The Unsociability of Commercial Seafaring: Language Practice and Ideology in Maritime Technocracy

Sonia Neela Das

ABSTRACT   This article explores the language practices and language ideologies of maritime technocracy and inquires into the imagined and real gaps involved in sustaining channels of sociable talk aboard cargo ships. Lacking knowledge of the routines, practices, and beliefs impacting seafarers' productivity, shipping industry leaders turn to Christian ministries to identify infrastructural or logistical gaps in the operation of communications media networks and deficiencies in the language policies and interactional practices that animate them. These converging profit-driven and ethical projects collectively support a technocratic language ideology. It locates risks to the supply chain in presumptions of miscommunications caused by the lack of English-language use and unsociability caused by the lack of convivial talk among seafarers for channeling information about these risks. Actualized by strategies that affirm the value of face-to-face talk and online chatting rather than solitary reading, maritime technocracy standardizes the logistical coordination of media infrastructures and labor and language policies. This article draws on ethnographic research aboard cargo ships and at Christian centers to elucidate the logic of maritime technocracies in Newark and Montreal, two seaports with different governance structures highlighting the internal differences of a shipping industry facing crises due to automation, outsourcing, and neoliberal reform. [*commercial seafaring, shipping industry, sociability, maritime technology, language ideology*]

RESUMEN   Este artículo explora las prácticas del lenguaje e ideologías del lenguaje de la tecnocracia marítima e investiga las lagunas imaginadas y reales envueltas en el sostenimiento de canales de conversación sociable a bordo de buques de carga. Faltando conocimiento de las rutinas, prácticas, y creencias impactando la productividad de los marineros, los líderes de la industria naviera recurren a ministros cristianos para identificar los vacíos infraestruc-turales o logísticos en la operación de comunicaciones de redes de medios de comunicación y deficiencias en las políticas del lenguaje y las prácticas interaccionales que las animan. Estos proyectos convergentes con fines de lucro y éticos apoyan colectivamente una ideología del lenguaje tecnocrático. Localiza los riesgos a la cadena de oferta en presunciones de faltas de comunicación causadas por la carencia de uso del lenguaje inglés y la no sociabilidad causada por la deficiencia de conversación convivial entre marineros para canalizar la información acerca de estos riesgos. Actualizada por estrategias que afirman el valor de las conversaciones cara a cara y chat en línea en vez de la lectura solitaria, la tecnocracia marítima estandariza la coordinación logística de las infraestructuras de los medios de comunicación y las políticas de labor y lenguaje. Este artículo se basa en investigación etnográfica a bordo de los buques de carga y centros cristianos para elucidar la lógica de las tecnocracias marítimas en Newark y Montreal, dos puertos de mar con diferentes estructuras de gobernanza enfatizando las diferencias internas de la industria naviera enfrentando las crisis debido a la automatización, la externalización, y la reforma neoliberal. [*navegación comercial, industria naviera, sociabilidad, tecnología marítima, ideología del lenguaje*]

Commercial seafaring is a solitary, knowledge-intensive, and high-risk labor practice performed by unrelated men and a few women who are paid mod-est to high wages to work under extreme and often

hazardous conditions aboard inhospitable ships and without the basic protections of national citizenship. Since Bronislaw Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, published in 1922, ethnographic depictions of seafarers and seafaring have illuminated the cultural, political, and economic rationales underwriting maritime exchange, sovereignty claims, labor rights struggles, and resource extraction at sea (Cowen 2014; Dua 2013, Fajardo 2011; Mannov 2013; Markkula 2011; McKay 2014). By comparison, anthropologists and linguists have looked less closely at the role of linguistic practices and ideologies in organizing seafarer work routines, regimenting ship workplaces, and reinforcing or contesting maritime narratives. Indeed, the few studies that examine multilingualism aboard ships ignore the ideological mediation of communicative practices. In doing so, these studies have neglected to analyze the consequences of a recent claim made by maritime technocrats. Their assertion is that commercial seafarers today are imperiling the supply chain upon which the entire world's economy depends with their acts of *unsociability*. By translating the rich phenomenological experience of solitude at sea into mere logistical and infrastructural problems of a lack of social intercourse, this technocratic discourse equates the vitality of seafarers' talk with measurable accounts of the shipping industry's profitability. However, the disjuncture between the monolingual "talk-focused" policies of the industry and the multilingual, mediatized reality of life on ships is arguably the real peril, exacerbated by the changing technologies and labor conditions of a new age of automation.

This article explores the contradictions of language ideology in maritime technocracy. Drawing on multisited ethnographic research that elucidates how the linguistic practices and language policies of cargo ships impact the structures, policies, and histories of the shipping industry, I ask the following questions: Are seafarers' worsening experiences of geographic and social isolation, physical and psychological vulnerability, and cultural and linguistic difference actually jeopardizing the supply chain, or have maritime technocrats invented this present-day crisis to instead deter the public's attention from urgent problems of unsustainable consumption and labor exploitation? Second, which linguistic practices do technocratic interventions into seafarers' lives count as being sociable or unsociable, and what is at stake in basing maritime policies on the frequency of seafarers' verbal interactions? Finally, how do industry leaders talk about and act upon profit-driven imperatives to coordinate the logistics and infrastructures of interaction and communication aboard ships to acquire information of risks to "just-in-time" shipping schedules, and how successful are these technocratic interventions? By additionally considering the dramatic transformations in oceanic transport occurring over the last century, I seek to contextualize maritime discourses of crisis in value by examining how ship owners, port officials, and other actors collaborate in the technocratic management of commercial seafarers.

Contributing to anthropological discussions of the semiotics of capitalism (Cavanaugh and Shankar 2014; Kockelman 2006; Nakassis 2012; Wilf 2016) and the politics and ethics of infrastructure (Appel 2015; Bear 2015; Larkin 2013; Starosielski 2015), this study of maritime "language ideology" (see Irvine 1989) analyzes how the technocratic valuation of communicative practices aboard cargo ships promotes the economic and moral interests of shipping industry leaders and rationalizes the logistical practices involved in the coordination of an industry-wide communications media infrastructure. I begin by describing the innovations in commercial seafaring in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries designed to promote convivial talk among seafarers and build new or bolster existing communications infrastructures through monolingual language policies and pastoral talk therapy. Turning afterward to my ethnographic fieldwork volunteering alongside a Catholic chaplain at the Mariner's House at the Port of Montreal from June to August 2005 and two Episcopalian chaplains at the Seamen's Church Institute at Port Newark from September 2015 to February 2016, I then discuss how these technocratic investments are increasingly becoming entangled with religious and ethical projects also promoting sociable intercourse in maritime spaces. I conclude by stressing the importance of comparing onshore and offshore governance infrastructures to theorize the relationship of language and technology in late modernity. This comparison exposes how proxy measures of global economic security, such as reading the signs of unsociability, serve to perpetuate the violence of capitalism.

