

THE ATMOSPHERIC GRID OF CRUISING ON THE HIGH SEAS

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Summary: The paper identifies ‘the atmospheric grid of cruising on the high seas’ as collective basis for the individual atmospheric perception. Embedded in the current academic discourse on research involving atmospheres, we developed a theoretical concept that is tailored to the particular characteristics of cruise ships. Practical experiences, empirical analysis and discursive introspections show that the atmospheric grid can be broken down into the five dimensions of ‘movement’, ‘disappearing’, ‘reflection’, ‘simulation’ and ‘guidance’. Since the analytically recognized atmospheric dimensions overlap, the ‘atmospheric grid’ is experienced as a whole on cruise ships. This forms the basis for each passenger’s individual atmospheric perception of cruising on the high seas.

Zusammenfassung: Der Aufsatz erarbeitet das ‚atmosphärische Gitter der Kreuzfahrt auf hoher See‘ als gemeinsame Basis zur individuellen Wahrnehmung des Atmosphärischen. Eingebettet in den aktuellen wissenschaftlichen Diskurs der Atmosphärenforschung wurde ein theoretischer Entwurf konzipiert, der auf die Besonderheiten des Ortes Kreuzfahrtschiff zugeschnitten ist. Im Zuge der lebensweltlichen Erfahrungen, der empirischen Analysen und der diskursiven Introspektionen konnten die fünf Dimensionen ‚Bewegen‘, ‚Entschwinden‘, ‚Spiegeln‘, ‚Simulieren‘ und ‚Führen‘ isoliert werden: Auf Kreuzfahrtschiffen herrscht ein ‚atmosphärisches Gitter‘ vor, in dem sich die analytisch erkannten atmosphärischen Dimensionen überlagern und als Ganzes wahrgenommen werden. Dies erzeugt die Basis für Passagiere zur individuellen atmosphärischen Wahrnehmung auf Kreuzfahrten.

Keywords: Atmosphere, atmospheric grid, cruise ship, postmodernism, tourism

1 Introduction

According to a SPIEGEL ONLINE article from March 5, 2015, “Germany is Europe’s leader when it comes to vacation cruises”¹⁾. A pleasure cruise on a specially built ship following a set route from port to port seems to be *en vogue* with all sectors of society. The television series ‘The Love Boat’ (1977–86)²⁾ sparked a veritable boom in America’s cruise industry and resulted in the rapid expansion of cruise fleets in the 1980s, which in turn led to an increase in European cruise passengers. The number of German travelers has grown steadily from 306,000 in 1998 to 1.77 million people in 2014 (DRV 2015). Cruise types range from the classic ocean cruise to various themed cruises as well as three-day river excursion trips, weekly round trip tours and boat transfers lasting up to several months. There is a wide variety of price categories and regions (such as the Caribbean, Mediterranean or North Sea) to choose from as well as different ships for almost

all socio-economic groups. The idea behind cruises is based on the notion of constantly setting sail and constantly being on the go and can be summed up with the phrase ‘sail away’³⁾. This means that a cruise is an absolute, permanently repetitive departure from a port and the prevailing conditions there. ENZENSBERGER (1958) characterized vacation travel with the start of modern mass tourism as ‘getting away from it all’. This alternative to everyday life is distinguished by potential romantic adventures and illusionary hedonistic expectations. It pertains to the expectations of tourists and is thus inseparable from the definition of a cruise (KWORTNIK 2008, 295). The passengers’ subjective feelings of desire and freedom are substantial elements of cruises and are generated and strengthened through extensive marketing and strategic management.

A cruise ship is a vessel designed for navigating the high seas that simultaneously restricts and expands the passengers’ space. The rules of navigation, the nautical requirements and the situation at sea limit construction possibilities and human activities:

¹⁾ In order to insure readability, all German quotes have been translated into English.

²⁾ The ZDF series ‘Das Traumschiff’ has been the German equivalent of ‘The Love Boat’ since 1981.

