



Geographies of alcohol, drinking and drunkenness: a review of progress

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Abstract: This paper explores geographical contributions to the study of alcohol, drinking and drunkenness. We argue that where alcohol studies have engaged with geographical issues research has been dominated by a case study approach that has undertheorized the relationship between practices and processes relating to alcohol, drinking and drunkenness and the people and places being studied. We then go on to show the ways in which human geographers are approaching alcohol, drinking and drunkenness via complex interpenetrations of political, economic, social, cultural and spatial issues and unpacking connections, similarities, differences and mobilities between supranational, national, regional and local spatial scales. We argue that such an approach represents a conceptually and empirically important contribution to alcohol studies research. The paper concludes, however, that if geographers are to have a central role in shaping future research agendas then they must engage with theoretical issues in a more detailed and sustained manner, particularly in relation to epistemological and ontological impasses that have to date characterized the study of alcohol, drinking and drunkenness.

Key words: alcohol, alcohol studies, drinking, drunkenness.

I Introduction

In contrast to disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, politics, economics, planning, social policy, and the health and medical sciences, which have a much greater tradition of exploring the centrality of alcohol, drinking and drunkenness to people's lives, there has been relatively little

consideration of these topics by human geographers. This 'alcohol studies' literature has investigated political, economic, social, cultural and spatial issues bound up with alcohol, drinking and drunkenness in both historical and contemporary contexts. While an acknowledgment that geographers have been slow to address these important issues

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is disappointing, work has nonetheless begun to engage with alcohol studies research in conceptually and empirically nuanced ways. By unpacking connections, similarities, differences and mobilities between supra-national, national, regional and local spatial scales human geographers are offering new insights into complex interpenetrations of political, economic, social, cultural, spatial and embodied and emotional geographies bound up with drinking practices and related issues. Such an approach has not been attempted by alcohol studies researchers in a sustained way. In this paper we argue, however, that if geographers are to have a central role in shaping future research agendas then they must engage with theoretical issues in a more detailed and focused manner, particularly in relation to the epistemological and ontological impasses that have to date characterized the study of alcohol, drinking and drunkenness.

A cursory survey of alcohol studies literature uncovers work that addresses the ways in which alcohol, drinking and drunkenness are differentially and discursively constructed in specific spaces and places.¹ A large amount of research has, for example, investigated spatial patterns of drinking and drink-related issues. This includes quantitative research looking at the relationship between outlet density and drink-related problems in the USA (Tatlow *et al.*, 2000), patterns and variations in alcohol content and spirit measures in Scotland (Gill and Donaghy, 2004) and analysis of consumption habits and consumers use of drinking venues (Treno *et al.*, 2000). There is also a significant body of writing concerning national, regional or local alcohol-related legislation, initiatives and policies, as well as work that draws on large-scale transnational statistical reports and cross-cultural surveys. For example, studies include an investigation of alcohol control and policy in Finland (Alavaikko and Osterberg, 2000), research into the relationship between drinking and gender in nine European countries (Allaman *et al.*, 2000), a study

of students' drinking in eighteen countries (Smart and Ogbourne, 2000), a survey of the Russian population's drinking habits (Bobak *et al.*, 1999) and various local initiatives in Europe (Ramsey, 1990; Comedia, 1991), the USA (Wittman, 1997) and Australia (Lindsay, 2005). There are also a growing number of large transnational surveys and projects (WHO, 2000; 2001; 2004; ECAS, 2002; ESPAD, 2004).

Theorists have also investigated the relationship between place, drinking patterns and identity, lifestyle and forms of sociability in a large number of different locations around the world. Studies have focused on drinking in Andalusia, drinking among female entertainers in Egypt, an analysis of the relationship between drinking wine and masculinity in France, beer drinking in Hungary, commensality and drinking in Greek agriculture, drinking and fishing in Ireland, Norwegian domestic drinking parties, football and drinking in Malta, tribal drinking in Northern Cameroon, drinking in Mexico and a study of the relationship between drinking and slavery in the British Caribbean (see, for example, Gefou-Madianou, 1992; Bobak *et al.*, 1999; Allaman *et al.*, 2000; de Garine and de Garine, 2001; Share, 2003; Wilson, 2005; Holt, 2006). Other studies have considered drinking and gender in India (Chatterjee, 2003), gender and sexuality in San Francisco (Bloomfield, 1993), drinking and young people in Vietnam (Thomas, 2002), young people in rural areas of Australia and Wales (Jones, 2002; Kelly and Kowalyszyn, 2002; Kraack and Kenway 2002), underage drinking in Barcelona (Vives *et al.*, 2000), masculinity and identity in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Nayak, 2003), alcohol-related service provision for Indian, Chinese and Pakistani young people in Glasgow (Heim *et al.*, 2004), Sikh, Hindu, Muslim and white male drinking in the West Midlands (Cochrane and Bal, 1990), African-Caribbean and South Asian drinking patterns in the UK (McKeugue and Karmi, 1993)

and research that asked respondents whether they thought it acceptable that Australian supermodel Elle McPherson drinks beer (Pettigrew, 2002).

