Affected in the nightclub. A case study of regular clubbers’ conflictual practices in nightclubs

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ABSTRACT

The nightclub as a space is presented as a free and hedonistic place for pleasure. This space is also part of a wider socio-spatial-economic framework in which various forms of regulation apply to clubbers and the cultivation of affects. This paper researches marginal and contested forms of experiences within a club as a way of understanding the complexities of pleasure. The study does so by addressing experiences through the concept of affects, which is situated within a framework of a non-representational theory of space. Anxiety, pride, anger, shame and embarrassment are embodied simultaneously with the affects of love, joy, sympathy and so on. Alcohol, illicit drugs, bouncers, music and other human or non-human actants are part of the place. It is within this heterogeneous assemblage that affects become embodied. The data consists of 273 cases from a large Copenhagen nightclub where guests have complained about being rejected or being given quarantine. The paper suggests that if the space of the club is approached as being more than a mono-affectual space of either risk or pleasure, then it would be possible to reduce conflicts and produce more inclusive spaces.

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Introduction

The nightclub is designed as a space for enjoyment. It is meant to allure through its human–nonhuman technologies of public intimacy (Cf. Thrift, 2010). Alcohol as a legal substance is used instrumentally to facilitate this intimacy, together with music, spatial design, selection of guests and so on (Hayward & Hobbs, 2007). Illegal drug use may be another, more tacit, way of ensuring a good night out (Measham, 2004; Hutton, 2006; Ravn, 2012a). As such, the state of the body/mind cannot be described as being a causal effect of substance use alone. It must include a number of other aspects related to the space. The present study investigates the affects produced within the club as a space and how they relate to the social-spatial relations of alcohol, drugs, clubs and regulation.

Alcohol and illicit drug studies have a tendency to describe the effects of drugs as either negative or positive, in line with the distinction between risk on the one hand and pleasure on the other (Auld, Dorn, & South, 1986; Coveney & Bunton, 2003; Duff, 2008; Fry, 2011; Hunt & Evans, 2008; Hutton, 2006; Monaghan, 2002; Moore, 2008; Valverde, 1998). The risk literature is mostly situated within an (quantitative) epidemiological perspective and the pleasure literature represents a critical response to this (dominant) perspective (Hunt & Barker, 2001). This has resulted in research in which there is a tendency to fall either to one side or the other when describing alcohol and other drug use. The reason for this should be found in the perspectives within which risk contra pleasure is situated. Within an epidemiological perspective, general health improvements are the central ontological perspective, whereas the pleasure discussion has been situated within a broader anthropological-sociological perspective in which health outcomes play a minor part. This means that discussions of pleasure also have a tendency to run into the opposite pitfall of the public health-oriented risk discourse. However, the perspective on pleasure in drug and alcohol studies has opened the field towards the affectual by taking intoxication seriously (Jayne, Valentine, & Holloway, 2012). A number of researchers have investigated specific forms of pleasure in relation to ecstasy (Duff, 2005, 2008; Hunt & Evans, 2008; Malbon, 1999), alcohol (Demant & Heinskou, 2011; Demant, 2009; Fry, 2011; Measham, 2004; Valverde, 1998), and ketamine (Joe-Laidler & Hunt, 2008; Newcombe, 2008; Demant & Ravn, 2013), to name a few drug-specific studies. The tradition of pleasure research on alcohol and other drugs has also brought a very strong focus on social contexts (e.g. nightclubs, gangs, streets, friends, subcultures, school classes etc.) as well as on controlled or recreational drug use (Decorte, 2001; Zinberg, 1984). This article follows the highly situated perspective of drug and alcohol use related to the nightclub (Hutton, 2006; Ravn, 2012a, 2012b) but seeks to move away from the concept of both risk and pleasure. This article focuses on how a group of clubbers who navigate on the edges of acceptable clubbing behaviour produce and experience very heterogeneous affects. The cases deal with clubbers...
who have been excluded but insist on re-gaining access to a club. The cases highlight the allure of the club space, while the controversies regarding access to the nightclub highlight how affects, drugs, alcohol and space become relevant. The theoretical framework on non-representational theory of affects includes aspects such as alcohol and other drugs, but also rejects a one-sided view of how alcohol and other drugs affect people. The paper argues, in line with Jayne, Valentine, & Holloway, 2010 and Jayne et al. (2012), that the affective (drinking) space, in this case the nightclub, is an assembly of much more than alcohol and other drugs alone. As such, this framework opens up for studying how bodies, nightclubs, behaviours and other social-material actants are relevant alongside alcohol and drugs in understanding affects amongst clubbers.

