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Afterword

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A controversial academic journey through camera viewfinders, around debated normalities and reflections on stained mirrors.

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What is felt and what is seen

Moving through the crowd in the liminal space provided by party tourism locations dissociates from everyday life in many ways: most importantly, perhaps, in being allowed to touch. Whereas public spaces elsewhere (and the party tourism site itself off-season) are spaces that require a certain knowledge about distances between bodies, prohibitions concerning touch and gaze, as well as politeness practices, these liminal spaces seem to allow for a transgression of all possible regulations and taboos. The sensual transgression here appears to be particularly complex and emblematic: in the clubs and bars close to the beach, gazing at the body is not discouraged, but desired. The neon-colored motto t-shirts with their low-cut necklines and sleeveless openness invite unabashed gazes at bosoms and bellies that would be considered obscene in other contexts. Touch may follow the intimate gaze, and may be an informal and brief slap on a shoulder, an invitation to share a drink, or a more invasive gesture, such as grabbing breasts and buttocks, or making out.

Yet being allowed to touch means more than transgressing everyday norms; it means doing precisely what the industrialized society's regime of disciplining the human body has turned into a shameful, embarrassing act if performed in public. Touch here is a sense that is constructed as being private, intrusive, intimate and voluntary. This does not mean, however, that it is entirely absent in public life, as the salience of touch in party tourism locations suggests. In public spaces, as Constance Classen writes in her cultural history of the "deepest sense" (2012: 197), touching consumable objects is just a variation of the drill and discipline imposed on people and bodies, with the department store as a place where touch has been turned into a marketable sensation. The tourism industry follows up precisely here: touch is a commodified sense, which is marketed and purchased through a journey to clubs, bars and beaches. Vacationing at a party tourism setting such as El Arenal therefore offers excess as commodified transgression, and not, as one might also expect, as a form of being in a state of 'southern' inversion[1]. Classen portrays participation in this commodified transgression as a way of fulfilling rather central needs and at the same time of fitting hegemonic social roles (of consumers and disciplined citizens): "No wonder then that many in the new age would increasingly look not to rural life or to communal life or to religious life to satisfy their tactile hunger, but to consumer culture" (2012: 197).

Touch outside of arenas of consumerism, such as beaches, bars and shopping malls, may quickly amount to excess. However, as long as we watch excess as participants and as visitors to the spaces of consumption where

Figure 1: Being allowed to touch

excess is desirable, there is a possibility of containment and security (consider the motto on a t-shirt – *What happens in Mallorca stays in Mallorca*). The embarrassment which imageries of excess are able to evoke obviously depends on the position and the perspective of the beholder. When strolling through the exhibition, images from the *Ballermann* area of El Arenal feel different; they do not fill the spectator with joyful and easy feelings but produce feelings of ambiguity or even discomfort.

What are the imageries and objects we see when we look at the *Ballermann* from further afar? One option would involve Spain as "the South"[2]; seen from a touristic perspective, it is conceptualized as a zone of sunshine, relaxed attitudes towards life, and unconventionality, when we look at tourist agencies' glossy magazines that

[2] Southern is understood here as the liminal zone: the metaphorical Other; the excessive violation of the "Northern" norm.

advertise cheap trips into the sunshine and to the south. Similar connotations of carefree and uncomplicated southernness appear to be – specifically for the *Ballermann* – transported through music, often in the form of carnival and party songs such as the Paveiers' *"Buenos días Matthias"*, where Mallorca appears as a place that represents *"nur Amore un Sunnesching"* [only love and sunshine] as the central attributes ascribed to a specific lifestyle and savoir-vivre.