It is clear that, when read together, varying bodies of literature seek to consider the ways in which alcohol, drinking and drunkenness are related to spatial relations, practices and concepts. As the above indicative lists show, research has addressed a large number of diverse topics relating to legislation, policy and policing, production, marketing and retail, consumption, identity, lifestyle and forms of sociability (and so on) at transnational, national, regional and local spatial scales. Indeed, a key feature of these studies has been a concern with 'geographical' issues such as spatial scale, boundaries and transgressions; distinctions between public and private, visibility and invisibility, centrality and marginality, urbanity and rurality, and so on. However, despite alcohol, drinking and drunkenness being a focus of high-profile debates across the social and medical sciences (and despite engaging with geographical issues) human geographers are yet to impact on alcohol studies research agendas.

Such criticism notwithstanding, geographers have looked at alcohol, drinking and drunkenness in terms of a number of different topics, with varying focus and depth of interest. These include for example studies of the entertainment/night-time economy (Malbon, 1999; Thomas and Bromley, 2000; Chatterton and Hollands, 2002; 2003; Latham, 2003; Latham and McCormack, 2004; Hubbard, 2005), geographies of food (Bell and Valentine, 1997; Bell, 2005; Bell and Binnie, 2005); pub life and identity (Hall, 1992; Kneale, 1999; 2004; Leyshon, 2005; Maye *et al.*, 2005; Edensor, 2006; Valentine *et al.*, 2007a); temperance (Kneale, 2001); family life (Lowe *et al.*, 1993); the relationship between drinking and health (Twigg and Jones, 2000; Philo *et al.*, 2002); historical geographies of wine production and consumption (Unwin, 1991), the distribution of working men's clubs (Purvis, 1998); and

the policing of urban public space (Bromley *et al.*, 2000; 2003; Bromley and Nelson, 2002; Raco, 2003; Jayne *et al.*, 2006).

While in the context of alcohol studies literature such work represents a small intervention that has yet to impact beyond the discipline, geographers should perhaps not be berated too much for a lack of clear and sustained engagement with alcohol studies. While the voluminous alcohol studies literature does stretch across both social and medical sciences researchers have tended to consider alcohol, drinking and drunkenness in diverse and often contradictory ways, with little dialogue existing between disciplines. For example, alcohol studies have been overwhelmingly dominated by a focus on medical issues and a pathologizing of alcohol as a social problem, or as a legislative, crime or policy issue. In contrast, other accomplished work has concentrated on the theoretical goal posited by Mary Douglas (1987), regarding the imperative to move beyond the limiting pathologizing of alcohol consumption. Douglas advocates the need to address the everyday social relations and cultural practices bound up with drinking.

Research that seeks to develop new theoretical frameworks, or combine these approaches, to draw together political and economic with social and cultural (or even spatial) issues, however, has failed to have any significant impact on the direction of alcohol studies research – being the goal of theorists working in the subdisciplines of sociology, politics, psychology and criminology (see, for example, Gofton, 1990; Thomas, 2002; Nayak, 2003). Despite the large amount of research then, producing detailed and rich data and debate, we argue that there has been *de facto* and/or fragmented research agenda with little sustained inter- (or trans) disciplinary dialogue. This has created a general problem where drinking is depicted in an abstract manner or around specific issues that, while being based on particular people, places, practices or processes, does not enable generalizations to be made

(see Castree, 2005). It is thus possible to argue that, while alcohol studies' agendas have included geographical research, the limited rationale of specific place- and issue-based studies has ensured that has not been a clear agenda for geographers to engage with.

To a certain degree, however, geographers can also be criticized for undertaking research that is focused on case studies of specific people and places, replicating weaknesses of alcohol studies research. However, where research has sought to make connections between different people, places, practices and processes, addressing similarities, differences and mobilities at different spatial scales, human geographers *are* nonetheless developing important new insights. This represents a conceptual *and* empirical approach that offers opportunities to draw together topics related to production, regulation and legislation, consumption, identity, lifestyle and forms of sociability, representation and emotional and embodied issues, and so on. While Jackson and Thrift (1995: 228) suggest that such a goal has been key to theoretical advances by geographers (and other social scientists) who have sought to 'transcend the boundaries between the economic and the cultural', it is clear that such a process of joining-up areas considered as separate and unconnected has not been a key element of alcohol studies research.

Despite progress being made by geographers, a number of important concerns and questions arise from reviewing both geographical and human geography's contributions to studies of alcohol, drinking and drunkenness. For example, throughout this introduction research that takes place in various disciplines has been described as 'alcohol studies'. It has also been argued that there is surprisingly little inter- (or trans) disciplinary dialogue. Indeed, it has been shown that alcohol studies research is dominated by epistemological and ontological approaches overwhelmingly pursued in dialectical

opposition. In these terms it is clear that there has been a lack of acknowledgement, investigation or discussion of how theorists can better address interconnected practices and processes in conceptually nuanced ways. This includes, for example, a lack of reflection on the relationships between the diverse and different topics studied, little concern for how issues are addressed with varying foci and depth of interest (both within and between different disciplines) or indeed little convincing and sustained attempts to advance theoretical and empirical debates. Trying to navigate and come to terms with competing theoretical frameworks and the diverse research questions and agendas that make up alcohol studies research clearly represents a challenge for geographers working in this area.