COMMERCIAL SEAFARING IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Starting in the 1920s and accelerating in the post-World War II period, the shipping industry has undergone gradual processes of neoliberalization, including outsourcing, automation, intermodalism, and, finally, deregulation (Cowen 2014). Currently, ship owners save money by registering many of their merchant vessels with countries flying under "flags of convenience" exempt from most taxes and international agreements on citizenship and maritime labor rights (Markkula 2011; van Fossen 2016).[1] Today's worldwide population of 1,647,500 seafarers (including 774,000 officers and 873,500 ratings) is increasingly being recruited from different countries, giving rise to multinational crews preferably outsourced from the Philippines, Russia, Ukraine, Indonesia, China, Turkey, and India as opposed to the single-nationality crews of Western Europeans, Americans, and Japanese favored in previous decades (Alderton et al. 2004; International Chamber of Shipping 2017; Lillie 2004; McKay 2014). Downsized from thirty to between twenty-four and fourteen seafarers, crews are also hired under contracts of different duration depending on their nationality, rank, and type of vessel. Containerization, which refers to standardized forty-eight-foot boxes used for the intermodal transport of cargo by ship, truck, and rail, and automation of heavy machinery, especially the gantry cranes that enable heavy

loads to be lifted on and off cargo ships in record speed, have further curtailed the total time that ships dock at port, from several weeks to often less than a day (Levinson 2016; McKay 2014). Although seafarers have mobilized to seek greater representation in decisions regarding such technological, political, and labor changes impacting their livelihoods, entrenched divisions of nationality, race, ethnicity, and language continue to impede worker solidarity (Appel 2015; Cowen 2014).

Small crews of multinational, multilingual, and primarily male seafarers, therefore, comprise more or less ephemeral communities that spend between three to twelve months living together on cargo ships where they may have few opportunities to disembark or converse with people who speak the same native or preferred language (George 2013). Since 2001, the global war on terror has made the procurement of visas to travel ashore at American and European ports more cost prohibitive and litigious for seafarers of nonwhite and Muslim backgrounds. Safety issues at certain Asian and African ports have also dampened the desire of many to venture off ship. Onboard ships, the sporadic opportunities for seafarers to communicate with their kin and friends at home are often exacerbated by routine problems of Internet and phone connectivity in both coastal and international waters. Heavy workloads; staggered shifts and work contracts; and job, pay, and rank inequalities further constrain social interactions with coworkers (Fajardo 2011; Markkula 2011; McKay 2014). Finally, added to these stresses are the daily threats of coping with piracy attacks, tumultuous weather, and hazardous materials (Dua 2013; Mannov 2013). Needless to say, the social life of cargo ships is regimented according to a set of technological, meteorological, geopolitical, and labor conditions, both to a type and degree not found onshore.

Shipping companies and port officials grappling with impending logistical crises in the coproduction of social, economic, and political value crucial to the "friction-less" functioning of the global supply chain have yet to fully acknowledged the pernicious effects of such labor policies (Cowen 2014). Whereas lawyers and human rights activists have condemned neoliberal policies for exacerbating the vulnerability of a mobile labor force denied the basic citizenship rights guaranteed under most liberal regimes, industry leaders have instead stressed the urgency of improving the communications media infrastructures of cargo ships and deemphasized other appeals for greater leisure time, faster visa processing, and improved health care for seafarers (van Fossen 2016). Industry-approved technological and social investments include practices such as installing routers and satellites to increase Wi-Fi broadband signals, designing convivial recreational spaces, enforcing the use of working languages, and inviting chaplains to engage in talk therapy aboard ships. Despite these initiatives, however, industry leaders remain concerned about persistent threats to the global "circulatory system" and "life of trade" (Cowen 2014, 3, 14), especially in the form of feelings and afflictions of boredom, loneliness, depression, and addiction believed to debilitate seafarers' morale, instigate accidents, and, consequently, jeopardize shipping schedules. Remarkably, industry leaders attribute such risks to cross-cultural miscommunications and deficiencies in the sociability of men and women aboard cargo ships, and not to the inequalities of race, class, and gender endemic to the structures of capitalism.

Maritime technocrats who lack measurable knowledge of the daily routines, language practices, and social beliefs playing a role in seafarers' productivity have turned to Christian ministries for assistance. As the original and primary providers of pastoral care to seafarers since the Reformation, Christian ministries have historically depicted seafarers as "lost" and socially isolated souls in need of solace and reform (Miller 2012). Nowadays, chaplains are working ecumenically across churches at ports located worldwide by conducting ship visits and engaging in talk therapy, during which they also seek to identify any infrastructural gaps in the operation of telecommunications networks and logistical deficiencies in the language policies that support them. Alaina Lemon (2013, 68) writes about the gaps that we, as academics or folk theorists, often "project between readers and texts, or 'speakers' and 'hearers,'" as part of the project of making modernity. Drawing on work in the field of communications theory (Peters 1999), Lemon argues that tropes of contact pertaining to putative barriers in intersubjective connection tend to play up media-induced gaps, and she concludes that "communication as a person-to-person activity became thinkable only in the shadow of mediated communication" (Lemon 2013, 69). According to maritime technocrats, digital media and communication technologies can both exacerbate and attenuate gaps in the intersubjective connection between seafarers. The pastoral work of chaplains who chat with seafarers and sell or assist with ICT devices has been critical in articulating this logic. By gathering and sharing data of seafarers' daily communicative practices with officials, Christian ministries help to institutionalize a technocratic language ideology affirming the biopolitical value of face-to-face and online interaction for securitizing the "vital systems" of commercial shipping (Collier and Lakoff 2015). This ideology depicts talk as channeling information about risks threatening seafarers' productivity and the circulation of goods, about which "knowledge and action are out of sync" (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982, 1).

Stated otherwise, shipping magnates seek reliable indicators of the unsociable practices of seafarers as a means to protect the global infrastructure of oceanic routes supplying 90 percent of goods worldwide (see George 2013). They collaborate with Christian chaplains to reconcile the number of friendships among seafarers aboard cargo ships with quantifiable measures of the security of the supply chain. This feature of modern port governance, which encourages collaboration between governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations, and secular and religious actors, in sharing knowledge of seafarers' labor conditions, social relations, and mental and spiritual health, has contributed to

the entrenched practice of standardizing acceptable levels of sociability on ships.

