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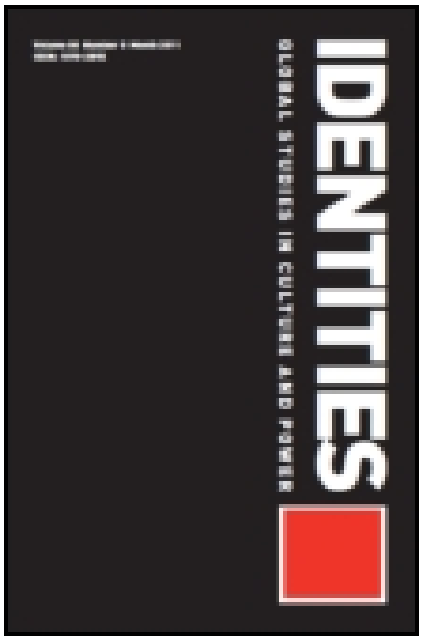

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How diverse is Cologne carnival? How migrants appropriate popular art spaces

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How diverse is Cologne carnival? How migrants appropriate popular art spaces

Monika Salzbrunn

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The present article contributes to the ongoing academic debate on migrants' appropriation of artistic and political spaces in Germany. Cologne, one of the largest cities in Germany, is an interesting example of the tension between political discourse centred around multiculturalism and cultural segregation processes. The 'no fool is illegal' carnival organised by asylum seekers shows their capacity to act, as they reinvent an old local tradition by reinterpreting medieval rituals. Today, different groups and associations appropriate this festive art space: migrants, gays and lesbians, feminists and far-left groups either organise their own parties or take part in the official parties and parades as separate groups. As a result, the celebration of diversity figures on the local political agenda and becomes part of the official carnival festivities. This leads to a blurring of boundaries, whereby mainstream popular culture becomes more and more influenced by multicultural elements.

Keywords: carnival; migrants; diversity; Cologne; multiculturalism; reinvention of tradition

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Introduction: cultural dynamics and collective artistic mobilisation

How do migrants mobilise collective action in a city that boasts of an open-minded, cosmopolitan image, showing the city's pride in its long history of migration on official posters? Can festive events create commonality (Salzbrunn and Sekine 2011, Klöß 2013)? Cologne, the fourth-largest German city counting one million inhabitants, one-third of whom have a first or second generation migration background, is an interesting example of the tension between a very active local popular arts scene and a political discourse of self-representation centred around multiculturalism, diversity and open-mindedness on the one hand and social and cultural segregation processes as well as unequal distribution of political and economic power on the other hand. Indeed, the latter contrasts with the purported political will to present a cosmopolitan city image. The present article contributes to the ongoing academic debate on migrants' appropriation of artistic and political spaces in Germany (New German Critique 2004, p. 92, Metzler 2013) and elsewhere (Maeckelbergh 2012). Moreover, it shows how 'minorities in minorities' (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2010) express their belonging to a local place of residence as well as to a transnational political movement that fights for open borders.

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Cologne carnival, one of the biggest popular festive events in the world, serves as an entry point for the analysis of collective identities as well as political claims that are made within this arena. The 'no fool is illegal' carnival co-organised by asylum seekers shows their capacity, together with leftist artists and activists, to reinvent this old local festive tradition by reinterpreting and rewriting the choreography of medieval rituals. This peak point of collective mobilisation shows the 'potential effectiveness' (Graeber 2011, p. 5) of creative political engagement through art expressed during this event. It also underlines the growing influence of alternative voices, music, dances and discourses on the official carnival. Carnival is not only a popular event, but also serves as framework for broader artistic expression because music, theatre, cabaret, parades etc. are produced in the context of a translocal political movement. Today, various groups and associations appropriate this festive art space; gays and lesbians, feminists and far-left groups either organise their own parties or take part in the official parties, rituals and parades as separate groups. This leads to profound changes in the local cultural policy and institutions. As the 'alternative' carnival now sells more tickets for its parties than the events recognised by the official carnival committee founded in 1823, boundaries have become blurred and mainstream popular culture has become more and more influenced by multicultural elements (rhythms, instruments, political messages expressed in lyrics, etc.).

