



Navigating Safety

Second Report from Safety Culture
and Reporting Practice on Danish Ships in
the Danish International Ship Register



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Preface

This is the second report from the ‘Safety culture and reporting practices on Danish ships in the Danish International Ships registry’ (SADIS) project.

The project began in March 2010 and was initially conducted by Fabienne Knudsen as a project leader, Sisse Grøn as project researcher and also Gichelle Cruz as research assistant for a period of three months, where she was to conduct interviews in Manila and assist with fieldwork in Manila.

Halfway through the three year project period Fabienne fell ill, and after a sick leave period she retired, leaving the project leadership to Sisse.

In the spring of 2012 Line Richter joined the project as a research assistant.

This report is written by Line and Sisse, based on our own work, but also on that of Fabienne and Gichelle. We would like to use this opportunity to warmly thank our former or current colleagues Fabienne Knudsen, Gichelle Cruz, and Henrik Hansen for their valuable work. We also wish to express our gratitude to the members of SADIS’ scientific reference group; Steven McKay, Gunnar Lamvik and Johnny Dyreborg for their input as well as our professional reference group from the maritime industry for their much valued insights. We are also very grateful to the shipping companies we cannot name, who let us on board for our fieldwork, but mostly we are deeply indebted to our anonymous informants who have shared their knowledge with us.

Acronyms and abbreviations

DMA.	Danish Maritime Authorities
DIS	Danish International Ships register
PEME	Pre-Embarkment Medical Examination
POEA	Philippines Overseas Employment Agency
SADIS	Safety culture and reporting practices in DIS (Sikkerhedskultur og Anmeldepraksis i DIS)

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1. Executive summary

Navigating Safety is the second report from the SADIS project. Overall, the project seeks to understand the difference in reported work-related accidents among seafarers of various nationalities in the Danish International Ship register (DIS). Two strands of inquiry have been pursued in order to find answers to this difference, one strand focused on reporting practices (underreporting as a (partial) answer) and the other focused on safety culture. In this report we zoom in on safety culture as an explanatory path.

Ethnographic methods have been used to answer this question. 48 Interviews at sea during 7 voyages where participant observation was also carried out, and 14 interviews and 6 focus group discussions on shore form the basis of the analyses.

Culture is a guiding term in the report and we take a point of departure in two variants of the term, i.e. national culture (as related to multinational crewing) and safety culture. Instead of letting national culture be an explanation *sui generis*, the aim is to understand the underlying factors that may be experienced as culture on an everyday basis. These factors may influence national differences in reporting of accidents. In other words, we dissect culture and break it into smaller components. We do not claim to give an exhaustive list of factors but rather try to identify some of the differences that make a difference. We use the concept of safety culture in line with Alvesson's term "*bounded ambiguity*" for the broadly shared rules and meanings which we need to account for if we are to talk about culture at all. Thus we aim to describe safety culture as something, which might be shared, divided or fragmented, but should encompass all.

Especially two national groups come under our attention, the Filipinos who have the lowest rate of accidents and Danes who have the highest. The accident statistics of Filipino seafarers working on ships in DIS presents a paradox. The Filipino seafarers usually constitute the lowest ranking crew members, and in general ratings carry out the most risky work tasks on board a ship. Further, several scholars have pointed out that the research on seafarers health is slanted in favor of European and North American nationals and that the research on especially south east Asian seafarers leaves much to be done. Accordingly, in this report we zoom in on the Filipino seafarers on ships under Danish flag, and juxtapose them with Danish seafarers.

We look “behind the scenes” and sketch out what we have called the professional field or terrain of the seafarer. The notion of professional field is used here to describe the social space within which the seafarers have to move in their professional lives. In this field institutions such as schools, manning agencies and medical institutions coexist. What characterizes the Filipino seafarers and the terrain they move in, is the lack of access to knowledge and a lack of trust in the system or systems, which in turn are opaque and hard to pinpoint. We argue that the terrain is in motion, which entails that the Filipino seafarer’s course into and in the business must continuously be adjusted, he must keep navigating in the unstable terrain where his future is decided, but not by himself. The terrains are not just background information on the paths of the seafarers; they also have direct consequences on how the seafarers think about safety in their daily work life. In the Danish context the professional field or terrain is characterized by a predictability that is absent in the Filipino context. The seafarers must still navigate through a terrain filled with various institutions but these are not as interchangeable and unpredictable as they are in the Filipino context. In Denmark, the societal construct, with one major institution that holds power over the territory i.e. the state, entails that the seafarers are able to foresee what lies ahead, and thus it appears as more stable.

After sketching out these terrains we move closer to an important aspect of all seafarers’ lives; their families. The lack of physical presence on board the ship does not mean that the family is absent from the social world of the seafarers. Instead the family, especially for the Filipino seafarers is at the core of their lives and in the center of the professional field. This influences the way safety is perceived.

It is hard to say if there are any differences pertaining to nationality that make a difference in regards to safety practices. But we can say that there are differences in the way the seafarers themselves think about safety which seem to be linked to national differences. These differences, we argue, are hinged on the very different backgrounds and professional fields of the seafarers; where the types of family they are part of also play a role.

2. Introduction

This report is the second report from the SADIS project. Overall, the project seeks to understand the difference in reported work-related accidents among seafarers of various nationalities in the Danish International Ship register (DIS).

A study on occupational accidents among crew aboard Danish merchant ships, based on data from the Danish Maritime Authority (DMA), and insurance data, reveals that Coaster crews have a low rate of reported accidents. Yet they have the highest rate of accidents leading to permanent disability (Hansen et al. 2002). The same study shows a great variation in the rate of reporting, depending on the nationality of the crew. As discussed by the authors, a possible explanation of this difference may be found in the rate of underreporting. It is likely that some barriers to a good practice of reporting are reinforced in the case of foreigners who might lack different types of information. However, the statistical data also show a remarkable disparity between the different nationalities among the foreigners. Filipino seafarers, who make up the biggest proportion of foreigners on Danish ships, have less than 50% reported accidents compared to the Danes, while Polish seafarers, the next biggest group of foreigners, have a higher rate, although still lower than the Danes (Hansen et al. 2001; Hansen et al. 2002). Another international survey on self-reported injuries shows a similar difference between the rate of injuries for Danes and Filipino seafarers (Jensen et al. 2004). Three other studies show similar differences between Filipinos and other nationalities (Dahl et al. 2008; Lamvik & Bye 2004; Bell & Jensen 2009).

Also, analysis of a database consisting of one year's recording of accidents from four different sources (notifications to the DMA, notifications to the Danish Ship-owners Accident Insurance Association, reimbursement of medical expenses due to an accident by the DMA, and the journals of the Danish Radio Medical) confirms that Filipino seamen have fewer injuries than Danes, and that underreporting, even if it takes places, cannot account for the whole difference (Hansen et al 2008).

Thus, it seems reasonable to presume that differences in injury rates between seafarers of different nationalities are related both to safety culture and reporting practice. Therefore, the SADIS project was launched in March 2010 in order to contribute with more knowledge about the reporting of work accidents and safety culture at sea.

The project's aim has been to bring qualitative answers to the question of why Danish workers in some situations score higher – and Filipinos lower - than other

nationalities in international injury statistics. The building of the Øresund bridge between Denmark and Sweden offered the possibility to compare Danes and Swedes at the same workplace, which resulted in an interesting study by Spangenberg et al. that showed that Danes had more injuries than Swedes (Spangenberg et al. 2003). However, the study raised more questions than it could answer. In this project too, we have compared Danes to other nationalities, thereby looking at different factors that may have an impact on this difference. It is not a mere matter of nationality, we have assumed, but rather a blend of social, cultural and structural factor. Overall, a greater knowledge of the contributing factors will qualify preventive work in industries that are comparable to seafaring in regards to workers' gender distribution and life mode, and which hold relative high injury statistics. At the same time, the project qualifies our knowledge of the cultural dimensions of the work environment; Knowledge that is becoming pertinent because of the increasing share of nationally mixed workplaces – also in land-based occupations such as cleaning or transport.

In 2011, there were a total of 621 ships in DIS. These ships were crewed by a total of 9.406 seafarers. Out of these there were 2.987 Danish seafarers, 1.448 seafarers from other EU/EEA countries and 4.971 seafarers from 3rd countries. Out of the 2.987 Danish seafarers, 1.762 were officers and 1.225 were ratings. From the EU/EEA countries 556 seafarers were officers and 882 were ratings. From 3rd countries 1.267 were officers and 3.704 were ratings. These numbers tell us a range of important things. First of all, that the majority, of all Danish seafarers – app. 70% - are officers. Further, that the Danish seafarers comprise 49% of all officers on ships in DIS, but only 21% of ratings (DMA 2012).¹

In general unskilled and low-skilled labor workers are more exposed to work related accidents than highly skilled (Baarts et al. 2000; Pedersen et al. 2010). In seafaring, this distinction can roughly be made between ratings and officers and a study has shown the same difference between ratings and officers as between unskilled and skilled (Brandt et al. 1994). If we couple this with the general crew distribution an interesting paradox arises: how come the Danes, who are in a seemingly less vulnerable position, report more accidents than other nationalities who are in a seemingly more vulnerable position?

We know that some of the difference in accident reporting is due to underreporting, and accordingly we have described the reporting practice in DIS shipping in the first report from SADIS (Grøn & Knudsen 2011). The report presented the practices of reporting accidents on Danish ships as it appeared in our empirical material. Here we found a number of rationalities of reporting that may affect what is reported (or not reported) and how.

The rationalities were:

- 1) *Compensation*: Companies, masters and seafarers may report accidents to make sure the injured employee can be compensated should he lose his income in the future. When masters report for this reason they write a detailed description of the damage to the body.
- 2) *Prevention*: Some masters are clearly thinking of how reporting an accident can be used to prevent similar accidents in the future. When masters report for prevention they give detailed reports of the tools used and the work process leading to the accident.
- 3) *Self-preservation*: ('cover my ass') it is the master's duty to report accidents, but also to ensure a safe environment, thus he might incriminate himself by reporting. Some masters are tiptoeing around their description of the accident in order to do so without blaming anybody in particular. These types of reports were always in English, while other types might be in English or one of the Scandinavian languages.
- 4) *Reporting as ventilation*: In some of the reports it was clear that the reporting person had an agenda of blaming his colleagues for incompetency, while reporting the accident at the same time.

