

Alcohol control in the news: the politics of media representations of alcohol policy in South Africa

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Abstract

Media coverage of the “problems” associated with alcohol is widespread in countries of the Global North and now, increasingly, in those of the Global South. However, despite this mounting ubiquity, there have been very few analyses either of newspaper coverage of alcohol or media coverage of alcohol policy, especially outside Europe or North America. This paper argues that, given international concern with the long-term health, economic, social and developmental consequences of risky drinking in the Global South, an exploration of newspaper coverage of nascent alcohol policy in such a context is both timely and valuable. This is not least as such analyses bring to the fore the deeply contextual and contingent nature of alcohol’s problematisation in politics, policy and public life. To examine these assertions, we explore the ‘attention allocation’ processes of two South African alcohol control policies – the Western Cape Liquor Bill and the City of Cape Town’s liquor by-laws –in two regional, English-language newspapers over a four year period between 2007 and 2011. In so doing, the paper highlights the particularities of the political valence of alcohol in the South African context. Furthermore, it also draws out the tensions between alcohol as a source of livelihoods in a context of endemic unemployment and chronic poverty and alcohol as a causal factor in poverty, crime, violence and social disintegration. And, in contrast to media coverage of alcohol policy in Europe and North America, this analysis of the South African press suggests that liquor consumption is far less likely to be framed as an express health risk, forcing us to question how best preventative policy efforts should best proceed.

Introduction

In 2010, the World Health Organisation (WHO) endorsed its *Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol*. It highlights that, while alcohol is a ‘major *global* contributing factor to death, disease and injury’ (World Health Organisation 2011b, x, emphasis added), its impact is greatest in middle-income countries. Thus, even though there are more drinkers in the high income countries of the Global North, the burden of alcohol-related harm (e.g. disease, disability, violence, neglect, abuse and absenteeism) is often most onerous in countries where legislation is poorly developed, routinely unenforced and, ironically, rates of abstinence are high. Alcohol control policies in any country are complex and inter-sectoral (Matzopoulos *et al.* 2008) and reflect both the multi-dimensional nature of alcohol-related harms and the ambiguous status of alcohol as a material good (Smith, Atkin *et al.* 2006). Indeed, the polysemic nature of alcohol is reflected in the ways alcohol policies necessarily straddle numerous governmental domains (e.g. health, economic and social development, planning, tax and excise) (Drummond 2004; Room 2004; see also Myers, Louw *et al.* 2008). Policy development is thus a manifestation of the cultural relationships, norms and beliefs that surround drinking as well as the political ambitions pegged to the alcohol ‘cause’. For this reason, this paper argues that alcohol control policies and the debates that encircle them are reflective not just of the drive to reduce alcohol-related health harms, but rather multiple, overlapping and often competing social, economic and political agendas. In turn, it is clear that ‘the mass media play an influential role in the process of agenda setting by providing one of the primary attention arenas in the public domain, by calling attention to certain problems and by framing what are seen as the causes of and solutions to those

problems' (Armstrong, Carpenter et al. 2006, 763). To this, it is important to add that the 'agenda setting' processes undertaken by the press are creative and constructive, largely subjective and, furthermore, almost always inextricable from alcohol's own contested and ambiguous status. This paper therefore represents an important contribution to the existing canon of multi-disciplinary work that critically engages with media (re)presentations of health/wellbeing/disease in general and alcohol in particular by examining an instance where such coverage necessarily forces us to reconsider the degree to which alcohol is conceptualised as a *health* challenge within the political, policy and public spheres. And, moreover, where the development of efficacious policy solutions is hindered by vast differences in the perceived legitimacy of alcohol retailing and consumption depending on where and among whom it is taking place. Together these are important as they highlight areas where policy assumptions derived from the Global North may be challenged by the reality of the politics encircling liquor in many countries of the Global South.

To explore these ideas, the paper turns to South Africa's Western Cape Province to examine newspaper coverage of the debates that emerged around two recently enacted alcohol control policies: the Western Cape Liquor Bill and the City of Cape Town's municipal by-laws. As 'the country within Africa that has experienced the most rapid period of alcohol policy development over the last 15 years' (Parry 2010, 1340), South Africa has witnessed demonstrable efforts to make alcohol control policies more relevant to the post-apartheid socio-economic context. However, a renewed national focus on alcohol control has also come about due to mounting pressure from the World Health Organisation on low and middle-income countries to develop adequate policy responses to 'one of the four most common modifiable and preventable risk factors for major non-communicable diseases' (World Health Organisation 2010a, 3). With an extremely high burden of alcohol-attributable harm and an endemic culture of "all or nothing" drinking (Norman *et al.* 2007; Michalak and Trocki 2009), there is high-level agreement that South Africa's alcohol "problem" must be addressed, but limited political consensus as to *how* this might best be achieved, *which drinkers* should be targeted, *where* the riskiest drinking takes place and, moreover, the politically and publically acceptable *limits* to policy intervention. In all, therefore, little consensus as to what the problem actually is. These are all crucial dynamics of the South African debate, but they also resonate strongly with broader considerations of alcohol policy development and deployment in other countries. This is not least because the South African example provokes a fundamental reconsideration of the way in which alcohol's societal *necessity* is configured within the policy process.

In itself, this is a fundamental political question raised by alcohol control. To clarify, many explorations of alcohol hinge on the degree to which liquor is socially normalised, culturally acceptable and desirable and, therefore, its regulation often decried as undesirable Nanny Statism. However, when alcohol is cloaked in a discourse of societal necessity because it offers up an essential (and historically notable) livelihood strategy for the (majority) poor, then claims of Nanny Statism take on a fundamentally different mantle. Thus, at a very basic level, the press coverage discussed in this paper raises far broader questions concerning the legitimacy of drinking and/or selling alcohol and how this is fundamentally challenged by the fact of being poor. Indeed, the right to survival is rarely an aspect of discourses and debates on alcohol in North America or Europe. This sharply contrasts with countries of the Global South. The South African case therefore reveals a fundamental political tension between the significant number of livelihoods dependent on liquor and the disproportionately high costs of alcohol-related harms borne by both the poor and poor countries. This tension is, however, one that is remarkably silent in the *Global Strategy*, which, instead, focuses on the conflicts between the free market operation of liquor multinationals and the burden alcohol places on state resources (World Health Organisation 2010a, 7). Without full appreciation of the significance of liquor to livelihoods, there is little hope of publically palatable policy solutions and even less chance of political consensus. In South Africa, as in many countries, political allegiances follow strong regional, racial and class patterns, making consensus, meaning that party political conflicts over alcohol's regulation are a source of great moral and strategic valence. This paper explores a valuable empirical instance of such arguments in its analysis of competing frames of alcohol policy within the news press.

The paper analyses the (re)presentation of liquor control policy in two major regional, English language newspapers - *The Cape Times* and the *Cape Argus* - from 2007 to 2011, a time period over which debates over proposed changes to liquor legislation reached their zenith in the Western Cape. In so doing, it identifies three major 'agenda shifts' (Hansen and Gunter 2007, 155) in the politics encircling the alcohol policy debate: opposition to the legalization of shebeens by communities; opposition to shortened licensing hours by the city centre's licensed trade; and backlash against the perceived assault on livelihoods by shebeeners. Each of these shifts is characterised by a new set of advocacy groups and a revised vision of alcohol's problematic status set out in terms of *who* policy should address as well as *where* efforts should best be targeted. To contextualize this analysis, the paper first provides a critical exploration of media analyses of health in general and alcohol in particular, before elaborating further on the South African political and policy context. It then sets out

the methods employed in this research. The paper concludes by further discussion of the ways in which the alcohol control agenda in South Africa represents a complex politics of reconciliation between livelihoods and harms, which extends far beyond matters of health alone and, therefore, demands multiple, creative policy solutions.

