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"Hotel Royal" – Tourist Accommodation and Detention Camp

E-Paper

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Introduction

"The hotel" has been used as a chronotope for a certain modern lifestyle in the urban centres of the Old World (e.g. Clifford 1997), contrasted by "the motel" as metaphor for a rather postmodern way of life (e.g. Löfgren 1995). Both metaphors have been criticized because of their biased presentation of travel that does not reflect class, race and gender inequalities, and ethnographic interest has turned to women, servants, and hotel staff (e.g. Adler/Adler 2004) in order to compensate for the predominant travel historiography.

If we turn to the external borders of the European Union in the Mediterranean now, we are confronted with the result of the tremendous tourism development of the last decades and at the same time we may follow the implementation of the European border regime with its consequences for migrants on their way to Europe. Located in this context, "the hotel" becomes important beyond its metaphorical meaning for a certain lifestyle and its material relevance as working environment.

I would like to illustrate this at the example of the "Hotel Royal", which is located a few kilometres away from the Cretan capitol of Iráklion. In summer, the hotel serves as a tourist accommodation for less privileged Greek citizens from the North of Greece who are once a year entitled to state-sponsored vacations on one of the Greek islands. When we – a political scientist, a sociologist and a cultural anthropologist from Germany – visited the "Hotel Royal" in September 2004, the touristic peak season had already come to an end. However, about 140 persons were said to stay currently in the hotel. But no one could be noticed on the balconies, when we arrived, and the entrance hall was totally deserted. We were told that the hotel guests were not allowed to leave the first floor of the building or to use the balconies.

When we went upstairs we found three men sitting in the corridor playing cards. Two of them were wearing uniforms of the Greek navy. They kept an eye on the guests and made sure that no one escaped from the hotel. The third card player – like the rest of the hotel guests – was a so-called "refugee" from Egypt or Palestine. The men had left Alexandria heading for the Italian coast. A week ago, their ship almost sank in the midst of the Mediterranean Sea. Greek coast guards rescued the passengers and brought them to Crete. Originally, the ship's crew had consisted of six persons. Since two of them had disappeared, the police arrested the remaining four and one of the passengers. The other passengers were

temporarily accommodated in the "Hotel Royal" that in the low season serves as a detention camp.

We spoke with some passengers. One of them introduced himself as the headmaster of a school in Egypt. He explained that he had paid 2.000 Euro for the crossing to Italy. He was told that they were going to bring him to a big ship where he would get provided with a passport and a visa. Nothing like that happened in the end. So he was left with no official documents at all. Others had similar stories to tell.

The "mobility turn"

The "Camp-Hotel Royal" is a place where different mobility projects that significantly shape the contemporary European landscape can be localized and observed. Mobility has become a major concern in anthropology and the social sciences. The cultural anthropologist Gisela Welz (2004, 410), for instance, states: "During the 1990s, globalization processes started to become prominent objects of anthropology. In particular, migration, mobility and the social groups they produce – refugees, tourists, labor migrants – were put on anthropology's research agenda." And recent developments in sociology tend to proceed in the same direction, when for example a "mobility turn" or a "'new mobilities' paradigm" is declared that is supposed to "challenge the ways in which much social science research has been relatively 'a-mobile' until recently" as Hannam, Sheller and Urry (2006, 5) put it in their editorial to the first volume of their journal with the trendsetting title "Mobilities" which was published last year. It seems to be more and more acknowledged that "mobility is increasingly the norm not only for Westerners and highly qualified workers, but also for capital, goods, information, and services" (Pécoud/de Guchteneire 2006, 76) and that access to mobility has become a powerful stratifying factor (Bauman 1998, 307).

