MAKING THE SHIP WORK:
AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF MARITIME LABOUR IN GLOBAL SHIPPING

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an anthropological study of the organisation of maritime work and life among seafarers in different parts of the world. It discusses the labour experiences of seafarers, whose everyday work within a highly regulated, spatially bounded, and ethnically stratified work environment is an integral—even crucial—part of the global economy. Up to 90 percent of world trade is carried by the international shipping industry (George, 2013; ICS, n.d.a), which means that without movement and circulation at sea, 'half the world would starve, and the other half would freeze' (ICS, n.d.a). Despite the essential role that seafarers play in what is arguably the most globalised of all industries, the (non-) attention given to them and their work in operating the ships that carry goods across the world's oceans is disproportionate to their importance.

Based on ethnographic research conducted aboard a contemporary cargo vessel crewed by seafarers of mixed nationalities, this dissertation sheds light on the labour required to make a ship 'work' and demonstrates how explorations of the tensions between the standardised, formalised, and theoretical measures of work on the one hand and the individual, personal, experiential, and practical aspects of work on the other hand can offer a new perspective on maritime work. By investigating labour standardisation and bureaucratisation in shipping labour and the way in which this labour is organised and structured, this dissertation elucidates the 'invisible' work undertaken by seafarers, as well as the multiple ideologies that surround their work and work practices, and the everyday strategies that they implement to render their time at sea more bearable and sustainable.

One of the central arguments of this study is that the formal structure of shipboard labour and its institutionalised organisation on the one hand and the informal structure of shipboard labour and its social organisation on the other hand intersect with and are

interconnected with one another. In my exploration and analysis of onboard social relations and the everyday negotiation and organisation of work, I reveal how seafarers—despite their unequally distributed positions, power, and conditions of employment—manage to keep a vessel afloat and contribute to the apparently unimpeded transportation of goods.

SAMMENDRAG

Denne avhandlingen er en antropologisk studie av organiseringen av maritimt arbeid og liv blant sjøfolk på et lasteskip. Studien diskuterer arbeidserfaringene til sjøfolk, hvis daglige arbeid foregår innenfor et høyt regulert, romlig avgrenset og etnisk stratifisert arbeidsmiljø om bord skipet. Arbeidet er en integrert - til og med avgjørende - del av verdensøkonomien hvor opptil 90 prosent av verdenshandelen bæres av den internasjonale skipsfartsindustrien (George, 2013; ICS, n.d.a). Til tross for den viktige rollen sjøfolk spiller i det som er verdens mest globaliserte næringer er arbeidet de gjør om bord skipene som frakter varer over verdenshavene understudert.

Gjennom etnografisk forskning utført ombord på et internasjonalt bemannet lasteskip, belyser denne avhandlingen det arbeidet som kreves for å få et skip til å 'fungere' og demonstrerer hvordan utforskninger av spenningene mellom standardiserte, formaliserte og teoretiske forståelser av arbeid, og de individuelle, personlige, erfaringsmessige og praktiske aspektene av arbeidet kan gi et nytt perspektiv på maritimt arbeid. Ved å undersøke arbeidsstandardisering og byråkratisering innen maritimt arbeid og måten dette arbeidet er organisert og strukturert på, belyser denne avhandlingen det 'usynlige' arbeidet som utføres av sjøfolk samt de mange ideologiene som omgir deres arbeid og arbeidspraksis, og de daglige strategiene de iverksetter for å gjøre tiden til sjøs mer utholdelig og bærekraftig.

Et sentralt argument i avhandlingen er at den formelle strukturen for skipsarbeid om bord og dens institusjonaliserte organisering er nær forbundet med den uformelle strukturen for arbeid om bord og dens sosiale organisering. I min analyse av sosiale relasjoner om bord og den daglige forhandlingen og organiseringen av arbeidet, viser jeg hvordan sjøfolk – til tross for sine ulikt fordelte posisjoner, makt og ansettelsesvilkår – klarer å holde et fartøy flytende samt bidra til den tilsynelatende uhindrede flyten av global varetransport.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB – Able-bodied seaman (member of the deck department)

CCR – Cargo Control Room

ECDIS – Electronic Chart Display and Information System

ETA – Estimated Time of Arrival

HSE – Health, Security, and Environment

ICS – The International Chamber of Shipping

ILO – International Labour Organisation

IMO – The International Maritime Organisation

ISPS - International Ship and Port Facility Security Code

ITF – The International Transport Workers' Federation

LNG – Liquefied Natural Gas

MSC – Maritime Safety Committee

MTM – Motorman (member of the engine department)

NIS – Norwegian International Ship Register

NOR – Norwegian Ordinary Ship Register

OCIMF – The Oil Companies International Marine Forum

OS – Ordinary seaman (member of the deck department)

PEC – Protection and Environment Committee

PPE – Personal Protective Equipment

PSC – Port State Control

SIRE – Ship Inspection Report Program

SMT – Safety Management Team

STCW – Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping

VHF – Very High Frequency

GLOSSARY

Aft and forward: The maritime industry uses a specialised vocabulary for the nomenclature of ship parts. The forward of a ship is just as it sounds: the foremost side, at the ship's front, facing the bow. The ship's rear, in the direction of the stern, is called the aft.

Captain: The captain is a high-grade licensed seafarer who holds ultimate command and responsibility of a vessel. The captain is responsible for the safe and efficient operation of the ship, and legal compliance, and for the persons and cargo on board.

Chart/charterer: A shipper or a company may wish to hire (chart) a ship from a ship owner with a view to transporting certain quantity of commodities from port A to port B, or they may wish to hire a ship for a certain period. The charterer may be the owner of the goods for transport, or they may be an agent or a broker who acts on behalf of the goods' owner.

Cabin: An individual private room on a ship for the ship's workers.

Dirty mess: Also called 'duty mess', this is an area on the ship where seafarers can take their breaks without changing out of their work attire.

Fitter: A ship's fitter forms part of the engine department and is the highest-ranking position among the engine department ratings. The fitter is responsible for fitting, maintaining and repairing any damaged parts on a vessel's decks.

Galley: The galley is the kitchen area aboard a vessel.

Handover: During handover—the moment of transition between two shifts—information is shared with the person(s) in charge of the next shift.

Mess hall(s): The mess hall is where seafarers socialise and eat. The term ‘mess’ can also be used to denote groups of seafaring personnel who belong to separate messes, such as the officers’ mess and the crew’s mess.

Monkey Island: Monkey Island is located at the ship’s topmost accessible height. Technically, it is a deck located directly above the navigating bridge. A popular theory states that, at one time, sailors would climb like monkeys to reach the ship’s rigging so that they could free or mend the sails. Monkey Island is an integral part of modern ships that houses external parts of the bridge equipment, including a data recorder capsule, radar scanner and radar mast, satellite antenna, communication equipment gear, whistle, navigation lights, and a magnetic compass. It is imperative that Monkey Island be well maintained. It must be de-rusted, painted and cleaned in accordance with the ship’s schedule to prevent the build-up of salt particles and to reduce exposure damage.

Cargo operation: Loading and/or discharge of liquefied natural gas (LNG) cargo either at terminal facilities at port or by other means, such as ‘ship-to-ship operation’, is referred to as ‘cargo operation’ or simply ‘operation’.

Mooring: A mooring is any permanent structure to which a vessel may be secured. Examples include quays, jetties, piers, anchor buoys, and mooring buoys. A ship is secured to a mooring to forestall free movement of the ship on the water.

Permit to work: A permit to work (or a work permit) is a formal, verbal, or written authority to operate a planned work procedure. It is designed to provide protection for employees working in hazardous situations. It ensures that management systems are followed such that the job is completed safely.

Pilot(s): Pilots are professionally licensed mariners whose role is to board and assume conduct of a vessel and guide it along the safest route to its port of call. The pilot's role while onboard a vessel is equivalent in importance to that of the captain.

Ratings: A term used to describe skilled seafarers who play supporting roles in navigation, maintenance, security, and other shipboard operations. The ships' ratings are those who perform most of the actual work assigned by the ship's officers. Aboard the *Pacific*, the following positions are categorised as ratings: Bosun, able-bodied seaman (AB), ordinary seaman (OS), motorman (MTM), fitter, messman, and messboy.

Shore leave: Shore leave is defined as the period during which a seafarer is allowed to take leave from the ship while the vessel on which they work is in port. The duration of their leave can vary depending on how long the ship is scheduled to remain in port.

Starboard side and port side: Nautical terms referring to the vessel's right and left sides, respectively. Unlike 'right' and 'left', however, the terms 'starboard' and 'port' denote fixed locations on a vessel. Because starboard and port never change, they are unambiguous references that are independent of a seafarer's orientation, and seafarers use these nautical terms rather than 'right' and 'left' to avoid confusion.

Suez ropes: Suez ropes are mandatory equipment required to transit the Suez Canal. The Suez ropes are kept onboard and used in the event of sandstorms, collisions, or disruptions in the canal—for example, to moor the vessel safely along the canal's banks.

Toolbox talk: A toolbox talk is an informal safety meeting that takes place as part of an organisation's overall safety programme. Toolbox meetings are typically conducted at a job site prior to the commencement of a job or work shift. A toolbox talk covers special topics pertaining to safety aspects that are relevant to the particular job in question.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

'BE BACK BEFORE WE LEAVE; WE WILL NOT WAIT'

Early one morning towards the end of April 2019, the *Pacific*[1] reached her scheduled destination: a liquified natural gas (LNG)[2] terminal located in Portugal. Having loaded her LNG cargo in Qatar, the *Pacific* was chartered to discharge the cargo at a terminal facility in a medium-sized Portuguese coastal city. From a distance, the terminal looked identical to the numerous others through which the vessel had already passed since I had embarked in South Korea in mid-January: a large, greyish industrial site with the by-now recognisable and tall-reaching LNG-loading arms used to load and discharge cargo.

LNG terminal in South Korea, seen from aboard. Photo by author.

[1] All names used in this dissertation are pseudonyms.
[2] Chapter 2 provides a general description of the LNG trade and its role in the global shipping industry, as well as a detailed description of the type of work that the LNG trade entails aboard the *Pacific* in particular.

The seafarers aboard the *Pacific*, however, had previously told me that this terminal was in fact quite different from the majority of the (to them, well-known) terminals. As the vessel passed the breakwater, it became clear just what distinguished this LNG terminal from others: having passed the breakwater, the entire city was visible. In contrast to other terminals to which the *Pacific* had called, both for discharge and loading operations, the Portuguese terminal appeared not to be closed off or located several miles outside its residential postal code. Whereas in other terminals, where the sight of the city's blurry silhouette reminded the viewer that they were in fact still a part of modern civilization, in Portugal, the vessel was actually entering said civilization. From the vessel, one could see people walking in the distance, make out the city's beach and even distinguish houses from restaurants and other commercial buildings.

I recall that I had to muster a significant amount of courage before entering the captain's office. For, what I was about to request seemed outrageous: permission to spend an entire night off the vessel with the promise that I would return before the ship departed the following morning. Given that I was the ship's supernumerary (the position noted in the mandatory crew list kept onboard, to which I shall return and elaborate on in Chapter 3 of this dissertation) and thus held no formal role in the loading and discharge operation, the captain not only granted me permission, but also appeared genuinely excited for me. He clearly recalled a time when he was free of the responsibilities of a ship's captain (who must remain onboard during cargo operations) and could himself experience new cities. However, he warned, 'Be back before we leave; we will not wait'.

I was able to catch a ride from the terminal to the city with the appointed ship agent, and we parted ways outside a shopping mall close to the city centre. An immense feeling of freedom washed over me as I walked away from the shopping mall. I did not know the city; it

was raining heavily and the heavy grey clouds covering the distant sun made the temperature cold. I must have appeared confused and somewhat out of the ordinary to many people as I jumped crash barriers to cross the heavily trafficked main road that separated the outskirts and centre of the city. I enabled 4G on my phone, and it immediately began to work, resuming podcast downloads, updating applications, retrieving messages that were either too long or that had attachments. I could now also make phone calls. The trafficked road and crash barriers were soon replaced by narrow, cobbled-stone streets and colourful buildings. I could see the vessel from where I stood. The rain was still pouring, making a recognisable sound inside an otherwise quiet city, and the fog I had seen embracing the city just a few hours ago from the bridge of the *Pacific* had shifted and was now surrounding the vessel and terminal.

A view of the Portuguese terminal facility from the city. Photo by author.

Although short-lived, the surprising sense of freedom that I experienced as I disembarked in Portugal towards the end of April reveals, I believe, a central aspect of seafarers' lives that is crucial to understanding the particular type of work organisation that is implemented aboard ships: 'A ship, of course, is a close-knit, 24-hours society, so the way work on board is organised determines also the kind of social life possible outside work' (Johansen, 1979, p. 117). For these reasons, it is perhaps unsurprising that ships are often compared to and portrayed as floating prisons (Foucault, 1977) and total institutions (Goffman, 1961; Auber & Arner, 1962) and that seafaring is considered a total occupation (Tunstall, 1962). Indeed, the very act of getting *off* the ship may reveal what life *on board* a ship is.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

By empirically foregrounding seafarers' differentiated experiences and the practices that they habitually adopt through labour, this dissertation focuses on the actual work that takes place aboard the ship and the ways in which it is organised. On the one hand, the shipping industry is highly deregulated: as I shall elaborate further in the coming sections, the widespread use of precarious contracts, differentiated wage scales for different nationalities, and the practice of flags of convenience,[3] allows key actors and stakeholders engaged in the cargo shipping sector's 'hidden' maritime world (George, 2013; Sekula & Burch, 2010) to circumvent or avoid regulations, such as seafarers' rights, and labour standards, for instance. On the other hand, if we regard ships as workplaces, they are highly regulated sites, and UN agencies (such

[3] Chapter 2 elaborates upon these issues in relation to crewing and recruitment patterns and open registries.

as the International Maritime Organisation and The International Labour Organisation) are instrumental in the sector's regulation.

It is thus essential for this dissertation to study the impact of this particular way of organising and structuring work on occupational practices and relations—in short, what it is that makes a ship 'work' seemingly without friction. Against this background, the dissertation seeks to investigate *how seafarers navigate, negotiate, and perform their social relations and occupational roles onboard a multicultural vessel.* This overarching point of research interest has led to the following, more specific, questions:

(1) How do seafarers accomplish this navigation, negotiation and performance of social relations and occupational roles in relation to processes of labour standardisation?
(2) How do they do these things in relation to multifaceted understandings of skill?
(3) How do they do these things in relation to their everyday work rhythms and time management?

This dissertation, then, presents a portrait of seafarers, their work, and their work relations. By closely observing their daily lives, their everyday negotiations, and practices of work between and among them as a diverse group, this empirical study offers a glimpse into the magnitude of human labour that is involved in keeping a ship continuously afloat and on the move. It sheds light on the different strategies that seafarers apply with the aim of making their everyday labour meaningful, valuable, and autonomous in an environment that is otherwise dominated by repetitive and monotonous cycles of cargo operations, routine work, repairs, and rest.

To better understand this connection between everyday negotiations and practices of work on the one hand and the current development of the shipping industry on the other, this

dissertation argues that skill is of the utmost importance. Indeed, skill has been at the heart of academic debates about work, employment, and management over the past half century (Buchanan et al., 2017, p. 1). As early as 1776, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* opened with observations about skill levels, work organisation, and productivity in the oft-cited pin factory (Buchanan, Anderson, & Power, 2017, p. 445). The notion of skill thus lies at the core of all work and work relations.

However, Buchanan et al. state, 'What has been particularly striking most recently has been growing recognition of the need to nest skills initiatives in wider strategies of economic renewal, which involves both the redistribution and not just the growth of income […] International agencies, such as the OECD, which previously strongly advocated supply-side initiatives, based on the assumption that increased skills boost economic development, have argued in recent pronouncements for the need to engage with a wider range of factors. Along with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the World Bank, the OECD now explicitly acknowledges that skills alone cannot solve the major economic challenges of our time and that unless the broader forces shaping inequality are tackled, initiatives […], such as skills, will be of limited impact' (Buchanan et al., 2017, pp. 2–3).

In line with the idea that skill provides a 'springboard for examining wider issues' (Buchanan et al., 2017, p. 3), this dissertation uses skill as a prism through which to understand work and work relations. I assert that an analysis of skilled practices *at* work can be uniquely fruitful in illuminating the lived experiences of workers (i.e., seafarers) in addition to the power dynamics produced and reproduced on site. Thus, skill is conceptualised as a socially contingent and negotiated process that is enacted between people, influenced by the type of work in which one engages, and characterised by differentiation and boundary work. Beyond this, the idea of the formal acquisition of competency and proficiency— 'the

ability to do something well' as Attewell[4] calls it (1990, p. 423)—also includes embodied knowledge, experience, a 'feel' for work, and intercultural skills. To balance and navigate these different expectations that make a seafarer more or less successful occupationally and career-wise, 'soft' skills, as they are often termed, are equally essential at sea, not least to seafarers' ability to perform their work and get along with their shipmates.

GLOBAL MARITIME ENTANGLEMENTS

If this dissertation were a film and the introductory vignette were the opening scene, the familiar cinematic technique of fast-tracking backwards would ensue, taking the viewer back in time to January 2019 and the moment I boarded a plane in Oslo and travelled to South Korea to muster aboard the *Pacific*. When I arrived in South Korea after a long and tedious journey, the ship's agent greeted me at the airport terminal. Seeing a cardboard sign that read *Pacific*, I walked towards him and discovered that I was not the only person bound for the *Pacific* that day: five seafarers also gathered around the ship's agent. Together with the five on-signing crewmembers, I spent one night in a hotel in the busy inner-city area of Pusan prior to our departure towards the *Pacific* the following morning. The drive to the terminal from the city took about three hours, and the urban city landscape gradually changed as the car eventually pulled off the South Korean highway to a smaller yet still heavily trafficked road from which the ocean was visible in the distance. Large industrial houses, warehouses, and plants with familiar names, such as *Hyundai* and *Hanjin*, lined the route towards the gas terminal where the *Pacific* was berthed.

Our earlier vista of the ocean, glimpsed in the distance as the car pulled off the highway, stood in stark contrast to the view with which we now confronted as the car stopped

[4] Attewell's definition also aligns with the accepted *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) definition as 'the ability to do something well'.

and the driver announced that we had arrived at our destination: a large scaffold-like steel construction with stairs leading four flights up, approximately thirty meters from the ground to the gangway that connected the scaffold to the vessel. The terminal, which was located a considerable distance from the urban landscape through which we had passed, resembled a large construction site. As the six of us ascended the steel-stairs and crossed the gangway, we were crossed off the visitor sheet by the young gangway watch, who consequently announced on the very high frequency (VHF) radio he carried with him that 'all new on-signers are on board'. After the announcement, another seafarer escorted us the short distance from the gangway to the ship's accommodation area.

The deck worker left the six of us immediately after we had entered the ship's accommodation and while the five new on-signers dispersed, knowing where they were supposed to go, I remained behind. Johnny, the Norwegian chief engineer, ascended two flights of stairs to the ship's C-deck, where the off-signing chief engineer was waiting for him to complete the mandatory handover (see Glossary) before his departure. Arnie, the Ukrainian electrician found his back-to-back colleague two decks below from where we had entered, the A-deck, in the engine control room. The three remaining men, all Filipino deck workers, brought their luggage with them to B-deck to find their designated cabins. After this, they found the ship's Filipino bosun and were informed of the off-signing deck workers' names in the changing locker on A-deck to learn their watch duties and hours of work. The ship's new on-signers performed an apparently automated routine of 'falling into place'. Not only did they know where they were going but, within a few hours, they had already changed into work clothes, making them difficult to distinguish from their identically equipped and clothed colleagues.

For quite some time, and since I had not yet been assigned a cabin, I stood and waited in the hallway on the ship's A-deck before beginning to move around a bit. Voices and

distorted electronic sounds from what I imagined were VHF radios emanated from what I later learned was the cargo control room on C-deck. Inside were people whom I assumed to be crewmembers; the captain was there, for instance, in addition to people whom I gathered were connected to the South Korean terminal, with various company logos printed on their hardhats and work attire. Recalling how these initial hours aboard the *Pacific* unfolded is difficult. Mostly, it was a constant flux of people moving quickly and unfamiliar sounds surrounding me. That same night, after the South Korean port authorities and shore personnel involved in the discharge operation had left the vessel along with the disembarking crew, the *Pacific's* engine was heard throughout the ship as she slowly departed the terminal, guided by the navigational expertise of South Korean pilots. Later, as I conversed with Peter, the Norwegian captain aboard the *Pacific* who had more than twenty years of sea service, he made a comment that I found to be rather informative, adding to my initial understanding of how the new on-signers fell into place once they signed on: 'It's a challenge, yes', he said, 'because it's like this. You pick out twenty-five different men, from different cultures, different personalities, different everything. And then you place them on a ship and go, here, this is your home for two months'.

Peter's above comment is central to this dissertation and, in many ways, introduces us to the main theme and focus of this work. In his brief observation, Peter captured the tensions between the standardised, formalised, and theoretical measures of work on the one hand and the individual, personal, experiential, and practical aspects of it on the other hand; between the mechanical function of labour, human-as-infrastructure, and the ship and terminals as empty signifiers and non-places (Auge, 1995), and the everyday strategies and practices—what we might regard as the 'human elements'—that keep the proverbial wheels of the global shipping industry in motion.

This study discusses the labour experiences of seafarers whose everyday work in a highly regulated, spatially bounded, and ethnically stratified work environment is an integral—even crucial—part of the global economy. Up to 90 percent of world trade is carried by the international shipping industry (George, 2013): without movement and circulation at sea, 'half the world would starve, and the other half would freeze' (ICS, n.d.a.) Despite their essential role in what is arguably the most globalised of all industries, the scant attention afforded to seafarers and the work that they perform in moving the ships that carry goods across the world's oceans is frequently disproportionate to their importance. Although the seafaring occupation is, to some extent, still associated with a certain nostalgic or romanticised flair, evoking the adventurous and epic narratives recounted by Homer, Melville, Hemingway, and Conrad,[5] among others, these characterisations do not capture today's global shipping industry: ships are global and mobile work and production sites with internal differentiation in levels of onboard specialisation, departmental and inter-departmental divisions of labour, and high turnovers. Moreover, ships are highly regimented spaces, both in terms of their everyday work, as well as in terms of their position in the global circulation of commodity flows (Leivestad & Markkula, 2021; Markkula, 2021a, 2021b, 2022; Borovnik, 2004, 2012; Schober, 2021; Leivestad & Schober, 2021; Sampson, 2004, 2003).

In line with the above characterisations—let us call it the 'reality' of shipping as opposed to the popularised conceptions that are riddled with associations with adventures and freedom—this dissertation illuminates the invisible and hidden worlds of seafarers' work and life, which form the 'backbones of global trade' (Buer et al., 2019, p. 113). I shall demonstrate that the *Pacific* is a highly regimented work environment, characterised by

[5] I am thinking here especially of *The Odyssey* of Homer, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway and, among several other works, *Lord Jim* and *The Shadow-Line* by Joseph Conrad.

repetitive routines and largely dominated by the notion that on board, 'every day is Monday'. This institutionalised and standardised organisation of shipping labour both enables and reinforces seafarers' ability to seamlessly join different kinds of vessels, with almost no introduction beyond a brief handover and the expectation that they will work smoothly and immediately. As noted above in relation to the new on-signers who joined the *Pacific* in South Korea, they immediately knew where to go on board and, within a few hours, they had changed into work clothes that effectively made them indistinguishable from their colleagues. Within such a mechanical labour environment, seafarers emerge as an apparently anonymous, non-distinct, and non-diversified part of the ship: they are 'mobile labour' (Bastos et al., 2021) in the sense that they can come from anywhere in the world and travel to whichever country a ship is destined for. Consider, for instance, Allan Sekula and Noel Burch's 2010 film essay entitled *The Forgotten Space*, a detailed and visual examination of personal stories of (dis)connection in the global supply chain and those marginalised by the global transport system, and Kurt Vonnegut's 1969 novel *Slaughterhouse Five*. The latter work's epiphanous phrase 'so it goes', repeated about a hundred times throughout the novel, evokes a somewhat familiar association with the former—not in the sense the two distinct pieces of work thematise similar issues, the first concerning the effects of globalisation and the second a testament to the anti-war movement, but rather because of the way in which the expression 'so it goes' comes to take on a life of its own. It develops into a phrase that marks transitions from one subject to the next, and with each repetition it becomes more of an automated response to one's environment than an individual response that requires active reflection.

In what I perceive to be a similar manner, *The Forgotten Space*, aided by Sekula's seemingly effortless yet exaggerated narration, manages to conjure up an image of the global transport system as an almost self-motored system, the global equivalent to the factory assembly line. Using a wide range of materials, from descriptive documentary, interviews,

archive stills, and footage, as well as clips from old films, Sekula and Burch's film essay challenges the contemporary view of an integrated, globalised, self-regulated capitalist world economy. As they put it,

> Investment flows intangibly, through the ether, as if by magic. Money begets money. Wealth is weightless. Sea trade, when it is remembered at all, is a relic of an older and obsolete economy, a world of decrepitude, rust and creaking cabled, of the slow movement of heavy things. If Petty's old fable held that a seafarer was worth three peasants, neither count for much in the even more fabulous new equation. And yet we would all die without the toil of farmers and seafarers.[6]

What Sekula and Burch address, I believe, is the impact that the complex system behind the global flow of commodities—a system of which most people are unaware or to which they are inattentive—exerts on the organisation of this labour, as countless people are reduced, Sekula and Burch argue, to spare parts of an immense and increasingly automated machinery. This is something that overlaps to a certain extent with the seemingly automated routine of 'falling into place' that the *Pacific's* new on-signers displayed almost immediately on arrival. 'So it goes', it seems (Vonnegut, 1991).

At the same time, however, I demonstrate that the *Pacific* is also a social environment in which the crew who both live and work on board over extended periods engage in distinctive ways of organising forms of sociality between and among one another. They are, as such, not exactly the anonymous, non-distinct, and non-diversified human components of ships that they are sometimes made out to be; they are real people, whose experience, age, social background, and motivations in pursuing a maritime career are multifaceted and subject to great variation. As shippers of their own histories, seafarers are simultaneously collectively positioned together within a multicultural and hierarchic society while onboard their floating worksites. They come from diverse backgrounds and have different experiences, biographies,

[6] Sekula & Burch, 2010.

and relationships with their family and loved ones, as well as with their shipmates on board, all of which play a crucial part in defining the *Pacific's* particular social tapestry. It is this tension—or, rather, contradiction—that the *Pacific's* captain, Peter, captures so well in his comment on the 'human' challenges that arise in this intimately confined space. In contrast to how labour of this nature is 'supposed to work', according to the industry's regulatory and standardisation practices ('be back before we leave, we will not wait'), the captain instead highlights the cultural differences, both the individual and the personal, and the fact that the *Pacific* is not merely a technology or worksite, logistical tool, or vessel, but also a home.

This study is based on nearly seven months of fieldwork conducted on board the *Pacific* between January and August 2019 under rather exceptional conditions. With the exception of the single night that I spent ashore during cargo operation in Portugal, with which I purposely opened this dissertation, there were no breaks, pauses, or interruptions to the fieldwork period. It was a wholly encompassing undertaking of 24 hours a day, seven days a week, day and night; an extreme endeavour by any definition, pushed even further by the substantial period spent aboard within the confined structure of the *Pacific* for a total of 200 days. The more specific data on which this dissertation is based are derived from participatory observation conducted among 45 seafarers who constitute a diverse group in terms of age, experience, nationality, educational training, class, and cultural background. As a participant observer, spending nearly seven months on board one ship and participating in the everyday work and leisure, while highly challenging, yielded valuable insights into maritime work organisation and the diverse yet differentiated working relationships that play out on board a contemporary global cargo vessel (the methodology will be developed further in Chapter 3).

The ILO Convention No. 185, Article 1 'defines the seafarer as any person who is employed or engaged or works in any capacity on board a vessel, other than a ship of war, ordinarily engaged in maritime navigation' (ILO, n.d.). These seafarers are drawn from

traditional seafaring countries in Europe and Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development (OECD) countries, as well as from 'new' labour supply countries, such as China, Philippines, Myanmar, and Indonesia (Sampson, 2021b, p. 2; Leivestad & Markkula, 2021). It is common to find multicultural setups on board general cargo ships with mixed nationality crews today. The emergence of open registries of flags, commonly known as 'flags of convenience' (Borovnik, 2012; Alderton & Winchester, 2002), the increased use of third-party crew agencies (Sampson, 2013; Alderton et al., 2004), and the widespread implementation of temporary contracts issued to seafarers (Borovnik, 2004; Bloor & Sampson, 2009) raises important questions regarding the onboard and everyday organisation of shipping, particularly in terms of labour, regulations, and standardisation processes.

The ways in which seafarers are situated within and engage with the larger maritime supply chain offers a particularly interesting case study for several reasons, not only owing to the industry's ethnic stratification and differentiated conditions of employment, but also as an illustration of the extreme movement and pace that this industry requires. This, I argue, may cause tensions: on the one hand, seafarers face similar circumstances in their occupational lives—mutual dependence on one another and collectively agreed understandings of *how* and *when* they should act in different situations on board in addition to pre-established standards of competency and certificates that the seafarers have obtained through vocational and educational training. They face long stretches away from their families and loved ones in an isolated work environment that poses a double threat owing to both the unpredictability of the ocean and the often hazardous cargo.

On the other hand, the 1.9 million registered seafarers across the world (BIMCO and ICS, 2021; Baum-Talmor and Kitada, 2022) are a highly stratified occupational group. The rigid shipboard hierarchy (see illustration 0.1) and large variations in wages, working conditions, sailing periods, and benefits among seafarers are widespread. Moreover,

conditions vary substantially across different shipping companies. This effectively means that within a crew working on board the same vessel, some may be hired on temporary contracts, making their employment contingently precarious, whereas others are permanently employed on a fixed rotation. Again, while the shipping company operating the vessel directly employs some seafarers, others may have been recruited via manning agencies or other third-party actors. Two major stratifying conditions for many seafarers working on board mixed-nationality crewed vessels are wages and crew rotation. A third important factor is employment status, distinguishing between fixed or contractual employment. In debates surrounding 'fairness' and 'competition', it is often publicly claimed that the salary of a Filipino AB, for example, will be effectively 'higher' when adjusted for national context than, say, the salary of a Norwegian AB. While this is true on some level (seafaring is considered high-paid work in the Philippines), context-driven argumentation of this sort underestimates the extent to which global inequalities are reproduced and reinforced in maritime shipping. However, it also limits the possibility of variation and individual response and fails to address the evaluative element of labour across the lines of nationality.

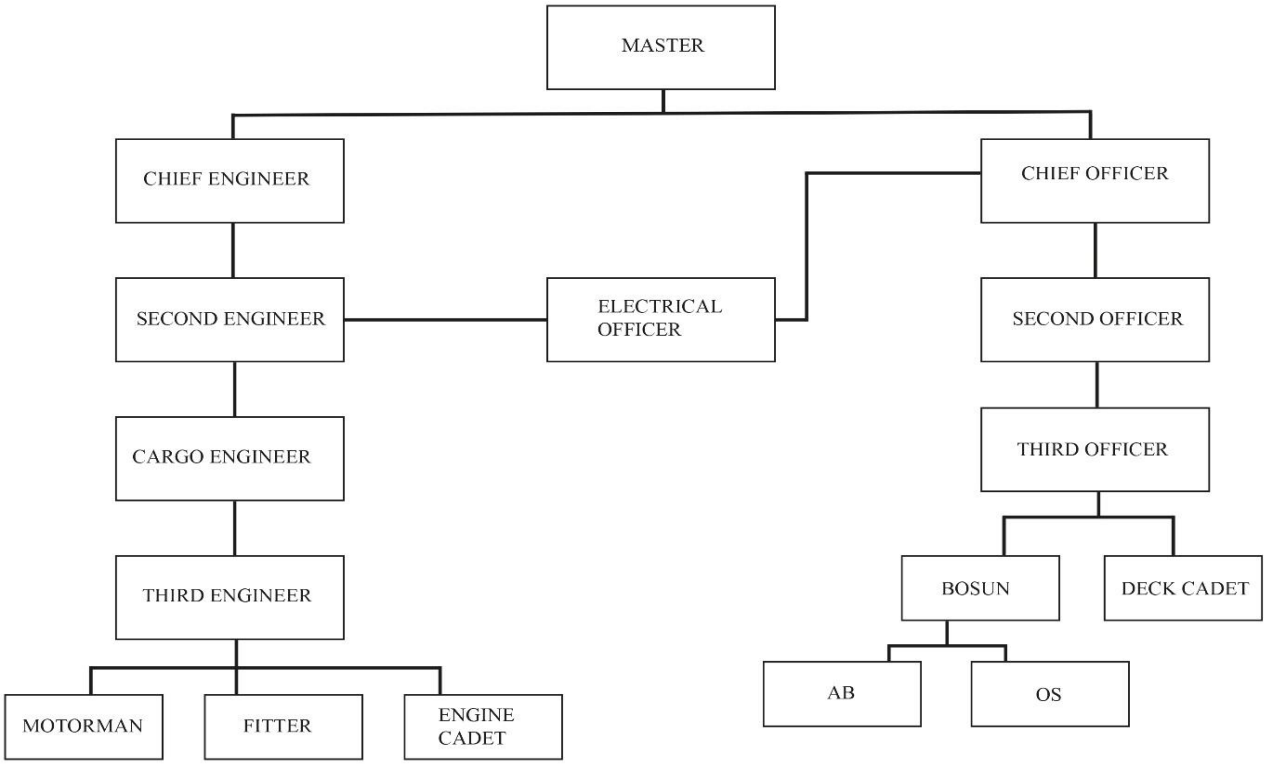


Illustration 0.1 (by author): The organisational chart of the *Pacific*, commonly referred to as the shipboard hierarchy. AB, able-bodied seaman; OS, ordinary seaman.

The overarching focus on these different—and often conflicting—cultural ideals and negotiations with regard to the enaction of hierarchy and power differentials in a cross-cultural environment guides this dissertation. However, rather than approaching maritime labour as inherently stratified by a global and mobile differentiated workforce, whose nationalities and positions in the shipboard hierarchy reproduce and reinforce global inequalities, this dissertation argues that the ways in which people adapt and respond to the divisive framework used to organise work, which can be readily observed in the global shipping industry, are key in attaining a nuanced view of maritime labour. I believe that this is not simply a matter of asking the right questions, but rather of asking how we chose to approach them. Why, for instance, were open displays of conflict rarely, if ever, enacted on board the *Pacific*? Is this reflective of everyone getting along and liking one another onboard,

or are other, perhaps less visible, alternatives—such as looking to the ways that this kind of labour is organised and structured—more fruitful to explore? In line with the relational-comparative approach elaborated by Hart (2006), rather than comparing the people and relations on board the *Pacific*, this study focuses on how they are constituted in relation to one another. In so doing, I adopt the occupational structure and onboard organisation of labour as a lens through which to understand the variegated *in situ* labour experiences of seafarers whose 'invisible' work within the shipping industry has been spearheaded by the notion of 'globalisation' (Sampson, 2021, p. 2).

The present study aims to present an empirically based and in-depth account of some of the dominant occupational structures that influence how maritime labour is organised on board a ship and the ways in which these structures affect the working lives of seafarers who both live and work onboard this multicultural and hierarchic society for considerable periods. In particular, in concentrating on seafarers' everyday labour and occupational practices, the study explores the multiple ideologies that surround work and the way in which this work is structured and organised. To make this 'oceanic turn' (Blum, 2010, p. 671) on labour more complete, I argue that empirical assessment of the complexities of the human and human labour power of seafarers in the global shipping industry is crucial in that it yields valuable insight into *why* and *how* a crew manages to cohabit and collaborate within an intimate, confined, and differentiated space.

DISSERTATION OVERVIEW

The remainder of this dissertation is organised as follows: Chapter 2 presents the study's theoretical framework and maritime context. After unpacking and elaborating on the theoretical framework, I position the study's general framework within a wider contextual

landscape and in relation to the study's ethnographic orientation. Chapter 2 will also provide the reader with contextual knowledge about the shipping industry's LNG sector and the *Pacific*'s role within this segment with a particular focus on Norwegian maritime development to further situate the study's context and setting.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed account of the methods used. In addition to discussing central methodological questions, the chapter will also systematically present the processes through which the dissertation's material emerged and was developed. I further elaborate on the reflection and positionality necessitated by employing the empirically motivated method of participant observation. The following chapters are empirically driven, and together they make up the dissertation's argumentative foundation in relation to the research question(s).

Chapter 4 concerns the standardisation of labour in shipping, taking two ethnographic case studies as a lens through which to examine seafarers' experiences and negotiations of standardisation practices and how they are implemented through their acts of labour. The first is the case around the rather banal situation of a slamming door that stayed open for days regardless of crewmembers either seeing it was open or hearing the actual slamming of the door. This example is deployed to interrogate some of these standardisation processes by demonstrating how the rigid organisation of labour and distribution of responsibility create 'blind spots' in the sense that unplanned tasks fall outside the distribution of responsibilities and thus fail to be acted on as they are 'nobody's' responsibility. This, I argue, occurs as a result of the high degree of inflexibility in maritime work. Meanwhile, the standards, categories, and adaptions to large-scale information structures that the seafarers adhere to are sometimes open for negotiation. The chapter's second case introduces Phil, an inspector who boarded the *Pacific* in mid-May and who represents the broader classification society on which the shipping industry rests. Based on this inspection of the ship, I illustrate the tensions, both positive and negative, that seafarers experience in these encounters.

Proceeding from Chapter 4 and its descriptions of the mindless performance of work tasks brought about through labour standardisation, Chapter 5 reveals how individual ship workers have (and create) strategies that allow them to negotiate their labour. The chapter analyses the daily work rhythms and the various strategies that seafarers implement to make their working lives more bearable and sustainable. The chapter details the strategies they use to carve out space and take (back) time in the context of the highly regimented, restricted, and routinised work on board and analyses the importance of notions of time and rhythm to seafarers. I demonstrate how such strategies are related to and intersect with shipboard hierarchy, arguing that, while permeable, the shipboard hierarchy is also tightly organised.

Chapter 6 examines the different understandings that exist in relation to skill and explores them in light of the *Pacific's* multinational crew composition and hierarchic organisation. Rapid and extensive technological developments in the shipping industry have radically changed not only how the industry conceptualises competence and proficiency (i.e., the skills required in maritime work) but also regarding what these skills should entail and include. On board vessels like the *Pacific*, how are these debates—both those surrounding regulatory frameworks and public debates among maritime stakeholders—experienced from an occupational and practical perspective? Reflecting on the significance of the social and contingent dimensions of skill, the chapter argues that the probability of being recognised as skilful is dependent upon a particular understanding of skill, where, for some seafarers, social access to skills is enabled while other crewmembers' access is constrained.

Chapter 7 explores culturally different expectations of collegiality, the 'how' and 'know-how' of being a good worker. Particularly, through the story of Cameron, a Filipino deck worker, who was promoted to third officer during the fieldwork period, the chapter illustrates the relationship between the specific differentiated spatiality into which seafarers are bound and the particular cultural ideals and expectations that are valued within a prevalent

Nordic model of leadership. In examining these encounters of differentiated spatiality, the chapter analyses career progression and collegiality as the ability to 'fit' into certain categories, and while some succeed in making this shift, others are less successful. The chapter argues that cultural ideals and expectations regarding leadership are more important for career progression but that the opinions of others, such as lower-ranking co-nationals, are key to one's well-being and social support. Possession of the intercultural skills required to balance and navigate these different expectations is part of what makes a seafarer more or less successful occupationally and career wise.

Chapter 8 summarises the central theme and arguments presented in this dissertation and comments upon their methodological and theoretical implications. The concluding chapter will once again raise this study's research question(s) and I shall summarise how the dissertation has responded to the research question(s) presented in the introduction while also highlighting potential avenues for future research.

CHAPTER 2: SHIPPING LABOUR: IN THEORY AND IN CONTEXT

IN THEORY

In her essay entitled 'Prospect to Oceanic Studies', literary scholar Hester Blum (2010) opens by stating that 'the sea is not a metaphor'. Advocating that oceanic studies should be 'attentive to the material conditions and praxis of the maritime world' and the perspectives of those 'for whom the sea was simultaneously workplace, home, passage, penitentiary, and promise' (2010, p. 670), Blum criticises the tendency in cultural studies to use the sea as a metaphor for fluidity and connection. In particular, the figure of the sailor, 'both mythologised and consigned to invisibility' (2010, p. 671), presents a challenge to the emerging fields of transnational studies, whose attention, Blum argues, is predominantly directed towards metaphorical constructs of 'empire, exchange, translation, and cosmopolitanism' (2010, p. 671). Urgently exhorting that oceanic studies recast theories of oceanic spaces and transnational crossings that are otherwise rendered obscure and abstract, Blum focuses on the *work* involved in oceanic practice, such the speculative labour of the seafarer.

In this chapter, I shall present the theoretical and empirical context for the study. Situated within the 'oceanic turn', as Blum (2010, p. 671) calls it, this study places the perspectives, experiences, and—not least—the labour of the actual actors front and centre of my analysis of globalised processes that are both supported and delivered, contained and restricted, by the global shipping industry's mobile and differentiated workforce. The relationship between work organisation and occupational structure in a cross-cultural environment is not only of theoretical significance to this study: developed in the interplay

between the theoretical focus on occupational structures and work organisation on the one hand, and the lived (and thus more practical day-to-day) aspects of the labour experiences of the seafarers who reside onboard the *Pacific* on the other, it is also of empirical significance. Let us briefly return to Peter, the Norwegian captain whose words introduced the central theme and focus of this dissertation: 'It's a challenge, yes. Because it's like this. You pick out twenty-five different men, from different cultures, different personalities, different everything. And then you place them on a ship and go, here, this is your home for two months'. In analysing and, thus, theorising about the tensions between the formal and informal dimensions of such labour, this dissertation joins several works that focus on work organisation and professional practices in the context of the particularities of maritime work.

WORK (RE)ORGANISATION AND SKILL

Classic studies of work (re)organisation and skill (see Attewell, 1990, 1987; Form, 1987; Cohen, 1979; Braverman, 1974; Adler, 1990) have emphasised the pervading tendency to reorganise jobs at a lower skill level than previously and with a particular emphasis on and in relation to processes of labour standardisation, de-skilling, and alienation (Mollona, 2009a, p. xvi). Harry Braverman's foundational work, *Labour and Monopoly Capital* (1974), for instance, argues that the scientific management of labour was pivotal to these processes. Moreover, a central feature of the scientific management movement is a particular concern in the organisation of work (Braverman, 1974, p. 140), pushing for the continued validity of Taylor's original formulations of organisation principles. The first principle is 'the dislocation of the labour process from the skills of the workers'; the second principle is 'the separation of conception from execution'; and the third principle is the 'use of monopoly over knowledge to control each step of the labour process' (Braverman, 1974, pp. 112–121). In contrast to the

term 'species-being',[7] introduced by Karl Marx and which he uses to describe human nature (Santilli, 1973, p. 76) and people's ability to realise themselves in the world around them by seeing themselves in a world they created (Tucker, 1978, p. 33n), the essential argument here is that jobs are increasingly becoming devoid of content, routinised, and mechanical (Wood, 1982).

Rightly debated, Braverman's focus on scientific management has been criticised as unsatisfactory in many respects; it does not provide an adequate account of pre-existing organisational and political bases of capitalist domination and extraction of surplus value in addition to assuming that subordination has already been secured prior to the reorganisation of the labour process (Elger, 1979, p. 78). The lack of attention paid to the social formation involved in any labour situation is also striking.[8] Moreover, the hegemony of nation-states and of the connections between formal bureaucracy and shifting occupational structures *within* national contexts applied in Braverman's de-skilling thesis effectively removes globalised labour from the analytical framework. Although Braverman ultimately argues that the working class has become increasingly homogenous, without affording any consideration to new constellations of labour issues due to increasing internationalisation, his work nevertheless focuses on the fundamental conflict of interest between work(ers) and capital(ists) and the vital importance of control.

I find Eliot Freidson's term 'professionalism', which he identifies as 'the institutional circumstances in which members of occupations rather than consumers or managers control work' (2001, p. 12), useful in any discussion about skill and the organisational conditions

[7] While Marx situates the term 'species-being' within the broader context of his theory of alienation in his 1844 'Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts' (Easton & Guddat, 1967), Marx's definition of the term with such humanist emphasis is largely what sets it apart from the 'determinism' of the de-skilling thesis, for instance. By contrast, 'species-being' forms a dialectical relationship: 'For it is here that the productive power of an individual joins with a natural world that subsists in its totality as a sort of second body to man, a webbing which imparts to him as much as it receives from him' (Santilli, 1973, p. 77).

[8] See, for example, Grint and Nixon (2015, p. 159) for a critique of the labour process.

framing labour at sea. First, it demonstrates how seafarers, despite the many similarities in the profession on a general level, will not fit together well as a single occupation group. Rather, it appears that seafarers make clear distinctions according to the type of work in which they engage. One such separation revolves around the degree of specialisation. Building on Friedson's (2001) approach to specialisation as representations of different type(s) of knowledge, certain tasks, such as the daily engine round or degreasing the deck, could discursively be articulated as specialised labour as distinct from tasks requiring low skill levels. Within this distinction, there lies a broader discussion surrounding control over the labour process, a debate that scholars have long argued stands in relation to management surveillance (see Beynon & Blackburn, 1972; Carrier, 1992).

In approaching these issues from a maritime angle, the work of historian Markus Rediker (1987) on seafarers and collectivity is particularly interesting. In carving out larger historical issues, such as the rise of capitalism, the origins of free wage labour, and class formation, Rediker's work, *Between the devil and the deep blue sea* (1987) draws attention to seafarers' experiences in the eighteenth-century maritime world: first, the 'collectivism of the entire ship, constituted in the confrontation with nature and by the need for survival, he writes. Second was the collectivity formed among the common seafarers, constituted in the confrontation with capital, created over and against the logic of discipline and cooperation for the sake of profit. Collective labour passed easily into collective self-defence as seamen sought to protect themselves from harsh conditions, excessive work, and oppressive authority. Whereas the collectivism of the entire ship depended upon a harmony of wills, a consensus, and a set of paternalistic relations of authority, the collectivism of the common seafarer, in stark contrast, was formed instead from the conflict inherent in the social relations of production in shipping and the consequent negotiations of waged work' (Rediker, 1987, p. 243).

Two points in Rediker's historical account of collectivism are worth noting in light of classic studies of work (re)organisation and skill: first, the industry's transformation in terms of technology and demands for vocational and educational training, to mention just some of the more obvious changes in the shipping industry, render comparison with Rediker's eighteenth-century maritime world spurious, as today's context is radically different. However, within the above framework, Marx's 'species-being'[9] concept aligns, in a way, with the sense of collectivism that seafarers must cultivate to tying the entire ship together. For example, we may consider this not only in relation to the particularity of maritime work but, rather, as a commonly valued feature across professions and society, whereby the virtue with which the ability to work together is imbued constitutes a form of Hobbesian social contract. Second, and in part because of new development and the changed patterns of organisation within the shipping industry, what Braverman and others would regard as processes of labour standardisation, de-skilling and alienation, new constellations of conflict have, in many contexts, replaced or have added to Rediker's dichotomy between labour and capital.

