

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS: DEFINING A NEW MORAL BEHAVIOUR IN THE PUBLIC SPACES OF VILNIUS

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ABSTRACT

This article will explore and explain the effects of the beer law introduced by the Supreme Administrative Court of Republic of Lithuania in July, 2001. I will argue that the new law has been adopted as a result of the strategic calculation and manipulation of the legal system by the municipality of Vilnius. As a result of global finance flows and tourism the law and authoritative voices of the city council seeks to redefine moral, social and physical boundaries within the city space and introduce a new moral public behaviour in the centre of Vilnius. The article suggests that common citizens, unable to participate in the decision-making process, undertake acts of resistance: tactical manoeuvres and creative acts of hidden transcripts of how to subvert and challenge the law. The materials for the article were collected during my three months field works in the community of beer drinkers, as well as 10 partly structured interviews with policeman, also 1 interview with high administrative person at Vilnius city municipality.

KEY WORDS: socio-cultural anthropology, strategies, tactics, moral behaviour, beer drinkers, alcohol control, public spaces, Vilnius old-city.

ANOTACIJA

Šiame straipsnyje rašoma apie tai, kaip abstraktūs modeliai veikia žmonių elgesį viešosiose vietose. Šiuo atveju kalbama apie draudimą viešosiose vietose vartoti lengvuosius alkoholinius gėrimus, kuris buvo priimtas 2001 m. Atkreipiame dėmesį, kaip skirtingi šios savotiškos viešojo gyvenimo pjesės veikėjai (meras, policijos pareigūnai ir alaus gėrėjai) patiria, internalizuoja, legitimuoja ir praktiškai realizuoja šį įstatymą. Empirinę bazę straipsniui sudaro trijų mėnesių trukmės lauko tyrimai alaus gėrėjų bendruomenėje, 10 pusiau struktūrizuotų interviu su policijos pareigūnais, taip pat vienas interviu su aukštas pareigas užimančiu Vilniaus savivaldybės valdininku.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: sociokultūrinė antropologija, strategijos, taktikos, morali elgsena, alaus gėrėjai, alkoholio vartojimo kontrolė, viešosios erdvės, Vilniaus senamiestis.

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Introduction: Vilnius Centre, Orange Bicycles, Beer Drinkers...

For me as well as for many other students drinking beer in the public places of Vilnius has always been an important aspect of socialization. Drinking beer is rarely an individual act in Lithuania and has always been woven into the social fabric, carried out in the groups of close friends or members of the same kin. Drinking beer is very important in traditional festivities such as weddings, funerals, birthday parties as well as day-to-day life interaction. And as the name of this article suggest, I will deal with drinking beer in the public spaces, which most likely to occur on the level of everyday interaction and not during official festivities. Drinking beer in the public spaces has social meaning and is functional as it brings up people together in order to reassert their social roles, relations and identities. So when a new law prohibiting beer drinking in the public spaces was introduced in Vilnius in 2001 my friends and me where sceptical that the law could be implemented into the practice. We knew that behind the law stood a young, hot-headed Mayor of Vilnius, whose previous attempts to introduce new things on the public stage not always have been successful and not always met its ends. As for example, a year before the beer law came out, the Mayor had introduced the public bicycles in the city centre of Vilnius. It was an attempt to make the face

of the post soviet public transport more ecological than it actually was, as well as to bring political credits for the Mayor. The campaign was called the “orange”, due to the fact that the colour of the new mean of public transportation had chosen to be orange. Posters calling “to choose your orange” were distributed. Commercials on TV with prominent celebrities driving on the orange bicycles (before they actually reached common people) urged everyone to support the innovation. Although, as promised, brand new bicycles were brought to the centre after several days 90% of them were either stolen or broken. The attempt became a complete failure, despite the fact that it gave the city authorities and media the subject of discussions for the next two months.

