



Special issue: *Historical narratives of public health in the built environment*

Research article

Contextualising tragedy in places of assembly through cases of New York City social club fires

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Guest Editors: Tara Hipwood, Northumbria University, UK, and Seyeon Lee, Syracuse University, New York, USA.

Submission date: 1 August 2022; Acceptance date: 2 December 2022; Publication date: 4 April 2023

How to cite

Brandt, S. and Sowder, A.M. 'Contextualising tragedy in places of assembly through cases of New York City social club fires'. *Architecture_MPS* 24, 1 (2023): 4.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.amps.2023v24i1.004>.

Peer review

This article has been peer-reviewed through the journal's standard double-blind peer review, where both the reviewers and authors are anonymised during review.

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Abstract

Patrons of assembly spaces have a reasonable expectation of safe and healthy indoor environments, the subject of planned efforts to ensure safety from officials ranging from politicians to building inspectors. These efforts include inspecting building fitness, management and safety governance. A key component of guaranteeing safe assembly spaces is policy enforcement, an area overlapping inspections and governance. In New York City impartial inspectors are a necessity, due to the potential for local bribery and extortion. *Quid pro quo*, or a favour granted in expectation of a favour returned, is a symptom of a corrupt process of governance and can negatively impact the legitimacy of building safety enforcement when that enforcement is influenced by politics or corrupt agents. Requirements for building occupant safety are vulnerable to election cycles and

priorities tend to shift in the aftermath of specific motivating events. They are further complicated by omissions in, and overlapping of, responsibilities for enforcement. Fire safety in New York City has been of distinctive relevance because of the role the New York Fire Department played as a building inspector and due to the Knapp Commission outcomes in 1972. This article has two aims: to use case studies of New York City social club fires to identify limiting factors in improving buildings for occupants in the wake of motivating events and to contextualise these factors within the broader history of politics in New York City. Policies are tracked through governing administrations to shed light on how political decisions can contribute to catastrophes in places of assembly. The resulting analysis highlights a typical conflict between political pressures on mayors while in office and occupant safety in social club venues, as well as how confusing rules for the enforcement of safety regulations contribute to unsafe conditions for building occupants. Vulnerable communities were especially at risk in the cases examined; specifically, immigrant communities as they migrated to and settled in New York City, moving to older neighbourhoods and socialising in converted spaces. Key issues identified relate to venue operations in building conditions, occupant behaviour and regulation and enforcement. Failures on all three counts were identified in each of the cases examined in this article. However, due to its recurring cycle of failures and its overarching relationship to the other two factors, regulation and enforcement stands out as the most pressing issue for improving safety for occupants of social clubs and other assembly spaces.

Keywords: building code; social clubs; fire safety; Knapp Commission; New York City; Mollen Commission

Introduction

Between 1970 and 1990 the city of New York experienced a series of catastrophic social club fires. Each was followed by disruptions of mass inspections at gathering spaces due to a logged catastrophe.¹ This progression necessitated a discussion of building health and safety. After each disaster, the question ‘when will community gathering spaces be safe?’ remained elusive. Safety inside buildings varies based on code enforcement and political will. Priorities shift in the aftermath of tragedies, are vulnerable to election cycles and are complicated by overlapping responsibilities for enforcement. New administrations bring in vitality and their own agendas that may not overlap with those of prior administrations. A proper analysis of risk and mitigation strategies tailored to the new risk climate could be beneficial to building occupants, building owners and the municipalities who are responsible for inspecting buildings. By recognising mistakes in the past, we hope that future mayors and their staff can collaborate with their municipal workers – such as building inspectors and fire marshals – to develop a strategy to identify unsafe locations and follow up on repairs and upgrades to buildings’ infrastructure to allow a community to gather in safety.

Fire safety in New York City has been of particular relevance to building safety because of the tragic history of fires in performance and gathering spaces. New York City social clubs provided new immigrant communities, such as Puerto Ricans, with locations to gather and celebrate their cultural roots.² A review of case studies drawn from fires in New York City social clubs helps to identify constraints on efforts to improve building safety, even in the wake of catastrophic events. This article has two aims: to use case studies of New York City social club fires to identify limiting factors to improving buildings for occupants in the wake of motivating events and to contextualise these factors within the broader history of the politics of social clubs in New York City. The resulting analysis highlights a typical conflict between delivery of a political agenda and occupant safety in social club venues, as well as how confusing rules for the enforcement of safety regulations contribute to unsafe conditions for building occupants.

Methods

Research methods included the examination of social club fires using contemporary reporting from *The New York Times*,³ the newspaper of record in the location of the fires, as well as post-event reporting conducted in the immediate aftermath of, and years after, the tragedies. *The New York Times* was selected due to the detailed research and regional expertise of the writers. The three fires were chosen due to their historical importance derived from the large loss of life and local political reaction to each tragedy. Contextual information was gathered from each event, including location layout, patronage, and the era, as well as the political environment. An examination of code updates as a reaction to each conflagration led to a deeper study of the location, layout, victims and political responses to each event. This was then coordinated with, and analysed against, *The Knapp Commission Report on Police Corruption* to provide a timeline of political changes and code enforcement, as well as current and historic versions of New York City codes and laws to track changes.

Social clubs, immigrants and safety concerns

The first recorded private club in New York was the Union Club, organised in 1836. Over time, laws were written to protect private clubs, allowing them to prosper with little regulation. The current laws state that a club shall mean:

an organization of persons incorporated pursuant to the provisions of the not-for-profit corporation law or the benevolent orders law, which is the owner, lessee or occupant of a building used exclusively for club purposes, and which does not traffic in alcoholic beverages for profit and is operated solely for a recreational usage.⁴

Private clubs require only a membership body to define themselves. During the 1960s, social clubs were able to open and run with little scrutiny. The law allows the location to skirt the rules for legal sales of alcohol by claiming to only sell drinks to their members.

In the 1950s, the New York City social club scene played a significant role for new immigrant communities, including Puerto Ricans and other Latinos, to gather and celebrate their cultural roots. For immigrant New Yorkers longing for a centre familiar to their cultural lives, the clubs became the hub of their social engagements, a place to organise and host sports, political rallies and family celebrations. The social clubs had such large concentrations of Latinos that they provided opportunities to find family members and hometown neighbours. They were often the first locations that Puerto Ricans found for networking in New York City.⁵ Social club locations tended to be located in older renovated spaces in poor neighbourhoods. From the 1950s to the 1960s, many older neighbourhoods were in a state of transition. The buildings had aged, and owners had moved to newer neighbourhoods in the city. The old locations would be refurbished into smaller apartments for rent. The more rooms that could be rented, the more potential income for the landlord. These became the affordable homes and rental spaces for new immigrants. These enclaves were melting pots for immigrant communities.⁶ As a result, many Latino social clubs operated out of older buildings and were dispersed throughout Williamsburg's South Side, the Bronx and East Harlem.⁷ These locations began to flourish in poor neighbourhoods throughout the city. New ethnic groups looking for a better life moved to enclaves inside each borough. They found neighbourhoods with old buildings and cheap rent. An entrepreneur would see the opportunity in creating a social club in densely populated Latino neighbourhoods.⁸

Because many social clubs were built in older buildings, they were more susceptible to safety concerns related to design and the organisation of spaces.⁹ Many of the social club venues were converted apartments. The apartments were designed for family living with typically only one egress to enter and exit from the basement or second floor to the first floor. Owners of the buildings and club management were typically ignorant of the changes in safety needs when the location was transformed into a place of assembly. A common apartment floorplan presented challenges for the owners and potential tragedy for the patrons when converted to a club. 'Some of these clubs operated legally and even joined together under larger umbrella organizations, while others operated illegally.'¹⁰ By 1990 there were close to 1,400 unlicensed social clubs in New York.¹¹ Due to the low economic status of their neighbourhoods, immigrants were vulnerable to tragedy at these locations. They were motivated to open clubs in older buildings with few modern safety mechanisms, such as flameproof materials or fire sprinklers. Social clubs opened and flourished, but some clubs became locations for illegal drugs and

gambling; this, combined with illicit relations with enforcement agencies, led to bribery and extortion. This resulting atmosphere of lawlessness produced unsafe conditions in which horrific outcomes were possible. As the following sections will illustrate, a patchwork of regulations and agencies of oversight governed these locations.