³⁾ Solano’s cover version of Enya’s ‘Orinoco Flow’ is played on all AIDA cruise ships during departure from the harbor. One of the song’s recurring lines is ‘sail away’.

“The ship’s architecture inescapable depends on the ship’s engineering. (...) [Therefore] a passengers’ ship as a floating structure is constantly confronted with safety aspects” (WEILAND 2005, 3–7). The ship’s internal structure is arranged into water and fire bulkheads. As a result, the ship’s structure and the design of the individual areas of the ship are based on the principle of ‘form follows function’. A cruise ship’s interior is always geared towards the clientele for whom the ship was built. The interior design creates a “characteristic ambiance” (WEILAND 2005, 3) that lends each class of ships its own unmistakable note of individuality. Interior architectural stylistic elements create the desired atmosphere in a room: “And we always say that every room has its own character, its own atmosphere, but they work together as a whole. We played a lot with materials, light, and color - especially color. The rooms flow together, and they automatically blend with one another and are carried over into the other rooms. This happens through the interior design, this happens through the ambient noise, this happens through light” (BUNGE and SCHINDLER 2014). This invites and encourages guests to linger or leave, consume and enjoy where they are. We assume that the design of both the cruise and the cruise ship is reflected in and navigated through the dimensions of a phenomenon which we will identify as an ‘atmospheric grid’.

The cruise is framed by events and rituals (e.g. being photographed by staff photographers and sanitizing one’s hand) that adhere to standardized rules. There is a wide variety of entertainment and services offered on board between the ‘welcome party’ and the ‘farewell’: sports activities, parties, entertainment shows, shopping events and art auctions. A differentiated range of shore excursions complements the program.

The goal of this paper is to capture the atmospheric⁴⁾ of cruising on an empirical level. Furthermore, we aim to derive a theoretical concept from those empirical results. The study’s fundamental question is: Which preliminary conditions determine the individual perception of cruising? In other words: How could the framing of the atmospheric perception be conceptualized?

⁴⁾ The terms ‘ambiance’ and ‘atmosphere’ are used interchangeably in the context of this study. There is no agreement amongst scholars as to whether or not the terms describe different concepts (THIBAUD 2015). ADEY et al. (2013, 302) use ‘atmosphere’ with a focus on approaches of affect theory and ‘non-representational theory’, while studies on ‘ambiance’ focus more on subjective and situational perception of and through atmosphere.

2 A theoretical concept for the empirical analysis of the atmospheric of a cruise on the high seas

Academic interest as well as the number of different theoretical approaches to the study of atmospheres has increased to a large extent during the last decade (ANDERSON 2009, BLUM 2010, GOETZ and GRAUPNER 2007, 2011, GRIFFERO 2015, HASSE 2008, 2014, and HEIBACH 2012). For the purpose of this study, we developed a theoretical slide that is tailored to the particular characteristics of a cruise ship. Inspired by SCHMITZ’s phenomenology of the lived body (1964, 2003, 2007, 2014) and BÖHME’s new aesthetics (1993, 2001, 2013) as well as the empirically oriented approaches of HASSE (2002, 2008, 2012, 2014), KAZIG (2007, 2008, 2013) and THIBAUD (2003, 2010, 2015), we summarized selected aspects of their discussions into four theoretical components. In building upon and choosing well accepted theoretical findings on atmospheres, we selected aspects that suit and allow a dialogue with the empirical research and its operational implementation.

(1) Atmosphere should initially be understood as a ‘framing unit’, because atmospheres are “holistic spatial phenomena of expression” (FUCHS 2000, 213) that “influence the whole environment” (THIBAUD 2003, 285; BÖHME 2013, 103). An atmosphere is therefore “more than just the sum of different objects or signals, consecutive feelings or individual patterns of behavior” (THIBAUD 2003, 285); it is a “totality” (BÖHME 2013, 102). An atmosphere is created from different dimensions; however, it only works situationally as a holistic “half-thing”⁵⁾ in the “primitive present” (SCHMITZ 2011, 121). The sensing subject therefore does not perceive the atmosphere, but rather “in accordance with the atmosphere” (THIBAUD 2003, 293). Atmospheres can thus be seen as the framework for perception since they bring us “in direct contact with a situation in its entirety” (THIBAUD 2003, 282).

