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Practices of social control by nightlife and event security

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DISRUPTING LOOMING VIOLENCE

PRACTICES OF SOCIAL CONTROL BY NIGHTLIFE AND EVENT SECURITY

M.F.S. (Phie) van Rompu

This dissertation discusses how Dutch nightlife and event security guards exercise social control. Previous research confirms that the vast majority of antagonism and violence occurs between patrons, and that guards try to manage these violent interactions through a variety of techniques. However, little is known about the actual practice of performing these bodily interventions. What is missing is an interactional approach that moves away from individuals, and instead focuses on social control as a social accomplishment, involving bodily techniques, a material environment, and shared understandings of what is important to do, when, and how to do it.

Taking a practice-based approach, I describe how guards use their bodies to prevent and disrupt antagonism and violence by interrupting and redirecting patrons' antagonistic and violent lines of action. The study aims to increase our understanding about the why, how, and when of social control of a specific social order, and violence from an embodied perspective.

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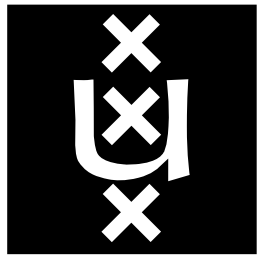

Disrupting looming violence
Practices of social control by nightlife and event security

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To accept the existence of other subjects as well as oneself is also to accept that there is a world which all these different subjects experience, each from his or her perspective, and which provides the common ‘horizon’ for all our experiences.

— Merleau–Ponty, 1945

PREFACE

I have written a monograph instead of an article-based dissertation. This decision stems from my personal annoyances and struggle with dividing and categorizing data into a set of academic articles. Consequently, I felt I was failing on many fronts. Failing at the level of academic requirements of writing highly structured academic articles. Not doing justice to the group I was researching because of the academic style (Which guard cares about a methodological paper?). Lacking to do justice to the collected data and its richness *because* of the article structure killing so incredibly many darlings. Finally, failing to spread my enthusiasm because the COVID–19 pandemic salted our usual face-to-face get-togethers, conferences, and workshops, which enabled space for researchers to, for example, discuss fieldwork-related matters as opposed to only dropping such details in the limited format of academic articles.

So, after writing two articles, I blew up my planning. I changed course to remain close to what I stand for as an individual, personally and professionally, despite the fear (albeit rational or irrational - depending on who I would talk to within academia) of potentially jeopardizing my academic career due to not publishing enough and never finishing the book in time with only nine months of my contract left.

I steered towards my conviction that an ethnographic monograph would do more justice to (most) of the areas I felt that I was lacking on. Many of the tools, and extra features, in this book are the result of the creative and analytical space this offered me. I hope that you will read it with as much joy as with which I wrote many of the pages in front of you.

Of course, this joy was not a solo performance. Along the journey there were many people who made it an enjoyable ride. I want to highlight some of them, but of course, there are others to thank.

First and foremost, I want (and need!) to thank all the security companies and especially all the guards that made this project possible. Without you I could not have written one word of this book and I would not have had a clue about your job! Especially Brent and Samuel (not their real names, but they know who they are) are true icons: thanks for spending way too much time on my project: without your interviews, reflections, and helpfulness I do not think the book would have turned out the way it did.

Without my promotor and daily supervisor, dr. Don Weenink, I could not have finished the writing of this book. Thank you for always being available and being critical, but especially for nudging my curiosity, and giving me the trust, support, and freedom to be creative. Without it, many of the tools and ideas would not have been realized. I enjoyed many of our brainstorm sessions, please continue doing such valuable work for PhDs!

My co-promotor, professor dr. Giselinde Kuipers, was there to zoom out when Don and I were too 'zoomed in'. Thank you for your valuable helicopter view. For those who participated in the Culture Club and D/Escalation reading sessions on my work: your input made my writings so much better.

Tim Heyne (Studio Play) and Lisa Scheer are the champions of the creative aspects of this book. Thank you Tim for making those beautiful illustrations, and thank you Lisa for the amazing, and analytically valuable lay-out, your (critical)

thinking, and for everything else you always support me with! Helen Faller, my editor, knew the words where I did not capture them adequately enough.