SEMIOTICS OF MARITIME SOCIABILITY

"Sociability," often used interchangeably with "sociality" in the anthropological literature, is best known by Malinowski's ([1922] 2002, 24) definition as the mundane social and linguistic practices that constitute the "imponderabilia of everyday life." Other definitions include Georg Simmel's "artistic play" (1949, 261) and Jan Blommaert's "stuff of conviviality" (2014, 434). Although focusing on qualities of social intercourse, each of these definitions implies a distinction in scale between the different modalities and standards of interaction. Attention to such scalar distinctions (Carr and Lempert 2016; Das 2016; Lemon 2013) helps to decenter knowledge about normative sociality and open up new areas for investigating how language ideology regiments the communicative practices of social life, both onshore and offshore.

Not only prevalent in maritime technocracy, the concept of "sociability" is also a common trope in oceanic historiographies. As a narrative device, the trope evokes a stark, irreconcilable divide between the sociable norms of land-based civilization and the unsociable norms of maritime savagery (Mannov 2013). "Frontier" narratives, in particular, depict neocolonial imageries of ships as traversing the deep, wild sea, where real-time communication with the outside world is constrained and nature runs amok, before reaching the safety of the civilized coast, where sanctified religious and consumptive activities foster open-ended sociality (Klein and Mackenthun 2004; Steinberg 2013). According to Stefan Helmreich (2009, 129), this culture/nature binary lies at the heart of the imperial "conquest of the world's ocean [and is] coterminous with the rise of Western capitalism." In semiotic terms, the binary also organizes a "representational economy" (Keane 2003) that naturalizes indexical and iconic linkages among the "sociable" qualia and material affordances of land (seen as fertile, visible, orderly) and those of "unsociable" water (seen as barren, murky, chaotic). On ships where these assemblages of signs index different communicative modalities and outcomes, sociable "talk" also seems to generate information flow or exchange, while unsociable "texts" induce isolation or miscommunication.

This semiotic analysis of the signs of maritime sociability entextualized in maritime discourses underscores Annelise Riles's (2004) observation that technoscientic regimes regard social relations as both the engine of scientific knowledge and its potential demise. When endorsed by shipping magnates, this reductivist view concerns itself with the conviviality of friendships between seafarers. Rather than indexing quality of life on ships, the number and durability of friendships are instead interpreted as iconic of, and thus equated with, the relative security (or precarity) of the global supply chain. The scaling up of the sensory qualities of sociality into knowable quantities or discrete qualifiers of sociability thus represents a type of semiotic mechanism or

"social calculus," described by Laura Bear (2015, 179) as a "grid of conversion between divergent forms of value and their associated social relations." Because friendships between seafarers presumably lead to more free-flowing talk (Simmel 1949, 257), their imagined value lies precisely in channeling information about risks facing the industry (Collier and Lakoff 2015), literally moving it from the mouths of seafarers to the ears of port officials. In practice, however, talk can just as easily instigate conflicts exacerbated by ethnic, religious, and linguistic differences and undermine a ship's infrastructural capacity to sustain friendships, a contention attributable to the industry's neoliberal policies.

Studies of the information and communication technologies (ICT) critical to the operation of global capitalist industries such as commercial shipping have conceptualized these infrastructures in the traditional sense as "matter that enable the movement of other matter," as defined by Brian Larkin (2013, 329). Infrastructures also rely on language policies that perform logistical support by implementing or bolstering channels of communication. Malinowski was the first to discuss how linguistic forms can act as or entail infrastructures "as concrete semiotic and aesthetic vehicles oriented to addressees" (Larkin 2013, 329). Malinowski's ([1923] 1994, 10) definition of "phatic communion" as "a type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words" depicts social interactions such as "ordinary gossip" as enabling an "atmosphere of sociability" and "convivial gregariousness" that binds together the "hearer to speaker by a tie of some social sentiment or other." Roman Jakobson (1960, 5) elaborated on this by asserting that the phatic function establishes a veritable "channel" that initiates, prolongs, or discontinues communication between speakers and addressees. Paul Kockelman (2010), taking a more comprehensive view, argues that the distributed phenomena of infrastructure comprise a holistic system that acts both as object and creates the background or channel upon which other objects (including speech acts and communicative practices) are foregrounded. These semiotic views of "infrastructing" have each emphasized the reflexive function of language as a channel operating in and across different circulatory regimes (414). As exemplary metapragmatic objects, moreover, infrastructures and their discursively foregrounded properties can appear as emblematic of distinct eras, such as the undersea fiberoptic cables of the age of Internet connectivity (Starosielski 2015) and the oceanic seafaring routes of the age of just-in-time shipping.

Various ethnographers have drawn on Malinowski's, Jakobson's, Kockelman's, and Larkin's insights to investigate how infrastructural projects hinge on human choices and generate language practices that either affirm or surpass the limits of architecture, the market, law, and social norms (Fischer 2005). Taking a mostly generative view, Julia Elyachar (2010) notes the untapped economic and political value of social transactions that function as "phatic labor" and enable the creation of new channels of communication for selling goods and services in Cairo. Equating Elyachar's

"phatic labor" with Markman Ellis's (2008) "architectures of sociability," Paul Manning (2013, 44–45) instead emphasizes how European coffeehouses seek, but sometimes fail, to foster interactions between strangers through architectural features that index an aspirational modernity associated with valorized genres of "face-to-face sociability" and "print circulation." Conversely, Courtney Handman (2017) discusses how the Guhu-Samane of Papua New Guinea label as "satanic infrastructures" the poorly constructed roads that impede the movement of Bibles and Christians between villages and signal their relative lack of modernity to the world. Alaina Lemon's (2013, 68) study of Cold War discourses suggests that such competing or divergent claims to global modernity are rooted in the material affordances of signs of gaps, "where contact seems to fail [and] phatic attention is more frequent, frantic, or forcefully reflexive." The discursive and ethnographic analysis of phatic communication as a trope thus illuminates how projects of modernity either objectify levels of sociability or problematize its absence.

Missing from these studies, however, is close attention to the role of human labor in building and maintaining the channels through which media, goods, energy, and information flow—and, in the process, enable the transformation of everyday social relations, governance structures, and ethical life. An important exception is Laura Bear's (2015) research, which makes these connections explicit by showcasing the practices of shipyard workers, port officers, marine crew, river pilots, boatmen, and entrepreneurs extracting value from the Hooghly River, despite West Bengal's austerity debt policy and the difficulties in guaranteeing a livelihood from public infrastructure. Tracing the articulations between nationalism, Hinduism, and austerity, she concludes that economic governance is "rich with ethical meaning" (22). Yet the labor of building infrastructures in the middle of the ocean paints a different picture. Referring to the offshore oil and gas rigs in Equatorial Guinea, Hannah Appel (2015, 258–59) argues that daily infrastructural practices make worlds possible offshore through "the corporate abdication of liability, racism, and the disempowerment of workers." Exposing the agenda of hydrocarbon modernity as the "disentanglement from the specificities of place" (266–67), she shows how oil technocrats strive to create a juridico-legal space barring the intrusion of politics (Collier and Lakoff 2015). Research on onshore and offshore governance infrastructures presents compelling counterpoints. Akin to offshore rigs in attempting to disentangle from local politics, commercial shipping also resembles onshore governance in its collaborations with civic and religious groups.