The media, health and alcohol

The media plays a critical role in framing public discourses, especially regarding health and the lifestyle “diseases” resulting from drinking, eating and smoking (Bell, McNaughton et al. 2011; Bell *et al.* 2011; Herrick 2011). For, as Armstrong *et al* (2006, 768) suggest, ‘in the mass media, the decision of whether to give attention to a particular problem is a key determinant of what makes it onto the public agenda...certain characteristics associated with problems – namely the segment of society they most burden and the activity of interested advocacy groups – affect systematically this process of attention allocation, bringing certain diseases into public view while keeping others out of sight’. Within the health field, alcohol represents a complex “problem” in that the physiological and psychological effects of *chronic* heavy consumption can be severe; but also so too can the acute consequences of *episodic* heavy drinking. Moreover, the effects of drinking affect non-drinkers just as much as drinkers if acute injury and accidents are deemed to be within the remit of ‘health’. Unlike countries of the Global North where attention is increasingly turning to alcohol consumption as a risk factor for non-communicable diseases including certain cancers, liver and heart disease (Parry, Patra et al. 2011), countries of the Global South have instead largely tended to focus on alcohol as a conduit for the more immediate concerns of injury, violence and crime (Room, Jernigan et al. 2002). This concern is understandable given the rising rates of road-traffic accident mortality and the role played by liquor in exacerbating these trends (Nantulya and Reich 2002). This concern is ably exemplified by the World Health Organisation’s *Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020* (2010) in which reducing blood alcohol concentration limits for drivers forms a central objective. Moreover, in countries where rates of accidental and non-accidental mortality are high (e.g. through homicide), alcohol has come to assume a central role in causal narratives of violent, criminal behaviour. These narratives often have their roots in burden of disease studies (Schneider, Norman et al. 2007; Rehm, Mathers et al. 2009). As a consequence, it is important to note that the South African example demonstrates a case where homicide is a principle public health concern (Norman, Matzopoulos et al. 2007) and alcohol perpetually cited as a causal factor in driving the country’s infamously high murder rates. In turn, this shapes the dominant framing of alcohol in the media and, arguably, renders the tension between liquor’s

economic contribution (to national GDP through the industry and local livelihoods) and its social and public health costs far more politically exigent.

These trends add to the problematic status of alcohol as either a “disease” (even of lifestyle) or even a health concern. In South Africa, the primary health concerns raised by the country’s high rate of alcohol consumption are injuries and violence. In turn, this then renders heavy episodic or ‘binge’ drinking the primary behaviour of concern. If, for example, liver disease or cancer were cast as primary burdens, then chronic, sustained (i.e. quotidian) moderate to heavy drinking would be the major policy focus. Returning to Armstrong *et al*’s assertion, health risk behaviours (e.g. smoking, poor diets and sedentarism) are almost always linked, within media coverage to certain ‘segments of society’, whose interests may be represented by different ‘advocacy groups’. This is not a process particular to South Africa, but rather a general conflation of perceived behaviours and demographic characteristics that has long defined how health is talked about in medico-moral terms (see for example Armstrong 2003). Building from this, media coverage of risk behaviours has climbed as both a reflection and constituent of governmental efforts to regulate them. This is not simply because of the increasing numbers of studies that quantify the economic or health burdens such behaviours pose to states and individuals; but also because stories about health usually contain a great deal of human interest given they discuss, in effect, mundane and routine lifestyle choices laced with class and racial judgment. It is therefore unsurprising that explorations of media coverage of risk behaviours are numerous, given their ability to reveal the ways in which they deepen our understandings of ‘responsibility, blame and morality’ and ‘political rights’ (Saguy and Riley 2005, 871). Such media analyses include those examining newspaper accounts of the risks of smoking (Menashe 1998; Clegg Smith *et al.* 2006), youth smoking as a particular risk category (Smith and Wakefield 2006) as well as a recent burgeoning within ‘Critical Obesity Studies’ exploring competing framings of obesity in the media (Gard and Wright 2005; Oliver and Lee 2005; Saguy and Riley 2005). In addition, there have been a series of papers exploring diet and exercise (Theberge 1991; Lupton and Chapman 1995; Caburnay, Kreuter et al. 2003), and particularly a series of contributions to gendered representations of (male) health (Gough 2006; Gough 2007). As the internet has emerged as a key site for health information and advocacy, there have also been a number of fascinating engagements with its changing role (Parr 2002; Seale 2005).

However, despite the broad interest in media coverage of health, it is notable that as Nicholls (2011) highlights, there remains a lack of interest in either alcohol as the subject of *news*

media discourses or media coverage of alcohol *policy*. While there have been some explorations of the relationship between alcohol and the media, but much of this has focused on the behavioral impacts of alcohol advertising, sports sponsorship and product placement (Cherrington *et al.* 2006; Anderson *et al.* 2009; Engels *et al.* 2009). Indeed, Hansen and Gunter's (2007) review identifies only eleven significant English language studies published from 1997-2002 exploring alcohol in the US, UK and Scandinavian press. However, there are a number of notable later analyses of media coverage of alcohol that merit further scrutiny. For example, work by Day *et al.* (2004) explores the representation of female drinking (as a definitive problem) in the British press, while Connolly-Ahern and Broadway (2008) analyse US newspaper coverage of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) and Lowe *et al.* (2010) offer up an analysis of UK newspaper coverage of FASD. This body of work suggests that female drinking represents a distinct category of risk-taking, morally questionable and a legitimately subjected to external control when undertaken during pregnancy. A large collection of critical reflections on discourses of binge drinking in the UK (Hayward and Hobbs 2007; Ruddock 2008; Szmigin *et al.* 2008) must also be noted for the ways in which they force open categorizations of risk that often appear as epidemiological truth, rather a societally constructed reflection of 'the proper social order' (Armstrong 2003, 15). Yet, despite undeniable alcohol control policy activity, there remains a clear research lacuna on 'news and factual media reporting on alcohol, drinking practices, alcohol policy and alcohol-related problems' (Hansen and Gunter, 2007: 150). This lacuna is even more glaring in the Global South, where critical social science research on alcohol is in its infancy, but policy developments are still proceeding apace. Given that 'the impact that the printed press may wield in determining knowledge and attitudes towards alcohol has been largely neglected' (Baillie 1996: 235), this paper represents an important contribution to our understanding of not only knowledge and attitudes towards alcohol, but also the political strategies that underpin and are, moreover, advanced by them.

