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Theorising Urban Playscapes: Producing, Regulating and Consuming Youthful Nightlife City Spaces

Paul Chatterton and Robert Hollands

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Summary. This article develops a theoretical understanding of the relationship between young people and city space. More specifically, our focus concerns what we have termed ‘urban playscapes’—young people’s activities in bars, pubs, night-clubs and music venues within the night-time entertainment economy. The paper theoretically and empirically explores three interrelated aspects of these playscapes: *production* and the increasing role of a small number of large-scale corporate leisure and entertainment operators providing sanitised, ‘branded’ experiences; *regulation* in which the development of urban playscapes can be understood through a night-time entertainment regime based around a modified relationship between state, developers and consumers, including enhanced forms of surveillance and control; and *consumption* which is characterised by segmentation and differentiation and based around more ‘exclusive’ and ‘up-market’ identities. We argue that these three aspects combine to create a dominant mode of ‘mainstream’ urban nightlife, with ‘alternative’ and ‘residual’ nightlife increasingly under threat or squeezed out. In conclusion, we discuss some of the interrelationships between production, regulation and consumption and suggest a number of potential future scenarios for nightlife development.

Introduction

Social and economic restructuring over the past three decades has had profound effects on cities. One response to this restructuring has been the development of a new urban ‘brand’ which has reshaped parts of city landscapes, especially during the evening, into corporate entertainment and leisure hubs (Hannigan, 1998). While cities have always been sites of entertainment and pleasure-seeking, a central focus of recent rebranding has been the promotion of the night-time economy, much of which is characterised by the ritual descent of young adults into city-

centre bars, pubs and clubs especially during the weekend (Hollands, 1995).

This paper draws upon research looking at youth cultural activity outside London, in England’s large metropolitan urban centres—often referred to as ‘core cities’ (Charles *et al.*, 1999).¹ Our aim is to provide a theoretical framework and empirical evidence for understanding the interrelationships between the production, regulation and consumption of what we call ‘urban playscapes’ in these cities.² While our focus refers to a particular type of urban centre, we would argue that our

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findings have some wider relevance to global and capital cities with multiple and diverse centres of nightlife, as well as more suburban locations, both of which continue to experience similar processes of corporatisation and gentrification in leisure and entertainment.

The first part of the paper explores some of the changes within city cultures and youth lifestyles and the relationships between them. In particular, we are concerned with the underlying dynamics of urban cultural transformation and the effects of increasing amounts of corporate influence and state regulation in city centres on youth nightlife identities and consumption patterns. Such an approach spans several different traditions such as youth transition studies and youth cultural analysis (Hollands, 1998) as well as contemporary thinking on the city including issues of political economy (Harvey, 1989a, 1989b), socio-spatiality (Soja, 2000; Gottdiener, 1994) and urban cultures (Zukin, 1995).

The second part of the paper develops an understanding of urban playscapes by examining the production, regulation and consumption of different types of nightlife space. Our argument is that this sector of the cultural economy is increasingly characterised by a dominant regime of 'mainstream' *production* through the corporatisation and branding of ownership (Klein, 2000); *regulation* through practices which increasingly aid capital accumulation and urban image-building (Zukin, 1995) and increase surveillance (Davis, 1992); and *consumption* through new forms of segmented nightlife activity based around more 'exclusive' and 'up-market' identities amongst young adults (Wynne and O'Connor, 1998; Savage, 1995). Parallel to these dominant forms, residual and alternative nightlife spaces exist, although increasingly these are being marginalised both socially and spatially.

In conclusion, we explore the interrelationships between producing, regulating and consuming nightlife city spaces and briefly examine the ways in which these relationships are modified by the particularities of place. We suggest that, while high levels of

corporate ownership in city-centre consumption spaces are not a completely new phenomenon, over the past decade corporate ownership has been increasing at a rapid pace which has squeezed out many alternative, subordinate spaces, meanings and practices. This does not preclude other pathways for future development, and we hint at a number of possible scenarios in which different nightlife spaces could develop. Within this, it is important to re-evaluate and re-frame the debate about young people and cities around concepts and policies based on inclusion, diversity and creativity, rather than more limited notions of danger, social control and regulation.

The Context: Changing Cities, Changing Youth

Changes occurring within cities and their centres over the past few decades act as one of the backdrops for understanding cultural transformations in young people's lives. "Something extraordinary happened to cities in the late twentieth century" and numerous discourses have arisen to make practical and theoretical sense of these happenings (Soja, 2000, p. 148). Our focus moves beyond the many post-modern textual readings of these transformations to explore critically the role of corporate capital and the local state in urban restructuring, or what many have called the 'new urbanism' (Webster, 2001).

Traditional metropolitan and industrial centres in the UK, like many urban areas in Europe and North America, were once points of concentration for economic, political, cultural and social activity. Since the 1970s, they have been sidelined through the centralisation and suburbanisation of employment, depopulation, the domestication of leisure, national-local political wrangling and marginalisation by multinational capital (Hudson and Williams, 1994; Massey and Allen; 1988; Taylor *et al.*, 1996; Pacione, 1997). The result has been widespread unemployment, physical and social decay, crime, homelessness and dereliction.

Nevertheless, over the past two decades,

city centres have been remodelled as places in which to live, work and be entertained. This move back to the city is part of a wider process of socioeconomic restructuring within the UK. For example, the neo-liberal political project since the Thatcher years has eroded the established labourist city strongly connected to its manufacturing and industrial past in favour of private/corporate capital, knowledge-based activities, middle-class consumption and an entrepreneurial turn in urban governance aimed at attracting and satisfying the demands of highly mobile global capital (Harvey, 1989b; Jessop, 1997). Over the past two decades, this 'return to the centre' (O'Connor and Wynne, 1995) has come of age with the wholesale reinvention, symbolically if not materially, of the importance of cities and particularly their centres (Harvey, 1989a; O'Connor and Wynne, 1995; Zukin, 1995), reinforced by a range of bodies and policy statements in the UK, including the Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) of the 1980s, the Urban Task Force report (1999), and the government's urban White Paper (DETR, 2000).

The specific characteristics of this return to the centre are a renewed emphasis on business service employment and the so-called dematerialised and knowledge-based economy, city-centre living and a greater economic role for corporately organised leisure, retail and consumption-based rather than production-based activities (Zukin, 1995; Worpole and Greenhalgh, 1996; Hannigan, 1998). This new urbanism is underpinned by voracious efforts by civic boosters to create a new city 'cultural brand' which, although stressing the cosmopolitan and culturally diverse nature of cities, is largely directed towards mobile, non-local and corporate capital, property developers and high-income urban-livers and professional workers (Savage, 1995).

Central to this new image has been an emphasis on the potential employment and income effects of developing a strong urban cultural economy and cultural production systems (Hall, 1996; Scott, 1997; Pratt, 1997). Moreover, it has become accepted

parlance that the night-time economy, through bars, pubs, clubs and music venues, has an identifiable role to play in revamping the material and symbolic urban economy. Clearly, each urban area has steered its own course through this reinvention process and British metropolitan centres have borrowed both from the excesses of the North American model of casinos, multiplexes and malls (Davis, 1992; Hannigan, 1998) and the continental European model associated with 'café culture' and socially inclusive city-centre living.

