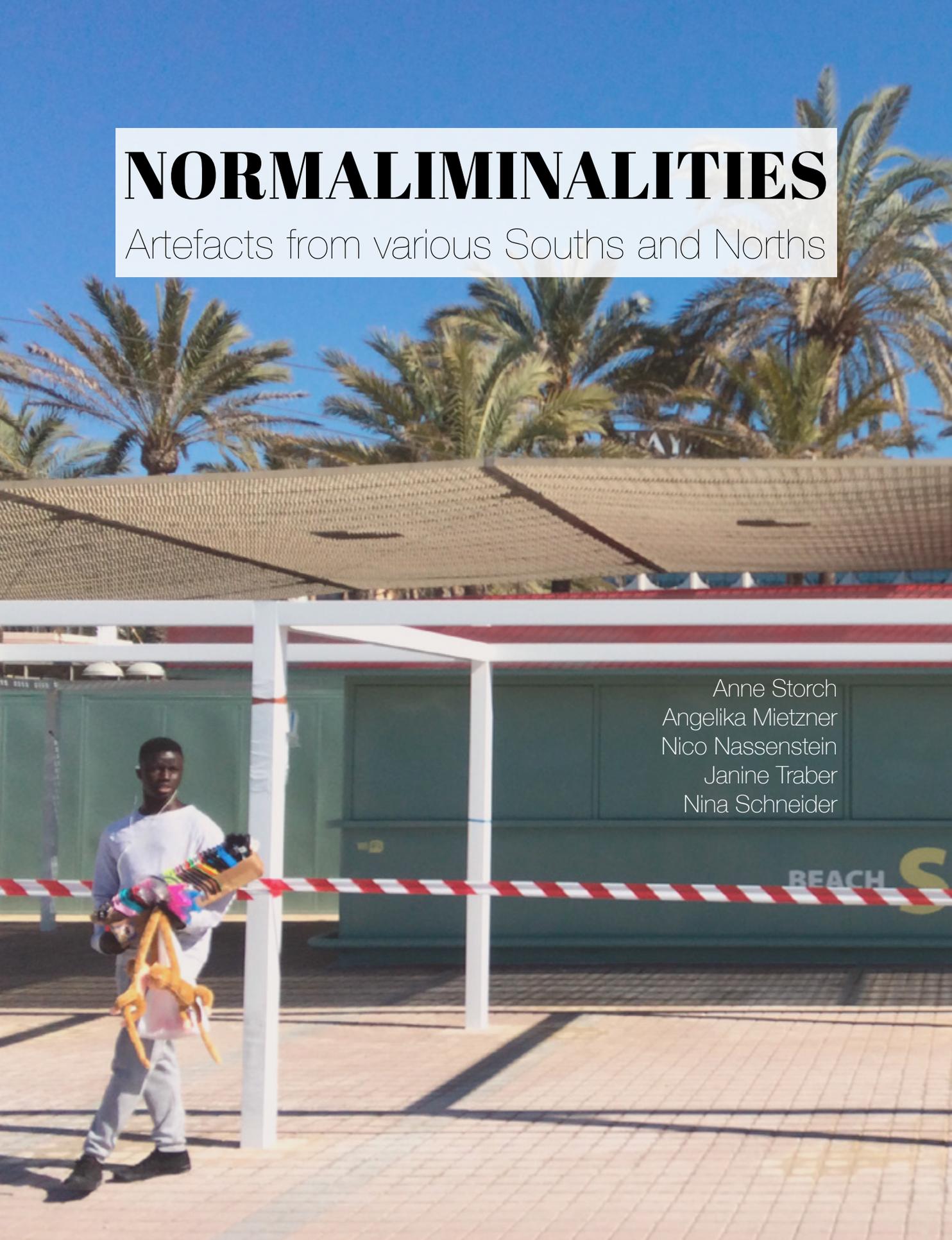


# **NORMALIMINALITIES**

Artefacts from various Souths and Norths

Anne Storch  
Angelika Mietzner  
Nico Nassenstein  
Janine Traber  
Nina Schneider



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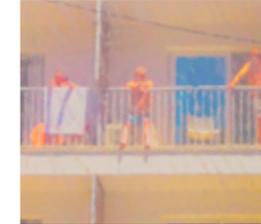
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# Foreword

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This volume is the result of various discussions, strands of work and cooperation with others. It has been inspired by a project on 'tourism and ruination', focusing on Kenyan beaches, as well as by debates on the 'Global South' and its imagined opposite, the 'Global North', and various attempts to construct and deconstruct such labels at our home university in Cologne, as well as in Brazil, Uganda, Egypt, Spain, South Africa, among others. The outcome is a diverse and decidedly hybrid collection of texts and images that invite the reader to reflect on the need to move away from fixed labels, static concepts and binary oppositions, and look at the space in between instead.

Our work, and this catalogue would not have been possible without the generous support of Clemens Greiner and Martina Gockel-Frank and their team at the Global South Studies Center at the University of Cologne, Festus Badaseraye and Ahmed of Palma de Mallorca, Jan Peters and Fatou Cisse Kane. We are indebted to the German Research Foundation (DFG) for their generous funding within the Leibniz Prize programme.

The published texts and images are part of an exhibition which was shown at the University of Cologne in June 2017 during a conference titled 'The Global South on the Move'. Further materials and images on the exhibition and an installation on the university campus can be found in the blog of The Mouth ([themouthweb.wordpress.com](http://themouthweb.wordpress.com)).



01

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Malleable words

# 01 Malleable words

Anne Storch, Angelika Mietzner, Nico Nassenstein, Janine Traber and Nina Schneider

The beach as liminal space, where unforeseeable encounters take place and transformation seems to dominate, is not only found to be a historical setting like that of first encounters in colonial contexts or as a place where one may be lost, but is also – invested with more banality and silliness – a mass tourism site, where it provides consumable liminalities. At El Arenal on the island of Mallorca, the beach combines, in curious ways, various such commodified forms of liminality, which, probably most saliently, are constructed as various forms of southernness. Often mockingly referred to as the colony of the north, El Arenal is one of Europe's busiest and largest tourist destinations, with the town mostly hosting tourists from Germany. Around beach section Balneario Nº 6, the German party tourism community is particularly visible, not only through the existence of a large number of clubs, bars and restaurants with special food and attractions for German audiences, but also through discourse. The

beach is hardly ever referred to by its official name, but as the corrupted form *Ballermann*, a word originally created as the name of a bar in Germany. Yet this stretch of sand and the streets next to it are excessively southern, in the sense that voices from multiple parts of the world – German, Senegalese, Brazilian, Nigerian, Argentinian, Spanish – talk, shout, sing, play and flatter, creating (surrounded by sounds from the bars and music halls) an ambience of noisiness, whereby noise is one feature associated with the liminality offered by a kind of El Arenal and the space where encounters take place. Some of the exhibited objects and photographs may be perceived as stereotyped southernness (in contrast to other versions of the south). Another feature is the sexualization of encounters and events.

The beach itself, and also the bars and clubs, are arenas for the presentation of sexual prowess as well as submission. This trope is also represented by the many souvenirs

offered in the shops around the area. Here, performed divisions between the two most visible groups present at the beach, namely European guests and African vendors, are clearly visible, albeit in absurd ways: none of the African vendors would ever sell any of the otherwise ubiquitous sexually connoted (and often tasteless) items, such as straws, bottle openers and other things in form of phalli and breasts. These objects are sold by different vendors. African traders offer glasses, watches, hats and other decorative accessories in screaming colors and thus contribute to the image of the *Ballermann* as an arena of disruption. Both the production of trash and playing with taboo are part of the liminal construction of the beach here, as a form of creating southernness in the sense of a specific way of being noisy, colorful, and disturbing. Other encounters between tourists and street vendors may involve sexual encounters or drug transactions. The boundary between tourist locations and the street – the place where the African vendors are – is blurred and subject to numerous normative negotiations. Such instances of norming are found everywhere in the liminal space of the *Ballermann*: while sex toys and obscene objects can be bought in souvenir shops mostly run by people with Pakistani, Indian and sometimes Chinese background, off-license alcohol (for the buckets used in communal drinking) is sold in shops owned by Spanish people or by

beach vendors from Andalusia, who often have a Roma background, and so on.

This catalogue is about divisions and how they can be constructed and named, as well as unification in terms of how the merging of a variety of backgrounds serves to create a special arena in the context of tourism. A word that is of particular importance to the discussion of liminality, division and mixing is 'south'. It means and does many things in the contexts discussed in this volume: the 'south' evokes desires and escapist fantasies and refers to other places (never the place where one is at the time). The 'south' associates notions of space with the placement of people and suggests that there might exist a division of this entire world between north and south as an irrevocable truth. 'South' is also a word that evokes images of power and defeat, of northern colonialism and southern subalternity, of whiteness and color and race. It is a difficult word that refers to ideas (or practices) of obedience, which can be bought as cheap labor and convenience in global tourism settings in a so-called postcolonial world. The 'south' – which needs to be put in relation to 'north' – is also a term that serves as a tool to construct otherness, for example, the otherness of migrants. 'South' consequently not only denotes those spaces located elsewhere, but also people who are, through the racialization of skin

color, gender and class, conceptualized as 'southern' and therefore as other and different. This may entail marginalization or exclusion, but is not necessarily thought to result out of bad intentions. The migrants residing in global cities who are portrayed as 'southern' are increasingly seen, by linguists and sociologists, as people who add color and sound to otherwise bland urban landscapes. And such images, of course, are also images of a stereotyped 'south' where exoticism prevails.