This paper consequently represents the first such exploration in relation to South Africa's evolving alcohol control debate and one that seeks to go beyond the existing and dominant biomedical/ public health canon of work to consider how alcohol is problematic in relational terms. By this, we mean to challenge the notion that South Africa's drinking "problem" is necessarily wholly particular, but rather exhibits many traits common to debates taking place elsewhere. For example, the pleasurable aspects of drinking in South Africa are as discursively and politically significant as recent scholarship from the Global North has suggested (Measham 2004; O'Malley and Valverde 2004), however the processes by which

pleasure is legitimized and delegitimized by the presence of poverty shares similarities and exhibits differences when compared to the Global North. In essence, middle class conservatism frequently casts the consumption of alcohol among the poor as irresponsible, unnecessary and serving only to direct funds away from more prudent pastimes such as paying bills and eating healthily. Rarely is pleasure acknowledged as a fundamental right among the poor, socially in the press. This then has ramifications for media coverage of alcohol consumption *in* poor countries, as well as coverage of consumption *among* the poorest in poor countries. As O'Malley and Valverde (2004) have asserted, this moral judgment is far from new, but repeatedly legitimises the absence of 'pleasure' as an acceptable discourse within alcohol control debates when discussing the poor as much in poor countries as rich ones. As this paper shall discuss, however, the middle-class and tourist right to the simple pleasures of 'responsible' drinking is rarely questioned by policy-makers in the Western Cape. Instead, they consistently argue for the importance of safeguarding this right. It should be noted at this juncture that such a split between those seen as deserving and those as undeserving is inextricable from the country's mercifully particular history of socio-spatial control and segregation that has also guided its liquor control policies, a contextual point that merits further attention.

South African alcohol control

By the end of apartheid, white areas of Cape Town had fifteen times the number of licensed premises as the black and colored townships (Provincial Government of the Western Cape 2003) as black South Africans were prohibited from selling, purchasing or consuming 'European liquor' (Mager 1999). The result was a burgeoning in the number of unlicensed, small bars in the newly-formed townships, commonly known as shebeens (La Hausse 1998). Here, the sale of home-brewed beer became a central livelihood strategy mainly for township women who were otherwise excluded from most formal and informal job opportunities. Prohibition was relaxed in 1962 in favor of a municipal monopoly on brewing and retail, but the legacy of illicit brewing and retailing still remains in an urban landscape characterised by numerous, covert shebeens that still operate without a license, do not pay taxes, exist outside formal regulatory structures and are commonly thought to be hotbeds of crime (Morojele, Kachieng'a et al. 2006; Kalichman, Simbayi et al. 2008). This "shebeen problem" has a long history (Mager 2010), but the moral panic that characterizes its most recent iteration during the period 2007-2011 considered here, clearly demonstrates the powerful creative processes that drive alcohol control policy in directions that supplant health concerns alone. By this we mean that the media coverage of alcohol in the Western

Cape is inextricable from the province's broader fears over the scale of shebeen numbers, their persistent ungovernability and the perceived consequences that result from the (high risk) drinking suspected to be undertaken in shebeens. Moreover, these fears are exacerbated by the fact that shebeens provide incomes for many thousands of people in a context where unemployment is high and rising, and the informal economy is far less developed than elsewhere on the continent (James 2012). As such, shebeens may be a source of great public and political anxiety, but this is repeatedly compounded by the difficulty of offering up viable alternative livelihoods to shebeeners. It is precisely at here that the political dimensions of alcohol's media presence gain traction.

The 2003 National Liquor Act devolved responsibility for the regulation of trade to individual provinces. In the process it not only generated 'much confusion and no agreement on the definition of shebeen across provinces' (Mager 2010, 143), but also made clear the need to update the 1989 Western Cape Liquor Act. However, as the Western Cape prepared for provincial elections in 2004 and municipal elections in 2006, revising the provincial act from its 2003 initial draft was delayed until 2008 (Parry 2010). Essentially, the original Western Cape Liquor Bill was an invention of the ANC, who led the province at the time of its inception. However, the issues represented by liquor control (i.e. crime, informality, violence, the effects of unemployment) spoke powerfully to the concerns and anxieties of DA voters as much as disillusioned ANC voters. Thus, the unfolding of the debate over the ANC-inaugurated Liquor Bill and the DA-led municipal by-laws provide an insight not only into South Africa's regional politics, but also the political valence of alcohol, an area that has received remarkably little attention from critical scholars, despite the fact that such machinations clearly extend far beyond South Africa's borders.

The Western Cape Liquor Bill's central stated aim is to 'protect the community against any negative consequences of the abuse of alcohol' (Provincial Government of the Western Cape 2003, 9). It is important to note that while the precise definition of 'abuse' is never elucidated, protection against it is nevertheless to be achieved through several objectives: (1) bringing shebeens into the formal economy by allowing those meeting certain criteria (e.g. room size, location, provision of toilets etc) to apply for a liquor license; (2) revising land-use regulation so as to limit licenses in residential areas and (3) enabling community involvement in the licensing process. The overriding focus on the province's estimated 30,000 shebeens represents a broader political and public belief that, in contrast to the

romanticised 'shebeen queen' imagery of apartheid-era progressive politics (Edwards 1988; Mager 2010),

Many shebeens are dens of iniquity, which are a nuisance to the communities in which they operate and contribute towards a climate of lawlessness and disrespect for community rights. Organised criminal elements have entered the unlicensed liquor trade, and shebeens under the control of gangs are venues where many criminal activities originate (Provincial Government of the Western Cape 2003, 4)

It also represents a pragmatic concern with the inability to enforce alcohol control policy in a context where only 20% of premises selling liquor are licensed (*Ibid*) and where even existing laws such as those regarding drink driving routinely go unenforced.

While the Western Cape Liquor Bill was being debated and reworked, the City of Cape Town was also busy drafting its own municipal by-laws. Liquor licenses are issued under the terms of the provincial act, but the municipality has the right to control land use zoning and the trading days and times that pertain to them. The Western Cape Liquor Bill is therefore inextricable from the municipal by-laws at both the level of public and political debate as well as legislation and enforcement. In theory, the municipal by-laws were scheduled to come into effect on January 1, 2011. However without the full ratification of the Western Cape Liquor Bill, the by-laws remained unenforceable as liquor licenses themselves remained under the auspices of the original 1989 provincial act (which did not grant municipalities the right to enact by-laws). It was not until April 2012 that the Western Cape Liquor Bill and, therefore, the by-laws, were finally signed into law.

The by-laws are a crucial component of the alcohol policy debate particularly because, at the same time as the moral panic around shebeens as conduits of unsafe sex, crime, gangs, drugs, violence and anti-social behaviour has accelerated (Oxfam 2005; Kalichman *et al.* 2008), so too has the development of Cape Town's night-time economy in the newly gentrified Central Business District and the Victoria and Albert Waterfront. The spatial, class and racial split between the city's diverse drinkers and drinking venues underlies the variegated presentation of the alcohol policy debate in the press. This debate has been further catalyzed by the formation of interest groups, their influence over (or authorship of) press coverage and the regular reworking of policy after considerable public consultation to appease these factions. To examine this political backdrop to the development of alcohol control policy, the paper draws on the concept of framing to look at how alcohol is represented within the press and, moreover, the ways in which such representations denote

the politics that feed into the policy process and debate. This methodological approach is explored in more depth in the following section.

Methods

In 2010, 15.32 million South Africans over the age of 15 read newspapers and 11.36 million people read weekly newspapers. The country has 20 daily and 13 weekly newspapers in circulation (SouthAfrica.info 2012), most of which are in English. Although English is the official language of business and education, it is spoken by only 8% of South Africans at home (compared to 23.8% isiZulu, 17.6% isiXhosa and 13.3% Afrikaans). South African diversity thus makes any attempt to use the media as an indicator of public discourse challenging. The mainstream press is increasingly being challenged by economic pressures, and in the last decades there has been a notable boom in tabloid circulation (Jones *et al.* 2008; Steenveld and Strelitz 2010). Since the end of apartheid, the media has undergone significant (but widely considered insufficient) change (Sparks 2009). Key conglomerates have been unbundled and there has been increasing ownership, editing and authorship by the previously disadvantaged. New black ownership has produced a marked discursive shift within news coverage and critiques of government have arguably increased as the post-apartheid state no longer has control over newspaper messages (Tomaselli 1997; Tomaselli and Teer-Tomaselli 2008; Olorunnisola and Tomaselli 2011). A clear example of this burgeoning of critique is the ongoing newspaper offensive against endemic corruption in South Africa, especially in relation to Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) state contracts, politician expenses and the police. South African newspapers (both tabloid and broadsheet) have also remained firmly regional in their coverage and distribution. Yet, analyses of South African media content are limited *tout court* (Thetela 2001), which makes it unsurprising that our search showed no engagement with how alcohol has been represented by the press. This is despite newspapers' influence on public and political discourse. Alcohol advertising is legal and exists in the press, although the national government has recently begun to debating a potential ban on all alcohol advertisements. It is notable, however, that none of the articles analyzed were authored by representatives from the alcohol industry, reflecting, perhaps, a desire to appear to be objectively placed "outside" the alcohol control debate.

