Structural violence, capabilities and the experience of alcohol in Cape Town.

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STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE, CAPABILITIES AND THE EXPERIENCE OF ALCOHOL IN CAPE TOWN.

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In this article, I explore how liquor acts as a medium through which the effects of structural violence are diffracted and become embodied as personal and collective risk in Cape Town, South Africa. Drawing on focus group respondents' experiences of alcohol and its consequences, I argue that: (1) Risky alcohol consumption emerges as form of coping, escapism and pleasure under situations of structural violence. (2) Drinking practices and their consequences contribute to and reinforce broader conditions of structural violence. (3) Alcohol-related harms (e.g. violence, crime, injury, poor health) and the settings in which they unfold (e.g. townships, informal settlements, and unlicensed drinking venues) have tended to dominate policy interventions, rather than the very structural conditions that engender them. In working through these arguments, I make novel empirical and conceptual contributions to the study of alcohol within geography as well as reflecting on the multiple tensions at work within South African liquor policy.

Introduction

In urban South Africa, alcohol and its multiple harms represent a significant and multidimensional urban governance problem. Liquor consumption contributes to the country's substantial double burden of infectious and non-communicable disease (Parry et al., 2011, violence and injury (Seedat et al. 2009) and HIV/AIDS risk (Chersich and Rees, 2010). Alcohol is also an integral component and reflection of wider economic and social development challenges (Ataguba and Alaba, 2012). Any attempt to understand this multi-dimensionality thus requires eliding the quantitative domains inhabited by epidemiology and public health (Babor et al., 2010) with the qualitative granularity of social science writing on the everyday experiences, meanings and value of liquor (Borovoy, 2001; Garcia, 2008; Prussing, 2007; Rogers, 2005). In so doing, health reseach needs to examine 'the many political and social determinants of health that make people vulnerable to disease and injury' (Biehl and Petryna, 2013, 3). This perspective is central to the analysis of how, in the urban contexts explored in this paper; alcohol is implicated in a 'pathogenic social spiral' in which already-risky lives beget further risk-taking (Nguyen and Peschard, 2003: 464). This "spiral"

forms part of a broader landscape of what Paul Farmer (2004) terms 'structural violence' or those 'social arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm's way' (Farmer, et al. 2006: e448) and that are usually 'beyond [their] control' (Nguyen and Peschard, 2003: e449). Thus far, structural violence has mainly been used to explain the genesis of human suffering by scholars within the Critical Studies of Global Health field (Farmer et al., 2013; Kleinman, 2010). However, it also has clear conceptual synergies with geographical work on (in)equity (Corburn and Cohen, 2012; Pearce, 2012; Pearce and Dorling, 2009), lived experience (Cutchin, 1999; Valentine et al., 2012) and urban political ecology (Jackson and Neely, 2014; Lawhon, 2012).

Structural violence, Farmer argues, stymies the exercise of individual and collective agency, thus reinforcing the multiple inequalities that are both its cause and effect (2004: 307). In this paper therefore, alcohol is taken as a fascinating example through which to explore the effects of structural violence on everyday lives, not least for the ways in which it speaks directly to individual and collective vulnerabilities, or what Sen (1999) has termed 'unfreedoms'. Within the context of development and public health policies in South Africa, alcohol is a particularly fraught object of governance as it has long offered a means for individuals to realize greater freedoms, most frequently through its small-scale retailing (Herrick, 2013). On the flip side, alcohol's negative externalities may be rendered more pernicious by the lack of substantive freedoms (e.g. low life expectancies, HIV, unemployment) accessible to many South Africans. In this sense and in Sen's language, the everyday experiences of alcohol and its consumption may undermine people's 'functioning' or their ability to lead lives of value. Structural violence and the Capabilities Approach, as well as emergent concern with the nature of 'structural vulnerability' (Quesada et al., 2011), further highlight the impact of alcohol on poor communities as a clear issue of social justice

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(Venkatapuram, 2009). Alcohol has yet to be explicitly examined in relation to structural violence, despite its sale and consumption in South Africa invoking the same issues of rights, power and agency under conditions of inequity that motivates calls for a "biosocial" approach to affliction (Farmer, 2004: 19, see also Gandy, 2005).

