

# **Youth culture and nightlife in Bristol**

**A report by:**

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*In 1982 there were pubs and a smattering of (God help us) cocktail bars. The middle-aged middle classes drank in wine bars. By 1992 there were theme pubs and theme bars, many of them dumping their old traditional names in favour of 'humorous' names like The Slug and Lettuce, The Spaceman and Chips or the Pestilence and Sausages (actually we've made the last two up). In 2001 we have a fair few pubs left, but the big news is bars, bright, shiny chic places which are designed to appeal to women rather more than blokes with swelling guts. In 1982 they shut in the afternoons and at 11pm weekdays and 10.30pm Sundays. In 2001 most drinking places open all day and many late into the night as well. In 1982 we had Whiteladies Road and in 2001 we have The Strip*

(Eugene Byrne, *Venue Magazine* July, 2001 p23).

*Bristol has suddenly become this cosmopolitan Paris of the South West. That is the aspiration of the council anyhow. For years it was a very boring provincial city to live in and that's why the music that's come out of it is so exciting. Cos it's the product of people doing it for themselves. That's a real punk-rock ethic.*

(Ian, music goer, Bristol).

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## Introduction

This document is based upon research undertaken as part of an Economic and Social Research Council funded research project looking at night life and youth culture in three English cities – Newcastle, Leeds and Bristol. This project examines change in two, interconnected, areas. Firstly, we are concerned with the changing identities and experiences of young people. In particular, ‘growing up’ in many Western countries has been significantly extended due to dissatisfaction or exclusion from the labour market, increased participation rates in further and higher education, lower marriage and greater dependency on the family household. This extended adolescence has fuelled an array of youthful consumption lifestyles and identities beyond those traditionally identified as ‘youth’.

Secondly, we are concerned with the dramatic and forceful transformations of cities from images of decay, crime and dereliction in the 1970s and 1980s, to more vibrant, yet still problematic, places to live, work and be entertained into the twenty first century. A distinctive part of this ‘return to the centre’ involves the promotion of the ‘cultural economy’, in which city centres have become leisure and entertainment hubs. Within this, it is now accepted that night-life activity (defined here as licensed premises – pubs, bars, clubs, music venues) is an important economic sector in its own right. Our concerns, then, are changes in city centre nightlife activity and the way in which young people shape their identity within such spaces.

This research takes a critical look at several issues. First, while one might initially be quick to applaud the development of urban nightlife, especially as a tool for regeneration, crucial elements concerning cities and young people are being overlooked in the hubbub of self-congratulation and civic boosterism. In particular, promoters of urban nightlife often say very little about who owns the night-life economy and that corporate ‘merchants of leisure’ are dominating and transforming city centre nightlife at the expense of smaller, local independent operators. This has a number of implications for individuality, identity, creativity and locally embedded economic development. Second, most of Britain’s core cities are pursuing a rather formulaic, ‘entertainment’ led approach to developing the night-time economy, which begs the questions for whom and in whose interests?

While many of our cities show elements of both the continental European model of more inclusive and diverse nightlife activity and the more corporate-led and divisive model prevalent in many US cities, current trends suggest that the latter model is increasingly widespread in UK city centres as they become ghettos for high value added entertainment and leisure activities

with alternative, smaller scale and locally embedded activities undermined or pushed to the fringe. National corporate operators, then are playing a disproportionate role in shaping nightlife activity, especially through the leverage they can apply on cash strapped urban authorities.

Our work is structured around three main sections to develop an understanding of young people's use of nightlife spaces in Bristol. First, we look at the **production** of nightlife through changes within the nightlife sector such as mergers, concentration, branding, and theming and the different roles and strategies of national, regional/local and independent nightlife operators. Second, we examine the **regulation** and planning of nightlife spaces through issues of economic development policing, licensing laws and safety. Finally, we examine the **consumption** of nightlife by exploring young adults' own 'lived experience' of Bristol. The final section highlights some key issues which arise from our study.

This document is based upon fieldwork undertaken in Bristol between July 2000 and July 2001, which comprised focus groups with consumers of nightlife and one to one interviews with venues/owners/managers, promoters and DJs, police, security firms, licensing magistrates, authority representatives and various other people involved in the nightlife industry. We hope that the research has adequately captured some of the 'voices' and experiences of all the different participants in the night-time economy, and that this document can begin the process of creating a dialogue and debate about the future direction of this important element of urban life.

A website with information about the wider project is located at: [www.ncl.ac.uk/youthnightlife](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/youthnightlife). Further copies of this report, a shorter 10 page summary and associated figures and maps can be downloaded from there.

## Chapter 1. Understanding Bristol

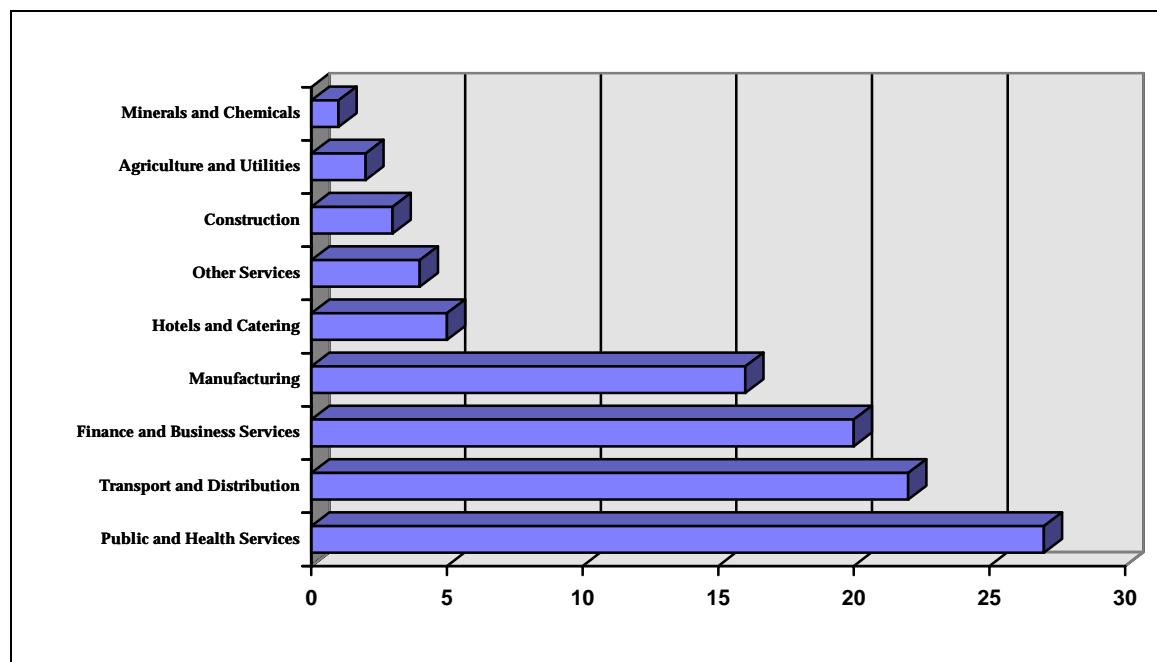
### ***Sleepy City or Nightlife Mecca***

Bristol, the largest city in the South-West resting on the M4 corridor, has played a distinctive role in Britain's economy. With its varied history, magnificent architecture and prosperous maritime past, Bristol still remains an affluent city and a desirable place to live. Today, Bristol is a large commercial centre, home to many major finance companies and a key focus for media industries. It is a very popular University city and a desirable destination for business relocation. But as Sudjic (2000) suggests it is also; "a city with recent memories of its own race riots, inner-city slums, and cider-soaked estates". An image far removed from the headlines of a hip trendy 24hr nightlife scene 'city that never sleeps'.

Like most cities around Britain it has been affected by de-industrialisation and has embarked upon a process of re-inventing itself in recent years. In the early 1980s Bristol was considered one of the countries 'sunbelt cities' mainly based on the presence of buoyant industrial sectors such as defence and financial services and good quality of life (*Boddy et al 1986; Griffith 1995*). However in the early 1990s, Bristol suffered because of the peace dividend and the slump in the office market.

Weathering this storm however, it seems that in recent years Bristol has seen many major companies grow from strength to strength under the strong economic climate in the region. Firstly, the Aerospace industry gives both historic and contemporary importance to the region. In 1996 Aerospace was employing one in five working Bristolians in 600 companies throughout the region such as Rolls Royce, British Aerospace and Westland (Newsco:South-West:1996). Secondly, the growth in Electronics and Telecommunications has meant that Britain's own Silicon valley exists in the region through firms like Hewlett Packard, Division and Thompson CSF. Thirdly, the Bristol area has strengths in Financial Services which employs over 55 000 people. The following chart highlights the main areas of employment in the local economy:

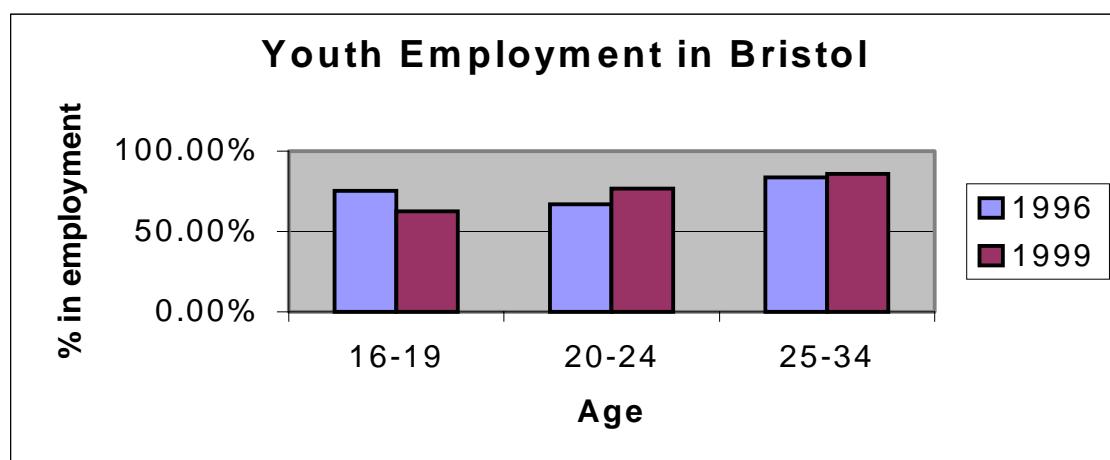
**Figure 1.1: Employment by Sector in the Old Avon County**



Source: Western Development Partnership, 1996.

Bristol's extended period of economic boom has meant it has one of the lowest unemployment levels in the country and youth employment has remained fairly high. But it has been recognised that skills shortages are common within many job sectors. There has been a push for young people to move into further and higher education to combat this, which may explain the fall in employment within 16-19 age category in the table below.

**Figure 1.2: Youth Employment in Bristol 1996 - 1999**



Source: Labour Force Survey 1996 & 1999.

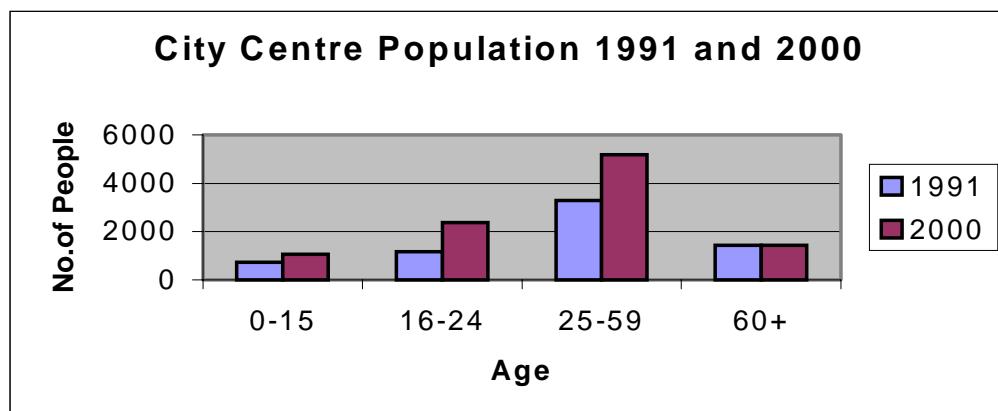
With a population of over 400,000 Bristol is becoming an increasingly popular place to live. Within the council's city centre strategy for 2000, there is an objective to encourage the

development of 1,250 new homes in brownland sites, around the city centre and through the conversion or re-development of existing buildings, hoping to attract yet more young professionals and students into the city centre. We can see in Table 1.3 the increase of people living in the city centre during the last 10 years, especially among 25-59 year olds. The city centre leisure industry and population have continued to grow side by side, with a significant rise in luxury waterfront accommodation. As a local councillor commented:

*'I think a lot of people move into the city centre for all sorts of reasons, one is lifestyle decisions about not wanting to travel to work, that people like waterfront properties and there will carry on being a big demand for those'.*

The challenge for the next few years is how the city will manage and cope with the tensions which will emerge between residential and entertainment uses and users in the heart of the city.

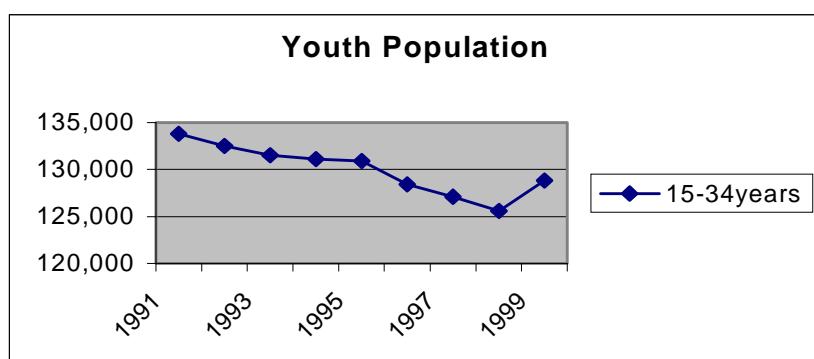
**Figure 1.3: Changing City Centre Population**



Source: 1991 Census and Strategic & City Wide Policy based on Avon Health Authority GP registrations.

It is interesting to note in the figure below that amongst the 15-34 year old cohort the population has dropped slightly in the past ten years.

**Figure 1.4: Youth Population in Bristol 1991 - 1999**



Source: Population Estimates Unit, ONS: Crown Copyright 2000

## **Bristol's cultural and entertainment infrastructure**

In common with many other British cities, the legacy of cultural provision in Bristol has its origins in arts patronage of the Victorian era. This provision was mainly driven by a belief in the civilising power of high art and acted as an emblem for the success of the local bourgeoisie (Bassett:1993). In this period the foundations of a cultural infrastructure were established in the city through venues such as The Royal West of England Academy, The Victoria Rooms, The City Museum and Art Gallery and subsequently, the Bristol Old Vic and the Colston Hall. However, there was very little in the way of an emergence of a distinctive local cultural strategy in Bristol for most of the twentieth century (Bassett:1993:1780).

By the 1980s, then, in contrast to other British cities, Bristol had neglected the development of a cultural strategy. This absence stemmed from three distinctive features of the city: the relative strength of the Bristol economy throughout much of the post-war era and the lack of need for culture-led growth; a weakness of urban interests because of the absence of metropolitan status for Avon; and a local leadership based upon Protestant non-conformism rather than innovation (Griffiths:1995:258).

However, by the 1990s Bristol followed many other British cities by developing an innovative cultural strategy. The economic downturn of the late 1980s affected the city's traditional industrial base and forced moves to seek alternative growth areas. Increasing pressure was mounting from a progressively better organised arts community; and the emergence of innovative partnership groups.

The 1990s saw the emergence of a key organisation - the Bristol Cultural Development Partnership (BCDP) - a partnership between South West Arts, Bristol City Council and Chambers of Commerce, whose main objective was 'to provide leadership on cultural activity in the city' (BCDP:1994:1). The City Council aspirations 'for the City of Bristol to realise its full potential as a prosperous vibrant regional capital' (Bristol Arts Strategy:1995:3) was incorporated with the BCDPs objective "to use cultural activity to raise Bristol's profile regionally, nationally and internationally"(BCDP:1994:1)

Such ambitions are being achieved through the development of flagship public-private partnership projects such as Millennium Square and @Bristol which aim to increase the city's national and international reputation. Recent partnership-based cultural strategies such as these are illustrative of new forms of urban governance (Bassett:1996) based around a more entrepreneurial local state, aggressive place marketing and a greater role for the private city.

Although such a model has been successful in terms of securing outside investment and lottery money there are continuing disagreements over many aspects of future development, especially in the Harbourside area. Place promotion, then, has become a key theme for the city's cultural strategy and tourism now plays a significant role in the city. As Bristol City Centre Strategy (1998) comments: "Tourism is worth as much as £300 million each year to Bristol's economy, of which up to two-thirds is directed through shops, pubs, restaurants, tourist attractions, transport operations, hotels and arts and entertainment in the city centre".

Bristol has also gained recent fame for its innovations in popular culture with Bristol appearing on the map within British youth culture as a mecca of ground-breaking, innovative music and vibrant clubs to compete with places such as Manchester as 'the 'place to party (Younge:1997:3). As a journalist from Bristol's listings magazine, *Venue*, commented:

*We believe Bristol, at the moment, is in something of a cultural renaissance, especially in the music and the club scene. Bristol has arrived and has come out of being a cultural provincial backwater and that's due, from a personal point of view, to two factors really. Firstly, the sort of latent creativity and the amount of people making music and the club scene in particular has finally matured now and becoming recognised as, you know, house, jungle, hip-hop. All these genres have sort of meant there is a phenomenal amount of good music in Bristol. Also there has been a relaxation by the council in terms of licensing laws to allow clubs to open much later which has contributed to the success of Bristol greatly.*

Bristol owes much of its diversity and creativity to the multiethnic character of the city. The city's ethnic communities have added greatly to the city's music, cultural and arts scenes and the coming together of different ethnicities has created many innovative hybrids in music. Following the success of the music industry and the export of the 'Bristol sound' in the 1990s, through artists such as Massive Attack, Tricky, Roni Size and Portishead, Bristol's nightlife has attracted much interest from London-based firms and promoters. Along with the City Council's desire to see Bristol as a cosmopolitan 24 hour European city and develop a liberal attitude to licensing, a vibrant late night economy has flourished since the mid 1990s. Bristol, for example, has been at the forefront of issuing 24-hour licenses to night clubs and extending drinking hours in pubs and bars.

Alongside the change in licensing philosophy the Centre area and neighbouring Corn Street has experienced a rapid increase in bars, themed pubs and branded café bars. There has also been a growth in nightlife spaces outside the city centre, such as the sophisticated night life area commonly known as 'the strip' in Clifton and Gloucester Road which is rapidly emerging as a new popular student drinking area. This on-going music and night life renaissance and growing

bar and cafe culture in the city is dependent upon the large number of students, young people and professionals who live, work and socialise in the fashionable areas of the city.

However, there are concerns that the city is facing saturation point due to the rapid growth of nightlife venues. There is concern that as it is a small provincial city, Bristol may be 'punching above its weight'. As one music journalist commented:

*It's a provincial city that's a lovely place to live and has a very liberal, laid back attitude. But it's not London and there's so much interest in it, it's going to get saturated. There's almost too much stuff going on and not enough people to fill it. Too many protest singers, not enough protest songs.*

Overall, Bristol's approach to nightlife development has to allow unchecked growth. As a result, the city centre nightlife and leisure market has become dominated by large scale corporate investments, especially around the Centre. The pace of nightlife growth does not seem to be slowing. Bristol's bid to be the European Capital of Culture 2008 will add new momentum. The key issue, however, is how the city can balance the growth of commercial nightlife and external place promotion with the needs of the city's strong independent sector based around venues such as the Watershed, Arnolfini, Easton Community Centre, Malcolm X Centre, and New Trinity.

Bristol, then has to make some quick decisions concerning the future focus of its nightlife. As Sudjic pointed out "*Bristol is the most ambivalent of Britain's big cities, unable to make its mind up about itself*" (The Guardian, 3/10/00). The city has to manage its growth carefully. In many ways, Bristol is an affluent city with high levels of urban prosperity. It is clear that the 1990s have marked an era of positive urban regeneration and Bristol is still undoubtedly a city with much wealth, confidence and outside interest. It is also a city which is proud of its innovative home-grown, independent arts and music scene. However, it will have to confront the difficult issues of the flipside of such growth such as exclusion, alienation and marginalisation. In particular, there are significant class and ethnic cleavages within the city in terms of housing, employment and services which are not being addressed by recent growth.

