

# **Louder! Wilder!**

**Danish youth at an international nightlife resort**

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# Contents

<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	6
“WHAT HAPPENS IN SUNNY BEACH, STAYS IN SUNNY BEACH” .....	7
PACKAGED DEBAUCHERY .....	11
THE MEDIA COVERAGE .....	16
THE EXISTING RESEARCH ON NIGHTLIFE TOURISM.....	21
A NEO-DURKHEIMIAN APPROACH TO NIGHTLIFE TOURISM.....	27
A LOOK AHEAD .....	30
<b>CHAPTER TWO: METHODS</b> .....	36
THE RESEARCH TEAM .....	37
ENTERING THE MADNESS .....	38
FIELD RELATIONS .....	39
INTERVIEWS AND CONVERSATIONS.....	42
OBSERVATION.....	43
SURVEY PROCEDURES .....	45
DATA ANALYSIS AND WRITING STYLE: THE POETRY OF PARTYING ..	47
ETHICS.....	50
<b>CHAPTER THREE: DRUGS, ALCOHOL, SEX, HEALTH AND HOLIDAYS</b>	
<b>SATISFACTION</b> .....	52
DRUG USE.....	52
ALCOHOL USE .....	56
SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR.....	59
COMMERCIAL SEX .....	63
HEALTH.....	67
HOLIDAY SATISFACTION .....	70
REFERENCES.....	71
<b>ARTICLE I</b> .....	82
Tutenges, S. (2009), "La nouvelle culture de la 'défonce'", <i>Sociétés</i> , 103(1): 47-57.	
<b>ARTICLE II</b> .....	96

Tutenges, S. “The wildest party monkeys: the un-civilizing of youth at an international nightlife resort”

**ARTICLE III**.....120

Tutenges, S. (submitted), "Ecstatic crowds: a case study of pub crawls at an international nightlife resort". Theory, Culture & Society.

**ARTICLE IV**.....144

Tutenges, S. (2009), "Safety problems among heavy-drinking youth at a bulgarian nightlife resort", International Journal of Drug Policy, 20(5): 444-446.

**ARTICLE V**.....158

Tutenges, S. and Rod, M.H. (2009), "We got incredibly drunk ... it was damned fun" drinking stories among danish youth ", Journal of Youth Studies, 12(4): 355 – 370.

**APPENDIX I**.....176

**APPENDIX II**.....178

**SUMMARY**.....190



# Chapter One

## Introduction

Why on earth go to Sunny Beach in Bulgaria to study young people from Denmark? I have often asked myself that question. And then I have thought of how my friend Jonas reacted when he first heard about my plans to conduct fieldwork at the resort over a couple of summers: “HOW TRASHY!” he nearly yelled and roared with laughter. Sunny Beach does not have the best of reputations. But it is nevertheless a booming resort that attracts tourists of all ages from all over Europe. Most of the young tourists from Denmark who travel to Sunny Beach stay for a week with the intention of partying intensively. They are what I choose to call “nightlife tourists”.

There are resorts throughout the world that thrive on nightlife tourists. Among them are Ayia Napa in Cyprus, Ibiza in Spain, Faliraki in Greece, Rimini in Italy, Alanya in Turkey, Kazantip in Uzbekistan, Koh Phangan in Thailand, Surfers Paradise in Australia, Cancun in Mexico and Panama City Beach in the United States. Since the late 1980s, an array of studies has been conducted at such resorts, scrutinizing in particular the (risk) behaviours of North American and British tourists. However, most of the existing studies are based solely on quantitative methods and, consequently, certain aspects of nightlife tourism remain understudied. In particular, we still know little about the phenomenological dimension of partying under distant skies. What do nightlife tourists themselves think about their holidays? How do they experience the sultry atmosphere and absence of parental control? What is the attraction of heavy drinking for days in a row? What kinds of emotions are drummed up when a crowd of tourists dances and jumps in foreign streets, shouting: “Louder! Wilder! Louder! Wilder!”? And how does it feel to wake up the following day as the alcohol leaves the blood and the air temperature is surpassing 35 degrees centigrade? These are questions that deserve more attention than they have hitherto received.

I travelled to Sunny Beach in the summers of 2007 and 2008 because I wanted to write a comprehensive account of nightlife tourism, based both on qualitative and quantitative methods. I carried out field observations for a total of three months at the resort, and I conducted 45 qualitative interviews with 104

tourists and 11 guides. Also, under the guidance of the survey expert Morten Hesse, four student assistants and I completed an array of surveys that involved more than 2,000 tourists. Almost all of the data that we have collected cover tourists and guides from Denmark between the ages of 16 to 26 years old. I hope, however, that the study can be used to shed light on nightlife tourists in other age groups, of other nationalities and in other parts of the world.

The results from our Sunny Beach surveys are presented in articles listed in Appendix I. None of these articles are included in the dissertation, but some of their key results are summarised and discussed in Chapter Three. This dissertation is primarily focused on the qualitative data, aiming to generate a rich, phenomenological description of the behaviour and experiences of young Danish tourists and guides in Sunny Beach.

### **“What happens in Sunny Beach, stays in Sunny Beach”**

Sunny Beach is located in eastern Bulgaria on the Black Sea coast. The resort was founded during the Communist era to meet the growing demand for low-budget holiday facilities in the Soviet Union. During the 1970s and '80s, Sunny Beach attracted tourists from both the Eastern bloc and from non-Communist countries such as England and Germany (Alexandrova and Vulkov 2004). After the collapse of Communism in the early 1990s, the number of tourists from Western and Northern Europe increased, and the size of the resort rapidly expanded (Iliev 2006). Today, Sunny Beach is the biggest and most popular holiday resort in Bulgaria. Critics call it overdeveloped and claim that it strains the local environment, but Sunny Beach is also an important source of revenue in one of Europe's poorest countries.

The resort features several kilometres of beach frontage and a hot and dry summer climate. The permanent population is very small; all services are geared toward the tourists. In the summer months, deckchairs and parasols cover the beach, and sellers wait nearby with supplies of food, drinks, sunglasses and other holiday requisites. Lying on the sand and swimming in the sea are free of charge, but most other activities cost money. And there is no shortage of activities. They include getting a massage, racing in an aqua scooter, riding on an inflatable banana, bungee-jumping, playing mini-golf, smacking a punching ball, and flying over the sea in a parachute that is being pulled by a speedboat.



The beach is enclosed by an esplanade and rows of new buildings. The mafia is rumoured to be behind much of the development with the motivation to launder money. Here's how the alleged procedure works: you construct a building, rent it to existing or non-existing tenants, report excessive rent prices to the tax authorities, and presto! — you have created the appearance of legal revenues that actually come from illegal activities such as selling drugs, prostitution and extortion. I mention these rumours about the mafia, not only because ample evidence supports these claims (Nikolov 1997; Mortensen 2009), but also because the air of mystery is part of the Sunny Beach experience. The young holidaymakers from Denmark talk a lot about Bulgarian thugs, shoot-outs on the beach, corrupt police officers, and tourists who have been followed, robbed, blackmailed or kidnapped. This discourse may be interpreted as a mechanism to vent one's fears, become aware of dangers and avoid harm; but more than that, the stories are a source of entertainment and excitement. Many young Danes enjoy the suspense of sojourning in a shady place, and they like to share stories confirming that they have left the humdrum of daily life.

One night at a foam party I struck up a conversation with a 19-year-old tourist, Andreas, who warned me that Sunny Beach is crazy. He explained that, just a few days ago, a Danish man had killed someone. The Dane was partying with his friends on a balcony, and then, he suddenly and inexplicably tossed a bottle of vodka onto the street below. The bottle hit a moving car and killed the driver. Andreas told me another story that involved himself and two friends. They had heard that Bulgarian strip clubs are cheap, and decided to visit one. Once they entered, Andreas bought a rum and coke drink and a lap dance, but he then realized that he was short on cash — so were his friends. The staff at the club ordered Andreas to stay while his friends went to withdraw money. However, Andreas' friends forgot or misunderstood their job, and never came back. After a long wait, a bouncer in the strip club punched Andreas twice in the chest, forced him into a car and drove to a retired spot. The bouncer punched Andreas some more before driving back to his hotel. The bouncer was eventually paid. Afterwards, Andreas was so upset with his friends that he wrecked their hotel room; he threw knives and punched holes in the walls with his bare fists. I visited Andreas in his hotel room the day after the foam party. I saw the holes in the wall and I met his friends. Their dispute had since been

settled, Andreas told me. Everyone had been drunk and no one was to blame. The hotel management demanded a high price to pay for the room damage, but that was alright. Andreas assured me that he and his friends were having a good time and that, overall, he was happy about his holiday and had no regrets.

Andreas' thus portrayed Sunny Beach as a dangerous yet fascinating place that generates crazy behaviour and far-out experiences. To put it differently, Sunny Beach conforms to Erving Goffman's notion of a "back place" (1963), meaning an area where individuals are hidden – or convince themselves that they are hidden – from forbidding authorities such as parents, teachers or the criminal justice institutions. Back places often "provide an atmosphere of special piquancy" (1963: 81) that enable individuals to expose themselves and misbehave without necessarily risking their overall reputation. "Here the individual will be able to be at ease among his fellows and also discover that acquaintances he thought were not of his own kind really are" (1963: 81-2). Likewise, many tourists and guides consider Sunny Beach a place where they can act with less restraint than they do at home. Sunny Beach is crazy, as Andreas pointed out; it is a world of perpetual excess, and not simply because it abounds with cheap drinking venues and strip clubs, but also because the young tourists and guides consent that some degree of misbehaviour is acceptable, expected and even suitable at the resort.

In a Goffmanian article about the Mardi Grass festival in New Orleans, David Redmon (2001) writes that back places or "backspaces" often project the impression of a hedonistic environment devoid of censure where individuals can indulge in playful deviance without fear of condemnation: "Playful deviance occurs most often when small groups of tourists travel to symbolic spaces of leisure to participate in temporary forms of transgressions that they will not perform in places where they live. These symbolic spaces of leisure, located inside themed environments, are associated with powerful representations that structure public perceptions and provide normative instructions on how to perform playful deviance in these settings" (2001: 27-28). Sunny Beach caters to playful deviance, but it is not an anarchistic playground where "anything goes". People cannot do entirely as they please. The nightlife excesses are orchestrated by implicit and explicit rules that are backed by threats of punishment. Andreas' stories exemplify this: Sunny Beach is a place where young people can indulge in binge drinking, party on

balconies, enter strip clubs, purchase sexual services, and wreck hotel rooms, but they may face severe sanctions if they fail to pay the bills. Holidaymakers are also prone to punishment if they are apprehended in the act of committing a crime. The road of excess is narrow!

Consider the following excerpt from an interview with a group of tourists:

Sébastien: What brought you to Sunny Beach? Can you give me the three most important reasons for coming here?

Nathalia: To have fun, party and be together with friends.

Signe: Yeah, being together[...]

Nathalia: We just want to have fun without anyone interfering or criticizing us. What happens here is between us, between close friends [...] And right from the beginning we agreed: “What happens in Bulgaria, stays in Bulgaria”.<sup>1</sup> It’s best if people back home don’t know what we have been doing here.

Signe: There is another kind of moral down here.

Nathalia: For sure.

Sébastien: Can you tell me more about that moral?

Linda: Here it is less acceptable to abstain from drinking. When I see someone who doesn’t want to party, I kind of think that they are boring.

Helene: People should go out and have fun while they can.

Signe: People are generally more tolerant down here, more open.

People in Sunny Beach are generally very tolerant when it comes to immoderate behaviour, but less so when it comes to moderation. Even the youngest tourists can get away with being drunk and obnoxious, but they may be subjected to teasing from peers if they make too many sound decisions such as repeatedly going to bed early, eating healthy food, exercising at the gym, saving money or staying sober. Cautious behaviour is deemed boring; it spoils the sense of being in a place of exception where “the normal becomes abnormal, and the deviant is temporarily legitimated” (Redmon 2003: 381).

As I have already hinted, commercial forces play a key role in producing the excesses in Sunny Beach. To quote Andreas:

“This place never stops. At dawn, as some of the bars begin to close, new ones open. And McDonalds has 24-hour service. Nice.”

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<sup>1</sup> In 2003, Las Vegas successfully boosted its reputation as a place of forbidden fun by running an advertisement campaign with the slogan, “What Happens Here Stays Here” (Tamara 2009). This slogan has since been used as an invitation for excess at many other nightlife destinations such as Tenerife, Ibiza and Sunny Beach (Thomas 2005).

The centre of the resort and large parts of the esplanade are densely packed with shops, restaurants, bars, nightclubs and brothels, all trying to attract customers with different forms of advertising such as billboards, flashing neon signs, scantily-clad dancers and personnel who hand out promotional flyers. Many of the restaurants and drinking venues try to boost their sales by offering “happy hours” and discounts on large menus. Some places feature musicians and dancing waiters to create an attractive ambience and lure people to stay longer and spend more money (Measham and Brain 2005). Sunny Beach is a Mecca of consumption, a shining example of what Keith Hayward and Dick Hobbs have referred to as a “liminal zone” that “cultivates a desire for immediate, rather than delayed gratification” (2007: 445) and “where the watchers as well as the watched are seduced by the spectacle of massed transgression” (2007: 449).

### **Packaged debauchery**

The majority of the young Danish tourists come to Sunny Beach during the month of July with tour operators that offer a range of services such as the flight, transportation to the hotel, accommodation, meals, outings and parties. There are four Danish operators that specialize in offering nightlife holidays to young people: “DUF Rejser”<sup>2</sup> ([www.duf-rejser.dk](http://www.duf-rejser.dk)), “Ung Rejs” ([www.ungrejs.dk](http://www.ungrejs.dk)), “Uptours” ([www.uptours.com](http://www.uptours.com)) and “Viby Ungdomsrejser” ([www.viby.dk](http://www.viby.dk)). These youth operators sell themselves explicitly as promoters of alcohol-fuelled parties and casual sex (Sørensen 2003), much like the British “Club 18-30” and the American “Sun Splash Tours” (Pritchard and Morgan 1996). Here was Uptours’ weekly activity program for the summer of 2008:

- Sunday: arrival, accommodation and welcome party.
- Monday: mingling at a bar during the day, pub crawl at night.
- Tuesday: party in a boat on open sea.
- Wednesday: barbeque party with a guide show.
- Thursday: beach party.
- Friday: foam party.
- Saturday: return home.

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<sup>2</sup> Duf Rejser was founded in 1982 and is the oldest of the four Danish youth operators. Ung Rejs was founded in 1992 and is the largest of the youth operators.

By comparison, Balkan Holidays' weekly program that same year included several cultural excursions and just one party. It is important to note that partying is a top priority for the majority of young Danes who visit Sunny Beach, regardless of their choice of tour operator. Sunbathing, swimming and shopping are also valued activities, but partying is essential. Take, for example, the following field notes that I wrote down during a bus trip with a package tour operator that catered to both young and old people, who sought active holidays with opportunities to hike, bike, sail and other activities:

We take a bus that goes directly from the airport to Sunny Beach. Here are Danes of all ages. In front of us sits a group of elderly people, and in the back there is a group of around 10 very loud and agitated young guys. One of them yells: "When is the bus leaving?" An approximately 40-year-old woman gets on, and she is greeted with a cheerful: "Hey there, sexy!" Another one of the young men complains: "My eyes will be all red when we go out tonight." They've travelled for many hours on a plane that was delayed. Another one answers, "We'll just sleep until 6:30 p.m. and then we'll be ready for action." The old people in front of us are irritated at the youngsters. A grey-haired senior says something about how the youth deserve a good beating. We reach Sunny Beach and the passengers are let off, group by group, as we pass the different hotels. We reach Hotel Diamond. This is where the young guys get off: they begin to whoop and holler. The older folks also begin to whoop and holler. Apparently, everyone is happy that the young men are getting off. An older woman opens a beer to celebrate the departure of the youth. It's 8:15 in the morning. The grey-haired senior turns around and says, happily, "Ah, the kids are gone."

Judging from my observations in Sunny Beach, not only the young but also the elderly tourists increase their drinking and partying whilst abroad. Holiday excess is not merely a youth phenomenon. However, my data on the elderly are limited and I will therefore make very little reference to them in this dissertation.

At this point I would like to introduce George Ritzer's book "The McDonaldisation of Society" (2008) in order to probe further into the kind of packaged experiences that the tour operators offer to young tourists. This book has generated massive sales and attracted heated debates (Kellner 1998: vii), and it has been applied in the study of several tourism-oriented areas such as cruise ships (Weaver 2005), theme parks (Bryman 1998), and holiday resorts

(Ferraresi and Stigliano 2009). Ritzer's main argument is that the principles of McDonald's "are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world" (2008: 1). According to Ritzer, the core principles of McDonald's include: efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control (Ritzer 2008). I will now examine the extent to which each of these four principles applies to the packaged tours to Sunny Beach.

*Efficiency* involves the effort to reach a desired end with a minimum amount of work (Ritzer and Ovadia 2000: 34). As mentioned before, many of the young holidaymakers go to Sunny Beach in order to "have fun, party and be together with friends". The tour operators try to fulfil these expectations by reducing boring activities and ensuring swift and easy access to states of collective excitement. For instance, soon after the tourists land in Bulgaria they are greeted by guides and directed onto a bus that brings them to their hotel. The guides often use the bus ride to crack jokes and give practical information about the local currency, where to withdraw cash, and so on. They also help with the hotel check-in so that the formalities are over quickly. Another way that the tour operators maximize fun is by strategically employing alcohol — the social lubricant — to make their customers feel more outgoing and festive. Drinks are accessible everywhere and at all hours: on board the plane, at the welcome meetings and, of course, during the organized parties, some of which include all-you-can-drink specials and drinking competitions where large amounts of beer, cocktails, or hard liquor have to be downed as quickly as possible. Drunkenness is part of the package, and this is particularly true for the packages offered by the youth tour operators.

*Calculability* is, in Ritzer's perspective, "an emphasis on things that can be quantified" (Ritzer and Ovadia 2000: 34). In McDonaldized systems, quantity often becomes a proxy for quality: the bigger, the better; the more, the merrier. Or as the young tourists often shout during nights out: "Louder! Wilder! Louder! Wilder!" The tour operators also express this logic in their advertisements, which abound with bombastic descriptions about the vast number of Danes in Sunny Beach, the huge sizes of the night clubs, the multitude of bars, and the nonstop opportunity for hedonistic fun. Several of the tour operators employ surveys to gather information on the tastes of their customers. This may also be interpreted as an example of "calculability". The tour operators use quantitative methods to calculate the preferences of their

customers for the purpose of product improvement. Numbers are used as criteria to evaluate the quality of the services (Ritzer and Ovadia 2000: 34; Weaver 2005: 351).

*Predictability* is another important aspect of McDonaldized systems. It involves the effort to standardize the behaviour of employees and customers so that the production process and the products can be anticipated (Ritzer and Ovadia 2000: 34). One way that the tour operators impose predictability is by training their guides so that they act in accordance with the expectations of the tourists. Much of this training takes place before the summer season in “guide schools” or at seminars. Here the guides learn how to communicate to a crowd of tourists, what to say during excursions, how to initiate collective dancing, how to be festive, how to act in case of an emergency, and much more. Everything is carefully prepared in order to give the tourists a good time without too many unpleasant surprises. Planned surprises, on the other hand, are often part of the weekly activity program. For instance, one of the youth operators once hosted a party that, according to the official announcement, would feature a world-famous band to be flown in by helicopter. The band turned out to be two completely unknown, tone-deaf dwarfs. This kind of planned surprise is an important part of the fun.

*Control* is exerted both over workers and consumers in order to ensure the aforementioned principles: efficiency, calculability and predictability (Ritzer and Liska 1997: 106). The tour operators mainly exercise soft forms of “control”, for instance, at the welcome meetings where the guides try to persuade the tourists to buy tickets for the organized activities. A typical line of argument is that the tourists should buy tickets because otherwise they will miss out on the fun and perhaps never really get to know their guides and fellow travellers. Tourists venturing out on their own, so the argument goes, may also expose themselves to scams and confrontations with locals. Thus, the welcome meeting is not simply a friendly gesture, but an opportunity for luring tourists into consumption (Andrews 2000: 241). Another example of control is the actions taken against illegal drug use: several of the tour operators warn that drug users will be kicked out of their hotel rooms, deprived of participating in the organized activities, and eventually handed over to the local police.

There are, in other words, many parallels between my understanding of the packaged tours to Sunny Beach and Ritzer’s vision of McDonald’s. But there is

also a substantial difference: the tour operators promote and capitalize on emotional states that would be unheard of in most fast food restaurants, and they do little to prevent things from getting out of hand. Most of the tour operators allow tourists to dance on bar stools, strip naked, drink till they drop and have sex wherever they want to. High levels of excitement are accepted, and minor injuries are not necessarily perceived as a problem. Such behaviours and emotions are not welcome in your average risk-averse McDonald's. Ritzer explains: "Structures that excite consumers can be dangerous" (2003: 133), and therefore the atmosphere in McDonaldized settings is often "so sterile and antiseptic that it does little to stimulate customers, and in fact acts as a damper on them" (2003: 133). McDonald's sells inoffensive, family-friendly products exclusively. The Danish tour operators offer family-friendly products *and* opportunities for devaluation and exaltation.

Ritzer is obviously very critical of McDonaldized systems and their swift spread throughout the world. He condemns the "flattened, featureless products" that are served at fast food restaurants (2008: 49), and he deems packaged forms of tourism inferior to more traditional, self-arranged modes of travelling (2008: 27, 177-178; see also Parker 1998: 9). McDonaldized systems have allegedly "lost their magic and mystery" (2008: 141), they pose a threat to the environment and to the public health, and they "deny the humanity, the human reason, of the people who work within them or are served by them" (2008: 141). Yet Ritzer recognizes that many people seem to derive pleasure from McDonaldized products and services: "One need only observe what is taking place at such McDonaldized cathedrals of consumption as McDonald's, DisneyWorld, the Venetian casino-hotel in Las Vegas, or the Destiny cruise ship to see that they are brimming with life" (2003: 124). But why is that? What compels people to visit places that supposedly rob them of their humanity? What is fun about packaged experiences? These are central questions in my research on nightlife tourism, but I have not found any satisfying answers to them in Ritzer's writings. Ritzer is more concerned with criticizing McDonald's rather than understanding its appeal. He focuses on the principles that underpin McDonaldized systems, but fails to describe or theorize the life that unfolds within these systems.

Following Martin Parker (1998), I would say that Ritzer occupies a position of cultural pessimism and elitism that criticizes and renounces the joys of mass



consumption. Such positions are common in the research literature on mass tourism (Pons *et al.* 2009) and also in the literature on nightlife (Maffesoli 1985). Holidaymakers and partygoers are commonly portrayed as uncultured and alienated hedonists who blindly follow the dictates of the market forces and who, in their relentless pursuit of (illusory) pleasure, jeopardize their own health, destroy traditional cultures, and ruin the environment. Now, I don't intend to make a case against critical sociology! In fact, several of my own writings on Sunny Beach are critical (e.g. Tutenges 2009). But what I oppose are elitist and reactionary forms of critique that belittle other peoples' experiences. I also find it problematic when the critique tends towards narrow-mindedness. Who is Ritzer to claim that the meals at fast food restaurants provide "little gratification" and that, "[t]he best that can usually be said is that the meal is efficient and is over quickly" (2008: 154)?

Here, it is worth recalling Émile Durkheim's advice to study social life in a non-condemnatory and open-minded manner. In the last of his masterpieces, "Elementary forms of Religious Life" from 1912, he writes that, "It is a basic postulate of sociology that a human institution cannot rest on error and falsehood or it could not endure ... The most barbarous or bizarre rituals and the strangest myths translate some human need, some aspect of life, whether individual or social" (2001: 4). Durkheim thus cautions us not to underrate other peoples' practices and beliefs. He holds that, in order to understand other people, it is necessary to take them seriously, especially when they engage in activities that one finds unsophisticated, offensive or nonsensical. Most parts of this dissertation are written in this Durkheimian spirit. My main objective is not to criticize the corporate forces that make money on young travellers. Nor is it to expose the negative consequences of nightlife tourism or to arrive at preventive measures. Rather, I set out to conduct an in-depth and, as far as possible, non-condemnatory investigation of the behaviour and experiences of the Danish youth in Sunny Beach.

## **The media coverage**

Sunny Beach captured the attention of the Danish media in the summer of 2007 when a 17-year-old Danish man died of alcohol poisoning after going on a pub crawl coordinated by a Danish travel agency. Shortly after that tragedy, a young Swede was beaten to death by Bulgarian bouncers, and reports emerged of

robberies, assaults and rapes. An army of reporters subsequently invaded the resort and raised harsh criticism against the Bulgarian authorities and the travel agencies, as well as the young tourists and their parents. Consider the following excerpt from an article in a national Danish newspaper:

"We are not shocked that young people go on holidays to party and get drunk in the southern heat. Neither do we mind that travel companies will arrange the trips, even for very young people. But we are appalled that tour operators, which openly advertise that the purpose of the holiday is binge drinking, do not provide guides certified in first aid and trained in handling the critical situations that are bound to arise, when young people roam around plastered in foreign places [...] Police are nowhere to be found. The area is dominated by mafia types with batons and guns [...] The hotel guard acts violently if one plays music too loudly or pees in a bush. The taxi driver beats up customers who cannot pay their insane prices. The trade in cocaine and ecstasy is rampant." (*Ekstra Bladet*, 17 July 2007).

The bad press continued the following summer with media headlines such as "Nightmare Holiday", "Harmful Binge Travels", and "Awash in Drugs". Hidden camera stories also appeared exposing Danish tour guides and their reportedly unethical behaviour. One video showed guides doing a striptease and initiating drinking competitions. Another video showed a drunken guide making sexual advances toward an undercover journalist using lines such as: "If you don't kiss me right now, then I won't go home with you." Two guides were fired as a result of the videos.

To summarize, in recent years, the Danish public has been exposed to numerous stories concerning Sunny Beach (see Table 1). Commentators have used the expression "media storm" to describe the debate (Elling quoted in Kjær 2008), and this seems accurate, at least with respect to the summer of 2007. The majority of the stories took on a negative tone, and relatively few offered positive descriptions of the resort, the young tourists or their guides (see Table 2). The central themes highlighted by the media have been harm and deceit rather than pleasure and gratification. This is not surprising. Journalism plays a critical role in society and is commonly envisioned as the watchdog that protects the public from abuse. Furthermore, when it comes to the topic of "intoxicated youth", the journalistic angle is almost invariably critical, if not alarmist (Hier 2002). I experienced this firsthand in 2009, when I contacted a well-regarded Danish newspaper in order to diffuse some results obtained from

one of our Sunny Beach survey studies. My message was, in short, that illicit drug use is rare among Danish tourists whereas heavy drinking is common. The message resulted in two articles with the loaded headlines, “Teenagers drink 72 units during sun holidays” (Schmidt and Kaae 2008) and “Party, dance, cheap booze – and 60 different illnesses” (Kaae and Schmidt 2008). These two articles, as well as the debates that followed, barely mentioned what I regarded as the most interesting part of the message: that few tourists actually take illicit drugs. Instead, the media focussed on the negative information: that tourists drink a lot. To get across positive news about alcohol and drug use among youth requires skill and determination.

Table 1: Assessment of the number of articles about nightlife tourism in Sunny Beach, Lloret de Mar (Spain) and Kos (Greece).<sup>3</sup>

	Sunny Beach	Lloret de Mar	Kos
<b>2000</b>	0	2	7
<b>2001</b>	0	10	2
<b>2002</b>	1	4	4
<b>2003</b>	0	15	6
<b>2004</b>	0	3	1
<b>2005</b>	1	0	1
<b>2006</b>	1	0	1
<b>2007</b>	81	37	1
<b>2008</b>	34	20	1
<b>In total</b>	118	91	24

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<sup>3</sup> The source of Table 1 and 2 is the Danish web-source, Infomedia, a leading provider of Danish media intelligence ([www.infomedia.dk](http://www.infomedia.dk)). Via the Infomedia database, a search was conducted on the names “Sunny Beach”, Lloret de Mar” and “Kos” in eight Danish newspapers (*BT, Berlingske Tidende, Ekstra Bladet, Erhervsbladet, Information, Jyllands-Posten, Politiken* and *Weekendavisen*). The search was conducted in the period from January 1, 2000 to December 31, 2008. Only articles focusing on nightlife tourism were included in the count.

Table 2: Assessment of the number of articles about nightlife tourism in Sunny Beach that were positive, neutral or negative.

	Positive	Neutral	Negative
<b>2000</b>	0	0	0
<b>2001</b>	0	0	0
<b>2002</b>	1	0	0
<b>2003</b>	0	0	0
<b>2004</b>	0	0	0
<b>2005</b>	1	0	0
<b>2006</b>	0	0	1
<b>2007</b>	7	31	43
<b>2008</b>	3	10	21
<b>In total</b>	12	41	65

Much has been said and written about the young Danes who holiday in Sunny Beach. But how do they feel about the way they are portrayed by the media? Here are the opinions of a group of tourists:

Sébastien: What do you think about the media coverage?

Brian: It's some bad shit. We have not been in danger.

Henrik: No, we have not been in danger at all, and I have walked home alone to my hotel many times. I also did that yesterday. I haven't experienced anything dangerous.

Brian: They are always using the same expression, "binge drinking", "binge drinking", "binge drinking". When reading the newspapers, one gets the impression that the guides just pour alcohol down our throats while we are sleeping.

Henrik: The newspapers don't see that the young tourists themselves also are responsible for their own behaviour, and that they act responsibly.

Martin: And they also write as if the young tourists don't know what they are doing. I mean, we actually do.

Henrik: I believe in the media coverage. I do. But I just think that they are good at blowing things out of proportion.

Brian: It's one big party down here, so it's unavoidable that perhaps 50 people will get hurt during the course of a month. If you were to read about everything that happens back in Copenhagen, then you would read about knife stabbings and rapes every weekend. I think that it is because they don't have anything else to write about in the summer holidays.

Thomas: I also read in *Ekstra Bladet* recently that some boy was paralyzed after falling off a balcony as a consequence of playing some kind of game. And the headline read: “Youth holiday ruined my life”, or something like that. I mean, he was the one who acted an idiot. He is also personally responsible for what happened.

The young people that I spoke with in Sunny Beach were generally very interested in, but also sceptical of, the media coverage they received back in Denmark. Many, such as the men quoted above, felt that they were being patronized and treated like victims without any willpower of their own. Moreover, it was commonly held that the guides were being demonized, that the dangers of Sunny Beach were overstated, and that the journalists were unreliable. For the most part, the tourists sided with the guides and opposed the media.

The media coverage of Sunny Beach is reminiscent of earlier debates about young partygoers, in particular the debates about rave parties that raged in Britain, North America and many other parts of the world in the 1990s and early 2000s (Hier 2002; Hunt *et al.* 2007). These debates were also dominated by problem-focused stories that condemned the leisure activities of a segment of youth. Rave parties were described as drug-infested events in need of strict control and repression, and the ravers themselves were portrayed as being unstable individuals who posed a threat not only to themselves, but also to “property, propriety, and peace” (St John 2009: 51). Note, for instance, the following quotes from a British newspaper dating back to 1992: “A Village of Nightmares: 25,000 invaders turn rural peace into anarchy [...] Worried families in the village have sent their children to stay with relatives, and others are sleeping with shotguns under their beds [...] The result of the low police presence has been thousands of hippies spending three days dancing, drinking, taking drugs and making love” (Creasy 1992; see also St John 2009: 51).

Many of the arguments and anxieties that marked the debates concerning rave parties have resurfaced in connection to nightlife tourism: fear of crowds, suspicion of mind altering, discomfort with other people’s excesses, concern for the vulnerable youth, the demand for more strict regulation – those talking points are back in the news. However, it is unlikely that the debates over nightlife tourism will lead to the kind of repression that rave parties ultimately faced. In the words of Graham St John, raving “experienced a level of

criminalization unprecedented in youth and dance cultures” with laws being passed that made raves illegal, for instance in Britain and the United States, and “para-military-style assaults” on dance events (2009: 10-11). Nightlife tourists do not pose a serious threat to the “rural peace”. Unlike ravers, the music they listen to is often soft and mainstream. Their clothing may be scant, but it is rarely outré. And they tend to party in secluded, commercialized resorts that have been designed for excess. Moreover, nightlife tourists have powerful allies, such as the tourism and alcohol industries, that rally to their cause. As a result, nightlife tourism will probably remain a legal leisure activity, despite all the criticism that the activity receives, and is likely to draw, for years to come.

### **The existing research on nightlife tourism**

There is nothing new about young people partying under distant skies. For example, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries many young men from Northern Europe undertook so-called “Grand Tours” to the south — tours that were not only about learning foreign languages and viewing old ruins. For many of the travellers, the tours were also about getting away from the “cold, damp, smog-ridden, buttoned-up and repressive” North (Littlewood 2001: 59) in order to enjoy the possibilities offered in the Sin Cities of that era such as Paris and Venice. As a certain Lady Montagu remarked in the eighteenth century, upon return the youth, “only remember where they met with the best Wine or the prettiest Women” (quoted in Littlewood 2001: 11). Debauchery was on the itinerary, also in those days. With the advent of cheap air travel in the 1960s, parties in distant locations became a leisure activity of unprecedented dimensions. Today, millions of young people – both men and women – holiday abroad each year, and many of them select destinations renowned, above all, for their pulsating nightlife scenes (Hughes and Bellis 2006).

Researchers started taking serious interest in nightlife tourism in the late-1980s. The vast majority of the research literature is based on survey methods and focuses on youth from North America and Britain. In the following I will make a brief review of the literature. The purpose is to distil general insights about nightlife tourism and to identify the themes that have received most attention and those which have been neglected. I would like to note that the studies reviewed below are based on different methods, focus on different age

groups, include different sample sizes, and were conducted at different time points. One should therefore be cautious when comparing the results of the studies. Moreover, it should be mentioned that a number of studies are missing from my review, including studies on young nightlife tourists from Australia (Bogaards *et al.* 2000; Maticka-Tyndale *et al.* 2003; Mulhall *et al.* 1993; Smith and Rosenthal 1997; Zinkiewicz *et al.* 1999), New Zealand (Ryan *et al.* 1996), Germany and Spain (Hughes *et al.* 2008). I will not review this literature here because, by and large, it replicates the methods, research questions and conclusions of the literature on North American and British youth.

### ***Spring Break in America***

Spring Break usually occurs in March and sometimes lasts into April. This North American tradition can trace its roots to 1938 when Fort Lauderdale in Florida hosted the first College Swim Forum for approximately 300 students (Josiam *et al.* 1998). In the 1940s only a few students could afford the trip to Florida, but this changed during the '50s and '60s (Gerlach 1989). By 1953 Fort Lauderdale received 15,000 students, and by 1961 over 51,000 (Hobson and Josiam 1996). The resort found it necessary to hire extra police, but little harm was done by the young revellers. The newspaper *Time* wrote in 1959, "Not too surprisingly, little that is really calamitous happens to Fort Lauderdale or its student invaders. The townspeople regard the invasion with edgy amusement; student-watching has become a local sport [...] Probably nothing can head off an eventual sociological study of the Fort Lauderdale rite of spring. But one girl's comment should help. Asked why she made the migration, she answered with a simplicity that needs no analysis: "This is where the boys are." By 1985, Fort Lauderdale was receiving as many as 350,000 students. Spring Break had risen to the level of a cultural institution, but it also lost its innocence. In 1985, seven students died from overdosing on alcohol and drugs in Fort Lauderdale, and riots occurred in other resorts in 1986 and 1989 (Josiam *et al.* 1998). This is when Spring Break became a hot research topic.

J. S. Perry Hobson and Bharat Josiam have made some of the earliest studies of the Spring Break travel market (1992; 1996) and together with Uta C. Dietrich and George Smeaton they have conducted the first on-site survey study of students at a Spring Break destination (Josiam *et al.* 1998). The survey study by Josiam and colleagues concludes that, "students engaged in more sexual activity and had more new sexual partners during their holiday than in the

previous month. Students were also found to engage in heavy alcohol consumption and some drug abuse, placing them at higher risk for contracting sexually transmitted diseases” (1998: 501). These findings are consistent with later studies of spring breakers (e.g. Maticka-Tyndale *et al.* 1998). Josiam and his colleagues argue that part of the blame of the holiday excesses lies with the tourism industry: “A cursory look at spring break promotional materials and videos highlights the type of alcohol and sexually related activities that the tourism industry is not only condoning, but encouraging. As the tourism industry is benefiting from students travelling during Spring Break, it clearly has a social responsibility in its marketing and promotional campaigns, and once students are at the destination.” This criticism of the tourism industry is recurrently raised, also by researchers outside of the United States (e.g. Sørensen 2003).

Anne Mattila and colleagues (2001) have studied the influence of religion and gender on college students on Spring Break. Their data suggest that students’ attitudes toward drinking, drug use, and casual sex vary significantly depending on their religious beliefs. Also, the study indicates that men have significantly more favourable attitudes towards drinking, drug use, and casual sex than women. Similar gender differences have been found in other studies of U.S. students (e.g. Josiam *et al.* 1998) and in studies of Canadian students on Spring Break in Florida (e.g. Maticka-Tyndale and Herold 1997). The study on the Canadian youth shows that more men than women intended to have casual sex during the holidays but similar percentages of men (15%) and women (13 %) had actually engaged in casual sex (Maticka-Tyndale *et al.* 1998). In a study of spring breakers from the U.S., Sevil Sönmez and colleagues write that about one third of their sample responded that they had engaged in casual sex whilst on holiday (Sönmez *et al.* 2006). In other words, although Spring Break resorts are conducive to casual sex, most spring breakers do not participate in sex with a new partner.