I am grateful for the chance that I got to go to Cape Town, South Africa. Dr. Guy Lamb, Lameez Mota, and others: thank you for having me at the University of Cape Town. I also want to thank the SAPS officers and others in the field whom I spoke to and joined along, and my local friends Esti, Nick, Rodrigo and Ruhan, for making me feel at home in Cape Town.

Gaby, our secretary, smoothened the administrative process and helped me out with all my laptop troubles. My GV crew, Flo, Lau and Roos, made PhD life more fun by always going out and about during conferences, our writing retreat and after-hour activities. Also, cheers to everyone who made work a little bit more pleasurable at the department, the coffee corner, in B6.01, and during after-hour borrels. Thanks to those events, I made new friends, among others, Anna, Fenna, Myra, and Peter, who have enriched my life!

Finally, I particularly want to thank my parents for having me take over their house during COVID–19 restriction measures that made us all work at home. Your house, table, and food were better than my own and your support was limitless. Last but not least, without Wes and my friends, some mentioned, I could not have done it. Thank you for pushing me through that last and final bit. When I saw the finish, but it was still far way, you gave the right pep talks!

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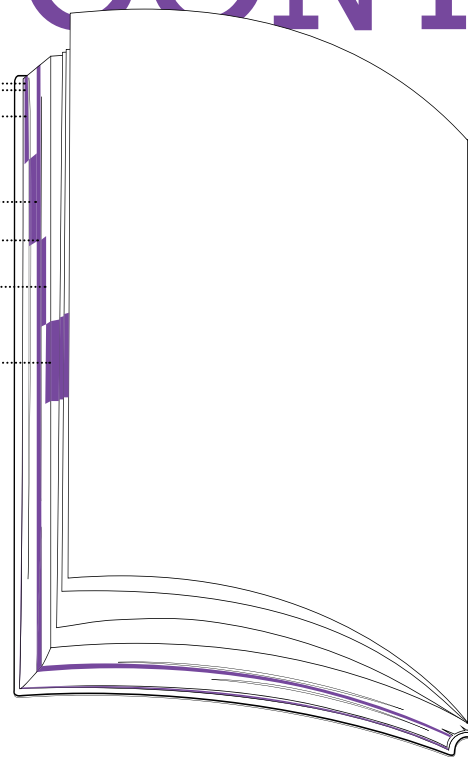

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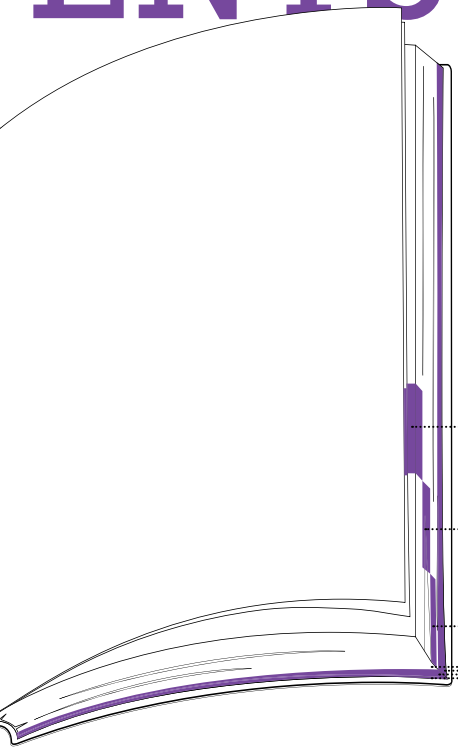

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GLOSSARY

Bodily foregrounding techniques

Techniques that apply pressure to weak points on the body. I pinpoint a crucial moment to stop ongoing violence: the point at which pain ruptures the antagonist's intense focus of attention on their opponent, causing all focus to move to their own body. By imposing this directionlessness on the antagonistic patron, guards restrain the antagonistic patron's opportunity to propose or continue their violent line of action.

Bodily know-where

Bodily-spatial dimension of the practice which marks the fluid boundary between the human and the outer world. The spatial environment is interiorized through the bodily-spatial relations between humans and their 'bodies as entities'.