Moreover, Bristol's identity is a complex mismatch of contradictory tendencies. For many, Bristol signifies a provincialness associated with the rural South West and its stereotypical inhabitants of cider swilling yokels. At the same time, many Bristolians are struggling, and succeeding, to create a more dynamic, European and cosmopolitan image for the city.

## Chapter 2. Producing Bristol's Nightlife

### ***Restructuring and concentration in the nightlife infrastructure***

Who makes the alcohol we drink and who owns the pubs and clubs we drink, dance and socialise in have been subject to restructuring and concentration over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While in 1930 there were 559 brewery companies in the UK, by 1998 there were only 59 (BLRA, 1999). One company, Scottish-Courage (formally Scottish Newcastle), accounts for 1/3 of the supply of beer in the UK, while the last ten years has witnessed a decline in the control of pubs by breweries and a meteoric rise of a number of corporate pub companies which now overwhelmingly dominate ownership in this country. There has been a similar, if not slightly less dramatic concentration and restructuring in the night-club industry as well.

How did this dramatic shift in ownership come about? The watershed event was the 1989 Monopolies and Mergers Commission report, which concluded that a complex monopoly existed in the brewing industry, largely as a result of high levels of vertical integration in which brewers owned everything from production to the point of sale (Mason and McNally, 1997). At this time, 88% of public houses were either managed by breweries or tied to them as tenanted houses. The 1989 Report led to the Supply of Beer Orders Act which aimed to break the monopoly ownership of the national brewers by restricting the 'tied house' system so that no brewer could own, lease or have any other interest in more than 2000 pubs, that at least one guest beer should be sold, and that loan tying should be abolished (Mason and McNally, 1997, p. 412). As a result, most large national brewers sold off large stocks of public houses to come within these limits or divested from brewing altogether to get around the limits on pub ownership imposed upon them. However, the Beer Orders Act was never fully implemented as any brewer only had to release ties on half its pubs held over the 2000 limit and the loan ties were never completely abolished (*ibid.*).

Since then, there has been an acceleration of mergers, concentration and rationalisation within the brewing and pub industry. Whereas in 1989 there were 6 big national brewers in the UK (Grand Metropolitan, Bass, Allied, Whitbread, Scottish and Newcastle and Courage), by 2000, Scottish Courage remains the only large domestic brewer. With the Belgian firm Interbrew (recent purchasers of Bass and Whitbread breweries, along with the Canadian company Labatts), Carlsberg-Tetley and Guinness, these brewers control 81% of the beer sales in the UK. The more significant by-product of this restructuring has been the emergence of a new breed of highly profitable pub companies, or 'pubcos'. While some of these were established by the

brewers to avoid the restrictions of pub ownership set by the Beer Orders Act, the vast majority, backed largely by corporate money, have sprung up recently to take advantage of forced divestment by the beer companies. Over the last decade, these pubcos have flourished as more and more pubs have been put on the market by former brewers with around 70 such companies existing who own 30 pubs or bars or more. While the number of pubs has stayed roughly static at about 62,000 in the UK, the number owned by brewers has fallen from 32,000 to 3,300 over the last ten years (accounting for 5.3% of the UK pub market). In contrast, pubcos who owned 16,000 outlets in 1989 now own around 49,000 (accounting for nearly 80% of the market) (see table 2.1).

**Table 2.1 Change in pub ownership in the UK, 1989-2000.**

	1989	2000	2000
<b>National Brewers</b>			
Tenanted	22,000	2,724	1,000
Managed	10,000	7,336	2,300
Sub total	32,000	10,060*	3,300**
<b>Regional Brewers</b>			
Tenanted	9,000	5,939	5,939
Managed	3,000	3,498	3,498
Sub total	12,000	9,437	9,437
<b>Independent Operator</b>			
Single	16,000	18,098	18,098
Multi-site pubcos	-	24,196	30,956
Sub total	16,000	42,294	48,392
<b>Total</b>	<b>60,000</b>	<b>61,791</b>	<b>61,791</b>

\* Bass, Scottish and Newcastle, Whitbread

\*\* Scottish and Newcastle only

*Source: The Publican Handbook, 2000.*

Many of these pubcos have shown remarkable levels of growth such as Nomura Principal Investment Group (a Japanese Investment Bank which runs other high street chains such as William Hill, Thresher and Victoria Wines) which now owns over 5,500 pubs and is the UK's largest pub operator. Smaller companies such as JD Wetherspoons are making dramatic inroads into pub ownership, with the company reaching a turnover of £380m and hoping to boost its

estate from 500 to 2000 pubs. As table 2.2 shows, the top 10 leading UK pub operators now account for nearly 50% of all pubs and bars, only three of which still have a connection with brewing.

**Table 2.2 Pub ownership in the UK**

	<b>Outlets</b>	<b>Managed</b>	<b>Leased/Tenanted</b>
Punch/Wellington	5878	1060	4818
Nomura**	4839	28	4821
Whitbread PLC	3714	1990	1724
Bass	3046	3046	-
S & N*	3300	2330	1000
Enterprise Inns	2437	-	2437
Pubmaster Ltd	2050	-	2050
Wolv & Dudley*	1993	997	996
Greene King*	1730	630	1100
Alehouse Prop.	830	50	780
<b>Total for top 10</b>	<b>29,817 (48% of all pubs in the UK)</b>		

\*Brewer  
\*\* This figure does not include the recent acquisition of 988 Bass pubs.  
Punch includes Punch Taverns, Punch Retail, Inn Business, Vanguard, Wellington  
Nomura includes Unique, Inntrepreneur, Phoenix, Inn Partnership, Wizard Inns

Source: *The Publican*, 2000

Pubcos, then, have reinvigorated high street pubs and bars into a rapidly growing sector worth an estimated £2.5B (*The Publican*, 5/2/01, 17). City centre nightlife is also a significant employer. Nationally, there are 21,000 employed in brewing, 429,000 employed in pubs, bars and licensed clubs (excluding Hotels and Restaurants), and 80,000 self employed licensees. With another 300,000 employed indirectly as pub and brewing suppliers, it has been estimated that the sector employs 830,000 (BLRA, 2000). However, as the Low Pay Commission (1998) outlined, 40% of people employed in the hospitality sector are paid below the minimum wage, the highest of any sector in the economy. Pinning hopes on nightlife activity as a source of sustainable and meaningful employment growth, then, should be treated with extreme caution.

It is currently a highly volatile and unstable period for the pub and bar market with 6,500 or 10% of the country's pubs up for sale during the beginning of 2001 (*Guardian*, 18/1/01). Many of

those up for sale are city centre, non-branded pubs owned by large brewers and former brewers such as Scottish and Newcastle, Whitbread and Bass. What is evident, then, is that some brewers who have divested from brewing are also slowly divesting from pub ownership into higher profit areas such as pub restaurants, fitness centres and hotels, due to perceived shifts in the demographic and consumption patterns.

This on going restructuring has implications for the ways in which pubs and bars are operated. More specifically, there is a shifting balance between managed and tenanted/leased outlets. Up until the massive changes in pub ownership in the 1990s, most traditional pubs owned by the brewers were operated as tenancies. However, the number of tenanted premises has fallen dramatically from nearly 45,000 to just under 10,000 between 1967 and 1998 while the number run as managed houses has increased (BLRA, 1999). The recent growth of super pubs, style bars and branded restaurants has shifted ownership in favour of managed rather than tenanted outlets, which has challenged the financial viability of many individual tenants. However, there are some signs that tenanted outlets may be enjoying a renaissance as they offer stable rental income and reduce overhead costs for pub operators as there is less need for area managers, head office staff, personnel and marketing departments. Moreover, operators are aware that tenancies can offer a differentiated product in contrast to the large glut of monotonous branded pubs and bars which fill Britain's high streets today. Two-thirds of pubs owned by the UKs top ten pub operators remain tenanted.

Overall, then, the Beer Orders legislation largely had the opposite effect of reducing the monopoly in the sector, as pub ownership by a small number of large brewers has now been replaced by ownership by a small number of large corporate pub companies. In sum, the pub market is effectively controlled by one brewer-pub company, a handful of pub companies (backed by financial institutions) and a couple of regional brewers. They will have sufficient power to control everything from supply to distribution to sales returning the market to the oligopolistic status of the 1980s. Considering shareholders' demand for growth, it is likely that the strong will get stronger, with ownership by a smaller number of large pub companies eroding the viability of small operators.

Nightclubs are currently experiencing similar levels of merger activity. The nightclub industry had sales of over £2 billion in 1997, and admitted around 185 million people through their doors (Mintel, 1998:15). Many nightclub operators are facing new challenges due to falling audiences and the blurring of the division between pubs and clubs. As a result, many small operators are

going bust, which is opening the way for the emergence of large operators such as the PoNaNa Group and Luminar Leisure.

### **Luminar Leisure**

Luminar Leisure has grown through the £360m acquisition of Northern Leisure, recent buyers of Rank Leisure, one of the most established entertainment operators in the UK. Luminar now runs 250 late night venues, including brands such as Chicago Rock Cafe, Jumpin Jacks, Life and The Café Bars. It has become the largest nightclub operator in the UK owning 15% of all clubs. While many of these night clubs were traditionally associated with more city centre mainstream nightclubs, Luminar is investing heavily in refurbishing and changing the image of these venues. Luminar experienced exceptional growth in 2000 with pre-tax profits increasing by 207%.

### **Branding. To the rescue?**

*It is a tale often told that in '1875, an employee of Bass, the Burton upon Trent brewer, spent an uncomfortable New Year's eve camped outside the patent office in London. His task, in which he succeeded, was to register Bass's red triangle logo as the country's first trade mark. The brewery wanted to be sure of protecting the logo, not only because it was associated with its beers in Britain but also because it made the many casks it shipped abroad instantly recognisable and was used to mark out Bass pubs. 'Brand New' (Victoria & Albert Museum)*

Branding is far from a new phenomenon in any aspect of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and city night life is no exception. Branding has grown from its origins in alcoholic products to apply to whole retail outlets and branding multiple outlets has become a central part of the expansion strategies of many pubcos. For example, 8% of all pubs in the UK (4,776 outlets) are now branded using one of 206 brands, with the top 5 pub operators controlling 63% of branded pubs (The Publican, 2000). In particular, out of 3,300 outlets, Scottish & Newcastle claim that '50% of the estate is currently branded. This will rise to 70% by April 2002' (Scottish & Newcastle website, 2001).

Pub branding exploded during the 1990s through the emergence of Aussie, Irish and sports themed bars. Such theming came under heavy criticism from consumer groups and publicans alike, due to its role in eroding the identity of the traditional British pub and its clientele (Everitt and Bowler, 1996). Those developing themed bars claimed that they were responding to changing consumer demand by catering for smaller niche markets. For example, Firkin and It's a Scream brands are associated with students, All Bar One, Bar 38 and Quo Vardis target office

workers, while Bar Oz, Walkabout, OutBack Bar and SpringBok target sports groups. Moreover, smarter, more upmarket style and café-bars have emerged to attract the more lucrative, older age groups rather than a mass pub market. The net result has been to create new consumer identities in the night time economy.

### **The theming of nightlife**

All large operators are now organised around branded divisions rather than geographical areas. While many early brands are now tired, there is no end to new 'roll outs' and brands that have proved successful in one pub are often expanded nationally. Brand wars have become a common feature of city centres at night, as operators vie to win the hearts and wallets of the same amount of consumers. For example, Bass's Goose theme has been launched to compete directly with the JD Wetherspoon concept, offering cheap alcoholic drinks, no smoking areas and music-free policies. The most recent turn in branding is a focus on café bar brands, such as Bar Censa (S&N), Tiger Tiger (Chorion) and Lloyds No 1 (JD Wetherspoon).

Larger national chains have taken the branding concept a step further. Nightlife venues are increasingly disconnected from their brewing legacies, with the signature of a pub no longer referring to the brewer or the type of beer associated with that brewer, but free floating brands which aim at constructing a wider lifestyle experience rather than a narrow drinking experience. Freed from the chains of mundane production of beer, companies now have the time and extra cash to develop brand images. Venues now attempt to draw on wider synergies associated with the experience beyond merely the sale of food and drink but also through the ability to buy into a particular lifestyle experience, dress code and social mores. Hiding the reality of corporate ownership is also a way for operators to detract attention away from their market domination and to encourage consumers to believe that they are making a discerning decision between real nightlife choices.

Moreover, developing a portfolio of brands allows the company to develop a number of distinct identities, target several audiences and operate at several venues in one location without competing with themselves for customers. The attractiveness of branding as a strategy stems from its ability to offer a wider 'lifestyle' experience, to increase uniformity and hence reduce costs and overheads, to increase a feeling of consumer choice, safety, convenience and reliability. Many new pub and bar concepts, then, have often led to the development of new types of licensing arrangements, new attitudes to dress codes and gender relations, have encouraged a diversity of uses, generally mixing eating and drinking and a 'chameleon' approach

by appeal to different audiences throughout the day. New bar concepts are dedicated to the three Fs - family, food and females (Mintel, 2000). For many companies, then, branding has become the holy grail and the only way to earn the favour of stock market investors.

The physical layout and design of city centre nightlife spaces has changed dramatically, then, over the last 20 years through a decline in the number of male dominated ale houses and working men's clubs of the 1970s and lager fuelled discos and pubs in the 1980s and early 1990s. In their place we have seen two contrary developments in nightlife – first, attempts to move towards a more diverse, cosmopolitan and European atmosphere, and second, a more overwhelming transformation of many U.K. city centres into US style theme parks, multiplexes and 'casino culture' (Hannigan, 1998). Underneath the façade of cosmopolitanism and diversity, a more corporate uniformity is growing in every town and city centre through expanding pub and bar branded experiences. Moreover, the widespread growth of branded licensed outlets has enabled large operators to gain cost advantages through rational techniques of production such as bulk buying arrangements and 'synergies' between products, both of which have eroded the profitability of small, independent operators. While there may appear to be a greater variety of provision, branding develops a largely non-local 'experience' which is eroding many of the distinctive elements of nightlife in Britain's cities, especially the concept of the 'local'.

### ***Current patterns of nightlife provision in Bristol***

*'I can't keep up with the number of new places opening up all the time, new bars, new restaurants. It's good, the city in general, and it's night life and music industry in particular, is in a very healthy shape (Paul, 22 years old, Call Centre worker).*

The following section outlines the nightlife in the city centre in more detail. We highlight patterns of (1) ownership in terms of the balance between national operators, expanding local and regional operators and small single-site and/or independent operators, (2) levels of branding and (3) the styles of venues in the city centre.

### **Who owns what in Bristol city centre?**

Ownership of the night-time economy can be understood by reference to three types of operators. The first category 'national operators' comprises the brewers, former brewers and pubcos, who now operate at a national level. It also includes what are termed 'super regional' operators, which include former regional brewers who have grown from particular localities and now own pub estates on a national scale such as Wolverhampton and Dudley and Greene King. The second category, 'local/regional operators' comprises companies which are established in a

particular locality across multiple sites and relatively new operators who are rapidly expanding in their local and regional catchments. The final category 'independents', refers to operators who generally exist at a single or split site and do not have any discernible corporate strategy, such as plans for expansion, board of directors or company name.

Bristol's nightlife revolves around the 'hub' of the city centre which contains 108 pubs and bars and 35 nightclubs which are concentrated on a number of well defined drinking circuits in Corn Street, King Street, the Harbourside, Park Street, and the Centre. A number of 'spokes' radiate from this nightlife hub to form distinctive nightlife destinations. These include the long route up Stokes Croft, Cheltenham Road and Gloucester Road which contains 22 pubs and bars, Whiteladies Road which contains 19 pubs and bars, the Old Market containing 10 pubs and bars and numerous pubs to the west of the city centre around the Hotwells and Clifton village areas. While many of these are separate nightlife areas, they also act as feeder areas into the city centre.

Over the last 50 years ownership of Bristol city centre pubs has changed dramatically (figure 1 – see web page). In the 1950s breweries such as Bristol United Breweries and the Bristol Brewery George and Co had a large monopoly over the pubs in Bristol, owning 11 and 37 respectively in the city centre. The latter, established in the heart of the city in 1702 was run by the George family from 1788 until 1961 and there has been brewing on the site for just under 300 years. After changing hands to Courage and then to Scottish-Courage, the brewing division of Scottish and Newcastle, the Brewery was closed in 1999. Few local brewers remain. A exception is Smiles Breweries, specialising in real ale and located in the heart of Bristol. Smiles Brewery sold off its 17 pubs for £5.8M in 2001 to concentrate on its brewing activities.

Over the 1970s Courage came to play a dominant role in the city's nightlife through takeovers and mergers of older brewers in the city. In 1975, Courage owned over one-third of all pubs in the city centre. The 1969 Licensing Act brought hard times for independent operators as it imposed a tax on privately owned public houses increasing the financial burden on individually run businesses and strengthened the hand of the brewing companies who ran multiple site operations. The licensing authorities also closed down a number of sites which were deemed to be 'unfit', many of which were independently run.

By 2001, nightlife is not dominated by any one operator. Large operators such as Bass, Whitbread and Scottish and Newcastle have small estates of 4, 7 and 14 respectively. Ownership is now mainly characterised by one off venues, one-third of which are owned by national companies which indicates that Bristol is to some extent being used as a test ground for new

brands and concepts by small growing companies. The rest of these one off operations are owned by small independent local or regional operators. The strength of this independent market is worth noting, especially those who have developed niche markets such as the Watershed, Arnolfini and several family run business on Park Street. Looking to the future, the growth area lies not with the national brewers or local independent operators but with national and highly acquisitive 'pubcos' who have seen the market potential within Bristol.

In terms of ownership, then, we can see in figure 2 (see web page) that around two-thirds of all venues are owned by operators functioning on a national scale (the largest amongst them being S&N), with local/regional operators accounting for 15% and single site independents for about 22%. Map 1 (see web page) shows the distribution of national, local/regional and independent operators throughout the city.

### **Branding Bristol**

In Bristol city centre 26% of venues are branded. This includes both first generation brands such as Wetherspoons, O'Neills, Firkin and It's a Scream and second generation ones such as Brannigans, Parisa, BarMed and Belgo. Branding is heavily concentrated in the Centre, Harbourside and Corn Street area, the most well established drinking circuits in the city centre (see map 2 – web page). However, there is also evidence in outlying areas such as Whiteladies Road and Gloucester Road, due to the heavy presence of niche consumer groups such as students. Looking at the top national brands, many of them can be found in Bristol city centre. Interestingly, Scottish and Newcastle have not infiltrated the Bristol market with their brands.

**Table 2.3: Branding in Bristol, 2000.**

Top 10 national Brands (no. nation wide)	No. in Bristol city centre
Mr Qs (Punch 230)	0
Hogshead (Whitbread 160)	1
John Barra (S&N 120)	0
Yates's (Yates's 110)	1
O'Neills (Bass 107)	1
T&J Bernard (S&N 80)	0
Firkin (Punch 78)	2
It's a Scream (Bass 68)	2
Rat and Parrot (S&N 60)	0
All Bar One (Bass 51)	1

*Source: The Publican, 2000.*

## Venue Styles in the night time economy<sup>1</sup>

The types of venues in Bristol city centre have changed dramatically (Figure 3 – web page), especially through the extension of opening hours, the introduction of more café and style bars and bar-restaurants and the general decline in traditional and independent pubs. Most venues are promoting such mixed use activities to retain consumers for as long as possible, especially during the day. In general, design has moved from a traditional cosy feel, to minimalist, wooden floored and chrome furniture styles.

Most notably, there has been a significant growth in café bars and pubs and bars serving food which reflects the growing affluence of city centre consumers and a growing trend towards eating out. As one of Bristol's city centre police officers commented:

*'peoples' lifestyles have changed so much haven't they, people do eat out a lot more, they eat out after work, they don't cook at home so much. People go out more nights of the week than just on a Friday Night and you can see a pattern of it changing. But whether it's sustainable or not?*

In terms of the distribution of styles of venues in the city centre, (figure 3 – web page) King Street is home to some of the more traditional pubs such as the Llandoger Trow and the Old Duke. Traditional pubs are still the most numerous style of pub to be found in the city centre, accounting for 34% of venues. Café bars are the fastest style of venue in Bristol accounting for 30% of city centre venues. The Harbourside contains 7 large corporate themed café bar style venues such as the Pitcher and Piano and the Brasshouse.. Pubs which followed a theme, account for nearly 17% of pubs and Corn Street is home to several large theme bars. Style bars are also beginning to make their mark in Bristol, accounting for 10% of venues. The Trenchard Street area of the city is fast becoming the style bar district home to Sukoshi Champagne Bar, Rock nightclub and Ether. The few gay venues in the city centre include the Pineapple, Queen Shilling and The Griffin, the rest located in the Old Market area.