In this paper we show that by folding together political, economic, social, cultural and spatial issues relating to alcohol, drinking and drunkenness at different spatial scales, geographers have begun to address certain theoretical and empirical impasses. Nonetheless, we argue that in order to build upon such advances it is important that geographers begin to unpack the unresolved issues that emerge from the different ways that alcohol, drinking and drunkenness are viewed, classified, considered and researched. This includes the need to think through the different usage and meanings of terms, how these emerge from different concept-formations; to ask how and why general and specific research questions are being pursued. In simple terms, human geographers must engage with underlying assumptions and approaches and begin to address the epistemological and ontological contradictions, impasses and conflicts that constitute alcohol studies. This paper argues that such an agenda is vital if human geographers are to add value to current research and contribute in significant ways to research, knowledge and debates concerning alcohol, drinking and drunkenness.

II Geographical contributions to alcohol studies

A large amount of research has attempted to identify the ways in which issues related to alcohol, drinking and drunkenness unfold in specific spaces and places. For example, one of the most productive areas of study has looked at production, regulation and policy regimes. This encompasses, *inter alia*, legislation and policing, health issues, and service provision and retailing. Work has also addressed a range of topics such as restrictions on alcohol availability, alcohol content and measurement size; numbers, density and types of outlets, the design and layout of venues; server intervention (relating to age and levels of intoxication), and the impacts of levels and types of law enforcement (see Plant *et al.*, 2001). Alcohol education, the historic development of alcohol control, the impact of tax initiatives in specific contexts, partnerships between government agencies and drink's retailers and attempts at 'joined up' policy making have also been scrutinized (see Raistrick *et al.*, 2003, for an overview).

In a similar vein, an important body of writing has wrestled with issues concerning the contradictory nature of alcohol as both a generator of wealth and a public health concern. Researchers have considered how increasingly globalized alcohol supply and international supply-side initiatives impact on strategies to reduce alcohol-related harm, and how international trade treaties effect alcohol regulation and policy (Alavaikko and Osterberg, 2000). Bound up with such analysis is an acknowledgment that while there has been reduced restriction on cross-border trading of alcohol, and an increasingly integrated global system of production and distribution, mechanisms to collect cross-cultural data on alcohol remain underdeveloped, thus there is often an under-reporting of consumption in many countries. As such, a key concern of the work on production, regulation and policy regimes has been to address the ambiguous nature of alcohol in political discourses and the conflict

between economic and social development and health policy concerns (Room and Jernigan, 2000; Grieshaber-Otto *et al.*, 2001). Holder (2000), for example, shows that while consumption of alcohol is an important health and safety issue in many countries, it is the interests of production, distribution and the retail sector rather than a health and public order agenda that influence policy and legislation. Health and social welfare are shown clearly to be a secondary concern in comparison with the economic benefits of direct and indirect employment; tax revenue, a positive impact on balance of payments; the presence and investments of multinational corporations, technology transfer; and the presence of packaging, distribution and retail networks and so on (Harrison, 1971; Jones, 1987; Grant and Litvak, 1998; Alavaikko and Osterberg, 2000; Raistrick *et al.*, 2003).

While such work relevantly identifies issues that are of geographical importance, there has been a tendency to gloss over the extent to which space and place are key constituents of the issues at hand. For example, while each of the above examples focuses on national or local levels, often pursuing comparisons between different spaces and places, research has generally tended to shy away from making connections, describing similarities or differences between case studies. This has also ensured a lack of theoretical arguments that translate beyond specific people and spaces and places, other than dialectical approaches that consider alcohol as either a social/medical problem or as a social or cultural practice. While there have been some attempts to conjoin these issues in studies at transnational, national and local levels (for example, Jones, 1987; Harrison, 1999; Holder, 2000) there has been little success in developing perspectives that translate beyond the empirical evidence generated at particular spatial scales.

A useful way to elaborate this point is to consider debates around 'European' drinking patterns'. At a Europe-wide scale

researchers in the field of public health have started to question the relevance of the traditional dichotomy between 'wet' Mediterranean countries (where wine is the customary drink, alcohol consumption is high but unlikely to result in intoxication) and 'dry' northern European countries such as the UK (where beer or spirits are the established drink, alcohol consumption is lower overall but more likely to result in intoxication, and access to alcohol has been more closely regulated) (Knibbe and Bloomfield, 2001; ECAS, 2002). Researchers have questioned whether there has been a homogenization in both drinking rates (as consumption has increased in the 'dry' countries and fallen in the 'wet' countries) and beverage choice (with wine consumption up in 'dry' countries and down markedly in 'wet' countries, beer has become more popular in non-traditional markets, and a growth in new beverages such as alcopops across the board) (Allaman *et al.*, 2000; Leifman, 2001). However, while there has been a questioning of the limits to this apparently clear-cut picture of homogenization in European regulatory regimes and drinking practices, there has not been a systematic attempt to undertake research to explore this issue.