(2) Atmospheres capture the individual’s lived-body as an ‘affective-emotional feeling’. An atmosphere is experienced immediately and as a feeling, before it can be differentiated into cognitive and physical/sensory variables. This inevitable atmospheric ‘feeling of being captivated’ is also an ‘affective concern’ (SCHMITZ 1993, 48; BÖHME 2001, 46)

⁵⁾ HASSE (2002, 23; emphasis in original) describes an atmosphere as a ‘half thing’ since it is a “special immaterial thing that one can encounter in the world”. The term ‘half thing’ was coined by SCHMITZ (2007, 271).

that addresses the individual emotionally. In addition, atmospheres are heterogeneous, which means that they are experienced as a “mélange of various impressions, perceptions and interpretations” (HASSE 2002, 85). An atmosphere can only be subdivided into individual components at the analytical-reflexive level. In principle, atmospheres can be analyzed and interpreted only after one has felt and experienced them; however, you cannot completely escape or distance yourself from them.

(3) In many respects, atmospheres should be interpreted as ‘procedural states’. THIBAUD (2003, 287) describes atmospheres as ‘dynamic processes’, because they influence our physicality, our behavior and our actions⁶⁾: “An atmosphere can stimulate or relax us, grip or tear us apart, support or paralyze us” (THIBAUD 2003, 289). Atmospheres also constitute space and place, since as a ‘half things’ they are located between subject and object. In particular, atmospheres affect the modalities, in other words the rhythm and form of movement or the execution of actions. THIBAUD (2003, 291) notes that “an atmosphere [corresponds] with a style of movement that is found in everyone who is affected by the atmosphere”. Since an atmosphere is constituted in situations⁷⁾ and a situation is always tied to a location, our movements and actions that are motivated by the atmosphere are also determined by the location where we perform a movement.

(4) Finally, the deliberate ‘programmatically design’⁸⁾ of the situation and/or the situational framing guides the appearance of the atmosphere in a target-oriented and purpose-oriented manner. This programmatic aspect of atmospheres includes strategies to “create the conditions under which the atmosphere can appear” (BÖHME 2013, 105) and at the same time is a constituting dimension of cruises. Following HAHN (2013) and his remarks on ‘Erlebnislandschaften’ (experience-oriented landscapes), that are inspired by BÖHME’S (2001) new aesthetics, it is fundamental that “the effectiveness of the architectural space touches everybody in its immediately perceptible reality” (HAHN 2013, 69).

⁶⁾ THIBAUD (2003, 289) refers here to the approach by GOLDSTEIN (1934) that states that perceptions, behavior and actions are closely related.

⁷⁾ According to SCHMITZ (2008, 36), a situation is “the element in which we live.”

⁸⁾ This knowledge is based on a discussion with Prof. Dr. JÜRGEN HASSE (Goethe University of Frankfurt) following his lecture on ‘Atmosphere and Authenticity’ on November 14, 2013 at the Institute of Geography at the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz.

3 Methodical approach

We approached the issue on two levels. Initially, we analyzed corporate brochures, films, pictures, documentation and scientific studies on modern cruises. In addition to that, we interviewed the managing directors of the leading agency for state-of-the-art cruise ship design and architecture, Kai Bunge and Siegfried Schindler (Partner Ship Design, PSD). Visits to cruise and tourism trade fairs provided information on ocean carriers and gave us insight into their strategies. Their programmatic design approach follows an implicit knowledge based on the conditions of cruising.