However, migration on the one and tourism studies on the other hand which actually both have specialized on the analysis of mobility, largely used to stick to the norm of settledness.[1] Just as many migration studies used to concentrate on the encounter of sedentary natives and mobile migrants, who belong to two different, clearly definable cultures, studies on tour-

[1] While the paradigm of transnationalism has found its way into migration studies (Glick Schiller/ Basch/Szanton Blanc 1997) in order to give consideration to mobility as normal course of life for an increasing number of people worldwide, tourism studies remained to a large extent unaffected by this concept {for an exception see Jana Binder (2004) on backpacking as a transnational form of tourism}.

ism usually assume that there are sedentary hosts on the one and mobile tourists on the other hand. While migration in classic migration research is understood as a unique, unidirectional process resulting in resettlement, tourism is mostly understood as a temporary time-out from settled life. In both research traditions sedentariness is considered as the norm and mobility as deviation, which in case of migration may lead to identity crises for the immigrant and to integration problems for the host society, and in the case of tourism may have negative effects on the authentic lifestyle of host societies. (see Römhild 2002, 179-84)

Since the mid-1990s now an increasing number of scholars stress the normality of mobility. Most of the theoretical and empirical studies that are conducted in the wake of the "mobility turn" start from certain dichotomies that I would like to "Europeanize" (see Hess/Tsianos 2007; Beck/Grande 2004, 186) in the following, that means to locate them in the historically specific context of the contemporary European mobility regime and critically asses their plausibility against the backdrop of my empirical example of "Hotel Royal". These dichotomies are:

1. Voluntary and forced mobility
2. Mobility and immobility
3. Tourism and migration

1. Voluntary and forced mobility

After the Cretan coast guards had brought the ship from Alexandria under their control, one of the first actions they took was to separate out the tour operators who due to the difficult mobility conditions at the external borders of the European Union are usually called "smugglers of human beings". Thus, the first gathering of the new arrivals which took place in the lobby of "Hotel Royal" was not for the welcome cocktail but to let the passengers identify the members of the ship's crew. The four crewmembers whom they identified were, however, not sufficient. The police knew that there had been more, so they also arrested one of the passengers. This is at least what some migrants in "Hotel Royal", with whom we spoke later, told us. They were planning to go on hunger strike to extort the release of the fifth arrested person.

Many of the passengers had paid quite a lot of money for the crossing to Italy, but didn't reach their destination in the end. Where do we get, if we apply the distinction between "obligatory "and "voluntary" forms of travel (see e.g. Hannam/Sheller/Urry 2006, 10) here? Is it done with the explanation that circumstances may have forced them but that the men from Alexandria voluntarily gave their money to "smugglers" and so have willingly engaged in a criminal enterprise?

At any rate this explanation would fit in certain measures of the European mobility regime. On 15th of November 2000 the general assembly of the United Nations have passed a comprehensive convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UN TOC) and supplementary protocols against trafficking in human beings, in particular in woman and children, as well as against smuggling of migrants. The basic definitions formulated in these protocols have been adopted in the convention of the Council of Europe against trafficking which was signed by 14 countries on 16th of May 2005.

The UNHCR stressed the importance of a clear distinction between trafficking and smuggling. Whereas trafficking is said to be characterized by the disdain of human rights of the persons concerned (the "victims"), smuggling is rather defined as an offence against immigration regulations, as aiding and abetting people to cross a national border by ignoring the regulations for legal entry into a state, with the aim to directly or indirectly achieve financial or other material advantages. (UNHCR 2003)

Jacqueline Bhabha (2005) points out that "[t]he Trafficking and Smuggling Protocols are framed around a central dichotomy between coerced and consensual irregular migrants. Whereas people who are trafficked are assumed not to have given their consent and are considered to be 'victims' or 'survivors', people who are smuggled are considered to have willingly engaged in a criminal enterprise". She stresses that "[t]here is also a gender dimension to these distinctions: whereas those who are smuggled are mostly assumed to be men, victims of trafficking are associated with the traditional targets of protective concern — women and children".

The distinction between trafficking and smuggling is, however, difficult to implement in practice, since the underlying distinction between "consent" and "coercion" (Lenz 2003) can seldom be clearly drawn. "Pure" cases of one or the other are rare. These dichotomies are, however, central for the legitimization of the European migration politics. They allow for a certain management of migration. With the official objective to smash "trafficking networks"

and "smuggling gangs" intensified border controls may be legitimated as humanitarian measures, which serve the prosecution of crimes and the protection of "victims". Thus, the "movement of migration" is split up in "villains" on the one and "victims "on the other hand (Bojadžijev/Karakayalı 2007, 206) as the example of the first evening in "Hotel Royal" may illustrate, when the "tour operators" were sorted out as "smugglers" by the police and separated from the rest.