What is the role of young people within this reimagined urban centre? One of the fundamental shifts in the past two decades has been the extension of a youthful phase, as evidenced by terms like 'post-adolescence' and 'middle youth' (Irwin, 1995), often characterised by liminality or experimentation in youth cultural activity for an extended period of time. Marketing agents such as Mintel (1998) use phrases such as 'young adults' and 'pre-family adults' to reflect this extended period. Further, as traditional social relations and sites of identity for young adults weaken, consumption, leisure and popular culture, especially in city centres, become more central elements of youth identity (Willis, 1990; Hollands, 1995). Significant changes in the labour market, education, consumption and household dependency, combined with increased individualisation and globalisation have fuelled a seemingly complex array of youthful, and not so young, lifestyles and identities (Miles, 2000; Readhead, 1997), many of which are at their most prominent in city-centre nightlife.

However, it is important to stress the endurance of significant cleavages within youth populations (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997)—between, for example, unemployed young people or those dependent on welfare benefits or unstable employment (Brookes, 2000), university students and those in high-level training and young professionals in stable, well-paid and mobile employment (Ball *et al.*, 2000). While differences between these categories of young people are underpinned by a host of factors such as educa-

tional background, parental income, ethnicity and geographical location, we are interested in how they relate to nightlife consumption practices and the ways in which provision increasingly targets certain groups of young people and excludes others. For example, there is a growing section of young people exposed to unstable labour market conditions or welfare dependency, whose participation in city-centre nightlife is often extremely curtailed. For a whole host of reasons such as price, geographical marginality, racism, or merely feelings of disenfranchisement, significant groups of young people are restricted to leisure in their homes and estates, or community pubs and social clubs (MacDonald, 1997; Campbell, 1993).

At the same time, numbers of university students have substantially increased in Britain since 1992 with the bulk of this made up by 'non-traditional' students, who are older and often locally based, living at home. This diversification of the student body has served to broaden the nature of consumer and cultural activity away from that of the 'elitist' traditional student model, with the net result being both a blurring of student-local distinctions and a segmentation of the student body into various sub-categories (Hollands, 1995; Chatterton, 1999). Nevertheless, traditional student identities and consumption patterns remain strong, and identifiable swathes of all British cities are devoted to meeting their educational, housing and entertainment needs. Students are offered a host of promotional nightlife discounts such as happy hours and cheap entry prices and, in most large cities, identifiable student pubs, bars and clubs, as well as students unions, exist to cater for their exclusive needs.

Finally, many young people emerging from universities and professional qualifications are able to enter into a world of relatively stable employment and consumer lifestyles. In metropolitan centres such as Leeds, Manchester and Bristol which have benefited from the spoils of professional and business service decentralisation, entertainment and cultural provision for this youthful service class is plentiful. These young urban

service workers, knowledge professionals and cultural intermediaries—the denizens of the reimagined urban landscape (Lash and Urry, 1987; Featherstone, 1991)—are often heralded as the saviours of the city's new night-time and cultural economy. As well as accumulating economic capital, they also seek symbolic capital and status through consumption, and hence are implicated in a virtuous cycle of growth. Numerous studies have examined these new class factions in urban contexts (Bourdieu, 1984; Featherstone, 1991; Savage, 1995; Wynne and O'Connor, 1998) and have suggested that they have stimulated an explosion of cultural goods and services and have increased the range of young adult identities and lifestyles.

What is the relationship between these proclamations about urban change and young people? Some readings of the city at night point to the city centre as a 'stage' or 'edge', which can act as a backdrop for a diverse and varied collection of 'mix and match' youth styles, cultures and lifestyles (Redhead, 1997). In this sense, the city offers abundant resources for experimentation and play and opens up liminal and carnivalesque social spaces (Shields, 1991). Many such post-modern readings of the urban explore the metaphors of play and hedonism rather than work and order. As Featherstone observes

Postmodern cities have become centres of consumption, play and entertainment, saturated with signs and images to the extent that anything can be represented, thematized and made an object of interest (Featherstone, 1991, p. 101).

However enticing such readings can be, it is important not to accept uncritically post-modern analyses of either youth or cities. Behind the fragmented and individualised patterns of consumption and underneath the seemingly free-floating array of consumer goods and urban lifestyles, differential transitions, inequalities and exclusions continue to assert their influence in both social and spatial terms on young people (Toon, 2000; Ball *et al.*, 2000; MacDonald, 1997). In particular, the various urban reinventions, although suc-

cessful in terms of reanimating and transforming the physical aesthetics of city centres, do little to question who is guiding urban playscapes, to what ends and who, literally, has been invited to the 'party'.

The remainder of this paper unravels the concept of urban playscapes on two levels (see Table 1). First, they can be understood through an integrated 'circuit of culture' (du Gay *et al.*, 1997) comprising production, regulation and consumption. In this sense, while particular cultural meanings and practices are manufactured and circulated within nightlife venues by a combination of local, national and multinational operators, and regulated by various legislative frameworks and formal and informal mechanisms, it is also necessary to explore the lived consumer experience and the role young people play in shaping such spaces.

Secondly, city-centre urban playscapes can be understood as a mixture of mainstream, residual and alternative nightlife spaces. Mainstream spaces are the well-recognised commercially provided bars, pubs and nightclubs that exist in most large urban centres, characterised by ownership by large national corporate players who are increasingly using strategies such as branding and theming to target certain cash-rich groups such as professionals and high-level service-sector workers (the 'suits'), those working in lower-order service and semi-skilled jobs (the 'townies' or the 'trendies') and students (the 'sloanes'). These mainstream spaces also encompass the rising number of 'upgraded' nightlife spaces such as café and style bars which are being developed by operators to tap into the more lucrative and exclusive consumer markets. Residual spaces such as traditional pubs, ale houses and market taverns, on the other hand, which were a common feature of most city centres and which played a strong community role, have been left to decline or are disappearing due to the changing priorities of many nightlife operators. Finally, there are a range of smaller, more differentiated, usually independently run 'alternative' nightlife spaces which cater for more specific and specialist youth cul-

tures and tastes, and are primarily organised around identities such as ethnicity, sexuality, politics or certain styles related to music and dress (rock, goths, hip hop, etc.).

Table 1 maps out these two lines of inquiry and outlines the main features of the production, regulation and consumption of mainstream, residual and alternative nightlife spaces, each with their own geographical identity within the urban core. The following sections discuss this framework in the context of large provincial urban centres in the UK.

Producing Nightlife City Spaces

The ownership of nightlife spaces in any city represents several overlapping layers of history. Traditional producers of nightlife spaces in city centres were often local or regional brewers or entrepreneurs. Yet, over the course of the 20th century, a small number of large national brewers came to play a dominant role in the ownership of pubs. However, over the past decade, the monopoly of the national brewers has been broken up and ownership of nightlife spaces now comprises a hierarchy of larger national and multinationals entertainment PLCs, a historical legacy of national, regional and local brewers and local independent entrepreneurs. Our research has shown that, in general, in large provincial centres, national operators control approximately two-thirds of the pub market, while independent operators own between 5 per cent and 30 per cent, with the remainder comprised of regional operators. The night-club sector is less concentrated, but a small number of players control large sections of the market. For example, Luminar Leisure controls 10 per cent of all nightclubs in the UK, while First Leisure owns 3.2 per cent (*Mixmag*, November 2000).