There is general agreement that Spring Break is a high-risk period. Some scholars even go to the extent of stating: “Considering that youth travel is the fastest growing component of leisure migration and that the prevalence of youth health risks (particularly related to substance use and sexual risk taking) constitutes a problem of pandemic dimensions this tripartite relationship (youth, travel, risk-taking) has the potential to become an explosive public health



hazard” (Apostolopoulos *et al.* 2002: 734; see also Sönmez *et al.* 2006: 896). Different preventive measures have been proposed, many of which are in line with Josiam and his colleagues’ call for a multifaceted strategy that builds on broad collaboration between student health services, health departments at nightlife resorts, and the tourism industry (1998: 510-511).

The literature on Spring Break abounds with health recommendations and calls for further research, but the question of implementation is generally passed over in silence. The work of Christopher Cronin (1996) is an exception. He has designed and evaluated an intervention that consists of prompting students one week before Spring Break to complete a diary in which they try to predict their level of alcohol consumption and alcohol-related problems during their upcoming holidays. One week after Spring Break, the students were asked to complete a diary about their actual consumption rates and problems during the holidays. A control group also completed the diary after Spring Break. This intervention resulted in a significant reduction in alcohol problems among the group of students who had completed the diary before Spring Break. The study indicates, in other words, that it is possible to minimize harm simply by bringing students to reflect upon the averse effects of alcohol prior to Spring Break.

After the *annus horribilis* of 1985, the residents of Fort Lauderdale successfully campaigned against Spring Break. The city authorities began cracking down on student activities and the resort gradually closed down for the influx of students. However, new resorts soon emerged in the U.S. and further south, in Mexico, Jamaica, and the Bahamas (Hobson and Josiam 1996). This development is typical for the Spring Break market: revellers cause havoc → local residents put an end to the festivities → new resorts emerge (for similar developments in Europe, see Sharpley 2004). In order to attract customers, the emerging resorts often exhibit high tolerance for various forms of excess, but at the same time they lack the expertise to handle crowds of unbridled revellers.

### ***Clubbing holidays in Europe***

In Europe, the high season for nightlife tourism is the summer. The most popular resorts are located on the Mediterranean Sea, with the Balearic island of Ibiza as the most legendary of them all. Hippies discovered Ibiza back in the 1960s and infused it with a sex and drugs reputation that has persisted ever since. The island grew in popularity up through the 1970s and ’80s, turning

nightlife tourism or “clubbing holidays” into a veritable media darling and a pan-European fad among youth from all layers of society (Melechi 1993). Ibiza and its neighbouring islands have also drawn a host of researchers who have provided detailed information on the risk-behaviour of young holidaymakers.

Lawrence Elliot and his colleagues (1998) have conducted a pioneering mixed methods study of British youth on a seven-day package holiday in the Balearics. The group of holidaymakers was compared to a group of people who stayed at home in Britain; both groups were recruited from the British dance scene where substance use is common. The data indicates that a “significantly greater number of those on holiday reported using alcohol (91%) and ecstasy (77%), compared with 69% and 63%, respectively, of those at home. Approximately half of those who had sex with new partners whilst on holiday, and at home, used condoms. Of those on holiday, 45% reported sickness and diarrhoea compared with 23% at home; 49% of holidaymakers reported sunburn” (1998: 319). It is worth noting that despite the raised level of drinking among the holidaymakers, this group was no more likely to complain of a hangover compared with those at home. This issue was raised in qualitative interviews where several holidaymakers explained that they did not suffer from hangover because they used alcohol continuously throughout their holidays. Others pointed out that they medicated themselves with ecstasy to reduce the alcohol withdrawal symptoms (1998: 330). Another surprising finding in the study by Elliot and colleagues is that the holidaymakers were less likely to have sex than those at home.

Mark A. Bellis, Karen Hughes and their colleagues at Liverpool John Moores University have conducted an array of survey studies in the Balearics, resulting in what is arguably the world’s largest data set on nightlife tourism. Their main focus is British youth, and their results give support to many of the findings that I have outlined above: nightlife resorts offer an atmosphere conducive to casual sex, heavy drinking and drug use. Based on survey studies conducted in Ibiza in 1999 and 2002, Bellis and colleagues (2003) write that more than half of the British visitors had tried illicit drugs prior to their holidays, and nearly all of the users continued to use whilst in Ibiza. The authors also note that, “Use of most drugs in Ibiza was characterized by binge behaviour, with many individuals using drugs 5 or more nights per week” (2003: 1713). Elsewhere, Bellis and colleagues (2004) note that 56% of

individuals visiting Ibiza had sex with at least one person; and 26.2% of males and 14.5% of females had sex with more than one individual. The authors write moreover that, “of those arriving without sexual partners (75.5%) just under half (47.5%) have sex in Ibiza and most of these (62.4%) always used condoms. Having any sex abroad was associated with using illicit drugs and having more sexual partners in the 6 months before visiting Ibiza. However, having unprotected sex or sex with more than one person was associated with smoking as well as having higher numbers of sexual partners before their visit. Overall, 8.6% of individuals had sex with a non-UK resident in Ibiza although such individuals were no more likely to have sex without condoms” (2003: 43).

Another set of studies by Hughes and Bellis compares the behaviour of British youth working in bars and nightclubs in Ibiza with that of British youth visiting the island solely for holiday (2004; 2006). The workers were more likely to have used illicit drugs both in the UK and Ibiza, but no differences were found in the level of alcohol consumption. Moreover, the workers were more likely to report having sex in Ibiza.

An important finding in the work by Bellis and colleagues is that international nightlife resorts are sources of recruitment, relapse and escalation in drug use. One study thus indicates that, “While visiting Ibiza, 7.2% of British tourists tried ecstasy for the first time with similar recruitment amongst Spanish (8.6%) but not Germans (1.8%) [...] One in 5 British holidaymakers visiting Ibiza tried at least one new drug” (2009: 78). This study also illustrates that while nightlife resorts contribute to the lowering of inhibitions, not all tourists act disinhibited in the same manner and to the same extent. People’s background such as their nationality, religion and gender have an important influence on their behaviour abroad (see also Vorakitphokatom *et al.* 1998; Maticka-Tyndale *et al.* 2003; Hughes *et al.* 2008).

A number of European studies problematize the distinction between the “everyday” and the “holiday” (Khan 2000; Carr 2002; Andrews 2005). David Knox writes, for instance, that “Youth tourist holidays are not about experiencing apparently unspoiled authentic cultures or attempting to go native [...] but rather about the opportunity to have more fun in a short space of time than might be possible at home” (2009: 150). Correspondingly, Furzana Khan and colleagues note in a study of British dance enthusiasts in the Balearics: “the ecstasy-using holidaymaker has no wish to suspend ‘ordinary’ behaviour, but

simply to extend a weekend's fun to a full week's fun. Not just a Saturday night and a Sunday morning, but a Sunday morning right through to the next Saturday night. Not only do they seek to follow the 'ordinary' but also they consciously pursue these amusements with groups of people they already know [...] When they took photographs (which wasn't often), it was to take pictures of each other – often doing silly things” (2000: 223). These observations run counter to the view that people travel abroad in search of the cultural other. Many nightlife tourists seem satisfied with eating familiar food, being with countrymen, and listening to music from their home. Theirs is not primarily a quest for cultural experiences, but also, and more importantly, an opportunity to explore new facets of themselves (Littlewood 2001).

### **A neo-Durkheimian approach to nightlife tourism**

As indicated above, the existing research on nightlife tourism speaks almost unanimously of risk behaviour. The keywords are alcohol, drugs, sex, and prevention. The tone tends to be grave. One reason for this problem-emphasis is arguably that the research, to a large extent, is dependent on funding sources that work to improve the public health and safety: if researchers want funding, they better formulate study designs that can highlight problems and point to possible solutions (Hunt and Barker 2001). Accordingly, the research virtually ignores the pleasures of partying abroad. Furthermore, little attention is paid to the tourists' own perceptions and thoughts about their holidays, and focus is almost exclusively on youth from Anglophone countries.

In order to close some of the gaps in the existing research, this dissertation takes inspiration in a pleasure-focused sociological tradition springing from Durkheim's study of religion (2007). The tradition includes such figures as Georges Bataille and his adherents at the Collège de Sociologie as well as Michel Maffesoli and his colleagues at the Centre d'Études sur l'Actuel et le Quotidien (CEAQ). A central theme for these thinkers is Durkheim's notion of “effervescence” which, put very briefly, refers to states of collective exaltation characterised by communal experiences, emotional intensity and transgressive behaviour. Historical examples of effervescence include the upheavals in France in May 1968 and the celebrations in Berlin after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Durkheim holds that such episodes of emotional turbulence form an indispensable driving force in social life: it prevents cultural stagnation by

accelerating the interpersonal exchange of emotions and ideas, and it allows people to transcend the limits of their own personality and become part of a larger and more powerful whole (2001: 287). The people at the Collège de Sociologie organized and explored rituals that could unleash effervescent forces and help revitalize themselves and society (Surya 1992). The researchers at CEAQ currently conduct research along similar lines, although in a more disciplined manner. They have, for instance, applied the notion of effervescence in studies of the techno movement (e.g. Maffesoli 2003; Hampartzoumian 2004). This is not the place for a lengthy account of the neo-Durkheimian tradition. However, it is worth our while to take a closer look at Maffesoli's extensive methodological and theoretical contributions to the study of effervescence. First a few words about Maffesoli's diagnosis of the time we live in.

Maffesoli argues that Dionysian values have grown to dominate society since the 1950s. Life today is not primarily about producing things and securing the livelihood of tomorrow, but increasingly about having a fling and enjoying one another, wherever and whenever the opportunity presents itself. A collective de-civilisation has taken place. Today, passions are allowed to manifest themselves more freely in public. The clothing-style has become more daring; speech, more frank and bold; sexuality, more permissive; and the habits of intoxication, more orgiastic. The "no future" attitude, which in the 1970s was celebrated by a relatively small crowd of avant-garde debauchees has today developed into a general attitude of "I-don't-give-a-shit".<sup>4</sup> In order to understand these Dionysian times it is necessary, according to Maffesoli, to adopt a "Dionysian" or "erotic" approach, which insists on saying "YES" to life in all its shades (2005: 155). Regardless of the research topic – whether we are talking hooliganism, gang wars or heroin abuse – then, we must approach it with an open and sympathetic mind. The issue is to love, accept or, at least, tolerate things as they are and explore their inherent nature without ulterior motives to improve them. Aversion carries us away from the lived life, Maffesoli believes, and good intentions to help people or change the world often result in problem-focused research, which denies the pleasure of destruction and the adventure of risk-taking. Sociologists are therefore well-advised to call off the fight for a better

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<sup>4</sup> For a critical assessment of Maffesoli's sociology and conception of history, see Evans 1997.

future and instead concentrate on examining how life is lived here and now (1989: 3).

Edmund Husserl's dictum, "Zu den Sachen Selbst" is key in the work of Maffesoli. If one wants to understand a phenomenon, one must investigate its immediate manifestation rather than its background (1989: 2). For example, when studying nightlife tourism, it is crucial to become carefully acquainted with the tourists' behaviour and experiences, and not get lost in endless scrutiny of their psychological profile, economical background, upbringing, social class, educational level, or other antecedents (see also Jackson 1996: 10). Maffesoli is not arguing that human life unfolds freely and unconditionally. Rather, he advocates that the starting point for the sociological analysis should be the life that unfolds right before our eyes. As he puts it, it is the "things themselves that teach us what they are" (2000: XXI). With an affectionate mindset and open senses it is possible to gradually understand the inherent logic and nature of things. One should therefore beware of the "centrifugal" forces that haunt current sociological thinking, and which direct one's thoughts away from the object under investigation to, instead, its causes and effects. The crux for Maffesoli is the things themselves, not their past or future, not their background or higher purpose. He calls for a "centripetal" approach that concentrates on the thing under investigation and stubbornly sticks to it until its nature is clear (1996: 161; see also Bech 1997: 5-6).

Unlike traditional positivistic science, Maffesoli's primary interests are the emotional, turbulent and intangible aspects of life. He writes, "It is important to recognize that passion and its gestures remain the essential pivots of societal life. Justifying, theorizing and rationalizing all come after the event. What comes first is the impulse that pushes us to act, that incites us to speak, that oversees our various aggregations, that favours attraction and repulsion, and that orders alliances" (Maffesoli 1993:63). If you want to understand these pre-reflective processes, you must, as a researcher, use all your senses: You must see, hear, feel, taste and sniff your way ahead and, thus, engage corporeally in the life you are investigating. Periodically, it may even be fruitful to completely disregard any requirements of objectivity and analytical distance in order to make room for wholehearted participation in the studied people's world (2005). Hereby, one may achieve sensuous insights that are difficult, if not impossible, to achieve with verbal methods such as questionnaires and interviews.

The goal is to get close to the people under investigation, understand things from their perspective and describe their lives without unnecessary abstraction or oversimplification (2005: 59, 189). Maffesoli believes that the time has passed entirely for simple models, categorizations, logico-causal arguments and narrowly defined concepts. Such scientific rigidity misses our Dionysian age. We require a new, flexible and image-rich language, which do not purport to be exhaustive or definitive. Stringency is passé, and the scientific aspirations for truth are illusory: "[R]ather than trying to fool ourselves into thinking we can seize, explain and exhaust an object, we must be content to describe its shape, its movement, hesitations, accomplishments and its various convulsions" (Maffesoli 1996: 5). Affectionate and rich descriptions are the best strategy to avoid alienating discourses and grasp the world we live in (see also Jackson 1996).

## **A look ahead**

In sum, what I propose in this dissertation is a Durkheimian-cum-Maffesolian-cum-phenomenological examination of young Danish tourists and guides in Sunny Beach. Readers will find very little information about the young people's lives at home such as their economical situation, family affairs, educational level, working life, or religious beliefs. This is not because I find these background factors uninteresting or irrelevant. Rather, I suspend inquiries into the background in order to make room for a systematic, in-depth description of the young people's behaviour and experiences at the resort. I am aiming for a nuanced account that will give an impression not only of the problems but also of the pleasures of nightlife tourism. Let me briefly sketch the chapters in the remainder of the dissertation.

*Chapter two.* This chapter describes the qualitative and quantitative methods used to collect data in Sunny Beach. The pros and cons of the methods will be discussed, as will my role in the field, the role of the student assistants, the recording and analysis of data, my writing style and ethics.

*Chapter Three.* This chapter presents some of the key results from two of the surveys that we conducted among the Danish youth in Sunny Beach. The surveys will be used to map the prevalence of substance use and sex among the Danes. In order to put some flesh on the statistical bones, the chapter will also

present qualitative data that highlights the young people's experiences with substances and sex whilst at the resort.

*Article I.* This first article is a short French “essay” (i.e. attempt) entitled, “La nouvelle culture de la défoncé”. It was published in 2009 in the journal, *Société*. The article takes its point of departure in the proposition that a “new culture of intoxication” has emerged among youth in Britain (e.g. Measham and Brain 2005), Denmark (e.g. Østergaard 2007) and in other parts of the world (Järvinen and Room 2007). Put very briefly, the “new culture of intoxication” refers to a historical situation where large proportions of youth recurrently pursue intense and spectacular states of intoxication. This situation has received much attention in academia, and yet relatively little has been written about the phenomenological dimension of the new patterns of substance use. We are in need of a vocabulary that can capture the lived reality of the new culture of intoxication: Article I takes a few steps towards building such a vocabulary. The article proposes an essayistic description of the kind of sociality, morality and time conception that prevails among heavily intoxicated youth from Denmark. An English translation of the article can be found in Appendix II.

*Article II.* The article, “The wildest party monkeys: the un-civilizing of youth at an international nightlife resort” is destined for the journal, *Leisure studies*. The theoretical starting point of the article is Norbert Elias’ observation that present-day youth in the West are trained, from their earliest childhood, in the vigilant self-control that they need to function as adults. They are “civilized” to the point of being inhibited. Elias and Eric Dunning explain, “To be rated as normal, adults brought up in societies such as ours are expected to check the rising upsurge of their excitement in good time. As a rule, they have learned not to show too much of it to others. Often enough, they are no longer able to show it at all. The control they exercise upon themselves has become, in part, automatic. The control – in part – is no longer under their control. It has become part of their built-in personality structure” (1986: 65). Contemporary Danish youth also show signs of strong self-control: many of them lead everyday lives that follow strict time schedules; they have many daily chores and responsibilities; and they do not necessarily give in to their impulses or express what they feel. This changes when the youth come to Sunny Beach. But not overnight and not without determined and concerted effort. Article II focuses on the role that guides play in helping tourists to modify and partly



suspend their ingrown habits of self-control. This process of “un-civilizing youth” is not simply a matter of facilitating heavy drinking. The guides employ an array of techniques to stir up wild behaviour in tourists. The article will outline these techniques.

*Article III.* The third article is entitled, “Ecstatic Crowds: A case study of pub crawls at an international nightlife resort”. It has been submitted to *Theory, Culture & Society* and is currently being reviewed. The motivation for writing the article was, on the one hand, my impression that crowd dynamics play a key role at the parties in Sunny Beach and, on the other hand, the discovery that crowd dynamics play a marginal role in the research literature on contemporary youth and nightlife. Very little is known about the effects of crowds on the behaviour and experiences of individual partygoers. Article III takes a few steps towards filling this gap in the research literature. The article revisits the crowd theories of Gabriel Tarde, Gustave Le Bon, Durkheim and Elias Canetti. The aim is to reintroduce a set of notions which dominated the early European debates about crowds and to explore the prospects of applying them in the study of contemporary youth and nightlife.

*Article IV.* “Safety problems among heavy-drinking youth at a Bulgarian nightlife resort”, is a modified version of a very short article that was originally published in 2009 in *International Journal of Drug Policy*. It is semi-quantitative, problem-focused text, but I decided to include it in the dissertation because it demonstrates that: 1) I am aware of the adverse effects of wild parties, 2) I am inspired by and greatly admire some of the problem-focused research that has been conducted on youth and nightlife, and 3) problem-focused research can point towards preventive measures that can minimize harm without minimizing pleasure. Allow me to return for a moment to the notion of effervescence.

Critics have accused Durkheim and some of his followers of being moral relativists with a dangerous tendency to overlook or glorify the dark sides of effervescence. Graham (2007), for example, writes that Durkheim, in his eagerness to accept and find meaning in religion, ends up overlooking the violent forces that sometimes come to life during rituals. Allegedly, this has spurred a number of thinkers to conduct entirely uncritical studies of the most atrocious forms of behaviour such as the sacrifice of human beings (2007: 36).

One must therefore tread carefully when acknowledging, as I do, the late Durkheim as a source of inspiration.

Article IV is a token that I am not a naive adherent of effervescence. I am fully aware that when people lower their inhibitions they often also lower their sense of self-preservation.<sup>5</sup> However, my reading of the literature on “club health” also makes me confident that even the wildest of parties can be relatively harmless if they take place within safe settings (e.g. Hughes et al. forthcoming). Article IV highlights some of the key factors in the bars and nightclubs of Sunny Beach that put young revellers in danger.

*Article V.* The last of the articles is called, “We got incredibly drunk ... it was damned fun': drinking stories among Danish youth”. It is co-authored with Morten Hulvej Rod and appeared in the *Journal of Youth Studies* in 2009. The article examines a pool of drinking stories told by young Danes between the ages of 13 to 24 years old. All of the stories were recorded in Denmark – not in Sunny Beach – through field observations and audio-recorded interviews between 2001 and 2004. The article does not make any reference to guides, tourists or nightlife tourism. However, I have included the article in the dissertation because drinking stories form a vital aspect of the Sunny Beach experience: the young tourists and guides spend a lot of time at the resort talking about their drinking experiences; some have brought photo cameras, video cameras and diaries to keep record of their revelry; and many, especially the guides, can relate numerous stories about drinking episodes from earlier party-oriented holidays. In an interview conducted in Sunny Beach, three female tourists explained that they wrote a diary every day of their holiday in order to keep track of their night-time doings:

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<sup>5</sup> In my interpretation, Durkheim does not ignore or deny that effervescence can go awry. He is mainly interested in the pleasures of effervescence, but there are also several passages in “Elementary forms of religious life” where he mentions the dangers of effervescence. Consider for example the following passage about ceremonial meetings among Australian Aborigines, “the effervescence often becomes so intense it leads to unpredictable behaviour. The passions unleashed are so impetuous they cannot be contained. The ordinary conditions of life are set aside so definitively and so consciously that people feel the need to put themselves above and beyond customary morality” (2001: 163). Elsewhere he notes that there are many examples in history where effervescent crowds have indulged in “bloody barbism” and that, “Under the influence of general exaltation, the most mediocre and inoffensive burgher is transformed into a hero or an executioner” (2001: 158).

Sarah: We write in the diary who got most drunk, who slept with whom, and all the stuff we did [...]

Tine: It will be fun one day to look back and say ‘oh yeah, we did that too’, and ‘that was just so much fun.’

Sarah: And I mean, it will take a whole year before we can turn back to Sunny Beach.

Natasha: So now we’ve got some memories.

Sarah: Also because sometimes you can’t really remember everything you did, but the others will remember it. And it’s fun too to sit together and write it all down.

Natasha: With this [diary], we can make it through an entire school year.

Tine: Yeah.

Sarah: Also just to remember how much fun we had. To see what we did down here.

Tine: And look forward to the next time we go on holiday.

Sarah: Yeah, and also just to have it [the diary] as a trophy.

The stories that young Danes tell each other in Sunny Beach are similar to the kinds of stories that Morten Hulvej Rod and I examine in Article V. These are stories about good times and bad times, about heroic drinking and histrionic degradation, and about the ritualistic suspension self-control. Let me give an example, recorded in my fieldnotes, of one of the stories that circulated one year among the youth in Sunny Beach:

We are sitting on the beach, talking about the parties, the guests and a little of everything. One of the guides says to the other that Joe [a guide] drank piss the other night. “How much?” the other guide asks. “Half a glass”, is the answer. “How large was the glass?” I ask. The guide uses his hands to show the size of a large glass. We sit in silence for a while. The other guide mumbles something along the lines of, “That’s crazy.” He asks whether Joe spat out the piss or whether he threw up. Joe didn’t do that. He swallowed it and continued to party, but now he’s been ordered by his boss to stop drinking piss. There were tourists who felt offended by Joe’s behaviour. I ask a few questions, and the guide explains that there were three big bodybuilders who couldn’t cope with it. They simply couldn’t handle it, so they left. One of the guides amuses himself over the fact that it was musclemen who couldn’t handle the sight of Joe drinking urine — not girls or sissies, but musclemen.

Sunny Beach is a veritable story generator. It provides the young visitors with many sights and events that they will remember and talk about many years *post*

*festum*. Article V sheds light on why young Danes find it so interesting and giving to share stories about their drinking experiences.

# Chapter two

## Methods

I had barely set foot in the resort when I saw the first drunken spill. It was a Tuesday in the early afternoon, and I had just arrived in a taxi from the airport. Overwhelmed by the heat, I drifted in the direction of the beach. Then, off in the distance, I saw a figure crashing headlong. I walked quickly towards him, but soon saw the faded tattoos, the furrowed face and the hearing aid: not one in my target group. An elderly woman helped the man back to his feet. She was also unsteady but together they managed to lurch their way into a hotel. I was in Sunny Beach all right, but I had arrived too early, before the onset of the Danish summer holidays. It would take several more days of impatient searching and waiting before I found any Danish youth that I could observe and interview.

The youth found me and not the other way around. I was lying on my bed, convincing myself that my long-planned research would flop, when someone knocked on my door. It was my neighbour, a man my age working in Bulgaria. But he had company: two 18-year old tourists from Denmark who wanted me to join them on their first night out at the resort! I told them about my research, and they kindly agreed to act as my informants. I was allowed to interview them, and I hung out with one of them on a daily and nightly basis throughout his stay. Indeed, as Michael D. Jackson writes, “fieldwork cannot be willed into happening. Inevitably, it proceeds by fits and starts.” (2000: 21).

My entire fieldwork has benefitted from kindness and openness on the part of the Danish tourists and guides. Everyone that I asked for an interview agreed to participate, and most also showed up for the interview appointments. No one expressed any dissatisfaction with having me around observing and taking field notes, and the survey response rates were good. There are many possible reasons for this readiness to be studied. The first is simply that my research topic has a natural appeal to teens and twentysomethings. Unlike adult and elderly Danes (Elmeland 1996), young Danes generally have few inhibitions when it comes to exposing their experiences with alcohol, drugs and, to a lesser extent, sex. Another reason for the young people’s openness may be that they saw me and my assistants as potential defenders who would speak up for them

and challenge the negative media coverage of their holiday behaviour. The guides in particular were frustrated by the media, and some of them explicitly encouraged me to portray them in a sympathetic manner. As one guide put it, “You are the scientist. You can understand the nuances. Put things straight”. Finally I think, in all modesty, that my student assistants and I collected data in style that was unobtrusive and, at times, perhaps even fun for our informants.

## **The Research Team**

My fieldwork in Sunny Beach was undertaken during two phases: June 19 to August 12 of 2007 and June 29 to July 30 of 2008. It amounted to 12 weeks in total. Between the two periods in the field, I had almost a year at home to get my bearings and work with my data: the first interviews were transcribed; the survey data were entered into a database and analysed; the interview transcripts and field notes were coded; new questionnaires were prepared; and a couple of articles were drafted. I thus had time to read, think and prepare new lines of enquiry before I turned back to the field in 2008.

My work at the resort mainly consisted of doing observations, writing down field notes, interviewing people and administering questionnaires. I was working practically all the time, other than nine hours of comatose sleep. Wherever I went, there were observations to write down and new interpretations to mull over. I was binge working at a holiday resort. Yet I was rarely struck by fieldwork fatigue. The heat, the sea, the swarming masses: Most of the time I found it enlivening.

My fieldwork was also greatly facilitated by the four student assistants who accompanied me to the field. In the summer of 2007, I had company of Sanna Schlieve (my wife) for six weeks and Tine Reinholdt (our close friend) for two weeks. In the summer of 2008, I was assisted by Pernille Bouteloup Kofoed for four weeks, Ida Ravnholdt Poulsen for three weeks and Sanna for three weeks. The job of the assistants mainly consisted of administering questionnaires. On a couple of occasions they also made ethnographic observations, mostly in areas where a male researcher could not tread. (Even claims of “university study” and “ethnographic observation” can’t get a man into a strip show for “Girls Only.”) During and after the fieldwork I frequently consulted with the assistants to hear their opinions about my interpretations. Their comments have been invaluable.

## Entering the madness

Jackson remarks that there is more to fieldwork than asking pertinent questions, writing comprehensive field notes, and assembling high numbers of questionnaires (2000: 119). Knowledge of the other “is a product less of your methodology than your mastery of basic social skills” (2000: 21). In Sunny Beach, an important social skill is the capacity to steer clear of workaday attitudes and give in to the holiday frolic. You don’t need to chug yards of ale and dance on the tables in order to become accepted, but it is certainly rewarding to cut loose a bit, at least verbally. Let me give an example.

One night at a pub crawl I became intrigued by a male tourist who virtually took control of the festivities by skilfully shouting out commands through a megaphone. The man convinced the approximately 300 pub crawl participants to sing the Danish national anthem! He also made them jump around and sit at his command. The guy was busy, in other words, but I very much wanted to interview him. How did he succeed in catching the attention of so many boisterous partiers? Where had he learned to master the megaphone? These are the kind of questions that I wanted to ask him. Had I approached him in a dry, matter-of-fact, business-like manner he probably would have written me off as a button-downed dork and pitied my overly sober soul. As Maffesoli rightly points out, wild parties are incompatible with dry scientism (1985). I therefore introduced myself to the man and the megaphone and asked them for an interview. Of course, this is a rather nerdy way to proceed, but nerdy is ok in a back place like Sunny Beach – as long as it is self-ironic nerdiness. The key is to avoid party-killer attitudes such as narrow-minded seriousness, rigid moralism and overly intellectual attitudes (see also Bakhtin 1984: 11).

That said, my role in the field was not to be an ethnographer who has “gone native” and intentionally acts like the people being studied. I did not get drunk or use drugs, and I rarely participated in any dancing, singing, or party games. However, I tried to spend as much time as possible with young tourists and guides, both day and night, and I tried to accompany them wherever they would go. There were times when I tried to immerse myself in the field and, as illustrated in the field notes below, there were times when I felt it necessary to step back a bit:

The barbeque is over and we enter the bus that will drive us to the nightclub. I ask if I can sit next to a guy who takes up two seats. He hesitantly answers “yes” and adds, “I am flipping, you should know that.” And he sure is flipping! As soon as the bus begins to drive, he stands up on his seat and yells at the top of his lungs: “WHERE IS FAT H?” This continues for, I don’t know how long. Then he yells something about how for 10 Bulgarian Leva you can lick the pussies of three girls sitting right behind us. He goes on like a broken record. Then he goes: “Listen up, you shouldn’t lick their pussies after the girls have been in the pool at Lazur. They’ll taste like salt.” The guy’s two friends are sitting nearby. One of them has a tight black dress on with a giant wig on his head, and the other is wearing a Tyrolean outfit. Maybe they are guides. They also tip their heads back and scream. Then it’s time for the Bunny song. I can’t remember the lyrics, but they get up and sit down in shifts while “singing” it. The Tyrolean guy wants to give me the wig, but I decline. It reeks of beer, and worse smells. I finally use my earplugs. The yelling is simply too much for my weary, troubled eardrums. I just want to sleep.

As these notes show, the atmosphere in Sunny Beach was often one of effervescence. The youth were sometimes nearly boiling over with excitement and wanted me to be part of it. However, as fun as it can be, effervescence cannot last forever and can take its toll on you. Durkheim is very clear on this (2001: 300; see also Maffesoli 2007). Too much effervescence can be gruelling or even drive you insane. W. S. F. Pickering also clearly knows the limits of living at the extremes: “Human energies are limited, and after a point of climax, man has to return to everyday life. This is the level at which life is lived: never at that of perpetual excess” (1984: 389). My fieldwork therefore involved ping-ponging between high-intensity locations such as music-blasting, sweat-soaked nightclubs and low-intensity areas such as the desk in my apartment. This allowed me to experience the nightlife effervescence without going deaf or losing all of my energy. Also, my time in the low-intensity areas gave me time for writing field notes, reflection and identifying promising lines of enquiry.

## **Field Relations**

Dina Perrone raises an important criticism about much fieldwork: “The question of objectivity in the field research has historically compelled ethnographers to present their data without, or with little, discussion of how one’s individual characteristics affect the research process” (2010: 717). Up till now, my own articles on nightlife have not been immune to this type of



criticism. Indeed, there is little mentioning of the role that I played in the field and how this affected the data collection. Let me now try to make up for this.

As I conducted my fieldwork in Sunny Beach, I was 29 to 31 years old. In short, I was approximately a decade older than the tourists that I was studying and a couple of years older than the average guide. I was not on holiday. I did not indulge in heavy drinking or drugs. I was not in search for casual sex. I stayed at the resort for several weeks in a row, and I constantly roamed around with notepad and pencil in hand. In other words, I must have cut a strange figure. However, the position of “the stranger” can be a useful one when conducting fieldwork. First of all, it can be used as a viable excuse to transgress some of the social norms of the people under study. In my case, I could refrain from participating in heavy drinking, daring competitions and so on simply by saying that I was doing research. I could do lots of impudent staring – aka ethnographic observation – without anyone seriously reproaching me and without having my vision warped by what American teenagers would call “beer goggles.” This was no small achievement in a carnivalesque setting where everyone is supposed to be festive and contribute to the common fun (Bakhtin 1984: 7). Second of all, assuming the role of “the stranger” and exhibiting signs of difference can be a way to announce “here comes the ethnographer,” the one who keeps record and muses over everyone’s doings. To make myself obvious and identifiable, I wore the same cowboy hat, day in and day out. After a few weeks in the field, I also began taking notes openly amidst the people that I was observing in order to display the main reason for my presence. This seemed to me as a more honest and comfortable way to proceed than the widespread habit among ethnographers to secretly take notes in toilets and other secluded places. Third of all, the position of “the stranger” can help sharpen one’s eyes for behaviours and assumptions that may go unnoticed for the “culture members” themselves (Schutz 1964). Neither a total stranger nor completely familiar, I think that I managed to gain a partial understanding of some of the young people’s experiences in Sunny Beach while avoiding the blinding effects of being overly immersed in the party atmosphere and the people whom I was studying.

Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson write that, “people in the field will seek to place or locate the ethnographer within their experience. This is necessary, of course, for them to know how to deal with him or her. Some

individuals and groups have little or no knowledge of social research; and, partly as a result, field researchers are frequently suspected, initially at least, of being spies, tax inspectors, etc.” (1995: 80). Some tourists and guides suspected that I was a journalist. Some asked me what newspaper or magazine I was writing for. Others may have steered clear of me for fear that I would expose them in the media. When I explained my research — and this I did whenever I spoke with Danish individuals for any length of time — the reaction was often one of admiration that I had tricked the system into paying me money to hang out in Sunny Beach. I often heard comments such as: “How did you manage to get the job?” and “You must be the luckiest guy on earth!” Indeed, it was not always possible for me to convince people that I really was doing research. This was particularly difficult in the nighttime. Many people simply thought that I was joking with them. As Maffesoli points out, role-playing is a vital feature of nightlife: revellers try out different roles in order to explore their intrinsic plurality and experience the world from new perspectives (1985). From this point of view, it’s not surprising that people in bars and clubs would raise an eyebrow at my claim of being a researcher and assume that I was fooling around. Indeed, as Fiona Measham and Karenza Moore point out, “objectivity and neutrality in clubland is illusory, not least because clubbers form views about the researchers’ presence: as social researchers we are operating within, will influence and are influenced by the social world within which we operate” (2006: 19).

As I will explain in more detail in Article II and Article III, the guides play a key role in Sunny Beach. They are “superstars,” as one tourist expressed it, elite debauchees who pump up the mood and incite people to go wild. Even so, most of the guides took me in, trusted me and fed me with the kind of hedonistic stories and anecdotes that could easily have whipped up a scandal on the front pages back in Denmark. I never promised the guides that I was on their side, but I suppose they could sense that I was favourably disposed towards them. My alliance with the guides was very helpful, not only because the guides could share with me their oftentimes year-long experiences at various nightlife resorts, but also because they could vouch for my identity and reassure the tourists that I was trustworthy.

## Interviews and Conversations

The richness of human experience cannot be captured in words. In the case of nightlife, it would take a modern-day Baudelaire of the bars to verbally paint the fun of pub crawling, the thrill of participating in a strip show, and the disorientation that sinks in after days of consecutive partying. Words can only give us a “patchy translation” of such intangible experiences, but we can hardly do without them (Desjarlais 1992: 250). “[W]e often know of others only by what they say of their experiences” (1992: 250). Accordingly, I saw it as one of my prime tasks in Sunny Beach to encourage the young tourists and guides to verbally express themselves and, as it were, find the “right words” to describe their own behaviour and experiences.

Like James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, I do not consider interviews as a means of digging out true, immutable facts that reside within the interviewees (1995: 2). I think of my informants not as “treasuries of information awaiting excavation” (1995: 4), but more like co-thinkers who can help me to make sense of their behaviour and experiences. My formal and informal interviews thus took the form of “active interviews” which, “is a kind of limited “improvisational” performance. The production is spontaneous, yet structured – focused within loose parameters provided by the interviewer” (1995: 17, quotation marks in original). The interviews included exchanges with Danish tourists and guides as well as Bulgarian venue owners, bartenders and healthcare workers.

Forty-five recorded interviews were conducted with a total of 115 Danes, one to six individuals at a time. Exactly 104 of the interviewees were tourists and 11 were guides. The distribution by sex was 55 females and 60 males. All of them were found and interviewed at the resort. The selection criteria included being Danish and approximately between the ages of 16 and 26. The durations of the recorded interviews varied from 15 to 90 minutes. I left it to the interviewees to decide the place and length of the interviews in order to convince them to participate and to make them feel more at ease. Typical locations were the beach, cafés and hotel rooms.

The audio-recorded interviews were based on a questionnaire that I followed very loosely. The first questions were concrete. For example, I asked the interviewees about basic demographic variables, and if they had visited a

nightlife resort before. These questions served as a warm-up for the more abstract questions that followed, including: “Try to describe the atmosphere at the Pub Crawl”; “How would you describe your condition when you first woke up today?”; “Try to tell me about the best / worst thing that has happened to you during your stay”; and “Is it different to have sex here compared to having sex in Denmark?” The questions relating to bodily sensations and emotions generally gave short responses whereas questions about concrete events resulted in more detailed accounts.

The main reason that I included up to six individuals per interview was that the youth, or most of them, expressed that this was what they preferred. They wanted to spend a maximum of time together with their friends and I did not want to interfere with this. Moreover, the group situation made the interviews seem less strange and helped create a relaxed ambience conducive to creative exchanges. Questions relating to sex, for instance, were much easier to talk about in big groups (Frith 2000). I completely refrained from asking sex-related questions when I was in one-to-one situations with women – out of embarrassment, and because I did not want to come off as an old sleazebag. However, both females and males appeared to have few qualms about talking frankly about their sexual experiences. The women didn’t shy from talking about sex in a rather direct manner, whereas the men tended to be more indirect. For example, a group of men spoke about alcohol-induced impotence as “falling asleep” under the act. Still, such euphemisms did not make the exchanges less valuable.