For example, studies of European drinking policy and consumption practices have been undertaken in three ways. First, public health researchers (often funded by supra-national bodies such as the WHO and the EU) have employed large-scale, cross-national quantitative studies that have made useful but broad-brush comparisons between European countries, often focusing on high consumption among particular social groups such as women or young people (WHO, 2000; 2001; 2004; ECAS, 2002; ESPAD, 2003). Second, a similar focus on alcohol consumption-related medical problems has been seen in quantitative studies working at a subnational scale (Gmel *et al.*, 2000; Knibbe and Bloomfield, 2001; Plant *et al.*, 2001). Third, researchers in a diversity of disciplines (including medical sciences, psychology,

sociology and human geography) have undertaken smaller scale qualitative research, which tends to investigate consumption of alcohol as a medical/social problem for specific social groups (Beccaria and Sande, 2003). While each approach has generated important work, there has none the less been a failure to formulate research agendas that also offer the opportunity to pursue a more integrated understanding of how interpenetration of political, economic, social, cultural and spatial elements impact upon alcohol, drinking and drunkenness at particular spatial scales in either theoretical and empirical terms.

Similar criticisms can also be levelled at social and cultural theories of modernity and postmodernity, which have shown that attempts to control and regulate alcohol and drinking were central to the bourgeois modernist project and its vision of urban life. Concerns over the 'evils of drink' were manifest around a number of interrelated issues. These included, for example, the need of industrialists to increase productivity and to create a market where disposable income was spent on goods and services; the religious concerns of the middle classes for the piety of the lower classes and immorality of urban life and, in particular, carnivalesque behaviour; paternalistic concerns to improve the education, health and lives of the working classes; and, stimulated by all these issues combined, the physical redevelopment of the city (Thompson, 1967; Malcolmson, 1973; Stallybrass and White, 1986; Rojek, 1995). Alcohol, then, was a key factor in imposing the social control that underpinned bourgeois modernist urbanity and was thus a central feature of the political, economic, social, cultural and physical development of the modern life (see, for example, McAndrew and Edgerton, 1969; Schivelbusch, 1992; Burnett, 1999). Such work provides a broad-brush typography that characterizes the relationship between drinking and the development of the modern urban life and provides a useful generalizable template.

However, many of the neat connections between, for example, the development of legislation and policy, production and consumption cultures, proliferation and success of middle-class crusades, and control of drinking cultures are overblown. As Monkkonen (1981) and Holliday and Jayne (2000) show, the uneven spread of industrialized capital accumulation, bourgeois political control, the suppression of unruly working-class leisure activities and the physical redevelopment of the city were differentially and discursively constructed in different places at different times. Despite useful work by Harrison (1971), Girouard (1975) and Clarke (1983), which consider the impact of temperance in different context, literature regarding the relationship between alcohol, drinking and drunkenness tends to be overgeneral, uneven and often underdeveloped. As Miles and Paddison (1998) argue, there is still much work to be done to look at historical geographies of modernity, and in particular to rectify the lack of analysis of social relations and cultural practices and processes in specific spaces and places that is missing from generalized accounts.²

Moreover, even when research offers a useful antidote to general approaches, a number of weaknesses can be identified. For example, focusing on specific places and people via study of consumption, identity, lifestyle and forms of sociability, research has focused on gender differences and drinking patterns (Ettore, 1997; Plant, 1997; Waterson, 2000; Harnett *et al.*, 2000), gender and sexuality (Bloomfield, 1993), masculinity, femininity and ethnicity (Shaikh and Nax, 2000), women who drink and expose themselves (Hugh-Jones *et al.*, 2005), women who drink and fight (Day *et al.*, 2004), men and violence (Benson and Archer, 2002) and drinking among various black and minority ethnic groups, and so on (Stivers, 2000; Share, 2003). Despite considering topics at different spatial scales, space and place are mainly addressed as passive backdrops to the

issues being considered. Location, context and the relationships between the people and places tends to be considered as a peripheral issue. Such limitations are perhaps best evidenced by the lack of attempt to join up, to compare or contrast research in different contexts and at different spatial scales. Thus, while such research is a corrective to more general approaches the connections, similarities, differences and mobilities between drinking practices and contexts at either general or specific levels are not considered in a clear way.

