

Exercise I – Material I1

I1 - Storyline one: Life of a trawler

They are standing on the deck in the spotlight, the November sky is steel grey and the short daylight is about to disappear. It is rather windy and the temperature is well below zero. The water overflowing the ship and the deck is turning into ice, making it dangerous to walk there. The full halibut trawls are being drawn up slowly and Larseraq and Inoraq are working together with a couple of others on the deck. Occasionally, one of them has to leave the trawl to knock off the ice, making sure the ship does not get too heavy on the side. It is a hard and dangerous job to work on a slippery deck when the boat rolls.

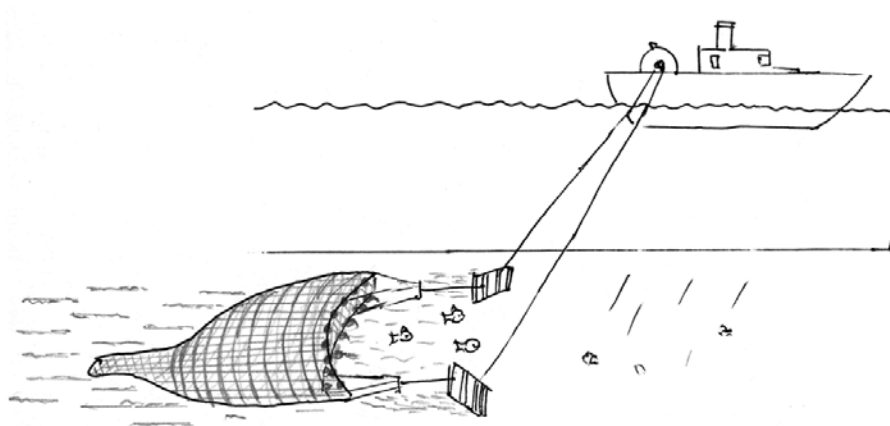


Illustration: © Sebastian Schmitz

At this time of the year, with many autumn storms, the work on the trawlers is hard and the days are long. Knowing that Naja is standing downstairs in the galley preparing a delicious evening meal for them is what keeps up their spirits. She always knows how to prepare the most excellent food, no matter how strong the wind is. They wonder how she can manage to keep the pans on the stove, the food intact, and still keep her balance. She never lets them down no matter how many days they are out in the heavy storm.

The trawl is drawn on board, and it was a good draw, several tons of halibut are put down into the hold. First, the fish has to be cleaned by taking out the guts and cleaning the fish. This must be done before freezing the fish.

This is followed by the tedious, but necessary job to clean the trawl from fry that sticks to the trawl. The slimy fry is a part of the catch, though useless. For the cleaning high pressure flushing is necessary.

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Most of the halibut is frozen in what is called 'Japan cut', which implies that only the head and tail are removed from the fish. The price is actually often higher for whole fish than for fillets even though the process of removing the skin of the fish immediately after the catch preserves the fish meat better than cutting and preparing the fish after unfreezing.

When the trawler rolls like now, it is not easy and very tiring to stand there for several hours taking fish from the net and cleaning it with hot steam. In these situations, you should not suffer from seasickness. The crew cleaning and preparing the fish in the factory below deck will need to work for quite some time yet, while the crew on deck can prepare themselves for dinner downstairs in a short while, when they have cleaned the deck.



Picture: © Royal Greenland

The best part of working on a halibut trawler is probably the good wages, and the long periods of time, they can spend at home. But these free periods also mean that they have to work for up to 3 months in a row, on the trawler, with no spare time, no weekends, and no time off. This is how life goes: three months on sea, three months with the family at home, but then the wages are definitely above what you can get from other types of jobs.

This is difficult with a family. Not all families can live with a husband or wife being away for such long periods of time, or being at home with no work for a long period. So quite a lot of workers are divorced. This might also be the reason that many of the workers on the Greenlandic trawlers come from Iceland and other countries. It can be difficult to find enough Greenlanders who want to work in these conditions for several years.