The second level refers to the central method for ‘observing’ atmospheres as described by BÖHME (2001, 52): “It is important that you can only determine the character of an atmosphere by exposing yourself to it.” The authors were able to contribute their own travel experiences on various ships to this research. All in all, the knowledge, experience and empirical data based on 17 cruises have been incorporated. The majority of the empirical data such as interviews, discussions, observations and field notes, was gathered during the totalled up 217 days that we spent on cruise ships, usually accompanied by students. The authors discussed and ‘intersubjectified’ their subjective experiences based on their observations, descriptions, self-perceptions and group discussions during a cruise in 2015. We assume that while an atmosphere is experienced individually and personally, there are dimensions to which all individual atmospheric perceptions are related.

The methodological approach combines different techniques of qualitative social and ethnographic research, as discussed for example in the context of non-representational theory and other approaches such as participatory observation, audio protocols and photo documentation. Following VANNINI (2015) and his research on non-representational ethnography, we put the aspects of performativity, corporeality and sensuality in the center of our methodological considerations. Since a cruise is characterized by ritualized and scripted as well as unscripted actions, we focused especially on the performativity of people, places and perceptions that are situationally involved. A second focus was placed on our bodies and on their capacities to be affected by and to affect the cruise, because we consider “the researcher’s body [is] the key instrument for knowing, sensing, feeling, and relating to others and self” (VANNINI 2015, 321). In order to ascertain these affective aspects and to identify the atmospheric dimensions of cruising on

the high seas, we included elements of the method of the ‘parcours commentés’, a well-established method for empirical studies on atmospheres (THIBAUD 2001, HASSE 2002, KAZIG 2008). For this kind of participant observation, it was essential to become immersed and to reflect upon this immersive experience. Within the processes of immersion and reflection all sorts of influences were studied, including elements such as odors, colors and how surfaces feel.

Our empirical research concentrated on isolating atmospheric dimensions, which applied to the specified theoretical criteria and were perceivable throughout the entire cruise. During the on-board research, it is important not to confuse perceiving or experiencing the atmospheric of the cruise with the “micro-atmospheres” (EDENSOR 2015, 84) on the ship. The atmospheric dimensions of the cruise overlap, distort or determine the local micro-atmospheres, which are marketed in the ads as dignified, intimate, informal, personal, modern, casual, comfortable or cozy. They develop at specific staged locations on the ship, for example, in the bar, restaurant, dance club, theater and in the sports area. While those micro-atmospheres are dense and intense because of the highly structured and separated spaces, they only contribute to the experience of the atmospheric grid of the cruise, which encompasses the entire ship, through their integration in the structural framing of the stay.

In particular, three challenges of empirical research on atmospheres need to be considered: the ephemerality and transience of atmospheres (KAZIG 2008, 152), the status of atmospheres as ‘half things’ (HASSE 2002, 76 et seq.) and the apparent contradiction between (participatory) observation and (atmospheric) experience. Participatory observation therefore always took place with the intention of complete immersion in the events. The notes and voice protocols took all fields and elements into consideration that are impacted in and through the lived body, on both the subject and the object side. The observations and experiences were then gradually compiled, condensed and abstracted in strategic group meetings, applying the method of discursive introspection.⁹⁾ In a final step, following hermeneutic methods, the data have been edited, progressively reduced and interpreted.

⁹⁾ Discursive introspection is the explication and interpretation of individual observations and experiences in a group setting. Thoughts and impressions are therefore not only associated with one’s own reference patterns, but also analyzed in the context of their integration in intersubjective, comprehensible everyday structures (DICK 2009, 38).

4 The ‘atmospheric grid of cruising on the high seas’

Practical experiences, empirical analysis and discursive introspections show that the cruise ship, activities and shore excursions merge into an atmospheric grid that can be broken down into the five dimensions of ‘movement’, ‘disappearing’, ‘reflection’, ‘simulation’ and ‘guidance’. In an empirical setting, the individual atmospheric dimensions cannot be considered on their own: In the world of a cruise ship, they only occur intertwined as a ‘grid’. That grid and its interwoven dimensions give then rise to atmospheres that are holistically and individually perceived by passengers on the cruise. Every atmosphere that can be experienced on the cruise is thus based on and shaped by this atmospheric grid and its dimensions. This also becomes apparent in the following description of the individual dimensions, since the attributes apply to very different perceptions. They are contradictory and simply must be described as (post) post-modern.