To explore these ideas, this paper makes three arguments: First, rather than evidence of individual deviance or "cultural obstacles" (Biehl and Petryna, 2013: 15), risky alcohol consumption in the poor urban communities studied emerges as form of coping, escapism and pleasure under situations of structural violence that include gender and socioeconomic inequality, residential segregation, unemployment and persistent inequities in law enforcement. Second, drinking practices and their consequences *contribute to* and *reinforce* broader conditions of structural violence which can have further complex, intended and unintended impacts. And third, these *impacts* (e.g. violence, crime, injury, poor health) and their *settings* (e.g. townships, informal settlements, unlicensed drinking venues or 'shebeens') have tended to be the central object of policy interventions, rather than the structural conditions that engender them. This approach may well be ineffective in reducing risk and vulnerability, facilitating coping and, therefore, enhancing freedoms. To explore these contentions, I first turn to the intersections of structural violence, vulnerabilities and the Capabilities Approach to theorize the complex set of problems posed by alcohol and its regulation in Cape Town, before offering a brief methodological note. I then analyse the findings of a series of focus group according to themes that respond to the article's three arguments: the factors that drive drinking; the experiences and harms of alcohol and respondents' suggestions for how best to unravel the pathogenic social spiral perpetuated by liquor. In exploring respondents' embodied encounters with liquor and how they reflect (and are reflective of) the broader inequities that pattern daily life and life chances, I hope to

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uncover how suffering unfolds in relation to alcohol use and abuse and, therefore, contribute new empirical and geographical dimensions to both the study of structural violence and its relationship to alcohol.

Alcohol, structural violence, vulnerabilities and capabilities in South Africa

Over the past decade, Michael Marmot and colleagues have argued for a shift in attention from the aetiology of disease to the 'more fundamental structures of social hierarchy and the socially determined conditions in which people grow, live, work, and age' (Marmot 2007: 1153). The Capabilities Approach has been central to work on the social determinants of health in its concern with the 'social ontology of [the] causes' (Venkatapuram 2009: 225) of the inequitable distribution of poor health and its broader social, economic and political consequences. Here health represents a 'meta-capability... to achieve a cluster of capabilities to be and do things that reflect a life worthy of equal human dignity' (Venkatapuram 2012: 9). This holistic perspective is valuable (if under-explored) with respect to the study of behavioural risks such as drinking alcohol, for which acute and chronic health outcomes are set alongside equally pernicious social and economic ones (e.g. absenteeism, violence and crime) which are often the more powerful policy motivators. However, when capability deprivation is deemed to emerge from 'the lack of opportunities to choose from and a poorly developed opportunity to choose' (Leßmann 2011: 457), there needs to be greater recognition of how and why people's choices are often preconfigured by the distal pathogenic effects of inequality. In turn, this deeply problematises the assumption of individual "choice" (e.g. to consume or sell liquor) and individual agency that tends to characterise neoliberal health policy (Leßmann, 2011).

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In South Africa, alcohol is conceptualized as a problem along two primary axes: (1) how, where, when and by whom it is retailed; and (2) the nature and consequences of its consumption. Farmer's (1996, 266) assertion that the genesis of structural violence is 'historically deep and geographically broad' is important to note here. For, as multiple historians have made clear (Mager 1999; Rogerson 1992; Willis 2005), the roots of alcohol as an *escape from* and r*esistance to* structural violence, its effects and experiences are long-standing and deep. Alcohol is thus rendered more complex in that it can also act as an effective *tool* of structural violence in which access to or rights over liquor become, in a sense, a medium through which the effects of structural violence are diffracted and become emplaced as personal and collective risk. Indeed, as Fiona Ross has forcefully argued in her detailed ethnographic engagement with one of Cape Town's poor coloured communities, 'alcohol use deadens the experience of structural violence, but enlivens the possibilities of personal violence' (2010: 29). That alcohol is used to cope, but also enhances vulnerabilities has its origins in a South African history of liquor regulation that is entwined with state projects of containment and control.

The contemporary urban retail landscape of liquor and its regulation is a clear legacy of colonial and apartheid restrictions over the right to buy and consume 'white liquor' among Africans (Mager 2004; Rogerson and Hart, 1996). As Wilfried Schärf has argued, not only did 'the state's liquor interests [form] an integral part of the functioning and success of apartheid policy' (1985a: 53), but the distribution of liquor among non-whites was 'a conscious instrument of class control' (1985a: 57). This socio-spatial legacy lives on in Cape Town as "previously advantaged" neighbourhoods continue to hold the monopoly of liquor licenses. Past inequalities in economic, social and political rights to drink have produced the social and spatial "fix" of South Africa's vast illegal liquor retailing sector. These township

shebeens (illegal/ unlicensed bars) are typically small-scale, survivalist and located in residential areas, yet their numbers dwarf the formal trade. The South African state has long grappled with the "shebeen problem" (Rogerson, 1992) and the 2012 Western Cape Liquor Act represents the Provincial government's most recent attempt to mitigate and manage the multiple risks the sector is argued to pose to health and human life (Lawhon and Herrick, 2013). This management strategy has primarily been through police raids of unlicensed premises, seizing alcohol and fining shebeeners (Herrick and Charman, 2013).