History of corruption and the Knapp Commission

In 1896 an investigating committee headed by State Senator Clarence Lexow heard testimony that police officers were taking bribes from gambling houses and brothels.¹² The commission was named after the senator and called the Lexow Commission.¹³ The testimony confirmed money was shared up the chain of command, from street officers to their superiors.¹⁴ The New York Police Department (NYPD) was reorganised as a result of the Lexow Commission. As the nation grew and changed so did the definition of what was appropriate for quid pro quo inside the NYPD and what was defined as corruption. The Lexow Commission gathered evidence that corruption in the form of bribery was present.¹⁵ In 1898 the New York State legislature ordered the 24 local governments to consolidate into a single entity called New York City, including one police department; the NYPD.¹⁶ The centralising of local government was intended to solve the problems of conflicting laws and regulations of individual small cities concentrated along the coast, running separate but competing bureaucracies. However, the unintended outcome of the transition from 24 small municipalities into one large city overseen by a single police department was the ever-present danger of quid pro quo.

In New York City, nightclub venues were regulated under the city's Cabaret Law (in effect 1926–2018) that prevented entertainment such as singing and dancing in unlicensed locations, but private social clubs were often excluded from some kinds of scrutiny. Social clubs 'did not need the many permits and licenses required of bars, such as a State Liquor Authority (SLA) license or a cabaret license'.¹⁷ However, social clubs were still potentially overseen in various other ways. Local politics played a role in the governance of the social clubs for safe operation, including their locations and building conditions, inspection cycles, alcohol sales and other matters through the independent but overlapping enforcement mechanisms originating with the NYPD, New York City Fire Department (FDNY) or the New York City Department of Buildings (NYCDOB). As various specialty commissions set priorities for legislating and enforcing social clubs, these issues fell to the city's chief executive, its mayor. As a city agenda item, this left social club safety vulnerable to loss of institutional knowledge as each new administration brought in its own ideas for change. They were easily influenced by lobbyists and election-cycle politics.

Mayor John Lindsay (in office 1966–73) witnessed subway shutdowns, union marches and police corruption during his tenure.¹⁸ He established the Knapp Commission in the spring of 1970 to delve into police corruption.¹⁹ The commission was inspired by two disgruntled police detectives, Frank Serpico and David Durk. It was named after its chair, Whitman Knapp (1909–2004), a federal judge later appointed to the Southern District bench by US President Richard M. Nixon. The commission examined gambling, construction, prostitution, narcotics and alcohol consumption, and was meant to tackle a department 'riddled with graft and unable to police itself',²⁰ but it directly impacted places of assembly such as social clubs, where police inspections had resulted in a pattern of bribery to keep clubs open and the sales of illegal narcotics behind closed doors.²¹ Uncovering this pattern after two years of investigation, the Knapp Commission recommended that some functions shift to other agencies due to the corruption in law enforcement and that whenever possible the city should curtail situations that exposed police officers to corruption hazards.²² *The Knapp Commission Report* also acknowledged the history of graft and corruption inside the NYPD throughout its recorded history.

There was no specific reference to social clubs in their report, but they did investigate bars, after-hours bars and bottle clubs.²³ A bar is defined as a location that has all correct permits and state liquor licences. After-hour bars or 'juice joints' included social clubs, as social clubs fit the definition of being open after the licensed bars closed, late at night and on religious holidays. Bottle clubs were also private clubs because they required membership. *The Knapp Commission Report* stated that legitimate bars were regulated by complex state and local laws that left them vulnerable to police shakedowns. The commission determined there was a system of abuse going on in legitimate bars and social clubs. One informant included a list of locations and dates he visited bars, the amount of money collected and who on the police force he dispersed the collections to.²⁴ The Knapp Commission commented that

corruption is unavoidable in large municipalities due to the pressures on the police, the nature of the job and inevitable temptations.²⁵ The commission was able to conclude that a corrupt officer would claim to inspect a location, receive a bribe and never report any violations. The officer would join in the crime by allowing the location to remain open. This behaviour encouraged small bars in hazardous locations to operate openly.

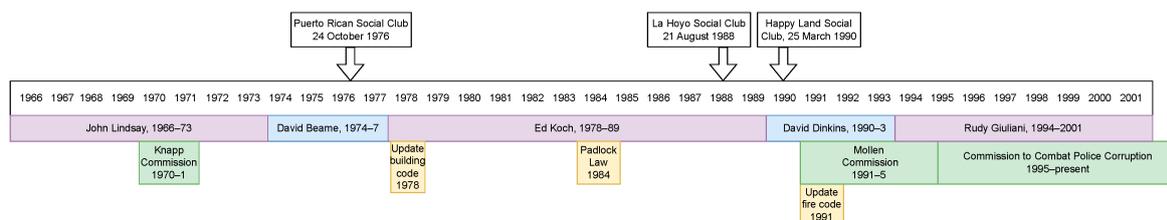
The changes in New York City inspection practices inspired by the Knapp Commission included the transfer of responsibility for inspecting social clubs from the NYPD to the FDNY.²⁶ The inspection of places of assembly was delegated to the FDNY, which then delegated it to a subgroup inside their own organisation to accommodate the odd hours that places of assembly were open to the public.²⁷ As a result of *The Knapp Commission Report*, the city worked to change how the police operated in New York City. The Knapp Commission findings remained influential.²⁸ Some twelve years after the commission published its outcomes, eight more police officers were convicted of crimes because of a federal investigation²⁹ into payoffs to the police by operators of after-hours clubs in Manhattan.³⁰ However, it is in the near aftermath of the commission that we begin to explore our case studies.

Social club fires case studies overview

Between 1970 and 1990 a series of tragic fires occurred at private social clubs that served New York City's Latino community. The worst incidents include the Puerto Rican Social Club fire on 24 October 1976, the El Hoyo Social Club fire on 21 August 1988 and the Happy Land Social Club fire on 25 March 1990. All three clubs had fatal flaws related to design or organisation of space, including insufficient means of egress, gathering spaces on second floors or in basements and flammable decorations and surfaces.³¹ The need for places to meet and socialise³² in neighbourhoods with ageing and inadequate building stock resulted in some club overcrowding, limited safety resources and alcohol consumption.³³ Prompted for comment after the fire at El Hoyo Social Club, then Mayor Koch asked, 'Should any place like this have ever been allowed to open? . . . This cellar should have never been legal.'³⁴ In reality, legal loopholes, ageing building stock, community pressures and irresponsible actions by the bar management and corrupt enforcement made these situations anything but safe. Each administration put their own spin on how to solve the problem of social club tragedies.