This paper explores the framing of alcohol control policy in the *Cape Times* (CT) and *Cape Argus* (CA). Together, the newspapers capture the largest readership in the Cape (exceeding that of the most popular regional Afrikaans paper *Die Burger*), providing insight into the public discourses circulating among English-speakers in the region. The *Argus* has 374,000

readers and is the most widely-read afternoon paper in the Cape Peninsula, the southern-most and wealthiest area of Cape Town. By contrast, the *Cape Times* has an 'up market' readership of 316,000, a rise of 20% in the past three years, bringing it the title of the Cape Peninsula's most popular morning paper (Superbrands 2011b). The *Argus* and *Times* thus represent two contrasting, widely circulated and influential English-language newspapers which form the bedrock of municipal and provincial news reporting in the region, especially among the province's largely white and coloured middle class Democratic Alliance (DA) voters.

Neither newspaper has an online archive, so the *Lexis Nexis* database was used to identify relevant articles. We used the search phrase: "liquor bill" OR "liquor act" OR "liquor policy" OR "liquor law", to reflect the manifold phrasings used for the WCLB and by-laws as their legal status has changed. The search was conducted from 2 May, 2007 – 2 May, 2011 for both pragmatic and analytical reasons: Lexis Nexis only subscribes to South African papers from 2 May 2007 and the first iteration of the bill was initially approved by the provincial legislature only in 2007. The search results were filtered for relevance (i.e. retaining those that reference alcohol policy and rejecting those focusing on enforcement issues), letters to the editor were retained as part of the search and in each case, the page number (as a reflection of its relative importance) of the article was noted. The final sample of 99 *Cape Times* articles and 141 *Cape Argus* articles were subjected to qualitative discourse analysis, drawing on Entman's (1993) notion of 'framing' or the 'process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation' (Entman 2007: 164). All articles were thus subjected to an initial analysis according to Entman's four functions of framing: (1) problem definition; (2) causal diagnosis; (3) moral judgment; and (4) prescribed solutions. In this logic, contestations over policy can also be viewed as 'strategic framing contests' (*Ibid*) in which actors and outlets vie to move from setting the agenda (i.e. problem definition) to leading discussion through the three subsequent stages. As coverage of alcohol control policy exhibited no significant differences in frame between the two papers, we have amalgamated them in our discussion. These parameters were then collated within a database, which was used to tease out the dynamics of the debate around the Western Cape's alcohol control policies and their potential consequences.

Contesting alcohol control policies in the Western Cape

From 2007-2011, two strands of alcohol control policy contestation are clear. First, opposition to the WCLB's potential effect on shebeen numbers and livelihoods. Second, opposition to the City of Cape Town's municipal by-law's potential effect on the licensing days and hours of hotels, bars, clubs and vineyards. Peppered throughout these debates are concerns over the city's World Cup "offering", and national-scale conversations about the potential bans on alcohol advertising and raising the legal drinking age from 18 to 21 (Parker 2011). The following sections examine three broad 'agenda shifts' that cut across and cross-reference these two domains of contestation (see table 1). It should be noted that, although they exhibit contrasting framings of what the "problem" with alcohol policy might be – and therefore the political exigencies in question - the agendas co-exist throughout this period, gaining momentum at the times specified and often triggering or acting as a precondition for the emergence of other agendas. Debates surrounding the Western Cape Liquor Bill and by-laws consequently reveal a complex and interlaced plethora of authors, actors, problems and proposed solutions which, individually and in sum, contribute to the frames examined in each of the next three sections. As such, each agenda shift is also marked by counter-framings and alternative policy recommendations, which are also explored below.

TABLE ONE HERE

i. *Opposing the "legalization" of shebeens in the WCLB (May 2007- late 2008)*

The shebeen problem is a legacy of our apartheid past and cannot be allowed to linger indefinitely... the present state of lawlessness and chaos in the industry cannot be allowed to continue (Provincial Government of the Western Cape 2003, 4)

The first phase begins in mid 2007 (roughly four years after the initial drafting of the bill), just after the provincial legislature approved the Western Cape Liquor Bill, which was then to be promulgated and signed by premier within 45 days (Cape Argus, henceforth CA, 20 April 2007). This did not happen because of delays in consultation between the ANC-led provincial government and the national Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), who needed to make sure the provincial policy was in line with the 2003 National Liquor Act (Cape Times, henceforth CT, 8 Feb 2008). Despite concerns of both the public and shebeen owners described below, on 25 November 2008 the Western Cape Liquor Bill was signed by the ANC premier with the notation that a grace period would apply until regulations were approved. In 2007, between the first and second passing of the act, the alcohol bill again became the subject of extensive public debate as the DA geared up for the 2009 provincial elections. Four rounds of public consultation were held which news reports suggest were

dominated by community representatives opposing the “legalization” (by allowing them to apply for a license) of shebeens (CT, 23 June 2008), with letters to the editor from community members similarly calling on the general public to support their opposition (cf CT, 25 April 2007; CT, 3 July 2008).

A key contestation emerged around the likely impact of the bill on shebeen numbers if the WCLB’s aim of “formalization” (i.e. bringing shebeens into the formal, enforceable economy) was realized. Initially, the DA, the main opposition party at the provincial level and ruling party at the municipal level, was strongly opposed to the bill (CT, 16 Oct 2007). Members of the party, including Cape Town Mayor and leader Helen Zille, reported ‘grave concerns’ about the liquor law, suggesting that formalization would lead to an increase in shebeens (CT, 27 June 2007; CT, 7 May, 2008). By October 2007, ‘the DA [was] call[ing] on WC residents to mobilize and submit written opposition to the proposed liquor act’ (CA, 16 Oct, 2007) as it geared up to take on the ruling African National Congress (ANC) at the provincial elections. The ANC, specifically, then-MEC of Finance, Economic Development and Tourism, Garth Strachan, responded to this accusation that the Western Cape Liquor Bill would increase the number of shebeens by suggesting that this was a ‘wilful misrepresentation of the (intended) consequences of the bill’ (CA, 4 June, 2008). As a result, the DA argued for amendments meaning that shebeens in residential areas would need to be rezoned or relocated. The ANC conceded to this revision, and afterwards both parties supported the bill, with the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) remaining opposed (CT, 12 Nov 2008).