4.1 The comprehensive atmospheric dimension ‘movement’

Like every ship, the cruise ship is always on the move. The ship and the sea create a dynamic movement in all three spatial directions. The ship is constantly moving regardless of whether it is anchored or in the port or whether it is at sea. The convulsions and vibrations of the engines, the propellers and the stabilizers further add to this movement. Within the ship there is the ongoing upward and downward movement of the elevators, which are almost constantly in motion. The passenger’s body must permanently interact with the dynamic movements of the ship. The ship’s heaving and maneuvering are counter to normal body dynamics. The passenger cannot escape the movements and the way he is moved, and vibrates along with the ship. The movement becomes a constant drone, a perpetual, unconscious reference of all the senses. In addition to the passengers ‘being moved’ on and in the ship, one must also consider the movements of the passengers themselves, which are subjected to the act of ‘being moved’. Embarking, climbing stairs and walking in the passageways and corridors, dancing and playing on board intensifies the movement of the passenger. “At sea, a room’s floor feels somehow 3D, and your footing demands a slight attention that good old static land never needs” (WALLACE 1997, 283). There are also the movements from the passengers’ repeated em-

barking and disembarking for shore excursions. The gangway passengers must use to travel between land and the ship is also constantly in motion.

'Being moved' and 'moving' constitute the background of the cruise ship's comprehensive atmospheric dimension of 'movement'. This dimension of the atmospheric grid occurs on every ship and equally affects passengers and crew. It contributes to the passenger's sense of disconcertion, since he can only somewhat anticipate or foresee sudden jerky movements. For example, the individual tolerance of the vessels' motion does vary, which in turn can lead to seasickness. The feeling even persists during shore excursions,¹⁰⁾ because passengers continue to be influenced by their previous efforts to cope with the movements on the ship. Passengers experience a major shift in their relation to the world.

4.2 The detaching atmospheric dimension 'disappearing'

A cruise is characterized by sailing, departing and passing by. The passenger thereby experiences a disappearing of places. The dimension of disappearing is conveyed at various levels during the cruise. Disappearing is perceived with varying intensity in visual, olfactory, acoustic and haptic channels during the entire trip and at almost all locations on the ship.

The detaching atmospheric dimension of disappearing culminates with the departure and distancing of the ship. The shoreline fades on the horizon as the ship sails out to sea; the view of the multifaceted world disappears and the only visual perception is the ocean. This continues to happen; whenever the ship leaves the port, the coast and its residential areas disappear. At the same time, passengers experience a sense of wistfulness due to the departure and desire for another port.

The cruise is dominated by an absence of odors, since the air conditioning and its exhaust systems prevent them from occurring. From the passengers' subjective perception, neither guests nor food emit an odor. Odors are drawn away from the objects and people. Specific odors are released at certain locations, such as during a presentation of baked goods, but those odors are also subject to disappearing. Thanks to air circulation systems even sweat-soaked

athletic apparel that is hung in the cabin loses its odor. Odors vanish from one moment to the next before passengers can notice them. Due to this phenomenon, guests experience a world without odors, comparable to those witnessed in movies.

One perceives to hear the steady sound of background music almost everywhere on the ship. Apart from activities, the volume is controlled in such a way that you can either barely hear the music, or it is just loud enough to drown out other ship-related noises. This leads to the impression that the music seems to be disappearing and stopping. The ambient noise of the ship, which consists of noise from the equipment and people as well as the music, is always present. However, it feels as if the noise, voices and music disappear even though they are constantly present (apart from temporary stretches at night).