The social sciences have produced an enormous amount of studies focusing on festive events[1] like carnivals (Davis 1965/1975, Bausinger 1983, Cohen 1991, Bakhtin 1993, Agier 1999, Martin 2001, Salzbrunn 2011b) and on rituals of transgression (Turner 1969, van Gennep 1981, Köpping and Rao 2000, Evens and Handelman 2006, etc.). For a long time, carnivals have been considered either as a means of testing authority or as a mode of controlling rebellion. In this article, I overcome this dichotomy and take a new approach by showing how carnivals can offer a mode of expression for people who are excluded from official positions as decision-makers. To do this, I link approaches from migration studies (by showing how carnival can create commonality through arts instead of focusing on a predefined, essentialised group as a unit of analysis), event analysis and urban studies (by questioning the incorporation of cultural diversity expressed during carnival by the city government).

Namely, I focus on the alternative Cologne carnival, which expresses support for non-regularised migrants. During these festive events, ancient rituals are reinvented and filled with political meaning. The protagonists have learnt which elements of language and music are not only allowed (Bakhtin 1993[2]) but are also efficient ways to get attention. Moving from the margins to the centre, migrants sustainably influence mainstream artistic culture; however, this cultural power does not necessarily lead to profound political changes, as I will show below.

Festive events as a means of inclusion and exclusion

Migrants, especially those without the required papers and permits ('sans-papiers'), have only restricted access to the public space where they

can express political claims. Therefore, the (re)invention (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) of rituals can be an opportunity to symbolically manifest their existence. However, a ritual can also be a framework for the emergence of a new, locally rooted reference group in which original religious or geographical belongings play a less important role. Abner Cohen (1991) and Fredrik Barth (1969) emphasise the fact that cultures do not exist in themselves, but only in a specific context. Completing her reflections on culture, which is always 'sited and negotiated', Pnina Werbner (1997a, p. 16) reminds us that the actors' identities are 'partial, multiple and fractured by cross-cutting alliances' (Werbner 1997b, p. 265). As migrants have to deal with different everyday living conditions, they need to be able to *bricoler* in Lévi-Strauss' sense, which means to handle different elements of identity-building in a creative way. I consider carnival rituals as public forms of expression of this identity-building process in the context of migration.

Following Ayse Çaglar's (1997, p. 183) critique of essentialism in studies on migrants' culture(s), I consider the social practices and their references as emerging constructions which are part of a transnational social space (Pries 2002, p. 20). Researching carnivals as a mode of group building follows this critique: usually, the observer chooses, a priori, a group of migrants who are celebrating a ritual linked to their origins. Hence, the empirical material shows that a dynamic group is constituted only around the festive event, not the other way around (Salzbrunn 2011c, 2011d, 2011e). One of the political messages that regularly comes up at Cologne carnival(s) is the strong local identity that people coming from various backgrounds and living in the same city identify with. Here, an interaction between identification processes from above and from below can be observed: the official carnival from above proudly promotes the belonging of citizens of any origin to Cologne. From below, the immigrant artists express a need for recognition by claiming that this political message should be put into practice (namely through better treatment of asylum seekers). In some cases, this demonstration of a geographically defined identity can accompany a collective demonstration of a common standpoint on global political issues. In Cologne, carnival – practiced through music styles and texts, speeches, cabaret, parades etc. – creates an urban identity that overcomes differences rather than reinforcing them. The most popular songs, like 'Unsere Stammbaum' (our family tree) or 'Viva Colonia', proudly celebrate the multicultural origins of Cologne's inhabitants.

A specific locality and its political, social and economic context determine the evolution of the actors linked to this locality. Before analysing how migrants appropriate local art spaces during carnival, background information on the political, cultural and socio-economic context shall be provided in the following section. Then, empirical material about the 'No fool is illegal' carnival organised by asylum seekers will be analysed in detail. The concluding part of the article deals with carnival as a mode of expression for migrants with the transformative power of rituals.