This policy has not been without controversy. Moreover, it raises important questions about the origins and genesis of alcohol-related crime, injury, violence and morbidity among poor communities (Mager 2004). Reflecting on these questions necessarily responds to Nguyen and Peschard's interest in 'how local actors make meaning and draw on a cultural repertoire to fashion tactics in order to allow engagement with a material environment that, if not overtly hostile, offers a considerably diminished horizon of possibility' (2003: 463). The case study communities explored here offer vastly diminished horizons of possibility for many of their residents for whom alcohol often serves as a janus-faced coping tactic amid significant adversity. Yet, the strategies used to enhance the capabilities and freedoms of some (e.g. shebeeners) may, ironically, only reinforce the unfreedoms of others through diminished safety, trust, community cohesion, public nuisance and noise. This dissonance is clearly elucidated through the focus group narratives explored in this paper.

A brief methodological note

Focus groups were undertaken in three case study sites in Cape Town: Salt River; Freedom Park and Philippi (see figure 1). The three sites are representative, in different ways, of some of the broad human, social and economic development challenges facing the city: poverty;

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inequality; unemployment; poor health and inadequate infrastructure. Salt River is located on the edge of the Central Business District and was originally a coloured community. More recently it has become home to a significant influx of pan-African immigrants as well as a growing number of pioneer gentrifiers drawn to the area's affordable housing stock and its burgeoning array of cafés and restaurants, despite significant numbers of homeless. Philippi is a relatively new black township built on once-rural land that now houses roughly 200,000 people. The area still has an agricultural periphery, but has recently come under pressure to turn over this land for urban expansion. This pressure compounds current problems of inadequate service delivery (housing, transport, sanitation) facing the community. Freedom Park is, by contrast, a small upgraded community that sits on the former site of a coloured squatter settlement. Its residents may now have formal housing and (limited) services, but they also suffer significant problems of domestic violence and drug abuse.

<<figure 1 here>>

Focus groups are a particularly valuable method for approaching the sensitive topic of alcohol consumption/ harms as they can explore individual and collective values, attitudes and beliefs and how these are corroborated or contested within and by the group dynamic (Kidd and Parshall 2000). Their ability to uncover the context or 'situatedness' of experience is particularly pertinent to the study of alcohol given that drinking is intricately linked to the multi-scalar ecologies of place: the availability of alcohol; the nature of access; local cultures of drinking; social norms; community awareness and support; economic opportunities; recreation and leisure; and policing (Jayne et al 2008a; 2008b). To explore these issues, the facilitator's schedule of questions was kept consistent across the sites and explored: where people drank in the local area; what they drank; when they drank; the motives for,

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experiences of and consequences of drinking; how much money was spent and what respondents felt should be done to reduce alcohol consumption and its harms. Eight groups were convened in total: Four split be age and gender in Philippi, members of a church group and community policing forum in Salt River and two mixed-age female groups in Freedom Park[1]. After all groups were completed, the facilitators transcribed the audio recording in its original language and then translated this transcription into English for inductive qualitative content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). This approach seeks themes, meanings and context to build a picture of participants' 'emplaced everyday experiences', as well as deeper insight into how they 'understand and frame [such] experiences' (Wiles et al 2005:97-98) with reference to broader conditions of structural violence.

Experiencing, mitigating and managing structural violence

The drivers of drinking
In order to explore the experiences of alcohol, it is fundamental to understand *why* people drink. Across all three sites, respondents identified the main underlying drivers of consumption as personal stress and unemployment. Thus, when asked the question, 'why do people in your community drink?', respondents from Freedom Park replied that people drink as they have 'too many worries. Financial worries come first…joblessness, that's my problem. I live from day to day' (FP1). This view of the causal influences of stress, poverty and unemployment were reiterated by two members of the second focus group in Freedom Park:

(1) Stress plays a big role. It's almost like there's no way out, and then you drink because of it, but the next day you wake up with that same stress, and then you go back to the bottle again. So that's also a big problem in our community. (2) Poverty also plays a big role in it, and unemployment (FP2)

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It is important to note that people drink to escape the stresses caused by poverty and unemployment, but that these are then magnified by the cost of drinking. In turn, this compounds stress, ensuring that the cycle of *needing to drink* remains intact (Mulia, et al. 2008). It is interesting that the ascription of drinking to life's quotidian stresses was more common among older respondents, especially in Philippi. For example, the older male group concurred that, 'when you have financial problems you tend to drink thinking that your problems will disappear or will be lighter [but] alcohol wastes money - the only people who are benefiting are those who sell alcohol' (POM). Among this group, alcohol was viewed as an effective (although short-term) and socially normative distraction from everyday problems: a lack of money; jobs; relationships and money. By contrast, while the group of young men from Philippi did not mention stress *per se,* they did ascribe drinking to the boredom of being jobless and a lack of alternative leisure activities. The group of older women, by contrast, discussed family dynamics and the pressures of children's expectations of parents (in terms of providing material possessions) as a source of stress in which 'some [parents] are getting strangled by their children for money. That is why many parents think, let me just drink' (POW). For the respondents in Philippi therefore, stress emerged in differentiated ways, with drink seen as a common solution to or escape from both the state of stress itself and stressful environments.