City officials reacted to the tragic club fires by creating task forces or enacting restrictive laws that worked to close private clubs deemed illegal.³⁵ These resulted in updates to the building code by mayoral proclamation turned into written code after the Puerto Rican Social Club fire; the changes included adding a second emergency egress to second-floor locations. The code update was supported by Mayor Beame. His solution was to require a second means of egress from any second-floor place of assembly. After the El Hoyo Social Club fire, a new padlock law was put into effect to allow inspectors to close locations. The second solution was suggested by Mayor Koch. He supported the NYPD participating in the process by creating a padlock law. After the Happy Land fire an update to the padlock law was initiated by the Dinkins administration. Mayor Dinkins worked to draft legislation to close any eating or drinking establishment for violating fire or safety codes to strengthen the existing law.

Figure 1. Timeline of events and regulatory environment (Source: authors)



But with pushback from local communities, the rules for closures softened. Clubs would close, then move to a new location or just reopen. Only recently has the incursion of Covid-19 caused community-based social club numbers to dwindle; currently, only one Puerto Rican club remains open in Brooklyn.³⁶ The

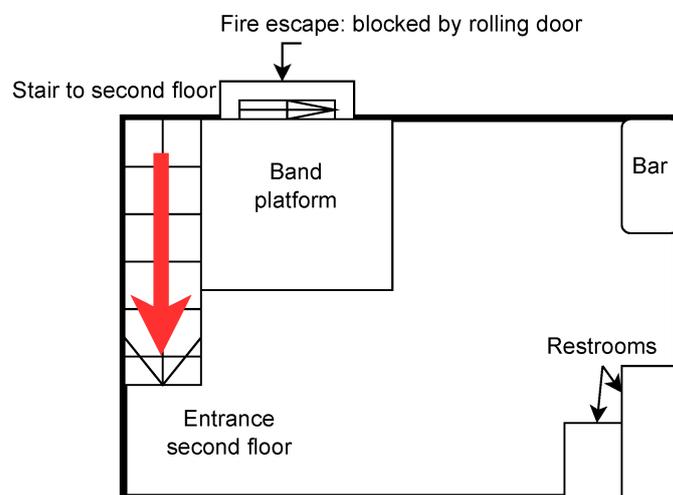
following review of case studies drawn from fires in New York City social clubs helps to identify common building flaws as well as constraints to efforts to improve building safety, even in the wake of catastrophic events. These events are contextualised within the contemporary political climate. Figure 1 provides a timeline summarising the case study events and their place within New York City's local political environment. Each new regulatory change was meant to solve the problems associated with social clubs, but with changes in regulating bodies, similar problems continued to plague places of assembly.

1974–7: Mayor Abraham Beame and the Puerto Rican Social Club

The Puerto Rican Social Club served its local Bronx community as a congregation and entertainment venue during the administration of Mayor Abraham Beame (in office 1974–7). Beame spent most of his time as mayor dealing with the worst fiscal crisis in the city's history. A former Assistant Director of the Budget for New York City from 1946 to 1952, the city's Budget Director from 1952 to 1961 and elected Comptroller in 1961 and 1969, Beame was an experienced financial manager who successfully negotiated New York City's labour contracts and avoided work strikes or stoppages during those years. The management programmes that he established as mayor allowed the city to save about \$40 million in labour costs. Beame strived for a balanced budget, slashing the city workforce, freezing salaries and searching for savings to ward off bankruptcy.³⁷ Such drastic changes to the municipal workforce may have disrupted some agencies' ability to function.

Although the Puerto Rican Social Club did not have a liquor licence, it was inspected by the FDNY and passed fire inspections. This may be due to local regulations not requiring private social clubs to obtain a liquor licence (to be considered a social club the group had to show paid memberships). The Puerto Rican Social Club was located on the second floor of its building, with only one interior staircase to enter and exit. There was an exterior fire escape, but it was blocked from lowering by a rolling steel door installed to protect the first-floor windows from burglary. The club's floorplan can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Floorplan of Puerto Rican Social Club (Source: Susan Brandt, adapted from layout published in *The New York Times*³⁸)



The club was in the heart of a Puerto Rican immigrant neighbourhood. The conflagration was started by an arsonist who poured petrol at the entrance near the stairs at the street level.³⁹ The fire on 24 October was exacerbated by failures of governance (enforcement of existing regulations), management (layout of interior spaces) and building conditions (lack of appropriate egress).

As a result of the club's layout, the interior exit was blocked by the fire. On the night of the disaster, most of the patrons were dancing to music from a live band, the members of which were the first people to observe the blaze. Although their bandstand impeded access to the exterior fire escape egress, the six band members broke the second-floor windows and jumped down to the street below. An additional 24 people were able to escape by following the band out of the window and down to the street. Most

of the people who jumped were injured due to the height and the concrete pavement surface below. Those who tried to escape through the main entrance were met by smoke and deadly gas. The stairwell became a flue for the air current to feed the fire and poisoned the air leading up the stairs to the second floor. Post-mortem examinations of those who expired revealed that they died as a result of smoke inhalation; the bodies were not severely burned. Officials also noted that the blaze, extinguished within five minutes of arrival by the FDNY, had been contained to the dance hall and its stairwell and did not extend to the connected bank of stores on the first floor.⁴⁰

Local officials researched the club's permits and began the task of rooting out the causes of the disaster. Noting that beyond discovering the cause of the fire, inquiries were being made into the club's legal status, authorities identified culprits, including 'the building, which was reported free of violations, and . . . the dance, itself, where liquor was sold without a license'. The police described it 'as one of dozens of such gathering spots in the Bronx and elsewhere in the city, most of which manage to operate freely – and without supervision of the State Liquor Authority because of legal loopholes in the law exempting fraternal organizations from licensing requirements.'⁴¹ Mayor Beame's solution to the Puerto Rican Social Club fire was to update the building codes and create a panel to study the problem.⁴² Beame looked to the building codes to create a long-term fix. He hoped to update the places of assembly building code, a special designation triggering additional safety requirements, to properly address the tragedy. The current building code did not require two fire exits for a place of assembly if the capacity was 75 people or fewer and if the gathering was for religious, recreational, educational, political or social purposes or for the consumption of food or drink or similar purposes.⁴³ His proposed amendment to the building code required two exits for upper-floor assembly places regardless of the number of people, only excepting locations of limited size with fire sprinklers.⁴⁴ Although the proposed amendment could have been initiated through city council legislation, no such changes appeared until 1978 when Local Law No. 41, Fire Protection For Places of Assembly, hit the books, requiring 'emergency lighting, sprinklers, and fire alarm signal systems in certain areas of places of assembly', reportedly in response to an unrelated 1975 club fire in midtown Manhattan at the Blue Angel.⁴⁵ Notably, in a separate amending directive, NYCDOB clarified that the portions of the relevant 1968 building code that applied to automatic sprinklers and interior fire alarm systems⁴⁶ that applied to 'Places of Assembly used as a cabaret' were to specifically exclude places 'to which the general public is not invited', particularly 'social and ethnic meeting facilities'.⁴⁷ The significance of the addendum is that social clubs were left out of the 1968 changes to the code. Social clubs are thought of as a private location, not a location for the public. This allowed social clubs to ignore the new codes. Mayor Beame wanted to address this loophole.

