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Safe nightlife collaborations: Multiple actors, conflicting interests and different power distributions

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Abstract

Given the expectation that people will consume more when safety is guaranteed, most cities have, along with the stimulation of nightlife districts, implemented special policies to promote safety. Safe nightlife policies fit in neatly in the larger context of 'integral' safety policies where many different actors are expected to collaborate and take responsibility. Very little is known, however, about the interactions between various actors within these new partnerships. This research acknowledges an emerging surveillant 'assemblage' in urban nightlife districts where different systems are brought together and practices and technologies are combined and integrated into a larger whole. Interviews with different actors involved in safe nightlife collaborations in Utrecht and Rotterdam (The Netherlands), show how differences in the emergence and set-up of these assemblages, conflicting interests and different power distributions between actors shape collaborations on the ground considerably and result in various local outcomes.

Keywords: geography, governance, nightlife, safety, western Europe

Introduction

Nightlife districts have always played important roles in cities, but have mostly developed at the margins and have received little attention from the local state (Lovatt, 1996). The post-industrial landscape however has offered opportunities for cities to reinvent themselves as places of consumption, during the day as well as at night. The successes of these night-time economies are apparent in the fact that nightlife districts in certain cities can be more densely populated at night than during the day. This revitalisation of nightlife districts is not only expected to boost the local economy by providing jobs, but also helps to make cities competitive and attracts the type of 'hip' cultural consumers

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who are said to be the creative drivers of wealth in post-industrial cities (Chatterton and Hollands, 2002; Helms, 2008; Roberts and Eldridge, 2009; van Liempt and van Aalst, 2012).

The financial potential of the night-time economy, however, is not the only dominant picture. Problems of drunkenness, disorder and public nuisance are closely linked to this economy. Hence, there is a clear tension between the narrative of urban renaissance, where city centres are imagined as comfortable and safe places to live, visit, play and consume, and the narratives of violence and disorder that also accompany the urban night (see also Bannister *et al.*, 2006; Eldridge, 2010; Hadfield *et al.*, 2009; Harvey, 1989; Helms, 2008; Judd, 2003). Thus the urban night not only offers pleasure, excitement and adventure, but also offers opportunities for the transgression of social norms that are taken for granted during the daytime. Night is a time to try to be something the daytime may not let you be, a time for meeting people you shouldn't, for doing things your parents told you not to do. This unique configuration of economic opportunity and pleasure as well as excess has resulted in several authors describing the urban night as a distinctive space–time (Hubbard, 2005; Middleton and Yarwood, 2013; Schwanen *et al.*, 2012) or an ambiguous space simultaneously composed of both regulatory control strategies and deregulatory liberalisation policies (Hadfield *et al.*, 2009; Smith, 2007).

The most common response to disorder in the night-time economy is strict (and increasing) policing (Helms, 2008; Roberts and Eldridge, 2009; Winlow and Hall, 2006). Since the mid 1990s, different techniques to govern nightlife districts have been implemented (Hadfield *et al.*, 2009; Helms, 2008; van Liempt and van Aalst, 2012). A key trend is increased technological mediation of the surveillance and policing of nightlife districts. In the Netherlands 77 per cent of Dutch cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants now have surveillance cameras in public spaces (van Schijndel *et al.*, 2010) and in most cities nightlife districts are the places where cameras are considered most urgent and are installed first. It is not simply that CCTV systems have become more widespread; new technological hardware, software and procedures have been introduced and piloted as well. Real-time feedback from CCTV operators to police and bouncers 'on the ground' is increasingly implemented, as well as the continuous tracking of specific individuals moving through an area. Interest in and use of 'smart' cameras and 'smart' algorithms to handle and interpret data flows are also increasing. Cities are experimenting with mobile cameras (for example, Amsterdam) and cameras equipped with sensors for recording sounds (for example, Groningen), although the success of the latter has so far been mixed (Gemeente Groningen, 2011).

Apart from new technologies and techniques to police and control, the regeneration of post-industrial city-centre spaces has also resulted in a process of increasingly contracting out policing and control to the commercial sector (Hobbs *et al.*, 2003; Monaghan, 2002). Rather than a top–down Big Brother type of surveillance, surveillance techniques in nightlife districts have increasingly been embedded and orchestrated in policies in which various public- as well as private-sector authorities collaborate (Hadfield *et al.*, 2009). In the Netherlands, these policies are known as Safe Nightlife policies (*Veilig Uitgaan Beleid*).