Alternative venues, those associated with non commercial styles and music, account for only 1% of venues in the city centre, with most alternative venues located in more peripheral and residential areas. Finally, Bristol has a small amount of ale houses (6% of venues) which make up a residual, historic element within the city's nightlife, and are clustered around Broadmead and the City Centre. Such venues are in decline as the regeneration of the city centre continues. (Map 3 – web page – maps these styles across the city centre).

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<sup>1</sup> Criteria for style categories can be found in appendix 1.

Bristol's nightlife scene is built on a strong network of small clubs serving both the clubbing and live music scene, which have encouraged innovation amongst local artists. In the early 1990s Bristol exploded on to the national music circuit following the success of many local artists. As one local journalist commented:

*Bristol really took off in the last 10 years, on a cultural level, due to the music scene, mainly due to Massive Attack, Wild Bunch and Smith and Mighty. A lot of this centred around the Dugout Club on Park Row. The Dugout Club was basically the Cavern to Bristol what it was to Liverpool.*

While much of the character of the club scene in the 1970s and 1980s was based around the organic nature of smaller venues and the desire to create an environment that allowed creativity to thrive, the 1990s have seen a dramatic increase in larger, corporate owned, city centre venues alongside the closure of several traditional venues. Most recently, there has been development of large branded venues in air hanger' size buildings such as banks, warehouses and old waterfront boat sheds. In the last few years there has been an explosion of several super clubs such as Rock, Creation and Evolution reflecting both the mainstreaming of clubbing and a decline of live music venues. There has been a major shift towards crowd-pulling big name DJs away from smaller acts and live music. However, Bristol can still boast a fairly large selection of clubs varying from small venues occupying cellars playing specialist music to a small audience to large 1000+ dance venues playing commercial oriented music.

Bristol has a large range of clubs. The 35 clubs in the city centre and adjacent areas and the 5 outside the city centre give a total capacity of 20,990 (table 2.4). The strength of the nightclub sector is its range and scope with an average club size of just over 500. Many of the venues further out provide an alternative focus for clubbing providing hip-hop, reggae and drum and bass to techno. Following the large influx of new investment in Bristol, it is unlikely that there will be other new night-club developments in the near future. Appendix 2 highlights a typical week in Bristol's clubs.<sup>7</sup>

A prominent feature of Bristol's nightlife is the blurring between pubs, bars and clubs, especially due to the explosion of late night bars. One-quarter of all city centre pubs and bars open post 11pm, which adds an additional capacity of 14,495 people and a further 45 venues to choose from. In total, then, the city centre and adjacent areas have a post 11pm capacity of over 35,000 across 95 venues.

**Table 2.4: Nightclubs in Bristol, April 2001.**

Venue	Owner	Capacity
Creation	PoNaNa	1400

Chicago Rock Café	Luminar Leisure	600
Evolution	Punch	1652
Po Na Na Fez Club	Po Na Na	300
Po Na Na Souk Club	Po Na Na	200
The Cooler	It's a Scream	200
Steam Rock Tavern	S&N	500
The Works	First Leisure	1823
Rock	Piers Adams	1660
McClusky's	Kingfisher Leisure	850
Bar Latino	John Skinner	150
Maze	John Skinner	400
Bar Latino	Independent	150
Benny's	Independent	220
Bristol Bierkeller	Independent	750
Blue Mountain	Independent	300
Café Blue	Independent	1700
Castro	Independent	400
Central Chambers Wine Bar	Independent	150
Club Met	Independent	600
Club Crème	Independent	250
Dojos	Independent	180
Kickers	Independent	480
La Rocca	Independent	120
Le Café New Platform One	Independent	300
Lakota	Independent	650
Lizard Lounge	Independent	100
Mandrake Club	Independent	280
Queen Shilling	Independent	350
The Thekla	Independent	400
Winns Club	Independent	350
The Old Porthouse	Independent	300
Rummer Bar*	Independent	270
Silent Peach*	Independent	170
Powerhouse*	S&N	885
<b>Total City Centre</b>		<b>19,090</b>
<b>Out of City Centre</b>		

Black Swan	Independent	220
The Depot	Independent	280
Easton Community Centre	Independent	300
Malcolm X Centre	Independent	600
New Trinity Centre	Independent	500
<b>Total out of city centre</b>		<b>1,900</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>20,990</b>

\*Closed, but re-opening sometime in the near future.

### **Production Issues**

#### **The corporate game**

One of the main characteristics of corporate, as opposed to locally operated nightlife venues, is a lack of local control in terms of design, employment and purchasing, as the following quotes from bar managers at some of Bristol's new corporate branded bars outline:

*At the end of the day the Head Office stipulate what we can do, what we can't do.*

*We're not even allowed to promote things unless Head Office gives us consent, if they say to us look you can go and promote Budweiser, the only promotions we do or try to promote the beer is actually having it on the shelves*

*Before the take over you could order from who you wanted, you go Tescos and buy food, you could use your local butcher. But now you have to do exactly what they tell you to do, you can't just go round the corner to the local butcher. You've actually got to use the food company, seafood, vegetables. You can't really do what you want to do.*

Moreover, many bars were closely tied into sponsorship deals with various drinks companies, which were often tied to wider marketing schemes; '*We've got a huge Budweiser promotion coming up, where Budweiser have sponsored the company and giving huge staff incentives and giving away holidays and stuff in each unit*' (Corn St, Bar Manager). However, many bar managers in larger corporate bars also explained that they were often under extreme pressure from their own companies to reach targets and fulfil quotas.

The increase of nationally based larger scale corporate venues in Bristol has a number of particular consequences for the city's nightlife. Much of the growth of a more cosmopolitan bar brand reflects the growing affluence of the city and the re-invention of the city centre is occurring around a disproportionate role for national corporate operators, a large increase in café

and style bars, a decline of the traditional pub and a decline in alternative venues, which although still evident in parts of the city, have fewer options in the high cost city centre.

### **Changing Times for a traditional pub**

An example of this dramatic change is the refurbishment of Aunties Bar into 'The Park'; turning a traditional pub with a long standing male-orientated day time crowd and popularity as an evening venue with live music into a more minimalist, pine floored, chrome furnitured venue. Owned by Inntrepreneur, it has been taken over and given a new identity as a cafe bar. Due to its location and close proximity to Clifton it is trying to draw from the Whiteladies Road clientele. As one member of staff commented: '*people with a bit more money than usual. Not your usual pub where you come in here and get pissed everyday. The company prefer and are wanting more the suits and rich students*'.

More generally, there is a wider trend away from pub culture towards bar culture, which is mirrored by a shift from live music towards clubs. As one club owner commented:

*I think a lot of competition is coming from this new thing of this late licensed bar. Where you can go somewhere and they've got a dj playing and they may have a small dancefloor and they stay open until 2 and I think if people stay there until 2, they don't really want to go clubbing after that. Because they've done everything they want to do. So I think that's taken away some of the crowd that would go out on a Saturday night and go to a couple of pubs and then go to a club to carry on drinking, may be have a little bit of a dance. Now they can stay in a bar till 2 and still have a bit of dance. People that aren't really passionate about dance music that just want to out for a good time, I see that as a competition. Not massive competition, but it is definitely a factor with all these bars getting their late licenses.*

A common strategy used by large corporate pubs in the city centre of Bristol is the creation of closer links between nightlife spaces and workspaces. In this sense, the world of work is penetrating the world of nightlife and the new bar culture is becoming the place where after work socialising and business deals are extended. Moreover, most corporate workplaces are eager to foster a sense of sociability in the workplace and they do this by using certain nightlife operators. Such links between large employers and nightlife operators, then, signify the wider lifestyle experience which links service sector professionals with large corporate nightlife venues. Brannigans, for example, has set up a working relationship with Directline, a major Call Centre located near to the bar. As the bar manager commented:

*'We've got a good relationship with Directline, you know we've given all the workers discount cards. They come in and eat, they get a free pint. So we've got our regulars from there and in that they do all their staff parties through us then. So we do them a good deal on that, so we make a lot of money on staff parties etc... I think*

*they hired upstairs, we don't charge to hire it out, because again it's a case of bringing the people in to spend the money over the bar.*

Moreover, many of the sports teams at Bristol University have sponsorship deals with nightlife venues, many of which exploit the traditional Wednesday drinking night for sports teams. One of the city's largest clubs, Evolution, are personal sponsors for both Bristol University and the University of the West of England. Clearly, night time venues are keen to attract the 40,000 plus students living and spending in Bristol. There is also evidence of co-operation between bars to share this audience: '*It does seem very much like an understanding between bars almost well we will hold our student night this night and another place will hold it on a Tuesday night so they all share the trade out between them almost*' (City centre club owner).

Large corporate chain bars are also trying to create a one stop shop for nightlife. As one bar manager suggested:

*It is a completely different concept though because you can eat here, drink here, dance here. It's our whole concept 'eating drinking and cavorting', which every way you look at it. We open at 12pm and we run straight through to 1 am'*

At the same time, they are also trying to create a far-reaching corporate strategy in which the venue is not just a place but a wider lifestyle brand, with international recognition. As an employee of the Rock club commented:

*The overall vision is to create Rock as a brand and as a brand that can travel. So something along the lines of Cream, Gatecrasher, Ministry of Sound. It's a brand that you buy into as a customer. When you go to Ministry of Sound it's the whole ethos, you get the magazine and the CDs and the t-shirts and the record bag. All that kind of stuff and that's what we hope to do. To make this club into something special, that will be recognised as one of the best clubs in the world.*

### **The independent point of view**

There is a range of views from local independent venues towards the influx of larger corporate nightlife operators into the city centre. A local bar owner working in the Stokes Croft area feels that due to the strong stigma attached to the area, big corporate chain bars could only improve its image:

*We're all for the big sort of chain pubs coming. It's brilliant for the road. It will mean other people will take the road more seriously'. 'I don't know if this is just idealistic, but I think we believe that if a big chain comes here it will mean that other people that might have heard bad things about Stokes Croft, they will go out the window if they see a big corporation spending a lot of money and opening a bar, restaurant or whatever on the main road. And it will mean that there are more*

*people in the area and more people in the area will then generate more people and if they can't get in one place they will come in here*

Other bar owners felt that the sameness of many chain bars allowed the independent sector to stand out more and be more distinctive:

*'There's so many places that are so similar that we stand out like a sore thumb as being different. So you know if you're looking for somewhere to go and you're looking at all these bars, all these places. Once you've really started trawling through them all you realise they're pretty much the same' (Bar Manager)*

More importantly, the alternative venues attract a different clientele, and cater for a different audience. Many independent venue owners highlighted that they aimed for the more '*discerning kind of clubber*' rather than '*cheesy commercial*' consumers.

In contrast to larger, nationally operated corporate bars, the independent market operates in a very different manner. They have the ability to create a personal and hands-on approach. As one independent bar owner commented:

*I've worked for Pitcher and Piano, I used to work for them up in London, well the difference for managing for them and managing here so far apart its unbelievable. So I've got the experience of the independent thing and the corporate thing. I mean this place is down to the kind of enthusiasm and belief in what we are doing and there's no wage system, or there's no figures I have to enter into a spreadsheet and send off to Head Office and stuff like that. It's down to me, which is really nice.*

*'If you walk along it's just chain bars and you look in here and it's got a different feel about it. Go to most bars and staff will be on £3.50 an hour their bosses are somewhere in the Shetland islands that don't know their name and their just on a payroll and you can see that in somebody's face. When they just don't give a shit. Obviously their making money, they are business men. But they want to have a good time doing it. Basically they want to have as much as they can making money. A lot of places are chain bars there all very samey, they don't offer anything different really. We want to create a nice environment with nice staff and nice customers' (Bar Manager).*

Moreover, independent venues are often less motivated by profit. The New Trinity, for example, a local community centre that is licensed to hold live music and club nights, is keen to support local people who want to put on their own events. As one member of staff commented:

*We put on more diverse events that the mass market would shy away from because they are not 100% profit based. We are not 100% profit based we can afford to diversify. 'We have a night called Bliss, that's a smoke-free, alcohol-free, drug-free environment that has proved very popular with alternative groups. They do a damn good job really and where it would have been hard from them to have started that night at another venue. Cos simply most of the venues in Bristol would have not said yes to it, or would have just looked at the them to one-off and talk about how much*

*money they could make. As we've been able to subsidise the nights quite heavily, and therefore allow them to build'*

### **The Bristol Brand. National branding and local cultural creativity**

*The yard stick if you like, was in Japan, we were in Tokyo in this little record store. You know how they have A-Z labels, like House music or Pop music. There was one for Bristol music. When I went through it, it was literally a huge rosta of Bristol bands. It had it's own bloody section in a record shop in Japan! (Local DJ).*

City cultures have always been a blend of larger commercially oriented activities and smaller more creative ventures. One local journalist summed up the former in the following way: '*There has always been big townie clubs. The same club with different names. Horrible places where you go and get the shit kicked out of you if you look casual. A hell hole of bland music. You get this in any town and has nothing to do with culture, musical culture or heritage*'.

However, Bristol is also known as a hot bed of musical talent, which has attracted much media attention and interest from London based firms. As the rather partisan Venue magazine (19.1.01, p10) commented:

*Massive Attack, Smith and Mighty, Roni Size, Tricky, Way Out West and Portishead all have roots in the underground and party scene. They all turned their respective genres on the head by refusing to compromise or bow down to commercial requirements. Put simply, they were/are entirely original. They changed the face and shape of popular music, making Bristol a word to prick up the ears of any self-respecting record company executive anywhere in the world.*

It is important to assess the impact of the recent growth of nationally oriented corporate nightlife on local, small scale cultural innovation and the 'Bristol brand' of local creativity. One promoter suggested that:

*The more corporate bars you have and obviously they're going for the licensing money. Ultimately the indigenous kind of music of the city is going to really suffer and it will go more underground and will dissipate which would ultimately be very, very bad for the community at large*

There is clearly a general trend towards larger, corporate chain venues in the city's nightlife and it has seen London-based operations such as Rock moving into the city and interest from large external promoters such as Slinky from Bournemouth. Many of these can mobilise large budgets against which many local clubs cannot compete.

Many London based artists and entrepreneurs have set up independently run city centre bars. One example is Arc Bar, which is keen to build and create an environment that is conducive to producing as well as a consuming. In the words of one of the managers; '*they want it to be a*

*hive of productivity if you like. They want people to come in here and write music, and produce music and play it where possible. They wanted to come down to Bristol and set up something that would be used by people to produce music and art work, and for it to be a place where you can come socially as well'. They see themselves as 'off the beaten track' and 'not the kind of place that your townie bloke would go out of his way to come'.*

We have already outlined the huge significance the independent sector plays in the city both historically and culturally. One DJ reinforced this: '*They're incredibly important in the city, the culture of the city. That's what I worry about, the more it becomes about just drinking and about just money, the more the cities creative cultures will suffer*'. More than this though, the strength of the local creativity has acted as a source of pride which has fuelled further creativity: As one promoter commented: '*It is really important to have a proud local scene for everyone for young kids coming up, for everyone*'. Publicly funded, voluntary and community venues play a key role in this, a fact which should be kept in mind by those aiming to promote a broad range of cultural activities in the city.

However, independents face a number of barriers such as rising property values, bulk buying by corporate chains, and greater use of the regulatory system. As one bar manager from a large company told us: '*For a company that already has 50 units our case is pretty much already out across before you get there*' (Bar Manager).

Bristol, for now, seems to have struck a balance between it's strong and creative local brand of nightlife and the more placeless national brand of nightlife. One independent bar manager commented:

*There's still enough people promoting and believing in good music and good nights and stuff to make things happen. So in that sense Bristol has got a good alternative scene, and I don't think that will ever change, well not for the foreseeable future anyway. It's just a matter of balancing, that against the commercial main stream stuff that has kind of started to take over at the moment.*

However, Bristol will have to face up to an increasing tension between an off-the-shelf form of regeneration and a preservation of local cultural strengths. Stokes Croft, an area known for many years as both 'down at heel' but immensely creative, epitomises these tensions. Several consumers we spoke to recognised the growing standardisation within Bristol's nightlife:

*Sally: They're all much of a muchness though.*

*Jo: Yes, they're all a generic type.*

Corn Street is a dramatic example of such change. Ten years ago this area was a banking centre: '*on a Saturday afternoon it was like walking through the City of London used to be*' (Local Councillor). As changes occurred in the banking and finance industry, such as the increase in out of town call centres, rationalisations and the closure of branches, these buildings became surplus to requirement. Some consumers commented on the character of such large themed venues:

*Polly: You could walk down Corn Street and it's you know you could as well be in Leeds*

*Sean: You see the same places.*

*Polly: Like Edwards and Hogshead.*

Before further nightlife growth continues unchecked, it is worth taking stock of what has been gained and what has been lost by the transformations over the last ten years.

## Chapter 3. Regulating Bristol's nightlife

### ***Understanding regulation***

The word regulation often produces mixed feelings. These tensions are particularly evident in debates about the night-time economy. While some feel that their freedom to go out and enjoy themselves is restrained by current licensing and public entertainment legislation, others strongly argue that there is a real need to control nightlife activity to prevent social disorder. Hence while many have embraced the urban night-time economy as a useful mechanism for urban regeneration, others regard it as a social problem.

Evidence for both sides of the debate abound. Proponents of nightlife activity point to a revival of city centres as a result of the growth of licensed premises. The total number of on-licensed premises in June 1998 in all of the U.K. was 111,6000 and there were another 5,000 new applications for on-licences in the following year. On-licensed premises have increased by almost 30% in the last twenty years and today the pub and club industry has a turnover of around £22 billion pounds, equal to around 3% of the GDP of the UK (Hobbs et al, 2000; Allen, 1998). However, there has been much concern that the increase in both numbers of places and late licenses has led to more public disorder in town centres. Fred Braugthon, chair of Police Federation commented recently that there was a 'sense of disorder and anarchy' in many city centres because of this change. This image has become commonplace in the media, leading to discussions about shutting down 'thug pubs' and curtailing drink-fuelled violence and vandalism (See 'Blair to Propose 48 Hour Shutdown for Rowdy Pubs in Summit on Lawlessness', *The Guardian*, 3.7.2000, 'Police Win Powers to Shut Down thug Bars', *The Observer* 2.7.2000, 'Colonising the Night', *The Guardian* 12.9.2000 and 'Straw to Target Drink-Related Crime', *The Guardian*, 18.7.2000).

There is a wide range of issues at stake behind these rather simple portraits of nightlife activity. To fully understand the regulation of nightlife, it is necessary to appreciate a number of different dimensions - legal, technical, economic, social and cultural. Legal forms include a whole range of laws and legislation laid down to regulate nightlife activity; technical forms include the use of CCTV and radio-nets to monitor behaviour; economic forms include pricing policies of drinks and door entry; while social and cultural regulations include more informal aspects such as musical taste, youth cultural styles and dress codes, the latter being explicitly enforced by door-staff.

There are also many different ‘players’ involved in the regulation of nightlife. Licensing magistrates, fire departments, local authorities and police play a primary role in advising, implementing and laying down legislation to regulate nightlife activity. Increasingly, residents’ groups have a strong role to play in regulation, mainly when conflicts arise between city livers and city revellers. The role of producers in regulating nightlife activity is often curiously overlooked. Yet, they play an important role in shaping nightlife activity through door policies, style and design of venue and promotions, all of which attract different types of revellers and encourage certain types of behaviours both in bars and out on the street.

Additionally, as local authorities are increasingly involved in promoting city centres as investment locations, they increasingly find themselves aligned with, and in some cases led by, capital investors in the development of the night-time economy. There is a growing array of public-private partnerships which are beginning to influence the development of cities as well as a number of organisations and ‘cultural intermediaries’ involved in producing images or commentary on the night-time economy such as listing magazines, advocacy groups and promoters. Strangely enough, the views of consumers themselves are often omitted, or only weakly considered, in regulating nightlife (see Hollands 1995 for an exception). The balance of power between these different interest groups varies across time and place, resulting in varied interpretations and approaches to nightlife regulation. For example, while in many places, there are close and meaningful relationships between the police, local authorities and local consumers acting towards a common goal, in others there are serious conflicts of interest and differences of opinion on how to best regulate the night-time economy between interest groups.