Respondents also cast the drivers of drinking as originating in childhood, whether through parents taking children to shebeens, sending them to fetch drinks, teenage socialization or peer pressure. For respondents in Salt River and Freedom Park in particular (most likely reflecting the higher rates of foetal alcohol syndrome in these communities), there was a strong sense that many children were born biologically addicted to drink, with attendant consequences for the future replication of violence. As one group member explained, 'when

the parents are alcoholics the children automatically become alcoholics too. If you were a man that abused your wife while you were drinking, the children do the exact same, because that is their way of thinking' (FP2). Familial learning and influence was also felt to be notable when families contained "a drinker". For example, one respondent from Freedom Park explained how her father 'worked and he was a drinker'. More than this, she detailed how 'he was one of the people that get crazy when they drink….He drank every day. Drinking was his hobby, get up and drink, go to bed and drink, everyday'. The semantic bifurcation between "drinkers" and "non-drinkers" was often used as shorthand for an individual's moral status and for narrating individuals' changing relationships to alcohol through time. In addition, it helped people explain how certain life events or triggers - such as finding religion in the case of respondents from Freedom Park and the Salt River Church Group - spurred their moral salvation as they transmogrified from "drinker" to "non-drinker".

Young male respondents in Philippi held quite different views of the reasons for drinking initiation. As one respondent summed up, 'some people drink because they think that they are flushing out their stress and problems by drinking, but most people want to be happy and have fun' (PYM). The young men, for example, were keen to discuss the micro-dynamics of the tavern as space for simple enjoyment, socialization and pleasure, meeting people (particularly for many migrants from the Eastern Cape), making a name for oneself and asserting masculinity through consumption. As one group member recounted:

I'm new in Philippi…I want to introduce myself at the shebeen. If I was not drinking people would not know me or I am not cool. It's a way of setting a statement, be acknowledged as a guy... You will buy beers and share with others and chat and you will find out that you are from the Eastern Cape and also you

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find out that you are from the same *Majola* clan. When you are drunk you can speak with somebody that you never spoke to. Next time when you don't have the money he is the one who buys the liquor for you (PYM)

This assertion of confident masculinity plays out in two ways within drinking spaces: through the type and volume of liquor consumed and through using liquor as a vehicle to secure the attention of women. The two are, however, inherently linked, as the purchase of an appropriately impressive volume of (premium brand) liquor can help secure female attention or at least sufficiently lessen inhibitions to make a move. The need to fit in with the activities of peers, ensure bragging rights, and establishing social norms and camaraderie drives a desire and need to drink. As one young man recounted, 'every weekend my friends would drink and talk about that they drank this... I'm just feeling left out and I`m the good one. The term they used was "unyabile" (or "meek")'. He continues that because he felt left out for not drinking, he started going to the shebeen just to be able to 'say on Monday that I drank this and that and I saw that girl and did that. I did it to be able to fit in. Alcohol is a way of fitting in' (PYM). These kind of social motivations mark out South African youth as strikingly similar to those in many other countries (Engels, et al. 2006; Kuntsche, et al. 2005). This is especially important to bear in mind when reflecting on how South Africa is held up by the World Health Organisation for its high-risk pattern of drinking and the magnitude and severity of its alcohol-related harms in relation to other middle-income countries (Parry, 2005; World Health Organisation, 2014). Equally of note, however, is that while the *causes* of drinking noted by respondents exhibit broad parallels with the findings from other qualitative surveys in a variety of countries, the *consequences* of these practices exhibit particularities that are inextricable from the quotidian physical and structural violence of South African society (Altbeker 2007; Steinberg 2008). These are explored below.