Similarly, we identified a number of barriers that impedes reporting; here knowledge about the compensation system is particularly applicable to non-Danish seafarers, but criminalization and rewards for not having accidents (zero-accidents policies) are equally important.

In connection to the aforementioned report, an article was also published based on the same results. The article is a review of recent studies on the relationship between nationality and safety. The reviewed studies tell us that there is no reason to believe that employees' ethnic or national background determines their safety practice, all things being equal, mainly because things are never equal. If we are to believe the reviewed studies, it is not the minority or migrant status, as such, which makes certain employees vulnerable, but more likely convergent factors. We will attempt to pinpoint such convergent factors, which we did not identify in the review article.

In this report, our aim is to move beyond the obvious safety practices such as drills, use of personal protection equipment and compliance with safety regulations, to understand the differences between nationalities. On board ships all crew members, regardless of nationality, are subject to the same conditions as they are part of the same crew and yet their practices are guided by other factors than those given by their immediate surroundings. To understand safety practices and safety concerns of workers, we believe that it is important to widen the scope of inquiry and look beyond the individual worker and his or her actions. We expand the notion of safety

and try to grasp the social worlds of the worker that shape ideas and actions of safety. We believe that these factors are important for understanding in which way the different nationalities have different perceptions of safety and risk and what importance it holds for them in their lives.

In a maritime (shipping/seafaring) setting, this widened scope becomes even more necessary to apply as the work place can be seen as what sociologist Ervin Goffmann calls a “total institution”. A “total institution” is defined as a place *“of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appropriate period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life.”* (Goffmann in Zurcher 1965:389). The recurring parallel drawn between the ship and a prison (the latter being a text-book example of a total institution) by Filipino seafarers further underpins the relevance of using Goffman’s term. Lamvik characterizes a ship as “an extreme and abnormal place to be” (Lamvik 2012:25), and Zurcher uses Goffman’s above mentioned notion of a total institution, to underscore how all aspects of the seafarer’s life are carried out within the confinements of the ship (Zurcher 1965).

The point of departure of this report lies in the narrative of the seafarers we talked to in both formal and informal situations about their perceptions of safety, accidents, seamanship and other matters of concern.

In general it was very hard to conclude on whether any one group was “safer” or had a better safety culture than another, but it was clear that national differences were constantly invoked and created meaningful narratives among the seafarers about themselves and the “others”, whoever they were. This concerned almost all aspects of social life including safety practices. These narratives are what we have looked into in this report. Because we believe there is much to be learned from an inclusion of the whole of the seafarer (worker)’s social life in understanding the safety practices of the individual.

■ Structure of the report:

- In chapter 3** **(Methods)**, we describe the methods we have used throughout the project. These are primary ethnographic and qualitative, but also include a literature review.
- In chapter 4** **(The research field of (safety) culture)**, we discuss the concept of culture as it relates to both an (anthropological) notion of national culture and the more organizational notion of safety culture.
- In chapter 5** **(Holding on to the life raft)** we sketch out the theoretical framework that will guide us in the consecutive chapter.
- In chapter 6** **(The professional field of the seafarers)** we look into the “outside” factors that contribute to how the seafarers perceive of safety on board. We zoom in on the Filipino seafarers and juxtapose this with examples from Denmark. We outline the professional field or terrain of the seafarers that they have to navigate in order to even get their foot in the door in the industry. This terrain is so filled with obstacles that the risks of making a wrong turn are sometimes deemed higher than the risks associated with work safety on board the ship.
- In chapter 7** **(Family as a safety factor)** we delve into a specific factor, i.e. the family, and investigate how the Filipino and Danish seafarers link safety at work and family. We argue that the type of family structure combined with the societal framework and professional field (as presented in chapter 6) influences how the seafarer perceives of safety and in the end, the safety culture at sea.
- In the last chapter** **(Discussion and concluding remarks)** we discuss the consequences of our findings in relation to safety and sum up the main arguments in the report.

3. Methods

The project was conducted using ethnographic methods.

Fabienne, Sisse and Line carried out fieldwork on 7 ships embarking on journeys between 2 and 21 days. During these voyages, in addition to the participant observation that was carried out throughout the journeys, they conducted 48 interviews. The vessels we selected had different characteristics in terms of type, size, crew, organization, route and cargo. This was important because the composition of the crew and the organizational structure of the company form the preconditions for the seafarers' ability to work together as a crew and also has an impact on the safety culture on board. The methods used were participant observation, informal conversational interviews, unrecorded formal interviews, recorded interviews and also mail correspondences with informants from the ship after the voyages ended.

All formal interviews were transcribed. Informal interviews were carried out frequently as the researchers worked alongside the seafarers; they are in a condensed form documented as part of the field diary notes. Diary notes, transcripts and emails from informants received after the voyages were collected and managed in N'Vivo – a software program for qualitative data analysis.



Ethnographers with seafarers during fieldwork on board a passenger ship

Further 14 interviews and 6 small group discussions were conducted with key actors in the field as well as 6 interviews with seafarers ashore. Roughly half of these took place in Denmark and were taken by Fabienne, Sisse and/or Line. The other half took place in Manila in November 2011 to January 2012, Gichelle conducted the interviews with injured seafarers in Manila in Tagalog and later translated and transcribed the material along with a team of student assistants. The group discussion and key person interviews in Manila were done by Gichelle and Sisse together and transcribed by Gichelle and her team.

All this material was coded in N´Vivo by Fabienne, Sisse and Line according to a list of predetermined categories based on the main topic of the project, as well as important emergent topics. Coding was done by the researchers independently, and a sample of interviews was double coded and the categories were revised after discussions.

Table 1. Fieldwork voyages

Type	Crew size	Crew nationality	Organization type	Duration	Year	Researcher
Coaster ² ship	6	Mixed	Small family owned company	7 days	2010	Sisse
Oil tanker	24	Full (Indian)*	Large multinational company	15 days	2011	Sisse
Cargo ship	13	Full (Danish)	Medium sized outsourced national company	11 days	2011	Fabienne
Reefer ship	15	Mixed	Large multinational company	21 days	2010	Fabienne
Passenger ship and Ro/Ro**	180	Mixed	Large international company	20 days***	2010	Sisse and Fabienne
Special service		Full (Danish)	Sub firm of large international company	2 days	2012	Line

* Crew consisting of seafarers of the same nationality.

** Roll on /roll off. Here a ship transporting passengers, trucks, cars and cargo.

*** Both researchers at the same time in 10 days.

4. The research field of (safety) culture

The scientific field we place ourselves in, is safety research, and our overall topic for this report is safety culture, thus we find it is necessary to bring forth some of the main points from the ongoing discussion about the concept; and state our position in the research field. As we have engaged in the discussion in earlier publications, we will lay out the discussion on a general level, and refer to these publications for more detailed discussions and arguments. In order to discuss safety culture, we find it useful to start with the concept of culture.

■ Culture

Culture is a foundational concept in social research and it has guided research within anthropology and related disciplines for the last centuries. Under constant revision its substance has changed a great deal over the years. From the first voyages of discovery that set out to chart the world and its peoples and their specific ways of living in the Age of Enlightenment to present day attempts to map how modern organizations work, culture has provided the framework for description.

One of the earliest definitions of culture is attributed to Edward Tylor, a pioneer in American anthropology: *“culture or civilization taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as member of society”* (Tylor in Keesing & Strathern 1998:15). This opaque and all-encompassing definition lives on in popular accounts of differences between groups of people.

But culture as a concept that denotes particular peoples’ or nations’ particular customs, behaviors, beliefs etc. has also been greatly criticized throughout vast parts of the last century. Particularly within anthropology, the discipline that introduced the concept as part of social life, it has, by now, to a large extent been demoted in the professional vocabulary, replaced by other terms. Hastrup argues that culture has undergone an “ontological dumping”, meaning that it has been taken out of its specific academic context and moved into an everyday intuitive usage which has diluted the term (Hastrup 2004). Other critics claim that the concept masks other important factors that make a difference in the way people are, think and act in the world, such as material and financial conditions, class structures and historical circumstances. Others point to the static nature of the term which they claim renders people without agency – the ability to act according to individual strategies. There have been several attempts to meet this last objection.

An influential turn that circumvents the static Herderian notion of culture stems from anthropologist Clifford Geertz. He claims that we must understand culture as “webs of meanings” – as “a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (1973:89) – lifting the notion of culture from an inherent quality in a people to a system of symbols, which *mean* something to people. In this way the term encompasses some of the complexity and flexibility that lacks in e.g. Tylor’s definition.

■ Culture and multinational crews

Culture is often a key term in the undertakings to understand different aspects of multinational crewing. But as pointed out by Knudsen and Froholt (2009), the concept is uncritically applied in maritime research, and this often leads to a reproduction of stereotypes and hinders a development in theoretical frameworks. Quoting Østreng they argue “*National culture functions as principle of structure, while other factors are disregarded*” within research on multinational crews (Østreng in Knudsen and Froholt 2009:117).

Particularly Hofstede’s culture concept (Hofstede 2001), which is regularly applied in research on multinational crews, comes under their scrutiny. Hofstede argues that national culture can be placed in a matrix consisting of four dichotomized dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, and masculinity. Each nation can be placed somewhere on a scale between the two extremes of each category, the result of which can work as tool for understanding the particular traits of that nationality.

Hofstede’s model can be and has been greatly criticized, and Knudsen and Froholt roughly sum up the different types of critique that has been raised, in the following categories: “in built western bias”, “static essentialist concept of culture”, “national culture determinism prevents seeing other forms of identity”, “a variety of methodological problems” and “simplification and uncritical use by others of his concepts”. Thus, some of the major concerns about his model concerns ethnocentric notions and lack of room for complexity. Instead they propose that we must consider other explanatory factors besides culture, when dealing with multinational crews, and instead of thinking of culture we should think of cultural attributes - a more dynamic perspective which take into consideration other factors and most importantly, for Knudsen and Froholdt, the aspect of negotiation. As they state “*cultural attributes are always in the making; they may be contested, appropriated, denied, and negotiated. These attributes are products of social interaction and specific, historical*

and societal forces, rather than primordial, internal mental states like in Hofstede's version." (Knudsen and Froholdt 2009:118).