What is evident is that the regulation of nightlife activity is currently in the midst of a significant transition. In particular, the role of the local state has largely shifted from managing the city to encouraging and supporting primarily large-scale entrepreneurialism. As a result, most cities, especially those large industrial ones which face problems such as declining populations and tax bases, are increasingly aligning themselves with the interests of private capital to develop urban nightlife. At the same time, city councils also have to ‘pick up the pieces’ of some of the negative consequences caused by the development of nightlife activity such as litter, noise and violence and have to balance the needs of local residents with those of developers and entrepreneurs. It is necessary to put the issue of the regulation of the night-time economy into a historical perspective before discussing the specific situation in Bristol.

### ***A brief history of regulating nightlife activity***

For several centuries, government has actively regulated the sale and distribution of alcohol. The British Parliament first became involved with the regulation of the sale of alcoholic drinks in the 13th century due to concerns about beer purity and price and public order issues. Early taxes were levied on beer and subsequently very high duties were imposed on the retail of spirits from 1729, and justices were required to licence premises on which spirits were consumed. In 1828 an Act required two licenses to sell alcohol - a justice's licence and an excise licence for premises on which alcohol was consumed (Home Office, 2000). Several emergency statutes about sale and consumption during wartime were passed in 1914/15, including current legislation about opening and closing times and in 1921 the universal 'permitted hours' came into being (i.e. the number of hours a pub could be open, including breaks in the afternoon and different Sunday hours). Restaurant, residential and combined restaurant and residential licences were introduced in 1961. The same Act introduced 'drinking up' time of ten minutes. The Licensing Act 1964 was a consolidating measure and is the main statute even today (*ibid*).

Historically, the power to regulate the night-time economy through liquor licensing has rested with licensing magistrates with input from police and fire representatives and some local authority influence through planning permission and their power to grant Public Entertainment Licenses (PELs). The sale of alcohol, the type, the licensee, the place, the hours and the circumstances within which it can be sold are governed by Justices of the Peace (voluntary magistrates) sitting either in Petty Sessions or as a Licensing Committee. They operate within the Licensing Act 1964, as amended by the Licensing Act 1988 and are advised by professional Justices Clerks.

The role of the licensing magistrates has recently come under scrutiny through the Justices' Clerks Society' *Good Practice Guide* (1999) which set out a number of recommendations to unify the workings of licensing committees, many of which were interpreting national laws in different ways in different localities. In particular, it highlighted the changing role of licensing committees in relation to the tricky issue of need. Historically, magistrates have decided whether a neighbourhood needs more pubs on the basis of moral and social concerns connected with the 'odious and loathsome sin of drunkenness' (Justice Clerks Society, 1999, 29). To this end, towards the end of the nineteenth century, a number of regulations came into force which gave magistrates absolute powers to refuse new licenses where they felt the needs of the locality were adequately catered for.

However, since the 1990s, there has been a growing awareness that licensing committees should not be able to refuse liquor licenses on the grounds that there is no need or no demand for any more in a given area. In particular, it was felt that licensing magistrates should not make decisions on the basis of reducing unfair competition or trade protection. The Justices Clerk Society (1999) has now stated clearly that when considering the question of 'need' licensing magistrates should ensure that "premises in the area do not become so numerous as to produce problems of noise and disorder or risk of public safety" and not take into account "the need to protect the interests of existing license holders, nor to restrict competition" (ibid., 77). Magistrates must now consider public safety and control without distorting the operation of the free market. In many ways, then, licensing regulations have become divorced from their historic legacy which viewed the sale of alcohol as such a potential danger to public peace that it should only be sold by fit and proper persons in specifically licensed premises. While this historic notion does remain, increasingly, licensing issues revolve more around balancing urban regeneration with potential disorder and disruption to residents.

There is currently a plethora of licence types for liquor and different procedures to follow depending on the type of licence application. Many of these licences have esoteric and cumbersome requirements attached, for example in order to operate a night club, an individual first needs to acquire a PEL from the local authority and then an on-licence and a Special Hours Certificate - with conditions to provide food, music and live entertainment. In 1983 the jurisdiction of justices to grant licences for music and dancing (or a PEL) and similar entertainment in restaurants and hotels was abolished and replaced by a system under which district councils became licensing authorities.

In 1988 weekday hours were extended to permit 'all day opening'. Since 1994 a number of minor deregulatory measures have been introduced, including a special extension of hours for the Millennium. Otherwise, few fundamental changes have been made to the basic legal approach that has stood for almost two centuries. This, however, seems set to change in the near future, with numerous working parties and proposals being formed to implement a complete overhaul of the current system (table 3.1).

**Table 3.1: Summary of Some of the Key Changes Advocated by The White Paper on Reform: *A Time for Change* (Home Office, 2000)**

- A single integrated scheme for licensing premises which sell alcohol, provide public entertainment or provide refreshment at night.

- A new system of personal licences which allow holders to sell or serve alcohol for consumption on or off any premises possessing a premises licence (places providing public entertainment or refreshment at night which does not involve alcohol, would require a premises licence only).
- New measures to back-up restrictions on under age drinking including: a new offence of buying alcohol on behalf of a person under 18; a new offence of knowingly permitting a sale to a person under 18 years; test purchasing to be placed on a statutory footing; a new duty on people selling alcohol to satisfy themselves about a customers, age.
- Personal licences to be issued for ten years to those aged 18 or over without a relevant criminal record following a test of knowledge of licensing law and social responsibilities, with provision for endorsement or withdrawal of licences within that period: abolition of vague 'fit and proper' person test in respect of licences to sell alcohol.
- Premises licence to incorporate operating conditions (e.g. hours, noise, fire exits, capacity) limited to crime and disorder/public safety/nuisance factors, and set locally on a basis of the balance of operator's requirements/resident views/police and fire authority assessments.
- To minimise public disorder resulting from fixed closing times, flexible opening hours, with the potential for up to 24 hour opening 7 days a week, subject to consideration of the impact on local residents.
- Tough new powers for police to deal instantly with violent and disorderly behaviour by closing premises that rogue licence holders have allowed to become the focus of such behaviour.
- Children to be allowed access to any part of licensed premises at the personal licence holder's discretion; but licensing authorities to have the discretion to restrict (e.g. by requiring adult supervision) or deny access for children to unsuitable venues.
- Personal and premises licences to be issued by local authorities
- An avenue of appeal for parties (including the police and local residents) to the Crown Court.
- Licences to be supported by a flexible range of sanctions (including temporary reduction in opening hours) instead of present single all or nothing sanction of loss of licence.
- New arrangements for non-profit making registered clubs supplying alcohol to their members which preserve their special status.

The fact that the night-time economy has been perhaps the slowest sector to respond to a loosening of regulation stems from its perceived peripheral status to the daytime economy and a historical suspicion of the night as a site of excess, vice and crime (Lovatt, 1995). As a result, not only has it been marginalized economically, it also has been subject to much legal, political and indeed moral regulation. Historically, the night-time drinking economy was characterised by monopoly ownership of beer production and distribution aimed at mass consumption by a relatively homogenous clientele whose activities were carefully regulated through the curtailment of opening hours to ensure that workers' leisure did not interfere with their productivity (Harrison, 1971).

Part of the shift in regulation in the 1990s has been motivated by the emergence of a 'new entertainment economy' in cities (Hannigan, 1998) which entailed forging new sets of relations between the state, capital and consumers. In particular, many U.K. cities began to reinvent themselves as places of consumption dependent on the development of a diverse and vibrant 'after dark' economy, and this involved grappling with outdated laws and curtailments. For example, the idea of the '24 hour city' was designed to break away from the industrial city with its emphasis on manufacturing production and its strict temporal and spatial ordering. Furthermore, the Beer Orders Acts in 1989 sought to limit the breweries' stranglehold on controlling pubs and encourage diversification in the night time economy, which in turn fuelled demand for more flexible regulations, especially around licensing hours (see Home Office, 2000).

Yet, there have been problems with building a new regulatory environment. While the Beer Orders legislation was intended to break down monopoly and increase diversification, as discussed in chapter 2, it merely shifted control from the breweries to the large pub chains who have pioneered much more aggressive approaches to marketing their nightlife brands as a lifestyle. Moreover many U.K. cities had neither the infrastructure nor the clientele to fuel a 24 hour cultural economy. However, cities such as Bristol, Manchester and Leeds have pioneered innovative policy mechanisms to deregulate and develop the night time economy. In sum then, while these are dominant trends in the regulation of the night-time economy across England, there remain local variations. The balance of power between various parties involved with regulation is crucial toward understanding how particular cities have responded by either controlling or liberalising nightlife activity. Below we look at the views and relationships between various regulators in Bristol.

## ***The regulation of nightlife in Bristol***

*'If you look on Friday and Saturday night at the statistics there's anything from 30,000 to 60,000 people on the street which is huge numbers, for a relatively small area and its how we provide facilities for those people' (Council Officer).*

In the last decade nightlife in Bristol's city centre has dramatically increased, with over 30 bars opening in the last 5 years. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s there was a more restrictive attitude, especially towards many venues which were seen as seedy, dingy and badly run. Many of these venues have gradually had their licenses revoked or not renewed and by the 1990s the local authority were looking towards the 24 hour phenomenon, and recognised that a mixed use city centre would help sustain a healthy local economy. By the mid 1990s the pace of development has accelerated and many well-organised large corporate organisations began to move into the city. Both the local authority, magistrates and police embraced a deregulation and growth of the night time economy and once this ideology of expansion was embraced and accepted it was largely impossible to then put the breaks on. A contributing factor to Bristol's expanding night time economy was the dispersed nature of night life and the historic under-development of the city centre. Historically, the city centre has had a limited residential component and limited conflicts between city livers and city revellers.

The following sections outline the current range of regulatory bodies within Bristol and will focus on the role and relationship between i) the magistrates and licensing committee, ii) the police, iii)local authority and iv) the residents associations.

### **Licensing Magistrates**

*Interviewer: How do you think the public perceive you in you role?*

*Magistrate 1: They haven't got a clue.*

*Magistrate 2: I think most people probably don't know that magistrates courts grant the licenses for pubs they go in.*

The Magistrates have traditionally played a key, yet largely unrecognised, role in regulating nightlife activity. Their current role is to maintain a delicate balance between control and regulation while allowing market forces to operate unhindered. When an application comes into the court they have a legal duty to serve it on the police, the fire services, the local authority and other public agencies depending on the nature of the application. As long as statutory orders are followed, a notice is placed in the newspaper and a copy of the application must be placed outside the premises to give the general public the opportunity to object.

In Bristol, there are 15 members of the combined ‘Licensing and Betting and Gaming Committee’. The magistrates seem to be in touch with the night life scene in Bristol and gauge local trends to help them make decisions. As one magistrate commented:

*Licensing law as opposed to criminal law is less about just sitting there and listening to what applicants have to say, it's more about keeping up to date with the trends in the city centre, what problems there are, what methods we are using to solve them. Because you listen to an application and you have to judge for yourselves what type of clientele its likely to attract.*

It is clear that the licensing magistrates appreciate the need for local knowledge:

*the whole philosophy of appointing a magistrate is that he must be aware of what local needs and local feelings are. They are appointed because they are supposed to be experts on their community and you've got to allow them to use that knowledge.*

The present committee has adopted a culture of allowing venues to stay open late in Bristol, as long as they abide by the conditions attached to their licence. As one magistrate explained, they look at; ‘*what's the potential for disorder, what measures can be imposed on that license if we grant it, to try and minimise those dangers*’.

The general approach adopted by the Bristol magistrates at the moment has been relaxed, interpreting national guidelines set out in the Justice Clerks Society Good Practice Guide (1999) in a pragmatic manner. However, they see the need for conditions and control:

*you can attach to it conditions to restrict various things, for example you may say if it's a big city centre bar where you're expecting a lot of young people, potential for trouble. You may have a condition that every Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday there must be at least six doorman employed between 8 and closing.*

It is worth recalling that until fairly recently there were no national guidelines for magistrates to follow:

*It's very new, licensing law is very old, most of the legislations been around for many decades. Different committees looked at it and it was very easy to interpret it in slightly different ways. Policy and procedure was completely unique, no one talked to any one else. Each courthouse was it's own little island.*

As a result, most cities moved in different directions in terms of licensing. The introduction of national guidelines has meant there has been some move to greater uniformity, but not without its problems. As a member of the local police commented:

*The difficulty with Magistrates is, that when you are in a refusing mode you always refuse everything and you are frightened to grant anything, cos granting something becomes the precedence and the way it goes. Equally when you are opposing things. You're seen to be granting and supporting a certain philosophy to then to put a*

*block on one or two is very difficult because you have to have a specific reason to identify and put forward clearly. When Magistrates did hold a very firm line and people don't want to challenge it because it costs money and time and they very often lose anyway. But once you start to let go then everyone piles in.*

Further, as one police representative commented: '*it is sensible to either adopt a 'refusing mode or a granting mode'. As philosophies you can't mix them up*'.

As we have mentioned, the role of the magistrates in granting licences is not influenced by commercial need and they are not able to turn down a license because of commercial considerations such as market saturation. As a licensing magistrate commented:

*It's not our role to stop competition between places, if places want to open, then that's what matters for them. And we don't say to people, no you can't have a license because you'll never make a living there, that's their commercial judgement. It's for them to decide. If they want to open and there's going to be too many bars and one of them going to go bust, we're not here to protect one business from another by saying poor old so and so will suffer if we allow this big fancy place to open.*

In this sense, the licensing committee is '*looked at as being a body which must not only be, but must be seen to be, completely independent. If we were shown to be favouring one body over another then you'd be looking for calls for resignation over*' (Licensing Magistrate).

In sum, magistrates see their role as checking that premises are run responsibly, which begs the question 'responsibly for whom'? One magistrate outlined the difficulties here: "*The committee have worked very hard to serve the community, now it's very difficult because some of the community would say we like it quiet. We would like everyone shut by 10.30 every night. But of course as you say there is a large number of people who do want to go out and socialise and it's a case of looking at the balance*'

It is important to note that smaller operators are often disadvantaged by the licensing process as they have fewer resources than large operators and they are seen as more risky due to their lack of track record.

## **The Police**

The Police play a dual role in the night time economy: advising magistrates on the suitability of applicants and also policing nightlife activity. Throughout the research it seems clear that the Police work very closely with licensees and bar managers and there has been a constant dialogue between most night life producers, through various forums and discussion groups, to combat crime.

The Police have generally supported the promotion of the 24-hour city model in Bristol and staggered closing times. In the past it is clear Bristol has suffered from a stop-start approach to licensing, where most people leave the pub at the same time, creating potential for higher levels of crime and violence. As a result, the Police were keen to encourage staggered drinking times to help alleviate crime. As a member of the police's licensing team commented:

*There's been a fairly liberal strategy by the city council and police, I would say for about 3 years at least. In this period we have not opposed no new developments at all. It's fair to say they've all been high quality applications with people, with lots of expenditure, with track records and there's been no reason to resist them. In non-contentious areas where the criteria were broadly met, it didn't become a fighting ground and therefore we've had a huge growth in the number of pubs with late licenses.*

The police, then, have actively encouraged licensing liberalisation:

*We try and encourage them to take out public entertainment's license that goes on at least an hour beyond the permitted liquor hour. So that there isn't a mad rush of people going on to the streets all at once. So some people may leave at 3 O'clock in the morning, 4 O'clock and even up to 6 O'clock in some of the dance venues. So you don't get quite so many people on the streets at the same time and also staggering the permitted hours of 1 O'clock and 2 O'clock, instead of finishing at 2. We try to maintain a staggering of closure so there is a gradual drift of people away from the city.*

Police also hope staggered opening will ease pressure on their resources: '*The longer people actually stay in them sometimes the better, because they come out and they are perhaps a little bit more relaxed because you don't have the frantic trying to get a taxi and go home much more slowly*'.

However, as the level of licensed premises increase and the license applications continue to flood in, an immense pressure is being put on the police resources in the city centre. As a result, police found they were under-resourced and unprepared for the scale of growth. As one police officer told us: '*The management who allowed 24 hour city and who were party to that decision making and let things go as I have described, didn't fight their corner in getting increased numbers of staff when they should have done. We should have more Police officers available for routine patrol*'. Clearly, there are wide issues here associated with police resourcing nationally and why the police should foot the bill for problems associated with drinking within private establishments. However, compared to other public events, nightlife receives very little police resources. For example:

*If you look at the Bristol city centre the capacity if all the clubs were full, you're looking at a capacity of about 50-60,000. If you look at that disorder issue*

*potentially, I don't know what level of policing that would be attached to that. But if you draw a parallel between say Bristol Rovers playing Exeter they may have a crowd of 4,000 and you might have a very high presence. But I think they are interesting parallels in the terms of how the whole issue is policed' (Council Officer).*

Due to the lack of staff resources within the Police they are looking for alternative ways to police the city. For example, the role of door staff has increased significantly in the city centre which is also due to criteria attached to many city centre premises post-11pm licences. While there are 1,385 registered bouncers working in Bristol, in the city centre on a Friday or Saturday night there generally no more than 20-30 police officers.

Moreover, there has been a departure from the old style tactics of containment and confining night life activity and consumers to a small area. It is now clear that the police are looking towards radio links and CCTV and surveillance equipment to aid their work rather than large numbers of officers and are looking towards technology rather than staff power to make cost savings.

### **CCTV. Civilising or surveillance?**

The Police and the local authority have developed the Bristol Community Safety Partnership to try and combat violent crime in the city centre and the CCTV programme is high on their agenda. A £92 million bid has been made available by Central Government for CCTV networks for city centres. The partnership is securing a bid to the Home Office to install a network of 48 CCTV cameras right across the city centre as well as Whiteladies Road, Stokes Croft and Old Market. It is felt the CCTV network will give greater control to the policing of the city and a safer environment. One councillor commented on its likely effectiveness:

*'So if you've got a group of people that are being anti-social outside of Evolution and are well oiled and are therefore rejected from Evolution and going along down the main network of clubs and outlets and pubs the Radionet can lock in and that goes down the line and everybody is forewarned. The TV network will follow them all the way down, all the way down, and the Police can monitor them and as soon as they get to a point where they think they've got them, they can then send the resource out to remove it. Now in the past without that they would have had to respond to the initial call, even if it was not needed. So it wasted police resources right around the city centre, this way they can control and make a professional judgement when they need to move, and I think that's a much better use of resources in that respect. You can never legislate for a total idiot I'm afraid you know if they get totally legless and be anti-social and*

*whatever. They really do ask for it, they either ask to be a victim of crime or become violent or obstructive or abusive'.*

#### ***[CCTV Map of Bristol]***

Having looked to Cardiff as an example for it's CCTV system, Bristol City Council have accepted its role in crime prevention. The Cardiff system on average records 2 crimes that lead to a conviction a day. However, many civil liberty groups still contend that such widespread CCTV is an infringement of civil liberties. Though the Home Office would fund the capital cost of setting up the scheme it does not support the up-keep and running costs of the system, which will be roughly £50-60,000. It is felt that the breweries and large corporate firms operating in the city centre are part of the causal factors of alcohol related crime and should support the CCTV fund as well, and the council feel it is reasonable to ask the large operators to contribute to the running costs.

The police also draw upon the Night Task Force – a team of officers which go out to “provide a high profile presence at known disorder hotspots”(AS&C Annual Report:2001:7). There has also been an increase of support for late night venues, largely encouraged by the introduction of the radionet scheme. Radionet, is a radio network linking all pubs together and directly to the police. It is a licensing and public order initiative that provides venues with radios connected to the Alehouse patrol and the central mobile patrols and is run by a multi-agency team, with representatives from the police, the council, licensees, and door security. The network has enhanced communication between the police, licensees and doorstaff and allows police officers to reach the scene much more quickly than before. As one door staff member commented:

*the police would invariably turn up and just mop up what's left and get all the shouting and screaming from everybody. Police are getting much more quicker and their seeing what the doorman have to put up with a lot of the time. And so there's an advantage there and yeah we're getting a lot more sympathy off them, cos they can see what's happening, instead of turning up there and there's blood and snot all over the place. They think the doorman they're still standing, why aren't these others.*

It also allows the police and door staff to share information on problem groups of customers and identify people who have been responsible for crime and disorder.