Research on space and controversies

There is already a solid base of studies of space in relation to alcohol and other drugs. British researchers, for example, have examined young people’s leisure time and cultural consumption habits within drinking spaces (Jayne, Holloway, & Valentine, 2006; Jayne et al., 2010, 2011b, 2012; Measham & Brain, 2005; Measham, 2006). The main focus in the research on alcohol is the relationship between alcohol, drunkenness and public urban night spaces. Studies of illegal substance use often considers the nightclub space as being a predominant stage for the use of drugs (Aas, 2006; Duff, 2005; Hutton, 2006). Specific electronic music profiles and commercial foundations at some clubs are described as contributing to enhancing the experience. However, the literature on drinking and taking drugs has often also taken a political-economic perspective on drinking entertainment venues in the city through using the term “night time economy” (NTE).

Research into conflicts related to the NTE is also substantial (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003; Hadfield, Lister, & Traynor, 2009; Hayward & Hobbs, 2007). Literature in this field acknowledges the use of the city centre as place of consumption, play and hedonism. This perspective implies that the studies have focused on how government policies, business strategies or social codes of conduct seek to direct people’s actions and desires. This perspective on the NTE has somehow advocated that night spaces are produced by a political-economic alliance and that dominance is to be blamed for some of the problems associated with it (Demant & Landolt, 2013). A number of these studies have focused on bouncers and door policy (Birkley, 1998; Hobbs, Hadfield, Lister, & Winlow, 2003; Kim, 2007; Lister, Hadfield, Hobbs, & Winlow, 2001; McConnell, 1981; Monaghan, 2004; Pratten, 2007; Roberts, 2001; Tomsen, 2005; Warrell, 1994; Zedner, 2006). This political-economic perspective employs a neo-Marxist research perspective that, to a lesser degree, is able to include how young people constantly challenge and contest the spaces (Jayne, Holloway, & Valentine, 2006). As such, I would argue that a very strong “ontological domination” favouring a certain view of power can be found within this tradition (Cf. Lash & Lury, 2007). The perspectives of non-representational theory that are applied here, insist on following the provisional assembly of the space and are critical towards the highly political-economic rational perceptive to understanding behaviours. To paraphrase Thrift, it may be better to understand consumer capitalism in clubs as a series of overlapping affective fields, than to describe it in political-economic terms alone (Thrift, 2010: 308). However, the cultivation of clubbers as highlighted by the NTE perspective becomes, to a great extent, part of the assembly of “affective fields” within this analysis.

Theory of club spaces and affects

The theory of the social-material aspects of affects and space has exploded in volume in the last decade. On the one hand, actor network theory has developed from science and technology studies. Within this stream of theory, the concept of the actant has substituted the one-sided focus on “the social” within sociology and anthropology. This theoretical direction has led to an analytical shift from the social and symbolic constructions of matter toward a perspective of how the social-material assemblages matters (an ontological flat perspective (Cf. Latour, 2004, 2005)). Assemblage thinking is ill at ease with a notion of power as a resource that can be processed. The “flat perspective” of researching within this radically relational understanding also for-sakes the critical position found within the NTE. As opposed to concepts like structure, culture, science, objectivity, production, agency, technology, and nature, the idea of assemblage empha-sizes the material-discursive heterogeneity. Within the perspective of assemblages, no priority will be given to any specific actant. The concept is based on a deleuzian understanding (Anderson & McFarlane, 2011: 125). Assembly is used in an actor-network theoretical perspective to “refer to the provisional assembly of prod-uctive, heterogeneous and (this is the crucial point) quite limited forms of ordering, located in no larger overall order.” (Law, 2007: 6).