There are, of course, a number of exceptions where writers are indeed attempting such a project. Work has usefully identified, for instance, the conflicts and trade offs between legal and 'common-sense' definitions of drunkenness and policing policy (including sensitivity towards differences in local cultural practices, behaviour, speech and so on), unpacking how discourses of pleasure are bound up and accounted for in the legislative and policy-making process (Levi and Valverde, 2001; Valverde, 2003; O'Malley and Valverde, 2004). Other useful examples include research into the characterization of the 'lager lout' by the Thatcherite government, young male drinkers in the northeast of England and street drinking in Vietnam (see Hunt and Slatterlee, 1980; 1981; 1986; Gofton, 1990; Thomas, 2002; Nayak, 2003). Such work contextualizes how local, regional and national assertions of resistant identity are differentially constructed in terms of broader processes – thus considering alcohol, drinking and drunkenness in terms of political and economic change and conflict via social and cultural relations at various spatial scales. This writing is particularly useful in allowing comparisons of the ways in which legislative, policing, policy and health issues are mobilized around specific issues and specific groups of people, in different spaces and places. Despite such exceptions studies that seek to draw together generally conflicting and seemingly entrenched

epistemological and ontological positions within alcohol studies remain small in number and are relatively marginalized.

In summary, we suggest that two important issues arise from reviewing geographical contributions to alcohol studies research. First, there has been an under-theorization of the role and impact that space and place have on the differential and discursive construction of issues relating to alcohol, drinking and drunkenness. In these terms human geography has much to offer theoretical and empirical debates concerning the importance of both past history and contemporary spatial practices and processes relating to alcohol, drinking and drunkenness and their unique position in wider constellations of political, economic, social, cultural and spatial relations (Massey, 1989; Castree, 2005). Such an approach provides a framework to pursue the study of, for example, heterogeneity of European drinking cultures in the context of policy convergence and cultural change, and the role that alcohol plays in public space, at different periods and in different cities throughout the world.

Katz's (2001) concept of counter-topographies, is particularly useful here in showing the ways in which geographical knowledge can address such weaknesses in alcohol studies research. Katz's use of the geographical term *topography*, refers both to the detailed description of a particular location and the features that comprise the landscape itself – physical geographers use contour lines to connect places at a uniform altitude to reveal the three-dimensional form of the terrain. Katz (2001) adaptation of these terms can be applied to drinking-related issues by using counter-topographies in a number of ways. On one hand this approach is particularly useful in describing the inter-penetration of political, economic, social, cultural and spatial 'features' relating to drinking landscapes within and between

specific spaces and places. Importantly, this represents a productive conceptual technique in which theoretical contour lines can be used to connect spaces and places analytically, in order to trace general relations, practices and processes and to identify common (and unique) ones unfolding on the ground, and indeed to imagine different kinds of practical responses to them and the effectiveness of resultant actions. In this way, geographers' spatial knowledges can be used to transcend the specificities of the localities in which they were gathered and can be mobilized in ways that offer possibilities for making wider theoretical, empirical, political and policy connections.

Second, and underpinning the theoretical and substantive points argued in this section, is our view that engaging with the different ways that alcohol, drinking and drunkenness are considered and approached by different theorists and disciplines must be a central concern for human geographers. Research into alcohol, drinking and drunkenness is undertaken in diverse and significantly different ways, often with little dialogue between, or reference to different theoretical or methodological traditions. For example, drink-related issues are studied as a central or peripheral topic, considered as a causal or contributory factor. Alcohol is at once a social problem, a leisure activity, a pleasure, an accelerator of violence, a central to identity formation and so on. While these are all, of course, relevant areas of study, there has been little sustained attempt to engage in theoretical and empirical debate concerning the different ways in which alcohol studies' research frames and addresses the practices and processes (and people and places) being studied. In the second half of the paper we explore the ways in which human geographers have engaged with the study of alcohol, drinking and drunkenness and the extent to which research has sought to address such deficiencies and theoretical impasses.

III Human geography and alcohol studies

While in the context of alcohol studies research human geography's engagement with alcohol, drinking and drunkenness is limited, geographers have nonetheless pursued a wide variety of issues with varying focus and depth of interest. For example, Maye *et al.* (2005) and Leyshon (2005) discuss rural drinking practices – production and consumption cultures and constructions of masculinity/femininity, respectively. Hall (1992) unpacks nostalgic ideas of pub life and Lowe *et al.* (1993) investigate drinking and family life. Unwin (1991) and Purvis (1998) have looked at historical geographies of the production and consumption of wine and the proliferation of working men's clubs in the nineteenth century. Lagendijk's (2003) study of global wine-producing networks shows how highly complex institutional and territorial arrangements are underpinned by geographically and historically specific production and consumption cultures. Lagendijk describes complex trade-offs between the importance of local sociocultural bindings of distinctiveness, identity and cultural value and how these impact on the economic logic of globally integrated production networks and distribution. Such geographical attention shows that over a relatively short period of time there has been a burgeoning interest in alcohol drinking and drunkenness among geographers who are offering vital insights into the ways in which space and place are key constituents in a diverse set of issues relating to alcohol. To a certain degree, however, geography has mirrored alcohol studies research by focusing on specific issues in specific places that, while generating rich and diverse findings, has been based on a *de facto* and fragmented research agenda.