In this recent period of intense change in ownership, nightlife spaces are constantly being reinvented and remodelled. In most city centres the traditional pub and 'cattle-market' nightclubs with their associated masculine drinking and sexual cultures

Table 1. Mapping out urban playscapes

Mode of analysis	Type of nightlife space		
	Mainstream	Residual	Alternative
Production	Corporate brand Profit-oriented Global/national	Community Need-oriented National/regional	Individual Experimental Local
Regulation	Entrepreneurial Formal (CCTV/bouncers, etc.)	Stigmatised Formal (police)	Cautious Informal (self-regulated)
Consumption	Profit-oriented Divided consumer–producer relations (brand/lifestyle) Sanitised/Up-market	Community-oriented Traditional consumer–producer relations (product) Down-market	Creative-oriented Interactive consumer–producer relations Alternative/resistant
Location	Dominate centre	Underdeveloped centre	Margins

Table 2. Change in pub ownership in the UK, 1989–2000

	1989	2000	
		January	July
<i>National brewers</i>			
Tenanted	22 000	2 724	1 000
Managed	10 000	7 336	2 300
Sub-total	32 000	10 060 ^a	3 300 ^b
<i>Regional brewers</i>			
Tenanted	9 000	5 939	5 939
Managed	3 000	3 498	3 498
Sub-total	12 000	9 437	9 437
<i>Independent operator</i>			
Single	16 000	18 098	18 098
Multisite pubcos	—	24 196	30 956
Sub-total	16 000	42 294	48 392
Total	60 000	61 791	61 791

^aBass, Scottish and Newcastle, Whitbread.

^bScottish and Newcastle only.

Source: The Publican Newspaper (2000).

(Gofton, 1983, 1990; Gofton and Douglas, 1985) were transformed in the 1980s and 1990s through new bar, pub, hybrid bar/clubs and café concepts, and themed and stylised environments aimed at an assumed set of new consumer demands, lifestyles and tastes. However, these changes are increasingly directed by the machinations and strategies of an ever-smaller number of large-scale corporate leisure and entertainment developers or what Hannigan (1998) calls the new ‘merchants of leisure’ who are promoting, as we outline below, a new mainstream mode of night-time entertainment production.

Underpinning this new mode of production in the UK is a concentration and shift in ownership of pubs, bars and clubs sparked by a number of regulatory changes. The 1989 Monopolies and Mergers Commission report and the subsequent Supply of Beer Orders Act attempted to break the high levels of vertical integration in the brewing and pub industry in which brewers owned everything from production to point of sale (see Mason and McNally, 1997; and Ali, 1998, for an overview). While the aim was to break the stranglehold of the brewers on pub owner-

ship and the supply of beer, the end result was to further concentrate beer production into a handful of multinational brewers and, as Table 2 shows, merely to shift the concentration of pub ownership from a small number of large national brewers to a small number of highly profitable and acquisitive multisite pub operators, or ‘pubcos’. By 2000, the top 10 UK pub operators owned nearly 50 per cent of all pubs. Only 3 of these were brewers with the largest being pubcos such as Nomura and Punch Taverns who own pub estates in excess of 4000 properties (*The Publican*, 2000).

These changes in ownership and control in nightlife spaces have signified a shift in the nature of nightlife entertainment production. The number of nightlife consumption spaces has been steadily increasing in British city centres and has been driven primarily by large, multisite, pubcos. A distinguishing feature is that these operators are generally expanding their operations through the development of brands and themes. Eight per cent of all pubs in the UK (4776 outlets) are now branded using one of 206 brands with the top 5 pub operators controlling 63 per cent of

branded pubs (*The Publican*, 2000). In city centres in the UK, the figure is generally much higher—for example, in central Leeds the figure is 31 per cent, while in Bristol it is 26 per cent.

Branding has become an imperative for most large PLCs as a way of minimising risk and maximising profits for shareholders (Klein, 2000). This forecloses options in terms of how individual tenants within large entertainment PLCs develop their properties. As one regional manager for a national pub chain told us

as far as the City of London [stock exchange] is concerned, half a dozen pubs in one city or another means nothing to them, whether they make you know good money or not it is not something. I mean the city loves brands. They love things that you can roll out and you can have 20/30/40.

It can be argued that brand development can be understood as part of wider rejection of an old Fordist model of night-time entertainment production associated with a mass consumption experience in the largely male- and ale-dominated traditional pub, in an attempt to respond to more specialist demands in a number of smaller niche markets. Brand development, then, is seen to respond to, yet also to create, new consumer identities in the night-time economy. For example, brands such as 'Firkin' and 'It's a Scream' target students; 'All Bar One', 'Bar 38' and 'Quo Vardis' target office workers; while 'Bar Oz', 'Walkabout Bar', 'OutBack Bar' and 'SpringBok' target sports groups.

It is widely held by the pub industry that changes in nightlife spaces have encouraged different types of licensing, new attitudes to dress codes and gender relations, especially more female-friendly environments, a diversity of uses mixing eating and drinking, a 'chameleon' approach by appealing to different audiences throughout the day and a broader range of alcohol preferences such as wine, spirits, bottled designer beers and alcopops (Difford, 2000). The most recent trends in the production of mainstream spaces are towards more expensive café and style-bar

concepts which are based upon seating, eating and drinking in a highly design-oriented environment. Such features have been welcomed by many regulators and are part of an attempt, as one senior police spokesperson told us, to help 'design out' problems of excessive drinking and violence.

What are the implications here for a diversity of nightlife provision? On one level, many aspects of these new nightlife spaces appear positive and choice has increased, especially through the decline of male-dominated drinking environments. However, beyond such proclamations of choice amongst these flexible brands and niche stylised nightlife environments is a largely standardised, sanitised and non-local consumption experience. One young reveller we spoke to was clear about the less sanguine aspects of such nightlife spaces

You know these super pubs, like I say it's just like going into McDonalds. You're like a sheep. You go in for a product, get it, and leave.

It has also been suggested that, despite changes in style and appearance, mainstream nightlife culture continues to be 'awash on a sea of alcohol' (Hobbs *et al.*, 2000), with heavy circuit drinking, vandalism and violence still commonplace. Furthermore, there is contrary evidence that such provision is really 'female-friendly', with Hollands' (1995) research reporting that up to two-thirds of women are sexually harassed on nights out.

There are other important issues, in terms of at whom mainstream nightlife spaces are targeted and for what reasons. In general, they are designed increasingly to meet the needs and desires of cash-rich groups of young people, especially service-sector professionals, graduates and students—those who are seen as spearheading the renaissance in urban living, working and consuming (Wynne and O'Connor, 1998). A more thorough assessment suggests that branded and stylised environments represent attempts by national and multinational capital interests to maximise profits for shareholders by target-

ing the most lucrative groups of young consumers. In this process, the nuances of local consumption practices are largely sidelined, less-well-off customers shedded, and spaces which cater for less-profitable alternative and residual nightlife increasingly closed down, pushed to the margins or simply bought out.

Many large operators suggest that they are merely responding to market demand as young people are clearly voting with their feet and visiting these nightlife spaces. In this sense, mainstream consumption venues remain popular for a variety of reasons such as familiarity, ease of access and enhanced expectations about quality of service, products and décor many of which have been imported from North America and/or continental Europe. They also appear to offer both excitement and safety—an atmosphere summarised by Hannigan (1998) as ‘riskless risk’. Moreover, globalisation and the increasing role of the media, branding and merchandising within cultural styles and preferences, have helped to normalise mainstream nightlife choices for large swathes of the youth population (Klein, 2000).