Anyway, my expectations in the case of beer law were not fulfilled. The beer law was enforced and people were warned then arrested and fined. The effects of the beer law divided citizens of Vilnius. Many of them viewed the restriction as a violation of their human rights while the others welcomed Mayor’s decision and called for more order and security in the public spaces. Some of the most extreme voices urged for using all power of law against not only beer drinkers but also other “asocial elements” such as homeless people, pushing them out of the centre of Vilnius. Stories about arrested and persecuted people made me cautious. Although I did not stop drinking beer in the public spaces my behaviour in the public parks has changed.

This article will explore and explain the effects of the beer drinking law introduced by the Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuanian Republic in 2001. I will argue that the new law has been adopted as a result of the strategic calculation and manipulation of the legal system by the municipality of Vilnius. As a result of global finance flows and tourism the law and authoritative voices of the city council seeks to redefine moral, social and physical boundaries within the city space and introduce a new moral public behaviour in the centre of Vilnius. The article suggests that common citizens, unable to participate in the decision-making process, undertake acts of resistance: tactical manoeuvres and creative acts of hidden transcripts of how to subvert and challenge the law.

In the first chapter of this article my aim is to discuss the relation between the law, concerning the consumption of beer in the public spaces of Vilnius, and some reactions of beer drinkers by using Michael de Certeau’s concepts of strategy and tactics. In the second chapter I will show how the Mayor of Vilnius by using rhetorical devices tries to introduce the new moral standards over behaviour in the public spaces in Vilnius and how the law is implemented into the practice. In the third chapter I will show how beer drinkers in their day-to-day life challenge to resist and subvert the new public order. The rest of the article is organized as follows.

The materials for the article were collected during my three months field works in the community of beer drinkers, as well as 10 partly structuralised interviews with policeman (5 of them from particular Vilnius old-city precincts, and 5 as regular patrols in Vilnius old-city streets), also 1 interview with high administrative person at Vilnius city municipality.

The strategies of Vilnius authorities

Mayor’s position could be grasped in the rhetorical devices, which Mayor used to convince the publics for the beer law. During a media debates the mayor told a story. He told that, once walking in the city centre he encountered a situation where a group of young beer-drinkers, men, threatened a mother and her child passing by their bench¹. The trope exposes several dangers, which I would

¹ Mayor arguing for the introduction of the law told the story on the TV. His story was told and retold in some interviews with city officials and police officers.

like to discuss more extensively in the first half of this chapter. In the second half of the chapter I will show how the law is enforced into the practice. I am starting from the first danger, which is danger to society and afterwards I will discuss danger to environment.

Beer drinkers threatened “a mother and her child”. “A mother and her child” is a metonymy (where the part represents the whole or the whole represents the part). The symbolical value of a metonymy goes beyond that anonymous mother and child. It stands for all mothers and their children in Vilnius. By threatening one mother and her child, beer drinkers threaten all mothers and their children. This trope becomes intimate and appeals to each of us. We all have mothers and we all were children. We all have wives who are mothers of our children. It suggests that the next time a threatened woman might be from our kin or the closest circle of our friends.

The trope has also a metaphorical value (where a thing means something else). It means that “a mother and her child” stands not only for all mothers and their children but symbolize a bigger moral order and reproduction of it. The value of the metaphor is articulated in its units. Beer drinkers do not threaten a father passing by with his child. In this case there was a chance that father would be able to defend his child without the assistance of authorities. And thus this fact would reduce the intimacy of the appeal of the metaphor. Beer drinkers do not threaten an anonymous woman passing by. In that case the effect of the metaphor would not be that strong either. There might be many women and all kind of women passing by the bench, including maybe those who are drinking beer on their way. But what makes the metaphor so powerful, is the moral value and purity of symbol captured in the social status of being a mother. And again, the presence of beer drinkers challenges her moral right to fulfil her mother’s obligations to raise her children in the safe, secure and moral space. Beer drinkers threaten reproduction of the order. It is articulated in the metaphorical value of mother’s child. A child came to the park not by his own will but by the will of his mother. It can not take decisions and perform actions. He relays on the will of his mother, which protects him from actions that can pollute and endanger. Thus the child is purer than his mother, who possibly might have taken a bottle of beer along and keeping it in her back. The child does not know the taste of beer; it is too young to drink it anyway. It does not possess a will to drink beer yet, since it is socially and physically impotent to carry out such an action. Only the presence of beer drinkers or a beer bottle hidden in mother’s bag can slowly teach him how to perform it. The behaviour of beer drinkers denies this possibility. They threaten the mother and thus the child is exposed to the threat as well. Beer drinkers do not suggest a welcoming gesture and this denies the possibility that mother has a bottle of beer in her back. If she had a bottle then she would become one of them, a bad mother, exposing her child to threat of drunkenness and carelessness.