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Cologne – a multicultural city?

With 1,036,117 residents, Cologne is the fourth-largest city in Germany. The local carnival attracts 1.5 million people every year and provides a turnover of EUR 460 million.[3] Five thousand jobs depend on the Cologne carnival. The city is also known as a gay capital where one of the world's most important Christopher Street Day parades takes place. The city government is aware of the importance of cultural activities for the city's reputation and economic growth. In attempting to emphasise the city's diverse image, the tourism office has conducted a publicity campaign focusing on the city's 2000 years of migration history. Cologne is a city historically shaped by immigration, and this remains an important economic, political and social issue to this day. Its official image is that of a socially integrated, multicultural European city.[4] According to local statistics (Stadt Köln 2012), 35% of the population has a migration background and 17.7% of the Cologne's population does not have German citizenship. The largest group, comprising 6.3% of the total population, is Turkish. This unique characteristic of Cologne explains why even a conservative mayor celebrates diversity instead of proclaiming the failure of multiculturalism, as Chancellor Angela Merkel once did. Discourses pronounced by various political leaders during local election campaigns confirm the fact that the electorate is far more liberal in this part of Germany than elsewhere and therefore less sensitive to the ongoing pessimistic debates on multicultural society (Salzbrunn 2001). Cologne also attracts many asylum seekers from different regions of the world. In a research study commissioned by the City of Cologne concerning undocumented immigrants, Bommes and Wilmes (2007) have observed this group's difficulties in accessing housing, the education system and the job market.[5] Undocumented migrants generally find accommodation and employment through informal networks based on relationships with acquaintances and members of the same cultural community. Asylum seekers are excluded from almost all kinds of political decision-making processes.

According to statistics dating from September 2007, about 120,000 Muslims[6] live in Cologne. One of the largest mosques of Europe is currently being constructed at a central intersection next to the city centre. The building is already considered to be a symbol for tolerance by the city government and by carnival organisers, as the carnival medal below shows. Nevertheless, it remains a bone of contention for some because of the involvement of a conservative Muslim group in the administration of the mosque. In 2008, the mosque was part of a decorative carnival float – together with the famous Gothic cathedral. The district of Cologne-Ehrenfeld even integrated the mosque, the cathedral, the TV tower and the Heliostower (part of the industrial heritage) in the official carnival medal in 2008/09 (Figure 1). In 2011, the mosque was mentioned in a carnival song performed by a famous group during the giant carnival parties in the 'KölnArena'. Finally, in 2013, the leftist carnival organisers of the alternative event 'Stunksitzung' performed a short satirical play where the Archbishop sees Cologne cathedral transformed into the new mosque.

Figure 1. The official carnival medal of Cologne-Ehrenfeld in 2008/09.
Source: http://www.report-k.de/content/view/11656/126/(11.3.2011)

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Local spaces of artistic expression, production and consumption

The mosque featured on the official carnival medal (pictured above) even before its construction was finished. The medal symbolises the political will to symbolically include the presence of Muslims in the official imagination. The four buildings are personified as humans who smile and intertwine their arms. This position is actually one of the ways people dance with each other in Cologne's pubs. This custom creates a feeling of closeness and familiarity among the people in the crowd, especially if they do not know each other. Therefore, the symbolic inclusion of Muslims in carnival events is an important sign of recognition for the group. Whereas politicians in Germany debate on a federal level whether Islam is part of Germany or not, the local organisers of the Cologne carnival have integrated Islam in their symbolic references by putting a mosque on the official carnival medal. This example helps to nuance academic debates on the broader political discussion on multiculturalism in Germany – which is not questioned in Cologne – at least on the level of mainstream political discourse.