After additional coordination with his team, Beame assigned additional FDNY inspectors to night-time inspections 'of the city's one thousand social clubs and other public halls' and social club operators were encouraged to 'go to their local firehouses and request safety inspections'.⁴⁸ Beame created a panel to investigate a city-wide inventory of all locations of possible clubs, as coordinated by the NYPD police commissioner. Police departments were ordered to create lists of all clubs that were operating without licences and or permits. Inspections would be prioritised by clubs located on the second floor. By early December, the NYCDOB had circulated an internal memorandum in anticipation of a wave of violations to be generated by the Social Club Task Force inspections, noting that violations written both at locations used as a social club 'contrary to approved department records' and locations with misaligned numbers of exits for their occupancy 'may require the filing of a vacate order'.⁴⁹ One report submitted to the US Department of Justice included the Social Club Task Force as an example of a group working in 'corruption-prone, low visibility, settings'; doing the sort of 'public morals work in New York typically [involving] planned encounters with people who are unlikely to fiercely resist the police', and 'historically . . . a source of profit-motivated misconduct'.⁵⁰ After the fire, Mayor Beame used his executive privilege to make an immediate search for other unsafe locations. His long-term goal to change the building codes would proceed at a snail's pace, due to complex city bureaucracy and changing administrations.

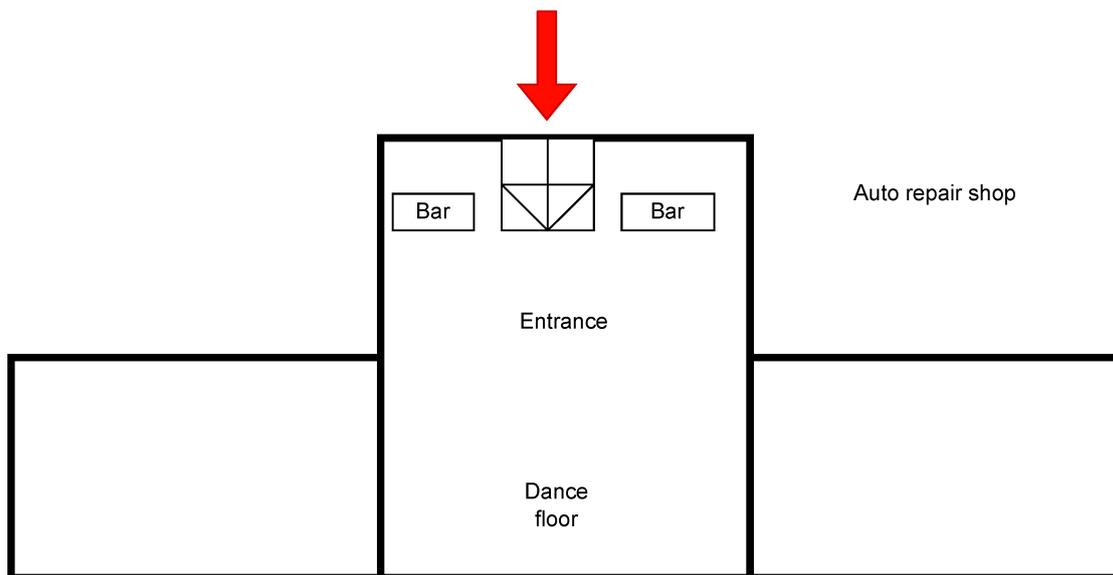
1978–89: Mayor Ed Koch and the El Hoyo Social Club

El Hoyo Social Club was one of many social clubs located in the Bronx during the administration of Mayor Ed Koch (in office 1978–89). He was a popular mayor. On the 1981 election ticket he was listed as both Democrat and Republican,⁵¹ and he was a staunch supporter of the NYPD while in office. Koch inherited problems associated with social club safety. Locations opened, closed, moved and changed

their hours to avoid being cited, leading to missed communications and unclear chains of command for inspection and the enforcement of safety.⁵² Complicating efforts to enforce violations, 'the Fire Department [was] responsible for enforcing the fire code, the buildings inspectors the building code and the State Liquor Authority [had] authority when liquor violations [were] involved.'⁵³ In 1984 Koch returned some of the NYPD's enforcement authority through the Padlock Law, which granted police authority to close a location if two criminal convictions and a third criminal arrest occurred within a 12-month period at the location. The law was designed to target owners and landlords of the address in question to make them respond directly to the closing of the location. The Social Club Task Force had raided El Hoyo five times, but the club was not permanently closed as the raids were for liquor and gambling violations and did not meet the qualifications for closure under the Padlock Law.⁵⁴

Located in the basement of a six-store, one-storey structure, El Hoyo's ceiling was 7-feet high. It had one entrance and means of egress: a staircase from the street leading to the cellar. The club space was T-shaped, 50-feet wide and 100-feet deep. The venue had no fire sprinklers or extinguishers.⁵⁵ The club's layout can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Rough floorplan of El Hoyo (Source: Susan Brandt, from description by Captain Gallagher of the FDNY⁵⁶)



Open 24 hours a day, at the time of the fire it was thought there were around 200 people inside the club.⁵⁷ The source of the fire was believed to be a salad oil bottle full of petrol that had been confiscated the week before from a patron. The bottle was put behind the counter and set alight by nearby bar-top candles, but the failures of governance (enforcement of existing regulations), management (enforcement of safe practices) and building conditions (lack of appropriate conversion for occupancy) can also be blamed for the tragedy. Because the fire started near the staircase, the egress was soon impassable. Some patrons escaped by running through the heat to the street level. Three patrons breached a wall of the cellar, escaping through the neighbouring auto repair garage. Fire companies arriving on the scene found locals frantic to get in and rescue the victims. Four fire companies attempted to breach different sides of the building and the roof. It was a harrowing experience for all involved.⁵⁸

In the aftermath of the fire, officials reported that the club violated building laws due to its basement location and inadequate egress.⁵⁹ Koch said of city inspectors that they could not 'be expected to know about every social club operating without licenses – as most of them do'. He continued that 'in addition to a liquor license, such an establishment should have Fire Department certification that it has enough working exits, sprinklers, alarms, kitchen extinguishers and such; Buildings Department certification that its electrical, plumbing, heating and other systems are safe, and other licenses.'⁶⁰ Calling the location 'a rabbit warren' unworthy of operation at that location, Koch's plan called for the creation of a new task

force, combining efforts by the NYPD, FDNY and NYCDOB, to review and strengthen regulations. A week after the fire the task force began efforts to crack down on unsafe venues throughout the city.⁶¹ Mayor Koch's solution was to adopt new legislation. It would require previously vacated clubs to post a bond or letter of credit. He wanted signs posted at each location informing the public that the bar was safe to enter.⁶² The bill was never passed. Koch became unpopular and was voted out of office. Rudy Giuliani subsequently became Mayor, and the bill was dropped.

1990–3: Mayor David Dinkins and Happy Land Social Club

In the spring of 1990 in New York City, private social clubs still proliferated on the social scene. The election of David Dinkins (in office 1990–3) was met with dancing on the streets of Harlem⁶³ and a concession speech from opponent, Rudy Giuliani.⁶⁴ Dinkins was called 'someone with a heart . . . a great person', but his administration had major problems to combat, including street drugs and homelessness.⁶⁵ Dinkins had courted the surging Latino vote in his run for office. He was promoted as a mayor for all the people of New York City, regardless of race or creed. He travelled to many Latino neighbourhoods and spoke to voters in person leading up to the election. One election event was held at a location that could be categorised as a social club: El Caney in Harlem. The club had remained open after a vacate order was posted by an inspector due to fire safety infractions. The club was tied to one of Dinkins's new appointees on Hispanic affairs, William Nieves. Indeed, he was listed as the owner of the club. Dinkins defended his choice of location as one that other politicians had used in the past.

