

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 power and responsibilities within
the privileged part of the globalized society.*

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



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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 gigantic ships, we discover the human effort needed to craft the entertainment of the few and challenge the meaning of happiness.

Themes

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

Subject

A gigantic 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.

R&D Teaser Trailer

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

Output

- Feature-length Documentary
- Social Impact Strategy

State of Development

Research and development.

Producers

- Tico Film (Producer)
- Fade In (Co-producer)



Issue

Our future is constantly evolving, and our dreams struggle to keep up and fulfil them 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. Meanwhile, 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 due to the pandemic, the demand for such a tour experience seems to be high and charming to many. The production

line hides many grey areas, always leaving the vastest majority of low-income workers out of the spotlight. Much like a giant floating holiday village for the mid-class, the on-tour entertainment is the tip 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, and 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 ensemble the huge parts in the factory.



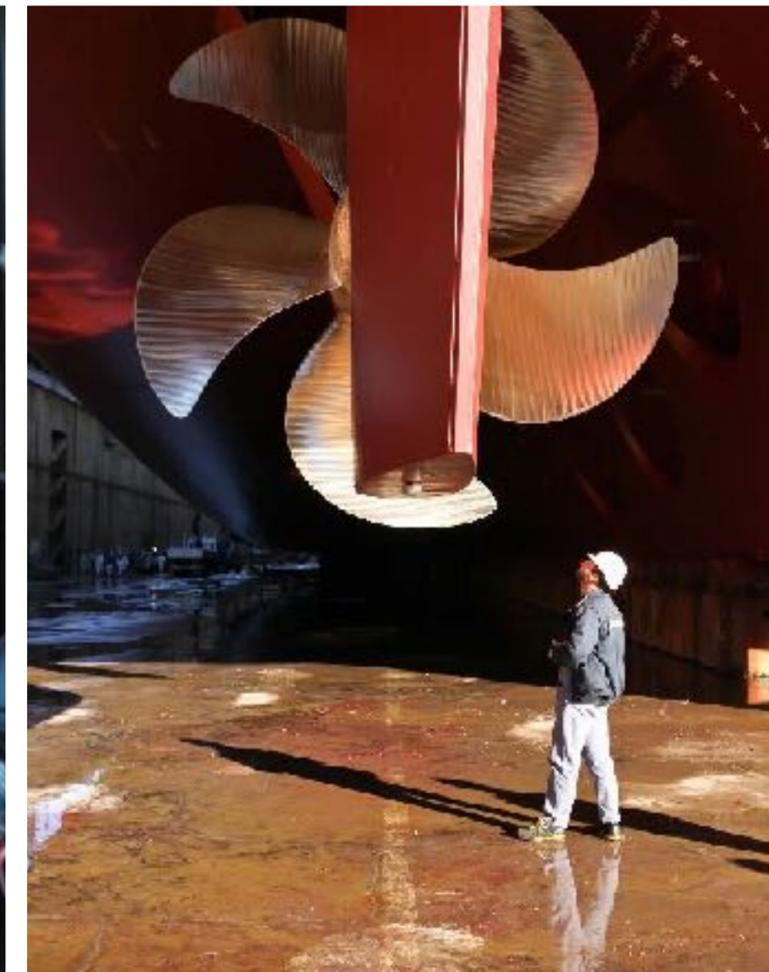
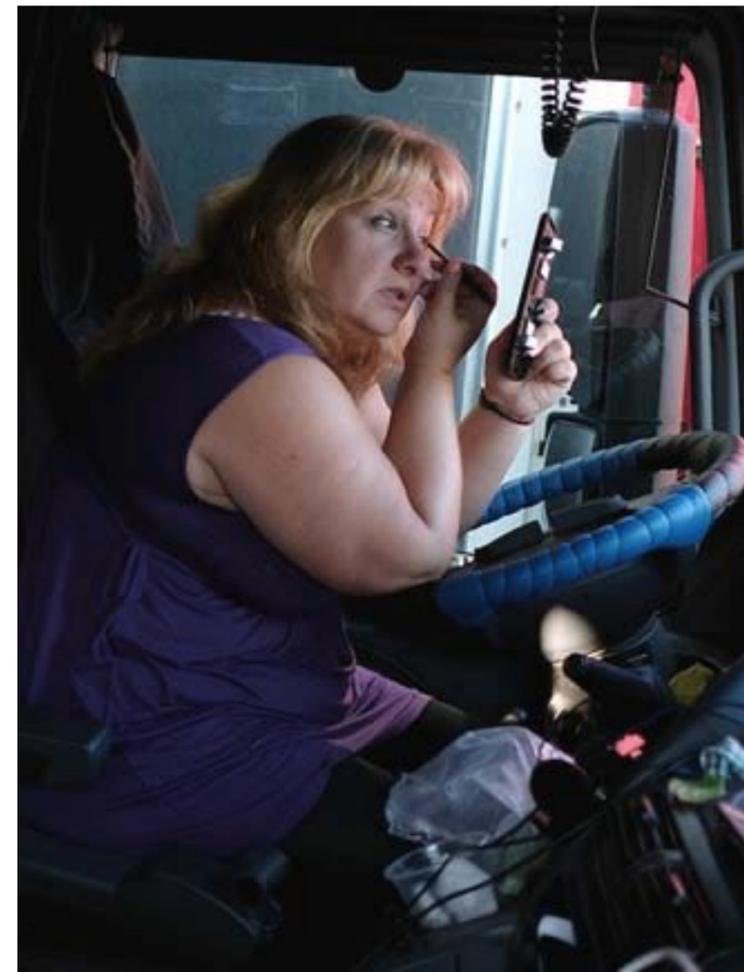
These people, as the final users, have dreams too but, unlike many of them, face daily struggles for survival. This high-contrasted comparison of life conditions facilitates the rise of some questions:

- 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 on 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 in Pakistan struggling with low-income and hazardous working standards complete the cruise ship life chain process 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 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. The characters, this way, become 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 yet personal observation, the narration leaves the audience the space to absorb and elaborate on 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, a small city on the sea which has welcomed cruise ships since decades. One day, in front of one of these floating cathedrals, we noticed two white-suited dots on a tiny raft, cleaning with a hand broom the massive stern of the ship, while a 90s disco super-hit echoed from the main deck. We thought of all the invisible hands that are the hidden driving force behind the financial, human, and environmental effort required to bring this glittery business to life.

It made us wonder about ourselves, seeking happiness outside, and in recognition of others. About the exhausting races done to achieve something that, after a short flicker of joy, left us with nothing but a doubt: "Are we looking for happiness in the right place?"

How many times have we felt lost in front of the pressure of our social system? A structure that leads us in the pursuit of an unreachable better future, and grants the right to be safe only to those who can pay. "Where are others looking for happiness? And if it's working for them, what is it that we can't see?"

We love movies, their ability to trigger minds and give voice to those who don't have one. They push us out of our comfort zone, and evolve us as human beings. We have been traveling as privileged humans and storytellers for years, and asked about the meaning of happiness to the people we met along the way, wherever they came from or were headed.

The cruise ship is a metaphor for our society, a spectacular floating mirror where we can have a deep look into ourselves and perceive the power of living in the privileged part of a globalised society. It is where we can discover whether the dream of a better life is legitimate for all. We can question what the human and environmental costs of this quest are, and, finally, whether the hunt for happiness has finally become an escape from ourselves in search of ephemeral gratifications?

The navigational course is set, and the ship is plying the seas, but are we looking for happiness in the right direction?



MSC



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MSC



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MSC



MSC



Social Impact Strategy

The network is growing thanks to the support of NGO Shipbreaking Platform, and the contacts with The Ocean Opportunity Lab and IndustriALL Global Union.

We aim to further establish partnerships with Organisations and Stakeholders active both in the cruise ship production chain and the protection of labor and environmental conditions.

We are learning new information about the different environments and their complexities.

Given a growing concerned global community and the central role of the Ship Recycling Regulation for the EU Parliament in the incoming years, we envision to reach a heterogeneous audience, help build more responsible citizens, and support concrete actions in favour of the most fragile subjects.

Three Levels

- **Grassroots Awareness**
Raising awareness in targeted groups and creating a new community, through Call-to-Action campaigns, 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.
- **Advocacy and Change-Making**
Supporting advocacy practices and law-makers.

UN SDGs

Promoting good practices for some of the 17 Goals of the United Nations Member States drew up in 2015. They provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.



Outputs and Distribution

- **Short film:** public and decision-making arenas.
- **Multimedia content** (video, photo, literature) for Web and Press purposes.
- Supporting **call-to-action projects** (crowd-funding, fundraising) to collect funds for concrete actions in favour of the families of the workers victims of labor-related violations.
- **Web-distribution:** tailored and monitored for the needs of the partners involved.

Collaborations

Tico Film (Producer)

Documentary Film Company, Italy.

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

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

A.M.I.

Human rights and inclusion, Italy.

We are 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, associations, and national and international foundations involved with the project's main issues, which 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 to promote the project and its Social Impact Strategy goals.



Primi Piani is a collective of creatives with members 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. We carry out tailored impact strategies that work synergistically with films, multimedia literature, causes, and audiences.

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



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