However, the ‘success’ of mainstream nightlife says more about lack of choice being offered in city centres by most nightlife operators. As one independent music promoter was keen to stress: “There’s a difference between producing what people want and dictating what people get”. Moreover, there are numerous difficulties involved in travelling to alternative nightlife spaces which are in general in fringe locations. In this sense, nightlife consumption options for young people are often curtailed as they are only able to choose between a range of seemingly different, yet increasingly similar, nightlife products. This is not to say that mainstream nightlife spaces are unproblematically adopted by consumers as many branded and themed concepts do fail or are not accepted. However, consumers of mainstream nightlife have few opportunities to influence the nature of the mainstream production process outside simply buying or not buying certain products.

Clearly, some groups of young people are

disenfranchised from these mainstream spaces on the basis of price, dress and style, and are left to leisure in their communities, social clubs or estates. Other groups of young people choose to frequent smaller-scale and independently run nightlife spaces as they promote a more alternative and experimental philosophy and lifestyle. As one long-standing independent bar-owner told us

We are one of the few places in the city centre that’s offering anything ... that isn’t a theme bar. And we’re not driven by fads. We’ve got our own rules. And it feels, at times, like running a different country. And everyone’s having a good time and it’s great. And that’s the buzz of it for us. I like what I do and I wouldn’t sell it for all the money in the world really. I’m far more interested that my children will grow up seeing me doing something that mattered than I am to take a big dollar off someone. Lifestyle over profit every time.

Yet, in the face of the popularity of mainstream venues, there are fewer opportunities for alternative, independently run, nightlife activities in city centres. One consumer at an alternative rock pub commented on their predicament

We don’t have that much money and so we can’t support a scene where we can have a choice. Because we can’t support a choice we don’t get a choice.

The growth of mainstream nightlife concepts is also eroding the traditional pub market and its clientèle (Everitt and Bowler, 1996). While traditional pubs remain a feature of British society, distinguished by their sober homely décor, traditional ales and older clientèle, those at the lower end of the scale such as ale houses and market taverns are quickly disappearing. These often-forgotten, ‘residual’, night-time spaces of the city centre, often owned by more conventional national or regional brewers, continue to act as local community pubs with a regular clientèle. However, such places are remnants of a bygone industrial and manufacturing age (Taylor *et al.*, 1996) and have little role to

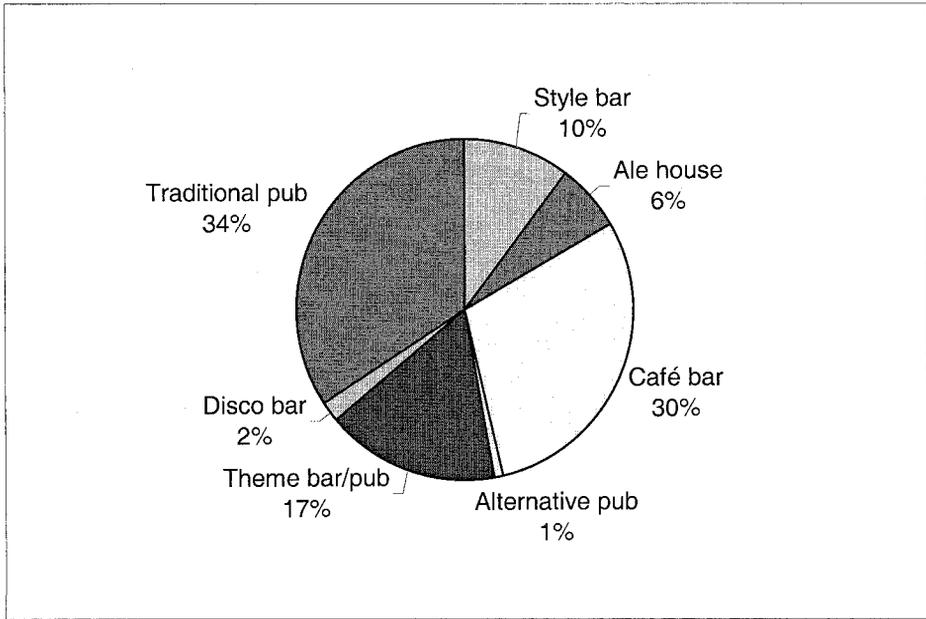


Figure 1. Pub styles in Bristol, 2000.

play in the entrepreneurial, post-industrial city and the branding strategies of today's multinational nightlife PLCs.

A brief glance at the range of types of venue in one English city, Bristol (Figure 1), confirms this shifting balance between mainstream corporatised, alternative and residual nightlife spaces. Nearly 60 per cent of bar/pub venues are either café bars, style bars or theme bar/pubs, aimed largely at more wealthy professional service-class workers, with alternative spaces making up only 1 per cent. While traditional pubs account for one-third of pubs and are the largest single category, it should be remembered that at one time they were by far the largest and virtually the only type of provision in cities. Older-style ale houses have been reduced to 6 per cent.

Mainstream nightlife, then, has a number of in-built advantages over alternative and residual nightlife modes of production. First, branding enables large operators to gain cost advantages through using rational techniques of production such as bulk-buying arrangements and cross-product 'synergies'. High

property values effectively curtail options for independent nightlife ventures, hence corporate operators tend to dominate attractive and well-utilised city-centre locations, while alternative and residual spaces are marginalised from the core. One long-standing operator of a city-centre pub commented on what they felt they were up against

With corporate enterprise taking over more and more you have the Wetherspoons chain you have Scottish and Newcastle, they have a game plan that they will follow which is domination of city centre sites.

Figure 2, based on Newcastle upon Tyne, highlights this concentration of large-scale national and regional/local operators in the city centre with independent operators pushed to the fringe.

Regulating Nightlife: Regulators and the Local State

Although the local state in the UK has long had an important part to play in the planning

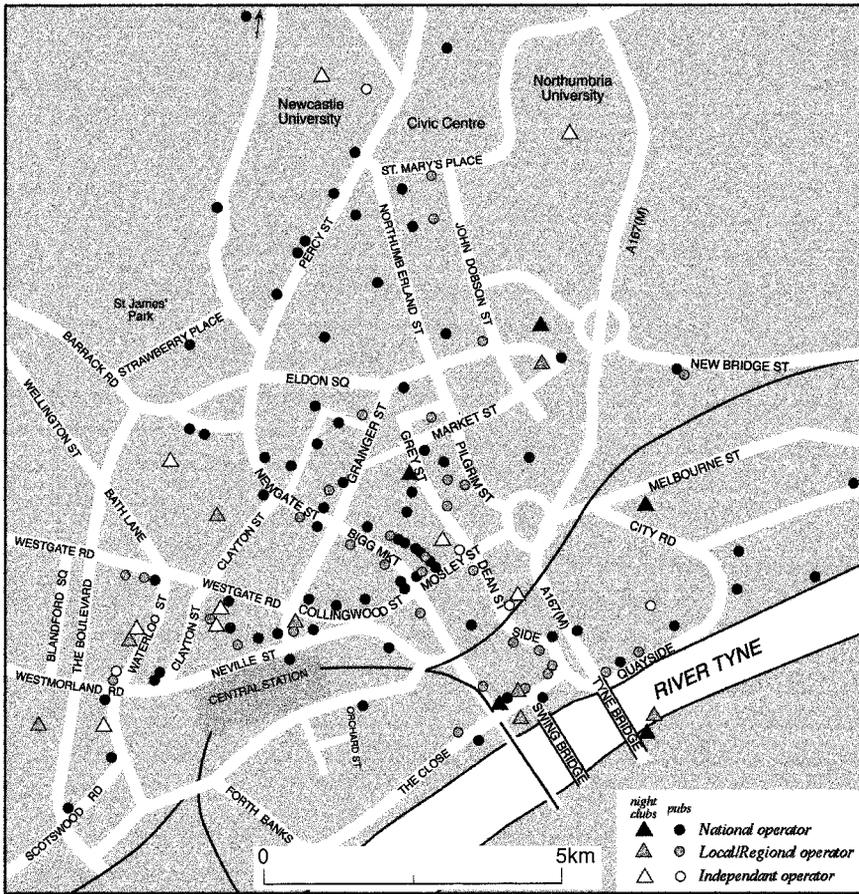


Figure 2. Distribution of pub ownership in Newcastle upon Tyne, 2000.

