Bar crawls, foam parties, and clubbing networks: A Mediterranean vacation ritual

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Mediterranean nightlife destinations spanning across Spain, Italy, Greece, Cyprus, and Turkey draw millions of visitors annually with promises of sun, sea, sand, unrestricted drinking, and nonstop partying. Incidence and prevalence of health and safety risks for young adults of age 18-35, at these resorts has reached epidemic proportions. In these environments young adults engage primarily in binge drinking, recreational drug use, and casual sex. This study is designed to elucidate the physical space of clubbing settings where health and safety risks unfold; delineate the social organization of risk taking in order to identify stakeholders and primary players involved; ascertain risk exchanges and transactions among these populations; and explore potential multifaceted solutions for harm reduction. Ethnographic assessment of risk environments in Ayia Napa, Cyprus included participant and nonparticipant observation, socio-spatial mapping of risk settings, informal discussions, and secondary data collection. Results revealed an array of individual and public health, as well as safety risks exacerbated by characteristics of the spatial environment. Data analysis revealed that excessive drinking often leads to increased hospital visits due to blackouts, alcohol poisoning, substance overdoses, accidents, injuries, fatal falls, and various acts of violence. In addition incidents of unplanned pregnancies, sexual assault, and even death, were revealed during analysis. Recommendations are made for interventions and harm reduction in response to an urgent need to create healthier and safer recreational settings at tourist destinations. Additionally, the use of complexity science perspectives is recommended to better understand the dynamic and complex nature of international nightlife tourism and its health and safety risks.

Biography

Sevil Sonmez completed her PhD in Tourism Management from Penn State University. She is currently Professor in the Department of Tourism, Events, and Attractions, Rosen College of Hospitality Management, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida. Prior to UCF, she served on the faculties of the University of North Carolina Greensboro, Zayed University (UAE), European University of Cyprus, Emory University, and Arizona State University. Her research is interdisciplinary and applied and delves into the nexus of leisure, work, and health. Her work focuses on adverse health consequences of occupational and leisure mobility, occupational health of tourism and hospitality sector employees, and reduction of tourism’s adverse health effects and promotion of its health benefits. Her work has appeared in both tourism/hospitality and health journals and conferences. She is the Co-editor of three books: Women as Producers and Consumers of Tourism in Developing Regions, Mediterranean Islands and Tourism Development, and Population Mobility and Infectious Disease.

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