

THE WATERLINE

IT COULD BE HEAVEN, IT COULD BE HELL.



*“The metaphor of a giant floating mirror of our society
encloses everything that pushes us, over time,
to find new answers to fundamental questions of the times we live in.
It is a place where we can take a deep look at ourselves
and perceive our power and responsibilities within
the privileged part of the globalised society.*

*The route is set, and the ship is sailing the seas,
but are we looking for happiness in the right direction?”*



Logline

A journey beneath the shiny surface of the cruising world with a handful of human beings. From the most dangerous jobs and remote locations, to the luxury decks of the gigantic ships, we discover the human effort needed to craft the entertainment of the few, and challenge the real meaning of happiness.

R&D Teaser Trailer

<https://vimeo.com/731325002/a218059f61>

Output

- Feature-length Documentary
- Social Impact Strategy

State of Development

Research and development.



MSC



MSC



MSC



MSC



MSC



MSC



Subject

A huge floating holiday village, a cruise ship, is being built and will soon be ready to sail the international waters. From the extraction of the materials to the dismantling process of the old ships, the human beings involved, whether through their workforce or as final users, find a space to confess their hopes for a better future and the pursuit of *happiness*, walking on the line between escape for survival and *escapism* from everyday life.

Themes

- The Research of Happiness
- Occupational Safety and Health
- Environmental Costs

Summary

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Issue

Our future is constantly evolving and our dreams struggle to keep up and fulfil it while dealing with the side-effects of a promise – a better tomorrow – that every day becomes more fragile as we realise that our resources are limited, and our frustration for this elusive dream of *elsewhere* grows within us.

The cruise ship business represents a contemporary container of the workforce, natural resources extraction, profit, and prepackaged mass entertainment.

This chain business is often referred to as one of the most wasteful and, despite the recent recession in the business due to the pandemic, the demand for such tour experience seems to be high and charming to many. The line of production hides many grey areas though, always leaving the widest majority of low-income workers out of the spotlight.

The on-tour entertainment, much like a huge floating holiday village for the mid-class, is the top of the iceberg. To make it work, a variety of workers are needed on board: sailors, customer care employees, entertainers, cleaners, cooks, beauty & spa workers, shop assistants, engine workers hired by recruiting agencies and reassigned to the cruise company with different levels of health and social care.

Before the ship even touches the waters, a whole army of thousands of workers is needed to extract the materials, ship them, and assemble the huge parts in the factory.