The exhibition of artefacts from Mallorca's *Ballermann* and its surroundings offer the spectator a range of liminal encounters. The objects serve as a prism that enables us to interpret southernness from different angles. They may fill spectators, for instance, with a feeling oscillating between astonishment, incomprehension, slight embarrassment and even rage. The artefacts and photographs presented may serve to some extent as a looking glass that highlights a form of excessive party tourism with an inherent notion of liminality. They may serve as binoculars through which the gaze is turned to marginal actors, to "another" form of southernness – a "South" that is different from sunny, southern European Spain and is embodied by Nigerian toilet cleaners, Senegalese street vendors, Chinese masseuses or Indian shop keepers. This "South", read as "Global Southerners", shifts the focus from mere sunshine and relaxation to worlds that are usually invisible to the tourist, associated with everyday racism, sexism, poverty and marginalization. Perhaps the challenge is simply to find adequate material through camera viewfinders and audio recording equipment – what are we looking for in the first place, when we want to study/see the "South"? – or to look critically at oneself as a researcher. Questioning the liminal and highlighting the blurry boundary between the normal and the liminal in the visualization of protagonists through a camera lens or through objects associated with them, their composition and graphic reproduction, therefore stand central to this project, and will be taken up again in this afterword.

Another key criterion in addition to the researchers' positionality is a range of distorted forms of mimicry, such as different voices, recorded with mobile phones, scribbled down in notebooks, or played through tourists' megaphones. The very selection of voices constructs normalities or liminalities and in turn we can (and ought to) question these very constructions. Besides looking back at the selection and arrangement of photographs and objects, as well as at the choice of recordings and voices, we turn our gaze on ourselves as spectators and researchers, which requires a certain degree of reflexivity, and playful flexibility. When we look critically at encounters in the *Ballermann*, we necessarily always also look at ourselves in the role of academics, at our own research material (and collected items), and at the way we are perceived by colleagues, readers and, most importantly, interlocutors on-site. These mirror images and the academic journey with all its challenges are both addressed in the remainder of this article.

Blurry boundaries: Visualizations of the normal and the liminal

The blurry boundary meanders through normalities and liminalities, where European tourists, African workers, worlds of transgression, pain and excess not only mingle but interconnect as parts of one complex picture, which cannot easily be separated or deciphered. The act of turning these normalities and liminalities into photographs is itself a process that creates new normalities and liminalities, and raises more questions for the viewer than it provides certainties. The constant re-interpretation of what normality and liminality may mean also concerns the act of collecting artefacts and thus organizing the exhibition. For this reason, some of the photographs are intentionally kept blurry, amateur-like, or appear to be too bright or are not necessarily aesthetic – they are as intimate and indiscrete as the intrusive gaze and encroaching touch. Since the exhibition catalogue combines messy linguistic data, trashy items and camp, and also includes disgusting, discarded and contradictory objects such as driftwood and touristic leftovers, their photographic representation also takes messy and unclear forms.

The protagonists are displayed differently in specific media, too: for instance, the social media platform Instagram shows us that other ways of portraying street vendors are possible and not uncommon, representing them in the form of talking *Nutella* chocolate cream jars, or as freaks with colored wigs and masks. These images and the hashtags underneath usually focus on the liminality of Southern (here: "African") hustlers with hashtags that refer to their skin color, to their selling of cheap touristic items or to their limited language ability when speaking German. But our camera viewfinder can also take a more critical angle, which de-exoticizes some protagonists and zooms into discourses of the excess and liminality of tourists, for example.

The angle we choose therefore always constructs realities in a different way, and either warps or sharpens the focused object. In relation to some of our interlocutors, interactions and collected objects, as mentioned previously, we have deliberately chosen to distort images, or

to take photographs through substances that have an impact on how normalities and liminalities are constructed. Figure (2) shows a group of German men in their 50s and 60s, dressed in carnival costumes, seated outside a bar at the Playa de Palma, who were – at the moment when the shot was taken, in February 2017 – conversing about their sexual encounters from the previous night and the girls involved, while obviously being under the influence of alcohol and waiting for the carnival parade to begin on the beach promenade. The photograph was taken through a glass of *San Miguel* beer, which served as a filter and seemed to match the overall mood of conversation, drowned in several days of excessive alcohol consumption. Technically, this form of photography is reminiscent of Terry Gilliam's (1998) filmmaking in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, where drug consumption is displayed through perspective distortion.