Safe Nightlife Policies in the Netherlands

In 1998, the first national Safe Nightlife guidelines were published by the Dutch

Ministry of Justice (van Erp, 1998). These guidelines were a plea for a more structured collaboration between the city council, the nightlife industry and the police. It was then also decided that concrete partnerships as well as the different responsibilities and intentions had to be specified and laid down in Covenants (van Liempt and van Aalst, 2012). In 2002, 75 out of 163 middle-sized Dutch cities with a nightlife district had signed a Safe Nightlife Covenant (Algemene Rekenkamer, 2002). An evaluation of these Covenants in 2002 showed that the issues laid down in them differed considerably and that hardly any binding agreements were made. Only a minority of the Covenants, for example, mentioned the need for evaluation or follow-up and in hardly any Covenants were concrete consequences mentioned in case of failure. The evaluation showed that the main achievement of the Safe Nightlife Covenants was the improvement of communication between the various parties involved. Increasing familiarity with each other's tasks and duties had improved the building up of trust, in particular between the police and the nightlife industry (Algemene Rekenkamer, 2002). Very little is known, however, about how these collaborations work out on the ground and what the possible power struggles or conflicting interests between actors within these networks are.

Safe Nightlife Policies and Assemblage Thinking

Engaging with these general observations when it comes to Safe Nightlife, we argue that the current surveillance and policing of nightlife districts in the Netherlands can be seen as the outcome of distributed 'assemblages' (DeLanda, 2006; Deleuze and Guatarri, 1987; Haggerty and Ericson, 2000). Interviews with different actors involved in Safe Nightlife collaborations in Utrecht and Rotterdam (the Netherlands) show how differences in the emergence and set up of these networks, conflicting interests and different power distributions between actors play a considerable role in shaping collaborations on the ground.

The term 'assemblage' is increasingly used in a wide range of scholarship and has become a familiar part of the lexicon of contemporary social-spatial theory (Anderson and McFarlane, 2011). We think that the term fits our case study for various reasons. First, assemblage is often used to redefine the socio-spatial in terms of the composition of *diverse* elements into some form of socio-spatial formation (Anderson and McFarlane, 2011). This notion of the assemblage as a collective whose properties emerge from the relations between its heterogeneous parts—human bodies, but also technological artifacts, codes, built structures and even knowledge and ideas (DeLanda, 2006; Deleuze and Guatarri, 1987)—fits the situation of Safe Nightlife policies very well. CCTV cameras and other *non-human* elements such as smart technology that makes it easier to profile 'risky' consumers are as much part of these policies as the 'traditional' police officer on the ground.

Secondly, apart from the form, *formation* is considered an important element of assemblage. Rather than considering Safe Nightlife Policies as one-size-fits-all, we argue that specific relations are formed, take hold and endure within these collaborations. Moreover, they may even change or be disrupted. Following Deleuze and Guattari (1987), any assemblage is characterised by both stability and *instability*. This ability to change allows us to attend to how disparate activities become entangled with one another and, at the same time, have potential agency beyond these interactions. It also makes it possible to study the *process*

of assembling in specific local contexts. Thirdly, the *assembling* does not only vary over space, or within the assemblage, it also changes over time. Diverse elements are drawn together at a particular conjuncture at a specific time in space. In nightlife districts, collaborations and the presence of surveillance bodies are, for example, clearly more intense at specific hours of the night (see also Schwanen *et al*., 2012). Assemblage thus offers more opportunities for a specific and dynamic form of relational thinking that offers space to understand the play between stability and change and order and disruption (McFarlane and Anderson, 2011).

Another reason why the framework fits this case study well is the specific reading of power within assemblage thinking. Power is read as multiple co-existence, as plurality in transformation. This means that the linkages between the components of assemblages are not necessarily logic nor static. As DeLanda (2006) puts it, power relations may only be *contingently obligatory*. It is for example not necessarily immediately logical and obvious for nightlife venue owners to collaborate in Safe Nightlife arrangements with the police. Both actors, for example, have opposing interests in serving and/or policing 'potential consumers'. This articulation of specific formations of various elements by relations of exteriority involves an important property of assemblages in the context of Safe Nightlife. In studying Safe Nightlife policies, it is important to know about specific assemblage distributions, not only the physical relations and collaborations, but also the languages, words and meaning that are used in order to create these assemblages.