and development of cities, their changing role from ‘managing’ social welfare to aiding urban regeneration in partnership with private capital, has not gone unnoticed (Harvey, 1989b; Cochrane, 1987; Boddy and Fudge, 1984). This transformation is no less borne out in the licensed premise sector of the cultural economy, whereby many cities have sought to sell themselves partly on the quality of their nightlife provision. At the same time, concern over public disorder in many centres, expressed through references to ‘yob cities’, has become commonplace in the media, leading to discussions about shutting down ‘thug pubs’ and curtailing drink-fuelled violence and vandalism amongst young adults (Hobbs *et al.*, 2000).

Our approach incorporates these argu-

ments about whether the night-time economy is the saviour of provincial cities or their ultimate ruin, but also seeks to explain this contradiction. We argue that a new nightlife ‘regulatory regime’ is emerging—one where the balance of power between the various regulators is shifting from traditional sources such as magistrates and police, towards local authorities who are increasingly favouring inward investment by corporate pub chains. At the same time, the local state has been left to deal with some of the social problems and negative consequences of the development of mainstream nightlife, and has had to balance these with its desire to encourage the ‘entertainment city’. City centres, then, are increasingly being deregulated with respect to the cultural economy and aiding corporate in-

vestment in the licensed sector, while at the same time young adults are experiencing greater social and spatial control through formal mechanisms such as CCTV and informally through pricing and dress codes.

The changing role of the local state in relation to capital is essential to an understanding of how and why this new and apparently contradictory regulatory regime has come about. Regulation theory specifically alerts us to the changing role of capital and the local state in the movement from the Fordist to the post-Fordist city.³ As Harvey (1989b) argues, the function of the local state has changed from one of managing and planning to assisting the private sector and trying to attract multinational capital to locate within its boundaries. In conjunction with the transformation from mass production to one of 'flexible accumulation' (Harvey, 1989c), including a shift towards investment in lifestyle brands and the cultural economy (Klein, 2000), has been a rolling-back of the 'welfarist' state both fiscally and in terms of its powers of economic intervention and style of governance. In this context, cash-poor local authorities across the UK have increasingly been marginalised by quasi-private bodies like the UDCs (O'Toole, 1996), have been forced into public-private partnership schemes to stimulate economic development, or have become increasingly dependent on attracting mobile corporate capital investment. The local state in many provincial cities has also had to respond to a rapidly changing post-industrial populous, characterised by new work identities and consumption lifestyles (Savage, 1995; Wynne and O'Connor, 1998).

How might some of these general changes help to explain what is happening in and around the regulation of urban playscapes? While regulation theory has been useful in understanding urban transformation generally, it has been less helpful in coming to terms with fully comprehending regulatory regimes in relation to consumption and leisure. Lovatt (1995) critiques regulation theorists and insists that this approach requires more detailed accounts of the role of

the local state in aiding capital and how it has negotiated with nightlife consumers and other intermediaries. He also observes that the night-time economy has been perhaps the slowest sector undergoing such a transformation in regulatory terms and that the current regulation of the night-time economy continues to throw up a range of problems and, indeed, contradictions.

The fact that the night-time economy has been slow to respond to a changing mode of regulation, concerns its perceived peripheral status to the daytime economy, and a historical suspicion of it as a site of excess, vice and crime (Lovatt, 1995). Thus, not only has this sector been marginalised, it also has been subject to much legal, political and indeed moral regulation (Dorn, 1983). Under a Fordist mode of organisation, the night-time drinking economy was carefully regulated through the curtailment of opening hours to ensure that workers' leisure did not interfere with their productivity (Dorn, 1983; Gofton, 1990). The shift towards a more flexible 'entertainment economy' (Hannigan, 1998), and a '24-hour city' (Bianchini, 1995; Heath and Stickland, 1997) helped to fuel demand for deregulation, especially in terms of planning restrictions and licensing hours (see Home Office, 2000). As UK cities have reinvented themselves as places of consumption dependent on the development of a diverse and vibrant after-dark economy, they have found themselves eliding with property-owners, developers and corporate pubcos to create the conditions for inward investment, expansion and profit-maximisation in the nightlife sphere.

Within this context, the status of the night-time economy has risen to the extent that a new regime of accumulation can be detected, underpinned by a different set of relations between state, capital and consumers. In particular, there is a shift in power from traditional regulators (magistrates and police representatives) primarily concerned with social order and public safety, towards local authorities with their contrary imperative to expand the cultural and night-time economy.

Regulation is often viewed negatively by

capital interests because of the dominance of individualism, entrepreneurialism and the primacy of the global market-place in the contemporary period (see Philo and Miller, 2000). The trend has been for the local state increasingly to deregulate the conditions for inward investment in the night-time economy, especially for larger corporate operators, through the need to secure 'best value' for publically owned prime city-centre sites, and by pressuring for the relaxation of licensing hours and planning requirements. As an independent pub-owner observed about the council's approach

They just see that leisure-driven development is the easy way out for them because they go to Wetherspoons [an expanding pubco], they're not going to go bust, the big PLCs.

Despite concern from the police as to the impact of increased numbers of premises serving alcohol to young adults late on into the evening, a common view is that many of these new types of place will effectively be 'self-policed' through design, price and/or attracting a better 'class of people'

I think the slight emphasis on that is trying to move away from the loutish party image to a more up-market, shall we say, a better class of clientèle but probably a more mature clientèle who are perhaps not so irresponsible as some of the younger ones (a UK city centre manager).

However, there has been little evidence that mainstream nightlife has been able to divest itself completely from a range of associated problems like noise, drunkenness, vandalism, harassment and violence—despite attempts, to use a phrase from Zukin (1995), to create 'pacification through *cappuccino*'. While some pubcos are attempting to upgrade nightlife, more to raise profit margins than through a sense of civic responsibility, such attempts have largely failed to have much impact on levels of violence and anti-social drunken behaviour.