THE SPATIAL PRODUCTION OF LABOUR

More recently, several scholars inspired by Marx (1978; 1967) and his theory of capital, the circulation process, and the logic of keeping 'value in motion' (Harvey, 2019), have continued to expand on Marx's argument about transport of commodities as 'on the one hand an independent branch of production and hence a particular sphere for the investment of productive capital, and on the other hand it is distinguished by its appearance as the continuation of a production process within the circulation process and for the circulation process' (Marx, 1978, p. 229), and develop the idea of contemporary capitalism and the

[9] In the sense, as Santilli (1973) argues, 'we cannot *use* an object without 'giving thanks' to its being there, for we come upon not only its being, but also the *being* of others and, hence, of our own being' (1973, p. 87).

maritime shipping industry as mutually constitutive of one another (Leivestad and Markkula, 2021, p. 3). 'Container economies', the term introduced by Leivestad and Markkula in an attempt to synthesise these perspectives, refers to 'the maritime global circulation of cargo that is sustained by a mobile and disposable labour force, dependent on volatile logistics infrastructures, and nurtured by speculative and asymmetrical geographies' (2021, p. 3).

This growing body of work that focuses on maritime circulation while also examining the circulation of capital investigates the social and politicised nature of space (Lefebvre, 1991; Bear, 2014, 2105; May & Thrift, 2001; Massey, 2005) and uneven development under capitalism[10] (Kasmir & Gill, 2018). In particular, Harvey's concept of 'space-time-compression' and his attempt to reconstruct Marx's theory of the geography of capitalist accumulation (that which Marx referred to as 'the annihilation of space through time', being central to this theory) entailed an investigation of how distinct geographical processes of production and reconfigurations of space create specific conditions of globalisation and not the other way around (2001, p. 24). Put otherwise, changes that have surfaced as technologies of communication and transport are processes that effectively cause relative distances between places to contract, giving the idea of a 'shrinking world'.

However, among several critical logistics scholars who focus on labour politics (see, for example, Cowen, 2014; Chua et al., 2018; Bonachich & Wilson, 2008; Alimahomed-Wilson & Ness, 2018), a debate is emerging with respect to the revolutionary potential of logistics labour and the strategic location of logistics labour. Broadly speaking, two interrelated arguments align with this debate: 'the people who move the world can also stop it' (Cowen, 2014, p. 126) and that logistics workers are in a unique position in 'critical nodes in the global capitalist supply chain' (Alimahomed-Wilson & Ness, 2018, p. 2) and can thus

[10] Calling to mind Leon Trotsky's notion of 'uneven and combined development' (Rosenberg, 2016) and Rosa Luxemburg's (2003) insight that capitalism as a global system of accumulation requires a *diversity* of production relations to survive.

potentially disrupt the ‘smooth’ circulation of capital. While these studies surely capture the political and differentiated, yet potential, conditions of work under supply chain capitalism (Tsing, 2009), I wish to adopt a situated ethnographic approach and examine the interconnectedness of the variegated organisational and managerial principles of everyday work practices. Moreover, in approaching shipping labour from an anthropological stance, this dissertation investigates the low levels, on the face of it at least, of interpersonal tensions and conflicts and bring to light the difficulties involved in organising labour across cultural and global contexts.

THE SOCIAL ORGANISATION OF LABOUR

Regarding the important, yet understudied, social aspect of organisation of labour, the Ship Research Programme, a Norwegian project initiated at the Work Research Institute (WRI) in 1967, is particularly interesting. At the time, the Oslo-based programme was a pioneering force in view of its progressive stance on labour as a crucial component of human identity, and it incorporated many concerns regarding processes of labour standardisation, skill, and alienation into its research on the social organisation of labour among seafarers and on board ships. As part of the Ship Research Programme, experiments involving both relations between company and ship and changes in ship technology, in organisation and collaboration on board and the educational and professional conditions within shipping were realised and involved ship owners, maritime unions, and seafarers alike, who all participated in a series of experiments over a substantial period. By implementing organisational changes aimed at relaxing the traditional and rigid shipboard hierarchy, the programme sought to democratise work and social life aboard ships.

‘Few social systems have as long a tradition of rigid social divisions, highly authoritarian, some might say, oppressive, authority structures, and difficult, if not dangerous working and living conditions, as the social system typical on board a ship’ (Johansen, 1979, p. 117). Against this occupational background and through collaborative efforts between different actors, such as those already specified, the Ship Research Programme linked the organisation of labour—that is, how work is allocated and assumes different purposes—to larger issues, such as security and safety, continued learning curves for workers, and ensuring that people achieved meaning through their labour input. The strategies implemented to enforce such an outcome, it was argued, included the fundamental restructuring and reorganisation of the shipping industry by integrating the ongoing democratisation that had already taken place in industrial labour on shore and incorporating these democratic processes offshore (Quale, 2010, pp. 189-190). In line with the tradition of ‘work humanisation’, echoing Herbst’s (1975) well-known statement, ‘the product of work is people’, the Ship Research Programme emphasised the importance of participation when it came to developing an organisation. Through participation, they argue, people simultaneously create their own relationships to others, thus ‘becoming a product of your own organising’ (Johansen, 1979, p. 127).

During the 1970s, on board the general purpose carrier, M.S. *Balao*,[11] the Ship Research Programme attempted to disentangle the conventional organisation of ships: ‘The traditional[12] ship organisation is marked by highly compartmentalised departments (deck, engine room, catering); extremely differentiated jobs within the departments (i.e., greaser, motor man, repair man, third engineer, second engineer, first engineer and chief); splitting of

[11] The M.S. *Balao* was a platform for social scientific research and an ‘experimental ship’ on which a ‘more egalitarian and democratic form of work in the merchant fleet could be piloted’ (Lezaun, 2011, p. 554).
[12] The researchers use both ‘conventional’ and ‘traditional’ interchangeably to describe a particular approach to organising ships.

work plans (senior officers), control (senior officers, junior officers, petty officers) and execution (crew); separate messrooms and dayrooms, and great differences between the officers' and crews' cabins' (Johansen, 1979, p. 118). Furthermore, an excessive fragmentation is inherent in the principle that people can be shifted around 'like parts of a machine', thus not reducing the effectiveness of the total organisation (Johansen, 1979, p. 118). The intention onboard M.S. *Balao* was therefore to change or replace the traditional parameters of shipboard organisation, which were strongly characterised by hierarchy and social division, by creating autonomous groups that collectively planned *how* tasks should be carried out and *who* should do which jobs *when* (Johansen, 1979, p. 122).

Although the context for the M.S. *Balao* and the Ship Research Programme differs radically from that of today and despite its limited impact and organisational changes (for a critique, see, for example, Lezaun, 2012), the programme's theoretical interventions in attempting to humanize shipping labour are significant. If we consider recent large-scale changes in technology, demands for vocational and educational training, crew compositions, and the considerable changes in turnovers and sailing periods, this significance may be even greater today. Moreover, given that the Ship Research Programme took place within a Scandinavian, mostly Norwegian, context, it is also particularly relevant for my work on the Norwegian-operated yet globally crewed *Pacific.* Finally, while certain aspects of work have been democratised through mandatory collective meetings, the conventional organisation of ships, whose principles bear similarities with those mentioned by Taylor (documented above) remains the dominant managerial principle for organising work through a) compartmentalised departments, b) differentiation within the departments, and c) splitting of plans, control, and execution.

THEORETICAL FRAMING

As a general theoretical framework, then, I expand on Sekula and Burch's (2010) idea of the global transport system as an almost self-monitored system and their notion that mechanisation of labour is alienating, the *laissez-faire* equivalent of Kurt Vonnegut's [1969] (1991) 'so it goes' attitude. Particularly, in conversation with classic studies of work (re)organisation and skill, I elucidate how the global transport system is underpinned by processes of labour standardisation. Although Sekula and Burch (2010) and Braverman (1974) offered compelling arguments with respect to the organising forces and principles of work, in terms of a global interconnectedness, they (particularly the former) often remain abstract and at times appear wholly devoid of people, thus attracting criticisms similar to that which Blum (2010) directs towards her own field of cultural studies. Indeed, while these processes are effective managerial measures for reinventing the contents of jobs towards becoming increasingly routinised and mechanical (Wood, 1982, p. 11), people's abilities to realise themselves and engage in meaningful interactions should not be underestimated.

In approaching shipping labour from an anthropological stance, I focus on the social organisation of labour, particularly in relation to skill and its devaluation. Drawing on Leivestad and Markkula's (2021) idea that spatial and organisational power and violence and social and cultural practices are components of container economies,[13] as they call them, I make an argument about maritime work and life, cross-cultural relationships, and the impact of standardised labour. Namely, in investigating how seafarers negotiate, handle, engage in, and navigate their everyday labour—that is, how they are locally situated—this dissertation

[13] It is important to note here that while there are many overlapping features between the container part of the industry to which Leivestad and Markkula refer and the LNG sector of the shipping industry, due in great part to the broad landscape that is today's maritime industry, several differences may also be discerned. It is in relation to the maritime global circulation of cargo that I situate the LNG-sector within the term 'container economies' and not, as is the case of the container ship (and container itself), as an icon of economic globalisation.

empirically investigates the *Pacific*'s crewmembers' in-situ experiences of the structural and occupational framework within which work is organised. In contrast to the de-skilling thesis, which I argue has become a 'catch-all' category for describing the development of work today, I illustrate how people's emerging responses and adaptions to processes of standardisation and mechanisation of labour in a cross-cultural work environment create new categories and understandings of skill.

However, given that skill is produced between people and through the type of work in which one engages—for example, specialised or manual labour (Freidson, 2001; Braverman, 1974; Taylor, 2003, 1967, 1947)—I argue that there is yet another dimension to skill that is central to this dissertation's purpose. Namely, many Filipino crewmembers draw on their understanding of what it means to be skilled in their everyday work, and these understandings are anchored in the application of different strategies with the aim of shaping their position, both in terms of career progression as well as by maintaining their position aboard.[14] Thus, skill has the potential to challenge ethnic and cultural homogeneity (Chapter 7). In this dissertation, skill is conceptualised as social and contingent and as a negotiated process that takes place between people, is influenced by the type of work in which one engages, and is characterised by differentiation.

Examining the socially and culturally politicised idiom and practice of skill (Patchett & Mann, 2018), the ways in which perspectives and experiences shift across different people in different positions (Venkatesan, 2010; Mollona, 2009b), and unequal distribution among social actors (Fisher & Botticello, 2018), I analyse skill in relation to how crewmembers negotiate and devise occupational practices in their everyday work. Taking occupational structures as the driving forces that determine how occupational discourse and practice are

[14] The Filipino seafarers working for the shipping company that operated the *Pacific* work from contract to contract, maintaining their position (i.e., being cleared for the 're-hire box' at their end of contract evaluation) is important and often the result of a six-month performance constantly subjected to cumulative evaluation.

produced and reproduced aboard the *Pacific*, it is necessary to move away from the traditionally conceptualised binary categories of work and leisure to include and combine the social life of skills (Carswell & De Neve, 2018). The social life of skills comprises 'the social processes, relationships, and ideologies that enable (or constrain) people's access to skills, and subsequently to employment, wages, satisfaction, and dignity' (2018, p. 313).

Finally, in line with the growing body of work that focuses on the social and politicised nature of space, this dissertation also investigates people's positions in the uneven development under capitalism (Kasmir & Gill, 2018) and how this uneven development affects some people more severely than others. Again, while these studies surely capture the political and differentiated, yet potential conditions of work under supply chain capitalism (Tsing, 2009), this study takes a situated ethnographic approach to everyday work practices. My approach to shipping labour therefore serves as a lens through which to investigate the interpersonal, cross-cultural, hierarchic, and stratified occupational relations that unfold in this highly regulated and spatially bounded work environment and highlight the difficulties involved in organising labour across cultural and global contexts.

However, seafarers' experiences of labour are difficult to distinguish from the larger shipping industry's globalised seascape in which they perform an integral and crucial role. Therefore, I next turn to the contextual seascape and the industry's practices.

IN CONTEXT

SHIPPING ENERGY: LNG AS A COMMODITY AND THE LNG CARGO CYCLE

Hitherto, I have laid out the theoretical framework that guides this study and in which a central contention is that 'the sea is not a metaphor' (Blum, 2010). However, as I now direct my attention to the context of the global shipping industry, it is not difficult to comprehend how the sea has come to be invoked as such a powerful metaphor for fluidity and connection. The *Pacific*, for instance, criss-crossed the world during the fieldwork period, loading and discharging LNG in ten countries in total; she made her way through the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Mediterranean Ocean; transited both the Panama Canal and the Suez Canal; and crossed the Gibraltar, Malacca, and Hormuz straits. While some vessels operate in fixed routes between two ports or more, others, like the *Pacific*, do not. The distances can nevertheless be extreme—a containership, for example, travels the equivalent of three-quarters of the way to the moon and back in a single year during its regular travel across the oceans (Levenson, 2013). Indeed, a glance at the *Pacific*'s movement[15] over a seven-month period reveals that the ship's movement literally spans the entire world.

[15] Red colour marks discharge operation; green colour marks loading operation.

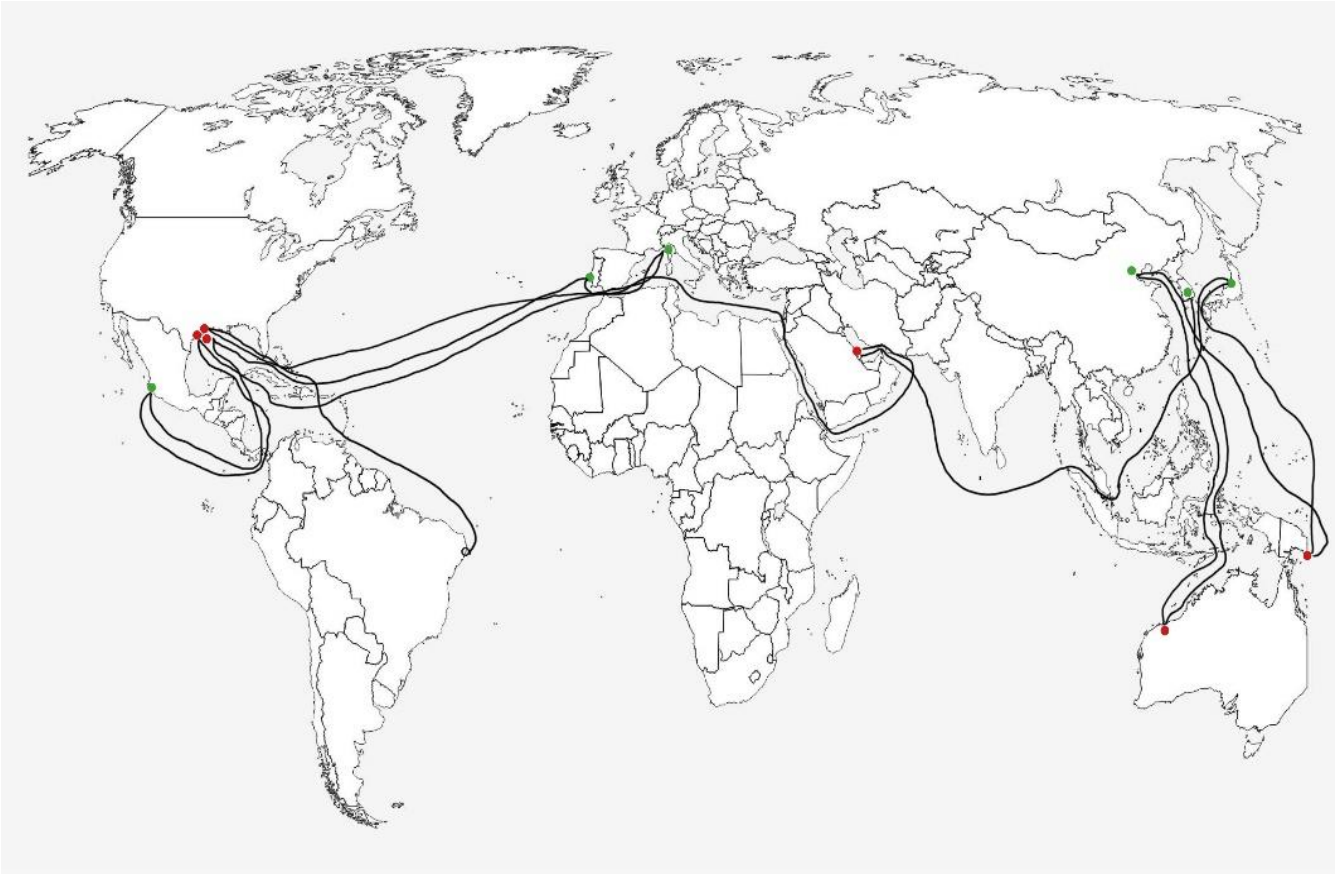


Illustration 0.2 By author.

Behind these navigational decisions lay a Europe-based energy company that chartered the *Pacific* on a long-term contract. The charterer (see Glossary), or 'that mystical entity' as some seafarers called the energy company, is (in non-maritime terms) the one who rents/hires the *Pacific* and is the temporary proprietor of the LNG during its transportation from one port to the next. From the shore, the charterer handles logistics and negotiations pertaining to the amount of cargo, rates, and time schedules involved in the sale and purchase of LNG to the highest bidding enterprise, corporation, or company on the global level. Put simply, the *Pacific*'s main objective is the transportation of cargo from point A to point B: loading operation in the US, for example and, via seaborne transport, proceeding to another port for discharge operation.

From the bridge aboard the *Pacific*, which had a carrying capacity of 170,000 cubic meters LNG, one has a complete view of the ship deck—five tall white masts and, in the middle of the deck from aft all the way forward, the intricate system of crisscrossed and interconnected tubes, pipes, and valves containing liquefied natural gas (see image below). The *Pacific* transported considerable amounts of LNG continuously via the intricate equipment on deck connected to the vessel's large cargo tanks.

View of the deck. Photo by author.

As a commodity, LNG competes on the global market. Natural gas consists of 95 percent methane (considered to be the cleanest fossil fuel), and the combustion of neutral gas

primarily emits water vapour and small amounts of carbon dioxide (CO_2). Owing to the associated CO_2 emissions being thirty to fifty percent lower than those produced by other combustible fuels, LNG has been touted as 'the energy of the future' (Elengy, n.d.). In the context of Europe's current green energy transition, LNG is regarded as an excellent alternative energy source that can help reduce greenhouse emissions and combat global warming, thus rising to the main challenges of the twenty-first century.

In addition to green energy transition and the growing pressure to reduce industrial greenhouse gas emissions in the industry,[16] the increase in the world's LNG market is largely attributable to its properties: As LNG cools down from its gaseous state, it is transformed into liquid, reducing its volume 600-fold, thus making LNG highly cost-competitive in terms of transport. According to the 11th Global LNG Report of 2020, the LNG trade increased by 13 percent in its sixth consecutive year of growth. From an export perspective, the US, Russia, Australia, Algeria, and Egypt continue to dominate, while Asia Pacific and Asia remain the key centres of demand, accounting for almost 70 percent of global LNG imports in 2018 (IGU, 2020). Most European ports do not yet have LNG terminals in place, accounting for Asia's pre-eminence with respect to terminal facilities. According to Statista Research Department, Spain is home to the largest number of operational LNG import terminals in Europe, with six operational facilities as of April 2022 (Sönnichsen, 2022). In total, Europe currently has twenty-nine operational LNG terminals with an additional thirty-three LNG import terminal projects under construction or in the planning stage.

The 12th annual World LNG Report of 2021 highlights 'LNG performance over other energy sources in its resilience during the crisis' and notes how, despite the unprecedented circumstances (the COVID-19 pandemic, for example), a modest increase in global LNG

[16] Known as 'IMO 2020', a new limit on the sulphur content in the fuel oil used on board ships came into force on 1 January 2020. This new limit was made compulsory following an amendment to Annex VI of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL)

trade was recorded (IGU, 2021). Another key topic in the report concerns how the LNG sector managed to adjust to great demand fluctuations, 'navigating between huge drops in demand levels at the height of the pandemic lockdowns, through exceptional upward spikes of the winter deep freeze'. Aside from the pandemic's impact on the global LNG market, the ongoing Russia–Ukraine war has brought the issue of LNG imports to the forefront of the energy debate, in view of the fact that Russia is home to the world's largest gas reserves and the second-largest natural gas producer globally after the US (Tachev, 2022). Russia's invasion of Ukraine—in addition to the toll it has taken on the international community, in the form of civilian deaths, nuclear threat, and devastating economic consequences—has also had a significant effect on the energy crisis. I shall elaborate further on this in the dissertation's concluding chapter.

As of 2019, Norway accounted for roughly half of the LNG-fuelled fleet in use worldwide, which, as of 2020, consisted of 175 liquefied natural gas-propelled (LNG) vessels in operation worldwide, another 125 were LNG-ready and 55 ships were on order (Placek, 2021). Development and investment in the LNG field is in line with the prognostics provided by the Statista Research Department (Placek, 2021), which state that 'the global demand for liquefied natural gas-propelled vessels is expected to grow considerably in the coming years, as a response to the increasing pressure on the shipping industry to reduce its emissions'.

As a commodity, the LNG-segment trades similarly to other shipping industry sectors; as cargo, however, LNG is different. In contrast to containerships, for example, whose cargo is both physically and visibly placed on the vessel's deck surface, LNG is stored inside tanks and cannot be physically handled. The complexity involved with transporting what essentially is an energy substance sets it apart as a special category of cargo. A typical cargo cycle begins with the tanks in 'gas-free' condition, meaning that the tanks are full of air, allowing for maintenance on the tanks and pumps. Cargo cannot be loaded directly into the tank, as the

presence of oxygen would create an explosive atmospheric condition within the tank, and the rapid temperature change caused by loading LNG at negative 162 degrees Celsius risks damaging the tanks.

During the first stage, the tank must be ‘inerted’ to eliminate the risk of explosion. An inert gas plant burns diesel in air to produce a mixture of gases (typically less than five percent O_2 and around thirteen percent CO_2 plus N_2). This is blown into the tanks until the oxygen level falls below four percent. Next, the vessel enters port to ‘gas up’ and ‘cool down’, as one still cannot load directly into the tank: the CO_2 will freeze and damage the pumps and the cold shock could damage the tank’s pump column. LNG is brought onto the vessel and taken along the spray line to the main vaporiser, which boils off the liquid into gas. This is then warmed up to roughly twenty degrees Celsius in the gas heaters and blown into the tanks to displace the ‘inert gas’. This continues until all CO_2 has been removed from the tanks. Initially, the inert gas is vented to atmosphere once the hydrocarbon content has reached five percent (the lower flammability range of methane), and the inert gas is redirected to shore via a pipeline and manifold connection by the high-duty (HD) compressors. The shore terminal then burns this vapour to avoid the dangers of having large amounts of hydrocarbons present, which may explode. The vessel is now gassed up and warm, and the tanks are still at ambient temperature and are full of methane. The next stage is the ‘cool down’ stage. LNG is sprayed into the tanks via spray heads, and it subsequently vaporises and begins to cool the tanks. The excess gas is again blown ashore to be re-liquefied or burned at a flare stack. Once the tanks reach around negative 130 degrees Celsius, the tanks are ready to load bulk. Bulk loading commences and liquid LNG is pumped from the storage tanks ashore into the vessel tanks. Displaced gas is blown ashore by the HD compressors. Loading typically continues until the tanks are 98.5 percent full (to allow for thermal expansion/contraction of the cargo).

The vessel can now proceed to the discharge port. During passage, various boil-off management strategies can be used. Boil-off gas (BOG) can be burned in boilers to provide steam for propulsion; alternatively, it may be re-liquefied and returned to the cargo tanks, depending on the vessel's design. Once in the discharge port, the cargo is pumped ashore using the cargo pumps. As the tank empties, the vapour space is filled either by gas from ashore or by vaporising the same cargo in the cargo vaporiser. The vessel can either be pumped out as far as possible, with the remainder being pumped out using spray pumps, or some cargo can be retained on board as 'heel'. It is standard practice to keep five to ten percent of the cargo on board after discharge in one tank. This is referred to as 'heel' and is used to cool down the remaining tanks that contain no heel prior to loading. This must be done gradually, otherwise the tanks will be cold-shocked if the cargo is loaded directly into warm tanks. Cool-down takes between 10 and 20 hours, depending on the vessel type, and so carrying heel facilitates the completion of cool-down prior to the vessel reaching port, thus saving significant amounts of time. If all the cargo is pumped ashore, the tanks will warm up to ambient temperature on the ballast passage, returning the vessel to a gassed-up and warm state. The vessel can then be cooled again for loading. If the vessel is to return to a gas free state, the tanks must be warmed up using the gas heaters to circulate warm gas. Once the tanks are warmed up, the inert gas plant is used to remove the methane from the tanks. Once the tanks are methane free, the inert gas plant is switched to dry air production, which is used to remove all the inert gas from the tanks until a safe working environment has been created.

Seafarers never enter these tanks or engage physically with the cargo, as it has been transformed into a gaseous state in addition to its odourless and colourless properties. The cargo simply remains in these enormous tanks, only 'visible' on the ships' numerous computer screens and on occasions where the excess gas pressure is too high. In such cases,

the ship will have to release some of it through the funnel, causing sporadic bright white light in the shape of what resembles dense clouds exiting the ship's funnel.

THE GLOBAL SHIPPING INDUSTRY

The *Pacific*'s globe-spanning movement (Figure 0.2) illustrates the enormous reach of the maritime industry. As of January 1, 2021, around 55,000 merchant ships are trading internationally (Statista Research Department, 2021) and thus plying the same oceans as the *Pacific.* This interconnectedness of shipping networks (Boyce, 2008), while undeniably crucial for the continuous flow of cargo circulation, also illustrates how the maritime industry is closely entangled with the global economy. Fluctuations in the latter greatly impact the shipping industry and given that the shipping industry is a highly capital-intensive industry, financing and other management decisions are made within a 'highly risky economic, physical, and financial environment' (Panayides, 2019, p. 1). On the one hand, the volatile market environment dictates the managerial decisions that determine operational ship deployment, such as time vs spot market decisions, and short- and long-term strategic goals. On the other hand, the same volatile market may present opportunities to ship owners and other maritime decision makers; during the late 1990s, for example, low freight levels forced Norwegian investors to sell off their K/S shares at distress prices allowing a quick-thinker entrepreneur to establish majority shareholdings in K/S companies only to later on force the sale of assets at higher prices (Panayides, 2019, p. 1). A variety of indices are therefore used in the maritime transport sector to predict market changes and behaviours, and the index that is most widely used in the maritime transport sector is the Baltic Dry Index (Sahoo & Karamperidis, 2019, p. 270).

Intimately tied to the shipping industry's importance for the global economy and its centrality as the 'backbone for the facilitation of global trade' (Buer et al., 2019, p. 113), are larger networks of multiple actors and infrastructures that form the connections that facilitate the movement of people, goods, and capital. These connections of fluidity, however, from the shipyards that build ships to the ports around the world that facilitate the loading and unloading of all kinds of cargo at unprecedented speed and precision, are made possible by a wide range of people, all of whom are engaged in some part and form of labour in the global maritime supply chain: onshore personnel, ship chandlers, manning agencies, stakeholders, investors, companies supplying ships with personnel, spare parts, fuel, provisions, technology, and more.

In addition to the maritime industry's enormous reach, the *Pacific*'s globe-spanning movement also tells a more complex story about the industry's history and development towards the sea's becoming increasingly juridically regulated. *Mare Liberum*[17] (Grotius [1609] 2009) postulated that the sea was a 'formless surface across which ships sail, [and] is beyond territorial control' (Steinberg, 2001). While the *high seas* remain an (un)regulated space outside the sovereign regulations of nation-states, the ships that sail the world's oceans have become highly regulated. In his book *Margins of the Market* (2016), Johan Mathew uses trafficking as a lens to understand the historical development of free trade. In particular, Mathew engages with notions of spatial margins, such as borders and coastlines, to demonstrate the commencement of particular territorial markets and regulation praxis. The forces involved in commoditising transport, he argues, besides colonial states' exclusion and suppression of existing practices of exchange (2016, pp. 21–24), determined how different ships were monitored, regulated, and channelled into particular routes along with the

[17] In *Mare Liberum,* or the *Freedom of the Seas,* Dutch jurist and philosopher Hugo Grotius formulated the principle that the sea was free for all nations to use due to its international territory and, consequently, that access to the free seas could not be denied by others.

processes of standardisations and demands for documentation that came into existence in the 1860s (2016, p. 19) and were further developed at the turn of the twentieth century (2016, p. 37). In many ways, the processes that Mathew (2016) described are precursors to how the shipping industry is organised and regulated today. As a *key industry*, shipping has been 'crucial to the emergence of a global economy' (Harlaftis et al., 2012, p. 263), having operated on an international scale as early as the 1870s (Harlaftis et al., 2012, p. 267).

Organisationally, the shipping industry is situated in specific institutions that are both geographically enclosed and often managed by relatively small numbers of individuals, many of whom share similar backgrounds. The International Maritime Organisation (IMO), for instance—a United Nations specialised agency with responsibility for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine and atmospheric pollution by ships established in London, UK in 1948—broadly regulates, both judicially and legally, the maritime industry that member countries must follow. Since its inception in 1921, the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) has operated as another regulatory body whose mandate is to 'ensure the development, promotion, and application of best practices throughout the shipping industry' (ICS, n.d.b). As the global trade association for ship owners and operators, also located in the UK, the ICS represents the world's national ship owner associations and over eighty percent of the world's merchant fleet, with members from around 40 countries. The ICS' foundation was 'to some extent indicative of the new spirit of international co-operation that existed following the First World War' in addition to the need for ship owners to conform to the new body of international maritime safety rules that was under development (ICS, n.d.c).

In relation to the shipping industry's historically visible and well-documented tradition of internationalisation, it is important to accentuate the fact that despite its global reach, the industry is unevenly distributed geographically. In terms of shipping capital, traditional maritime nations, such as Japan, Greece, Norway, Germany, the UK, and Korea, remain in the

top 25, although China, together with Singapore and the US, have recently enhanced their standing as major ship-owning countries. As of January 2021, in terms of both deadweight tonnage and the commercial value of their fleets, Greece, China, and Japan were the top three ship-owning countries (UNCTAD, 2021). In terms of deadweight tonnage, Greece accounted for 17.64 percent of the world market, followed by China with 11.56 percent and Japan with 11.43 percent (UNCTAD, 2021). If we consider only the 2021 revenues from gas carriers in relation to country or territory of ownership, Norway (ranked sixth) is at 7,620 USD, surpassing China with 4,115 USD, the US with 1,454 USD, followed by Singapore with 4,377 USD (UNCTAD, 2021).

Another aspect of the maritime industry's geographical unevenness, which is important for this dissertation, is the practice of registering ships in a country that is different from the country of ownership. According to the IMO, 'the general mechanism for establishing a ship's nationality and for regulating shipping is registration of the ship in a particular State. By linking a ship to a state, the system of ship registration indicates that that State has the right to protect that ship in international law' (IMO, n.d.a). Open registries, more commonly referred to as 'flags of convenience', are commercial registers that, in accordance with articles 91 and 94 of UNCLOS,[18] acknowledge the right of every State to 'fix the conditions for the grant of nationality and for the right to fly its flag'. In other words, despite of there being no 'genuine link' between the flag state and the vessel, open registries allow shipowners to register their vessel(s) in the registry of their own choosing, most often opting to avoid the regulations of their own countries, particularly with respect to labour. Today, over 70 percent of the world's vessels are registered in countries that are not their countries of ownership (UNCTAD, 2021). The leading flags of registration according to deadweight

[18] United Nations Conventions on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

tonnage include Panama, Liberia, Marshall Islands, Hong Kong (China), Singapore, Malta, China, the Bahamas, and Greece (UNCTAD, 2021).

The Norwegian International Ship Register (NIS) is also represented in the top thirty-five leading flag registries.[19] Since its inception in 1987, NIS has allowed ship owners to recruit and employ seafarers from different countries in which work and wage conditions and other labour conditions on ships in this register are stipulated in a collective agreement. Norwegian trade unions have the right to participate in all negotiations on the conclusion of a collective agreement and can enter into collective agreements with Norwegian and/or foreign trade unions. Ships registered in the Norwegian International Ship register are not permitted to carry cargo or passengers between Norwegian ports or to operate a regular route with passengers between Norwegian and foreign ports (Norwegian Maritime Authorities, 2016). The register has seen a steady rise in ships over the years: in 2019, the number of ships registered in the Norwegian International Ship Register was 492, and in 2021, the number had risen to 682 (SSB, 2022). The *Pacific*, engaged in worldwide trade and chartered by a Europe-based energy company on a long-term contract, was registered in NIS and could, therefore—as evidenced by the crew composition—recruit seafarers from around the globe.

Presented with an array of flag types and actual flags in which it may freely register its vessels, the industry found a means of enhancing its competitiveness. However, as Mitroussi and Marlow noted, it 'also ended up with increased and serious safety concerns' (2013, p. 579). The top 35 maritime countries in 2013, for example, accounted for 95.35 percent of the world's deadweight tonnage, 67 percent of which was under a foreign flag (Mitroussi and Marlow, 2013, p. 579).[20] The fundamental distinction between national flags and flags of convenience is, as already mentioned, the absence of a 'genuine link' on the part of the latter.

[19] Number 15
[20] Dropping to 53.7 percent when the number of vessels is considered (UNCTAD, 2008).

However, as traditional flags admittedly adjust their registration procedures to make them more attractive, convenient, and opportune for ship owners, Mitroussi and Marlow (2013, p. 596) argued that the 'genuine link' distinction is no longer quite so clear-cut:

- Foreign-owned or foreign-controlled vessels can be allowed to register in traditional flags—for example, the Norwegian Ordinary Ship Register (NOR) accepts EU citizens or companies as equivalent to Norwegian citizens or companies for registration as owners of vessels flying its flag;
- Access to and transfer from national flags is made easy while the cost of registration fees has been reduced—for example, in the UK, flag registration costs are among the lowest available in terms of national flags, with no annual renewal fees;
- Taxes on ships' income are not levies, but rather a tonnage tax system is implemented—for example, Greece has the longest history in applying a tonnage tax regime that dates back to 1939 while the current taxation system applying to the shipping sector was introduced by Law 27 in 1975;
- Fiscal obligations can typically be circumvented through the avoidance of corporate tax, as is the case, for example, with the UK and Dutch flags;
- The manning of ships by non-nationals is permitted to a smaller or larger extent—for example, a recent softening of Greek flag manning requirements with respect to the complement of Greek nationals has meant that—with the exception of masters, who must be Greek—shipowners are free to choose whether the Greek contingent (minimum 4–6) consists of officers, lower ranks, or a combination of the two.

(Mitroussi & Marlow, 2013, p. 596)

The deterritorialized nature of ships allows shipowners to register their vessels in whatever country is most convenient and to recruit seafarers from all around the world. However, while the impact of choice of flag on ship management is a common theme in discourse surrounding open registries and flag policies (Mitroussi & Marlow, 2013), the impact that choice of flag has on crews remains underappreciated. Ships are social spaces in which constellations of different people and the multicultural and hierarchised environment are intertwined and come together to form a distinct and local social tapestry. I will turn to this localness next in this chapter's final section.

THE LOCAL CONTEXT OF THE GLOBAL SHIPPING INDUSTRY

> ‘This life at sea. People think they will see the world. Well, you can go and ask the people what they have seen. Crane pipe roads. That’s it. Or McDonalds, parking lots or supermarkets. Nothing else. So, you see, there is no benefit. The only benefit we have, this is the one and only and people are not just saying this, is the salary. That is why we are here. There is no enjoyment being aboard. Well, if you live in a cardboard box then perhaps you will enjoy being onboard. That’s for sure. But if you have a proper home …’
>
> (Gregor, member of the engine department on the *Pacific*)

> ‘You can’t survive onboard without a system. You need to have, or you should have, a routine, right. Maybe you’ve noticed this, I don’t know. You don’t need to wake up every morning here but let’s say that was also the case for me. After not getting up in the morning for a day or two, I will hang myself here. Because then there’s no purpose, right, for me to stay. Because why am I here?’
>
> (Alex, member of the deck department on the *Pacific*)

As the above description of the global shipping industry has demonstrated, the sea can indeed invoke powerful metaphors of fluidity and connection, particularly when we consider the globe-spanning movement of the ships that traverse them, with crews hailing from all parts of the world. While ships are both spatially bounded and isolated units, they are simultaneously highly mobile structures that criss-cross the world’s oceans. Central to ‘the very fabric of capitalism’ (Khalili, 2020, p. 3), ships epitomise and are emblematic of broader globalised processes, some of which are concrete and visible, while many others are invisible, hidden from plain sight, and incomprehensible. The massive 400-meter-long Panama-flagged containership, the *Ever Given*’s infamous grounding in the Suez Canal in March 2021, for instance, serves as a powerful example of how globalised processes are both visible and

hidden from view. The interest in what became a highly public and global affair extended beyond the narrow audiences who maintain an interest in traditional maritime circles—shipping companies, charterers, port authorities, investors, insurers, and so on—and the grounding revealed, quite literally, the infrastructure of global capitalism. However, as Amanda Mull, a staff writer at *The Atlantic* observed, it only managed to do so because of how the *Ever Given's* grounding not only disrupted but effectively halted the global flow of continuous seaborne trade, thus illuminating the otherwise 'hidden' maritime world. As Mull (2021) puts it, 'I'm obsessed with the dang boat because people like me and you are not really supposed to be aware of what boats like her are up to. You're not supposed to think about, or even notice, global freight, but the *Ever Given* has made cartoonishly noticeable some of the crucial infrastructure of global capitalism, which is usually invisible in most people's daily lives' (2021).

For the seafarers who uphold and maintain these waterborne, globalised processes, however, ships are not necessarily symbols or emblems of something larger. On the contrary, to the seafarers who travel and work on them, they are everyday spaces of routine, life, and work. The metaphors that emerge from an onboard perspective, then, are less evocative of fluidity and connection than they are of containment, isolation, and loneliness—the 'unglamourous aspects of the job' as Sampson (2021a, p. 87) describes them. One Filipino seafarer aboard the *Pacific* mentioned loneliness and mental health issues in relation to his work: 'Sailing is all about mentality. You need a mental toughness in you. If you don't, you can [commit] suicide, or be depressed'. Others spoke about their work as a kind of sacrifice. 'I tell myself I need to be brave. I need to settle it my mind that I will travel to Manila, then Manila [and] out of the country and it is work. You go there to work. Work. You will miss all the family events, all the festivities. Accept it, accept it. Because you will now work. Vacation ends, then work. Back to reality', another crewmember said. However, several positive

aspects of seafaring were also voiced on board, particularly when it came to social relations among the crew. A Filipino deck worker expressed the following in relation to his shipmates: 'It's like family to me. I treat them [shipmates] as family. Sometimes as my best friends. I travelled to so many hometowns with my colleagues because I [got to] know them on the ship. So social environment must be, I think, priority.'

While the relatively constrained space onboard a ship might suggest a greater likelihood that social bonds will be forged, this is often not the case, as life on board is overwhelmingly dominated by work: 'The institutionalised nature of the ship, its isolation, the occupational culture on board and the complexities of legal jurisdiction, all combine to make ships unique workplace settings which carry both threats and opportunities for seafarers. They are first and foremost workplace settings where work dominates almost all other concerns. However, they are also spaces where strong hierarchies determine all activities (work-based and leisure-based) and where strong occupational cultures and multinational crewing practices have a strong influence on behaviour' (Sampson, 2021a, p. 88).

In reflecting on the social life on board the *Pacific,* the Norwegian chief engineer, Gunnar, echoes Sampson's argument about the dominance of work on vessels today: 'In terms of the social life', Gunnar said, 'I have sailed on various vessels as the only Norwegian person. British captain, Indian officer, Nigerian petty officer and crew, and Filipino crew', Gunnar recounted and continued: '[It was] a wonderful blend and hotchpotch deluxe, made worse by the captain putting Nigerans over Filipinos, publicly voicing his opinion that they were more qualified and skilled. But as he [the British captain] later confessed, he disliked Filipino seafarers because he did not trust them. It turned out he had collided with two fishing vessels in China and on both occasions, he blamed the Filipino officer who had failed to inform him and had notified him too late. But you know what, I don't really think too much about the social things, you do your work and go home'.

Upon relistening to the recorded interview with Norwegian chief engineer Gunnar, I observed a brief moment of silence between me asking him about the *Pacific's* social environment and Gunnar's response. To be fair, it may simply have been that he needed a moment to adjust to the sudden change of topic and collect his thoughts: it was his conclusion to his last response to my question concerning his everyday work and routines as a chief engineer that triggered my direct question as to what, in his opinion, were the most important social factors in terms of being a so-called 'happy ship' or not. In response to the previous question, Gunnar had spoken effervescently about his job without pause, mentioning the importance of logistics and the need to look ahead: a lot of work was required for the *Pacific* to run smoothly and safely. Tasks such as issuing orders for spare parts, lubricant oil, and other vital equipment are the responsibility of the chief engineer, and on board a floating worksite, where the ship's next port of call is frequently unknown, this can be a challenging task. In relaying his experience, Gunnar shared personal examples involving sudden changes of plans, turning around in the middle of a sea voyage, for example, or how in some ports, such as Nigeria, provisions were difficult to come by. Being prepared, he emphasised, was thus central to the role of a chief engineer. In reflecting on his experiences, pausing slightly towards the end, he highlighted the importance of 'keeping the wheels in motion'.

It was this notion of keeping the proverbial wheels in motion that prompted my next question. With so much of what takes place aboard a ship being related to work and bound up in day-to-day routines, seafarers work around the clock every day of the week. Aside from the institutionalised breaks at 1000 and 1500 and mealtimes, after the working day has ended for the daymen or when seafarers included in the ship's watchkeeping rotation go off-duty, very few activities took place aboard the *Pacific.* Nevertheless, as Gunnar said, the wheels continue to turn, in constant motion.

The short silence that I later discerned on the tape recording was soon replaced by Gunnar's familiar voice as he began to share his thoughts on some of the social aspects of life at sea. 'Well', he said carefully, 'people's well-being is obviously important. You notice right away if the guys are not happy. Then everything happens in slow-motion'. He continued, 'Food, more than anything, is especially important. We have had a fair share of stewards who simply could not cook. And I'll tell you, there were people onboard contemplating whether to feed [him] to the sharks or not'. While working for a different shipping company and aboard a ship where the crew experienced problems with food quality, Gunnar still recalled one of his shipmates saying to him, 'Chief, just tell me if you like me to go up and throw him overboard, I'll do it'. 'And the worst part of it', Gunnar said, in a tone that was serious yet with a faintly detectable note of humour, 'they all would have done it!'

This was not the case aboard the *Pacific,* on which the two Filipino chief stewards, Santiago and Antonio, both received daily appreciation and accolades from their shipmates for their efforts in the galley and their overall culinary skills. Santiago was particularly praised for his capacities as chief steward, and prior to his boarding the ship, several crewmembers talked excitedly about his food, with some even specifying dishes that they particularly liked: Santiago's *adobo,*[21] I was told, was exquisite. A ship's galley department, under the supervision of the chief steward, is often characterised by seafarers as the 'hardest working department'. Indeed, in addition to cost accounting, continually keeping score of the galley's balance sheets, in addition to provisions, a ship's chief steward is also in charge of planning the menus and most of the actual cooking. Both Santiago and Antonio were rarely, if ever, far from the galley during the day. If you wandered into the galley outside of the mealtimes, they were typically surrounded by steaming pots and casseroles, running from one end to the other.

[21] *Adobo* is a popular Filipino dish and cooking process in Philippine cuisine that consists of meat, seafood, or vegetables marinated in vinegar and soy sauce. *Adobo* is regarded as the national dish of the Philippines.

The Filipino term for a chief steward, 'mayor', seems to be a fitting description and in line with the important role that they fulfil in terms of seafarers' wellbeing and as the responsible actors in charge of organising the much-anticipated breaks on board.

In relation to the functions of pauses and breaks, Snow and Brisset (1986, p. 12) write, 'The most far-reaching consequence of pauses is that they are essential in establishing a rhythm in one's personal and social existence. The fact that rhythm is ubiquitous in all life forms may belie its importance. At the very least we feel that pausing provides the contrast, emphasis, and energy that aid in developing and sustaining meaning in any area'. The daily meals aboard the *Pacific,* while undeniably important for the sake of sustenance, had a significance beyond this point (particularly in light of both Santiago and Antonio's culinary skills). It provided a contrast to the everyday daily rhythm in addition to social benefits. Workwear, for example, is not permitted in the messrooms, and while changing one's clothes prior to dinner or lunch may appear to be a rather minor detail, it constitutes an important part of what these breaks symbolise.

First, for the *Pacific's* ratings (e.g., deck and engine crew), whose everyday work mostly consists of general maintenance either out on deck or below in the ship's engine area, the ritualistic act of changing out of their workwear is important. Working out on deck under a scorching sun or in the engine areas, where temperatures run hot and the noise levels are extreme, is uncomfortable, and, in both departments, the washer and dryer are constantly running, as crewmembers go through several sets of coveralls within a single day. Moreover, given that a substantial part of the work is manual, requiring direct, hands-on involvement, seafarers in these positions are constantly covered, to various degrees, in grease, smut, paint, oil, or rust. Consequently, around ten minutes prior to both lunch and dinner, the locker room on A-deck, just outside the crew messroom's entrance, is packed to its maximum capacity with the *Pacific's* ratings, high-spirited and seemingly excited as they change into

comfortable leisurewear, replacing their heavy protective footwear with light slippers, and wash their hands and faces.

Second, the institutionalised breaks on board—both the daily meals and the coffee breaks at 1000 AM and 1500 PM—also create a sense of social space. This was particularly important for Noel, the *Pacific's* second officer. We met on the day I joined the vessel in South Korea, and already on that first occasion, he sat down beside me in the crew messroom. He was an experienced seafarer, I learned, and had sailed since 2003. In 2019, Noel was in his late thirties, and in relation to his age and occupation, he quickly added to the conversation that it 'was not a life for an old man': 'Not when you have a family, but you do it for the money', he said, rubbing his thumb and index finger against one another, as though there were notes between them. As a navigational officer, he was accustomed to working alone, and perhaps for that reason, he appreciated the breaks, particularly lunch and dinner, which provided the long-awaited socialisation. Noel was adamant when it came to what kind of space the messroom was: 'You never bring rank into leisure', he would say repeatedly throughout our time together.

Noel's attitude towards the shipboard hierarchy during worktime and leisure, as he articulated it, appeared to be shared by his fellow shipmates. This was particularly noticeable during the *Pacific's* lunch and dinner hours, during which the distance between small talk and lengthy discussion on the one hand and friendly banter, jokes, and serious issues on the other hand was often relatively small. Both the officer and crew messrooms would typically have three or more different courses on display, meticulously arranged according to how well they combined with one another. Aided considerably by the variety of inviting scents emanating from the different dishes, these rooms would then become onboard spaces in which the crewmembers could lower their shoulders, decompress, and relax.

Breaks are undeniably important aboard most, if not all, commercial vessels for multiple reasons beyond providing a temporary standstill. Aboard the *Pacific,* breaks were also important in terms of social cohesion, providing brief moments during which the hierarchical and cultural divides were less conspicuous than they were during working hours. This is not to say that the divides simply disappeared somehow or, as second officer Noel stressed, were 'temporarily out of order'. Rather, as the *Pacific* had two separate messrooms, situated on opposite ends of the galley—one reserved for the vessel's crew and the other for the vessel's officers—social and hierarchical cohesion *within* particular groups onboard the vessel is perhaps a more accurate description, as opposed to involving all of the residing crewmembers. Moreover, despite its name, most of the *Pacific's* licenced officers did not, in fact, not use the officers' messroom during mealtimes and/or leisure.

According to rank, the officers' messroom should include the ship's second and third officers, the two third engineers, and both deck and engine cadets. However, aboard the *Pacific* and apart from the European seafarers occupying the positions of captain, chief officer, chief engineer, and electrician, the cargo and second engineers were the only two officers among the others that were there. The reasons for this, I was told, derived from the ship's captain and chief engineer: they stated that taking meals together would facilitate communication, as they did not physically see each other during the working day. Given that they did not sit together during the coffee breaks at 1000 and 1500, the captain, chief engineer, and chief officer met in the ship's meeting room on C-deck while the second and cargo engineers sat with the engine crew in the engine control room. The intention was that the daily meals would provide a space in which information about the day's work could be more easily conveyed.