Other forms of southernness come into play as well: the beach may be declared to be 'German', and may be conceptualized as being 'colonized' by German tourists<sup>1</sup>, but it is inhabited by people from many places. The German tourists, while claiming ownership over El Arenal in a carnivalesque way (planting flags, wearing motto t-shirts, drinking in groups marked by commonly worn insignia), do not hold this land as their exclusive property. Their bodies are adorned with cheap accessories offered by mobile vendors from Senegal and other West African countries, who wander the beaches and streets; they are treated by Chinese women working as mobile masseuses and buy drinks from

vendors with Roma backgrounds. People continuously call to each other, rubbing each other's bodies, mingling and sharing. From a 'northern' perspective, being part of the beach and party life at the *Ballermann* turns all players, regardless of the places they came from, into 'southerners' of some kind, and creates a space where they can express their craving for another reality free from social boundaries, or simply for a better life. Nevertheless, this does not erase divisions and social inequalities, but turns them into something different.

This reluctance for clarity is not only visible in the presence of people experiencing diverse forms of liminality, but is also audible: in performances of subversive silliness, West African street vendors and German men address each other as *Helmut*; in a play on racialized difference and the underlying inequality of the encounter (where the tourist owns a return ticket and a passport, while the tourism worker may not have either of these), some West African vendors talk back by calling themselves *Dunkelmut*, a nonsensical creation playing with a contrast between *hell-mut* 'fair-mut' and *dunkel-mut* 'dark-mut'.

The migrants living on the tourism business at *Ballermann* are mostly former citizens of Nigeria and Senegal, alongside some German expatriates. They participate in the tourism space as an inherent part of it, necessary for the tourist's amusement: to many tourists, hawkers are fantastic subjects for photos, amusing conversation partners for entertaining banter, and perversely exciting when a police patrol is present and drives these young men into hiding places, highlighting the absurdity of the party space. The material and verbal wit that is part of these encounters does more than offer entertainment and amusement. It creates silliness, removing clarity and normality, in order to make space for the self as other. Words remain at the heart of this, but they become more shapeless. Shared 'southernnesses', in other words, does not so much create a sense of belonging across class and language boundaries, but rather removes the need for clarity. The binaries that help to divide 'northern' and 'southern', often in violent ways, are mockingly refused and turned into an obscene mimicry of shared otherness. In his essay "Belief in Europe" (2015), the artist and activist Jimmie Durham plays with the binaries in which we are forced to live; for instance, in places called 'south' and 'north' or 'third world' and the like:

It is tiresome to watch 'Third World' individuals (mostly guys, but not exclusively) make fools of themselves by reciting some version of this thing where we tell some white folks how bad some aspect of their culture is compared to a similar aspect in our own.

Such as, 'the trouble with you Europeans is you have no sense of proper thickness in sauces; now in my culture, you see, the correct thickness of the sauce for the dish is the most essential part of life ...'

The explainer/instructor assumes a patronising kind of smarmy attitude, as if he already knows, having got the listeners' attention, that they have entered into a complicity that is a social ritual, and that will leave him feeling frustrated and angry the next morning.

Even though the white person has heard it all a billion times before, he or she listens with such sincerity and attention that we wonder about the listener's intelligence. (Durham 2015: 121)

What Durham's text shows is that speaking and writing about diversity – such as of languages and cultures – quickly tends to turn into speaking or writing about otherness and divisions. And these divisions, in Durham's text and in our lives, become absurd: "About the location

<sup>1</sup> Mallorca – colloquially referred to as Malle in German – is also dubbed as 'Germany's 17th federal state', as well as 'the charladies' colony', the latter referring to the initially cheap rates offered by hotels there.

of Europe: it thinks it is a continent. Even though it uses the same maps and globes that the rest of the world uses“, he writes “and can easily see that“, he continues to write “it is not by any stretch a continent, it still thinks it is a continent“ (Durham 2015: 122). Divisions, like words, are malleable; they can be stretched and compressed, made wide or narrow.

This becomes obvious in the way people are described, as Durham wittily explains, and also in the ways people can be addressed and referred to. At the *Ballermann*, the African beach vendors have a special way of acting which is adopted by the tourists and is taken back home as a linguistic souvenir: it is very common to hear tourists on their way back to Germany calling each other *Helmut* or *Gisela*, collective names with which the street vendors attract tourists. And it is also quite common to hear girls calling each other *geile Schlampe* ‘sexy bitch’, an expression which is used by Nigerian lavatory attendants as a ritualized greeting in the party zone. The female lavatory attendants work in the party locations of *Ballermann* and turn the toilet into a place of performance. They arrange shrines with antiperspirants, perfumes and lollipops, and help drunk toilet users out of precarious situations. This least of scientific places is a place full of meaning, performance, otherness and transgression; here, in complex transformations, the other

turns into a mother figure who offers solace and clarity.

Normal scientific texts tend to make such transformations and the malleability of words and divisions invisible; writers of such texts, remaining faithful to a particular form, structure and placement of text and discourse, need to essentialize their gaze in contexts that seem to be quite the opposite of their own contexts: the places that are portrayed as foreign and interesting are made to appear uncontrollably diverse, in contrast to offices and homes. An often evoked example of this is the presence of foreign words in linguistic landscapes – language on the built environment – for example around railway stations, in areas where many shops are run by people from the ‘south’, or where foreign people live or meet. Such a way of portraying diversity and difference is not an innovative one, but is utterly traditional, and as such is true to ideas of languages and cultures as being separable from each other, of language as being artefactual – consisting of (written) words – and of diversity (symbolized by words coming from different places and contexts), standing in contrast to the tidiness of one’s own room.

At the *Ballermann* this diversity is appropriated by the tourists, who demarcate the zone as theirs through linguistic landscap-

ing, carried around on their t-shirts, while the vendors, in parallel, display an inverted mimicry of the tourists’ strategies to inherit the place. They often wear the same t-shirts, depicting these tools of arena construction as a kind of parody of the vacationists. The t-shirts with place-specific slogans are performances of the liminal place, and an attempt at order, at trying to control diversity. Yet uncontrollable diversity, a chaotic concert of voices, and a lack of clear boundaries between different languages and cultural practices have been thought to be part of the ‘south’, and therefore also characteristic of the otherness located in the colonized parts of the world (regardless of compass points) since the early days of imperialism and colonialism. Nick Shepherd and Christian Ersten, reflecting on alternative ways of doing science as dreaming and walking, see the persistence of old concepts as being deeply embedded in the form and location of thinking:

This situation [...] takes its meaning and significance from the manner in which it, in turn, reinforces, reproduces and relies on a number of key oppositions that structure and provide the conceptual underpinnings of modern Western thinking (itself a complex amalgam of genealogies, lineages, positions, forms, knowledges and ways of being, presented here through this shorthand

designation). These include oppositions between mind and body, reason and emotion, theory and practice, culture and nature, subject and object, beings gendered as male and beings gendered as female, beings raced as white and beings raced as black, and so on. The particular force, energy and violence of modern Western thinking and practice (its coloniality) comes about, in part, through the manner in which it lines up and connects terms on either side of the binary. Modernity itself – gendered male, raced white – is identified with the mind rather than the body (“a triumph of mind over body”), with certain forms of dispassionate rationality (“reason” versus “emotion”), with culture rather than nature (culture is understood to assert itself over and against nature), and with the kind of subject position that regards other beings and ways of life as objects of contemplation. It also takes the mantle of a certain kind of universality, which is another way of saying that it situates itself in a privileged relationship to time, space and history. The rest, a seething territory (metaphors matter) of body, affect, emotion, instinct, beings gendered as female, and beings raced as black, becomes a kind of alter-ego or mirror of the Western self. (Shepherd & Ersten 2016)



This has not remained unreflected, but continues to creep back into texts and speeches, perhaps for the sake of clarity. Outside of the written world, the 'south', its boundaries and the differences between people are less clearly arranged. The territories named by Shepherd and Ernsten widen their boundaries, being constructed as malleable too. Places may be ambiguous in terms of their 'southernness', and may contain various forms of 'south'.

The 'south' also represents a trope that often occurs in literary works. In the novella *Death in Venice*, Thomas Mann writes about an elderly, 'northern', bourgeois man, who travels to the Venice Lido in summer. The hot and humid climate, the high season on the beach and the outbreak of a cholera epidemic all function as a background for the actual story that unfolds once the story's hero, Professor Aschenbach, falls in love with a boy whose family has also come for their summer holidays. The beach as a prototypically liminal space, the almost tropical climate of this southern place, and the sexual though fatal attraction of the seemingly innocent boy, perfectly create an imagery of southernness which also evokes notions of ruination and decay. In this south, its destructive inhabitants are faced with the cracks and debris that are the consequence of bourgeois boundary-

making. Michael Taussig explores the semiotics of the 'south' as an idea in the novella, and as a concept that not only exists as a kind of opposition to the self (any self), but that also asks for a sacrifice: "This sun does *not* give without receiving" (1999: 94). However, the sacrifice is not an openly visible one, but secret. The overwhelming power of the 'south', its capacity to ruin the prototypical protagonist of the 'north' in Mann's novella, is secret, yet can be guessed and felt. Secrecy, as lingering malice, is part of southernness as well, and here the 'south' once more becomes uncontrollable, this time not in terms of diversity, but in terms of destructiveness:

For the secret is overdeterminedly southern. But at the risk of enormous and enormously-forgotten banality, note there can be no south without a north. The secret then is "Asiatic Cholera," and its lair is the innermost recess of the Third World [...] The expansion of self is here couched in the motif of travel to far-off Third World places, but the travel is also a seizure that stands for instantaneous transformation of Aschenbach's [Mann's protagonist] very identity, as he imagines tropical forests and lush landscapes centered on the figure of the tiger – the figure, we could say, of the "south," it being this particularly exotic animal,

camouflaged by jungle, that provides the formula for beauty, danger, secrecy, and wild release. (Taussig 1999: 80-81; 89)

The delusional sexual desires of Aschenbach that eventually kill him have their direct equivalent in the performance of sex and the subsequent representation of performances in social media, resulting in shaming of the participants and their social degradation in their normal environments at home. The 'south' here stands as a symbol of its lure of sexual greed and ruinous stuffiness, both in Mann's novella and on the beach of our time in Mallorca. As images of its visitors' transgressions float around, words remain at the heart of all this, but they become more shapeless.