The temperature and light controls that are installed in all of the ship's rooms and corridors contribute to the reinforcement of the feeling of disappearing. Passengers claim it gets colder and brighter at the end of a meal in a restaurant. The cool temperatures in the corridors and particularly in the passageways where passengers are not supposed to linger urge guests to keep moving. Temperature controls also ensure that rooms are temporarily kept at different degrees. This phenomenon creates the feeling of the disappearing of warmth and light at almost imperceptible gradations.

4.3 The integrating atmospheric dimension 'reflection'

The elements of nature, ocean, the open air, clouds, wind and sun that are reduced in human perception seem to reflect into each other and communicate with each other on the high seas. People claim to immediately perceive this natural phenomenon as if they are being 'reflected' on their bodies. One feels surrounded by and drawn into nature, even though one is standing on an extremely technical product of human creativity. This may be possible because these natural factors are repeatedly mirrored in the material of the ship, integrating it into the nature of ocean and sky.

The ship's designers have taken this dynamic and transferred it to the ship's space. They mimic nature, 'artificialize' natural plants and transfer the reflective dynamics of nature on the high seas to the design of the interior rooms. Inspired by the reflection of natural elements, the interior designers use colors, shapes, features and patterns that reflect and highlight each other.

¹⁰⁾ The term 'sailor's gait' can be attributed to the swaying of a sailboat, which sailors compensate for with their wide-based gait. They continue this manner of walking on land, and people have the impression that sailors sway when they walk.

The guests are continuously photographed and filmed by a set team of crew members while boarding and leaving the ship. This way, passengers can purchase pictures of themselves from their first day of the cruise onward, and watch themselves on screen in the travel film shown in an endless loop on many monitors placed throughout the ship. Like in a hall of mirrors, the passenger becomes part of the cruise and is reflected in the ship's mirrors, glass walls and monitors. Due to the atmospheric dimension of 'reflection', the passenger fancies himself as the focus of the cruise. Ultimately, everything is reflected in the passenger, which is also reinforced by the taking of 'selfies'. The passenger is depicted in many ways: he or she is mirrored and reflected in the ocean and the sky, in wind and water, as well as in the material of the ship. The passenger's individual being identifies with the cruise. The nature of the ocean and the sky, of above and below, the different yet mutually dependent blue in the ship are captured and transferred through the feeling of 'reflection'.

4.4 The distancing atmospheric dimension 'simulation'

The cruise commands two expansions of simulation. On the one hand, the ship's design simulates nature and culture and the ship's materiality maps semantic relationships that are not inherent. On the other hand, the passengers' activities turn out not to be actual activities that affect the world around them, but rather simulated activities that have limited consequences in the day-to-day world.

The artificiality of the nature on board emphasizes the simulation of the world on board. The carefully designed cruise ship simulates nature. All of the plants, such as the rows of trees and palm trees, are artistically constructed with considerable technical effort using organic material. One of the apparently newest simulation technologies can be seen in a waterfall as on the AIDamar. This waterfall exists through an interplay of several media effects: an endless film loop, lighting effects, air circulation and others. The viewer believes to be seeing, experiencing and feeling a waterfall, although it does not actually consist of water. Designers convert technical dominance into transformed nature, in post-modern hyper-stylized nature; guests have the feeling of being in a technical environment that seems to be organic. The trees, palm trees, flowers and the waterfall are medially simulated realities. Nature is artificially staged and simulated as an artificial super-nature.

On the ship, the guests experience the 'big wide world' through visual art with auctions of more or less significant paintings and prints, through the theater with its musical effects, and through gambling in the casino. Even when the activities are 'real', the guests still perceive them as simulated, because the possible impacts are feigned or pushed into the background. Most actions are only carried out symbolically and not experienced in their full intensity. The numerous leisure and sports activities such as shuffleboard, darts, bingo, volleyball, basketball, roulette and slot machines, dance classes and karaoke usually only have an observational value. Passengers do not engage in the traditional and foreign cultural practices of the countries they visit, but rather enjoy them as folklore in passing.