In addition to the audio-recorded interviews, a number of informal, single-person interviews were conducted with Bulgarian venue owners, venue staff and health care workers. These interviews ranged in length from 10 to 40 minutes. They were based on brief, ad-hoc questionnaires that focused on a variety of topics such as the safety conditions in Sunny Beach and the party culture of tourists from different countries. I wrote down these informal exchanges on a notepad and later typed the notes into my laptop.

## **Observation**

Gunilla Bjerén writes in her study of Swedish male drinkers that, “people drinking abhor being watched by a sober fellow” (1992:162). In Sunny Beach, the youth did not seem uncomfortable to have me watching them. They

frequently asked me to get rid of my notepad and get drunk, but I see this more as a sign of hospitality than hostility, as in the following situation:

Joe yells at me to come up on the bench and dance. Seeing that the bench is just about to collapse, I decline. Later Joe yells again that I should come join them and get drunk. He bends down and says something like, "Just follow me. I am completely crazy. I will teach you." I try to explain to him that I will stay put because I am on a 54-day observation binge. I have to save my strength.

I spent several hours taking notes about Joe and his friends, but they did not at all seem bothered about this. Quite to the contrary, I think that they enjoyed having me, a sober fellow, witness their excesses. As Bataille points out, there is something histrionic and exhibitionistic about human excesses (1988). When alone, humans rarely light cigars with bank notes and likewise with "crazy" dancing on a bench. Such non-pathological craziness is much more fun when shared. Through over-the-top antics, humans can release themselves from the demands of utility, move beyond the world of sanity and reason, and blast out the message that they are sovereign beings free from restraint. I was there to bear witness to it all, scribbling it down in my field notes and having other people read it.

Joe and his friends accepted my lack of participation in the festivities but still found it a bit weird. After all, the University of Denmark was paying for my stay, right? Why not buy a round of drinks and send the bill to the Ministry of Health? Why not forget about the research and have some fun, just this one night? I was frequently asked these types of questions, but my well-rehearsed answers never seemed satisfactory. Many ethnographers would also probably question my reluctance to order a line of shots and immerse myself in the revelry. Jon P. Mitchell writes, for instance, that, "We learn more in the field through doing than through talking" (Mitchell 1997:83). And Jackson writes that during his fieldwork among the Kuranko people he gained some of his most valued insights by imitating the way the Kuranko carry out everyday practical tasks (1989:134-135). By acting like other people we may obtain an impression, in our own being, of how they feel and sense.

However, observation without participation can also give a good impression of other people and their state of mind (Jackson 1989: 121-136). Inner states are not merely a private matter; they are always at least partly public, and rarely

more so than in a crowd of effervescent youth. In the words of Maurice Merleau-Ponty: “We must reject the prejudice which makes ‘inner realities’ out of love, hate, or anger, leaving them accessible to one single witness: the person who feels them. Anger, shame, hate and love are not psychic facts hidden at the bottom of another’s consciousness: they are types of behaviour or styles of conduct which are visible from the outside” (1964: 52). By carefully observing the tourists and guides, I feel that I could sometimes arrive at a significant, experiential understanding of their lived experience in Sunny Beach (Desjarlais 1992: 13). Moreover, the daytime and night time observations provided me with information about concrete events that I could then bring up for discussion in the interviews.

## **Survey Procedures**

One of the best methods of studying the prevalence of risk behaviour among nightlife tourists is to give them anonymous questionnaires in the airport just before they travel home from their holidays. This method was first developed by Bellis and his colleagues (2000). We used the same method in the summers of 2007 and 2008 in Bourgas Airport, which is used by the vast majority of Danes holidaying in Sunny Beach. In the next chapter, I will present some of the key results from these airport surveys, so let me briefly describe the questionnaires that we used and how we administered them.

The airport surveys were conducted by the student assistants during the periods of July 4-21 in 2007 and July 5-29 in 2008. The assistants were instructed to target Danes from 16 to 24 years old, and to approach them while they were waiting to check in for their flights back to Denmark. In order to exclude other nationalities, only individuals returning to Denmark were asked to complete the questionnaire.

The assistants asked the people in the target group if they had time to fill in a short, anonymous questionnaire for a research project under Aarhus University. Those who indicated that they had time were then informed of the nature of the questionnaire. The assistants registered the number of females and males who refused to participate after being approached first, as well as after being informed of the nature of the survey. All participants were provided with a clipboard for the questionnaire, a pen, and an unmarked envelope. The questionnaires were returned in the envelopes immediately after completion.

Our questionnaires were written in Danish; their layout and content resembled questionnaires that were originally formulated by Bellis, Hughes and their colleagues in one of their Ibiza studies. In brief, our questionnaires measured basic demographic variables and levels of licit and illicit substance use in Denmark and whilst in Sunny Beach. Questions about alcohol use were broken into the following categories: drinking more than 6 units per day; drinking more than 12 units per day; and drinking to intoxication. In addition, participants were asked about their sexual behaviour in Denmark and Sunny Beach, their motivation for holidaying in Sunny Beach, their health problems during the holidays, their involvement in violence, and their (dis)satisfaction with the holidays. In 2008, we included a set of extra questions to measure the participants' purchase of sexual services.

The airport survey has a number of limitations that deserve mentioning. First of all, the approach is based on self-reports about sensitive matters, like taking drugs and having sex with prostitutes. Such self-report data may be tainted by over- or under-reporting and thus they must be interpreted with caution. Moreover, as Hughes and colleagues point out (2009), the setting in which the questionnaires are administered may exacerbate the problems of under- or over-reporting: Participants completing questionnaires in airport check-in queues have limited private space and are surrounded by security personnel and surveillance devices.

Another problem is the term "alcohol unit" that figures in our questionnaires. We wrote in the questionnaires that, "One unit of alcohol is roughly equivalent to: one beer, one glass of wine or 4 cl. of alcohol". However, beers come in different strengths and sizes, and so do wine and alcohol. Therefore, there is some uncertainty about the actual number of units consumed. Finally, many of the travellers feel exhausted, hung over and sick after their holidays. With their bodies and brains worn out, certain recovering partiers could have difficulty adequately answering even the shortest of questionnaires.

In spite of these potential issues, the airport survey also has a number of benefits. The vast majority of Danish tourists travel to and from Sunny Beach via Bourgas Airport. In the summer of 2007, an estimated 10,000 people in our target group passed through the airport, and in 2008 this number was probably a little higher. Bourgas Airport was therefore a good location to get in contact with vast numbers of holidaymakers. Like so many other airports, the one in

Bourgas is a dull and uninspiring place where people often spend much time waiting. In such places it is fairly easy to obtain a high response rate. Finally, as the tourists are on their way home, they “are able to provide information covering the entire holiday period whilst this is fresh in their minds.” (Hughes *et al.* 2009: 272).

As can be seen from Figures 1 and 2, the student assistants collected a high number of questionnaires in the airport surveys, and they obtained good response rates. In 2007, the average age of the respondents was 19.9, and their stay in Sunny Beach lasted for an average 7.8 days. In 2008, the average age of the respondents was 20.0 years and their stay at the resort lasted for an average 7.8 days.

Figure 1:

Flow of participants through the survey in 2007

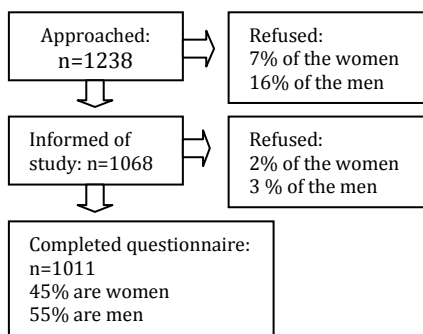
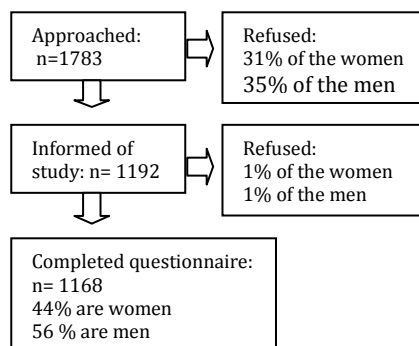


Figure 2:

Flow of participants through the survey in 2008.



## Data Analysis and Writing Style: The Poetry of Partying<sup>6</sup>

The analysis of my data has been a collaborative and versatile process that started on day one of my fieldwork. Throughout my stay in the field, I wrote down notes on a daily and nightly basis, and I also took time to do some reading and to scribble down initial interpretations. Part of this early analytical work was done alone in front of my laptop, but it also took place in the company of the Danes and Bulgarians that I spoke with at the resort. It was in

<sup>6</sup> Morten Hesse has analyzed the survey data. The analytical procedures that he employed are described in the articles listed in Appendix I.



discussions with tourists, guides, venue staff and the student assistants that I heard and expressed many of the reflections that can be read in this dissertation.

In Denmark, the analysis continued with repeated readings of the field notes and interview transcripts, discussions with my colleagues, paper presentations at seminars, feedback from my supervisors, and so on. Also, I transferred the notes and interview transcripts into the computer program “Nvivo” which enables the categorization and organization of large, qualitative datasets. I categorized my material with a variety of more or less abstract terms such as “alcohol”, “stories” and “moral,” changing the categories along with my focus and interpretation. Indeed, the analytical process was very much, “an art of choice, like finding meaning in poetry, where meanings were both found and discarded” (Kane and Tucker 2004: 224). For example, the category “crowd” came to me during the fall of 2007, during a jogging session with some people from the Department of Sociology at Copenhagen University. I told about the pub crawls that I had seen in Sunny Beach and one sociologist, Christian Borch, suggested that I look at the early crowd theorists. Soon after, he e-mailed me a long list of reading suggestions. I borrowed a cottage on the countryside and huddled up with tomes by Gustave Le Bon, Gabriel Tarde, Elias Canetti and other unlikely holiday literature. I then re-read the qualitative data in search of passages about crowd dynamics: Article II and III in this dissertation were in the making. What I mean to say with this example is that data analysis is not a straightforward exercise. It always involves a complicated back and forth process which is difficult to pin down *post festum*.

It was also essential to find quotable passages in my field notes and interview transcripts in order to convey direct impressions from Sunny Beach. Throughout the dissertation I quote such empirical passages, not because I consider them to be more authentic, factual or true than other types of text, but because I find them useful for vividly plunging readers into the young people’s experiences at the resort. In doing so, I am following the path of the phenomenologist Michael D. Jackson. His texts abound with captivating passages about concrete situations from his fieldwork that appeal not only to the intellect but also to the senses. In an article about phenomenological anthropology, Jackson warns against the “arcane, abstract, and alienating character of much theoretical thought” (1996: 2). He explains that the writing of detailed descriptions of “lived reality” can be used as a strategy to avoid the

“estranging effects of conceptual models and systematic explanation which, when pushed too far, disqualify and efface the very life one wants to understand and isolate us from the very life we have to live” (Jackson 1996: 2). For me, it is important to give readers an impression of my impressions of the young people’s impressions in Sunny Beach.

Somewhat like Jackson, Durkheim also had a special capacity to capture life in words, especially late in his career. Since part of his goal was to make sociology into a respectable science on a par with the natural sciences, many of his early writings are sober and almost mathematical in precision, exuding seriousness and scientific weight. Nevertheless, the last of his masterpieces contains effervescent passages describing ceremonies among Australian Aborigines, which are extraordinarily intense in character (2001: 162-164, 283-285). The passages exude such vitality that the reader can easily imagine and almost sense the atmosphere surrounding the ceremonies. A central point in the book is that the tribals' lives alternate between periods characterized, respectively, by monotonous work and intense ritual celebration, and Durkheim reproduces this alternation in his writing by switching between measured, calm reasoning and action-packed ritual descriptions. There is a consistency between the writing style and the tribals' way of life – between the book's form and its content.

Following Jackson and Durkheim, I have tried in this dissertation to strike a tone that is in tune with the atmosphere in Sunny Beach. The tone changes along with my focus, but in all chapters I have tried to infuse a little bit of the effervescence that fills Sunny Beach. Whenever possible, I give priority to storytelling over theorizing, to description over explanation, to the concrete over the abstract. My hope has been to find a writing style which does not completely eliminate the kind of effervescence that nightlife tourism is all about (on writing as an analytical tool, see also Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 239-262; Bech 1997: 7-8; Bech 1999: 33-37, 101-110).

All quotes from interviews and field notes that I have included in the dissertation have been translated from Danish into English. Some of the quotes, particularly the interview excerpts, have been cleaned up for grammatical mistakes and eventually modified slightly in order to make them flow better (Alland and Alland 2001: xxxvii). The purpose of this procedure is not to manipulate the so-called “raw data”, but to make it more clear and readable.

## Ethics

Ethical problems loom large in my study — particularly the problem of studying people who never consented to partake in the research. For example, I have extensive field notes about individuals – some of them minors, and some of them drunk – that I saw fall and sometimes hurt themselves after dancing on bar counters, chairs and tables. I did not always inform these individuals about my research, nor did I ask for permission to write about them. However, the falls are interesting data that have served me, among other things, as cases to analyse the interplay between pleasure and risk, between the comic and the tragic. Furthermore, falling from heights is a regular and common occurrence at nightlife resorts. It therefore deserves to be studied, not only by medical scientists but also social researchers.<sup>7</sup> Was it wrong of me to include these individuals in my study? Should I have made sure only to observe and write about individuals who had understood the implications of my research and given their unrestrained consent to participate, and who were sober enough to understand that they were being studied? There are no simple answers to these questions.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, nightlife ethnography is a rather chaotic undertaking where it is almost impossible to ensure that all participants are informed about the research, have consented to be studied, and remember that they are being studied. Numerous scholars have gone before me who studied nightlife with the kind of methods that I am using (for examples of Danish studies see Balvig *et al.* 2005; Kolind and Elmeland 2008; Sørensen 2009; Järvinen *et al.* forthcoming). To protect the anonymity of my informants I did not ask for their full names and I tried to remind everyone not to disclose any information that would reveal their identity. Therefore, my field notes and audio-recordings contain very little data that can be linked to identifiable individuals. And of course, my publications are cleansed for data disclosing the identity of the people being studied. I did my best and so did the student assistants to openly tell about the research to everyone with whom we spent time, including the

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. medical researchers have used the term “the Spring Break syndrome” in relation to non-intentional falls that lead to “vertical deceleration injuries” (Mathis *et al.* 1993). This phenomenon has, to my knowledge, never been studied by social researchers.

<sup>8</sup> An anonymous reviewer wrote in relation to my article, “Ecstatic Crowds” (Article III), that it is problematic that I observe and write about drunken individuals who have lost control of themselves.

interviewees. Also, audio-recorded interviews were not conducted with people if they were too drunk to speak clearly or to understand the implications of being interviewed.

# Chapter three

## Drugs, alcohol, sex, health and holiday satisfaction

There is something about partying under distant skies that makes people more intemperate, more open to experimentation. Nightlife tourists are pleasure seekers with a penchant for risky fun, but they are not out-of-control debauchees with no concern for their own health or safety. They tend to lower their inhibitions, but only to a certain extent. They often indulge in acts of transgression, but always within certain bounds. They have a propensity for excess, but not just any form of excess. This chapter presents a brief overview of the kinds of excesses that the Danish youth indulge in whilst in Sunny Beach. The focus is on the main themes of the airport surveys, i.e. drug use, alcohol use, sexual behaviour, health conditions and holiday satisfaction.

### Drug use

A Danish newspaper wrote the following in the summer of 2008: "Awash in drugs: Positive cocaine test at Ung Rejs-parties in Sunny Beach" (Rølle and Røgind 2008). The exposure was based on the following procedure: at three parties hosted by the travel agency Ung Rejs, four random toilets were tested for traces of drugs. All the tests were positive. This kind of procedure is an efficient and rather widespread strategy to create news about drug abuse. But is the procedure reliable? Is it correct that the Ung Rejs parties are awash in drugs?

Our data suggest that the use of drugs is low among the Danish youth in Sunny Beach – much lower than, say, the use of drugs among young British tourists in the Balearics (e.g. Bellis *et al.* 2003) and young British backpackers in Australia (Bellis *et al.* 2007). Table I shows the pattern of substance use among young Danes in Sunny Beach in the summer of 2008. As can be seen, 98.8% of the women and 88.4% of the men reported that they had abstained from drugs whilst at the resort. This conclusion is confirmed by the qualitative data: many different types of drugs are offered at the resort, but I rarely observed or heard about drug consumption among the tourists and guides. As for the drug traces at the Ung Rejs parties, these cannot be taken as a sign of high levels of drug use. A single person can easily produce many such traces,

and a party with hundreds of participants, plus a number of guides, bartenders and security personnel will almost assuredly produce traces of drugs in the toilets.

Table I: Percentage using substances in Sunny Beach (from the airport survey 2008)

	Women			Men		
	Alcohol	Tobacco	Illicit drugs	Alcohol	Tobacco	Illicit drugs
<b>Not used</b>	3.6%	50.8%	98.8%	1.9%	45.4%	88.4%
<b>1 day per week</b>	3.8%	2.3%	0.5%	1.5%	2.2%	2.9%
<b>2-4 days per week</b>	20.2%	6.4%	0.0%	9.0%	5.4%	3.6%
<b>5+ days per week</b>	67.9%	38.0%	0.5%	84.8%	43.5%	3.1%

Table II: Percentage using substances in Denmark (from the airport survey 2008)

	Women			Men		
	Alcohol	Tobacco	Illicit drugs	Alcohol	Tobacco	Illicit drugs
<b>Never used</b>	1.3%	44.7%	84.2%	1.8%	42.5%	55.1%
<b>Not in the past year</b>	0.4%	7.5%	10.1%	1.1%	6.6%	14.8%
<b>1-3 days per month</b>	38.8%	4.4%	0.5%	18.4%	3.4%	5.2%
<b>1 day per week</b>	34.7%	3.7%	0.2%	37.4%	4.9%	5.4%
<b>2-4 days per week</b>	17.3%	5.3%	84.2%	29.3%	5.3%	55.1%
<b>5+ days per week</b>	1.7%	27.6%	10.1%	9.5%	32.3%	14.8%

In the qualitative interviews, several of the young people expressed a clear aversion to drugs, as exemplified by this excerpt from an interview with a tourist:

Gabriel: "Even though we're down here [in Sunny Beach], I still think that people would raise their eyebrows if they heard of someone doing drugs. It's like OK for someone to drink themselves silly and not be able to walk and talk and all that stuff. People think that's cool. But as soon as you mention 'we went out and did some coke' it's like 'Hey!' [angry voice] I feel the same way. I'd get mad at them too."

The Danish travel companies that organize trips to Bulgaria promote a drug free holiday. At the previously mentioned welcome meetings, the newcomers are often told that drugs will be met with "zero tolerance". Drug use allegedly leads to hotel eviction and perhaps notification of the police – and the guides are keen to mention that you do not want to mess with the Bulgarian police. Another factor that decreases people's motivation for using drugs is the widespread fear of the Bulgarian pushers. As one woman said in an interview, "I certainly don't think I would [use drugs] down here, because I wouldn't know what I was getting." The Bulgarian pushers are said to be unprincipled gorillas who sell rat poison, mug people, and worse.

As mentioned in Chapter One, some of the nightlife scenes in Ibiza still bear the stamp of the hippie movement of the 1960s and 1970s (D'Andrea 2004: 238). In Ibiza, one may still find tourists who associate drugs with mind expansion, rebellion and anti-consumerism. The Danish youth in Sunny Beach generally have a different approach to drugs. In all of the qualitative interviews, for instance, there is not a single hint of drug romanticism and there are no allusions to "doors of perception," "mind expansion," "mystical states" or any such longhaired hippie notions (Houborg 2008: 184). None of the interviewees stated that drugs can bring new insights or change the world for the better. Many women, in particular, expressed scepticism and also fear of drugs:

Rie: We stick to alcohol. We know what that is.

Marianne: Just alcohol is fine with me.

Mai-Britt: I am also scared to death about drugs. It is, again, all those horror stories that you hear. Also, I have a big brother who got mentally ill from drugs.

One of the "horror stories" that circulated among the tourists was that bartenders might put drug-spiked ice cubes into drinks to incapacitate their customers and, subsequently, try to trick, rob or rape them. This story made

many tourists drink lukewarm drinks without ice cubes, and people kept an eye on the bartenders. There was a lot of talk about poisonings. I met two tourists who thought that their drinks had been spiked. They told me they had had a terrible night with panic attacks, followed by a major down trip the next day. They had never before experienced such symptoms, and their conclusion was – despite my doubtful questions – that someone had spiked their drinks; to say nothing of the fact that their holiday diet had consisted of only little food, but copious amounts of alcohol, something they were adamant had nothing to do with their symptoms.

In other words, for many of the Danes, drugs are a source of worry more than pleasure. Even among the ones who purposively use drugs, pleasure is not necessarily the crux of the drug high. For example, here is how a group of tourists described their experiences with Poppers, a drug that is advertised and sold by many of the sex shops in Sunny Beach:

Interviewer: What are the effects of "Poppers"?

Peter: The heart starts pounding.

Henrik: Heatstroke.

Peter: Yes, totally heatstroke.

Henry: And then you become a little bit crazy [...]

Kevin: You fumble around for a minute or something. And then you come back down.

Peter: Then it all stops again – you are suddenly all yourself again.

Henrik: Yeah, but still sweating like hell! [...]

Interviewer: But, I mean, that does not sound particularly nice?

Peter: Well, you do get a little up and running, don't you?

Henrik: Yes, I guess so.

Kevin: I think it's all about getting used to it.

These are not the words of “psychonauts”, meaning persons who take “hallucinogens or other drugs in order to explore and understand human experience and existence” (Newcombe 2008: 209). Neither are the words those of “drug enthusiasts”, i.e. individuals who celebrate drugs and organize their lives around drug consumption (Dance and Mugford 1992). Like so many of the other drug users that I spoke with in Sunny Beach, Peter, Henrik and Kevin showed little interest in the chemistry of drugs or the facets of mind alteration. The main objective of their drug use, so it appeared to me, was not the state of intoxication per se, but the thrill of doing something unusual, something



slightly forbidden, to be laughed at and shared through storytelling back in Denmark.

## **Alcohol use**

The majority of the young Danes in Sunny Beach are what may be called alcohol enthusiasts: large parts of their leisure lives are centred around the consumption of alcohol, they love to be drunk, they advocate drinking, and they do not worry much about the adverse effects of alcohol. For them, heavy drinking is perfectly acceptable, as long as it takes place in the company of others and, preferably, in a festive context. They do not approve of frequent solitary drinking, which is deemed sad and pathological, but they celebrate the kind of continuous collective drinking that takes place in Sunny Beach.

Young Danes have long been notorious for their heavy drinking. Margaretha Järvinen and Robin Room explain (2007: 5) that in Denmark, the drinking and drunkenness levels among teenagers started rising in the 1980s and escalated in the 1990s. The high alcohol consumption has levelled in recent years, but Danish teenagers are arguably still the holders of “the European record for drinking alcohol. They drink more, very often and with a clearer focus on drunkenness than young people in most other European countries” (Demant and Järvinen 2006; see also Demant 2007B; Østergaard 2007).

The youth that we surveyed in Sunny Beach have a tendency to drink alcohol on a regular basis when they are home in Denmark (see Table II), but during their stay in Bulgaria their drinking increases significantly (see Table I). Many of the young tourists and guides drink heavily, constantly and with the clear aim to get drunk. A young tourist explained in an interview:

Sébastien: Is there any difference in how you party here and back home?

Amalie: Yeah. At home you have your drunken moments. But down here you are like really, really drunk to the point of getting all messed up in your head and all that. You would not be like that at home. Then you would go like, “Well, have to go to work tomorrow. Have to go home and get some sleep”. It is like more relaxed [at home]. Down here we just take it to the max!

Table III shows that nearly everyone who completed our questionnaires reported that they had used alcohol during their stay in Sunny Beach. A total of 84% reported drinking 6 or more units of alcohol in at least one day of their holiday, and 79% reported drinking 12 or more units in at least one day of their

holiday. More than a third reported drinking 12 or more units per day for six or seven days per week.

Table III: Percentage using alcohol in Sunny Beach (from the airport survey 2008)

	Under 18	At least 18	Among all
<b>Drank any alcohol</b>	87.0%	98.5%	97%
<b>Drank 6 or more units at least one day</b>	75.0%	85.1%	84%
<b>Drank 12 or more units at least one day</b>	52.7%	82.0%	79%
<b>Drank 12 or more units 6-7 days per week</b>	30.8%	40.1%	40%

The heavy drinking is fuelled by the cheap alcohol prices plus general consent that moderation is a party-killer:

Birgitte: Here, the idea is to drink all the time.

Sébastien: More than at home?

Birgitte: Yes.

Signe: Yeah. I think that people are really focused on that. I mean, no one says anything back home if you go to a club and don't have a drink in your hand. But here it will draw comments. People will get down on you right away.

The guides and the tourists support each other in kicking off the party with loads of alcohol. With tongues in check, heavy drinking is applauded, and abstinence is rejected. The goal is to create parties where everyone joins and has fun. The following field notes from a party for Danes illustrate that heavy drinking is a common endeavour with broad support:

The three dudes on the stage are now supposed to compete in drinking. The guide with the microphone asks each one of them, "Do you want water or beer?" The first participant says that he'd prefer water, but the crowd begins to boo him. The guy backtracks; now he wants beer. The second participant answers, "Obviously I'll choose beer." The third participant answers, "Do you even need to ask?" Now each guy has to down three beers. They begin drinking, but one of them throws up; this draws clapping and cheers from the crowd.

Heavy drinking is also widespread among Danish youngsters under 18 years old. In our airport survey, 91% of the minors reported that they consumed alcohol during their holiday. 71% reported that they had consumed at least 6 units of alcohol on at least one day of their holiday; and 31% reported having consumed at least 12 units for six to seven days per week. In both Denmark and Bulgaria, serving alcohol to minors under eighteen is prohibited, but this prohibition is not observed in Sunny Beach. The bars and nightclubs at the resort serve alcohol to anyone, regardless of age or level of intoxication. If you have the money, they will serve you, and in Sunny Beach it does not cost much to get plastered.

When the youth describe their own holiday drinking, they tend to use vivid images such as “to run amok”, “to give it gas”, “to blow it off”, “to go crazy”, “to get stupid”, “to get smashed”, “to get totally fucked up in the head”, “to take it louder and wilder”, and so on. These are violent expressions that suggest what the youth want when they drink (Levine 1981). Their aim is not to get drunk quietly, but to reach intense and spectacular states of intoxication. They use alcohol in large doses as a means to “smash” their ingrained habits of self-control and get momentarily “stupid”. But what is the point of getting drunk to the point of “stupidity”? What is fun about being “fucked up in the head”? Why such violent expressions? I think Bataille is on to something essential in these lines, "The world of the subject is the night: that changeable, infinitely suspect night which, in the sleep of reason, produces monsters. I submit that madness itself gives a rarefied idea of the free 'subject,' unsubordinated to the 'real' order and occupied only with the present" (1988: 58, quotation marks in original; see also Bakhtin 1984: 39, 49). The young people in Sunny Beach who drink to excess do so, in my interpretation, because they want to destabilize their bodily habits and pass into a province of reality filled with turbulence, adventure and freedom. Not Freedom with a capital F, but brief moments of release where the distance between self and other is overcome and past and future can be partly forgotten. For most people, achieving such release does not come easily, but requires determination, effort and force. Hence the violent, war-like expressions that the youth employ to describe their alcohol use (Jackson 2009: 160).

## Sexual behaviour

Upon arrival in Sunny Beach, one of my colleagues, Tine, exclaimed, “There is naked skin everywhere!” Indeed, the Black Sea coast is hot in the summertime and the tourists wear few clothes, not only on the beach but also in supermarkets, restaurants and just about everywhere. Many of the female workers at the resort are also scantily clad. For instance, in a family restaurant where my colleagues and I often went for lunch, the waitresses were dressed in low-cut tops and red miniskirts, and once in a while they would line up and perform a dance to loud music. It was always the same dance, the same music and the same smiles on their faces. Across the street from the restaurant was a bar with occasional pole dancing, and after dark the street prostitutes walked by, calling attention to themselves with their advertisements of “I give you good sex” and “sucky, sucky”.

Ian Littlewood writes that, “It is a defining characteristic of the traveller’s erotic interests that they are *not* concerned with reproduction. Sex is about pleasure, experiment, excess, self-discovery, not about making families” (2001: 126, italics in original). This is also true for the Danish youth in Sunny Beach. Many go to the resort with the explicit aim to indulge in lots of casual hook-ups and sex. These holiday aspirations are reflected in our airport surveys: in 2008, 67% answered that they had kissed someone whilst at the resort, 32% had kissed more than one person, 45% had engaged in sex, and 13% had engaged in sex with more than one partner. These statistical results give an overview of the sexual behaviour of the tourists, but they do not capture the sensual curiosity and lust that consume many of the young visitors. Let me set the scene with an excerpt from my field notes:

As I am talking to Henrik, I see something strange happening ten meters away, down in the corner of the pool. A woman has her back to the corner with a man standing right in front of her. She looks around with an embarrassed smile. They are having sex, with hundreds of partiers standing just a few metres away from them. I point this out to Henrik and he goes over to see what those two are up to. Our suspicions are confirmed. We’re witnessing one of those legendary sex-in-the-pool scenes. The lovebirds realize now that they’ve been caught and stop. The guy emerges from the pool and shortly thereafter he lets himself fall back into the water with arms out to his side. It looks to me like he had all his clothes on, but two girls tell me that his dick was hanging out of his pants. A little later the guy shows up at the bar and I go over to ask him whether they

were indeed having sex. Yep, they definitely were. He says that last year when he came here he also got laid in the pool. This has become like a tradition for him.

The sexual activity is fuelled by the sultry climate and the sense of being hidden from the critical scrutiny of people at home. As mentioned, the tourists convince each other that, “What happens in Sunny Beach, stays in Sunny Beach” and this gives them the courage to let loose (Redmond 2003):

Benjamin: ”A girl and I were fucking down by the beach and then in a pool, but we were chased away by the police. I would hardly do that kind of thing at home.”

Alcohol also facilitates the sexual experimentation:

Ditte: You also feel like trying something new [in bed]. Especially when you’re drunk.

Henriette: Yeah, definitely. Like trying something that’s a little more wild [...] Things are also a little like that back home, but still. Down here, if something or other goes wrong, I mean, I’ll never see the guy again. Back at home it’s a little more embarrassing if something fozzles.

As can be seen from the field notes and interview excerpts above, there is much more to the sex than achieving an orgasm. The young tourists explore themselves and each other – out of curiosity, in order to become better in bed (or in the pool), to gain recognition, or for the sheer fun of it. The motivations are multiple and often difficult to pin down, and the sexual exploration takes on many forms. Some just want to observe the sexual play that takes place at the resort and eventually do a little bit of flirting and kissing; others want to lose their virginity, have sex in open air, try group sex, or be with a prostitute. It is widely held that Sunny Beach is a good place to try things out.

As mentioned, many tourists declare that they use alcohol to become more courageous in the flirting-game. However, it can be hard to find the right level of drunkenness. Both the conquest and the sexual act itself can become complicated if you have had too much to drink:

Michael: It’s good to drink a couple beers. It makes you happy and more outgoing. Then I think it’s easier to score. But if you’re completely shitfaced,

then I don't think anyone can get laid. For example, you [Jens] at that pub crawl, you could hardly even talk. In that condition it's really difficult to score.

Two guys from the same group interview said about the sexual act itself:

Jakob: You can get girls to do lots of things when they are drunk [laughter].

Michael: It's like, if you've had a couple beers but aren't drunk, just a little buzzed, enough so that you can't really ride a bike, then you are capable of fucking for a longer time. But if you're really shitfaced, it can be totally awful for you and for her.

One female tourist explained in an interview that, "sex becomes a sport" for many of the tourists. She related that she and her friends had an expensive Louis Vuitton bag as a price for the one in their group who kissed and had sex with the highest number of ugly partners. Sex with a fat, red-haired man yielded maximum points whereas sex with an attractive man or with the same man twice counted for minus points. Correspondingly, a group of men related that they were competing for the number of women that they could get intimate with: kissing counted for one point, a blow job counted for two points, and vaginal intercourse counted for three points. The members of the male group wore wristbands in different colours indicating the number of points that they had obtained. I recorded many other of these self-invented scoring competitions, and all of them have one feature in common: the winner is the person who is most daring and sexually active. Unrestrained behaviour is rewarded.

The Danish travel agencies also organize a wealth of sexual games and plays that serve to lower the inhibitions and intensify the licentious fun. Take, for example, the all-night party called the "Polterabend". This event took place once a week in the summer of 2008 and it included an array of brief plays enacted by guides. The plays mimicked some of the rituals that surround the traditional Danish wedding. Here are two highlights captured in field notes, first the proposal scene:

Leif goes down to his knees and says to his chosen one, "I still remember the first time we met. My little pencil could hardly penetrate you because you were so tight. But then you met this huge negro [...] The fourteen days that we have known each other have been very special. Will you marry me?"

Later in the evening, the marriage ceremony was enacted:

The couple stands on a platform in the middle of the dance floor. In comes an Elvis look-alike. He yells something in a drunken voice and staggers over to the couple in order to conduct the wedding. Elvis asks the groom, "Will you fuck her? [...] Fuck her hard in the arse every day of your fucking life?" "Yes", answers the groom. And Elvis asks the bride, "Will you suck his dick, take it in the arse, do the dishes and do the laundry?" "Yes", answers the bride. That's it. The newly married immediately begin simulating wild sex up on the platform while Elvis yells frantically, "This is how marriage is! Halleluja!"

The stereotypes in these scenes are blatant: the men are presented as sex-crazed chauvinists, whereas the bride is portrayed as a servile recipient of the (white) groom's "little pencil" and the black man's not so little "pencil". There is not a hint of romance or love. The marital affair is reduced to sex in different variants, plus some dishwashing and laundry – quite a ways from the Christian vision of the wedding ceremony and wedded life! This is no coincidence, of course. The entire polterabend is a well-rehearsed onslaught on the traditional contract-based relationship between one man and one woman. The ideas of "love", "faithfulness" and "monogamy" are ridiculed while casual sex is celebrated. This is not to suggest that the youth have anything in particular against Christianity or that they want to overthrow the marital institution. Rather, it is to suggest that the youth make fun of wedded life, just for the hell of it, and also in order to remind each other that the life that awaits them may be full of obligations and restraints. Ergo, better have some fun right here, right now, before it is too late!!

In other words, there is a strong sense of impermanence to the holiday parties. A sense that things change, bodies wither, opportunities arise and disappear. This acknowledgment of the ravages of time goads the partiers to seize the moment and engage in memorable activities that can be looked back upon when old age sets in. As two tourists explained:

Birgitte: You have to get out there and try stuff before you get old and grey. We do not want to find ourselves thinking back to an eventless life.

Kathrine: When I turn thirty years old, I want to be able to think to myself, "I don't regret anything of what I did. I tried out all the things that had to be tried out."

Sébastien: So you do not regret the transgressions. But you could come to regret if you had not committed any transgressions?

Kathrine: Yes. That is how I feel. For instance, that Miss Wet [T-shirt contest]<sup>9</sup>, I might have regretted it if I hadn't participated.

Birgitte: Because, then you had not tried it out. And it actually was quite fun.

Kathrine: Yes!

Birgitte: I would much rather regret something that I have done than regret something that I had not done [...]. Instead of fretting the rest of your life over all of the things that you missed out on [...].

Kathrine: Also, to be able to tell your children, "Listen, I was part of it, and I have tried it!" Then they will think, "Damn, my mother was really cool when she was young" [laughter].

Birgitte: Yeah, that could be totally awesome!

In Denmark, young women participating in Wet T-shirt Contests or other forms of sexual exhibitionism are likely to receive slander: such behaviour is commonly deemed "hoochie" or "slutty".<sup>10</sup> Female partygoers simply cannot behave as unrestrained as male partygoers without being condemned for it (Demant 2007A). This is different in Sunny Beach. Here not only men, but also women are expected and rewarded for engaging in (some degree) of sexual dissipation. Sunny Beach is a place of exception where members of both genders can act a little "crazy" and build up a CV of (minor) transgressions. When old age comes, the Sunny Beach visitor will have stories to tell that bear witness to a youth rich in playful deviance and out-there experiences.

## Commercial sex

Henrik leans over and says, "I'm gonna tell you something. They say that you gotta hear the truth from kids and drunk people. And I'm drunk." I smile at him. He's drunk, but not hammered. He just downed a drink and two or three Sambuca shots, but he's a big guy. "Half of these people have been to whores," he says. He explains something about how there are mostly guys in this group. I don't know exactly where he's going with this; perhaps he means to say that,

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<sup>9</sup> A Miss Wet T-shirt contest is a beauty competition for women. The participants typically wear white T-shirts with no bras beneath. Water is sprayed onto the participants in order to make their T-shirts transparent. The participants take turns posing before the onlookers and the winner is the one who can draw the loudest cheers.