Through the lens of a beer glass, the group of drunken old men engaging in sexist and mysogynist "beer talk" was redirected from constituting a sort of "normality" to an image of "liminality", and turned the protagonists into shapeless yellow substance. The play with colors, lenses, angles and filters not only portrays the beach and party areas of El Arenal in a different light, but also enables

Figure 2: Elderly men in carnival costumes seated at the Playa de Palma (seen through a beer glass)

the viewer to imagine a different reality, where allegedly "normal" and "liminal" actors exchange roles. Several other snapshots therefore also portray Senegalese and Nigerian protagonists in very "normal" situations, including a portrayal of their desires, their lonely strolls along the cliffs, and narratives of their occasional visits to German party bars such as *Das Deutsche Eck* ('German corner').

The way the *Ballermann* and its surroundings are pictured using diverging angles can thus create very uncommon and aesthetically challenging views of a tourist setting: photographs taken in the washrooms of major party locations such as *Bierkönig* and *Megapark* disturb us with their visualizations of disgust and dirt, painting a different picture of tourists' partying, while crooked and distorted perspectives of beer-drinking tourists, in contrast to sharp photographs of Nigerian and Senegalese workers outside of their working environments, may give a sense of the contradictory and disturbing images, visual experiences and encounters.

A multilingual concerto: Recording voices, notes and megaphones

Language plays a crucial part in the touristic setting of the *Ballermann*, and also in its representation in this catalogue. In different ways, snippets taken from interviews with different actors have been integrated as fragments and arranged alongside photographs and collected objects. These extracted bits of speech, for instance those of Senegalese street vendors, are often voices that remain unheard in the touristic encounter. Alternatively, they appear only as stylized, high-pitched and Othered voices that are supposed to attract tourists but that are otherwise muted. In the multilingual concerto that we display as one part of our exhibition, we therefore carefully collected voices, sounds and forms of language that have the potential to question hegemonic discourses of "complete" and "incomplete" or of "normal" and "liminal" forms of language, beyond tourists' Instagram hashtags or mockeries of vendors' competence in German. These creative and multilingual performances became discernible not only in our recordings of conversations but also in our WhatsApp communications with Senegalese interlocutors,. The exchange shown below actually summarized the plans that were made to meet the following day for an interview, and contains the creative use of several languages. Moreover, it served the purpose of teaching one of the authors some

A	*Nelawal bou bakh signifie dors bien*	(*nelawal bou bakh* means sleep well)
N	*ohhhhh cool* *j'ai bcp oublié* (Emoji: Monkey covering his eyes)	(oh cool I forgot a lot)
A	*Ne t'inquiète de rien tu vas en recevoir plus A demain*	(don't worry you will get more of that, till tomorrow)
N	*Ok cool haha a demain!!*	(ok cool, haha, till tomorrow!)
A	*Tschuss morgan*	(bye, tomorrow)
N	*Tschüss! Bis morgen mein Freund*	(bye, till tomorrow my friend)
A	*Tank chun je ne sais pas si j ai bien* écrit	(thanks a lot, I don't know if I wrote it well)

Table 1: Whatsapp chat

basic Wolof (*nelawal bou bakh*), and was mostly held in French, while the Senegalese interlocutor in the end expresses his farewell wish in German (*tschuss morgan*), which is very close to the phonetic realization, yet not "correct" in a narrow standardized view on orthography.

The creative potential of these "grassroots" writing practices (Blommaert 2008) fade in relation to the marginalized performances of Senegalese vendors as shown in YouTube video clips or Instagram pictures, where they mostly trigger laughter and mockery. Often disqualified as "inadequate" forms of literacy, or as defective repertoires of language, local beliefs and ideologies as well as creative language practices seem to matter less than the tourists' repertoires, which are considered to be superior:

> Thinking about repertoires thus not only forces us to focus on actual practices, but it also compels us to set these practices in a field of power and inequality. Repertoires are internally and externally stratified, with all kinds of internal distinctions marking differences between 'better' and 'worse' resources, and external distinctions defining the resources from one repertoire as 'superior' or 'inferior' to those of others […]. (Blommaert 2008: 9)

With the specific choice of voices, the exhibition turns this common hegemonic view on language around, and focuses on marginal voices, small bits of speech and simple practices. This also concerns notes on housewalls in the impoverished neighborhood Son Gotleu (home of many of the African street vendors), stickers on billboards and toilet doors, and handwritten messages on washroom doors of bars and nightclubs, all of which portray dynamic voices that become meaningful testimonies of encounters in these unequal tourism settings around Palma de Mallorca.