Collectively, these ethnographic and semiotic approaches help to advance a framework for investigating the interactionally emergent and infrastructurally distributed logistical systems that coordinate (or else fail to coordinate) the coproduction of political, economic, and social value and mitigate (or otherwise exacerbate) risks to the supply chain. Yet what has not been fully explored is the possibility that sociability itself can be one of the intended or anticipated outcomes of infrastructural investments. Whereas people living in infrastructure-poor areas will knowingly compensate for the lack thereof by investing in their kinship networks and cheap telecommunication services (Barber 2008; Horst and Miller 2006), technocrats and industry leaders arguably regard investments in communications media infrastructures as encouraging greater verbal interaction and thereby enhancing productivity and augmenting profits. Complicating this technocratic narrative, however, is the ever-changing composition of ethnonationally diverse crews. Often, a lot of logistical coordination and knowledge sharing among government officials, industry leaders, and religious organizations are needed to reconcile seafarers' different beliefs and cultural practices and foster verbal interaction. My volunteer work at Port Newark and Port Montreal, two of the oldest seaports in North America with the longest histories of ecumenical and industry collaboration, highlights the different logistical strategies and infrastructures of a maritime technocracy striving to reform the seafarers it deems unsociable.

PORTS OF NEWARK AND MONTREAL

In 1834, the Episcopalian Seamen's Church Institute (SCI), built on a floating barge in the East River in Lower Manhattan, became the first brick-and-mortar church devoted exclusively to the pastoral care of seafarers in North America. Since relocating to its permanent landlocked home in Port Newark in 1921, the SCI has acquired two dedicated Episcopalian chaplains and one affiliated Lutheran chaplain. Director Stephen Lyman describes the newly renovated SCI hospitality center as providing "concierge services" for approximately two thousand seafarers and longshoremen who visit the center yearly to use the Internet, phone, gym, pool table, and television; deliver mail and parcels; and enlist the legal counsel of Douglas Stevenson, the world's leading expert on maritime law. The Mariners' House of Montreal, also one of the first seamen's churches in North America, instead grew out of an ecumenical partnership between Protestant (Montreal Sailors' Institute, established in 1862) and Catholic (Sailors' Club, established in 1869) missions. Today, multifaith volunteers at both ports assist chaplains in driving seafarers around the city, socializing with them at the hospitality centers or onboard ships and selling them phone and SIM cards. A ship visit typically ranges from thirty minutes to three hours, depending on seafarers' work schedules and the rapport established between the chaplain or volunteer and the crew.

In 2005, while conducting dissertation research on Tamil immigration to Montreal, I assisted Father Joseph, a Sri Lankan Tamil Catholic priest at the Our Lady of Deliverance mission, with his additional duties as the chaplain of the Port of Montreal. Several times a month from June to August 2005, I accompanied him to the Mariner's House, where he officiated over mass, heard confessions, and counseled Catholic seafarers of mostly Filipino, Indian, Sri Lankan, and Eastern European nationalities about their marital problems,

depression, addiction, and other common malaises. Sometimes he brought a South Asian seafarer back to his mission church in Montreal to hear the mass celebrated in Tamil. As his personal assistant, I was asked to drive seafarers to local shops and restaurants, accompany them on sightseeing tours in the city, including to St. Joseph's Oratory (popular among Catholic pilgrims) and the Olympic Stadium, and read scriptures during mass. When Father Joseph returned to Sri Lanka and the new priest did not renew my services, my volunteer work ended, but my interest in maritime ministry was piqued.

Ten years later, after completing my first book, I designed a follow-up study to take place at Port Newark with the Seamen's Church Institute. From September 2015 to February 2016, I shadowed the church's senior chaplain, Betty, an older white American woman whose father was formerly an SCI chaplain, and the junior chaplain, Mark, a middle-aged man from the Philippines who had originally interned with the SCI and then joined the staff after the American chaplain retired. After familiarizing myself with the byzantine layout of the port and berths and the strict protocol for visiting ships and completing my mandated antiterrorism security training with the NY/NJ Port Authority, I began to visit mega- and mid-sized container ships, dry bulk ships, oil and chemical tankers, and car ships on my own. Working two or three days a week from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., and averaging three ship visits a day, I followed Betty's advice to coincide my visits with coffee and lunch breaks in order to maximize opportunities to talk with off-duty seafarers. Sometimes I rented Wi-Fi routers and sold phone cards, and other times I troubleshot telecommunication and computer devices. Occasionally, I made deliveries and drove seafarers to the nearby shopping mall at Jersey Gardens, a poor substitute for Walmart and Best Buy, the stores preferred by seafarers for buying personal items and expensive electronics. In the cold, snowy month of December, I assisted Betty and Mark in lugging huge bags of "Christmas at Sea" gifts up the icy gangways of cargo ships to distribute handmade knitted hats, scarves, and other personal items to the seafarers, continuing a proud SCI tradition dating back to 1898.

My methodology is partly based on participant observation and the taking of field notes during ship visits and informal interviews and conversations with American, French, Bulgarian, Korean, Chinese, Indian, Sri Lankan, Russian, Israeli, Turkish, Indonesian, Samoan, and Filipino ratings (seafarers without special certificates who perform rudimentary tasks), officers, port officials, lawyers, chaplains, and volunteers in Newark and Montreal. Contrary to my decision to use pseudonyms for chaplains, I have represented seafarers as nondescript and nameless persons. This ethnographic device reflects the short duration of our conversations (ten to fifteen minutes, or less) and the ephemeral nature of our acquaintances due to seafarers' demanding work schedules and the rapid turnaround of the ships at ports (often less than a day). The seafarers' anonymity also reflects my decision to

FIGURE 1. *Sign on the* MV Dolphin II, *Newark, December 3, 2015. (Photograph by author). [This figure appears in color in the online issue]*

focus primarily on the endeavors of maritime technocrats to acquire and share knowledge of maritime risks by facilitating talk *among* seafarers *about* their problems *aboard* multinational and single-nationality ships. This research is based on observations of seven multinational ships that rely on English as their working language (the *Victory Leader, MSC Kim, Hoegh Detroit, Bow Summer*, *Global Oriole*, *MV Dolphin II,* and *Zim Virginia*; Figure 1) and four single-nationality ships that operate in the host country's national or official language (the *Castleton, Kaan Kalkavan*, *Federal Asahi,* and *Seapace*). As a volunteer associated with Christian organizations, I was not in a position to discuss the religious views of non-Christians, and yet I would venture that most seafarers are neither Catholics nor Protestants.