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# Structure of the catalogue

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This catalogue provides materials on different aspects of life, transgression and divisions at the *Ballermann* – “Dress Code”, “Expressive Normaliminalities”, “Deep Normaliminalities”, “Lost/Found Normaliminalities”, “Global Normaliminalities”, “Reflections” and finally “Shrines”. All of them deal with notions of southernness, and with the interaction of ‘southern’ and ‘northern’ actors in El Arenal and the space where their encounters take place.

- **DRESS CODE:** Pieces of clothing, worn by the tourists exclusively during their stay. Linguistic landscaping happens considerably through wearing motto t-shirts with *Ballermann*-specific words or phrases.
- **EXPRESSIVE NORMALIMINALITIES:** Typical souvenirs of the *Ballermann* tourists. Mostly items of everyday life with a sexual connotation such as cups, straws or bottle openers.
- **DEEP NORMALIMINALITIES:** Life and things from the suburb of Son Gotleu, where most of the African protagonists of the *Ballermann* live. Items of everyday life stand in stark contrast to the items portrayed in “Expressive Normaliminalities”
- **LOST/FOUND NORMALIMINALITIES:** Flotsam and jetsam of the beach mile, which were collected during various visits, lost property of those who inhabit liminal spaces. Moreover, they combine trash and leftovers of beach parties, excessive drinking and photographs of dirty corners of El Arenal and its terres vagues of tourism, spaces that appear as messy, empty or deserted (after the touristic encounter).
- **GLOBAL NORMALIMINALITIES:** The Nigerian emigrant Festus Badaseraye left his country in the search of greener pastures almost 30 years ago. The exhibition shows his way to success up to his present life as a taxi driver, book author and law student. His book “De África llegué” (‘I came from Africa’) was only lately translated into English.
- **REFLECTIONS:** In the course of a critical discourse on their research, the group of scholars who have visited the *Ballermann* reflect on their experiences.
- **SHRINES:** A shrine of a Nigerian lavatory attendant is reproduced and contrasted with images of the ‘real’ toilet. They are extremely dilettante efforts in order to highlight the banality of this place.

02

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Dress Code

# Dress Code

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T-shirts with motto prints are bought and are often worn as group outfits by *Ballermann* tourists. By dressing up, the actors identify themselves with the surrounding ecstatic atmosphere, and construct themselves as outlaw personalities, fulfilling the social codes given through the prints.

West African street vendors likewise wear and offer colorful and unusual accessories. Things that blink, shriek, move, protect, expose and help to be seen.

Whom might this suit? Who are the buyers, sellers and actors of these costumes? Which realities are reflected and which diversions can be observed?





Various colors  
(A. Storch 2016)





Untitled  
(A. Storch 2016)



Men I  
(A. Storch 2016)





I'll be off then – finding themselves in Mallorca  
(J. Traber 2016)



Helmut shirt  
(A. Storch 2016)



Never saw anybody wearing this  
(A. Storch 2016)





Suggested sightseeing  
(J. Traber 2017)



Girl group t-shirt  
(J. Traber 2016)



Print now language  
(A. Mietzner 2017)





Fashion walk in front of spectators  
(J. Traber 2016)





Oktoberfest working suit  
(A. Storch 2016)



Suit, drinks and accessory  
(J. Traber 2017)





Men II  
(A. Storch 2016)

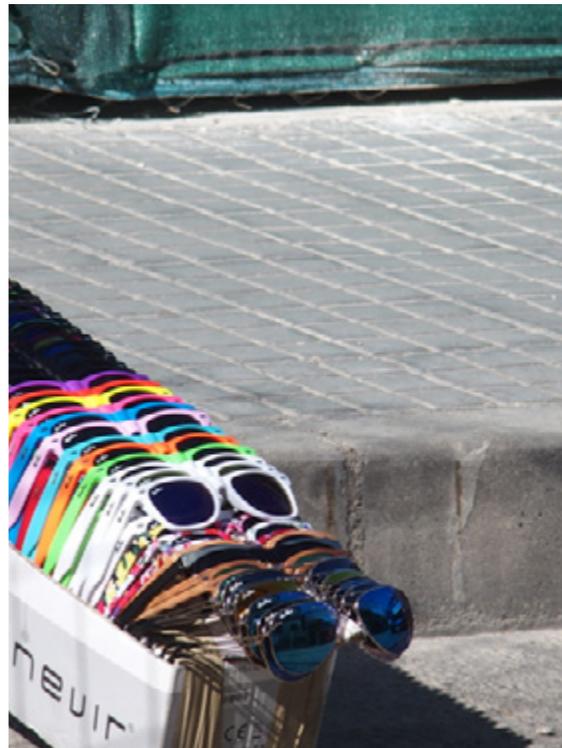


Capoeira performance in front of tourists  
(N. Schneider 2016)





Heute billig  
(A. Mietzner 2016)



Out of office  
(A. Mietzner 2017)



Street vendor in colorful clothes selling souvenirs  
(J. Traber 2017)





Undress to impress? Performances in drinking halls  
(J. Traber 2016)



Performing "Schinken"  
(N. Nassenstein 2016)





Plastic skins  
(N. Nassenstein 2016)



# 03

---

Expressive  
Normaliminalities

# Expressive Normaliminalities

---

Images and souvenirs display the conflicting desires for the breaking of taboos and the incorporation of traditional role expectations regarding gender and cultural norms. During the time spent at the *Ballermann* region, the tourists are able to violate rules and norms which restrict their freedom in their 'real lives'.

Taking their souvenirs to a different context allows the connotations of these souvenirs to switch from excitingly expressive to strikingly absurd.





Diverse offer  
(A. Storch 2016)



Regular accessories ...  
(J. Traber 2016)



A display of emblematic things  
(A. Storch 2016)



Helmut in a glass  
(N. Nassenstein, screenshot 2016)





Quality watch vendor  
(A. Storch 2017)



Favorite sight of a tourism worker  
(A. Storch 2016)





Pepper and salt dispensers in a souvenir shop  
(J. Traber 2016)



No age limit required  
(J. Traber 2016)





Don't drown!  
(A. Mietzner 2017)



Breaking free in Mallorca  
(A. Mietzner 2017)





Bierkönig  
(N. Nassenstein 2016)



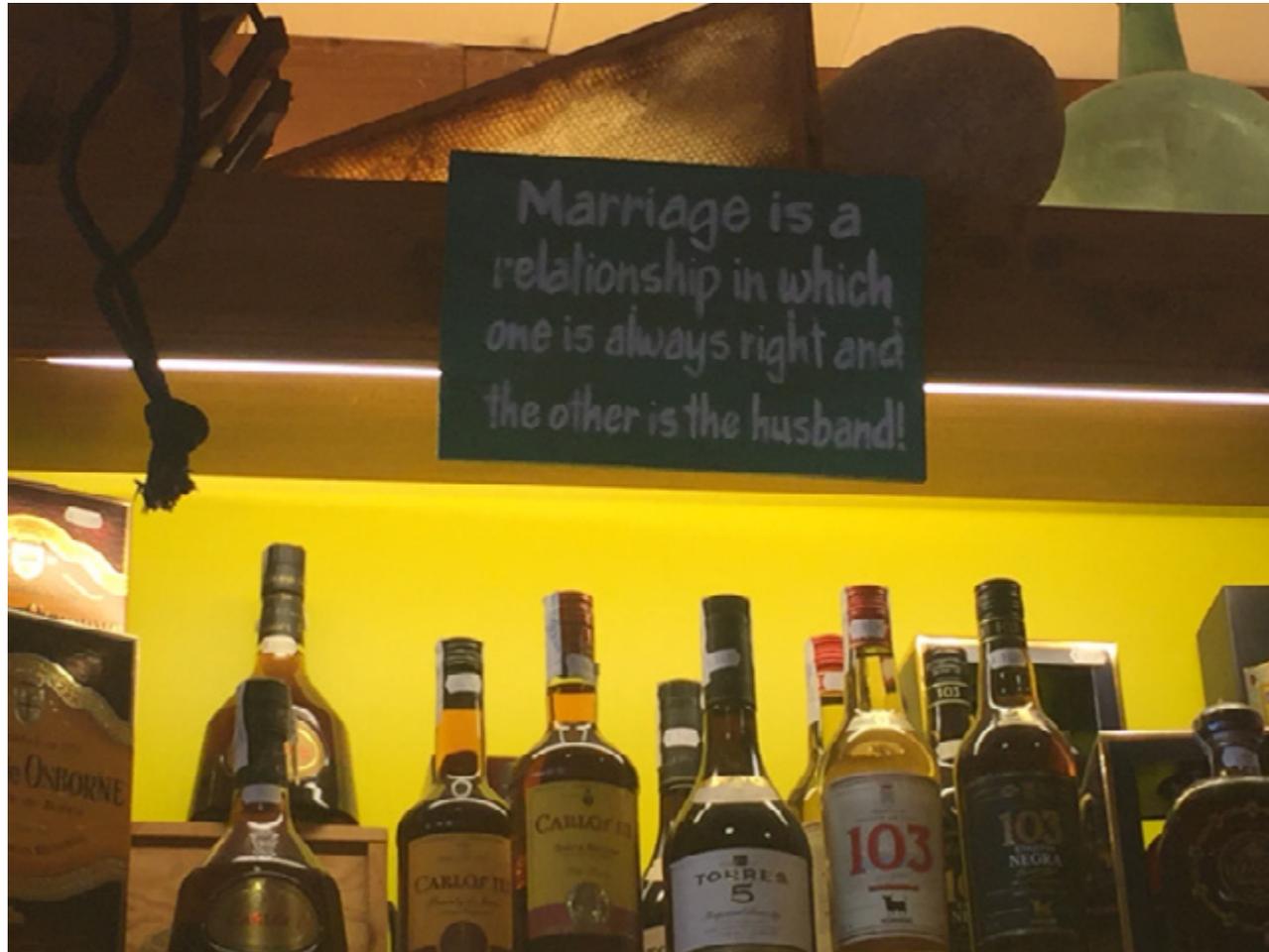


Hierbas, local brew  
(N. Nassenstein 2017)