Within geography, focus has been directed towards an understanding of space that comprises both the spatial (material) and the social (Lorimer, 2005; Massey, 2005). The central concept becomes the place-event (Pink, 2009) or event of place (Massey, 2005) – an understanding of the place as an assembly that is only temporarily stabilized through relations between the material and social. This non-representational or relational space perspective draws on some of the same understandings of how the social and material are interrelated as within actor network theory (Farias, 2011; Hetherington, 1998; Lorimer, 2005; Murdoch, 1998). However non-representational theory not only resembles actor network theory in its ambition to move beyond space as symbolizations (percep-tions of space), but further has a focus on embodiment and affects. As such non-representational theory is a central inspiration for this analysis.

A social material affect analysis has to be committed to the empirical: “we do not know what we are looking for before we find it”. The crucial move is to put this highly complex, multiple and evolving entity, the “club space”, at the core of our enquiries (cf. Farias, 2011). Empirical research on clubs deals with many issues: drugs, door policy, safe environments, music, décor and so on. But the underlying question we need to keep in mind is how each of these objects, processes and phenomena are reconstructed and remade; that is, how the materials, technologies and different affects are assembled in practice.

Methods and approach

The data considered here comprise 273 cases from a large city centre Copenhagen nightclub where guests have written emails or letters in which they have complained about being rejected or being given quarantine, alongside police reports, and evidence relating to quarantines and restraining orders. The cases were collected over a period of eight years from 2003 to summer 2011. In addition to the accounts of the guests, the majority of the cases contain a com-mendary made by the bouncers as well as the manager of the club. This commentary often presents another story which in most cases is in opposition to the experience recounted by the guest. These counter-positions are the assessment-tool which the manager will use to consider whether to allow entrance again.

Based on a coding of the cases in regards to grounds for exclu-sion, I found that almost a third of the exclusions are drug related, a quarter are based on conflicts, a fifth on physical confrontations, and the remainder on various smaller categories, such as appearance. None could be linked directly to alcohol.
The material is dominated by letters from male guests (75%). Some guests appear a number of times in the data. They are guests who have experienced several exclusions, and every time made use of the process of appeal. This suggests that the appeal system is somehow working to the advantage of the guests and also underlines that there is flexibility in the understanding of the normative boundary-work applied by this club. (To my knowledge, no previous research has described such a protocol of door policy).

All names, dates and places have been anonymized. The letter/email material is supplemented by interviews with the club manager and owner and with ethnographic fieldwork at the club.

**Approach**

The letters can be described in two ways. First, epistemologically, as unique insights into where the affects that create an "[...] irresistible impulse to act, regardless of the rationality of the motivation" (Thrift, 2008: 240) – in other words where the actions became, to speak, more than the wills of the frontal lobe. The letter materials give us access to matters where actions are more than the representational. For example, a young girl explains that she was out clubbing to feel joy and that she did not plan to hit another person. These letters offer description of how action is more than willful. The use of the letters can be understood as an ethnmethodological perspective that is inspired by actor network theory. We look for where the controversies develop in order to identify the acts involved. This, then, gives us access to how the assembly is constructed. The controversies described between the bouncers and guests are purely social. But the controversies are not isolated to the social sphere alone. They articulate relations that are more than social: They articulate how social and material concerns, drugs and bodies take part in these socio-technical relations. Gregg argues that "the tiny catastrophes of which everyday existence is made up from" are the micro-encounters that can provide focal points for the transitory affects (Gregg, 2010).