Is this a sign for a changing social grammar of diversity in the global urban society, as Yildiz (2011, p. 135–147) writes? Cologne is becoming an emerging multicentre for different cultural groups, styles of music and art, religions and festival cultures, including the carnival. In turn, the celebration of diversity figures

prominently on the local political agenda and becomes part of the mainstream carnival. Consequently, the variety of cultural practices leads to a changing image of the city that appropriates this (increasing diversity of) diversity (Vertovec 2007) as a central part of its image. In Cologne, the metropolitan dispositive[7] has been changing for several decades, whereas in Berlin, for example, the evolution from a national-homogeneous dispositive to a cosmopolitan-diverse dispositive is quite recent, as Lanz (2011, p. 15) writes. However, I would assume that this argument refers rather to the changing image of Berlin than to its long migration history and religious diversity (which had not been put forward by the city government or the tourism board for a long time).

Several political activists criticise a lack of coherence between the political discourse and cultural and social policy on the ground. A refugee support group, 'No border – nobody is illegal', which organises alternative carnival parties called 'No fool is illegal during carnival', denounces the difficult living conditions refugees face in Cologne – particularly concerning housing. As part of the carnival scene, the activists write critical songs and satirical speeches that are then performed during carnival events.

Political and artistic action in a multicultural democracy

As I have shown elsewhere[8] (Salzbrunn 2004, 2008, 2009a, 2009b), migrants have developed alternative and creative strategies for political action – partly because, in most cases, they are excluded from formal means of political participation like elections. How does a city like Cologne cope with multicultural democracy (Martiniello 2011) and how do migrants appropriate political and artistic space? Does their engagement change the *Eigenlogik*[9] (Löw 2008) of a city?

As the official image of the city includes virtues of tolerance and cosmopolitanism celebrated during festive events, this particular situation offers (not only migrants) an important platform for expressing publicly political claims: the long local carnival tradition includes ironic and satirical speeches about local or global politicians and prominent persons, as well as caricatures and big puppets representing local and global heroes or objects of hatred or disgust that the population laughs at during the parade. These objects of ridicule are similar to 'weapons of the weak', including gossip and ridicule as a form of resistance against social and cultural hegemony (hidden and public transcripts) (Scott 1985). For A., member of a support group for asylum seekers, the activists' public events are key elements of their activities, since 'in Germany, in comparison to France, undocumented migrants hardly demonstrate in public for their rights, because they risk getting arrested even on stage'. He refers to the first public appearances of undocumented migrants during cultural events in the Cologne city theatre in the last decade.

Cologne carnival

The carnival in Cologne has an important historical background and follows well-codified rituals. Various evidence points to a strong local historical

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engagement in festive events, but the carnival was only officially organised starting in 1823. The official season starts on Saint Martin's Day, November 11th, and lasts until the beginning of the Catholic Lent period on Ash Wednesday. On the one hand, at first sight, the Rhenanian carnival is a real popular celebration in the sense that the majority of the population participates by preparing and wearing costumes, singing carnival songs in the pubs, watching or participating in the parades, going to indoor events, eating fish together on Ash Wednesday, etc. On the other hand, power relations in the organisation of the carnival are characterised by a strong hierarchy linked to the economic, clerical, political and media powers in the city, so that the subversive critiques usually expressed during this period became less visible and audible over time. In the 1970s, this tendency led to the creation of alternative carnival groups, which emerged from students' theatre groups. Leftist and minority groups such as the LGBT community join them today by creating their own artistic spaces and/or by participating individually in all kinds of carnival events. They had not participated as visible members of minority groups previously because of the popular or even vulgar image of the carnival. Of course, the absence of these groups did not mean that leftist individuals or gays and lesbians did not enjoy the carnival individually within the existing framework predating the communitarisation of the event. Over the last 20 years, alternative movements have occupied the city's carnival scene to the point that nowadays the official committee[10] worries about the continuity of the 'true carnival'. In parallel, the official committee tries to incorporate alternative artistic movements into mainstream carnival culture. One example is the financial support provided by the official committee to the 'Geisterzug', the ghost parade, which started in 1991 as a spontaneous anti-war demonstration replacing an official parade scheduled for Monday (that had been cancelled exceptionally because of the war in Iraq). The Geisterzug started as an alternative political and artistic parade and now features on the webpage of the official carnival committee as one of the main events. Parallel to these autonomous artistic movements, some of which have been incorporated into the official event calendar, the city of Cologne's policy has evolved as well. The city government promotes the expression of artistic and cultural diversity by co-organising carnival events with elements of world music or by celebrating the city's partnership with Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In 2013, the official theme, 'Fastelovend em Blot, he un am Zuckerhot' ('Carnival in our blood, here and at the Sugarloaf'), showcased that partnership.