Closed violence

Discourages turn-taking by restricting the antagonist's freedom of movement and/or by creating what I refer to 'physical perplexity'. As a result, guards dominate the interaction by redirecting the trajectory towards non-violence. With closed violence I refer to restraining techniques, such as escort holds and arm wraps, bodily foregrounding techniques, such as applying pressure to weak points, as well as striking techniques that end a patron's ability to engage in violence.

De-mirroring patron behaviour

Displaying contradictory or unexpected lines of action to disrupt the patron's anger. (Talking technique)

Directionlessness

The sudden loss of a sense of direction in the midst of the trajectory.

Directionless violence

Violence employed repeatedly and without direction because of the person committing it abruptly loses the trajectory's sense of direction.

Dominance

Is achieved as a result of the ability to pose unexpected lines of actions through a variety of bodily techniques. I demonstrate how this dominance is effected using techniques that become increasingly active and therefore move from implicit (e.g., gazing) to explicit (e.g., violence) performances. Dominance is the ability to (collectively) induce turning points in trajectories.

Failure talks

Method to discuss more information about practices. Elicits accounts of significantly failed practices. The feeling of disruption causes informants to elaborate upon situations more extensively than they would have done otherwise.

Guard swapping

A colleague guard takes over a dialogue to disrupt the rising antagonism between a patron and a guard. (Talking technique)

Gauging

Gauging informs guards' bodily know-how and is therefore seen as an important element to grasp and give a sense of orientation to where the trajectory is or might be going. Gauging is carried out using several specific subtle tech-

niques, including conversations, touching and proxemics, or a combination.

Gazing techniques

Gazing performed overtly and semi-covertly. Social control stems from generic gazing. Although guards might indeed indicate problems, it is not necessarily their sharp eye, but the performances of (in)visibility that give patrons the idea that they are being watched, which introduces social control.

Looming violence

The potential for violence, the present absence of violence. Situations of looming violence are situations in which lines of action do not yet display any antagonism or violence but could potentially do so.

Mirroring patron behaviour

Going (somewhat) along with the patron's line of action to manipulate it. (Talking technique)

On-the-spot triggering

Questioning technique during observations in the field. The kind of trigger depends upon the turn of events: depending on what unfolds, the researcher has to anticipate, decide, and actively step in, asking on the spot what, why, and how informants performed a particular move.

Open violence

Leaves space open to an antagonist and may provoke them to respond in a violent way. Open violence pertains to techniques, such as pushing, shoving, punching, hitting, and kicking.

Prodding techniques

The techniques entail bodily arrangements and physical movements. These techniques redirect the trajectories away from violence by repositioning patrons into new positions through bodily arrangements, physical movements, and alignment. By positioning and applying gestures, guards break the situational ties between antagonists. Guards pull them into alternative trajectories and interrupt the antagonists' mutual entrainment.

Re-enactments

By performing actions instead of verbalizing about them during interviews, bodily know-how was communicated through gestures and partial verbalizations while taking the researcher through the trajectory.

Situational drawings

Sketches by informants of different types of experienced situations. These drawings help to discuss situations in a systematized manner, due to having to discuss the situation chronologically step by step.

Social control

An ongoing accomplishment, individually and collectively achieved moment by moment, by employing a variety of bodily techniques that aim to redirect trajectories away from the negation of social order.

Talking techniques

By means of these techniques, guards determine the direction of a trajectory of action, while simultaneously redirecting trajectories away from antagonism. Sometimes still anticipating looming violence, and in other cases, already react-

ing to displayed antagonism between groups of patrons or directed at guards.

Trajectories

We can view social (inter)actions as trajectories: as delimited courses with beginnings, intermediate phases, transitions, and endings, during which people act upon each other's actions to project a direction for the interaction to take, which can be (con)tested in the exchanges that follow. The practice of social control aims to redirect these trajectories.

Trigger techniques

I bundle together elicitation techniques as trigger techniques, to emphasize the importance of combining different types of techniques. In order to prompt the generation of information regarding different levels of sensory experiences in order to tighten the gap between action and recollection.

Un-anonymizing patrons

Using information, such as names or familiar details, as a shield. (Talking technique)