This preference for corporate inward investment should not imply that the local state

has lost interest in encouraging local independent operators in the cultural economy. Intuitively, independent venues are seen as unique, giving a distinctiveness feel or 'vibe' to a city's nightlife. The difficulty was often in various regulator's perceptions of 'one-man [*sic*] band' pubs and club venues as unknown quantities, and a lack of strategy for assisting them to develop and grow. In contrast, corporate operators were seen as a 'safe bet' in terms of credibility, financial situation and policing methods such as mandatory use of door-staff. Ironically, it is often the case that alternative venues use self-regulation through their customers' identification with the ethos of the premises, with few using door-staff or requiring police presence. In turn, a number of independent operators were critical of local authorities as they were unhelpful and unsupportive of their needs, especially in terms of recognising their creativity, and traditional regulators such as magistrates and police for being out-of-touch 'geriatrics' and 'dinosaurs' when it came to understanding their lack of need for regulation or their contribution to a more diverse nightlife culture. One independent operator expressed how out of touch he felt one police licensing officer was by commenting

He's running a major European city and he doesn't know the difference between techno and salsa.

The moral history surrounding urban drinking also partially explains the continuation of what we might call 'residual' regulatory views of the night-time economy. While these views of danger and social disorder are often used in general discussions of the mainstream night-time economy, they are also extended to 'rough' pubs in city centres—usually located around historic market areas—inhabited by what has been described as the urban 'underclass' (for a critique, see Campbell, 1993). Overall, these 'dens of iniquity', as they are often referred to, are viewed as sites of criminality, violence and debauchery, worthy only of containment or surveillance, or are seen as places that are

better ignored in current discourses about urban regeneration. A police spokesperson had this to say about these types of licensed place

Very difficult some of them. I mean they are in poor areas ... They have still got to be policed ... it is a place where if you go through the day you might get offered cheap bloody perfume or something that has been nicked from one of the shops, it is where shoplifters tend to get rid of their gear.

While these types of premises continue to exist, albeit in small numbers in most cities, and provide a leisure outlet for people increasingly not provided for in the corporate city centre, the assumption is that they will be swept away under the tide of the developing entertainment city.

So, despite the self-congratulation brought on by the steady expansion and economic success of the night-time economy, the current debate about the regulation of many mainstream licensed premises continues to be influenced by concerns around drunken, violent, marauding youth.⁴ Recent representations of UK cities emerging from the media, police, government and in some cases academia (see Hobbs *et al.*, 2000) paint a picture of increasing lawlessness of city centres which are held to ransom by 'yob culture' every weekend evening.⁵ Proposed legislation to introduce new powers instantly to shut down pubs for 48 hours and proposals for on-the-spot fines for rowdy behaviour are waging a war on many consumers of night-life city spaces. As the chairman of the Police Federation commented: "Lots of our towns and cities during certain times are pretty tough" (*The Guardian*, 3 July 2000).

Thus, there has been a concomitant increase in formal regulatory mechanisms to maintain social order, at precisely the same time as councils are attempting to encourage more provision and later opening hours in mainstream provision. Interestingly, there has been a blurring between private security methods and publically provided and co-ordinated programmes such as door regis-

tration schemes, city radio-nets and Pub-Watch schemes. Furthermore, a recent survey of the practices of town centre managers (TCM) in the UK argues that they are increasingly drawing on strategies associated with regulating the private sphere of the 'shopping mall' (Reeve, 1996), with some cities going part-way down a quasi-privatised route of urban management. Many city councils have adopted CCTV cameras, offering reassurance to users of the city centre, especially at night, but also resulting in continual surveillance in the streets. The move towards 'security-obsessed urbanism' (Davis, 1992) is reinforced by a new political culture in which attempts are made to separate out whole areas of city centres from the realities of urban life, with streets sanitised of evidence of inequality, poverty and homelessness.

Despite the forthcoming liberalisation of the UK's liquor licensing laws to promote later European-style drinking (Home Office, 2000), there is little evidence to suggest that cities overall will become less-regulated places for young adults. In fact, the emerging mode of regulation associated with the corporate entertainment city points to intensified social and spatial control of leisure spaces via formal mechanisms such as increased surveillance and door security staff, restrictive by-laws and design of the built environment (Christopherson, 1994; Soja, 2000), in conjunction with attempts literally to 'sanitise through style'.

Young Adults' Consumption of Urban Nightlife

We have already hinted at ways in which emerging production and regulation regimes contour young adults' consumption of the night-time economy, especially through branding nightlife experiences and more invasive regulatory practices. Furthermore, we have noted that there are recognised divisions within the youth-cohort and, as a result, nightlife provision is increasingly segmented between different populations. Yet it is important to recognise that consumption is also

a symbolically meaningful and active relationship, producing experiences and identities (Slater, 1997, pp. 4–5; Bobcock, 1993). Young adults, then, should be viewed as both recipients of an economically produced and regulated nightlife activity, and active participants in this cultural realm.

A range of evidence suggests that young people play a distinctive role in the consumption sphere (Willis, 1990; Miles, 2000), and in nightlife culture in particular (Intel, 1998, 2000; Malbon, 1999). Stewart (1990) lists going out/drinking as the third-most-important spending priority amongst 16–24 year-olds, and young adults are more likely to frequent pubs and much more likely to attend night-clubs than the general population (Intel, 2000, 1998). The popular perception of city centres being dominated by young people in the evening has some basis. Additionally, the development of a prolonged post-adolescent phase economically and domestically, increased participation in student and post-student lifestyles, and an explosion of popular cultural products aimed primarily at youth, all have an impact on generational consumption patterns. One suggestion has been that identities for many young people may be as likely to develop around the consumption of commodities, experiences and lifestyles, as through engaging in economic production itself (Miles, 2000; Wilkinson, 1995; Willis, 1990). This notion, combined with the fact that night-life cultures are changing so quickly and frequently, has led to the idea that there is a highly mixed set of youth lifestyles developing in this realm (Miles, 2000; Redhead, 1997).

Youth cultural analysis over the past 10 years, then, has been inspired by this increased emphasis on the fragmentation of identity, exemplified by a somewhat diverse set of writings around ‘club cultures’ (Redhead, 1993, 1997; McRobbie, 1993; Thornton, 1995; Malbon, 1999), youth lifestyles (Miles, 2000) and ‘neo-tribes’ (Bennett, 2000). Club cultures have been described as representing loose, globally based youth formations grounded in the media/market niches of contemporary dance music (Redhead,

1993, 1997), while some studies on youth and consumption use lifestyle as an organising concept (Miles, 2000). Others prefer to utilise the term ‘neo-tribe’, to express the rather less formal attachment of young people to an eclectic mixture of dance styles, venues and musical genres (Bennett, 2000; Malbon, 1999).

However, rather than a free-floating ‘pick and mix’ story of youth consumption in the night-time economy, what is evident from our analyses is that increasing corporate activity and tighter regulatory regimes provide a grounded context for understanding the formation of segmented socio-spatial nightlife consumption groupings and assessing degrees of agency and choice.

Amongst these segmented consumption groups, what we have previously labelled ‘mainstream’ stands out as the dominant mode of young-adult consumption of urban nightlife culture. Such an experience is characterised by smart attire, commercial chart music, circuit drinking, pleasure-seeking and hedonistic behaviour, framed within largely corporately owned bars/pubs and night-clubs. Experiences of the mainstream, while being largely circumscribed by branding, profit-making and the commercial *status quo*, are none-the-less utilised creatively by young adults—especially to create a ‘civic’ identity of belonging or community (Hollands, 1995). As one young reveller commented about his group night-out on the town

It’s great to be in one of those groups. It feels really powerful in a horrible sort of way ... you are accepted you know, it sounds you know really spooky, but it’s like you own the city you know ... and it’s like you’ve joined it at last, you’ve joined the real world you know.