None the less, writing by geographers is adding value to knowledge and debates within geography as well as more broadly to alcohol studies research by pursuing

theoretical and empirically nuanced work aimed at tying together geographies of political economic, social, cultural and spatial practices and processes. For example, in *Urban nightscapes: youth cultures, pleasure spaces and corporate power* (2003), Chatterton and Hollands undertake ethnographic research that is grounded in theories of wider processes of capital accumulation and restructuring and look at the interpenetration between processes of production, regulation, consumption, identity and representation. In simple terms, they look at who and what is involved in producing nightlife spaces (for example, designing, marketing, selling, property markets, corporate strategies, etc); who and what is involved in regulating them (for example, laws and legislation, surveillance, entrance points, codes of conduct); and who and what is involved in consuming them (for example, lived experience, perceptions and stereotypes). Thus, while they have a specific focus on young people and urban nightlife and not drinking *per se*, their work is very useful here in identifying how geographers can offer a conceptually and empirically 'joined-up' approach.

Despite many positives and while Chatterton and Hollands pursue this agenda with great success, their approach is nonetheless uneven. For example, there is an overly dominant focus on regulation and production at the expense of consumption, identity and representation. This is not to say that they do not discuss the relationship between, for example, where people drink and their identities, lifestyles and forms of sociability, or that they ignore representation in their depiction of the production and regulation of the night-time economy; however, these topics are not fully developed. While Chatterton and Hollands unpack the motivations for drinking among young people in specific places they tend towards abstraction, glossing over consumption practices by representing generalized

depictions of drinking practices. Moreover, while Chatterton and Hollands acknowledge that cities (and spaces and places within them) have differentially steered their own course through this reinvention process with very differing degrees of success, there is little investigation of how restructuring takes on varied forms in different locations (see also Hobbs *et al.*, 2003). In a similar vein, while Bromley *et al.* (2000; 2003) and Bromley and Nelson (2002) seek to disaggregate the space-time layers of city centres via analysis of people's daily activities (based upon perceptions and experience of alcohol-related crime and disorder and concerns for personal safety), their approach is one that rarely moves beyond a generalizing perspective. While adding much to our understanding of alcohol and the night-time economy Chatterton and Hollands and Bromley *et al.* paint an overly neat picture of evening and late night drinking ghettos in UK city centres populated by drunken and violent young people. Such work tends to replicate both the strengths and weaknesses of generalizable templates of research into alcohol drinking and drunkenness noted in the previous section.

Other geographers have taken a different approach, showing that far from being homogenized, drinking is a varied activity constructed through diverse practices and experiences. Scratching the surface appearance of urban transformations identifies not a homogenized, purified set of spaces and experiences but something more complicated and contested.³ Work has sought to connect the general and specific ways in which broad political, economic, social, cultural, and spatial practices and processes relating to alcohol, drinking and drunkenness play out in different ways, at different times and for different people in different spaces and places.⁴ For example, Alan Latham (2003: 1713), while recognizing the pervasiveness of social divisions that have characterized the city over the past thirty years, highlights that general depictions of

urban life lack understanding of day-to-day uses of space, which suggests an idealization of the city against which 'real' cities do not match.

Latham's (2003: 1709) ethnographic study of two streets in Auckland, New Zealand, uncovers a public culture that is underpinned by tolerance, diversity and creative energy, with a mixing of postindustrial lifestyles, with sexually polymorphous and industrial male public cultures co-inhabiting in hotels and pubs. Latham suggests that there is a mix of 'self-consciously worldly spaces' and traditional pubs, where 'groups are mixed sex and not infrequently of openly mixed sexualities, and if people get drunk that is rarely the main purpose of the evening but rather a rather pleasant side effect of the night's socializing' (2003: 1712). He identifies a mixing of vernacular and gentrified drinkscape, and a convivial ecology, which can be seen to spill into the streets, generating 'new solidarities and new collectivities' and a greater sense of belonging (Latham, 2003: 1719). Edensor (2006) makes a similar point about the Keg and Marlin pub located on the redeveloped waterfront of Port Louis, Mauritius. The Keg and Marlin allows the ethnic and religious division that characterizes the city/island to be (temporarily at least) challenged. This drinking space allows social mixing and suspension of tension and struggle via drinking and drunken forms of sociability.

Kneale (2004) also synthesizes concern for an understanding of the political economy surrounding the temperance movement and social and cultural relations of 'drunken geographies' by focusing on theoretical and empirical issues concerning public houses and public space in various towns and cities across the UK during the nineteenth century (such as Bolton, Blackpool, Plymouth, Liverpool and Fulham). Kneale shows the importance of pubs as spaces for relatively intimate social relations, where drunkenness was bound up with commensality, trust and reciprocity that encouraged a relaxation of inhibitions and conviviality that spilt out of public houses

into promenading in public space. Kneale discusses how such sociability became a policing and legislation concern and how attempts to control behaviour both within and outside commercial venues unfolded.

Similarly, other researchers have focused on the interpenetration of a number of issues relating to legislation, production, consumption, service provision and health issues through consideration of class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, age, urbanity/rurality, public/private (and so on) via engagement with research into social geographies.⁵ Valentine *et al.* (2007a; 2007b) discuss how, when, why and for whom drinking alcohol is discursively constructed as a 'problem', one that demands both government intervention and the development and enactment of specific tailored policing strategies in the UK. By focusing on complex and spatialized ways in which drinking among young people is framed as a 'problem' – differently in urban and rural areas – this research shows the importance of a sustained consideration of the ways in which alcohol, drinking and drunkenness is problematized – and when it is not (Jayne *et al.*, 2006; Valentine *et al.*, 2007a).

