

## Unseen Trash

*Glazenhaller!* Did you know of their existence? Ever noticed the person who collects your glass at a club? I did not. *Glazenhallers* do not exist where I come from, Germany. There, most clubs seem to be cleaner than in the Netherlands. No one drops his glass just on the dance floor. In Germany, you normally pay deposit for, and take care of your own glass. Is this only a recent trend in the Netherlands, and could I speak about differences in habits - a cultural thing? I guess so and I assume there is more than being tidy. Anyway I got inspired and there were enough reason for me to picture *glazenhallers* and their job, at night. Look and think about it!

I started to take up the job myself, at the *Melkweg Club* in Amsterdam, for around three shifts a week. I must admit, I underestimated the physical impact of working at night carrying glasses and plastics. I did not take into account what it meant to work in a night club, and to share your night with hundreds of people. Even if you are used to a nightly rhythm, doing your private stuff or working in a public space are really two different experiences. The noise, the crowd, the dirt, the trash for you to clean up between their dancing legs, is exhausting.

I can not believe I endured the job for almost a year. I still remember what it was like, to hold a tower of glass (or plastic cans) in my hands, letting it lean against neck and shoulder. Feeling trickles of beer dripping down my back, asking myself: 'why am I doing this?' 'Oh yes, I have to partly finance my study, and the job was payed well. Not boring either. So I became part of the Melkweg's interior, while wearing the mask 'of not being there'. And from behind this mask I saw concerts, punk festivals, political discussions, election parties, electronic dance nights, CD-presentations, award ceremonies, and high society events, - and all those different people involved. Which in a way all left their trash to me. Although I officially got recruited by the Melkweg Club, it often felt as working in a "hidden economy", because informal contacts made it easier: to get the job, get to know musicians and artists and last but not least get yourself and your friends on the guest list.

During the last year of studying at the art academy of Utrecht, I returned to the Melkweg with my camera, to frame my impressions, and my memories, of being a *glazenhaller*. As an anthropology student, I made a first attempt to understand the phenomenon. It seems that the job of glass-collector came into being during the 1970s, when disco music and disco clubs became mainstream popular. It launched a particular 'night time economy' in the context of club life, being part of urban transformations in the West, as some British sociologists have argued. .

Since the early 1970's, significant transformations have occurred within western cities. These changes involve two key processes: firstly, a shift in economic development from the industrial to the post-industrial; and secondly a significant reorientation of urban governance, involving a move away from the managerial functions of local service

provision, toward an entrepreneurial stance primarily focuses on the facilitation of economic growth. (Hobbs, Lister, Hadfield, Winlow, and Hall 2000:701)

A general growth of prosperity and leisure time coincided with a significant rise of students – young people moving towards towns and city centers. The amount of café's, bars, dance halls and nightclubs increased accordingly. New demands were made in relation to service during the night. But why became *glazenhalers* a phenomenon in the Netherlands, and not (yet) in Germany? I do not know and I leave further investigations into this matter to another anthropologist. Here, I am merely the photographer.

The pictures should speak for themselves. Night club atmosphere with its heat and crowd, but foremost with the amount, the stack, the weight, the tower, of glasses or plastic cans: to make the *glazehaler* seen.

## **FOTO'S**

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## **Reference**

Hadfield, Ph., S. Hall, D. Hobbs, S. Lister, and S. Winlow

2000 Receiving Shadows: Governance and Liminality in the Night-Time Economy. *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 51(4): 701-717.