Our own voices and the play with mimicry and imitation in Figure (3) show a member of our research group trying out a megaphone in a Chinese tourist shop located at the Playa de Palma in February 2017, while recording the interaction between the Chinese vendor and one of his colleagues from Germany. After recording it, the interaction was played again, thus copying a scene from the beaches, where tourists at times record Chinese masseuses with a megaphone and play the pufferies over and over again as a seemingly humorous activity. Yet actually, our play with megaphones as mimicry of tourists corresponds with Bhabha's (1994: 86) notion of mimicry, which also always "poses an immanent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers". "The effect of mimicry camouflage […] is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, or becoming mottled" (Lacan 1977: 99). Therefore, the purchase of souvenirs and trashy items such as megaphones is a form of "camouflage".

Figure 3: Trying out a megaphone in a Chinese-owned souvenir shop, El Arenal

Moreover, our own play with these images and mock forms shows that we produce voices of all different kinds, too. The multilingual conversations and recording sessions with Nigerian, Brazilian, Indian and Senegalese interlocutors, where English, French, German, Portuguese and Spanish form part of the interaction and serve on a meta-level as tools of concretizing experiences, perspectives and stories, also show our own multi-faceted and multilingual take on language: in the course of our research and the compilation of this catalogue we dealt with language in creative, de-standardized, broken forms, including bits and snippets from Nigerian languages in interaction with Nigerian saleswomen in San Gotleu, from Wolof when interacting with Senegalese vendors, and from language practices of the German Rhineland when interviewing package tourists from the Cologne area. Engaging in very similar strategies of play and mimicry to tourists and street hustlers, we barely refrained from the linguistic practices we were documenting, and very soon started to critically assess our research.

Stained mirrors: Critical reflections

Compiling a catalogue that serves as a documentation of a research project with a focus on the "South" in touristic encounters involves a view through stained mirrors, too, that reflect ourselves as academics affiliated with a German university (and thus, as part of an ambiguous kind of North which we critically look at in our research), located in a cultural sphere that produces these specific images of the *Ballermann* as a party tourism site, and that (re)celebrates them in popular party songs, travelling magazines and television shows. We must but cannot fully withdraw from prevailing images of the *Ballermann* to which we are constantly exposed. The mirror through which we see ourselves remains stained, due to our awareness of the stigmatizing and ridiculing endeavor to work on

discourses of transgression, excess, dirt and disgust in the encounters between Germans and international workers in the context of tourism.

Figure 4: The banality of the place

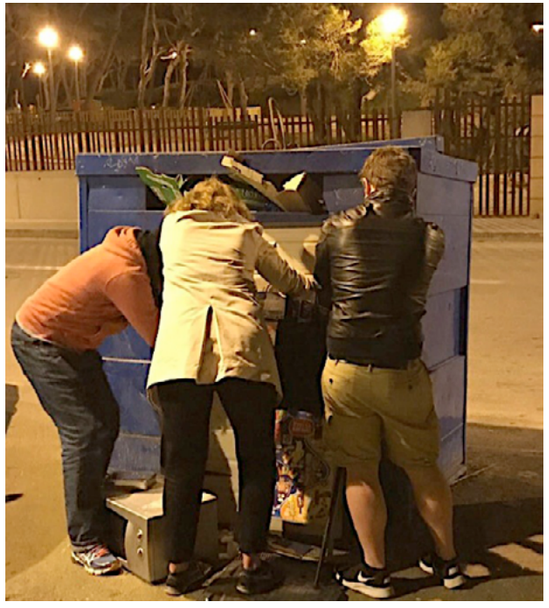
The idea of conducting fieldwork in Mallorca's tourist region of El Arenal, in a context that is usually known for its excessive parties, for its sexualized and trivial encounters and as a holiday destination, initially unleashed criticism and doubts both in our academic and private surroundings. Students and fellow colleagues mostly reacted with disgust or laughter or both. Obviously, the transgressive pleasures offered at the *Ballermann* were considered as intrusive and too overtly sensual to be resisted by the "serious experts" we had been disciplined to be. Furthermore, the banality of the place seemingly failed to qualify as a serious object of academic research.