For this young person, consumption is used as a form of acceptance into the ‘real world’—albeit one of corporate consumption.

Within this dominant mainstream experience, there are a number of differentiated and overlapping spaces which appeal to the aspirations and styles of various cash-rich groups

highlighted earlier such as the yuppies, townies, trendies and students. For example, student life leaves a visible mark on mainstream nightlife with mid-week evenings often designated as 'students' night' by scores of competing pubs and clubs to avoid clashes with local young people. Moreover, significant parts of mainstream nightlife consumption are being upgraded with many young people attracted to more mixed-use style and café-type bars, which have attempted to create a more up-market feel with polished floors, minimalist and heavily stylised décor and a greater selection of designer drinks. Many of these new venues are perceived and experienced by young adults as indeed more cosmopolitan. As one of our interviewees exclaimed in relation to them, "There's just a better class of people"; while another young woman summed up the link between her identity and the type of place she frequented with the simple comment: "I'm a cocktail person".

The advent of dance music and club culture over the past 10 years has contributed to this upgrading of mainstream consumption environments. Traditional mainstream nightclubs, with their rather seedy images of violence, drunkenness, chart music and reputations as 'cattle-markets', face competition from smaller, safer, niche-oriented clubs playing specialist music. Further, hybrid club-bars have become a common feature of the upgraded mainstream which act as feeder bars to clubs or offer dance music themselves without charging high entrance fees and tap into consumer desire for a more relaxed and quieter atmosphere.

It is not difficult to see what is so attractive about this newly developing gentrified strand of the mainstream. Clearly, part of its success has been in catering for the increasing numbers of young professionals and service employees in many UK cities. These more exclusive places act to separate them out from the more traditional mainstream and provide an atmosphere for networking, socialising and meeting other social climbers. They also appeal to the wealthier elements of the student population and an increasingly

older, more mature and upwardly mobile section of local working-class populations, who view such places as sites to express their perceived mobility, status and maturity. Part of the explanation for differentiation here and the trend towards a more 'exclusive' mainstream can be found in theorisations about 'sub-cultural capital' and an emphasis on the importance of 'peer distinction' and hierarchy within nightlife youth cultures (Thornton, 1995). The idea that these cultures are essentially 'taste cultures' (Bourdieu, 1984)—in this case, the acquisition of sub-cultural knowledge—partly explains the division between mainstream and alternative forms, as well as how more specific hierarchies of taste, style and cultures evolve (Thornton, 1995).

Some consumers were less convinced as to whether this stylised mainstream represented a real step up the social mobility ladder. One reveller suggested that many of the new service employees were just "working-class kids in suits and mobile phones". Social divisions of wealth and occupational distinction emanating from outside the leisure sphere, then, continue to assert their influence in urban playscapes. Moreover, for many, much of the style revolution in premises meant all style and no substance. As one of our interviewees exclaimed

People want to belong to that élite crowd, but what people do not realise is that it is actually McDonalds with a marble bar'.

In this context, the mainstream mode of nightlife is based upon a separation between consumers and producers in which control over innovation, design, music, dress and pricing policy is taken out of the locality or the particular venue. Characteristics of the locale and local consumer-base, then, become subsumed within the non-local branded image of the venue and its products.

In light of this dominance of the mainstream and, more specifically the growth of up-market styles bars, more residual forms of night-life consumption in the city centre have diminished rapidly. Consumers of more tra-

ditional community-based pubs and ale-houses, hark back to an earlier era, consuming standardised products rather than lifestyle brands, and are often stereotyped as petty criminals, hardened drinkers or 'older folks'. These kinds of consumer exist precariously alongside the newly emerging glitzy style bar and café society, where they are increasingly unwelcome.

Finally, independently run, alternative spaces, in the form of single-site music, club and bar venues often with a unique style/design content, often form the basis of more localised nightlife production-consumption clusters. The British dance music industry (see Hesmondhalgh, 1998) and its associated infrastructure in independent clothes and record shops are a good example of this model. Such places exist to meet the needs of particular identity-groups based around, for example, certain genres of music and/or clothing (Bennett, 2000), ethnicity, politics or sexual identity (Whittle, 1994). Because of their less-corporate status, such places are typically found on the margins of city centres. Consumption here is usually related to a conscious identity, style or lifestyle, rather than a passing consumer fancy. Styles can be quite specific and related to identifiable sub-cultures and are generally more 'casual' in relation to the formal regulation of dress in the mainstream sphere. Consumption can also be driven through musical appreciation (sometimes live music, or specialist DJs), being with like-minded people and can combine arts, culture and performance.

The important point is that within such sites there is a blurring of the division between producers and consumers, through the exchange of music, ideas, business deals and networks of trust and reciprocity. As one of our interviewees stressed generally about these kinds of people and places

Creative pubs attract creative people. You can fairly much guarantee yourself you are sitting in any one of those bars and you can guarantee they are a DJ, a performer, an artist, a poet.

Examples of more underground alternative provision include illegal warehouse or house parties or squats, where the link between production and consumption is literally indistinguishable (Chatterton, forthcoming). It is here perhaps that more fleeting and loose forms of tribal association as suggested by Maffesoli (1995) might be identified.

However, cultural identity in the guise of lifestyles or 'neo-tribes' does not negate the idea that social and spatial divisions, inequalities and hierarchies continue to exist within urban youth populations (Toon, 2000; Ball *et al.*, 2000; Hollands, 1995). Even within dance culture, it is the case that internal cultural diversification in the industry is as much about ensuring continued profitability, than it is about responding to cultural 'agency' (Hesmondhalgh, 1998). City-centre nightlife consumption cultures, then, remain segmented around a dominant mainstream, and diminishing opportunities for alternative and residual experiences.

Conclusions: Variations and Visions of Urban Playscapes

What we have pointed towards in this paper is the dominance of a mainstream mode of production, regulation and consumption in the night-time licensed economy, based upon partnerships between developers, local political élites and a smaller number of large entertainment corporations. In this mainstream, the consumer experience is increasingly framed by the brand and characterised by sameness and sanitisation (Hannigan, 1998). In contrast, in the alternative sphere, there is evidence of a greater role for the consumer in the production and regulation process.

So, while the local state is keen to expand and cosmopolitanise nightlife behaviour, many corporate operators continue to focus upon profit maximisation through volume beer sales which undermine attempts to create more tolerant and pluralistic nightlife spaces and continue to exacerbate problems of social disorder. Our analysis suggests that the solution to these problems does not rest

with the development of large corporate-owned licensed themed venues, but more local coalitions of producers/consumers/cultural intermediaries and residents associations. In parts of cities such as Leeds, Brighton, Dublin and Manchester, it has been independent operators who have pioneered new and diverse activities for city centres, making them interesting, safe and attractive places. While 'upgrading' the mainstream may eventually begin to sanitise and regulate nightlife behaviour through pricing-out 'problem' consumers, it will do so only at the expense of social exclusion. In this regard, a wealth of lessons can be drawn from continental Europe (Landry, 2000), one characteristic of which is a greater diversity of provision and more local and family-based patterns of ownership in urban entertainment infrastructures.