Actions of the beer drinkers pose other threats, which are not articulated in the metaphor of “a mother and her child”. The metaphor suggests that beer drinkers endanger safety and security of the society. But interviews, which I conducted with police officers and officials suggest that there are other threats, related to the aesthetics of the city. Broken beer bottles, drunken people, blood from fights, the smell urine in public places, trashes in the old town and the public parks literally pollutes the glitter of the old town. The traces left by beer drinkers are spots of physical dirt in the city centre. It makes recently renovated old town of Vilnius less attractive to mothers and their children as well as foreign tourists, whose numbers are steadily increasing. Tourists appear as another important argument against beer drinking in the public spaces. I will not be discussing this argument into depth, but it is important to mention briefly, that tourists are perceived by authorities to be exposed

to the same dangers as local mothers and their children. They encounter a different kind of Vilnius that that one, they read about in a tourist brochure.

The Mayor of Vilnius appears as a “*deus ex machina*” in the ancient Greek theatre. He lands on the ground from his office to solve the problem of beer drinking and re-establish law and moral order of the place. He proves being a good leader and Mayor. Symbolical purity of the metaphor of “a mother and her child” represents moral order and physical presence of beer drinkers threatening it. Beer drinkers must be pressed out and their traces cleaned should be cleaned and the order restored.

I suggest that the law is a part of strategic calculations to introduce new more civilized behaviour in the public parks. According to Michel de Certeau “a strategy is the calculus of force relationships, which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, research institutions) can be isolated from an “environment”(Certeau 1988:xix). It is a strategic goal, according to Certeau to produce, tabulate and impose spaces in conformity of with abstract models and its representations (Certeau 1988: 29- 0). Strategy reveals itself as Claire Colebrook suggest in rhetoric devices, especially, in synecdoche (represents system or model as such), or metonymy (Colebrook 2001: 556).

In this case we are talking about “a mother and her child” as an abstraction and representation of the moral public order whereas beer drinkers represent general disorder. Certeau suggests that strategy is a production of a dominant subject, since only a subject in power can transform the natural environment. The powerless subject does not have such a privilege. Placed inside the strategic calculation a powerless subject becomes an object. It does not have a ground to stand on only a beer bottle to hold on. The strategy removes the ground and imposes its own. The strategy of mayor turns beer drinkers into anonymous, generalized symbolical other, category defined by moral criteria, invented by the act of political speech. The category of beer drinkers does not represent a specific group of individuals but rather immoral actions of a group. A beer drinker can become anyone at anytime including the mother and the mayor and after emptying a bottle turn into normal citizens again. It does not have fixity and permanence of stigma, possessed by, for example, homeless people who roam the streets of Vilnius old town and openly drink alcohol. It is clear from the police officers. Citizens and police officers in the street recognize faces of the homeless people. Beer drinkers do not have faces for the police officers. They are faceless, without identity and only a beer bottle indicates “who they are”. But since this expectation of relationship of who they are and what they do can never be fulfilling (people can not be beer drinkers all the time), beer drinkers are subjected to anonymous and formal treatment (unless, of course, a transgressor is your personal friend or a member of family). Beer drinkers must pay the fine defined by the Administrative Code of Lithuanian Republic and after, having done that, they become moral citizens again. This discussion leads us to other important questions, namely, how the beer law is enforced, and how police officers maintain the public order against beer drinkers. The public order in Vilnius is maintained by the optical or panoptical means. Optical means are more traditional in Lithuania and relays on immediate reactions of a police officer towards a transgressor. “You saw me, I saw you”. “I saw you that you saw me, and you saw me that I saw you” is the logic in a case that a transgressor would attempt to deny his actions. But optical means are highly subjective, as well as our senses, since the glimpse of the moment does not leave any hard evidence. To avoid those disadvantages video cameras were installed around the old town, almost simultaneously when the beer law came into being. They made the work of the police officers more efficient and coordinated, especially