One of the most recent alternative organisers is the 'keine jeck es illejal' (no fool is illegal) group, a sub-group of the translocal 'Kein Mensch ist illegal' (KMII, 'nobody is illegal') or 'no border' movement, which supports asylum seekers and other people without valid administrative documents. These groups, as well as the carnival sub-groups, exist in several German cities, but Cologne is the most dynamic and largest one among those that have significant festival traditions and an active art scene. During the last 10 years, several alternative carnival events have been launched, for example the 'Humba Party' linking popular carnival music to world music and the 'Immi-Sitzung', where Cologne immigrants and binational citizens explain carnival rituals to other internal and international

migrants. Developments on the translocal level are increasing through links between different festive urban movements. The 'no fool is illegal' carnival has extended to other German cities like Northeim and Wuppertal, where its ritual practices and political discourses are adapted to the local traditions (such as the exorcism of demons).

'No fool is illegal' during Cologne carnival

Carnival offers an opportunity for activists to demand the abolition of the semantic category 'illegal' once more and to celebrate a translocal community in which the geographical, ethnic or religious background of the individuals is not important. The Cologne group has redefined one of the central ancient carnival rites: the cremation of the 'Nubbel', a straw man that hangs above the entrances of the pubs and is burned during the carnival's closing ceremony. The ceremony starts at around 11 p.m. on Mardi Gras. The festive community assembles in front of a popular alternative pub in the city centre, where the 'Nubbel' is torn down, so far according to common practice in Cologne. But in 2003, the rite celebrated by the no border carnival movement contained more than one political message: the straw man was placed onto a wooden stretcher, and members of the movement put a vest and a hat made of an American flag on the puppet. Meanwhile, a number of photocopies of the text for the cremation celebration, written in the dialect of Cologne, were distributed among the people coming out of the pub. An asylum seeker from Cameroon and the wife of a well-known local leftist journalist carried the stretcher, followed by different key persons: other members of the 'no border' carnival group, disguised as a priest with his acolytes, several musicians (playing sad melodies on an accordion and drums) and mourners. Approximately 250 people took part in the funeral cortege, including guests from the pub. During the procession, a fake priest blessed the community by sprinkling water on the weeping carnival crowd using a toilet brush. Some individuals had difficulties keeping a straight face and chuckled from time to time. After a 20-minute parade through the neighbourhood, where other ceremonies were performed, the procession reached its destination: a small square in front of the Bank of Cologne. Following a song by the mourners, the priest commenced the funeral ceremony in front of the stretcher, surrounded by the participants and musicians. The first part of the dialogue between the priest and the community was similar to 'official ceremonies': the community shared in the sadness of the ending carnival, weeping over the death of the beloved 'Nubbel', who incarnates the end of the carnival parties and who carries with him all the sins committed by the community during the carnival. In the second part of the ritual, the wind turned against the 'Nubbel', who became the scapegoat that expiated the sins of the participants. The priest's speech was full of allusions to current political events in Cologne, but also beyond: 'Here in front of us stand again the stars of local politics from the KMII,[11] who have dealt with Attac, the antifascists, and who have shown their importance to themselves . . . Yes, the wandering asylum shall not die, with our fleeing Kurds (. . .) Who has destroyed our politics? The Archbishop Joachim? Bush's Saddam? Fischer's

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war? Or Schramma? We will only send them to Nirvana!' The summary of their activities is a mixture of pride and ironic self-criticism. At that time, German involvement in the war in Afghanistan, defended by the Green Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joschka Fischer, was being heavily criticised by left-wing associations such as the 'no border' movement.