The Police Licensing Team work closely with the licensed retailers, managers of licensed establishments to develop an environment of “*understanding and partnership with the industry*” to prevent problems and objections escalating and getting out of hand. In 2001 the Licensing

Team have had 11 formal objections to licensed premises: all these are being raised in the courts. Strategies in place include:

- Structured visits to premises
- Pub watch schemes
- Meetings involving the trade and enforcement agencies.
- Drug awareness training

Along with the local authority and fire services, the police also take part in a multi-agency initiative to go out every 5 weeks and conduct 'on the spot' checks of premises to make sure they are meeting the specifications of their license, such as, a properly fitted, regularly running CCTV system. The latest initiative for the Police is to back the introduction of toughened safety glass and support the elimination of glass bottles. The police have been working within the industry towards increasing the number of products which are available in plastic bottles. They are also keen to encourage staff to prevent people from leaving venues with any glasses or bottles, to try and eliminate the use of these objects in acts of disorder.

Beyond such specific initiatives, the police in partnership with venue owners and the local authority are looking to solve the root of the problem. In particular, they are keen to understand the issues rather than be reactive. As one police spokesperson commented:

*the heart of the problem is the licensees and how they run their premises and if you can get them on-board with what the Police are trying to mop up afterwards because of the way they are operating you're trying to sort out the problem long term, rather than dealing with it as a **Fire Engine policing**, just responding.*

However, there are clearly different agendas between the police and nightlife operators. As one police officer commented:

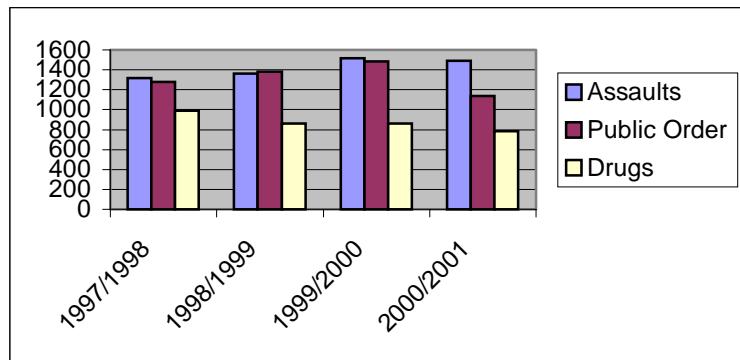
*There is obviously a lot of lip service paid by the licensed premises to assist the Police Officers, but at the end of the day they have commercial pressures on them to make money....They are driven by commercialism and we are driven by trying to maintain the peace.'*

As a result, Somerset and Avon police are moving towards trying to get pub companies and brewers to take some responsibility, especially financially, for the environment they are creating in city centres at night.

Looking at recent crime figures, it is evident that levels of arrest are fairly stable. There has been a recent drive to encourage officers to record crime in this way, so it is possible to identify 'hotspots' in the city centre on a statistical basis. This will mean the police can build up

evidence to use when they want to revoke licenses of badly run venues and also focus efforts on areas such as the Centre which are historically areas of violent incidents at night.

**Table 3.2: Arrests in Bristol City Centre**



There are already certain places in the city which are deemed to be hot spots: '*usually in terms of disorder outside premises by the Harbourside, Park Street or on the centre St Augustine's Parade. They tend to be the areas where there would generally be a disorder or a fight of some description*' (Police Officer). The lively Stokes Croft area is also seen as a problem area, often unjustifiably. Many people have suggested that an increase in leisure users may increase the number of street robberies.

The police do show an awareness of local and cultural differences within the city's nightlife. As one police officer stated: '*If they come from an African Caribbean background they don't start partying till about midnight and they'll finish at six and they'll think that's early. So you get a proportion of the population, because Bristol's got a high ethnic population, who have a different pattern*'. Many people we spoke to seemed quite positive about the approach taken by police in the city centre at the weekend and people seem quite keen on the low visibility approach that has been adopted.

### **Nightlife Security: to menace or to mediate?**

*'I always say that I believe that 99.99% of the people that go out any night of the week, Fridays and Saturdays right throughout the week, young boys and girls are thoroughly nice decent people. I think that there's a percentage of these thoroughly nice decent people that after having a drink too much to drink can turn somewhat anti-social and become a pain in the arse and sometimes are very difficult to deal with and sometimes violent. However there is a very minor percentage, less than 1% out there that are not nice people, nasty people, drunk or sober it doesn't matter, they are not nice people they are nasty people. They're creatures' (Doorman).*

Door Security plays a significant role in the city at night. The Police and Licensing Team recognise the importance of Door Staff in maintaining good order at premises, and have

formalised their activities through a door safe policy and door registration scheme. Bristol has a less violent image when compared to many northern cities. However, “*The rougher side of Bristol’s nightlife was beamed into millions of homes by the TV documentary series Muscle*”(Thorpe: Bristol Evening Post:11.7.00). It depicted a Bristol based security firm being followed around by a camera crew and watching what occurred when the ‘heavies’ were brought in for extra support when problems broke out in the city centre at night. One episode witnessed a twenty man brawl in Bristol’s King Street.

The media hype of the Muscle documentary does not quite reflect the day to day reality of door security in Bristol, which is increasingly well organised. A door registration scheme was established in 1992 in an attempt to give the sector more respectability and there are currently 1385 registered door staff. All door staff in Bristol must go through a specific training course and are all fully police checked. The City of Bristol College provide all the training for Bristol’s door staff which includes many practical elements, such as restraint techniques. It is a basic 9 hour NVQ training scheme. All applicants are required to re-register every three years. Bristol is the only council in the UK to also require the registering of door staff agencies. Moreover, they are in the process of putting BSI standards on to door agencies as a requirement. The sector is in flux and national guidelines in the Security Industry Bill are attempting to give the industry more accolade and respect, moving away from the history of bouncers and bullies.

Such changes have shifted the identity of the sector: ‘*Bouncer is a very old fashioned term for what somebody used to be really a big gorilla, that could bash people. Originally that’s all the job was going back into certainly I come into the business in the 1960s. You just had to be able to bash people you see. And now obviously it’s changed an awful lot and it’s a highly skilled job now*

’ (Door Staff Manager).

Moreover, one magistrate commented: ‘*We don’t believe in bouncers we believe in people who regulate who comes in and who comes out. And so they’re there to help not just to bully and bounce and chuck their weight around, because that causes often as much trouble.*

’

Various Pub and Club Watch groups have been formed in the centre of Bristol, bringing together licensees and the police. 90% of premises in Bristol City Centre participate in such schemes which enable partnerships between licensees and the police to be strengthened and improved; “*The groups represent an ideal forum for problem solving and promoting collective action to deter criminal behaviour, including violent and drug-related activity*”(Avon and Somerset Constabulary Annual Report:2001:9/10).

## Club Safe

Club Safe is an initiative to encourage women not to walk home alone following several serious attacks on women when walking home from nightclubs in the city centre. 10,000 special £1 phonecards have been produced and are being handed out to clubbers in Bristol. The card allows 5 free minutes talk time, providing free of charge calls for lone women wanting to call a private hire vehicle home. The scheme has enabled a network of operators to establish ClubSafe accounts where club-goers can pay for their journey in advance. Also they are encouraging venues to create waiting areas in clubs where women can wait for up to 30 minutes after closing for their taxi.

In Bristol there are a variety of doorstaff which reflects the different needs of different types of venues, especially between mainstream and the more alternative venues. As one door staff manager commented: '*what I've sort of done is to try and create the opposite thing of a bouncer, because you know what a bouncer is, what used to put your back up, put your nose out you.*'

This entails a different, less confrontational, 'on the door' philosophy:

*doesn't matter who the person is coming on we try to sort of treat them with some sort of respect and then hopefully they will treat you with respect, and treat the place with respect. Sometimes they don't always work that way. But obviously you started off on the right foot, which I would say right I'm going to treat this guy with respect. So when it comes to time to leaving, you say could you drink up and leave they might show that same respect and leave as you've shown as you let them in.*

There is a recognition, then, that the role of door staff is to encourage a close connection between the consumer and the atmosphere of the venue. As one member of a door security team observed:

*It's the constant problem of trying to ram square pegs in round holes isn't it. We know that there are certain people that are comfortable and right for a dance based venue and they fit in nicely and there are certain people and possibly an age difference there as well, where you put them in a café based place like Chicago. So yeah we don't just slam people in at all, it's got to be thought about*

Corporate pub companies have developed particular brands for different consumer groups. For example, the café bar brand has become increasingly popular and these venues adopt certain door policies: '*you keep the riff-raff out, you don't have all the arse-holes. We do really push for reasonably smart dress purely because if people have made the effort to get dressed up they're not going to be causing trouble they don't want to wreck their clothes*'. As a result, there are many places that adopt the policy of 'no jeans, no trainers' and try to attract up-market young

people as these are seen as consumers who will cause less trouble. Such a policy is supported by the police.

However, there are clear problems with the assumptions behind such an approach:

*Jane: in some places they're particular about trainers aren't they. Edwards and RSVP, you can't get in with trainers on can they?*

*Karmel: Yes, they have stopped people before going in with trainers. I don't see what difference it makes really.*

*Jane: You get kicked in the head with a pair of shoes on it's going to hurt more.*

*Karmel: No-one really looks at your feet. It's too packed to see your feet.*

As venues push to market a wider lifestyle image, the clientele they let in is crucial to their success. As one club employee commented:

*'We like people to come down and make an effort and we do turn people away quite a lot. Our sort of feeling is you know this is a club not a pub, so don't come down dressed for the pub basically. We like people to make an effort we like to look smart. We not necessarily smart, but just to look trendy rather than that they've just thrown on any old t-shirt and any old scabby pair of trainers and a baseball cap. We want to come down I'm on a night out I'm looking good. That's the kind of feeling we want. Also helps to attract slightly better class of clientele. You find that people that have actually made an effort are usually a little bit more social and civilised than people that just come down dressed in whatever.'*

In contrast, many independent venues are more self-regulating through the relaxed environments they encourage. As one independent bar manager commented: '*Like the world this place is mixed, gay people, straight people, white, black, everybody's welcome*'. The following description of Easton community centre also outlines this different ambience: '*It's not like you're going in anywhere else and it's a comfortable environment. You don't get hassled you haven't got security loitering over your shoulder everywhere. You're smoking a roll up, you can smoke a roll up without being hassled for smoking a joint*'.

In some of the larger competitive venues there is increasingly a conflict of interest between the need to fill the venue to maximise profits and the need to regulate access for reasons of safety. In many cases usual criteria for entry, such as excessive drunkenness, are disregarded. As one bouncer suggested:

*The local Manager of club or pub out in the centre of Bristol is under tremendous pressure to get as many people in as possible and then get as much money off of these people as they can get off them. So the Manager is under tremendous pressure and he has to sometimes over-ride door staff to make sure he's got a packed house so he can get all his money in his tills. Everybody works under this pressure. So the*

*door man sometimes, it doesn't happen all the time, but sometimes he sees people that they're not quite comfortable with, don't want to let them in. His Manager says no, no, no let them in, let them in. Then sometimes you get disorder through it as well.*

Clearly, in many places, older traits are still evident due to the nature of the clientele. But as one Door Security Owner said; '*I mean he does some places like it ain't worth doing, like the Horn and Trumpet. Where some body told me just over the weekend somebody bit a chunk out of somebody's arm and that's right on the centre and you've got the Yates which is always going up in Yates. The reason why I wouldn't is more or less because I wouldn't want to send somebody in there or a group of guys in there to stand and fight every night or weekend*'.

Moreover, the increase in bars and subsequent demand for more door staff has led to a decline in standards in the operation of many doors. Despite attempts at regulating door staff, then, there is still a history of monopolisation. As one local councillor commented: '*The security industry, if not controlled, is closer to the mafia than you ever get*'. However, with the introduction of forums between the police and doorstaff, there has been an increase of positive relationships which has helped combat problems.

### **The 'liberal' local authority?**

*The bulk of those pubs changed together and so it was, on the road to Damascus, you know, we saw the light! (Local Councillor).*

Since the mid-1990s, the City Council have been active in the promotion of Bristol as a 24-hour city in attempt to attract major investment into the city and develop a cosmopolitan image which will, in turn, make the city centre more attractive for working and living. The emphasis on night life has benefited the growing tourist industry and impacted on various public-private partnership projects involved in urban regeneration in the city centre. Nightlife, then has become a central part of the economic development strategy for the city centre. The City Council have pursued a very liberal approach to the granting of Public Entertainment Licenses and have largely responded to the workings of the free market rather than encouraging certain types of development. One local councillor expressed the move towards a 24 hour city in the following way:

*That was an attempt to promote the city and strengthen the local economy. Because by doing this we are obviously attracting more major club funding, leisure funding, brewery funding and that people are now being bussed from the Midlands, Birmingham, Bath, Cardiff, Devon. And they all come to Bristol because it's the place to be seen, dance and do whatever they want to do and then go home.*

The granting of PELs has become a significant revenue stream for the City Council. The cost of Public Entertainments License (PEL) in Bristol is £3.50 per person for all premises with a terminal hour of up to 2.00am and £4.20 per person for all premises with a terminal hour later than 2.00am. There is also a standard fee for the issue of the License of £38.00. Therefore a 1,000 capacity nightclub will generate a £4,238 minimum license fee for the Council.

Both the police and the Council agreed on a more liberal approach to granting PELs. As one police officer suggested:

*Provided there was an area you could dance and there was some music you could dance to, albeit it was not for that purpose, it fulfilled the physical needs of it....In non-contentious areas where the criteria were broadly met, it didn't become a fighting ground and therefore we've had a huge growth in the number of pubs with late licenses'. 'We actually don't object to PELs at all now. Because there's no point really. Not on philosophical issues really.*

Although Bristol was at the forefront of cities allocating 24 hour licenses this has not meant that the city is fully 24 hours. Venues open after 2 am must still apply for an additional late night refreshments license for soft drinks. So venues that have the option to open 24 hours very rarely do because it is not viable for them without the ability of consumers to buy alcohol. It is also hindered by the fact that people can not be admitted into clubs after 2 a.m. '*I think Bristol has often said that we are not a 24-hour city we're an 18-hour city*' (local councillor). However this may change with the proposed national changes in licensing legislation.

### **A Sunday Dance**

A sign of the relaxing of licensing laws came from the Deregulation Order of 2000 which came into force on 28 December 2000. It is now possible to pay for a license to dance on Sundays and the Deregulation Order 2001 will allow special hours certificates to operate until 12.30 am on Sundays and on bank holiday weekends until 2 am. 12 city centre premises have already applied. '*You've got all this Sunday partying now and you've got this clash between Rock , Café Blue and Lakota they are all free on a Sunday, where they basically don't stop partying. I like the idea of it. It's all going to go mental, I think at the moment it's at it's height of it.* (Promoter).'

This deregulation has had an effect on the city's nightlife:

*'The original Sunday laws were stupid. The original Sunday laws said that you could only open on a Sunday if you were a private members club or a free event and even then you had to have a special license for it. This law was to basically prohibit dancing and this law was passed even before the gramophone was even invented. So I think the change in that law was long overdue and it has helped all the clubs massively. It means Sunday clubbing is now a big thing.*

*Sundiessential started it out. Up north we're one of the pioneers of it and Sunday clubbing is great. I think it's a good thing' (Club Worker).*

The liberalisation of the night time economy has gone hand in hand with the increase in large corporate operators. As one Council officer commented: '*I think the market talks at the moment. So the big players are getting in, so its difficult*'. Initially, the deregulation of nightlife seemed to increase crime levels in the city centre. However, crime associated with nightlife activity continues to fall, especially due to staggered opening and the introduction of late night buses.

### **Up in Arms – the response of residents to nightlife growth**

*Where we have got a responsibility is where we have received complaints from neighbours, we've had a number of cases where complaints have been received, and we've got a responsibility to protect the neighbours. So we try and resolve the differences. Sometimes that's successful, sometimes it isn't (Council Officer).*

In recent years there has been a development of night life spaces outside the city centre in areas such as Whiteladies Road. Over the 1990s, there has been a growing organised response to the growth of nightlife venues in this area, which has paved the way for the voice of residents to become a permanent fixture in the area of licensing.

#### **Whiteladies Road. The growth of 'the strip'**

A short length of Whiteladies Road, 'The Strip' or the golden mile, has become a popular drinking area for the 'more sophisticated crowd' over the last 10 years. The Strip and adjoining area contains some 30 licensed premises, with a total customer capacity of about 4000. Several local residents groups feel that this high concentration of themed pubs and bars has already had a detrimental effect on the local community. Issues that have been raised by them include noise disturbance, vandalism and litter. However, mainly it was regarded as a planning issue.

Two local groups have been particularly vocal: **Redland and Cotham Amenities Society**, established in 1974 and the **Aberdeen Road Residents Associations**, established in 1997 as a single-issue organisation aiming to stop the expansion of large, alcohol-dominated venues in the area. This was not an attack on particular types of lifestyles, but a reaction to an impingement on their space by rowdy groups, and the generally high levels of night time usage. '*Obviously there was quite a knock on effect for people living in the area and we decided basically people had, had enough*' (Committee Member).

The latter groups have fought against a number of major corporate pub operators on Whiteladies Road. In one particular case:

*'it was going to be a very big outlet and it was basically going to be a bar, and it was yet another bar on the strip and plus the citing of it and the implications on the residential side roads as well. With the way it would be used and with the servicing of the premises. Because one of the knock on effects of the increase of the big licensed premises has actually been the servicing activities, the deliveries of the lorries, the noise of extractor fans, and associated activities that go with them. Which are environmentally detrimental. So there was the issue of the size of the place the use it would generate the servicing issues and the impact of that on the residential area'* (Committee Member).

The Association originally opposed this license at city council level and at a Public Inquiry. They embarked upon a letter writing campaign, and were able to mount a huge exercise to gather evidence that they would present in court, *'We gave video footage of what it was like already at night and showed that at the public inquiry'* (Committee member). In the end, it was a very well mobilised campaign: *'We were prepared to learn the system learn how to object properly using the system. So it was a huge amount of work and things like it is really hard because people will object to things'*.

This was a significant victory with a number of consequences: *'it was really a landmark decision for the area. They entered into a local consultation exercise and we achieved a supplementary planning guidance for this area.'* (Committee Member). This Planning Guidance introduced restrictions on the use of food and drink and stipulated that a certain percentage of new developments should have restaurant space, where people must eat a substantial meal.

Clearly, such levels of mobilisation are not widespread: *'In terms of making the system work for minority small groups and the ordinary person that lives somewhere it was interesting experience. You can object theoretically if you understand how to do it and the justices system was very fair, the court system is the fairest'* (Committee Member). In this particular case the residents association had the resources to mobilise a large campaign against a major pub operator. In other parts of the city, there has not been the same success. However, some would argue that the impingement on residential amenities is much greater on Whiteladies Road than elsewhere.

The residents groups have also been putting pressure on the government over the proposed changes in licensing law, as they believe *'the separation of licensing and planning worked better really and having licensing within the judicial system makes it very fair and impartial'*.

## Promotional and advocacy groups

Promotional agencies, listings magazines, advocacy groups, community groups, and festival organisers play an important role in Bristol night time economy. In particular Venue Magazine, celebrating its 500 issue in 2001, plays a key role in promoting local music and cultural events. Venue believe they have been actively promoting the campaign for 24 hour licensing for years:

*It's something we've actively campaigned for in Venue for years and years and years 24 hour drinks licensing and 24 hour club licensing. I thinks that's gonna be within the next 5 years happen. It will be like France, you will have to have a license to sell alcohol and liquor – but will be up to you when you close.*

Venue is not the only listings magazine in Bristol. Others include Adhoc, This is Bristol, What's on Bristol, Synergy and The Fly, many of which are aimed at specialist music and nightlife communities.

Bristol Community Development Partnership has also plays a major role in the pursuit of a specific cultural vision for the city based upon the belief in partnership, place promotion (often through flagship developments) and the idea of the creative city, especially through the role of media and new technologies. BCDP ha been established for nearly 10 years and are key players in the bid for City of Culture 2008. Clearly, each of these different advocacy groups pursue different understandings of art, culture and nightlife.

## The invisible voice of the consumers

Often the views of the consumers are not recognised or recorded, especially in terms of how nightlife should be designed. Bristol City Council undertook a City Centre Research Project with young people who were seen to be experiencing social exclusion. The purpose of this research was to gain an understanding of needs, concerns and aspirations of young people in their perception and use of the city centre. Further, 'Training Exchange' carried out research with young people aged 11-25 years old who experience social exclusion, predominantly using semi-structured group/interviews and discussions.

The main themes and concerns outlined by the young people interviewed were the needs for safety improvement in the city, more police presence and increased street lighting. People feel unsafe at night and some interviewees had been mugged and assaulted, and others had experienced homophobia. Improved public transport was urged, which has been acknowledged through the introduction of the night buses.