Secondly, in ontological terms, the letters represent the stabilized place-event. The researcher stabilized the always-under-construction-spaces with the specific form of ethnography applied (in this case letters and door reports). Space is “the product of power-filled social relations” (Massey, 2005: 21) and not solely a “stage” on which these relations are enacted. The production of space, and consequently space itself, is therefore an ongoing process that is dynamic and “alive”, always provisional and changing, never finished and closed, as it combines relations between multiple entities (Massey, 2005). The central meaning of a place is the “thrown-togetherness” that makes it unavoidable to negotiate “here-and-now” when the human and non-human intersect. This negotiation is termed the place-event (Pink, 2009). The places are “the coming together of the previously unrelated, a constellation of processes rather than a thing” (Massey, 2005: 141). In other words, particular places are permanencies that are only ever provisionally stabilized. You will always be embodied in the occurrence of the place (Pink, 2009: 33). To be embodied in the occurrence of the place is a way to describe how we become sensorially engaged with the material by taking part in the thrown-togetherness of the place.

Within this analytical framework, the nightclub should not be seen as a whole. The point is that it will never be given in a finished state (it is always an event-place). This means that we cannot study it as a given stable whole, but rather must study it as an assemblage. The notion of (urban) assemblages allows us to think about spatial formations as products that must be constantly defined, held together, maintained and repaired (Farias, 2011: 370). This can be compared to studying it as an underlying structure or structural context that is found in NTE studies. As such, this analysis shifts its focus from the abstract club space or NTE to the multiple urban assemblages from which these spaces are made and remade. To rephrase Bennett’s (2005) words, assemblages are not organic wholes, where the differences are subsumed into a higher unity. They are uneven topographies of trajectories that cross or engage with each other to different extents over time. As such, the event-place is an assemblage that is composed of heterogeneous elements (human or non-human, material, organic etc.) (Anderson & McFarlane, 2011). The assemblage is the concept that is used within this analysis to describe the process of arranging these heterogeneous elements into the provisional contingent wholes. These wholes are the concrete place-events. The letters are the methodological tool that let the occurrence of the place stabilize. It enables us, as researchers, to follow the assemblages of affects. The analysis follows three cases in order to describe how different types of affects become embodied within the club.

**Data**

The data consists of 273 cases, the majority of which is made up of letters to the manager, as well as police reports, quarantines and restraining orders.

**Setting**

The particular nightclub studied attracts guests with an average age of between 18 and 23 years. The club holds an extended license permitting it to stay open until 8 am, which it has held for 15 years. The longer opening hours are combined with a free bar (spirits mixers) when paying the cover charge of EUR 20–30. The music is dominated by electronic dance music with a 120bpm sound on one dance floor and more relaxed house/dance music on the second dance floor. A small third dance floor with a non-vocal electronic music profile (mostly hard trance) has been tested, but has been replaced by a chill-out pop-music and snack area. The dance floors are connected by a labyrinth of hallways and staircases. All three scenes are accessible when the cover charge has been paid. When you move from one dance floor to the next, or hang out in the hallways, as many people do, the music fades into each other. At the ground level of the club there is a small open-roof courtyard where smoking is permitted. This area can feel a little uncanny with three entrances, black asphalt surface and cigarette butts all over. But it seems to be a favourite place for a lot of the clubbers. For the most avid ravers on the main dance floor, it functions as a kind of chill-out room. For others it may be more of a passageway. The long-time club owner describes his club as having the same impact on mainstream electronic music lovers in Denmark as Ministry of Sound has had in London. He further likes to highlight how the clubbing experience at this place is fairly unrestricted; drinks are free and the club closes very late so very few feel that they have to end the night before they themselves are ready to leave. The club has a history of presenting bands and DJs, but is run on the music side by in-house DJs. This is not the club where you will hear the latest tunes in the rapidly changing electronic scene. This place is, in the words of the manager, a place where you know what you get – but where what you get is good.