Well-intentioned as its initial purpose was, this arrangement did not appear to be fully realized during the meals, however. While all six officers sat together at the same rectangular

table, second engineer Tomas and cargo engineer Vincent sat opposite one another at the far end of the table. They communicated primarily in Tagalog, and the chief steward would bring food—that is, traditional Filipino dishes—from the other side of the galley to their side. On one occasion, I asked Vincent why they ate in the officers' messroom—knowing by then, from the captain, the motive behind the arrangement. He did not know exactly why, he revealed, other than the 'Norwegian management wanting it that way', as he phrased it.

Beyond establishing distinct and reoccurring rhythms and providing powerful contrasts and a sense of meaning in an environment otherwise characterised as regimented, monotonous, and lonely, breaks can also be important events that are connected to the larger social order on board the *Pacific* in that they differ from and disrupt the ways in which people interact and socialise with one another outside of breaktimes. It is tempting to draw a comparison with a 'switch' to describe the observable changes in seafarers' behaviour, the ways in which they communicate, their body language, their situational awareness, as they move from the one context to the next. Another way to conceptualise breaks, I believe, relates to the notion of value, framing breaks as valuable events. In his ground-breaking work on anthropological theory of value, David Graeber (2001, p. xii) writes, 'Value, […] can best be seen in [this] light as the way in which actions become meaningful to the actor by being incorporated in some larger, social totality – even if in many cases the totality in question exists primarily in the actor's imagination'. Value, as Graeber understands it, is synonymous with meaning: 'giving value to something is a matter of defining it by placing in some broader set of conceptual categories' (2001, p. 40). Aboard the *Pacific*, the conceptual categories invoked in thinking about or describing what seafarers broadly referred to as 'a life at sea', were based on and premised through a unanimously shared perception among the crew that the *Pacific* was first and foremost a place of work.

To illustrate this, we may take the following example: weeks after the engine cadet, Freddy, had finished his contract and been replaced by a new engine cadet, his name incidentally came up in a conversation between AB Bryan and myself about fishing. The *Pacific* had recently transited the Panama Canal from both directions. On both occasions the vessel, while waiting to transit, had dropped the anchor and thus provided the ship's fishing enthusiasts with an excellent opportunity to test their improvised fishing rods. Freddy, second engineer Tomas, and cargo engineer Vincent were among those most likely to be found fishing from the ship's aft if the opportunity presented itself. It was in the context of asking whether AB Bryan also enjoyed fishing that I mentioned Freddy's name, and his answer (or question, rather) surprised me: 'Who is Freddy?', he asked, interrupting the work that we were doing midship.

In explaining to Bryan who Freddy was, I mentioned his rank and where he would sit during the meals in the mess hall. 'He always sits with the other engineers on the table on your right-hand side entering the mess hall', I explained. I could see Bryan visualising the seating arrangements in the mess hall as he paused and stared into thin air. 'Oh, that guy', he replied shortly after. 'Did he catch some fish?', he continued as he resumed working. Surprised, I turned to him and said that Freddy had completed his contract and was probably already settled in the Philippines and enjoying time with his family and loved ones. 'Have you not noticed that there is a new engine cadet on board?', I asked, to which Bryan simply shrugged his shoulders, seemingly unaffected. He picked up the pace and our conversation ended.

AB Bryan's not knowing that the engine cadet, Freddy, had disembarked or even his inability to properly remember who he was is not necessarily strange or revealing of their relationship. In fact, if the vessel is functioning optimally—that is, when there is nothing out of the ordinary, with no equipment glitches, crew changes, or unforeseen repairs or job

orders—the day-to-day organisation of work and leisure is largely dominated by face-to-face contact with smaller groups. Aside from mealtimes, seated at opposite ends to one another, AB Bryan had little to no contact with the engine cadet. Consequently, although they cohabited the same spatial structure, their paths were unlikely to naturally cross.

Two deck workers aft on the *Pacific.* Photo by author.

To return to chief engineer Gunnar's initial response that he did not think about the social environment on board but rather that he 'does his work and goes home', one might

argue that the ways in which these daily breaks were socially enacted were related to how work was organised and the dominance of work over other, social aspects of life at sea. As one seafarer said about his shipmates, ‘You get to know each other in a way, even if you don’t get to know everyone on a personal level. You become known to each other in a way through the work. There are personality traits in the work. Even if you don’t know the background and all that to a person, you have a certain knowledge about them as long as you work with them’.

Having provided the theoretical framework and contextual setting for this dissertation, the next chapter will further elaborate on the local context of the study from a methodological perspective.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

In this chapter, I will present the data and methods used to address the dissertation's research questions. The material on which this dissertation is based reflects a combination of different methodological approaches. It includes close to seven months of fieldwork conducted aboard the *Pacific*, including observation and participation in seafarers' everyday work, informal discussions, and eleven semi-structured interviews with crewmembers.

In contrast to many ethnographic contributions depicting shipboard labour and life (Khalili & Chua 2015[22]; Sampson, 2003, 2013; Lamvik, 2002), I was not a passenger: I signed on with a valid seaman's passport, health declaration, and STCW certificate.[23] Officially, I was registered as the ship's supernumerary, a position used interchangeably to describe both a person employed in connection with business interests and in relation to social activities onboard, who is considered neither passenger nor crewmember (Law Insider, n.d.). In praxis, however, and 'as long as I did not kill myself', as the captain humorously remarked during one of our first conversations, I was allowed to participate. This allowed me to take active part in the everyday work performed on board the vessel as opposed to simply observing, from either inside the accommodation or from a safe distance.

My position as the ship's supernumerary was particularly advantageous for several reasons, aside from the most obvious advantage that it allowed me the flexibility to move through the ship in ways that would otherwise have been impossible as either a passenger or an actual member of the crew. The freedom to move across and within departments was

[22] 'One reason may have been that CMA CGM, the shipping company on whose ship I was steaming, actually takes on board passengers as a matter of course, and there were two other women passengers, both in their 70s, on the ship with me', Laleh Khalili says in *Shipboard Travels: A conversation between Charmaine Chua and Laleh Khalili.*

[23] Holding a valid STCW meant that I met the industry's minimum requirement with respect to training. For my part, it involved five days of training, covering the topics Rescue at Sea, Fire Protection and Smoke Diving, First Aid, and Personal Safety at Sea.

crucial in terms of data collection: I could work with the deck workers for a week, for example, followed by a week with the engine department. Alternatively, I could shadow certain crewmembers on board, such as the deck cadet, motorman, electrician, second officer, or cargo engineer. Moreover, since I had no formal responsibilities aboard the vessel, I was in the rather unique position of being able to spontaneously join crewmembers who directly invited me to join them.

This flexibility is reflected in my participation in the actual onboard work. Together with the ship's electrician, I climbed masts that were around fifteen meters high equipped with a harness to replace the mast's floodlight. Together with the engineers, I participated in the full overhaul of the engine's turbocharger as well as daily participation in general maintenance. I cooked squid with the chief steward and assisted with cleaning routines and stocking up supplies. I tested fire alarms, conducted risk assessments prior to some jobs, was the designated winch operator from time to time, and changed countless gaskets in every perceivable corner of the ship. I organised folders with safety flashes and new bulletins issued by the shore-based management side of the shipping company, and on one occasion I spent several hours together with the captain and the deck cadet manually correcting the ship's compass. I painted, chipped rust, washed, and scrubbed the ship together with the deck crew and conducted numerous six-hour gangway watches during discharge and loading operations in LNG terminals across the world. In some instances, time permitted brief shore-leaves that I spent outside and off the ship together with other crewmembers. I met several loading masters from different ports and talked to river pilots, inspectors, ship chandlers, and other individuals involved in portside labour. I mopped floors, assembled, and disassembled equipment, and, finally, I learned the daily routines and the nature of the work that takes place aboard a contemporary cargo vessel.

Climbing the forward mast with equipment to change the vessel's floodlight. Photo by author.

My engagement in the actual work onboard helped me considerably in developing an understanding of the shipping industry's LNG sector as well as enabling me to establish more meaningful relationships with the crew (see Mollona, 2009b; Linhart, 1981). This was particularly important given that I did not speak Tagalog or any other Filipino language, nor did I know the Philippines or have any previous experience with Filipino seafarers. Most crucial, however, was the way in which participant observation facilitated my participation

outside of work (see Table 1.3 for an overview of hours of work and rest onboard the *Pacific)*—during movie nights, coffee breaks, and basketball tournaments, for instance. I listened to stories from the crew about how they had met their wives and girlfriends as well as the less pleasant stories of break-ups that occurred during the fieldwork period. Anecdotes of the shipping industry during the 1970s and 1980s were frequently shared by the more experienced crewmembers and became an important source of information with respect to both occupational changes and changes in the maritime industry at large. I learned new card games, sang karaoke, and became an integral member of the 'second dinner club', organised primarily by crewmembers from the engine department but at times joined by other Filipino crewmembers from other departments. The 'second dinner club' came together around 2130 in the crew mess hall and made *pancit canton,* noodles from the Philippines, and sardines. Outside the scope of work, these moments and activities were a valuable source of information, in part due to their informal nature and the space that they created in terms of providing a setting in which I could ask questions that would expand on the insights offered by the many heterogeneous crewmembers on board.

1.3 Hours of work and rest

N/A – Not Applicable

EO – Engine Officer

POSITION	WATCHKEEPING	NON WATCKEEPING DUTIES	NON WATCHKEEPING DUTIES	TOTAL DAILY REST (HOURS)	TOTAL DAILY REST (HOURS
3RD OFFICER	08–12, 20-24	13–15	13–15	14	14
CAPTAIN	N/A	08–12, 13–17, 18–20	08–12, 13–17	14	16
CHIEF OFFICER	04–08, 16–20	08.30–12	08.30–11	12.5	13.5
2ND OFFICER	00–04, 12–16	10–11.30	08.30–11	14.5	14.5
BOSUN	N/A	07–12, 13–17, 18–20	07–12, 13–17	13	15
DECK WATCH 00-04	00–04, 12–16	04–04.30, 09.30–11.30, 16–17	04–04.30	12.5	15.5
DECK WATCH 04-08	04–08, 16–20	08.30–11.30, 20–20.30	20–20.30	12.5	15.5
DECK WATCH 08-12	08–12, 20–00	00–00.30, 13–16	00–00.30	12.5	15.5
DECK DAYMEN	N/A	08–12, 13–17, 18–20	08–12, 13–17	14	16
CHIEF ENGINEER	N/A	08–12, 13–17, 18–20	08–12, 13–17	14	16
CARGO ENGINEER	CARGO WATCH	08–12, 13–17, 18–20	08–12, 13–17	14	16
2ND ENGINEER	EO	08–12, 13–17, 18–20	08–12, 13–17	14	16
3RD ENGINEER	EO	08–12, 13–17, 18–20	08–12, 13–17	14	16
ELECTRICIAN	N/A	08–12, 13–17, 18–20	08–12, 13–17	14	16
ER RATINGS	N/A	08–12, 13–17, 18–20	08–12, 13–17	14	16
CHIEF STEWARD	N/A	06–08, 08.30–12.30, 15–18, 18.30–20	06–08, 08.30–12.30, 15–18, 18.30–20	15.5	15.5
MESSMAN	N/A	06–08, 08.30–13, 14.30–18, 18.30–20	06–08, 08.30–13, 14.30–18, 18.30–20	12.5	12.5
MESSBOY	N/A	06–08, 08.30–13, 14.30–18, 18.30–20	06–08, 08.30–13, 14.30–18, 18.30–20	12.5	12.5

The constant data collection within such a confined environment and throughout such an extended period allowed me to participate in the seafarers' 'life-worlds' (Wikan, 2012) and to develop thick descriptions (Geertz, 2008). It allowed me to gain insights into the seafarers' responses to the industry's development with respect to labour standardisation (Chapter 4),

the strategies they employ to make their lives and work more sustainable (Chapter 5), as well as hierarchised and socio-cultural discourses in terms of career progression and work practices (Chapters 6 and 7). As a process, however, it requires a substantial degree of interpretation. Not only is the issue of interpretation related to the researcher herself, but it is also a particularly important issue for the individuals whose lives are under examination. Their perception of and sympathy for the researcher will influence what they choose to share and the level of intimacy and comfort they experience in relation to the researcher. Passing a comment, observing how one person carries their body differently to another, or finding a common ground in a shared taste of music or sense of humour are all situations that are multi-layered and dynamic. They may change and carry different meanings depending on who you speak to and may assume different forms from one occasion to the next.

This is particularly important considering that ships are manned by relatively small crews. Of the relatively limited sample of forty-five men in total, not all individuals are equally represented in the dissertation. This is due in part to the *Pacific's* crew composition: for example, while the European officers were on board for seven weeks at a time, like the electricians, the contracts for the Filipino crew were of six months' duration. The only exception was the combined position of second and cargo engineer, both held by Filipinos for four months at a time. Effectively, this meant that I had longer stretches of time together with most of the Filipino seafarers and that, while the periods were shorter, the times that I spent with the European officers, who throughout the fieldwork period signed off only to return to the *Pacific* after their period at home, constituted recurring events.

BEGINNINGS

This study began with a broad scope as an anthropological study of the social and political and formal and informal dimensions of the maritime world as glimpsed through the everyday work of seafarers. By examining how maritime work is organised on board ships at a considerable geographical distance from shore-based management, the study aimed to shed light on seafarers' multi-faceted experiences of working offshore. I reached out to several Norwegian shipping companies with a short presentation of myself and a detailed description of my doctoral project. I emphasised that both the shipping company and the seafarers would be guaranteed anonymity in the completed dissertation. I received a positive reply from a Norwegian shipping company, and after they had approved my inquiry about fieldwork, their maritime coordinator contacted the fleet's vessels and received a positive reply from the captain aboard the *Pacific.*

During the short period between the shipping company's approval of my inquiries about fieldwork and my mustering aboard the *Pacific* in South Korea, I completed a five-day course of basic safety training (STCW),[24] obtained a valid health certificate from a licenced medical practitioner, ensured that my vaccination card was up to date, and confirmed that I had a valid US visa in view of the *Pacific*'s worldwide trade. Finally, with a letter of confirmation from the shipping company, my seaman's passport was signed and approved by the Norwegian Maritime Authorities.

Perhaps the most decisive factor in my securing access was my previous maritime experience. Smaller places, such as rural areas that have familiarity with and traditions of fishing and/or coastal relations have traditionally been overrepresented in maritime recruitment (Bjørklund & Jensen, 1989, pp. 67–72). The connection particular demographics

[24] The Standards of Training Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) is an internationally recognized set of rules that determines what mariners must know to perform their jobs safely.

with representation resonates particularly well with me. While it is not true, I like to think that I learned how to swim before I could walk. Growing up in a rural island community off Norway's west coast, I was familiar with the shipping industry. Both my grandparents were seafarers, with siblings, cousins, uncles, and parents alike employed in the maritime sector, and like so many others in my community, I grew up surrounded by 'seafarer paraphernalia'—large wooden trunks brought from the US, incredibly fragile Chinese porcelain, Brazilian mahogany trays impregnated with colourful butterflies, and nautical knots decoratively displayed within frames.

As early as 2009, I had signed on as a catering assistant on various vessels working within the Norwegian maritime offshore cluster. Later, I continued to pursue my interest in maritime work through my MA research on Norwegian seafarers (Mevik, 2016). These combined land and sea experiences are of immense significance to me, having both shaped and informed my understanding of maritime work. To me, a seafarer is not an imaginary or romanticised abstraction—a figure of the past—but rather is an essential contributor to the maintenance and production of societies across different scales through their labour, which goes largely unseen by society at large. Life at sea and life ashore are closely connected and interdependent on one another: As the daughter of a seafarer growing up in a seafaring community, and due to their lengthy absence followed by long periods at home, I was raised by women who fulfilled the roles of both mother and father, as did the men when home.

Being a 'petroleum product' (Shever, 2013) myself, I thus experienced a sense of ease and calm prior to my fieldwork that people unfamiliar with the industry would not necessarily have experienced. For the company, I know that my previous experiences were an important factor that they included in their internal discussions, and the fact that I already held a seaman's passport further facilitated the organisation of fieldwork. Later, aboard the *Pacific*, I learned from the captain that this had also been decisive in his own evaluation of whether or

not he should allow a researcher to come aboard for fieldwork purposes. As a former seafarer, conducting fieldwork among seafarers and aboard ships can be both positive and negative. On the positive side, my familiarity with the industry and the occupational group in addition to first-hand experience of what labour at sea entails is worth mentioning. Meanwhile, in considering this familiarity, it is important to methodologically reflect on how this may have influenced my data collection process.

In relation to my previous experiences, my encounter with worldwide trade and a multinational crew challenged both my preconceptions and pre-existing knowledge as I found myself in a setting that was simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar. The ship was already familiar to me. Certainly, the *Pacific* was three times the size of other ships I had joined, but the design, in terms of both material structure and the accommodation's organisation, was nearly identical: linoleum floors, narrow hallways on each deck, and the staircase positioned in the middle of the accommodation structure taking you to either the bridge, the mess halls, recreation rooms, the smoking area, the ship's gymnasium and—as I was assigned shortly after joining—the familiar ship's cabin. Less familiar to me were the geography and language. As I learned early on during fieldwork, the Philippines consists of different regions, of which Luzon, Bicol, Mindanao, Davao, and Visaya were represented in the crew's composition. Moreover, some 120 to 187 languages are spoken in the Philippines, depending on the classification method used. Tagalog and English are official languages, and while they were spoken by all the Filipinos aboard the *Pacific,* several native languages were also represented, including Cebuano, Ilocano, Bikol, Waray, and Zamboangueno.

In a sense, I was thus both an insider and outsider. While I had good familiarity with particular aspects of the shipping industry, such as the Norwegian offshore service and supply ship segment, I was unfamiliar with the mixed nationality-crewed LNG segment. For example, as my previous experiences in the shipping industry stemmed from Norwegian and,

in some cases, Norwegian/Scandinavian crewed vessels, I observed significant differences in the role that hierarchy played in the two contexts. On board the *Pacific*, I observed that rank was decisive in the ways in which people communicated with one another, how they executed their work, and who they talked to, all of which differed considerably from how hierarchy was experienced and navigated in my previous research contexts. On board Norwegian crewed vessels, the shipboard hierarchy also effectively structures seafarers' responsibilities and functions; outside the scope of work, however, it exerted little to no influence on the overall social milieu.[25] For this reason, I was required to reflect on and develop a contextual understanding of what kind of ship the *Pacific* was.

DOING SHIP ETHNOGRAPHY

In light of the open-ended and exploratory research questions that guide this study, an anthropological framework is particularly useful for approaching maritime work and seafarers' experiences, as it allows the investigation of several dimensions extending holistically and simultaneously beyond particular elements of the shipping industry. Universally accepted as the central and defining method of ethnographic research, participant observation means taking part in people's daily activities, rituals, interaction, and events as a means of learning about both explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and cultures (Musante (DeWalt) & DeWalt, 2010; Laurier, 2010). As a research approach, ethnography imposes a substantial responsibility on the researcher, who may themselves be perceived as an integral part of the methodological toolkit. In relation to fieldwork, Judith Oakley (2012, p. 5) writes, 'Fieldwork is embarked upon and completed by the anthropologist, often alone. […] The anthropologist is the embodied participant observer, researcher, scribe, analyst then

[25] This is, in part, due to Norwegian socio-cultural ideals about egalitarianism (Gullestad, 1992, 1985), the notion of equality being a central characteristic here.

author'. Moreover, fieldwork entails bodily engagement, and bodily engagement—how people act, perceive the world, and engage—is not apolitical. Rather, the body serves in great part as a 'memory' (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984) of the 'cultural, class and gendered positionality' (Oakley, 2012, p. 107) that is required to develop relationships and to become acquainted with people. Hence, the use of the body itself as a methodological tool has been crucial for this dissertation. In working with the seafarers on board the *Pacific,* which required a deeply embodied level of participation (Oakley, 2012, p. 112), I was able to obtain more profound insights into everyday maritime work. However, as the next section will illustrate, questions regarding access, movement, and positionality become more stringent in confined spaces (Gibson-Light & Seim, 2020).

'*NOW* I TRUST YOU'

During bunkering in the Gibraltar Strait, Silas, an on-signing AB, boarded the vessel, signing on with Ulysses and Cameron. Ulysses was relieving Caleb in the galley, signing on as a messman, and Cameron came back on board after a couple of months of training in the Philippines, assuming his new position as a third officer. The crew change occurred overnight, and the new on-signers were able to settle into their designated cabins and absorb the vessel's atmosphere. For Silas, this was his first contract with this particular shipping company, and, unlike many of his soon-to-be shipmates, he did not know anyone from previous contract aboard the *Pacific.* In the days that followed, however, he quickly adapted to the work on deck. Having sailed as an AB for several years, the work was familiar to him, regardless of which company's logo adorned the ship's funnel. As a newly arrived on-signer, I quickly introduced myself to him to explain my role on board.

Additionally, by the time we met, I relied heavily on many of the other crewmembers, who by that time had become used to my presence, both as an observer and as an extra set of hands. Silas would observe me together with other crewmembers, during both work and leisure, and this made the establishment of trust between us easier. I enjoyed working and spending time with Silas. His personality was direct, he was hardworking, and his colleagues on deck quickly took a liking to him. In particular, his duty in the ship's watchkeeping rotation allowed us to spend time together on the bridge nearly every night. Together with the newly promoted third officer, Cameron, with whom I had already become well-acquainted, Silas was on lookout from 2000 to midnight. Standing close to the windows on the bridge, looking for other passing or nearby vessels in the dark, our conversations were less marked by the hectic work schedule but rather were more conducive to lengthy conversations. 'This is the life of a sailor', he would repeat during his duty, referring to the uneventful existence of standing up and down looking out and into the darkness for four hours straight. It was during these hours that Silas and I became familiar with one another. Our time spent together as lookouts made him a good companion for deck work, and we were often paired together during the day.

Mostly, we conducted maintenance-related work: chipping rust, painting, and cleaning. While we worked, we talked, engaging in friendly banter, and with Silas, I practiced my Tagalog pronunciation, as we sang—or rather screamed—out the lyrics he taught me as we worked. We did this as much for our amusement as for that of the rest of the deck crew, who would humorously comment on our mental state. 'Wala sa ayus', many said—'no good'—as they passed us, brush in hand, singing loudly in the middle of nowhere. As Silas' time on board progressed, so did our relationship. One day as the date for my departure became closer, I had been working in the engine, and I went out onto the poop deck for some air. A door leads out onto the poop deck from the main engine room, and I saw Silas there

painting the rollers. We had a brief conversation; I asked how his day was going and what people were working on out on deck. As I began signalling my return to the engine room, he said, rather bluntly, '*Now* I trust you'. Silas' remark struck a chord in me: we had been together daily for nearly three months. Moreover, during this time, he had been more than forthcoming in sharing his views and perspectives on life in general as well as the particularities of life as a seafarer. Seemingly minute details, such as marital status, his upbringing and childhood in the Philippines, and vulnerable conversations about his future aspirations, had led me to regard Silas as an important source of information.

As the above example concerning issues of trust illustrates, my status as a Norwegian woman performing research on a Norwegian-operated vessel among an all-male, culturally diverse crew highlights this study's central methodological challenges. Being a woman among an all-male crew was the most difficult aspect of my ethnographic experience and was interconnected with the more methodological aspects of the study as well. All of the above involved finding the appropriate balance between being, on the one hand, friendly, trustworthy, and easy to talk to and, on the other, maintaining a professional distance as a competent researcher. The two roles were not easy to reconcile. On board, I accentuated certain personal features that were typically perceived as masculine. I dressed in oversized t-shirts and sweatpants; I used a hair elastic and did not use make-up. The fieldwork process was also deeply embodied, and the ways in which I responded to the people around me—and vice-versa—was fundamentally influenced by the fact that the *Pacific*'s crew were exclusively male crew and by my Norwegian nationality.

POSITIONALITY

Being the only woman aboard the *Pacific,* part of an industry that is still largely male-dominated,[26] influenced how my relationships with the crew members developed during the research process. However, although the industry remains highly gendered, this dissertation does not include debates around masculinity or the importance of gendered positionalities other than my own. While gender inarguably raises important issues relating to maritime labour—both at sea and in the maritime industry at large (see for example Fajardo, 2008; McKay, 2022, 2007; Alimahomed-Wilson, 2021; Mannov, 2021)—the scope of the research reported in this dissertation is primarily concerned with the organisation and structure of the everyday work and life enacted on board. Some seafarers jokingly called me the vessel's psychologist, while others frequently remarked that 'I was the only rose among the thorns'. The nature of the comments I received varied. My appearance was frequently commented on, included weight loss and gain, how much or how little I ate, as well as crewmembers' general input on my physical features, including my hair, eyes, and facial expressions. My civil status was also subject to comments by the crew. During fieldwork, I celebrated my 31st birthday, and this intermediary category—neither young nor old—was reflected in the crew's perception of me: some used the term 'spinster' in light of my age and single status, while others, for these same reasons, spoke of me as a careerist. In the matter of which crewmembers applied these seemingly descriptive terms, it coincided to some extent with the crew's age distribution (see Table 1.1 for an overview of the *Pacific's* age distribution (1) when I came onboard and (2) throughout the duration of fieldwork).

[26] According to the BIMCO and ICS 2021 seafarer workforce report, woman represent only 1.2 percent of the global seafarer workforce.

1.1 – Age distribution on the *Pacific*

20–25	**25–30**	**30–35**	**35–40**	**40–45**	**45–50**	**50–55**	**55–60**
7	**2**	**2**	**6**	**4**	**1**	**3**	**0**

Age distribution when I came on board.

20–25	**25–30**	**30–35**	**35–40**	**40–45**	**45–50**	**50–55**	**55–60**
9	**5**	**5**	**9**	**11**	**2**	**3**	**1**

Age distribution throughout the duration of fieldwork.

As Table 1.1 illustrates, the crew on board the *Pacific* were relatively young. It was mostly the older crewmembers who were outspoken about my civil status as an unmarried woman, including the few who, in light of this, offered input along the lines of sympathetic comments, such as ‘don’t you worry, you’ll find someone someday’. The younger crewmembers, on the other hand, although most were already married or seriously committed to their ‘long-distance-relationships’, were less concerned about me being unmarried or single and were more inclined than their older, Filipino shipmates to disregard my gender. However, I was not really an ‘equal woman’ as much as I was equal *despite* my being a woman—I was a woman ‘being like a man’. This became clear during a crew change, when Arturo—the ship’s disembarking and young messboy—told me ‘not to worry about the new guy because he had already told him to not treat me like a girl, because he knew I did not like that’. The advice that Arturo issued to his reliever, Aldo, during their short meeting was, in other words, to treat me as though I were male.

In terms of the data collection process, navigating the different perspectives on age and gender was easily facilitated along with overcoming the language barriers, as most of the younger Filipino seafarers’ proficiency in English was advanced. In situations wherein the language barrier between Tagalog and English hindered communication, I could rely on help

with translation from other crewmembers. It also provided me with key information about maritime work and the shipping industry through the exponentially large differences in experience and practice from the perspective of age and seniority—ranging from drunken fistfights, tales of shore-leave in 'strange and exotic' ports, months on end without an onboard Wi-Fi connection, and accidents—to current and contemporary perspectives from the younger generation, who increasingly spoke of longer vocational training and accentuated proficiency and competency through their more digitally experienced career trajectories. A commonality among all the crewmembers, however, was that they had few if any maritime experiences of working with women and, as such, my presence aboard was for many a novelty.

Moreover, as a Norwegian aboard a Norwegian operated vessel, the Filipino crewmembers' initial assumption was that I was a company representative, whereas with the Norwegian officers, by virtue of our shared language and cultural affinity, my role as a researcher and my fieldwork purposes did not spark any similar confusion. Earlier in the chapter, I mentioned that one area of unfamiliarity that I encountered when I signed on aboard the *Pacific*, aside from the language and geography, concerned how the shipboard hierarchy was navigated by the crew. Being Norwegian further exacerbated the initial barriers between the Filipino seafarers and myself. As specified in the dissertation's introduction, I signed on in South Korea during a discharge operation, and once I was inside the vessel's accommodation quarters, I was told to wait for further instructions by the gangway watch who, by then, had introduced himself as Jake. He did not know which cabin I would be staying in. In retrospect, I cannot say with certainty how long I waited; I can, however, say that it felt like an eternity, and I remember feeling very happy when a Filipino seafarer walked past me in the corridor and said (perhaps 'asked' would be more apt) that it was 'time to eat'.

I followed him into the crew mess and copied his moves. The crew mess is a rectangular room located on A-deck, and to the left-hand side of the entrance are typically

located plates and a rice cooker with freshly made rice for dinner. After taking a plate and filling it with rice, you proceed towards the wall along which a series of bains-marie containing hot food are lined up. I was about to reach for some of the hot food in one of the trays, still copying what the others were doing, when Caleb, the ship's messman, came running out of the galley and tried to take the plate out of my hands: 'You should not eat here', he told me, bluntly, 'you should eat in the officer's mess'. As I already had a plate in my hands, I expressed surprise: 'Should I leave the plate, should I go?' I asked him, plate already in hand, to which Caleb replied that I could take my dinner but that I should, normally, eat in the other mess hall.

Caleb's urgency in running out of the galley to remove my plate serves to illustrate how ships, hierarchised and—as in the case of the *Pacific*—with a mixed nationality crew, are shaped by unequal power relations (Gibson-Light & Seim, 2020), and my initial encounter with Caleb was definitely shaped by my Norwegian-ness. That same day, I learned that the *Pacific* had two different mess halls, one for the crew and the other for the officers, and later Caleb would share that his initial reaction to my presence in the crew mess hall was that he thought I was some sort of company representative. In terms of the anthropological research method, it has been noted that 'chance is crucial' (Oakley, 2012, p. 46), and my first dinner, unintentionally taken in the crew mess hall, proved decisive in breaking the ice, so to speak. When I showed up there for breakfast the next day, I was handed a plate with the invitation, 'Let's eat!'

It was methodologically difficult to incorporate these challenging dimensions into my ethnographic observations. Particularly with respect to the gender dimension, I was compelled to constantly reflect on my own feelings towards being observed through a male gaze and the ways (if any) in which this might have influenced my ethnographic observations. However, my active participation in the everyday work across the ship's three labour departments

mitigated these gendered and ethnic dynamics and helped me substantially in overcoming the challenges associated with being a woman among an all-male and ethnically diverse crew.

The considerable amount of time that I spent working on deck with the deck workers, for example, provided a natural setting that allowed me to do the actual work, handle the tools and equipment needed, and get a feel for the pace and rhythm of the work. Given that the deck work was largely comprised of physically demanding manual jobs—using high-pressure and heavy tools, climbing masts for work aloft, spending long hours in demanding work positions and environments—I was in a position to demonstrate that I was not only capable but also willing to participate in the everyday toils of maritime work. These settings also had a social element, and I could engage in small talk with the crew during the work, as I moved from one task to the next, and during the coffee breaks. The same applied to the other departments. On a personal level, I experienced a great sense of achievement in having gradually established trustworthy relationships with the crewmembers, who, as time progressed, included me in ship's crew list.

FORMAL INTERVIEWS AND ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF DATA

It was difficult to achieve a level of participation similar to that which I enjoyed with the crew with the captain, chief engineer, and chief officer on board as they—particularly the captain and chief engineer—mostly worked from their offices. In addition to joining them during their coffee breaks at 1000 AM and 1500 PM, occasional inspection rounds, meals, and during loading and discharge operations, I conducted semi-structured interviews with them. To ensure representation from across the wider occupational structure, I also conducted

interviews with the ship's electrician, motorman, deck cadet, chief steward, able seaman (AB), and third officer.[27]

In addition to the countless informal talks, conversations, discussions, and impromptu chats that were a daily occurrence and which I transcribed in detail in my fieldnotes (Emmerson et.al., 2011), I also became familiarised with the ship's extensive digital software solutions. The senior officers, for example, were most helpful in sharing information about the various digital tools they used in their daily work. These programs provided ample information about many aspects of maritime work, including modules for procedures and manuals, checklists, incident reporting, permits to work, audits and inspections, risk assessments, work-and rest- and overtime policies, navigational systems, and, finally, information systems designed to order and organise job orders aboard. The *Pacific's* library, which contained publications about vetting and audit processes, cargo manuals, and marine rules and regulations, was a useful additional source of information.

Regarding the importance of the gendered and hierarchic dimensions described above throughout this study, my success in overcoming these barriers was largely the result of my constant presence over such an extended period. Due in part to the lengthy fieldwork period, the analytical process of writing thick, descriptive, and reflective fieldnotes (Geertz, 2008; Emerson et al., 2011) yielded a considerable amount of written material that is of methodological significance. To return to my first encounter with Caleb in the crew mess hall, for example, and his attempt to remove the plate from my hands based on his belief that I was in the wrong mess hall (i.e., the crew mess hall): some time passed before I discovered that

[27] In addition to conducting interviews due to limited levels of participation with certain crewmembers who I could not follow as closely as others, they also provided additional insights. In line with Jerolmack Khan (2014), I believe that interviews are also a useful methodological tool for identifying the discrepancies between what people say and what they do.

the majority of the Filipino crewmembers had assumed that I was a company representative of some sort.

As time progressed, I noticed my interactions with the crewmembers evolving from their initially reserved tone to become more intimate and familiar. Considering the time aspect and the spatially limited structure of the *Pacific*, I was able to obtain insights into how behaviour evolves over time. Extending, then, beyond the methodological examples described here, the chapters that follow empirically analyse several aspects of maritime work stemming from social situations and social interaction over time, such as work practices (Chapter 4), career trajectories and social mobility (Chapter 7), conceptualisations of everyday work and the different work strategies applied by the seafarers (Chapter 5), and culturally contingent and embedded understandings of skills, competency, and proficiency (Chapter 6).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Finally, another key aspect of anthropological research is the matter of ethics. As Raymond Madden (2010, p. 34) stated, 'Ethnography doesn't have an ethical element – ethnography is an ethical commitment from the very outset and through all phases of ethnographic research and writing'. While I agree with Madden's reflection, the statement does not necessarily translate into action. It reads well but offers no insight into the way in which an ethical commitment is a continuous and situationally contingent part of the research process.

On the one hand, formal approval for the study was obtained from The Norwegian Centre for Research Data prior to fieldwork, and informed consent was ensured both orally and in writing. On the other hand, these are not static, one-dimensional categories. On the contrary, formal approval and informed consent may be revoked by the participant at any time during different stages of the research process. Since anthropological research allows

researchers to develop an understanding of people's actions, interactions, ways of being, and values through participant observation in their daily lives, the process is one that entails interpretation. In the words of Hortense Powdermaker (1966, p. 19), 'The anthropologist is a human instrument studying other human beings and their societies. Although he has developed techniques that give him considerable objectivity, it is an illusion for him to think he can remove his personality from his work and become a faceless robot or a machinelike recorder of human events'.

A key ethical consideration throughout the course of fieldwork, then, in addition to formal approval and informed consent, was transparency. First, by virtue of the flexibility provided by my position of the ship's supernumerary, I was able to move across departments and across rank. In the context of the *Pacific*, this entailed cross-cultural movement. Owing to these circumstances, it was important to establish clear boundaries in terms of my movement across the shipboard hierarchy and what this movement entailed for the crewmembers. I repeatedly emphasised discretion and guaranteed confidentiality when it came to my conversations with crewmembers and, particularly, in situations in which personal opinions were voiced.

Second, due to the extensive duration of the fieldwork, I was able to observe changes in the people with whom I was working. These changes occurred as a result of the mental and physical exhaustion associated with long contracts as well as the more recognisable social situations, such as changes in the social dynamics among colleagues as some got along better than others or due to the interpersonal tensions that occasionally arose. Consequently, the fieldwork process also required me to cultivate an embodied presence by being attuned to my surroundings and the crewmembers' surroundings while on board. On the one hand, I was open about my interpretations of different situations so that I could distinguish my personal understanding and interpretation from those of the crewmember(s) in question, and, on the

other hand, I continuously emphasised and repeated that participation was voluntary and could be revoked at any time.

Finally, all accounts of situations involving the seafarers aboard the *Pacific* in the analysis have been anonymised. I have also altered ranks, ages, and names, inter alia, to further impede recognition. Given that the shipping company operating the *Pacific* has knowledge of the crewmembers, I have intentionally attempted to disguise their identity. This also applies to the use of images in the dissertation.

CHAPTER 4: SHIPWORK: STANDARDISATION AND WORK PRACTICES

'But the chief thing about Melville's crew is that they work'

(James, 1953, p. 29).

Increasing standardisation is a key recent feature of the shipping industry. In practical terms, standardisation practices facilitate movement across and between different segments of the shipping industry by fostering uniformity and implementing industry-wide technical standards. In this chapter, I explore the ways in which both low- and high-tech infrastructure influence and shape everyday maritime work. What does it mean for work to be standardised, and how are standards implemented in the everyday organisation of maritime work? What kinds of work practices emerge in this intersection between, on the one hand, formalised and standardised work arrangements and, on the other hand, its execution? What various adaptive measures do seafarers take in response to the inflexible work environment?

This chapter will present in detail the formalised and standardised work arrangements involved in the everyday organisation of maritime work as well as the ways in which the seafarers onboard the *Pacific* experience the magnitude of standardised labour practices and their implementation of them in their daily work. As an isolated term, 'standard' is simply a word for some people, while for others it may carry a particular meaning. This chapter explores what these processes of standardisation entail and the tensions that arise from the challenging task of upholding and maintaining them. A central argument in this first analytical chapter is that to better understand the nexus of standardisation and labour, it is necessary to closely examine the local translations and negotiations of the standards and

categories embedded in the large-scale information structure of shipboard labour. I shall present two ethnographic examples in support of this argument.

First, I open with an ethnographic example concerning a slamming door on board the *Pacific* as a lens through which we can appreciate the extent to which ships are highly regulated workspaces. The slamming door serves as a particularly interesting case study for understanding maritime labour because it sheds light on how a formalised working environment may generate counterintuitive scenarios in which it is unclear whose responsibility certain work tasks are. The first section will highlight the ways in which maritime work has become standardised and formalised through the extensive use of digital solutions that are modularly designed and that significantly influence onboard work practices. Second, in the chapter's next (and final) ethnographic case, I introduce Phil, an inspector who boarded the *Pacific* in mid-May and who was a representative from the industry-agreed Oil Companies' International Marine Forum (OCIMF) Ship Inspection Report Program (SIRE). The inspection offers a particularly useful lens with which to illustrate the adaptations to the industry's *lingua franca* as an instance in which the externally imposed demands are mitigated and negotiated. Finally, I return to the introductory example of the slamming fire door in juxtaposition to the ship as a highly regulated workspace as a lens through which to understand the particular work practices that emerge from working within standardised arrangements.

THE SLAMMING FIRE DOOR

During one of several crossings across the Pacific Ocean, on a calm and intense blue-coloured sea, the sun being the only other object in sight, the *Pacific* moved slowly and rhythmically from one side to another as she made her way through the swell at the interface between water and air. Just outside the designated smoking room on the A-deck was a red quadratic steel

compartment containing one of the ship's numerous fire hoses. A steel construction, it had a door that, when opened, exposed the compartment in which the hose was rolled up and strapped tight on a lever. For some reason, this door had been left open. A mandatory fire drill had been conducted several days previously, and as the door was one of the types that slams shut through contact of the lock mechanism with the steel compartment, this may explain why it was open. Presumably, as the fire drill had ended, a seafarer simply guided or moved the door towards the wall and assumed that it would close.

One afternoon, I was sitting in the vessel's designated smoking area conversing with the Norwegian captain, and he mentioned that the door had been open for several days. The smoking room was strategically positioned on A-deck, as it was one of the ship's most frequented corridors. The officer and crew mess halls and galley were on this deck, along with the ship's gymnasium, officer and crew recreation rooms, the changing locker for the deck crew, and the coffee bar. The crew, mostly deck workers, would spend their 1000 and 1500 coffee breaks in there without having to remove their work overalls. The captain was not particularly concerned about the door being open as such but, rather, he asked rhetorically why no one had closed it.

As the ship moved in rhythm with the swell, notwithstanding the calmness of the Pacific Ocean on that particular crossing, so too did the steel door, and each time the *Pacific* moved from starboard to port side a loud metal bang could be heard as the door slammed into the wall. Consequently, as the ship moved steadily and rhythmically, the loud metal bang of the door hitting steel had taken on that same steady and rhythmic interval. The fact that the door was open was thus both audible and visible to the many seafarers that walked along the corridor on A-deck on a daily basis.

As the captain stepped out of the smoking room to return to his office on C-deck, he observed the ship's messboy Arturo making what was most likely his first swing with a wet

mop on the floor on A-deck. As I had been on board for quite some time when this incident surfaced, I knew that the first thing Arturo did after returning from his break at 1430 was to clean the corridor on A-deck. The *Pacific's* messboy—in this case, Arturo—performs this task daily. Eventually, when Arturo signed off, the new Filipino messboy, Aldo, mopped the same corridor at the same time every day. The floor took on a darker colour, marking the task's steady progress, as Arturo guided his wet mop across the dry floor. As he mopped, the captain recounted, the steel door slammed three times right in front of Arturo, who, in turn, continued mopping. Like the captain, he did not close the door.

The example of the slamming door on A-deck aboard the *Pacific*, banal as it might seem, would require only minimal action to address from any of the crewmembers on board. However, the door remained open for days regardless of how many crewmembers saw that it was open or heard the loud bang that followed every roll of the ship. Eventually, the door to the fire hose compartment was closed, by whom or what I do not know. Perhaps the swell built up just enough force for the lock mechanism to latch onto the door properly or, alternatively, a seafarer closed it as he passed by. When the captain brought up the topic in the smoking room, the Filipino third officer, Ernie, was already in the process of vetting the entire ship's fire equipment, and eventually, he would check and inspect that on A-deck. Perhaps it was he who finally closed the door.

This example of the slamming door on A-deck, despite its banality and apparently simple solution, tells a more complex story about the standardisation of labour and developments in the shipping industry at large. It sheds light on how formalised and standardised work environments may produce what we can categorise as counterintuitive scenarios with respect to everyday work in the sense that it becomes unclear whose responsibility certain work tasks or job orders correspond to, and the example could fruitfully be investigated against the backdrop of labour standardisation. A timely question, then, and

one to which I shall now turn, is what causes scenarios like that described above, and how is it connected to shipping's standardisation processes and occupational structures?

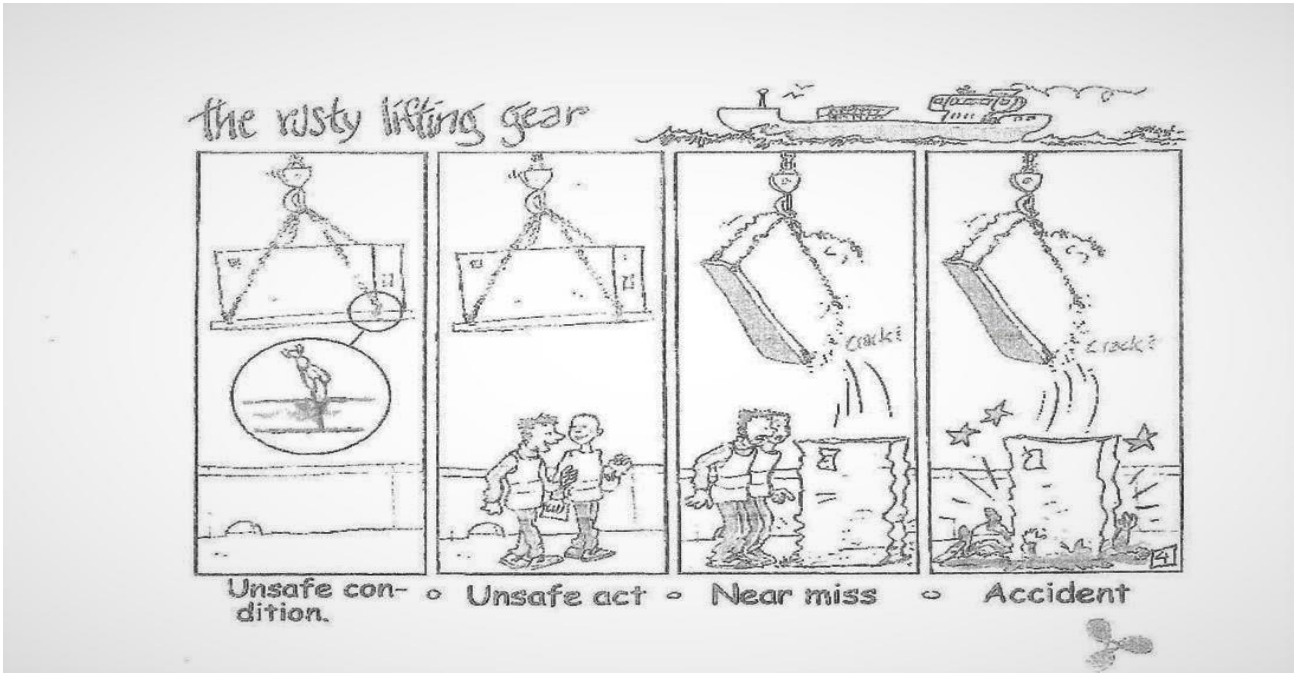
THE BLACK BOX OF STANDARDISATION

The first encounter with the *Pacific* will tell you, as you walk around and familiarise yourself with the vessel, that it is organised around the premise of standardisation. Full overviews of the ship's watch duties, mooring duties, and gangway duties are documented on large, laminated sheets displayed throughout the ship. Drill schedules, waste management duties, instructions for fire rounds in the accommodation, instructions for watchmen on duty during loading/discharging, complaint and grievances procedures, procedures for mooring, for proper hoisting of flags, and a matrix for personal protective equipment according to the type of work one is doing are, likewise, placed strategically around the ship for people to read. As I familiarised myself with every nook and cranny of the *Pacific*, I was struck by the sheer enormity of the quantity of signs relating to work. These signs, posters, pamphlets, and lists that provide the standard for work, both in writing and as visual representations, are practically impossible to circumvent as one moves about the ship. These represent the ship's more low-tech solutions for regimenting work on board: Most are printed on the ship's printer and changed out accordingly as new information comes to light.

The work that takes place aboard the *Pacific* consists of standards that inform and instruct the seafarers on how to properly execute job orders in accordance with pre-established industry standards. Where one should be at what time, institutionalised breaks, and recipe-like instructions for seemingly simple work orders, such as chipping rust (matrix for proper PPE), painting (matrix for hazardous material), and general maintenance on the ship's equipment (signed work permits, risk assessments and toolbox talks) are all standardised and familiar situations for the crewmembers, whose daily work largely consists

of such tasks. Likewise, as the watchkeeping officer hands over the watch to the reliving officer, the relieving officer crosses out the bridge checklists and signs his name without really looking at the actual checklist. These apparently automated responses to everyday work are, I believe, related to processes of standardisation.