Port Newark and the Port of Montreal are key ethnographic locations from which to showcase the internal differences of the shipping industry. In the ten-year lag between my two fieldwork experiences, I have noticed more "Panamax" megaships with English-speaking multinational crews docking in Newark, a deepwater port, than in Montreal, which mostly accommodates smaller and single-nationality ships.[2] Federal officials in these two cities have taken divergent stances to recent neoliberal initiatives to deregulate and incentivize the scaling up of oceanic transport infrastructures. One initiative concerns whether or not to accommodate larger generations of Panamax and post-Panamax megaships or instead redirect shipping lanes to deeper-water ports that can transport greater quantities of goods more quickly and efficiently (van Fossen 2016). Although still a regionally important port, and an emerging leader in the use of green technology, the Port of Montreal cannot accommodate the draft size of the larger ships due to the Saint Lawrence River's shallow depth and is therefore no longer a global player. Yet after relocating from New York City's Hudson and East Rivers to its present-day location at the Newark/Elizabeth terminal next to the airport, railway system, and several interstate highways, Newark has retained

its status as an internationally important deepwater port, even if it is currently surpassed in tonnage by Asian ports. Renown for launching the world's first ship with intermodal containers in 1956 (Levinson 2016), Newark rapidly transports cargo from Panamax and post-Panamax ships by air, rail, and road. Despite their differences, both ports have instituted the principles of maritime technocracy. This means that cultural and linguistic differences, in the form of ethnonational stereotypes, feed into the construction of a set of standardized practices by which industry leaders rationalize and attempt to resolve problems of unsociability aboard cargo ships.

MARITIME LANGUAGE POLICIES

For much of modern history, men of different ethnonational and linguistic backgrounds sailing on whaling ships, fishing boats, merchant marines, and navy fleets shared cramped living quarters for several months before returning to the same ships after extended shore leaves. In these contexts, fictive kinship networks cultivated practices of multilingualism or pidginization. Although there are no audio recordings of actual maritime pidgins and creoles, linguists have reconstructed a few from the historical materials. The best studied is Lingua Franca, also called Sabir, an Italian-lexifier creole used in the Mediterranean region from the Crusades to the mid-fifteenth century (Thomason 2001). Sailors also spoke a Basque-lexifier pidgin in Iceland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Bakker 1989; cited in Bakker 1994) and a Russian-and-Norwegian pidgin around the North Cape in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Broch and Jahr 1984; cited in Bakker 1994). Whalers and traders likely used a Hawaiian- or Polynesian-based pidgin in the Pacific Ocean (Drechsel 1999), and lascars serving in the British merchant marines are thought to have employed an unidentified pidgin in the nineteenth century (Ghosh 2008). Despite these fascinating cases, linguistic studies have presumed rather than investigated baseline levels of interaction by arguing for mixed codes developing aboard multiethnic ships. Also, these studies have not specifically analyzed language contact in contexts of capital accumulation.

In the contemporary context of commercial seafaring, there is no evidence of seafarers speaking pidgins or creoles and little to suggest that mixed codes would develop on cargo ships where maritime policies usually enforce the use of a single working language. From the 1840s to the 1960s, when the national flag system of American, Western European, and Japanese fleets prevailed, the presence of homogenous crews obviated the need for a *lingua franca* (McKay 2014; van Fossen 2016). Even after multinational ships became the standard in the latter twentieth century (Sampson and Zhao 2003; van Fossen 2016), many seafarers still preferred the camaraderie of single-nationality monolingual ships, even if this choice cost them job security and career advancement opportunities. By far the largest and best-equipped ships use English as the working language, and all aspiring officers,

except for captains, must demonstrate sufficient skill in conversational English. Yet with the world's largest seaports now in Asia, English is no longer assured its preeminent status. Illustrating this symbolic shift is Port Newark: in 1985, it was the world's busiest container port, but now it is only the third largest port in North America, and Korean, Mandarin, Tagalog, and German interpreters routinely conduct visits on docked ships.

Maritime language policies, which include provisions for interpreting, safety, training, and education, offer logistical support to the communications media infrastructures of cargo ships. They enforce the use of a working language when members of different ethnonational or linguistic communities have to interact socially and professionally, such as Francophone and Anglophone sailors serving together in the Canadian navy (Daveluy 2012). Highlighting the phatic function, these policies promise to facilitate the flow of talk among multilingual crew by bypassing insurmountable social divisions. Even on single-nationality ships, subnationalist allegiances dividing native speakers of national or official languages from native speakers of nonstandard dialects or indigenous languages make a working language seem desirable. This is the case on the *Castleton,* a container ship with an all Filipino crew. When visiting the ship with Mark, a seaman greeting us off the gangway asks Mark for the name of his hometown in the Philippines. He then informs him that one of their deckhands, Daniel, comes from a town in the same northern mountainous region where an indigenous language is spoken and the American Episcopal Church is more prominent than the Catholic Church. As minority Protestants speaking the same minority language, Mark and Daniel share a bond and talk privately while touring the ship before switching into Tagalog upon rejoining their Catholic mates at lunch (Figure 2).

Maritime labor policies, however, also perpetuate language-based stereotypes about the work ethic and moral character of groups of seafarers through national ciphers. For example, the Philippines government promotes the image of the "natural-born" Filipino seafarer to uphold its dominant share of ratings in the industry (Fajardo 2011; Swift 2007). According to Reverend David Rider, SCI president and executive director, many ship owners prefer to hire Filipinos because they are seen as hardworking, congenial, and possessing strong English-speaking skills. Although cheaper laborers can be found in China, Myanmar, Indonesia, and Vietnam, the best jobs go first to Filipinos, second to Eastern Europeans, and third to South Asians (Fajardo 2011; Lillie 2004). Technically, seafarers in the Philippines seeking work on cargo ships must follow a complicated bureaucratic process of certification, yet many companies bypass this system and directly recruit the best English speakers from maritime colleges (Swift 2007). Several of the *Castleton* crew who attended the prestigious Norwegian Maritime Academy in Iloilo City, a maritime hub on Panay island, confirm that Scandinavian and Japanese companies routinely conduct interviews in English

FIGURE 2. *Daniel and Mark on the* Castleton*, Newark, November 16, 2015. (Photograph by author). [This figure appears in color in the online issue]*

at their school and hire the most fluent speakers on the spot.