By 1989 the task force appointed during the Koch administration to inspect and close locations deemed dangerous had dwindled⁶⁶ from 12 teams to a single team to inspect clubs for the entire city.⁶⁷ The task force was still charged with drawing up a list of clubs to be shuttered. The list was to be posted at each police precinct in the city.⁶⁸

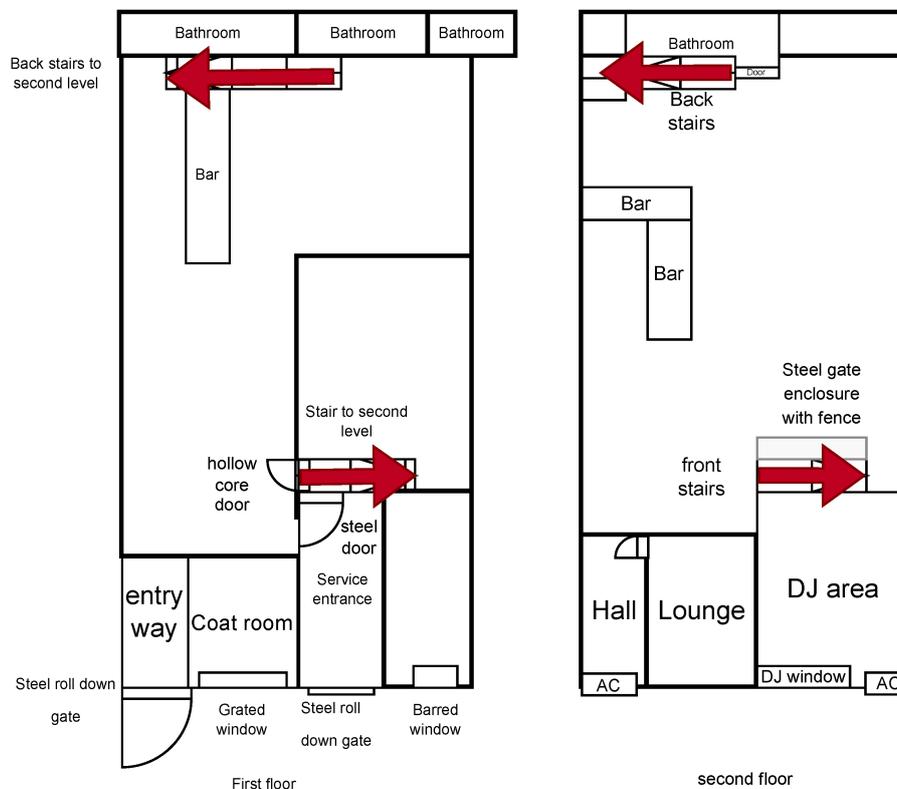
Happy Land Social Club was in the West Farms section of the Bronx and, like many clubs, it had a history of inspections and violations. The location had a vacate order glued to its door in November 1988.⁶⁹ In January 1989, a bartender was caught selling alcohol without a licence. Enforcement was difficult; a fire department three blocks away claimed Happy Land was not in their district; several city agencies cited the location. But without constant monitoring the venue reopened and continued operations.⁷⁰ The owner of the building that housed Happy Land was Alex DiLorenzo III, a real-estate investor with an arrest warrant hanging over him that had been issued after he did not appear in court on 3 February 1989 to respond to safety violations at the club. The violations had been noted long before the fire and included the lack of fire sprinklers, lack of emergency lighting and no assembly permit for entertainment of more than 75 people. After the warrant was issued, it was never served. Building violations were not a high priority to enforce, due to a lack of police officers to serve the warrants.⁷¹ Happy Land had one main egress on the first floor. It was a two-storey venue with drinking and dancing on both floors. The venue had one small sprinkler system on the second floor. There were seven sprinkler heads, five of which worked. Several exits had been blocked off.⁷² The floorplan of the club can be seen in Figure 4.

On 25 March 1990, an arsonist returned to the club after previously being ejected, poured petrol on the entrance, tossed two lit matches into the doorway and left. Approximately 100 young people were still inside celebrating; only six escaped the fire, which resulted from the failures of governance (enforcement of existing regulations), management (enforcement of safe practices) and building conditions (lack of appropriate conversion for occupancy). The fire started in the front vestibule. The heat initially went from the front door up the stairs to the second floor. The employees and DJ escaped, likely because they had personal knowledge of the venue exits. As they escaped the second floor, the door leading into the first-floor bar area was left open, allowing the fire to move into the first-floor main room. The rear staircase leading from the first to the second floor was also left open, allowing more air to circulate, and feeding the second-floor fire. All the remaining patrons perished due to the intensity of the heat and the toxicity of the air.⁷³

Dinkins had been in office for barely 100 days when the Happy Land Social Club fire occurred. He visited Happy Land the morning after the fire and surveyed the scene, deeply affected by what he saw.⁷⁴ He stated that, 'Anybody that had an opportunity to view those eighty-seven bodies knows that we're not going to tolerate this', and predicting that illegal clubs would be closed 'come the next weekend'.⁷⁵ After touring the site, Dinkins's administration worked to draft legislation to close any eating or drinking establishment that violated fire or safety codes. The bill was meant to strengthen the Padlock Law.⁷⁶ The

bill would require more stringent record keeping for orders to vacate, including notifying the mortgage holders. It would put responsibility for compliance on the owner of the building. In the case of Happy Land that meant that the responsibility would follow the chain of ownership back to Elias Colan, Jay Weiss and Alexander DiLorenzo III. Under the proposal the owners could request a hearing to get the property reopened.⁷⁷ Dinkins's administration proposed legislation aligned to Koch's ideas that included stiff civil penalties for building owners who reopened vacated venues where injuries or deaths later occurred. He also created a panel to study the problem of the fire itself and how to help Latino and other communities create safe cultural spaces.⁷⁸ Some 13 weeks after the fire, Dinkins cut the task force in half, stating that it had 'brought many of the clubs into line and closed those that did not comply', although Deputy Mayor for Public Safety, Milton Mollen, claimed to be prepared to expand the task force when needed, keenly noting 'that the Happy Land Social Club disaster happened a year after city officials had shrunk the task force, citing a similar reduction in the number of clubs to check'.⁷⁹

Figure 4. Floorplan of Happy Land Social Club (Source: Susan Brandt, adapted from layout published by the Building and Fire Research Laboratory)⁸⁰



A 1992 NIST analysis using Hazard 1 (a fire hazard assessment software tool used to analyse locations that burned)⁸¹ of the Happy Land disaster resulted in several notable conclusions: that 'an automatic sprinkler head in the entryway would have promptly actuated and most likely prevented the spread of lethal conditions from the entryway into the rest of the club'; that 'a second means of egress might have reduced the toll, but probably would not have eliminated all of the fatalities'; and that 'non-combustible interior finish appears to be the least costly strategy for limiting the life loss in this incident'.⁸² These findings suggest that although the building's layout and fire suppression systems were inadequate for its use as a social club, relatively affordable changes to the interior may have improved its safety. These findings invite comparisons to the hyperbolic-seeming claims made in 1942 by commissioner Patrick Walsh, during Mayor Fiorello La Guardia's tenure (in office 1934–45). He stated that fire safety was ensured in gathering places by testing interior materials with a blowtorch. His assertion was to demonstrate that New York City had a plan when inspecting places of assembly to test for flammable materials by use of a blow torch test to curtains and other surfaces.⁸³