Throughout this section work by geographers seeking to unpack the connections, similarities, differences and motilities relating to alcohol-related issues at different spatial scales achieves a degree of success that is rare in alcohol studies writing. Nonetheless, this work can also be criticized for its failure to address fundamental questions about the topics, issues, approaches and theoretical terrain to which geographers are contributing. While to a certain degree this criticism is unfair, given that such a project has not been a stated concern of geographers' engagement with alcohol, drinking and drunkenness, we argue that such a goal is important if fledgling geographies are not to replicate some of the weaknesses and impasses of alcohol studies research.

This argument can be best elaborated by looking at the emerging body of geographical literature that focuses on the interplay

between emotions, space and place and which has dealt with alcohol, drinking and drunkenness in various ways (McCormack, 2003; Thrift, 2004; Davidson and Bondi, 2004). In such work, emotions are investigated as important aspects of our daily lives, and research is involved in looking at 'embodied and mindful phenomena that partially shape, and are shaped by our interaction with people, places and politics that make up our unique, personal geographies' (Davidson and Bondi, 2004: 373). This includes joy, sadness, confusion, excitement, fear, conviviality, love, hate, arousal, reciprocity and so on. Thrift (2004) importantly shows how emotions and embodied experience are central to the systematic engineering of space and central to the political life of Euro-American societies. Thrift suggests that expressive affective embodiment is being written into the 'affective register of cities' and emotional and embodied experience is inscribed into the regeneration of our urban (and rural) areas.

From this point of reference geographers have begun to identify the ways in which alcohol, drinking and drunkenness can be seen as part of a process of 'performative experience ... which encourages new configuration and twists of ideas and experience' (Thrift, 2004). For example, Philo *et al.* (2002) look at the relationship between alcohol and mental health in respect to rural areas. They show how alcohol is bound up with emotional geographies around a number of issues, including hospitality, a lack of leisure opportunities, relaxation and reward, gendered coping strategies regarding both isolation and belonging. Taking another tack, Phil Hubbard (2005) considers the experience of 'going out' in the urban 'evening economy', describing how danger, unpleasantness, frustration, resentment, pleasure, desire, anger, happiness and fear can be key elements of a night out. While not specifically investigating in depth the impact of alcohol or degrees of drunkenness, Hubbard describes drinking in terms of pleasure,

embarrassment, emotional talk (arguing, comforting, romance and so on) as well as bodily discomforts. Focusing on another important topic, Latham and McCormack (2004) discuss the materialities surrounding alcohol, drinking and drunkenness and the physiological impact of alcohol (and other drugs) on amplifying or focusing our experiences of particular spaces. Latham and McCormack also importantly discuss the materialities of drink itself, including sweetness, taste and texture, and identify the need for future research to address how specific drinks affect people in different ways, at different times and in different places.

While there is clearly much work to be done to explore the co-constitutive relations between emotions, notions of embodiment and materiality, space and place, and alcohol, drinking and drunkenness, this approach has much to offer alcohol studies research.⁶ Such studies offer an interesting conceptual framework to engage with debates concerning the ways in which alcohol-related issues are a key part of political, economic and cultural life, supported and nurtured not only at the level of vernacular but through political and planning discourses. However, concern can also be expressed about the ways in which alcohol, drinking and drunkenness are being mobilized to pursue such agendas. For example, this relatively small and emerging body of research usefully highlights that alcohol, drinking and drunkenness can be considered in very different ways – as a central focus, as a peripheral concern, as an issue impacting on mental health, related to fun and excitement, fear and violence, in terms of taste, its relationship to our experience and perception of city streets and rural isolation and so on. On one hand, the proliferation of such diverse research into alcohol, drinking and drunkenness by geographers can be argued to offer a relevant way of addressing underlying assumptions and conceptualizations of the relationship between space and place and alcohol, drinking and drunkenness

in critical and creative ways. It is also possible to argue, nonetheless, that in pursuing such an approach geographers are simply utilizing and adopting alcohol, drinking and drunkenness as an empirical set of practices and processes in order to investigate already existing and newly emerging conceptual, methodological and policy agendas within the discipline. While this is a useful project in itself, we suggest that it is also vital that geographers embark on a more sustained engagement with the ways in which alcohol, drinking and drunkenness are conceptualized in their own right.

Thus, while the work presented in this section can be celebrated as ground-breaking advances in human geography, we are concerned that such progress must also be aligned with a more challenging agenda that questions the theoretical and methodological approaches that are being mobilized in pursuing alcohol, drinking and drunkenness research. Adding alcohol, drinking and drunkenness to the canon of human geography research is, of course, and important theoretical and methodological goal. None the less, in doing so human geographers must fully engage with the strengths and weaknesses of the alcohol studies research that geographers are drawing upon in order to frame and underpin their own research. We argue that it is only by pursuing this critical agenda that human geography will add value to the progress already made and lead to research that will have a highly significant, conceptually and empirically, contribution to make to alcohol studies research.

