



Response

Drinking stories: A time in space and a space in time



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Tutenges and Sandberg (2013) have written an enlightening article about the role drinking stories play in the identity construction of young Danish people on holiday in Sunny Beach, Bulgaria. Their remit is the micro-social-subjective importance young people allocate to drinking lots of alcohol to retain a 'repertoire of personal drinking stories'. In other studies, as well as my own work (see all those studies listed in Tutenges & Sandberg, 2013), I have come to find they are absolutely correct in this respect. The personal motivation to seek out risqué behaviour – regardless of whether it results in positive or negative consequences – is of immense social importance for these young people. However, though detailed in this respect, I would ask that they consider two additional elements in their argument. These areas of contention relate to two concepts: (1) the *space in time* for drinking stories; by this I mean how the 'holiday' is conceived as a particular time to exaggerate attitudes to consumption, live 'the good life to the maximum' by taking advantage of what is on offer in the resort with the aim of going home with stories to tell; and (2) the *time in space*; by this I mean how the space and its commercial attributes facilitate the behaviours and therefore act as an active enabler for potential story telling.

My first point here is that the article doesn't seem to show how these Danish people have come to value the 'holiday' in Sunny Beach (the *time in space* respectively) as a possible catalyst for the pressure to consume alcohol as well as to create drinking stories. I would ask 'is what these young Danes do on holiday to the same degree as what they do at home?' Probably not. Is there an increased pressure to create more extreme stories on holiday? Probably, yes. This firstly suggests to me that this *time in space* – the holiday in the wider structure of their everyday home life – has particular relevance for the construction of the drinking story. The 'holiday' is a time in space to celebrate because it has come to be constructed to embody the departure of home life, routines, and reputations, and the moral suspension of everyday behavioural protocols. On holiday, anything goes... and this is clear in the narratives Tutenges and Sandberg present in the article. However, at home, anything doesn't go, so is there a difference in story-telling ambitions? I say this

because the pressure to 'get new experiences' and 'create stories' on holiday are collectively and personally raised and, very often, new forms of behaviour become the order of the day: behaviours which are extreme and often contravene personal boundaries and contract collective interests. This might suggest that the story-telling value is different and needs to be acknowledged because of the specific *time in space* attached to the holiday in the wider context of everyday home life.

This relates to my second point about the *space in time*; these young people undoubtedly construct the pressure and resulting kudos for story-telling about the consumption of alcohol among themselves but it is as much them as it is the symbolisms of the holiday resort and its players which determine drinking events and their narrative outcomes: or the space (resort) in this time (holiday). On holiday, young people not only have elevated attitudes to the consumption of alcohol but anything on offer: drugs, food, and, unfortunately women become seen as potential consumerables. The overt celebration, and active and aggressive endorsement of all this consumption on holiday is sold by corporations and companies and the pressure to make money manifests itself in the promise of 'experiences'. So the people selling bar crawl tickets, 241 club deals, booze cruise tickets, sex, and drugs endorse the idea that by buying these 'experiences', the holidaymakers will get some sort of 'story' to go along with it. They do this by providing the holidaymakers ideologically-motivated stories about drinking/drug/sex escapades to accompany the 'experiences' for sale in the hope they will sell more tickets (a booze cruise sold with the promise of 'sex' or 'pussy' for example). However, very often the 'experience' falls short of what was promised yet the punters are under the illusion it was all worth it. Does this ideology therefore undermine the legitimacy of the drinking story?

Reference

- Tutenges, S., & Sandberg, S. (2013). 'Intoxicating stories': The characteristics, contexts and implications of drinking stories among Danish youth. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 24, 538–544.

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