<sup>10</sup> Sidsel Kirstine Thorsen is currently writing a master thesis at the Department of Sociology at the University of Copenhagen, which highlights the existence of sexual double standards among Danish youth: young men are encouraged to indulge in a maximum of casual sex whereas women may become stigmatized for the exact same behaviour (see also Crawford and Popp 2003).



for many guys, the scarcity of women justifies them going to prostitutes to satisfy their needs. I chew on that a bit and ask if he's visited whores, himself. "Yes, I have," he says without a pause. (Field notes from the summer of 2007)

Prostitution is a theme that is strangely absent in the research literature about young nightlife tourists. Perhaps this absence is due to nightlife tourists' disinclination to visit prostitutes? Or perhaps it has to do with the researcher's reluctance to ask questions about prostitution? I for one did not give any thought to prostitution when I first came to Sunny Beach. However, as I began exploring the resort I couldn't help but notice the many billboards featuring undressed women, and I also noticed the street prostitutes and the flashing neon-signs advertising strip shows, lap dances, Go-Go girls and what not. The night that I met Henrik, the penny finally dropped: commercial sex is an important aspect of the Sunny Beach experience for a significant proportion of the male tourists from Denmark.

When we returned to the resort in 2008, my colleagues and I brought with us a modified version of the airport questionnaire that could help shed light on the use of sexual services among the Danish holidaymakers. As Table IV shows, 48.2% of the men reported that they had visited a strip club during their vacation, and 12.5% reported that they had paid for sex. It is worth noting, moreover, that for nearly a third of the men who went to strip clubs, this was their first time, and for almost half of the men who paid for sex, this was the first time they had done so. In other words, a significant number of the young Danish men are introduced to sexual services whilst in Sunny Beach. The purchase of sexual services is much lower among the female travellers: only five women reported paying for sex during the holiday, but all of them were excluded from the analysis due to improbable answers (for instance, one reported being attracted to Sunny Beach by "your mother"). Among the women whose responses we estimated to be valid, 8.4% reported going to a strip club. One in five (21%) of the males who reported paying for sex whilst in Sunny Beach also reported using Viagra during their stay. The use of Viagra is much lower (3%) among the group of men who report that they did not purchase sex at the resort.

Table IV: Proportion of men and women visiting a strip club and paying for sex (airport survey 2008)

	Men		Women	
	In Sunny Beach	In Denmark	In Sunny Beach	In Denmark
<b>Visited strip club or brothel</b>	48.2%	57.9%	8.4%	17.9%
<b>Paid for sex</b>	12.5%	13.7%	0.0%	0.4%

The prostitution scene in Sunny Beach has a farcical element about it, which many of the Danes find both shocking and highly entertaining. After dark in the centre of the resort, the street prostitutes virtually chase down potential male customers, taking them by the arm, reaching for their crotch, holding them back, teasing and playing mad pranks:

Jeppé: They just pull down your pants as you are withdrawing money from the ATM machine! She like took my dick in her mouth and said “Could finish?” That’s the time when you have to take a run. I went over to someone and claimed that she was my girlfriend: that made the prostitute go away [...] I got a little scared, you know. There she was pulling off my pants, just like that!

Helle: Yeah, and that happened on one of our first days here.

Jeppé who was quoted above was certainly taken aback by the prostitute and her blunt offer, but he did not seem seriously offended by it. In fact, Jeppé and his friends joked a lot about the incident. Their attitude seemed to me as one of bewildered amusement more than indignation, and this is quite typical for the young Danes, particularly the men. The men generally exhibit high acceptance of the prostitution scene whereas the women are more sceptical. Here is an excerpt from an interview with a group of female tourists who expressed mixed feelings with regards to prostitution:

Pia: Well, the first thing I said when I heard that he had been to whores and gotten laid was, ‘What, he couldn’t even score?’ I thought why the hell would he pay for a whore? He could have whoever he wanted here.

Bente: He could have so many others here.

Sidse: I don't know. I think it's kind of fun. It's things like that that they'll remember and stuff.

When asked to describe their motivations for purchasing sex, strip shows, lap dances, and so on, the young women and men often answer along the lines, "why not, it's cheap" and "we just wanted to try it out". Some of the youth seem to regard sexual services as just another form of packaged fun that can be bought to spice up the holidays and create memorable stories to be shared with (selected) friends. Consider the following excerpts from two interviews with male tourists:

Sébastien: So what made you go to the strip club?

Poul: I don't really know. It was just like, I had to try it so that I could say that I'd done it.

Sébastien: So it wasn't something that you decided at home?

Benjamin: It wasn't planned, but the idea was kind of in the air. We have to get a blow job from a whore, just for fun. Just to say that I've done it.

Sébastien: You went twice [to the prostitutes]?

Kent: Actually, Lennart started off with a whore down here.

Lennart: It was just a blowjob.

Kent: Then we were up there, and Stefan he...

Lennart: That was where he barfed!

Kent: That was where he barfed [laughter].

Sébastien: While he was going at it?

Lennart and Kent: Yeah [laughter]

Sébastien: How did that happen?

Kent: Well, apparently he had drunk so much that he threw up in the middle of it. We thought that he had gone to sleep or something, so we sat there and waited [...].

Sébastien: So the second time [you brought prostitutes to your hotel room], did both of you have sex with them?

Lennart: No, just me.

Kent: It was just Lennart, who fucked both of them. That's a good picture for the scrapbook afterwards.

Lennart: We're gonna go home and have a scrap wall.

Sébastien: Did you take photos of it?

Lennart: We took photos of everything. I've got my phone with me in town. We're taking lots of photos.

In general, there is a remarkable absence of pleasure in the young men's accounts of their sex with prostitutes. The accounts are full of suspense, surprises, humour and disgust, but sexual satisfaction is rarely part of the equation. In fact, many of the young men are so stressed out or drunk that they fail to consummate the act:

Sébastien: Was it something you had decided before you came down here?

Stig: No, it was very impulsive. At least on my part [...]

Bjarke: Yeah. It wasn't something we had given much thought.

Mads: Stig had a whore on the way into town.

Stig: Yeah. I just took a street whore. Over in the bushes [...] It was one of the most murky things I've ever done. Coming down and 30 Leva and the sand and 20 minutes; then she leaves because I hadn't cum. What's up with that? And it was just so foul. Some Brit was standing right next to me getting a blowjob.

Stig's intercourse with the prostitute was not pleasurable in and of itself, but it sure was out of the ordinary: it was one of those far-out experiences that made his holiday truly memorable and worthy of narration back home.

## Health

A week or two with loads of alcohol, junk food and sleepless nights can wear you down. If one then adds strong sun, air conditioning and frequent exchanges of saliva, then you are far removed from your employer's dream of holiday as recreation. Some of the health consequences of party-holidays are illustrated by the following field notes:

It's 11 o'clock, and checkout time at the hotel. A big group of young Danes waits at the reception area for the bus that will take them to the airport. They've all been in Sunny Beach for at least a week, and they seem totally drained of energy. Now they are sprawled out, half dead, on chairs and sofas. Some are asleep. Others lay there with glassy, half-open eyes and groan. Once in a while there is talking, sniggering and coughing, but otherwise it's silent. I suddenly laugh, a bit too loudly, and explain myself to a couple of guys who look at me, confused. "This looks like a Russian gas attack!" One of them feigns a smile but quickly returns to his vacant gaze.

Some of the travellers are struck by illness during and after the holidays. Fatigue, shivers, stomach problems and colds are among the typical symptoms. A small number of them also incur acute injuries during their holidays such as

sprains, skull fractures, cuts and severe sunburns. Many of these injuries are dealt with on the spot by so-called "night guards", who work for the Danish tour operators and are on-call 24 hours a day; other, more serious injuries require further examination elsewhere. In our 2007 airport survey, 6.7% of the respondents reported that they had visited a doctor during their holiday. In 2008, this number had risen to 8.5%. Moreover, there is a small – and yet much too high – number of rapes and deaths. In 2007, there were four reports of rapes of Danish youth, a 17-year-old Dane drank himself to death during a pub crawl and a young Swede was beaten to death by local bouncers.

In 2007, we conducted a small pilot study of the physical and mental condition of the returning tourists. 48 people were contacted by telephone or email within one to four weeks after their return, and of these 35 responded. 85% of the females and 60% of males reported that they had suffered from fevers, headaches, colds or other symptoms within the first week of their return. The following description is an email-response from a 21-year-old man who had partied non-stop in Sunny Beach for nearly two weeks:

Well, it's been hard to come home [...] my body got used to the wild party life. In fact, I've drunken nothing but water since I came home in order to clean out my system. I haven't been hungover, really, but I've been extremely tired for quite a while. I've slept much more than I usually do. It took 14 days after my return before I got back my energy. I know that many of [my travel companions] feel the same way. I had a slight cold when I came home, as well as some coughing fits. Why, I don't know. But my lungs and my heart took quite a while to recover. I've just now begun running again after giving that up because I couldn't get enough air and because of a serious pain in my chest.

It is worth noting that the e-mail above comes from a hardened nightlife tourist who has been to nightlife resorts several times in his life. He went to Sunny Beach well aware that the intensive partying would cost him a period of indisposition. However, like so many other of the Danes that I met in Sunny Beach, the man insisted that the pleasures of nightlife holidays far outweigh their detriments. The holiday fun is worth suffering for. Similar views are expressed in the following excerpt from an interview with two tourists:

Sébastien: What is the worst experience you have had here?

Mette: Illness.

Annika: Yes.

Mette: I mean, I have hurt myself so many times. That is probably the biggest minus of being here [laughs].

Sébastien: Okay! How?

Mette: Well, first, I jumped on a piece of broken glass and cut my foot; and I get blisters everywhere. Also, I fell from a chair and hit my shin, and I have been thrown into a pool where I hit the edge with my back. And last year I fell off a table and damaged my back permanently [laughs].

Sébastien: Okay.

Mette: But that is just what happens when you are drunk and dancing on the tables. You can't avoid getting injured.

Anikka: I'm sick only.

Mette: Yes! [laughs] You are just 'sick'.

Anikka: I'm not unlucky like you.

Mette: I'm the one who gets the injuries; she just gets the illnesses [laughs].

Sébastien: Does this make it a bad holiday?

Anikka: No, absolutely not.

Mette: You kinda bear with the injuries and illnesses.

The youth generally accept that health problems are part of the package when they go to Sunny Beach. Smaller problems such as hangovers are to be expected, and more serious problems such as lacerations and broken limbs do not necessarily spoil the fun. I would even say that some of the young visitors welcome certain types of party-related health problems. For example, hangovers, as painful as they are, can serve as an excuse for various pleasant pastimes such as complete inactivity, collective moaning by the poolside, friendly teasing, mad pranks, overeating fast food, and exchanging drinking stories. Likewise, a deep laceration hurts, and it can certainly be scary to get sewn up by a strange-looking doctor in a strange-looking clinic. But later the bandaged arm can command lots of attention and also respect from peers. I have often seen revellers flashing their wounds, taking pictures of passed-out individuals, vomiting on parade, and bragging about dangerous behaviour. Signs of (minor) self-destruction are prestigious among the youth: they prove commitment to the partying cause and deliver the kind of farcical entertainment that makes the holidays unforgettable.

Marjana Martinic and Fiona Measham write that, "most young people who drink to extremes also want to end the evening safely" (2008: 9; see also Jørgensen *et al.* 2007). This is also true for the majority of the young Danes in Sunny Beach. The holiday excesses should not be misinterpreted as a symptom of nihilism, pathology or some sort of death wish. The youth do not travel to

nightlife destinations to escape from pain or because they want to turn their backs to the world. Quite the contrary. The excesses are above all an expression of vitality. When the youngsters go to the edge, it is not to take the jump, but rather to explore the abyss, feel the rush and later reap recognition for the exploit.

### Holiday satisfaction

In our airport surveys we included the following question in order to shed light on the young traveller’s (dis)satisfaction with their holidays: “On a scale from 1 to 10, how good was your holiday (1=poor, 5=middle, 10=the perfect holiday)?” In 2007 this question received an average score of 8.2, and in 2008 the average score was 8.3 (see Table IV). In other words the youth were overwhelmingly positive about their stay in Sunny Beach, and this is also true for the group of respondents who had sought medical treatment during their stay. The most satisfied respondents were the ones who indicated that they had consumed the largest amount of alcohol and/or had engaged in sex and/or had engaged in kissing whilst at the resort.

Table IV: Satisfaction with holidays (from the airport survey 2008)

	Satisfaction	T-score	DF	P-value
<b>Among all</b>	8.3			
<b>Among men</b>	8.1	4.00	1084	0.000066
<b>Among women</b>	8.6			
<b>Among those who have had 12 or more drinks for 6-7 days per week</b>	8.7	5.69	792	0.000000
<b>Among those who have not had 12 or more drinks for 6-7 days per week</b>	8.1			
<b>Among those who have had sex</b>	8.5	-3.04	985	0.002402
<b>Among those who have not had sex</b>	8.2			
<b>Among those who have kissed</b>	8.5	-4.20	970	0.000029
<b>Among those who have not kissed</b>	8.0			
<b>Among those who have been to a doctor</b>	8.3	0.05	1079	0.960191
<b>Among those who have not been to a doctor</b>	8.3			

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# Article I



# LA NOUVELLE CULTURE DE LA « DÉFONCE »

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**Résumé** : L'usage d'alcool et de drogues parmi les jeunes de certains pays du Nord de l'Europe a changé d'une manière significative depuis le début des années 1990. Certains signes indiquent un usage de drogues croissant, tandis que l'usage d'alcool s'est focalisé particulièrement sur l'ivresse. Plusieurs chercheurs sont d'avis qu'une nouvelle culture de la « défonce » est en train de se produire ; une culture qui vise des changements de conscience intenses et spectaculaires. Un développement semblable est peut-être en train de se produire en France et dans d'autres pays du Sud de l'Europe. À partir d'un rapprochement phénoménologique, cet article décrit quelques-uns des éléments les plus caractéristiques de la nouvelle culture de la défonce se produisant parmi les jeunes du Danemark. L'article s'appuie sur une recherche du terrain parmi des jeunes touristes danois dans une destination touristique estivale. L'auteur et quatre assistants ont recueilli les données pendant les étés 2007 et 2008 en utilisant des méthodes diverses comme interviews, observations et questionnaires.

**Mots clés** : alcool, jeunesse, tourisme festif, phénoménologie.

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**Abstract** : The use of alcohol and drugs among youth from a number of North European countries has changed significantly since the early 1990s: there are signs of increased drug use and of growing sessional consumption of alcohol. Hence a number of researchers have argued that a new culture of intoxication is emerging which is centered around the pursuit of intense and spectacular states of intoxication. Similar changes may be underway in France and other South European countries. Drawing on a phenomenological approach, this article describes some key features of the new culture of intoxication which is emerging among young people from Denmark. The article is based on fieldwork among young Danish tourists at an international nightlife resort. The author and four assistants collected the data during the summers 2007 and 2008. Various methods were used including surveys, field observations and interviews.

**Keywords** : alcohol, youth, nightlife tourism, phenomenology.

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## Introduction

« Tu devras aller là où tu n'as pas pied. » Tel était le message du chanteur folk danois Hasse en 1967. Cette invitation fut entendue. Des hordes de hippies et de provos se défoncèrent, au hasch et au LSD, et dans le sillage, les punks suivirent gavés à bloc d'alcool et de neuroleptiques. Dans les communautés tribales naissantes, on y mit le paquet, mais la jeunesse en général était encore calme. Les temps ont changé.

Aujourd'hui, la majorité des jeunes Danois se saoulent fréquemment et environ la moitié d'entre eux ont consommé des substances illégales (Hibell et al., 2003 ; Balvig et al., 2005). Ce n'est pas dû au laxisme de l'autorité publique. La juridiction sur les narcotiques a été durcie à maintes reprises au cours des dernières décennies. La police a travaillé dur dans la lutte contre les narcotiques et des ressources importantes ont été investies en mesures préventives ; mais les résultats ne sont pas vraiment convaincants. Le fait est : une nouvelle culture de la « défonce » est née.

Cette évolution au Danemark n'est pas unique. Au cours de ces dernières décennies, l'utilisation croissante de substances enivrantes par les jeunes en Grande-Bretagne est bien connue, et l'usage de l'alcool s'est plus focalisé sur la « défonce ». On le boit en grandes quantités, et en peu de temps (Measham et Brain, 2005). Il ressort aussi que, dans plusieurs pays latins européens, de grands changements sont sur le point de se produire concernant l'utilisation de substances enivrantes par les jeunes (Beccaria et Sande, 2003 ; Demant et Østergaard, 2006). Pensez simplement aux « bizutages » qui ont lieu dans « les grandes écoles » en France. Ou pensez encore à « El Botellón » en Espagne où de grands rassemblements de jeunes se retrouvent dans les rues et les passages, venant écouter de la musique et communier ensemble en avalant de grandes quantités d'alcool bon marché (Østergaard, 2007, p. 17-19). Ces rituels de beuverie méridionaux ont des points de similitude frappants avec la forme festive qui se focalise sur la « défonce » parmi les jeunes Européens du Nord. Si l'on veut comprendre ce qui est en train de se passer parmi les jeunes d'Europe du Sud, il peut être utile de jeter un œil sur la situation dans le Nord. C'est pourquoi je veux, dans cet article, décrire le rapport des jeunes Danois avec les substances enivrantes ; mais tout d'abord quelques mots concernant la recherche existante sur la nouvelle culture de la « défonce » et ma propre démarche dans ce domaine.

## Phénoménologie de la « défonce »

Articles et livres traitant de la nouvelle culture de la « défonce » ne manquent pas. Non des moindres, les chercheurs britanniques ont été très efficaces (Parker et al., 1998 ; Measham et al., 1994, 2000 ; Measham, 2004 ; voir aussi Shiner, 1997). Cependant, il est étonnant que très peu d'entre eux prennent en compte la dimension phénoménologique de la culture de la « défonce ». La « défonce » même, en

tant qu'état et comportement, est dans une large mesure passée sous silence. C'est d'ailleurs un problème connu de longue date dans la recherche sur les substances enivrantes. Comme l'écrivait Sørhaug il y a plus de dix ans : « Si on parcourt la très vaste recherche internationale sur l'ivresse, on ne trouvera pas beaucoup d'études sur l'expérience de l'ivresse elle-même. À ce sujet, cette recherche large – et souvent excellente – ne fait que tourner autour du pot. La recherche concerne les causes et conséquences psychologiques et sociales, tandis que tout le champ existant entre les causes et les conséquences, et qui globalement dans un certain sens, a trait au contenu de l'ivresse et sa signification, est généralement peu et vaguement étudié et discuté. Souvent, il n'est même pas cité » (1996, p. 182 ; voir aussi Elmeland, 1996). Ainsi est-il bon de se remémorer les recommandations d'Husserl : *Zu den Sachen selbst*. Le défi consiste à aller fouiller derrière les tableaux statistiques et à trouver une terminologie sur la « défonce » elle-même, sans la réduire à des forces économiques, des conditions sociales, des problèmes psychologiques, des conditions biochimiques, et autres contingences externes. Nous devrions éviter les explications causales simplistes faisant un portrait de la « défonce » comme une simple conséquence ou le dérivé d'autre chose. Je suis donc très critique quant à cette tendance largement répandue consistant à traiter la « défonce » comme un simple symptôme d'une quelconque forme d'injustice, de pathologie, ou d'inégalité sociale. Bien trop souvent, par exemple, la globalisation sert de bouc émissaire : on soutient que les jeunes se réfugient dans les substances enivrantes parce qu'ils ne peuvent pas supporter le rythme de travail sans cesse croissant, les nombreuses exigences et attentes, et la perspective d'une vie adulte incertaine avec chômage et marginalisation sociale. Le post-modernisme est aussi soumis à de dures accusations arguant ainsi fréquemment que les jeunes cherchent refuge dans la « défonce », parce qu'ils ne peuvent pas affronter les nombreux choix que la vie post-moderne offre, parce que le tissu social s'est déchiré, et parce que les jeunes sont livrés à eux-mêmes pour trouver leur chemin dans un monde chaotique, où les anciennes valeurs et traditions ont perdu leur signification. Ces modèles explicatifs (et échappatoires) réduisent les substances enivrantes à des régulateurs de problèmes, et font apparaître la « défonce » comme une carence, un vide ne contenant ni contenu ni profondeur.

Jackson (1996), qui est un des principaux héritiers d'Husserl en anthropologie, souligne la valeur importante du travail de terrain ethnographique, et sa capacité à nous faire côtoyer de très près la vie des gens étudiés. En les accompagnant, en les imitant, en les observant et en parlant avec eux, on peut graduellement bâtir une interprétation intellectuelle et physique du cadre de leur vie. Maffesoli s'inscrit dans la même tradition phénoménologique et souligne : « Il faut revenir avec humilité à la matière humaine, à la vie de tous les jours, sans chercher quelle cause (Cause) l'engendre, ou la fait ce qu'elle est... Plus qu'une raison *a priori*, il convient de mettre en œuvre une compréhension *a posteriori*, s'appuyant sur une description rigoureuse faite de connivence et de sympathie » (1996, p. 59). Cette recherche approfondie et cette description des choses en elles-mêmes nous donnent la possibilité de saisir leur essence et leur signification immanentes. C'est pourquoi il

existe encore un important travail dans l'étude de la nouvelle culture de la « défonce » : étudier les propres expériences de la « défonce » des jeunes, et condenser celles-ci en descriptions pertinentes.

Je veux, ci-après, apporter ma contribution à ce travail sous forme de description à grands traits de la nouvelle culture de la « défonce » telle qu'elle se présente parmi les jeunes Danois. Je me concentrerai sur la « défonce » par l'alcool, mais je pense que mes remarques et descriptions peuvent aussi être utilisées pour la compréhension d'autres formes de « défonce » comme avec la cocaïne et les amphétamines. Le point d'appui empirique de mes descriptions a pour origine mon tout dernier travail de terrain. Il fut réalisé durant la période du 19 juin au 12 août 2007 et du 29 juin au 30 juillet 2008 à Sunny Beach, destination estivale populaire en Bulgarie. Chaque été, c'est là qu'accourent des milliers de jeunes Danois venant profiter du beau temps, des jolies plages, et de la vie nocturne effrénée. J'ai réuni des données au moyen d'interviews qualitatives et d'observations faites de jour comme de nuit. Grâce à l'aide de quatre assistantes, Sanna Schliewe, Tine Reinholdt, Pernille Bouteloup Kofoed et Ida Poulsen, j'ai en outre effectué deux enquêtes à base de questionnaires <sup>1</sup>.

## Socialité

Les substances enivrantes aident les gens à évacuer l'emprise du contrôle de soi et à s'abandonner à des états plus grégaires et plus débridés. Comme le dit Maffesoli, « l'ivresse est à la fois une initiation cosmique (perte de soi) et une initiation érotique (agrégation collective) » (1985, p. 188). Et les jeunes Danois sont tout à fait conscients de cet effet. Ils emploient les substances enivrantes pour évacuer les inhibitions, être plus extravertis, ouverts aux contacts, et être plus amicaux. La « défonce » permet aux gens de se rapprocher les uns des autres tant physiquement que psychologiquement. Remarquez d'ailleurs la similitude entre une bonne fête et le sentiment d'appartenance qui peut régner en tribune lors d'un match de football :

C'est la même chose avec les fans de football, lorsque vous sautillez dans une tribune. Si vous étiez tout seul, cela apparaîtrait bigrement stupide. Mais quand vous avez une marée humaine, alors se crée cette communauté. Lorsque nous sommes là en boîtes à crier et brailler [à Sunny Beach] n'importe quelle chanson danoise, j'éprouve la même sensation que dans un stade ; celle d'être ensemble, de faire des choses ensemble (Extrait d'interview avec un jeune homme).

De telles descriptions font penser à la notion de « l'âme collective » dans les théories des foules à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Le Bon écrit : « Dans certaines circonstances données, et seulement dans ces circonstances, une

1. Pour une description plus approfondie des méthodes et résultats de mon étude à Sunny Beach, voir Tutenges (forthcoming), ainsi que Tutenges et Hesse (2008).



agglomération d'hommes possède des caractères nouveaux fort différents de ceux de chaque individu qui la compose. La personnalité consciente s'évanouit, les sentiments et les idées de toutes les unités sont orientés dans une même direction. Il se forme une âme collective, transitoire sans doute, mais présentant des caractères très nets. La collectivité devient alors ce que, faute d'une expression meilleure, j'appellerai une foule organisée ou, si l'on préfère, une foule psychologique. Elle forme un seul être et se trouve soumise à la loi de l'unité mentale des foules » (1894, p. 9). Le Bon et nombre d'anciens autres théoriciens des masses comme Tarde (1972) et Taine (2002) redoutaient ces instants où de simples individus se perdaient dans la masse. Renvoyant aux démonstrations violentes et aux défilés de l'époque, ils assuraient que les gens réunis en foule étaient enclins à des comportements impulsifs, à l'irrationalité et à la destruction. Nous trouvons un tout autre comportement chez les jeunes d'aujourd'hui. Pour la majorité, lorsque les énergies collectives prennent le dessus et les transportent dans des états qu'il leur serait impossible d'atteindre seuls, ce n'est plus que pur amusement et désordre. C'est entre autres la raison pour laquelle les jeunes, lors d'occasions festives, viennent s'agglutiner dans les lieux où domine grande concentration d'individus et musique forte. L'énergie émanant de la masse, la musique et la quantité suffisante de substances euphorisantes, tout ce mélange procure les conditions nécessaires pour que ça marche vraiment (Tutenges, à paraître).

Il faut ajouter ici que Durkheim se distingue de la majorité des autres théoriciens de masse antérieurs, en étant généralement positif quant à la faculté de la masse à déstabiliser les gens. Pour lui, ces décharges d'énergie ont quelque chose de revitalisant pour la masse. La bête humaine a tout simplement besoin de s'agglutiner et de prendre de la distance avec les soucis du quotidien et de ses tâches. Ainsi, Durkheim écrit-il à propos de la fête : « Elle a pour effet de rapprocher les individus, de mettre en mouvement les masses et de susciter ainsi un état d'effervescence, parfois même de délire, qui n'est pas sans parenté avec l'état religieux. L'homme est transporté hors de lui, distrait de ses occupations et de ses préoccupations ordinaires » (2007, p. 543). Et il y a assurément quelque chose d'insouciant, de désinvolte, et parfois de délirant quant aux rapports des jeunes avec les substances enivrantes, particulièrement, lorsque les festivités se déroulent bien loin du foyer dans ces destinations attirant des milliers d'autres jeunes voyageurs. Afin de donner une idée de ces excès, je peux citer quelques chiffres provenant d'une de nos enquêtes sous forme de questionnaires de 2007, à Sunny Beach. L'enquête ciblait les Danois de 16 à 24 ans. Toute une série de questions fut posée aux jeunes juste avant leur retour au Danemark, et parmi les 1011 qui répondirent à nos questions, 41,3 % avaient bu 12 boissons ou plus par jour, durant 6 à 7 jours, 5,6 % avaient fait usage de substances illégales lors de leurs vacances, et 8,8 % avaient été impliqués dans des rixes (Tutenges et Hesse, 2008). Notez également l'extrait suivant, tiré d'une interview où deux jeunes femmes racontent leur nuit précédente :

Sébastien : Vous n'étiez pas bien en rentrant chez vous [hier] ?

Karen : [Rire] Mette souvent... dort par terre quand elle est vraiment saoule.

Mette : Non, c'est parce que j'étais sortie gerber ; et puis je ne me voyais pas retourner au lit, alors j'ai simplement pris mon duvet et mon oreiller... J'étais donc couchée dormant douillettement, c'est alors que cette satanée Karen est arrivée et s'est mise à dégueuler sur moi.

Sébastien : C'est vrai ?

Karen : Elle était allongée, la tête juste à côté de la cuvette... Manifestement, je me suis mise à gerber sur sa tête. Non, bon sang tu dois m'excuser. [Rire].

Les paroles de Karen et Mette illustrent, peu s'en faut, que décidément « faire la java » dans le monde nocturne n'est pas seulement réservé aux hommes. Par souci d'équilibre, écoutons aussi le récit de deux garçons sur leur nuit précédente :

Jens : [Henrik] se mordait un peu les doigts d'avoir fait chou blanc, et d'avoir été repoussé toute la soirée, c'est alors que soudain deux dames arrivèrent. Je lui dis alors : « Que penses-tu de ces deux dames là-bas ? » Il parla donc un peu avec elles, et tout d'un coup, ils sont partis.

Leo : Alors on est rentrés à l'hôtel, et pour finir, il a baisé avec elle là-bas, devant l'hôtel, dans un coin comme un terrain de football avec des balustrades.

Jens : Et puis, ils ont fini. Deux jeunes Danois étaient restés là-haut au balcon et avaient tout vu, aussi quand il se retourna, ils se levèrent et l'applaudirent. Alors...

Leo : ... Il a reçu une ovation debout, quand il est arrivé en short et en T-shirt, le pantalon noué autour de la tête, et ses belles chaussures aux pieds.

Les substances enivrantes déstabilisent les habitudes corporelles qui sont ancrées en nous et ouvrent la voie à un comportement inhabituel. Il est très rare au quotidien de voir les gens se lancer dans le sexe en plein air ou encore vomir ; mais durant la vie nocturne, il est possible d'observer ou de tester ce genre de choses. La célèbre formule de Rimbaud contient un peu de ce que cela comporte : « il s'agit d'arriver à l'inconnu par le dérèglement de tous les sens » (Rimbaud, 1999, p. 237). Quand les adolescents boivent abondamment ensemble avec un grand nombre de jeunes du même âge, loin du foyer familial, il arrive que les choses dépassent les bornes. Les gens perdent leur contrôle, et des événements imprévus se produisent – bons ou mauvais – devrais-je dire. En règle générale, il est question de perte de lucidité maîtrisée, ayant un dénouement amusant ; mais de nombreux accidents navrants se produisent aussi, agressions, viols, et décès dans les villes festives comme à Sunny Beach<sup>2</sup>.

2. Durant mes sept semaines de travail de terrain, à Sunny Beach en 2007, plusieurs décès se sont produits. Entre autres, un jeune Danois de 17 ans fut victime de l'alcool, alors qu'il était en tournée de bars avec une agence de tourisme danoise, et un jeune Suédois de 24 ans fut tabassé à mort par des videurs bulgares. En outre, nombre de touristes ont relaté des agressions violentes, des vols et des viols. Malheureusement, Sunny Beach est loin d'être sûre pour les jeunes touristes fêtards : la criminalité est élevée et les débits de boissons violent les règles de sécurité les plus élémentaires (voir Tutenges, à paraître).

## Morale

Nous descendons la promenade... Un rickshaw essaie de se frayer son chemin à travers un attroupement [de Danois], mais il est stoppé. Les gens le freinent des mains. Une fille saute dessus à plusieurs reprises, bien que le chauffeur en colère lui dise d'arrêter. Un autre rickshaw est simplement pris d'assaut. Cinq Danois s'assoient dedans. On est parti [pour le club Enzo]. Un grand panneau publicitaire est évidemment renversé. Un homme s'y penche lourdement dessus. Une palissade qui flanque la promenade subit évidemment quelques coups (Notes de terrain de Sébastien).

Les jeunes d'aujourd'hui ont hérité de nombreux noms péjoratifs tels que « generation no limit », « generation fucked up » ou « les jeunes sauvages ». Ces propos injurieux ne sont pas sans fondement car, lorsqu'ils se saoulent, les jeunes peuvent sans équivoque se comporter d'une façon sauvage et immorale. Les jeunes défoncés défient les conventions et se fichent de l'ordre établi, mais ce comportement provoquant ne doit pas être interprété comme une mauvaise volonté farouche contre l'ordre des choses établi. Les jeunes défoncés ne cherchent pas à changer le monde, ils veulent simplement s'amuser (voir Maffesoli, 1985). Ce thème se retrouve chez Jean-Paul Sartre dans son livre *Baudelaire* (1947). Sartre écrit que nous devrions faire la différence entre le « révolutionnaire » qui farouchement désire changer l'objet de sa révolte, et le « révolté » qui en réalité désire garder les choses telles qu'elles sont, ayant ainsi un sujet de révolte (1947, p. 58-59). À mes yeux, ces jeunes « fêtards » sont plus révoltés que révolutionnaires. Les excès nocturnes ne sont que pur amusement et désordre. Ils n'indiquent en rien une quête de renouveau et de jours meilleurs.

Jenks rappelle que la frontière morale et son dépassement sont réciproquement constitutifs (2003). L'attrait des limites suppose que l'on soit conscient d'une possibilité d'outrepasser ; et le dépassement n'est possible qu'en présence d'une limite. En outre, les limites ont pour habitude d'exciter notre curiosité. Elles nous attirent et nous poussent au dépassement ; et les transgressions sont souvent des actes intentionnels qui nous aident à voir l'étendue des limites et leur force (voir aussi Bataille). Le dépassement systématique de limites (secondaires) existant parmi les jeunes fêtards peut – vu sous cet angle – se traduire comme une exploration et une évaluation de la morale régnante durant les heures diurnes. La validité de la morale dominante est testée par le biais des transgressions, et les limites du bien sont souvent entaillées via ce culte du mal. Les transgressions ne devraient certes pas être considérées comme d'occasionnels enfantillages ou de stupides rébellions. Ce sont des actes réfléchis qui nient et confirment, qui tuent et régénèrent les normes et les règles avec lesquelles nous vivons en accord au quotidien.

L'immoralité des jeunes touristes défoncés est empreinte d'une certaine systématisation : sauvagerie, destruction, écart, démence et exagération sont valorisés d'une façon positive, tandis que retenue, moralité, normalité, équilibre mental et modération sont dépréciés. La morale d'aujourd'hui est retournée sens dessus dessous. On glorifie par exemple la façon de boire immodérée des gens, leur insolence,

quand ils s'affalent et quand ils gaspillent l'argent, le faisant couler à flots toute la nuit. Et l'on désapprouve les gens qui restent sobres, rentrent tôt chez eux, et gardent leur maîtrise. Il n'est aucunement question d'état anarchique chez les jeunes fêtards. Ils ne peuvent faire n'importe quoi. On attend d'eux qu'ils fassent les quatre cent coups. L'immoralité qui se déploie parmi les jeunes défoncés peut en apparence paraître superficielle et naïve, mais à y regarder de plus près, elle se révèle être plus rigoureuse et assez sophistiquée. Le chemin du vice est étroit !

Cependant, il est important de souligner que l'immoralité de la nuit n'est aucunement considérée comme une alternative sérieuse à la morale des heures diurnes. Quand on va au fond des choses, les jeunes défoncés sont contre le sérieux. Ils pratiquent une immoralité rigide afin de démontrer l'absurde d'un sérieux borné, un mode de vie dogmatique et une normalisation inflexible. À mes yeux, les jeunes défoncés ont une conception de la vie carnavalesque : ils parodient les vérités officielles, raillent « le sérieux unilatéral et toutes les prétentions à une signification et à une inconditionnalité située hors du temps » (Bakhtine, 1970, p. 58) et ils s'ingénient à « poser sur le monde un regard différent, non troublé par le point de vue "normal", c'est-à-dire par les idées et les appréciations communes » (Bakhtine, 1970, p. 48).

### Le temps

Comme énoncé, les jeunes d'aujourd'hui savent y faire pour adopter un comportement violent quand ils se saoulent, mais leur sauvagerie est rarement d'essence subversive. Elle n'a pas de caractère politique. La « défonce » n'est pas un « projet » (pro-jectum) dans le sens latin du terme, compris comme une activité qui est projetée dans un futur en souffrance, avec un but précis, une fin bien définie (Maffesoli, 2002, p. 64). La « défonce » n'a pas pour sujet l'amélioration de ce monde ni la création de quelque chose, qui puisse assurer le lendemain. Notez l'extrait d'interview suivant :

Sébastien : Peux-tu me parler de ta meilleure expérience ici [à Sunny Beach] ?

Katja : La meilleure expérience ? Je ne crois pas pouvoir citer comme ça une chose précise, mais je pense qu'hier fut vraiment l'occasion d'une bonne virée en ville... Les deux premiers endroits n'étaient pas aussi amusants, mais alors, les gens ont commencé à être plus festifs et plus gais, et puis on s'est un peu saoulés, histoire d'arrêter de cogiter si le présent était aussi amusant. On s'amuse quoi. On oublie un peu toutes ces pensées qui autrement tourbillonnent dans la tête ; et puis, on a parlé avec vraiment beaucoup de gens, et ils étaient vraiment fêtards et s'intéressaient aux autres et plaisantaient.

À mes yeux, l'expression de Maffesoli « éthique de l'instant » révèle le caractère temporel qui règne chez les jeunes défoncés. Sous ce terme, on entend une forme d'existence où l'instant présent constitue le centre. Le présent remplit tout l'horizon temporel et a, pour ainsi dire, réduit le passé et l'avenir à des futilités dont il est inutile de se soucier (2003, p. 105). L'accent est mis sur les potentiels de l'instant pré-

sent, les joies présentes sont savourées à fond et le temps appartenant à notre vie quotidienne au tracé rectiligne, est momentanément arrêté. En d'autres termes, on peut dire que les jeunes défoncés font preuve d'une certaine acceptation de l'état des choses. Ils n'essaient pas de changer le statu quo, mais s'offrent à cette vie dans laquelle ils furent un jour jetés (voir Maffesoli, 1985).

Les jeunes Danois sont en général très préoccupés de tester quantité de choses au moment présent. Ils s'imaginent qu'avec le temps, ils se poseront et peut-être même deviendront ennuyeux. Certains trouvent même pitoyable que des personnes « âgées » fassent la fête à fond, comme le racontent ces deux femmes dans une interview :

Karen : Je ne veux pas rester là comme une de celles-là de 42 ans à descendre des tequilas [dans une discothèque].

Mette : Non, non, non. C'est horrible aussi, tous ceux-là de 28 ans qui sont ici [à Sunny Beach].