Young people in the research seemed particularly concerned about the segregated nature of the city centre and many were afraid of walking through Broadmead as it is not clearly linked to the Waterfront and Park Street. They feel that there need to be linkages between areas of the city. Moreover, they felt the city centre had only been developed for tourists, rather than local people.

### ***Issues in regulation***

#### **Licensing and beyond**

The current Labour administration is attempting to overhaul the liquor licensing regulations in England and Wales, in part to help alleviate drink related crime and violence related to the stop:go approach to licensing hours. By bringing us into line with our European counterparts through staggered and later closing times, it is hoped that violence and drinking-related crimes can be dissipated. As outlined in table 3.1, the proposed changes are relatively far reaching.

It is clear that Bristol has been at the forefront of developing a 24-hour night time economy and it is interesting that this was built on the belief that by staggering hours it would lead to the reduction in crime. It seems that spreading out the number of people congregating in the centre of the city has had a positive effect. However, if licensing law is relaxed even further, many pub operators believe it will have little impact on their opening hours because staff will not want to work those hours and the issue of extra overheads. As one bar manager commented:

*I think the people in England predominantly know the drinking times and they adapt to those drinking times. If we stay open 24-hours the place will still be empty by 3 O'clock. Because everybody will be so drunk. Whereas in Europe there are loads of places open 24-hours people take it slow they're in no rush. It's all social. Whereas here it's quick run in drink as much as possible, make a twat of ourselves, dance a bit, and off we go home again.*

Further, club operators were concerned about the effects on their business:

*if you can keep selling alcohol longer then your going to because that's where a venue makes most of it's money. The only thing that will be a slight worry as I said before you'll get even more bars staying open later. So less people will be wanting to come out. I think we will definitely have more people here and we will be able to do more changes, once people know they can drink till 4. I don't think we will stay open much later than that because it is just too long and it becomes a drain on resources and past 4 O'clock most people are either too pissed or you don't want them to get anymore drunk because then they just become a problem' (Club Employee).*

It is clear that there is a need to overhaul many of the archaic licensing legislations. As a police officer involved in licensing commented:

*If a pub simply wants to have an extra hour drinking, with the same customers he has a quiet environment, he can't do that under present law. He must put on music and dancing so therefore he turns from being a quiet pub with a desired extra hour, into something he never wanted and the character changes. So we all accept that we need to change that generally, because what most people want is simply another hour more drinking time, in an environment which they enjoy. But they can't. We are all aware of those anomalies really and probably the archaic nature of the law' (Licensing Sergeant).*

Interestingly, it seems as consumers have become accustomed to later opening hours in Bristol, their demands for further extensions in opening hours have increased. Not content with 2am openings, in Bristol many people we spoke to wanted to see 4am opening: '*a lot of places a lot of clubs a lot of people go to bed at 4 but a lot of clubs do not stay open until 4 and they've been times when it has come to 2 o'clock I am still raring to go happy to stay out I am not saying every club should stay open until that time but there is a need and a demand*' (Jackie).

What is clear is that for the foreseeable future, traditional pubs are being forced to change into rowdier places, attracting a new crowd of late night consumers. Many dissenting voices have emerged. For example, the Redland and Cotham Amenities Society have voiced their own concerns about the relaxation of licensing laws. They feel that the Licensing White Paper is based "*on the assumption that more flexibility, including longer hours of drinking, will encourage, cool and 'continental attitude'*". They have collated much evidence to suggest otherwise. Firstly they believe that extended drinking hours, will increase the consumption of alcohol. They also feel that there will be a rise in public nuisance and anti-social behaviour that will ultimately put increasing pressure on police resources. There is also an assumption that removing standardised closing hours will lead to staggered closing times. But the association believes that commercial pressures and competition will mean that premises will still stay open for the same length of time, though all a little later.

The local police recognise some of these concerns and believe that there may be more crime and disorder initially, as people take advantage of longer drinking times and 'binge drink'. But over time they believe it will have a positive effect on alcohol related crime, and change the general philosophy of 'going out'.

We are still waiting to know whether the power of issuing licenses will be transferred to local government. Some interesting opinions have emerged in this debate. Many pub operators believe that the shift is a concern as it will no longer be in the hands of an independent body such as the magistrates. Others feel it will just make the system easier as it will be a one stop shop. The associations in Cotham, Redland and Aberdeen Road agree that the licensing

authority would be better served by an independent body. As it stands, the magistrates who hear all the licensing applications are a specially trained body with no individual interests. The group's major concern is that the proposed local authority committee may be influenced by other local political agendas.

## **Zoning**

*Rather like a theme park Bristol offers a number of abrupt zones segregated by the random legacy of airborne destruction, incomplete 60s town planning, rigid conservation policies, swollen traffic, ill-directed entrepreneurial zeal and plain bad luck...". (Vickers, 1988)*

Vicker's gloomy interpretation of Bristol highlights the dire post-war planning which has crippled Bristol greatly. As a city it was badly bombed during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, the planners were desperate to see some order back in the city, quickly re-building the centre, leaving many parts disjointed from the rest.

Broadmead area is a particular case in point. It is a mono-functional area where activity rarely extends beyond the 5pm flight. Plans are afoot to change the image of the area. "*The aim is to rid Broadmead of its rather bland, closed-at-6 reputation and, by 2007, recreate an entirely different "living city"*" (BEP:26/1/2001). Bristol is looking at the success of Manchester and Glasgow as living examples of what can be achieved. A £500 million development is to be undertaken to attempt to make Broadmead into a more attractive, exciting and diverse place, changing it from a shopping complex into a multi-purpose living centre, including housing, leisure and other facilities.

The growth of nightlife is reinforcing some of the old problems associated with functional land use zoning. In particular, the Harbourside and the Centre are becoming late night entertainment ghettos geared towards alcohol consumption, regardless of what the promotional material says.

## **City centre living versus city centre leisure**

One way in which such mono-functionalism is being countered is through encouraging city centre living in Bristol:

*The working worm has turned. Now the bright young things actually want to live in the city centre in flats with river views close to their offices, within walking distance of the café society which is flourishing in the regenerated dockland Harbourside. But much of the driving force towards a city centre society which never sleeps is the growing number of students moving into Bristol's hub. Progressive young companies like Unite are busy turning old office blocks or a derelict leisure centre*

*into fashionable mid-town apartment blocks full of undergraduates looking for a good time after a hard day's learning (The city that never sleeps Tavener 5/12/00).*

The centre of Bristol is home to a relatively small but increasing population. In 1991 there were about 6,800 permanent residents in the City Centre Strategy area, plus about 500-1000 students in term time. Since then the population of the city centre has increased by about one-third. In April 2001 it was estimated that the Cabot ward (roughly equating to the city centre) contained just over 11,000 people, 50% of whom were aged between 18-29. The recovery of population in the 1990s is partly due to an increase in student accommodation. About 1400 additional students now live in the city centre, mainly due to the conversion of surplus office space into about 200 'cluster flats' (*Research and Monitoring Team for Strategic and Citywide Policy, Bristol City Council, 2001*).

Central government agendas to encourage city centre living, the current range of housing projects to come on stream coupled with the suitability of city centre living for the growing student population will see the city centre population increase more over the next few years. At the moment, there are few conflicts between leisure and residential use. However, as both nightlife and residential development continue apace, there is likely to be a round of new objections against continued nightlife growth from the newly growing city centre population.

### **Regulating the city centre. Sharing the responsibility**

*It's alcohol it wipes away everybody's inhibitions, takes away all their common sense and it's all down to alcohol and I think the breweries have a major role to play in the blame (Door Security Staff).*

As outlined earlier there has been a recognition by both the local authority and the police that the large breweries and pub companies must take some responsibility for late night disorder as they sell alcohol in large amounts every Friday and Saturday. The police quite rightly are beginning to recognise that nightlife operators have an obligation to help policing:

*At the end of the day they're creating the problem by selling drink to people in excess, so they get drunk. So they need to make sure their action is directed towards sensible drinking policies in terms of age and in terms of the amount people drink. So there's a problem there and they should be dealing with it not the Police. So the concern is there and in many respects it is intelligent use of your resources, not throwing resources at a problem (Police officer)*

Part of the problem is that the raison d'être of large corporate leisure companies is profit rather than social cohesion. As one bar manager commented:

*At the end of the day breweries and major companies are run by accountants. All they're interested in is how much profit is being made. Because they've got to service their share holders. And that's the reality that we have to live with'.*

Financial contributions from private sources increase the prospects of private policing in the UK. Such schemes are beginning to be introduced in Bristol:

*'An interesting project in Broadmead is that they are actually funding their own Police Force. Buying 6 police officers that are dedicated to that area 24 hour, from Somerset and Avon police. There will be 6 police officers and a Sergeant. They will be paying their salaries. I think it's the first one in the country and it could be setting a precedence. It could be a sensible approach, the money will be coming from Broadmead board who will get all their money from the businesses. Businesses will be putting money back in' (Council Officer).*

While there is a recognition of a need for a changing philosophy of city centre nightlife and the development of a more cosmopolitan feel and a move away from the focus on vertical drinking, there is less awareness of how to achieve this. The private funding of police by nightlife operators, while solving the problems of drunken violence in the short term by increasing the number of police, will still not tackle the heart of the problem – the lack of a diverse range of nightlife activities, a predominance of mainstream drinking culture based around vertical drinking and wider social, economic and psychological problems which lead many young people into a culture of heavy drinking. In particular, there also needs to be more awareness of self regulation as an alternative to more policing. The police do recognise that there is a different level of potential disorder depending on the type of premises. They believe: '*where the emphasis isn't on drinking, it's on eating and drinking as well there is less chance of problem*'. In contrast, places they perceived as hotspots tended: '*to have a larger capacity and more people there and the emphasis is on drinking rather than food*'.

## **Saturation Point**

There was a general consensus within the industry that around 8 months ago Bristol had reached saturation point, after two new super clubs had emerged making the level of venues reach new heights. Though this has occurred it has not really affected the number of people applying for licenses and the number of premises closing down:

*You are potentially getting to saturation point and I can't see how all these places are going to survive. Just go down Corn Street on a Friday Night and there's a handful of pubs that are half full. I think we need to start questioning how local authorities are going to get some power over this. We can't determine the numbers at the moment and its key to creating an atmosphere in the city centre. It's great to have all these places, but when do they go bust' (City Centre Manager).*

Bristol has reached a point where it is seeing who can survive in this hyper-competitive market, and it seems that the independent market is the most likely to suffer, as it does not have the same financial support as large corporate enterprises. However, the reality may be that: '*I hear everyone's suffering because there are not enough people to go around. It was very groundbreaking at the time, everyone from London got excited came to Bristol and there are not enough people*' (Independent Bar Owner).

One club employee took a more neo-Darwinist approach to the situation of saturation point the nightlife market is facing: '*You know the badly run clubs and the badly run nights won't do well and the good nights will. It will just be the normal law of the jungle, the fittest will survive. The rest won't be able to carry on and then it will just get to the point where it will be saturated, but everyone will be happy enough with enough people. Because it can't go on forever*' (Club Employee). Most recently, there is evidence of a slow down in investment as investors are recognising that there are fewer customers out there.

### **Mutual Understanding and Partnerships**

The Bristol approach to nightlife has been founded on partnership, with little evidence of hostility between different forms of regulators. Though the Magistrates are suggesting it was their initiative to pro-actively move the city's night time economy towards a 24-hours opening, it does highlight the clear mutual partnership work that has been done to achieve this. The council are keen to work with the police, so they can align their policies to achieve both agencies' objectives. The local authority suggested the de-regulation of the city centre; '*was on the basis of assisting the Police in the city centre*'.

Recently there has also been a clear shift towards getting the leisure industry on-board as well, based on an understanding that more communication will facilitate constructive work around combating crime and disorder. '*I say we are trying to work with the industry, we're trying to work with them in partnership. We're not here to put unreasonable restrictions on them. We are not here to be a dinosaur and to be a thorn in the side of the road and clearly nobody wants people not to be able to trade on New Years Eve*' (Licensing Sergeant).

The police and the council are still concerned about the level of drunkenness in Bristol city centre at weekends and all are keen to work with licensees to try and control this. In informal discussions licensees are regularly urged to resist selling alcohol to people already under the influence of excessive levels of alcohol.

Bristol, then, represents a very liberal, yet level-headed and partnership-based, regulatory framework. Agencies are keen to help local business thrive in this city as long as they act responsibly and follow all the correct procedures, especially in terms of health and safety. They do not go out of their way to find offending premises and generally act upon complaints and evidence of disorder. However, it is worth bearing in mind the disadvantages placed on smaller entrepreneurs in such a competitive market and the fact that consumers' views are rarely part of this partnership approach.

### **Future Priorities: Balancing corporate growth and creativity**

*'You can almost draw a blue print for a city centre, the things they need. You need CCTV; you need a form of policing. That's the more draconian approach. But other things you need are a very good taxi service, you need late buses, you need alternative venues for people to go when the clubs have shut' (council officer).*

The need for CCTV has been clearly laid out by the council. But alongside this the council are trying to tackle Bristol's appalling public transport system. It is not helped by the fact that Bristol is a fairly difficult city to move around in due to its historic urban form. However the new Night Flyer night bus service running on 8 different routes throughout the city from 12am to 6am has proved popular. It has been extremely popular and the council are looking to extend the service:

*'They've been going for 6-7 months now and the figures are absolutely tremendous, the numbers of people who use them, and what's interesting, the things we hadn't thought about. We did think about the safety and security of drivers and worked with the bus companies and their trade unions about making sure the drivers were safe... And there have been very few incidents, violent incidents or anything like that on the buses. The police say that they largely police themselves, cos anybody whose doing anything they shouldn't be doing the rest of the bus kind of 'don't be so bloody stupid' throw them off themselves. So the driver doesn't have very much of a role in it and the police actually are so supportive of it. They say there had been less violent incidents on the centre since the night buses came in, because a lot of the tinderbox was along in the taxi queues when people had to wait so long for taxis' (Local Councillor).*

The council are also keen to combat the 'kebab and fight' mentality around the city post-2am. They believe that this is largely due to people being made to wait in the taxi ranks for long periods of time. They are keen to give people the opportunity and choice to go to other places:

*'In Bristol at 2 in the morning you go for a kebab and a fight. But what I'd like to see is the option to go to a coffee shop outside, we've not got that culture in Bristol at all. Increase taxi ranks, night buses, temporary food units. One of the big problems was people queuing outside food outlets. Loads of litter and fights. Now you've got more choices.' (Council Officer).*

There is a growing focus on late night venues other than pubs, clubs and bars, places people go after they have been drinking. '*Almost you wish that there was somewhere to go for a coffee and just a chill out. Rather than having to go out with a lot of drunks*' (Local Councillor). The council have also put plans forward for additional food outlets to alleviate the hoards that converge outside the kebabs shops along Augustine's Parade/bottom of Park Street. The council are beginning to look beyond their preoccupation with CCTV for more self-sustaining and participatory answers. One local promoter had some guidance in this respect:

*They [Council] just need to pay a lot more attention to how to encourage the natural cultural diversity of city to influence everyone who comes here and everyone who lives here. I think it would be a much more exciting place to be and ultimately a lot more affluent if they did stuff. It's very short term isn't it, they short term money to do what ever and that's why when you look at the centre it's so disgusting and you wonder why they spent so much money on it. Essentially all they've done is created a fighting ring, like a gladiatorial kind of. You've got your little fort people to smash mattes head against you've got the fountains for pushing girls and stuff. Its horrible stones are horrible. I guarantee that centre cost a hell of a lot of money and they will probably make more bars to compensate.*

## Chapter 4. Consuming Nightlife

### ***Change trends in nightlife consumption. Changing contexts for young people***

The initial section of this chapter presents a number of wider social trends and changes in consumption behaviour which are affecting the lives of young people and their night life activities. We will then go on to highlight how these general trends are modified in the specific context of Bristol.

First, what we mean by 'youth' is open to interpretation and needs clarifying. The meaning of the term changes constantly and it is clear that 'youth' increasingly refers to a period which extends beyond being an adolescent or teenager to a 'post-adolescent' or 'pre-family' stage. By this we are referring to well recognised delayed transitions into adulthood, marriage or full time work due to staying on in education and training, increased dependency on the parental household, erosion of income benefits or student grants and a changing labour market. This suspension of adult roles has meant that increasing numbers of young adults are remaining at home into their 20s and even early 30s, and ironically have more disposable income for consumer spending.

Second, a parallel trend is that over the last few decades there has been evidence of a growing dissatisfaction amongst groups of young people towards the balance between work and play (Hollands, 1998), and in particular a reaction against the constraints of the work ethic (Kane, 2000; Wilkinson, 1995). Some young adults who are seeking to redress the balance between work and play, reject low-paid, low-skilled jobs, while others have become dissatisfied with consumer and corporate culture.

Third, the greying and ageing of the UK population has become a well established phenomenon in which young people will constitute a smaller proportion of the total population than in the past. As a result, many leisure and entertainment operators now see their financial future not so much with teenagers, but with 'post adolescents', family and even 'post-family' leisure associated with empty-nesters and baby boomers due to their numerical dominance and assumed greater levels of disposable income. This older population will spend more of their leisure time on mixed-use, family venues, fitness centres, restaurants, in-home entertainment and holidays in the future.

Finally, many young people continue to face ingrained social and economic problems. In spite of opportunities opened up by 'New Deals' and the so-called dot-com revolution, the vast

majority of young adults entered the millennium with, at best, low-paid, low-skilled temporary employment. In 1999, the unemployment rate for those aged 16-24 outside higher education was twice that for the rest of the working population (Brockes, 2000). In terms of young people's use of city centre nightlife, there is a continuing polarisation between highly mobile, 'cash-rich, time-poor' groups of young people who can access a variety of entertainment choices and those experiencing unemployment, unstable employment, low wages, high debt and restricted leisure opportunities (Ball et al, 2000). Nevertheless, while social groups ABC1s may have higher wage levels than those in social groups C2DE's, the former may show a greater emphasis on saving or buy consumer goods with the latter more willing to continue partying despite economic hardship and low wages.

### ***Trends in nightlife consumption***

Nightlife activity is a significant part of most young people's lives in Britain. With around two-thirds of city-centre populations aged between 15 to 44 (Mintel, 2000a:14), cities are reasserting themselves as leisure and entertainment hubs for young people. Visiting pubs and clubs is a core element of young people's lifestyles. Eighty percent visited pubs and clubs in 1999, an increase of 12% over the last 5 years (Mintel, 2000b:15). The 15-24 year old group is ten times more likely to be a frequent visitor to a club, with 52% going once a month or more (Mintel, 1998:22). While marital status is a major influence on clubbing, there is little significant overall difference between those working and those not working, a finding skewed perhaps by high levels of clubbing by students. While night club admissions continue to rise, the number of visitors has fallen from 17 m to 15.7m between 1998-9. In other words, while night clubbing is becoming less popular in general, it appears that there is a 'hard core' group of youngsters who are going out more frequently than before. The over-25 'rave generation', continue to visit clubs and as a result 'clubbing will remain as popular as it is now, and more sophisticated night clubs will cater for die-hard party animals in their thirties' (Mintel, 2000b, 45).

Key to understanding such figures are the ways in which the experience of going out to night-clubs, bars and pubs has changed drastically over the last decade, largely through the advent of dance music. Firstly night clubs have largely moved away from the stereotypes associated with violence and excessive drinking in the wake of the phenomenon of 'clubbing' which emerged from the 'one-nation' dance, rave, and to a certain extent drug cultures of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The club scene has now diversified, grown and fractured along the lines of a number of smaller consumer groups and musical styles which represent a growing sophistication and exactitude amongst clubbers who demand more customer service, better venues and more

sophisticated sound/light equipment. Since the mid 1990s, the dance club scene has to a certain extent been commercialised and a distinction between underground and mainstream clubs has emerged (Collins, 1997; Thornton, 1995).

The experience of going to the pub has also been transformed as the traditional experience based around dingy, male dominated ale houses has been eroded by the emergence of bar and cafe-bar culture which offer increased levels of customer service, mixed uses, blending food with music and drinking a greater diversity of alcohol products in environments which involve high levels of design, all of which would suggest that they have become more female friendly. Some pubs and bars have matured into pre-club venues - hybrid half-club, half-pubs - which may have eroded the popularity of more traditional night clubs as a consumption destination. Reasons which account for this shift from club culture to bar culture are: the ability to offer DJ based music but with door prices considerably lower than night clubs; the disillusionment of entrepreneurs from the late 1980s and 1990s with the club scene and their move into the bar scene; the ability to achieve higher rates of return from bars with the introduction of later licenses; problems associated with traditional night-club culture such as drugs and violence; the fragmentation of consumer demand towards smaller scale and more specialised musical preferences; and finally, the emergence of new audiences seeking a more relaxed and quieter atmosphere in bars rather than clubs. There are significant regional variations to these overall consumption trends with the highest number of frequent visitors to clubs clustered around the city-regions of Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and the lowest in the South (excluding London) (Mintel, 1998). In sum, the consumer experience of night clubs and pubs has changed dramatically over the last 20 years.