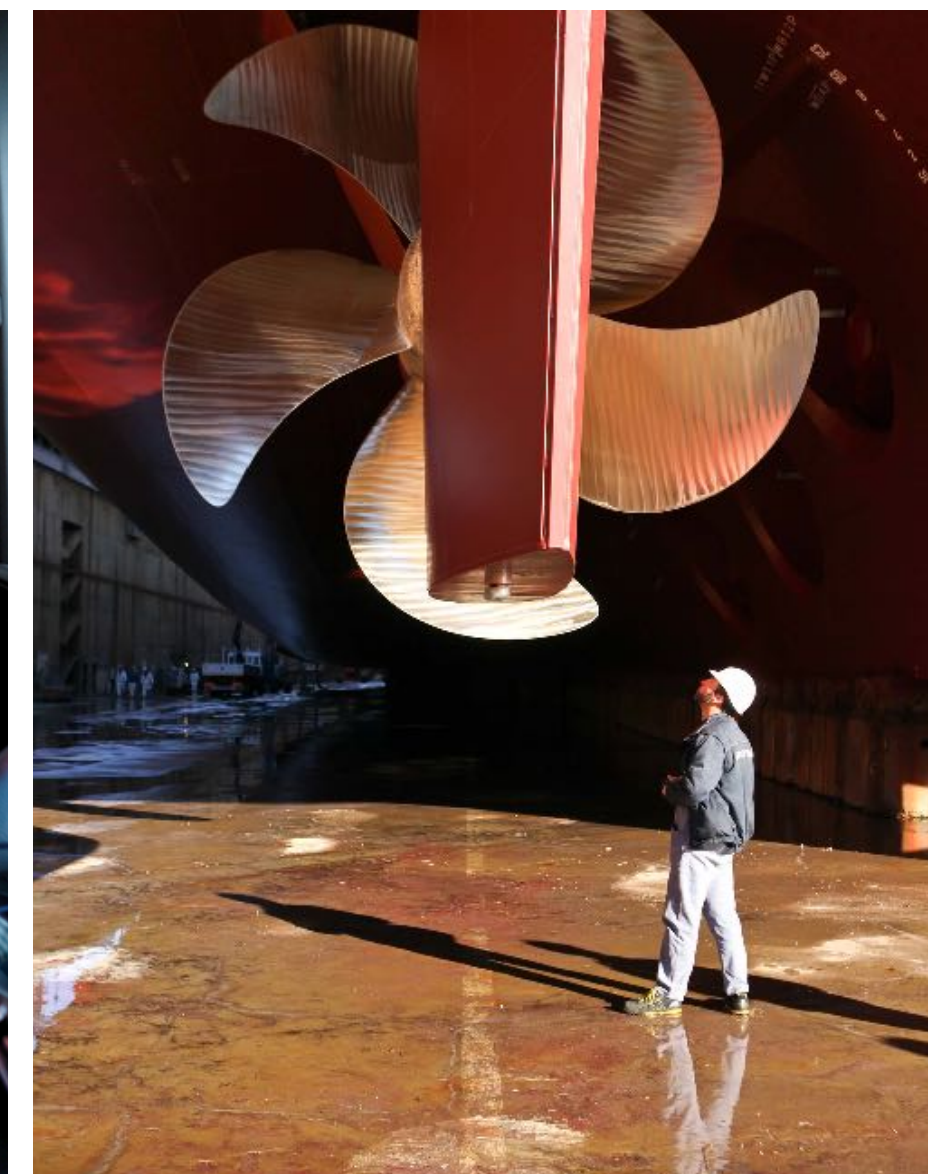
These people, as the final users, have dreams too but, unlike many of them, face daily struggles for survival. This high-contrasted comparison of life conditions facilitates the rise of some questions:

- What's the human and environmental price for the happiness of the few?
- Why is someone's dream more legitimate than others?
- Are we looking for happiness in the right place?

The Chain

Our Narrative Path

1. **Extraction/transportation of materials needed for the production:** the iron ore workers involved in the extraction and the train driver on the train route of Mauritania connecting the mining sites to the harbour in the West-African coast.
2. **Transportation of materials:** from Ukraine to Italy, the workers transport metals and components needed to build the big pre-constructed pieces.
3. **Construction of the cruise ship:** the foreign ship factory workers of a ship factory in Italy.
4. **Cruise ship tours:** the end-users of the American tours and the on-board cruise company entertainment employees.
5. **Dismantling of the ship:** the scrap metal workers operating in Pakistan who are struggling with low-income and hazardous working standards, who complete the chain process of the cruise ship life by dismantling it.





Synopsis and Characters

The Show Must Go On

The characters narrated below are based on people we encountered in these years of research. Although none of them has been chosen yet, the situations described are inspired by actual events.

Mark and Miriam just returned to the cabin after the routine blood pressure check. Looking back, they don't regret leaving the U.K. three years ago. Given their age, the hospice was the only horizon left. Now they only look forward. Mark is waiting at the door. Miriam hustles through her shoes in search of the perfect fit for the night.

Sidi's look is focused on the hypnotic rails ahead of his tiny train cockpit. His shift counts 16 hours, 8 more before he can finally rest in Nouadhibou, where the train will stop, and the iron ore will be shipped to the world's edges.

Firat looks at the dark snowy road with one eye; with the other, he sets the coffee pot on the mini-stove placed on the truck dashboard. He is due to stop in half an hour, but there is no time: he has to deliver the iron bars to the ship factory.