Methods

Following our theoretical assemblage approach, an empirical focus on how these spatial forms and processes are assembled differently in various places, how they work in different ways to open up or close down possibilities and how they change over time is required (see also Anderson *et al*., 2012). By looking into local variation and power distribution within the specific set-ups of Safe Nightlife assemblages, this article will move beyond a general analysis/evaluation of Safe Nightlife policies and/or typology of the different actors involved. In line with Peck and Theodore (2010), we argue that the actors involved in Safe Nightlife policies are

> sociologically complex actors, located in (shifting) organizational and political fields, whose identities and professional trajectories are often bound up with the policy positions and fixes that they espouse (Peck and Theodore, 2010, p. 170).

Translating this position into actual research methods requires a lot of sensitivity from researchers towards competing interests, possible rivalries between actors and an up-to-date knowledge of political circumstances in specific contexts.

We have decided to analyse Safe Nightlife policies' practices in two different cities in the Netherlands: Rotterdam and Utrecht. Rotterdam is the second-largest city in the Netherlands. With the largest harbour in Europe, it is traditionally the most industrial city in the Netherlands and it is currently undergoing a transformation with the promotion of a vibrant nightlife and many festivals. The city has a population of around 600,000 and hosts the highest percentage of youth and immigrants in the Netherlands.[1] Another important characteristic of the city is that the local political landscape has shifted drastically in the past decade with a populist party (Leefbaar Rotterdam) changing the city's strong socio-democratic tradition (van Liempt and Veldboer, 2009). A farewell to

'permissive multicultural politics' and a tough approach towards 'problematic immigrant areas' were promised through a policy of zero tolerance that for example included ethnic registration of problem youths, stop and search actions in specific problem areas and since 2003 the introduction of so-called City Marines (*Stadsmarinieren*) who have the unique power and the financial means to solve concrete problems and to manage specific unsafe areas. City Marines are strongly result-driven and are responsible for specific areas.

The City Marine responsible for the area where the main nightlife district is located is actively involved in implementing Safe Nightlife measures, currently renamed as Safe and Healthy Nightlife measures, with a strong focus on reducing alcohol and drug use. Apart from stop and search programmes, other preventive measures have been taken in the nightlife area, such as temporary alcohol bans for the entire district (once during an important football cup final and several times during events). Rotterdam's unique position with regard to strict safety measures around festivals can be explained by the tragic incident in the summer of 2009 when a Dance beach party in Hoek van Holland (Rotterdam's beach) got seriously out of hand. Football hooligans attacked the police and a police officer shot a young man and several other visitors got wounded in this situation of panic (Muller *et al.*, 2009).

Utrecht is the fourth-largest city in the Netherlands with a population of around 310,000. It is a historic city and like Rotterdam hosts a young population, mainly due to the presence of a large university. For its size, Utrecht has a high number of cultural events and its nightlife facilities are clustered in the historic part of the city. Utrecht's local political landscape is a coalition between the Social Democrats, the Social Liberal Democrats and the Green Party. As a city, it is much more reluctant to implement safety measures than Rotterdam.

Between October 2010 and March 2011, 22 in-depth interviews were held with different actors involved in Safe Nightlife Collaborations in both Utrecht and Rotterdam. We interviewed three police officers, three local policy-makers, three city administrators, two persons working for local anti-discrimination organisations, two nightlife venue owners, four national policy-makers and four researchers/consultants in the field of Safe Nightlife. The aim of these interviews was to understand the specific positions of various actors within Safe Nightlife assemblages, how they relate to and collaborate with each other, and their underlying motives for participating. In order to try to grasp particular practices, we also conducted night-time observations. These observations (conducted by the author herself and two PhD students involved in the research project) have been extremely important for contextualising the data collected (see also Schwanen *et al.*, 2012). We also attended a meeting in Utrecht where the evaluation of the collective pub and club ban was officially presented. At this meeting, many nightlife venue owners were present as well as police officers and city administrators involved in Safe Nightlife policies. In Rotterdam, we attended one of the Safe Nightlife meetings organised by the City Marine. These meetings were important to get a feel for how collaborations between the various actors work and are performed in official arenas.