In this report we follow Knudsen and Froholdt and hope to show the reader the complexity of national differences and the way they might be attributable to cultural aspects, and we turn our attention to more detailed units of analyzes than culture. These units may contribute to the differences between people that are popularly perceived as culture, but they allow us to move away from the 'black box' that culture often becomes when the term is used as explanatory factor without specifying the phenomenal form of the concept.

■ Safety culture

The concept of safety culture has gone from being an analytical lens through which discourses and behavior related to safety within organizations could be understood, to also becoming a management tool, used to steer employees towards safer work practices. In the maritime sector it is hard to find a well-respected organization that does not include safety culture as part of their politics and guidelines on safety.

In 2000 psychologist Frank Guldenmund (2000) wrote a review of theory and research on safety culture. His main interest is in the field of organizational psychology, and in his review he seeks to find the optimal model for understanding safety culture. The review work is thorough and he lays out the most important trends within research on safety culture and climate. But we believe that he misses a great deal when he focuses on finding a unified definition of safety culture. As it has been argued by Richter and Koch (2004) as well as Antonsen (2009), it might be understood as an advantage not to agree on a unified safety culture concept.

For the purpose of this report we think of safety culture following the simple definition from organizational culture research "*The way we do things around here*" which according to Hopkins (2006) can be traced back to Deal & Kenney (1982) *Corporate Culture: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life*. Addison-Wesley, Reading (Originally '*the way things get done around here*'). The advantage of this definition is that is dynamic and practice oriented. It does not, however, describe what the actual unit of analysis is. In the safety culture literature there has been a lengthy debate about the extent to which a safety culture must be shared in order to exist. Several scholars have described a distinction between the perspectives of safety culture in terms of accounting for a single unitary culture (integration), many subcultures (differentiation), or no culture at all (fragmentation) (Richter & Koch 2004; Haukelid 2008). Haukelid argues that the question is not theoretical, but empirical, meaning that all forms are

likely to appear in field work and he reminds us that “*The lesson learned from anthropology is that change and conflict, paradoxes and fragments are more often the order of the day than harmony or common values and norms*” (Haukelid 2008)

Haukelid continues to suggest Alvesson’s term “*bounded ambiguity*” for the broadly shared rules and meanings which we need to account for if we are to talk about culture at all. Agreeing with these statements, we aim to describe safety culture as something, which might be shared, divided or fragmented, but should encompass all. Some scholars have also enlisted the factors which a positive safety culture should entail and as it is useful for our discussion later we wish to refer the indicators of a positive safety culture listed by Gadd and Collins in their review from 2002 (Gadd & Collins 2002):

- Managers planning work effectively
- Managers getting actively involved in active monitoring.
- Managers getting actively involved in reactive monitoring.
- Managers sitting on health and safety committee meetings.
- Housekeeping
- Communications
- Bonus Schemes (not necessarily an advantage, it depends if the schemes endorse the right features)

As can be seen from the list, most factors which are deemed advantageous for a safety culture are related to the role of managers. This is especially challenging in seafaring where the back office management is not physically present, but act through the master with the aid of his officers. This puts an extra load of responsibility on the master. Moreover, there are other challenges deriving from the fact that the ship is a confined space outside the immediate reach of the top management. Björkroth has shown how pressure towards uniformity in the team of the bridge on a ferryboat lead the ferry to a grounding that could have been avoided otherwise (Björkroth 2009). According to Björkroth this accident was related to a psychological term; *groupthink*. Groupthink is “*a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members’ strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action*” (Janis 1972). We might name the phenomenon, which can prevent accidents as a consequence of this groupthink, ‘*critical mass*’. By this term we refer to the notion that in order to cultivate an encompassing and shared safety culture, everyone must contribute and be encouraged to offer their opinion. In that way seafarers from the lower parts of the hierarchy will also speak up if they suspect that someone is making unwise decisions.

5. "Holding on to the life raft" - theoretical framework

The accident statistics of Filipino seafarers working on ships in DIS presents a paradox. The Filipino seafarers constitute the lowest ranking crew members, and in general these ratings carry out the riskiest work tasks on board a ship. But the Filipino seafarers have the lowest share of reported work related accidents. This paradox lays the foundation for the whole SADIS project and in this report we focus on factors that may contribute to answering this question. The Filipino seafarers' own explanation for the relatively low accident-frequency is that they take better care of what they do than other nationalities. The Danes who have the most reported work related accidents, tell us that they take the lead and do not "keep their hands in their pockets" in the same way as other nationalities, and are therefore more at risk than others. What seemed to be a common understanding was that there were distinct national work practices. Even though it was hard for us to identify specific national work practices during our fieldwork, we have no doubt that there are differences, but that these differences are very much a matter of perceptions of risk and safety.

As already noted, we move away from individual and psychologically induced explanatory factors; and we look beyond the workplace and replace a notion of culture as inherent traits that lead to certain behavior patterns with a more dynamic concept of culture, which we claim has no explanatory capacities in itself. Rather we tease out some of the notable differences in the backgrounds of the seafarers that may appear as culture on board the ships. In other words, we dissect culture and break it into smaller components. We do not claim to give an exhaustive list of factors but rather try to identify some of the differences that make a difference. This move entails that we for a moment sign off the ship and step ashore, where we will look at the road to becoming a seafarer as well as how the seafarers hold down employment.

We have taken the title of the chapter from a conversation we had with a maritime teacher, who said *"There is really not much opportunities here in the Philippines. So they [the aspiring seafarers] see the profession of the maritime as the saving (life-saver) as the life boat, as the life raft."* His wording provides a good image of the way we argue that the Filipino seafarers have to navigate in a terrain (or maybe a better image is treacherous waters) throughout the process of becoming part of and staying in seafaring.

The factors we illuminate are part of what we call the professional field or the terrain, of the seafarer. By using these terms we are able to see the "cultural backdrop" of the seafarers as a sort of landscape that the seafarers move or rather – navigate – in.

Further it allows us to show that risk is not simply about calculations of the immediate dangers (such as using or not using PPE), but rather we argue that risks are collectively acknowledged and are part of *risk portfolios*.

■ Concepts and theoretical framework

As pointed out above we want to show how the seafarers navigate in uncertain and unstable terrains. To do this we use theoretical concepts from three scholars, i.e. Bourdieu, De Certeau and Vigh. Their concepts form the basis for our theoretical framework.

Pierre Bourdieu sees it as his primary task to build a bridge between a structural approach to social analysis (what he terms objectivist) and an actor-oriented approach (what he terms subjectivist). He does this by introducing a range of terms, which encompasses both approaches. Most importantly, for our purpose, the concepts of Field and Capital will briefly be outlined here.

The “field” is the structural dimension of his theoretical scheme. It can be seen as a social arena constituted by social relations between actors that are positioned or position themselves somewhere in the field. Bourdieu also call this the social space, underlining the spatial dimension of the term. The actors’ position should be seen in two different dimensions. In the first dimension they are positioned according to the volume of different types of capital they are in possession of. In the second dimension their position is dependent on the structure of the capital they are in possession of, meaning the relative value of the different types of capital in a particular field.

“The existence of a specialized and relatively autonomous field is correlative with the existence of specific stakes and interests: via the inseparably economic and psychological investments that they arouse in the agents endowed with a certain habitus, the field and its stakes (themselves produced as such by relations that are constitutive of the field) produce investments of time, money and work, etc. ... In other words, interest is at once a condition of the functioning of a field (a scientific field, the field of haute couture, etc. in so far as it is what “gets people moving”, what makes them get together, compete and struggle with each other, and a product of the way the field functions.”

(Bourdieu 1990:87-88)

There are several fields in any society and they may overlap and converge in certain regards while in others be distinct and divergent. The notion of professional field is used here to describe the social space within which the seafarers have to move in their professional lives. In this field institutions such as schools, manning agencies

and medical institutions coexist. As we will discuss, it is also within this field that the seafarers' practices and perceptions of safety and risk unfolds. While there is also an educational field, a recruitment field and a medical field, we believe it is valuable and possible to place these institutions in the same field, as they are correlative with a set of interests and stakes – namely the objective of becoming a seafarer and staying in the business. To this a range of interests, such as making a living, earning prestige or going on adventures can be added dependent on the setting. As we will show the interests also differ from the Philippines to Denmark. In Bourdieu's view actors persistently strive to obtain not just capital but also a structure of the total volume of capital that is most desirable in the particular field (Bourdieu 1989).

Bourdieu outlines four different types of capital; economic, cultural, social and symbolic. Economic capital, is capital as we know it – i.e. money. Cultural capital covers institutionally recognized values, such as education (or rather degrees and diplomas), memberships of clubs etc. Social capital is somewhat more intangible as it covers tacit knowledge and practices related to a privileged position in society; this could be the ability to play a certain type of sport, a certain poise, a way of speaking etc. Symbolic capital is the obtainment of the right proportions of the other values.

Bourdieu's conceptual framework will work as a guide, for our analysis of, what we have called, the professional field, or terrain, in the seafaring nations of the Philippines and Denmark respectively. Bourdieu has been in a theoretical line of fire in many regards, but for our purpose the main objection of his quite schematic theoretical apparatus is the stability of the so-called objective structures, which is needed for his structures to come into being. We believe that by adding an unstable dimension, such as Vigh does, to the structures, we can better understand how the (aspiring) seafarers perceive of and act in the professional field of seafarers.

Henrik Vigh builds on the work of Bourdieu and others, and launches the concept of social navigation, which he claims *"directs our attention to the fact that we move in social environments of actors and actants, individuals and institutions, that engage us and move us as we move along"* (Vigh 2009:420). Where Bourdieu and others sees "the social" as actors who act within a somewhat structured, rather stabile, framework, Vigh claims that the framework is in itself in motion. He calls this move "motion squared"; motion in motion. As Vigh points out the word navigation is rooted in the maritime terminology and means "to sail, sail over and go by sea". The sea is in constant motion and he who navigates the ship, can set a course, but must also be ready to change it according to the elements. He does not know what exactly will happen next, but nonetheless he sets a course.

Beside Bourdieu Vigh also draws on De Certeau and his concepts of strategy and tactics: *"Coupling the idea of navigation with a conceptual dichotomy from De Certeau*

(1998), we can say that strategy is the process of demarcating and constituting space and tactics the process of navigating it” (Vigh 2009:424). We follow Vigh’s move and use de Certeau’s conceptual pair of strategy and tactics, which we find particularly useful for understanding how the seafarers move around in the professional field of seafaring. The pair adds a dynamic dimension of power linked to space, that we cannot derive from Bourdieu, who locates power in the position in the field and power shifts in symbolic battles over semantics and the distribution of capitals.