In the media this club has been portrayed as a place with a lot of illicit drug activity. It is well known due to its long history, but also because of its long opening hours. Data from a nightclub survey of clubbers from this particular club (n=976) found that 65% had lifetime experience with cannabis, 41% had lifetime experience with other illicit drugs (mostly amphetamine, cocaine and ecstasy), 10% had used illicit drugs on the particular nights when the nightclub surveys were conducted (Järvinen, Demant, & Østergaard, 2010). The gender ratio was 40% women and 60% men, and there was a mean age of 21 years (unpublished data from Järvinen et al., 2010 study). Further, Danish youth have, for a
decade, had the highest drink-to-intoxication levels in Europe. This alcohol-intoxication culture was indeed evident within the club.

**Analysis**

**Anxiety**

This case contains a letter written by two male guests who end up in a brawl with six other guests in the club. Phillip and Adnan’s friend is homosexual, and because of that, the six guests accost him and show aggressive behaviour. The two friends talk them out of it, and they leave for the dance floor. Later that night the six guests suddenly attack them, hitting and kicking them, before running off. This leaves Phillip and Adnan having to defend themselves. In their view, there was nothing else they could do.

What is interesting in the case of Phillip and Adnan is the reflection on how physical conduct becomes a necessary means in the unsafe and violent nightlife. Their letter begins by stating that violence is not part of their motive for exploring the night time scene:

> We can only say that we never go out just to fight. Never!!! We know that it is standard procedure to get a hold of the doormen when trouble is in the making.

With the reassurance of their non-violent behaviour, they emphasize their awareness of doormen as managers of social control. The fact that the quarantine is caused by an act of self-defense creates a situation where the out-of-place conduct is placed on the others involved in the fight. They describe how night time consumerism takes place in an unsafe environment:

> In short, we feel that we couldn’t do anything else than defend ourselves. This is the way night life is today, you never know if people are carrying a knife or other stuff. It has unfortunately become more and more common to carry a knife, and people are not afraid to use it. In situations like that where people jump you, it is a case of them versus us, and in the worst cases, people can get stabbed.

In this context they frame their conduct and justify their otherwise illegal behaviour. They argue how the affect that became aroused in them is somehow a direct result of the fact that they are embodied within the occurrence of a place where violence is present. In other words, they transfer their violent act from a matter of subjective misjudgment caused by an anxiety that is embodied by the aggressive atmosphere within the club. The violence as such becomes part of the club space. This makes the affect of anxiety a way to navigate within this space. Anxiety somehow becomes a positive affect in the sense that it makes them alert. At the same time it is very important for them to show that they acknowledge the bouncers’ roles, because they performed as stand-in for the bouncers in the struggle against sexual harassment. The anger that is expressed during the fight as such becomes part of a place-event where it is transformed from unregulated violence into the securing of the affectable controllable worlds (Cf. Thrift, 2008).

**Embarrassment**

Nina is 18 years old and visits the club on a regular basis. She explains an incident where she and her friend are pulled aside by the doormen and frisked for drugs:

At the wardrobe we met some friends and stop to chat with them. The doorman has followed Mia up to here and follows when we continue towards the stairs [leading up to one of the dance floors. Here he stops Mia]. I follow and at this point don’t know what is going on. I am standing next to Mia and ask the doorman what is going on. (My mother has however always told me not to put my nose in things that don’t concern me, but my friend is a very insecure girl, and I love her dearly, so I just wanted to make sure that she was okay.) I didn’t want to interfere in the doorman’s work. [...] He asks if he can body search us and then have a look in my handbag. [I] wonder why he wants to body search us, because we still don’t know what’s going on. He starts body searching Mia. This was a very ugly thing to watch when we still didn’t know what he was looking for! After he body searched Mia I handed over my handbag to him and he looked in it. I ask him again what is going on and get no answer.

Nina and her friend describe how they are body searched at the entrance of the club just after meeting their friends. This part of the club is a central crossovers of the corridors going up and down the different dance floors. As such it is not only their friends who can see what is going on, but all the clubbers entering the club or moving from one floor to the next. Nina wants to protect her friend in the uncomfortable situation. It may not only be an uncomfortable situation due to the transgression of the integrity of the body, but also due to the gaze of other clubbers (Sennett, 1992). After body searching Mia the doorman frisks Nina as well. They have no drugs on them, but are both excluded from the club. Nina finds the situation unfair and embarrassing. The next weekend when she revisits the club she is once again frisked by a female police officer. Again she is clean. After the second visit she is seized by a doorman who violently pulls her out by her arm. She tries to get an explanation but is left with an accusation of violent behaviour towards the doormen and receives quarantine.