Consumption choices in live music in city centres has also changed dramatically over the last decade. Young adults in the 15-24 year old group make up 27% of all visits to pop and rock concerts (Mintel, 2000b: 11), yet with this age group declining in numbers, small scale live music in many city centres has disappeared. Other reasons for its decline include the popularity of commercial chart music, the advent of large scale arena venues and because live music is seen by many commercial operators as cutting into drinking space and profit margins. In other words, live music literally takes up space in the form of a band stage and a dance floor, thereby cutting down on vertical drinking space.

Motivations for night life activity are wide and complex. In many cases it is simply a desire for a good time or letting-go, meeting a partner or having casual sex. However, changes in the night club and pub/bar sectors mean that music, socialising, atmosphere and dancing are now amongst

the main motivations for a night out (Hollands, 1995). More fragmented, experimental 'mix and match' behavioural patterns are evident in which different styles and types of venues are woven together to create a night-out. What is also evident is the endurance of 'tribal' patterns of behaviour, in which groups of young people feel a strong sense of belonging to particular areas or particular groups of venues (Bennett, 2000). Yet, these are minority patterns and as we outline below, and in the issues section (chapter 5) city centres remain highly segmented and socially divided spaces when it comes to nightlife, highly structured around drinking circuits or areas each with their own set of codes, dress styles, language and tastes.

City centre night life continues to face challenges from home based activities, financial constraints, the increased cost of city centre entertainment and issues of safety, travel and access. The most popular leisure time activities for pre-family adults were visiting friends and relatives, listening to music or reading (Mintel, 2000b). Such trends are likely to increase as the population continues to age and out-of-town leisure, such as video rentals and off-license trade, continues to expand. Moreover, the growing standardisation and corporatisation of city centre leisure is encouraging many consumers to opt for more traditional pastimes or to create their own nightlife in the form of house parties or 'free parties'. However, considering the continuing upward trend in investment and development in nightlife activity, for the foreseeable future young people, especially the more affluent and mobile ones, will be significant consumers of city centre entertainment.

### ***Young people, drugs and alcohol***

More than many other countries in Europe, the consumption of alcohol, and increasingly drugs, shapes young people's nightlife activities in Britain. The retail beer market is valued at £3B in the UK and more than 9m adults in this country drink at levels which endanger their long term health (G. Younge, 'Booze nation, *The Guardian* 19/12/00, 2-3). Estimated alcohol consumption in the UK has increased from 5.07 litres in 1957 to 9.44 litres in 1998. Moreover, 36% of males and 25% of females aged 16-24 drank over the selected weekly limit of alcohol (21 units for men, 14 units for women) in 1998-99 (General Household Survey, 1999). However, while alcohol consumption overall is not significantly higher in the UK than in many other EU countries, the crucial difference is that people often drink to get drunk rather than drink with food or as part of other social activities. Such problems are confounded by the current licensing laws which condense drinking into a few hours and promote binge drinking and aggressive behaviour. In terms of young people's drinking habits, in the 1930s 18-24 year olds were the lightest drinkers in the population. By the 1980s this situation had reversed (Institute for Alcohol

Studies, 2000). Underage drinking is on the increase with 50% of 15 year olds reported to have drunk alcohol and under 18 year olds accounting for 7% of all drunk related convictions (*ibid*).

The role of drinking alcohol then has changed in society. In the days of ale houses, drinking was associated with masculinity and the rituals and relationships of the workplace, a rite of passage into adulthood where the young 'learnt to drink' through controlled 'session drinking' led by an experienced drinker who knew their limit (Gofton, 1983). The changes which have been wrought on pubs over the last few decades through the advent of lagers, ciders, spirits and the presence of more women, has altered the role of drinking from a largely male ritual a to broader lifestyle phenomenon associated with fun, hedonism and courtship. Moreover, drinking in city centres has more and more become the preserve of the young, who in contrast to their more mature predecessors sometimes have problems handling their drink (Coffield and Gofton, 1994). In this context, concern over public disorder in urban centres, expressed through references to 'yob cities' has become commonplace in the media, leading to discussions about shutting down 'thug pubs' and on the spot fines to curtail drink-fuelled violence and vandalism.

The transformation of drinking in a community based context to a profit driven lifestyle activity, continues apace. The nature of alcohol consumption has changed with lager sales overtaking those of ales and stout for the first time in 1998 and now accounts for 66% of volume sales (Mintel, 2000b). Alcohol consumption has also become more women-friendly and geared towards designer drinks, especially through the growth in popularity of wine, spirits, bottled beers and alco-pops (Pattison, 2000). The explosion of alcohol products the 1990s has also witnessed the emergence of the 'repertoire drinker' who consumes a variety of drinks over the course of the same night. Alcohol consumption is also increasingly becoming driven by brands with the top ten branded drinks accounting for 90% of pub sales. Moreover, beer sales are controlled by a smaller number of firms with three brewers - Scottish and Newcastle, Interbrew (recent purchasers of Bass and Whitbread breweries) and Carlsberg-Tetley - now controlling the vast majority of the beer sales in the UK.

Alcohol consumption and pub attendance has been influenced by the growth of dance and drug culture. While pub attendance for all age groups actually fell by 20% between 1987-97, illegal drug taking has doubled to nearly 30%. The brewing industry is acutely aware of the threat to their core business from club culture and illegal drugs and the introduction of alcopops, energy drinks such as Red Bull aimed at clubbers and the development of new bar-club hybrids to regain ground lost from them, have been introduced. There is evidence, that some young people are turning their back on legal drugs such as alcohol consumption in pubs towards taking illegal

drugs such as ecstasy in clubs (Henderson, 1997) or staying home to drink and smoke (Coffield and Gofton, 1994). Illegal drugs are now a common part of youth consumption. Amongst 16-29 year olds, 49% admitted to ever taking any drug with 42% ever taken cannabis, 20% amphetamines, 11% LSD, 10% ecstasy and 16% poppers (British Crime Survey, 1998).

### ***Experiencing Bristol's nightlife***

*It's a melting pot. Bristol, it's just got so much going on, so many different kinds of people, who rub along together (Laura).*

*We've got a much more diverse area that's getting bigger I think it's expanding outwards, and instead of having the tightly controlled centre that this is where it is, you've now got areas where you've got slightly different variations on the same theme' (Local Councillor).*

*Bristol's quite regional, there's a city centre person who comes in. There's another sort of person who might go up to Clifton or Whiteladies Road. Another group who might go up to Gloucester Road. It's getting zoned like other cities. I would like to see the city centre become more cosmopolitan and different bars would help create this' (City Centre Manager).*

As the above quotes illustrate, Bristol has a variety of nightlife centres. Each of these areas, seem to have varying tempos, clientele and atmospheres, for example cinema and theatre go-ers leaving from 9pm, Whiteladies Road closing at 11pm alongside some pubs in the city, more city centre pubs closing at 12am and 1 am, city centre clubs closing at 2am, Stokes Croft and Old Market finishing at 4 am. Different areas, then, cater for different groups:

Eating, drinking and clubbing appear to have grown in national popularity and importance and during the last decade Bristol has experienced a wave of growth of new national corporate venues to reflect this. As the opening hours have been extended, the types of venues have changed dramatically - as we have already mentioned we have seen the introduction of café bars, and a rise in themed pubs and late night venues. The term 'bar' seems to be symbolic of the changes in Bristol's scene. Historically Bristol's club scene was based on a network of smaller clubs with a more recent explosion of super clubs, exemplifying a national trend towards clubbing, and a movement away from live music venues. However, alongside this there has been the general decline in traditional, independent pubs. But for some consumers it seems; '*it's almost as if the more choice we get, the less choice we actually have*' (Ian). There has been an increase of clubs that have been using big name DJs to draw in the crowds reflecting an emphasis on money rather than creativity. The style and musical policy of larger corporate owned venues are often dictated from Head Office company policies and by their share holders rather than by consumer demand.

## Style Nightlife

Most cities are attempting to shake off images of ale houses and rowdy night clubs and rebrand themselves as cosmopolitan, stylish locations. The nature of the consumer experience in such contexts is based around more style-oriented, mixed use bar and café venues in which drinking becomes ancillary to eating, talking, music or other forms of cultural activity. Bristol, more than many other cities, has witnessed this style revolution amongst its nightlife spaces.

With the development of many different areas of the city, Whiteladies Road has emerged as an ‘up-market, classy’ suburban nightlife destination to rival city centre nightlife. It is a popular area to live within the wealthier student populations and is home to a large population of professional middle class groups.

Whiteladies Road is a gateway to the city and has a longer history as a place of social interaction and entertainment. Recent growth has led to a variety of nightlife venues in the area with new, trendy corporate pubs placed between the traditional drinking establishments that have been in the area for many years. Men propping up the bar of the local ale house, as they have done for generations, sit beside the new trendy bar where young professionals are drinking the latest cocktail, while not far away students are downing pints in one of the several theme pubs. The area, more commonly known as ‘the strip’, in the last 5 years has been transformed especially through the emergence of wine and style bar concepts. One consumer commented on the style of one venue: *‘It is a bar but you could almost classify it as a wine bar you get your change back on a plate with your receipt’*.

Several of the bars are specifically designed for people to sit outside and be seen. The proprietors are keen to choose the right clientele to project the classy ‘moneyed’ image they want. The Fine Line is a good example of the recent style explosion on Whiteladies Road. It’s interior of trendy pine floor and chrome furniture oozes stylish pretension. Right in the heart of many media and finance companies it attracts many young professionals and the richer student market. As one customer observed, it is catering

*for the people who are really dressed well and if we just turn up looking scruffy in our normal clothes you sort of stand out. Ultimately you just don’t relax do you. You don’t have a good time’ (Sean).*

There is also a growing market of style bars in the city centre especially around the night club Rock, with bars such as Ether, e-shed, and Sukoshi a Japanese Champagne bar. Rock opened on the back of the success of its sister club in London, an exclusive celebrity haunt. Though the Bristol Rock club is meant to have a much more open policy, it is attracting the type of clientele

that like to dress up for a night out and are attracted to these ultra-chic venues. '*I like to get dressed up. I mean going out I like to make it an affair*' (Emma) and there are exclusive elements to it. '*They're on about making a VIP bit upstairs like particularly smart*' (Helen). Clearly, there are a host of social barriers and protocols associated with such places which limits access to this growth in style venues.

### **Mainstream Nightlife**

*The market in Bristol is for the music that The Works plays. A lot of people in Bristol do like a good night out singing to Wham and that is what the biggest interest is (Claire).*

In contrast to the style nightlife of Whiteladies Road, a dominant feature of parts of most British towns and cities every weekend evening is the drunken hedonism which flows from pubs and clubs onto the streets. We have labelled this 'the mainstream' which is characterised by established gender roles and working cultures, pleasure seeking, hedonism and excessive drinking which often leads to outbursts of violence, behaviour which transcends everyday social roles set down in other aspects of life, relationships, courtship and casual sex. Rather than condemning such activity to the moral panics associated with recent discourses on 'yob culture' taking over British cities, it is important to understand the basis for such activity and its place within the broader social and economic changes affecting young people.

Many young people that are out on the weekend to have a hedonistic Friday and Saturday night venture into the heart of Bristol city centre to enjoy some of the pubs, late night venues and mainstream clubs. It seems that many still have a greater affiliation with a more fun-pub like atmosphere, for various reasons such as price, entertainment, or just letting go, rather than the pretensions of style and café bars.

Corn Street is an area which is popular with the townie crowd at weekends, though it is an area constantly under re-development. As a local councillor commented: '*they have tried this before and it never managed to shrug off its townie image*'. The area is currently being upgraded through the introduction of café bars and large chain style bars. In many ways, Corn Street represents the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of bar concepts after developments such as themed Irish and Aussie bars. In the space of 50 metres there are 6 large corporate pubs: JD Wetherspoon, Bar Oz, Toads, Slug and Lettuce, Parisa and Chez Gerald. However, the extent to which such changes in design and introduction of a 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of chain bars are creating a different atmosphere is debatable. In particular, there is little evidence of a shift away from traditional gender roles or a diminishing role of alcohol-dominated consumption.

## The Harbourside development

*“Great ships no longer unload their cargoes here, but the quaysides are far from derelict. Like London and Liverpool, the waterfront is revitalised with bars, internet cafes, floating restaurants, bookshops, galleries and health clubs”* (Pritchard:Observer:25/6/00).

The Harbourside area has undergone massive change in the last decade and in many ways is becoming the focus for mainstream nightlife consumption in Bristol. Such leisure and nightlife based waterfront developments are the jewel in the crown for many post-industrial cities. They take their distinctiveness from their dramatic waterfront locations and the reuse of industrial architecture.

The opening of Arnolfini, Mud Dock cafe and the Watershed media centre, along with the International Youth hostel promoted the area as an art- and culture-based, cosmopolitan, if not expensive, consumption destination. More recently, since the failure of the bid for the Harbourside Centre, several large branded chain bars offering outside seating have opened along with a large nightclub and louder fun pubs. As a result, every weekend evening the area is thronging with loud revellers ranging from students and culture lovers to those, as one of the bar's slogans in the area suggests, 'drinking, dancing and cavorting'. The dense network of bars in the area has created a drinking circuit along the Harbourside. While this is appealing to many people, it has also deterred others: *It's just too busy, too hectic, a bit too loud, people too drunk, a bit of a meat market, people spewing up, that kind of thing, and that's not just my perception like, I have on occasion just ventured down there and just always had a bad night, and thought won't be doing that again in a hurry*'.

Nevertheless, the development of the Harbourside has had a dramatic effect on the surrounding area and has exceeded the Council's expectations. There has been much hope and hype surrounding the opening of the Millennium Square and the @Bristol development. The new leisure quarter at Canon's Marsh has provided the catalyst for the much needed widespread regeneration of the locality, which has laid derelict for the last 20 years. No doubt, it has successfully created a regional focus for leisure, tourism and the arts world (Bristol City Centre Draft Local Plan:1998:4).

Following the success of the Harbourside development there are plans to extend this leisure area further along the river, with a 100ft sweeping European-style Boulevard with a mixture of residential and leisure development. Bristol City Council has been keen to cultivate this continental café bar feel to the city centre and put Bristol on the International stage of urban design. So why has it been so successful? It is clear that the success of Park Street has continued

to filter on to the Harbourside. As one local paper put it: “Now it has been totally refurbished and looks wonderful. I think it is a great centrepiece to this regenerated dock land area and gives it a very attractive core in what is a very cosmopolitan area, which at least rivals northern towns like Manchester or Leeds” (Taverner, 2000:3).

The subsequent layers of development at the Harbourside have resulted in a curious mixture of uses ranging from high art, cinema, multimedia to plain drunkenness and debauchery. Many people have suggested that the growth of large corporate bars has eroded the cosmopolitan nature of the area, and there are signs of tensions between consumers with different aspirations and incomes. Whatever the future of the Harbourside, it has established itself at the heart of the city centre’s nightlife.

One novel aspect of mainstream bars is the extent to which they are offering all-evening entertainment packages which keep consumers in the venue for several hours through a mixture of food, drink and entertainment. This reduces the historic circuit drinking approach to consuming. Bristol, then, is also becoming a mecca for large scale cheesy ‘party clubs’ providing fun, chart music and frolicking for people who want to have a good time and are not really bothered by the type of music that is played as long as they are with their friends. The popularity of the mainstream has much to do with reducing risk and chance during a night out, especially when time and cash are of limited availability for many young consumers. It also seems that people are wary of experimenting beyond what they know and trying something different: *‘I think I’m quite wary of going off the main track’* (Charles). Increasingly, however, consumers are unaware of other consumption opportunities outside the growing mainstream: *‘The question for me is well I wouldn’t know what was there even if I did want to go out’*.

### **So what is a townie?**

Many groups referred to a distinctive type of consumer in the mainstream – the townie. People had quite particular views on townies, seeing them as people who make a real effort when they go out at the weekend and were associated with drink fuelled, sexually charged environments with loud pumping ‘cheesy’ music. There is a specific dress code, involving making a conscious effort to fulfil all door policies such as wearing shoes. As some people observed about ‘townies’:

*‘Chequered shirts and kickers. I know it’s quite difficult but that is what there is. We really try and avoid them’* (Jo).

*'They do dress differently like little skirts and they make more of an effort than students do we are quite happy to go out in our trainers and our tops and things a lot more dressy' (Claire).*

There is a feeling that townies are behind the times and not in touch with the latest fashion and changes in nightlife provision. As one person observed:

*'What I'd probably say about local Bristolians, the local Bristolians, dare I say it, they are a bit behind the times. They're down there in their Ben Shermans and their black polished shoes looking very smart, but acting like wankers' (Paul).*

As Bristol continues to up-grade its bars and clubs to satisfy the affluent clientele it is likely to affect the mainstream market. However, mainstream nightlife continues to play an important part of both the city's culture and economy, as people seek a place of fun and release from the stressful world of work. Places such as The Works and Evolution still command the largest audiences on a weekend.

### **Student Nightlife**

*Monday nights is Rock, Tuesday Night is The Works, Wednesday Night is Kickers, weekend is Creation or the Rock (Cathy).*

*Evolution there is a student night for Bristol University on a Wednesday night at Evolution and the Works do a student night for UWE students on a Tuesday night. We do but a lot of people do Monday nights. You go to the Barclay they do a pound a pint on a Monday night so you go in there and the Lizard Lounge is just across the road (Claire)*

Student nightlife is an important part of the night time economy. There are significant numbers of students in Bristol with more than 23,000 at the University of the West of England and just over 12,000 at the University of Bristol. Combined with Bristol College, the number of FE/HE students in the city is over 40,000. As the above quotes show, like most University cities there is the student circuit for the conventional students. These are generally nights that have been tailor-made for the student market with key clubs nights taking place on Tuesday (student night) and Wednesday (sports night). As one recent newspaper commented: 'The city is forced to compete for the student pound and you are hard pressed to find a city centre pub or bar that is not vying for your custom' (Newey: The Guardian, 9.1.01)

Student Unions play a significant role in many University cities such as Sheffield, Newcastle and Liverpool. However Bristol University Students Union is in a residential area hindering its role as a large-scale entertainment provider. Moreover, the dispersed nature of UWE campus means that it plays a very marginal role in entertainment provision in the city. However, it is interesting to note that the city centre large mainstream clubs have superseded the role of student

unions for being at the forefront of provision for student nightlife. Brannigans, a venue generally designed for older 20-something townie crowd has tried to cash in on the student market promoting their student night as a '*University of Pubbing – a degree in drinking*'. Evolution also host the 'official student nights'. However, Bristol University Students Union has established joint promotional links with these venues.

There does seem to be some divide within the student nightlife, however, between the wealthier students in Clifton, Redland and Cotham and students elsewhere in the city. This is largely to do with the extreme difference in disposable income. Bristol University has a reputation for attracting a proportion of very wealthy students. A local Bristolian felt; '*there is like I suppose the posh ones that get dressed up, you can tell they've got designer clothes on, and they've got rich parents, but there's the other ones that are like skaters, surfers*'. There is certain provision in the city that is aimed at the more traditional middle and upperclass students, especially around Whiteladies Road. Other students recognised the variation in their consumption patterns depending which year of university they were in, especially as they become more aware of what is going on in the city. One guy had already made a decision that he will; '*become a regular in a proper pub*', once he no-longer lives in Halls.

There are mixed feelings about the relationship students have with locals in the city. Some people we spoke to felt students '*bring a good atmosphere to the pubs that we go to and the clubs that we go to*' (Charles). But others felt that they; '*Just inhabit different worlds most of the time*' (Ian). Some students were less positive about how much they were accepted in the city: '*Interaction between each other is on each others territory that is part of it, we are remote and a lot of the locals see the students as a bit of a pain there is stigma on us*' (Cathy). '*Bristol locals rejected Bristol University students because they think we invade their territory*' (Dave). Local townies who are out in the city centre at weekends are perceived by many students to be territorial and see it as their opportunity to go out, rather than students.