Schinkenbude 'Bacon hut'  
(N. Nassenstein 2016)





Statements and drinks  
(J. Traber 2016)



Closed muschi's  
(N. Nassenstein 2017)



04

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Deep  
Normaliminalities

# Deep Normaliminalities

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In contrast to the rapid lifestyle of the main tourist centers, the everyday life of the local population has a different pace. Working as street vendors during the main season, they blend into the crowd after the summer work is done. Most street vendors live among a variety of cultural backgrounds in Son Gotleu, one of the old working-class districts of Palma.

Originally the home of seasonal workers from Andalusia – fruit pickers, olive harvesters and farmhands – Son Gotleu nowadays also hosts people from different parts of West Africa. The artefacts and images from Son Gotleu show some aspects of their effort to combine different lifestyles, as well as their sometimes challenging experiences.



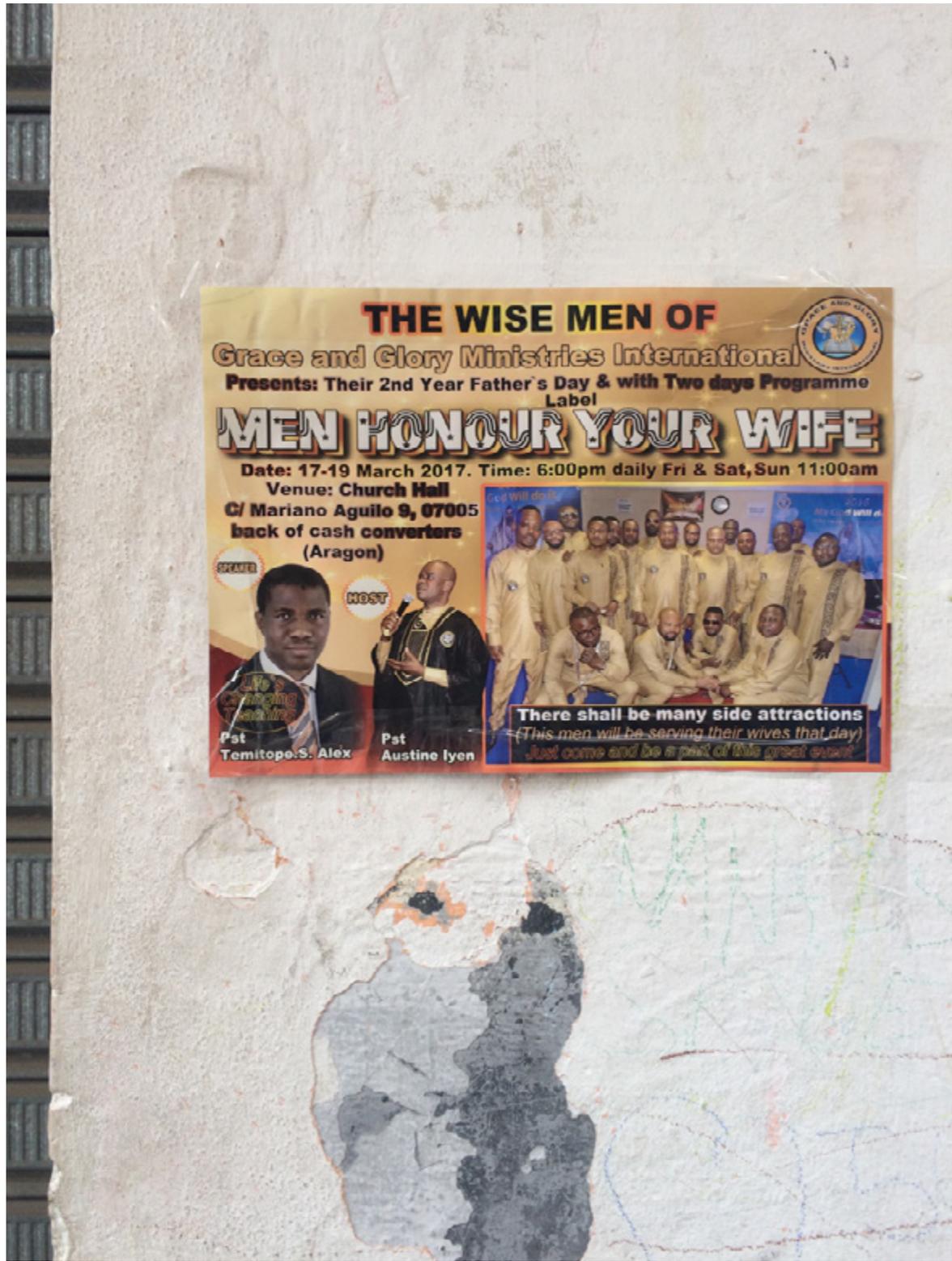


Explanations  
(A. Storch 2017)

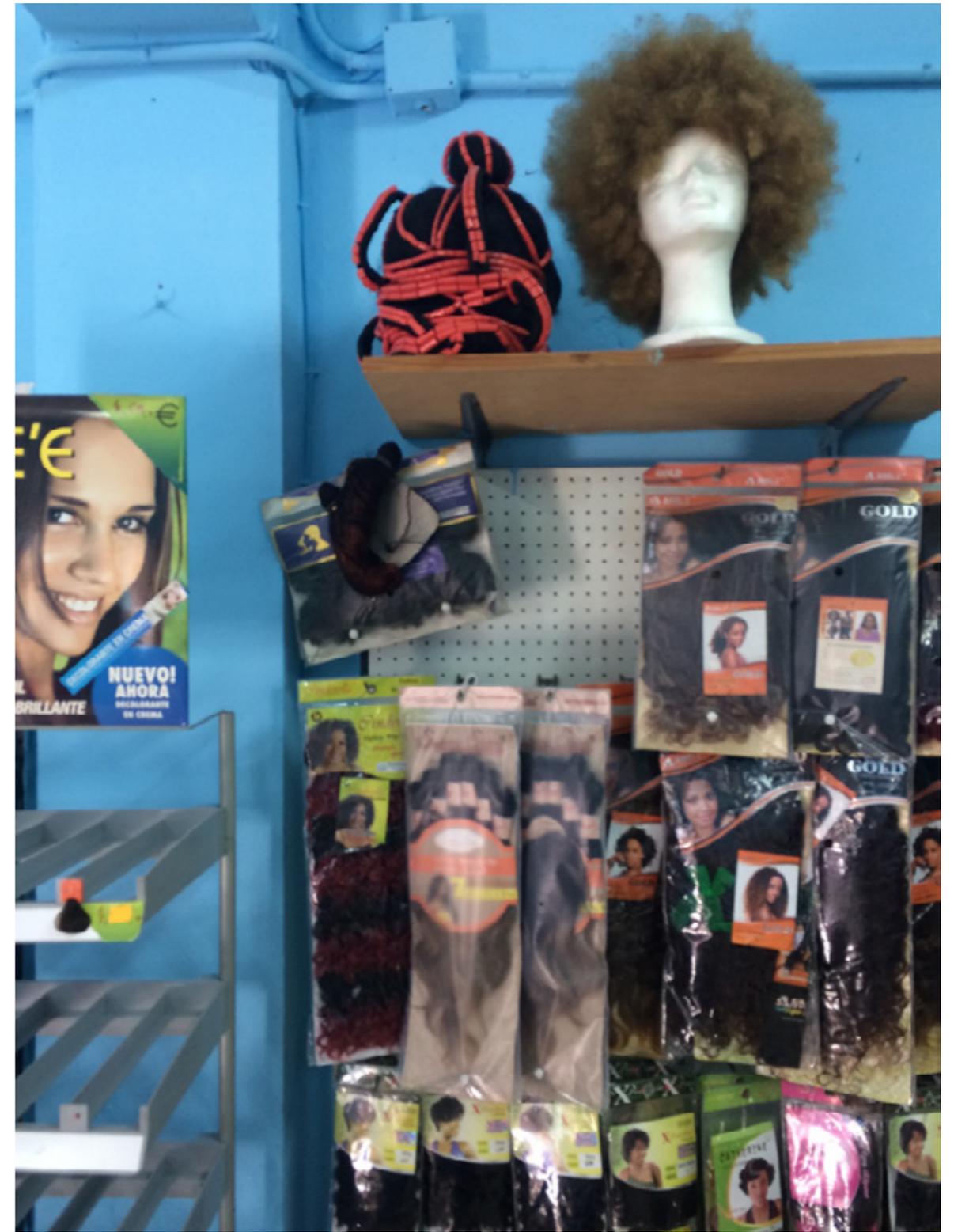


Office  
(A. Storch 2017)