The DA’s concern with shebeen numbers reflects the party’s political stance against drugs and alcohol abuse and its Social Development Policy highlights that:

The DA will crack down hard on drug and alcohol abuse – a problem that leads many young South Africans to destroy their lives. Among other things, we will reinstate the narcotics bureau, triple the funding allocation to the central drug authority and tighten up on bail for drug offences (DA, 2012)

The DA’s concern with alcohol abuse is also reflected in their Criminal Justice Policy, in which they state that crime prevention cannot be achieved without first addressing alcohol. Around this time, the DA started to use the ANC’s purported (and repeated) failure to address South Africa’s high rates of alcohol dependence and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome as a platform for election. This line capitalizes on broader feelings of disillusionment among ANC voters with the party’s poor record on service delivery and fulfilling its post-apartheid promises of redistribution which, in turn, has led to falls in voter turnout for the ANC since

1994. This political stance was further evidenced when Helen Zille was arrested in September 2007 on suspicion of supporting “vigilante group” the ‘People’s Anti-Drug and Liquor Action Committee’. In early 2008 she also led an anti-drugs protest march in Johannesburg. The outrage expressed by the DA’s Cedric Thomas towards the ‘atrocious’ WCLB’s potential to ‘contribute to moral degradation’ (CA, 8 Oct, 2007) is further evidence of the party’s socially conservative line on drugs and alcohol.

The dominant framing in this first phase of articles thus clearly identifies shebeens as a problematic presence in communities – a view shared by both parties. However, there is some conflation among the articles as to what specifically is problematic about them. In many stories, children, women and families are identified as innocent victims. Some, however, use vague language, referencing ‘the negative impact of selling alcohol’ (CA, 25 April, 2007) or condemning the fact that shebeens contribute ‘to the destruction of the social fabric of our communities’ (CA, 26 Mar, 2008). Others authors, such as the Hanover Park Civic Association (a majority coloured neighborhood in the Cape Flats area of Cape Town), are much more explicit in their criticism of shebeens: ‘Parents spend much needed food money, which is needed by our children. Children are negatively affected even before they are born by abnormalities like fetal alcohol syndrome’ (CA, 26 Mar, 2008). In this phase of engagement with the Western Cape Liquor Bill, civic and community groups as well as local police and Community Policing Forums (CPFs) are the most vocal interest groups and express concern over the bill’s impact on neighborhoods’ moral fabric. The tone is often combative. For example, the Grassy Park (also in the Cape Flats) community declare that they are ‘not taking the legalization of shebeens lying down’ (CA, 25 April, 2007).

Although there are occasional references to drinking and driving, the most frequent explicit association is between shebeens, drugs, crime and violence. In a direct election tactic, Mayor Zille noted that ‘up to 80% of crime [in Cape Town] is linked to substance abuse’ (CA, 7 May 2008), an appeal to both crime figures and their causal link to alcohol that would be repeated throughout all the phases discussed in this paper. Others, however, argue for ‘protecting the innocent women and children from the effects of alcohol abuse and the violence emanating around shebeens’ (CT, 28 May, 2008). Interestingly, the ANC’s Garth Strachan also adopted the same tone in defending the rationale of the Western Cape Liquor Bill in arguing that:

The bill assumes that alcohol abuse is strongly associated with crime - drugs, child prostitution, assaults, robbery, domestic violence and more. The impact on health and

education, the carnage on our roads and the intolerable disruption of otherwise orderly and peaceful communities are central considerations (CT, 23 June, 2008).

These comments together suggest that *drinking itself* is not the key concern of community representatives, but rather they are anxious about the *consequences* of the type of drinking they believe to be routinely undertaken in shebeens. Indeed, rarely are the *causes* of such drinking styles even discussed. The moral evaluation of drinking, crime and violence is in most cases clearly articulated and unambiguously negative. Particular moral outrage is expressed about shebeens located or opening near schools or playgrounds (CA, 7 April, 2008), with newspaper reports suggesting that the closure of all shebeens in residential areas the only solution (CA, 19 May 2008). This stance is most vociferously championed in the press by the Muslim group 'People Against Gangsterism and Drugs' (PAGAD) who want to 'mobilise the Western Cape against shebeens' (CT, July 30, 2007). The group particularly targeted then ANC Premier, Ebrahim Rasool for passing the WCLB under his watch, adopting a clear discourse of disproportionate township suffering. One PAGAD spokesman argued that 'if one [shebeen] opened in Pinelands it would never be accepted. Why is it fine to have thousands of shebeens in townships?' (*ibid*). Marking out Pinelands – a wealthy majority-white neighborhood where the sale of alcohol is prohibited – in contradistinction to a generic 'township' blighted by liquor highlights the religious and racial underpinning of the public and political outrage concerning the location and effects of shebeens.

In this phase, there are less prominent counter-narratives voicing the concerns of shebeen owners. When their perspectives do appear in articles, they are typically presented as being unaware of the passing of the law (CA 22 July 2007; CA 12 Nov 2008). Two main grievances are raised by the respondents: first, procedurally, despite multiple rounds of public comment, shebeen owners claim a lack of consultation. Second, economic concerns ignited by the possible loss of income. By 2008, the ANC are on the policy defensive. Garth Strachan, at this time, becomes a prevalent voice in the newspaper articles analyzed, taking the line that the best way to redress the "shebeen problem" is through regulation, not the DA's strategy of elimination. This public relations campaign on behalf of the Bill is succinctly captured in the titles of Strachan's self-authored news articles: 'Liquor Bill's 'aim is to protect communities' (CT, 4 June 2008) and 'Liquor Bill will help to crack down on illegal trade and curb abuse' (CT, 23 June, 2008). This tactic represents an outright attack on the DA's 'tendency to jump on this popular bandwagon [of] ... willfully [suggesting] that the Bill will lead to a proliferation of liquor outlets or that the Committee is oblivious to the massive and intolerable social costs of alcohol abuse in society' (*Ibid*). The tone also points to the ANC's

more pragmatic need for grassroots support at a time when support at the provincial level seemed to be waning. As the elections drew closer, however, the conflict between the DA-led City of Cape Town and the province grew in momentum and, with it, the interlacing of the WCLB with debates over the proposed changes to the municipal by-laws.

ii. *The City's by-laws and Regulating hours of operation (late 2008- early 2009)*

A second phase emerged in late 2008, defined by tensions around the controversial proposal to use by-laws to restrict licensed premises' opening hours by more than would be required by the provincial legislation. Initially and unsurprisingly given the spatial dynamics of power, the provincial bill was criticized by the DA for overstepping its boundaries by removing municipal authority to set its own land-use zoning powers and thus 'undermining the functions of local government' (CT, 7 May, 2008). Helen Zille also expressed concern that the bill would grant the provincial liquor licensing tribunal (then ANC-led) exaggerated powers and remove the ability of municipal (i.e. DA) councilors to comment on licensing applications. Importantly, the city initially sought to clearly distinguish the by-laws from the provincial policy, positioning itself as an advocate for stricter regulation of alcohol in both spheres of government (CT, 29 Dec, 2008). At this time, two themes are prominent: i) the effect of reduced hours of operation on business profits and employees and ii) the incorrect targeting of culprits by the bill. The two frames are, however, interdependent and, importantly for this discussion, catalyze the formation and mobilization of a new set of lobbyists around the liquor debate.