To make sense of how both low-and high-tech infrastructures influence work and to understand how people use and understand them in their everyday work, a good deal of scholarly attention has been invested in attempting to define and make tangible what these processes are and what they do, and the issue of standards and classification has long been a central concern within the social sciences (see Larkin, 2013; Leigh Star & Ruhleder, 1996; Winner, 2017; Carse, 2016). 'To classify is human', state Bowker and Star (2000, p. 2), pointing to the countless ways in which humans engage in classification in their everyday lives: sorting dirty dishes from clean, white laundry from colourfast, important emails from junk mail, etc. However, while standards are 'imbricated in our lives' (Bowker & Star, 2002, p. 2) they are typically invisible. Drawing on Bowker and Star's definition of classification (2000, p. 10) as a 'spatial, temporal or spatio-temporal segmentation of the world, as a set of boxes (metaphorical or literal) into which things can be put into work', the above descriptions of the standards that guide and inform the daily work can be analysed as the vessel's classificatory system. The below image entitled 'the rusty lifting gear', for instance, illustrates the processual component of standardisation and serves to exemplify how classifications are implemented aboard ships. Comprised of four frames, the image illustrates the different categories of accident: unsafe condition, unsafe act, near miss, and accident.



'The rusty lifting gear' displaying the classificatory stages of an accident used onboard the *Pacific.*

The graphic was presented to the crew during a mandatory protection and environment committee (PEC) meeting in which the captain informed the crew about how to classify the different stages of an accident. The image shows how both standards and classification are at play simultaneously on board the *Pacific.* The different categories are standardised in the ship's larger management system, and behind the classificatory stages of accidents may be found standards for vetting and continuously checking the ship's equipment to prevent accidents of the type illustrated in the above image.

In addition to these manufactured material objects, far more elaborate and high-tech infrastructures are simultaneously in operation. Most work tasks are digitalised through a comprehensive database in addition to being synchronised to set time intervals in the ship's digital software. Additionally, owing to the modular design of the software solutions, access is restricted, and the ratings on board, for example, are not privy to the information. Using technological objects, shipboard labour has been positioned within a larger system that will dole out work orders. Consequently, work orders are distributed by officers who have access

and who occupy higher positions in the shipboard hierarchy to their corresponding departments and people. Large-scale technology is integral to the way in which 'setting the standard' (Levinson, 2016) (i.e., providing compatibility)[28] creates 'agreed-upon rules' and spans distance and heterogenous metrics (Bowker & Star, 2000, pp. 13–14)—in particular, as the next section will demonstrate, as work becomes increasingly digitalised.

ICT AND TECHNOLOGY ABOARD THE *PACIFIC*

To function and operate optimally and safely, the *Pacific* relies on intricate technological systems that have been developed in the industry over several years: automated computer-monitored engines, sophisticated (ARPA) radar systems, satellite communications, global positioning systems (GPS), electronic chart displays (EDCIS), internet access, e-mail, and access to satellite and mobile phones (Sampson & Wu, 2003, p. 128). However, technological development is not only a matter of maritime operation safety; efficiency and rationalisation, in addition to managerial and operational control, are equally important and significantly more invasive when it comes to work performance and organisation. Shipboard labour is increasingly easily monitored and supervised through an extensive web of digital solutions and industry-derived training modules and the requirement to report and log different work tasks, crew meetings and assemblies, loading and discharging operations, and mandatory safety rounds and inspections.

As an example, we may take the *Pacific*'s onboard digital solutions for ordering and organising work. Through TM Master, a fully integrated marine information system that comprises several modules (TM Maintenance, TM Procurement, TM Human Resources, and TM Quality & Environment) ship work was digitalised through a comprehensive database and

[28] Levinson's discussion about the threat of diversity to 'nip containerisation in the bud', for instance.

synchronised to specific time intervals. For example, TM Master will provide a full overview of all jobs that must be completed on board the ship. Officers with a username and account used TM Master daily,[29] efficiently keeping track of the immense list of work orders that the programme produced. The various jobs that TM Master doles out are not necessarily comprehensive and time-consuming; rather, the programme is designed to provide the seafarers with an overview to which they must respond accordingly, as this snapshot of four dates illustrates. On May 3, the Filipino third officer informed me that he had 19 jobs lined up in TM Master. On May 10, the number was eight. On May 19, he had seven TM jobs, and finally, he had four jobs scheduled on May 28. Some of the work orders, such as cleaning the radio on the bridge, were performed every three months, while others, such as checking the stock of printer paper, were set to a two-month interval. Most job orders from the above-mentioned four dates dealt primarily with checking and testing bridge equipment. As the officer on duty completed the work orders, he would register this in TM and also had the option of postponing the jobs in TM Master. Heavy and time-consuming work orders, such as overhauls of essential equipment, that require far more planning and manpower are also included in this digital software.

The other main digital solution used to order and organise work was *OceanLog*, a software solution that delivered operation support software to both vessels and companies. In *OceanLog*, the officers had access to modules for procedures and manuals, checklists, incident reporting, permit to work (PTW), audit and findings, risk/SJA (safety job analysis), international ship and port facility security code (ISPS), 14001(environmental management system), fuel reporting, daily reports, tender and contract management, and more. The 'Rusty lifting gear' graphic would be found in this software solution, under incident reporting. In

[29] See, for example, Table 1.2. TM Routine jobs represents the first point on the agenda in the engine department daily meeting. On deck, however, the deck officers are in charge of TM Master, and although deck workers may be instructed by an officer to perform TM Master jobs, it is not included in their daily meeting.

addition to TM Master and *OceanLog,* several other digital programmes are in use on board the *Pacific*, including programmes for documenting hours of work and rest, maps and routes, and navigational support. However, it is important to note that while these last digital programmes are also new technologies (Sampson and Wu, 2003), in contrast to TM Master and *OceanLog*, their impact on the everyday work (i.e., division of work) is minimal.

To illustrate how standardised ship work is implemented in the everyday, the traditional (and historically persistent) structure of shipboard hierarchy (Illustration 0.1) is a fitting point of departure. As the shipboard hierarchy demonstrates, a ship's organisational chart is vertically arranged and corresponds to occupation and rank. Moreover, the ship's crew of a ship are differentiated along the occupational categories of rating and officer. While ratings do not carry certificates of competence,[30] officers are licensed seafarers, as reflected by their ranking. On board the *Pacific,* eleven men held officer rank[31] and fourteen men held the rank of rating.[32] Given that these software solutions were modular by design, the ship's officers effectively had first-hand access to both TM Master and *OceanLog*. Moreover, as the multiple different use areas corresponded with ship rank, those with higher ranks had ample access and thus more responsibilities.

As mentioned above, the fourteen seafarers who held the rank of rating did not have access to the ship's digital software solutions. The distribution of the daily work was therefore distributed along the occupational hierarchy, and the kind of work with which the ship's ratings engaged on a daily basis largely dealt with routine labour and general maintenance.

[30] While this is an accurate description of rating as an occupational category in relation to the wider shipboard hierarchy (e.g., as an occupational position), the reality may be different. Ratings on board a ship, such as motormen, fitter, AB, and bosun, may hold certificates of competence while they await vacant officer positions or promotion or, due to other circumstances, have chosen not to actuate their certificates. In short, variation occurs.
[31] Captain, chief officer, second officer, third officer, chief engineer, electrical officer, second engineer, cargo engineer, third engineer (two positions), and chief steward.
[32] Bosun, AB (three positions), OS (two positions), deck cadet, messman, messboy, motorman (three positions), fitter, and engine cadet.

For both the deck and engine departments, the working day commences at 0800 AM. Prior to the morning meetings, both the second engineer and bosun receive the job orders from the chief engineer and chief officer, respectively. The deck department (shown in Illustration 0.1) is comprised of bosun, three ABs, two OSs and the deck cadet, all Filipino seafarers and distribution of the various jobs will be delegated according to both rank and experience. For instance, the ABs will perform work aloft in addition to operating the ship's cranes. The deck cadet, in a trainee position, will spend time on the bridge with the navigational officers in addition to performing deck work, and the ship's OS will mostly participate in general maintenance, often accompanied by more experienced colleagues. Similarly, in the engine department, made up of the second and cargo engineer, two third engineers, the fitter, three motormen, and the engine cadet (all Filipino on the *Pacific*), the work is distributed according to both rank and experience. In particular, the three motormen rotate, each for a week at a time, the duty of mandatory and pre-set inspection rounds of the ship's entire engine area.

IN THE DEPARTMENTS

It should be clear at this point that most work on board ships consists of general maintenance: painting, cleaning, chipping rust, preparing equipment for operations, and proper storage and care of the equipment after operations. As one of the ABs, Rodrigo explained, 'I mean, it's just routine, this is for today, this is what you do tomorrow again. Mostly this is what you do, for a month, maybe you do it for how many times. Before going to port, washing, cleaning and the next time around, washing and then you prepare …' Similarly, the engine department is also characterised by the distribution of job orders during the morning meeting with the crew subsequently carrying out the orders.

Maintenance work on one of the vessel's four main engines. Photo by author.

Most of the activity that takes place on board a ship is related to work and concerns the day-to-day routines. Looking back at my own fieldwork, it would be difficult to distinguish my work time from my leisure time as the two often intersected and because work was the most visible activity. It is, after all, a '24 hours society' (Johansen, 1979), and seafarers are constantly 'on the job' every day of the week. An on-duty motorman, for instance, carries out the same repetitive round for a week before he alternates with another motorman. A day on motorman duty might proceed as follows: He will commence his round after the morning meeting with a checklist on which, beginning from the bottom of the engine department, he will note down the oil levels using an oil-level gauge, check engine temperatures and the capacities and running hours of the vast machinery. Additionally—and the checklist is extensive—he will check all equipment, including the ship's purifiers, coolers, freshwater generator, and backflush filters. As he checks off the equipment, he will also wash and remove excess oil spillages from the equipment. By the 1000 AM coffee break, he will typically have finished the machinery on the lower levels and noted the engines' updated

running hours on the whiteboard in the engine control room before ascending to the crew mess hall to bring the snacks for the coffee break and brew a fresh pot of coffee. The engine laundry is also his responsibility. After the 1000 break, he resumes his round and will typically have finished by the 1500 break. Returning at 1530, the motorman will normally participate in and assist with the specific jobs lined up for that day. Table 1.2 represents a direct transcript of the different job orders that the deck and engine department performed during a week, the majority of which are manual, distributed across rank from high to low. As the table illustrates, the ship's ratings are not included in the planning and supervision of the different job orders that are part of the everyday work aboard the *Pacific.*

1.2 Daily engine-and deck meetings

DAY	ENGINE DEPARTMENT	DECK DEPARTMENT
MONDAY	TM Routine jobs No. 1 auxiliary boiler inspection (permits needed: TBA, RA, Enclosed Space, LOTO) Dismantle brake assembly port anchor (permits needed: TBT, RA, LOTO) Check stock cargo valves	Repair damaged paint at stations Pedestals and rollers to grease Check main stoppers Windless port and starboard Monthly winches and ropes Garbage routines
TUESDAY	TM routine jobs Continue working port anchor brake assembly Burning sludge Chain bypass drain v/v control air reservoir (permits needed: TBA, RA) Check starboard manifold pressure gauges	Check water tightness weather doors Continue pedestal refurnish Slopes port side surface treatment
WEDNESDAY	TM Routine jobs Continue working on port anchor brake assembly Clean LO safety filter MGE 2 Clean spare LO automatic filter Clean boiler no.2. swirler	Surface treatment slopes Inspect cofferdam under port CL Forward HFO pump room entry
THURSDAY	TM Routine jobs Assemble port anchor brake assembly Clean LO safety filter MGE 2 Check gas detector Clean boiler no.2 swirler	Slopes, surface treatment Duct keel entrance aft treatment Monthly check lifting gear Security drill Cleaning / garbage routines
FRIDAY	TM Routine jobs ER watcher Cleaning ER Mooring	Weekly routines: valves, ducts, dampers Bilges, HFO, pump room forward Lifeboat, MBO Slopes, paint duct
SATURDAY	TM Routine jobs Saturday routines Check drain CAC bottom floor	Paint: Slopes and duct keel entrance
SUNDAY	TM Routine jobs Repair steam leak booster unit MGE 2 (permits needed: TBT, RA, LOTO) Clean save all ports S.W. cooler	Surface treatment slopes Duct keel entrance Inventory, stock list Cleaning / washing deck area Refill ECTV cameras

Every Sunday, the safety management team (SMT), consisting of the captain, chief officer, chief engineer, second and cargo engineer, and electrician, go through the same fixed points: status on work, key performance indicator, critical orders and spare parts, vetting, port calls, crew change, maintenance, and welfare matters. Every Saturday, the engine department will test the emergency generator, test the emergency compressor, start the life-boat engine, test the life-boat steering, check the engine, test and check the man-overboard engine, test the

manifold bunker valve, and check the dampers on the forward bosun store by opening and closing them. They must ensure that engine room dampers are operational, also by opening and closing them. They test bilge alarms, engine room bilge, steering bilge, and high-level alarms. They exercise/move seawater automatic valves and run the heavy fuel oil (HFO) purifier. They test the boiler and cooler water and analyse the lubricant oil. The ships' electrician checks alarms in the provision cold room, fire alarms, public/general alarm, elevator alarm, dead-man alarm, and check batteries. The deck department will test the bilge alarm, test the vessels' five cranes, exercise and grease the isolation valve for the fire line and spray line. They grease on 'flaps' from accommodation and, finally, exercise and grease the ships' ventilation, which resembles small mushrooms dispersed throughout the vessels' deck.

The everyday life aboard a ship is characterised by routines, repetitiveness, and high predictability for the crewmembers. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner take place at the same time every day, as do the institutionalised coffee breaks at 1000 and 1500. When asked to describe their jobs, most crewmembers would say that, 'Every day is Monday', or 'Same, same'. Illustrative of this description is the way in which, in response to a question regarding how to decide what to do, AB Bryan elaborated, 'What we usually do here is bosun gets the job order from the chief mate, so basically, it's the chief mate who will decide what we are going to do and then bosun get the job from the chief mate and then [he] assign us the jobs. So that's it. It's not that we decide what to do, no'. Indeed, aside from the loading and discharging operations, which took place on average every three to four weeks, the everyday life and work aboard the *Pacific* was significantly more concerned with manual maintenance and repetitive work orders than with the technologically advanced cargo components.

Moreover, in terms of the interrelatedness between the systems for work and the actual completion of the work, several meetings are organised monthly—safety committee meetings (PEC), health, safety, and environment (HSE) rounds, 'reflective learning', 'learning by

incidents' and 'resilience'. PEC meetings are generally open and mandatory for the entire crew. HSE rounds are carried out more sporadically, but throughout the fieldwork period, they were performed monthly. During the HSE round, the captain walks through the accommodation with the chief steward, through the engine department with the chief engineer and, finally, along the deck with the bosun and chief officer.

'Reflective learning', 'learning by incidents', and 'resilience', however, differ considerably from those mentioned previously, corresponding directly to matters of safety, welfare, and the general maintenance of the vessel. The 'resilience' meetings are organised by the third engineers on board. The topics of these meetings vary and are determined by third-party companies on shore providing a service that is thought to positively impact seafarers' safety and welfare on board. The entire crew will participate in these meetings that are organised as group activities, in which crewmembers from various departments and ranks will work together on responding to a set of questions and present the resultant perspectives of the group in plenum afterwards. The topics are frequently designed with the intention of accountability on board. 'How to take care of yourself' and 'how to take decisive action' were two topics held during two different 'Resilience' meetings on board. 'Reflective learning', organised by the second officer on board, is similar in format, but the topics have a heavier, more practical character—for example, mooring procedures was one such topic. Finally, 'Learning by incidents' comprises practical group-based meetings in which reported incidents from other vessels are discussed in plenary, with topics ranging from minor personnel injuries to larger, more critical incidents, such as collisions, fatal accidents, and more.

Against this rigidly structured occupational landscape within which most of what takes place is not only related to work and concerns the seafarers' day-to-day routines but also concerns *how* and *when* to do what, the example of the slamming door may be more easily understood. Consider, for example, Goffman's emphasis on the self-negating features of a

total institution and how, as individuals enter a total institution, the role they have in civil society is disrupted, as they lose control over their 'adult executive competence' (1961, p. 47). Without projecting Goffman's total institution concept[33] onto the *Pacific*, his thoughts on reduced autonomy and control resonate to an extent with the implications of increased labour standardisation and counterintuitive scenarios. In the words of the ship's electrician, Arnie, 'this is a place for robots'. Arnie, who often used a robot analogy in describing his work as a seafarer, had years of experience at sea, having worked on different types of vessels and for different companies; at the time of my fieldwork, he had also worked on board the *Pacific* for many years. The invocation of robots as an analogy for seafarers intersects directly with a long-standing dilemma inherent in many work situations on which the following section will elaborate—namely, how standardisation and formalisation may alter and/or influence understandings of how work is conceived from its actual execution.

'THIS IS A PLACE FOR ROBOTS'

The ship (like the factory) has been transformed (Sampson & Wu, 2003, p. 128), and Arnie's robot analogy speaks directly to the shifting context of this transformation. Arnie was far from the only seafarer to mention that the amount of paperwork and, subsequently, the documentation of everyday work was both challenging and that it added to rather than diminished the workload. Furthermore, the officers told me, the amount continued to grow. An immediate first response to their claims regarding the increasing bureaucratisation of work might be to compare the development from when they began their careers at sea to the present moment. In my opinion, however, such a comparison is too simplistic.

[33] Levinson and Gallagher (1964, pp. 18–32) criticised Goffman's emphasis on the self-negating features of a total institution and overall focus on loss of freedom, for example, arguing that it portrays too homogeneous an image and accusing it of being a nihilistic study.

Through an extensive web of digital solutions, industry-derived training modules, the requirement to report and log different work tasks, crew meetings and assemblies, loading and discharging operations, and mandatory safety rounds and inspections, shipboard labour has become increasingly standardised and formalised. In their foundational article, 'Compressing Time and Constraining Space: The Contradictory Effects of ICT and Containerisation on International Shipping Labour' (2003), scholars Helen Sampson and Bin Wu contextualise shipping in the twentieth century by pointing to the 'rapid change in terms of production and consumption, work and employment' (2003, p. 123). Much of this change, they argue, has been at the wheel of 'development in technology and the application of new technologies to already existing production systems and ways of ordering and organising work' (2003, p. 123). The development of ICT and increased demand for documentation have inarguably altered seafarers' organisational contexts. However, the majority of the seafarers I encountered, even those close to retirement age, did not, in fact, believe that they had sailed under 'simpler' times, as they put it: 'There's no dolphins, whales, or mermaids, just ocean', one said, pointing to 'simpler' times. As such, while many romanticised a 'simpler' time without the constant pressure to comply with numerous rules and regulations, the question is not whether the development in the industry has evolved positively or negatively. Rather, we should be investigating how certain occupational structures influence the people who perform the work and take their critique seriously as opposed to redirecting it into a historical comparison of which very few people have experienced both sides.

Two interrelated topics are at play in Arnie's refusal and active resistance to becoming a robot: the dilemma between doing what he considered important and the formalised manner in which it should be done. During an interview, I asked whether it was 'difficult to balance doing what you want, what you see as important, with all the things you are expected to comply with'. Arnie's answer echoed many of the other seafarers' responses to the ship work

formalities: ‘Yes, it’s so hypocritical. You can be a NASA genius engineer here, which is in compliance with all those rules, regulations, paragraphs, annexes, clauses, manuals and books they make you sign that you are aware and that you know. But it’s impossible to know everything written down there. It’s all based on your previous experience, your knowledge, what you remember. You can’t imagine how much bullshit captain Lars and chief Johnny, for example, have to sign and read to be in compliance. They’re not reading this, they’re just signing. As I said, you have to be a NASA spaceship pilot on paper but in real life you’re not. You’re just Arnie, you know’.

One of the many measures implemented with the aim of structuring work is the use of checklists. Checklists function as a permit to work, and on board, different permits served different purposes. For Arnie, checklists could be useful if ‘you don’t know about the system’. However, he continued, for those familiar with the equipment they are a waste of time. Arnie had a practical disposition, and he quickly provided an example in support of his opinion. He described the lockout/tagout padlock (LOTO), a device designed to ensure that dangerous machines are properly shut off, in relation to which he asked rhetorically, ‘Made by who? Made by engineers!’ When I worked with Arnie, LOTO was one of the tools he used most frequently. In addition to Arnie closing off the equipment, it is crucial that others are made aware that high voltage work is in progress, as an accident would likely result in fatalities. As a physical object, the LOTO padlock is easily detectable, with a bright yellow tag on both sides. In addition, as it is a padlock, it is accompanied by keys. However, in addition to the use of the LOTO padlock, seafarers were obliged to sign a checklist prior to commencing work on electrical equipment.

As Arnie said: ‘Yes, but you see, it’s a padlock, not a checklist. And engineers make it, because engineers can see that it is important, and it works. What IMO made, they made a lock-out/tag-out permit, so you see, it’s not enough to lock it for fuck sake. No, you can just put this lock in your ass [rather] make sure you sign the permit! You see, who cares about this

fucking padlock? The paper, the paper [clapping his hands] you have to show this [permit] to the class, inspector, to internal audit … He will come on board and check how many LOTO we made, we produced … It's not enough to just lock, you see what they want, they want idiots on board … You see, you don't need to think anymore, you can be an animal, dumb. And then, according to the shipping company, IMO and all this HSE and Q/A departments in the company, it's ok – you are in compliance. Because you have the papers, you have them'.

Having laid out how highly regimented the nature of work is on board in this chapter so far, it should come as no surprise that it is impossible to uphold every standard. The seafarers typically engage in their daily work without necessarily envisioning, say, the classificatory stages of accidents. What this tells us about the particularities of maritime work is that it is difficult to separate the 'systems' that are designed to organise and structure the everyday work—not to mention the aspects of managerial control that they impose due to these systems communicating and reporting back to the shore-based management of the shipping company—from the manual labour that is inevitably involved in executing these job orders and tasks. In-situ explorations of labour organisation and the various forms in which work of this nature takes place are thus particularly fruitful in demonstrating the interrelatedness between the systems on the one hand, and the people whose manual labour implements them on the other.

Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter (2017) highlight this point in their edited volume entitled *Logistical worlds. Infrastructure, software, labour*. Providing an overview of concepts that are most commonly applied within the field of logistics, Neilson and Rossiter demonstrate how they overlap and argue that these concepts intersect with one another and are not easily demarcated. While standards are ubiquitous and have the potential to assume 'a political economy through which power is asserted' (Kolkata, No.2, 2017, p. 103), the related concept protocol is equally important as 'the capacity for standards to hold traction depends

on protocological control. But there are also standards for protocol' (Kolkata, No.2, 2017, p. 104). Likewise, 'infrastructure is matter that moves matter' (Larkin, 2013), while logistics 'is to manage the movement of people and things in the interests of communication, transport and economic efficiencies – logistics puts anything, anywhere, at any time' (Kolkata, No.2, 2017, p. 102). At the opposite—albeit interrelated—end of the logistics spectrum is contingency. Argued to be the 'nightmare of logistics' (Kolkata, No.2, 2017, p. 109), studies of contingencies have the potential to uncover the production of variation. Finally, the concept of chains is equally variegated: as chains supply, they may equally 'connect, bind, produce value, join enterprises through relations of subcontracting and outsourcing, stimulate standardisation and generate varied forms of hierarchy and exclusion' (Kolkata, No.2, 2017, p. 106).

However, closer examination of local translations and attempts to mitigate standardisation processes is necessary. As the chapter's second (and final) section will illustrate shortly, concepts such as infrastructure, protocol, contingency, and standards too often become reified as though they had minds of their own. Had it not been for his focus on the connections and collaborations that form as part of the relationships among actors on site, Larkin (2013)—for example, by calling infrastructure the 'architecture for circulation'—could be criticised for the latter. For aside from the issue of upholding the standards set for work on board, perhaps the most important issue is whether it is humanly possible to incorporate them in the execution of the daily work. After all, the seafarers on board the *Pacific* were people, not robots. Through the ethnographic example of Phil, an inspector who boarded the *Pacific* in mid-May, I include the human element, which is an undeniably important actor here, and focus on the ways in which seafarers respond to and, importantly, negotiate the standards for work. In doing so, I draw a parallel with Bowker and Star's (2000) theorisation regarding 'fitting categories to circumstances' as a strategy that allocates meaning collectively to

circumstances. While the example provided by Bowker and Star concerns the negotiation that goes into diagnosing a medical condition between a patient and their psychiatrist (Bowker & Star, 2000, p. 47), I observed similar tendencies in motion on board the *Pacific*, as seafarers mitigate the at times impossible work standards they must confront. In the final section, this will be explored in relation to how seafarers encounter agents who are formally appointed to assess the ships and between seafarers and their own assessment of their everyday work and workloads.

PHIL THE AUDITOR

'If there's no findings, there's no findings'. The middle-aged external inspector, Phil, had just sat down in the ship's office on C-deck with the captain Lars and chief engineer, Johnny. The captain informed him why I was on board and asked whether Phil was comfortable with me observing the meeting and following the upcoming SIRE-inspection. Phil candidly expressed an interest in what the captain had told him and expressed no opposition to my observing the meeting. On the contrary, he welcomed my presence and stayed behind with me for a longer chat after the inspection had been carried out. As the three men—Phil, the captain, and the chief engineer—sat down, Phil opposite to the other two, with a large binder of documents as a barrier between one end of the table and the other. He opened with the above quote. A seasoned SIRE inspector, Phil introduced himself by comparing himself to other inspectors, who, he went on to say, would report five findings as a minimum per inspection, regardless of the situation.

This was the only SIRE inspection (i.e., external audit) of the *Pacific* that took place throughout my fieldwork. However, inspections and audits have become quite institutionalised and therefore routine elements of ship management. In Papua New Guinea,

Qatar, Portugal, and the US, Port State Controls (PSC) were carried out during port stay. As part of the maritime transportation business and, similar to most of the world's fleet, the *Pacific* is subject to vetting processes. As a vessel's 'ticket to trade', vetting is the process by which oil majors, charterers, and port state authorities manage risk when assessing a vessel. In essence, PSC provides a 'safety net' capable of catching substandard ships. Port authorities worldwide have always inspected ships in various ways. However, such inspections were only conducted in a systematic manner in accordance with specific rules and regulations after the formation of the Paris Memorandum of Understanding (Paris MoU) in July 1982.

The history of PSC inspections in their current form can be traced back to 1978 and the grounding of the *Amoco Cadiz* off the coast of Brittany. The grounding resulted in the spillage of more than 220,000 tons of crude oil and had a devastating impact on the environment. The accident was said to have been caused by insufficient monitoring of the ship's technical condition, inadequate training of the crew, and deficiencies in what we know as 'safety management' on board. The MoU entered into operation on July 1st, 1982, and covered safety of life at sea, prevention of pollution by ships, and living and working conditions on board ships. The Paris MoU recognised that in accordance with international law, responsibility for compliance with the requirements of international conventions lies with the ship-owner/operator and the responsibility for ensuring compliance lies with the flag state administration—a task that can prove difficult. This is particularly the case when a ship does not regularly call at a port of the flag state.[34] This challenge, although partly overcome by appointing inspections at foreign ports and/or authorising recognised organisations (classifications societies) to act on the administration's behalf, persists today.

[34] The world's most popular flag state does not correspond with a country's tradition of shipping, the size of the fleet, or the trading area. Flag states are decided based on which registry has the laxest rules and regulations in terms of working conditions, staffing policies, tax benefits, and more and do not reflect a ship's country of residence.

To assist administrations in ensuring continuous control of the ship's compliance with international conventions and to complement the measures already taken by the flag state, unannounced inspections of 'foreign-flagged' merchant ships calling at ports of the member states of the Paris MoU were initiated. The PSC inspections proved successful as the number of ships with serious deficiencies declined year after year. The IMO recognised this success and, in 1991, invited its members to develop regional agreements similar to the Paris MoU. There are currently nine regional agreements[35] (MoU's) in place around the world, and the US maintains a separate PSC regime.

Likewise, the Ship Inspection Report Programme (SIRE), launched in 1993, specifically addresses concerns about sub-standard shipping, and its system comprises a large database of up-to-date information about tankers and barges. Since its introduction, 'more than 180,000 inspection reports have been submitted to SIRE. Currently there are over 22,500 reports on over 8000 vessels for inspections that have been conducted in the last 12 months. On average Programme Recipients access the SIRE database at a rate of more than 8000 reports per month' (OCIMF, n.d.). The Oil Companies' International Marine Forum (OCIMF) manages the SIRE Inspector Accreditation programme to conduct vessel inspections and complete inspection reports on behalf of the OCIMF submitting companies, who input these reports into the SIRE database (OCIMF, n.d.). Finally, the accredited SIRE-inspectors are asked to report on all vessel or operational deficiencies identified in an observations list left with the vessel's Master at the end of each inspection. Depending on the outcome, vessels are either cleared or withheld for continued service (BP trading and shipping, n.d.).

[35] Paris MoU (Europe and the north Atlantic region), Tokyo MoU (Asia and the Pacific region), Acuerdo de Vina del Mar MoU (Latin America region), Caribbean MoU (Caribbean region), Abaya MoU (West and Central Africa region), Black Sea MoU (Black Sea region), Mediterranean MoU (Mediterranean region), Indian Ocean MoU (Indian Ocean region), Riyadh MoU (Kingdom of Bahrain, State of Kuwait, Sultanate of Oman, State of Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates). The United States Coast Guard maintain the tenth regime.

By official standards, inspections such as PSC and SIRE are high-stakes events that, in the worst-case scenario, could result in the vessel going off-hire. The possibility of going off-hire came up in numerous conversations with the *Pacific's* highest-ranking officers,[36] who consistently referred to it as the worst possible situation. As the Norwegian chief engineer, Gunnar, eloquently put it as he described having learned through experience to keep extra filters for fuel aboard the ship, 'Yes, you need to think ahead. It's all about keeping the wheels in motion. It is more expensive to stop the vessel due to not having that last filter. The 'off-hire button' is immediately pressed [and] that costs'. As I was about to continue asking about going off-hire, I remember he interrupted me to say, 'We don't need to talk about that'. After a short sigh, he went on conclude that, 'yes, in a way you feel like you lost' in response to my question of what it meant for a ship to go off-hire. Gunnar's reference to 'keeping the wheels in motion' brings us back to Phil's introducing himself in the meeting prior to the inspection. Given that the shipping industry at large depends on the ability to make deliveries, keep time schedules, and adhere to principles of 'just-in-time-delivery', Phil's attitude of, 'if there's no findings, there's no findings' is telling of more than, say, his personality. Official standards, enforced by PSC and SIRE, for instance, must be efficient in addition to being thorough. In a matter of hours, inspections are designed to legitimately conclude whether or not a ship meets the standards set by international conventions. Thus, a streamlined method—or, as the SIRE programme states, 'a uniform inspection protocol' (OCIMF, n.d.)—will facilitate these inspections. Phil's 'if there's no findings, there's no findings' philosophy stands in contrast to that of the other inspectors to whom he alludes who simply allocated five findings to fit a report. This, on the one hand, points to standardisation as a means of legitimising the inspections' outcomes. On the other hand, it also makes a SIRE-inspection a

[36] Master (captain), chief officer, and chief engineer.

highly interesting point of departure for further exploration of how people respond to and negotiate inspection outcomes.

Upon finishing the inspection, Phil returned to the ship's office on C-deck, where the captain and chief engineer awaited the result of the inspection. Despite the limited timetable, the inspection covered four major areas: Certification and Documentation, Crew Management, Safety Management, and Vessel System Management. A substantial record of the inspection is documented in the ships' logbooks, which are open to inspectors, in addition to the physical rounds conducted on board the ship together with the seafarers.

The general tone among Phil, captain Lars and chief engineer Johnny was generally positive, and before diving into the results of the inspection, they engaged in small talk about the weather and other sundry topics while drinking coffee. Phil had four findings to report in total: The first two were breaches of resting hours (see Table 1.3 for a complete overview) for one worker in the deck department and one in the engine department. Each had a documented resting period of only five hours over a twenty-four-hour period. I was later informed by the captain that Phil had stopped him in the hallway with the breaches of resting hours noted down on pieces of paper prior to the sit-down. 'Yes', Lars replied, 'that isn't too good, is it?'. The last piece of paper documented, according to the captain, a greater breach of resting hours committed by the captain himself. However, and as Phil gently curled the paper and put it in the pocket of his shirt, he said to Lars, 'you take care of yourself'. The third finding, Phil continued, concerned the bilgewater separator[37] screen, the numbers on which were not readable. Finally, Phil's fourth finding concerned the ship's engine department. In the gas valve unit (GVU) on starboard side, he observed a pneumatically operated valve blocked with

[37] Bilge separators, also known as oily water separators (OWS), are onboard treatment systems designed to remove the oil from vessel bilgewater prior to its discharge. Bilge separator technologies have advanced in recent years to improve the effectiveness of oily bilgewater treatment.

a small piece of wood. None of these findings had negative implications for the *Pacific*'s continued service.

Although Phil's four findings were straightforward in nature and could have been communicated easily and swiftly, or simply by him handing over his report, the concluding meeting lasted for a considerable time, and a substantial portion of the meeting concerned additional observations that Phil had made during his inspection. This, together with the captain and chief engineer responding to the other findings, as they efficiently negotiated the outcome, took a relatively long time. Phil, a now-retired chief engineer, had in fact seven further observations that he brought to the meeting. The additional observations, some of which I shall elaborate on, were 1) an incorrect entry in the ship's oil log book; 2) an observation regarding the mooring system management plan; 3) an instance of non-compliance in mandatory course requirements for the safety officer; 4) missing VHF radios on the fire stations; 5) failure to wear proper PPE; 6) an observation to the ship's ECDIS display and, finally; 7) a deviation in the ship's magnetic compass.

FITTING CATEGORIES TO CIRCUMSTANCES

What were the reasons behind these additional observations not being registered into the SIRE database? To answer this question, I want to draw on a narrative that, by this time, had become very familiar to me and that surfaced once again during the concluding inspection meeting. The term 'shore-people' was often used by seafarers aboard the *Pacific* in various contexts to refer to people with no experience or knowledge about the workings of a ship. In the concluding inspection meeting, Phil specifically mentioned 'shore-people' in relation to the additional observations. These, it appears, were not reported because they address some of the challenges integral to standardised protocols that are not designed to meet the people that

enforce them. In the following three observations, the discrepancy between the formal, general requirements for work on the one hand and the execution of standardised work in the everyday on the other, demonstrated the negotiation involved when common sense intersected and clashed with Phil's standardised protocol.

Accompanying Phil during his round in the engine department was the Filipino second engineer, Pedro, who, throughout the entire round, did not use hearing protectors. As per the matrix for proper PPE use, hearing protectors are mandatory in every part of the engine department, except inside the engine control room. When Phil commented on this in the meeting, he highlighted two reasons for not reporting it: first, he observed that the rest of the engine department used proper PPE, and second, he theorised openly that perhaps Pedro's failure to use proper PPE stemmed from his being nervous. Perhaps, he suggested, this was Pedro's first external inspection? These two points—that the rest of the engine crew used PPE and Pedro's assumed 'pre-exam' nerves—Phil concluded, indicated that this was an isolated incident rather than a systemic failure. Hence, it exemplified 'the human component' that also involved sometimes simply forgetting.

On the bridge, Phil observed that the ship's ECDIS display was not properly updated—although it was a minor detail that could easily have been solved by automatically changing the setting, it did constitute a 'finding'. The captain, in particular, agreed with Phil and knew precisely which setting of which of the screens he was referring to. As I listened and observed, the tone of their conversation resembled that of a conversation between colleagues more than a conversation between two people in different positions of power. Despite Phil's experience as an engineer, he was familiar with ECDIS and could engage in proper anecdotes with Lars about 'these machines', as he put it. Lars, nodding his head to signal his agreement, countered with an informal description of the number of papers they needed to keep track of these days. As a compromise, Phil suggested, 'how about I check the

ECDIS in ten minutes or so?'—a 'gentleman's agreement' to which Lars nodded his head and gave Phil a small wink.

Phil's final observation—and perhaps the most telling in terms of illustrating the discrepancy between formal protocols and what is actually being done—concerned the ship's magnetic compass.[38] The *Pacific* did not use the compass; in fact, in one of my first conversations with Lars in January, he mentioned the compass among several items on board that he believed belonged to the past (e.g., the sextant, the gyrocompass). The ship's magnetic compass, in Lars' mental checklist, most definitely belonged to the past; it was a relic, as he put it. Substantial advances in navigational science and technology have rendered the traditional ship's compass redundant and altered the work and methods used for navigation through the development of Electronic Chart Display and Information Systems (ECDIS). Lars was not averse to this outdated equipment's presence on board. In fact, he took great pleasure in these objects as a leeway into the past and struggled considerably on one occasion where he tried to teach me how to calculate the ship's coordinates using the sextant.

Unable to bring to life part of the curriculum from over twenty years ago, he gave up and instead showed me how to perform the same calculation using the ECDIS. Nonetheless, in the event of the ECDIS shutting down due to some unforeseeable event, a ship must be able to continue safe navigation using the magnetic compass. Given that magnetism causes deviations in the compass, a deviation card that considers this is produced so that the ship's heading will remain unaffected by the natural deviations associated with magnetism. On board the *Pacific,* no updated deviation card had been produced.

Two key factors are important here to understand the low degree of feasibility in maintaining an updated deviation card. First, it is a time-consuming process and, second, on

[38] The magnetic compass of a ship is located on the Monkey Island and reflected into the bridge with the help of the periscope. Magnetic compass deviation is caused by the magnetism present in the ship's structure itself.

board a ship that trades worldwide with a crew that is often unaware of where the next port call will be, the practicality of this regulation is called into question. Phil mentioned both of these reasons as he introduced his observation, and it effectively concluded with the three men simply agreeing on the impossibility of meeting this particular standard. Nonetheless, the issue was raised and provided an interesting ending to the concluding meeting.

This, in addition to the captain's breaches of resting hours that Phil intentionally overlooked, reveals a mutual understanding of ships' position vis-à-vis the regulatory policies at large. To 'keep the wheels in motion' is to balance on a knife's edge between efficiency, a mutual understanding of the standard's encounter with everyday organisation, and a narrative that separates 'sea-people' from 'shore-people'. Additionally, despite the particularities of ships, these universal standards form part of the occupational structure within the shipping industry. Later, in a conversation with the captain about the vetting process, I found his reflections to be illustrative of how many seafarers perceived 'shore-people' as different to 'sea-people'.[39] In the words of a senior European officer,

'That's the problem with vetting processes. It's impossible to follow every rigid rule. You see how big this ship is! In one way, vetting is good. I remember when I started sailing … Back then, there were no standards for ships and every port stay involved several repairs prior to berth. After the industry implemented vetting inspections, standards were dramatically improved. But now … it's gone over the edge. It's not about safety anymore, now it's about finding errors for the sake of errors, five points, at least, just for the report. What's funny is that you can be aboard an old wreck of a vessel, and still, you'll only get five errors. Likewise, aboard a new vessel, fresh off the shipyard, you'll get five errors all the same. So the question is whether these are real issues and errors or if it just looks good on paper. Of course, Phil was a reasonable guy, he understood how ships works. Not like other nit-pickers. Phil was one of the rare ones'.

[39] 'Shore-people' is a pejoratively emic term used by many seafarers to describe people who are unfamiliar with the seafaring occupation and/or who work in shipping but from the shore. It is often used in situations of miscommunication or conflicting interests between seafarers and shore-based management.

I do not believe that the *Pacific*'s encounter with Phil and the SIRE inspection is representative of how all inspections proceed, whether external inspections, such as SIRE or PSC, or internal inspections conducted by the ship owner/operator. Nor, for that matter, do I question Phil's decision to authorise the continued service of the *Pacific*—far from it, I learned from many of the crewmembers on board that inspections were often affected by the personalities of the people involved as well as by the inspector themselves. Hence, the SIRE inspection that took place mid-May comprised several variables unique to that particular event. Nonetheless, I do believe that the SIRE inspection and the questions that this encounter raised—between ships on the one hand and the larger body of regulatory policies ships are part of on the other—are worth pursuing in the attempt to understand shipboard labour. Inspections reveal how the shipping industry at large is interconnected through the standards imposed on systems; however, inspections are also open to local negotiations. Ships are continuously subject to inspections and, as many seafarers will confirm, each port stay is analogous to passing an exam.

Audits are formalised encounters between two parties, wherein one party (the auditor) holds substantial discretionary power in terms of outcomes and the uneven positions of power between the two parties are enacted through its realisation. The 'social form' (Simmel, 1971) of the audits has already been structured to follow a certain correct form of sociality. However, as audits and inspections are part of the routines around ships in their institutionalised format, if Phil were to be removed, would that have any effect on the social form involved in responding to routinized maritime standards?

Illustrative of both standardised work and the attitudes to this type of work is the case of a 'safety-on-board' campaign for the entire fleet of a shipping company for which all of the Norwegians on board the *Pacific* had previously worked at different stages of their careers. The 'protagonist' of the safety campaign, I was told, was 'Buddy the safety cat', an orange-

coloured cartoon-cat whose face was printed on safety pamphlets, on the company logo, referred to in shore–sea communication as well as forming the focal point of competition between vessels. Buddy was vicariously introduced to me during a discussion with the captain about what he perceived as the maritime industry's one-sided focus on compliance with international rules and regulations. By 'one-sided focus', he was referring to the extent to which a disproportionate part of maritime work today is about meeting pre-set standards for work and the subsequent demands to comply with them, as though work lacked any day-to-day variation. The implementation of yet another 'safety-on-board' campaign reduced opportunities to 'think for yourself', the captain further explained.

Nonetheless, the seafarers had to comply with management policies, and during the lifetime of this campaign, crewmembers actively had to report to the shore-based employees how the vessel was implementing the policies led on by Buddy. On various occasions, Buddy would surface as a topic among the Norwegian crew onboard the *Pacific*, often as the punchline of a joke: the question 'What would Buddy do?' might pop up in conversations, for example. The outcome, I was told by the crewmembers who had previously worked for the shipping company where Buddy the cat circulated, was that as time passed by and while the safety campaign was still ongoing, crewmembers decided to paint a portrait of Buddy the cat on the bottom of the ship's pool. As they finished, they opened the lock gate, and as water began to fill the pool, they celebrated Buddy's death. '*We* killed Buddy', the captain remarked humorously, and with a sense of pride.

The metaphorical murder of a cartoonish, orange-coloured cat can be interpreted as indicative of how shore-based policies assume a life of their own through the responses of the people who must implement them. Furthermore, the safety campaign, in addition to the graphics of the orange-coloured cat giving a big 'thumbs up' to safety, brought on board new standards and subsequent procedures for the ship's safety policies that the seafarers had to

include in their daily work. The assertive act of killing the cat versus the humble attitude I observed during the meeting with Phil, who, in a way, 'personified' the values represented by the cat, reflect two sides of shipboard labour's increasing integration of routines. While the formality or social form, if you will, evident in encounters with auditors such as Phil, including shore-based policies embodied in a cat, leaves few options for negotiation, these examples have demonstrated that this is in fact not the case. While Phil eventually disembarked the *Pacific,* the extensive demands to uphold the standards for which he stood are nonetheless imposed on the seafarers, regardless of whether or not someone like Phil is on board.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter opened with the example of a slamming door that none of the *Pacific*'s crewmembers closed, despite many crewmembers having seen and heard that it was open, as a means of questioning the shipping industry's standardisation processes. What does this exemplify, and what can it tell us about maritime labour? A key concern in this chapter has been to give the reader an insight into the extent to which the *Pacific* is a highly regimented workspace. I have thus demonstrated how the rigid organisation of labour and distribution of responsibility create 'blind spots' in the sense that unanticipated tasks fall outside the distribution of responsibilities and are thus never acted on as they are 'nobody's' responsibility.

This may appear to be counterintuitive, given the extremely regimented nature of work on board, but I have attempted to demonstrate that it is precisely this increasingly tight organisation, which does not encourage flexibility, that may best serve as a lens though which we may understand how such matters play out. While standardisation practices are undeniably

central components in the promotion of such a tight organisation and, perhaps more importantly, 'visible' in the eyes of onshore management, the highly regimented nature of shipboard labour raises important questions with respect to the impact that this has exerted on the onboard lives of the seafarers who both work and live on these floating worksites.

The chapter then proceeded to examine the interrelated concepts of infrastructure, logistics, standards, protocols, chains, and contingency to further illustrate that the tight organisation of maritime labour is not solely a matter of a single component (e.g., standards of work) but rather that maritime work is based on several interrelated aspects that are mutually dependent and productive to promote certain organisational principles that govern work accordingly. In particular, through digital software such as TM Master and *OceanLog*, these concepts are at play simultaneously. However, a crucial component in these digital solutions is their modular design. While officers have access to the software and are thus privy to the broader web of which the daily tasks are an integral part, for the ship's ratings, job orders are simply doled out during morning meetings. Effectively, the everyday work performed on board a ship is characterised by routine, repetitiveness, and high predictability for the crewmembers and particularly among the ship's ratings, many of whom regarded routines and following orders as replicating the shipboard hierarchy—not least because work orders were distributed to the ratings via the officers. Finally, even unanticipated risks that accidents will take place on board—while providing a standard for how accidents should be classified and articulated through the formally determined stages—ultimately consolidate the grip on the everyday work that standardisation and formalisation has.

Many of the crewmembers aboard the *Pacific* brought similar strategies of negotiation to the everyday work in their resistance towards the high level of automation. 'This is a place for robots', Arnie, the ship's electrician, stated in an interview as he attempted to shed light on a development within maritime shipping that heavily influenced his daily work. Between

knowing what to do and doing it in a *formalised* manner lies a tension that is in many ways encapsulated in the introductory example of the slamming door: here, we saw a move away from acting on the basis of experience with a practical attitude, which is a key aspect of everyday work, and a turn towards a labour regime that is more concerned with formal requirements. Given that it is impossible to maintain and uphold the many standards emanating from virtually every perceivable source (e.g., in digital solutions, pamphlets, signs, and posters, from ashore, and from larger organisational bodies, such as SIRE inspections and PSC), the seafarers actively engage in discourses through which they negotiate the countless ways in which work has been formalised today. Sometimes, the outcome is that the simplest jobs are no longer completed. The chapter also explored the interventions around the time when Phil, the auditor, boarded, coupled with the metaphorical murder of Buddy, the safety cat, that I had heard about, as negotiated circumstances largely produced unintentionally within such a tight organisation.

To conclude, the critical examination of labour and labour (in-)flexibility within maritime work allows us to better expose the mechanisms that enable and enforce a particular work environment that does not encourage on-the-spot decision making. This, I propose, should also be done by exploring the occupational structures implemented in onboard solutions that largely serve to standardise and formalise everyday maritime work. In turn, these are mechanisms that, in practice, not only subjugate the actual work by filtering it through the ship's digital solutions but also subjugate the seafarers themselves, as they move and work within and in compliance with the larger systems that govern their everyday work. With this apparently rigid organisation of maritime work in mind, in the next chapter, I shall explore the strategies that seafarers apply to counter and mitigate these rigid labour structures, both in relation to the nationality divide on board and the divisions caused by formal

hierarchies among the workers. In other words, how do seafarers' make their working lives more bearable and sustainable while they are on board?

CHAPTER 5: SHIPWORK REVISITED: RHYTHMS AND STRATEGIES

> 'Why would anyone be interested in the lives of sailors? I eat and sleep, and I don't socialise much. Most of what goes on takes place in the daytime'.
> (Filipino deck worker on the *Pacific*)

This dissertation is guided by the overarching question of how maritime labour is organised and disparately experienced by the seafarers onboard. In examining the occupational and social processes that take place on board the *Pacific* and the ways in which they intersect and are interconnected with one another, the study focuses on the particular forms of labour relations that unfold in this highly regulated, spatially bounded, and ethnically stratified work environment. In the previous chapter, I presented in detail the formalised and standardised work arrangements on the *Pacific*, the diverse ways in which crewmembers experience the magnitude of standardised labour practices and their responses to the demand that they implement these processes in the everyday work. In this chapter, I shall continue to expand on the idea of labour standardisation and the notion of a tight organisation by turning to the different strategies that the crew on board the *Pacific* apply and engage with the aim of making their working lives more tolerable and sustainable.