Untitled  
(A. Storch 2017)



Things from Edo  
(A. Storch 2017)





Untitled  
(A. Storch 2017)



Waiting space  
(A. Storch 2017)





Jehovha's Witnesses and other people with mixed cultural backgrounds  
(J. Traber 2016)





School children's art mixed  
with graffiti  
(J. Traber 2016)





African shop interior  
(J. Traber 2017)



Homes  
(J. Traber 2017)





Bloody traces  
(N. Schneider 2016)



Resting canal and graffiti  
(J. Traber 2017)





vivify!  
(A. Mietzner 2017)



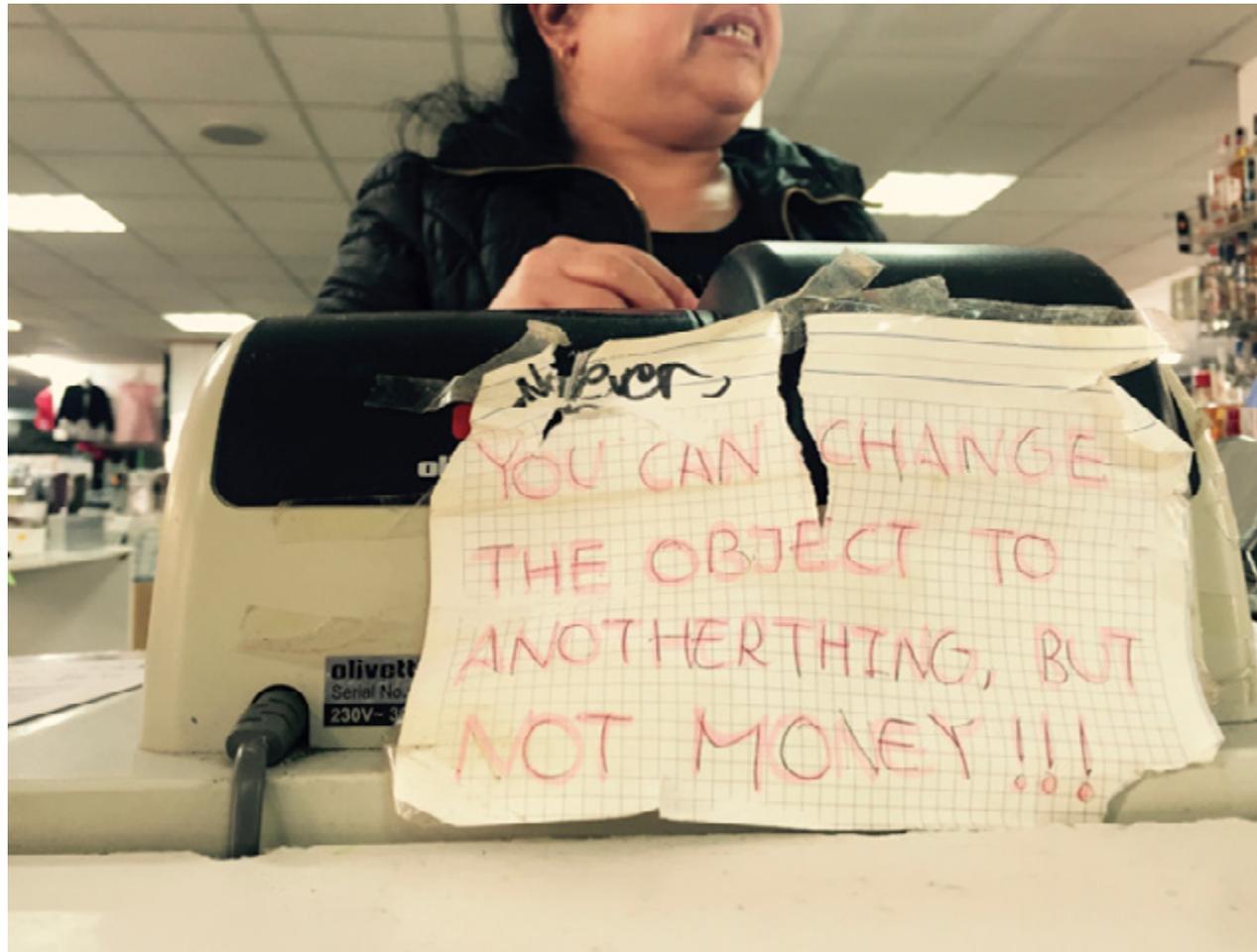
Waiting  
(A. Mietzner 2017)



Fuera o adentro?  
(N. Nassenstein 2016)



Invisible language in Son Gotleu  
(N. Nassenstein 2017)



Metamorphosis; Chinese supermarket  
(N. Nassenstein 2017)



Terrain vague through a fence  
(N. Nassenstein 2016)





El café Senegales: Meeting point and culinary nostalgia  
(N. Nassenstein 2017)



Nighthawks: African backroom nightclub at the Playa de Palma  
(N. Nassenstein 2017)





Shop in Son Gotleu II  
(A. Mietzner 2017)



Shop in Son Gotleu I  
(A. Mietzner 2017)



# 05

---

Lost / Found  
Normaliminalities

# Lost / Found

## Normaliminalities

---

*What happens in Mallorca stays in Mallorca.*

Flotsam shows up the materiality of the leftovers of those who visit the beach, work there, or become stranded. The things displayed here might have been lost or thrown away and are surprising in their variety.

Compared to personal statements which are always filtered through emotions and experiences, this flotsam bluntly displays a more direct reality of the mingling hotspot.



Leftovers from a fight at night, near Megapark (A. Storch 2016)





Leftovers from "kings of the north"  
(J. Traber 2017)



Forgotten panties  
(A. Mietzner 2017)





Home at the beach  
(A. Storch 2016)





Untitled  
(A. Storch 2017)



Untitled  
(A. Storch 2017)





Backing  
(A. Mietzner 2017)



Hidden in the wall  
(A. Mietzner 2017)





Stranded: Human flotsam  
(N. Nassenstein 2016)



Reminders  
(N. Nassenstein 2017)





Help with the shepherd's leftovers!  
(N. Nassenstein 2016)



Adelheid peeling off  
(N. Nassenstein 2017)





Who dropped you?  
(N. Nassenstein 2017)



Lost vitamins with a view  
(N. Nassenstein 2017)





Marking terrains  
(J. Traber 2016)



Untitled  
(A. Storch 2017)



# 06

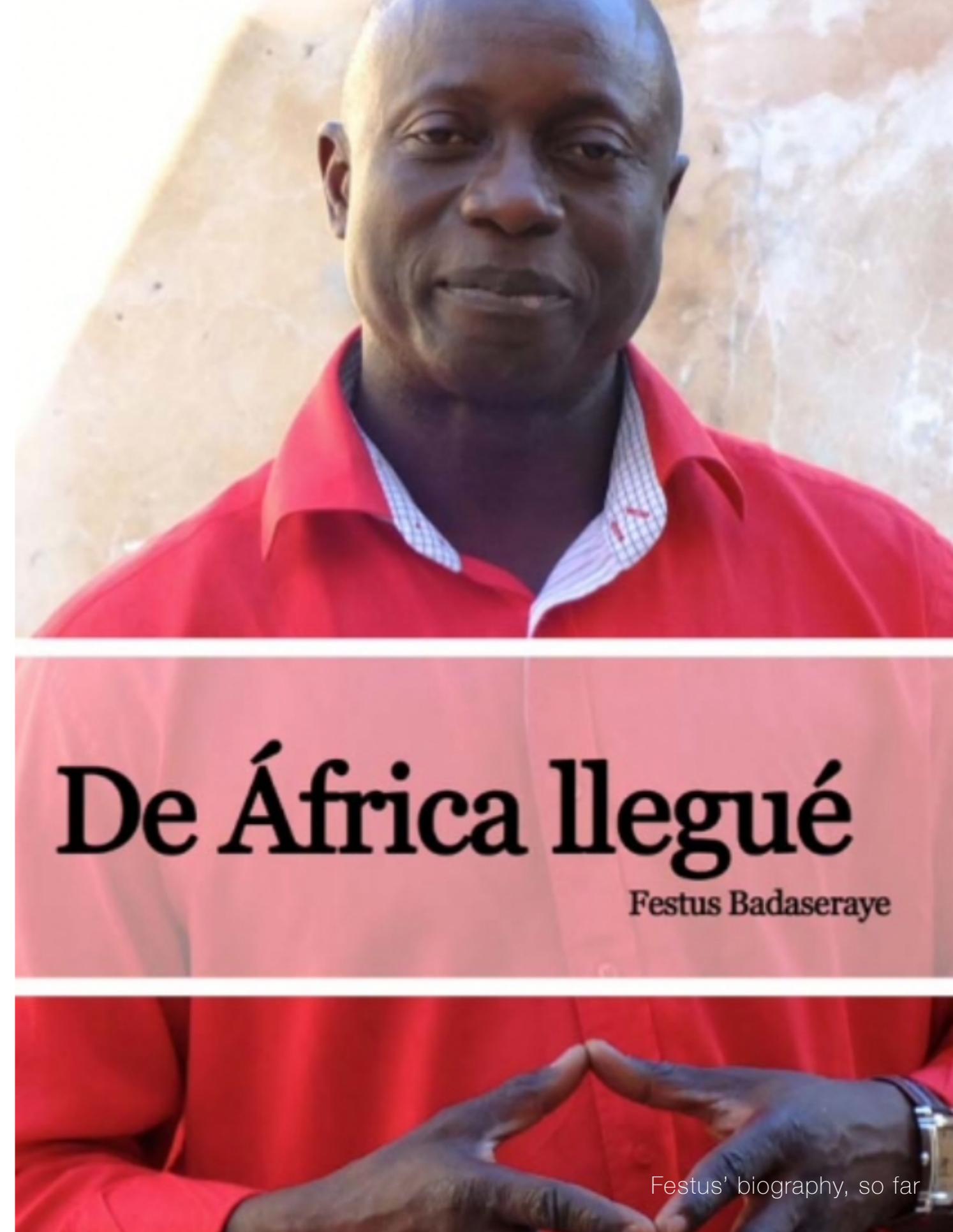
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Global  
Normaliminalities