I have never in my life had anything to do with drugs. Not to mention violence. Especially not towards a doorman, I’m 168 cm, slim built and not able to harm anyone. What in the world would make me hit a person who is 3.5 times bigger than me?! [...] I want to make it clear once and for all that I have never in my life used or touched any kind of drugs. I am really against the sort and don’t socialize with that kind of people.

She is accused of doing drugs and being violent towards the door staff. Nina, however, does make a very sharp distinction between herself and the violent and substance-using person that she is accused of being. In asking for an explanation, it seems that she tries to counteract her affect of embarrassment by a cognitive rational explanation. Nina’s attitude toward people who use drugs is very hostile. As such, she places drugs within a socially created category of people, identified with certain negative values and attributes. In making this link between drugs and a specific group of people she positions herself in line with what she perceives as the normative construction of the club space. She describes what is out of place. But when Nina and Mia are being searched for drug possession, they are turned into one of those out-of-place people. This is not just due to the doormen’s suspicions, but also an enactment of the body search in front of friends and other clubbers. Thus it is the specific location within the club (where they are being subjected to the gaze of others) in connection with the actual practice of the body search that brings about affects of embarrassment and anger in Nina. When Nina is frisked the following weekend her anger results in an aggression that makes the doorman judge that he has to psychically move her out of the club.

This case contains a story on how control disciplining guests is part of the night time experience. Drugs are also part of the place-event even though they are not found on the girls. The perceived omnipresence of drugs in the nightclub is a way to enable the
bouncers to engage in body searches of girls like Nina. Nina and Mia wear clothes that the bouncers consider to be related to drug use. From this material it is not possible to argue if the girls have actually taken drugs. But the mismatch between the way they are being observed as “drug users” (by bouncers and other clubbers’ gazes) and the lack of possession of drugs affects the girls. The continuing searches the following weekend further trigger Nina’s anger. The space-of-interruption embodies her as out of place and allows these effects to develop.

Pride

The following case consists of three different episodes with the same male guest, Robert. It spans over seven years, with the first incident dating back to November 2004. Robert is in his early 30s and calls himself “secret service” as a screen-name in the emails written to the management. It is not unlikely that a few persons between 30 and 35 will be at the night club. But Robert still stands out because of his age. He considers himself very much a part of the club and also includes descriptions of the club as “home” in his emails to the manager. The manager on the contrary describes the guest as being a ‘complete gooner’, ‘angry’ and ‘out of control’. Here we focus on the last episode. This episode is interesting because we can follow how much Robert is affected by the place: it gives him a sense of pride, a sense of belonging and an ability to feel powerful. It becomes even more interesting because these affects are formed in opposition to the consumer-identity that was supposed to produce a feeling of pleasure within the club. In the last incidence Robert gets picked up and excluded during the early hours of the morning. He is accused of having warned other club guests about a particular doorman working at the club and also for wearing security guard/doorman uniform-style clothes in the club. The correspondence between Robert and the management evolves during a lengthy series of emails and ends in a heated argument between the manager and the guest. Robert ends up threatening the manager by arguing that if he does not let him revisit the club, he will spread rumours in the nightclub business that he himself is part of.

In relation to his appearance and behaviour as doorman, Robert argues:

I’m not wearing doorman’s clothes in there, I have a fleece advertisement sweater on, and that isn’t doorman’s clothes. I have mentioned to some people I know in there that I’m a doorman as a second job, and that is true.

