

## Abstract

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### Judging and storytelling in the everyday life of a shipowner

This study discusses how assessments are made at a shipping company when purchasing a new ship. The shipping company chosen for the study has a reputation in the shipping industry for doing everything right and running its business within the framework of sustainable development. In the shipping literature, economic models have been developed, which can be used as an aid to achieve the optimum economic results when calculating and acting. But the persons at the shipping company I have been in contact with during the course of this study told me that this is only a theory and does not function in practice. In order to find out how the people at this shipping company really make their assessments, I have carried out an ethnographically inspired study where these persons have been given the opportunity of saying what they consider to be important. My investigation consists of a week spent on one of the shipping company's tankers, a visit to their chartering company and several visits to their office on Donsö.

I have developed a theoretical starting point, as an alternative to the one previously adopted in the "shipping literature", with the help of the work of Hannah Arendt and Alasdair MacIntyre and others. Central concepts in this theory are stories, judgements, accounts, and usable practical wisdom.

The study shows that being skilled at making assessments is based on apparently commonplace, everyday storytelling – both inside and outside the shipping company. By listening to gossip from the chartering company, they can keep themselves up to date with what is happening around the world. This storytelling creates a depth in the world where characters with personalities and backgrounds can be distinguished. The judgements made of actors, who perform well or poorly, teach them what rules can be applied and who can be trusted. The storytelling on board the ships creates a feeling for quality and life at sea.

On Donsö, there exists a vibrant storytelling culture, which creates moral structures. Of particular interest here are the judgements of spectators, which are based on an overall perspective and not on short-term private interests. The people at the shipping company not only strive to make a profit but also to provide the world with stable cultural objects – in the form of ships – and they want to be able to talk about their actions with their friends and be positively judged. On Donsö, praise is given to ships, which are beautiful, efficient and of high quality as well as incorporating new solutions. The people on Donsö strive to act in a way that reproduces the island's shipping tradition.

From this shipping company, we can learn something about the conditions under which companies run their business within the framework of sustainable development.

**Key words:** storytelling, judging, accounting, practical wisdom

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