Consequences

Across the case study sites, respondents reported that alcohol drained financial resources, perpetuated food insecurity, caused family breakdown and initiated a spiral of debt with profound social consequences. Respondents were keen to share these experiences, which varied from killing people while driving drunk, to indecent exposure, being unable to go to work on Monday, missing trains to work, being arrested for evading train fares, being mugged, stabbed and getting fired. Several young men also flagged alcohol as driver of unsafe sex putting them at greater risk of contracting HIV. Another suggested that the cold temperature of drinks was inherently unhealthy as it could *cause* TB. When asked where people got enough money to drink across whole weekends, respondents across all three sites suggested that many drinkers (as well as drug-takers in the case of Freedom Park) had turned to crime to finance their habits. The constant need for money (as well as for reciprocal acts of generosity to compensate for a lack of money) was also viewed as a major *driver* of interpersonal violence in communities. One young man in the Philippi group recounted an example of where drunkenness had led one man to stab another 'because of a cigarette'. The victim died and the respondent concluded that 'alcohol causes many things in the community even if you are sober and you want money for alcohol you can kill a person'. Alcohol consumption and its effects thus seep into the pores of everyday life in the case study communities, too often in the form of severe violence and trauma that compound more commonplace socio-environmental 'insults' (Quesada, et al. 2011). In one example, a resident told of being repeatedly woken by women screaming throughout the night:

> In the taverns they like things that make people cry till morning at 3 or 7… when you wake up you don't sleep again because it sounds like things are making noise inside the house… Once there was a corpse at this tavern in front of me, and that person didn't do anything (POW)

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The persistence of feelings of threat and noise reinforced by living in poor quality housing were, in this instance, compounded by the gruesome (but not uncommon) experience of witnessing a dead body about which nothing was done. In situations of extreme violence, liquor was seen as an excuse enabling the guilty to escape conviction. Thus, instead of drunkenness *aggravating* the crime, respondents suggested that inebriation often facilitated pleas of innocence if and when the case ever made it as far as the judicial system. This reinforced some respondents' overriding concern that alcohol was fuelling a more widespread culture of irresponsibility and immorality. Thus some respondents reported their dismay at a society in which crimes such as child rape not only took place, but often went unpunished:

> Look how many of children are getting raped these days. What do they say? I was drunk. I didn't know what I was doing… I read now the other day about quite a few guys that got off free, they raped a child and they killed the child, nothing became of it but there was not good evidence or whatever, they just say they were drunk they didn't know what they were doing (SRCG)

Violence might be attributed to intoxication, but it was also ascribed to the effects of specific drink *types*. Thus, respondents in Freedom Park spoke of drinkers turning to very cheap wines and unregulated ales and "concoctions", which they believed were having a profound effect on people's rationality whereby 'in the old days when people were drinking, they were very amusing, but nowadays if I look, they'll just stab each other to death like that. This wine makes them really crazy' (FP1). These fears over the effects of cheap, unregulated, industrial liquor also represent an expression of nostalgia for the many things deemed to be "better" in the past. Whether people were previously less violent drunks is perhaps arbitrary, but the point still hints at broader community concerns over increased crime, violence and a decline

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in community capacity to collectively ensure safety. As a respondent from Freedom Park thus lamented, 'previously there were rules and laws'. Moreover, a decline in respect for law was picked out by some focus groups as a particular problem of certain drinking venues. Older women in Philippi suggested that, 'the places with fights are the ones with jukeboxes' as they often had a more intoxicating mix of young male drinkers, women and glassware that morphed into weaponry. By contrast, venues for traditional African beer drinkers were seen as more innocuous social spaces where 'they are sitting with their beer... They have their conversation, nothing causes a fight' (POW). "Problem" shebeens stopped many residents from sleeping because of loud music, people standing and drinking near their houses and constant fears over personal safety. This severely compromised quality of life and well-being, especially for tired children unable to concentrate in school. This is a clear example of alcohol magnifying the structural violence perpetuated by already-existing inequalities in educational provision and quality, with recent textbook scandals, classroom overcrowding, schools without electricity and inadequate resources hindering students' own abilities to achieve the qualifications needed to overcome South Africa's 'structural crisis of waged employment' (Barchiesi 2007: 574).

One of the central themes brought up in focus group discussions was the changing gender dynamics of drinking and its consequences for cultural, family and economic life. Respondents repeatedly suggested that women not only drank the most, but were the "worst" drinkers. Female drinkers were judged (most critically by other women) for failing in their maternal and marital duties, choosing alcohol over feeding their children and losing their self-respect. Female drinking thus seemed to represent a visceral marker of a decline in the moral fabric of communities. However, rather than question why changing community and individual circumstances may have catalysed women to turn to drink, respondents frequently