Hieronymus Bosch's painting *Ship of Fools* (1490-1500) seems to be an adequate visual metaphor of our Mallorca research trips, seen from the perspective of the above-mentioned critical voices; the entire title of the painting is *The Ship of Fools, or the Satire of the Debauched Revelers*. The Louvre, where the largest part of the painting by Bosch is exhibited, explains it as an artistic response to Sebastian Brant's allegory of the same name (*Das Narrenschiff*), which shows ships loaded with fools that head to a place called "the fool's paradise" or "Narragonia". Further, the Louvre website describes the trip of the ship of fools as an "unusual journey", interpreting it as follows:

> […] the fools are clearly recognizable from their costumes and bonnets, with the ears of asses. In Bosch's painting there is only one such figure, and he appears as if to clarify the meaning of the painting. It is probable that a work which depicts people drinking and delirious, obsessed with food and drink, is a satire on monks and an ironic criticism of the drunkenness that deprives them of their reason and their souls.[2]

In the case of our *Ballermann* project, the "debauched revellers" stand for a research topic which is neither recognized as profound nor approached by "traditional" research methods. The excessive fools that are painted by Bosch can be seen as the stained mirror images of researchers who intend to conduct fieldwork within the margins of academia, and who fight the mustiness of their academic disciplines by using the same hilarity and silliness that are ascribed as an overgeneralization to the entire context of their (*Ballermann*) research. To outsiders, travelling fools therefore appear as travelling fools, while actually other and deeper intentions prevail. The foolish endeavor of steering toward unknown academic grounds, with a methodology of participant observation in a context of excess and squalidness, inevitably turns the academic sailors into excessive and debauched participants, it seems.

Figures 5 & 6: Voyagers on the *Ship of Fools*



[3] See [http://www.louvre.fr./en/oeuvre-notices/ship-fools-or-satire-debauched-revelers] (accessed 3 March 2017).

At first sight, one may conclude that this exhibition spotlights marginal actors embodied by Nigerian toilet cleaners, Senegalese street vendors and Indian shop keepers, showcasing a southernness that is associated with everyday police controls, humiliation and marginalization, as well as mimicry and subversive practices. Yet the exhibition of artefacts from Mallorca's *Ballermann* offers the spectator a range of liminal encounters. It allows the interpretation of southernness from a variety of angles and displays a kind of performative "South", a hands-on experience of the inescapable fact that we constantly construct, deconstruct and reconstruct categories and draw, undraw and redraw boundaries, of ourselves as well as of our encounters. The capacity to visualize this process of Othering is what makes both this exhibition and the research project so valuable: we set out to research the "South", only to experience the absurdity of our mission. The "South" is not a dead object that can be studied under a microscope. But here it presents itself in a broad and never unambiguous range of expressions, feelings and identities which lead to a dynamic setting of exchanges in an arena, that otherwise clearly arises from separation or distinction.

The liminal character of the *Ballermann* has turned out to be an ideal setting for discovering the hard labor of ridding ourselves of our positionality, of questioning our own position. It has shown the very ordeal of having to constantly draw sensible boundaries when conducting research. Through the exhibition we hope to have contributed to new perspectives on the making and unmaking of borders, on "souths" and "norths", and on the researchers' daily task of drawing and undrawing boundaries. As the exhibition shows, there are many Souths.

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