Safe Nightlife Agreements around the Stadhuisplein Area in Rotterdam

The nightlife district we selected in Rotterdam is the Stadhuisplein area. This is the largest nightlife area of the city and

attracts the highest number of visitors, but is not the only area in Rotterdam where one can find night-time entertainment. Rotterdam has dispersed nightlife locations. Other famous areas (the Kop van Zuid, de Oude Haven, de Nieuwe Binnenweg) are more geared towards students and the upper middle class. The Stadhuisplein area is a relatively small square in front of the town hall with a high concentration of bars and one nightclub (all owned by two entrepreneurs). Our night-time observations show that the area attracts a young, lower-middle-class and ethnically diverse crowd (Schwanen *et al.*, 2012). While crossing the square, one is watched by 14 public CCTV cameras (van Schijndel *et al.*, 2010) and all the bars have their own CCTV cameras, bouncers and metal detectors at the entrance. During the Safe Nightlife meeting in Rotterdam, the City Marine responsible for the Stadhuisplein area referred to the "permanent combat readiness" of the square "that might not be necessary for every single night and is maybe a bit overdone".

The physical appearance of the Stadhuisplein area does, however, reflect the city's political shift from a strong socio-democratic tradition to a populist and zero-tolerance approach. The former (liberal) major of Rotterdam who is currently Minister of Security and Justice, Ivo Opstelten, nicknamed the 'Dutch Giuliani', was one of the key players in promoting a policy of zero tolerance in Rotterdam and in the Netherlands. Many other Dutch cities see Rotterdam as an example and the city is often described as a laboratory for new safety measures. The city's CCTV project, for example, is unique and is favoured by many other Dutch mayors and city administrators. Apart from being the city with the largest number of publicly installed CCTV cameras (van Schijndel *et al.*, 2010), it is the only city in the Netherlands with 24/7 live watching of the footage. Peck and Theodore (2010) point out that there is a clear tendency to associate particular policy models with places. Rotterdam is a good example of a city known for its restrictive safety policies and their efficient implementation.

The first Covenant for Safe Nightlife in Rotterdam was signed in 2000 in the context of the Euro 2000 cup and preceding football riots. The mayor, the chief of police, the chief public prosecutor and a representative of the Foundation for the Promotion of Stadhuisplein (Stichting Promotie Stadhuisplein) all signed this first Covenant, which contained agreements on increasing safety in the square and explicitly named the responsibilities and tasks of each actor involved (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2000). The signing of the first Covenant went hand-in-hand with the installation of the first public CCTV camera in Rotterdam. Another very concrete result of the Covenant was the installation of a special police team for Friday and Saturday nights. This team consists of 13 policemen, usually in yellow reflective vests, and two mounted police (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2000). These police officers are in direct contact with the control room. Bouncers who work the doors of nightclubs and bars are not in direct contact with the operators, but do have a special phone line so that they can communicate directly with the police.

Since 2009, the special police officers patrolling the Stadhuisplein area at the weekend have been accompanied by two youth stewards (van Sluis and van Rossum, 2011). These young people, who are part of a city-wide reintegration programme that helps young people to start a career in the security industry, help to prevent trouble and reduce potential conflicts. The fact that they are young themselves and are not police is believed to ease contact with clubbers. They are described by the city council as "those who put out a fire before it starts"

(van Sluis and van Rossum, 2011, p. 31). They are however in close contact with the police and, when things get out of hand, the police can intervene quickly. Rotterdam is the only city in the Netherlands that has youth stewards patrolling nightlife districts. Funding for these stewards is however under discussion in the 'result-driven' local political arena. According to the City Marine, their small numbers are not achieving significant changes, both in terms of visibility or in reducing crime figures. This fits the more general observation that politicians, managers as well as police officers involved in Safe Nightlife are more in favour of repressive than preventive measures (van Helst, 2009).