The former conservative Mayor of Cologne, Jürgen Schramma, and the Archbishop Joachim Meissner are frequent targets of most of the alternative carnival groups and also the butt of many jokes made by the official carnival organisers. A common point in classic ceremonies is the allusion to 'our beautiful city', but in this case the celebration of local identity is quickly understood as irony, because 'our beautiful cathedral of Archbishop Joachim' follows it. The relationship between the leftist carnival scene and the Archbishop is laden with tension because the latter has exercised his influence on the local broadcasting service several times in order to censure parts of (progressive) speeches that were, in his eyes, too polemic towards the Catholic Church. For example, several years ago, during the broadcasting of the 'Stunksitzung', one of the most successful carnival parties, a satirical speech imitating the (unpopular) Archbishop Joachim was cut after his personal intervention. Nevertheless, the association identifies itself with at least one highly important symbol of Cologne: the local dialect called *Kölsch*. The whole ceremony is held in *Kölsch*, and reading and understanding the distributed text is extremely difficult for those who are not familiar with the dialect and impossible for those who are not familiar with German. Hence, the non-verbal part of the ceremony that follows is easier to share: the 'Nubbel' is set on fire, and the community sings local and international songs. Some of the repeated songs from 2003 and 2004 belong to the classic left-wing demonstration repertoire, such as 'Bella Ciao'.[12] With the declining flames, some participants start to dance around and to jump over the burning 'Nubbel'. The priest's question about Bush's Saddam is answered by the burning of the American flag in form of the 'Nubbel's' vest and hat. This was a clear anti-American message in the context of a looming war against Iraq.

In this case, the organisers of the ritual used identification with the open-minded mentality of the city of Cologne in order to put pressure on the local administration and the mayor. The fake priest's discourse in 2004 used the same dramaturgical and semantic structure as those in 2002 and 2003, but the allusions concentrated mostly on local events. The phrase 'we all stick together' is part of a famous traditional carnival song celebrating Cologne as a place of solidarity. The Mayor of Cologne and the police use the same kind of slogans in order to protect minorities. However, the organisers of the KMII carnival deplore the fact that refugees without valid papers still live under constant pressure from authorities and that people are being expelled. The ironic use of phrases belonging to the official discourse on solidarity by the organisers aims to underline the contrast between the official discourse and the acts themselves. Therefore, the fake priest cites several local events during his speech: in summer 2004, for example, a national 'no border' movement meeting turned into a confrontation with the police, who arrested several activists. The fake priest summarises the situation with self-irony: 'We

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wanted to help the refugees and beat the Nazis, and chat, and drink booze, but the cops showed up again – away to jail, totally illegal, 1000 people – and nice girls!' The message that emerges from the burning ritual at the end of carnival is a demand for the abolition of administrative discrimination among people living in Cologne. Asylum seekers who would not have the opportunity to express themselves politically in everyday life because of the risk of getting arrested can use the carnival situation as a stage for their claims. Tickets are rarely checked in the public transport system during the six days of carnival, and the police are more preoccupied with the security of the parades than with looking for people without papers. Whereas undocumented migrants frequently demonstrate for their rights in Paris (Salzbrunn 2009b, 2011a), they rarely make an appearance during public events in Germany. Therefore, the open demonstration of ethnic mixing (in the sense of Barth (1969)) during carnival, which includes undocumented migrants, is particularly innovative in the case of Cologne. Even if representatives of the administration whose acts are denunciated might not attend the ritual in person, the ritual has a long-term transformative potential that is part of a broader context. The local and national press reports on the events organised by the local KMII group and the different associations have already successfully denounced the city's attitude towards persecuted minorities: namely when Roma[13] that had been expelled from France were seeking asylum in Cologne in the 1990s.