De Certeau uses a military metaphor throughout his work. This metaphor, we find can be useful to keep in mind when trying to understand the professional fields of the seafarers in the Philippines and in Denmark.

For de Certeau strategy is “*the calculus (or the manipulation) of relations of force which become possible whenever a subject of will and power (a business enterprise, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. Strategy postulates a place susceptible of being circumscribed as a propre and of being the base from where relations can be administered with an exteriority of targets or threats (clients or competitors, enemies, the countryside surrounding a city, the objectives and objects of research, etc.)*” (De Certeau 1980:5). Thus, strategy can only be carried out by a subject of will and power that has a location from where it can isolate itself from the exterior. These subjects of will and power – as we will show – can in the professional field of the seafarer, e.g. be the maritime schools or the medical institutions. De Certeau argues that without being a *propre* it is impossible to master relations between entities and thus impossible to plan ahead – to hold power over the future.

Tactics has an almost antithetical character of strategy. De Certeau defines it like this: “*I call tactics the calculated action which is determined by the absence of a proper place. Thus no delimitation of exteriority furnishes it a condition of autonomy. Tactics has no place except in that of the other. Also it must play with the terrain imposed on it, organized by the law of a strange force. It does not have the means of containing itself in itself, in a position of retreat, of anticipating, of gathering one self: it is movement “in the enemy’s field of vision” as von bulow said it, and in the space controlled by him.*” (De Certeau 1980:6). Thus, we see that tactics is what befalls the subjects without a *propre*. It can only be carried out in the space determined and ruled over by others. Tactics only encompasses the present and it precludes the possibility of planning ahead. Instead, tactics is a constant movement in a terrain defined by others (i.e. the subjects of will who are able to strategize).

According to Douglas and Wildavsky, risk is connected to knowledge about dangers, but knowledge is not all. As they state “The choice of risks and the choice of how to live are taken together. Each form of social life has its own typical **risk portfolio**. Common values lead to common fears (and, by implication, to a common agreement

not to fear other things).” (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982:8 emphasis added). These risk portfolios can be seen as collections of the risks that have collectively been “chosen” as the most significant. They continue by adding that “Risk taking and risk aversion, shared confidence and shared fears, are part of the dialogue on how best to organize social relations. For to organize means to organize some things in and some things out.” (ibid.). As we cannot know everything, and we cannot fear everything in equal measures, we include some things in our risk portfolio and leave other things out (or rank them very low). This is a collective process, which they claim is related to the way society in general is organized.

6. The professional field of the seafarers

In the following section we will show how the professional field, or terrain, of the seafarers consists of a range of actors and institutions that the seafarers must relate to in order to fulfill their objectives. These we see as core “obstacles” or “launch pads” (according to your point of view), that the seafarers must pass through if they want to stay on the career path, but these in themselves also provide the means for the seafarers to continue on the same path, and getting access to and moving past other obstacles or launch pads on the way. The structure of this field, influences the risk portfolio of the seafarers, who consequently rank certain risks higher than others.

In a recent large study of risk perception in the maritime industry researchers from the Seafarers International Research Center (SIRC) carried out a large questionnaire based survey on seafarers’ perception of risk of personal injury (Bailey et al. 2012). They asked the seafarers which types of work and situations they saw as most risky. They conclude among other things, that nationality is the most significant variable when it comes to perceptions of risk of personal injury. Their work is thorough and gives us a range of variables, such as rank, age, gender, last employment etc. to cross. Our methodology and empirical material does not allow for such conclusions, and it is not the intention with this project. Rather, qualitative methodology enables us to look behind such datasets and investigate why they appear as they do. And here we find that SIRC’s findings can drive our investigation and motivate the questions we ask in this report. Thus when they claim that *“Respondents from the Philippines tended to see the risk of injury as lower than other national groups in the sample”* (Bailey et al. 2012:2), we ask, what may be the reasons behind this, and if the work in itself is not risky, can risk for the Filipino seafarers be associated with circumstances or situations precluded from the questionnaires?

Thus, the main focus of this chapter will be on the Filipino seafarers and their ways of introduction into the industry and how they are able to stay on the career path. We argue that this terrain is unstable and unpredictable.

Throughout the chapter we will juxtapose the immersions in the Philippine terrain with contrasting examples from the Danish terrain. We have chosen this approach for three reasons; first of all, the Filipino seafarers have the lowest amount of reported work related accidents and Danes have the highest, in the study that precedes this, therefore we find it interesting to zoom in on these two settings, as we believe we can learn much, about what makes a difference when it comes to safety (and reporting) from looking at the two extremes where the differences presumably are

the biggest. Second of all, the Filipino seafarers constitute approximately one third of all seafarers on internationally going vessels, and a major part of the crew on Danish ships. Third of all, it has recently been pointed out how understudied the health of South East Asian seafarers is compared to that of their European and American counterparts (Carter 2011), and this chapter will thus contribute to filling this knowledge gap.

We will show how this terrain presents itself as opaque and is continually shifting, and further how the seafarers hold no power over the terrain and are not able to strategize about their future, meaning that they are not in control and are not able to plan the next step. Instead they must do their best to try to anticipate what the next step is in order to, in the end, obtain the goal of becoming a seafarer and holding on to the job.

From this account we move on to argue that for the Filipino seafarers risk is associated with movement in this terrain and thus with elements outside the immediate working environment on board the ship. As SIRC shows, the Filipino seafarers rank immediate work-related risks, such as working with a fork lift, low, and we will show in this section that risks that are not work-task related, such as losing your job, are ranked much higher and affect the way safety is practiced and perceived in the daily work on board the ships.

It is useful to imagine the seafarers' road to employment and how a risk portfolio is connected to this, as a sort of board game (where the board is somewhat erratic – but we will get to this later). The seafarers know their goals but they hold only little power over how to get there. The easiest passage through the different obstacles on the board is given to those who hold the most capital. In order to obtain these capitals the candidates must use different means available to them.

Pivotal to reaching the goal is the seafarer's social network. All the seafarers we talked to mentioned how they had used their connections at one point or another in their quest to land a job on ship. And the social network is not just an important means to reach the goal; it is also the main motivation for even pursuing that goal. As we will show in the next chapter the family is the main motivation for going to sea, and being able to support your family is what keeps the seafarers going in their job. As they say: "we sacrifice for our family". Therefore we have chosen to place the social network in the middle of our imaginary board game as a central resource and goal in itself. It becomes even further relevant when we move on to discuss the risk portfolio of the seafarers, as their navigation in this terrain (their movements on the board) influences their risk perception and "risk ranking".

■ Becoming a seafarer in the Philippines

In the Filipino context getting into seafaring, meaning the course of actions, from the wish to find employment at sea to actually working at sea, is a process that demands a strong social network and not least a great deal of knowledge about the system (or systems in plural). There is not one typical way into the industry, but the common denominator for the candidates' road to a career at sea is the multitude of obstacles or launch pads and an unpredictability of the oncoming impediments.

The way into seafaring in the Philippines has grown increasingly difficult to tread in the last 40 years. Some records say that the total amount of Filipino seafarers working overseas increased eight times between 1975 and 1999, ending at a number of around 200.000 Filipino seafarers working on international ocean going vessels at one time, around the turn of the millennium. This number is drawn from a total of approximately 500.000 registered seafarers (Pabico 2003). Coupling this with the increase in stories of successful sailors who have returned from sea to e.g. build a large house the competition grows even harder.

The statement about seafaring as a life raft from the maritime teacher, which we presented in the previous chapter, underlines the predicament that many aspiring seafarers find themselves in, characterized by a lack of (attractive) employment opportunities locally. This is further spurred on by an official national strategy for workers to seek employment overseas (Mckay 2007; Swift 2011).

If we take seriously that a career at sea is like a life raft, doing everything you can to get on board and staying there is of course of outmost importance, and losing your position in the life raft is figuratively speaking, lethal. Following this line of thought, the risks associated with losing your place in the raft, are ranked at the top in the Filipino seafarers' "risk portfolio" (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982). In other words the risks associated with losing your job are ranked high(est) among the risks associated with work. If we link this with the findings from SIRC (Bailey et al 2012), which show that the Filipino seafarers rank the work related risks presented in the report lower than all other nationalities, it is plausible that we should look outside the ship for the risks that rank the highest among the Filipino seafarers.

But though this might be plausible in theory we wish to state that this *could* be the case – but only at times when the seafarers do not find themselves in any immediate danger, of course. There is only a limited amount of risks which one can tend to at a time, and thus the selection of which risks to take most seriously is dependent on the current situation at hand. For instance we might imagine that if a seafarer finds himself in a ship where he does not trust the company to have adequate safety standards, he will rank the risks related to his immediate surrounding highest, but at

times when he works for a company with a good safety standard, he will rank the risk of losing that employment higher and tend to their reputation rather than worrying about risks that already seem well managed.

■ Social relations – the importance of knowing the right people

Two Filipino seafarers working for a Danish passenger ship company got hired because they had family working for the company. The first one tells:

“*My father also works on board for 36 years of his life! [...] As a seaman. Now he is a chief engineer in a cargo ship. So my father helped me to apply in our agency, the Career agency. So that’s it. I only wait for something like 3 month and after that my agency hired me and put me here in this ship as a cabin steward.*” (Filipino seafarer)

The other describes it this way

“*Interviewer: So how did you get this job?*

“Through my brother in law, he is pastry chef before here, he’s number one here before. He just recommended me as a scullery before. I work in the scullery - we call it scullery, the dish wash - for 3 years.” (Filipino seafarer)

One way into seafaring in the 1970’s, but which seems to have been replaced by other trajectories, was through nightclubs, restaurants et al., where employees would meet influential customers, who could help them land a job as a seafarer. As one seafarer describes it:

“*Well, I got my first job as a seaman in a Filipino, a Philippine flag company, Madrigal Shipping through a well-known person, or by what we call a referral system.*”

Interviewer: Your “Referral system,” are they a family member? A friend?

“He is not my family member. He is a big man, a rich man in Manila. [...] Before I worked on board a ship, I was bowling-in-charge waiter in a very well-known club restaurant for rich people in Manila. We call the place “Casino Español de Manila”, and then it happens that the people that I sought help (from) are very well-known people, very rich people, he is Don Antonio Madrigal. [...] He gave me a recommendation to his shipping company... [...] Luckily, I got in and I sailed on their ship for 17 months.”