In 2009, the DA took the province from the ANC and set about trying to implement both sets of legislation and, in particular, quell disquiet over the potential effect of the by-laws on its core voter demographic. At this time, the hospitality industry emerged as a powerful lobbying voice, using the press to oppose the new by-laws. Unsurprisingly, their position was supported by the ANC, with Garth Strachan again using the press to highlight the inadequacies of the prescribed regulatory solution. In one Cape Times piece, he argues that the proposed by-law would make Cape Town 'the "laughing stock" of tourism bodies internationally' (CT, 18 Feb, 2009). He goes on to claim that 'the by-law [is] aimed at the wrong targets and [fails] to address the concerns of the city's many shebeens that want to be regulated' (*Ibid*). This represents a distinct agenda shift in social and spatial terms – from the WCLB's focus on township shebeens, their patrons and owners to the by-law's concern with city centre bars, tourists and 'civilized' drinkers, with the ANC (at this time) defending the needs of shebeeners as potential voters. At this time, the Federated Hospitality Association

of Southern Africa (Fedhasa) became a powerful lobbying voice, arguing against the 'draconian, verkramp¹, restrictive and unacceptable' laws that 'punished the industry for the known defaulting of a minority' (CT, 4 Oct, 2010). The city's Tourism Chief Executive, Mariette du Toit-Helmbold supports this position in asserting that t 'the by-law doesn't deal with the real issues of abuse, poverty and unemployment, but targets a "well-organized" tourism industry' (CA, 17 Feb, 2009).

In July 2010, the city by-law was passed unopposed by the council and was set to come into effect on 1 January, 2011. This time-lag and the media opportunity provided by the World Cup resulted in a clear surge in activity defaming the by-law's intentions and likely effect. The city's tourist industry argued that shortening trading hours would undermine the international image and 'Global City' status of Cape Town's hospitality sector by restricting the ability to offer a "sophisticated" product beyond 11pm. As Fedhasa lament, 'it would be deemed as patronizing to our international visitors if, let's say following a long-haul flight, they are unable to be served an alcoholic beverage outside of specified hours' (CT, 4 Oct, 2010). The city's most prestigious hotel, the Mount Nelson, thus claimed, in a front-page story, that it would have to seek re-zoning if it did not want to be 'forced to lay off staff because its conferencing and banqueting facilities would be unsuitable [for an 11pm finish]' (CT, 11 Oct, 2010). At this time, the Cape Chamber of Commerce also precipitates voluminous coverage and panic over the potential illegality of 'champagne breakfasts' (due to planned restrictions that would stop liquor sales before 11am on weekdays) as an unassailable example of 'responsible drinking' (CA, 3 Sept, 2010). As one article argues, 'it's a civilized thing to do on a Sunday morning – stroll down to your seafront eatery and enjoy a glass or two of delicious Cape bubbles with your salmon omelet and Sunday newspaper' (CA, 6 Sept, 2010). The planned solution to this conundrum is a seeming illogicality where a champagne breakfast may be served before 11am as long as the champagne is free (CT, 4 Oct, 2010).

By late 2010 as the by-law's enforcement loomed closer, a surge in newspaper headlines warned that the 'by-law may spirit away New Year's Eve partying' (CT, 24 Dec, 2010). The row centered around the proposed shortening of opening hours from 4am to 2am with offenders facing fines of R30,000 and up to three years in jail. Long Street, the city's night-life hub,

¹ Verkramp^{te} is an Afrikaans word that refers to an Afrikaner nationalist who opposed any liberalization of government policy, in particular racial policy.

became the heart of the debate with coverage accelerating as enforcement loomed. The Festive Period is traditionally a time of heightened anxiety around security and alcohol in the Cape as public holidays and booming tourist numbers routinely lead to increased road traffic fatalities, fights and drowning. These stories almost always occupy the front page headlines of both newspapers (e.g. CT, 27 Dec 2007; CT 29 Dec 2010). The conflation of these long-held public anxieties with the concomitant tradition of festive partying in the region's most important night-time economy facilitated the hospitality industry's argument that the by-laws would be unenforceable (and therefore pointless) as 'police will have their hands full with illegal parties and drunk drivers going to Paarl to get a drink after Cape Town shuts' (CT, 24 Dec, 2010). At this time, efforts to discredit the by-law cite bar owners' confusion over the technicalities of enforcing new opening hours on January 1, with many expressing ignorance over the zoning (and thus closing time) of their business (CT, 30 Dec, 2010). At the final hour on New Year's Eve 2010, the city rescinded and performed a 'last-minute u-turn' (CT, 31 Dec, 2010) after a public meeting with enraged city bar and club owners. DA Councilor Taki Amira conceded that the new by-law would be 'phased in over a period of time' (CT, 31 Dec, 2010).

With champagne breakfasts now safeguarded, the city's nightclub and bar owners mobilized to form the 'Club, Bar and Restaurant Association of the Western Cape' (CBRA) in advance of a new gazetting of the amended Western Cape Liquor Bill on 14 January, 2011. They threatened the city with an interdict and, as membership swelled to fifty businesses, discussions emerged of legal action against the purported unconstitutionality of the by-law (CT, 7 Jan, 2011). Their call was further backed-up by press coverage penned by the CBRA's Chairman, Zeeshaan Nordien (himself a Long Street club owner and lawyer), accusing Councilor Amira of being a 'party pooper' without 'the ability to think outside the box...[as] sending everyone home early won't stop drunk drivers, we need more roadblocks and better policing' (CA, 11 Jan, 2011). By 13 January, the city backed down in the face of the CBRA's legal threats and a front-page story revealed that it had commissioned a review of the by-law (CT, 13 Jan 2011). Nonetheless, the CBRA vowed to 'push ahead with legal action despite the city's decision to put the brakes on the legislation' (CT, 14 Jan, 2011). The lobbying of Fedhasa and CBRA clearly demonstrates their belief that 'there's no company in the hospitality industry that's causing problems. This by-law was created to solve *other* problems' (CT, 9 Sept, 2010). This suggests a *misplaced* Nanny State, seeking to infringe on the commonsense liberties of responsible citizens and foreign tourists, rather than focusing on the *real* problem of shebeens. Indeed, as letters to the Editor provoke: 'Today – liquor law. Tomorrow – no sex after 2am. Way to go DA!'. Similarly another letter claims that, 'It will

not stop people from drinking. Focus on crime and corrupt so-called politicians!' (CA, 31 Dec, 2010).

While the CBRA continued its assault of the city's by-law, counter-narratives emerged accusing license holders of not 'taking responsibility for their actions' and forgetting 'how their actions are affecting thousands of lives' (CT, 24 Jan, 2011). As an article written by the Woodstock Community Police Forum notes, 'Liquor outlet owners... sell liquor to already drunk people, who then get in their cars and kill other people on our roads or make a nuisance of themselves by screaming and shouting and urinating against other peoples' property' (*Ibid*) and accuses the CBRA of being concerned only with 'making as much money as possible without consideration for anybody'. This effort to reposition the debate highlights that even the licensed trade in city centre locations has 'bad guys in [its] midst' and, therefore just like shebeens, needs to 'get [its] house in order'. By February 2011, press coverage of the by-law suddenly goes quiet, the CBRA has achieved its goal by delaying the by-law's implementation and a final agenda shift rises to transform counter-narrative into dominant trope.

iii. *Shebeen owners organize (early 2009-mid 2011)*

The roots of shebeener organization stems from a response to the decision by the ANC-led province, in late 2008, to remove a clause in the WCLB allowing shebeens a 12-month grace period to comply with the new legislation and apply for licenses before the bill came into effect. South African Breweries and the SA Liquor Traders' Association (SALTA) quickly spoke out against the change and threatened to take the province to the Constitutional Court for failing to keep with the spirit of the National Liquor Act. The suggestion was that the unintended consequence of the removal of a grace period for compliance would be to 'drive shebeens underground and then problems with alcohol abuse will mushroom' (CT, 10 Oct, 2008). By November 2008, newspapers were proclaiming the 'liquor bill approved' (CT, 12 Nov, 2008) and the front-page story 'shebeen crackdown begins as liquor act comes into force' (CT, 26 Nov, 2008). However, the rapid shift from headlines assuring that 'We won't give up until all the shebeens have been closed' (CT, 28 Nov, 2008) to 'Liquor Act no silver bullet to close 300,000 shebeens overnight' (CT, 28 Dec, 2008), marks a new phase in engagements with the Western Cape Liquor Bill through the press. Moreover, while multiple shebeen associations can be found until the beginning of this phase (CA, 28 Jan, 2009), these are eventually replaced by a single voice, the WC Shebeen Association (WCSA) which professed 10,000 members by late 2009 (CT, 24 Dec, 2009).