The political potential of migrants in the Cologne case is far from being central. Migrants are at the centre of the political battles, but the most important actors in this political conflict are people who have a German nationality or an official residence permit. However, migrants are permanently present during the carnival rituals and play an important part in the organisation of the carnival. Their cultural practices and knowledge interact with the history of the association and lead to the emergence of innovative political instruments that are strongly influenced by the local framework in which the action takes place. They appropriate popular art spaces either by participating in the mainstream carnival or by inventing new forms of expression within a given framework. Nevertheless, migrants are also used by left-wing activists as a tool to appropriate political capital. One of the most important events organised by KMII during the last 10 years was a performance by an acrobat who climbed a rope that was suddenly let down from a bridge across the Rhine on the day of the Corpus Cristi parade, when the Archbishop was celebrating Mass on a ship. The media, used to broadcasting the annual Catholic celebration on a large scale, paid great attention to the fact that the Archbishop's ship had to change direction because of the unexpected performance by the KMII activists. This performance is another example of how the group strategically uses popular celebrations in Cologne to express their political claims.

As the local dialect is a key element in incorporation processes in Cologne, political activists have been using the local dialect *Kölsch* (instead of standard German) for many years. However, some voices began arguing in favour of standard German, as many people (even those from other German regions) have difficulties understanding the dialect. Thus, in 2010, the main speech during

the final ritual was held in standard German. However, in 2011, the organisers returned to *Kölsch* – with a bit of irony, as the fake priest noted, 'Did you finally accept that I, your pastor, do not speak proper Kölsch'? The speech was, again, a mixture of allusions to local political conflicts concerning the living conditions of asylum seekers and global political issues like the revolutions in North African countries. Here, the common element in the situated process of identification and belonging is the leftist political attitude (against Ben Ali and Mubarak, who were pursued recently, Ghaddafi, who was still in place in spring 2011, as well as the former socio-democratic member of the German Federal Bank, Thilo Sarrazin, whose xenophobic statements in a polemic book sparked controversy in 2010).

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Conclusion: carnival as a site of articulation for migrants and marginalised people

We have asked how migrant activists appropriate alternative spaces for political and artistic expression and how the politics of diversity and multiculturalism are articulated in festive situations. The festive event analysed here offers migrants different ways to express themselves on a local, global and translocal level. Migrants mobilise in the local art scene by taking the opportunity to perform music and theatre during carnival. They use the same choreography (of rituals, parades etc.) but fill this artistic space with new semantics, which are connected to translocal political and artistic movements (like the 'no border' group). We can observe the presence of local political struggles as well as allusions to global political events (e.g. the war in Iraq) in the alternative Cologne carnivals. Developments on the translocal level increase through the links between different urban festive movements. The translocal 'no border' movement with its 'no fool is illegal' carnival in Cologne links the local references to global politics and tries to go beyond the cultural differences of its members. The Cologne carnival is seen as a political demonstration of the possibility of forming a communitas without regard to origins or the administrative situation of its members. Here, the common political battlefield creates commonality. By living a local world-society in practice, the activists express their demand for an opening of the national borders. Carnival, as an event with liminal character, offers temporary freedom for the asylum seekers (who are a minority within the minority of migrants) within the organised anarchy. Through their participation in the 'Nubbel' ritual, the asylum seekers can appear on the public scene without being threatened with identity checks and expulsion. But, the open demonstration of their existence is only possible because some legal norms are turned on their heads. The old question concerning the influence of the festive event on the norms and customs valid for the rest of the year remains open.[14] Similar to the case of Lisbon, immigrant practices have changed the city's image here. Did the city exploit the migrants' cultural activities in order to improve its image as an open-minded, welcoming urban space? Or did

the artists' performances lead to profound changes in the city's government practices, images and customs? In conclusion, a mutual identity building process in ongoing.

In Cologne, the mayor and the tourism board try to promote an image of a liberal cosmopolitan city. Since they are afraid of negative reporting in the media, the city administration tries to keep dealings with asylum seekers as discreet as possible, which offers the 'no border' associations room to negotiate. A translocal leftist political identity, claims for same-sex couples' rights as well as a postcolonial critique of detention camps are expressed in the field of arts. Nevertheless, the treatment of undocumented migrants is not as liberal and open-minded as the self-constructed image of the city seems to suggest.

Finally, local policies are definitely becoming multicultural. Changes on the artistic scene are part of an emerging metropolitan dispositive that clearly valorises diversity, even though the related discourses and applied policies are far from being homogeneous.