# Global Normaliminalities

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Festus Badaseraye is a Nigerian expatriate who came to Mallorca in search of greener pastures. In his biography, he writes about the desires and dreams of people who come to the island, from Nigeria and various other places, in order to improve their chances and support their families. While having succeeded in establishing a firm basis in Mallorca himself, his ties to his native country are visible in his efforts to support the residents of his village in Ekakpame, Ughelli, South Delta State in Nigeria. He is presently in the process of buying land, and building a school which aims specifically to help girls to create a future for themselves in their home country, so that migration is no longer the sole option.



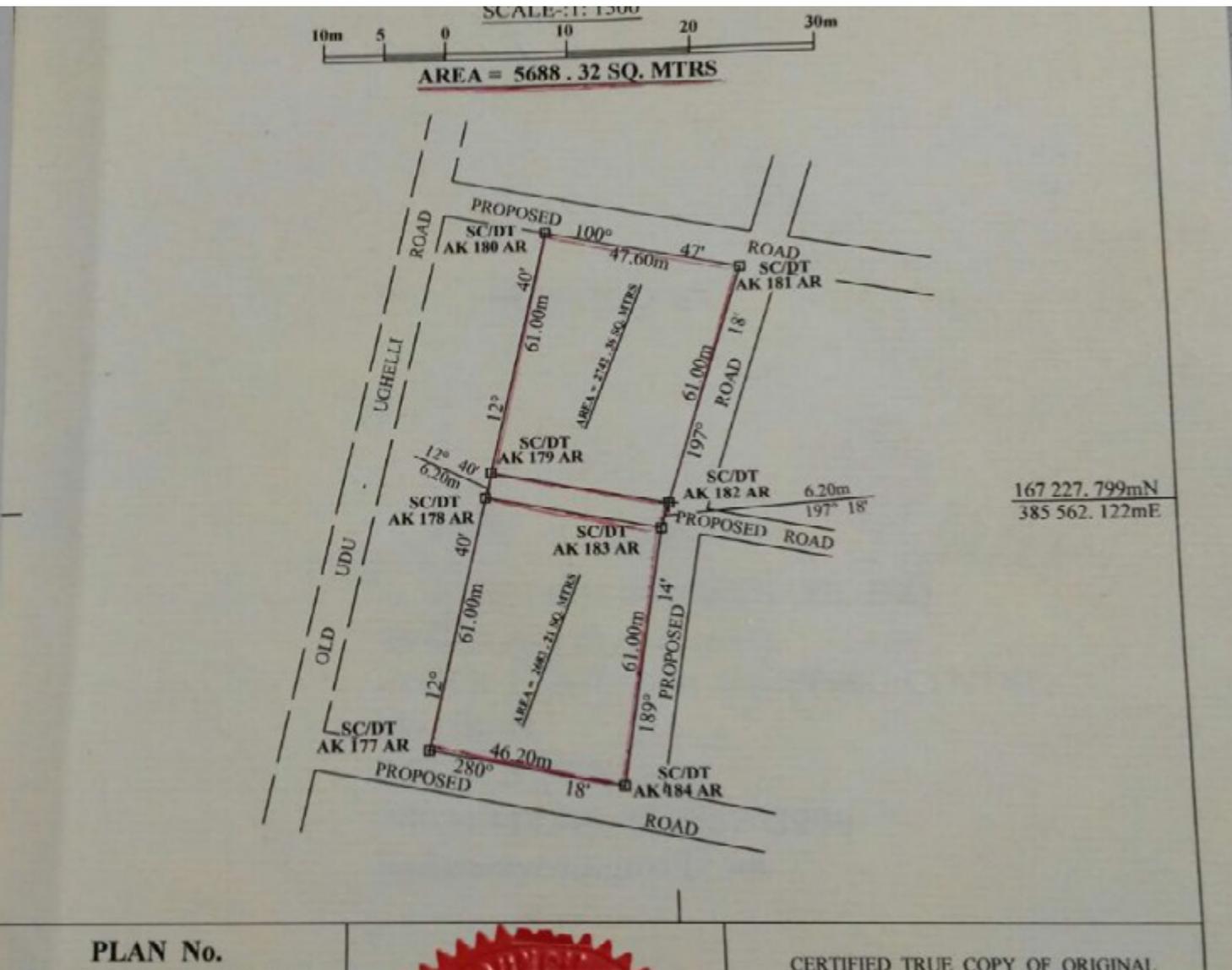


Stories and trajectories in a Nigerian travel agency (N. Nassenstein 2017)



Christmas greetings (A. Storch, screenshot 2016)





Festus bought land for a school, back home in Nigeria  
(F. Badaseraye 2017)



A school in the village, during Festus' visit back home  
(F. Badaseraye 2017)



07

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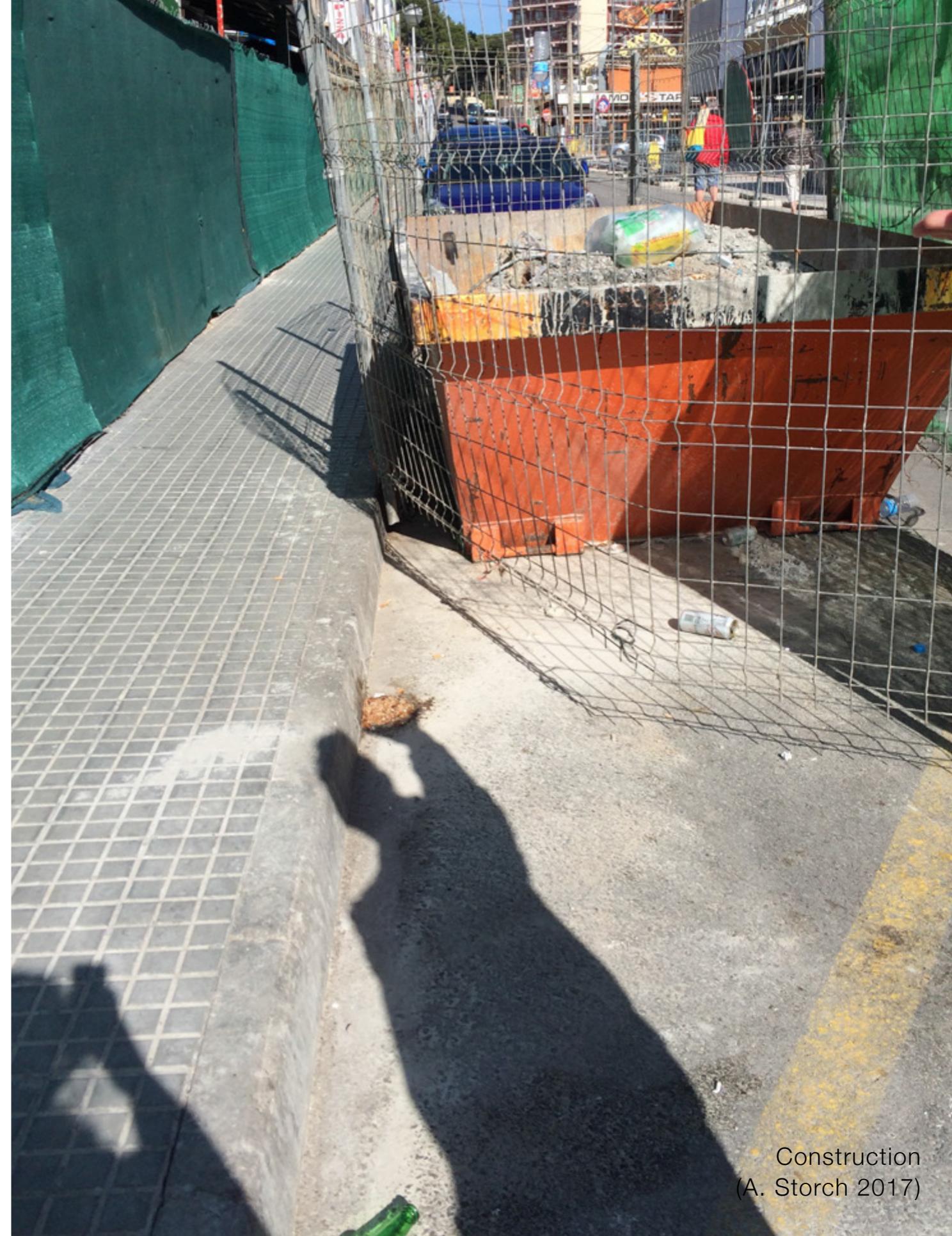
Reflections