By early December 2008, headlines arguing that ‘New liquor Act duped community’ (CA, 1 Dec, 2008) highlight how the ‘fight’ against shebeens exacerbated existing tensions between the police, community and shebeen owners. Under the WCLB, a shebeen in a residential area would not be able to apply for a license and would be fined R20,000 if found to be operating illegally. The ‘crackdown’ – codenamed Operation Cobra - by the City of Cape Town’s substance abuse team provoked ‘anger in the community’ (CA, 31 Dec, 2008) for its heavy handedness in confiscating liquor and dishing out fines. When, in late December 2008, 11 illegal shebeen operators from the informal settlement of Masiphumelele were arrested, the news sparked a mass protest. In Khayelitsha, 500 gathered to protest police tactics and threatened to block liquor delivery trucks from reaching licensed shebeens (CA, 31 Dec, 2008). In January 2009, 600 shebeeners marched from Keizergracht (in District Six) to Parliament to protest against the WCLB. These incidents mark a definitive moment not only in newspaper coverage of the liquor laws, but also the grassroots mobilization of shebeen owners to protest their right to livelihoods, even through the sale of alcohol.

The WCSA argued that while shebeen drinking in the townships is often associated with crime and violence, there is a need to distinguish between co-operative shebeens and those not co-operating with law enforcement. Such a distinction is also found in the WCLB’s concern to support the entrepreneurship and community function of ‘traders from previously disadvantaged communities who are law-abiding citizens and want nothing more than to earn an honest living for themselves and their families’ (Provincial Government of the Western Cape 2003, 4). The Bill suggests that such ‘good shebeeners’ should be enabled to ‘legitimize their business [despite] unrealistic barriers created by the present licensing system’ (*Ibid*). In this reading, drinking in poor communities is cast as a response to stress, unemployment and economic hardship and “good” shebeens provide a positive antidote to such problems of poverty. Shebeen owners thus emphasize that their establishments are ‘[places] where people can come together as a community to have a good, relaxing time... not a breeding ground for crime or drugs’ (CA, 23 Feb, 2010). Furthermore, the positive social utility of shebeens is not only emphasized by their owners. For example, a police station commissioner in Khayelitsha, notes that ‘there are not enough places in Khayelitsha where people can go and relax and we acknowledge that. Our focus is currently on *problematic* shebeens’ (CT, 11 Mar, 2010). Such criticisms of a lack of community amenities cannot be disentangled from its associated criticism of ANC policy failure. In this reading, problem

shebeens also become visceral evidence of such policy failings including: unemployment; poverty; crime; poor health and violence.

The mobilization of shebeeners also gathers around arguments for the role of shebeens in providing entrepreneurial opportunities in situations where these are in short supply. Such discourses tap into livelihoods and rights agendas, where shebeeners are often forced into illegitimacy because of onerous barriers to obtaining licenses. Its opponents contend that the new law will risk 100,000 jobs, push shebeens underground and increase 'social instability and economic insecurity' (CA, 18 Nov, 2010). While the bill is understood to provide some provisions for licensing and legalization of shebeens, the WCSA argue that these are inadequate to overcome the challenges of getting a license: many shebeen owners must wait for months to have their license application heard (while bar owners in Cape Town's CBD who can afford to use a lawyer or 'liquor consultant' wait only weeks); the application fee is too high at R200; the form can only be obtained from the South African library in Cape Town; it must be typed and not hand-written; it must be accompanied by a plan of the premises (showing room dimensions, doors, windows and the surrounding streets) and a description of its fixtures and fittings; it must be lodged (in triplicate) at the district magistrate's office and two weeks *before* this, at the Government Printers in Pretoria. Given these conditions, it comes as little surprise that the Western Cape Liquor Board's own information warns, that 'compliance with the guidelines set out here does not guarantee the success of an application. The Liquor Act and its regulations are complex and applicants should seek professional advice regarding its working' (Western Cape Liquor Board 2012).

It should be further noted that most shebeens are in residential areas where licensing criteria are particularly onerous and include such stipulations as the need for the premises to be a 'permanent structure', the applicant having the legal right to occupy the structure (that would exempt informal settlements) and the requirement to advertise the application in the local community newspaper in either English, Afrikaans or Xhosa which must be acknowledged by the local police. Such contestations over the equality of the licensing process is brought out in the press by a Khayelitsha tavern owner who claims that 'we all want a fair hearing where permits or licenses could be issued' (CT, 11 April, 2011). He is, however, seeking more than due process, for he continues: 'we are poor and can't be denied a permit because of small things like not having a solid structure... most of us don't even have a solid structure to live in... the rich open a shop today and tomorrow they get a permit!' Shebeeners will often find (after months or years) that their license has been

rejected without reason. Moreover, if the application goes to appeal, shebeeners are obliged to hire a lawyer to make representations on their behalf. Such a system clearly favors the largest and most financially powerful liquor retailers. In South Africa however, such political economies of legal prowess only further reinforce divides between the legitimate and illegitimate alcohol trade, and, as a result, public opinions of alcohol.

By late 2010, a semantic shift transformed the WCSA's members overnight from illegal shebeeners into the legitimate (and amorphous) Western Cape Liquor Traders' Association (WCLTA). By December, the WCLTA had heightened its call to arms and was threatening a repeat of the 2009 protests. Mauritz Rossouw, the WCSA/WCTLA's Chairman again emerged as a powerful lobbying voice, deploying potent historical associations to accuse the province of failing 'to acknowledge the legacy of apartheid, where hopelessly inadequate town planning in black townships continues to blight and frustrate black entrepreneurs trying to empower themselves and in doing so, make a living' (CA, 6 Dec, 2010). More generally, there is a frustration that neither city nor province has listened to any of the WCLTA's proposed policy alternatives, despite clear opposition to the ones being tabled. The first alternative put forward by the WCLTA is a broad strategy of self-regulation, cooperation with police, and community engagement to help shut down shebeens found to be associated with crime and violence and drugs (CT, 11 Mar, 2010). To support this collective responsibility, Rossouw proclaims that 'if any of our members do not co-operate with police, we will close them down ourselves' (CT, 24 Dec, 2009) as 'there is a responsibility on us as traders to help fight crime' (CT, 11 Mar, 2010).

The WCLTA's second policy alternative piggybacks on research conducted by the Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation exploring the importance of micro-enterprise in townships and informal settlements in Cape Town (SLF 2012). The research concluded that the WCLB might potentially contribute to a rise in the illicit liquor trade (Charman and Pieterse 2010) and that, instead, a restrictive licensing system would enable shebeeners to trade subject to a series of basic rules, with penalties for transgressions. This would occur during 'a transitional period to allow enough time...to plan and investigate alternative employment, and business zones...where shebeen owners can obtain valid licenses and trade legally' (CA, Nov 18, 2010). By April 2011, threats of further protests were once again in the press with a new voice, the Foundation for Business and Consumer Services (FABCOS) arguing that 'there are simply not enough business opportunities in townships. The government is clamping down on our taxi industry, Somalians are taking over our shops and we will now lose bottle stores' (CA, 11

April, 2011). The SA National Civic Association also supported the stance, with the Chairman calling the WCLB an 'assault on the poor' (*ibid*). The emergence of an organized shebeener voice, through the auspices of a number of key (and exceptionally vocal) organizations, represents an important element in the multiple challenges to the constitutionality of the WCLB and the city's by-laws at this time.