cast them as immoral and guilty, especially when household or maternal duties were neglected. The group of older women in Philippi also reported their disgust at the growing number of women using men for alcohol and, in turn, using alcohol strategically to get men, without thought to the circumstances that might have precipitated these tactics. Within the masculinist culture of township life (Mager 2010; Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger 2012; Walker 2005) where domestic violence is rife, drinking is a clear reflection of the multiple forms of violence exerted on women's lives and bodies. The younger women also expressed concern at women making themselves dependent on men for liquor, suggesting that it left them vulnerable as 'guys who pay the bills will want something in return, so people expose themselves to such things as rape' (PYW). In communities where rape is routinely underreported and a patriarchal society tends to pre-assume a women's guilt; these drinking practices are a double-edged sword. Women may have an equal right to drink, but in so doing, it places them in situations where they could be blamed for being victims of violence as a 'socially endorsed punitive project' that 'inscribe[s] subordinate status' (Moffett 2006: 129). Women are thus trapped: if they drink they are rendered vulnerable to the actions of men and the moral judgments of others in the community. Yet, even if they do not drink, they are vulnerable to the significant pressure on household resources and violence that too often stems from men drinking.

Stories such as the one below were thus common:

> He says to his wife here is the money for groceries, and this is for my beer. When his money's finished he comes back home and demands the grocery money. The wife tries to stop him explaining that I haven't bought the groceries. The wife is at the risk of being beaten up and being sworn at and told "you are not working" (POW).

Here, high rates of female unemployment and single female-headed households not only drive the stresses that provoke drinking as a coping mechanism, but also create a dependency on men that becomes dangerous when household resources get converted to liquor. Women are reticent to leave their husbands or partners even in violent situations as they are wholly dependent on their income for basic household provisions for themselves and their children (who are viewed as their responsibility). This has further consequences for the reduction of community capabilities and freedoms. For example, members of the church group in Salt River highlighted that the monopolization of household resources by male drinkers had led at least one woman they knew to start a shebeen from her home to ensure an income to feed the family. Indeed, across the case study sites, respondents highlighted a surge in home-based liquor retailing.

There is a deep irony in being forced to sell liquor to pay for the drinking habits of others. This ironic situation also highlights how, for many poor communities, selling liquor is a crucial coping strategy that eases the impact of certain vulnerabilities at the direct expense of reinforcing others. Vulnerabilities are further compounded by the use of social grant, disability, child credit or pension money to pay for alcohol. This creates a cycle of poverty, debt and dependency on the charity of others. The demand for credit also meant that loan sharks were a common port of call even for those people with jobs. Indeed, as one Philippi respondent explained, 'a guy your age [thirties] who is working will ask you if you know any loan shark and you tell them out of pity thinking he does not have money for work tomorrow, only to realize it's for alcohol' (PYM). The profound consequences of liquor for communities are thus all too clear. It must also be remembered that shebeens are liquor giant SABMiller's most significant distribution channel (Tsoeu 2009). Their vested interests are thus also a powerful, under-analysed force in shaping the social dynamics of affliction.

Unfurling the pathogenic social spiral

This final section explores respondents' ideas about how alcohol-related harms should best be addressed, and crucially, who should assume responsibility for these efforts. The 2012 Western Cape Liquor Act, for example, has been justified with respect to the province's high rates of alcohol-related crime, violence, injury and foetal alcohol syndrome. Yet despite the legislation's long period of drafting, debate and attendant media attention (Lawhon and Herrick 2013), very few focus group respondents were aware of the new legislation or its likely effect. Rather, they *experienced* the Act through the increasing frequency with which local shebeens were raided, patrons threatened or arrested and liquor confiscated. It is thus unsurprising that opinions among group members differed in the extent to which they believed alcohol should be subjected to greater degrees of governmental control. For those in Salt River and Freedom Park, there was a sense that local Street Committees and Neighbourhood Watch groups needed to be far bolder in ensuring shebeener compliance with basic codes of conduct. Yet, as a member of the Salt River Church Group asserted, many falsely believed that the current regulation was actually helping to legalise shebeens and that, moreover, many of the shebeeners themselves were actually members of regulatory bodies such as Community Policing Forums, reaching the conclusion that 'the underworld is alive and well'.

Such fears of the underworld were even more alive in Freedom Park where the rise of gang culture was seen as one of the main reasons why previously active street committees had ceased operating. Fears over being a target of violent crime had thus also led to a decline in the kind of community self-policing highlighted by Schärf (1985b; see also Steinberg 2009) that had once helped moderate the genesis of alcohol-related harms. Residents complained that the police were slow to respond when called out, and often never come at all. The