against beer drinkers. When the next season started there were hardly any beer drinkers left in the public spaces. They retreated to the periphery of the public spaces, public parks, where video cameras had not been installed.

If caught for the first time a beer drinker is either warned or arrested. If for the second time, then he is surely arrested. He is brought to a police office, where the detention is registered and he receives a fine. The beer drinker pays the fine at a bank and delivers the recite to the same police office and not latter then a weak after the detention. If a beer drinker is detained and fined more then two times per year he/she risks to be put under the trail and sentenced to maximum one month of imprisonment. Even though the procedure might seem quite clear but in reality it is complicated. There is always ambiguity and negotiations involved between a police officer and a beer drinker, and thus it makes a police officer to relay more on subjective criteria, then on objective instructions. A beer drinker has better chances to negotiate situation and slip of with a warning if he/she is a tourist, drinking alone, drinking during a hot summer day, if he/she admits that he/she misbehaved in the public place and he/she apologize for his/her actions to the police officer. Negotiations mean always a possibility to escape. A beer drinker has less or fewer chances to escape if it is a male, he/she is drunk, making a lot of noise (singing for example), braking bottles, are in a group of friends, does not apologize, making offensive comments on a police officer. In this case it is more likely that the police officer will not negotiate with a beer drinker and deliver them to the police station.

Beer drinkers' responses: Drinking water from beer bottles

Does this discourse leave any space for manoeuvring by the beer drinkers? And if so, then what forms does it take? In this chapter I will follow Certeau's conceptual framework and in order to shed light upon beer drinkers' actions I would like to introduce a concept of tactics.

Tactic, according to Certeau is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper power (Certeau 1988: 7). According to this definition municipality and police officers relay on strategy whereas beer drinkers are subjected to the logic of tactics in everyday life. A tactical action takes place inside a strategic action, inside a frame of a law. Certeau calls it "ways of using" or consumption of the space, which does not manifest itself through its own products, but through its ways of using the products, imposed by a dominant economic order (Certeau 1988: 1). A tactic is a language of a metaphorical shift and could be distinguished namely in moving, navigation or trajectory of actors. It distorts the logic of strategy, as Colebrook says, "rather than returning the logic to same ground it thinks the logic from a different point of view" (Colebrook 2001: 546-547).

I have already suggested one tactical manoeuvre performed by beer drinkers. It happened due to the presence of the video cameras in the public spaces of Vilnius. Soon after the law had been introduced, beer drinkers had to abandon streets, street corners, yards and backyards, squares, public gardens etc. to more safe places such as public parks. It became more and more problematic to hide since police patrols know the refuge places in the public parks. Beer drinkers can not drink beer in bushes. It is a public act and has a social meaning. Thus her I would like to suggest two tactical actions or contractions which take place in public spaces, despite its status.