Karen : Oui... Et puis si ça doit arriver, et bien autant que ça soit maintenant... Je n'ai pas envie d'être une de celles qui tout d'un coup se réveille en pensant « et merde qu'est-ce que j'ai fait de ma jeunesse ? »... Je veux vraiment faire le calme en moi quand j'atteindrai l'âge où l'on a tout essayé de ce qui doit être essayé.

Le scénario catastrophe est donc une vieillesse où l'on peut jeter un regard rétrospectif sur une vie sans écarts. Aussi, certains ont-ils décidé de se hâter « d'essayer tout ce qui doit être essayé ». Ils veulent embrasser le plus de gens possible, faire l'amour en pleine nature, essayer le triolisme, danser sur les tables, tester les stupéfiants, ou d'une certaine manière se distancer de la représentation de l'ordinaire. Leur sentiment est que la vie doit être vécue ici et maintenant, avant qu'il ne soit trop tard ; et la « défonce » justement peut aider à saisir l'instant présent et à se jeter dans la vie telle qu'elle se présente.

## Conclusion

Plusieurs chercheurs ont avancé que le développement de la nouvelle culture de la « défonce » devait être considéré en relation avec des changements à caractère social. Par exemple, Measham et Brain (2005) avancent que l'industrie de la vie nocturne a développé une série de stratégies de vente sophistiquées poussant les jeunes clients à dépenser plus d'argent et à boire plus, tout le temps. De nombreux bars et discothèques fonctionnent avec des offres constantes de bouteilles d'alcool entières, et dix « shots » de petits verres d'alcool fort. Ce sont des boissons à avaler d'un tournemain, qui altèrent la lucidité presque aussi efficacement que les plus forts des stupéfiants. Durant la vie nocturne, on peut ainsi s'offrir une perte de lucidité sous contrôle, de l'ordre de 0,5, et atteindre cette excitation qui fait défaut au quotidien. Qui plus est, Measham et Brain avancent que la jeunesse d'aujourd'hui vit dans un monde marqué par la fragmentation et l'individualisation ; il y a eu un affaiblissement des valeurs et des normes traditionnelles qui, auparavant, servaient à limiter la consommation excessive (2005, p. 275).

Au cœur de cette discussion importante concernant l'arrière-plan de cette nouvelle culture de la « défonce », il est important de rappeler une autre dimension essentielle de l'affaire : la « défonce » en elle-même. Si l'on veut comprendre son ampleur complexe et imperceptible, il faut employer d'autres méthodes que des questionnaires, et il est vital de ne pas se perdre en d'infinis développements sur les raisons du comportement des jeunes. La logique causale et l'utilitarisme peuvent facilement mener à des égarements dans l'étude de la « défonce ». Dans cet article, j'ai utilisé une approche phénoménologique et examiné la forme de socialité, de moralité, et de temporalité qui règne parmi les jeunes Danois défoncés. Évidemment, il n'est question que de descriptions caricaturales, qui devraient être approfondies et systématisées ; mais j'espère avoir donné un aperçu de la « défonce » en tant que phénomène riche et plein de signification. Voici ici quelques questions qui demandent une recherche plus approfondie : comment est vécue et concrétisée la « défonce » dans différentes communautés néo-tribales ? Comment l'espace physique influence-t-il l'expérience de la « défonce » ? Quel est l'effet expérimental de divers types de substances euphorisantes ? Et en général, la nouvelle culture de la « défonce » est-elle vraiment nouvelle, ou bien serait-elle le retour d'une forme de fête archaïque ?

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# Article II



# The wildest party monkeys

## The un-civilizing of youth at an international nightlife resort

### Abstract

Young people behave differently when they vacation at international nightlife resorts. Social mores relax, the use of alcohol increases, debauchery unfolds. Based on ethnographic fieldwork at the Bulgarian nightlife resort, Sunny Beach, this article focuses on guides and tourists from Denmark to examine the role the tourism industry plays in stirring up wild behavior among young tourists. Drawing on Norbert Elias' work on the civilizing process, the author argues that the holiday excesses should not be misinterpreted as spontaneous manifestations by inherently depraved youths who go wild simply because they are no longer restrained by school, work and family life. For contemporary youth to shed their habitual self-control requires effort and technique. The article suggests that guides use four basic techniques to help tourists go wild: body techniques, speech and sound effects, crowd effects, and alcohol.

### Introduction

Carina and Sabine have brought their own straws with them to Lloret de Mar [Spain]. The straws are shaped like penises, and theirs are colored white and pink. They bought them at a sex show in Odense [Denmark] along with penis ice-cube trays. The girls have brought them on tonight's Young Travelers pub crawl, and the straws stick up from under their gold-colored belt buckles as they enter their third bar of the night, Chaplin's. More than 200 kids are jumping around to a fast version of the 80's hit "Forever Young". A guide grabs the microphone and announces that two boys and two girls are needed for a competition. "Don't be shy," the guide calls when no one volunteers. Eventually, two girls are lured up on stage. The game requires a girl using her mouth to push a table tennis ball up through one of the boy's pant legs and then down and out the other side. The guide whispers in the boy's ear: "Pretend you like it." The young man then throws his arms in the air and claps to the music. The audience breaks into revelry when the girl's mouth touches his crotch. (The Danish newspaper *Politiken* 2007).

The scenario is familiar: young tourists at a nightlife resort acting in a noisy, naughty and at times self-destructive manner. Every year, the media in many western countries cringe at the binge drinking, drug use and sexual experimentation among a generation of youth who seemingly want to have fun regardless of the cost. Let me quote some headlines from the Danish press in the summer of 2007, all relating to the Bulgarian nightlife resort, Sunny Beach: ‘Danes are the international drinking champions,’ ‘On vacation at the gates of hell,’ ‘Persuading kids to drink themselves to death,’ ‘Home from Bulgarian drinking hell,’ ‘Drinking your brains out,’ ‘A kick in the ass for pissing,’ and ‘Drinking to death.’

Surveys from resorts such as Ibiza and Mallorca in Spain (Bellis *et al.* 2003; Bellis *et al.* 2004; Hughes *et al.* 2008) and Panama City Beach in the United States (Josiam *et al.* 1998) confirm that young tourists have penchant for risky behavior including increased unprotected sex, fighting, heavy drinking and drug use (see also Clark and Clift 1996; Elliott *et al.* 1998; Maticka-Tyndale, Herold and Mewhinney 1998). Recent surveys among Danish tourists in Sunny Beach indicate that their risk behavior consists primarily of heavy binge drinking. In the summer of 2007, 1,011 Danes with an average age of 19.9 years were questioned about their vacations just after leaving the resort: 41.3 per cent reported drinking 12 or more units of alcohol per day, 6 or 7 days per week; 5.6 per cent reported drug use, and 8.8 per cent reported that they had been involved in a fight (Tutenges & Hesse 2008). Most alcohol was consumed by tourists traveling with “party package agencies,” meaning agencies that offer a range of party activities during the week such as “pub crawls,” “sailing party cruises,” “karaoke nights,” and “foam parties”. In this group, 58.8 per cent reported consuming 12 or more units per day, 6 or 7 days per week (Hesse *et al.* 2008). The aftermath of the vacation seemed painful. A pilot study of 45 travelers indicated that, after returning home, 60 per cent of the men and 85 per cent of the women suffered from symptoms such as the common cold, stomach problems, headaches, and fever (Tutenges & Hesse 2009).

Such statistics support the work of Diken & Bagge Laustsen (2005), which describe nightlife resorts as liminal domains where civilized behavior is forgotten and debauchery unfolds. At resorts, respectable youth turn into ‘party animals’ who demand ‘unlimited enjoyment’ (2005: 115): ‘Having left the social origin, stripped of former identities, the tourist occupies, or fantasizes to

occupy, a sort of state of nature' (2005: 111). These references to animals and nature, savagery and wildness, are typical descriptions of tourists and especially nightlife tourists (Littlewood 2001). The Danish media have recently referred to nightlife tourists as 'party lions' (Ekstrabladet 2007) and the 'wildest party monkeys' (Århus Stiftstidende 2007).

However, the debauchery should not be interpreted as a spontaneous manifestation by inherently wild youths (Hayward & Hobbs 2007). Rather, the wild behavior results from a complex set of factors which, collectively, transport the tourists away from the restraints of everyday life and into festive states of abandon. The youth transition from structure to anti-structure (Turner 1997), from the Apollonian to the Dionysian (Maffesoli 1982). Bellis, Hughes and Lowey (2002: 1031) have listed some factors that may fuel the transition: alcohol and drugs purchased abroad may differ in strength from tourists' home countries; hotter climates enhance the risk of dehydration and disorientation; and individuals far from home are not held back by the constraints of family and duties which normally moderate their behavior. Another vital, but almost unexplored factor in vacation debauchery is the tourism industry. This article elucidates how the tourism industry helps tourists go wild focusing on Danish tourists and guides in Sunny Beach travelling with or working for agencies with at least one party event on their weekly program.

## **Methods**

The article is based on ethnographic fieldwork in Sunny Beach from June 19 to August 12, 2007. At the outset, I focused exclusively on Danish tourists, but I gradually became aware of the important role that guides play, and I began collecting systematic data on them as well. In the following section, I will explain the reasons for my methodological approach. I basically utilized three methods: interviews, observations and surveys. The results of the surveys are presented elsewhere (e.g. Tutenges and Hesse 2008).

### *Informal and formal interviews*

Presence in nightlife environments is key to understanding the lived experience of the participants and organizers of nightlife events (Measham & More 2006). Time and proximity are important. That is why I spent the entire peak season in Sunny Beach, close to an area where the Danish tourists stay and party. This

setting afforded me many days and nights of convivial gathering with tourists, guides and bartenders. The conversations often focused on the ongoing festivities, and this kind of open, informal dialogue proved fruitful when studying intangible phenomena such as the experience of music and intoxication. One disadvantage of using informal dialogue, on the other hand, is the difficulty of recalling exact wording and long statements. For that reason, I conducted tape-recorded interviews with one to six people at a time. In all, I conducted 27 tape-recorded interviews with a total of 63 people, 9 of whom were guides.

### *Field observations*

Participant observation is an important method in ethnography. In the study of parties, for instance, one gains valuable insight through unreserved participation at the festivities. However, this kind of participation is also steeped in ethical and practical problems (Measham and Moore 2006). In my case, seven weeks of partying, Sunny Beach style, would probably leave a dubious impression on my informants and leave me bedridden. Therefore, I generally refrained from actively participating fully in the day- and nightlife of Sunny Beach. I did not use drugs or get drunk, and I barely danced. I did, however, observe others, and this is also an effective way to generate data. Merely hearing, seeing, touching and smelling other people offers a good impression of them and of their state of being (Jackson 1989). Even though I remained sober, I was able to facilitate contact with the young partygoers. The workers in the nightlife and tourism industries were also very accommodating. On days and nights out, I scribbled my observations on paper, while sitting at a bar table or on the beach, for instance, and upon returning home, I completed and typed the notes on my computer.

An array of tragic events in Sunny Beach in 2007 caused a veritable media storm in Scandinavia. This storm gathered when a 17-year-old Danish man died from excessive drinking during a pub crawl with a Danish travel agency on July 12. Two more tourists died shortly thereafter, and numerous youth fell victim to robbery, rape and assault. Harassed journalists invaded Sunny Beach with their flapping notebooks, blitzing cameras and video recorders. All of this affected how the Danish guides acted, and consequently, the data that I collected. Consider the following field notes that I took after the first death:

Down by the [Jump Bar]. Talking first with the ... guide. Apparently she was standing right next to the dead guy when he fell over. "Even if there had been 10 doctors standing over him immediately, they wouldn't have been able to do anything." She believes that [the travel agency] has been cleared by the autopsy report, which shows that the boy swallowed his own vomit, creating a sort of vacuum, and that his heart stopped on the spot. He was dead before he hit the ground. She speaks in a subdued voice and is clearly affected. Poor girl. She explains that they have eliminated the "mega pub crawl" in favor of a karaoke evening and a pool party at the discotheque. Their general practice has changed.

For approximately a week, a depressed atmosphere hung over the Danes in Sunny Beach. Especially the guides seemed affected, and some had to see a psychologist. Moreover, the extensive media coverage forced some travel agencies to order their guides to avoid explicitly encouraging heavy drinking. This allowed me to observe a few parties where guides successfully stirred up wild behavior without encouraging tourists to drink alcohol.

### **The return of Dionysus**

In "The Civilizing Process," Elias traces how "the behavior and affective life of Western peoples slowly changed after the Middle Ages" (1939/2000:X). Refined manners emerged in the courts of the feudal lords and absolutist rulers and gradually spread to the rest of society. Strong emotions were withdrawn from public view, bodily fluids hidden, and sexual impulses repressed. People began suppressing in them everything that they felt to be of an "animalic character". Elias argues that the restraint 'is enforced less and less by direct physical force. It is cultivated in individuals from an early age as habitual self-restraint by the structure of social life, by the pressure of social institutions in general, and by certain executive organs of society (above all, the family).' (1939/2000:158). The self-restraints become 'an automatism, a self-compulsion' that the individual 'cannot resist even if he or she consciously wishes to' (1939/2000:367). Moreover, the restraints operate, to some degree, when a person is alone (1939/2000:117).

A number of sociologists, including Elias, have observed a recent relaxation in the habits of self-control (Elias 1939/2000; Elias & Dunning 1986; Maffesoli 1982; Jenks 2002). During the past decades, strong affects have been allowed

back into the public sphere, the dress code has grown more daring, speech more discourteous, sexuality more released, and the culture of intoxication more orgiastic. Maffesoli thus claims that the historical pendulum is moving away from the reign of rationality and restraint and towards times of irrationality and turbulence. He writes: "Dionysus, the god of a 'hundred faces', the god of versatility, of play, of the tragic and the loss of the self, casts his shadow over our societies. It is no longer the presence of a celestial Apollo, luminous and rational, who prevails, but rather that of the more earthly figure, in whom obscurity and ambivalence have their place" (1996: 61). According to Maffesoli, Western youth in particular have a strong penchant for the wild life represented, for instance, by music icons like Eminem and Marilyn Manson (Maffesoli 2008).

Correspondingly, it is my conclusion that many young tourists in Sunny Beach deliberately and intentionally seek to escape from the learned habits of self-control. They want to "get wild" or, to use other expressions from their own vocabulary, "live it up," "run amok," "go crazy," and "give it their all." As we shall see, the guides play an important role in the tourists' quest for these moments of release.

### **The guides and their functions**

As mentioned, this article focuses on Danish guides in Sunny Beach who work for travel agencies with at least one party on their weekly schedule. These guides come from various social backgrounds, but they share a few important traits: they tend to be physically attractive, trendy, around 18 to 25 years old ... and they love to party. A man who has worked with Danish guides for many years told me with a twinkle in his eye: "I mean, many of the guides are alcoholics! Once they return home they lose their voices and get sick. They feel terrible". The reference to alcoholism is an exaggeration, but there is little doubt that workers at international nightlife resorts such as Ibiza and Sunny Beach tend to consume a high amount of intoxicants, also while working (Hughes, Bellis and Chaudry 2004).

The guides, many of whom were once nightlife tourists themselves, have attended courses where they were taught basic guide skills such as meeting guests at the airport, bringing them to hotel rooms, shepherding party crowds through town, organizing drinking games, and performing comic dances and



songs. Some guides have also received first-aid training. In an interview, a guide summed up the characteristics of what makes a good guide:

It's the festive social climber. A person ... who makes sure that all tasks are done before going out and making trouble. Some think that you can do the job without using your brain, but [being a guide] is a highly responsible task involving a multitude of roles and situations in a constant flux. You have to be a parent, a best friend, a teacher, a psychologist, and a medic – all at the same time.

In other words, guides are both supposed to be serious and festive, steady and unruly. Their job is hard work, and working 70 hours in a week is not unusual. The following field notes from a “foam party” illustrate some of the challenges that guides face:

I'm sitting on the bench together with two ... guides. The blonde one has the night shift but she's already tired. As usual, she hasn't slept much. Today her night shift will last from around 6:30 p.m. to 6 a.m. She probably worked earlier today as well. A really tough gig, she complains ... A male guide arrives and begins talking with us. He has a vodka-Red Bull drink in his glass and is dressed in a dry t-shirt. Two guests come and grab hold of him. He gets dragged over to the pool and thrown in, even though he tries to resist. He lands at the low end of the pool, near the stairs that lead into the water. It looks dangerous. He's completely surprised and falls awkwardly. He gets up and holds his head, waddling up the stairs and yelling that he hit the stairs. The two others approach him, and the guide catches one of them. The scene was just for fun. (ST's field notes July 23, 2007)

The guides are supposed to entertain almost non-stop from midday until early the following morning. This became particularly clear to me during a week when a team of guides disappointed their tourists by remaining calm and reserved. On one night out, for instance, a woman complained to me that the guides had bored her from day one. On the 30-minute bus ride from the airport to Sunny Beach, the guides had not sung any songs or shouted “let's drink!” even once, she lamented. Their only comment had been: “Now we are in Sunny Beach.” In an interview, another woman complained about the same guides:

Woman: They're supposed to make sure that people are in a good mood, and stay on us. They're supposed to kick things off and yell 'cheers' and make us

do the same. But they're not doing it this year, not at all. These are the worst guides I have ever seen. They just walk around and do nothing. These guides have no training whatsoever and don't know the place at all.

ST: Why is it so important for them to lead the party?

Woman: Because that's what they are here for. That's why we pay them. They're supposed to make sure that people have a great time. I mean, if they're only interested in practical things, then I don't think they should be guides.

During another interview, a man echoed these thoughts by emphasizing that guides should be festive and help others become festive as well:

ST: What did the guides do [last year] that was so special?

Man: They went totally crazy, just didn't give a damn. We had one last year, named [Adam] ... He ... just went crazy: painted himself and yelled and was really fun and just didn't care what he looked like. He actually appeared on the front page [of a Danish newspaper] when we came home because he had sold Viagra to the guests. He didn't sell any to us. But he just didn't care and he showed so much energy. ... [He] stripped off his clothes up at the bar all the time; showed people the path they could follow and act just as dumb as he was. He was totally full of energy.

ST: And what was so fun about that? Another dumb question.

Man: It's just that he shows that there are no limits for what one can do down here; how dumb you can act. Just be as crazy as you want and totally ignore what people think about you. And it worked. People really let down their guard when they see a guide stand up there and do that. If you have guides who take the lead, then that's the way it is. They are the ones who have to kick off the party.

As Maffesoli points out (2003:93), the productive and rational subject, homo faber, is often celebrated as the very foundation of Western civilization. In Sunny Beach, however, other ideals prevail. From the tourists' perspective guides should be able to handle practicalities and emergencies. At times, sober-mindedness is needed. However, it is also important that the guides are able to let go of themselves and, in the words of one woman, 'act raving mad' and 'game for anything'. Especially at the beginning of parties, it's vital to have wild guides who can lead the way toward crazy, enjoyable debauchery.

## **The un-civilizing of youth**

The guides in Sunny Beach utilize various techniques to help tourists loosen their bonds of self-control. In my interpretation, four basic techniques stand out as the most important ones: body techniques, speech and sound effects, crowd effects, and alcohol. These techniques are generally used simultaneously, but for the sake of convenience I will examine them one at a time.

### *The use of body techniques*

Mauss writes (1979) that certain “body techniques” – meaning set patterns of bodily movement – can lead to “mystical states.” As an example, he mentions the mind-altering potentials of yogic respiration exercises. Another example from the contemporary music scene is the “headbanging” of rock enthusiasts, which involves forcefully shaking the head forward and back, in time with music. Such body techniques may induce new experiences and new states of mind (Jackson 1989: 129).

The guides in Sunny Beach employ various body techniques that modify the tourists’ habitual state of being. They call people out on the dance floor, make them dance together, jump, clap their hands, raise their arms and so on. During an interview, a guide commented about these physical movements:

People need to be encouraged, right? [We get them] to dance around and do the same dances and things together. They have to concentrate on initiating something. It’s really simple. These are things kids do in kindergarten. Things like “let’s touch our knees,” “touch our shoulders,” “touch our feet.” Stuff like that. And they do it all together. It’s really fun when 600 people are doing the same thing at once.

Such simple and almost infantile exercises hardly provoke “mystical states,” but they help people to loosen up. Deep conversations become difficult and instead people are prompted to interact physically. Bodies come close. Also, the silly-looking movements serve as an icebreaker; they are an antidote to reserved attitudes. It is hard to remain serious when surrounded by 600 adults moving like children at their first gym class. At times, the guides instruct the tourists to move in more demanding ways. Note, for instance, the following field notes about a “Beach Party,” which took place in the daytime:

The beer relay race begins after dinner. Three teams are formed, and each participant is supposed to run 15 meters to a waiting guide who holds a large draft beer. The participant must down the beer, run five times around the guide, roll forward, run back and give way to the next in line. Everyone must take two turns, and drink two beers. The participants are overwhelmingly male. The guide says into the microphone: "Now we're gonna play a game we learned in Spain. We're gonna dig holes, so grab a shovel." He laughs into the microphone. There are four teams, each with three players. They are told to dig for 10 minutes. The guide with the microphone tells those not participating to come close and cheer. Some of the other guides encourage others nearby to "come watch, this is cool as hell." The diggers are given small shovels, and they really get to work. Some discuss tactics while digging. Others just give it their all. A female guide runs up to the bar: 'Beer, beer, lots of beer.' She walks around with a tray and serves the diggers, who are laboring under the relentless sun.

As these notes indicate, the guides prefer activities that increase the heart rate instead of using ascetic body techniques such as silent meditation or seclusion. The tourists are instructed to move and shout, to wiggle and roar. "The sweat has to flow" as one guide often expressed. Moreover, many of the activities require a strain of "degradation" in Bakhtins' sense of the term, meaning "the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity" (1984:19-20). For instance, the drinking competitions are often performed with such fervor that the alcohol seeps down the participants. People are smeared in sand, and worse, when they attempt somersaults, fall to the ground or dig holes in the beach. These field notes from a "pub crawl" speak for themselves:

When we are about to leave, the guide tells us to stand in line. We are supposed to reach one of our arms through our legs and lock hands with the person behind us, so that we're all standing together, with our arms more or less in each other's laps. We get to know each other well during these group games! The guy in front of me smiles and tells me that he's in a great spot. His partner in front of him is a woman wearing a miniskirt and his head is only a few centimeters from her ass and his arm is between her legs. I suggest to the guy that if I pull my arm as hard as I can, he will do a somersault. He declines the offer. Then we begin to walk. We move away from [the bar] and out onto the crowded beach promenade.

Needless to add, this kind of activity can embarrass the participants. It is important to note, however, that the degradation is collective. People make fools of themselves together by waddling along in a human chain like the one described above, or by doing “nasty body tequilas” where people in twos lick salt from each others feet or buttocks and then down a shot of tequila and suck on a piece of lemon. The tourists laugh not only at others, but also at themselves.

The guides also deliberately put themselves in awkward situations when they perform strip shows, participate in drinking contests, or dress in Tyrolese costumes. In doing so, they overturn the normal standards of orderly conduct. They show with their bodies that wildness is appreciated, thereby helping others win their inner struggle against self-censorship.

### *The use of speech and sound effects*

The guides also make use of verbal instructions in order to lead the tourists toward wildness. They arrange welcome meetings for newcomers during which they explain practicalities and urge the youth to live it up. A guide explained the following in an interview:

We tell them at our meeting to just let go. They should do whatever they want. It's their free choice because they've paid for their vacation. Down here there are no rules. So they should take advantage of that. For many of them it's super rebellious to stand on the bar and dance, right? But they can do that here. And people are remarkably indifferent — those that work here. The feeling here is contagious. 'Holy shit, man, I can do everything here that I'm not allowed to [back at home]. Everything that I've thought would be so much fun. Suddenly I can do it.' And they do it. They're really good at living it up.

Moreover, the guides make sure to instruct the travelers that, “what happens in Sunny Beach, stays in Sunny Beach.” This motto is repeated again and again, adding to the image of Sunny Beach as a place of exception, protected from all the frowning faces back home. ‘Hell is other people,’ writes Sartre in a famous passage in which he illustrates that all self-judgment is based on means given to us by others. Whatever we think or feel about ourselves is fashioned by the gaze of others; those piercing eyes sometimes filling us with shame and guilt. According to the guides, however, things are different in Sunny Beach. The

resort is allegedly free from evil-minded others who would condemn the debauchery and spill the beans back home. If tourists have sex with repulsive persons or cheat on their sweethearts, no one will know. So there's no need to hold back! There is nothing hellish about the others in Sunny Beach. They are all co-conspirators who know all too well that shame and guilt are the ultimate party killers. In Sunny, misdeeds remain hush-hush. This assertion may, of course, seem naïve given that many tourists, guides and journalists eternalize the vacation excesses in writing, photographs and video recordings. Just look up 'Sunny Beach' on the Internet, or check out the Scandinavian press from 2007 to 2009. What happens in Sunny Beach certainly does not stay in Sunny Beach, but this is, in a sense, irrelevant. The guides and tourists lull each other into the illusion that they are safe from the moralism of people back home. They help each other overcome the fear of condemnation in order to better indulge in the joys of wildness.

The expression "whipping it up" aptly captures the guides' role when they, with whistle or microphone in hand, call people to attention and instruct them to jump, drink, dance, sing and so on. The decibel level is often excruciating, and there's a reason for that. Loud noise has an enervating effect. It builds up inner tension that almost requires a bodily reaction in the form of whistling, shouting, movement or an enervated "shut up!" The agitation spreads quickly in a festive crowd, and the streets and venues in Sunny Beach are often densely packed with partygoers yelling at the tops of their voices. The effect is powerful, especially for those who wish to be carried away.

Selected guides and DJs make sure that all the party activities have a soundtrack. The choice is often music with cheerful lyrics that inspire movement, excitement and abandonment. The bass tends to be heavy and persistent, not unlike the monotonous drumming used in many shamanistic rituals (Johnston 1977:225). This music makes you move. The partygoers are removed from the composure and moderation of everyday life and transported into more unrestrained festive states. In an interview, a guide referred to the right mix of music and lyrics at parties as an "art form." When addressing crowds of partygoers, he explained that, first you need to turn down the music in order to get a hearing. Then you need to call for attention and speak in simple language and at a pitch that indicates the importance of what you want to say. He continued:

You should know what you want to say before you begin talking. Then people will listen. You need to control people ... You should talk in a consistent tone of voice, and they'll listen. And then talk in a relatively quiet tempo after that. Firm and determined. You don't need to yell and scream. You should be clear and precise.

These words are reminiscent of Canetti's description of how to spellbind crowds. He writes: "The art of a speaker consists in compressing all his aims into slogans. By hammering them home he then engenders a crowd and helps to keep it in existence. He creates the crowd and keeps it alive by a comprehensive command from above" (1987: 360). As I hinted earlier, the young tourists are in favor of receiving commands. They want the guides to lead the way and tell them what they should do as a group. Le Bon exaggerates, as is his custom, when writing that, "A crowd is a servile flock that is incapable of ever doing without a master" (1895/1960: 118). Naturally, the tourists know how to have a good time in Sunny Beach and how to party on their own, but it certainly helps the party atmosphere when competent guides lead the way toward wildness.

### *The use of crowd effects*

"The very fact of assembling is an exceptionally powerful stimulant," writes Durkheim (1912/2001: 162), hereby summing up a notion that was widespread among French social thinkers in the last decades of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see, for instance, Le Bon 1895/1960; Tarde 1890/1968). The notion certainly seems convincing when considering the strong emotions that are drummed up when party tourists gather in crowds on the beach, on the streets or in bars and discotheques. It does seem, as Durkheim expresses, as if the proximity of people in large numbers "generates a kind of electricity that quickly transports them to an extraordinary degree of exaltation" (1912/2001: 162).

It could be argued, however, that Durkheim and most of the other early crowd theorists have a tendency to overestimate the crowds' transformational force. Many of us have trouble escaping the torments of self-control (see Elias 1939/2000: 105, 109, 117, 160, 367). An overcrowded stadium or a crammed concert hall does not necessarily make people lose themselves. However, if such crowds are subjected to loud music, stimulating words, copious amounts

of alcohol, and if it all takes place in a foreign setting and in the company of skilled guides, then the effect may be overwhelming. “In the end,” as Canetti puts it, “there appears to be a single creature dancing, a creature with fifty heads and a hundred legs and arms, all acting in exactly the same way and with the same purpose. When their excitement is at its height, these people really feel as one, and nothing but physical exhaustion can stop them” (1987: 35-6).

The guides purposively make use of these crowd effects. They assemble people in big flocks, make them move to the same beat and yell the same thing. The tourists come to act in a coordinated manner. The individual can experience this collective attuning as both liberating and empowering. For instance, when the guides instruct the crowd to shout silly cries, then all the participants can, under the cover of each other, create an outcry of imminent idiocy which is even more fun if witnessed by non-participating and, preferably, sober bystanders. In a crowd, individuals can act like fools without being held responsible. Consider these field notes from a pub crawl:

We follow the two [guides], one of which has a megaphone. Then they make everyone stop. They chant, ‘Here [the Danes] rule.’ The flock of people begins to chant along. Our presence is loud and powerful, and one is really left with the impression that we are the ones in charge. The others are just observers. We are the active ones, the partiers, the ones in control. Even I – a sober researcher – feels nearly overcome by the strong emotions. We walk 20 meters more, and once again the guides unite us. We sing the same song. They guide us towards the right kind of boisterous and roaring mood.

Indeed, crowds seem to enjoy noise. Crowds want to draw attention to themselves and occupy as much space as possible (Canetti 1987). The crowd of tourists intentionally makes a show of their wildness, and they obviously take pleasure in doing things that they would never do in the mundanity of their home. At times the wildness degenerates into explicit displays of force, for instance, when hundreds of young tourists decide to sit down on an esplanade, blocking all traffic, or when crowd factions tug at road signs, knock down fences, break beer glasses, pull up plants, move heavy objects or hurl abuse at passers-by. Amidst a swarm of others, the individual can behave in manners unheard-of under normal circumstances. Festive crowds allow for



experimentation and systematic boundary crossing (Durkheim 1912/2001: 283-5).

Perhaps I should add that I have rarely seen nightlife tourists doing anything that I consider truly evil. I therefore find it hard to recognize many of the early crowd theorists' portrayals of the crowd as an erratic and bloodthirsty monster (see, for instance, Le Bon 1895/1960; Tarde 1890/1972). When party tourists are assembled in large groups, they most certainly manifest a penchant for destruction, but this destructiveness is rarely directed at other people or expensive objects. The wildness is playful rather than subversive or hateful. And the guides assist in channeling the wildness in this direction: they encourage binge drinking and promiscuity, but they oppose violence and vandalism.

### *The use of alcohol*

When it comes to alcohol, Elias and Dunning write that, "A glass or two enables people to loosen relatively quickly the often rather deeply ingrained armor of restraints and thus to open themselves to the mutuality of playful arousal" (1986: 123). Alcohol also enables the Danish tourists to indulge in "playful arousal," but more than this: many of them drink much more than a glass or two and they do this in the pursuit of what Measham and Brain call "determined drunkenness" (2005: 273). The "armor of restraints" is almost torn off by all the liquor, and the tourists thus expose themselves to the adventures of rule breaking and loss of self (see Maffesoli 1982).

The guides help set the standards through their own drinking, which is frequent and copious. They often yell "cheers," give out free drinks, introduce drinking rules that promote heavy drinking, and organize games and competitions that focus on drinking. Also, the guides put pressure on moderate drinkers. In my capacity as a sober researcher, I was often told to let loose and drink more. Here are two examples from my field notes:

A guide walks by and smiles at me. 'You're holding on to your Coca-Cola again?' she says.

I sit away from the crowd in my usual spot on my chair and take notes. First a guide approaches me ... The guide says to me: 'There isn't so much to report

this evening, so maybe tonight is the night that you should drink yourself under the table with us’.

As these examples indicate, the encouragements to drink usually unfold in a friendly tone. The intentions are good. To go on a binge together is a sign of esteem in Denmark (Elmeland 1996), and to refuse a binge invitation can easily be taken amiss unless one has a good excuse such as ‘I am sick’ or ‘I am a researcher.’ However, the young tourists rarely have a viable excuse to offer so they are often encouraged to drink more than they had intended. Consider this comment, for instance:

[The guides] concentrate their efforts on pressuring one to drink. One can’t hold back. We’ve also had a couple of evenings where we say “OK, tonight we’re not gonna get too drunk.” It’s just not good when you’re pressured to do it. Also, you meet new people here, and you don’t want to come across as weak. You’ve just got to roll with it.

For this man and young Danes in general, people who do not drink tend to be regarded as weak and immature (Demant and Järvinen 2006; Balvig, Holmberg, and Sørensen 2005). The guides take advantage of this. They tease moderate drinkers. The tourists themselves also put pressure on each other, using the exact same strategies as the guides: they often say “cheers” and force others to lift their glasses; they buy rounds, and they single out restrained drinkers. All of this helps generate states of collective wildness, which are valued so highly by the young tourists.

As mentioned earlier, the guides introduce the tourists to drinking games. One of these is the popular “Buffalo rule” named after the famous cowboy “Buffalo Bill” who allegedly always drank with his left hand so he could keep his quick right hand ready to grab his gun. Buffalo once drank with the wrong hand and he was immediately shot dead — hence the importance of always drinking with the left hand. Tourists as well as guides who are caught drinking with their right hand have to empty their glass. Offenders are quickly surrounded by a pack of people who unremittingly yell ‘Buffalo-Buffalo-Buffalo’ until the glass is empty. This rule becomes increasingly complicated over the course of the nights out and yells of ‘Buffalo’ often resound when Danish tourists are around. Initially, the guides introduce and enforce the rule,

and then the tourists gradually take over and happily cry out whenever they see a right-handed drinker. Here is an example from my field notes that illustrates the entertainment value and effectiveness of the Buffalo rule. The young tourist in question is already drunk when another tourist suddenly puts a megaphone to his face and chants the popular theme:

[Brian] stands there with a beer in his right hand. 'Buffalo-Buffalo' yells out of the megaphone. He downs the half-liter of beer and suddenly looks sick in the face. He becomes dizzy and holds onto the railing. He pauses for a second and then hangs his head as if he's about to puke. But the megaphone cheers, 'well done, yeah.' The dizzy guy gets a friendly tap on the head. Two guides are watching, and they whistle and hoot and applaud the drinking. The ironic part is that [Brian] didn't even need to drink the glass. He just stood there with his beer [in the right hand] but didn't drink any of it. But how are you supposed to argue with a megaphone?

## **Conclusion**

Vacations at international nightlife resorts form an important and valued element in the lives of youth in many countries. Resorts are located throughout the globe in places such as Sunny Beach in Bulgaria, Ibiza in Spain, Alanya in Turkey, Goa in India, Had Rin in Thailand and Cancun in Mexico. All kinds of risky behavior have been associated with these tourist destinations including immoderate drinking, drug use, fighting, and unprotected sex (Tutenges and Hesse 2008). This dubious reputation does not scare away young tourist, perhaps quite to the contrary. However, the vacation debauchery should not be interpreted as spontaneous outbursts among inherently depraved youths who go wild simply because they are no longer restrained by school, work and family life. As Elias (1939/2000) has shown, contemporary youth are trained, from their early childhood, in the vigilant self-control that they need to function as adults, and as they grow up it becomes increasingly difficult for them to give free rein to impulses and emotions. Even in these permissive postmodern times, average adolescents and adults still require some effort and technique to go wild.

This is where the tourism industry comes into play, offering trips to foreign nightlife resorts in the company of guides who are able to pump it up, night after night at a frenzied pace. The trips are guided tours into states of hedonistic

release, akin to those ‘happy meals’ offered at McDonalds: rationalized, ready-to-go opportunities for unhealthy gluttony (Ritzer 1996). Such organized excess is obviously tempting for a generation of Danes who, like their British peers, have ‘a new willingness to experiment with and experience altered states of intoxication as part of a leisure “time out”’ (Measham & Brain 2005; see also Østergaard 2007). Youth have a recurrent and irrepressible urge to ‘go wild’, and this urge is big business for the nightlife industry as well as the tourism industry. Hence, a number of travel agencies are guilty of what Hayward and Hobbs refer to as “corporate manipulation of youthful liminal drives” (2007: 447). The agencies comply with, promote and capitalize on young peoples’ desires to momentarily suspend the torments of self-control and get a taste of wild life.

A host of scholars have shown that contemporary nightlife environments such as Sunny Beach are subject to intricate regulation by commercial forces: be it drink promotions, venue decoration, bartender uniforms or the attitude of bouncers, everything is carefully staged in order to maximize profits (Hobbs *et al.* 2000). One may or may not like this commercialization, but in any case it is important to recognize that such nightlife environments may give rise to genuine, full-flavored fun. All the regulation and money-making does not preclude moments of ‘authentic’ release. Thus, in contrast to Presdee’s claim that the “packaged carnival never tastes as sweet” (2000:54), my data from Sunny Beach suggests that young people like the packaged debauchery that they buy from travel agencies (Tutenges & Hesse 2010). These young consumers do not mind that their excesses are fuelled and exploited by corporations. What matters to them is to ‘let loose’ at a reasonable price.

Much in the spirit of Maffesoli (1982), I have tried in this article to steer clear from the heated debate that surrounds nightlife tourism. My intention has neither been to condemn nor defend the tourism industry, but rather to give a detailed account of how guides stir up wild behavior in tourists. I have argued that the Danish guides in Sunny Beach use four basic techniques: body techniques, speech and sound effects, crowd effects, and alcohol. Each of these techniques are potent per se, and the combination of them can quickly bring people into states of great fun.