IV Conclusion

Although tending to mirror alcohol studies in its diversity, fragmented nature and *de facto* research agenda, examples throughout this paper have shown that epistemologies of generality or specificity (or both combined) pursued by human geographers are relevant to both disciplinary and wider debates (see Massey, 1989; Castree, 2005). By making

connections, unpacking similarities, differences and mobilities between supranational, national, regional and local spatial scales, geographers are producing work that is conceptually and empirically groundbreaking. In these terms human geographers are currently investigating complex interpenetrations of political, economic, social, cultural and spatial issues to a degree not achieved in a coherent or sustained way by alcohol studies research.

However, this paper has also struck a note of caution. While geographers have focused on developing new areas of research – producing ground-breaking interventions for human geography into this area – there has been a failure to engage in a detailed and clear way with epistemological, ontological and methodological genealogies of alcohol studies research. Pursuing such an agenda is, of course, by no means an easy task – tackling orthodoxies and assumptions that conjoin and separate research both within and across disciplinary boundaries offers a significant challenge. Indeed, this paper does not claim to present any clever approaches to the problem of fragmentation or solutions to the competing approaches that characterize alcohol studies research. What is clear, however, is that there is a need for geographers to establish the ‘translation-rules’ for how a more impactful and critically productive dialogue between human geography and broader research into alcohol, drinking and drunkenness can be pursued (Castree, 2005: 544). Geographers thus need to address the different ways that alcohol-related issues are considered, measured, conceived and theorized, and moreover to engage with the theoretical and empirical frameworks and impasses that exist in alcohol studies research. To this end, we challenge human geographers from all areas of study to pursue research into alcohol, drinking and drunkenness that both addresses and boldly states the important role that geographical work can play in advancing both disciplinary and alcohol studies research agendas.

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Notes

1. Throughout this paper indicative topics and examples of alcohol-related research are presented not as a comprehensive review of the diverse and varied terrain of ‘alcohol studies’ but as exemplars of geographical contributions to alcohol studies. However, a comprehensive and detailed review of all the ways in which geographers have engaged, or could possibly engage, with alcohol-related issues is beyond the limits of this paper.
2. Examples of possible future research include studies of alcohol-related issues in the 1930s depression and during the second world war, and the role played by alcohol in youth subcultures in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s. The overwhelming focus on working-class drinking has ensured that upper- and middle-class public and private drinking has tended to be ignored, as have drinking-related issues concerning gender, ethnicity, age, sexuality and so on. A glaring and particularly important constituent of this lacuna of historical and contemporary research is the lack of work focusing on domestic production and consumption of alcohol.
3. Future research topics could include the ways in which different people use venues and consume different types and brands of alcohol at different times, with different people and in different ways. Research relating to the mix, location and density of venues is vital. Similarly, studies of drinking must strive to address how the life course affects drinking patterns, and highlight intergenerational change in different places at different times. There is a need to explore continuity and change between generations in individual families, as the household provides a key space where culture of drinking/abstinence are transmitted and contested. Tracing change in consumption across generations also provides an opportunity to explore how shifting historical and contemporary socio-economic conditions can shape place-specific drinking cultures.
4. A non-exhaustive indicative list of possible future research includes studies of the changing numbers, location and types of alcohol-related venues, fashions and trends regarding the popularity of

brands and drinks, and activities of local breweries. License applications, arrest rates, local interpretation of legislation, and the urban/rural dimensions of all these are all issues that are also clearly important. Of course, much of the alcohol studies literature has been restricted to Europe and Northern America (and anthropological studies have overwhelmingly focused on 'traditional' societies), hence research characterized by increased geographical diversity is a clear imperative.

5. Examples of possible future research include drinking subcultures such as real ale pubs and drinking, wine and cocktail drinkers and beer festivals. The role of drinking in celebrating special occasions such as birthdays, religious sporting or other cultural events and the effect of changing patterns of retailing, in particular the impact of supermarkets and off-licences on drinking patterns must be addressed. Other spaces, places and people that have been ignored include public drinking, drunks and homeless people as well drinking in parks and on street corners. Alcohol-tourism, holiday drinking and official place promotion around drinking and drinking trails are also clearly productive areas of study.
6. A non-exhaustive indicative list of possible future research topics includes the relationships between excitement, anticipation, apprehension, affection and sociability bound up with drinking, performativity and national, regional and local identities. Indeed, health geographers have usefully begun to contribute to these debates in terms of self-reporting of drinking and concerns over consumption levels (Twigg and Jones, 2000; Twigg *et al.*, 2002). Hangovers, regret, sadness and 'boozers' gloom', as well as drinking as a reward and for relaxation will also be important topics for study. In terms of materiality, study of the relationship between drinking and drunkenness and venues, furniture, lighting, music, drinking at home, in parks and gardens, the weather, the time of day and year and so on would be welcome.

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