In general the level of difficulty in getting hired in the industry seems to have increased a lot since the 1970's. As one AB told us about his entry into seafaring in 1975:

“I was 21 years old, I applied as a seaman but I got the job through a training and they fixed all my papers. [...]”

Interviewer: “Nobody directed you to the company?”

“No one. [...] That time, they were not yet that demanding. [...] Application was fast before” (Filipino former seafarer)

This story is exceptional in that the seafarer was not directed or recommended for the company, by others. All other seafarers we talked to reported using their informal networks. One seafarer tells:

“I landed the job when I was referred by a friend to Captain Gilberto of Malayan Towage. It was the manning, operation manager of the Malayan Towage that time. He was a friend of a friend, and that friend referred me to him, to this Captain Gilberto and that was my first time in a vessel.”

To sum up, being connected to the right (powerful) people is vital in order to get employment at sea. Such connections can provide the seafarers with the means to move on in the industry, and it works on several levels or several stages of the course towards employment at sea; both in getting into the right academy, becoming affiliated with a (good) manning agency and getting a contract on a ship. Thus, using our analytical optic, we can see that in order to get your foot in the door in seafaring, you must possess quite a lot of social capital, which in this field lies in being connected to the right people.

Because the connections are vital throughout the seafarers' paths towards contracts, these connections must constantly be nursed and taken care of, we therefore argue that connections are not launch pads or obstacles in the same way as getting a certificate at an academy is. Instead they are resources that the seafarers can draw on at various stages of the process. But they are not just resources; they must also be nursed and cared for. And as we saw above, the connections are often linked to family members, who play a vital role in the seafarers' navigation in this professional terrain. Norwegian anthropologist Gunnar Lamvik has referred to the Filipino seafarer as “a family based enterprise” (Lamvik 2002), and we explore the role of family and how it is linked to safety more closely in the next chapter.



Seafaring cadets in a Filipino academy

■ School – the primary launch pad

Most often, the first thing an aspiring seafarer has to do is find a school where he (or more rarely she) can get his basic training. In order to even consider going to a training academy, the would-be cadet needs financial support, usually from the family, who “invests” in the future seafarer (Lamvik 2002).

This can be done in the provinces or in Manila and requires economic means, which are often provided through the aid of family members and loans. Choosing the right academy is important, as there are many and some will be expensive, but not correspondingly good. There are no limits to the amount of graduates, though there are limits as to how many can be employed afterwards. According to our informants, as much as 80 % of the graduates end up working as security guards or in other land based occupations which do not pay as well as seafaring. Thus, the seafarer needs to find information about the quality of the training in the different academies and make his choice based on the cost, location and reputation of the academy. In Bourdieu’s terms the seafarer needs social capital in order to make a good choice since he is dependent on his network to inform him.

■ Manning agency

After the basic training is procured the aspiring seafarer will normally need become affiliated with a manning agency. We know, however, that there is a growing tendency for shipping companies and even flag states to invest in maritime academies in the Philippines in order to secure the loyalty of the best seafarers to be, and thus circumvent the manning agencies' role as middlemen. To obtain an affiliation with a manning agency can be quite lengthy, difficult, and costly. As a government official told us:

“[...] the manning agency asks for money from the seafarers as payment for the processing of their employment. They give how much? I don't know how much is the price but they pay for some amount for the manning agency.”

The Filipino seafarers we talked to had all used their informal network to get access to an agency and subsequently to employment. As one seafarer told us of his road to his work as an AB:

“Ma'am this is about the story of how I boarded on the ship – when I graduated in 1998, I went to Manila to apply to the agencies. It was very difficult to apply – when you reached their door the utility personnel will tell you there is no vacant. You cannot pushed yourself, they will give excuses like you need to take exam or you need to know people from inside the agency; or you need to give money or commit “red tape” to the person you know. It's really very difficult to get opportunity to board the ship. I found all of these situation when I applied as a seaman. It's also very expensive because you have to spend daily transportation.”

The main obstacles the seafarer meets when he tries to become affiliated with the manning agency are tied to lack of official training (need to take exam), lack of personal relations (need to know someone inside) or lack of money (need to give money). The lack of official training can be seen as a lack of cultural capital in Bourdieu's terms. Further the lack of finances can be seen as a lack of financial capital in Bourdieu's term. The lack of knowing the right people can be seen as a lack of social capital. In this case social capital it seems to overrule the other capitals or at least to be the most sought after capital. Social capital thereby becomes the most important capital to have in order to gain symbolic capital.

When the quoted seafarer does land a job via the agency it is with the help of his aunt, who by chance knows the right person:

“*What I did was to wait for the call of my aunt who worked as domestic helper to a ship owner at Greece during that time. It was only then that the agency called me – they sent me to medical and gave me contract because my aunt requested her employer.*”

As we see above, the manning agency is seen as the key to the job at sea, but getting into an agency requires money, stamina, and the right connections.

There are hundreds of manning agencies in Manila that offer their services as intermediaries between the seafarers and the principal/shipping company. Some of them also function as ship managing agencies, some also offer training while others are strictly manning agencies. It is commonly thought that there are great differences in the quality of the manning agencies. Finding your way into a good agency is difficult, and takes both familiarity with the different agencies as well as a good position socially and professionally. A teacher from a maritime academy told us this:

“*But unfortunately maybe it would be very safe to say that 20% of them are able to land jobs on board. Those are the cream of the crop; those are from selected maritime schools, or those who were picked by companies. What happens to the 80%? What happens is that they land as security guards. After spending 4 years in the maritime school, spending hard earned money, (certificates) selling the carabaos of their parents. This is actually happening. Why? As I’ve told you, there is really not much opportunities here in the Philippines. So they see the profession of the maritime as the saving (life-saver) as the life boat, as the life raft. Having known this, well there are some maritime institution taking advantage of this dream. So what happens? These people are deprived – the eighty percent well maybe out of the 80%, another 30% of the 80% will be able to land a job somewhere with a class D, with a class C by hardwork, by simple persistence.*”

The classes, D and C, the teacher is referring to, is an informal indexation of the manning agencies, where A is the best and thereafter the quality deteriorates as the alphabet progresses. He underlines the hard competition there is to land a job and/or become affiliated with the good agencies – the A’s and the B’s.

A particular type of agency, which will probably rank in the poor end of the alphabetical scale, is the so-called **fly-by-night agency**. In a conversation with representatives from a Filipino union, Gichelle and the representative described this type of agency.

Sisse: Fly by night?

“Gichelle: *“It’s like there’s a contract and that they’re there to man that for that particular contract then afterward, after finishing the contract (no more company) and then the manning agencies went and then the seafarers will be put in very bad and inhuman conditions. No more.”*

Informant: You know what’s the worst thing? They paid for their employment.

Gichelle: “And then the seafarers even paid the manning agencies to get employed. Only because the seafarer wanted to have an experience because if no experience, then the seafarer could not get to the A and to the B manning agencies which is the long term.”

This type of agency can be seen almost as scams, where the seafarer is completely in the mercy of the opaque dealings of the agency. This agency takes money from the seafarer, but neglects its responsibility and provides horrible conditions for employment, only to disappear as quickly as it appeared shortly after. Two such agencies recently had their licenses suspended by the POEA, on the background of complaints from 12 seafarers, who were treated poorly. Further it is clear from our conversations with seafarers that they must obtain trustworthy information about agencies before becoming affiliated with them, but also that this information is hard to come by. Sometimes, due to the tough competition to land a job on a ship, the seafarers may know that the agency they are seeking employment with is not an “A” agency, but since they are not connected to the right people or have the right diploma from a top school, they try their luck with this type of agency anyway.

Using de Certeau’s metaphor the seafarer is on the enemy’s territory when choosing a manning agency and holds no power over the land he is moving in. He has to fight one battle at a time without the possibility of strategizing for future battles. But to add another dimension to it, by using Vigh’s framework the seafarer has to navigate through the shifting terrains of manning agencies. The fly-by-night agencies are examples of how the terrain is in motion and how the seafarers have to navigate past these unforeseeable obstacles in order to stay afloat in the industry.

In contrast, Danish seafarers are hired directly by the shipping companies and thus do not need to worry about becoming affiliated with a manning agency. There are some shipping companies with a bleak reputation, but it does not require as many forms of capital to know how to sort the good from the bad, though it does require competences and effort to enter the top range, which will lead to the best employment opportunities.

■ Rizal park – a physical manifestation of the terrain the seafarers must navigate in

The opaque job market for seafarers in the Philippines has a physical manifestation in Rizal Park, a public park in the middle of Manila, where agents have stands or employees walking around with posters advertising jobs. Here seafarers looking for a contract come to make contact and also to network and hear news. When we walked around in the company of a couple of former seafarers, it was our impression that there were many jobs on offer, but mainly for the young and those holding a maritime degree as engineer or equivalent.

The picture to the right illustrates one of the offers of shortcuts to employment, as the future applicant is promised to be at sea in just seven days if he enrolls in the offered course. Whether the company from the top end or the bottom end, we cannot tell, but the gentleman who poses in front has a wonderfully ironic attitude to the poster as he knows that with his age and medical condition - he has been declared unfit for duty due to an injury - he does not stand a chance.

The same seafarer also taught us a lesson about how valuable trustable information is. During a walk in the park we met a young seafarer – pictured below – who asked our friend about his experiences as a seafarer. Our friend started to educate the young applicant about the importance of choosing a safe company and about reporting accidents should he sustain any, and immediately he was surrounded by a group of listeners who were eager to learn from him. Finding relevant and trustworthy information in Rizal Park where all sorts of agents, academies and employers are looking for employees and offering their services can be hard, and in the midst of the jungle of promises of the moon, someone un-tangled from the market was deemed trustworthy.



“Onboard in seven days”

Rizal park can be seen as a physical manifestation of the unstable terrain or professional field of the seafarers. Here potential seafarers walk from stall to stall trying to find employment or to optimize their skills through additional training. But they cannot foresee which actions will lead to permanent employment, nonetheless they do their best to control the future – to strategize. This can e.g. be done by seeking information from our friend, who is unaffiliated with any of the organizations, and thus cannot gain anything from giving a certain type of advice.