As an example of a temporary space *par excellence*, ships are characterised by perpetual movement and, as detailed in Chapter 4, continuous work. This is not to say, however, that seafarers are always working (see, for example, Table 1.3 for hours of work and rest). Between different job orders, in the execution of work tasks as well as during the time that they spend in what are commonly perceived as non-work activities, such as coffee breaks and mealtimes, crewmembers have opportunities to carve out some space and take their time, thus extending a degree of control to individual workers in a workplace that is otherwise so

strictly regimented. It is in this context of the highly regimented, restricted, and routinised work on board that strategies—both individual and collective—emerge to counter the subjugating mechanisms wrought by processes of standardisation and formalisation processes.

In synthesising notions of time management and applying them to the kind of work in which seafarers engage and their expectations regarding work, I demonstrate how work rhythms facilitate acts of time-tricking (Bear, 2016) and how these also intersects with notions of hierarchy and unequal power relations. However, the chapter's exploration of the strategies devised to manage and cope with the continuous and never-ending cycle of work also illuminates the work that is involved in the efforts to forge some sense of autonomy and the tight yet permeable nature of hierarchy. Ultimately, the chapter demonstrates that even attempts to humanise labour themselves require a considerable amount of work on the part of the seafarers involved.

TIME AGAINST THE 'ALL-DAY EVERYDAY GRIND'

Much of the everyday work that takes place on board the *Pacific* can be described in terms of the changing rhythms between idleness and sudden work-intensive periods within the same productive regime or unit. Owing to the work's 'staccato' character (Parry, 1999, p. 110), large variations emerge in terms of how the work is performed and reflected on. Largely, in the balance between the 'all-day everyday grind' (Thompson, 1967) on the one hand and idle periods on the other, there is some scope to exercise some discretion and develop strategies that allow the seafarers to autonomously structure certain elements of their work within the otherwise regimented, routinised, and hierarchised work schedule.

How has time—that is, the evolution of how we conceptualise and think about time—affected work discipline? E. P. Thompson asked this question in his immensely influential

text, ‘Time, work-discipline and industrial capitalism’, in which he theorised the connection between attention to time in labour and the synchronisation of labour (1967, p. 38). Perhaps his most central claim with respect to how synchronic forms of time have affected people’s work discipline is the shift from what he identified as task-orientation towards timed labour—that is, employment—and the understanding that time equates to money that this shift involves (1967, p. 61). Thompson argues that time under industrial capitalism embodies one sole relationship—that between workers and the distinction that is made between their time and that of their employer on the one hand and workers making use of their time and demonstrating their productivity to their employer on the other. In contrast to timed labour, task-orientation, broadly defined by Thompson as ‘natural’ work rhythms, is ‘more humanly comprehensible’ and exhibits little demarcation between ‘work’ and ‘life’, as well as being conceived of by people accustomed to clock-time as ‘wasteful and lacking in urgency’ (Thompson, 1967, p. 60).

Henri Lefebvre (2014) has criticised the shift from task-orientation to timed labour. His distinction between cyclical and linear time—the first arising from changing seasonal organisation and the latter having to do with urban, industrial organisation—differs from Thompson’s more static understanding of the relationship between task-orientation and timed labour in that Lefevbre conceptualises movement as taking place *through* time rather than simply *in* time. Jonathan Parry (1999) also critiqued the notion that a new conceptualisation of time is necessary, with grounds for a new kind of work discipline. His central contention is that Thompson’s claims enforce an overly romanticised approach to task-oriented time management and, effectively, eradicate the extreme variation that exists in industrial production to the extent that a newly reified distinction between ‘life’ and ‘work’ is established (the distinction between pre-modernity and modernity is also implicit here). He writes,

'Whether industrial workers in Bhilai feel alienated from factory work is a difficult question. Even within the regular BSP[40] workforce I am struck by the variation – between workers in different departments, between workers with different tasks within the same department, and above all between relatively recent recruits and the older men who joined in the pioneer days. Some take an obvious pride in their jobs, enthusiastically describing improvements they had themselves initiated – a better door-opening mechanism for the coke-oven batteries, a new fitting which allows the rollers in the Rail Mill to be changed in half the time. Others, it is obvious, lack any commitment, regard work as nothing but drudgery and are interested in doing as little of it as possible. But the one generalisation which does seem safe is that, while industrial workers are conventionally supposed to be alienated from the factory, factory work has most conspicuously alienated these neophyte proletarians from agriculture – in which they are increasingly deskilled and of which they are increasingly disdainful' (Parry, 1999, p. 119).

In his ethnography of industrial work, Parry demonstrates how workers engaged in industrial 'hard work', to use Thompson's framework, do in fact exercise varying degrees of control over their own time. For example, in highlighting the 'staccato' (Parry, 1999, p. 110) character of work, Parry argues that the amount and pace of work varies. In his description of work, Parry argues that while the jobs in the steel plant are extremely demanding, the amount of the working day spent completing them is not. Moreover, much of the work requires 'neither much skill nor such physical stamina': 'I joined […] at the beginning of the second shift at 2.00 in the afternoon. By 2.30 he was ready to start work. By 3.00 the first task was done and we spent the next hour and half chatting, drinking tea in the canteen and reading the newspaper. At 4.30 there was another job to be done. That took twenty minutes, and by then he was ready to leave. Though the second shift ends at 10.00 p.m., *Jagdish* boasts that in the four years he has been in the shop he is yet to stay beyond 5.00' (Parry, 1999, p. 122).

In the context of the *Pacific,* whereby seafarers spend most of their contracted time physically onboard, a common approach to making time pass involved invoking different

[40] Bhilai Steel Plant

conceptualisations of time. This became clear to me early on during fieldwork. While some seafarers used their contracts to track the time, others used the monthly cargo operations to keep track of the time spent aboard. Others distinguished between long or short sea voyages as a means of measuring time, while some also counted the numbers of Saturday steaks.[41] Differentiations between the type of work being performed and the different perceptions relating to this were also at play when it came to seafarers' responses to the everyday work performed on board. While some seafarers emphasised how interruptions to the daily routine, such as unforeseen and unplanned repairs, helped pass the time, others highlighted routines and the completion of repetitive and predictable jobs as efficient ways to measure time. On board the *Pacific,* as in Parry's description of work in a steel plant above, time is also subject to variation in terms of how people think about and conceptualise the relationship between work and time. Primarily, as the everyday work is characterised by a high degree of predictability and, especially for the ship's ratings, manual labour, it is possible and often necessary to strategize how to spend and use time. From his time as an AB working on deck, Emmanuel, the Filipino seafarer who held the position of second officer during my fieldwork period, illustrated this rather beautifully when he spoke about the importance of 'adding some flavour' to the everyday routines. With that said, most of the personalised time strategies aboard were interwoven with formal measurements of time, which on board the *Pacific* could be categorised as 'clock time' (Thompson, 1967): the majority of the crew, notwithstanding exceptions relating to watchkeeping and positions, work from 0800 to 1200, 1300 to 1700, and 1800 and 2000.

In relation to the rhythms of maritime work, the next section introduces ordinary seaman (OS) Max and his strategy of 'smart working'. I want to demonstrate one rhythm of shipboard labour that predominantly emerges in relation and response to the wider

[41] While the menu during the week varied, steaks were served on Saturday, without exception; hence the term 'Saturday steak'.

occupational structure, primarily drawn along the lines of time as a measurable unit that aligns with seafarers' hours of work. In contrast to cargo operations, which are—in addition to the lengthy intervals between one operation and the next—largely automated and in which the actual cargo-related work is restricted to and handled by just a few crew members, general maintenance is the dominant work-related activity. In framing general maintenance as one work rhythm, Max's 'smart working' strategy cast ship work in a different light: namely, through a focus on labour as an activity rather than continuous and yielding clear results, unlike the work rhythm that dominates during cargo operation. By approaching personalised time strategies in the context of the formal measurement of time, I highlight the amount of work that is completed between ports and while the ship is in motion. I identity the piecemeal acts of clock-time labour that structure daily life on board and demonstrate the efforts involved in the attempts to establish a sense of autonomy.

SMART WORKING

In early May, the *Pacific* was making her way to Sabine Pass, a large LNG terminal located on the Sabine River estuary in the United States. Although the impending loading operation meant that the ship would engage exclusively with cargo operation for a period of twenty hours or so, the work aboard did not yet reflect the imminent cargo operation. On the contrary, the seafarers working on deck—the ABs, OS, and deck cadet—were all out on deck engaging with familiar work, such as maintenance tasks and the other odd jobs that largely accounted for their daily tasks on board.

At that point, I had been working with the Filipino OS, Max, for quite some time and had become accustomed to following his pace and rhythm throughout the long days. Max, who was in his early twenties, was used to allowing me to tag along. He was usually highly outspoken in front of me, freely sharing his thoughts about being a seafarer and thus offering

me valuable insights into the informal organisation of maritime work. My inclusion in the covert strategies that the crew applied to everyday work, for example, was in great part due to Max's interventions, as he specifically took the bosun aside to let him know that 'they could trust me'. Max introduced ship work to me through his strategy of smart working. His strategy had little to do with the perhaps immediate connotation of the word 'smart' as indicative of cognitive and intellectual abilities. Rather, via this strategy, Max articulated a central issue that was frequently addressed on board: namely, that within the scope of work, certain liberties are taken in terms of *how* the work is completed at the intersection between the formal scope of work and informally among the crew.

Before I proceed to carve out how the crew informally organised their everyday work, I wish to pause and illustrate just how time-consuming many of the jobs on board a ship are. As I have already specified, work on board a ship involves mundane tasks, such as general maintenance, which includes painting, chipping rust, cleaning, and other odd job orders doled out by the ships' superiors. However, considering that these are jobs must be timed and completed in an orderly fashion to match specific conditions, such as weather forecasts, whether the ship is running on fuel or gas, or the length of time spent on the high seas, the size of the ship is also an important factor to include. At almost 300 meters, moving from one end of the ship to the next, manoeuvring the *Pacific* was in itself time-consuming. Moreover, working under a scorching sun and high temperatures in coveralls, heavy shoes, hardhat, and gloves can render routine work, such as painting and cleaning, highly challenging. As such, when the chief officer celebrated that they had finally been able to finish painting the entire deck following nine months of consistent work, the sense of achievement was wholly subjective.

For the most part, the regular work rhythm proceeds as follows: The seafarers work from 0800 to 1000 prior to going for their coffee break. At 1030, they return to work and

work until midday, when lunch is served. The entire ship then takes a one-hour break. From 1300 to 1500, the seafarers are back at work before taking another coffee break. From 1530 to 1700 in the afternoon, the men work before taking their dinner at 1700 and then return to work from 1800 to 2000. Effectively, the tool most frequently used by the crew, then, is their watch. The intervals between work and breaks on board the ship induced many crewmembers to regard the working day in compartmentalised time units or as 'time chunks'. To return to OS Max, at the core of his 'smart working' strategy was his ability to anticipate time. In fact, my first introduction to deck work was via Max when, prior to commencing whichever task was at hand, he would determine how much time he should set aside for it, and it was this tactic that he referred to as smart working.

Upon approaching Sabine Pass at the beginning of May, I forgot to ask Max about how much time he planned to spend on the first task that day, and we finished earlier than he had anticipated. After the morning meeting, Max and I were dispatched to clean up after a repair that had been completed the previous day. For this job, we used brooms and sweeping boards, and after we had disposed of the residues and dirt from the repair and stored the equipment back, hardly any time had passed—that is, because we were both completing the job order, we had worked too fast. Max therefore took me to see William, the ship's bosun, for further work instructions. Under the heat of the already blistering sun, we slowly walked the three hundred meters from the ship's forward to the bosun's store, located aft of the ship, where we found William. There, we were ordered to bring rust chipping equipment up to Monkey Island (see Glossary). We took our time in locating the equipment in the bosun store, which provided us with both a temporary shelter from the heat and a fresh breeze, the small door being advantageously positioned in the direction of the wind as the ship was moving. Juan, a Filipino AB in his mid-forties, helped us carry the equipment up the several flights of stairs that encircled the accommodation, and as we reached Monkey Island, the heat felt

unbearable and the three of us stood still for some time. The plan was to begin chipping rust after the coffee break at 10. With a solid hour to pass before the break, Max simply and spontaneously suggested, 'Let's hide'.

Hiding was a practice that the crew appeared to incorporate into their daily work. When the men chose to hide, they did not go to their cabins but found remote places on the ship, out of sight, so that they might avoid working. As a form of time-tricking (Bear, 2016), hiding—as used here by OS Max—extends beyond the mere etymology of the word, often associated negatively with actions taken to conceal or cover oneself. As a form of time-tricking, hiding was incorporated into the everyday tasks because the act of hiding took place in response to and within the working hours, depending on what work was being done. Accordingly, when Max said, 'let's hide', it was because he was mentally visualising how that day would enfold. On board the *Pacific*, then, hiding and anticipation were acts that were not particularly removed from one another and that constituted forms of time-tricking.

Regarding Bear's conceptualisation of time-tricking as the sense that one can outmanoeuvre, overcome, and manipulate time (2017), to hide and to anticipate are two actions whose interrelated natures align with Bear's emphasis on phronesis. Phronesis, she argues, is the 'praxis or acts of ethical and political judgement' (2016, p. 489) and 'ethics of right action that contains accounts of what time is and what it should be used for' (2016, p. 494) thus bringing agency into her discussion about time management and time strategies. In line with the persistent onboard mantra that 'every day is Monday', general maintenance, then, allows for a different pace and rhythm. As long as no pressing matters arise—unexpected repairs that the crew must tackle immediately, for example—hiding and anticipation, in the sense of time-tricking and phronesis, can be interpreted as deliberate acts of mediation in pursuit of autonomy that, Bear argues, work to 'refill time with symbolism and to regain agency' (2016, p. 496).

The instructions to begin chipping rust on Monkey Island after the coffee break at ten left us with about an hour to spare, and Max saw this time as an opportunity to rest between two different jobs. From Monkey Island, we headed for the bosun's workshop, located forward on the ship. Again, we walked slowly under the sun, and upon our arrival, Max immediately reconsidered, as the direction of the vessel moved with the wind. As we stood in the workshop's entrance, the heat felt even more oppressive to our already warm bodies and Max wanted to return to Monkey Island. Up there, he insisted, we had at least enjoyed the fresh breeze that would come in occasionally. Our return was undertaken equally slowly, but this time around, we entered the accommodation area directly from the deck. We entered one deck below A-deck—that is, the U-deck, or upper deck. The decks below U-deck, E3, E2, and E1, are part of the engine and located in the hull of the ship. While waiting for the elevator, Max had me stand in front of the elevator door, confessing that the chief engineer might be in there.

An empty elevator revealed itself as the door slid open, but Max reconsidered yet again, as he turned towards the exit, telling me we should take the stairs instead, as, after all, someone had just pushed for the elevator and we had no means of knowing whether it was an officer or rating. Overlooking the ship from Monkey Island, we saw AB Juan together with bosun William, AB Silas, OS Pablo, and cargo engineer Vincent, working on one of the ships' many pipelines. 'We should assist', Max said, and we moved, once again, but this time more swiftly than before.

CREATING TIMESPACES

The act of hiding is an interesting response to both the natural environment and occupational environment; moreover, the crewmembers' responses to and performance of their work resonates with a Lefevbrian cyclical rhythm (2013). Most frequently, in part due to the season

and the *Pacific*'s proximity to the equator during sea voyages, working in (at times) excruciating heat was the environmental challenge that exerted the most direct influence on many of the crewmembers' work rhythms. As I myself engaged in ship work throughout my fieldwork period, this was something I also experienced, and normally, upon entering the accommodation from out on deck, my coverall would be soaked with sweat. The washing and dryer machines ran continuously throughout the days, and the crewmembers needed to change their coveralls frequently. To illustrate the tolls of working under challenging environmental conditions, we may cite the seemingly simple task of transferring and aligning the ship's mooring lines. Working 'against the clock' to get this done in time for the Panama Canal transit, for instance, deck cadet Ronald explicitly sighed that it was time-consuming and hard work. Even with the aid of the ship's mooring winches, the heat made the job order challenging. 'Chief officer and captain don't think it's hard', Ronald told me, as he had commented to them in passing that the job was difficult. 'It's just transferring', the captain had replied, and Ronald had sighed.

Lefebvre defined presence as the 'facts of both nature and culture, at the same time sensible, affective and moral rather than *imaginary*'[42] (Lefevbre, 2013, p. 23). Against the substantial variations that I observed between what some people believe to be hard work or not (such as the exchange between Ronald and the chief officer and captain), the act of hiding introduces presence into the analysis. Presence, in this sense, is the movement (work) *through* time rather than simply *in* time and in response to the natural environment, and the seafarers adapt minor strategies to allow themselves to pause. Likewise, in response to the occupational environment in which a comment of the sort made by the captain about whether certain job orders are easy or hard speaks to differentiated positions, the seafarers themselves equally adapt.

[42] Lefebvre's emphasis

The speed of work and movement often shifted in accordance with the workload, and most of the seafarers had an almost inbuilt response to work according to which they prioritised change over routine. ‘If I see anything that needs to be done or someone needs assistance, you assist’, deck cadet Ronald had taught me early on. Moving quickly from Monkey Island to assist AB Juan, bosun William, AB Silas, OS Pablo, and cargo engineer Vincent, all of whom were working on one of the ship’s many pipelines, Max and I arrived and joined them. The men were disconnecting one pipeline and connecting it to another, changing its direction, and immediately upon arriving, Max joined the work by moving tools around and assisting with the block.[43]

The men connected straps to the chain block and subsequently attached them onto the pipeline for the safe manoeuvring of the large heavy pipe from one end of the pipeline to the other. After this had been completed and the cargo engineer had left for the engine, those of us who remained entered one of the cargo compressor rooms located mid-ship and simply stood still for a moment, waiting for time to pass. The time was approaching 10 AM, and William, after looking at his watch, called for a break. The six of us walked together towards the coffee bar, where sweet bread, fresh from the oven, was displayed on the table, paired with a fresh pot of coffee. Many of the deck workers took off their coveralls and swapped their hard shoes for slippers, sitting down for a rest. AB Juan took one piece of bread and left for his cabin, while OS Max and deck cadet Ronald began to play a game of chess. AB Bryan, who at that time had the 00–04 deck watch, had just gotten out of bed and appeared content to be enjoying freshly baked buns for breakfast.

As the clock struck 1030 AM, the crew changed into their work clothes again and once more headed out on deck. Up on Monkey Island, the loud sound of various rust chippers heavily chipping away at the everlasting cycle of oxidation resonated throughout the ship until

[43] A chain block, also known as a hand chain hoist, is a mechanism used to lift and lower heavy loads using a chain.

lunch was served at midday. The remainder of the working day, except for the coffee break in the afternoon, was spent on Monkey Island. Looking at the deck and on the railings, the entire process involved in rust chipping was made visible in its distinct stages, with a myriad of small squares and rectangles in assorted colours covering the entire area. While two men were occupied with chipping rust, moving continuously and changing positions between the many large and small rusted parts, the others were painting over them with different-coloured paint. Silver, orange, and, finally, white paint indicated the stages of the various rusted parts. First, two layers of silver-coloured primer, followed by orange and, finally, one layer of white paint indicated that the cycle had been completed.

The above description of a day's work alongside OS Max recounts nothing out of the ordinary. Quite the opposite, it succinctly captures the rhythms of work on board a ship whereby a large portion of the working day is spent moving from one location to another and following job orders with clearly demarcated timeframes. 'Roaming around' was a phrase that the Filipino crew used frequently in describing their work, and this description is indeed illustrative of how work aboard the *Pacific* was experienced by the crew and overlaps in several ways with Max's strategy of smart working. Instinctively, the phrase 'roam around' might appear counterintuitive when used to describe work aboard a ship; after all, when Max decided not to take the elevator, in consideration of the possibility that he might meet an officer, choosing instead to pass time inside the cargo compressor room, out of sight, while waiting for the clock to strike 10, 'roaming around' was not used to describe movement that was in any way random. Within such a regulated work environment, this would prove very difficult at any rate. Rather, roaming around and anticipating how much time one would spend on a job order while also considering the breaks on board may be thought of as acts of time appropriation, during which crewmembers managed to regain some of the time that work usually took from them.

What, then, does it mean to roam around? As I briefly alluded to by specifying the lengthy process (nine months in total) that is involved in painting the entire deck, it should be clear to the reader that many of the jobs that seafarers do on board a ship are very time-consuming. Additionally, most of the general maintenance is never-ending. There is always work to be done, and most of the seafarers experienced the everyday work as physically and mentally demanding. What might be characterised as an ordinary day out on deck with OS Max might not appear overwhelming in terms of the actual workload. Comprised primarily of two job orders—cleaning up after a repair and chipping rust—Max's ad-hoc assistance in disconnecting one of the ship's many pipelines was a third, unanticipated task that day. While this may not sound like a lot, one must bear in mind that the work was incessant, something that the seafarers repeatedly said in describing ship work.

OS Max on the move with cleaning equipment. Photo by author.

This is particularly significant for those seafarers employed within the lower echelons of the ship, who, unlike their superiors, have little to no capacity to exercise discretion when it comes to their daily work. 'Here, you don't finish the work, you finish the contract', I was told by Mateo, a Filipino third engineer in his mid-twenties. His comment rather poetically captures the essence of countless conversations I had with the Filipino crewmembers on board the *Pacific* about everyday work. The context of Mateo's comment, largely resembling Max's strategy of 'smart working', was the advice he gave me during the early stages of my

fieldwork—that is, to always ask the people with whom I was working how long they anticipated the job at hand would take. Putting his advice into action proved fruitful not only as the crew appreciated the question but also because most of them did indeed manage to complete their daily jobs by timing them to fit with the institutionalised breaks and rest hours.

Consequently, I learned that the crew would seldom commence a new job order within the time slots 08–10, 1030–12, 13–15 and 18–20. If the engine department had three job orders lined up—for example, auxiliary boiler inspection, dismantle brake assembly at port anchor, and cargo valves stock-check—they would spend the entire working day completing these job orders and manage their time efficiently so that each task would be finished close to the set time for the breaks. Similarly, on deck, the experienced ABs who were sent out after the morning meeting to test the deck water spray system, for example, would set aside the two hours 08–10 to complete this order if the amount of work scheduled for that day allowed them to do so. This approach to time management appeared to encapsulate that the kind of work in which the lower-ranked seafarers engage matters and, considering the formal, clock-time, structure of maintenance work and the perception of this kind of work as never-ending, provided a small space within which the seafarers might establish a sense of autonomy.

In many ways, the notion of ship work as relentless and continuous challenges the presumption that ships are temporary spaces. While they are temporary in the sense that seafarers come and go, this transience is not as apparent on board. For instance, the description of maritime work by the ship's electrician, Gregor, illustrates this: 'Can you imagine, well you can't. I mean, this is a job you can't stop. I mean, let's say you work somewhere, in a steel factory, refinery, or whatever, but shore based. Your shift is over, bye, bye, and you're ... You're going home, it's over for you. But here it's not. There is no stop here. You have your six, eight weeks, or twenty weeks, it doesn't matter, from beginning till

end, day, and night, you are twenty-four seven available. You're on board, you can't turn the phone off, you should pick up, someone is calling'.

Gregor's reflection in response to my question regarding his thoughts on maritime work is quite exemplary of the kind of *place* a ship is. Two main points are essential to understanding how ships are organised. First, seafarers are physically placed on board for the duration of their contracts— 'six, eight weeks, or twenty weeks'—with little to no opportunity to disembark. Second, for the duration of their contracts, the work never stops, 'you are twenty-four-seven available'. However, Gregor's comment appears to imply that there are no differences between how crewmembers conceptualise and think about their time and work, thus giving the impression that the duration of a contract, say, or one's position in the shipboard hierarchy does not influence or impact time-management and work-rhythms. However, as I have demonstrated hitherto in this chapter, the strategies that seafarers employ to soften the rigidly standardised organisation of everyday work with the aim of fostering a sense of autonomy are largely developed in response to both the duration of their contracts and the kinds of work that they carry out.

In theorising how an occupational structure shapes a working environment, the work of scholars May and Thrift (2001) is particularly insightful. In moving beyond analyses of abstract time and work discipline, they suggest a focus on four key aspects of time and how these aspects intersect in experience: representations, technologies, social discipline, and rhythms in time. Central to their claim is that the 'picture that emerges is less that of a singular and uniform social time stretching over a uniform space, than of various (and uneven) networks of time stretching in different and divergent directions across an uneven social field' (May & Thrift, 2001, p. 10). This notion that time stretches out in different and divergent directions across an uneven social field raises several important questions. As noted in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, 'few social systems have as long a tradition of rigid social

divisions, highly authoritarian, some might say, oppressive, authority structures, and difficult, if not dangerous working and living conditions, as the social system typical on board a ship' (Johansen, 1979, p. 117). In relation to this, then, how do the work rhythms described above relate to the shipboard hierarchy? What about the act of avoiding 'imaginary officers', constantly shifting the speed and pace of work, or deciding beforehand how much time to use on specific job tasks? What does this tell us about how and in which ways time is spread unevenly aboard the *Pacific*? It is these questions that I shall turn to next.

THE UNEVENNESS OF RHYTHMS AND OF TIMESPACES

On International Workers' Day, the May 1st, 2019, shortly before I learned about 'smart working' alongside OS Max, the *Pacific*'s position was somewhere in the vast Atlantic Ocean. At that time, the *Pacific* had been through the Suez Canal, bunkering and changing crew in the strait of Gibraltar in addition to a discharge operation and crew change in Portugal. For all the seafarers on board, including the ships' officers, the period had been work-intensive. Organising the substantial amount of paperwork that goes into cargo operation—permits, communication with port authorities, and with the ship's chart, to name just a few—the captain, Lars, had been working around the clock. Crew changes and the work that goes into ensuring that this transition occurs smoothly added to his workload, with people from different countries and places arriving to the same location at the same time. The Suez Canal transit, while alleviating some of his workload as the experienced river pilots came on board to navigate the ship through the shallow waters and narrow passage of the Canal, was also stressful, as Lars then became the temporary host to the many river pilots coming aboard who sought extra compensation (mostly materialised through the maritime currency of

Marlboros[44]) for their services. The chief officer and chief engineer were preoccupied with reading the cargo manual specific to the Portuguese port and preparing for the coming discharge operation and with planning and facilitating the coming bunkering operation, where the *Pacific* would take on 220 cubic meters of diesel.

During the actual Suez transit, however, everything was put on hold for the ten hours that it took the *Pacific* to transit. The deck crew were ordered to stand by, which meant that, aside from taking turns on deck making rounds, for the majority of the transit they sat in the coffee bar, almost fully dressed and with their VHFs turned on. Below, in the engine department, the three motormen took turns of four-hour watches each, providing the two off-duty motormen with the rare (as all three highlighted) opportunity to do nothing. The two third engineers completed six-hour watches and, finally, the ship's electrician was on stand-by during the transit.

Prior to entering the Canal, the deck crew had taken aboard the mandatory mooring boat and Canal projector in addition to laying out 'Suez ropes' aft and forward (see Glossary). In the case of an incident, the 'Suez ropes' would be lowered to the several tugboats that followed the *Pacific* throughout the entire transit. Both deck and engine crew enjoyed the brief respite that the Suez transit provided between the previous loading and discharge operation and bunkering. The ship's messman, Caleb, was, in fact, the only seafarer that loudly voiced his dislike of the Suez Canal transit, commenting quickly as we passed one another, 'I must have gone up to the bridge at least twenty times already', before hurrying away again, carrying popsicles for the pilots.

[44] The way in which cigarettes were treated as currency was shared with me early on in fieldwork. As ships (in general) and the *Pacific* (specifically) traded worldwide, there were large differences, I was told, in how port authorities used their brief yet impactful position of power. The port of Bonny, in Nigeria, for instance, was held as the prime example of coercive port authorities in that they sought compensation for their services. Mostly, they sought cigarettes, but exchange could also include medicine, food provisions, and equipment.

Notwithstanding the ten hours of stand-by during the Suez transit, the *Pacific* had been working intensively, in part due to the short sea voyage from loading in Ras Laffan to discharge in Portugal and partly because of bunkering and anchoring. On May 1, then, the *Pacific* had finally made her way out to the high seas, excluded from national jurisdiction (Campling & Colas, 2021, p. 72). With the contours of Europe barely visible, Lars slowed the ship down considerably. On the high seas, the nationally regulated littoral zones, with juridical regulations relating to the ship's fuel consumption and speed and privy to audits and inspections, from which the *Pacific* had departed became obsolete. With two weeks to go before the impending cargo operation, by slowing the ship's speed strategically in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, Lars simultaneously intended to slow down the pace of work on board the ship so that the crew could recuperate.

However, this act of slowing down prompts the question of who benefitted from the prolonged crossing and in what ways. Certainly, for the captain, the lengthier period of time before entering US territory meant greater flexibility of time in terms of the extensive list of documents that he would need to have ready upon entering the US coastline. The following excerpt from an interview with the captain discusses time management and how a regular working day unfolds:

Captain: 'My day starts with two fried eggs and bacon. Then, mostly, I make a quick visit to the bridge just to see that - I do not always know what I'm really looking for, actually. If we are in the middle of the Atlantic, it's not that important, but I just want to see that things are fine for myself, even if I do get notified is something is wrong. It does not always make sense, but it feels pleasant to know that the ship is going so and so fast and is approximately at this or this place and that the weather is nice [and] then you have a little overview. It is also the mailbox that controls the entire working day, large parts of it. I go in there [mailbox] and start sorting them out and I 'throw out' everything that is of less important from my emails, and reply to the ones already there, and then it's mostly working on the important emails.'

Camilla: ‘What are the emails mostly about, logistics, from the operational side, or something else?’

Captain: ‘Like earlier today, I received an email from the chart that the bunkering in Argentina has been cancelled, and that we should go straight to Chile. That’s very good, because then I could answer him, and knowing beforehand that I avoid a lot of paperwork and nonsense with regards to Argentina now that nothing happens there. And an email came in regarding some loading papers in the US that they have re-made …’

Camilla: ‘From when we were there [US] now?’

Captain: ‘Yes, typical Americans. They want to have two, three copies before it gets right. I’m a little unsure of that document they have there because it is completely identical to the document I am sitting with. But as I said, for God’s sake, just sign on my behalf, there is no difference. If you can tell me why you are releasing documents again, it would have been interesting to know, but ok. It may seem, what can I say, unimportant, but on the other hand, it is the papers that have to do with the cargo, and you just have to make arrangements.’

Camilla: ‘What are the differences that affect the working day, then?’

Captain: ‘It’s like I say, mostly when I go to bed at night, I have somewhat of a plan for what I will do the next day, which is what I did not do that day … But I do feel a little free. I have my things that I must do within a certain time. So especially if there is a lot to do or many port calls, there can quickly be a buildup of many of the things I have to do but didn’t have sufficient time and I stay late and do them. And then, of course, I have to try to keep working hours within the limits of work and rest hours policies, but as I have said before, I can often adjust ... evening and/or afternoon can be just as effective for me, to sit a little later in the evening rather than during the early hours for example. Because then there are so many people around and, yes, even if there is not really anyone who wants something special, someone always stops by for a chat.’

Camilla: ‘Is it a lot of work you think?’

Captain: ‘You know what, it varies a lot. It depends on the trade area we have, how long the voyage is, it depends on which ports we are going to. Some of them will have few to nothing of papers and others will need buckets and buckets of documentation and a thousand questions about this and that and a lot of different stuff. My initial plan is normally turned upside down when I get up in the morning and check the mailbox. Then there are 30–40 new emails, hopefully nothing more, and then I just start. I look for what is not important and what is done quickly so I can sort the mailbox and throw out what I can throw away. Because I cannot intuitively look at a list [with] over 50 emails and see what is important, I just cannot. So I change my to-do list according to the day and start to work. It’s like every day, same same.’

HALF DAY? HAPDI MATA!

From many aspects, we may interpret the decision to slow down the speed through the lens of OS Max’s ‘smart working’ idea. In response to Lars’ everyday work as a captain, which mostly dealt with ‘office-like’ work, such as emails and paperwork, slowing down the speed and thus postponing the exit from the high seas, was his way of carving out more time for himself. Whereas certain roles, such as that of a captain and of other senior officers, for example, offer greater flexibility for autonomous time management, this is not the case for lower-ranking roles and, particularly, for ratings. For the bosun William then, as for most of his Filipino shipmates, who are also hired on six-month contracts and recruited to the lower echelons of the ship, maintenance and non-‘office-work’ is the most dominant work-related activity and this kind of work, as I have demonstrated, is perceived as never-ending and continuous.

As captain Lars slowed down the speed then, the remaining crew resumed their everyday work and as such, recuperation after a work intensive period was, de facto, a return

to repetitive and familiar work routines for the *Pacific's* ratings. May 1, although an internationally celebrated day, was no different in this regard, and in reporting for duty with bosun William at 08 in the coffee bar, AB Rodrigo's contagious and heartfelt laugh could be heard on the entire corridor on A-deck. He was reacting to a joke that William had made in front of the deck crew. 'Half day', he asked aloud. Surrounded by the other deck workers, who knew what was coming and had already started smiling, William added, 'hapdi mata'. Comprised of two Tagalog words, *hapdi* and *mata*, translated to 'pain' and 'eyes', it is a joke well known to Filipino seafarers. In fact, on May 9, 2020, in a post that was shared on a Facebook group for Filipino seafarers, was a picture of a vessel accompanied by the text, 'Mandalas Na Tanong Tuwing Sabado, Halfday o Hapdi?' (Marinong Tapat, 2020). Translated into English, it means, 'Frequently asked every Saturday, half day or pain'.

The prolonged sea voyages between loading and discharge ports generally leave little time to 'handle' the actual cargo but allow considerable time for maintenance of the ship. Effectively, it is the ship's ratings who hold the ship together through continuous physical labour. The joke, then, of 'half day/*hapdi mata*', refers to the literal pain associated with working non-stop. In addition to Filipino seafarers working 'non-stop' on considerably longer contracts than their European shipmates, the shipboard hierarchy is yet another integral—even crucial—factor in time-management strategies. The following reflection by Rodrigo, one of the ship's ABs, is particularly illuminating in this regard:

AB Rodrigo: 'There's pros and cons when chief officer is roaming around and not roaming around. But if the chief officer is not roaming around there are times when the complacency, when we're not [in compliance]. I mean, we are very relaxed when doing something. But if chief officer is there, it gives us 'we need to do something'. It depends also on the chief officer, some are like 'ok, you need to rest for a while first'. There are chief officers that reminds us to not stress ourselves, because they know. They are seamen also, so they know how you feel. It depends also on, I mean, you need to understand, I mean to balance

everything. There are also chief officers that are very strict so every time they roam around, they want to see each crew moving, doing something. That if you're not doing something, he would scold ... But he is also not asking you why you are just standing. Maybe you have a time-out to have some rest, you know. We cannot … how do you say. There is a power distance. You know it's hard for us to say something. It's because he is chief officer, and we are AB's. But you know, the good thing with chief officer not roaming around, we can have the leeway to, like [laughs a little] … I'm not saying we're not doing our job if chief officer is not roaming around. For me it's more relaxed and, because if he's roaming around you will be more self-conscious'.

Camilla: 'That makes sense. The work you do on deck is not going anywhere … so if you chip rust today you will still have to chip rust next week, so it's sort of never ending'.

AB Rodrigo: 'Painting, chipping, just grinding, that's it'.

Camilla: 'So it's interesting with what you're saying about finding the balance, you know, like for a timeout or ….'

AB Rodrigo: 'Yes. You know, there are also instances where the chief officers are not asking 'why is it that you're not doing anything'. Maybe I just need to have a breath outside or something like that. So it depends on how the chief officer deals with those situations. And there's also chief officer who knows how you feel. Because for six months, two months are for adjustment period. If you reach already four, five months, what you feel is that you're only excited to go home. Yes, four to five months and then you. I mean like, you're just dreaming that … these times, you are already so tired, so I mean, that's [all] part of a seaman's' life, it's part of life'.

Despite the vertical direction of the shipboard hierarchy, the AB behind these reflections instead highlights individual variation, which I also found to hold true on board the *Pacific*. This was particularly evident in response to the ongoing discussions about the shipping company's recent rationalisation of removing the second third officer. The chief

officer has been included in the ship's watchkeeping rotation since its implementation[45] and not, as it was prior to this decision, exempted from the watchkeeping rotation and thus more flexible. More significant, however, was the impact it had on time, and this was an issue that Jonas, the chief officer, often raised. 'This ship has taken enough of my time', he would say, interestingly referring to time on two levels, noting that the ship requires substantial time while he, simultaneously, felt as though he was out of time. Because he was 'spending eight hours per day on the bridge', in particular, time simply did not add up, he often sighed. Prior to losing another third officer position, the role of chief officer was more 'hands-on' when it came to keeping up the maintenance, and chief officer Jonas was convinced that the deck crew had been far more productive then than they were now under the current watchkeeping duties. Generally, he relayed to me, when the chief officer freely organises his working day, he has a more fruitful overview of the ship, as he is physically present on deck. As the chief officer put it, 'There was less idling, that is to say, less sitting around and simply standing by until some superior walks by to give orders and to direct the work'.

Having a full overview of the deck from the bridge, one also has a full overview of the deck workers but without the ability to intervene. As such, when the on-duty chief officer observed the deck crew walking slowly and taking their time, for instance, it was often attributed to a lack of on-deck supervision. The European management repeatedly raised two key issues in response to the shipping company's rationalisation of the crew size: issues concerning safety and the general condition of the ship. Given that an officer had been removed from the ship, some suggested that the accident rate on board had risen. Before, the chief officer highlighted, accidents had rarely occurred: 'Sure, some bruises here and there, and band aids being used but never anything serious'. Second, the ship was not 'fit', as some phrased it. Among several examples, Alex, the alternating chief officer, highlighted the ship's

[45] See Table 1.3 *Hours of work and rest*

MOB boat.[46] Regardless of the weekly inspections of the MOB boat performed by the engine department's crewmembers, upon closer inspection it was revealed that mandatory equipment was missing from the MOB boat and that substantial repairs were required. 'They don't see it, so we need the chief mate to be on deck checking', Alex concludes.

Individual variation in leadership styles, as AB Rodrigo described above, is important in terms of work. Captain Lars, for example, was perceived as a very 'relaxed' captain by his crew. In reflecting on the issue of management, Lars shared a story of an old teacher he had had during his maritime educational years, who had a very visible scar that almost covered his entire forehead. In reminiscing about 'Iron Rod' (the nickname that the students assigned to the professor because of his scar), Lars was quick to provide a general description of him, explaining the rumour behind his large scar: it was said that a Filipino seafarer had attacked him with an iron rod when the professor had still been working at sea. Interestingly, Lars concluded that 'he probably deserved it'. In reflecting on his own management style then, Lars mentioned a former colleague who, according to Lars, locked his cabin door. For Lars, with over twenty years' experience at sea and from working on mixed-nationality crewed ships, the idea that he might lock his cabin door is unthinkable: he said, 'If I ever ended up in a situation where I locked my cabin, I don't have anything to do at sea'.

In contrast to the position of chief officer, the chief engineer was not tied to watchkeeping duties. Of the two alternating Norwegian chief engineers, Johnny and Gunnar, the first hardly spent any time in the engine department whilst the latter made appearances every now and then. However, given that cameras were installed around the engine area with live transmission to the chief engineer's office, they could potentially see the work that was being done from afar. During standard maintenance on one of the ship's main engines, the electrician manually moved the focus of the camera in the engine control room so that I could

[46] Man-over-board (MOB) is a rescue boat.

observe and learn about general maintenance. After a while, we went to continue completing the electrician's work orders and left the CCTV still focusing on the engineers at work. At the time, I had given little consideration to the fact that several of the engineers were working without their hardhats. Despite the fact that it was mandatory to wear a hardhat at all times, seafarers occasionally removed them. Given that the engineers often must work in difficult positions, examining equipment from various angles, sometimes in very hot temperatures, it is sometimes difficult—even impossible—to work while wearing a hardhat. As we reunited in the engine control room for the coffee break at 10 AM, one of the engineers noticed that the CCTV camera was directed towards where they had been working and asked who had changed the focus. I immediately confirmed that I had and that I had wanted to observe what they were doing. While this was not a problem, one of the engineers quickly added to the conversation, 'so the chief engineer has seen us working without our hardhats'.

Consider here, for example, Foucault's (1977) panoptic society as a system that generates and produces 'discipline' through surveillance. While not a prison, the *Pacific* certainly shares some affinity with the ominous potential of surveillance upon which a panoptic society rests. Entering one of the ship's cargo compressor rooms to wait for the clock to strike 10 and avoiding the elevator *in case* one might meet an officer, for example, are actions that acknowledge this potential, and on board the *Pacific*, surveillance is deeply connected to hierarchy. Where, then, does this leave us with the Filipino seafarers on board the *Pacific* who are working on long contracts and whose 'non-stop' work within a strongly hierarchic culture does not encourage autonomy? Amid the highly monotonous daily routines on board the *Pacific*, one particular day carries high levels of anticipation and excitement for the Filipino crewmembers: the day of the 'pre-arrival meeting' held on the bridge at the end of a sea voyage while approaching *terra firma* for either loading or discharge operation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SHORE LEAVE

The ‘pre-arrival meeting’ is typically held a day prior to arrival. It is led by the chief officer and invariably includes the same content. Primarily, the meeting is informative for the crew: it addresses crucial points pertaining to the impending coming cargo operation, such as when to commence cooling the tanks, the specifics of the terminal, the estimated time of arrival (ETA), and the estimated time required for the operation overall in addition to more technical information. Some elements of the technical information apply specifically to the ship’s officers and engineers and do not concern the remainder of the crew. This includes the loading and discharge rate, the cargo quantity, and which tanks are scheduled for loading and/or discharge. During loading in Ras Laffan, Qatar, for instance, the agreed rate was 10.400 m^3/hr, the cargo quantity was approximately 136.000 m^3 and, finally, cargo tanks 2, 3 and 4 were the tanks that would be loaded. The designated personnel involved with this work are the chief officer, the second and third officers, and the cargo engineer.

The crew, on the other hand, have different areas of responsibility during cargo operation. Mooring, safety, and security, in addition to watchman duty during operation is completed by ratings. Again, during loading in Ras Laffan, the mooring set-up was 3-3-2 forward and aft; safety measures included the rigging of fire hoses and dry powder and the use of face shields for crew working at the manifold platform and adherence to the security standards set by the port. In Ras Laffan, the security level was ‘1’, meaning ‘standard frequency check of visitors, escort between gangway and accommodation, single access door to accommodation and A-deck, continuous check of moorings and seaside for stowaways and stowaway check after departure’.

The pace of the ‘pre-arrival meetings’, well known to the seafarers, is relatively swift, and typically no follow-up questions are asked. However, the general tone and restless bodies of the crew listening in on the meeting are revealing of their anticipation of the long-awaited

answer to the question of whether there might be a possibility of shore leave. Crewmembers discuss this endlessly prior to every port stay, making tentative plans and often thinking aloud about buying gifts for their families or simply buying something for themselves. The anticipation of getting off the ship is palpable in the days prior to a cargo operation, as it represents a disruption and break from the mundane everyday work and life aboard. Illustrative of this is how the ship's deck cadet, Marco, described shore leave. 'Yes! It's very important. It's like a change of fuel. It's like *something,* something for me that when you go on shore leave, then *wow,* you go back to the ship and work and all the problems, all the previous you left there, and this will be new'.

The 'pre-arrival meeting' thus signifies the culmination of several days of anticipation and excitement over the potential (albeit brief) escape from the otherwise monotonous rhythm of life on board the *Pacific.* However, as the average cargo operation takes between fifteen to twenty hours to complete, the possibilities for shore leave are rather limited. Nonetheless, for many seafarers, this miniscule escape window is a much sought-after compensation following months of confinement. Shore leave offers the crewmembers an opportunity to change rhythm and is not necessarily coupled with grand illusions of big events or exciting activities. Rather, the act of getting off the ship is closely linked to being on board the ship. As the ship's motorman highlighted, while reminiscing about his last shore leave, 'We took out 100 USD, taking pictures, roaming around. Just to ease our life here'. I can still vividly recall the strong scent of cologne and hair gel in the air in the corridors on A-deck along with the freshly washed jeans and crisp polo shirts that Cameron, Arturo, Freddy, and Arnie wore as they awaited the ship's agent who would drive us from the terminal facility to the city centre of Dampier, Australia.

The port of Dampier was the first port I visited after having mustered aboard in South Korea only a couple of weeks earlier in January 2019. About two weeks into the fieldwork

period, I had become familiar with the ship and crew but was nonetheless still in the process of establishing relationships. As the *Pacific* slowly sailed towards the port of Dampier, I met many of the Filipino crewmembers on my way up to the bridge. This was just after breakfast, and within a short time, the *Pacific* would be fully moored and ready for the impending cargo operation to commence. The crew spoke in Tagalog, and while I did not understand them, I understood the nature of their conversations. Two English phrases recurred frequently— 'first bus' and 'second bus'. They were discussing shore leave. During the 'pre-arrival meeting' the previous day and in response to the captain's request for 'show of hands', most of the crew had raised their hands to indicate their desire to go ashore.

Nearly at berth in the port of Dampier, Australia. Photo by author.

However, only one bus departed the terminal that day carrying four seafarers, considerably fewer than might have been expected, based on the initial interest shown during

the meeting the previous day. For the seafarers, this is a familiar outcome. This is not because several seafarers changed their minds from one day to the next; rather, it represents a culmination of several factors, each with its own rationale but simultaneously responding to one another. Shore leave ties into an issue that has already been discussed widely among maritime scholars—namely, how commercial imperatives have minimised the possibilities for and feasibility of shore leave. Broadly speaking, scholars investigating these issues draw extensively on theories of mobilisation and its counterpart of immobility (see for example, Markkula, 2021a, 2021b; Borovnik, 2012, 2004; Sampson, 2003; Sekula, 1995; Steinberg, 2001, 2013). This is particularly crucial when it comes to matters concerning seafarers' well-being and mental health, particularly for those with long contracts. Closely connected (but not restricted)[47] to these issues are external policies and developments in the industry and the fact that seafarers' essential right to shore leave is facing erosion amid growing pressures in the industry. In the words of the International Transport Federation (ITF), 'shore leave is not a luxury. It is essential for seafarers who spend many weeks cooped up at their workplace, with only work mates and managers for company. Those who work at sea need to get on shore to access phones and the internet to contact family, to seek welfare, social, medical or phycological support if needed, and to have a break from the work environment' (ITF, n.d.). In line with Borovnik (2012), I argue that neoliberal globalisation on the one hand and factors relating to security, border controls, patrolling, and piracy prevention on the other hand are two immobilising influences in the shipping industry.

First, in some ports, such as Ras Laffan and Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea, shore leave is simply not allowed, while in others, such as ports in China and the US, the

[47] Ratified by law, seafarers have rights when it comes to shore leave, and the requirement under the Maritime Labour Convention (ILO) 2006 for approval of shore leave states that 'seafarers shall be granted shore leave to benefit their health and well-being and consistent with the operational requirements of their positions' (ILO, 2021, p. 21).

potential for shore leave depends on rather stringent visa regulations and on the immigration authorities, who may physically come on board the ships. While seafarers find themselves in an already challenging situation with respect to their right to shore leave, the pandemic-associated lockdowns severely impacted the world's seafaring population. Not only was their right to shore leave temporarily overturned but more than 300,000 seafarers were unable to disembark their vessels for months on end after their contracts had ended (Van Gogh, 2020). Second, the highly efficient scale of the cargo operation in addition to the human efficiency in terms of the actors involved (a major component in cargo operation is technologized via massive loading arms, as I have already noted) effectively turns port stays into 'get in, get out' affairs. Table 1.4 illustrates the July set-up of alongside watches and highlights yet another obstacle to shore leave.