Alongside the celebrated markers of an urban cultural renaissance, what is evident is that "inherent in the new urbanisation process has been an intensification of socio-economic inequalities" (Soja, 2000, p. 265). The notion of the 'dual' or 'two-speed' city which highlights the persistence of polarisations in terms of land use, labour and housing markets (Sassen, 1994), we would argue also extends to leisure and entertainment opportunities. The dominant audiences for nightlife spaces are mainstream, higher-spending, consumption groups such as young professionals, aspiring 'townies' and students. Other groups of young people are marginalised within the current range of nightlife such as 'alternative' cultures, teenagers 'hanging out' (Toon, 2000) or those with few resources (MacDonald, 1997). And while some marginal groups have been incorporated into the corporate structures of the night-time economy, through 'gay villages' and provision for ethnic groups such as Birmingham's Bollywood cinema, or specialist music nights such as *banghra* or jungle and drum and bass, this 'corporatisation of difference' does little to encourage real intermingling and/or more 'authentic' consumption environments. Similarly, the argument that modern urban playscapes are more female-friendly, gener-

ally means that they are targeting women as potential consumers, rather than attempting to transform traditional gender relations.

This dominant relationship between production, regulation and consumption is modified in a number of ways by the specificities of locality (see Chatterton and Hollands, forthcoming). For example, cities such as Manchester, Bristol (Griffiths *et al.*, 1999), Glasgow (Boyle and Hughes, 1991) and Leeds (Haughton and Williams, 1996) have transformed their urban cores into busy business and cultural destinations. Such transformations have been aided by large population catchments, their role as regional employment centres especially in terms of a business service 'complex', the established cosmopolitan nature of their centres, strategic leadership shown by the local state and the significant growth in service-sector professionals which has fuelled demand for entertainment and cultural goods and services.⁶ The recent 'good times' for the centres of these select provincial cities, have stimulated the growth of corporate and branded playscapes based around a range of up-market bars, clubs and restaurants and, in some cases, have also created opportunities for the establishment and growth of a diverse independent sector. On the downside, however, much nightlife in such 'successful' cities can often act to exclude certain types of young people as they have become expensive, leaving the urban fabric at night increasingly socio-spatially divided with little interaction between night-life groupings in discrete geographical settings.

In contrast, cities still caught in the post-industrial transition, such as Newcastle and, to a certain extent, Liverpool and Sheffield, contain some of the UK's most deprived urban populations and continue to face severe problems, both symbolically and materially, in reinventing themselves from their industrial past (Robinson, 1994; Barnard, 1999). Newcastle, in particular, suffers from a small population catchment and a much less varied—though no less boisterous and vibrant—nightlife. Newcastle's nightlife retains a strong connection with its working

and industrial heritage based around traditional gendered and working roles and a heterosexual mono-culture (Hollands, 1997) which, while having negative consequences, ironically has shielded it somewhat against rampant corporatisation until relatively recently.

In spite of these differences between places, our analysis suggests that there is a certain air of inevitability in the way in which urban nightlife will unfold with both the local state and local people resigning themselves to the activities of national and multinational capital interests. However, there are a number of different ways forward for urban playscapes, each of which has different policy implications for nightlife entrepreneurs, the local state and consumers.

With regard to potential scenarios, cities can simply continue to accommodate and embrace the global corporate world, hoping that they can become its 'flavour of the month'. This very much appears to be the current trend. Thus, smaller, locally owned nightlife spaces will continue to be squeezed and marginalised and many cities will experience what Harvey (1989b) refers to as 'serial reproduction', losing their uniqueness and distinctive flavour. Similarly, when they fall out of favour and corporate capital moves elsewhere, there will be little local infrastructure to build on. Such corporate city nightlife will continue to experience numerous social problems associated with excessive drinking and will remain reliant on surveillance technology.

Balancing the global, the national and the local is probably a more likely scenario. This would involve the local state working together with all interested parties in the night-time economy, and not allowing sectional interests and the profit motive solely to influence the type of nightlife growth. In such a context, there is a need for the local state to play a stronger role in the development of the night-time economy—especially to strike a balance between commercial and local need, and the interests of corporate capital and users of the city, whoever they may be. The views of nightlife consumers themselves are rarely

heard (see Hollands, 1995, for an exception) and there are often large 'experiential gaps' between those who consume nightlife and those who regulate it. The concept of 'public culture'—the "process of negotiating images [of a city] that are accepted by a large number of people" (Zukin, 1995, p. 10)—is instructive here. Some UK cities claim to be doing this, yet, as local authorities seek even greater returns on property, and only large commercial developers have the resources to put derelict buildings back into use, the privatisation and corporatisation of city centres carries on apace (Wainwright, 2000).

Alternatively, city councils could begin actively to promote local nightlife cultures, in the same way that the 'slow food' movement in Italy has sought to do with cuisine (Carroll, 2000). To encourage this model, mechanisms would need to be established to favour certain types of nightlife activity and to encourage opportunities for local entrepreneurs. Moreover, it would point to a significant change in cultural values and philosophies based around a more inclusive urban realm, encouraging the intermingling of different age-groups and mixed night-time activities in which alcohol consumption, on its own, played a much smaller role. The objectives of this approach would be to stimulate diversity, creativity and more democratic relations between producers, regulators and consumers—in effect, involving young adults much more in the active production and regulation, rather than just consumption, of urban nightlife.

Notes

1. This paper stems from work being undertaken as part of an ESRC award entitled 'Youth cultures, identities and the consumption of night-life city spaces in English provincial cities' (award no. R000238288).
2. Our use of the term 'night-time urban playscapes' encompasses young people's activities in licensed premises such as bars, pubs, night-clubs and music venues. We recognise that other forms of activity such as cinema, theatre, restaurants, cafés and sporting events also combine to make up these urban playscapes (see Hannigan, 1998), but these are not the focus of our study as they

- are not primarily the preserve of young people in cities at night. Young adults are 20 per cent more likely to visit pubs and 10 times more likely to frequent clubs than the general population (Mintel, 1998, 2000); hence our assertion that night-time spaces are primarily youth spaces. Our focus on the term playscapes is also used to refer to issues raised by Zukin (1992) in terms of the aestheticisation and commodification of urban landscapes, but also to the increased use of the city as a place of consumption, play and hedonism (Featherstone, 1991).
3. Sociologically, the concept of regulation is closely linked to Marxist-inspired theories and the 'Regulation School' which has been particularly concerned with changing regimes of accumulation and modes of regulation in the transition from Fordist to post-Fordist economies. In essence, this school of thought is interested in how capitalism historically requires different forms of intervention and regulation in order both to legitimise itself, and also to function effectively in furthering capital accumulation. In order to achieve this, each way of producing (or 'regime of accumulation'), requires intervention in the form of laws, rules and the development of particular types of consumption pattern to match and stabilise production (Harvey, 1989c).
 4. There is a long history of 'moral panics' surrounding unruly urban youth (Pearson, 1983) and one should use some caution in judging the accuracy of such claims (see Hollands, 2000).
 5. See: 'Blair to propose 48 hour shutdown for rowdy pubs in Summit on lawlessness' (*The Guardian*, 3 July 2000), 'Police win powers to shut down thug bars' (*The Observer*, 2 July 2000), 'Colonising the night', (*The Guardian*, 12 September 2000) and 'Straw to target drink-related crime', (*The Guardian*, 18 July 2000).
 6. Leeds is a stark example of such trends. During 1981–96, job growth in Leeds was higher than in any other city in the UK. Over 75 per cent of employment is now in the service sector, with the largest employment sector being financial and related business services employing 69 000 or 19 per cent of the workforce (*Leeds Economic Handbook*, 1998).
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