So, if we do mobility research and speak about "victims" and "villains" of illegal border crossing, if we differentiate between "refugees" and "labour migrants" and make a distinction between "forced" and "voluntary" mobility, we do not necessarily apply analytically useful terms to the description of the mobile reality, but we might rather run the risk to uncritically adopt categories on which the European border regime as well as EU funded research projects are based.

2. Mobility and immobility

For the Egyptian and Palestinian travellers on their way to Italy the journey came to a sudden end in Crete. They were stuck in the detention camp and couldn't do anything but wait. Is the camp thus a suitable place to track "the power and politics of discourses and practices of mobility in creating both movement and stasis", as Hannam, Sheller and Urry (2006, 3-4) put it?

Scholars have acknowledged that it was the mobility of people that caused the erosion of the immobilizing equation of "territory, identity and nationality" (Beck/Grande 2004, 193, transl. by R.L.[2]) and blew up "the co-denotation of group, culture and territory" (Welz 1994, 67). When the nexus of "state, nation (birth) and territory" broke off, the nation state entered a state of crisis, and in this crisis the camp gained ground, as Giorgo Agamben (2002 [1995], 185) explains.

What happens in the camp, according to Agamben, is the stable spatial installation of the state of exception, which was originally only a temporary abolition of the legal order. Agamben puts it like that: "The camp is the space, which opens up when the state of exception begins to become the rule." (ibid., 177) He stresses explicitly that the camps of these days can

[2] Any English quotation from a German text (see references) has been translated by Ramona Lenz.

be found in seemingly harmless places such as hotels. If we follow Agamben's argumentation, places like "Hotel Royal" actually define a space where the normal order is in fact abolished. At such a place it does no longer depend on the law what happens with its inhabitants, but on the civility and ethics of the police, which act here temporarily as sovereign. (ibid., 183-4)

At our visit in the "Hotel Royal" we learned that most inhabitants were waiting for their deportation. Some of them were planning to apply for the status of asylum seekers. The Egyptians among them would rather not do so, because after their very probable deportation back to Egypt. They otherwise would have to fear imprisonment back in Egypt because of treason, and new attempts to migrate would become more difficult, as a representative of Amnesty International Iráklion explained us later. The fears to be deported are absolutely justified, because organizations like the UNHCR or the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and other powerful actors of the European border regime, which took on the concern for human rights issues from the nation states, usually proceed in such cases in accordance with the principle that people should live where "their homeland" is, where their "folks" are "at home" (Düvell 2002, 107-8)

However, it is by no means inevitable, that an illegal journey into the European Union ends in repatriation, even if one is already caught in a detention camp. An application for asylum, made in a camp in Greece, can thoroughly help to obtain a temporary residence permit in the country. Only a very small number of applications for asylum are accepted in the end, but the application offers the possibility to get a legal residence status until the case is dealt with, and once you are there, you may try to overstay illegally. From other camps in Greece it is known that camp inhabitants are released after three months with a document that calls on them to "voluntarily" leave the country within a fortnight "in a direction of their choice". That gives them the possibility to continue their journey to mainland Greece and Europe. It may take one to two years until it finally comes to an interview with the applicant. "This administrative practice documents an openly admitted political calculation: that the migrants don't show up for the interview and remain illegally in the country or continue their journey", as Efthimia Panagiotidis and Vassilis Tsianos (2007, 72-3) put it.

Hence, we wouldn't understand the camp properly, if we considered it to be a place of total immobilization. On the contrary, it can become an entrance ticket to the West. It may be re-

garded as "as the spatialized attempt to temporarily control people's movements by administering their routes" (Panagiotidis/Tsianos 2007, 79). Detention camps do obviously not aim at the total prevention of illegal border crossings but rather at their regulation according to the needs of the labour market. Rather than representing moments of immobility, they are means "to control mobility by deceleration" (Panagiotidis/Tsianos 2007, 81). Thus, instead of concentrating only on the extremes of mobility and immobility we may have to focus on moments of acceleration and deceleration to understand the European mobility regime.