The first is Drinking beer from beer bottles, hidden in the plastic bags, which is the most common found among beer drinkers. And secondly, drinking water from beer bottles is more subtle and interesting, which I will discuss in the second half of this chapter.

a) Drinking beer, hiding bottles in plastic bags. It is an act of rejection of the law where the crucial element is a secret consumption and visual deception. It is practiced at the public parks of Vilnius, street corners, keeping a beer bottle invisible while drinking. Beer drinkers invent invisible form of consumption so that would make them to disappear, while drinking, and thus become congruent with the new conditions. The facade should hide or deceive, make their actions invisible in the public spaces and thus keep the public space clean. It becomes a shield hiding their real intentions from an outsider. They subvert the public order by secrecy and conspiracy. Often those actions take place in the public parks. Unevenness of the public park serves their aim. Shadows of a corner, a stem of a tree should cover them from public daylight and dark plastic bag has to hide the illegal content. This environment creates another shield. It is a double hiding. The ideal place is a sanctuary where you are safe and out of reach, where only you know the way to escape. But police officers do not play this hide and seek game on the beer drinker's premises. They know the places in the old town where beer drinkers gather and time when they gather. Usually when a raid is conducted all possible ways to retreat are cut off. If a beer drinker is caught and an open beer bottle is found beer drinkers will have to pay a fine.

b) Drinking water from beer bottles. It is close to what Certeau calls an artistic trick or a ruse. The purpose of which is not to reject but to subvert and challenge the order. A young group of artists is walking in the streets of Vilnius old town with beer bottles filled up with water. Beer bottles are outspoken sign of their misbehaviour. The bottles pollute symbolical purity of the new order. But can a beer bottle without beer pollute the space? Can they be arrested for having beer bottles? If stopped by a police officer they offer to the police officers "to taste their beer". The police officers are not supposing to taste they are supposed to fine. They are puzzled how to interpret this, since textbooks do not mention how to respond to the issue of beer bottles filled up with water. Who would carry water in beer bottles? Are those people normal or insane? Can they be punished for their insanity? Can they be punished for offending a police officer? Drinking water from beer bottles is making a use of illegal form but still having legal content. It is the way of reversing the moral arrow. Police officers are subjected to the immoral actions since they arrest people for drinking water. The border between what is moral and immoral is fuzzed.

Conclusions

By criminalizing beer drinkers the city authorities attempt to introduce new moral standards in the public spaces of Vilnius. The mayor legitimizes his actions by which beer drinkers threaten good citizens such as mother and child. Lacking means of participation in the decision making process beer drinkers immerse into conscious and unconscious acts of resistance: tactical manoeuvres, creative acts or uses of how to subvert and challenge the law and in particular cases by reversing the moral arrow.

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STRATEGIJOS IR TAKTIKOS: FORMUOJANT NAUJĄ MORALIAUS ELGESIO KODEKSĄ VIEŠOSIOSE VILNIAUS ERDVĖSE

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S a n t r a u k a

Klausimas, kurį keliu šiame straipsnyje yra apie tai, kaip abstraktūs modeliai veikia žmonių elgesį viešosiose vietose. Šiuo atveju bus konkrečiai kalbama apie draudimą gerti viešosiose vietose alų. Atkreipiame dėmesį, kaip skirtingi šios savotiškos viešojo gyvenimo pjesės aktoriai (meras, policijos pareigūnai ir alaus gėrėjai) patiria, internalizuoja, legitimuoja ir praktiškai realizuoja šį įstatymą. Empirinę bazę straipsniui sudaro trijų mėnesių trukmės lauko tyrimai alaus gėrėjų bendruomenėje, 10 kokybinių, pusiau struktūrizuotų interviu su policijos pareigūnais (penki jų dirbo skirtingose nuovadose Vilniaus senamiestyje, o kiti penki reguliariai patuliavo Vilniaus senamiestyje), vienas interviu su aukštas pareigas užimančiu Vilniaus savivaldybės valdininku. Šiame straipsnyje yra taikomos M. de Certeau pasiūlytos strategijos ir taktikos sąvokos. Čia teigiama, kad strategijos ir taktikos yra neatsiejamos nuo galios žaidimų. Galios veiksmai konstruoja strategijas ir įkvepia taktikas. Strategija, anot Certeau, tampa įmanoma tada, kai galios subjektas yra izoliuotas nuo jį supančios aplinkos. Galios subjektas konstruoja objektyvius modelius (šiuo atveju viešąją tvarką), kurie apibrėžia realybės parametrus, primeta realybę kitam ir įveda sankcijas. Sankcijos subjektyvina realybė. Nepriklausomai nuo subjekto motyvų, statuso, alaus gėrimas viešosiose vietose objektyvizuoja pilietį, išskiria jį iš normalaus elgesio rėmų, padaro jį „administracinio kodekso pažeidėju“. Jauno Vilniaus mero veiksmus įkvepia jo fantazija paversti Vilnių „normaliu vakarietišku miestu“: švairiu, tvarkingu, saugiu. Politiškai tai įgauna prasmę alaus gėrėjų atveju, kurie, anot mero, girti rėkauja, teršia gatves, dažnai keikiasi ir mušasi. Dėl to jie dažnai tampa nekontroliuojami, pavojingi vienišoms motinoms, vedžiojančioms senamiesčio gatvėmis vaikus. Savo elgesiu jie baido ir užsienio turistus.