Even on single-nationality ships where the working language is not English, English is still the single dividing factor separating better-paid officers from poorer-paid ratings. On the *Kaan Kalkavan*, a Turkish-owned ship that I visit with senior chaplain Betty early one afternoon, I witness this sliding scale of English competence among the ranks. After climbing the gangway, we are silently escorted by a Turkish-speaking female cadet to the mess hall, where a stack of Turkish passports lying on a coffee table next to several US Coast Guard backpacks indicates that an inspection is underway. The captain arrives shortly thereafter and grants us his company for fifteen minutes while speaking to us in English of the ship's terrifying encounter with a major storm that produced waves higher than ten meters in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. He insists that his crew is not easily frightened by waves under five meters, but because these waves were much higher, he encouraged his crew to pray for safe passage. After listening sympathetically to his story, we move to a dining table, where the monolingual mess hall assistant serves us *kuru fasulye*, yogurt, pickled cabbage, and peppers, identifying each dish in Turkish. The second mate joins our table and, upon learning about my research, informs me in English that his Greek- and Turkish-speaking grandfather came from the same region of Greece as did Kemal Atatürk. He then points to a wall, where two framed pictures are hanging side by side, including one of the original ship owner and the other one of Atatürk. Next to them is an English sign that reads "Official/Working Language is Turkish." After lunch, while sipping our tea silently in the break room, we wait to see if any of the Turkish-speaking ratings stopping by for coffee or a smoke wants to buy a phone or SIM card. To no avail, not a single person there addresses us in English.

Even on multinational ships like the *Victory Leader*, an English-language ship crewed by Bulgarian officers and Filipino ratings, not all work tasks are accomplished in English. Visiting the ship by myself at lunchtime, I am escorted to the officers' table at the mess hall and promptly served a bowl of soup and plate of pasta by the Bulgarian mess hall assistant. When my attempts to initiate conversation with the surly chief officer fail, I glance around the room and take note of the European officers watching a muted American movie with Bulgarian subtitles on the large flat-screen TV while waiting for their food to be served to them. Most of the Filipino ratings seated together at several different tables are ignoring the movie, and several are standing in line to serve themselves rice, fish, and vegetable dishes *à la carte* from a table near the kitchen. When I ask the chief officer if social relations between Bulgarians and Filipinos aboard the ship are harmonious, he insists they are and then pauses, admitting that camaraderie would be better if any of the officers, himself included, spoke Tagalog. He once tried to learn Tagalog but found it too difficult to continue. He explains that even for him English is almost impossible to speak without switching mid-sentence into Bulgarian. This habitual code-switching aggravates problems of miscommunication with Filipino ratings, who similarly cannot speak Bulgarian.

As a policy issue, miscommunications are commonly attributed to seafarers' difficulties in speaking English due to their training in non-English-medium nautical colleges. According to the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations agency overseeing security regulations for the shipping industry, English, French, and Spanish are

the official languages of commercial transport, and Russian, Mandarin, and Arabic are additional languages to be used for translation and interpreting. When, in 1982, an alarmist report indicated that most occupational accidents onboard cargo ships are caused by miscommunications between sea-farers of different linguistic and national backgrounds, the IMO responded by developing and recommending the use of a simplified register called Maritime English for teaching in nautical schools and online courses. Maritime English refers to designated "standard marine communication phrases" and "standard marine navigational vocabulary" used for talking (but not writing) about common safety issues in ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore talk (Sampson and Zhao 2003). Yet at Port Newark, where I occasionally overhear Indian and Filipino ratings serving on the same ship and claiming to not under-stand each other's English accents, no one is familiar with Maritime English. This disjuncture suggests that the *idea* of cross-cultural miscommunication is more powerful than the *act* itself in articulating and naturalizing the logic of maritime technocracy.

Even when seafarers serving on single-nationality ships deny miscommunication issues, they still acknowledge problems of unsociability, including obligations between ethnonational compatriots that they perceive to be oppres-sive. Some seafarers have even described their friendships on multinational ships as more authentic and meaningful, especially when forged with seafarers of similar racial iden-tities or cultural backgrounds. While driving them to Jersey Gardens, the Chinese and Filipino ratings from the *Hoegh Detroit* explain their friendships to me in culinary terms. On their ship, the European officers are known as "potato eaters" and dine in a separate room and at tables adorned with fine china and goblets of wine, whereas the Asian ratings, or "rice eaters," as they call themselves, sit at crowded and unadorned tables accoutered with chili paste and other

condiments (Figure 3). I observe a similar layout in the tiny mess hall of the *MSC Kim*, where a Croatian cook prepares meals for the three round tables designated for the Croatian, Montenegrin, and Polish officers, and places a printed menu of the day's pasta dish in Italian with "Bon Appetite" [*sic*] written in italics on the bottom. An Indonesian cook instead prepares halal meals for the Indonesian and Samoan ratings, who sit and eat together at a long rectangular table. Although typically one cook prepares meals for an entire crew and creates special dishes upon request, circumstances vary. During my visit with Mark to the multinational *Bow Summer*, a Filipino cook complains of having to prepare different meals for the Norwegian, Swedish, and British officers and the Filipino ratings. Yet on the *Global Oriole*, a pan-Asian ship, a Filipino cook expresses delight in perfecting his knowledge of different Asian cuisines and catering to the culinary preferences of his Indian, Thai, Filipino, and Sri Lankan mates. To prove his point, he prepares for me a fish curry dish and gifts me with sweets upon learning of my Ben-gali heritage. These culinary practices speak to the salience of racialized categories in structuring the everyday life of cargo ships and expose the logistical gaps that may arise as a result.

Logistical gaps are perceived when maritime policies that institute a working language cannot counteract the ef-fects of the ship's working culture, racial prejudices, lin-guistic hierarchies, and social distinctions that often erode seafarers' networks (van Fossen 2016) and obstruct the con-nection of "people as infrastructure" (Simone 2004). Stated otherwise, language policies can address problems of *social-ity* but not of *sociability*, imagined by maritime technocrats as the minimal threshold of convivial talk needed to facil-itate the flow of information critical to the functioning of the shipping industry. Ideally, measures of sociability would be sensitive to any gaps in telecommunication networks and

FIGURE 3. *Lunch on the* MV Dolphin II, *Newark, December 3, 2015. (Photograph by author). [This figure appears in color in the online issue]*

breakdowns in interaction that exacerbate accidents or lower productivity on ships. Turning to the expertise of ship engineers and Christian chaplains in evaluating the communicative needs of seafarers, maritime technocrats collaborate with these other actors to bolster language policies through logistical and media infrastructural support.