3. Tourism and migration

Tourism and migration have become widely used in reflections on mobility in order to determine the poles of contemporary mobility projects according to the dichotomies of "voluntary" versus "forced" mobility or immobility. In many cases the length of the stay and the conditions of the journey – forced or not – are used to underline the difference. A rather prominent polarizer of mobility is Zygmunt Bauman who formulates a contrast between "tourists" and "vagabonds" as follows: "The tourists stay or move at their heart's desire. They abandon the site when the new, untried opportunities beckon elsewhere. The vagabonds, however, know that they won't stay for long, however strongly they wish to, since nowhere that they stop are they welcome. The tourists move because they find the world within their reach irresistibly *attractive*; the vagabonds move because they find the world within their reach unbearably *inhospitable*." (Bauman 1998, 309)

I have tried to elaborate that the opposition of "voluntariness" and "force" is not necessarily adequate to analyze different forms of mobility under the conditions of the European mobility regime. Also the length of a stay does not really help to differentiate between travelling for touristic or migratory purposes. This becomes particularly true if we look at mobility projects in the Mediterranean. In the Mediterranean tourist-migration area tourists, hosts and migrants interact with each other, tourist and migrant practices overlap and intermingle. Returning "guest workers" from Germany open businesses in the tourism sector; former tourists from Norway settle down at the Mediterranean coast, become residents and employ construction workers from Poland and domestic helpers from Sri Lanka; Albanian immigrants with or without papers work in tourism related jobs, Moldavian citizens enter with

tourist visa in order to work, and "refugees" from Egypt are accommodated in hotels which are not fully booked like the "Hotel Royal", to give just a few examples.

Doubtlessly the situation of the men from Alexandria whom we met in the "Hotel Royal" differs significantly from that of the tourists who had occupied the hotel a few weeks before. Only the fact, that they were accommodated at the same place doesn't make them travellers of the same class. However, the hotel is an expression of the fact that migration and tourism materialize in some respects very similarly and with similar consequences for the polity.

With the "provisional accommodations and camps" for migrants and the "building projects of the tourism industry [...] a whole world of strange interim solutions, of seasonal or temporarily occupied places, sometimes over-crowded, sometimes totally deserted" is created (Holert/Terkessidis 2006). These provisional solutions have a "hybrid, multifunctional character" (ibid., 251) and allow for very different utilizations. Increasingly they become what we paradoxically might call "permanent interim solutions" (ibid., 48) for "people who are absent, who commute, who pass by in summer, who wait" (ibid., 127). Especially in the Mediterranean, the European pleasure periphery at the external borders of the EU, more and more "zones in the permanent state of exception" (ibid., 169) come into being. Not only many migrants but also many of the tourists who occupy these zones are often without papers. Even though Europeans are allowed to move without restrictions within the European Union, they have to register when they stay longer in a country different from their country of passport. Only very few, however, in fact do so. (ibid., 181)

Conclusion

Hence, at the edges of Europe – but also in its presumed centres – more and more places without a public emerge, which are inhabited by people without political rights and which materialize for tourists and migrants in similar infrastructures and technologies. From the perspective of technological progress the night sensing equipment that is used by the border police to detect migrants of the global South who try to enter the European Union seems to be equivalent to the monitoring cameras that are installed in order to protect the vacation colonies of the tourists, the houses of the re-migrants and the apartments of the residents from the North. "Water, electricity, and a highway seem to be sufficient as connection to the

polity. What is in the making here and all over Europe are whole cities without citizens", as Tom Holert and Mark Terkessidis (2006, 139) put it.

Against this backdrop it is no accident that the men from Alexandria were accommodated in "Hotel Royal", a place that offers the perfect architecture and infrastructure for their temporary storage and surveillance – not *that* perfect actually: A few days after our visit we learned that a small group of the "refugees" had managed to escape from the hotel-camp and disappeared.

At the example of "Hotel Royal" we may see that the conventional differentiation of tourism on the one and migration on the other hand and their separate analysis in the wake of different research traditions falls short of the reality of mobilities that currently shape the European landscape. The "mobility turn" of the 1990s seems to have brought about some new perspectives that, however, seem to need further differentiation when applied to the current European mobility regime.

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