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inadequacies of post-apartheid policing in South Africa's poor neighbourhoods and the concomitant rise in private security and vigilantism in the absence of state provision has been documented elsewhere (Altbeker 2005; 2007; Lemanski 2004; Steinberg 2008). This inequitable distribution of law enforcement represents a clear form of structural violence with profound implications for community trust and cohesion. Respondents voiced concerns that the police were not doing enough to enforce laws such as the minimum drinking age or opening hours, with the result that shebeeners have little incentive to stick to the regulations, further perpetuating alcohol-related risks and harms. For the young women in Philippi, this was indicative of 'alcohol tampering with values' in which police inaction was part of a broader shift in collective rights, duties and responsibilities. An example of this came from the Salt River Church Group in which one respondent highlighted community fears about the potentially lethal consequences of intervening in alcohol-related incidents:

If you see a couple fighting in the road because of alcohol, you can get killed. So many times I think that is why neighbours won't get involved. So many times a husband beats his wife up, or a mother and daughter beat each other to death in front of everybody, because the community won't get involved because if they do they can get killed (SRCG).

The young women in Philippi brought these fears to life when one respondent recalled helping a neighbour who had suffered domestic abuse by allowing her to stay in her shack. The neighbour's husband had repeatedly left his children alone outside a shebeen while he drank and another neighbour eventually told his wife and asked her to collect them. She did so and her husband came to the respondent's shack looking for her and the children. Upon hearing the story, another neighbour's (drunk) husband rushed to the shebeen with a mob of equally drunk and angry men to confront the husband. A fight ensued and the husband

eventually died of his injuries. Even though she claimed to be nowhere near the scene of the crime, the fact that the accused's partner was living in her property was enough for the police to arrest the respondent as a suspect. These stories of (allegedly false) arrest in the face of neighbourly concern for the effects of alcohol do little to inculcate feelings of shared community responsibility or to foster communal coping tactics. Instead, the failures of the judicial system perpetuate a pervasive sense of anger towards law enforcement agents and a residual reluctance to help others.

There is no doubt that this situation would be ameliorated if group members had felt able to trust in the police to protect them, but many felt they were too embroiled in scams with corrupt shebeeners. As one older respondent from Philippi noted, 'the police do not do their job and they are not of great help, the shebeen owners give them alcohol so they keep quiet. Even volunteers helping the police tell us the police are coming' (POM). There was also a suggestion that some shebeeners were using police raids to their advantage by tipping off the police about competitors, thus ensuring a short-lived advantage while the other shebeen was temporarily closed. One young woman in the Philippi group sagely noted that 'that is what alcohol does to communities, it divides'. The focus groups thus provide evidence that shebeen raids and closures are having a destabilizing effect on the community, further enriched by shebeener efforts to evade police attention. This evokes an argument made by Schärf almost three decades ago when he contended that 'the initial illegality of selling liquor… amplifies the illicit methods by which the business survives' (1985b: 100). By extension, these illicit methods magnify existing vulnerabilities in the communities under study entrenching life's everyday dangers. Indeed, the intersection of the liquor trade, the state and the informal sector arguably still constitutes, 'a powerful form of control over the working class' (1985b:105). While we could equate 'working class' with 'poor' in this

context, such forms of control nevertheless still comprise punitive limits on the freedoms available to respondents, with freedom of choice and mobility persistently compromised.

When pressed about solutions to the everyday violence of alcohol, one proffered suggestion was making alcohol less 'cheap for even the poor man' (SRCPF). The Freedom Park focus group, however, questioned the utility of a price increase, with one member arguing convincingly that beer was already more expensive than bread, but many drinkers still chose the former over the latter. Increasing prices may also only perpetuate the often-violent gendered struggles over household resources documented here (see also Bähre, 2007). One point of agreement was the need for greater state investment or in Sen's language, 'collective responsibility', for addiction treatment services and educational provision. In contrast to the public health dismissal of education as a tool of alcohol harm reduction (Craplet 2006; Foxcroft 2006; Rehm, Babor and Room 2006), respondents in Freedom Park wanted to learn more about the effects of drinking. However, they also recognized the significant community stigma attached to attending such events as 'people don't respond because it gets put in the local newspaper, and I think everybody reads the local newspaper' (FP1). This is not a problem particular to South Africa and multiple studies have identified significant cognitive, cultural and structural barriers to accessing advice and services (Cunningham, et al. 1993). One of the biggest barriers is the social normalization of drinking that means that 'while [people have] got the money to spend, while they choose to live their lives the way they want to, there is very little you can do [as] people will always find a way' (SRCG). This determination to drink (see for example Measham 2006) was a marked characteristic of the respondents' everyday experience of alcohol and seemed to feed into a generalized feeling of the futility of harm reduction efforts. Such apathy could also, however, be read as a strong justification for the curtailment of *certain* freedoms not through more laws, but the effective

and equitable *enforcement* of the panoply of existing rules and regulations, without which there will be few deterrents to risk-taking.