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# Article III



# Estatic Crowds

## A case study of pub crawls at an international nightlife resort

### Abstract

This article contributes to a growing body of research which is seeking to revitalize the classical crowd theory. Drawing on the works of Gabriel Tarde, Gustave Le Bon, Émile Durkheim and Elias Canetti, the article highlights four notions that played a key role in the early debates on crowds: suggestion, the leaders of crowds, group mind, and the urge for destruction. The analytical strength of these notions are examined in a case study of pub crawls which took place in the summers of 2007 and 2008 at an international nightlife resort in Bulgaria. The author and a team of research assistants attended 14 pub crawls and made 45 qualitative interviews with young tourists and guides. The article concludes that there are elements in the classical crowd theory which can be used to advance the current research not only on parties, but also on other forms of collective behavior.

**Key words:** Alcohol, crowd theory, nightlife, tourism, youth.

The theoretical debates about crowd behaviour that swept across Europe in the last decades of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have recently been revisited in studies of politics and the media (see, for instance, Sloterdijk, 2000; Plotz, 2000; Laclau, 2005; Mouffe, 2005). Particularly the classical crowd theories of Gabriel Tarde, Gustave Le Bon, Sigmund Freud, and the more recent Elias Canetti, have gained prominence (Borch, 2008: 64).

This case study of pub crawls revisits the crowd theories of Tarde, Le Bon, Émile Durkheim and Canetti. The aim is to reintroduce a set of notions which dominated the early European debates about crowds and to explore the prospects of applying them in the study of contemporary youth and nightlife. The focus is on pub crawls organized by Danish travel agencies that took place in the summers of 2007 and 2008 at the Bulgarian nightlife resort, Sunny Beach. The author of this article and four research assistants attended a total of 14 pub crawls, all of which progressed according to the same basic pattern:

early in the evening the participants would meet up with guides at a designated location; the guides then walked the participants through town and stopped for 30 to 60 minutes at around four different bars or nightclubs, in which people could consume drinks, dance, sing and eventually participate in games and competitions; finally, the participants were lead into a big nightclub where the party continued with other partygoers. The number of pub crawl participants varied from around 20 to 600 persons who, for the most part, were young people from Denmark.

Sunny Beach is located on the Black Sea and attracts many tourists, particularly from northern Europe. There are almost no Bulgarian inhabitants in the area, everything is geared for tourists: the resort features a long beach strip full of deck chairs; vendors flank the esplanade offering everything from rubber toys to electro-guns, and the downtown is densely packed with restaurants, bars, discotheques, strip clubs and brothels. According to a survey conducted in the summer of 2007, young Danish holidaymakers at the resort have a penchant for risk behaviour. 1,011 Danes, with an average age of 19.9 years, were questioned about their vacations just before leaving the resort to return home: 41.3 per cent reported drinking 12 or more units of alcohol per day, 6 or 7 days per week; 5.6 per cent reported drug use, and 8.8 per cent reported that they had been involved in a fight (Tutenges and Hesse 2008). Surveys conducted at other nightlife resorts such as Ibiza in Spain (Bellis *et al.*, 2003; Bellis *et al.*, 2004) and Panama City Beach in the United States (Josiam *et al.*, 1998) also indicate a high degree of risky behavior in young tourists including increased unprotected sex, fighting, and excessive use of alcohol and drugs (see also Elliott *et al.*, 1998; Maticka-Tyndale, Herold and Mewhinney, 1998; Hughes *et al.*, 2008). Indeed, as Bellis and his colleagues (2002) point out, there is an urgent need to further examine the risk behavior at nightlife resorts and to develop evidence-based interventions that can protect the health of young holidaymakers. This task is particularly important at emerging nightlife resorts such as Sunny Beach, which have limited experience in managing young partygoers from other countries whose alcohol and drug cultures are far removed from the native youth.

Even so, as Maffesoli argues, when the sense of urgency is strongest it is often wise to slow down and look for alternative approaches and understandings for a given problem (2005: 11). Accordingly, the aim of this

paper is not to elucidate health risks or to arrive at preventive measures. Rather, the objective is to move beyond conventional thinking about contemporary youth and nightlife culture by drawing on a set of unconventional theories written by Tarde, Le Bon, Durkheim and Canetti.

## **European crowd theory**

“Crowds are somewhat like the sphinx of ancient fable; it is necessary to arrive at a solution of the problems offered by their psychology or to resign ourselves to being devoured by them” (2001: 59). These words are written by the most famous of the crowd theorists, Le Bon, in a period of French history marked by strikes, violent demonstrations and the first phase of the Dreyfus affair (Barrows, 1981: 2). In those years, at the end of the nineteenth century, the multitudes that thronged the streets were increasingly perceived as a threat, and a host of intellectuals tried to decipher their nature and find remedies to control them. The early crowd theorists include such diverse thinkers as Hippolyte Taine, Alfred Espinas, Scipio Sighele, Henry Fournial, Tarde and Le Bon; all of them aspired for scientific explanations and portrayed crowds as fundamentally “violent, bestial, insane, capricious beings whose comportment resembled that of the mentally ill, women, alcoholics, or savages” (Barrows, 1981:5). There were exceptions to this negative interpretation. Tarde, for instance, praises what he calls “love crowds” who unite in order to unite, not out of hate, but out of love and conviviality (2007: 42). In fact, Tarde claims that the edifying power of love crowds is far greater than the subversive impact of hate crowds (2007: 43), but nevertheless he and the other early crowd theorists almost exclusively focus on crowd destruction and madness.

Le Bon and Tarde stand out among the early crowd theorists for several reasons: their influence was, and still is, immense (Moscovisci, 1981: 73; Latour, 2005), their coupling of captivating descriptions with scientific rigour is innovative and highly quotable, and their texts summarize the main findings that were written by crowd theorists at the turn of the twentieth century (Borch 2006). In short, the crowd theories of Le Bon and Tarde can be boiled down to four notions. First, the crowd is believed to destabilize its members through a process of suggestion and make them do things that they would never do on their own. Second, the crowd is allegedly controlled and manipulated by one or several leaders. Third, the crowd is conceived as a distinct organism with a

common group mind. Fourth, the crowd is portrayed as a destructive being that is morally and intellectually inferior to the individuals composing it. Each of these notions will be discussed later in greater detail, but first I would like to make a few comments about Durkheim and Canetti.

Durkheim's crowd theory has rightly been accused of being "rudimentary" (Lukes, 1985: 163); and Canetti's work on crowds is a puzzling mix of anthropology, fiction, psychology, philosophy and what not (Brill, 2006: 196). Even so, the French sociologist and the Bulgarian chemist have forged powerful theoretical tools that highlight some of the pleasures and benefits of crowd dynamics. Both of them interpret the crowd as an autotelic entity: it is preoccupied with the present moment rather than the past and future and driven by inner principles rather than outer forces. Durkheim thus writes that crowd members have a tendency toward "violent gestures, shouts, even howls [and] deafening noises of all sorts" (2001: 163), but this kind of tumult is rarely aimed at social changes, political reforms or any other posterior purposes. Often, the crowd has no purpose apart from itself; it is fueled by desire for physical proximity, collective excitement, and abandon in the heat of the moment (Durkheim, 2001: 283-5). Canetti (1984) argues in a similar vein that humans gather together in crowds in order to transcend the limits of their own individuality and become part of a larger and more powerful whole. The co-presence of multiple bodies increases the capacity for noise, destruction and creation, blurs the signs of wealth and status that separate people in normal life, and promotes strong fellow-feelings. Canetti concludes: "It is for the sake of this blessed moment, when no-one is greater or better than another, that people become a crowd" (1984: 18).

European crowd theory has been read and elaborated by American sociologists since the beginning of the twentieth century, and this has led to new visions of the crowd (Borch 2006). In contrast to the early European crowd theorists, a host of American scholars argue that crowds should be conceived as more or less salutary and rational entities composed of individuals who deliberately and purposively work together in order to reach well-defined goals (see for instance Park, 1972). This American approach may serve as a corrective to the European traditions. However, in this article I concentrate on the abovementioned notions that emerged in the European debates in order to

discuss them at length and examine the prospects of applying them in the study of contemporary forms of crowd ecstasy.

## **Methods**

Newcombe (1991) demonstrates in his groundbreaking research on raves that being present in nightlife environments is important to understand the lived experience of partygoers. Data collected on site can challenge the sensationalist media coverage and the problem-focused discourse of policymakers and produce insights that correspond with how partygoers themselves perceive and interpret nightlife events (Measham and Moore, 2006). In the spirit of this research tradition, this study is based on fieldwork in Sunny Beach between 19 June and 12 August, 2007 and 29 June and 30 July, 2008. The author of this article and four research assistants – Sanna Schlieve, Tine Reinholdt, Pernille Bouteloup Kofoed and Ida Ravnholdt Poulsen – collected qualitative and quantitative data.

We did not fully participate in the festivities at the resort and remained sober during working hours. We rarely danced and only took part in a few party games. This raises a classical ethnographic question: how can we understand the behaviour and experience of others while not living them first-hand? Some scholars advocate the benefits of complete participation, while others maintain that researchers should keep some distance from their field (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2005: 104-9). Mossière (2007), proposes a middle path, “a circumstantial emphatic position”, which seems pertinent, both in her own study of Pentecostal rituals and in the study of nightlife. This approach involves attending rituals and mimicking some of the ritual practices, but without fully embracing a native position. Mossière writes that, in spite of her reserves, she was “deeply touched” during her fieldwork, “not only by the moving narratives of the believers, but above all by the blissful and ecstatic atmosphere of the celebrations” (2007: 7). Likewise, by attending parties we also felt, in our own being, some of the effervescence for which Sunny Beach by night is renowned. Indeed, being surrounded by exalted tourists and guides made it difficult not to be carried away. This is perhaps a trivial point, particularly for those acquainted with crowd theory: to join a crowd can be an intense experience even for the most sober of participants (Durkheim, 2001: 162). Would it be appropriate to

speak of intoxication without intoxicants? Drug enthusiasts like Hunter S. Thompson (2005: 63) have scorned at such pretense. But in this study we nevertheless felt that we gained access to, and took part in, the substance-induced states of our informants without joining them in their inebriation. During pub crawls we wrote down field notes on notepads, either amidst the participants or at a distance in cafés or on the beach. Later the notes were completed and typed into a computer.

The fieldwork also included various forms of verbal interaction with Danish tourists and guides as well as Bulgarian venue owners, bartenders and healthcare workers. Semi-structured tape-recorded interviews were conducted with Danish informants, one to six people at a time. In order to create a relaxed ambience conducive for creative exchanges (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995), it was left to the interviewees to decide how long the interviews should last, and where they should take place; the durations varied from 15 to 90 minutes, and the typical locations were the beach, cafés and hotel rooms. In all, 45 tape-recorded interviews were conducted in Sunny Beach with a total of 115 Danish people; 104 of them were tourists and 11 were guides. All of these interviews have been transcribed. The Bulgarian informants were interviewed in a less formal manner and without using a tape-recorder; these exchanges lasted from 10 to 40 minutes, they were based on brief questionnaires and written down on a notepad in situ. In addition to the interviews, a number of unfocused, open-ended conversations were held on a daily and nightly basis with both sober and drunken informants; some of these talks were written down in field notes after they took place.

A number of ethical dilemmas arose within this project, above all in relation to the copious consumption of alcohol in Sunny Beach. Drunken Danes have a tendency to say and do things that they would not normally say or do, such as revealing intimate secrets about themselves, telling others how they truly feel about them, and being unfaithful to their partners (Elmeland, 1996). Data on this kind of drunken behaviour are vital for this project, and they have been carefully recorded in field notes and on sound tapes. However, in order to protect the anonymity of informants, all data that could be linked to identifiable individuals will not be mentioned in this article or elsewhere. Moreover, the fieldworkers openly told about the research project to everyone with whom they spent time, including the interviewees. People were thus given opportunities to



decline participation in the project, but very few did. Audio-recorded interviews were not conducted with people if they were too drunk to speak clearly or to understand the implications of being interviewed. However, many interviewees suffered from hangovers and were as a consequence somewhat absent-minded. The hangovers generally resulted in slow-paced and yet fruitful exchanges with frequent excursions into the physical flipside of heavy drinking.

## **Suggestion**

Michael (tourist): What's really great about the pub crawl is that, in the first pub that we visit, people are sitting around and no one's really saying much, they are just sipping drinks. And then in the next pub people begin to get up and dance, and things get a little crazier and people start to get buzzed. Already at the third place everyone's out on the dance floor and people are going wild and getting hammered.

The interview excerpt above is a typical example of how young Danes in Sunny Beach talk about pub crawls: they speak with enthusiasm and in words that indicate escalating speed, force and madness. Field observations have left us with a similar impression that progressive states of exaltation are drummed up in the tourists as they move from venue to venue. Occasionally it adds up to a veritable freewheeling of affects with people abandoning themselves to all sorts of noisemaking and wild behaviour.

The early crowd theorists were intellectually absorbed in moments like these when people loosen their self-restraints and enter states of exaltation. Several explanations were advanced, including theories about mental contagion, magnetism, hypnosis, imitation and suggestion. Notwithstanding the vagueness of the term, "suggestion" became the most popular notion for understanding crowd dynamics, and this was partly due to Le Bon's bestseller "La psychologie des foules" (Faber, 1996). In the book, suggestion is used in a broad and almost aphoristic sense as a stimulus that may come from various sources such as a charismatic leader or a symbol. According to Le Bon, humans gathered in a group are particularly susceptible. They have little control of themselves and are easily swept away into states of abandon wherein everyone acts as of one mind. In a crowd, the individual has a "tendency to immediately transform the suggested ideas into acts ... He is no longer himself, but has become an

automaton who has ceased to be guided by his will” (2001: 19). Le Bon emphasizes, however, that the mere fact of assembling is insufficient to start the process of suggestion. Some preparation is needed. The sudden outburst in a crowd is “only a superficial effect, behind which must be sought a preliminary and preparatory action of long duration” (2001: 47). Suggestion is, in other words, a two-phased process consisting of a slow initial dissemination of stimuli among individuals who may or may not be in physical contact with each other and, thereafter, the virulent spreading of stimuli that transform individuals into a single crowd.

With this notion in mind, pub crawls in Sunny Beach can be viewed as ensembles of suggestions that take hold of people in two phases. Before setting foot at the resort, many will see pictures or hear stories that associate pub crawls with risk, sex and fun. The media plays an important role in producing such associations with its sensationalist and problem-focused depictions of tourists going wild in the south. Travel agencies also play their part with advertisements on the Internet and in brochures that show pictures of elated pub crawlers and texts full of praise such as: the pub crawl is the “climax of the week”, “a must”, “highly addictive”, and “CANNOT BE EXPLAINED, MUST BE EXPERIENCED!!”<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the travel agencies specialized in youth tours host “warm up parties” prior to the vacation where people can meet some of their future guides and fellow travellers and get a taste of some of the classical pub crawl games. Consider the following field notes from a “warm up party” held in Denmark:

A guide takes the microphone and calls for some of his colleagues to come up to the DJ tables, and for the guests to assemble on the dance floor ... “This will make your holidays more fun,” a guide says. The guests are divided into competing couples. The men get balloons strapped to their crotches, and they are told to burst the balloons with the help of their female partners, and without using their hands. A winning couple quickly emerges, when the woman bites their balloon. Bang! That’s it. The whole thing was a little tame, feigned and awkward. An older, experienced male guide yells “copulation exercise” and storms up to the DJ tables. He begins to furiously dry hump another male guide who has a balloon strapped to him. It takes a little time before they burst it. That’s how it’s supposed to be done: in a spectacular and unrestrained manner (Sébastien’s fieldnotes).

With demonstrations like these, and all the media stories and advertisements that circulate, most young tourists know what to expect of pub crawls before they participate in one. They have been subjected to a “slow contagion from mind to mind, a calm and silent imitation” which sets the ground for the actual pub crawl with its “rapid contagion, its noisy and captivating imitations” (Tarde, 1989: 96, own translation).

Le Bon claims that individuals can form a crowd without being in physical contact with each other (2001: 13-4). There are many contemporary examples of this, such as Internet-based groups which may not offer face-to-face encounters, but who nevertheless are closely united in a common political struggle (Lacey, 2005). Most of the crowd theorists hold, however, that co-presence is necessary for the formation of a crowd and for the efficient spread of suggestions (Rubio, 2008: 52). Tarde, for instance, describes the crowd as a “collection of psychic connections produced essentially by physical contact” (1969: 278). Similarly, Durkheim writes in a passage about aborigines: “The very fact of assembling is an exceptionally powerful stimulant. Once the individuals are assembled, their proximity generates a kind of electricity that quickly transport them to an extraordinary degree of exaltation” (2001: 162-3). Hence, Tarde, Durkheim and also Canetti are opposed to Le Bon in this question. They hold that something exceptional and almost magical can happen when multitudes are brought together in the same place: there is bodily attunement, strong emotions arise, and the boundaries between self and other become blurred (see also Collins, 2004: 34). The process of suggestion thus merges the assembled, transporting them into states that they would never have been able to reach on their own. Judging from the data about pub crawls, we can also conclude that proximity intensifies the interaction between humans. To be surrounded by a large number of boisterous pub crawlers is a strong experience not unlike the effects of drugs.

### **The leaders of crowds**

At this point it is necessary to introduce the notion of “les meneurs”, the leaders of crowds. Tarde and Le Bon have written extensively about this figure, and they emphasize that there can be no crowd without leaders. A crowd relies on leaders; it wants to be lead and will dissolve as soon as its leaders are gone (Tarde, 2007: 15; Le Bon, 2001: 68). Le Bon characterises leaders as “more

frequently men of action than thinkers” who are invested in the present moment more than in the past or future (2001: 68). They possess “prestige”, meaning an irresistible and “mysterious force” (2001: 75) which “entirely paralyses our critical faculty, and fills our soul with astonishment and respect” (2001: 76). Whatever the leaders suggest, the crowd will do. Le Bon argues that leaders “are especially recruited from the ranks of those morbidly nervous, excitable, half-deranged persons who are bordering on madness” (2001: 68). In a similar vein, Tarde describes crowd leaders as evil and physically attractive men with “prestige”, but he also recognizes the existence of goodhearted leaders (1893: 360).

The guides who organize pub crawls may be considered crowd leaders. They are neither mad nor evil, of course, but festive young women and men who get paid to show tourists a good time, both day and night. They are usually good-looking, experienced partygoers with insider knowledge about the nightlife scene in Sunny Beach and “V.I.P. cards” that give them free entrance and drinks in a number of venues. All of this adds to the “prestige” that enables them to seduce and excite the tourist crowds, and this – to seduce and excite tourists – is one of their key functions. A guide explained in an interview that he and his colleagues inform the tourists before going on pub crawls where and when to meet, what to bring, and how to (mis)behave:

Jakob (guide): “We tell them that they’re not supposed to wear high heels. They’re told that in their hotels so that they have a chance to go to their rooms and change. They’re also not supposed to cover their faces with makeup, because they’re going to sweat. We want the venues covered in sweat. You know, this is a marathon!”

When the pub crawl crowd moves through town, from one venue to the next, the guides make sure that everyone stays together and has fun. They may use a megaphone to command the tourists to sit down or to live it up while waiting for the ones who have fallen behind:

We walk together as a group. The guides keep us together. They make us wait when someone falls behind. We walk through a little arcade by a hotel, and here we stop. People whoop and holler, and the noise increases because we’re in the arcade. It’s completely deafening. (Sébastien’s fieldnotes).

Durkheim writes that the inner excitement that comes from being in a crowd is “bound to seek outward expression” in violent gestures and noisemaking “that intensify even more the state they express” (2001: 163). The guides are well aware of this mechanism. They intentionally and strategically use noise in order to externalize and intensify the pub crawlers’ excitement:

Sébastien: What do you think the noise does to people?

Morten (guide): It pumps up their adrenaline.

Kim (guide): When people are singing and living it up in the streets, they’re all excited by the time we get to the next bar. That way, the venues earn more money. People spend more at the bar when they’re pumped up. It’s really important for us that we can go around and make noise in the streets down here. We also get lots of attention and others think, hey, this travel company is great. I’ll go with them next time.

Inside the venues, the guides also take the lead; they call people out on the dance floor, show how the dancing should be done, organize competitions, urge everyone to “run amok”, yell “cheers” and sing their incessant “Louder! Wilder! Louder! Wilder!” Everything is carefully coordinated in order for everyone to reach the right level of excitement.

Note that I refer to leaders and guides in the plural. According to Tarde and Le Bon, it requires coordinated effort to (de)control a crowd. One leader is rarely enough. Tarde observes that there is often an entire organization behind a crowd with a “primary leader” who makes the decisions plus a number of “secondary leaders” who carry out the decisions (1893: 58). The pub crawl crowds are also brought to life by a whole range of leaders: at the top of the hierarchy are the owners of the travel agencies that host the pub crawls, and at the bottom are the guides who are in direct contact with the tourists. The tourists may also fill the role as secondary leaders and assist the guides in pumping up the mood, for instance by taking over the megaphone and initiating competitions.

Durkheim and Canetti hold that humans may assemble and generate crowd ecstasy without the intervention of prestigious leaders, organizations or any other external forces. This interpretation finds support in our data from Sunny Beach. Tourists are perfectly capable of commencing their own pub crawl, or

something very similar, and there need not be trained guides to unite and excite them. However, many tourists prefer to be led by guides. To quote a female tourist, it is vital with guides who can ‘act raving mad’ and help others do the same. What many of the tourists want, in other words, is packaged, ready-to-go debauchery, and this is what they get on the organized pub crawls.

## **Group mind**

“Group mind” is the third key notion in early crowd theory that I would like to examine. The idea is that people in crowds lose their individuality in favour of a common mind with the same intentions, thoughts and feelings. Tarde, for instance, writes that it only takes a “spark of passion”, or some other suggestion, and a “confused mass” of strangers will turn into a “single animal, a wild beast without a name, which marches to its goal with an irresistible finality” (1912: 323). Indeed, people on pub crawls often act alike, for example when they yell out the same slogans, sing the same songs or move to the same beat. Their mood and state of drunkenness also appear to progress at a similar pace. Early in the evening, people tend to stay in the same place and talk with a limited number of people that they already know. Then gradually they come to move more, talk less and mingle with strangers. The tourists obviously take pleasure in this collective attuning:

Jonas (tourist): The great thing [about the pub crawl] was that the DJs played those songs that just worked. The great oldies that always got us singing along. No one was left out. Everyone participated and got up and danced on the tables. The guides were all totally cool with that and made sure that no one was left out.

Durkheim has written extensively about the pleasure of being part of a larger whole (2001). He claims that humans gathered in a group tend to feel stronger, safer and more carefree. As the solitary “I” plunges into the collective “WE”, an eruption of energy follows that effaces the worries of everyday life. People are transported beyond self-centred existence and into a realm of possibility and strong solidarity (see also Maffesoli, 2007). Consider the following excerpt from an interview:

Simon (tourist): It's the same thing with football fans when they stand up on the bleachers and jump up and down. It would look pretty dumb if one person did that all alone. But it creates a sense of unity when you are surrounded by a sea of people. When we all yell and scream to a Danish song at a bar here at the resort, it's the same emotion that I get when I'm at a sports stadium. It's about being together and doing things together.

Meeting new people, getting close to them and emulating their actions is pleasurable — not only because the new acquaintances may turn into long-term friendships or strategic alliances, but also for the immediate thrill. Durkheim writes in a passage about rituals: "The essential thing is that men are assembled, that sentiments are felt in common and expressed in common acts" (2001: 287). It would therefore be a mistake, according to this perspective, to interpret the pub crawl as an activity with a well-defined rationale and purpose. Pub crawls and other types of rituals often serve no purpose at all, but simply answer the participants' "feeling that they need to act, to move, to gesticulate" (2001: 283-4).

Canetti also highlights the pleasures of communion. He writes that in daily life humans tend to lead separate lives. They dread the "the touch of the unknown" (1984: 15) and therefore create safe spaces around themselves. They build up walls and sleep behind closed doors. The forces of the unknown are held at a distance, but at the same time life becomes more cold and incomplete (1984: 18). However, in crowds – and in crowds only – can humans find escape from the burden of distance that haunts them in normal life. In the midst of a crowd, the fear of being touched is reversed. People rejoice in the physical proximity with strangers. They find comfort and relief, especially "where the density of the crowd is greatest" (1984: 16). Hence, once a crowd is formed, "it wants to consist of more people: the urge to grow is the first and supreme attribute of the crowd" (1984: 16).

This love of density and growth is a vital driving force at pub crawls and other festivities. In general, young partygoers in Sunny Beach shun the empty or half-empty venues. They prefer crowded places where they can come into close contact with both known and unknown peers:

Birgitte (guide): “The best thing about a pub crawl is when we go from one place to the next, and everyone sings and raises their arms in unison. Everyone stands really close to one another. That’s a good pub crawl atmosphere!”

The travel agencies try to gather as many pub crawl participants as possible through publicities and promotions; not only because the number of participants is proportional to income, but also because large numbers mean intensive and spectacular events. Moreover, during events the guides try to make sure that the participants get physically close to each other. They explicitly disapprove of reserve and restraint, and encourage mingling, touching, kissing and sex. Various games are set up to entertain and facilitate contact. For example, the gist of the game called “tøjbunke” is for two or more teams to undress and gather their clothes in piles. The team with the biggest pile wins. It goes without saying that teammates come close to each other as they congregate around their piles, encouraging each other to strip off more clothes and add to the pile. This kind of communion is rare in daily life, and many of the participants obviously enjoy the proximity to undressed strangers. Here are field notes in which a young tourist explains another game that is often used during pub crawls:

...the guides initiated a game in which you formed a human train by putting your hands on the shoulders of the person in front of you and moved forward. Vodka bottles were hung from the ceiling. When you stood under a bottle, it opened up and you swilled what tumbled toward you. Of course, the vodka usually just splashed onto your face. It tasted really awful, but the game was incredibly fun. (Sébastien’s fieldnotes).

Such games are “degrading” in Bakhtin’s (1984) sense of term: people are smeared and thus brought down to earth, irrespective of their everyday status. The distinguishing signs that separate people in daily life are washed away. The beautiful and the ugly, females and males, all are urged to lower themselves and partake in collective acts of cheerful indecency.

### **The urge for destruction**

The early crowd theorists held common that the most obvious and important characteristic of the crowd is its propensity for destruction. Tarde was a fervent advocate of this view. While admitting that crowds may contribute to the public



benefit (2007: 43), he generally focuses on the most threatening examples of crowd behaviour such as riots and revolution. He believes that single individuals are superior in all respects to gathered individuals. This, he argues, has to do with the suggestibility of humans. Once assembled, humans lose possession of themselves and become subject to the erratic whims of the group. The lowest instincts are awakened, passions override reflection, and even the most cultivated of men are driven into savage destruction. This destructiveness is exacerbated by crowds' indistinguishable thirst for alcohol. Tarde's crowd scepticism is highlighted by the metaphors that he uses. He writes that a crowd is a "feminine creature", "a female savage", "an animal of the lower orders, an invertebrate, a monstrous worm", a "spinal creature", and much more (Tarde quoted in Barrows, 1981: 145).

A case can certainly be made that the pub crawl crowds in Sunny Beach have an inclination for destruction. Pub crawlers of both sexes occasionally take pleasure in destroying things such as glasses, bottles and furniture. They sometimes fight, hurl abuse at passers-by and sing provocative songs about their own might. However, their destructivity is generally aimed inwards, at their own bodies, rather than outwards, at other people. They are, in my interpretation, not the evil monsters that Tarde depicts, but rather boisterous pleasure-seekers who enjoy the thrill of small risks and minor destruction. The following field notes illustrate a common form of destruction at pub crawls:

I quickly began chatting with Benny, who looked like he was 17 but was probably a little older. He was extremely drunk and immediately ordered two shots for each of us. I avoided my shots by talking about hangovers that could only be soothed by drinking beer. Benny cast me a surprised look and said "hangovers?" Benny wasn't hung over, and he proclaimed that the word didn't even exist in his vocabulary. He had been drinking all day, and promised that you wouldn't get a hangover if you just kept on doing it. He maintained that a hangover shouldn't be soothed with beer, it should be "fought" by drinking shots. That was the only way. Benny downed two shots, offered the third to a random guy at the bar in recognition that he couldn't handle it. He spat on the ground, and asked me if I could watch his seat for 30 seconds. He walked a few steps away, bent forward and threw up. Then he kept on walking and disappeared from view, but a few minutes later he was back, buying Hawaii necklaces from a guy hawking them ... He tried to use his best dance moves to get the attention of a blonde-haired girl in a very tiny, very tight white dress.

Later, he fell on his ass and proceeded to soil his white shorts over the course of the evening, but this apparently didn't bother him. (Ida's fieldnotes).

Things often get out of hand at pub crawls, not simply because the young participants ignore how much alcohol they can handle or because they have been pressured into excess by guides. Many participants want things to get out of hand. To fall, get smeared, vomit, break things and wake up the next day with hangovers should not be misinterpreted as mere side effects of heavy drinking; these are not unexpected accidents, but central aspects of the festivities (Griffin *et al.*, 2009). Accordingly, many male and female tourists have expressed that they deliberately seek to get "dead drunk", "go wild" and "run amok" at pub crawls. They want to move far beyond everyday routines into states of excitement, abandon and some degree of (self)destruction.

The pub crawls in Sunny Beach allow for such excess. Compared to Denmark, there are few restrictions at the resort: minors and very drunken people can easily access and buy alcohol at bars and nightclubs, stripping and dancing on tables is accepted, and there are rarely any complaints when hordes of pub crawlers blow into whistles late at night, yell through megaphones, run out on the main road to block the traffic or expose their behinds. In addition, the pub crawls often include several hundred participants and, following Le Bon, this in itself facilitates wild behavior: "the individual forming part of a crowd acquires, solely from numerical considerations, a sentiment of invincible power which allows him to yield to instincts which, had he been alone, he would perforce have kept under restraint" (2001: 17). Thus, the crowd has an empowering and at the same time de-civilizing effect, which enables individuals to behave in manners un-heard of in normal life. Consider the following notes from a particularly wild pub crawl where participants exhibited their force in a playful and yet violent manner:

We walk down the promenade ... a rickshaw tries to get through the mob but has to stop. People grab it. A girl repeatedly jumps up on it, even though the driver angrily tells her to stop. Another rickshaw gets invaded by five Danes. We are headed down to Jump Bar. A guy thrusts himself against a billboard, and a fence that flanks the promenade is toppled. (Sébastien's fieldnotes).

Tarde and Le Bon interpret the crowd's bent for destruction as a consequence of its megalomaniac, evil and drunken nature. Canetti, on the other hand, offers a much more subtle analysis of the destructiveness. He argues that humans gathered together are deeply sceptical towards anything blocking their way and preventing them from growth. They therefore knock down fences, doors and other constraints in order to make room for more people, more life and more intensity. Members of a crowd feel free from the burdens of distance that haunt them in normal life, and they want others to partake in this freedom (1984: 20). Canetti notes, moreover, that the crowd seems to take special pleasure in destroying objects that can produce a lot of noise: "The noise is a promise of the reinforcements the crowd hopes for, and a happy omen for deeds to come" (1984: 19). Hence, the singing, yelling and whistling at pub crawls can be interpreted as a strategy to attract likeminded others, to sound alive and powerful, and to scare away enemies (1984: 31).

Pub crawlers stir up destructive forces for the hell of it, but they also try to avoid uncontrolled escalation. Various strategies are used by the guides and tourists to contain the excesses: rowdy people are talked into their senses or handed over to security staff, the ones who fall are helped back to their feet, the injured are brought to the emergency room, people who pass out are brought to their hotels, there is counseling available for the ones who cry, and so on. The (self)destructiveness of the pub crawlers is not driven by death wishes, nihilism or alienation. Rather, it is a pursuit of "controlled loss of control" and all the adventurous fun that this entails (Hayward, 2002; Measham, 2002).

## **Conclusion**

"The age we are about to enter will in truth be the Era of Crowds"  
(Le Bon, 2001:8).

Ecstatic crowds loom large in the present era. Just think of student revolts, ghetto riots, sporting events, nightlife resorts, music festivals, or the centers of UK cities on a Saturday night. Indeed, a case can be made that a defining characteristic of the age in which we live is the tendency for people to gather en masse for comfort, adventure and the excitement that comes from being close to others (Maffesoli, 1996). Therefore theoretical tools are needed that can help us

analyze contemporary crowds and, as demonstrated on the preceding pages, such tools may be found in the classical European crowd theory.

There are aspects of the classical crowd theory that are hopelessly outdated, however. The work of Le Bon, for instance, contains racist, sexist and anti-democratic statements (Borch, 2009). One could argue, moreover, that European, and in particular, French crowd theory tends to exaggerate the irrationality of crowds while de-emphasizing the social and political context that underlies crowd action (Waddington, 2008). Accordingly, the argument of this paper is not that the crowd theories of Tarde, Le Bon, Durkheim and Canetti should be accepted completely and without criticism, but rather that elements in their thinking boast great relevance for the current research, not only on nightlife, but also other types of crowd activity. The paper has called attention to the following notions, which seem particularly fruitful in the study of contemporary crowds: suggestion, the leaders of crowds, group mind, and the urge for destruction.

## Notes

1. The quotes are from the homepages of leading Danish travel agencies specialized in youth.

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# Article IV



# Safety problems among heavy-drinking youth at a Bulgarian nightlife resort<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

**Background:** Vacations at international nightlife resorts represent an important but also risky element in the lives of youth in many countries. There is a need for evaluating the role played by bars and nightclubs in producing and reducing risks; this task is important, especially at upcoming nightlife resorts with limited experience in managing young partygoers from other countries.

**Methods:** Seven weeks of ethnographic fieldwork was conducted during the summer 2007 at the emerging Bulgarian nightlife resort, Sunny Beach. The research instrument “KAReN” was used as a guideline to evaluate the safety conditions in nine bars and three nightclubs.

**Results:** The evaluation highlights five key factors at the venues that put young tourists in danger: violent security staff, overcrowding, shattered glass on the floor, dancing on furniture, and irresponsible alcohol serving. Action is needed to improve the safety conditions at the venues of Sunny Beach and other nightlife resorts. The improvements call for integrated strategies involving travel agencies, local authorities, health services, tourists and venues.

**Keywords:** Nightlife tourism; alcohol consumption; drinking settings; youth.

## Introduction

In the summer of 2007, a 17-year-old Danish man died in a bar at the Bulgarian nightlife resort, Sunny Beach. The man was on a pub crawl organised by a Danish travel agency and, like most other pub crawlers, he had consumed a large amount of alcohol. He threw up, and choked in his own vomit. This

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<sup>1</sup> This is an extended version of the article, Tutenges, S. (2009). ‘Safety problems among heavy-drinking youth at a Bulgarian nightlife resort’, *International Journal of Drug Policy* 20(5): 444-46.

incident provoked a veritable media storm in Denmark. Sunny Beach was portrayed as a dangerous place full of depraved young tourists, the tourists' parents were blamed for being irresponsible, and the travel agencies were accused of inciting binge drinking and other risky behaviour. The media storm gained strength with the arrival of new tragic reports from Sunny Beach: a Swedish man was killed by security staff at a discotheque, several young tourists were raped, and others were beaten up and robbed.

There are multiple reasons for these fatalities. Whilst in Sunny Beach, young Danish tourists are likely to engage in risky behaviour, which above all consists of heavy binge drinking (Tutenges & Hesse, 2008). Binge drinking is particularly risky when undertaken in a foreign country: culture, language and geography abroad are often unfamiliar, and this can lead to confrontations, and it may also obstruct access to police and health care services (Bellis, Hughes, & Lowey, 2002). Moreover, the crime rates are notoriously high in Sunny Beach. Finally, and this forms the focus of this article, safety measures may be insufficient in the bars and nightclubs of Sunny Beach.

Recognition is growing that the adverse effects of alcohol and drugs are closely related to the setting in which they are consumed rather than simply resulting from the toxic properties of the substances (Bellis et al., 2002; Calafat & Juan, 2004; Green & Plant, 2007). The issue of safe settings is particularly important at international nightlife resorts which often cater to young partiers who have a well-documented penchant for excess (Bellis, Hale, Bennett, Chaudray, & Kilfoyle, 2000; Bellis, Hughes, Bennet, & Thomson, 2003; Hughes et al., 2008). This article will identify some of the key factors at Sunny Beach's venues that jeopardize the safety of young Danish tourists. This information can be used for targeted prevention and policing in Sunny Beach and other international nightlife resorts.

Sunny Beach is located on the Black Sea and attracts tourists of all ages with its warm weather, long beach strip, low prices and roaring nightlife. During the daytime, and throughout the summer, the resort buzzes with people tanning in the sun and swimming in the sea. Then, as night falls, young partygoers gradually fill the streets and venues.

## **Methods**

This article is based on fieldwork conducted in Sunny Beach from June 19th to August 12th, 2007. At the outset of the study I did not plan to examine the safety problems at Sunny Beach's venues. Observations and interviews were conducted focusing on young Danish tourists and no particular attention was paid to the venues. However, the tourists often spoke of abusive bouncers, the local mafia, and other health issues, and I also witnessed accidents at the resorts. Then came the reports of tourists being assaulted, raped, and even tourists dying. All of this served as a spur to probe into the safety problems at the resort with a special focus on the main venues used by young Danish tourists.