This doorman-identity is further illustrated in the following quote where he explains a situation where he interferes in a fight in the following way:

The guy might have been an ex-boyfriend or something, and hit out at the two girls, to give them a beating. I quickly discovered that something was wrong, and I saw that neither the busboys nor the doorman were present at the scene. So when there are no employees present at this point, I feel that it is my obligation as a doorman to make a citizen’s arrest and stop the fight, before something really bad happened to the girls. I’m sorry that I interfered in their fight, but I just couldn’t stand there as a doorman and watch two girls get beaten up. I myself am a doorman and security guard, so I will in no way behave in the wrong way [. . .]. It violates my pride as a doorman to be thrown out in that manner.

The quotes illustrate how the realm of his professional occupation and everyday life transgresses the night time leisure zone. He works as a doorman and presents himself as such within the club. On the one hand it can be argued that playing with your identity is not so strange in the club scene, including taking on a different occupational identity, gender or sex. This can be used in a playful way to attract boys or girls or just to have “fun” (Bech, 2004). Alcohol or drugs can be part of embodying such performances (Demant & Heinskou, 2011). In such games, occupation becomes part of the aesthetics (Maffesoli, 1996) that are used in forming relations within the club. On the other hand, this case is interesting in that it shows how taking on an identity other than that of a “consuming consumer” is somehow out of place. Robert fails because he does not play with identity and is not performing and playing. His presences within the club relate too much to the production side of clubbing (participating in the industry) and not to the consumption side. This is further underlined as Robert states that he “didn’t believe that doormen threw doormen out”. When being “the secret service” Robert becomes embodied within the place-event by assembling the logo fleece sweater with his professional identity within the highly regulated space. As such this connects leisure and work in a “wrong” way, and yet this is the very way he gets affected.

Acting as part of the production side of the club affects him. It is here he feels pride and a sense of power. The (seven-year) long history within this club is not a sense of belonging in the same way as we see it with some of the other frequent clubbers. Robert finds pride and a sense of power in the way he manages to slip into a professional role in the club. Because he is a bit outside the age group that frequents the club, he also slips out of the expected consumption role. By being embodied as a professional he finds another way to be affected by the club. And when the management keeps responding to his emails, they contribute to enabling these affects even more.

Discussion

The controversies between the regulated space of the club and the place-events in which the clubbers partake, form affects amongst the clubbers. It is this friction between the somehow stabilized space and the always-under-construction place-event that this analysis has sought to follow, to see how affects are embodied. The affects of being in the nightclub may not align with the normative space that is stabilized by regulation. Most existing literature in alcohol and drug studies focuses on the substances alone. However, alcohol and moderate drug use did not appear much within the controversies. Within the wider social-material perspective, drinking-to-intoxication seems to be in-place together with sensations of joy and happiness within this club. The findings that neither alcohol nor illegal drugs were directly related to the problems within the club should, of course, be viewed with caution. Consequently, even though drugs and alcohol as such were not directly relevant, they were included in assemblages with inappropriate dress, specific people, and certain attitudes. This is also supported by other studies (Duff; 2008; Jayne, Valentine, & Holloway, 2011a; Jayne et al., 2012) and indicates that the effects of the drugs need to be established not as direct effects in relation to the “thing power” (Bennett, 2010) of alcohol and other drugs but to the wider spatial-material setting.

The pleasures within the club are woven into the different forms of risk that the place produces. Pride, anxiety and shame are found in relation to the regulation of drug possessions and drunkenness. As such, it is still very relevant to acknowledge the workings of the instruments used to reduce risk as much as objective (epidemiological identified) risks. This does not mean that the regulation, as such, should be seen as only negative in producing a pleasurable night. However, this study finds that the
A mono-affective perspective of regulating the club towards one kind of pleasure becomes contested. This material carves out a club space with a number of very heterogeneous affects. Some of these result in behaviours that are considered out-of-place in the club. But the very same clubbers also describe how “being at home” at the club affects them positively and entices them to come back. The clubbers in this sample have been excluded or given quarantine. However, they strive to regain access to the club. If we turn to the affects of the clubbers, the ability to experience relative various heterogeneous affects within this club space may be exactly what makes it comfortable to them. Some clubs have a more regulated and static space, which may limit the heterogeneity of affects in the clubbers. To use Thrift’s words, such experiences may be a “play without play” (Thrift, 2004: 74). The possibility to become affected diminishes as the space becomes more regulated.