Seafarers in Rizal park

■ Medical checks

Seafaring is a quite unique workplace, where the employers have access to a great deal of control over your life and body not just when you are at sea but also on shore. Being declared fit for duty by a doctor is something seafarers around the world has to go through before the first embarkation and then regularly after that, if they want to continue working at sea. For Filipino seafarers who are employed on a contract basis, the health certificate in the seaman's book is pivotal in regards to his next contract and consequently his livelihood (staying in the life raft).

The health care system at sea and the way it interacts with the national health care systems is too large a topic for this report and our interview based data is not feasible for an adequate account of health care systems and the challenges they pose either. Thus our account is limited to the interviewed seafarers' perceptions of the importance of medical checks.³

The frequency of the medical check-ups seems to vary, but they have to be done at least every two years. Although, according to the seafarers we talked to, this may vary according to company and flag state.

Getting your medical check is not just a matter of popping by the doctor's office. As one seafarer says about those seafarers who live far from Manila, where his agency have their doctors:

“*Yes they have to go to manila, report to the company, make their papers, go to medical, in Manila. So while they are in Manila they can go to their family if they have, or go to a small apartment for one week or so. One is AMOSUP or some private. [...] They have to pay the air fare yes*”

Interviewer: How long does it take this medical exam?

[...] it takes 3 days to clear up but the exam in only takes 3-4 hours.

Interviewer: Ok and then wait 3 days?

“Yes and then call the company: how is my... how it's clear ok, yes you can come here today or tomorrow and sign your papers - contract. So no medical passed, no contract!”

Interviewer: 3, 4 hours is rather a long time

“Yes but we are used to it now, that's the way it is I guess! They check your blood, your urine, your heart, X ray, the chess for lungs, sometime KUB and they test HIV, they test I don't know what else... eyes and ears, they look inside our nose, ears”

As we see here, the medical exams can take a lot of time and even though the manning agency pays for the exam, the seafarer has to pay for travel and lodging if he is not a resident of Manila. Further the medical check is decisive in regards to your future in the industry and as the seafarer explains, you have to wait several days before you know the results of the test. The seafarers are thus kept in suspense and unable to move either backwards or forwards while in this suspense. This is another obstacle that is part of the terrain that the seafarers must navigate in, and this is a clear example of how the seafarers hold no power over the terrain. They are in no position to plan ahead. They are moving in the “enemy's” line of fire.

The insecurity and suspense associated with Pre Embarkment Medical Examinations (PEME) is further emphasized by the few examples of “goodwill” from a doctor. One seafarer told us that there are loopholes should you not be in the best physical condition:

“He [the doctor] did tell me, he was willing to help me because my children are still small. That’s why I asked to be declared fit in 2008. Of course, I left nothing, I wanted to board because I was going to the doctor for two months. But I was much better, already fit, if you ask me. But in reality I was still sick.” (Filipino former seafarer)

If you are lucky (or maybe unlucky) the doctor will have sympathy with you and you pass the test, even though you are not fit for duty. This “loophole” adds to the opacity of the terrain.

The medical checks are important factors and the hospitals or clinics can be seen as powerful institutions that hold a great deal of power over the individual seafarer’s trajectory in the business. They hold the power over the territory that the seafarer has to move in, and again he has to use tactics in order to obtain the necessary documents. He is unable to strategize as he has no means of defining the terrain he is moving in. The strategies of the institutions involved in the medical check-ups (the manning agency, the international regulations, the medical facilities) are opaque to the seafarer, who has to rely on his own tactics in order to get through it, as he moves in the field defined by the others.

In Denmark, the medical check-ups might also be an obstacle if the seafarer’s health is poor, but we do not have enough data to discuss whether the system is transparent or not.

When we are trying to describe the professional field or the terrain of the seafarers, it is important not to forget that this field overlaps with other fields and other parts of society. They may not just overlap but be entangled in one another. The medical checkups that the seafarers undergo are directly influenced by the national health care system. As two representatives from a major Danish shipping company told us about the procedure regarding medical examinations in the Philippines:

Rep. 1: “Some years ago we had quite a few medical cases with the Filipinos, because they signed on and were semi sick. They got the job and when they had their foot in the door they might get some treatment. [...] But then we have introduced a screening of them, in connection with the PEME, so that they also screen for kidney stone and gallstone and that kind of thing. So that you don’t get anyone who is already sick onboard”

“ Interviewer: “That means that the selection is harder in the Philippines? – That it is easier to get the blue book [seaman’s book] in Denmark?”

Rep. 1: “I think we can say that. But it is correct, because as we are used to saying: “if you can find the door to the doctor...”

Rep. 2: “Then you are in!”

The representatives’ statement underlines one of the major differences for Filipino and Danish seafarers: The societal organization. In the Danish welfare state system, the universal health care system will ensure the access to treatment for all citizens with very limited or no out-of-pocket expenses, whereas in the Philippines, the state is much smaller, which means that health care is only partly secured by the state, and some reports indicate that 49% percent of the costs for healthcare are out-of-pocket (Bernabe 2010). This difference entails that Filipino seafarers are prone to take their health situation and medical concerns into consideration when boarding a ship. The medical institutions that the Filipino seafarers have to navigate according to are ambivalent in their character. First of all, the seafarers must consider and be able to comply with the sometimes very high requirements they meet at the medical check-ups. Second of all, the medical institutions can also be an opportunity to get care that is otherwise unavailable outside this terrain.

■ Contracts – Temporary employments and risk avoidance

While the route to the first time you sign on a ship is long and complicated, the challenges are not over with the first embarkation. The Filipino seafarers usually work on a contract to contract basis meaning that their careers are characterized by short employments and job insecurity. Thus many of the actors and factors that play a role in the seafarers’ road to the industry keep playing an important role in their careers, as the seafarers have to keep “working” their networks. One seafarer tells us how the insecurity of not having the next contract affected him, and how his boss succumbed to his pleading and gave him a new position on a new ship.

“But I was quite late, I almost missed it, I said to my boss “What about me?” I was going to cry, ah.. no... no... no... and then suddenly they said, “You are going to go in the ship...” And then I signed the contract, I didn’t sign what kind of ship, what’s my position, as long as I like to be one of the crew of the [specific] company, cause I heard a lot about the [specific] company. You know, very nice salary, very nice benefits.”

This excerpt also shows that personal familiarization and emotional contact with important people, in this case the boss, is important in order to advance in your career.

This is in stark contrast to Denmark, where most seafarers are on permanent contracts and employed directly by the shipping companies. Although, this does not mean that Danish seafarers have job security; they are increasingly threatened by the competition from the global workforce of seafarers. Thus, outsourcing of jobs is a challenge for the Danish seafarers (mainly for ratings, but to a growing extent also officers).

■ Evaluations and reputations

Whether you have the right seafaring skills or not may not be pivotal in obtaining employment as we have shown above, but in order to hold on to it, you must have the right skills, and they must be endorsed by your superiors.

It is customary in the maritime industry that most shipping companies, by way of the master, evaluate each seafarer that has been employed on one of their vessels. They provide the records sealed off directly to, in the case of the Filipino seafarers, the manning agencies, and, in the case of the Danish seafarers, to the headquarters. We were told that Danish seafarer sometimes are shown their own evaluation, but we never heard of this in the case of Filipino seafarers, though it seems customary that they are given an evaluation of their performance and the content of the evaluation verbally.

In the Philippines the manning agencies can make decisions about future employment based on the evaluation, and we were told that these reports decide the future career of the seafarer:

“ Interviewer: But then the first times, do they give a written evaluation?

“Ah yes this written is actually in the form of a confidential report for [name of manning agency].”

Interviewer: Yes but you get a copy of it too?

“No we don't...”

Interviewer: OH!

“Because it is a confidential report. It’s an agreement I guess, because every time we have a briefing in the Philippines, they say we have this confidential report. Confidential is like it’s not for us. It’s only for our boss like the chief cook in our department, so they send it to [name of manning agency]. And hopefully we did good and in the report it’s one, one, one or two, not 4 or 5 which is very bad. So far I never got any 4 or 5 so I’m very lucky.”

Interviewer: But hopefully, even if you did not do so well, you would know about it after this interview?

“Yes”

Interviewer: Because if you go and think you have done everything well and then – no more work...

“That’s right! That’s right they tell us in the evaluation, and normally in your evaluation you will know already what grade he puts on the confidential record. So... actually we know it ourselves if we did good.”

Interviewer: Yea... some people have maybe too high or too low an idea of themselves.

“Yea I guess so. For my part I think I did good last time and this time I am also trying to be good.”

The written evaluation can in the hands of the manning agency function as tool to exercise power over the future of the seafarer. This is another example of the way the manning agencies are in a position to define the territory that the seafarers navigate in.

The written evaluation overlaps quite a deal with a more intangible notion of reputation, which was of much concern to the seafarers we talked to.

A ship electrician we talked to conjured up the gloomy picture of a seafarer with a bad record – meaning that his evaluations are bad:

From fieldnotes:

“We have to buy food ashore [...] the electrician also does it, but he doesn’t talk, never complains [to his superiors] “We have small children at home, we must keep our job. Otherwise we end like the seamen sleeping in Lunetta park [...] – the bad seamen”. [Fabienne:] “The bad seamen?” – [seafarer:] “yeah, those with a bad record”.

The seafarer points out that if you complain, and get a bad record you are at risk of ending up without a job and home, sleeping in a park, prowling around for a job, and labeled as a bad seaman.

“Badmouthing” is a practice that Filipino seafarers told us about. It is normally mentioned in connection with something one can be afraid of, or something other people do (but that you would never do). As one seafarer said in an interview: *“I am not trying to badmouth, but this is the situation”*. It entails speaking ill of others, usually in a way that will benefit oneself. We also heard of Filipinos having “onion skin” (sensitive to remarks), and of being afraid of “losing face”. In addition to this is the term “Agam-agam” – which means uncertainty for what is going to happen in the future. A typical response to “agam-agam” is having second thoughts about certain decisions.

Thus, the seafarers have to constantly be aware of the dangers of other people’s (superiors, colleagues etc.) narratives of themselves and are persistently trying to respond to such threats, e.g. by not complaining when there is not enough food, but buying extra yourself when ashore.