Years later, the city claimed that the building owners were criminally liable for the conditions at Happy Land; the owners contended that the fault lay with the city due to unclear policies and lax enforcement. A multi-billion-dollar civil suit brought by the families of the victims would raise questions about the responsibilities of landlords for conditions in their properties, regardless of whether they were actively managed.⁸⁴ After two days of testimony, one criminal defendant, the primary leaseholder on the venue, agreed to a combination of payments and community service as a plea bargain in addition to admitting guilt to certain charges. The leaseholder, Jay Weiss, had sublet the building to Elias Colan, an operator of the Happy Land Social Club and victim of the fire.⁸⁵

Mayor David Dinkins created a commission to look at police corruption in 1992, two years after the third fire. The Mollen Commission was established after five officers in two Brooklyn precincts were arrested by the Suffolk County Police and accused of buying cocaine in their precincts and reselling it on Long Island.⁸⁶ The findings of the Mollen Commission⁸⁷, written between 1992 and 1993 and published in 1994, indicated that the result of the Dinkins administration's decision to quickly increase the number of police officers resulted in a systemic failure to conduct thorough background checks. The commission determined that 'approximately 20 percent of the officers suspended or dismissed should never have been admitted into the Department. This data was based on information available in the officers' personnel files at the time of hiring'.⁸⁸ Mayor Dinkins only served one term and was replaced by Rudy Giuliani in 1994. He created a new commission to combat police corruption, the outcome of the Mollen Commission Report. The new commission, the Commission to Combat Corruption, is still in place today.⁸⁹

Overview of findings

This article has used prominent fires in New York City social clubs as its scope. In the cases examined, the social clubs were used for community gatherings such as parties and cultural celebrations. Research suggests the locations were exploited by owners, operators and regulators; all of whom were benefiting at the expense of public safety. The need for affordable building spaces and the subsequent clustering of social clubs in ageing buildings with limited upgrades, called into question the possibility of providing the desired functions of social clubs while meeting the necessary safety provisions. In the aftermath of these tragic fires, commissions were established, violations were issued, and analyses were commissioned by the relevant authorities.⁹⁰ Table 1 provides a summary of the relevant events, commissions and solutions attempted. The reassessment of safety in indoor gathering spaces after each case examined reflected a need for change. In each case, occupant safety was found to be compromised by venue design and organisation, occupant behaviour and failures in regulation and enforcement. These issues are explored in detail below. Table 2 describes the ongoing changes in local laws via directives and memorandums in attempts to bridge the gap between current events and the time it takes to update the New York City building codes.

Venue design and organisation

All three venues had issues with their designs, which contributed to congestion, unsafe fire conditions and missing or inadequate escape routes:

- *The Puerto Rican Social Club* had one entrance at street level to a first-floor dance hall. The only other exit was a fire escape that was prevented from lowering due to a metal rolling door installed beneath. The staircase leading up to the venue was built of wood. The location needed a second accessible exit to the street from the second floor. A fire suppression system starting at the entrance on the first floor and covering the second-floor areas would have saved lives.
- *El Hoyo* was on the basement level of the building. The ceilings were too low for a place of assembly. The best design would have been to select a different location on the first floor with two exits on opposite walls and a fire suppression system.
- *The Happy Land Social Club* was a two-storey building with spaces for the patrons on the first and second floors. There were two staircases, both very narrow and hard to navigate. The best solution would have been to rebuild the staircases to fit the code width and install a fire suppression system.

The best practice solution is to build new purpose-built venues from the ground up or to follow all current codes for renovated buildings. In cities and neighbourhoods where older buildings are cheaper to rent

and convert, some owners will have the funding and information to make the required safety upgrades, while others will look the other way and let an entrepreneur renovate. Owners and managers need to be aware of the building's usage and knowledgeable about the building, including all entrances and exits. The owner of the building and the business owners need to have a transparent relationship so that the usage of the location is understood and agreed upon by both parties. Further constraints to building safety improvement identified included complex ownership and leaseholder relationships, community resistance to change and the prevalence of ageing building stock.

Table 1. Events and commissions (Source: authors)

Event	Date	Mayor	Environment	Solution
Knapp Commission	21 May 1970 –26 December 1972	John Lindsey 1966–73	Determine the extent of police corruption in New York City	Limited exposure of policemen to corruption hazards using a climate of reform
Puerto Rican Social Club fire	24 October 1976	Abraham Beame 1974–7	City in bankruptcy	Update code to include a second egress from second-floor locations
El Hoyo Social Club fire	21 August 1988	Ed Koch 1978–89	Popular mayor supported the NYPD	New legislation: Padlock Law. Allow closure of locations by inspectors
Happy Land Social Club fire	25 March 1990	David Dinkins 1990–3	Supported by minorities	New legislation: Update Padlock Law and creation of Mollen Commission
Mollen Commission	1991–5	David Dinkins and Rudy Giuliani	Transition between administrations	Review current corruption
Commission to Combat Police Corruption	1995–present	Rudy Giuliani 1994–2001	Generating reports	Citizen committee is part of the commission

Occupant behaviour

All three venues had problematic occupant behaviour that contributed to crowding, intoxication and confusion. Management practices were the driving force behind these behaviours.

- *The Puerto Rican Social Club* was hosting a private event including dancing with a live band. In the past, the location had been inspected by the FDNY and passed fire inspections. The venue was listed as a private club; therefore a liquor licence was not required.
- *El Hoyo* acted as a local dance and party scene, open 24 hours a day. The club violated building codes meant to ensure that use-specific safety measures were in place, due to its basement location and inadequate egress.⁹¹
- *The Happy Land Social Club* was running a special event for Hondurans from the local neighbourhood. The location had a vacate order glued to its door in November 1988. In January 1989, unlicensed alcohol sales took place. Several city agencies cited the location, but without constant monitoring the venue reopened and continued operations.⁹² Building owner Alex DiLorenzo III had been issued an arrest warrant after failing to respond to safety violations at the club in court on 3 February 1989. The warrant was never served, owing to low enforcement of building violation infractions.⁹³

In best practice, safe egress is practised and discussed by all employees of a venue. Training staff on safety precautions, fire egress procedures and the location of fire extinguishers would have saved lives in each incident reviewed. Occupants at each location were victims. The community needed the social clubs to network and find a sense of community – so they attended despite safety concerns. Each conflagration exceeded the horror of the previous fire. The conspicuous lack of interest in making the venues safe is evident in the information uncovered as part of case study research.

Regulation and enforcement

All three venues had confusing relationships with appropriate regulation due to sporadic or non-existent enforcement of existing rules from the city, NYCDOB, FDNY and NYPD. Memoranda and directives were written to be enforced while the code process was navigated to enter the changes into the existing local laws. Table 2 shows an overview of the written laws and directions resulting from the social club and other fires.