Masum walks towards his second-hand bike out of the Italian ship factory gates. He rushes in the quiet cold winter day direction home. He is about to marry Aashi, a young woman in Bangladesh, over the phone. The Bengalese community Imam sits on his couch, searching for a phone signal.

A giant cruise ship is approaching the shore at full speed. Bilal takes his blowtorch and backs away, waiting for impact. His peers look at the ship from behind the fence just before going to the local primary school. Today Bilal celebrates one year at the ship-breaking factory.

The audience fills the luxurious theatre on deck 7. The music starts. Miriam and Mark rush to their seats while the lights fade out. The curtains open: the cruising show must go on.

Regardless of the living conditions of the characters - is it the search for relief or the pursuit of happiness disguised as entertainment - a silent question emerges along the way:

- While looking for personal happiness, what is the human price paid to craft this massive entertainment?

Cinematic Approach

A Bitter-Sweet Candy

The documentary alternates moments of observation with more intimate ones, where the characters explore the limits of their dreams.

The main narrative path is the cruise ship production chain itself, and a handful of human beings (workers of the chain, cruise passengers) appear along the way.

While we follow each of the main characters, some dreams emerge on the surface, drawing an inevitable line between the reality of the present and the fantasy of the future. They so risk becoming the prey of the personal hunt for an unreachable *elsewhere*.

Each of the characters, this way, becomes a synecdoche that casts a light on the grey areas of the consumeristic society, often hidden or simply not exposed, and always forgetting the rights of the most exploited ones.

The film's main character is humanity itself, and its nature is expressed by intimate moments and everyday life events of the workers and the cruise passengers.

The dramatic beauty of the locations, the hard-working conditions, the long journeys, and the gigantic vessels are all talking for themselves, so when the word of the characters is finally heard, its specific weight is utterly heavy.

Inspired by the intimate aesthetics of the dearly missed Glawogger, and Rosi's contemplative observation, the narration leave the audience the space to absorb and elaborate the variety of landscapes and the intimacy of the encounters with the characters.

The dreams of the characters and the observation of their hard/luxurious life create a tableaux-like juxtaposition of frames: a natural contrast between worlds, situations, and cultures, and facilitate ironic moments, suggesting invisible landscapes of humor, giving the audience a chance to look at themselves in the mirror while tasting a bitter-sweet candy.

Author's Note

We live in Trieste, an Italian town by the sea, and we've gotten used, over the years, to see gigantic glittering cruise ships docked in front of our homes.

But one day, we started hearing some 90's disco super hits coming from the main deck and we noticed these two dots in a tiny boat cleaning the massive, white stern of the ship by hand. They seemed so fragile and small. We started thinking about how many invisible little hands are this business's real hidden driving force. Who pays every day so that others can have fun?

We couldn't help but empathise with the cleaners, for we have felt ourselves small and lost in front of the overwhelming speed of the system, a machine capable of promoting a better and perennially unreachable future, granting the rights to be safe and visible to those with money only. How often have we felt powerless and bewildered in the face of our fears and in front of one of the most simple yet challenging paths: the research for one's innermost joy in life?

While travelling the continents in the past years as active storytellers and privileged human beings, we investigated and observed the people we encountered along the way, wherever

they came from or were headed. We asked them about the meaning of *home* and *happiness*. We wondered whether we all have the same right to dream of a better life, and to what extent this dream is legitimate. What are the human and environmental costs of this business? And, finally, when did escape for survival become escape from ourselves in pursuit of pre-packaged gratification?

We love films and their power to inspire people all over the world. We're passionate about making films because they very often demand us to stay out of our own comfort zone and evolve as human beings.

This metaphor of a giant floating mirror of our society, encloses everything that pushes us, over time, to find new answers to fundamental questions of the times we live in. It is a place where we can take a deep look at ourselves and perceive our power and responsibilities within the privileged part of the globalised society. The shipping route is set and the vessel is sailing the seas, but are we looking for happiness in the right direction?