# Reflections

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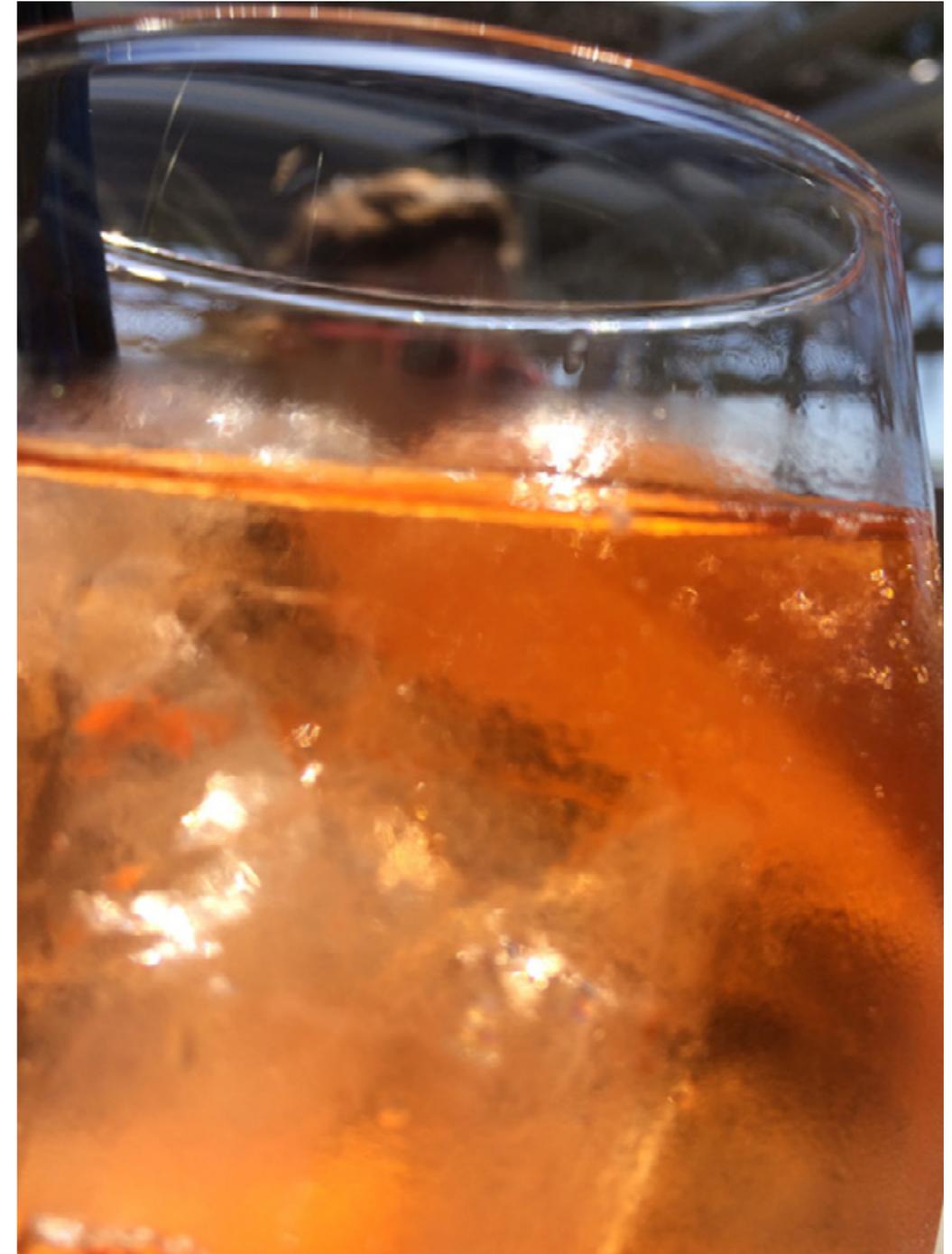
While doing an extraordinary kind of fieldwork, the researchers experienced and actively questioned their position as 'academic visitors'. As actors respectively representatives of established institutions of the 'Global North', it seems necessary to critically analyze one's own constructions and deconstructions.

These spontaneous pieces of self-expression seek to highlight the debate on a par with all of the actors, including those of the 'Global South'. Voice notes, conversations and photographs are used to critically reflect the constructed figures and their impact on identity concepts. Instead of othering different cultural groups, the researchers have attempted rather to other and objectify their own incorporated and expressed culture.





Mirror I  
(A. Storch 2016)



Team filter  
(A. Storch 2017)



Mirror II  
(A. Storch 2017)



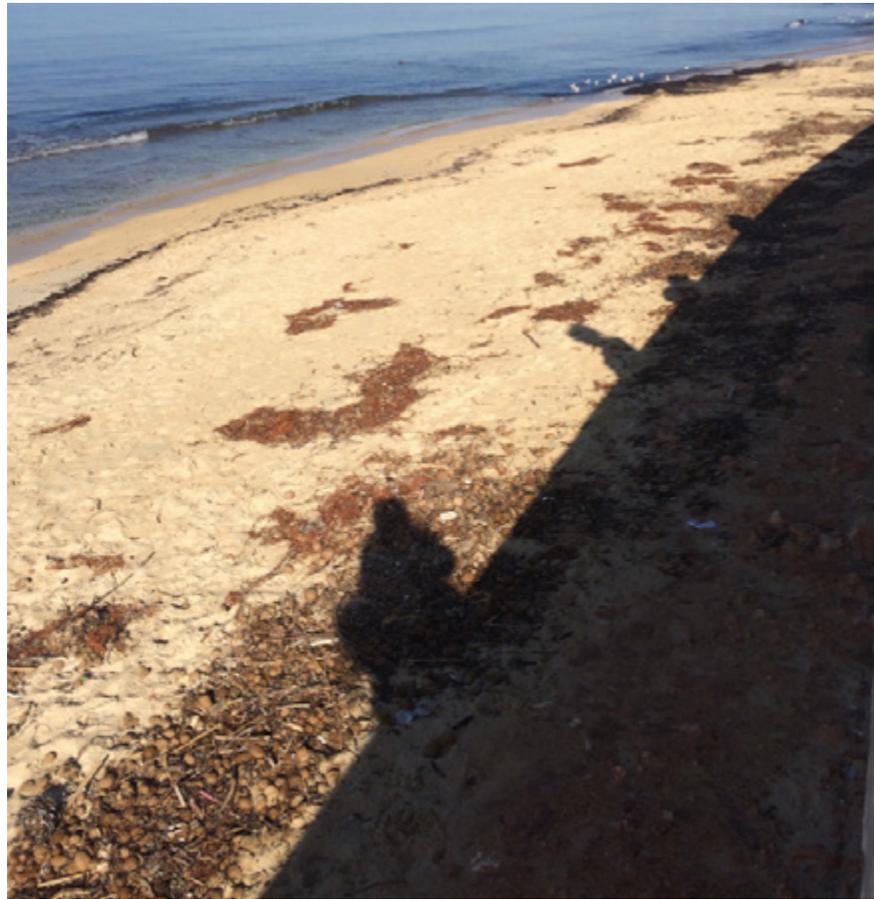
Yes!  
(A. Mietzner 2017)





Collecting data in the drinking  
halls with tourist interactions  
(J. Traber 2017)





Team on beach  
(A. Storch 2017)



Man, can, me  
(A. Storch 2017)





Now what?  
(A. Mietzner 2017)





Still life with baguette and vendor  
(N. Nassenstein 2016)