In most cases, passengers have already been made familiar with most activities on the cruise beforehand through advertising and consulting. Guests are audio-visually prepared so that they know what to do and what to feel at any given moment: Playing games on deck, relaxing on the ship's railings, daydreaming in the spa, flirting at the bar, winning in the casino, touring the city by bus, visiting historic sites, etc. are demonstrated through media and thereby trained in advance. The passenger remembers the prepared script and consciously or unconsciously calls up the appropriate perceptions and feelings that were demonstrated and/or shown to them on the screens throughout the ship, in the advertisements, in the theater presentations, brochures, etc. This atmospheric dimension is accompanied by an expected behavior, because 'simulation' satisfies the needs of the guests: "(...) the goals consumers bring to the cruise context are more likely to be hedonic, experiential, and symbolic than functional (i.e. problem solving)" (KWORTNIK 2008, 306). When the passenger then practically experiences the scene, the media memory mixes with their specific living environment and strengthens their emotions.

4.5 The freeing atmospheric dimension 'guidance'

The ship's logic, its control and the establishment of order and safety on board requires a great deal of time and effort. The entire organization is subject to control, which culminates in the all-pervading authority of the captain. Due to the high complexity of the ship and the number of passengers, it takes a lot of administrative effort to feed, care for, entertain and satisfy them. To do this, it is necessary to control, monitor and guide each passenger in almost all

of their activities. This is achieved by the employment of digital technology. Almost all of the rooms (apart from the cabins) are under constant video surveillance. Regardless of whether a plastic bottle is tossed into the ocean at some point during the day or a guest gains unauthorized entry to the wellness area at some point during the night, the ship's crew (in other words the bridge) is aware of everything that happens. An advertising brochure informs passengers that 'everything is under control', guaranteeing the safety and security of people and belongings.

Passengers' limited behavioral and movement options on board, the architecture, and the instructions of the ship's social and technical organization shape the atmosphere of the cruise. The passenger is quasi-guided through the ship, as well as through the entire trip.

Something is always being 'done' with the guests; they are controlled, monitored, functionalized, managed and guided. They are given the feeling that they can do anything, that all of their needs will be met, and that they are in charge of their own actions. However, due to the dynamics on the ship, this is not the case: Passengers cannot escape the seemingly liberating atmospheric dimension 'guidance', even if they are not (always) consciously aware of this fact.

5 A theory of the atmospheric grid of cruising on the high seas

The atmosphere of the cruise arises from the movement of a place as a place from location to location. The venue of the 'cruise ship' is the integration of the individual places. The cruise ship passenger is at the mercy of the designed and programmed venue of 'cruise ship' on the one hand, and the program of events on the other. The cruise ship operator influences and guides guests on the ship and on land with creative intensity.

The empirical analysis, discursive introspection and hermeneutic interpretation show that an atmospheric grid predominates on cruise ships. In our understanding, an 'atmospheric grid' is a specific basic condition and a dynamic basic structure for atmospheric perception. The grid spreads out from different, separable and intersubjective effective dimensions, which can be isolated empirically.

The atmospheric grid of cruising on the high seas consists, *inter alia*, of the dimension 'movement', which possesses the passenger and influences his body in countless ways anytime and anywhere. The dimension 'disappearing' determines the passenger's

visual, olfactory, auditory and haptic perceptions. The dimension 'reflection' refers to the dominance of visual perceptions. Images and reflections as well as self-images determine perception. These elements convey the feeling of a cinematic and mediated experience that takes place with reduced and self-reducing sensory impressions. The dimension 'simulation' reverses everyday reality, as most activities and experiences are located outside of the passengers' everyday lifeworlds or daily routines. Finally, the dimension 'guidance' leads to the impression of not being able to 'shake off' the location's conditions. Neither the service, the sounds, the noise, the control, the monitoring, the sea nor the rules or any other condition may be turned off or modified.