Safe Nightlife Agreements in Utrecht

In Utrecht, nightlife is predominantly oriented towards students and young urban professionals. Most bars and discos even have student membership only. Our night-time observations showed that not every bar has bouncers at the door and that there is not one metal detector in town. Hence, the physical appearance of the nightlife district is very different from Rotterdam. It was also remarkable that there was a clear underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in town at night (Schwanen *et al.*, 2012). This can be the result of discrimination at the door (see also Boogaarts-de Bruijn, 2011) and/or a mismatch between the clubbing preferences of ethnic minority youth and the specific supply of Utrecht's night-time economy.

Utrecht's first Safe Nightlife Covenant was signed in 2002 in the context of increasing local violence related to going out. Its aim has been described as

> to make sure that every partner in its own way makes a case for a safe nightlife environment and that by doing so levels of disorder and violence will decrease (Gemeente Utrecht, 2002, p. 3).

One year earlier, in 2001, the first public CCTV camera in Utrecht had been installed in the nightlife district. Increasing levels of clubbing-related violence were the trigger, although it must be said that the numbers are considerably lower than, for example, in Rotterdam. The city of Utrecht implemented strict regulations from the start as to when CCTV images were watched live. In 2008, however, after a local incident where a student got severely beaten up during a night out, the watching hours were prolonged. This was in contrast with the dominant discourse and shows how the process of assembling can be interrupted by local incidents.

Just as in Rotterdam, Utrecht introduced a special police team to patrol the nightlife district. In contrast to Rotterdam, this police team works on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights as Thursday is a very popular night in Utrecht for students to go out. This again shows local variation within the constellation of specific surveillance assemblages. The police officers on the ground are in direct contact with the CCTV operators, which has improved the policing of nightlife districts considerably. Police officers in both Rotterdam and Utrecht are very positive about these extra 'eyes on the street' and the direct communication between operators and police working on the ground.

Even though the literature stresses that camera surveillance is not very effective in nightlife areas where a lot of unpredictable violence occurs as a result of alcohol and drug consumption (Gosepa *et al.*, 2011) interviews with the police in both Rotterdam and Utrecht show that the technical possibility of following people in public space can sometimes help to prevent aggressive situations later on in the evening

> Last year we had a large group of students, you know these guys with ties and all, they were pushing each other and yelling, operators saw that. So I go there and ask them are you from Utrecht? Well no, Nijmegen, so I say Ok, let's introduce each other. We are from the police and we have several options to offer you if you do not behave. If you do behave, we don't see you anymore and we wish you a nice evening. Then we leave. And I have told them there is CCTV operating in the area and that we are watching them: It sometimes happens that three seconds later you are being called, you can go back because they have misbehaved after you have turned your back. Yes, that is nice, that is really beautiful! (police officer, Utrecht).

This example shows how concrete collaborations between various agents of control, in this case police officers on the ground and CCTV operators in the control room, can be effective in terms of policing. If we take a closer look, however, it appears that there are also tensions over responsibilities within Safe Nightlife Collaborations between the operators and police officers in nightlife districts.

Tensions over Responsibilities

In Utrecht, police officers working in the nightlife district pointed out that there are also tensions between police on the ground and operators behind their screens. Most of the time these conflicts are about setting priorities.

> Sometimes it drives me crazy when these operators send you out there to fine someone for public urinating, and this happens all the time. It makes you wonder whether this is police work? (police officer, Utrecht).

Unpublished data from the police in Utrecht show that CCTV operators observe very few incidents in Utrecht's nightlife districts. Disorder-related crimes (public drunkenness and public urination) are the most often reported crimes from the control room to the police on the ground. Only around a fifth of these incidents have actually resulted in arrests, fines or verbal corrections, which indicates large numbers of 'low' priority cases. As the quote shows, this may cause irritation amongst police officers on the ground in Utrecht. Rotterdam is different because it has much higher incidents of crime and less time for 'low' priority cases.