CHRISTIAN MARITIME TECHNOCRACY

In the shipping industry, the present-day alliance between Christian ministries and maritime technocrats is not just a matter of convenience but also of converging views of communication. Historically depicted as a "godless lot" (Miller 2012, 106), seafarers were objects of rivalry between Protestant and Catholic priests traveling aboard ships to distribute Bibles, prayers books, homilies, and psalms. In nineteenth-century England and France, ministries sought new converts by openly embracing the multilingualism of the maritime world and distributing books and periodicals printed in different languages to be read out loud on ships for entertainment and enlightenment. By the end of the century, however, as printing became cheaper and solitary reading more common, Protestant maritime ministries rejected the literary genre and physical medium of the Bible as "barrier[s] to reaching Christian truths" (24) and privileged face-to-face ship visitations instead.[3] In contrast, Peter Anson, one of the founders of the Catholic mission Apostleship of the Sea, advocated for both book distribution and ship visitations. Yet in 1949, when the International Transport Federation changed its policy to approve only single grants to port agencies, this intervention forced Catholic and Protestant ministries to work together ecumenically. Through their resultant collaborations, a joint emphasis on the therapeutic properties of talk and ship visits emerged as the most efficacious strategy for rehabilitating seafarers and connecting them with one another and the Christian God (for more on this history, see Miller 2012).

Nonetheless, denominational differences still persist in the pastoral strategies of some Catholic and Protestant chaplains, most apparent at the ecumenical Mariner's House of Montreal. Father Joseph's primary obligation is to assist Catholic seafarers with receiving the sacraments, and he celebrates mass regularly at the chapel, which has a small library stocked with Bibles written in different languages. Many Catholic seafarers will also wait to dock in Montreal to specially request Father Joseph's services to exorcize ghosts on their ships. He acquired this expertise when serving as a village priest in Sri Lanka during the civil war. One day, Father Joseph timidly informs his coworker, an Anglican chaplain, that the crew of the *Seapace* has requested that he bless their ship and purge it of evil spirits. When she asks derisively, "Like an exorcism?" Father Joseph chuckles, yet takes their request seriously and strives to allay the fears of the Filipino Catholic crew by explaining how ghosts arise due to sudden deaths. Sometimes he listens to seafarers' confessions about their infidelities and suicidal thoughts, yet with his time being limited due to his ecclesiastical duties, he relies mostly on volunteers to socialize with seafarers on ships or at the Mariner's House. For instance, when a Bengali woman accompanies her husband, the chief engineer, on the *Federal Asahi,* she requests my company to tour the city and chat in her room.

By comparison, seafarers infrequently visit the in-house chapel at the SCI center at Port Newark, especially after the center became alcohol-free due to safety reasons several

FIGURE 4. *Chapel at the Seamen's Church Institute, Port Newark, December 7, 2015. (Photograph by author). [This figure appears in color in the online issue]*

FIGURE 5. *Crew of the* MV Dolphin II, *Port Newark, December 14, 2015. (Photograph by author). [This figure appears in color in the online issue]*

years ago (Figure 4). Although the Episcopalian chaplains occasionally bless ships and cargo and raise funds by selling phone cards or sermonizing at local churches, their primary responsibility is to talk to seafarers *aboard* cargo ships. Mark, a particularly adept conversationalist, explains to me that he likes to "throw out a comment" about the weather, food, culture, or politics and "see what sticks." I witness his provocative style one day while distributing Christmas at Sea gifts to the crew of the *Dolphin II*. Mark starts a running joke about which of the Filipino crew prefers the pink woolen hats. Later, in the break room, he jokingly asks a deckhand still wearing his hat if he is a supporter of Trump or ISIS, hinting that only Muslims cover their heads indoors. A Coptic Egyptian vendor selling New York City souvenirs in the same room misinterprets Mark's joke as sincere praise for Trump and affirms his own support of Trump's proposed Muslim immigrant ban. Undeterred by the angry exchange that ensues between the vendor and me, Mark then switches to an equally contentious subject, the presidential election in the Philippines. Speaking in Tagalog with ten or so men, and periodically translating into English for my benefit, Mark discusses news of then presidential candidate and mayor of the port city of Davao, Rodrigo Duterte, who controversially supports the vigilante killing of criminals. The conversation is lively and the room soon fills up with all men on deck (Figure 5). Two hours later, Mark and I disembark the ship feeling pleased with our efforts. Even though we made no money selling phone cards, we succeeded in creating a convivial atmosphere on the ship. Afterward, upon returning to the center, Mark records the event by tallying the total number of seafarers to whom we spoke.

This simple transactional accounting of volunteer interactions with seafarers is the SCI's primary means of measuring its social impact. It also nicely illustrates the converging

ethical project of an ecumenical ministry and profit-driven policies of a neoliberal industry. Both parties share a commitment to increasing the frequency of shipboard interactions by offering logistical support to create or facilitate pathways of human-to-God or human-to-human connectivity. For instance, maritime engineers often consult with SCI directors and chaplains in New York and New Jersey about their latest technological initiatives to design more sociable living quarters and recreational spaces aboard new generation post-Panamax ships. Relaying this news to me at the office Christmas party, an SCI staff member describes a new ship design featuring round rooms with crisscrossing hallways obliging seafarers to walk through common spaces and chat with one another. The designing of larger and more profitable ships that architecturally select for features that aim to facilitate face-to-face talk between seafarers is compatible with the Christian mission to build maritime communities in communion with God in one specific sense: both use talk to bridge gaps in the logistical coordination of maritime policies and technological infrastructures.

As an SCI-affiliated lawyer at Newark, Douglas Stevenson advocates for seafarers with regard to visa issues, health care, hostage negotiation, and, increasingly, poor Internet and media infrastructures. Available in meager supply since the 1990s, Internet service is far from evenly distributed or reliable on all ships. Only the largest shipping lines, such as Maersk, have Internet facilities installed via satellite technology, and they offer only the first 200 MB for twenty-four hours for free and block high-bandwidth video-chat applications like FaceTime and Skype. On ships where the Internet is slower, seafarers instead become savvy shoppers of mobile technologies, buying phones in China, SIM cards in the Middle East, and refills in the United States. On the *Global Oriole*, a relatively unwired ship, the crew complains that I am selling them 2 GB iVitta SIM cards for

$25 rather than the cheaper and more coveted T-Mobile cards. In Turkey, a 10 GB SIM card for three months costs $60, the Sri Lankan captain chidingly informs me before grudgingly advancing cash to his ratings to buy a few cards. Unfortunately, the poor reception of mobile phones on the deck makes it difficult for all of us to connect, and I myself am thrice disconnected from customer service despite holding my cell phone near a window. An Indian engineer asks about the possibility of renting a Wi-Fi router at $25 a day. Yet after testing the limited range of its signal from the break room to his upstairs quarters and learning that none of the Filipino ratings can afford it after buying SIM cards from me, he decides against getting it.