Social Impact Strategy

Following the partnership with NGO Shipbreaking Platform, and the interest of The Ocean Opportunity Lab, we aim to establish new partnerships with Organisations and Stakeholders active both in the cruise ship production chain, and the protection of labour and environmental conditions, to deepen our knowledge on the related topics, and to ensure an extra amount of aware audience, and the growth of a concerned community.

OUR PAST PROJECTS →

Goals

Given our past experience in Multimedia Production and Social Media Campaigns, we envision a communication project capable having a Social Impact through three complementary goals.

- **Grassroots Awareness**

Raising awareness in targeted groups and creating a new community, through Call-to-Action campaigns, in order to facilitate and speed-up the Green Energy transition.

- **Companies and Investors**

Supporting forward-thinking Companies which invest in the Green Energy transition and promote Circular Economy models, by highlighting their choices, and promoting their brands.

- **Advocacy and Change-Making**

Supporting advocacy practices and facilitate the work of law-makers.

Outputs and Distribution

The Social Impact Strategy encloses a variety of content, for different purposes, to be used as tools for social impact.

- A **short-documentary film** (one step of the chain of production) to be shown at public and decision-making arenas, and tailored **multimedia content** (video, photo, literature).
- **Call-to-action projects** (crowd-funding, fundraising) capable of collecting funds for concrete actions in favour of the families of the workers victims of labor-related violations.
- A thorough and monitored **web-distribution**, tailored to the needs of the partners involved.

Who's on Board

Fade In Productions (Co-producer)

Documentary Film Company, Croatia.

ESoDoc

EU's Media Programme Training Initiative for Social Documentary and Impact Strategies.

NGO Shipbreaking Platform

Global coalition of organisations working to reverse the environmental harm and human rights abuses caused by current ship-breaking practices.

Un Ponte Per

Human rights NGO operating in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Mediterranean Area.

A.M.I.

Human rights and inclusion, Italy.

What we're looking for...

Production Companies

Committed producers and co-producers, especially if active in the 5 locations of interest.

NGOs and Foundations

Public and private entities, NGOs, association, national and international foundations, which are involved with the project's main issues and would like to support and benefit from the Social Impact Strategy.

Academicians and Experts

Individuals with knowledge and experience in the production chain, law, labor rights, and environmental care.

Stakeholders

Companies, investors and activists involved, at various levels, in the civil society and the Green Energy transition in order to promote the project and its Social Impact Strategy goals.

Who We Are

Primi Piani is a collective of creatives based in Milan, Trieste and Valencia. In the past years, we have documented the lives of humans from war zones to slums, from remote villages to megacities across Europe, Asia, Southern America, and the Middle East. Our experience in video-making, communication, and project management ranges from the profit sector to NGOs, allowing us to carry out tailored impact strategies which work synergistically with films, causes, and their audiences.

OUR MISSION →

Massimo Mucchiut

He is an independent video-maker and storyteller. He has worked in the Middle East, the Balkans, South America and Europe, producing multimedia content for NGOs and independent media.



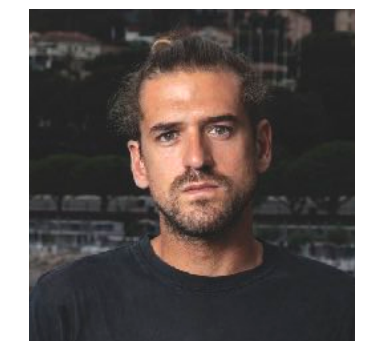
Aurora Mischi

She is an independent creative producer who was trained in the profit world and has coordinated entrepreneurial, scientific and artistic projects. She's been selected for the 2021 edition of ESoDoc.



Federico Guarino

Former Cesura reporter, he has worked for press, NGOs, and media in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, producing independent photo reportages.



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