- *The Puerto Rican Social Club*: Mayor Beame used his executive power to create a task force that delegated the power to the FDNY to create a team to find and inspect social clubs immediately. They assigned 20 men to work night-time shifts inspecting social clubs when they were open for business.⁹⁴ Two memoranda added to the local laws 4 October 1976 update panic hardware, and 29 December 1976 updated permit codes for places of assembly. The building code was updated on 3 October 1979 Local Law 41; however, the code changes did not apply to locations with fewer than 75 patrons.
- *El Hoyo*: Mayor Koch created a task force to investigate the safety problems in late-night clubs.⁹⁵ His task force sent out police officers and housing and fire inspectors to inspect and cite locations as needed. He also enacted a Padlock Law policy requiring locations that had three or more specific crimes committed on their premises within 12 months be shut down.⁹⁶
- *The Happy Land Social Club*: Mayor Dinkins put together a task force that created 20 teams to inspect late-night clubs. Albert Scardino, the mayor's press secretary, said the police listed about 1,220 clubs without liquor licences, with about 1,000 believed to be inactive. He said Happy Land was among those considered inactive.⁹⁷ An attempt was made by Mayor Dinkins to update the Padlock Law. He was embattled by the New York City Council. They wanted clear enforcement of the current laws, not an updated law. Mayor Dinkins was not able to make any permanent changes before he left office.⁹⁸

In best practice, a method of consistent inspections in social club operations includes governance (enforcement of existing regulations), management (reduction of capacity to promote safety) and building conditions (making appropriate upgrades). Failures on all three counts had led to deadly results in the past as presented in each of the cases examined. To add a level of difficulty for those attempting to ensure fair and consistent inspections, locations primarily used at night were locked and inaccessible during the day. Enforcement activities must be scheduled during hours of operation and consistently followed up on.

Table 2. Memoranda and directives added to current Places of Assembly building codes (Source: authors)

Memorandum or directive	Date	Summary
City of New York Department of Buildings P of A Fire Department Notification	4 March 1969	Memo from Director of Operations to Borough Superintendent: Fire Department assigned to inspect places of assembly. ⁹⁹
City of New York Housing and Development Administration Department of Buildings Vacating Premises	3 February 1976	Vacating Premises Occupied as Places of Assembly. For defective exits or other hazards. ¹⁰⁰
City of New York Housing and Development Administration Department of Buildings Acceptable door hardware	4 October 1976	FDNYC reports that slide bolts or drawn bolts not part of approved panic hardware are not easy to open. ¹⁰¹
Housing Development Administration Buildings Emergency Lighting Directive 5	14 April 1977	Emergency Lighting in Places of Assembly. ¹⁰²

The City of New York Department of Buildings Local Law 41 of 1978 Direct 7	13 December 1978	'Blue Angel' Law – Places of Assembly: FDNYC and NYCDOB may enforce provisions of the building codes for cabaret venues. ¹⁰³
The City of New York Department of Buildings Local Law 41 of 1978 update 'Blue Angel' Law	3 January 1979	'Blue Angel' Law – Places of Assembly: FDNYC and NYCDOB may enforce provisions of the building codes for cabaret venues. ¹⁰⁴
City of New York Department of Buildings Renewal of permits	13 March 1979	Renewal of P of A permits sending out notices one month prior to inspection. ¹⁰⁵
The City of New York Department of Buildings Update Local Law 41	4 April 1979	Update Local Law 41. Add definition for cabarets for locations with more than 75 patrons and music played or people dancing. ¹⁰⁶
The City of New York Department of Buildings Occupancy Load on F-4 Places of Assembly	9 August 1980	Occupancy Load in F-4 Places of Assembly. Lobbies and lounges to have a load assignment. ¹⁰⁷
The City of New York Department of Buildings Emergency Lighting	19 February 1981	Illumination-Emergency Lighting for Places of Assembly. ¹⁰⁸
The City of New York Department of Buildings Emergency Lighting	17 March 1981	Emergency Lighting update including drawing specifications. ¹⁰⁹
The City of New York Department of Buildings Acceptable door hardware	28 January 1987	Update to the 4 October 1976 memo that turn knobs and slide bolts may only be used when they are an integral part of approved panic hardware. ¹¹⁰
The City of New York Department of Buildings Permit Requirements for Places of Assembly	13 October 1988	Permit requirements update. Permits are required for rooms or spaces located on the same floor or different floors with a combined occupancy of 75 even if one room occupancy is less than 75. ¹¹¹
The City of New York Department of Buildings PPN Places of Assembly Permits	27 October 1993	Amended places of assembly permit rules. ¹¹²

Concluding remarks

In the social club fire case studies, venue design and organisation, occupant behaviour and failures in regulation and enforcement all contributed to unsafe conditions and outcomes. However, due to its complex history, recurring cycle of failures and overarching relationship to the other two factors, regulation and enforcement stands out as the most pressing issue to tackle in improving safety for occupants of social clubs and other assembly spaces.

As far as regulation goes, elected officials tend to move slowly to create and change laws in response to precipitating events. A group of individuals need to come together to decide for the common good of the public they represent, a process that requires time to build consensus. As an example, the update to the New York City Building Code to add a requirement for a second egress

to a second-floor place of assembly took two years to enforce. When tragedies arise, such as those in the case studies examined, mayors can write executive orders to stimulate change, but they must be followed by passing new laws or updating codes to keep communities safe. Each administration studied showed concern for safety after the fires with the goal of impartial inspections and enforcement; but this goal was difficult to ensure, whether the inspectors originated in policing, fire safety or building safety organisations. Policies and task forces that derived their authority from the mayor's office fell victim to the political cycle. Each time a mayor was voted out of office, a new mayor and team of legislators began, with their own political promises to consider, putting an end to most legislation not completed by the past administration.

Regarding enforcement, contextual information collected while examining the case studies suggests that social clubs can and will continue to exist outside of officially governed enforcement. Malfeasance inside city agencies can have egregious outcomes in locations where the very nature of the business can lure corruption from city officials. In the case of the Happy Land Social Club, everyone, including the bouncer, the manager who died in the fire or the owner of the building, ignored the potential dangers in the usage of the premises despite official warnings. The police were overwhelmed with warrants for what they considered more serious crimes, allowing the location to remain open even after it was cited for building safety. A Knapp Commission staff lawyer once referred to the problem of enforcement as a 'cyclical theory of corruption'¹¹³ and a Dinkins-era effort to revive police reform commissions similarly recalled the 'clockwork' nature of problems related to safety and reform.¹¹⁴ Ensuring enforcement of safety regulations that is fair, consistent and evenly applied is of the utmost importance for building safety and for the safety of the occupants of social clubs. Overcoming the resistance to these measures is often the greatest challenge.

Notes

¹ Terry, '39 illegal social clubs'; Kihss, 'First check of Bronx club'; Purdum, 'Fire in the Bronx: Dinkins Bill'.

² Sanchez-Korrol, *History of Puerto Ricans in the US – Part Five*.

³ Hicks and Wang, 'The New York Times as a resource for mode 2'.

⁴ Anonymous, 'New York consolidated laws', n.p.

⁵ Sanchez-Korrol, *From Colonia to Community*.

⁶ Negro, 'Tenement homes'.

⁷ Karlsson, 'The last Puerto Rican social club in Brooklyn'.

⁸ Moll-Ramirez, 'Tenement museum'.

⁹ Anonymous, *1968 Building Code of the City of New York*.

¹⁰ Karlsson, 'The last Puerto Rican social club in Brooklyn', n.p.

¹¹ Karlsson, 'The last Puerto Rican social club in Brooklyn'.

¹² Czitrom, *New York Exposed*.

¹³ Czitrom, *New York Exposed*.

¹⁴ Anonymous, 'Police corruption'.

¹⁵ Lexow, 'Lexow Report'.

¹⁶ Jabali, 'The Charter of 1898'.

¹⁷ Bird, 'Fire in the Bronx', 838.