The example of seafarers buying their own food instead of complaining, is a parallel to the often heard complain of Radio Medical doctors, that seafarers bring their own medicine instead of using the medicine from the ship’s medical chest. Both habits are examples of seafarers who choose to solve their problems singlehanded rather than involve an officer on board. Such habits might appear senseless and are often explained by a broad reference to ‘their culture’. Within the framework of social navigation in the terrains of Filipino seafarer employed in international shipping, this may be understood as a form of risk avoidance. The seafarers are avoiding the risk of attracting attention and thereby jeopardizing their reputation.

The Danish seafarers are also evaluated by the captain of the ship, who provides the shipping company with the written document. We have only heard of this from a Danish union representative, and never from any of the Danish seafarers. We therefore argue that these evaluations are not seen as something quite so risky or as dangerous as they are for the Filipinos. Nonetheless the Danish seafarers also care about their reputation, and this concern may very well result in a lack of reporting accidents. A Danish seafarer from a full crew Danish ship, from a shipping company with a strong emphasis on safety at work, told us that the learning cards and near-miss reports that are filled out often miss the spot, because the seafarers will not “rat out a colleague”. Even though, when the reports and cards are publicized weekly, everyone involved in the incident are anonymous. Thus, the tools that are made in order to improve safety and safety culture on board, may be seen as threats to the social order and may neglect the intended purpose.

When we have asked Danish seafarers why they wanted to become a seafarer, there was a tendency to attribute it to, what we here term “romantic” ideas of seaman-ship. The motivation most often came from acquaintances or family members who

could tell great stories of life at sea, or from ideas of “not being fit to be on shore”, or “having seafaring in the blood”.

It does require cultural capital to obtain the necessary certificates or degrees, also in Denmark. But we think that it can be argued that, the capital forms, which are needed to obtain the degree is fewer for the Danish applicant, or at least the amount is smaller. Surely a Danish student at a maritime academy will also benefit from personal connections in a shipping company with a good reputation, and they will also benefit from having seafarers in the family who can teach them about the topics which are not taught at school. And surely the Danish maritime student will also benefit from financial capital above the state allowance, but not to the same extent as the Filipino equivalent.

■ Discussion

At the end of this outline of the most important factors in the seafarers’ paths to sea, we would like to sum up by discussing some general differences between Denmark and the Philippines that we see in the terrains that the factors constitute.

In general, we find it quite suggestive that the same factors are at play in both the Philippines and in Denmark, but the content of the factors as well as the way the seafarers have to navigate according to them differ quite a lot.

What characterizes the Filipino seafarers and the terrain they move in, is the lack of access to knowledge and a lack of trust in the system or systems, which in turn are opaque and hard to pinpoint. In Vigh’s terminology we argue that the terrain is in motion, which entails that the Filipino seafarer’s course into and in the business must continuously be adjusted, he must keep navigating in the unstable terrain where his future is decided, but not by himself. In de Certeau’s framework the seafarers are able to make tactics but hold no power over the terrain and thus cannot strategize. They hold no power over place, which makes them unable to hold power over the future. They must duck and run according to the way the institutions and actors that do hold power over place and time (such as manning agencies, medical institutions and the state) strategize. Staying afloat in the life raft while moving in this terrain, is a demanding task and a lot of obstacles pose as potential risks for capsizing. These risks associated with exiting the industry are ranked higher than e.g. the dangers of bodily injury associated with risky work practices. This does not mean however, that the Filipino seafarers perform a lot of risk-laden tasks while working, but it might lead them to deem it ‘safer’ not to report minor accidents or to remain silent even if they think that an officer is making a mistake.

The terrains that we have described in this section are not just background information on the paths of the seafarers. They also have direct consequences on how the seafarers think about safety in their daily work life. In the following section we will show how the safety perceptions of the Filipino seafarers evolve around their families, who are also in the center of the terrain they navigate in.

In the Danish context the terrain on the way into seafaring is characterized by a predictability that is absent in the Filipino context. The seafarers must still navigate through a terrain filled with various institutions that hold the power over place and time, but these are not as interchangeable and unpredictable as they are in the Filipino context. In Denmark, the societal construct, with one major institution that holds power over the territory i.e. the state, entails that the seafarers are able to foresee the terrain they have to navigate in, and thus it appears as more stable. This is at least the case when it comes to getting into seafaring, where the schools are state run or - authorized and standardized, and getting hired demands less social capital and more cultural capital, in terms of having the right diplomas and certificates.

7. Family as a safety factor

In 1987 Umberson wrote: *“The mechanisms by which social relationships influence physical health and mortality remain one of the most important and least understood aspects of research on social ties and individual well-being”*. In the anthropological and sociological research on health practices, it has for decades, been a common move, to consider the individual actor’s practices and perceptions as part of larger social structures. And the family has continually been brought forth as a key component in the social structures that influence the individual’s health behavior (see e.g. Umberson 1987). Some scholars have even argued that in some places it is not possible to talk about a single person’s behavior, as the individual can only be understood as a collective person, who is part of a larger (family) unit (Menkiti 1984). This unit not only makes collective decisions, but it also purports the main identity marker for the individual.

Considering this vast body of literature on health behavior, it is extraordinary that within the safety sciences, the individual’s safety behavior has not been connected to the family. This chapter is an introductory attempt to do so. In this chapter we wish to draw attention to that, which is included in the totality of the ship for most seafarers, i.e. the family at home. The lack of physical presence does not mean that the family is absent from the social world of the seafarers.

In the following we wish to discuss what role the family as a unit plays in the narrative about safety practices and perceptions of seafarers. We believe that by including the social realm beyond the ship in the way we think about practices on board the ship much can be gained. The background, social organization and family structure that the Filipino seafarer comes from make the matter of family as related to safety more pronounced, but that does not mean that family does not play a role in the safety (practices) of the Danish seafarer.

In general seafarers experience higher rates of accidents than workers in other industries as explained in the introduction, and to add to that, when accidents occur the seafarers’ access to the right emergency assistance may be very far away. Thus, understanding not only the technical conditions, but also the social and structural conditions for preventing accidents is of outmost importance in the maritime trades.

In the previous chapter we argued that the seafarers’ risk portfolio and thereby their attitudes towards safety are dependent on the professional field they must navigate in. In this chapter we dive into one constituent part of this field, especially for the Filipino seafarers that we briefly touched upon in the last chapter, i.e. the family.

■ Absent/present families

One of the main things that set a ship apart from most other workplaces is the distance in both space and time that the seafarers experience in relation to their homes and families. Many seafarers are away for several months at a time, leaving their families at home. This, argues Thomas and Bailey, results in a “desynchronicity” with their families (Thomas and Bailey 2009) structured and organised"" (Adams i denne p615. Based on fieldwork among seafarers and their families, they argue that a dire strain on the mental health of both the seafarer and the family ashore is the lack of time spent together in real-time; meaning partaking in the little things that happen during the day as well as in the daily routines of cooking, cleaning, taking children to soccer practice etc. This results in an emotional gap between the seafarer and his family which is highly demanding both when the seafarer is at sea and when he is at home (Thomas and Bailey 2009).

Nonetheless Tang (2012) shows how communication via telephone and the internet helps seafarers and their partners to stay in touch and “re-synchronise” with each other. Thus, the family is not present but still very present, not only in the minds of the seafarers but also through different channels of communication.

A study from Australia shows that one of the major causes of stress for seafarers is being away from the family (Parker et al. 1997). Other studies on human errors in accidents on board ships show that some of the most common causes for making mistakes leading to accidents are fatigue and stress. So, if stress causes accidents and stress is related to family relations, we may tentatively state that family relations are related to accidents.

■ “We sacrifice for the family” vs “it is in my blood” – Work, family and life aboard the ship

Family is of outmost importance to Filipino seafarers in terms of providing the means and proper channels to get hired in the industry in the first place and in terms of the survival and wellbeing of the family as the main motivation for pursuing a career in seafaring (as we touched upon in the previous chapter). Talking to Filipino seafarers we were also met by a notion of seafaring as a sacrifice for the family. And in general the basis of the deployment seemed to be the concern for the family. Families in the Philippines are typically organized in extended families and the wellbeing of all members of the family is dependent on the income and status of the seafarer. During

fieldwork we were met by a notion of seafaring as a form of sacrifice for the Filipino seafarer, a notion that is also described by many others ethnographers, notably by Lamvik (2002) and Fajardo (2011). The seafarer works at sea for the sake of his or her family.

The Danish seafarers are in a quite different situation concerning their employment as a seafarer and their family relations. First of all, most Danish seafarers will go through official channels in order to have a career in seafaring. Nonetheless the motivation for applying to become a seafarer for example, may very well come from family members who themselves have been seafarers. As one former seafarer told Line when she asked him why he became a seafarer: “well, it’s in my blood. You know”. Second of all, the survival of the family is typically not dependent on the one seafarer, as the state provides a quite large financial safety net for all the members of the family. Third of all the Danish family is organized in nucleuses, where the larger family is typically not dependent on the income of the seafarer. The Danish seafarers never described their career choice as a form of sacrifice. Rather the opposite, the sea was chosen as it presented a range of opportunities, such as travelling and freedom, that a land-based job did not. Most Danish seafarers complained that the time to venture into foreign countries when in port had severely decreased in the last decades and the adventure that drew them to seafaring was slowly fading.

■ **“You take better care of what you do” – the link between family and safety**

The concern for the family is a repeated theme in the narratives of the Filipino seafarers when asked about safety and life onboard in general.

One Filipino seafarer stated that *“You cannot sleep during your rest hour period because you are thinking [about the family]”*.