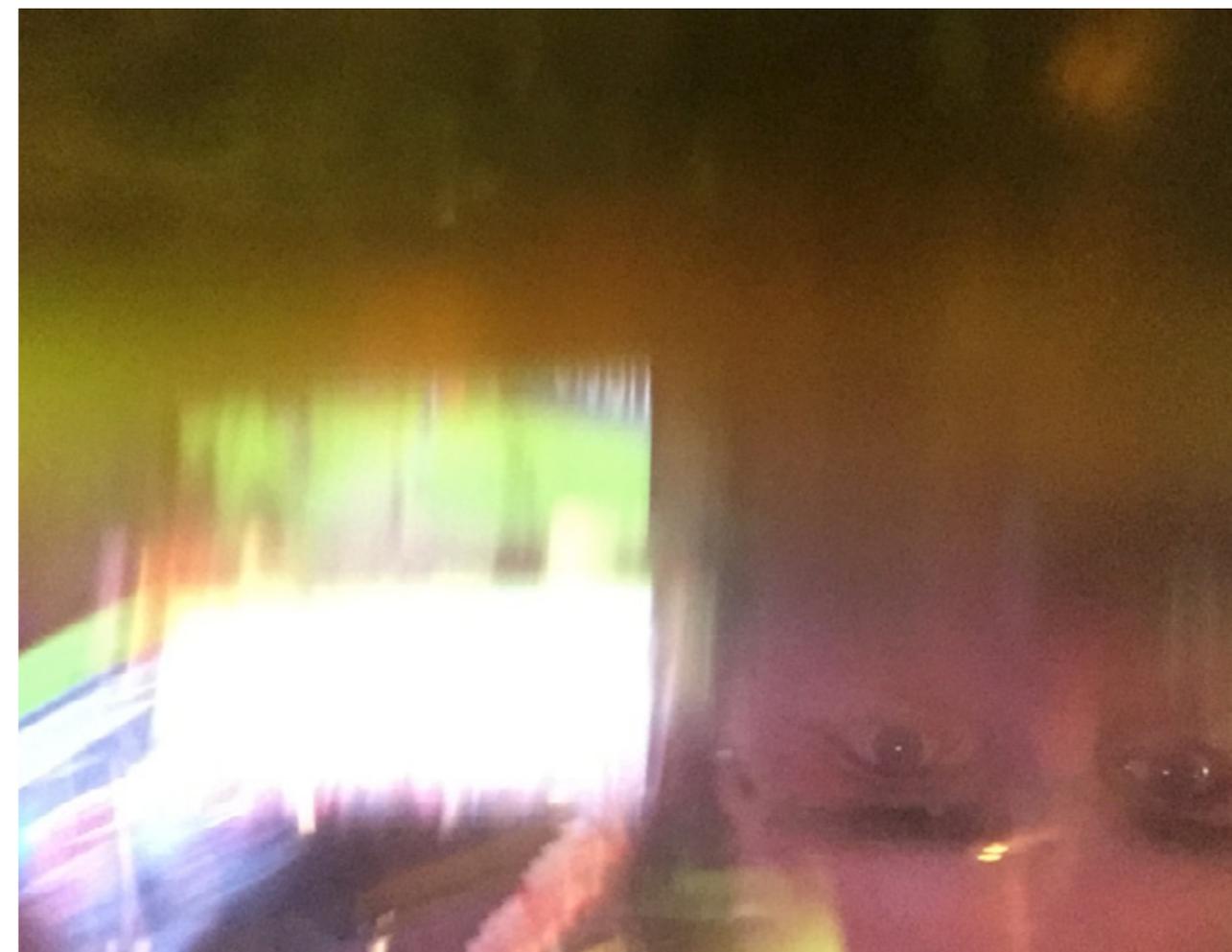


Du hast die Haare schön  
(A. Mietzner 2017)





Mutual snapshots, hiding behind cans  
(N. Nassenstein 2017)



Watery eyes  
(N. Nassenstein 2017)





With singer Jürgen Drews, the King of Mallorca  
(N. Nassenstein 2016)



Interactions  
(J. Traber 2017)





Untitled  
(J. Traber 2017)



08

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Shrines

# Shrines

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Working at the *Ballermann* also means being visible in a special way. While the performances of the visitors are an essential part of everyday practice in public spaces (such as clubs and at the beach), the staff working in more secluded, largely invisible spaces (such as toilets) create their own performances and turn the private into something public. Instead of being silent and invisible, the Nigerian women working as cleaning staff interact with the tourists by singing and joking, and by offering perfumes, deodorants or sweets to them. Assuming the role of mothering figures, they create an ambiguous image of Mami Wata and her altars. The equipment of their shrines needs to be carefully watched over, because their customers sometimes steal money, perfumes or deodorants. After several research stays, we also discovered other shrines which only became visible at second or third glance.





Off-season I  
(A. Storch 2017)



Off-season II  
(A. Storch 2017)

*Circles left by previous displays  
of perfumes and finery*



Mami Wata I  
(A. Storch 2017)





Mami Wata II  
(A. Storch 2016)



Work II  
(A. Storch 2016)





Keeping publics apart: Guests only (A. Storch 2016)

*Sign written in German and French, in order to keep Senegalese street vendors out.*



Alternative European "shrine" I (J. Traber 2017)



Alternative European "shrine" II (J. Traber 2017)





Bonjour tristesse: Dancing shrines  
(Nassenstein 2016)



# 09

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Afterword

# Afterword

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

Angelika St. Orch, Nico Schneider, Nina Traber, Anne-Janine and Nassenstein M. Ietzner

### 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<sup>1</sup>. 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"<sup>2</sup>; 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

<sup>2</sup> 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 misogynist “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	<i>Nelawal bou bakh signifie dors bien</i>	( <i>nelawal bou bakh</i> means sleep well)
N	<i>ohhhhh cool</i> <i>j'ai bcp oublié</i> (Emoji: Monkey covering his eyes)	(oh cool I forgot a lot)
A	<i>Ne t'inquiète de rien tu vas en recevoir plus</i> <i>A demain</i>	(don't worry you will get more of that, till tomorrow)
N	<i>Ok cool haha a demain!!</i>	(ok cool, haha, till tomorrow!)
A	<i>Tschuss morgän</i>	(bye, tomorrow)
N	<i>Tschüss! Bis morgen mein Freund</i>	(bye, till tomorrow my friend)
A	<i>Tank chun je ne sais pas si j ai bien écrit</i>	(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 morga*), 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.

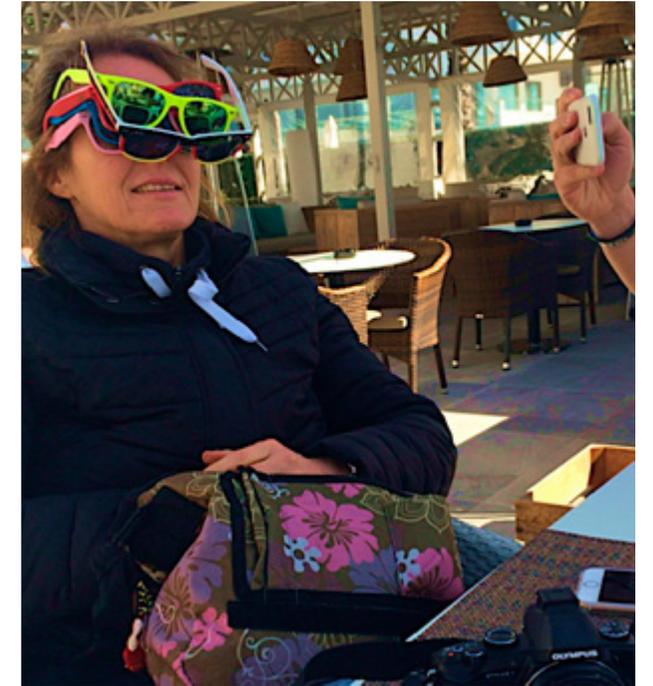
Hieronymus Bosch's painting *Ship of Fools* (1490-1500) seems to be an adequate visual metaphor of our Mallorca research trips, seen from the perspective of the above-mentioned critical voices; the entire title of the painting is *The Ship of Fools, or the Satire of the Debauched Revelers*. The Louvre, 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

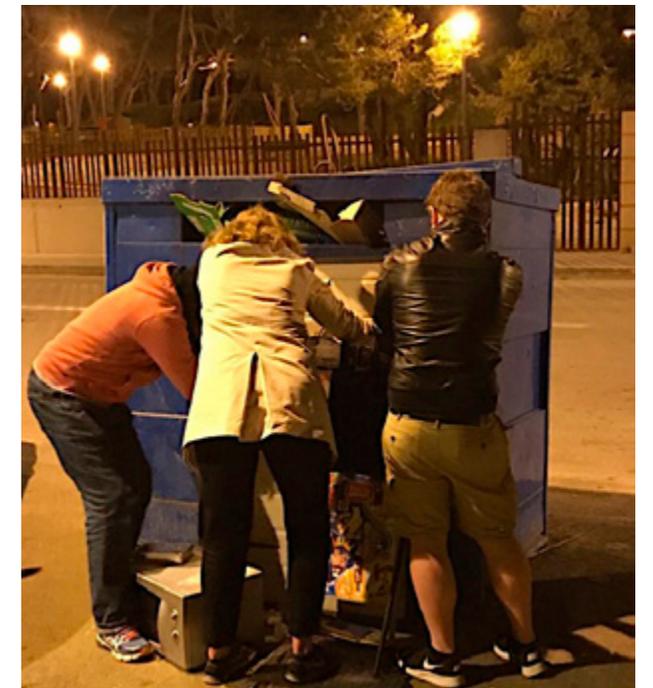
there is only one such figure, and he appears as if to clarify the meaning of the painting. It is probable that a work which depicts people drinking and delirious, obsessed with food and drink, is a satire on monks and an ironic criticism of the drunkenness that deprives them of their reason and their souls.<sup>2</sup>

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.

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



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



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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Authors

# Authors



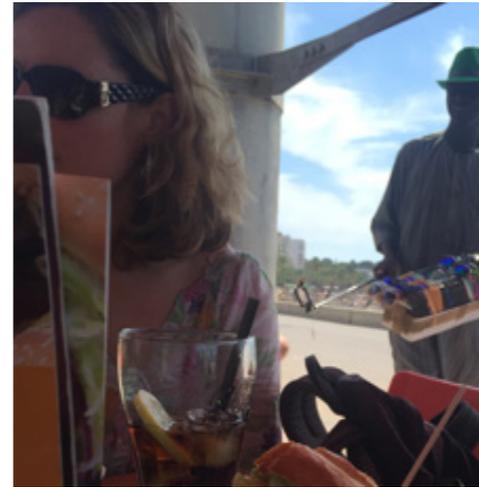
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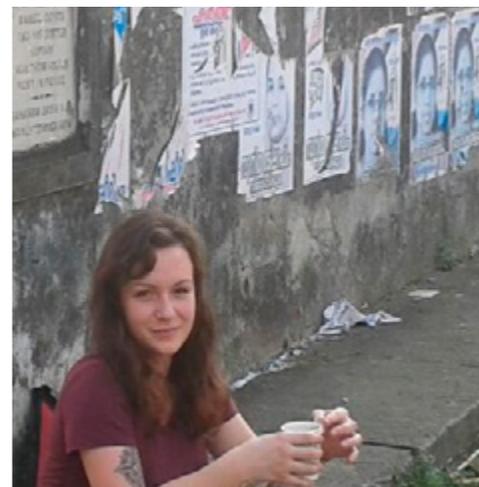
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