¹⁸ McFadden, 'John V. Lindsay, mayor and maverick, dies at 79'.

¹⁹ Anonymous, 'The Knapp Commission survives'; Knapp, *The Knapp Commission Report on Police Corruption*.

²⁰ Severo, 'Whitman Knapp', n.p.

²¹ Davidson, 'The Knapp Commission'.

²² Purdum, 'Koch plans task force to combat illegal clubs'.

²³ Knapp, *The Knapp Commission Report on Police Corruption*.

²⁴ Knapp, *The Knapp Commission Report on Police Corruption*.

²⁵ Knapp, *The Knapp Commission Report on Police Corruption*.

²⁶ Purdum, 'The region'.

²⁷ Purdum, 'The region'.

²⁸ Treaster, 'Knapp commission reunion'.

- ²⁹ Blum, 'F.B.I. inquiry'.
- ³⁰ Purdum, 'The region'.
- ³¹ Duval, 'The legacy of nightclub fires'.
- ³² Sanchez-Korrol, *History of Puerto Ricans in the US – Part Five*.
- ³³ Hensler, 'Reflecting on the Happy Land Social Club fire'.
- ³⁴ Terry, '7 killed and 33 hurt', n.p.
- ³⁵ Bird, 'Fire in the Bronx'.
- ³⁶ Karlsson, 'The last Puerto Rican social club in Brooklyn'.
- ³⁷ McFadden, 'Abraham Beame is dead at 94'.
- ³⁸ Thomas, Jr, 'Fire sweeps Bronx social club'.
- ³⁹ Kleiman, 'Youth guilty of causing 25 deaths'.
- ⁴⁰ Karlsson, 'The last Puerto Rican social club in Brooklyn'.
- ⁴¹ Thomas, Jr, 'Fire sweeps Bronx social club', n.p.
- ⁴² Kihss, 'Law is sought'.
- ⁴³ Purdum, 'Koch plans task force to combat illegal clubs'.
- ⁴⁴ Purdum, 'The region'.
- ⁴⁵ Minkin, 'Memo 1/3/79', 1.
- ⁴⁶ Terry, '7 killed and 33 hurt'.
- ⁴⁷ Anonymous, *1968 Building Code of the City of New York*, n.p.
- ⁴⁸ Terry, '7 killed and 33 hurt', 1.
- ⁴⁹ Minkin, 'Social club violations', 1.
- ⁵⁰ Fyfe and Kane, 'Bad cops', 66.
- ⁵¹ Lynn, 'Koch seeks sweep tomorrow'.
- ⁵² Purdum, 'The region'.
- ⁵³ Purdum, 'Koch plans task force to combat illegal clubs'; Goodwin, 'Tighten up fire codes?', 245.
- ⁵⁴ Purdum, 'The region'.
- ⁵⁵ Spak, 'El Hoyo Social Club'.
- ⁵⁶ Spak, 'El Hoyo Social Club'.
- ⁵⁷ Terry, '7 killed and 33 hurt'.
- ⁵⁸ Spak, 'El Hoyo Social Club'.
- ⁵⁹ Terry, '7 killed and 33 hurt'.
- ⁶⁰ Terry, '7 killed and 33 hurt', n.p.
- ⁶¹ Purdum, 'Koch plans task force to combat illegal clubs'.
- ⁶² Purdum, 'The region'.
- ⁶³ Holmes, 'The 1989 elections'.
- ⁶⁴ Holmes, 'The 1989 elections'.
- ⁶⁵ Holmes, 'The 1989 elections'.
- ⁶⁶ Bukowski and Spetzler, 'Analysis'.
- ⁶⁷ Purdum, 'Koch plans task force to combat illegal clubs'.
- ⁶⁸ Purdum, 'Fire in the Bronx: Dinkins Bill'.
- ⁶⁹ Bukowski and Spetzler, 'Analysis'.
- ⁷⁰ Logan, 'Around City Hall, Happy Land'.
- ⁷¹ Barbanel, 'Happy Land arrest order ignored'.
- ⁷² Bukowski and Spetzler, 'Analysis'.
- ⁷³ Bukowski and Spetzler, 'Analysis'.
- ⁷⁴ Logan, 'Around City Hall, Happy Land'.
- ⁷⁵ Geitner, 'Mayor orders crackdown on illegal clubs', 1.
- ⁷⁶ Purdum, 'Fire in the Bronx: Dinkins Bill'.
- ⁷⁷ Purdum, 'Fire in the Bronx: Dinkins Bill'.
- ⁷⁸ Purdum, 'A council panel'.
- ⁷⁹ McKinley, Jr, 'Dinkins reduces task force', n.p.
- ⁸⁰ Bukowski and Spetzler, 'Analysis'.

- ⁸¹ Bukowski and Spetzler, 'Analysis'.
- ⁸² Bukowski and Spetzler, 'Analysis', n.p.
- ⁸³ Anonymous, 'Night clubs here guarded closely'.
- ⁸⁴ Bennet, 'Judge to start weighing charges'.
- ⁸⁵ Hevesi, 'Leaseholder admits violation'.
- ⁸⁶ Slotnik, 'Milton Mollen, 97, dies'.
- ⁸⁷ Mollen, 'Mollen Commission final report'.
- ⁸⁸ Mollen, 'Mollen Commission final report', 65.
- ⁸⁹ NYC Commission to Combat Police Corruption, 'Twentieth annual report'.
- ⁹⁰ Treaster, 'Knapp Commission reunion'.
- ⁹¹ Terry, '7 killed and 33 hurt'.
- ⁹² Logan, 'Around City Hall, Happy Land'.
- ⁹³ Barbanel, 'Happy Land arrest order ignored'.
- ⁹⁴ Anonymous, 'Fire department plans inspection'.
- ⁹⁵ Purdum, 'Koch plans task force to combat illegal clubs'.
- ⁹⁶ Anonymous, '700 crimes sites'.
- ⁹⁷ Terry, 'Fire in the Bronx'.
- ⁹⁸ Purdum, 'Hearing on club safety'.
- ⁹⁹ Burk, 'Memo 3/4/69'.
- ¹⁰⁰ Minkin, 'Memo 2/3/1976'.
- ¹⁰¹ Minkin, 'Memo 10/4/1976'.
- ¹⁰² Minkin, 'Memo 4/14/1977'.
- ¹⁰³ Minkin, 'Memo 1/3/79'.
- ¹⁰⁴ Minkin, 'Memo 1/3/79'.
- ¹⁰⁵ Dennis, 'Memo 3/13/79'.
- ¹⁰⁶ Fruchtman, 'Memo 4/4/79'.
- ¹⁰⁷ Fruchtman, 'Memo 8/9/80'.
- ¹⁰⁸ Fruchtman, 'Memo 2/19/81'.
- ¹⁰⁹ Minkin, 'Memo 3/17/81'.
- ¹¹⁰ Berger, 'Memo 10/28/87'.
- ¹¹¹ Smith, 'Memo 10/13/88'.
- ¹¹² O'Brian, 'PPN 11/27/93'.
- ¹¹³ Treaster, 'Knapp Commission reunion', 25.
- ¹¹⁴ Gottlieb, 'Like clockwork, a police scandal'.

Declarations and conflicts of interest

Research ethics statement

Not applicable to this article.

Consent for publication statement

Not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of interest statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest with this work. All efforts to sufficiently anonymise the authors during peer review of this article have been made. The authors declare no further conflicts with this article.

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