After initial observations and consultation with Danish guides and tourists, I selected and evaluated a total of nine bars and three nightclubs. The ethnographic research instrument 'KAReN' (Calafat et al., 2007) was used to conduct the evaluation, most notably part three about safety and health conditions at recreational venues. This third part of KAReN contains a number of questions such as "Is the capacity of the venue exceeded?", "Are there any door staff?" and much more. For the purpose of this study, extra questions were added to the questionnaire relating, for instance, to whether venues tolerated patrons dancing on furniture. Other questions were omitted because they, in the case of Sunny Beach, were irrelevant or impossible to answer. I observed each of the twelve venues for more than 45 minutes on at least two nights. Some of the venues I visited on many other occasions, but my focus here was on the Danish youth more than the venues. When doing observations, I initially wrote field notes down on paper and afterwards rewrote and typed them into my computer.

In addition to the observations, I conducted tape-recorded interviews with Danish tourists and guides. I conducted interviews with staff from ten of the venues that are being evaluated in this paper, but none of these interviews were tape recorded or in-depth due to the staffs' heavy work load and my relatively short stay in Sunny Beach (i.e. seven weeks). Consequently, reliable data is missing on non-observable phenomena such as the eventual alcohol policy at venues and whether the staff has received training in first aid and conflict management. In-depth interviews with staff could also have served to crosscheck the other data.

## Results

There are numerous factors in the venues of Sunny Beach that are potentially dangerous for tourist (see Table I). In the following, five key factors will be highlighted.

Table I: Safety problems in twelve venues

	<i>Nightclubs</i> (n=3)	<i>Bars</i> (n=9)
<i>No door staff</i>	0	8
<i>No frisking at door</i>	2	9
<i>Minors given admission</i>	3	9
<i>Drunks given admission</i>	3	9
<i>No security staff</i>	0	6
<i>No relationship with the police for action in the event of conflict</i>	0	0
<i>Staff not easily recognisable</i>	1	0
<i>Regular overcrowding</i>	2	9
<i>Not enough staff during busy hours</i>	2	9
<i>No easily accessible or detectable emergency exit</i>	2	0
<i>Areas with insufficient light</i>	1	3
<i>No chill out areas</i>	0	0
<i>No provision of adequate air conditioning/ventilation</i>	1	0
<i>Temperature uncomfortable</i>	3	9
<i>Not enough bottle/glass collectors during busy hours</i>	3	9
<i>Staff do not prevent customers leaving venue with bottles/glasses</i>	0	8
<i>Empty bottles/glasses sometimes pile up on surfaces</i>	2	9
<i>Shattered glass sometimes on the floor or on furniture</i>	3	7

<i>Bathroom dirty</i>	0	0
<i>Bathroom not cleaned regularly</i>	0	0
<i>Bathroom not controlled by staff</i>	0	0
<i>No water available in bathroom</i>	0	0
<i>Dancing on furniture is allowed or tolerated</i>	2	8
<i>Alcohol serving to obviously intoxicated persons</i>	3	9
<i>Alcohol serving to minors</i>	3	9
<i>Indication that drugs are used in venue</i>	0	0
<i>Indications that people deal in drugs in venue</i>	0	0
<i>No drug prevention information on display</i>	0	0
<i>Indications of drug use in the surroundings of the venue</i>	0	0
<i>No information on risks, drugs, sex, driving, violence</i>	3	9
<i>No soundproofing</i>	1	9
<i>No advice notice on noise on display</i>	3	9
<i>No use of lollipops</i>	3	9
<i>No availability of earplugs</i>	3	9

## Security staff

A crucial safety problem in Sunny Beach is violent security staff. It is not unusual for staff to threaten perceived wrongdoers or punish them physically. In an interview, a bar worker from Northern Europe made the following comment on the issue:

In [my country], doormen first talk with people and then kick them out if they are troublemakers. Here they hit people, kick them out and then maybe they talk with them. Before, I didn't like it, but now I can see that it actually works. People are afraid and don't make trouble. It keeps them down.

Indeed, the shady reputation of the Bulgarian security staff most likely prevents certain tourists from making trouble, but this prevention is in itself dangerous. Note, for instance, the following excerpt from an interview with a Danish guide:

First the fighting [between the tourists] took place inside. Then the guests were thrown out. However, as the fighting continued outside, the security men threw them to the ground and kicked them and hit them [...] using batons, fists and their boots.

This kind of heavy-handed intervention can, of course, result in severe physical and psychological injuries. It is important to remember that young tourists are partygoers of a special breed. They have a strong penchant for all sorts of wildness, which occasionally puts them in dangerous situations. I witnessed this repeatedly during my seven weeks of fieldwork. For instance, at pool parties in one of the clubs in Sunny Beach, I frequently saw drunken youth doing somersaults and head-first dives into the shallow pool; using rubber beach toys to speed up the descent on a steep roller-coaster; running in the pool area; pushing each other into the water; jumping into the pool with bottles, glasses and their clothes on, and much more. The security staff rarely meddled in such behaviour. Needless to say that the poolside fun sometimes resulted in twisted ankles, bruised heads, cut feet and other injuries. Therefore, international nightlife resorts need qualified and law-abiding security staff.

## **Overcrowding**

The crowd frequently exceeded the venue capacity of bars and clubs in Sunny Beach. Part of the problem is that the tourists tend to go out in big groups. They like big crowds and many of them deliberately seek out venues that are known for assembling many of their peers. In addition, Danish travel agencies organise parties that attract large crowds. Several agencies have weekly pub crawls, for instance, in which up to 600 tourists move from bar to bar drinking, singing and making a big mess along the way. Even the most well functioning venues have trouble dealing with such crowds of excited tourists. Another part of the overcrowding problem is that the venues allow it. Some venues do not have staff at the entrance to monitor the number of people inside or, for that matter,



to check peoples' age and state of intoxication. Practically everybody is let in, even at the venues that actually have staff at the entrance.

It should be noted that most of the venues have few walls and enough exits. The problem of overcrowding is therefore not that it hinders people from getting out quickly in case of emergency (e.g. fire). Rather, the problem consists of preventing tourists from engaging in risky behaviour such as dancing on furniture, fighting, and climbing on rooftops. Not to mention the problem of collecting empty glasses and bottles which pile up and break when large groups of tourists assemble.

### **Shattered glass**

Under normal circumstances, the venues have sufficient staff to collect empty glasses and bottles, remove broken glass, clean the toilets, wipe the tables and so on. However, the sudden arrival of large groups of tourists can quickly cause havoc. Consider, for instance, these field notes taken in a normally tidy and orderly bar, just after the arrival of a large group of young Danes:

Some guys dance on top of a table which is three metres long and at the height of my shoulders. The bottles and glasses on the table are gradually pushed down, shattering against the ground. It looks ripe with danger. The table might collapse at any moment, but the guys are not asked to step down.

Safety does not seem like a priority when large numbers of tourists arrive. Shattered glass sometimes lies around for hours before it is picked up. Moreover, some tourists obviously take pleasure in breaking bottles, glasses and other noisy objects, and they can easily get away with it in the middle of a big crowd of their fellow travellers. This scenario from a pub crawl highlights the close connection between overcrowding and shattered glass:

Outside is a staff member whose job it is to collect glasses from people as they leave the bar. He stands ready as the pub crawl participants leave the place, but his job is of course impossible. When 200 guests leave through the many exits all at the same time, it's impossible for one man to pour the drinks from bottles and glasses into plastic cups. People don't want to wait for him. Many smuggle their full bottles with them outside. Out on the street it doesn't take long before the first glass bottle is dropped and breaks on the ground. A glass is thrown on the foot of a guy standing next to me. He is wearing flip-flops. He screams and

yelps. I'm also wearing flip-flops and have to concentrate not to step on the broken glass shards, which is not easy. Others in the group are less cautious of where they walk. When we leave the bar, the street is full of broken glass. It was clean when we arrived.

Injuries can easily occur when crowds of drunken youth, many with light footwear, move around in an environment with shattered glass on the ground and other surfaces.

### **Dancing on furniture**

To the great delight of many tourists, dancing on furniture is permitted or tolerated in most of the venues. This is not necessarily a big problem. It is not particularly risky for sober people to dance on a large sofa not more than 40 cm above the ground. However, it is risky when drunken youth dance on narrow bar desks or on unsteady bar stools close to a dance floor packed with other drunken people. The following field notes illustrate the risks related to dancing on furniture:

All around are people who climb onto the tables and dance. Only the first tabledancer is asked by a waiter to get down. After that the waiters can't keep up. If anyone is going to get the people down from the table, it's the guides. Only by using the microphone, or angry bouncers, can the tabledancers be stopped. One of the tabledancers takes off his pants and boxershorts part of the way. His bare ass is visible, shaking back and forth. Then he falls down, but lands on his feet. Dancing is not easy with pants hanging down by your ankles.

For many tourists dancing on furniture is an important part of the Sunny Beach experience. When talking about it, they tend to emphasise that the experience is fun and that it allows them to "live it up" and "get wild" in front of everybody. They focus on the pleasures rather than the dangers of the activity, which is quite typical for Danish people of this age group (Sørensen 2005). Consequently, the tourists tend to ignore advice against dancing on furniture.

### **Alcohol serving**

It is against Bulgarian law to sell alcohol to people who are under 18 years old and people who are drunk. These laws are not respected in Sunny Beach. During my seven weeks of fieldwork I never saw anyone being denied alcohol

in a bar or club, and I only heard about it once. Bartenders or doormen do not ask customers to show identification in order to prove that they are of age, and they do not turn away obviously intoxicated individuals. This problem was highlighted in a survey conducted in 2007 among young Danish tourists who were about to leave Bulgaria after vacations in Sunny Beach. Among respondents who were under 18 years old (n=136), 91% had been drinking. A total of 71% had consumed at least 6 drinks per day on at least one day, and 31.0% had drunk 12 or more units 6 or more days per week (Tutenges and Hesse 2008). The ethnographic data gathered for this article indicates that much of the underage drinking takes place inside of venues, many of which aggressively market alcohol with happy hours, free first drinks and discounts on alcohol shots and whole bottles of strong spirits. The urgency of this problem was highlighted in 2007 when a 17-year-old man drank himself to death in a bar. This tragedy did not seem to affect the serving practices in the resort.

## **Discussion**

Travels to international nightlife resorts are an important part in the lives of youth in many Western countries. Even so, international evidence shows that the resorts are associated with binge drinking, drug use, violence, public disorder and injuries (Bellis, Hughes, Thomson, & Bennett, 2004; Hughes *et al.*, 2008). There is a need for evaluating the role played by bars and nightclubs in producing and reducing these risks; this task is important, especially for emerging nightlife resorts such as Sunny Beach in Bulgaria, which has limited experience in managing young partygoers from other countries who may have alcohol and drug cultures far removed from the native youth. There is, for instance, a great divide between the drinking patterns of Danish and Bulgarian youth. Danes between the ages of 15 and 16 years drink greater amounts, more often and with a clearer focus on drunkenness than their Bulgarian peers do (Hibell *et al.* 2003). Danish tourists on a binge may be lucrative patrons, but they are certainly also demanding ones.

The venues and authorities in Sunny Beach could benefit from the experiences of more well-established nightlife resorts that cater to party-eager youths, such as Ibiza and Mallorca in Spain. There is a rich pool of literature about these resorts (e.g. Bellis *et al.*, 2000; Calafat & Juan, 2004; Hughes *et al.*, 2008), some of which offer preventive strategies that target the kinds of

problems that haunt Sunny Beach's venues. Of course, efficient preventive strategies may be expensive, but the alternative is the grim prospect of more injuries among the youth who will visit Sunny Beach in the future.

This article highlights a number of severe deficiencies in the venues in Sunny Beach. However, the resort also has a few edifying features worth mentioning, such as the many doctors and emergency services located throughout the resort which are open day and night. There are also a multitude of guides at the resort, and some of them are trained in first aid and designated to remain sober and help tourists in trouble day and night. However, many of the Danish guides currently play an ambiguous role. They encourage binge drinking, but warn against drug use. They incite wildness but help the ones who get injured. The guides could easily play a more wholesome role, for instance if their employers instructed them to advise tourists on how to limit the adverse effects of alcohol (e.g. eating regular meals, sipping water during nights out, and taking periods of rest).

## **Conclusion**

This article identifies five key factors in the venues in Sunny Beach that pose a threat to the health of young Danish tourists. These problems include violent security staff, overcrowding, shattered glass on the floor, allowance or tolerance of dancing on furniture, and irresponsible alcohol serving to minors and drunken people. This information can be used to improve the health and safety conditions in the venues in Sunny Beach and other nightlife resorts. This promotion of health and safety in nightlife resorts calls for integrated strategies involving multiple actors including venues, travel agencies, local authorities, health services, and tourists.

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# Article V





## ‘We got incredibly drunk . . . it was damned fun’: drinking stories among Danish youth

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Drinking stories are immensely popular among contemporary Danish youth. The stories are shared with much enthusiasm in school, at parties, over the telephone and via the Internet. But why are the young so compelled by these seemingly vulgar stories? Applying the theories of, most importantly, Bakhtin (1968), Ricoeur (1991), and Jackson (2002), this paper examines a sample of drinking stories that were collected through two anthropological research projects on Danish youth. The stories were recorded through participant observation and qualitative interviews. Our analysis proposes that Danish youth employ drinking stories in order to (1) constitute narrative identity, (2) entertain, (3) cope with tragic events, and (4) explore taboos.

**Keywords:** alcohol; health; young adulthood; risk

### Introduction

In recent decades the use of alcohol has become increasingly popular among young Danes (Due *et al.* 1999), and today alcohol and intoxication seem to be inseparable aspects of youth culture (Gundelach and Järvinen 2006). The drinking pattern in Denmark resembles the British, with its propensity for ‘binge and brawl’; it is characterized by weekday abstinence and drinking sessions with peers during the weekend (Hibell *et al.* 2004, Østergaard 2008). As a platform for socialization and self-experimentation, these drinking sessions hold great importance for the young who, accordingly, invest a great deal of time and money in acts of intoxication (see also Measham and Brain 2005).

Moreover, young Danes spend a remarkable amount of time telling stories about their drinking. For example, during school breaks, young students can often be heard recounting their weekend drinking escapades. These stories also loom large outside school. They are shared during face-to-face encounters and on the telephone, as well as communicated in writing via the Internet and mobile phone text messages. Some drinking stories are remembered for years and told over and over again (Elmeland 1996). Indeed, there is good reason to consider that drinking stories may comprise an epic genre of their own.

Drinking stories provide rich, entertaining and easily accessible data about young people and their use of alcohol. It is also a popular narrative genre outside Denmark.

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Therefore, it is not surprising that a number of scholars have made use of the stories in their research. Drinking stories have been studied in order to explore the construction of meanings in excessive drinking among American college students (Workman 2001), Swedish youth (Abrahamson 2004), and female secondary school students in Australia (Sheehan and Ridge 2001). Pyörälä (1995) has compared Finnish and Spanish drinking cultures through the lens of young people's drinking stories. Others have used drinking stories in the evaluation of drug, alcohol, and tobacco education programmes (e.g. D'Emidio-Caston and Brown 1998), and in evaluations of university student policy (Lander 1999).

As opposed to these previous studies, which have used drinking stories as means to explore other topics such as education programs or cultural differences, we examine the telling of drinking stories per se. Our starting point is the empirical finding that drinking stories are of immense importance to our informants and the aim of the present paper is to examine why young people find it so meaningful to share them. Whereas a traditional narrative analysis might be inclined to search for underlying meanings hidden, as it were, to the narrators, our analysis is grounded in a hermeneutics of a more phenomenological bent. From this perspective, drinking stories are not mere recollections of past drinking episodes; they should be analysed as constructive and creative social practices in their own right. Accordingly, our analyses bracket the question of the truth-value of the stories. Rather than analysing the stories as products of social interaction that can be evaluated according to whether or not they conform to supposedly objective accounts of past events, we consider processes of storytelling to constitute instances of interpretation in action with wider existential implications.

We were inspired by Paul Ricoeur's coupling of hermeneutical interpretation to phenomenological description. Human experience and self-understanding are mediated through language and, accordingly, interpretation is a basic condition of human existence (Ricoeur 1991). The existential dimensions of storytelling are also stressed by Michael Jackson (2002), who argues that storytelling allows people to appropriate their past in order better to comprehend and act in their present situation. A third important source of inspiration in our study is Mikhail Bakhtin (1968). As we see it, drinking stories have many similarities with Bakhtin's conception of carnival. They allow people to relax from dominating norms and rules, and they make use of humour, parody and degradation in order to explore the seamy side of life and question commonly held beliefs.

## Methods

The paper examines drinking stories that were collected through two research projects on Danish youth: the Ringsted Project and the Danish Youth Study. From the outset, neither of these projects focused intently on drinking stories, but it became apparent during fieldwork and subsequent analysis that such stories were of great importance to youth.

The Ringsted Project focused on youth living in a municipality with approximately 30,000 inhabitants. It explored the relationship between young people's lifestyles and their use of legal and illegal intoxicants (see Balvig *et al.* 2005). Tutenges was part of this project and collected data on young women and men aged 16–24 from October 2001 to February 2003 (see Tutenges 2004). Field observations

were carried out, particularly at night in bars and nightclubs. Venue owners and staff were informed verbally about the project and so were all patrons who showed an interest. Interviewees were recruited during nights out; telephone numbers were exchanged and a meeting was arranged. On the day of the interview, the interviewees were informed once again about the project and given the opportunity to refuse participation – no one refused. The interviews were either held at an office or in the home of the interviewees.

The Danish Youth Study was a multidisciplinary research project that investigated alcohol use and a number of other health-related behaviours among Danish teenagers. As part of this project, Hulvej Rod conducted fieldwork among 13–16-year-olds in a rural village of about 2,000 inhabitants during two 2-month periods in the spring and autumn of 2004. Informants were contacted through a local school that allowed us to carry out the study on their premises. The school served as the primary venue where participant observation and interviews were carried out, but some informants also invited us to their homes, leisure activities and parties. Before the fieldwork began, the informants were given information about the research project verbally and in an information leaflet. They were asked to return a slip indicating that their parents had read the leaflet, and the parents as well as the teenagers were given the opportunity to decline participation in the research. This resulted in two boys not participating.

Both projects employed a similar set of methods including participant observation, interviews and informal conversation. The data were collected by the authors and colleagues, all trained in ethnographic methodology. Participant observation was conducted in schools, bars, discotheques, malls, private homes, youth clubs, and other locations with access to young people's social interactions. Informants were not incited to tell drinking stories, yet we witnessed drinking stories being told in a variety of situations. The stories were recorded in field notes on a par with other observations, either as the stories were being told or immediately after.

As a complement to participant observation, both studies employed semi-structured interviews, either with individuals or with groups of two to five informants. In all, 19 focus group interviews were conducted as well as 15 single-person interviews. The interviews were tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed. All interviewees were promised full confidentiality and anonymity. All but two young men of Middle Eastern descent were Caucasian, native-born Danes, and in terms of social status the sample was fairly homogeneous, most being children of middle-class parents. During interviews, we noted that the informants' mode of speaking changed considerably when they got the chance to share stories about concrete drinking occasions rather than answering questions about their alcohol use in general. Especially group interviews could turn into lively storytelling sessions filled with laughter and friendly teasing.

For the purpose of the present paper, we conducted a content analysis of field notes and interview transcripts from both studies, sorting out excerpts that each could be taken to represent a drinking story. We defined a drinking story as an account of specific, past drinking episodes. In some cases, the stories were brief and simple; in others, lengthy and elaborate. Some were told in the first-person singular by the protagonist herself, while others were the product of avid discussion among a group of informants.

We did several careful readings of our sample of drinking stories and set aside all judgements about their objective foundation and truth-value in order to understand and do justice to the ways young Danes experience and make use of them. This phenomenological approach implies a rigorously empirical attitude that suspends enquiry into the hidden causes and preconditions of storytelling in order to make room for detailed description of the social implications and effects of what people tell (Jackson 1996). Our examination of the stories was guided, of course, by the broader insights we gained through fieldwork, and it was further informed by research literature on Danish youth (e.g. Balvig *et al.* 2005, Järvinen and Gundelach 2006). Furthermore, our analyses progressed in close dialogue with theoretical perspectives on storytelling (most importantly, Bakhtin 1968, Ricoeur 1991, Jackson 2002) that have enabled us to shed light on social and existential dimensions of drinking stories that tend to be overlooked in the existing literature on this topic. Our choice of theoretical approach implies that we cannot claim to present an exhaustive interpretation of the presented sample of drinking stories. While we feel confident in pointing to some central dimensions of these stories, we invite our readers to interpret along and, perhaps, complement our stories with some accounts of their own.

## Results

### *Constituting narrative identities*

During fieldwork, one of the authors met with 17-year-old informant Lisbeth in a bar. She introduced her childhood friend Johan, who immediately began telling a drinking story, which subsequently was captured in field notes:

‘Well, I’ve made quite a mess in this town,’ Johan says and tells a story about an evening during which he and a friend had won a bottle of liquor at some bar. They drank all of it and reeled out of the bar heading for a disco. Upon arriving, they gulped down more drinks and beer. At one point Johan was knocked off his balance and grabbed for a brass handle that was attached to a table. Unfortunately, the table wasn’t bolted to the floor and Johan took the table with him as he fell. The table plummeted on top of Johan’s chest, while glasses, bottles and ashtrays flew all over the place. While telling this story, Johan’s gesturing and tone of voice indicate that this was a fun, memorable evening, and Lisbeth seems to agree. She says that they used to party a lot at Johan’s place back home in the village where they grew up. Out there everybody drinks a lot, Johan explains. Lisbeth laughingly tells a story of an episode where she grabbed for a ladder while drunk, and the ladder hit her right in the head.

The stories told by Johan and Lisbeth were typical of the drinking stories which we witnessed being told among our informants. Their stories dealt with minor mishaps in which the protagonists got slightly hurt. The stories underlined the amount of alcohol consumed and they stressed the amusing elements of the episodes. Lisbeth seemed to echo Johan’s story – the point of both stories being that something unexpected and funny happened because of a drunken person’s clumsiness. Furthermore, the stories were accompanied by more general statements, such as Johan’s ‘I’ve made quite a mess in this town’ and ‘Out there everybody drinks a lot’ as well as by the invoking of Johan and Lisbeth’s common childhood in the village.

For our informants, telling others about personal experiences with intoxication seemed to be a popular way of presenting themselves. This might explain why Johan opens his account with the statement, 'I have made quite a mess in this town'. Johan does not attempt to mask the 'messy' results of his drinking sprees. On the contrary, he introduces himself to a stranger (the researcher) by talking about them. In doing so, he presents himself as a festive person who is willing to let go of himself. Thus, the telling of drinking stories provides an opportunity for making sense of one's intoxicated behaviour – to others as well as to oneself. Such rationalization can assume many forms, and oftentimes the stories celebrated boisterous, seemingly irrational behaviour. In many cases our informants presented themselves as wild and uninhibited, but as we shall see the storytelling also offers the possibility of critical reflection.

The following statement was documented in field notes. It concerns a group of 8th graders (14-15-year-olds) who have just arrived at school on Monday morning. While waiting for the first lesson to begin, they talk about a party at Camilla's place during the weekend where, apparently, things got a little out of hand:

- Sofie:** Did anyone see when Camilla started crying? She was completely done for, because someone had called the police. And pop! All the boys disappeared ...
- Tina:** And Amalie just lay on the bed.
- Lotte:** It's no fun if you can't control it.
- Tina:** In the end, I couldn't be bothered to help Amalie anymore ...
- Lotte:** She went on and on and on.
- Anita:** It's difficult. 'Cause you can't, like, leave her to herself, can you?
- Rikke:** Mikkel hardly drank anything. I drank all of his.
- Mikkel:** Yeah, Rikke said, 'Can I have a sip?' and then she just poured it down.
- Lotte:** Jeez, you drank a lot, Rikke!
- Rikke:** I have to. I can't feel anything unless I pour it down ...
- Anita:** Are you coming to my place on Friday?
- Kenneth:** I am.
- Anita:** As long as nobody ends up the way Amalie did ...
- Mikkel:** Amalie, are you still drunk?

The conversation is quoted at length in order to give the reader a sense of the tone and context of many of the drinking stories that are included in our material. The conversation was typical of a Monday morning when teenagers met in school after a weekend of parties and drinking. Before this conversation took place, most in this particular group had only recently started drinking, and during school breaks they often spent time discussing and telling stories about their experiences with alcohol. Often, stories were told one after another, and the teenagers cut each other short in order to call attention to a forgotten element in the story or to express their point of view on the past events.

The conversation may serve to illustrate how a story connects the past with the present and the future (Ricoeur 1991; cf. Ochs and Capps 1996). A past incident can only be recollected from the perspective of the present; thus, the story becomes interwoven with the narrator's expectations of the future. This is evident in the last part of the quoted dialogue, when the conclusion is reached that, at the next party, nobody ought to become as drunk as Amalie did last time. Another interesting element in the story is Rikke's claim that she has to drink a lot in order to feel something. Rikke uses a specific past incident in making a general conclusion about herself, and this conclusion points ahead as well as backwards in time. Also, Rikke's

presentation of herself as someone who needs to drink much in order to 'feel something' adds an air of purpose to her excessive drinking. Through the telling of stories a sense of coherence is attached to episodes of drinking, and hence young people can use the stories as a means of constructing and presenting a particular identity.

The veracity of Rikke's statement might be questioned. Perhaps she is simply bragging to her friends about her capabilities in alcohol consumption. However, the truth-value of the story is not at issue here. As Paul Ricoeur (1991) points out, fiction is a dimension of any self-understanding, and he urges us to discard all notions of identity that are based on the idea of a substantial, immutable self. Instead he suggests a concept of narrative identity that emphasizes the establishment of a plot, and, thereby, the active construction of some level of coherence over time. The plot relates heterogeneous occurrences to each another, giving them an order that is simultaneously retrospective and prospective. Thus, the constitution of narrative identity merges recollections of the past with expectations of the future.

Ricoeur emphasizes that the operation of plot is 'completed only in the reader or in the spectator, that is to say, in the *living* receiver of the narrated story' (Ricoeur 1991, p. 21; emphasis in original). Thus, he calls our attention to the processual and interactive elements that constitute any story, including the drinking stories under study here. The interactive aspects of storytelling stand out very clearly in the conversation quoted above. The drinking story was created in the interaction between teenagers who took turns being narrators and listeners. The stories told by Johan and Lisbeth made up narratives in a more classical sense of the word in so far as they were told one person at a time by someone reminiscing about his or her own experience. In both cases, however, the storytelling created a sense of social belonging and common experience. Johan's and Lisbeth's referrals to common childhood experiences signal to the fieldworker that these two persons belong together. During fieldwork, we observed the telling of drinking stories during everyday interaction among friends as well as during parties and in bars among strangers. The telling of drinking stories in all of these cases seemed to create a sense of commonality among those present (cf. Elmeland 1996).

Even if narratives are told in the present, they have important implications for the future. As mentioned above, narratives are simultaneously retrospective and prospective, meaning that their plots may be carried through to the future. In other words, the way in which one recounts the past impacts the range of possibilities that are open to future action. In the case of Rikke and her friends, the drinking story may commit Rikke to drink more at the next drinking occasion. 'I have to,' she says, and will need to prove this point true in the future. Hence, if a story is not exactly true by the time it is told, it may become true in the future by its implications for identity and action.

### ***Entertaining***

A study of fraternity members at an American university found that drinking stories may be used as a form of entertainment (Workman 2001). The stories allow 'for playful teasing, harmless pranks, or comic actions' (p. 434). For our informants, drinking stories also served to entertain. They almost invariably laughed or smiled when telling or hearing narratives about drinking. But what is it that makes drinking

stories so funny? Here is a story told in an interview by two 15-year-olds, Tina and Marie, which may help clarify this question:

**Tina:** As we were drinking, more and more people came over to the party. To begin with, we weren't that many people, so we just sat there, and the drinking wasn't really serious. It was booze and that doesn't hit you straight away, right.

**Marie:** Then we went out.

**Tina:** To the filling station.

**Marie:** And back again.

**Tina:** Yes, and back. Some of us were beginning to get tipsy, and I was definitely getting drunk as we returned to the party, and then it just went completely . . . Well, it certainly got out of hand. In the end, my father came and fetched me.

**Marie:** In the bathroom, bent over the toilet [Tina, Marie and the interviewer all laugh].

Henri Bergson writes that laughter is a kind of social ragging. It wells up in us when we are confronted with rigid, absent-minded or *maladroit* characters who transgress the prevailing norms and rules of society. Laughter is a social gesture serving to rebuke and correct transgressors (1911, p. 15). The laughter provoked by the story about Tina certainly has a corrective edge to it. Tina is laughed at because she drank excessively, vomited and was caught in the act by her father. This is risible, in Bergson's perspective, because it is a transgression of normal, decent behaviour: Tina has misbehaved and is scolded with mirth.

However, laughter has a highly ambiguous nature. It can be both reproachful and appreciative at the same time. Umberto Eco writes that we are seized by laughter when confronted with individuals who violate rules, preferably minor rules, such as etiquette. But our laughter does not simply mean that we disapprove of the violation; we also enjoy and welcome it: 'We are, so to speak, revenged by the comic character who has challenged the repressive power of the rule (which involves no risk to us, since we commit the violation only vicariously)' (1984, p. 2). Tina has the guts, so to speak, to break loose from the norms and rules that dominate daily life, and this gives rise to a laughter that is both teasing and reproachful while at the same time appreciative and acknowledging. Tina is simultaneously mocked for her abject state and celebrated for her assault on conformity. This is quite common in drinking stories. The excessively intoxicated character is both an *anti-hero*, a loser incapable of doing anything right, and a *hero*, a Nietzschean *Übermensch*, who has the nerve and fortitude to stand up to established norms and rules.

Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of 'carnival laughter' is useful in this discussion. He writes: 'Let us say a few initial words about the complex nature of carnival laughter. It is first of all, a festive laughter. Therefore it is not an individual reaction to some isolated comic event. Carnival laughter is the laughter of all the people. Second, it is universal in scope; it is directed at all and everyone, including the carnival's participants. The entire world is seen in its droll aspect, in its gay relativity. Third, laughter is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives. This is the nature of carnival laughter' (1968, pp. 11–12). In our interpretation, it was generally the same kind of laughter resounding when our informants shared drinking stories. Take, for instance, the story about Tina, or the stories about Johan and Lisbeth, for that matter. The narrators of these stories do not try to conceal their own mishaps; they put them out in the open so that everybody can have a good laugh. It is a deeply social laughter, shared and enjoyed in communion. Drinking stories rarely occur alone, especially in drinking

situations where several storytellers take turns entertaining and lifting the general mood with funny stories about themselves or their friends. The laughter, therefore, tends to be aimed at more than one person. Indeed, it often seems as though the laughter 'is of all the people', 'directed at all and everyone' and 'ambivalent' (Bakhtin 1968, pp. 10–11).

Anthropologists should also expect to have their 'leg pulled' when they are in the field studying intoxicated people. And when listening to drinking stories, it is likely that they will be called upon as well to take part in the storytelling, to share embarrassing, intimate and entertaining stories about themselves. This happened to one of the authors during a drinking session at 23-year-old Leo's home. Leo and his friend, Finn, had just held forth with a lengthy story about their previous night out together. As the story reached its conclusion, Leo requested that everybody present tell about their most embarrassing experiences in the art of seduction. He opened up the round of storytelling with a brief tale about his sister's wedding, where he flirted with a woman five years older than he. Then everybody else, including the anthropologist, took turns telling about awkward or unsuccessful attempts at seduction. Of course, all the stories hinted at alcohol use or drunkenness. This kind of storytelling is quite common in drinking situations, and it obviously serves as a form of entertainment. It helps to lift the mood and set the mind on partying, 'scoring' and enjoyment. It also allows everyone to become more familiar with each other. Everybody is encouraged to open up and reveal embarrassing episodes from their own past, exposing themselves to friendly teasing and laughter. With Bakhtin, it can be argued that this kind of mockery is liberating (1968), revealing the droll aspect in people, bringing them down to earth, irrespective of their looks, wealth or status. Laughter overthrows the hierarchy of everyday life and teaches us that we all have one feature in common: the ingenious and infinitely variable capacity to act in stupid and uproariously funny ways.

In an interview 18-year-old Claus told a story that will help us probe further into the comical dimension of drinking stories. Claus' story is about an intensive binge episode with 15 or 20 of his friends. At some point during the night, the group went to a local pub and sang karaoke. They were all very drunk. One man in the group wanted to perform a dance while singing, but he stumbled, knocked over a TV set, and ended up on the floor enmeshed in electrical wires. The pub was crowded and everybody laughed at the fallen singer. Even the pub owner could not help but laugh. As the pub closed at 8.30 p.m., Claus and his friends 'got kicked out'. Claus narrates:

We went around to the different bakeries and sang morning songs to them [he laughs]. And people came out on the streets and on their balconies and yelled, 'Shut up down there' [we laugh]. That was definitely fun. And then in the end we went to Felix [another bar], er, I think. We stayed there and continued drinking, and in the end, nobody was able to walk. So then we had to go home.

Jackson writes: '[L]aughter can only be understood in terms of its close relationship to tears' (2002, pp. 181–182). This intimate relationship between comedy and tragedy comes out in Claus' story. On the one hand, his story is comic, because it presents us with a group of people acting in a transgressive, rebellious and rather absurd manner. The 'boozers' are brimming over with excitement and insist on partying even after being thrown out of a pub. They disturb seemingly uptight and dreary people with boisterous and untimely singing, and they reject all utilitarian concerns about saving



money, being rested or getting healthy. All they want is to be together and have a good time here and now and for as long as possible – all enlivening and fun. On the other hand, there is something tragic about the story. The group seems to have lost all notions of common sense. They damage themselves with overdoses of alcohol, annoy their fellow citizens and cannot even walk straight. Claus' description of his drunken friend lying on the floor enmeshed in electrical wires is a striking image of their inabilities. In a symbolic sense, Claus' friend has been subjugated and immobilized by a world that he is unable to manage. This situation of being tied down, weak and helpless encapsulates the very essence of the tragic. In laughing at the situation, we are released from its sadness, and may secure, for a moment, a sense of being in control of our own lives, of not being vulnerable and ludicrous. Jackson explains:

Tragedy is an outcome of being arrested, stuck, immobilized or trapped in a situation *that one is powerless to do anything about*. The comic, by contrast, is defined by the relief, release, and distance it provides us from just such binds, which is why laughter may be compared with freedom of being able to breathe, speak, or move again after a moment of suspense[. . .]. The comic is not the opposite of the tragic so much as a strategy for countermanding the tragic with distance and indirection. (2002, p. 182; italics in original)

Drinking stories speak of existential dramas where the protagonists are on shaky ground, lose control and make fools of themselves. When laughing at these situations, we are amused by something that might happen to us personally, and such laughter can be seen as an oblique attempt to ward off an existential threat (Jackson 2002, p. 188).

### *Coping with tragedy*

Workman writes that the fraternity members in his study work hard to ignore the tragic outcomes of drinking (2001, p. 443). They prefer funny and uplifting drinking stories and never discuss the ones 'in which friends, acquaintances, or classmates faced negative consequences of their actions' (p. 442). This was not the case among our informants. It sometimes happened that they talked about nights out where things went wrong, seriously wrong, and these stories provoked neither laughter nor smiles. The *raison d'être* of these stories was certainly not to uplift or to entertain. Rather, we suggest that tragic drinking stories allow narrators to externalize tragic experiences and share them with others, thereby making them more bearable. As Karen Blixen put it, 'All sorrows can be borne if you can put them into a story' (cited in Jackson 2002, p. 17).

Here are two such stories, both of which were narrated in interviews:

Kenneth (23 years old) told about one night he and some friends had visited the town of Slagelse. They were all very drunk and excited. They joked, laughed and spoke loudly with each other and the bartenders. This apparently annoyed some of the local people. A group of locals went over to the Ringsted group and asked them to 'step outside', which is a polite way to initiate a fight. Kenneth and his friends hurried over to the bouncer and said that there were people after them. The bouncer answered that he was aware of that, and that he was one of those people. This situation made Kenneth sober up very quickly. He and his friends managed to escape in a taxi, but had bottles thrown at them as they left.

Sarah mentioned she had gone to a party in Roskilde with some 'murky people' who took hash and coke and were really strange looking. She only knew one person at the party. At 3 a.m., a guy named Kristian offered Sarah and two other guys a ride back to Ringsted. Sarah was drunk, so she just accepted the offer without further hesitation. As they drove off, she suddenly remembered having seen Kristian taking drugs at the party, but by then it was too late to get out of the car. Kristian's driving was terrible, and just outside Roskilde a tyre had a puncture. Kristian didn't care and just continued driving at the speed of 100 km/hour. Sarah demanded that he stop the car, and at that very moment a police car pulled them over. Sarah was relieved, but it turned out that the car had been stolen, so everybody was arrested. Sarah was separated from the others. She was taken to the police station and 'locked up'. She was scared; she cried and could hardly breathe during the interrogation. She felt hard done by and was afraid that the boys would lie to the police that she had stolen the car.