ALONGSIDE WATCHES JULY 2019		
TIME	**DUTY (LOCATION)**	**NAME**
00–04: 12–16	MANIFOLD/ MOORING/ GANGWAY	Able-bodied seaman (AB) Silas Ordinary seaman (OS) Frankie
00–06: 12–18		Deck cadet Ronald
04–08: 16–20	MANIFOLD/ MOORING/ GANGWAY	Bosun Antony Able-bodied seaman (AB) Rodrigo
08–12: 20–24	MANIFOLD/ MOORING/ GANGWAY	Ordinary seaman (OS) Pablo Able-bodied seaman (AB) Juan
06–12: 18–24		Off duty motorman (MTM)

Table 1.4 (by author): Alongside watches July 2019

Table 1.4 recalls a point that Markkula (2021b) has recently made regarding the changing infrastructures of maritime logistics. Ports—previously 'the beating heart of towns in shipping circuits' (Markkula, 2021b, p. 30) [Levinson, 2016]—are now situated far from city centres (Markkula, 2021b, p. 30). The experience of going ashore in Australia illustrates this particular challenge well. Located in what might best be described as a 'No Man's Land' or a non-place, in Auge's (1995) sense of the term, the terminal facility in Dampier was located far from both the nearest city centre and from the seafarers. Moreover, the terminal policy stated that movement inside the terminal area required specialised and privatised transport. Hence, without viable means of public transportation, the crew needed to be shuttled to the city in a pre-arranged van from the terminal in which the *Pacific* was berthed. This, in turn, has consequences for the seafarers on the watches happening alongside this. For example, if the ship's on-duty OS, Pablo, is relieved from his alongside watch at 12, it is unlikely that he will have sufficient time to go ashore, and, additionally, there will be no means of transportation other than the organised shuttle bus that departed the terminal earlier that day.

The strategic location of terminals far from urban settings together with efficiency-enhancing technology developed for the loading and unloading of cargo represents a contemporary development trend in the maritime sector. As ships are becoming increasingly large (Leivestad & Schober, 2021) they also require more space. However, the struggle involved in disembarking a ship implied in the above example is hardly exclusively attributable to recent developments within the shipping industry. As early as 1849, Herman Melville, in his book *Redburn: His first voyage*, described the complex relationship between ships, the men[48] who inhabit them, and the world they traverse. Powerfully, he writes, 'I began to see, that my prospects of seeing the world as a sailor were, after all, but very

[48] The sector is still male dominated today: women represent a mere 1.2 percent of the global seafaring workforce.

doubtful; for sailors only go round the world, without going into it; and their reminiscences of travel are only a dim recollection of a chain of tap-rooms surrounding the globe, parallel with the Equator' (Melville, 2011, p. 181).

To return to the 'pre-arrival meeting' then, upon its conclusion, the most important item of information for the seafarers is not necessarily the rate of cargo or whether the ship will berth along its port or starboard side. Rather, the crew wait with bated breath for the captain to begin counting the number of men who wish to go ashore and provide some sort of temporary prognostics as to the feasibility of shore leave. In most cases, it is deemed unfeasible. The pent-up anticipation and excitement dissipate after the initial disappointment and are then transferred to the *Pacific's* next port call, where the crew will, once again, participate in the 'pre-arrival meeting' in the hope that the outcome will be different.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the everyday organisation of work on board the *Pacific*, the daily rhythms of general maintenance and monthly cargo operation might give the reader the illusion that time progresses in a linear fashion, invariably moving forward at an even pace. However, as these rhythms intersect with the differentiated experiences of life on board, due to both the length of contracts and the large variations in terms of the different work responsibilities and job orders, the situation is evidently more complex. This chapter has addressed and mapped out responses to the repetitive and continuous cycle of general maintenance from seafarers whose lengthy contracts are spent almost entirely on board. The ethnographic attention to time management and strategies involved in making work life more bearable and sustainable for seafarers who work in the lower echelons of the ship's hierarchy demonstrates how the experience of work rhythms and representation is unevenly spread.

In relation to the challenging environmental conditions and considering the tight organisation on board the *Pacific*, the ability to anticipate work is key to achieving a sense of autonomy. However, while many are successful in managing their time through the use of collective and individual strategies (i.e., what I refer to herein as acts of 'time-tricking'), these manoeuvres often fall short when confronted with the rigid shipboard hierarchy. Owing to the substantial power distances between ratings and European officers, acts of labour carry different meanings. On the one hand, these strategies are similar to one another, as illustrated by the examples of OS Max and captain Lars; on the other hand, as these strategies emerge from an already hierarchic and ethnically stratified work culture, biased interpretations of them emerge—for example, the way in which walking slowly (among deck workers) was interpreted as signifying that on-deck supervision was deficient.

Shore leave, however, offers an escape from the otherwise monotonous rhythm of life onboard the *Pacific.* This is particularly true, as I have demonstrated, for the Filipino seafarers. During my fieldwork period, the *Pacific* was berthed in twelve different countries, and shore leave was organised in five of those. Keeping in mind the short time interval of cargo operation, on average the crewmembers cleared for shore leave had somewhere between five and eight hours to spend outside the confines of the ship. Indeed, while it constituted a physical relocation away from the confines of the ship, shore leave also entailed a psychological movement in the sense that it effectively broke the ties, if only for a moment, to the occupational structure that otherwise substantially controlled the seafarers' daily rhythm.

In the next chapter, I shall continue to expand on the ways that seafarers negotiate and organise their everyday work. In particular, by elaborating on the notion of skill as it pertains to this discussion, the next chapter will explore different understandings of skill and its importance for the sustained and efficient operation of the *Pacific.*

CHAPTER 6: MARITIME SKILLS: CONTESTED UNDERSTANDINGS

What role does skill play in the occupational lives of seafarers on board, as the maritime industry continues to push for new, cost-efficient, developments in technology, infrastructure, and logistics? Recent rapid and extensive technological developments in the shipping industry have radically changed not only how the industry conceptualises competence and proficiency (i.e., the skills that are required in maritime work) but also ideas surrounding what these skills should entail and include.

The shipping industry is highly regulated in terms of formal access. Since 1978, compliance to The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (from hereon STCW) still represents the 'ticket to work' for most of the global seafaring community (IMO, 2011). Meanwhile, the industry's insatiable drive to increase automation and digitalisation has created controversy among various maritime stakeholders (Kitada & Baum-Talmor, 2022; IAMU, 2020) in relation to maritime skills. Should seafarers be expected to adapt and develop their skills to be more digitally inclined, and, if so, what are the implications of transforming the structure and nature of their skills? Most recently, in 2017, IMO's Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) included the issue of 'marine autonomous surface ships' on its agenda, while the IMO's Strategic Plan for 2018–2023 includes a key strategic direction to 'integrate new and advancing technologies in the regulatory framework' (IMO, n.d.b).

In this context of increased digitalisation and the modernisation of work, Baum-Talmor & Kitada (2022, p. 2) write, 'Industry 4.0 is different from previous revolutions as rather than replacing individuals, it has been moving rapidly across different industries while

stipulating new skill levels. This facilitated employment polarisation, between low-and high-skilled non-routine jobs, while jobs at medium skill levels have declined'. How are these debates—both the debates about the regulatory frameworks and public debates among maritime stakeholders—experienced from an occupational and practical perspective on board vessels such as the *Pacific*? As has thoroughly been discussed in the existing research, the acquisition of competency and proficiency (i.e., skills) concerns more than the objective measurement of credentials.[49] In this chapter, I shall examine different understandings of skill and explore their expressions in light of the *Pacific*'s multinational crew composition and hierarchic organisation.

THE INCIDENT IN QATAR

At the beginning of April 2019, at 0450 AM one morning, the loud, persistent ringing of the telephone in my cabin let me know that the *Pacific* had reached her destination. The wake-up call came from the on-duty navigational officer on the bridge. In the coffee bar on A-deck, I joined the other ratings as we awaited mooring instructions. Considering how early it was, the coffee bar was quiet, and until the orders began sounding through the VHF, most of us simply stared into thin air. The crew quickly dispersed from the coffee bar and assumed their mooring positions. While they all knew where to go to safeguard in the event of a misunderstanding or miscommunication, the ship's mooring duties were also printed out and displayed in several locations throughout the accommodation quarters. In total, twelve crewmembers, divided into two groups of six, headed to the forecastle and poop deck (the ship's aft), respectively. In coordination with the chief officer, two off-duty officers who were overseeing the mooring from the bridge reported from deck. Following clearance from the

[49] See for example Berg, 1970 and Collins, 1979 for a critique of human capital theory.

officers on site, the crew left the mooring stations only to commence alongside watches until the loading operation had been completed.

After nearly three months on board the *Pacific*, I had become accustomed to the intervals between loading and discharge operations, which took place every three to four weeks. When I signed on in South Korea in January 2019, the vessel's cargo was discharged onto land, and within a month, cargo was again loaded onto the *Pacific*'s cargo tanks in the port of Dampier, Australia. The ship's next port call seventeen days later was a discharge operation in China, followed by a loading operation in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. In mid-March, after completing a discharge operation in Joetsu, Japan, the *Pacific* made her way through the Indian Ocean, crossing the heavily maritime-trafficked Malacca Strait towards the port of Ras Laffan, Qatar. There, the *Pacific* was scheduled to load cargo.

The crew are divided into watches depending on the ETA. In Ras Laffan, as the ETA was early, pre-dawn, watches had been implemented since the day prior to arrival. With the exception of one motorman, the engine department held four-hour watches, which were spent in the engine control room in addition to carrying out rounds in the engine area. The cargo engineer and chief officer, in charge of operations, are on duty throughout the entire operation and are on special alert during the most critical moments of the process. The same applies to the captain and chief engineer. The ship's ratings, including the off-duty motorman, completed six-hour watches.

During the loading operation in Qatar, I joined motorman Cato and OS Max, who were assigned to guard the ship's gangway. Shortly after mooring, the loading master[50] and surveyor came aboard, and Max and Cato, both having spent countless hours on the gangway watch and familiar as they were, noted down their names and positions. While Max escorted

[50] The designated person from the terminal facility in charge of overseeing the operation.

them to the accommodation, Cato announced their names on the VHF that he was carrying. The gangway watch is tedious, and aside from other crewmembers stopping by for a chat during their rounds on deck and escorting designated personnel involved with operations, just as Cato and Max had with the loading master and surveyor, one mostly sits and waits for the time to pass and for the watch to be over.

Joined by bosun William during his inspection round of the moorings, the three of us were about to chime in on Cato's comment about seafarers having 'strong hearts', when the *Pacific* experienced a sudden blackout. Although it was still daylight, the ship became considerably darker as the floodlights shut off, and before the emergency generator was activated, the vessel went silent. 'This is not supposed to happen', I remember Max saying. After the emergency generator was activated, William, Cato, Max, and I paused in anticipation. In the absence of the familiar sound of the ship's alarm and without any instructions or information being communicated via VHF, the men resumed their positions. William continued his round on deck, and Max and Cato both sat down in front of the gangway connecting the scaffold to the vessel.

Inside the accommodation, however, in the cargo control room (CCR) on C-deck and in the engine control room below A-deck, a series of actions were set in motion in response to the blackout. Both the electrician and chief engineer, I was later informed, were seen running down the stairs immediately after the blackout. There, they met with the second engineer Pedro, and the third engineer Mateo, who were both on duty. The four men were accompanied by the off-duty motorman, Jake. While it was not his responsibility, he later told me that he had mostly observed but wanted to provide an extra set of hands should the situation require it in addition to wanting to learn from what was unfolding.

In the CCR, the atmosphere was hectic. Cargo engineer Vincent was preoccupied with monitoring the cargo in light of the unanticipated event that was unfolding. Immediately after

the power failure, the vessel's emergency shutdown (ESD) system was activated for a quick and safe shutdown of the transfer pump and all bunkering system valves in case of an emergency. Jonas and Lars were both on the ship's phone—the captain Lars with the surveyor and chief officer Jonas with the terminal facilities, both concerned about the cause of the blackout and potential delays. Without immediately knowing what had caused the blackout—chief officer Jonas also intentionally delayed calling the engine control room in the belief that it would only exacerbate the stress they were already experiencing—the captain left the CCR only to return shortly after, in uniform—a sign that I interpreted as his preparation for the eventuality that port-side representatives might come aboard.

ANALYSING THE INCIDENT IN QATAR AS AN UNFORESEEN EVENT

Drawing on Laura Bear's (2014) work on accidents as important sites for analysis, the incident in Qatar serves as a particularly revealing lens that facilitates the exploration of different understandings of skill, precisely because of the irregularity and potentially severe financial impact of the event described. Much to the relief of the on-duty officers, the cause of the blackout was detected relatively quickly, and the potential impact—both financial and social—was thus drastically reduced. In short, the cause was related to what is termed 'gas-tripping'. For some time prior to the operation in Qatar, the engine department had experienced a series of errors relating to gas-tripping that would, consequently, activate the alarm system. Occasionally, only one or a few alarms were activated, but frequently, as was the case in Qatar, several alarms sounded simultaneously, thus causing the *Pacific*'s brief power failure. As the initial hectic atmosphere in the CCR simmered down to a normal level again, the chief officer attempted to comprehend what had happened: 'We're in this no-blame

work setting, right. We're not allowed to point fingers', he said, and continued, 'but if something *really* goes wrong, we're the ones that are blamed. That's not right either'. The 'we' in Jonas' comment was a reference to himself, the captain, and the chief engineer, a reference that he often made during conversations concerning onboard work situations. Although the root cause of the incident had yet to be fully investigated, he had already begun to contemplate that which he perceived as a repetitive pattern on board the vessel—namely, what he termed a denial of liability when it came to assuming responsibility. 'It's always a technical error, 98 percent of the time, at least!', he told me, half-joking, half-serious.

Jonas was not the only one to address the alleged 'technical errors' in an industry as vocal as the shipping industry when it comes to the impact of 'human errors'. The phrase '80 percent of casualties are caused by human error' is widely cited in the industry with considerable variation depending on the precise topic with which it intersects (see, for example, Wrobel, 2021 for a critique of this myth). A common denominator across sectors concerns the longstanding issue of safety in the maritime industry, but increasingly, the 'human error element' is included in contested debates surrounding the advancement of technology and the potential benefits of autonomous or unmanned ships (Kitada et al., 2019; Porathe et al., 2018). The European management on board shared the perception of their Filipino colleagues as particularly hesitant or reluctant to assume responsibility for erroneous actions, as the chief officer mentioned above appeared to suggest. On one occasion, the chief engineer cited an example from the engine department concerning a minor accident involving a motorman. 'It was really insignificant, nothing wrong at all', the chief engineer recalled. A week and a half later, however, as per company policy, he received the report describing the accident, and its content did not align at all with how he had perceived the situation. 'Fairy-tale, fraud, and deception', he said of the report. 'Why is it so damn hard to admit you made a mistake? I make mistakes every day', he sighed rhetorically.

In a similar vein, nearly three months after port call in Mexico, the captain was *accidentally* informed about a potentially dangerous miscalculation that had occurred in the rigging of the gangway. The emphasis on *accidentally* here is intentional as it was the word that he used to describe how the ship's Filipino second officer had made a comment about the gangway, which was apparently wholly unrelated to said error. However, the captain detected an abnormality in the second officer's description and pushed for additional information, he later told me. From what he managed to gather, the gangway had not been properly adjusted to the intersection ocean/vessel, and consequently, as the gangway was submerged, collateral movement from the waves significantly undermined the gangway's stability, which could have resulted people falling off or losing their balance. 'Why am I first hearing about this now, and not when it happened? How can we learn from a near-miss from three months ago?', he asked.

Finally, the perception shared by European management on board, who lacked confidence in how certain aspects of the everyday work were communicated or, rather, concealed, often emerged in situations that were de facto neither dangerous nor particularly crucial for the everyday safe operation of the vessel. For example, as regulated by the international ISPS Code,[51] certain doors on deck must be properly locked and secured using a padlock. On board the *Pacific*, the padlock of one such door was left unlocked. This was pointed out by a security representative during a port stay, but, as I was told by the chief officer, it did not take long before he came across the same door out on deck, still open. While he acknowledged the practical benefit to the door being open, which would relieve crewmembers from making extra trips to the bridge or finding the ship's bosun every time they entered the room, it was nonetheless against regulations. Again, he said, 'We are the last

[51] The ISPS Code provides a framework through which ships and port facilities can co-operate to detect and deter acts which pose a threat to maritime security.

ones to know about these situations. If you are not hands-on, either physically doing it yourself or overseeing, jobs might not get done. That's just how it is'.

The emphasis on being hands-on is particularly interesting here, especially when read against the STWC as a global regulatory body which governs access. First, the STCW Code is designed to ensure that all maritime personnel are competent and proficient in their work and that, regardless of nationality, age, sexual orientation, or gender, if an AB, second officer, motorman, or third engineer steps onto a ship, no one will question their competency. Second, in addition to aiding the procurement of competent maritime personnel and, therefore, by providing a safeguard against substandard seafarers, the STCW can also be interpreted as a tool to remove—or at least mitigate—discriminatory practices or bias towards seafarers from certain countries, say, or against women[52] in the industry, as the STCW's official mandate is to regulate access in terms of both legal responsibilities and mandatory provisions on competence.

However, as chief engineer Gunnar said, 'honestly, the Filipinos have these gilt-edged certificates but if you make in-depth inquiries about their content, you discover that, at times, they don't know what they're about, really'. In addition, then, to the formal requirements, such as the STCW, for example, Gunnar (much like his other European shipmates) used supplementary parameters to assess skills and skillsets on board, where 'being hands-on' was particularly valued. For example, in the aftermath of the blackout, Jake, the Filipino motorman who observed the engineers as they worked to resolve the problem in the engine control room, was later mentioned by Gunnar. Despite having been preoccupied, Gunnar had noticed Jake entering the room and, during our conversation, he included Jake to his list of potential candidates for promotion. According to Gunnar, Jake possessed the key skills—

[52] Today, women represent only 1.2 percent of the global seafarer workforce, as per the BIMCO/ICS Seafarer Workforce Report. This represents a positive trend in gender balance, with the report estimating that 24,059 women serve as seafarers, which is a 45.8 percent increase compared with the 2015 report.

resourcefulness and the ability to adapt to his surroundings—that Gunnar emphasised in his personal assessment of important occupational skills.

Laura Bear has described accidents as providing 'an unusual but important site from which to analyse contemporary capitalism' (Bear, 2014, p. 71). In her work on the Hooghly River, Bear examines the aftermath of a containership running aground, the controversies and debates that ensued as well as the impact that the grounding had on the river pilot, Ajeet, who was responsible for navigating the containership through the narrow river. Similarly, the incident in Ras Laffan also provides an important site of analysis. From a perspective that highlights digitisation and automation, the incident illustrates the various items of safety equipment installed for the purpose of monitoring and safeguarding a vessel. The automated activation of the emergency generator and the highly technologically advanced cargo equipment exemplify the human–technology relationships on board the *Pacific*, where we find seafarers who are involved in making the best possible decisions based on the data available. However, the incident is interesting for several other reasons. In particular, as an unforeseen event (i.e., something that occurs out of the ordinary) the blackout brought to the surface previously unarticulated perceptions of skill and culturally contingent understandings of the experience of labour. As Bear notes after Ajeet's accident, the question of skill surfaced, and the marine officers' responses to the accident cited inexperience as the cause (Bear, 2014, p. 83). How are we to understand the proceedings that took place in the aftermath of the blackout aboard the *Pacific?*

THE AMBIGUOUS NATURE OF SKILL

From an onboard perspective, events such as the blackout serve to illustrate two issues that are of particular importance here, both relating to skill and the experience of labour. Freidson

argues that, as a keyword, 'skill' is ambiguous (Freidson, 2001, p. 24). It can equally represent the amount and kind of specialised training that distinguishes certain members of the labour force as well as connoting different representations of skill as tacit—a pre-logical phase of knowing (Polanyi, 1964). As Polanyi (1967, p. 4) wrote in *The Tacit Dimension,* we should start from the fact that 'we can know more than we can tell'. Aboard the *Pacific*, Arnie, the ship's electrician, touches on the topic of the amount and type of specialised training required in his description of the IMO. 'That's the IMO. Because, you see, it's way too complicated. The system is huge, I mean, it's a monster. A monster made up of checklists and paperwork. It's enormous, the amount of paper, and PDF files, you know. It's terabytes and terabytes, you see, and they [IMO] made it'.

Resonating to some extent with chief engineer Gunnar's description of the 'gilt-edged' certificates that he believed some Filipino seafarers had obtained and the perception of Filipino seafarers as hesitant and reluctant to assume responsibility for errors, Arnie's statement about the substantial reporting requirement to the IMO seem to suggest that formal requirements are not necessarily indicative of whether or not a seafarer is skilled. Most certainly, resourcefulness and adaptation to one's environment—skills that are not typically acquired through formal schooling and vocational training based on exams—seemed decisive in Gunnar's noticing Jake, the ship's motorman. Conversely, the importance of being hands-on was emphasised by the European management on board.

In addition, it is important to note that even formalised and regulated requirements can be contested and that they are susceptible to both developments and contestations. Here, I am thinking about the controversies surrounding maritime schools and vocational training in the Philippines. After deficiencies in the country's STCW compliance came to light in an audit in 2006, the Philippines came under pressure from the EU. A quick news search illustrates the severity of the issue: 'Thousands of Filipino seafarers face Europe ban due to training

"deficiencies"' (Mabasa, 2022), 'Filipino seafarers escape EU ban despite failing EMSA (European Maritime Safety Agency) audit' (Hand, 2014) and finally, a headline alluding to the essential—and indispensable—position that the Philippines holds, with Filipino seafarers accounting for thirty percent of around 1.2 million seafarers worldwide: 'Imagine an EU ban on Filipino seafarers' (Uno, 2013).

On board the *Pacific,* European management often referred to this situation in both their personal and professional evaluation and assessment of their Filipino colleagues and in their understandings around skill that surfaced during the incident in Ras Laffan. This was largely articulated through the idiom of 'us' versus 'them'. Similar to Markkula (2021a), who has explored the ways in which Filipino seafarers integrate the historical tradition of sea travel as a particularly important factor in their 'natural' disposition for maritime work, Norwegian seafarers[53] also perceive their skills as culturally contingent. On board a mixed nationality-crewed vessel like the *Pacific,* such understandings become particularly salient in relation to the everyday organisation of labour. As one Norwegian officer stated, 'times have changed considerably from when one shook a palm tree, and a Filipino seafarer appeared'.

While the incident in Qatar had only minor consequences and was quickly resolved, it represented a 'sudden unpredicted irruption into work routine' (Bear, 2014, p. 74). As I have argued elsewhere in the dissertation and in line with how other scholars have argued (for example, Sampson, 2021a, 2021b; Devereux, 2021; Pauksztat, 2017; Thiruvasagam & Rengamani, 2015; King, 2000), the everyday work carried out on board ships mainly consists of repetitive job orders and, typically, a high degree of predictability. As a result of such tight organisation, whereby everyone knows where to be and what to do and what their roles and

[53] The Norwegian society has a long maritime tradition and consequently, much of the macro-economic success Norway has experienced can be viewed in relation to its activities at sea (Berggreen et al., 1989a, 1989b). Norway's 'natural' maritime disposition was further strengthened through recruitment, which have traditionally been overrepresented by smaller places; rural areas and placed that already had familiarity and traditions of fishing and/or relations to the coast (Bjørklund & Jensen, 1989, p. 67-72).

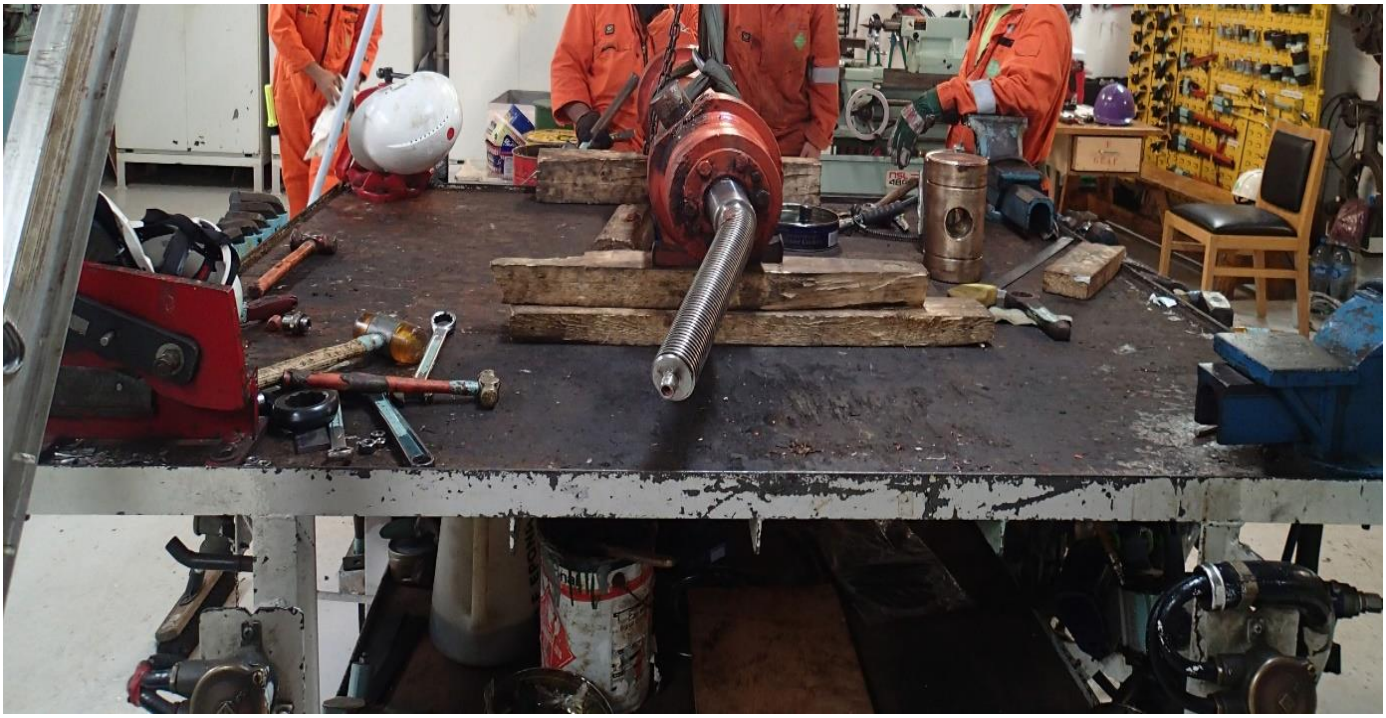
positions are, incidents that are out of the ordinary—even those that are minor in size and scale—tell important stories. As one officer said rather poetically in relation to logging his daily jobs into the ship's software, while firmly believing that no one really read his reports, 'It's like a fridge. Nobody cares about how it works until the sausages and milk have gone bad'.

This officer's comment, I believe, captures a central yet often underestimated theme in discussions on maritime skills, to which I shall now turn my attention—namely, how understandings regarding skill capture a wide array of social and contingent processes that, much like the refrigerator's function becoming salient only upon failure, are latent and enmeshed in the occupational maritime structure, where both outcomes—failure and/or continuity—render the interdependency of relations on board explicit. Diverse explanations as to why 'personal skills' are more important than 'job skills' (see Rose, 1994, pp. 246–249) in many occupations can be found in the existing literature. The relationship between the two, however, has less frequently been studied empirically, with the emphasis often placed on the social actions that go into non-standardised labour. In the everyday, routinised work on board the *Pacific,* in contrast to the potentially severe situation in Ras Laffan, understandings of skill were first and foremost expressed in relational situations: through different standards and strategies for work execution among crewmembers, perceptions of practical and theoretical knowledge, and, finally, in relation to career progression.

In what follows, I investigate the significant variation in the arsenal of skills, qualities, and abilities that the seafarers aboard the *Pacific* apply in different scenarios. Depending on what is required in work-related surroundings, this also entails a reflection on the significance of the social and contingent dimensions of skill in a hierarchised and multicultural work environment. As I have already observed in the dissertation's earlier chapters, most of the work performed aboard a vessel of this type does not involve the technologically advanced

LNG cargo. This is due in part to the intervals between operations and because LNG is stored inside the ship's tanks, tucked away from the seafarers' everyday spaces. Rather, most of the work is manual routine labour that concerns with the actual ship, recalling Fisher and Botticello's 'Machine-made lace, the spaces of skilled practices and the paradoxes of contemporary craft production' (2018). The paradoxes surrounding contemporary factory-based craft production in England that the authors outline are articulated through attention to the distribution and concentration of both material and immaterial resources and the potential knowledge and skill that are inherent in them. They write, 'While a factory may seem a counter-intuitive place for insights into skilled practice or craft, we shall show how […] workers have gained renewed agency as rare, skilled artisans in a craft-based mode of creative production' (Fisher & Botticello, 2018, p. 50). In reflecting on the significance and potential of the social and contingent dimensions of skill in both a 'bounded, enclosed space' (Massey, 1994, p. 168) and a logistical environment (Carse, 2018), I argue that the probability of being recognised as skilful is dependent upon a particular understanding of skill, where, for some seafarers, social access to skills is enabled while other crewmembers' access is constrained.

The hands-on process of cleaning up oil in the vessel's funnel. Photo by author.



Repair of the vessel's anchor brake in the engine department workshop. Photo by author.

DIFFERENT PEOPLE, DIFFERENT STANDARDS

During crew change in Japan, in mid-March, Marco signed on as the ship's deck cadet. Aged in his late twenties, as his time aboard the *Pacific* progressed, so too did our relationship. An important factor in our becoming close was that the bosun often paired us in the deck department's morning meetings. This was Marco's first contract as a deck cadet, and his 'eagerness to learn', as he put it, occasionally got in the way of interpersonal relationships with his fellow shipmates on deck. 'The deck is routine, but it is very personal at the same time. It depends on whether you want to learn or not—different people, different standards', he told me, as we were both engaged in degreasing the deck following a port stay—a standard work order after either loading or discharge operations, since residues from the ship's mooring lines leave large parts of the deck covered in grease. I found Marco's comment about there being different ways to execute even seemingly simple orders to be revealing of the considerable scope for negotiation in the dynamic between hierarchy and authority.

For Marco, a recurring challenge of which he often spoke was his relationship and dynamic with the *Pacific*'s OS, Frankie. Despite his relatively young age, Frankie, who was still in his late twenties, had sailed as an OS for over nine years, most of which were spent aboard the *Pacific* or other vessels operated by the same Norwegian shipping company. Effectively, while OS Frankie was a low-ranked rating on board—a position he had no desire to advance from, as he often emphasised—he was also the deck worker with the most extensive experience aboard the *Pacific*. During everyday routine work, then, Frankie would make comments, such as 'this is how we normally do this' or 'this is how we did it before' in reference to apparently straightforward manual work orders, such as degreasing the deck, securing equipment, or transferring mooring lines. Frankie's corrections were often interpreted as insults by many of the deck workers. As Marco explained, 'instead of viewing situations and helping out, they will just steal your job'. Frankie, in this sense, was

intervening and ‘stealing’ jobs, which was highlighted by many of those on board, in both the deck and engine department, as a particularly severe occupational offense.

Frankie, however, shared the view that the so-called ‘stealing of jobs’ was offensive, but in the context of his being experienced and familiar with the vessel, he performed the work efficiently and was not the only deck member who emphasised the importance of experience. The bosun William, for example, prided himself in being a father figure for the younger deck workers and often highlighted how the position of bosun—the link between officers and ratings—provided him with a particular insight into the two chief officers’ (Jonas and Alex) methods and approach to work. This, he assured me, was an important aspect of managing the deck departments and particularly the young and inexperienced deck workers, such as OS Pablo and Max, and the deck cadets, Ronald and Marco.

Employing Ingold’s (2000, p. 416) concept of enskillment, defined as ‘understanding in practice’, scholar Mike Brown (2017) asserted a correlation between identity and environment. Based in part on auto-ethnographic inquiry, Brown argued that embodied experiences are central to how identity as an offshore sailor is achieved. Contingent upon being attuned to one’s environment, Brown relates skill to embodied knowledge, noting, ‘My claim to be an offshore sailor is contingent upon my ability to perform the requisite roles that I perceive to be ‘properties’ of a competent sailor (e.g., the ability to steer, handle sails, navigate) […] My feelings of *being* an offshore sailor are a reflection of the shift in my perception regarding my level of competence/skill. It is my assessment of my ability that matters – not that of an observer’ (2017, pp. 691–692).

OS Frankie’s work corrections and bosun William’s insight into the alternating chief officers’ different methods and styles of work are both examples that can be analysed as embodied capacities that, through experiences over time, are contingent upon the particular environment aboard the *Pacific*. The emphasis on experience and learning in Frankie’s and

William's descriptions were also commonly voiced by European management. In a recorded interview with the Norwegian captain, Peter, for example, the issue of skill arose, and Peter stated that 'skill is how you measure it'. In an attempt to further clarify this, he said, 'It can be as straightforward as there being a bucket left out on the deck for weeks without anyone putting it where it belongs. If the *right person* comes along, he takes the bucket with him while others would simply walk by'.

In light of this, while Brown rightly points out a correlation between identity and environment, he fails to ask the timely question of whose environment we are discussing. That is, on board a vessel like the *Pacific*, the level of competence and skill are predominantly assessed by 'observers', such as the European management,[54] and not necessarily by the subjective assessment of those who possess the skills. Given that the European management holds the top positions on board, the assessment of issues such as who 'the right persons' are, as described by the captain, is the result of a particular and culturally contingent narrative of experience. As Ashley Carse puts it, 'In the confined waters where maritime routes converge, increased ships size and traffic may render a pilot's embodied capacity to 'feel' how ships handle in particular environments more – not less – important' (2020, p. 1). However, the 'feel' is not equally distributed and, therefore, is not equally valued among and available to all seafarers on board, a point that I believe Carse makes with the observation that 'the emergence of a logistical environment that elevates the status of some forms of embodied knowledge […] it diminishes others' (Carse, 2020, p. 1).

Who are the 'right persons' on board the *Pacific*? Let us begin with Peter. With over twenty years of maritime experience, Peter was rather outspoken when it came to his views on the industry's development over the years. A great deal had changed over the course of his

[54] The 'end-of-contract evaluation' to which Filipino seafarers are subjected and which are written by, in the case of the *Pacific*, European management, for example, are decisive in terms of whether a Filipino seafarer will be deemed eligible for both re-hire and promotions.

career since his first sea voyage, as the industry introduced new rules and regulations and replaced or sometimes removed altogether previously approved approaches to maritime work. His entrance into the maritime world was, in Peter's own words, the outcome of a work fair that his high school had organised, where among the numerous stands, he found information and pamphlets on the merchant fleet and thought to himself that it seemed like a good fit for him: 'It suited me', was Peter's choice of words.

After high school, he signed on as a ship's mechanic in an apprentice position, which relieved the shipping company for whom he was working of the commitment of employment, as they would have been obliged to offer him a longer-term job if he had signed on as a cadet. During his leisure time, however, Peter completed the mandatory requirements of the cadet book and was thus qualified to take on work as an able seaman (AB). By accumulating experience (also termed 'sea duty'), Peter ascended the ranks, from AB to third officer, third officer to second, second officer to junior chief officer, and from chief officer to his current position as captain. 'At sea, this is quite normal. You reach a certain position and must spend time to learn the position until you get to the point where you master the responsibilities. Moving on then, if you want to continue the career trajectory, you already attempt to learn about the next position', he observed in relation to his own trajectory.

Peter was not alone in highlighting experience and learning as essential components of skill. Chief engineer, Gunnar, for example, introduced the term 'system understanding' to me in a conversation. He stated, 'Here on board, an action is never isolated. There will always be consequences and repercussions in four or five links. But people onboard, regardless of nationality, turn valve X, then turn the other valve to the position marked Y – and hold their breath. Did it turn out right?' In our conversation, Gunnar was making a point about theoretical knowledge replacing practical experience. System understanding, he argued, was

achieved through experience, allowing seafarers to perceive the wider ramifications of their piecemeal actions.

Both captains on board, Peter and Lars, made similar observations: ‘Automation and technology are the reason’, Lars observed, as we discussed Gunnar’s comment regarding how to understand the intricate system of technology, where even miniscule actions would exert an influence and elicit some form of reaction. The conversation also led Lars to reflect on previous experiences, and he thought about a particularly digitally advanced vessel on which he had worked. ‘Screentime’, he said, recalling how most of the everyday work unfolded through computerised images displaying the ship’s equipment. Later in his career, he transferred to another vessel, on which the work procedures that had been executed through computer screen on the previous vessel were now completed manually. ‘You find the valves; you find the lines and work physically and in contact with the machinery’, he explained. He further argued, ‘there’s a lot of ad-hoc solutions on board that people learn from when things go wrong’. Jake, the young motorman who Gunnar first noticed during the blackout in Qatar, appeared to encompass several of the traits mentioned above. As Jake himself observed in relation to the incident, part of his reason for going down to the engine control room, in addition to providing an extra pair of hands, was to learn. Similar to Peter’s description of his career trajectory as a series of attempts to learn as much as he could about the next position, Jake’s decision to be present in the blackout during his off-duty time was precisely the sort of action that, to paraphrase Peter, the ‘right people’ would take.

Like the deck cadet, Marco, whose ‘eagerness to learn’ sometimes impeded his interpersonal relationships, Jake also spoke about his career drive and his desire to become a chief engineer. In fact, during a recorded interview, he shared his thoughts on the engine department, and, in his reflection, he revealed some of his understandings with respect to skill and the level of knowledge required in the work: ‘Seeing everything down in the engine. It’s

like a huge tree with lots of branches in it, how everything works, all the machinery is connected to make it perfect, to make everything perfect. And we are the people who take care of it, and we make sure that everything is right, that everything is normal and that everything works perfectly'. I found Jake's comparison of the ship's engine area to a large tree with expanding branches illuminating and by no means trite. For those unfamiliar with how engine areas of large ships are designed, the tree metaphor may function as an apt mental image. Spanning numerous floors, three below the engine control room—the only air-conditioned space below the ships' main deck—stairs connect the engine from the highest point of the vessel, where the ship's funnel is located, to three decks below the engine control, with the ship's hull serving as the barrier between the ocean and the ship. It is a highly technologically advanced machinery and, as Jake implies, the various components of the sprawling machinery are all connected.

As Jake's statement poetically suggests, the machinery is highly technologically advanced and interdependent on other parts: if one element fails or experiences a stoppage, complications will likely ensue in the system at large. Propelled by four dual-fuel engines,[55] the physical work constantly generates noise and causes temperatures to run high, and correct personal protection equipment—helmet, ear plugs, safety shoes, and coverall—are always required when moving and working in these areas. The metaphor of the engine, then, as a tree with connecting branches, each with a unique meaning and direction, is illustrative of the actual work that takes place but also reveals a narrative regarding the organisation of labour in the engine department. Like the other departments on board, it is hierarchical, and the responsibilities associated with the position of motorman do not include up-close work on the

[55] A dual-fuel engine is a diesel engine that can run on both gaseous and liquid fuels

actual machinery or its corresponding technological aids in the engine control room. As the chief engineer noted, 'essentially, the motorman is the engineer's helper'.

In the everyday routine work in the engine department, Jake was often assigned to work with them during morning meetings, perhaps also because the Filipino engineers had taken notice of Jake's career drive. However, these opportunities did not exempt him from his responsibilities as the ship's motorman and, like the deck cadet Marco, Jake experienced similar challenges with a more experienced motorman, Mario. In his early forties, Mario's approach to everyday routine labour resembled OS Frankie's. He had not ambition to climb the occupational ladder; rather, his motives for working at sea were financial in nature, and, like many others on board, he asserted that he would retire when he had saved up enough money or when the financial responsibilities required to provide for his family had decreased, he would retire.

However, while motivated by money, Mario's extensive experience was evident in his approach to much of the work, as he sometimes 'jumped into' situations and took charge in a manner similar to that of Frankie on deck. On one occasion, during the daily round in the engine, Jake and I were cleaning an oil spill from one of the generators, and Jake, considerably less experienced than Mario, was 'trouble-shooting' the situation.[56] Looking at the generator, he was unsure where the spill had come from and, therefore, which part he should disassemble to repair the leak. Suddenly, Mario passed by us and, within what seemed like seconds at the time, he jumped down the ledger to where Jake and I were assessing the situation and quickly disassembled the correct part, cleaned it, and re-assembled. Jake, taken aback by Mario's direct approach, stood idly by, and while he did not express any discontent at that moment, it was evident from his reaction—his facial expression and the way in which

[56] Jake had even obtained a certificate from his participation in a course entitled 'Trouble-shooting', which he took at a training facility in the Philippines.

he attempted to physically interfere with Mario—that he was not happy with what had just occurred. Indeed, once Jake and I continued with the round, Jake spoke about how Mario had 'stolen his work'.

THE QUALIFICATIONS LANDSCAPE

The ethnographic examples that I have presented from on board the *Pacific* are particularly interesting in light of the reoccurring topic of skill in current debates across the extent of the maritime industry (see IAMU, 2018; ITF's Seafarer Bulletin, 2020). The podcast *The Shipping Exchange*, for instance, helpfully summarises several key issues and concerns in their 2019 episode entitled 'Future Skills', whose episode description states: 'We explore the potential impact of new technologies on maritime training, the hard and soft skills seafarers require for the future and investigate the changing qualifications landscape' (Fisher, 2019).

Aboard the *Pacific,* the everyday work was, as noted above, often unrelated to the actual cargo operation. This is not to say that the cargo is less important—on the contrary, LNG requires highly trained seafarers with specialised skills: 'Captains, chief engineers, chief officers, second engineer officers and any person, such as a cargo officer or cargo engineer officer, with immediate responsibility for loading, discharging and care in transit or handling of cargo in a liquefied gas tanker (LPG & LNG) are required to have completed (1) MCA-approved specialised liquefied gas tanker training programme covering the syllabus in paragraphs 22 to 34 of section A-V/1 of the STCW Code, (2) at least 3 months sea service on a liquefied gas tanker (MGN 95)'.[57]

With such high levels of both competence and experience required for this particular segment of the shipping industry, recruitment and transfer of knowledge emerge as crucial.

[57] In addition to the other STCW mandated requirements for maritime work according to ranks.

However, it can also create challenges: in the context of the widespread use of flags of convenience, for example, in Norway a considerable decrease is evident in numbers of recruits to the shipping industry at large (Mogstad & Rogstad, 2013; Reegård & Rogstad, 2012; Kvinge & Ødegård, 2010). More specifically, this decrease is overrepresented in the merchant fleet, as many future Norwegian seafarers opt for safer work, in the sense that they cannot (for the moment, at least) be replaced, either on vessels or rigs and platforms within the Norwegian Continental Shelf.[58] A comment from chief engineer Johnny illustrates the severity of this situation: he discussed the challenges of recruitment to the *Pacific* and, more generally, to the company for which he worked. 'But remember, they have to get a full-fledged (Norwegian) captain and a full-fledged (Norwegian) chief. That is, they must find both captain and chief that have minimum five years of gas experience. They don't exist!'[59]

Johnny, like his European shipmates, was candid about how the global trend of deregulating hiring practices would render him obsolete in the future. He said that he represented the last generation of Norwegian seafarers in the merchant fleet, an opinion that was shared by other Norwegians on board. In the so-called changing qualifications landscape, Bonacich and Wilson's (2008) interview with Bob Kleist, corporate advisor for Evergreen, makes two illuminating observations with respect to training and historical development. Kleist notes that 'Most maritime countries have a Maritime Academy, where seafarers receive training. Almost every shipping nation has this kind of training or an agreement with a nation nearby that provides it. The ships are now sophisticated and only require small crews, including specialists and generalists. I don't know the operations end of the company [Evergreen] well, but I assume that the officers include the captain, a chief mate, a second

[58] This means that companies are legally obligated to fly the domestic flag and, therefore, have full Norwegian/Scandinavian crew on stipulated wages, independent of nationality—that is, wages vary according to rank. Sea time is additionally shorter with a 1:1 rotation of four weeks whereas, on installations such as platforms or rigs, the rotation is 1:2 (i.e., two weeks on/four weeks off).
[59] This is in line with the reported undersupply of seafarers to the 'top four' ranks, particularly seafarers originating in OECD countries (Sampson, 2013).

mate, an engineer and a second engineer—five officers' total. The rest are crewmen, maybe nine or ten of them. Generally, they have some background and experience. Forty-five years ago, San Pedro was considered the roughest waterfront in the world. Sailors hung out in bars waiting for captains. Captains would take drunken sailors aboard before they knew it. They no longer staff ships that way' (2008, p. 165).[60]

Despite the extensive development towards formalisation and global regulation (e.g., via the IMO that has members states from across the world) when it comes to competence and proficiency, from an onboard perspective, understandings about skill were largely forged in the combination of job skills on the one hand and personal skills on the other. Drawing on this combination, then, decisive impacts on the everyday work aboard the *Pacific* were situational, and, in this sense, skills were proven to be extremely difficult to measure and to objectify.

In this context, there is abundant scope for negotiation when it comes to work execution of everyday non-standardised routine labour, as the *Pacific's* deck cadet, Marco, noted in his comment, 'different people, different standards'. Moreover, in the context of Johnny's comment that he represents the last generation of Norwegian seafarers in the merchant fleet, how does the room for negotiation influence culturally contingent understandings of skill?

The emphasis on experience and, most importantly, on learning, was voiced not only by the Norwegian officers, who all shared similar occupational trajectories whereby apprenticeship was a pivotal feature of their training, but among the crewmembers in general. Arnie, the electrician, was able to correctly locate the gasket that was causing a disturbance to

[60] The changing qualification landscape, while definitely related to the industry's increasing standardisation practices, is also incorporated onto discourses and ideologies concerning different conceptualisations of skill which, in addition to their practical implications insofar as safely manning the ship goes, are also culturally and ethnically biased.

the ship's electrical system among the countless gaskets on board the *Pacific*. When I asked him how he knew, he could not really provide a satisfying answer, but said that he 'simply knew'. Similarly, Tomas, the Filipino second engineer, talked and listened to the engines that kept the *Pacific* moving every night before clocking out. Although he said this with a humorous undertone, he was not joking, as his finely tuned hearing and perception could detect and predict malfunctions, faulty lines, or engines in need of maintenance.

Tomas was in his early forties and had substantial maritime experience. He had, in fact, sailed for the company that operated the *Pacific* nearly throughout his entire career. Having started out as a messboy, on his second contract, Tomas joined the engine department as a wiper, the position from which he advanced in rank to his current rank as second engineer, second only to the ship's chief engineer. Among the crew on board the *Pacific*, Tomas was exceptional. He enjoyed a high sense of authority, but this was not solely due to his rank as a second officer. Tomas was highly regarded among his colleagues and by crewmembers outside the engine department alike as well as by the European management on board. While many Filipino seafarers said of Tomas that he 'had their backs', European management said that he was 'like them'. In describing this quality, chief engineer Gunnar said of Tomas, 'a shovel is a shovel. He lets us know and we go from there. He has a similar mindset as us, he's not afraid to speak his mind'.

European management spoke of Tomas as representative of a cultural exception among his compatriots. They often noted that Filipino seafarers would advance in rank or accept a promotion without necessarily having acquired the requisite skills for the position. Amid such widespread perceptions, skills are not synonymous with formal requirements but rather are part of the important tacit skillsets that European management value: practical experience, situational awareness, good communication skills, and a general 'feel' for the work. By contrast, they believed that the financial aspect of a promotion was the decisive

factor, and had it not been for the substantial rise in salary, many Filipino seafarers would prefer to remain as ratings.[61]

My research, however, presents an image that differs considerably from that portrayed by European management. Like Marco and Jake, several other crewmembers were outspoken about their career drives and occupational aspirations and had in common that upon reflecting on their occupational futures, they often mentioned being prepared and having acquired experience as key qualities. Tomas also highlighted this when he described the particular occasion in his career trajectory when he was offered the position of third engineer by a Norwegian chief engineer, who, in Tomas' words, had taken a special interest in him. In describing his first contract as a third engineer, Tomas stated explicitly that he said neither yes nor no to the promotion. At the time, he was still in the process of finalising his engineer certificate, and on recalling the situation, he said, 'I said OK, I will do my best, but you need to be aware that I am not a third engineer yet'.