Upwardly mobile seafarers that choose ships based on Internet broadband capacity acknowledge the trade-off in sociability. A writer for the online blog *Marine Insight* explains:

> With vessel's turning dry (zero alcohol policy), the social life onboard was already strained. Internet proved to be the last nail in the coffin. It virtually brought the social life onboard to a grinding halt. With the advent of laptops and smartphones, you very rarely find folks huddling up in the smoke rooms indulging in good old camaraderie. Gone are the days when the dinner table discussions revolved around what movie was to be played in the evening. These days you barely find people chatting in the mess rooms. All the chatting is reserved online. Everyone just wants to rush through with dinner and get wired. (Herwadkar 2016)

Yet on a Japanese-owned car ship where the Internet browsing speed is a snail-like 256 K, Filipino crewmembers engage in more diverse forms of sociality. Most of the time the older men read *National Geographic* and *Reader's Digest* magazines, and the younger men play video games and browse Facebook, Viber, and Twitter on their phones. Yet at port, everyone welcomes the use of the emptied car lot as a basketball court. Once, after retrieving magazines for the middle-aged captain, I bring back an SCI newsletter that features an article about younger generation seafarers who boycott older ships with slow Internet. The young chief officer concurs with this depiction and explains that his own friends are urging him to switch to a wired Maersk ship, even though he personally prefers the camaraderie of working with national compatriots in Tagalog.

Cast as nonmodern, seafarers working on older-generation unwired ships stocked with books but lacking routers or satellites are encouraged to find conversational partners and technology-enhanced opportunities to talk rather than read or write in solitude. Hence, when a Bulgarian rating on the *Zim Virginia*, an Israeli-flagged ship where English and Hebrew are both the working languages, asks Betty for a Bulgarian-language Bible, she brusquely dismisses him. Privately, Betty explains to me that the SCI does not pursue a religious agenda by furnishing Bibles. I recall a few weeks earlier in the break room on the *Kaan Kalkavan* when she spoke with similar disdain of Jehovah's Witnesses who left Bibles on the table without speaking to any of the crew. Considering that Betty feels no qualms about selling

SIM cards and contributing to possible Internet-addiction problems, I interpret her stance as less informed by theology than by technocracy. The technocratic view that texts are less effective than digital media in connecting seafarers is reinforced during my tour of a new post-Panamax ship, where the recreation room features an impressive wall-to-wall display of Hindi, English, and Tagalog DVDs but few books.

Divergent Protestant and Catholic styles of talk therapy and stances toward media technologies suggest that multiple religious and ethical projects coexist in maritime spaces. Yet even though some seafarers may welcome exorcisms, and some captains may encourage prayer for appeasing storms, Christian ministries are relatively technocratic in their permissible forms of pastoral care. As they endeavor to serve their religious communities and the port officials, ship owners, and engineers, they have institutionalized a language ideology purporting that sociable channels of face-to-face and digitally enhanced talk will better enable the flow of information about financial, technological, and spiritual risks to the industry and thus mitigate the precarity of labor.

CONCLUSION

Complicating the narrative that the unsociability of commercial seafarers is jeopardizing the global supply chain, I have argued that technocratic discourses about miscommunications and the lack of verbal interaction on ships are instead designed to transfer knowledge useful to the shipping industry and draw attention away from labor exploitation by blaming seafarers for their own deficient sociability. As a form of offshore governance, maritime technocracy provides logistical support to build or enhance communications media infrastructures by promising to generate face-to-face and digitally enhanced talk, imagined as authentic tokens of sociability as opposed to reading and other solitary activities. When indexically and iconically linked to the qualia of land and sea entextualized in oceanic narratives, these assemblages of signs entail perceived channels for sharing knowledge between seafarers, chaplains, port officials, and ship owners. However, technocratic discourses also simplify the sociolinguistic worlds of seafarers by validating monolingual policies that can paradoxically both enhance and detract from sociable work environments. Ultimately, whether or not the industry is indeed suffering financially from such unsociable crews, who in essence function as true neoliberal subjects, is difficult to surmise.

Nonetheless, changes on the horizon due to automation and geopolitical transformation continue to raise language-centric questions while affirming the value of ethnographic research of the maritime world. With the world's largest and deepest ports now relocating to Asia and the number of non-English-speaking seafarers growing exponentially, the official channels of commercial seafaring will no longer be predominantly Euro-American, Protestant, and English-speaking in cultural outlook. Will Christian maritime ministries from Europe and North America still dominate the provision of welfare services to seafarers, or

will new religious or other actors step up? Also, in 2019 the world's first crewless cargo ship, the Norwegian *Yara Birkeland,* is scheduled to launch and be fully automated by 2022. Although shipping companies insist they will continue to use crewed ships for intercontinental routes, advances in computer-assisted radar and navigation represent nothing less than a sea change in seafaring. Will the current anxieties about unsociable ships being unprofitable for the industry persist in an era of digitalized automation and artificial intelligence, when crews are further downsized, or will new anxieties be fueled by other technocratically driven language ideologies? Ethnographic studies of onshore infrastructures reveal that preoccupations with mediated "gaps" in communication underlie most projects of modernity. Given this social fact, can the ethnographic comparison of offshore and onshore infrastructures help to disambiguate between what are perceived as dysfunctional versus generative qualities of sociality and, additionally, elucidate what the quantifiable measure of sociability implies about the global standards for social interaction in an age of automation?

As global consumers rely more and more on just-in-time shipping, and as supply chains become both less visible and less subject to industrial oversight, it is imperative to rethink binaries of land and sea to explore how problems of connectivity and gaps are imagined to impact the human condition in late modernity. If corporate shibboleths erase the violence imposed on local communities by capitalist industries and highlight problems of sociability in order to ignore or deny basic human and civil rights violations (Fennell 2015), then bringing seafarers into dialogue with other vulnerable populations onshore would contribute to disentangling the local and global politics shaped by the policies, industry structures, and histories of capital accumulation.

Sonia Neela Das *Department of Anthropology, New York University, New York, NY 10012, USA; sonia.das@nyu.edu*

NOTES

1. In importing and exporting countries, 40 percent of ships must be registered, while 20 percent can be flagged out (Fajardo 2011).
2. The Panama Canal, renovated in 2016, accommodates the height, draft (depth below waterline), and size of lock chambers of Panamax ships. Larger post-Panamax ships can pass through the Suez Canal.
3. A future essay will explore historical connections between Protestant and Catholic language ideologies and mediatized forms of late capitalism in the maritime world.

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