The dimensions of the atmospheric grid of cruising on the high seas are linked to the theoretical aspects presented in Chapter 2. Each of the five dimensions can be considered a structural element of the atmosphere as a 'framing unit' – and thus a framing unit in itself; no passenger can avoid or ignore its influence. The same applies to the other four theoretical aspects: All dimensions contribute to an affective-emotional mode. For example, if the movements of the ship catch the passenger's material body, the passenger cannot help but 'be moved' in the sphere of his lived body. This movement also depicts the form of atmospheres as procedural states, since the sudden feeling of 'being moved' endures for a short while but at the same time changes the passenger's behaviour and actions. The continuous reflections a passenger encounters and experiences during the cruise also contribute to the notion of atmospheres as procedural states: Every location-based and, in that specific context, ephemeral reflection influences the passengers' immediate perceptions and, through memories and associations linked to the reflections, also their feelings and actions at a later point in time and space. The programmatic design, as the fourth theoretical aspect outlined above, is conveyed for instance in the ship's architectural design which is accompanied by the simulation of nature, as well as in the permanent guidance of passengers by the bridge, the crew and the ship's engine.

The 'atmospheric grid of cruising on the high seas' is perceived as a whole at sea, since the analytically recognized atmospheric dimensions overlap, even if they often appear to be diametrically opposed in the guests' subjective perceptions. Ultimately, an atmospheric grid that might be contrary to the company's and shipping company's sales strategy may unfold on the cruise ship. Its atmospheric dimensions can only be recognized analytically and reflexively; the cruise

clientele is usually not aware of them. With the help of an exuberant service crew, constant activities, media documentation of the (pseudo-)experiences on the trip, a sufficient amount of alcohol, etc., the cruise's atmosphere is shaped and the trip is conveyed to the passenger as individual fulfillment. The growing number of cruise guests suggests the increasing success of the industry's strategy. Many passengers experience and assess the methodically identified and described atmospheric grid of the cruise ship based on the recommendations of cruise line advertising, as illustrated by MANLY (2008, 7): "I am standing at the front of the deck of a cruise ship, the wind is blowing through my long, blond hair and I am listening to the music of the waves. I am seized by an unbelievable feeling of freedom at that moment. This is truly a lust for life!"

6 Conclusion

The goal of our paper was to capture the atmospheric of cruising on an empirical level. That brings us back to the research question of this paper: How can the framing of the atmospheric perception be conceptualized? The study has shown that this is possible through the concept and the notion of the atmospheric grid. The notion of such a grid with intersubjectively effective dimensions allows us to explore and discuss the (individual) atmospheric perception of cruising on the high seas.

Our concept of the atmospheric grid offers a way for further atmospheric research projects to detect basic structures underlying all individual atmospheric perceptions in a specific context. The study interconnects perspectives of tourism research, atmospheric research as well as the empirical sciences involving cruises and generates the theory of the atmospheric grid of cruising on the high seas. The theoretical approach is characterized by four components: 'framing unit', 'affective emotional feelings', 'atmospheres as dynamic processes' and 'programmatic design'. This theoretical perspective on atmospheres and our empirical fieldwork allows us to extract five intertwined dimensions of the 'atmospheric grid of cruising on the high seas'. The 'atmospheric grid of cruising on high seas' constitutes the basis of the individual perception of the atmospheric, and it is simultaneously an integral part of the individual atmospheric experience. It becomes apparent that the crew and the passengers of a cruise are exposed to those dimensions, which are perceived differently, but which have an effect on every individual on the ship. The identified five dimensions can be subjectified according to the subject

matter of other research projects. They must then be explored in the context of the individual's situational context. In order to better understand the implications of place-based experiences, it is eminent for tourism research to pursue the topic of atmospheric perception on cruise ships and in other immersive spaces: "Finally, we aim to create an atmosphere that has the power to bring back the customers on board several times" (BUNGE and SCHINDLER 2014).

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