There is a striking similarity between the tragic stories told by Kenneth and Sarah and the amusing stories that we have described in the previous sections. Both types of stories depict drunken characters entangled in situations that they are unable to handle. Actors in drinking stories are generally at serious odds with their surroundings, and we have, for instance, seen examples of how they knock over tables and TV sets, hit themselves with ladders, disturb other people with boisterous singing, and fall to the ground, overcome by the force of gravity. The drunken characters have lost control, sometimes over their own bodily functions: they drool, vomit, fart, yell too loudly, and reveal intimacies that they would normally keep secret. Things tend to go wrong in both tragic and amusing drinking stories, but with one big difference. The characters in amusing stories are, at least partly, the cause of their own mishaps. They are driven by a strong and uncompromising desire for enjoyment and deliberately indulge in excessive drinking and abandon. Circumstances are very different in tragic drinking stories. In these stories the main characters are portrayed, not as free agents, but rather as helpless and passive pawns, manipulated by external forces; their loss of control is anything but voluntary. Take Johan's previously mentioned story, for example. He must have hurt himself as he fell to the ground and as a table 'landed heavily' on his chest. It must have been annoying with all the 'glasses, bottles and ashtrays' that were scattered by the fall. But we can smile or laugh at this, because the accident was a minor one and because the damage was self-inflicted. Johan deliberately drank too much, thereby playing an active role in the accident. Kenneth's story, on the other hand, is not amusing. It presents us with a group of people who lose control mainly due to external circumstances; they are set upon by a group of ill-intentioned strangers. Likewise, it is saddening to hear about Sarah being driven around in a stolen car with an intoxicated driver. She had absolutely no control over these events, and had not been the one to decide to lose control in the first place. Her destiny was entirely in the hands of somebody else. Later, after having been brought to the police station and 'locked up', her status as a passive and powerless object is underscored. In other words, the main difference between funny and tragic drinking stories is, in our interpretation, that the funny ones depict characters who purposefully execute their own loss of control after due deliberation, whereas tragic drinking stories describe individuals who are forced into losing control by external forces.

Workman observes that the fraternity members in his study portray high-risk drinking as a pleasurable activity. He concludes that their stories 'prohibit critical self-reflection on what is obviously a dangerous set of behaviours. Drinking stories

not only limit individual and group reflection of potential danger but also serve as a form of protection against counter-messages about drinking' (2001, p. 442). True, drinking stories tend to be formulated in a humoristic tone. They often mock official truths about right and wrong, oppose normal common sense, and celebrate destruction and loss of control. Most drinking stories, therefore, stand in stark contrast to the preventive information propagated by national institutions such as the Danish National Board of Health (Sundhedsstyrelsen). However, as we have seen, our informants occasionally shared drinking stories that portrayed some of the negative consequences of alcohol and drug use, stories in which someone was severely injured, emotionally hurt, bitterly humiliated or reduced to a powerless object. These stories do not preclude critical self-reflection. Rather, they remind us that certain precautions should be taken when drinking. Kenneth's story, for instance, illustrates that one should remain guarded and perhaps a bit more discreet when partying out of town among complete strangers, while Sarah's story calls attention to the dangers of combining alcohol and drug use with driving.

The process of telling about a tragic incident allows the storyteller to review it, share it with others, and perhaps get it out of his or her system. As Jackson points out, 'To reconstitute events in a story is no longer to live those events in passivity, but to actively rework them, both in dialogue with others and within one's own imagination' (2002, p. 15). The private sentiments of guilt and worry are translated into a public story. The sentiments are no longer endured in solitude, but in communion. The burden is shared.

### *Explorations of taboos*

In the drinking stories presented so far, we have encountered a number of excessively intoxicated individuals who break things, fall to the ground, sleep in inappropriate places, vomit, and get smeared with dirt, ashes and beer. Workman certainly makes a convincing point when writing that drunken performances and their stories serve 'as a way in which to explore aspects of physicality, including sexuality, physical limits, body functions, and physical evolution' (2001, p. 435). Also, issues deemed improper and vulgar in daily speech are taken up and explored in drinking stories. Take, for instance, these two stories that were told in a private home during a warm-up session:

**Brenda** (18 years old): 'I got drunk for the first time when I was 11 years old. I puked all over my room [spoken proudly]. The second time I got so drunk I hit all the boys in their stomachs. They teased me because of that for a long time.'

**Francine** (18 years old): 'The first time I was drinking was with my parents for New Year's Eve. I'm telling you, I got drunk. I was 13 or 14 years old. A friend and I shared a bottle of champagne. We ended up in a bush. Then I don't remember any more. I just recall that later on I was lying by the toilet and puking.'

In daily life, Danish youth tend to keep their body waste products out of sight and rarely speak about them. But when our informants shared stories about drinking, they showed a remarkable interest in excreta. This fascination may seem childish and primitive, but, as Bakhtin reminds us, the exploration of excreta and the lower body has a very positive and affirmative side. It is an acceptance of the whole body, also in its ugly and ludicrous states, and it is an acknowledgement of the fact that decomposition and decay are integral aspects of life (1968, p. 19). There can be

neither growth without decline nor life without death. Negation is a necessary step on the path towards something new and better. These existential truths are often illustrated in drinking stories.

The following story was told in an interview by 18-year-old Leo about the first time he got drunk. Note the strong resemblance between Leo's, Tine's and Ditte's stories. All three present their first experiences of drunkenness as rather brutal initiations into the art of losing control. Things get out of hand in these stories, not simply because the inexperienced drinkers are unaware of how much alcohol they can take, but also, as Leo makes clear, because things *have* to get out of hand. Losing control, vomiting, and destroying things are regarded as natural elements in first-time experiences with alcohol. The joys of intoxication are intimately linked with destruction and chaos.

**Leo:** 'The first time I got drunk was with my brother and a friend. They had bought a bottle of vodka. We got incredibly drunk! We played drinking games, and they cheated me all the time. In the end my friend was lying under the table and eating plastic apples, and I was locked in the bathroom. I couldn't get out because I had broken the handle to the door. I tried to get out and broke a window with my hand. Then I fell asleep in the bathroom. That was the first time I got drunk. It was damned fun. I was 14 or 15 years old and I still have a scar on my fingers from that window.'

**Interviewer:** 'Things got a little out of hand!'

**Leo:** 'They have to. It was my first big drinking spree.'

Leo breaks a door handle, smashes a window, scars his hand, and then passes out in the bathroom, yet he does not regret any of this. To the contrary, he insists that the binge 'was damned fun,' and suggests that one is expected to lose control when on the first 'big drinking spree'. Allan Sande (2000) has attempted to explain this unbridled attitude and destruction that can be observed among Nordic youth when they begin their early experiences with intoxicants. He argues that the use of intoxicants among youth can be interpreted as a rite of passage into adulthood. The young consume intoxicants in order to destroy their former identity as children. They demonstrate that they are no longer innocent children and send the message that they have become self-determined individuals able to deviate, just like adults. In this perspective, the over-consumption of alcohol can be interpreted as a symbolic suicide. The young medicate themselves with overdoses of alcohol and enter states of sleep, oblivion and simulated death. They kill their identity as children in order to be reborn as adults (see also Gennep 1960, p. 81, Elmeland 1996, Tutenges 2005). The young organize their own ritual of passage into adulthood, and drinking stories reenact and bear witness to this important process.

Jackson writes: 'For every story that sees the light of day, untold others remain in the shadows, censored or suppressed' (2002, p. 11). Drinking stories tend to live a shadow existence. Young people generally exchange them among peers only, and researchers have paid little heed to their qualities. Moreover, drinking stories often deal with hidden and repugnant aspects of life. They portray drunken characters who have ventured outside the bounds of normality into a domain of uncertainty and suspense. These characters show us what happens when taboos are broken, censored words are yelled, and intimate body fluids are transmitted into public space.

Our informants were eager to tell and hear about different modes of transgression, not least acts of wildness, degradation and excess. This interest in boundary-

crossing may seem childish and perhaps somewhat disquieting, but Jon P. Mitchell explains that transgressions form a dynamic and necessary force in social life. He writes that boundaries and their transgression are mutually constitutive. To set a boundary is always to be aware of what lies beyond it. The boundary 'invokes' transgression, and the transgression assesses the existence and scope of the boundary (2001, p. 1). Therefore, transgression is, in Chris Jenks' words, 'a deeply reflexive act of denial and affirmation' (2003, p. 2). Thus, the extensive boundary-crossing in drinking stories can be interpreted as a critical evaluation of the moral and ethical boundaries of Danish society. The boundaries in normal life are challenged and overthrown in the stories, but they are highlighted and announced at the same time, and their strength and value are tested. Drinking stories both deny and affirm the societal status quo: they celebrate wildness, degradation and excess, but simultaneously illustrate the importance of self-composure, decency and moderation; they mock daily life for its rigidity and monotony but simultaneously depict chaotic and absurd scenarios that remind us of the necessity of order.

### **Conclusion**

Danish youth drink a lot and spend much time telling stories about their drinking. These drinking stories tend to be rather vulgar. They often refer to public displays of vomiting and urination and other repugnant aspects of life, and focus tends to be on deviant, destructive or ludicrous forms of behaviour. It is, therefore, tempting to write off the stories as naughty chit-chat or primitive gossip. However, young people take much interest in drinking stories and find them worth sharing in numerous settings, including at school, at parties and over the telephone. For this reason alone the stories deserve to be taken seriously.

In this study we have drawn upon drinking stories from two independent ethnographic research projects, and we have referred to studies told in a variety of settings and in a variety of forms: from boisterous storytelling by 18-year-olds in a noisy bar and informal conversations among 15-year-olds in a classroom to reflective accounts in formal interviews. For full understanding of the implications of each of these stories, we would need to contextualize the storytelling differently than we have done in the present paper and pay more attention to individual biographies and the particular social settings where the stories were told; the telling of drinking stories is definitely an integral aspect of the everyday lives of our informants. However, such an analysis goes beyond of the scope of the present paper, which has focused on elucidating more fundamental traits common to the storytelling practices of our informants and pertaining to general existential questions that are, perhaps, of particular relevance to young people.

Why do young people find it so important to share stories about drinking? In this paper we suggest four main explanations. Our informants employed drinking stories in order to (1) constitute narrative identity, (2) entertain, (3) cope with tragic events, and (4) explore taboos.

Through the telling of drinking stories young people may constitute and explore narrative identities. This is a two-way process in which narrators tell themselves as well as their audience who they are or, perhaps, who they wish to be. The narratives do not represent or reproduce some essential identity, but contribute instead to an ongoing and creative exploration of possible identities. Most often the drinking stories allow

young people to present themselves as cheerful and uninhibited – Dionysian, in essence. Yet, the stories also contain elements that underscore the importance of maintaining some level of self-control as well as other, more Apollonian, identity traits. As in Nietzsche's analysis of Greek tragedy, these two opposites and the tension between them constitute the stories' cornerstones. Thus, the stories allow for critical reflection although they tend to celebrate intoxication and wildness. The stories signify the potential for future action in the balance they strike between Dionysian excess and Apollonian control.

In most cases, our informants found it amusing to tell and hear about drunken persons who act wildly and make fools of themselves. A good drinking story almost always made them laugh, even if it was told during the daytime in an office while a researcher well past his teens tape-recorded the session. Such laughter is contagious. It spreads from narrator to listener and, if present, to the protagonist as well. Thus, the storytelling tends to be friendly and inclusive. Individuals are rarely ridiculed in a harsh manner, and yet the laughter certainly has a corrective edge to it. It is at the same time a reaction against the excessive behaviour of drunken people and an approval of their ability to break free from the confines of conformity. Drinking stories illuminate, in a playful and humorous manner, the boundaries between permissible and forbidden behaviour.

However, a small but significant proportion of the drinking stories in our sample were told with gravity, concern or outright sorrow. A common feature of these stories was that their protagonists were being manipulated and eventually harmed by forces against which they were entirely defenceless. The loss of control was unintentional and complete. Such tragic stories are not meant to entertain. Rather, the young tell them in order to review and eventually become reconciled with the tragic events and dilemmas inherent in human life. Storytelling helps them to draw inner feelings of distress out into the open where they can be endured and ameliorated in the company of others.

Drinking stories also serve as a medium to explore aspects of existence which generally remain hidden and ignored in daily life. Thus, many stories contain explicit descriptions of vomit, blood, urine, dirt and various forms of transgression. The seamy side of life is exposed and turned into something concrete, manageable and less threatening. Furthermore, the high frequency of transgressions in the stories can be interpreted as an assessment of the norms and rules that prevail in everyday life. Transgressions lay bare the scope and validity of boundaries, and the contours of decency are delineated in the depiction of indecency. Drinking stories are, in other words, highly reflexive acts that assert and deny, bury, and revive the norms by which we live.

Although Danish adults also share drinking stories from time to time (Elmeland 1996), a case can be made that drinking stories are particularly relevant for youths. The bodily changes that occur during puberty are closely connected with changes in young people's social positioning. Along with new bodily and social functions come new expectations from peers and parents, new social practices such as drinking and partying, and new modes of experience such as intoxication, and this all means that new rules have to be established, transgressed and explored.

The category of youth has been denoted as a linguistic shifter, that is, 'a word that is tied directly to the context of speaking and hence takes much of its meaning from situated use' (Bucholtz 2002, p. 528). Hence, there is no such thing as a universal linguistic definition of the category of youth. We might add that persons belonging

to the category of youth can be denoted as *social shifters* in the sense that their social position changes with the context. In some contexts young people are expected to take responsibility and act like adults while in others they are treated more like helpless and immature children. Michael Jackson draws our attention to the phenomenological view that being is always a becoming:

[O]ne's sense of being undergoes perennial redistribution in the course of one's strategic struggle to sustain and synthesize oneself as a subject in a world that simultaneously subjugates one to other means. (Jackson 2002, p. 13)

For our informants, drinking stories appeared to be an important tool in such an existential struggle. Young people grow up (and into) a world that has been created by others, and drinking stories provide an important narrative genre through which the young can discuss and explore themselves and their life world.

The findings presented in the present paper suggest that drinking stories carry the potential to serve as a critical evaluation of the consequences of excessive alcohol consumption. Youth generally tell stories in a humoristic tone, but sometimes the storytelling is dead serious and with a clear focus on the dangers of drunkenness. Also, storytelling sometimes leads to lively discussions about the pros and cons of drinking. Researchers and preventive workers can easily take part in these discussions and, thus, drinking stories can be used to talk about alcohol in a manner that the young find captivating and comprehensible. Several scholars have called attention to the importance of developing preventive messages that are in tune with young people's own experiences (e.g. McBride *et al.* 2004, Jørgensen *et al.* 2007). We suggest that drinking stories may be used as a platform to challenge youth to evaluate and eventually change their drinking habits.

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# Appendix I

## Articles based on the Sunny Beach surveys

Hesse, M. and Tutenges, S. (accepted). "Paying for sex and attending strip clubs during holidays: A study of Danish youth at a Bulgarian nightlife resort", *Tourism Management*.

Tutenges, S. and Hesse, M. (2010). "Højere! Vildere! Danske unge i Sunny Beach", in M.U. Pedersen and T. Kolind (eds.) *Unge, rusmidler og sociale netværk* Århus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag.

Hesse, M. and Tutenges, S. (2010), "Predictors of hangover during a week of heavy drinking on a holiday", *Addiction*, 105(3): 476-483.

Hesse, M. and Tutenges, S. (2009), "Evening experiences versus drinking indicators as predictors of hangover on a summer holiday", *American Journal on Addictions*, 18(2): 130-134.

Hesse, M. and Tutenges, S. (2008), "Gender differences in self-reported drinking-induced disinhibition of sexual behaviours", *American Journal on Addictions*, 17(4): 293-297.

Hesse, M., Tutenges, S., Schlieve, S. and Reinholdt, T. (2008), "Party package travels impact on alcohol use and related problems in a holiday resort - a mixed methods study", *BMC Public Health*, 8: 351.

Tutenges, S. and Hesse, M. (2008), "Patterns of binge drinking at an international nightlife resort", *Alcohol & Alcoholism*, 43(5): 595-599.

Hesse, M., Tutenges, S. and Jæger, M. (in preparation). "The impact of guides on drinking and drug use".

Hesse, M., Pedersen, M.U., Tutenges, S. and Kofoed, P. (in preparation) "An exploratory prospective study of young people's drinking during a holiday".

Tutenge, S. and Hesse, M. (unpublished), "After the orgy: Health problems following holidays at an international nightlife resort".

## Articles based on surveys on youth at the Roskilde Festival

Hesse, M., Tutenges, S. and Schlieve, S. (in press) "The use of tobacco and cannabis at an international music festival". *European Addiction Research*.

Hesse, M., Tutenges, S., Pedersen, M.U. and Schlieve, S. (in preparation), "Self-reported personality traits and substance use among rock festival guests".

Hesse, M. and Tutenges, S. (in preparation) "Perception of normative cannabis and tobacco use at a music festival"

Hesse, M. and Tutenges, S. (in preparation) "Inconsistent responding at a music festival: Associations of personality variables and substance use"

# Appendix II

## The new culture of intoxication<sup>1</sup>

"You have to go beyond your depth", sang the Danish folk singer Hasse in 1967. The call was heard. Crowds of hippies and Provos tripped along on hashish and LSD, followed by punkers pumped with alcohol and amphetamines. They were getting at it in the emerging neo-tribal communities, but the youth as a whole were still fairly placid. Times have changed. Today, the majority of Danish young people frequently get drunk and nearly half have taken an illegal substance (Hibell *et al.* 2004; Balvig *et al.* 2005). It is not that the authorities have remained passive. Drug laws have been tightened repeatedly over the last decades. The police have worked hard on drug enforcement. And vast resources have been invested in preventive measures. But the results are not exactly spectacular. Bottom line: a new culture of intoxication has been born.

The development in Denmark is not unique. In Great Britain, it is well-documented that the consumption of illegal drugs among young people has increased in the last couple of decades, and the consumption of alcohol has become more focused on drunkenness: large quantities of alcohol are consumed within a short period of time (Measham and Brain 2005). The evidence also indicates that in several South European countries changes in the youth's usage of intoxicants have taken place (Sande and Beccaria 2003; Demant and Østergaard 2006). Just think of the "bizutages" held at "les grandes écoles" in France. Or consider the "El Botellón" in Spain, where large crowds of young people gather in streets and open spaces to listen to music and socialise while consuming large quantities of cheap alcohol (Østergaard 2007: 17-19). These southern rituals have striking similarities with the buzz-focused way of partying among North European youth. Hence, if one wants to understand what is happening among young people in Southern Europe, it is worth taking a look at the situation in the North. For this reason, I will in this article describe young

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<sup>1</sup> This is a rough English translation of the article, Tutenges, S. (2009) 'La nouvelle culture de la défonce', *Société*, 103(1): 47-57.

Danes' usage of substances; however, first a few words on the existing research of this new culture of intoxication and my own approach to the field.

## **The Phenomenology of Intoxication**

There is no shortage of articles or books on the new culture of intoxication. Particularly British researchers have been productive (e.g. Measham *et al.* 1994; Parker *et al.* 1998; Measham *et al.* 2000; Measham 2004; Measham and Brain 2005; Shiner 1997). It is, however, only few of these writings that focus on examining the phenomenological dimension of the new culture of intoxication. The act and the state of intoxication is largely passed over in silence. This is – by the way – an old, well-known problem in drug research. As Sørhaug wrote more than ten years ago: “Even if you consult the extensive body of international drug research, you will not find many studies of the experience of intoxication itself. With respect to this issue, this elaborate and otherwise very good research pussyfoots. The research examine medical, psychological and social causes and consequences, while that which lies between the causes and the consequences, that which it is essentially all about, the content and meaning of intoxication itself, consistently remains sparsely and weakly studied and referred to. Often, it [the intoxication] is not even mentioned.” (1996:182, see also Elmeland 1996). There is, therefore, good reason to recall Husserl's dictum, "Zu den Sachen selbst." The challenge is to get behind the statistical figures and analyse intoxication *per se*, without explaining it away by reducing it to economic forces, social conditions, psychological problems, bio-chemical conditions or other external circumstances. We must try to avoid simplistic, causal explanations, which treat intoxication as a simple consequence or a by-product of something else. I thus remain critical of the widespread tendency to treat intoxication as a symptom or an epiphenomenon of some sort of social problem, injustice, or pathology. Some scholars put the blame on the process of globalization: it is said that contemporary youth seek states of intoxication because they have been marginalized and are facing bleak prospects in the work force. Other scholars blame post-modernity: it is suggested that youth seek refuge in intoxicants because they are unable to handle the many choices that post-modern life offers them; because they are overwhelmed by the expectations that are imposed upon them by their parents and the educational system; and because they are left

alone in a world where tradition and social networks have crumbled. These explanatory models present us with valuable information about the social world that surrounds contemporary youth, but the explanations oftentimes rest on inadequate understandings of intoxication. Intoxication is characterised by what it is not; it is presented as an absence of problems. Alcohol and drugs are treated as problem solvers that help people to escape from the nuisances of everyday life.

Jackson, who is one of the most important heirs to Husserl within anthropology, emphasises the value of ethnographic fieldwork and its ability to bring us close to the lives of those studied (1989, 1996). By following, imitating, observing and talking with the people under study, one can gradually build an intellectual and corporeal understanding of their life-world. Maffesoli inscribes himself in the same phenomenological tradition, and he points out: “Il faut revenir avec humilité à la matière humaine, à la vie de tous les jours, sans chercher quelle cause (Cause) l’engendre, ou la fait ce qu’elle est ... Plus qu’une raison *a priori*, il convient de mettre en œuvre une compréhension *a posteriori*, s’appuyant sur une description rigoureuse faite de connivence et d’empathie” (1996: 59). The thorough scrutiny and description of things themselves can help us grasp their immanent meaning and nature. Thus, there remains an important task in the study of the new culture of intoxication: to explore the young people’s own experiences of intoxication and to convey these experiences in pertinent descriptions.

In what follows, I will provide a small contribution to this work in the form of a rough sketch of the new culture of intoxication as it manifests itself among Danish youth. My focus is on intoxication induced by alcohol, but it is my impression that my descriptions and reflections also can be invoked to interpret certain other forms of intoxication, such as those caused by cocaine and amphetamine. The empirical basis of my descriptions is my most recent fieldwork, conducted between the periods 19 June - 12 August 2007 and 29 June - 30 July 2008 in the Bulgarian holiday destination Sunny Beach. Thousands of young Danes flock to Sunny Beach each summer to enjoy the warm weather, the beautiful beaches and the wild nightlife. I collected data at the resort through qualitative interviews as well as observations both during the day and in the night. In addition, I conducted an array of surveys with the help

of four assistants, Sanna Schlieve, Tine Reinholdt, Pernille Bouteloup Kofoed and Ida Ravnholdt Poulsen.

## **The Social**

Drugs help people to relax their ingrown habits of self-control and give in to unruly and collective modes of being. As Maffesoli puts it, "Intoxication is both a cosmic initiation (a loss of self) and an erotic initiation (a collective aggregation)" (1985: 188). Young Danes are quite aware of this effect. They use intoxicants to free themselves of inhibitions and become more out-going and amicable. The state of intoxication brings people closer to each other both physically and mentally. One informant from Sunny Beach compares a good party to the feeling of cohesion that can arise in the grand stands of a football match:

It's the same thing with football fans when they stand up on the bleachers and jump up and down. It would look pretty dumb if one person did that all alone. But it creates a sense of unity when you are surrounded by a sea of people. When we all yell and scream to a Danish song at a bar here at the resort, it's the same emotion that I get when I'm at a sports stadium. It's about being together and doing things together.

Descriptions such as these remind of the notion "l'âme collective" in early crowd theory. About this Le Bon writes: "Under certain given circumstances, and only under those circumstances, an agglomeration of men presents new characteristics very different from those of the individuals composing it. The sentiments and ideas of all the persons in the gathering take one and the same direction, and their conscious personality vanishes. A collective mind is formed, doubtless transitory, but presenting very clearly defined characteristics. The gathering has thus become what, in the absence of a better expression, I will call an organised crowd, or, if the term is considered preferable, a psychological crowd. It forms a single being, and is subjected to the law of the mental unity of crowds." (2008: 23). Le Bon and many of the other early crowd theorists, such as Tarde (1972) and Taine (2002), feared those moments when individuals lose themselves in the collective. Referring to violent demonstrations and marches that took place in the late nineteenth century, they emphasised that people in crowds have a penchant for impulsive behaviour, irrationality and destruction. Among today's youth, we find a completely

different perception of crowds. For most young people, it is mere high jinks, when the collective forces take over and transport them into states of exaltation which they could not possibly achieve alone. This is – among other things – one of the reasons why young people recurrently throng in places with many people and loud music. The power of the crowd, the music and the right amount of drugs altogether give the kick that it takes to really have a blast (Tutenges in preparation).

Now, it is important to mention that Durkheim stands out from most other early crowd theorists because he is, largely, positively inclined towards the crowd's ability to bring people out of equilibrium. For him, there is something revitalising in the energy discharges of the crowd. The human animal simply needs to gather in large groups to get away from the humdrum of daily life with its worries and chores. Thus, Durkheim writes about the nature of partying that, “every festival, even one purely secular in origin, has certain features of the religious ceremony, for it always has the effect of bringing individuals together, setting the masses in motion, and so inducing that state of effervescence, sometimes even delirium, that is not unrelated to the religious state” (2001: 285). And, indeed, the youngsters' usage of substances certainly appears cheerful and careless, even – at times – delirious, especially when the festivities take place far away from home with thousands of other young travellers. Some figures from one of our 2007 Sunny Beach surveys give an idea of the youngsters' debauchery. The survey was targeted at Danes aged 16 to 24, and we asked the young people a range of questions immediately before their departure back to Denmark. Of the 1011 people who answered, 41.3% had consumed 12 or more units of alcohol per day six or seven days a week, 5.6% had taken illegal drugs and 8,8% had been involved in fights (Tutenges and Hesse 2008). The following excerpt from an interview – in which two young women recount the previous night – gives a qualitative dimension to the figures:

Sébastien: Did you feel sick when you returned home [last night]?

Karen: [laughs] Mette has a thing about sleeping on the floor when she gets sufficiently drunk.

Mette: No! It was because, I had gone out to throw up. And, then, I could not cope with getting back to bed again, and so I had just taken my duvet and pillow with me [to the toilet] I was lying there sleeping like a baby, and then Karen fucking came and threw up all over me.

Sébastien: Really?

Karen: She was lying with her head right next to the bowl [...] So, I had apparently thrown up into her face. I am so sorry! [Laughter].

Karen and Mette's story shows that night-time debauchery is certainly not reserved for males only. However, for the order of things, here follows two men's story of the previous night:

Viktor: [Henry] was a little annoyed that he had not picked up any girls. He had been rejected all night. Then, all of a sudden, two ladies showed up, and so I said to him, 'What about the two ladies standing over there?' He chatted a bit with them, but then the girls left.

Esben: Then we went back to the hotel, and in the end he had sex with one of them girls out there in front of the hotel on some kind of fenced-off football field.

Viktor: When they finished, they realised that two Danish guys up on a balcony had watched it all. The two guys applauded.

Esben: Yes. [Henry] received a standing applause, as he came walking back in his T-shirt, boxer shorts, shoes and with his trousers around his head.

Intoxicants destabilise the bodily habits and open up to experimental behaviour and interaction. In everyday life, people rarely vomit and have sex in the open, but nightlife provides an opportunity to observe and try out such behaviour. Rimbaud's famous phrase captures part of what is going on: "Il s'agit d'arriver à l'inconnu par le dérèglement de tous les sens" (1999: 237). When teenagers go binge drinking together in large numbers, far away from home, then things may get out of hand. People lose control and unforeseen events occur – for better or for worse. Usually, we are talking about a “controlled loss of control” with an entertaining outcome (Measham and Brain 2005), but there are also many unfortunate incidents, such as accidents, assaults, rapes and deaths in party cities like Sunny Beach.

## **Morality**

Today's youth have received many derogatory labels such as "Generation No Limit," "Generation Fucked Up" and "The Wild Youth". The smear words are not entirely unfounded. Young people sometimes behave wildly and immorally when they intoxicate themselves. The drunken youth challenge conventions and sneer at the establishment; but this provocative behaviour should not be



interpreted as a fierce resentment of the existing society. The intoxicated are not trying to change the world, they just want to have fun (Maffesoli 1985). Sartre touches upon this theme in his book *Baudelaire* (1947). Sartre writes that we should distinguish between the "revolutionary", who fiercely wants to destroy the status quo in order to change it into something new and better, and the "revolter", who wants to preserve things as they are, in order to be able to revolt against them (1947:58-59). In my view, the partying young people are revolters rather than revolutionaries. Their night-time debauchery is sheer fun; it does not point beyond itself to social changes or better times.

Jenks reminds us that boundaries and transgressions are mutually constitutive (2003). Drawing boundaries presupposes an awareness of the possibility of transgression, and the transgression itself can only take place if a boundary exists. Boundaries also have a tendency to rouse our curiosity. They allure us to transgressions, and the transgressions are, simultaneously, often deliberate actions that help us realise the extent and strength of the boundaries (see also the work of Bataille). In this light, the systematic crossing of boundaries that occur among young partyers, can be interpreted as an exploration and evaluation of the morality that prevail during the day. The validity of the prevailing morals is tested through the transgressions, and the contours of the good are traced in the cult of the evil. The transgressions should, therefore, not be regarded as arbitrary child's play or stupid insubordination. They are actions saturated with meaning that negate and confirm, destroy and regenerate, the norms and rules that we normally live by.

The immorality of the intoxicated is marked by a certain degree of systematicity: wildness, destructiveness, deviance, madness, immoderation are valued positively; whereas restraint, constructiveness, normality, mental equilibrium and moderation are valued negatively. Thus, the everyday morality has been turned upside down. For example, it is appreciated when people drink excessively, fall over, are cheeky, throw money around, and party all night long. In contrast, it is disapproved when people stay sober, go home early or remain composed. Thus, it is by no means anarchy that prevails among partyers. They cannot behave in whatever way they feel like. They are expected to engage in the debauchery. *Prima facie*, the immorality that unfolds among the intoxicated may appear fortuitous and simple-minded, but upon closer

examination it turns out to be rigorous and quite sophisticated. The road of excess is narrow!

It is important to emphasise that the revellers' immorality is not meant as a serious alternative to the daytime morality. Basically, intoxicated young people are opposed to seriousness. They practice a rigid immorality to show the absurdity of narrow-minded seriousness, dogmatic ways of living and unbending normativity. The intoxicated youths have, in my view, a carnivalesque attitude to life: They parody the received wisdom, mock "limited seriousness and all pretense of an extratemporal meaning" (Bakhtin 1984:49), and they strive to "look at the world with different eyes, not dimmed by 'normal', that is by commonplace ideas and judgements" (1984:39).

## **Time**

As mentioned, today's youth sometimes behave wildly when they get drunk, but their behaviour is rarely subversive or political in nature. Intoxication is not a 'project' (pro-jectum), in the strict Latin sense of the word, understood as an activity that is aimed at a specific and well-defined goal in the future (Maffesoli 2000:36, 2002:64). Intoxication is not about making the world a better place or about creating something that can sustain the life of tomorrow. The following excerpt from an interview illustrates this point:

Sebastien: Can you tell me about your best experience here [in Sunny Beach]?  
Katja: The best experience? I don't think I can mention one thing specifically, but I think yesterday was a really good night out...[T]he first two bars that we visited were not that fun, but then people got into the right party mood. I also got a bit drunk, and then one stops thinking about whether you have fun or not. You just have fun. You kind of get rid of all those thoughts that might otherwise roam around your head. And you just get to chat to a lot of people, and [yesterday] people were great fun and made pranks.

Maffesoli's expression "ethics of the instant" captures, in my view, some of the temporal order that exists among the intoxicated. This expression signifies a kind of being where the present moment is at the centre. The present covers the entire time horizon and has, so to speak, reduced the past and the future to trivialities that it is not worth worrying about (2003: 105). The focus is directed at the potentialities of the present moment, the available pleasures are fully exploited and the linear time of quotidian life is temporarily on stand-by. Put

differently, one could say that the intoxicated exhibit a degree of acceptance of the current state of affairs. They're not trying to alter the status quo, but rather immerse themselves in the life, which – for better or worse – they have been thrown into (Maffesoli 1985).

Young Danes are, generally, very keen to try out a lot of things while they are still young. They imagine that as the years take their toll, they will become set in their ways and perhaps even become boring. Some find it pathetic when 'older' people party hard, as this interview with two women illustrates:

Selma: I would really not want to be here [in Sunny Beach] as some 42-year-old and slam tequilas.

Nicoline: No, no, no! It's so terrible with those 28-year-olds who are here. Really!

Selma: Yes, if there is a time for [hardcore partying], it's now [...] I don't want to be one of those who wakes up one day and thinks, "Hell, where did my youth go?"... When I reach old age, I would like to be at rest, having tried out all the things that needed to be tried out.

The worst-case scenario is an old age, where you can look back on a life without any drunken adventures. Some, therefore, are decidedly busy trying everything that needs trying. They want to kiss with a lot of people, have sex outdoors, try a three-some, dance on the tables, experiment with drugs or – otherwise – distance themselves from the mundane. The attitude is that life must be lived here and now, before it is too late.

## **Conclusion**

Several researchers have emphasized that the emergence of the new culture of intoxication should be seen in conjunction with larger societal changes. For example, Measham and Brain (2005) argue that the nightlife industry has developed a range of sophisticated marketing strategies, which prompt customers to pay more money and drink excessively. Many bars and discos run special offers on whole bottles of booze and ten “shots” of hard alcohol. These drinks can be consumed quickly, and they alter the consumer's mental state nearly as effectively as the hardest drugs. Thus, the nightlife industry offers swift access to states of heavy intoxication; they allow people to achieve a little of the excitement, lacking in daily life. Measham and Brain also point out that today's youth live in a world characterized by fragmentation and

individualisation; there has been a weakening of the traditional values and norms which, in earlier times, limited excessive drinking (2005: 275).

In the midst of this important discussion about the background of the new culture of intoxication, it is important to remember another essential dimension of the issue: intoxication itself. If one wants to understand this complex and intangible phenomenon, then one must invoke other methods than questionnaires, just as it is important not to get lost in endless explanations of the causes of the young people's substance use. Causal logic and utilitarian explanations can easily lead one astray in the study of intoxication. In this article, I have used a phenomenological approach and examined the kind of sociality, morality and time order that unfolds among intoxicated young people from Denmark. The article, of course, only provides sparse, caricature-like descriptions that should be extended and systematized; but I hope that I have conveyed an impression that intoxication itself is a meaningful phenomenon that deserves careful examination in and of itself.

Some additional questions that call for more thorough examinations are: How is intoxication experienced and lived in various neo-tribal communities? How does the physical setting influence the experience of intoxication? What is the experiential effect of different types of drugs? And, is the new culture of intoxication really new, or is it the return of an archaic form of celebration?

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# Summary

Since the 1960s, nightlife tourism has grown rapidly and is today an orgiastic institution of massive proportions. Each year during “Spring Break”, hundreds of thousands of North American college students migrate south to whoop it up at seaside resorts. In Australia, it is customary for high school students to celebrate their graduation with a week-long party away from home known as “Schoolies Week”. And in Northern Europe, there is a long tradition of young people spending part of their summer holidays at teeming nightlife destinations in the Mediterranean region.

*Louder! Wilder!* is a study of young Danish tourists and guides at an up-and-coming nightlife resort in Bulgaria. Drawing on a three-month ethnographic fieldwork and survey studies on more than 2,000 young travellers, the dissertation plunges readers into the effervescent front lines of nightlife tourism.

There is growing evidence that nightlife tourists have a strong penchant for risk behaviour such as heavy drinking, unprotected sex and fighting. The dissertation adds to this body of evidence, but argues that the holiday excesses should not be misinterpreted as a symptom of nihilism, pathology or some sort of death wish. The young people do not travel to nightlife resorts to escape from pain or because they want to turn their backs on the world; quite the contrary. The excesses are above all an expression of vitality. When the youth go to the edge, it is not to make the jump, but rather to explore the abyss, feel the rush and later reap recognition for the exploit.

The dissertation consists of three introductory chapters followed by five articles. A leitmotif throughout is Durkheim’s advice to study social life in a non-condemnatory and open-minded manner. In the last of his masterpieces, “Elementary forms of Religious Life”, he writes that, “It is a basic postulate of sociology that a human institution cannot rest on error and falsehood or it could not endure [...] The most barbarous or bizarre rituals and the strangest myths translate some human need, some aspect of life, whether individual or social”. Durkheim hereby cautions us not to underrate other peoples’ practices and beliefs. He holds that, in order to understand cultural others, it is necessary to take them seriously, especially when they engage in activities that one finds

unsophisticated, offensive or nonsensical. Most parts of the dissertation are written in this Durkheimian spirit. The main objective is not to criticize the corporate forces that make money on young travellers. Nor is it to expose the negative consequences of nightlife tourism or to arrive at preventive measures. Rather, the ambition is to conduct an in-depth and, as far as possible, non-condemnatory investigation of the Danish youth in Sunny Beach.

*Louder! Wilder!* thus sets out to find the “least false words” to describe the behaviour and experiences of the young tourists and guides in Sunny Beach. Theoretical inspiration is sought in the work of crowd theorists, neo-Durkheimians, phenomenologists, as well as a host of alcohol and drug researchers. Some of the key analytical words that the dissertation explores and puts to use include: back place, McDonaldization, effervescence, the new culture of intoxication, ethics of the instant, suggestion, crowd leaders, group mind, the urge for destruction, and degradation.

The dissertation – except one of the articles – is based on fieldwork that was undertaken in Sunny Beach during two phases: June 19 to August 12 of 2007 and June 29 to July 30 of 2008. The fieldwork was conducted by the author of the dissertation and four student assistants and included field observations for a total of three months, 45 qualitative interviews with 104 tourists and 11 guides, and five different survey studies. The target group of the study consisted of tourists and guides from Denmark between the ages of 16 to 26 years old.