Symbolic Measures and Power Distributions

As well as CCTV, a safety measure that is very popular in Dutch nightlife districts and which follows a British example, is anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) (van Stokkom, 2009). Under these orders, people can be excluded from public spaces such as clubs and pubs. Apart from the individual bans which have been issued by pub and club owners for years, it is now (since 2009) also possible in the Netherlands to be banned from various clubs and pubs through a *collective* pub and club ban. The difference between this and an individual ban is that personal data are stored in a database to which both the police and nightclub owners have access. Utrecht was the first city in the Netherlands officially to make its Collective Pub and Club Ban part of its Covenant on Safe Nightlife in 2010. After some criticism by the Dutch Data Protection Authority about the use and storage of video of visitors to nightlife districts, the city of Utrecht came up with a special Protocol for the Collective Pub and Club ban which is now authorised by the Dutch Data Protection Authority. Bouncers are informed and shown the pictures of offenders and their personal data during

meetings with the police, but they do not have access to the database while working the door as this information is not supposed to be made public. Observations in nightlife districts, however, revealed that there was at least one club where bouncers made photocopies of identity cards of 'troublemakers' and kept these copies in a file to make sure they would not get in again. In Canada, these informal practices have already been institutionalised. Bouncers scan identity documents electronically at the door and store a set of identifying personal details on their own *private* database (Haggerty and Tokar, 2012). In the Netherlands, collective pub and club bans can (still) only be issued in the presence of the police. This requires administration as well as collaboration between the different actors involved in Safe Nightlife. Looking into the practices around collective pub and club bans, conflicting interests between the various partners and different reactions in both cities came to the fore.

In Utrecht, the city council is very proud of the collective pub and club ban as a safety measure and actively communicates the fact that they were the first to have introduced a measure "which really keeps the troublemakers out" (interview with city administrator, Utrecht). This specific language and the communication around this safety measure are crucial in the process of *assembling* the assemblage. A special website has been launched where one can find a list of all the 61 entrepreneurs who collaborate in this programme.[2] And the city council has been very active in all sorts of ways to persuade entrepreneurs to participate in this programme.

Interviews with nightlife venue owners in Utrecht, however, revealed that they are not necessarily convinced of the added value of the collective pub and club ban. First, the administrative procedure takes up too much time, whereas in the heat of the moment bouncers and/or venue owners are happy to guide someone out of the club without too much hassle. Filling in a form, asking for a signature and having this person wait at the door seems like a lot of trouble. Second, there does not seem to be a real added value for venue owners because they already have the authority to reject people. Why would they bother rejecting somebody on behalf of another club? Most of the entrepreneurs support the collective pub and club ban because they think it is a good development that the city council wants to invest in nightlife districts. As mentioned before, cities have grown more and more dependent on the nightlife industry for their contribution to an attractive and popular night-time economy that attracts many visitors and creates jobs (Chatterton and Hollands, 2002; Lovatt and O'Connor, 1995; Roberts and Eldridge, 2009; van Liempt and van Aalst, 2012). A good relationship with the nightlife industry for the city council is thus crucial.

Moreover, a good relationship with the city council is considered very important by nightlife venue owners. Needless to say, nightlife venue owners are dependent on city administrators for their licences and permits. The possibility of having one's licence revoked is a great driving force for the nightlife industry to be involved in Safe Nightlife collaborations. Meetings with the city council were described by nightlife entrepreneurs as "dreadfully boring", "super slow", "they talk for hours and then nothing is decided". Yet at the same time it was made clear that meeting on a regular basis with city council representatives is an important incentive for participating in Safe Nightlife meetings, not only in Utrecht but also in Rotterdam.

> Communication on a regular basis with the police and the city council is crucial, there is always time at the end of meetings to ask questions and it is important that they know your face (bar owner, Rotterdam).

Efforts to reduce crime and disorder can thus be strategically aligned with the bottom-line orientation of making a profit.

Public and Private Partnerships within Policing

As well as collaborations between the local state and the nightlife industry, it is important to take a closer look at collaborations on the ground between the public police and the private security sector. Interviews in both cities revealed that public–private collaborations in nightlife districts had sometimes resulted in improved communication and more sympathy towards each others tasks and duties within the partnership. One police officer in Utrecht, for example, explained

> Today it will not happen anymore that on a busy night when a customer gets beaten up the police come around and the doorman has to come with him. This only happens in extreme cases. The police now understand that there will be a public order problem when the bouncer is removed from the door. And he understands that this action communicates to the public that the bouncer is wrong, whereas we actually do not know what happened. So this is what we have learnt by collaborating more closely over the years (police officer, Utrecht).