Conclusion:

The discourses that encircle alcohol control policies in the Western Cape straddle – somewhat messily - two sets of framings. The first is where “bad users (or retailers)” are seen to be the problem and resonates with those news articles opposing the city’s liquor by-law. This line of reasoning, promulgated by the CBRA, Fedhasa and the Tourist Board critiques the interventionist “Nanny State”, argues for the individual right to consume, the need for individual responsibility, commonsense, measured debate and an internationally competitive city. The repeated example of the by-law precluding city residents and tourists enjoying an innocent champagne breakfast is notable for its class-infused justifications, both reminiscent of nostalgic invocation of ‘European civilized drinking’ as a policy objective in the UK (see Allum and Boyd 2002; Jayne, Valentine et al. 2008 for a critique of this) and at the same time worryingly divorced from the reality of the majority of the city’s drinking places.

This contrasts with the framing of articles suggesting the need for collective responsibility for alcohol problems, specifically, through reduced supply of alcohol, restriction of licenses and shortened opening hours in order to address crime, violence and social problems. A situation that might alternatively be achieved through increased cooperation between the police, shebeeners and communities. This discourse of collective responsibility exercised through supply-side strategies is also dominant in public health science and has long permeated the South African debate. The Medical Research Council’s noted support for the supply-side orientation of the provincial and city regulations (CT 29 Dec 2009) is a case in point here. However, the complex tensions between the two lines of reasoning is also acknowledged for, as Parry (2010) notes, ‘the rights of such establishments and the rights of consumers to buy alcohol after 11pm in a residential area or after 2pm in a business district must be weighed against the duty of the state to protect the broader population from unnecessary harm and economic burden’. In South Africa, as in almost all countries, debates over alcohol and, therefore, media coverage of alcohol policy, may be representative of this constant tension between the appropriate and acceptable delineation of rights, freedoms and obligations (O’Malley and Valverde, 2004). However, which discourses emerge as dominant at any one

point in time are deeply contingent on prevailing political ideologies, moral beliefs and medical knowledge, as this discussion of even a brief period in South Africa's recent history has demonstrated.

This discussion of newspaper coverage of alcohol control policy in the Western Cape highlights the complexity of competing tropes and the frequent intractability of different frames, especially as they become invoked by and harnessed to the ambitions of political parties. Further, it demonstrates the role of competing interest groups that extend beyond the DA and ANC in shaping alcohol policy, a realm of media health coverage ably explored by Armstrong *et al* (2006). In this case, the 2009 provincial elections provided a space of opportunity for different interest groups to annex alcohol as a deeply emotive and politically powerful tool to achieve their own goals. As Saguy and Riley (2005: 873) argue, 'different frames imply not only different ways to understand social problems, but also different courses of action... when there is ambiguity or the empirical reality is complex, competing frames are plausible, and which frame prevails depends largely on rhetorical skill and the credibility of the claimants'. In the South African case, we see the multiple and opportunistic uptake of alcohol as a complex and ambiguous "commodity" (Babor, Caetano et al. 2010) in order to further the needs or demands of interest groups. For example, even though shebeeners have had less influence over the articulation of policy, the shebeen associations (through the public relations efforts of Mauritz Roussouw) have successfully channeled discourses of rights, obligations, livelihoods and fairness to argue in support of their industry. In so doing, they have also invoked the inconsistencies in requirements and regulatory structures across the post-apartheid city. Such insight not only offers a much-needed nuanced reading of the political dynamics of the alcohol control debate in the Western Cape, but also demonstrates that the media not only *reflects* public concerns over liquor control, but is also just as likely to *craft* them. In giving space to articles authored by politicians and interest group leaders, the "news" reporting in many instances is reduced to elongated letters to the editor: overtly subjective and politically ambitious.

Finally, this case also shows that alcohol is rarely about health policy alone, despite the concerns of the World Health Organisation. Indeed, the South African example demonstrates only limited engagement with alcohol as express "health" risk within press coverage. Where health risks are discussed, these are most often framed in terms of the acute risks of interpersonal violence, accidents and injury (e.g. CA, 16 Feb, 2009), rather than drinking as a risk factor for chronic disease. As such, alcohol is for more often framed as a *social* risk,

criminogenic, responsible for family breakdown, neighborhood decline and unsafe environments. In so doing, liquor is positioned as a touchstone for competing political, social, economic and moral agendas and is thus inextricable from the broader political landscape of the Western Cape and City of Cape Town. The explorations in this paper reveal the rapidity with which agendas around alcohol change, lobbying factions emerge and then promptly disappear as their demands are satiated, public opinion is swayed, and the interplays between provincial and municipal legislation alter tack. These dynamics suggest that alcohol control policy must be rethought in terms of multiple *solutions*, which enable responsible consumption and retailing, while simultaneously reducing individual and societal risks in South Africa.

While the need for responsibility in retailing and consumption has largely invoked calls to regulate the licensed trade in countries of the Global North, the South African example discussed here suggests that in countries of the Global South the need to reduce the negative externalities of the unlicensed trade exists alongside the necessity to enable the poor to make a living. Moreover, both rich and poor should be able to enjoy equal rights to the pleasures of drink. But, given the propensity for most alcohol to be sold illegally in poor areas, pleasure-seeking is automatically rendered an illegitimate activity linked, in the political and popular imagination with a related host of equally illegal activities. In turn, this conditions the spatial and social delineations of policy urgency or, in other words, where and upon whom policy is most urgently needed. Efficacy of outcome is, however, unlikely to be achieved through blanket alcohol control policies that delineate prospective risk according to land-use zoning typologies as set out in the City by-laws. Nor is it likely to be achieved by blanket closures of shebeens, which may well push liquor retailing further underground (Charman and Pieterse 2010). Instead it may be the case that the rich may have to suffer limitations on their pleasure-seeking activities, while the legitimacy of those trading alcohol in poor areas may need to be revisited by politicians and the public alike.

Table - Key phases in press engagement with the WCLB and Municipal by-laws from 2007-2011

| | Phase | Policy | Actors | Problem | Solution |
|---|---|--------------------------|---|---|---|
| 1 | Passing, and re-passing, the Liquor Act (May 2007- late 2008) | WCLB | Community and neighbourhood organisations | Violence, crime | Keep shebeens out of residential areas; reduce numbers |
| | | | Provincial government (ANC) | Unregulated shebeens | Regulation |
| 2 | Regulating hours of operation (late 2008- early 2009) | City of Cape Town by-law | Club, Bar and Restaurant Association of the Western Cape (hospitality industry) | Law is targeting the “wrong” people and places | Focus on the “right” people and places (i.e. shebeens and shebeeners) |
| | | | Municipal government (DA) | Laws cannot distinguish between people and places | One law for the municipality reducing hours of operation |
| 3 | Shebeen owners organise (early 2009-mid 2011) | WCLB | Shebeen owners/Western Cape Shebeen Association | Those shebeens associated with crime and violence | Shebeens and police work together to weed out “bad” shebeens |

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