Conclusion

In this article, I have followed three lines of inquiry. First, I have explored how, rather than evidence of wilful deviance, risky alcohol consumption represents a form of coping, escapism and pleasure under situations of structural violence. Access to or rights over liquor are a medium through which the effects of structural violence are diffracted and become embodied as personal and collective risk. While it might therefore be expected that respondents in the different sites would vary in their views of drinking and its harms, they concurred about the magnitude of the problems they faced, as well as their underlying causes and consequences to a striking degree. Indeed, positive stories of alcohol – with the exception of those linked to the bravado and pleasure-seeking of the young male group – were relatively rare. There was really only one detailed account of positive experiences of alcohol and even this was tempered by the suggestion that drinking for fun could all too quickly turn violent. Thus, as the respondent recounted, if 'Auntie Patricia starts going crazy then I am also going to start going crazy, that's how the fighting starts. But, if we all behave then everything goes fine' (FP1). The proposition that if everyone behaves, then everything goes fine suggests that it should be possible to drink without facing the kind of extreme consequences detailed by respondents. Indeed, there are many Capetonians who enjoy the freedoms of relatively risk-free drinking. However, in reality and as I have explored here, the experience for many is that people do not act in the common good and things often do not go "fine".

The second argument concerns how drinking practices and their consequences *contribute to* and *reinforce* broader conditions of structural violence which, in turn, have further intended and unintended impacts on individuals, families and communities. When alcohol is laid over

situations of absolute as well as relative poverty, then the consequences of drinking are only magnified in their significance. Moreover, these effects are deeply and persistently unequal. As Nguyen and Peschard have forcefully argued, 'in every society misfortune is selective, affecting some but not others' (2003: 467). It may not be that effects are absent, but as one respondent suggested, 'in the poor areas you see the results, but in the rich areas you don't see it clearly, but it's there, even sometimes worse' (SRCPF). In recounting their experiences of the immediate and distal effects of drink, respondents also spoke of alcohol's tendency to compound already-existing problems of, for example, unemployment, inadequate housing, poor infrastructure, inequalities in educational quality and attainment, masculinist cultures and violence. The problem for policy is when home-based shebeens and their allied services (e.g. takeaway food, security and car attendants) also offer a means to mitigate and manage some of these externalities. Thus, the question of how policy might respect the rights of the poor to choose and to consume, while protecting communities from harm is evocative of the 'regulatory complexity' evinced by Valverde (1998: 10). This complexity is further entrenched by policy's tendency to tackle liquor's downstream effects by closing shebeens rather than countering the very reasons why shebeens remain an omnipresent feature of South African life. To therefore reflect on the problematic of policy, I will dwell in more detail on the final line of argument: that alcohol-related harms (e.g. violence, crime, injury, poor health) and their settings (e.g. townships, informal settlements, shebeens) have long been the central object of policy interventions, rather than the structural conditions that have engendered them.

To return to Sen, if the aim of development policy is to expand individuals' freedoms so they can 'make choices that matter to them' (Alkire 2005: 117), Famer's suggestion that conditions of structural violence fundamentally 'constrict' and 'curb' agency and, therefore

choice (2004: 272) is important to note. Sen is far more circumspect about the value of choice and, as Alkire (2005: 121) explains, increased choice may not guarantee the enjoyment of more valuable freedoms. Yet, without adequate capabilities, the ability to make choices that "matter" is restricted, compromising the broader goals of social justice within which both Sen and Farmer's work is so embedded. Under conditions of deprivation or 'capability inadequacy' (Sen 1999: 90), individuals are 'deprived not only in terms of wellbeing, but also in terms of the ability to lead responsible lives, which are contingent on having certain basic freedoms' (1999: 284). This is significant for alcohol control policies because responsibility for one's actions can only be realized through the very freedoms inhibited by structural violence. Public policy thus has a role in 'creating more opportunities for choice and for substantive decisions for individuals who can then act responsibly on that basis' (Sen 1999: 284). Here, responsibilities are the shared domain of the social and the individual. For alcohol, not only might this mean the state assuming responsibility for the fair and equitable enforcement of liquor policy, but also for the provision of and support for alternative income sources. Thus the state may need to ensure training, access to capital and subsidized business premises. In turn, individuals will need to comply with regulations in the name of the common good. Ensuring that the provision of the former begets the acquiescence of the latter will be essential to unravelling the pathogenic social spiral of liquor and effects narrated through this paper.

NOTES

1. In the text, the groups are delineated as follows: Philippi young men (PYM); Philippi young women (PYM), Philippi older women (POW); Philippi older men (POM); Freedom Park (FP1 and FP2); Salt River Community Policing Forum (SRCPF); Salt River Church Group (SRCG).

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