Most of the time, however, suspicion towards doormen from the side of public authorities overruled this seemingly equal collaboration. This problem of status and integrity that the private security industry is facing has been noted by many other researchers before (for example, Hobbs *et al.*, 2003; Nabben *et al.*, 2011; van Steden, 2007; van Steden and Nalla, 2010). While talking to public actors involved in Safe Nightlife Collaborations in Utrecht and Rotterdam, it became clear that they were not very happy about the increasing presence of private security personnel in nightlife districts. They were depicted as "corrupt gangsters" devoid of conventional ethics. In the context of Safe Nightlife polices public policing bodies are however 'forced' to work more closely with the private policing bodies. On the ground, this unequal position between the two becomes clear through various examples. First, the limited rights door staff have to police public space are not in balance with the responsibility that they are given in the new context of collaborating with the police. Bouncers are exposed to violence but they do not have the authority to handcuff or arrest aggressive visitors, as is for example the case in Sweden. Moreover we found, in line with Smith (2007), that the door staff's view is that the police often come late, do not always give priority to violence related to going out and have a misguided view of nightlife reality. A nightlife venue owner in Utrecht said

> Look, if the most important conclusion of these collaborations is that bouncers and nightlife venue owners need to call the police when someone is making trouble at the door, then it is really frustrating to see that the police do not take these calls seriously and let us wait. I mean it needs to come from both sides (nightlife venue owner, Utrecht).

Second, bouncers in the Netherlands are not in direct communication with CCTV operators, as is for example the case in the UK (Smith, 2007), but police officers are. And third is the lack of communication and meetings door staff have with city councils when it comes to new Safe Nightlife policy initiatives. A study of bouncers in Utrecht, for example, showed that they were hardly ever invited to meetings at the city hall and that almost no one working the door in Utrecht knew about the collective pub and

club ban (van Veen, 2011). These unequal power relations within the 'assemblage' to a large extent shape collaborations between the public and private police on the ground.

Political and Personal Commitment

While interviewing *all* actors involved in Safe Nightlife Collaborations in two different cities in the Netherlands, it became clear that the failure or success of these collaborations often strongly depends on political commitment to Safe Nightlife policies. The city of Utrecht has freed one administrator to work full-time on Safe Nightlife projects and there is a budget to spend on brochures and websites to communicate the city's Safe Nightlife policy. This indicates that, as well as being an instrument to fight crime and/or reduce disorder, Safe Nightlife Collaborations also have a more symbolic meaning and act as part of Utrecht's overall city marketing strategy. In November 2011, when the first evaluation of the city's collective pub and club ban was presented, this political momentum became very clear. The evaluation report was officially handed over to the mayor in a bar in Utrecht's central nightlife district and during the mayor's speech the unique relationship the city council has with their nightlife industry was stressed repeatedly. Nightlife venue owners were there to show their commitment to this instrument and the police were praised for their good work.

Apart from political commitment, it seems that individual persons within the assemblage can make a big change. In Utrecht one police officer was specifically referred to by almost everybody we interviewed as a key person responsible for the 'smooth' collaborations

> For one and a half years there has been a police officer in the city centre who is really good. Since he has been around it is much easier for the nightlife industry. He is a very nice person to work with … He is calm, he is pleasant to talk to, he sends you an email at Christmas, he is a very relaxed dude, he knows how to communicate (nightlife venue owner, Utrecht).

When we asked this police officer about collaborations between different actors involved in Safe Nightlife, we learnt that he has put a lot of effort into reducing mistrust and changing prejudices.

> When I started this job, collaborations with doormen were not good. There was a clear we/them attitude, no contact at all and a lot of prejudice towards each other which made it impossible to collaborate. It was a little bit like doormen are at the door, they do their thing and when they go wrong, we get them! From the moment I started working in this job I wanted to keep in mind that doormen are our partners because they are important key players in violence related to going out. Not in negative terms, but in signalling it. So I started by acknowledging them as partners, which was step one. Then I talked to all of the doormen. I started with the owners of clubs, I asked them what is your policy, the idea behind it, and then I went a step down and talked to the boys who are working at the door … It really improved the situation. They now call us when there is a fight at the Neude [one of the main squares] instead of only seeing their own doorstep.