Another Filipino seafarer told us, when talking about safety and working safely:

“*You leave this, then you are taking a very big risk of not having anymore jobs for the rest of your life. So how is it that you are safer? I think the family aspect of it is coming in. “I am taking care of this job and I’m doing everything to keep this job. Is it for my job alone?” No, for the family. I’m not saying Europeans are less family oriented but they are more closely knitted as well – the family here. That’s one thing. You tend to be more safe, not for yourself alone, but for the people. You take better care of what you do.”*

“We see... we try to analyze the situation, if it is like going up or too high we have to do something to be safe. That’s what we are doing – that’s what I am doing to be safe. If I think I’m not good enough, then I try to do something to be safe. Not like just going ahead and never mind anything what happens. I don’t like that because I still have a family, that’s what I’m thinking. I don’t want to be disabled then my family suffers” (Filipino seafarer)

In our interactions with Danish seafarers the link between safety practices and family was not as recurring as it was with the Filipino seafarers. Nonetheless, statements like the following, underscore that having a family of your own or not makes a difference in how you think about safety:

“First of all, I guess you think more about safety and you are older. **Also when you have gotten a family.** You have someone at home who might be waiting for you, therefore you shouldn’t run around doing these stupid things.” (Danish seafarer, emphasis added)

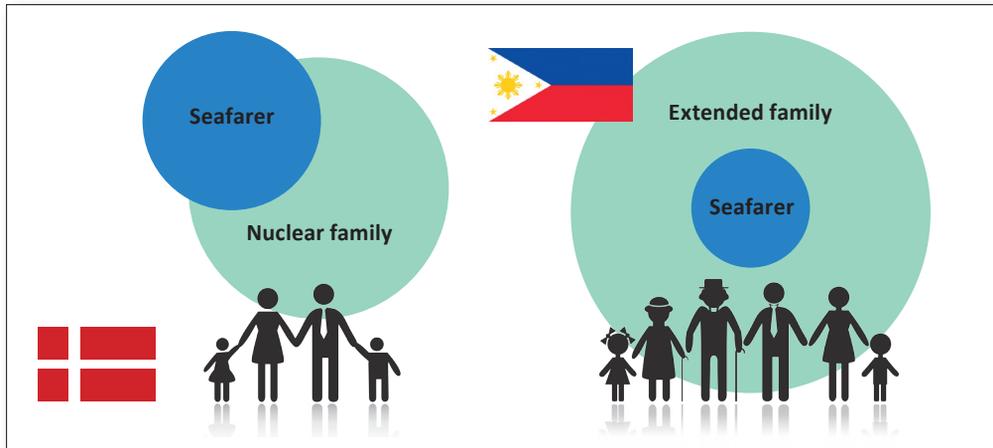
The interesting thing about this last statement is that according to the Danish seafarer a family is something you get at one point in life, referring to having a wife and children of your own. Whereas the Filipino seafarers in situations such as the following underscore how the family matter whether you are married and have children or not:

“I also asked a million questions. They thought the Filipinos might be particularly careful by “instinct”. For example when Cherry’s cart was about to roll down a set of stairs in bad weather, she thought about saving herself, and not the cart. The same goes for a bicycle: better damage that than oneself: **“our health is our wealth... we need the money, we are here for the money... we sacrifice for the family”** – This was actually only child Cherry who said this, even though it is clear that she still considers her job as an adventure and maybe as a liberation from home. She does not think 6 months is too long. She does not think the work is too hard. ” (from fieldnotes, emphasis added)

■ Nuclear family or extended family

The structure of the family you come from seems to have an effect on the way you think about safety on board the ships. The Filipino seafarers, who come from large family networks that play a big role in the entry and career in the trade, bring their families into the equation when asked to think about their own safety practices. Whereas the Danish seafarers may mention their families if they have, themselves, founded a nuclear family, or when directly asked about the role of the family in matters of safety.

Figur 1, seafaring families in Denmark and the Philippines respectively



It is well known in safety research that young people have a higher work related accident rate than the general population (Arbejdstilsynet 2008; Breslin 2007). The research done on this topic is typically based on data from the “West”, and the way of accounting for the discrepant numbers can roughly be categorized into the following two explanations: a) young people are more risk taking, and b) young people are more inexperienced and unaware of the risks associated with the work they are carrying out. If we dwell on explanation a), that young people are prone to take risks, we suggest that it may not be the case for young people who are part of extended families that count on their income for the wellbeing of the family members. Thus further investigations are needed in order to fully understand the role of the family in matters of work related accidents, particularly among young people.

As mentioned earlier, it is hard to say if there are any differences pertaining to nationality that make a difference in regards to safety practices. But we can say that there are differences in the way the seafarers themselves think about safety which seem to be linked to national differences. These differences, we argue, are hinged on the very different backgrounds and professional fields of the seafarers, where the type of family you are part of play a role.

Using Bourdieu’s conceptions the family constitutes an important institution, which holds a special position in the professional field of the seafarer. Using Vigh’s navigational metaphor it is possible to say that the moving terrains the Filipino seafarers navigate in, are to a higher extent than the terrains of the Danes, permeated by the family. Or if we are to take it even further, the seafarer cannot be seen as an individual who is acting but must be seen as the family-based enterprise that Lamvik terms, in all matters, not least concerning safety.

8. Discussion and concluding remarks

The most important question we are now left with, is what all these differences in the social worlds of seafarers mean to the safety practices of seafarers of different nationalities. Below we venture into speculations about how the arguments we have put forward relate to safety.

We have argued that the Filipino seafarer navigate in a more uncertain terrain than his Danish colleague. Part of this unstable terrain includes a general opaqueness in the employment situation, which means that the seafarer might meet conflicting demands – something that creates uncertainty. We find that on the one hand the seafarers' ability to navigate, may make them better prepared for unexpected situations. On the other hand it will make the seafarer less transparent to his colleagues, if he must constantly look after his own interests – or referring to our arguments in the previous chapter, we might say that the main unit of interest for the Filipino seafarer is the family – not the workplace. This is probably also the case for the majority of Danish seafarers, but judging from our fieldwork, not at all to the same extend.

This opaqueness also asserts itself in relation to the shipping companies (in our case companies with vessels under Danish flag), who are not always able to have an overview of the recruitment of seafarers. Nonetheless they are able to strategize and e.g. influence the terrain by expanding the requirements of the PEME for seafarers boarding their ships. Further we see that some shipping companies have their own manning agencies, which enables them to “cut through” the fogginess of the terrain and be able to hold full power over the terrain. Another tendency that seems to be on the rise, is for shipping companies or shipping nations other than the Philippines (e.g. Norway) to build and run their own seafaring academies in the Philippines, thus being fully in control over the process the seafarers go through. This tendency may also make the terrain less opaque for the seafarers as they have fewer “obstacles” or stops on their way to employment at sea.

As we started out with discussing, *safety culture* is inherently social and thus it is generated in the interaction of people. Therefore a lack of transparency can be problematic for the safety culture as it is vital for a seafarer to trust his colleagues.

We have shown that a Filipino seafarer has less job security than a Danish seafarer, which means that he feels that his career is always in jeopardy. This insecurity also makes him particularly vulnerable to social threats, such as “badmouthing”, and he tries his best to avoid this. Thus he is less likely to risk his reputation by speaking up, demanding his rights and contradicting his superiors. This can be a problem for the

shared culture onboard. It is problematic for the sake of a joined safety culture on board, since it is important that all crewmembers take part and contribute. Thus it is likely that we amongst the multinational crews find seafarers whose background means that they are flexible but also seem opaque (in a similar manner as the environment they must navigate in), in the eyes of their more firmly rooted colleagues from privileged countries. This creates a special challenge for the safety culture on board such a ship. The team must work hard on creating trust and transparency, in this endeavor communication and information is a key instrument.

Throughout the fieldwork for this project, we have heard a great many stories about the “others”, in shape of seafarers of a different nationality than whoever we talked to (some might say that our research questions spurred such comments on). These narratives may also contribute to the safety culture on board a ship. A newly graduated Danish chief officer told Line in a conversation that he had taken a class on cultural geography at the maritime academy, where he had learned about the Filipinos’ “dictator mentality”. He said that, that explains the way they work and how they just say yes to everything. When asked if he himself had ever worked with Filipino seafarers, he answered “no”. The way he talked about Filipinos and the way they work, without ever having been on a ship with Filipinos was remarkable and it underlines the aptitudes of the common narratives of the others. These common narratives contribute to an “othering” or alienation that may impede communication. The narratives may become powerful instruments if we follow Bourdieu’s concept of ‘world making’, which means that certain actors hold a position (which can be seen as a conglomerate of their volume and relative value of capitals) to semantically imbue social phenomena – e.g. national signifiers. This shapes the world and sets the standard for what is meaningful to say. Thus, the actors with the most symbolic capital or said in another way, with the best position from where to communicate from, hold the most power in the field. A similar insight within safety research is that communication about safety is the key to ensure that safety gets priority as Zohar has shown in his studies (Zohar 2002). It is thus necessary to challenge the narratives that appear as natural and self-evident, in this case notions of the others, to ensure that the social world of seafarers as well as the safety culture on board remains dynamic and free from a priori social inequalities.

After having pinpointed the differences between seafarers, we also wish to emphasize that you often find what you are looking for, and there are perhaps more differences between seafarers in general and shore based workers in general than between seafarers of different nationalities. We have several times in this project marveled at the lack of difference between the tactics of seafarers of varying nationality, as contradictory to the topic of the overall project as this may seem. One example is that we have various examples of Danish seafarers who did not report an acci-

dent because they did not want to complain. A behavior which is connected to job insecurity, which we would have expected from contract based employees, but not from permanently employed. Another example is how a certain group of ratings is named passive. The reason given is often connected to ethnic origin, e.g. 'Poles have a passive work mentality'. But as we have been on voyages with full crews Danes and others, as well as several mixed crews, we have realized that Danes can also be named passive by Danes, but then it is connected to their rank. So Danes can be passive and afraid to lose their jobs too, if the circumstances are right.

To sum up, there are probably more factors that unite seafarers of different nationalities than set them apart, when compared to land based (less globalized) professions. Nonetheless, these factors affect seafarers from the global south, such as the Philippines, greater than those from the global north, such as Denmark, due to the larger degree of uncertainty they face. We argue that these factors also impacts safety culture. The safety culture of seafarers cannot be seen as isolated to the single individual or single ship; instead, it must be seen in relation to the whole of the social worlds of the seafarers. In other words we must understand the terrain they navigate in as seafarers in order to understand how they practice and think about safety. This terrain we have shown is quite different from one nationality to another. This can further be linked to the different forms of communication on board. Thus, the terrains where the seafarers navigate towards safety differ a great deal from one nationality to another.

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- 1) <http://www.soefartsstyrelsen.dk/SiteCollectionDocuments/Tema/Moenstring/110704%20Årene%202000%20-%202011.pdf>
- 2) This ship was not registered in DIS, but as it is a rare opportunity for researchers to be able to conduct fieldwork on board coasters, we grabbed the opportunity.
- 3) For information about the health system at sea see the free online *Textbook of Maritime Medicine* at <http://textbook.ncmm.no/>. Chapter 7 by Tim Carter explains the criteria for medical checks or fitness examinations as it is rightly called (Carter 2010)



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