I have shown the complexity of interaction processes between the city government's policy of diversity and the migrants' expression of political claims: during carnival, the migrants use the city's image to put pressure on the local government through artistic expression in the field of migration policy (with little success). On the other hand, the migrants' performances influence mainstream culture from the margins – by means of political messages expressed through music and lyrics. The commonality created through the festive event is also an important result that can open an alternative to essentialising tendencies in migration studies. The present study has brought together (rare) studies on the artistic expression of migrants during carnival with urban studies, showing the mutual influences between mainstream artistic culture, a city's discourse on diversity and concrete municipal politics.

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Notes

1. A festive event can be seen as a battlefield where different actors try to expose, defend and reinforce their positions. As interest groups and alliances can change depending on space and time, we observed the same festive events over a period of several years, including the preparation for and evaluation of the events done by the actors involved.
2. Although Bakhtin himself did not recommend comparing Middle Age and Renaissance carnivals (on which his work is grounded, since his major source are the writings of French Renaissance author Rabelais), his reflections on semiotics and on carnival as a social system can be stimulating for the analysis of contemporary festive events.
3. The official committee of Cologne carnival, the Festkomitee, has commissioned a study by Boston Consulting Group about the economic impact of Cologne carnival: http://neu.koelnerkarneval1.de/254.html [Accessed 5 Feb 2013].
4. http://www.stadt-koeln.de/2/integration/03741/; http://www.stadt-koeln.de/2/integration/ [Accessed 5 Feb 2013].
5. Bommes, Michael and Wilmes, Maren 2007 « Menschen ohne Papiere in Köln. »Eine Studie im Auftrag des Rates der Stadt Köln.
6. The German « Meldegesetz », a law that requires every person to register upon his/her arrival at a new place of residence for tax purposes, includes a declaration on

his/her religion. Even though not everybody registers or makes a truthful declaration, estimates on the size of religious groups can easily be made in this way.

7. Here, I refer to the Foucaultian term of dispositive as an ensemble of discourses, institutions, architectural sites, decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific findings, philosophical, moral and philanthropic proposals (see Foucault 1977, p. 62–93).
8. In my context as Chair of migration and religious studies at Lausanne University, I am currently involved in several research projects to related areas. A comparative project on the "Economies of urban diversities" in Istanbul and the Ruhr Area is about to be completed. A project on festive events as a means of expression for migrants has been conducted in Paris (Salzbrunn 2011e), New York (Salzbrunn 2011a, 2011c), Cologne (Salzbrunn 2011b) and Cherbourg (Salzbrunn 2011d). Furthermore, two new research projects have just started: one on the incorporation of Muslim migrants in urban spaces in Switzerland (Lausanne, Geneva) (Schneuwly Purdie and Salzbrunn 2011) and one on digital-cultural resources of undocumented Tunisian migrants in Tunisia and Europe (http://p3.snf.ch/person-580020-Salzbrunn-Monika).
9. Martina Löw defines the *Eigenlogik* (inherent logic) of cities as the hidden structures of cities, which are subtle invisible constitutions of meanings in process (2008, p. 19).
10. The official name of the committee is 'Festkomitee des Kölner Karnevals von 1823 e.V.'
11. Here, the fake priest is making an ironic allusion to the spectators, a large number of whom are members or supporters of KMII.
12. 'Bella Ciao' was initially an Italian populist song about the difficult working conditions of women on the rice fields in the Northern Italian Po plain. In the 1940s, the text was rewritten and became a reference for antifascist fighters. Other linguistic references from the 1940s are consciously used by supporters of asylum seekers in order to justify their illegal acts as morally justified 'resistance' against a government that violates human rights by arresting asylum seekers in 'camps' and 'deporting' them to countries where their lives are in danger.
13. The Roma are an ethnic group that originally comes from Romania. They have no identity documents, which means that they cannot obtain a residence permit anywhere. In Cologne, a huge solidarity movement helped convince the city to give permanent residence permits to Roma who wanted to settle there.
14. See Köpping and Rao (2000) for discussions on the transformation of reality by rituals and festive events.

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