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF SKILLS

In both the engine and deck departments, I observed similar reasonings among those who were outspoken about their desires for promotion. Both OS Pablo and Max, the youngest members of the crew, envisioned many years on deck before they could potentially accept a promotion, and Antony, the bosun who replaced William, would spend nearly every off-duty moment on the bridge with the third officer, learning as much as he possibly could, as he was

[61] The financial aspect was highlighted by many Filipino seafarers, and if we look at the rather substantial differences in wages depending on position, this should not come as a surprise. While the salary of an AB is stipulated as approximately 1200 USD, the salary for a third officer is approximately 4000 USD. For a motorman, the salary is equal to that of an AB. A third engineer will make approximately 3000–4000 USD, while a second engineer, like Tomas, makes 7000 USD (in addition to a shorter rotation—e.g., four months on/two months off). In a Norwegian context, while wages do run higher proportionate to rank, the differences are not as substantial as they are among Filipino seafarers.

a licenced officer. He too wanted to apply his knowledge while awaiting a vacancy. Sylvester and Mateo, both of whom had recently been promoted from motormen to third engineers, described similar trajectories involving steep learning curves and, like Jake, mentioned investing extra effort beyond their responsibilities as motormen and that they were now reaping the awards from this hard work previously done.

Aboard the *Pacific* there were numerous narratives like those briefly described above, yet many of these went unnoticed by European management. On the occasions on which they did notice, as in the case of Jake being noticed during the blackout, their perceived qualities were lauded as exceptional or in contrast to others. Tomas' successful navigation between European management and their expectations and his Filipino shipmates was perhaps part of the reason behind Tomas' authority across the different departments. In the engine department, Tomas' management style illustrates how he 'had their backs', as attested by several of his colleagues.

Tomas was very outspoken on what it meant to be a good leader. He said, 'if you're a good leader, you'll have followers, and if you're a bad leader you'll still have followers but only in front of you'. Tomas' first rule, then, as he put it, when it came to being a good leader to his 'tropas' (troops), was the cultivation of a no-pressure mentality. As he saw it, work was never-ending and the contracts were long, and as he managed the engine department on a precautionary principle, he did not see the point of pushing his crew during everyday routine work. Second, in relation to the rather strict policies regarding overtime, Tomas was generous in providing rest. Given that it was occasionally difficult to provide reasons for overtime aboard the *Pacific,* he would often remain behind the last half-hour or so of the workday, sending the other men to their cabins. Additionally, if there were no pressing orders, he kept the workload light during the weekends. In many ways, Tomas could do as he pleased on

board the vessel by virtue of the perception that he was ‘like’ European management; they trusted him.

Many did not experience the same levels of trust across the departments as Tomas, however. Often, as in Tomas’ case, this was related to one’s position on board. Given that rank corresponds with responsibilities and, therefore, intersects considerably more with personal capacities, such as communication skills and decisiveness, rather than with other, lower-ranked positions, some crewmembers’ work goes unnoticed altogether—that is, until something goes wrong. Caleb, the vessel’s messman, exemplifies the latter scenario. For Caleb, like many others, financial incentives were, at face value, a common reason that many cited for having chosen or ‘ended up’ (some specified) in the shipping industry. He did, however, have a different background to the majority of his shipmates. When we met in 2019, Caleb had sailed for eight years after leaving his previous job as a civil servant in the Philippines, which he had held for twelve years. His decision to resign from his previous job, he said, stemmed from his exhaustion with the high levels of corruption in government work.

As a seafarer, Caleb ‘worked to save, and saved to quit’, and his plan upon having saved sufficient funds was to retire from maritime work and focus on his small farm, growing fruit and cultivating paddy fields. Because Caleb struggled with cramps in both feet and because of the long days spent in the galley, where the term, ‘every day is Monday’ truly is a fitting description, he was often tired, and during our talks, he frequently mentioned how he looked forward to completing his contract and going on vacation: ‘Five weeks of sleep’, as he put it. From working with the galley department, I learned that, as opposed to the other departments, whose work is susceptible to change, work in the galley is the same every day. Cleaning the floors in the mess halls is one reoccurring daily activity that falls under the messman’s remit, and it was in this context that Caleb’s name surfaced in a conversation.

Having removed the electrical appliances that kept the food hot in the officer mess hall for repair, the ship's electrician noticed that the floor had not been properly cleaned: 'It was a layer of dirt, sludging there for probably hundred years!', I was told. The electrician continued, 'The floor in the officer mess hall, it's shining bright, it's clean. Day by day, it's clean. The chief steward is probably telling him every day to clean the floor. And he [the messman] does it. But under the piece I removed … You have to look under. So perhaps one day you don't clean the floor, which is already clean and just clean something else, just right under. Do you understand what I am talking about?'.

In commenting on the dirty floor, the electrician was inadvertently making a point about culture, similarly to how other officers' spoke about some of the Filipino crewmembers on board—first, the belief that many Filipino seafarers did not care about their work and, second, that they preferred or were more lenient towards routine and mindless work. From similar observations made by the officers on board, I remember how I often asked whether they believed that this was connected to one's position—how they would experience everyday work that was comprised of the same tasks performed repeatedly over long periods. This did not matter, I was told, as many recounted their previous experiences as ratings. 'I was in that position, and I was cleaning and painting very well, and I was enjoying it', one officer said, while another spoke of having a drive for the work: 'I've been an OS. But I was trying to, like, do something. Because I can't really … my brain will explode if someone tells me to clean something that's already clean. I would like to clean something, you know, where the dirt is. Seeing results, I cannot stay in the same place forever'. Finally, one officer expressed himself as follows: 'We've been talking about all this culture and national things. It's related. It's about culture, yes. Because we are Europeans, we are freer to make choices and are more active'.

Carswell and De Neve (2018, p. 313) define the 'social life of skills' as 'the social processes, relationships, and ideologies that enable (or constrain) people's access to skills, and subsequently to employment, wages, satisfaction, and dignity'. On board the *Pacific*, European management's culturally contingent assessment of skills both enabled and constrained access to skills, not through physical obstructions[62] but rather through their location in the shipboard hierarchy. Weber (2000, p. 72) similarly conceptualised domination as the likelihood that an actor or set of actors will elicit obedience from others. Becoming skilful or being recognised as skilful is dependent upon a particular understanding of skill. Interpreted as a strategy aimed at the social closure of knowledge (Abbott, 1988), for some seafarers like Tomas, social access to skills is enabled while other crewmembers' access is constrained. While most European officers agreed that the industry's radical development in technology in recent years has affected the occupational group as a whole, some nationalities, including Filipino seafarers, were nonetheless positioned differently according to how successful they were in managing the cultural expectations of skill, becoming part of an 'us' as opposed to 'them'.

'I mean, *them.* Them, because they are just the people with minimum, minimum of knowledge, minimum. Minimum of initiative, the only initiative they have, let's say, just leave them alone and give them a check list, ok, to fill in. That's it. Because, you see, when you look at me you see, like me yes, but just close your eyes and imagine I am from, my name is 'Rodrigo' and I'm from Manila, it can happen here one day. And it will happen. And you will see the robot, and he will appreciate the toolbox talk, [and] he'll be in compliance, you know. But then preventive maintenance, you can cross it out. You can cross out many things. And I don't like this, it's not because I don't like *them,* [it's] because this is where it goes'.

[62] Although in some cases where, for example, a superior officer takes a special interest and through which they assume responsibility for a seafarer's acquisition of particular skills, we may speak of this as a form of physical obstruction for those that are not included or invested with interest.

Against the background of the shipping industry's continued push for new, cost-efficient developments in technology, infrastructure, and logistics—what I call the changing qualification landscapes in this chapter—the above quote illustrates how embodied knowledge, a 'feel' for work, and experience are becoming increasingly important. However, although understandings of skill are crucial to the everyday organisation of labour, at the same time, it is highly contingent and even elusive ('It's like a fridge. Nobody cares about how it works until the sausages and milk have gone bad'). The relations between different skillsets on board the vessel, particularly in terms of the inherent ambiguities of skill through the crewmembers' different—often conflated—perceptions and understandings, is illustrative of this point. On the one hand, there is scope for interpretation and negotiation about what is required within a varied work-related milieu; on the other hand, interpretation and negotiation about that which is required within a varied work-related milieu is also clearly biased.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter, I have explored the role of skill in the occupational onboard lives of the seafarers on board the *Pacific* and how the debates—both those regarding the regulatory frameworks and public debates among maritime stakeholders—are experienced from an occupational and practical perspective. While some situations benefit from embodied capacities developed through experience over time, other situations require more person-dependent, soft skills that convey both competency and proficiency in addition to other socio-culturally contingent understandings of skill. Such skills, bridging embodied knowledge with the 'feel' for work and experience, become even more important within a hierarchised and multicultural work environment. Some forms of embodied knowledge, such as how bosun William's insights into the different methods and styles of work of the alternating chief officers, and OS Frankie's work corrections, are mostly overlooked or go unnoticed by

European officers, while other forms of embodied knowledge are lauded. The chief engineer who noticed Jake, the motorman, for his assistance during the unexpected power failure, for instance, serves to illustrate both the socio-cultural dimension and the arbitrariness of skills. Jake's hands-on attitude aligned with the chief engineers' thoughts regarding which skills are important for seafarers, yet he only realised that Jake indeed possessed these skills because of the unforeseen event. Amid the widespread opinion voiced by European management with respect to Filipino seafarers—that they would advance in rank or accept a promotion without necessarily having acquired the skills needed for the position—skills are not synonymous with formal requirements but rather are part of the important tacit skillsets that the European management valued: practical experience, situational awareness, good communication skills, and a general 'feel' for the work.

In this chapter, I have presented a wholly different image. Like Marco and Jake, several other crewmembers were outspoken about their career drives and occupational aspirations, and all had in common that, upon reflecting on their occupational futures, they often mentioned the importance of preparedness and the acquisition of experience as key qualities. Their efforts, however, largely go unnoticed until something either goes well or wrong. Second engineer Tomas serves as an example of the first while the ship's messman, Caleb, exemplifies the latter. Similar to the power failure in Qatar's revelation of underlying reflections on skill, the dirty floor in the officer mess hall, which had gone unnoticed until the moment of repair, sparked similar reflections, whereby from one moment to the next, Caleb's work was questioned. On board the *Pacific*, the European management's culturally contingent assessment of skills both enabled and constrained access to skills, and this chapter has demonstrated how these processes are simultaneously an important feature of the everyday organisation of work while also highly arbitrary and unequally distributed depending on one's position in the shipboard hierarchy. Adopting a closer perspective on the cultural and

hierarchic dimensions that either enable or constrain people's access to work-related opportunities, the final empirical chapter will examine career progression and social mobility in light of the shipping industry's ethnic stratification and differentiated spatiality.

CHAPTER 7: MARITIME MOBILITES: THE 'HOW' AND 'KNOW HOW'

In 1960, only 2,000 Filipino seafarers were working on international waters; by 1975, that number had increased to 23,534 (Acejo, 2021, p. 100). Had it not been for the oil crisis that emerged in 1970 and the ensuing financial pressure, leading to shifts in maritime regulations—allowing ships to hire workers from countries with lower wages was a central feature of the industry's shift in the ensuing years, for instance—the seafarer demography as we know it today might have assumed a different form (Acejo, 2021). However, from the years that followed the 1970 oil crisis, we now know that Filipino seafarers were in it for the long haul, and the rapid expansion from the late 1980s documents a considerable increase in seafarers hailing from the Southeast Asian archipelago, 'indicating a sixfold increase' (Acejo, 2021, p. 100), leading to the current climate, wherein the Philippines have assumed the role of the leading supplier of seafarers worldwide. Despite their essential role in crewing the world's ships—the Philippines comprise 25 percent of the total seafarer population—Filipinos are predominantly recruited to the ships' lower echelons (Markkula, 2021a, p. 174). On board the *Pacific*, while excluded from holding positions such as captain, chief officer, and chief engineer, Filipino seafarers were, in fact, represented in positions ranking above ratings, including second and third officer, second and third engineer, and, finally, the position of cargo engineer.

This chapter picks up from where the previous chapter ended. Expanding on the notion of skill, this chapter explores the interpersonal skills involved in managing expectations of collegiality and career drive. In particular, the chapter explores career progression and notions of social mobility on board the *Pacific* by closely investigating several of the personality traits that Norwegian officers look to and/or value in questions of both promotion and demotion.

Why is it that some Filipino seafarers are sought out by Norwegian officers while others are not? While the shipping industry is highly regulated in terms of mandatory formal requirements—even for permission to come on board ships—when it comes to making decisions onboard, formal requirements pair with socio-cultural expectations and ideals. On board the *Pacific***,** the socio-cultural expectations and ideals stem from the Norwegian tradition and notion of egalitarianism, making encounters between low-rank/high-rank and Filipinos/Norwegians a particularly interesting point of departure for exploring differentiation and inequality. What kind of work practices do Filipino officers engage with, and are they different from work practices among Filipino ratings?

MOVEMENT, MOBILITY, AND EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS

A common perception of seafarers holds that they are 'figures of mobility' (Salazar, 2017; Markkula, 2021a). According to statistics published by Statista Research Department (2021) in January 2021, the number of ships in the world exceeds 50,000. Although the figure of over 50,000 ships circulating the entire globe (70 percent of which consists of water) at any given moment may not intuitively sound strikingly high, we know that these ships are crewed by some 1.9 million seafarers (BIMCO & ICS, 2021; Baum-Talmor & Kitada, 2022), most of whom are drawn from labour pools in South, East, and South-East Asia (Leivestad & Markkula, 2021, p. 2). Seafarers, in this sense, are highly mobile actors who travel across and around the world while working on board ships. They travel long distances from their homes and likewise undertake long journeys back to their homes as their contracts come to an end. As ships are continuously on the move, so are the world's seafarers.

In the social science literature, movement and mobility go hand in hand. Movement can be understood in the physical sense like what I describe above, through situating seafarers

as highly mobile actors and as 'figures of mobility'. For example, look back to Figure 2 that shows the *Pacific's* movement over a period of seven months. In this sense, seafarers are indeed physically mobile actors. In the wake of globalisation studies, and 'metaphorized as proximity and togetherness, along with cultural exchange, hybridism, networks, connectedness and cosmopolitanism, mobility has often been perceived by many as *positive* and a reducer of inequality gaps' (Bastos et al., 2021, p. 1). However, 'the contradictions hidden under such optimism emerged to plain sight in the early 21st century' (Bastos et al., 2021, p. 1). Under the aegis of 9/11, threats of climate change, financial crises, and related structural adjustments, imposed austerity, impoverishments, displacements by warfare, and the intensification of border violence, a shift occurred in the field of mobility studies, whereby mobility was increasingly used to highlight 'the disruptions, turbulence, inequalities and differential access in contemporary societies' (Bastos et al., 2021, p. 1).

In line with this shift in the field of mobility studies, if we examine shipping's general employment pattern, whereby white European officers hold the top positions while the ships' lower ranks are crewed by seafarers recruited from the Global South, we can talk about inequalities and differential access. Despite the obvious mobilities relating to cargo ships, then, (Borovnik, 2012; Leivestad & Markkula, 2021; Markkula, 2021a, 2021b; Sekula, 1995) the notion that the seafarers who crew these mobile ships are 'figures of mobility' loses some of its traction: while it may serve as a fitting description of some seafarers, for others it most certainly does not. This is particularly evident when mobility intersects with labour, a point that Bastos et al. (2021) make in their introduction to the special issue *Mobile Labour* in which they introduce the term 'mobile labour'. Judging from my own research,[63] the intersection of labour and mobility includes scenarios wherein many seafarers identifying economic reasons for going ashore (movements *for* labour); ships are de facto mobile

[63] Similar to that which Markkula (2021a) has documented elsewhere.

worksites (movements *as* labour); and, finally, labour conditions, including wages, benefits, and lengths of contracts, are differentiated along the lines of nationality (movements *of* labour). Concerning this last intersection, the process has been described as 'labour-related geographical displacement' that includes 'the associated production and reproduction of ideologies, stereotypes, processes and conditions of exclusion, and the making of hierarchized, racialized inequalities' (Bastos et al., 2021, p. 1).

To tell a larger story about the intersection of labour and mobility, the following section introduces Cameron, a Filipino deck worker, who was promoted to the position of third officer during my fieldwork period. In examining these encounters, I analyse career progression and social mobility as capable of 'fitting' into certain categories, and while some, like Cameron, manage this shift successfully, others are less successful. Finally, by looking to Cameron as a 'figure of social mobility', I argue that, while he successfully manages the expectations of the Norwegian senior officers on the one hand, his career drive simultaneously represents a story of sacrifice and changed onboard relationships on the other.

CAMERON'S PROMOTION

'All you can hear at [maritime]school is that life is good there [aboard]. You can go to different places, you can have this dollar compensation and just roam around for free in the world. If I'm going to be a teacher [at maritime vocational institutes], I would like to inform most of my students that this is not just about earning dollars, it's not just about going to other places. I will also tell my students that they need to understand that they're going to change their lives the moment they step onto this career. It is really a different, I mean, it's a different world. We are having our own clock, ship's clock. We are having our own world. So, if I'm going to be a teacher, I will tell them. Not to discourage them but for them to be prepared'.

Cameron was one of several crewmembers whom I formally interviewed on board the *Pacific* and one of the reasons for our recorded interview, aside from our good relationship, was his promotion. Having listened to Cameron's words on the tape recorder, however, even with the volume set to the maximum, I still needed to re-listen two or three times to ensure that I had not missed anything that he was saying. In hindsight, as I re-listened to the recorded interview several times, it occurred to me that the way he spoke—softly spoken and unobtrusive—constituted an apt expression of his personality.

Cameron, hailing from a small provincial town in the Davao Region located in the southern region of the archipelago, was in his late twenties when we met in 2019. Cameron was a devout Christian and active in his local community church, an affiliate of the Assemblies of God. He was engaged to a woman from his congregation and took pride in being a family man, values and ideals that he applied while on board the *Pacific.* He meditated and read the Bible from a pre-downloaded Bible app on his phone, and while he was very social—he played basketball on the weekends, watched movies with other crewmembers, and used the gym—Cameron never instigated or participated in jokes or friendly banter of the sexualised nature that such hyper-masculine environments as ships tend to produce and, often, encourage.

We may draw several connections from Cameron's more 'toned down' masculinity and his Pentecostal background to his career trajectory and career drive as a particular case on board among a predominantly Catholic Filipino crew. I think, for instance, about the deep-rooted connection between Christianity and *ethics,* widely theorised in Weber's classic account of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber, 2002) but also about the case of the 'Christian Philippines', analysed as negotiations through the idiom of persuasion, reluctance, and pity in the work of anthropologist Fennella Cannell (1999). On board the *Pacific*, however, and while there are certainly connections that may be drawn between

religiosity, masculinity, and career trajectories, the convergence of a particular ethics derived from religious background and tied to the prospect of career progression appeared to circumvent the more traditional pattern wherein religion and work are tightly interrelated. For example, I have demonstrated elsewhere (Chapter 6) how similar personality traits, such as the more 'toned down' masculinity and a drive for occupational advancement, are, to a larger degree than the connection between religion and work, illustrative of particular dominant European discourses and practices whereby some seafarers are sought out by the Norwegian officers aboard as unique in the profession.

When we met, Cameron had already accumulated several years' experience of working at sea. His experience, excluding his vocational training ashore and his one-year completion of sea service as a cadet, included one contract as an OS and three contracts as an AB. While in some ways, Cameron was still at the beginning of his career and had yet to turn thirty, he had already spent three years of his life working on board ships. Cameron was part of the *Pacific*'s deck crew, an AB, and when I first met him in January 2019, he had been aboard for little over a month of what was supposed to be a six-month contract, as per usual for Filipino seafarers working for this particular shipping company.

However, four months into his contract, and as the *Pacific* lay berth in Japan for discharge operation, Cameron disembarked. Unlike the other seafarers he signed off with, however, some of whom would go on to other ships for their next contracts after a period spent at home with their families and loved ones, Cameron already knew that he would soon return to the *Pacific* without any vacation period. As part of the promotion and in coordination with the Manila office—or rather, the Manila branch to the Norway-based shipping company for which he was working—Cameron needed to complete company-specific courses at their training facilities in Manila before returning to the ship and his new position for a new six-month contract. Owing to his promotion, Cameron would go on to

spend close to twelve months of the calendar year at sea, and the excerpt that opened this section was recorded shortly after his return to the *Pacific.* In his brief statement, Cameron manages to capture shipping's doubled-edged nature both as a provider of opportunities and, simultaneously, highly immobilising (Borovnik, 2004, 2012).

Many seafarers, including the Europeans on board, who sailed for shorter periods and were permanently employed by the shipping company, shared thoughts similar to Cameron's. Many expressed that, when offered an opportunity for career progression or asked to prolong their contracts owing to unforeseen challenges in the crew supply, for example, 'you say yes'. In terms of career progression, some highlighted how saying no would result in you not being asked again and, in terms of prolonged contracts, some talked about it as a form of implicit social contract while others discussed the importance of remaining on 'good terms' with the shipping company. Although some similarities emerge here in the framing shipping as double-edged, it undoubtedly hit some seafarers—Filipinos among them—particularly hard. Career progression may lead to (as in Cameron's case) spending close to a year at sea and, in the event of prolonged contracts, it comes in addition to the already excruciating lengthy periods at sea that Filipino seafarers endure. Finally, as contractual workers, many speak about these issues as not offering any choice at all. Thus, when Cameron speaks about maritime work as transformational, out of this world, and abiding by a different sense of time—ship's time—he illustrates succinctly how mobility, here in the socially upward sense, and immobility are tightly interrelated processes, processes with which Cameron is all too familiar.

THE (IM)MOBILE LABOUR OF SEAFARERS

Seafarers work in a highly competitive employment market (Borovnik, 2012, p. 68) and, as Markkula notes, maritime labour is especially big business in the Philippines (2021a, p. 169). While the competitive employment market perhaps influenced Cameron to accept a promotion that led him to remaining on board the *Pacific* for such a lengthy period, I was surprised to learn that, at one point, Cameron had taken a two-year leave from seafaring. The occupational trajectory from cadet to third officer had, in fact, caused Cameron considerable distress, and he shared this with me in a previous conversation: 'After I took my examination, I already have my license but then they, maybe it's not yet the time. Or maybe no available slot yet or I need to have more experience. One OS, three AB and then now. And, you know, maybe part of my two-year leave is somewhat like frustration, frustration in the point that I already have my license since 2014. I mean, of course, if you have this license, you really want to use it as much as possible. And then, maybe part of my frustration is I haven't used it yet, and then the peer pressure around you. Because in Davao we were twenty-four cadets, my classmates, all of us, we were twenty-four. Then most of them are already officers. I was like, 'what happened to me?' Something like, 'why is it that I am still here?' Then I was thinking of leaving the company and then I was thinking also, if I leave, I'm going to spend more time again to make experience'.

While Cameron's emphasis on 'available slots' highlights the competitive market, the frustration that led him to take a two year-long leave of absence should be interpreted in light of two other important factors. A seafarer's eligibility for promotion is primarily determined by (European) officers during their end-of-contract evaluation reports, a process that may be criticized as not being objective but rather subjectively influenced by an officer's opinion of the seafarer in question. Captain Leo, for instance, a Filipino seafarer from Markkula's ethnography, seemed to touch on this topic when he said, 'I remained a third officer with hard

work and low salary for so many years, whereas my Japanese colleagues advanced rapidly in the ranks' (Markkula, 2021a, p. 170).

The end-of-contract evaluations and Captain Leo's struggle for career progression are examples that call into debate the kinds of structural systems at play on board ships. In the article entitled 'We move the world': The mobile labour of Filipino seafarers (2021a), Markkula suggests that colonial histories work to reproduce unequal power relations that are historically, politically, and socially structured (Markkula, 2021a, p. 174). Markkula draws on Tim Cresswell's notion of 'constellations of mobility', which she cites in her work as referring to 'historically and geographically specific formations of movements, narratives about mobility and mobile practices' (Cresswell, 2010, p. 21 in Markkula, 2021a, p. 167). In this way, mobility is understood as fundamentally political, and Markkula explores the political dimensions of mobility by examining how movements for labour—the production and reproduction of ideologies, stereotypes, processes, and conditions of exclusion through labour—are structured at sea. In her ethnography, she documents the reproduction of colonial histories through racist and derogatory comments uttered by European seafarers, including 'Filipinos cannot make good officers' and 'They need constant supervision' as well as references to having to 'babysit' the Filipino crew (Markkula, 2021a, p. 173).

During my research, I observed interactions between European officers and Filipino ratings that echoed those documented by Markkula. On one occasion, during a mandatory fire drill, the ship's hospital squad (my designated squad in case of emergency) and one of the ship's fire squads met outside the accommodation, where the correct next stage of action would be to draw out the fire hoses and connect them to the water supply. During drills in general, efficiency is essential and, as some people began pulling out the hoses, the rest of us stood by and watched. Before several seconds had passed, we heard the loud and familiar voice of the chief officer, 'No looky, looky, scratching balls.' While we could not assist in

taking out the hoses, as there were too many of us, his comment prompted those crewmembers who were observing to move quickly and straighten their position as they commented back and forth with one another on what they were doing and how they were doing it.

Racialised and hierarchised discourses do not emerge in a vacuum, however, and Markkula argues that such discourses form in relation to shifts in labour politics and recruitment. Here, Markkula (2021b) identifies in the shipping industry the same neoliberal processes that Borovnik (2012) has documented elsewhere: the practice of flags of convenience, competitive free market policies, global crewing and recruitment operations (cheaper and more flexible labour), and increased port securitization. In light of these shifts, many seafarers, among them, Filipinos, are placed in what Borovnik (2012, p. 86) argues is a 'long-term constraint of ship-space'.

Unlike Captain Leo, who we might interpret as the kind of 'flexible' worker that Markkula argues is produced and reproduced in relation to both neoliberal processes and colonial histories, Cameron left the maritime business altogether. His decision to return was mostly the result of economic considerations, as he himself told me: 'One of the reasons I go back is to earn money. Because I still have some, and my parents have, (out)standing balances that I need to pay. If I'm not here, what will happen?' However, in addition to the financial aspect, I believe that Cameron's insistence on wanting to 'use his license' furnishes a key item of information here. This is not to say that aspirations of social mobility negate the unequal geographies that are experienced and articulated through 'hierarchized and racialized inequalities' (Markkula, 2021b; Bastos et al., 2021), as Captain Leo's story illustrates, but social mobility becomes interesting considering the inequalities that differentiate occupational trajectories. On his desire to 'use his license', Cameron elaborated as follows:

Camilla: 'Because you said that being on deck, 'I am a construction worker?''

Cameron: ‘Yes, I mean like, aside from the money, because you know, that’s already part of it. Besides that, it gives me the boost or the confidence … I’m an officer so that means that they see something in me, and it challenges me also with my knowledge, with what I’ve learned from school. I mean, you have a lighter job, because you always stay on the bridge, but the responsibilities are heavier than being an OS and AB. Before I was just saying, ‘seems like I’m a construction worker, seems like I’m’ … Because in the Philippines, most of the construction workers … they do not have this four-year course. Most of them, they have … not been to school, that’s why they do construction work. That’s why I feel so down with myself, I’m like, ‘but I didn’t go to school for this’ [construction work]. So, aside from the money, it also gives me the, I mean like, right now it also opens your, my, your life. One of my uncles told me ‘Your life will be changed the moment you’ll become an officer, your perspective, the way you think will be so different from when you were an OS or AB’. Seems like it, the work is lighter, but it’s heavier, the responsibilities.’

Camilla: ‘So it’s a big difference! From thinking about maybe stopping to now going, you know, more ‘in’.’

Cameron: ‘Yes, that’s because being a crew or AB is different from being an officer. I mean, as of this time, I want to be ‘on it’ already, I mean, in a deeper way. When I was AB I had a fear of many jobs, like, I would hide. Every time I went up [to the bridge] I thought ‘my goodness’. I wanted to stop, ‘why did I chose this kind of job’. But right now, this is the life. I’m starting to get it, ‘ah, so this is this, this is it’ [has a good laugh].’

From his new position, Cameron adopted a particular way of speaking about and differentiating the everyday work aboard the ship that was very different from how he had spoken about work while he was part of the deck crew. For example, in Cameron’s forging of boundaries between construction workers and himself, he indirectly raises the issue of class. However, his inadvertent comment about class moves beyond an orthodox understanding of

class conceptualised in Marxist terminology, for instance, as determined by the role in the production process and evokes a certain play on judgement and distinctions (Bourdieu, 1984). Yet Cameron also manages to capture his desire to want to 'do the job well'—echoing Richard Sennett's argument of *Craftsmanship* (2008). Rather than interpreting Cameron's experience of social mobility either through his new class position, changed habitus, or, conversely, through dimensions of skill and commitment, I propose that it is not an either/or scenario but that these different dimensions coexist with one another.

Situated in supply chain capitalism (Tsing, 2009), Cameron's promotion brings to life the conflation between super-exploitation and self-exploitation. Supply chain capitalism, Anna Tsing argues in her influential article published in 2009, 'refers to commodity chains based on subcontracting, outsourcing, and allied arrangements in which the autonomy of component enterprises is legally established even as the enterprises are disciplined within the chain as a whole' (2009, p. 148). Following Tsing's argument about supply chains, wherein she focuses on questions of diversity, even within a globalised capitalism, both its 'generality and scale' and the 'travel' to other localities that new organisational styles and subjectivities require, an analysis of supply chains, Tsing argues, manages to show diversity with the 'structures of power', (2009, p. 150). She introduces what she calls 'new figures of labour' who replace Marx and Engels' white, working-class protagonists (2009, p. 153). Thus, super-exploitation as 'exploitation that depends on so-called noneconomic factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexuality, age, and citizenship status' (2009, p. 158) entails, within supply chains, exploitative forces becoming imbedded in the exploited actors as performances, which in turn blurs the traditional lines of exploitation.

In this regard, Cameron's contractual employment status effectively positions him within Tsing's framework of these new figures of labour, and we can interpret his promotion as both voluntary and required—voluntary in the sense that no one is coerced into working on

board ships and required in the sense that such practices, Anna Tsing reminds us, 'weave complex […] dependencies into the fabric of [their] commitment' (Tsing, 2009, p. 156). The 'performance' in remaining at sea for close to twelve months that the promotion required that he agree to positioned Cameron's aspiring mobility as a subjectively articulated process of sacrifice. Cameron stated,

'You know, if you were in my shoes, being here for four months then going home for one month training, then having, being in my home for four days only, and most of that time is travel. I mean, if I had the choice, I would say no, I would not go on board yet. I was pushing with my company processor, 'mam I need to make sure that I am going to go back in May, please May only', but you know … part of the job'.

Camilla: 'I understand. You went through so much with this … to end up back here again.'

Cameron: 'Because I can really say this is not what I wanted to do. Here. No. The reason why, before, when people asked me, 'what would you like to do', this is not part of what I really was thinking about but my uncles or my relatives are into this kind of business, into shipping. My mother encouraged me to go to school, to the maritime direction, and I tried to apply but what I have in mind is that if I pass this, I'll go with it, if not, I look for another one. Yes, really, that was what I was thinking. When I passed the examination, so I told myself: So this is it.'

Through Cameron's promotion and the focus on career progression, I have attempted to adopt a more nuanced perspective on the dynamics of seafarers' mobilities than that outlined by other scholars on the topic. Cameron's promotion brings to life his ability to mobilise himself within a racialized and hierarchized industry and, in this regard, Cameron can be interpreted as a 'figure of mobility'. However, as this section has sought to convey, upward social mobility does not negate the differentiated spatiality into which seafarers are

bound and that, in some ways, we might interpret as a *subaltern* position, in Gramsci's (2011) sense of the word, on board ships and within the industry in general that conditions how mobility is acted out. For some seafarers, like Cameron, social upward mobility is conditioned more negatively than it would have been for seafarers from other countries, and yet it is enacted through a subjectively articulated idiom. In Cameron's case, his promotion was simultaneously a sacrifice, and this sacrifice becomes even more visible when connected to his family at home:

Cameron: 'Because the sad part is that my mother is celebrating her golden years, 50 years. Her birthday is April 1st. Ok, April 1st, but then it was moved, I told them I would be going home in March …. I went home in March, right?'

Camilla: 'Where did you go home from? Which country?'

Cameron: 'Japan.'

Camilla: 'Then yes, 15th of March'

Cameron: 'March, so when I go home, I told them because I was trying… I already did the math that if I'm going to have this schedule like this, I cannot be there on April 1st. So we did try to move the celebration on, somewhat like … that was after [Cameron is thinking out loud], the holy week, that was the 21st so I was trying to, will they prepare for it, will they do something about it? And then, I told the office, 'Mam I need to do this right now' so that I could finish it before Holy Week and that I could go home before Holy Week, so that I could be there during the celebration, ok, I did all, finished. Then I went home in, that was April, eh, April 13, I mean, oh no, eh, April 12 or 13? That was Saturday, I went home. The bad thing there is that my ticket was booked on Sunday, so I was really mad with the processor back in the Philippines. She called me 'ok, I need you here on Monday'. And then that was Thursday or Friday. I told her 'Mam, what are we going to do with Monday? I need to be here on Monday. Mam, you don't know that I still have this training since I arrived from the vessel, and until now I haven't been home, then you're telling me I need to go back here, I'm here already, what are you going to do?' She told me to sign something, and I was like 'why is it that we need to wait for Monday, why is it we need to do it right now?', and I can't go home to my family and have family time. That's why I did some signing of contracts and after that,

it was Sunday so I told myself I need to go home on Saturday so I can, eh, that I can have more time with them [family], so I need to re-book my ticked. I paid for my re-booking, sort of expensive, but then I tried to manage to go home earlier. So that was Saturday and then [laughs] the office contacted me again to go back on Monday, to have this Schengen visa, so I cannot say no, so I needed to travel again, Sunday, I mean, Monday travel again. When I arrive at the office, they tell me, I don't need the Schengen visa because 'you're going to be on, you're going on board on Friday already'. My goodness! So I only have, when I, when I return home on Saturday, Sunday…'

Camilla: 'Monday back in Manila'

Cameron: 'Yes, and I tried to somehow go back again to our province on that day, Monday also in the evening, so I have three days. So then Monday, Tuesday and then Wednesday and then Thursday I go back to Manila and Friday I have a flight.'

Camilla: 'So you had one day plus three days, that's it. Not four days together even.'

Cameron: 'No, and the sad thing is that the celebration was moved because they've been waiting for me! And then suddenly, 'oh my god'. I approached my mom, 'mom I cannot …' and then she told me 'Ok, we can't do anything about it'. But the sad thing is that they have been moving everything just for me and then I cannot be there. Because she really wanted us, I mean, she wanted to celebrate her birthday with all of us complete. I mean, of course, if we're going to move it ... the preparation, the invitation was being distributed with the date, dates are already set, and you can't just change that in a beat [clicks his finger], you need some time also to tell everyone. So I told them to continue with the celebration and then on Thursday I go back to Manila, Friday we have this flight going to Honk Kong. Then we arrive in Hong Kong, it was still Friday. I was thinking, we arrive there early in the morning already and then we stayed there until Saturday, in Hong Kong. I was thinking that if we'll go home on Saturday because we don't have any flight, we don't have any choice then I can attend [laughs].'

The contention most frequently voiced by the Filipino seafarers was, unsurprisingly, related to long contracts and short vacations. As opposed to the European seafarers, who are employed on a 1:1 rotation system, the Filipino seafarers are contractually employed on a 1:2 rotation system. Whereas the European seafarers spend the same amount of time offshore as

they do ashore, the Filipino seafarers on board the *Pacific* are hired on six-month contracts with three months' vacation. Additionally, as their employment status is contractual, their contracts are often prolonged and their vacation time cut shorter or spent on training and courses. Antonio, the *Pacific's* chief steward, relocated his family to Manila after several years as a seafarer as a result of courses and training that all took place during his time off. His entire family moved to the capital's outskirts to reduce the time he spent away from his wife and two daughters. As such, a career at sea for many seafarers working under such precarious labour conditions was repeatedly articulated through an interchangeable idiom of financial aspects and sacrifice for their families more than as an active choice. As Cameron's story illustrates, this was not what he intended to do with his life.

Cameron's transition from AB to third officer is a particularly interesting case study for several reasons: not only does his story serve to illustrate the relationship between the specific differentiated spatiality into which seafarers are bound (Borovnik, 2004, p. 39), and the industry's ethnic stratification and differentiated conditions of employment, his story also illustrates what kind of movement is required or, at least, valued, within a prevalent Nordic model of leadership. In the next section, I turn to explore how social mobility and career progression influence and change relationships on board. Keeping in mind the differentiated spatiality from which relationships emerge, Cameron's promotion brings the question of power geometry (Massey, 1993) into the mix and onto the social environment on board as his new position represents a vertical upward move in the shipboard hierarchy, thus reducing the occupational distance between himself and the Norwegian officers while broadening the occupational distance between him and the ships' Filipino ratings.

SHIFTING MOORINGS

On board the *Pacific* and finding out about his promotion, Cameron was happy and immediately shared the good news with his family and fiancé both via messages and via the ship's satellite phone from the small 'phone booth'-like room on A-deck. The crew were also happy for Cameron, and shortly after his promotion and before he disembarked in Japan, I entered the crew mess hall to sit down and eat dinner after a day's work out on deck. Carefully laid out on the tables were two chocolate bars and assorted refreshments from the ship's slop chest. This familiar situation surfaced from time to time: typically, an elaborately decorated cake, prepared by the ship's messman, with detailed confection-coloured inscriptions of the celebrated crewmember's name, would accompany the snack from the slop chest. Luckily, for my birthday in March, I was familiar with the arrangement and knew that it was customary on board to purchase snacks and refreshments for birthday celebrations.

The galley department would normally store this until dinner, whereby the messboy, responsible for preparing the mess hall for meals, laying out cutlery, glasses, and water jugs on the tables, and distributing the occasional celebratory purchases. I participated in several birthday celebrations, and while the crew visited the slop chest on each occasion, the purchases varied. For example, Max and Pablo, both of whom were OSs and the youngest crewmembers on board, took out refreshments only, while other higher-ranking and older crewmembers opted for refreshments and a snack. While the gesture was expected, it took the crewmembers' positions into consideration.

On this day, however, two things were stood out as extraordinary. Besides the missing birthday cake, this was the first time I observed that someone had taken out more than refreshments and/or a bar of chocolate, but the reason behind Cameron's luxurious spree in the ships' slop chest soon became clear. As Cameron entered the mess hall, those who were already there began cheering and applauding him. Cameron, evidently bothered by the

attention, nodded his head while smiling and sought to minimise his shipmates' high spirits by taking a plate and moving towards the food as though nothing out of the ordinary were occurring. From that moment, the crew began referring to him as 'Third' and ignored his attempts to proceed as normal. As they eventually settled down, the initial high spirits dissipated, and their conversations took on a cautionary tone. While remaining jocular, many of the deck crew commented that Cameron was now above them and that he did not belong out on deck any longer; others commented on how much money he would be earning and asked him, humorously, for small loans—after all, he could afford it now, many remarked and pointed to Cameron's decision to double the number of snacks laid out.

I asked Cameron about these jokes in a later conversation, both to ensure that my understanding corresponded with Cameron's interpretation and because I was curious as to his thoughts on how some of the crew had positioned him differently given his new status as an officer. While he immediately responded that it had not bothered him and that he had taken the jokes in the spirit in which they were intended, he admitted that a comment involving me had in fact troubled him. Ernie, the middle-aged and seasoned Filipino seafarer who currently held the position of third officer on board, had commented that if I needed information about the work of a third officer or had any questions about navigation or operation, I should now turn to Cameron as 'the new expert'. Later, however, in our recorded interview, having reflected on the topic, Cameron stated,

'But I'm trying to somehow catch up with them [the crew], trying to somehow, have a talk with them, you know. It's because maybe I'm still who I am, we've met already before, so why would I change? Maybe it's just because I'm promoted but it doesn't, it doesn't change the fact that I'm still who I am. So from time to time, I don't want to be, I mean, I don't want to feel like I'm higher than them. But you know, it really changes. They have this, I mean, those people, those AB's are older than me. You know that Filipinos are very courteous. We mostly call them

Kuya.[64] But right now, I mean, they're calling me Third. But the good thing is that my respect doesn't change. I mean, like, I still respect them, I still call them *Kuya,* call them whoever they are the first time we met, it doesn't really change. Yeah, the only thing is that when it's lunch time, the crew are always telling me, 'You're always late', so I cannot have this social life. In the evening, sometimes I eat late because I need to rest first before I eat, so I sleep at 1600, and I need to wake up before 1900 and they are done eating. I'm trying to really … Because relationships in this vessel is very really important. We don't have anyone to help you, only have this crew that you can lean on. Because there are times, I mean, life is not always on the bright side, bright side of it. There are times when you need to have someone to talk to and unleash what you feel, what you're feeling inside.'

In the above quote from Cameron, we can discern early indicators of various themes and topics. Initially, Cameron appears to situate rank as an incorporation of who he *is* or as an extension of himself as a person, highlighting that he is still 'the same guy' that he was before his promotion. Next, he introduces the concept of *Kuya,* yet another hierarchical dimension that transcends the traditional shipboard hierarchy of rank. *Kuya* is best translated as 'older brother', but Filipinos use the term to refer not only to their biological *Kuya* but also as an expression of respect and courtesy to anyone older than them. On board the *Pacific,* the term was most frequently used as a sign of respect in addressing older Filipino crewmembers but nonetheless occasionally surfaced in relation to rank. However, the Filipinos mostly used 'Sir' when speaking directly to or about Filipino shipmates who outranked them, and *Kuya* was used interchangeably to convey respect as well as indicating a particularly good rapport between those who used the term when speaking to or about one another. When Cameron emphasises that he continues to convey respect to older crewmembers through his use of the term, then, he is extending his initial formulation of how he *is* as a person and, rank aside, his respect for and acknowledgement of the socio-cultural expectation inherent in the term *Kuya.*

[64] Used as a polite title and as a respectful means of addressing an older relative or non-relative.

This focus on the importance of relationships becomes particularly acute, however, when Cameron reflects on the everyday changes that the promotion entailed, such as coming to dinner when the crew have finished eating and the lack of a 'social life' that his integration into the ship's watchkeeping rotation entailed.

Having someone to talk to and, in Cameron's words, 'unleash' one's inner feelings to was an important aspect of life on board the *Pacific* that resembled many of the processes included in what geographer Maria Borovnik termed 'moorings' (2012), noting how moorings 'perform as anchoring space within the dialectical processes of the mobilities and immobilities of the global shipping industry' (Borovnik, 2012, p. 72). As a source of stability, moorings are articulated as 'engaging in ship neighbourhoods, hierarchies, playfulness, shared memories, such as Christmas, feelings of 'being home' when having particular food items prepared, music, particular songs, and also the predictability and routine of jobs and situations' (Borovnik, 2012, p. 73). Borovnik includes ports as obvious mooring places. In Chapter 5, I described the crewmembers' reflections on shore leave as a much sought-after compensation for the prolonged periods spent on board, which many described as confined and isolated, resonating with Borovnik's inclusion of ports as mooring places.

Despite Cameron's efforts to maintain his AB identity as third officer, while his intention is clearly evident in his above quote, in practice, he encountered some challenges in this regard. In many ways, the cautionary turn that the celebration dinner took, as many crewmembers now positioned Cameron differently, emerged as an accurate foreshadowing of the reality that had not yet surfaced at the time. Removed from large parts of the everyday work and interaction aboard, as he primarily worked alone and followed the ship's watchkeeping duties as a third officer, Cameron's moorings shifted.

CONFLICTING MOBILITIES

Hitherto, I have not yet addressed why Cameron, as opposed to someone else, was singled out for promotion. Cameron's reflection on his career trajectory suggests that he perceives it as partially coincidental, as he compares himself to previous classmates who have all experienced social mobility in the field, while he, in fact, had to 'wait' for a slot to open. While this reflection supports perceptions of the industry's larger recruitment and employment patterns as 'big business', it does not offer any insights as to why one equally qualified seafarer might be chosen over another. What virtues did Cameron demonstrate that Ernie, for example, did not? In reflecting on this issue, I believe that socio-culturally embedded notion of expectations and ideals play a crucial role.

Let us begin with the *Pacific's* crew composition. The Norwegian seafarers do not represent a majority in terms of crewmembers. On the contrary, among a crew of twenty-five, only the captain, chief engineer, and chief officer were Norwegian. Their essential and managerial positions in the overall context of the shipboard hierarchy, however, imbued them with substantial power and the authority to structure the everyday work. Additionally, as heads of their departments, the captain, chief engineer, and chief officer played decisive roles beyond the formal scope of work in establishing work-related norms on board (i.e., the factors we might imagine when we consider different work cultures). Regarding the latter, ships are relatively unique in that they increasingly confine seafarers while facilitating the increased mobility of goods, supported, as we know, by developments in maritime logistics (Markkula, 2021a).

We might thus naturally assume that, while on board and confined within a relatively small space, it is impossible for seafarers to avoid one another or to avoid seeing each other on a daily basis. On board the *Pacific*, however, several days might pass during which one would not meet or see particular crewmembers. This may be partially attributed to the strong

departmental divisions on board ships; engineers are seldom spotted out on deck and vice-versa, for instance. The extent of the effects of strong departmental division became evident when I invited the ship's young Filipino motorman Jake to join me on the bridge for a chat one evening while observing the countless stars and serene dark waters. He had, in fact, never set foot there other than during pre-arrival meetings, and his unfamiliarity was evident in the way he moved his body upon entering the bridge. Jake gave me the impression that we were breaching protocol as he entered the bridge cautiously. In addition to the departmental division, the *Pacific* had two mess halls designated for either officers or crew, which also influenced whom one might see. Finally, many crewmembers spoke of a 'power distance' in terms of rank and nationality. Max, for instance, who did not wish to take the elevator in case he encountered the chief engineer (as described in Chapter 5) exemplifies this power distance. Relating to the question about how and why Cameron was offered the promotion, and keeping in mind the strong departmental divisions on board ships, to what extent might Norwegian socio-cultural norms be instrumental here?

EQUALITY AS 'ALIKENESS' AND 'SAMENESS'

In the Norwegian context,[65] ideas about egalitarianism are widely regarded as an important socio-cultural norm, and in summarising her reflections about Norwegian culture, Marianne Gullestad (1992) introduced the term 'egalitarian individualism'. On the one hand, Norwegian culture is arguably highly individualistic. In both religion and the arts, few traces of opposing cultures are discernible. As Gullestad (1992, p. 184) argued, 'There are few traces of a Catholic church culture to oppose the individualism of Lutheran Protestantism [and] within the arts, there was no strong classicistic tradition to oppose the individualism of romanticism'.