**Implications**

Where does this knowledge of the affectual club space put us in relation to the question of reducing risks? The regulatory paradigm (with bouncers and surveillance) within the club is focused on keeping behaviours within certain frames. The club does however also already practise what Massumi has termed an affect modulation (Massumi, 2005) by its very social-material organization. Affect modulation is, for Massumi, the shaping of the very basic, precognitive bonds that make up the foundation of social life. This aspect could however be acknowledged more and be used actively within policies. Affect modulation within the club could be approached in at least two ways:

First, the club in this study already works with some kind of affect modulation when it engages in the dialogic practices with clubbers over their access. This practice will, to some degree, enable clubbers to feel that they take part in the production of the space. Being an acknowledged part of the place event can make regulation work differently. Regulation could be sensed more as being a part of clubbing than a restriction to clubbing (cf. Demant & Landolt, 2013). However, such a perspective would demand that the club, to some degree, relaxes its regulation towards the mono-affective space and make space for including more heterogeneous affects. This perspective would to some degree break with the economic power structure of club ownership, because it would enable those with matters of concern to partake in the constructions (cf. Latour, 2005).

Secondly, even though a more heterogeneous affective club-space would challenge the economical-power organization of the club, it may not only be negative for business. Affect modulation within the club could pick up knowledge from marketing; following this line of thought, regulation of behaviours is substituted for an understanding where the marketer works on existing affects (cf. Milne, Wenzner, Bermbeck, & Brodin, 2011). The point is that by modulating pre-existing affects, it could feed back into the club’s brand. In this way it would be the clubbers that would produce the value (a place that is attractive for partying) and not (only) the production side of the venue. What we find in this particular club is that strong affects are established that attract the clubbers to the place. This is evident even amongst the clubbers who are excluded. The affect of “being at home” (Lorimer, 2005: 86) at the club could possibly be a stepping stone for modulating some of the most out-of-place affects into less risky behaviours as well as it could enforce a club brand of participation and social integration.

The present analysis has discussed the heterogeneities of the affects related to night clubbing. The perspective of pleasure that is applied within much club research has, in response to the dominant risk discourse, taught central lessons to the field by opening up discussions of what clubbing, drinking and drug use can be. Affects of love, joy and sympathy have been included in this discussion of pleasure. Within this material we found anxiety, pride, anger, shame and embarrassment embodied with love, joy, sympathy and so on. Furthermore, affects of hate, fear, boredom, disgust, sadness, lust, guilt and awe are found in some of the cases that were not picked up by this analysis. By addressing affects in relation to space, we gain an analytical point that may be central to addiction studies. It becomes evident in this analysis that some of the affects relate to obsession or compulsion. We find affects that create an “[…] irresistible impulse to act, regardless of the rationality of the motivation” (Thrift, 2008: 240). As such, clubbers may in some instances have little or no agency over their bodies or environments but are under the control of an affective force (ibid). The body becomes a medium for the transmission of force. We may discuss this as a form of compulsion – or even an addiction. However, this analysis also demonstrates that these bodily forms of compulsions are an assembly in which illicit drugs or alcohol take a less profound position than addiction research per se tends to give them. This may direct policies to work with organizing the affective space of the club though more complex means than regulating ingestion of substances. We do however still lack knowledge in this area and working with affective spaces and assembly thinking becomes analytically complicated due to the embodied nature of affects and the emphasis on the material-discursive heterogeneity. This article has barely scratched the surface. In further studies we would need to add more layers of knowledge (Despret, 2004; Latour, 2004). First and foremost we need to include the complex actants of psychoactive substances even more and the quasi-actants (Krarup & Blok, 2011) of the alcohol industry, national policies and culture of intoxication within the assembly.

**References**