Vilniaus mero veiksmai inicijuoja problemą, kuri yra viešai diskutuojama. Vėliau, spustelėjus viešąją Vilniaus policiją, administraciniam teismui yra siunčiamas paklausimas, kurio atsakymas išaiškina LR ATPK 178 straipsnį. Jį savo ruožtu Vilniaus meras pakartoja spaudoje ir televizijos laidose. Taip Vilniaus meras pasirodo kaip geras, modernus, vakarietiškas lyderis, kuris viešajai tvarkai užtikrinti taiko įstatymo žodį ir moralinius kriterijus. Šiuo atveju mero nuoroda į „vienišas motinas“ visų pirma gali funkcionuoti kaip metonimija (tiesioginis pavojus moterims) arba metafora (pavojus silpnesniems piliečiams, kurie negeria alaus). Taktikos reiškia tuos veiksmus, kuriuos apibrėžia galios nebuvimas arba jos stoka. Viešieji parkai šia prasme yra sunkiai kontroliuojamos viešosios erdvės (policininkų nėra, kada jų reikia). Čia atsiranda „taktikos“, kurios, anot de Certeau, yra siejamos su erdvės vartojimu ir skirtingų objektų kaleidoskopu. Policininkų patruliai ir alaus gėrikai tarsi žaidžia katės ir pelės žaidimą. Vienu tikslas – pasislėpti krūmuose ar nelegalų gėrimo turinį paslėpti plastikiniame, popieriniame maišelyje ar kuprinėje. Kitų policininkų tikslas yra demaskuoti pažeidėjus, t. y. užklupti juos iš netyčių pėstiems arba raitiems, pagauti tokius pažeidėjus įvykio vietoje. Taktikos, kaip pabrėžia Certeau, yra kūryba, kurią deklaruoja grupelė menininkų, vaikštančių po Vilniaus senamiestį su alaus buteliais, pripildytais vandens („netikros pelės“).

Meras, policijos pareigūnai bei pažeidėjai skirtingai suvokia ir traktuoja alaus įstatymą. Mero atveju išaiškėja abstraktaus elgesio modelio kontūrai, sietini su Lietuvos integracija į Vakarų Europą. Sostinė, anot mero ir policijos pareigūnų, turi tapti europietiška, švari, moderni, orientuota į ateitį. Toks modelis veikiausiai yra priešpriešinamas „purviniems“ Rytams ir sovietinei praeičiai. Įstatymą veikiu padaro jo paties egzistavimas, mero politinis dviveidiškumas, neveiklių biurokratų, patrulių aplaidumas bei išradingos alaus gėrėjų taktikos. Pažeidėjai naudoja lanksčias kūrybines taktikas įstatymui apeiti ir taip meta iššūkį naujo moralaus elgesio kriterijams.

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