[65] Or Nordic/Scandinavian

On the other hand, Scandinavia's welfare states are organised and structured according to collective principles (Esping-Andersen, 1990), which, in turn, makes collective values an equally important feature of Norwegian culture. In approaching the Norwegian iteration of egalitarian individualism, the definition of equality is crucial here, as it translates to 'alikeness' or 'sameness'. Gullestad (1985, p. 35) argued, based on her extensive research, that people must often feel alike before they can believe that they fit together (i.e., highlighting similarities over dissimilarities). Drawing on Gullestad's understanding of individual egalitarianism, Vike et al. (2001, pp. 16–17), argued for a distinction between equality as a premise of interaction and equality as a mutual understanding of rules. As two rationalities for interaction—the former bringing to life the metaphor of 'being in the same boat' and 'sameness', while the latter is indicative of broader, societal, structures—they give rise to tensions. These tensions, I believe, must be considered in analysing Cameron's promotion and Cameron's subsequent estrangement from his senior colleague, Ernie.

After I had been on board the *Pacific* for a considerable period, I realised that many of the crewmembers had histories of relationships with one another. This was the case for Cameron and the captain Lars. Greeting Cameron in the hallway warmly and with a big smile, Lars said, 'How's it going, Cameroonzy?' Somewhat puzzled by the affectionate play on Cameron's name, I learned that Cameron and Lars had sailed together prior to his two-year leave, and in a later conversation, Lars would frame their relationship as genuinely good, making a somewhat paternal comment about 'having known him for ten years, since he was a kid'. When Cameron joined the *Pacific* after having completed the mandatory courses in Manila and as a third officer, he not only saw Lars more frequently but would also have to engage with Lars in a different manner in view of his position. In addition to the expected increased social engagement between the two men now that Cameron was an officer, Lars

took a special interest in Cameron's progression. As Lars specifically stated, 'It is one of the largest transitions [in rank], to go from cleaning the deck to steering the ship'.

I perceived Lars' interest in Cameron as resonant with what was a broader topic among the Norwegian officers when they identified what they perceived as challenges on board mixed nationality-crewed ships. Predominantly, they identified communication in varying contexts and situations as particularly challenging. In response to my question about what he expected from his crew, Lars stated, 'I expect them to communicate with us, if things are good or bad. And I expect them to communicate with us if they have problems with things. But the most important thing is that they tell you when things are not in order. I guess that's what I expect the most. Because it's a big ship and I [only] have two eyes, the chief officer has two eyes. It's limited what we can see. Those guys [crew], there's hundred eyes trotting around, and they can really see how things are, and I expect them to give me feedback … But it's a little bit like 'comme ci comme ça', some do, and some don't. It is what it is'. Having detected a hint of frustration in his voice towards the end, I pushed Lars a little further on this topic and he continued, 'Of course, to be honest, I sort them out. I do. Some of them I value higher than others. Some I trust, others I don't trust when it comes to work. That's the way it always will be. People are different'.

Against Cameron's story, a parallel narrative about how certain personal qualities are cultivated and valued emerges, particularly in relation to the Norwegian officers' socio-cultural understanding of mutual trust. Now with more responsibilities both on board the ship and in relation to his Norwegian senior-ranking officers, whose end-of-contract evaluations hold substantial power in determining who is eligible for career progression, the interpersonal relationships that Cameron had previously enjoyed with his co-national shipmates now shifted towards his fellow European officers. These shifts entailed Cameron's adaption to social and occupational parameters that were defined and valued in a Norwegian social context. As such,

we may interpret Lars's above reflections on his expectations of the crew and somewhat frustration over having to 'sort people out' as exemplary of some of the inherent tensions in interaction described by Vike et al. (2001) as 'sameness' on the one hand and formally embedded work structures on the other. In the context of Cameron's promotion and in addition to his satisfaction of the formal vocational requirements, his already well-established relationship and good rapport with Lars contributed positively to his being offered the promotion. In particular, as the following example illustrates, Cameron met the Norwegian officers' expectations of trust and cross-hierarchic communication.

Upon returning as the ship's third officer, Cameron had a period of overlap with Ernie, who had referred to Cameron as the ship's 'new expert' immediately after the news of his promotion. While they shared the position for a brief period, their relationship changed during this time. The following incident was particularly challenging for Cameron and illustrates his struggle in navigating the role and responsibilities of a third officer while maintaining a relationship with his senior colleague, Ernie:

'The sad thing is that during my inspection I found something, some melted gloves. Rubber gloves that melted on forward part of the bosun store. In the fire locker, forward. So, of course, I'm new. I was trying to do what I really think is right, without any bad intention at all. Chief mate knows it, the captain knows about it. The problem is that chief officer was scolding third officer Ernie because he had not reported it. He [Ernie] is not mad but he ranted at me. I don't have any bad intentions. I mean, what I did is just part of my job'.

Camilla: 'Is Ernie angry with you?'

Cameron: 'Yes, a little bit, because he told me that I wasn't ... Supposedly, I should tell him first before chief mate, but I mean like, it's part of my job …. He was still sleeping at that time. If he's not here, I still need to contact him before I tell chief mate?'

Camilla: ‘So you already had a little conflict.’

Cameron: ‘Yes, but the good thing is that we already fixed it. I told him I don’t have any intentions to ruin your performance or to ruin your name. I mean like, it is really not my intention because I’m not, you know me, I’m not that kind of person. I’m just doing my job and, of course, I go to my superior.’

Cameron’s reporting of the incident—simply ‘doing his job’, as he specifies—is a good example of the way in which the strong Norwegian culture of equality is actually concerned with ‘sameness’ and ‘alikeness’. In the context of communication being highlighted by the Norwegian officers as the most challenging aspect of running a mixed nationality-crewed vessel, Cameron’s course of action was viewed in a positive light. As Lars said, ‘Because it’s a big ship and I [only] have two eyes, the chief officer has two eyes. It’s limited what we can see. Those guys [crew], there’s hundreds of eyes trotting around, and they can really see how things are, and I expect them to give me feedback’. Cameron, in this sense, did just that.

Moreover, aside from being part of Cameron’s job, his decision to report the incident resonated well with the Norwegian officers’ flexible attitude towards the shipboard hierarchy. When I came on board in January 2019 and sat down with the captain for the first time, I can vividly recall how one Filipino crewmember opened the door to the smoking area on A-deck and upon seeing the captain and myself immediately excused himself, closing the door and slightly bowing his head while addressing the captain as ‘Sir’. Lars, in response to this situation, revealed that despite his having over twenty years of experience, he had never become accustomed to being called ‘Sir’. In fact, he told me, he had repeatedly asked the crew not to address him as ‘Sir’ for several years until he eventually concluded that it was a ‘culture thing’ that would never change. Aligned with this ‘culture thing’ was the manner in which it played out in praxis. From a Norwegian perspective it related to issues of trust, while

from a Filipino perspective, it concerned—as many specified—power distance. In reporting the incident, therefore, Cameron found himself in a challenging position. While his senior officers praised his actions, the incident had a severe impact on his relationship with Ernie and came with a cost. 'Is it a difficult situation?', I asked Cameron, to which he responded, 'Yes! You need to somehow look after these people [Filipino shipmates] and you need to look to your superiors. This is one of the different adjustments I have right now. When you are an officer, you need to think of the people lower than you and you need to also think of the people higher. You're in the middle and you need to somehow, I mean, if you're going to tell them that this is not the standard the lower ones will tell you, 'You have changed''.

In many ways, Cameron had not changed. His personality was still the same as it had been before his promotion, as were his tone and demeanour towards his fellow shipmates, particularly those he regarded as friends, and, during mealtimes, Cameron sat on the same chair at the same table in the crew mess hall, as before. 'Cameroonzy', on the other hand, had changed. Removed from large parts of the everyday interaction due to his inclusion in the ship's watchkeeping rotation and positioned in competition against his former friends, Cameron's promotion tells a two-sided story. It illustrates the process by which his aspiration became a reality while simultaneously revealing the costs associated with promotion and the demands it imposes on a person.

After Cameron had come back onboard as a third officer, Lars visited the bridge more frequently than he had previously. During these many moments, he conversed with Cameron, at times concocting different work-related scenarios for Cameron to solve. On other occasions, he prepared short 'quiz-like' questions about navigation and, in general, made an extra effort to teach Cameron about the bridge equipment. Given that they already had a strong rapport, having known one another for several years, Lars' efforts revealed his special investment in Cameron's success, and their relationship developed further. I observed

Cameron becoming more relaxed and laid-back during these encounters. He was outspoken about his shortcomings in terms of theoretical and practical knowledge as a freshly promoted officer and, particularly, Cameron spoke directly with the captain about how he both looked forward to and dreaded various future scenarios, such as navigating heavily trafficked routes, cargo operation, and having to manage and take a leading role in onboard drills and meetings. Much to Lars' relief, I imagine, Cameron slowly began to addressing Lars by his name as opposed to 'Sir'. Finally, Ernie was often present during and a witness to these shared moments and increased intimacy between Lars and Cameron. His observation that there was a 'new expert' on the bridge appeared to bear fruition as he gradually faded into the background.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Through Cameron's transition from an AB to third officer, this chapter has demonstrated how seafarers form a differentiated yet spatially bounded workforce and how the shipping industry's crewing policies and employment patterns, which run along the lines of nationality, are profoundly racialised. Cameron's occupational trajectory also empirically illustrates the intersection between mobility and labour. For Cameron, as for most of his colleagues, the financial aspect to working on shore was crucial: 'One of the reasons I go back is to earn money', he said of his return to the industry after his two-year leave. Additionally, he spoke about ships as de facto mobile worksites, and included 'going to other places' as a feature of the seafaring occupation. Finally, like chief steward Antonio, who uprooted his entire family and relocated to Manila so as not to lose valuable time with them during his vacation, Cameron's occupational trajectory is also characterised by differentiated labour conditions.

Beyond providing empirical insight into the intersection of mobility and labour and the ways in which differentiation and racialisation play out in the shipping industry and beyond the question of whether or not seafarers are 'figures of mobility', I have attempted to demonstrate in this chapter that it is precisely this ability to 'fit' into preconceived culturally contingent ideas about equality, which are decisive in terms of how social mobility occurs, for whom it occurs, and why some people are considered over others. Through Cameron's case, I have sought to show how subtle exploitation of this nature and the toxic positioning of former friends who are now in competition with one another occur. As I have shown throughout the chapter, this is not necessarily about education and formal requirements as much as it is about the demonstration of similar values, such as cross-hierarchic movement, good communication skills, and the ability to disregard power. To conclude this chapter, the well-known and oft-cited phrase from George Orwell's 1945 novel *Animal Farm* powerfully epitomises the chapter's central argument about the experiences of career progression and notions of social mobility on a mixed nationality crewed cargo vessel: '(But) some are more equal than others'.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION: THE (UN-)MAKING OF MARITIME LABOUR

> 'Unlike many other objects, ships (which so easily cross national boundaries) have an almost human-like aura, and certainly a recognised international status. They are born or launched, have working careers, and then are decommissioned and oftentimes sent to the great beyond: Davy Jones' locker'[66] (Van Tilburg, 2007, p. 38).

During an interview, Ronald, the Filipino deck cadet, employed the metaphor of the body to describe the ship: 'Sometimes, we are separated, but we are a team. It's a big team, actually. Deck is the brain, and engine is the heart. Galley is the blood, I think. That is how it is for me. Deck and the bridge are the brain. They are the ones who plan. And when they plan, the engine, or heart, will provide. If we don't have the engine, then we cannot move, we cannot circulate. And the galley gives the nutrients, because if you don't eat, of course you will die. You will be like 'how can we work' [laughs]. That's the composition – it's a body, it's a full package that needs to work together'.

At twenty-four, Ronald was about to complete his mandatory twelve-month cadetship. 'That's the requirement in our industry, our maritime industry, to have a complete 365 days of seagoing', Ronald told me. 'So now, I'm in the end part of my training and so far, so good', he explained at a lunch during which we were seated next to one another.

His reflection, I believe, highlights two key observations. First, by re-examining the shipboard hierarchy on the *Pacific* (Figure 0.1), we can appreciate how the *Pacific*'s different

[66] 'Davy Jones' locker' is a metaphor for the oceanic abyss, the final resting place of drowned sailors and travellers. It is also a euphemism for drowning or shipwreck whereby the sailors' and ships' remains are consigned to the depths of the ocean.

labour departments are all interconnected and that despite the clear division of labour across ranks, the positions are indispensable to one another in multiple aspects. Ronald's use of the body as a metaphor for the ship underscores the way in which the vessel requires that all its constituent elements work simultaneously so that it might function fully. Without the planning of the deck and bridge, for example, how will the engine department know which engines to use, which type of fuel, and which speed? As Ronald describes it, without the brain, the heart cannot provide. Second, Ronald's reflection appears to be independent of hierarchical scrutiny. He does not afford precedence to any one of the body's components over the other. On the contrary, he highlights the interdependence of these central elements of labour on board a ship. In spite of Ronald's awareness of the divisions that govern onboard labour—the work he performs daily, for example, is de facto determined by his position as a deck cadet—he speaks of the *Pacific* as a composition, a 'full package', whereby the work involved in every component is part of the wider effort that is invested in keeping the ship afloat.

In this concluding chapter, I will present the dissertation's key themes and overall empirical findings and investigate what they might convey about the organisation of maritime work and life on cargo ships and the way in which this global industry is structured. This dissertation's purpose has been to investigate how seafarers navigate, negotiate, and perform their social interactions and occupational roles onboard a multicultural vessel. First, I have highlighted the vast—yet often 'invisible' (George, 2013)—amount of human labour and efforts that seafarers must perform to facilitate the shipping industry's seaborne movement and circulation. Second, my theoretical interventions around processes of labour standardisation, the importance of skill in seafarers' working lives and changes in and around maritime work today have shown that the division of labour onboard cargo ships is not solely linked to categories such as nationality, rank, and position, but also to interpersonal relations

and socio-cultural ideals. Third, I have demonstrated how seafarers, despite their unequally distributed positions, power, and conditions of employment, nonetheless manage to keep a vessel afloat.

AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF MARITIME WORKING LIVES

> 'You can't survive onboard without a system. You need to have, or you should have, a routine, right. Maybe you've noticed this, I don't know. You don't need to wake up every morning here but let's say that was also the case for me. After not getting up in the morning for a day or two, I will hang myself here. Because then there's no purpose, right, for me to stay. Because why am I here?'
>
> (Alex, member of the deck department on the *Pacific*)

In Chapter 1, I made the central claim that seafarers' everyday labour is an integral—even crucial—part of the global economy. As of January 1, 2021, around 55,000 merchant ships are trading internationally (Statista Research Department, 2021), and while the 55,000 ships that are circulating the entire globe (70 percent of which is water) at any given moment may not immediately sound like a strikingly high number, the visual data provided by ship-tracking websites demonstrates otherwise, as the world's maritime traffic is represented by innumerable variously coloured dots that span the entire world and carry up to 90 percent of world trade. Without these dots, the world would simply not work (George, 2013). As Laleh Khalili puts it, 'maritime transportation is not simply an enabling adjunct of trade but is central to the very fabric of global capitalism' (2020, p. 3).

The one-sided focus on the shipping industry's importance and its centrality as the 'backbone for the facilitation of global trade' (Buer et al., 2019, p. 113) undermines a focus on the people who perform the everyday labour that not only enables the functioning of this

immense machinery (Sekula & Burch, 2010) but also facilitates the industry's apparently seamless and frictionless operation. This latter point is particularly interesting—even impressive, one might argue—in light of the setup commonly observed on board cargo ships today, whereby the crew are multicultural and of mixed nationalities. This means that the world's 1.9 million seafarers (BIMCO & ICS, 2021; Baum-Talmor & Kitada, 2022), who are drawn from both traditional countries (e.g., European, OECD) and 'new' labour supply countries, such as China, Philippines, Myanmar, and Indonesia (Sampson, 2021b, p. 2; Leivestad & Markkula, 2021), must cohabit and collaborate regardless of their cultural and social differences with respect to leadership style, language, educational background and experience. As I have demonstrated throughout this dissertation, on the *Pacific*, the well-known idiom 'all in the same boat', used to describe a situation of shared circumstances, acquires the qualities of a painful paradox that demonstrates the transcontinental scale and heterogeneity of capitalist exploitation rather than simply serving as an apt description of maritime work; for while crew and officers are literally in the same boat, 'they are by no means equal' (Campling and Colas, 2021, p. 108).

As such, the comparison between *The Forgotten Space* (Sekula & Burch, 2010) and its image of the global transport system as an almost self-motored system—the global equivalent to the factory assembly line—and the epiphanous 'so it goes' phrase (Vonnegut, 1991), which ends up becoming more of an automated response to one's environment than an individual response requiring active reflection, served as an entry point into questioning some of the shipping industry's labour processes in this dissertation. In particular, it prompted an interrogation of the overwhelming dominance of work (Sampson, 2021a) in which the seemingly automated routine of 'falling into place' that those new to the *Pacific* exhibited almost immediately upon arrival (Chapter 1) was enabled and reinforced through the institutionalised and standardised organisation of shipping labour (i.e., 'every day is

Monday'). The idea of the global transport system as an almost self-monitored system, a space characterised by a 'so it goes' mindset, highlights the complex system that underpins the global flow of commodities and the system's standardisation to the extent that the seafarers have become an anonymised, indistinct, and homogenised part of the ship. For this reason, I argued that the brief comment uttered by the *Pacific's* captain, Peter, was central to this study and, moreover, that his comment introduced us to the study's main theme and focus. In contrast to the way in which such labour is 'supposed to work', according to the industry's regulatory and standardisation practices, the captain instead highlighted the cultural, individual, and personal differences at play on board and the fact that the *Pacific* was not merely a technological entity or worksite, logistical tool or vessel but also served as a home for those on board.

Chapter 2 presented the theoretical framework and maritime context. From a theoretical perspective, this empirical study has contributed to the field of work organisation and professional practices, and I have demonstrated how making an 'oceanic turn' (Blum, 2010) allows us to (re)consider key concepts, including work (re)organisation, skill(s), professionalism, manual and specialised labour, spatiality, sociality, and autonomy from a different perspective. Adopting classic approaches to work (re)organisation and skill—whose analytical frameworks tend to neglect cross-national and globalised labour—to a maritime context has yielded empirical insights into processes of labour standardisation and skilled practices. Particularly, in conversation with the deskilling thesis, which I have argued has become a 'catch-all' category in describing the development of work today, I have focused on how people's emerging responses and adaptations to processes of standardisation and mechanisation of labour in a cross-cultural work environment have given rise to new categories and understandings of skill and skilled practices. The tradition of work humanisation (see Weatherburn, 2020), which centralises the social dimensions of labour, has

served as a lens through which to examine several theoretical interventions that have attempted to humanise shipping labour (Johansen, 1979; Quale, 2010; Herbst, 1975) and investigate the longevity of the traditional barriers currently in place with respect to shipboard organisation.

In line with a growing body of work that examines the social and politicised nature of space (Lefebvre, 1991; Bear, 2014, 2015; May & Thrift, 2001; Massey, 2005), I have also explored the workers' positions in relation to uneven developments under capitalism (Kasmir & Gill, 2018) and the way in which global capitalism uses labour today, which affects some people disproportionately to others. This is important in terms of the occupational context. I have argued that it is difficult to separate seafarers' experiences of labour from the wider globalised international shipping seascape, of which they are an integral and crucial part. Chapter 2 thus included a broad description of the international shipping industry's landscape and a more detailed description of the LNG segment and the ship particulars of the *Pacific*. There is a connection, I believe, between the (non-)attention to seafarers and to how the shipping industry is organised around open registries of flags—commonly known as *flags of convenience* (Borovnik, 2012; Alderton & Winchester, 2002)—the growing use of third-party crew agencies (Sampson, 2013; Alderton et al. 2004) and the widespread implementation of temporary contracts issued to seafarers (Borovnik, 2004; Bloor & Sampson, 2009); namely, organisation of this nature effectively reinforces the idea of 'decentralisation'. It is also connected to the ways in which this global industry and its regulations are formally and institutionally produced and organised, including the frictions in the social and relational dimensions between and across its mobile labour force (Bastos et al., 2021), such as conflicts caused by competition between workers, for example, or by unforeseen events such as repairs and accidents, through a systemic just-in-time logic, which is underpinned, again, by logics of efficiency, large-scale infrastructure and standardisation.

More significantly, however, in adopting an ethnographic focus on the ways in which seafarers navigate, negotiate, and perform their social relations and occupational roles in the local context onboard the *Pacific* over a considerable period (Chapter 3), this study has revealed the living labour, in the Marxist sense—that is, the nerves, muscles, and brain—of the seafarers who are placed in this logistical environment (Carse, 2018) and revealed that the standardised work arrangements, 'mindless' checklists and routines, automated technologies, and the 'get in, get out' efficiency of cargo operations are in fact enacted and engendered by people whose skills, interactions, experiences, personalities, and social competencies shape them in various ways. The holistic approach that I adopted towards the *Pacific* was particularly well-suited to the task of obtaining empirically grounded knowledge about seafarers' everyday work, the multiple ideologies that surround work practices, and their everyday negotiation and organisation of work. In particular, approaching shipping labour from an anthropological stance allowed me to access and experience the broad range of work that took place on board first-hand. Moreover, it granted me access to the deeply personalised and subjective ways in which seafarers in different positions and from different backgrounds engaged and implemented strategies with the aim of making their everyday labour more meaningful, valuable, and autonomous.

In Chapter 4, I presented two ethnographic examples: the slamming door that no one closed and Phil, an inspector from the Ship Inspection Report Program (SIRE) who came on board the *Pacific*. One of this chapter's main objectives was to provide the reader with insight into the *Pacific*'s extremely regimented workspace and to demonstrate how the rigid organisation of labour and distribution of responsibility created 'blind spots' in the sense that unplanned tasks fell outside of the distribution of responsibilities and were thus left uncompleted, as they were 'nobody's' responsibility. This may seem counterintuitive, given the extremely structured nature of work on board, but I have attempted to demonstrate in this

chapter that it is precisely this increasingly rigid organisation that fails to foster flexibility. The descriptions of the formalised and standardised work arrangements aboard the *Pacific* laid out here echo both discussions about organisational deskilling principles (Braverman, 1974) and Marx's theory of alienation with regards to its overpowering work environment. While the example of the slamming door may be analysed through the idiom of alienation and the deskilling thesis—the central argument here being that jobs are increasingly becoming devoid of content, routinised, and mechanical (Wood, 1982)—the inspector Phil's coming onboard can be analysed in relation to labour standardisation as a form of managerial disciplining (Alimahomed-Wilson & Ness, 2018, p. 5). This, in turn, offered a lens that allowed us to better expose the mechanisms that enable and enforce a particular overpowering work environment. However, the chapter also revealed that such extreme regimentation of people's everyday lives is unsustainable in practice, a sentiment that most seafarers expressed, with one even arguing that the ship was becoming a 'place for robots'. The chapter further revealed how the standards, categories, and adaptions to large-scale information structures to which the seafarers adhere—such as the inspection and metaphorical murder of Buddy, the safety cat—may occasionally be open to negotiation.

I continued to expand on the idea of labour standardisation and the notion of rigid organisation in Chapter 5 by examining the different strategies that seafarers apply and engage in as part of their daily work, with the aim of making their working lives more tolerable and sustainable. Through the ethnographic example of ordinary seaman (OS) Max and his 'smart working' strategy, the chapter focused specifically on how individual ship workers working within the same regimented workplace setting devise strategies for negotiating their labour. However, given that these strategies emerged from an already hierarchic and ethnically stratified work culture, interpretations of them are inevitably biased—for example, slow walking (among deck workers) was regarded as a sign that on-

deck supervision was deficient. In examining the social and politicised nature of space, I demonstrated how time is spread unevenly aboard the *Pacific* and showed, through acts of 'time-tricking' (Bear, 2016), that even attempts to humanise work in fact require a great deal of work. What kind of space, I asked, is the *Pacific?* Is it the kind of gruelling workspace that E. P. Thompson (1967) described or a place of shirking, as described by Parry (1996)? To this question, I would answer that it may indeed be both at various moments during their quotidian labour.

Faced with a rigid shipboard hierarchy as a result of the large power distances between ratings and European officers, differentiated experiences of being on board, both in terms of contract length and significant variations with respect to distinct responsibilities, the most important question—for the Filipino ratings, in particular—is not necessarily what kind of space the *Pacific* is; rather, for Filipino seafarers, shore leave was the only disruption to the otherwise continuous cycle of work. Indeed, while it represented a physical transposition away from the confines of the ship, shore leave also entailed a psychological transposition in the sense that it effectively—if only for a moment—severed the seafarers' ties to the occupational structure that otherwise substantially controlled their daily rhythm.

Chapter 6 continued the exploration of the ways in which the seafarers negotiated and organised their daily work by incorporating an investigation of skill and different understandings of skill and skilled practices into the discussion. Against the ethnographic context of a blackout, this chapter explored perceptions of skill and culturally contingent understandings of the experience of labour in a landscape characterised by the shipping industry's changing qualifications. It demonstrated that while some situations benefited from embodied capacities developed through experience over time, others required more person-dependent soft skills that conveyed both competency and proficiency in addition to other socio-culturally-contingent understandings of skill. Skills of this nature, which bridge the gap

between embodied knowledge and the 'feel' for work and experience, became even more important within the hierarchised and multicultural work environment but remain highly arbitrary from one situation to the next.

The importance of skill for the everyday organisation and execution of work going smoothly is indisputable. In everyday operations—that is, when work is going as it should—the notion of skill is primarily a formal matter, such as having the 'ticket to work', which I term the STWC, and the requisite certification for various positions. However, when faced with unforeseen and critical situations, as the blackout in Qatar illustrates, the question of skill becomes more stringent and, moreover, reveals its importance and contestations. On board the *Pacific,* European management's culturally contingent assessment of skills both enabled and constrained access to skills. In this chapter, I demonstrated how the 'social life of skills' (Carwell & De Neve, 2018) was interpreted and negotiated vis-à-vis nationality and position in the shipboard hierarchy. The chapter's investigation of the significant variation in the arsenal of skills, qualities, and abilities that seafarers apply to different situations revealed that the elusive understanding of skill is significant for understanding how some people's skills are regarded as 'high' while other people's skills are deemed 'low'. As one seafarer phrased it, 'It's like a fridge. Nobody cares about how it works until the sausages and milk have gone bad'.

Expanding on the notion of skill, Chapter 7 picked up from where Chapter 6 left off and explored the interpersonal skills that are involved in managing expectations of collegiality and career drive. To provide a broader perspective on the intersection of labour and mobility (Bastos et al., 2021), the chapter analysed Cameron's occupational trajectory from deck worker to third officer in light of his promotion. In particular, the chapter attempted to affect a nuanced perspective on the dynamics of seafarers' mobilities, as outlined by other scholars, by closely examining some of the personality traits that Norwegian officers looked to and/or

value in questions of both promotion and demotion. As this chapter demonstrated, upward social mobility does not remove the differentiated spatiality in which the seafarers are bound. Like many of his co-nationals, Cameron's status as a *subaltern*, in Gramsci's (2011) sense of the word, conditions how mobility is enacted on board ships—as it did on the *Pacific*—and within the shipping industry in general.

The chapter showed that career progression and career drive are not necessarily concerned with education and formal requirement so much as they are concerned with demonstrating similar sociocultural values (Gullestad, 1992; 1985) to the Norwegians on board, including cross-hierarchic movement, good communication skills, and the ability to disregard power. However, this strategy may also come at a cost with respect to relations with Filipino co-workers, and in this chapter, I demonstrated how the shipping industry's crewing policies and employment patterns, which run along the lines of nationality, are profoundly racialised. This goes beyond providing empirical insights into how mobility intersects with labour and how differentiation and racialisation is organised in the shipping industry, and beyond exploring whether seafarers are 'figures of mobility' or not. Rather, I have demonstrated that it is precisely this ability to 'fit' into predetermined culturally contingent ideas about equality that determines how social mobility occurs, for whom it occurs, and why some people are considered over others.

SHIPPING MATTERS: LABOUR RELATIONS IN AND OF THE MARITIME WORLD

> 'Why would anyone be interested in the lives of sailors? I eat and sleep, and I don't socialise much. Most of what goes on takes place in the daytime'.
>
> (Filipino deck worker on the *Pacific*)

Ships are close knitted, 24-hour, and multicultural societies, and the seafarers who reside on board work around the clock, seven days a week, for months on end and with limited interactions with the outside world. As I have documented elsewhere—in Chapter 5, for instance—they have even fewer opportunities to leave. This is why many seafarers, including those onboard the *Pacific*, unsurprisingly assert that a seafarer's most salient skill is the ability to get along with other people. Despite the essential work that seafarers perform, their realities—that is, the occupational, relational, and temporal dimensions of their lives while on board their floating worksites—have remained largely underexplored or, like the LNG being transported on the *Pacific*, tucked away, 'out of sight, out of mind' (Sekula & Burch, 2010).

However, in addition to joining several scholars (cf. George, 2013; Sampson, 2021a, 2021b; Sekula, 1995) who seek to correct such collective 'sea-blindness', as Jatin Dua (2018, p. 6) terms it, this empirical study of maritime work and work relations from the decks of the *Pacific* has set out to explore the 'blindness' (to employ Dua's framing) towards the workers of this global industry. However, prior to summarising the central themes and concluding arguments of my research, I wish to take a step back from the ethnography conducted on board the *Pacific* and instead turn my attention to some more recent issues and debates pertaining to the global shipping industry. Several of these issues have exerted severe impacts on the shipping industry as a whole, while others, as I will elaborate shortly, have

substantially affected particular sectors or segments of the industry, such as the energy sector, in which we find the LNG trade.

It was not long after I had disembarked in Brazil and left the *Pacific* in August 2019 that the COVID-19 pandemic developed into one of the largest global-level crises known to date. As the virus spread from country to country, national governments implemented a range of preventative measures, including lockdown, the closure of national borders, isolation in varying degrees, and recommendations to remain at home. Over the course of the ensuing months, the global community entered what, at the time, came to be described as 'the new normal'. This 'new normal', as we now know, had tremendous adverse effects on the social, cultural, and economic aspects of people's lives, affecting some more profoundly than others. For the world's seafaring population, the decision to close off borders and seize all airborne traffic that many countries made was particularly severe. 'Collateral victims of the crisis' (IMO, n.d.c), as the IMO described seafarers, raised major concerns about the mental and physical burdens imposed on seafarers who had extended their contracts, and on December 1, 2020, the UN General Assembly called on its member states to designate seafarers and other marine personnel as *key workers* (UN General Assembly, 2020).

The pandemic, like the *Ever Given's* infamous grounding in the Suez Canal (although the latter event was clearly considerably less severe in terms of scale), in many ways managed to bring the 'unfamiliar' sea (Sekula & Burch, 2010; Sekula, 1995) and the 'invisible' (George, 2013) maritime industry onto land and revealed the all-too-real ramifications of a severely affected maritime industry and global supply chains. The pandemic's impact on the global LNG market, however, was less severe than it was on other shipping sectors, such as the container shipping sector, for instance. Moreover, recent LNG trade statistics indicate that the sector managed to successfully recuperate post-pandemic. The 12th annual World LNG Report of 2021, for example, which I discuss in Chapter 2, highlights 'LNG performance over

other energy sources in its resilience during the crisis'. The COVID-19 pandemic is clearly intended here, along with how the sector has managed to adjust to significant demand fluctuations, 'navigating between huge drops in demand levels at the height of the pandemic lockdowns, through exceptional upward spikes of the winter deep freeze'.

To better understand why the global LNG trade experienced an (admittedly reportedly modest) increase in 2021, the green energy transition and growing pressure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the industry—known to its actors and stakeholders as 'IMO 2020'—is central here.[67] As noted in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, natural gas is regarded as the cleanest fossil fuel, and the process by which LNG is cooled down from its gaseous state, whereby it is liquidised accompanied by a 600-fold volume reduction, also makes it highly competitive for transport. Indeed, the LNG trade increased by 13 percent in its sixth consecutive year of growth, according to the 11th Global LNG Report of 2020, with the US, Russia, Australia, Algeria, and Egypt emerging as leading exporters, while Asia Pacific and Asia remain the key centres of demand.

However, against the backdrop of the ongoing energy transition and the green shift, in which LNG is seen as 'the energy of the future', and the current energy crisis and war, the LNG sector is becoming increasingly salient and politicised. Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine, for example, has brought the issue of LNG to the forefront of the energy debate in view of the fact that Russia holds the world's largest gas reserves and is the second-largest natural gas producer globally after the United States. As of 2021, Russia's share of the gas supply accounts for 32 percent of Europe's total gas demand (up from 25 percent in 2009), and if it succeeds in its plans to increase its LNG capacity and output almost threefold to 140

[67] Known as 'IMO 2020', a new limit on the sulphur content in the fuel oil used on board ships came into force on 1 January 2020. This new limit was made compulsory following an amendment to Annex VI of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL)

million tonnes in the next fifteen years, its share in the global LNG market will grow from its present level of 8 percent to up to 30 percent.

In the current context of energy crisis and energy transition, during which some experts even publicly state that gas is being used as a 'weapon of war' (Mazneva & Shiryaevskaya, 2022) and as the global LNG market experiences unprecedented shifts, the recent events detailed here combine to demonstrate the market's fragility and document the associated risks of shipping and highlight several precarities affecting LNG's supply-and-demand system.

With this in mind, let us return to the *Pacific* and the idea that the act of getting *off* the ship may indeed be quite telling of what life *on board* a ship is like with which I began this dissertation. In asking 'what kind of work organisation takes place aboard ships, and what kind of work relations are produced onboard', I would answer that the particular intersection at which the LNG sector is currently situated (indeed, the maritime industry in general) intensifies the significance of onboard labour relations and relations among seafarers whose everyday work in this highly regulated, spatially bounded, and ethnically stratified work environment on which the shipping industry depends.

'THE PRODUCT OF WORK IS PEOPLE': MAKING THE SHIP WORK

> 'It's a challenge, yes. Because it's like this. You pick out twenty-five different men, from different cultures, different personalities, different everything. And then you place them on a ship and go, here, this is your home for two months'.
>
> (Peter, captain onboard the *Pacific*)

In line with Hester Blum's (2010) assertion that 'the sea is not a metaphor' and her exhortation that we remain 'attentive to the material conditions and praxis of the maritime

world' and the perspectives of those 'for whom the sea was simultaneously workplace, home, passage, penitentiary, and promise' (2010, p. 670), my own work has also focused on the *work* involved in 'oceanic practice'. Take, for example, the powerful images invoked by Ronald, the deck cadet whose metaphor of the ship as a body opened this chapter. His perspective, I believe, speaks to much more than just one person's evocative reflections or about whether it is an appropriate or accurate description of how a vessel is organised and structured in today's shipping industry; rather, it speaks to what throughout this dissertation has been the central theme and focus—that is, it highlights the labour that goes into making a ship 'work'. I have demonstrated how explorations of the tensions between the standardised, formalised, and theoretical measures of work on the one hand, and its individual, personal, experiential, and practical aspects of it on the other hand provides us with a fresh perspective on maritime work. In many ways, Ronald's metaphor of the ship as a body succinctly summarises several of the key tensions laid out in this dissertation.

This dissertation has revealed that the ways in which seafarers navigate, perform, and negotiate their social relations and occupational roles are significantly connected to discourses of mutual dependence. Ronald's envisioning of the ship as a body also points to the idea that seafarers' everyday labour amounts to a 'full package that needs to work together'. The contemporary shipping industry, I have argued, is dependent on seafarers continuously reinforcing and reasserting the idea that teamwork and collective work values are integral components of their occupational lives. Furthermore, the grip that this narrative of maritime work has on seafarers is, first and foremost, a powerful construct that benefits key actors and stakeholders in the cargo shipping sector rather than the seafarers whose everyday work keeps the industry's wheels in motion. These dependencies, in turn, are also significant in the context of the current energy crisis and war, since it will most likely prove difficult for the

shipping industry to uphold and reinforce the discourses of dependencies amid such moments of transition, change, and uncertainty.

In addition to providing empirical insight into that which I argue has largely remained underexplored (i.e., what this kind of work actually consists of and entails), my focus on everyday work has allowed me to investigate in greater detail how the dominant occupational structures are experienced by the seafarers on board. Indeed, my ethnography shows that the everyday, piecemeal acts of labour that enable the apparently seamless, globe-spanning operation of the shipping industry is in fact far more complex than it would initially appear to be. I have further argued throughout this dissertation that the everyday labour required to make a ship 'work' is performed largely at the intersection between the mechanical function of labour, human-as-infrastructure, and the ship and terminals as non-places (Auge, 1995) on the one hand and the everyday strategies and practices (i.e., what we might regard as the 'human element') of shipping labour on the other. What I hope to have demonstrated is that in contrast to the image of the global transport system as an almost self-motored system—the global equivalent to the factory assembly line—and the either/or image of seafarers as 'figures of mobility', a term that is too often invoked to describe maritime work and the people who perform it, seafarers constitute a diverse group of people whose experience, age, social background, and motivations for having pursued a maritime career are multifaceted and subject to great variation, yet whose combined everyday 'invisible' work is what makes, to paraphrase Vonnegut (1991) here, this global industry's 'so it goes' dependencies possible.

By taking matters 'out to sea', my empirical research into work and work relations offers a critique of labour standardisation (in the 'checklist' sense of the term) and of its undermining of flexible thinking and initiatives. I have focused instead on the everyday work that seafarers perform and on the occupational relationships that both produce and are productive of particular sets of work ethics and work values when it comes to going through

the everyday motions that enable the continued mobility of the shipping industry. Assumption of responsibility and refraining from blindly following orders and instructions have emerged as important occupational values that encourage social cohesion in an environment that is otherwise so clearly structured along the lines of nationality and hierarchy. As I have demonstrated, however, these discourses and narratives also gloss over the many ways in which they stem from deeply racialised social and cultural biases on board.

Moving from the descriptions of the mindless performance of work tasks, from checklists, standardised work arrangements, routines, and the institutionalised nature of shipboard life that arguably induces fatigue in the seafarers, replacing the kind of independent, resourceful labour in which many of them took pride, I turned instead to how individual ship workers devise strategies for negotiating their labour. These strategies are of central importance to this dissertation: namely, the intertwining of the social organisation of work with the occupational structure, the ways in which this takes place, and its impact on the everyday work and life on board contemporary cargo ships, like the *Pacific*, making it appear seamless and free of friction.

It may not be difficult to comprehend how the global shipping industry has come to be regarded as a powerful metaphor for fluidity and connection in some instances, particularly when we consider the globe-spanning movement of ships with crews hailing from all parts of the world. The *Pacific*, for example, during the fieldwork period, criss-crossed the world; loaded and discharged LNG in ten countries; made her way through the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Mediterranean Ocean; transited both the Panama and Suez Canals; and crossed the Gibraltar, Malacca, and Hormuz straits. However, I have demonstrated that the metaphors that emerge from an onboard perspective are less reflective of fluidity and connection than they are of containment, isolation, and loneliness—the 'unglamourous aspects of the job' as Sampson (2021a, p. 87) calls it.

Finally, my ethnographic explorations into the situated organisation of everyday maritime work aboard the *Pacific* illustrate that the way work is organised—its managerial principles, its standardised and institutionalised nature, its hierarchic and national divides, and its contingent conceptualisations of competency and proficiency—are key components to understanding collective action and labour organising. To conclude, I hope that my research has contributed critical empirical insights to emerging debates about inequality and its persistence within maritime supply chains and in the shipping industry.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Information letter (in Norwegian)

Appendix 2: Interview guide (in Norwegian)

Appendix 3: Ethics approval (in Norwegian)

APPENDIX 1

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

"Formation of an off shore identity. Autonomy, resistance and adaptability among maritime workers"?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å bidra til forståelsen av hvordan det er å jobbe til sjøs. I dette skrivet gir jeg deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Informasjonsskrivet er også tilgjengelig på engelsk da jeg gjør feltarbeid om bord et skip med internasjonalt mannskap.

Formål

Som del av mitt treårige doktorgradsprosjekt «Formation of an off shore identity: Autonomy, Resistance and Adaptability among Maritime workers» ved OsloMet, gjennomføres feltarbeid om bord her. Feltarbeid er en viktig del av prosjektet og vil bidra med viktig innsikt for å belyse hvordan sjøfolk påvirker og tilskriver mening til sin egen arbeidshverdag. Foreløpige forskningsspørsmål er sentrert rundt temaene autonomi, motstand og tilpasning i en industri i brytningstid.

Prosjektet plasserer seg sådan i en større tradisjon av forskere som analyserer arbeid; hva er interne skillelinjer mellom kollegaer, hvordan plasserer man seg i forhold til ledelse og, ikke minst, hvordan reflekterer sjølfolk rundt sin egen rolle i en næring som fortsatt er Norges bærebjelke.

Jeg kommer til å arbeide tett med prosjektet «(Dis)-Assembling the life cycle of container ships. Global ethnographic explorations into maritime working lives» ved Universitetet i Oslo. I tillegg til en klar nasjonal forankring har prosjektet også en internasjonal karakter. Prosjektet er knyttet til Norsk Maritimt Museum hvor offisiell åpning av prosjektet skal finne sted 14 og 15 januar 2019. Prosjektet strekker seg over tre år og omhandler tre viktige pilarer i moderne skipsindustri; skipsbygging, shipping og opphugging/resirkulering av skip. Med andre ord, kontinuerlig, mangeårig arbeid hvor prosessen fra vugge til grav følges.

I doktorgradsprosjektet mitt vil jeg fokusere på den norske delen ved shipping-industrien som vil utgjøre et viktig bidrag til det overnevnte prosjektet som primært har et internasjonalt fokus.

Prosjektet, i samarbeid med prosjektet som finner sted ved Universitetet i Oslo, tar sikte på å utvikle særdeles relevant kunnskap om en «gjemt» yrkesgruppe som representerer en uunnværlig resurs for suksessen Norge har hatt, og fortsatt har, til sjøs.
Forskningstillatelse er selvfølgelig klarert, samtidig som jeg garanterer full anonymisering av både rederi og ansatte.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Jeg er ansatt ved Senter for Profesjonsstudier som er et forskningssenter ved Oslo Met (Oslo storbyuniversitet).

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?
Du får spørsmål om deltakelse på bakgrunn av at skipet du arbeider på har godkjent at jeg gjør feltarbeid her. Det har skjedd i samarbeid med mannskapet og rederiet.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?
Jeg kommer til å følge vanlig arbeidsdag om bord på skipet i en periode på ca. åtte måneder (januar til august). Jeg vil lære om de ulike departementene om bord og de forskjellige ansvarsområdene.

Det er frivillig å delta
Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykke tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle opplysninger om deg vil da bli anonymisert. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan jeg oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger
Jeg vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene jeg har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Jeg behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

- Det er kun meg som vil ha tilgang til informasjon som deles. Det vil allerede være anonymisert i samtale med veiledere. De har tilgang til rederiet navn, men øvrig informasjon skal ikke deles.
- Navn og annen informasjon vil lagres på datamaskin med passord og jeg vil låse dør når jeg ikke arbeider.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når jeg avslutter forskningsprosjektet?
Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes august 2019. Ved prosjektets slutt vil observasjonsdata være tilgjengelig på personlig datamaskin med passord. I tillegg vil navn og annen informasjon som kan være gjenkjennelig være anonymisert i datamaterialet.

Dine rettigheter
Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- få slettet personopplysninger om deg,
- sende klage til personvernombudet eller Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.
- få utlevert en kopi av dine personopplysninger

Hva gir meg rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?
Jeg behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?
Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Senter for profesjonsstudier ved Senterleder Oddgeir Osland
- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS, på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller telefon: 55 58 21 17.

- Personvernombud, OsloMet Ingrid S. Jacobsen, epost (personvernombud@oslomet.no)

Med vennlig hilsen
Camilla Mevik
Prosjektansvarlig

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet Formation of an off shore identity. Autonomy, resistance and adaptablity among maritime workers, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- ☐ å delta i intervju
- ☐ å være del av deltakende observasjon

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet, august 2019 for feltarbeid. Doktorgraden i sin helhet er ferdig i august 2021.

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

APPENDIX 2

Intervjuguide

Da feltarbeid er en dynamisk prosess som oppstår i møte med forsker og informant(er) foreligger det ikke en intervjuguide med formulerte spørsmål i forkant av prosjektets oppstart.

Det er heller ikke avgjort om strukturerte intervjuer med enkeltpersoner eller i grupper vil finne sted.

Om intervjuer likevel finner sted i løpet av feltarbeidet, er det noen temaer jeg er interessert i å finne svar på.

Dette vil være spørsmål direkte knyttet til opplevelse og gjennomføring av arbeid til sjøs.

Jeg er interessert i å vite hvordan informanter opplever sin egen arbeidshverdag og hva de fyller arbeidsdagen med.

I en gitt intervjusituasjon stiller jeg åpne spørsmål;

1. Kan du beskrive en vanlig arbeidsdag?
2. Hva er det ved arbeid til sjøs du setter mest pris på?
3. Hva slags arbeidsoppgaver synes du er mest interessante?
4. Hva slags rolle har du om bord?
5. Hvordan er kontakten med rederiet?

I et gruppeintervju vil jeg være mest interessert i spørsmål knyttet til samarbeid;

1. Hvor viktig er det sosiale nettverket om bord?
2. Kan dere si litt om hvordan de ulike departementene samarbeider om bord?
3. Hvordan oppleves relasjonen til rederiet på land?

I tillegg ønsker jeg å kartlegge fartstid, tidligere erfaringer fra shipping og utdanningsløp da det er interessant å se hvorvidt dette er faktorer som er med på å påvirke samspillet om bord.

Det er ikke avgjort om intervjuer skal foretas ved hjelp av lydopptaker. Det vil avgjøres ved intervjuets lengde.

APPENDIX 3

Reference number	Type	Date
245889	Standard	11.03.2019

Project title

Formation of an Offshore identity: Autonomy, resistance and adaptability among Maritime workers.

Data controller (institution responsible for the project)
OsloMet – storbyuniversitetet / Senter/forskningsprogrammer / Senter for profesjonsstudier

Project leader
Camilla Mevik

Project period
21.01.2019 - 19.08.2019

Categories of personal data
General
Special

Comment
Hei, Takk for oppdatert meldeskjema og informasjon. Vi legger til grunn opprinnelig vurdering av prosjektet, og det kan dermed fortsette som planlagt.

Det innsendte meldeskjemaet med referansekode 245889 er nå vurdert av NSD.

Følgende vurdering er gitt:

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen, så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet 19.02.2019 med vedlegg, samt i meldingsdialogen mellom innmelder og NSD. Vi ber om at du oppdaterer informasjonsskrivet med rettigheten «-få utlevert en kopi av dine personopplysninger (dataportabilitet)», og at du også oppgir kontaktinformasjon til OsloMet sitt personvernombud. Vi ber i tillegg om at du endrer NSD sin e-postadresse til personverntjenester@nsd.no. Vi forutsetter at dette blir endret/tilført. Behandlingen kan starte.

MELD ENDRINGER

Dersom behandlingen av personopplysninger endrer seg, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. På våre nettsider informerer vi om hvilke endringer som må meldes. Vent på svar før endringen gjennomføres.

TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET

Prosjektet vil behandle særlige kategorier av personopplysninger om fagforeningsmedlemskap og alminnelige personopplysninger frem til 19.08.2019, og at data oppbevares for forskningsformål til 01.09.2021. Vi forutsetter at utvalget gir sitt samtykke til den totale perioden det oppbevares identifiserende opplysninger.

LOVLIG GRUNNLAG

Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 nr. 11 og art. 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse, som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake. Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes uttrykkelige samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 a), jf. art. 9 nr. 2 bokstav a, jf. personopplysningsloven § 10, jf. § 9 (2).

PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER

NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om: - lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen - formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke viderebehandles til nye uforenlige formål - dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet - lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet

DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: åpenhet (art. 12), informasjon (art. 13), innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18), underretning (art. 19), dataportabilitet (art. 20). NSD vurderer at informasjonen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13. Vi

minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER

NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32). For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og eventuelt rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET

NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet. Lykke til med prosjektet! Kontaktperson hos NSD: Øivind Armando Reinertsen Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17