In the city of Rotterdam, things worked out differently. For a long time there has been little political commitment to Safe Nightlife policies. During interviews at the city hall it was mentioned several times that "no-one knew where the Safe Nightlife Covenant was", that "it dates from the Stone Age and that they were still looking for it". This cynical attitude towards Covenants, pieces of

paper and guidelines fits the pragmatic, no-nonsense and results-driven culture of the city. One city administrator responsible for Safe Nightlife, for example, said

> The Covenant on Safe Nightlife is often presented as the Egg of Columbus but with violence related to going out it is more important to go out on the street and do something (city administrator, Rotterdam).

The City Marine (Stadsmarinier) responsible for the Stadhuisplein area, however, recently picked up the topic, freed resources and is drafting a new Covenant on Safe and Healthy Nightlife for the Stadhuisplein. Since 2010, health (and, more particularly, alcohol control) has become the new official focus of Safe Nightlife programmes in the Netherlands. With this new agenda and political prioritising, Safe Nightlife has re-entered the scene in Rotterdam. A Covenant is now drafted in collaboration with the city council, police, nightlife venue owners, private security companies, the public prosecutor as well as the community health service to give more weight to the renewed focus on alcohol control. These examples show that collaborations within Safe Nightlife assemblages are extremely vulnerable. If a key person changes jobs, is no longer committed, or budgetary changes are implemented, the whole assemblage can break down. It also shows that the language used, the common goal and the legitimisations of these assemblages are very much influenced by politics and thus are truly dynamic.

Conclusion

In line with Deleuze and Guatarri (1987), Haggerty and Ericson (2000) and DeLanda (2006), we acknowledge an emerging surveillant 'assemblage' in urban nightlife districts. We argue that the acknowledgment that Safe Nightlife networks consist of heterogeneous elements (both human as well as non-human) that are assembled in a specific way in various spatial and temporal settings and that collaboration may be only contingently obligatory (DeLanda, 2006), resulting in possible internal tensions about the discourses and practices of surveillance at night, makes the framework of assemblages fit this case study very well. Moreover, earlier analyses of Safe Nightlife policies in the Netherlands have shown that these policies are very much designed as 'one size fits all'. In this article, we have shown that local contextual variations such as different safety issues, variation in political landscapes and personal engagement (or disengagement) shape the emergence of Safe Nightlife Collaborations considerably and need more attention in order to understand what is really going on in cities' nightlife districts.

Interviews with actors involved in Safe Nightlife collaborations show that Safe Nightlife Covenants where responsibilities are laid down on paper do not grasp the complexity of real-time collaborations and that in-depth empirical research is necessary to grasp the complexities behind these collaborations. On the surface, the principal structural aim of Safe Nightlife Collaborations is the maintenance of order, but the interactional day-to-day (or night-to-night) configuration of Safe Nightlife networks is riddled with ambiguity and contrasting roles. The underlying goals and hidden agendas are often overlooked when Safe Nightlife Collaborations are discussed. They are however to a large extent responsible for the outcomes of the collaborations.

A specific difficulty with collaborations on the ground is the difference between public- and private-sector employees with regard to their levels of accountability, priorities and the unequal power distribution within the Safe Nightlife assemblages. Actual working relations are often hampered by

interpersonal conflict as a result of misunderstandings and a lack of trust in one another's accounts and definitions of the situation. This again shows that the assemblage is not a closed system. Haggerty and Ericson (2000) in a similar way of reasoning pointed out that speaking of *the* surveillant assemblage risks fostering the impression that we are concerned with a stable entity with a fixed boundary, whereas reality shows that the linkages are *ad hoc*, locally institutionalised and always under external threat. In sum, this study has shown that it cannot be taken for granted that integral safety policies, such as Safe Nightlife policies, will be functionally efficacious. Rather, they are works in progress which involve politics and power struggles. Identifying, acknowledging and carefully analysing specific instances of failure within this urban policy-making process is needed to come up with good governance strategies.

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Notes

1. See: www.cos.rotterdam.nl.
2. See: http://www.ontzeggingutrecht.nl/nl/aangesloten/3-aangesloten_horeca.

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