Many students also increasingly stay and settle in Bristol, in part due to the strength of the regional economic base, but also because of the strong and varied cultural infrastructure. Also it is a place that many local young people have been moving back to, often to get involved in the alternative scene in Bristol. As a result, there is often a greater blurring of students and locals due to the growing number of young consumers generally in the city.

## The imagined gay community

In 1999 it was suggested that Old Market was becoming the gay village in Bristol: '*they were developing that whole road and its basically going to be the new gay street like Manchester, like Canal Street*' (Mark). Some feared it may become the gay ghetto, others felt the 'Pink Pound' would breathe new life into an area that was desperate for some regeneration.

Historically the area was home to an important market and meeting place on the mediaeval route to Bristol Castle. The council have made it a priority to try and enhance the viability of shops and small businesses along Old Market Street and West Street and they are trying to improve links into the city centre. There has been an increase in housing and occupancy within this area. The council believe that the Temple Quay development next to Old Market will have a knock on effect on the street and they will see improvement. "*The proposed development of Temple Quay will create a new high profile office quarter alongside the Floating Harbour and adjacent to Temple Way. Along with new offices, a public square, footbridge and ancillary leisure uses will be provided*" (City Centre Strategy 1998).

Several years on, and on the surface Old Market still feels like an area suffering from years of neglect. Yet it is clear Old Market is a night life space with various gay venues such as Castros, and Winns Club. There are mixed feelings within Bristol about Old Market with some gay people feeling uncomfortable about being squeezed out of the city centre into the margins of the city into an unsafe area. Some gay consumers expressed their opinions to us:

*Well Old Market. For one, it's a rough area of town. And although the venues are so close together its on a major road with six lanes of traffic, so anyone who is openly gay, openly effeminate, anyone dressed in drag is open to abuse, or to violence or to threats, intimidation. So to try and make that into a gay area is just ridiculous. I've heard of a lot of problems in Old Market, not necessarily just directed at gay people, but straight people as well. With such things as muggings, 9 O'clock in the morning you can get mugged in Old Market. About three weeks ago one of the staff from one of the pubs down there she got mugged and her 7-year-old daughter got beaten up by a mugger. This is at 9 O'clock on a Thursday morning on Old Market. If that's happening in the morning, what's happening in the evening? There's a lot of drug problems in Old Market. Lot of heroin users in that area. So it's not really a safe part of town. (Craig)*

*It's a really rough area, and its got Easton at the end of it, another rough area, drug problems, violence, muggings, the lot. Old Market is not a nice area to walk through, it looks like a dump and gays there not going to go to dumps a lot of them. So I don't like it, I also think it's deserted. There's no life round there, the only reason you go to Old Market is for a sex shop or a sauna or cottaging or something (Paul).*

However, others see that slowly but surely Old Market is developing into a new nightlife space:

*Old Market's quite a growing and thriving area, one club down there is one of Bristol's most popular mixed or gay clubs now. There's quite a number of other venues down there that have proved extremely popular and starting to have small duets playing and things. Generally an up and coming part of town (Community Worker)*

The council is actively supporting the move to encourage gay businesses into Old Market. One councillor commented: '*I was quite happy to support the idea of a gay quarter in Old Market but I didn't think it would happen because the Council said so. It's an economic issue, if gay businesses want to go there that's absolutely fine and if it becomes a centre for gay business then again that's absolutely fine*'. Clearly, there needs to be an awareness that the emergence of a gay village relies on more than just the support of the city council. Moreover, city council intervention can often have the opposite effect: marketing can raise hope values, and then property values and thus squeeze out local entrepreneurs who could develop the scene.

Although Old Market is being debated as the new gay village in Bristol, one must not forget Bristol still has several thriving gay venues in the centre of town. The Pineapple, The Griffin and The Elephant are very popular city centre gay pubs and the Queen Shilling is a major mixed club. But some people feel that these pubs and clubs are not enough: '*There are not many gay venues in Bristol compared with the populations size. If you go somewhere like Manchester, I mean Manchester you've probably got 45 gay venues-friendly venues within a mile and a half radius of each other. Whereas Bristol's got nowhere near that.* (Paul)

The impression among local gay people in Bristol is a change in attitude towards the gay community. There is evidence of more support coming from the council to develop links with the gay community highlighted with the running of a Mardi Gras festival in Bristol for the first time. '*I just think society's attitudes changing. It's a sign of the times. I think because gay pubs and gay clubs have become so much more established now and so much more open. I think gay people have been accepted into the community a lot easier now*' (Craig) There are certain venues that aim to provide the gay community with exclusively gay, tolerant and safe nights.

The main criticism of the gay scene is that there needs to be more variety and that there is a preoccupation with commercial music: '*Unfortunately a lot of the venues are trying to compete for the same customers. Instead of looking at one pubs doing and looking for a niche in the market and trying to take on that. Everybody seems a little bit frightened trying something new*'. With the growth of gay friendly bars such as E Shed, the style revolution in Bristol is likely to increase the gay friendliness of the city centre. However, tensions may emerge as such places sit cheek by jowl with more mainstream venues.

## Clubbing Nightlife

*The main clubs used to be Lakota and Café Blue. If you ever read Musik Magazine listing it would have been those clubs listed from Bristol. But they have gone down now. We have seen London-based firms moving in and they are establishing names like Rock and Slinky (Local Promoter).*

There are a variety of clubbing experiences in Bristol and consumers perceptions of these places differ. We have identified three key categories of clubs within the city i) the large corporate super clubs ii) the alternative clubs iii) the free party scene and iv) middle ground clubs, indie clubs.

### ***(i) Corporate Clubbing and Super Clubs***

Bristol has always attracted many clubbers from outside the city, eager to come to places like Lakota, once deemed in the early nineties as one of the most famous clubs in the country outside London: *'It was just the atmosphere, everyone was just happy for obvious reasons. And smiling. And you'd just go in there and you'd know like if you went every week, you'd just know, you'd see the same faces every week, and say alright mate, alright mate, and just really good DJs and just all my mates were in there and so it was just brilliant'*

The main concern now is that there are too many larger clubs in the city which are competing against each other. Rock, the new superclub to arrive in Bristol is pursuing a model of hiring out the club to large promoters such as Slinky (Bournemouth-based) and Scream, rather than smaller local promoters. The club, then, has a guaranteed income and can focus on sales behind the bar. Rock regards itself as an exclusive club which can be seen by the price of drinks: £4.00 a bottled beer, £6 a vodka and red bull. Rock has been marketing itself towards clubbers from outside the city in this same way. But as one clubber who lives in Bristol suggested he regularly travels to Birmingham for big house nights as the crowds are more reliable and they stay open later. Rock attracts trendy clubbers who are keen to get dressed up, and spend a large amount of money on a night out. But it also attracts *'the pill head kids who go out in town, that's where they go, and in their words, they go to 'get off their heads' and that's why they go there'* (local promoter).

Many of the city centre clubs are offering the same product based around nationally recognised DJs playing commercial music. The following quotes highlight some of the reservations people have concerning such developments:

*The proliferation of city centre clubs all doing the same music policy it seems a waste of time. But most of the people who want to go to sort of fluffy house anyway will all naturally gravitate to the city centre, that's a long established market (Independent Club Manager).*

*Again they are almost like commercial chain clubs they go and re-fit their formula like McDonalds and then they get the same national circuit DJs to come and play the same fodder. It's not very innovative, it's very consumer orientated. I guess if your raving for the first time which most of the people are you know they are getting served up what they want. Bright lights, loud music, drugs. The kids like that just buy it in, lets pay this guy £2,000 to play here because he plays on the radio and the kids will like him. It's corporate; they're just serving up a product (Josh).*

*'The council seem intent on letting people open clubs in huge sheds because they think it's helping Bristol 'scene'. I'd say it was hindering it – still it keeps things underground I guess' (Jo)*

More and more, consumers are heading to the mainstream city centre and are increasingly not aware of other, less commercial consumption choices on the city's fringe. This lack of a diversity of experience may have significant consequences for Bristol's future image: *'The more students come here and just go to Bar Excellence or whatever and don't get real any value out of that other than a basic good time, they're not necessarily gonna want to stay in the city'* (Promoter).

### ***(ii) Alternative spaces, Alternative clubbing***

*'the independent sector in Easton is an important feature of Bristol' (Polly).*

*'if you want to have a proper clubbing next then you go to the likes of St Paul's and stuff completely different areas of Bristol' (Kate).*

As the above quotes highlight beyond the Harbourside, Corn Street and Whiteladies Road there are a number of other arenas for nightlife consumption. Alternative consumption areas cater for particular identity or subcultural groups, such as ethnic minority groups, alternative student subcultures or those groupings based upon particular musical styles such as techno, hip hop, rock, goth and post-punk (Bennett, 2000). Because of the lack of financial strength of the consumers or for reasons of self preservation, such places are typically found on the fringe of city centres. This fringe location is a vital part of the self regulation of the alternative scene as it ensures that attendance is based more upon a desire to attend rather than chance or as part of circuit drinking. As a result, such venues are generally less dependent on door staff. In contrast to mainstream or style venues, consumption on the fringe is driven by factors such as musical appreciation, a desire to meet and chat with like minded people, often mixing pleasure with business and is often characterised by environments which blend a variety of uses such as live music and performing arts with drinking and eating. In many cases, activities are less dictated by beer sales or profit margins. These are present in many different forms, some much more underground than others. Further, in some far reaches of the city there are night life pursuits which operating on a more de-regulated and informal basis to escape the commercialism of the city centre.

However over the last decade, many alternative venues have been squeezed further out of city centres or have closed altogether due to increasing property costs, the changing priorities of pub operators and brewers especially through branding, and age-old moral panics concerning the deviancy of alternative activities. At the same time, fringe or radical youth activity and spaces are sometimes commodified and brought into the mainstream. There are however, important experiential differences between alternative and mainstream venues. As one respondent put it: *'I think there is no sense of say fashion consciousness, it's almost like anti-fashion, you know, and it's a sort of Indie oriented music, people are either making music or listening to music, like non-radio'.*

The atmosphere and clientele is also considered to be different; *'No entrance regulations I guess crucially. Like no dress code, pretty friendly non-pretentious kind of atmosphere, just sit with your mates and chat and have a drink really. music and there's like a bit of a kind of a social worker, caring profession, public sector, sort of feel to it'* (Sean). From this discussion, it is evident that there are many possibilities for consumption outside the mainstream of new style venues and corporate branded environments, which highlights the strength of diversity and creativity in Bristol.

A short walk out of Bristol's city centre reveals a very different nightlife culture. Around the fringe seethes a heady mix of party fused with the politics of the city's underground scene. A walk along Stokes Croft, the city's alternative club destination, or across to Montpelier, St Pauls or Easton in the city's marginal, and in places gentrified, east side reveals countless flyposters advertising events from the underground. As well as the environmental and political posters declaring 'bike it!', 'Vote for nobody in the coming election', 'world car free day – critical mass carnival', there are others advertising nights of party, politics and protest. 'Tactical Frivolity' has recently held a benefit gig for the European tour of the Carnival Caravan against Capitalism at Easton Community Centre, while the '5<sup>th</sup> of May Group' featured a 'resis-dance' event in collaboration with the local squat turned official radical resource centre, the Kebele and its radical monthly publication, Bristle for the prisoner Satpal Ram. Further, the Malcolm X Centre, long-time promoter of black arts and culture in the city has recently organised a 'Resistance Conference' offering a chance to 'discuss and participate in issues you don't hear about on the news'.

Stokes Croft is an alternative nightlife space close to the city centre and home to clubs offering something different to the mainstream clubs in town. Originally Stokes Croft was an elegant Georgian suburb to the city centre and operated as an important gateway to the city from the

north. The neighbourhood has suffered greatly from dereliction and high levels of neglect as other parts of the city have been favoured for commercial development. Over the last few decades, this area of the city has suffered severely from various incidents of crime and a bad reputation for disorder due to its proximity to St Paul's. There are several housing projects in progress or in the pipelines around the Stokes Croft area which the Council are hoping will help stabilise the area. The new Redrow housing development, 52°04, has already sold 97% of the properties. Stokes Croft has also been included in the plans for CCTV.

Yet the area still suffers greatly from crime (such as robbery) and disorder. It has one of the highest crime records in the South West. One of the major clubs in the area had its license revoked due to a gun incident, which only reinforced the stereotypical image of the road. Many pub owners from the area felt that the policing of the city centre focuses on Broadmead and around St Augustine's Parade and that Stokes Croft had a very low Police presence. *'They always say all these horrible things happen on Stokes Croft, and where are the Police then. But where are the Police you go to Broadmead and they're like flies around shit. I've been to licensee meetings and the Police are there and there are very friendly and understanding, but its due to man power and money and Stokes Croft never seems to get any money'* (Bar Owner).

Those consumers who do not go to Stokes Croft often accept the negative perceptions of crime associated with the area which are more likely to keep them within the confines of the city centre. As one person commented:

*Basically people who want to go a little bit further because they know it is going to be good music or stuff, it is not really cheesy, it is sometimes a bit dodgy and dangerous round there. I saw something dodgy happening in The Maze. You have to get a taxi there (Sally).*

One of Bristol's strong characteristics is the alternative music scene, largely on the city's periphery, not least in the heart of Easton, a vibrant community west of the city. The underground music arena boasts a distinctive infrastructure to the corporate networks of pubs in Bristol's city centre. As one local promoter commented: *'Everybody playing produced their own songs produced their own music. So it's quite unique. It's not like you're going anywhere else and you hear the same kind of records'* (Local Promoter).

**New Trinity Centre** described as an alternative to "fluffy house nights" held in the city centre clubs, has been operating as a Community Centre for the last twenty years. Public Enemy said it was 'the first place of credibility they had come across in the UK'. Over the years it has risen to be a nationally acclaimed venue, especially for hosting live music events. Originally a church, it was de-consecrated and converted for community use. As one of the managers commented:

*'Its largely been geared as a community centre, and what a great place to put some bands on, I say its music policy has usually been in place as a way of supporting community activities. Everywhere we feel caters for the mass market, so as well as putting on events that will interest the mass market, we also put on more diverse events that the mass market would shy away from because they are 100% profit-based. As we are not 100% profit based we can afford to diversify and support'. When asked why they felt it had been so successful they replied: 'partly because of the grass roots feel, partly because of the intrinsic suitability of the structure'.*

**Easton Community Centre** established back in 1990 has been open for over 10 years, serving as a space for alternative, non-commercial, non-profit making nights. It serves as an ideal venue for more alternative underground events only charging £350 for the rent of the premises. In the past it has played a historic role in the techno and drum and bass scene in Bristol. One local group, the Kebele Collective, regularly use the centre: *'Kebele are basically anti-establishment. They come and hire this place out quite a lot and any community group we give a discount to the hire of the centre and they respect this place very well and they come in and make a mess and they clear up better than anybody do you know and get it for a good price'.*

*'As a venue I'd say it's not a threatening environment. Like a lot of places in town where you are surrounded by hundreds of people on the way to some where. Because people come here it's quite a unique little sub-culture. Compared to town you've got the Ritzys, the Creation's and Evolution, there all main streams. I'd say this is quite underground and I like to think it is underground because the underground has got to survive and not many places in Bristol are allowing it to survive because there letting people like Slinky and their letting people like Sundiessential take over. And they're massive organisations with lots of money and they can afford to pump the streets with rough looking posters everywhere. Whereas here they put on gigs here, were talking with little money that just don't want to make money. They just want to put on a night and they want to give people something a bit different than what's going on.'*

### **(iii) The Free Party Scene**

*'It's free. They're free parties. Obviously you know there's a sense of togetherness. But it's very, very different in the free parties. It's very anarchic, chaotic, messy, hazy. You don't have to worry about security' (free party organiser)*

There is a long history of free parties in the Bristol and South West region, run through well-organised groups of promoters and organisers keen to support certain genres of music, such as techno, and partying within boundaries of a different set of regulations. Supplying their own

sound system and using word of mouth to attract potential gatherers, they will find a venue and pretty much spontaneously the party will begin. As one free party organiser put it:

*Personally I just spot warehouse go and eye it up. Two hours before we're ready to do a party someone goes and opens it. Then we drive through the doors shut it behind, set up, a 1,000 people turn up. Phone lines, word of mouth*

People who come to such parties are attracted to the different set of collectively set rules and regulations. They are able to be 'free' and 'party' in any way they like. As one organiser commented: "*This is all about de-regulation you don't have to ask anybody for permission to do anything. There's a vibe there you won't get in a club*". For many people involved in the free party scene it is a wider lifestyle issue, which takes them away from the world of 9-5 work:

*'We are living a life basically and the kids that are going to Mecca. Their Mecca's their working all week and their going out for their explosion of 6 hours on a Saturday night and it just seems that most people that turn up to free parties are living some kind of alternative life and want to meet, want to congregate. Don't necessarily want to do it in pubs with alcohol. Don't necessarily want to do it in very dressy, you know dress coded you must be like this or you can't come in. It's just too regulated and free individuals are looking for a certain vibe. For an entertainment's license you have to pay x amount of pounds per head who might possibly attend. So you can have 100 people attend; you've got to pay for the capacity that you have. It doubles your ticket price it's massive. It's massive; entertainment's licenses don't come easy. I think really the crux of it comes down to freedom issues and whose laws you agree with and obey'.*

Clearly, while drugs have become pervasive within most youth cultural forms including mainstream pub and club culture, they have a greater role to play in such a deregulated environment:

*There is more of a drug culture in the non-cheesy kind of places you really notice it just the difference it does not mean that everybody who goes there does it or whatever but there is just so much more drug pushing just peddling going on. In all the places that are in more of a slightly dodgy areas even the places like the Maze and stuff whereas in the Lizard Lounge or something you do not see any drug action even though it goes on (Sally).*

#### **(iv) Independent Clubbing/ Indie Clubbing**

In between venues that are providing underground music, 'meat market' style pubs and clubs geared towards drinking and expensive superclubs, there is another genre of middle ground alternative music. Such places are: *relaxed it is not all dancing it is not so clubby. You go in jeans and a t-shirt* (Nas, indie clubber). Venues such as Blue Mountain, Thekla and Dojo are providing nights of hip-hop, northern soul, or ska that is not found in the larger commercial

clubs and gives people the opportunity of experiencing something different without having to venture too far.

**Hombre Records** is a home grown record label flying the flag for Bristol's thriving hip-hop scene. The label began life back in 1997 when a local artist was frustrated with the lack of responses to demo tapes he was sending out. Working in a record shop, he was able to meet many local musicians. They now have about 8 groups signed to the label and are affiliated to many more: *It's based on a love of sampling and techno which is fairly hip-hop based, not as fast as drum and bass and probably as fast as house music and right the way to reggae'*.

They put on various nights around the city to promote the music; '*once you get involved in that music you begin to care about it and you suddenly begin to care about local concerns around that sort of music*'. It attracts a variety of people:

*'People that may be have a routine but it's not such a weekend orientated routine It's not such a kind of 'I'm so sick of my life I've just got to drink at the weekend'. Maybe people who have real passion for music, whether it's a strict hobby or what; and that could be anyone from anywhere in the city. Obviously students do play a role because they have more free time, but it's trying a broader spectrum as possible'* (Promoter).

### The live music scene

Massive Attack and Roni Size are names still seen as products of Bristol's alternative music scene: "*They changed the face and shape of popular music, making Bristol a word to prick up the ears of any self respecting record company executive anywhere in the world*" (Venue 19.1.01). While world class music has come out of Bristol, there are concerns that without adequate support, Bristol is going to lose the few surviving live venues such as, Louisiana, Fleece and Firkin, and New Trinity:

*"Bristol's got a small but perfectly formed avant garde scene and places like The Cube really support it, but we need more small clubs and venues really, otherwise the danger is that it all becomes ridiculously obscure. It shouldn't be, it's really exciting music."* (19/2/01:Venue).

One promoter summed up the challenge for the future: "*There's not a lack of creativity there's a lack of places to play*".

## **Consumption Issues**

### **Pub, café, bar, restaurant culture?**

*'At the bottom of Park Street as it turns on to the centre, if you go there around 3 O'clock tomorrow morning or Sunday Morning it's like World War Two' (Council Officer).*

*If you don't have food these days in a pub people aren't going to come out, unless it's late on in the evening. If we didn't have food here we wouldn't have any business men coming in here at lunch time. Cos they'd far rather go and buy a sandwich round the corner and have a cup of coffee in the office. When they can come in here have a couple of pints and they know its got food. Its quick, its easy food. Its good food, but its easy and quick and they know they can have their food in front of them within 10–15 minutes (Bar Manager).*

Bristol has always had a strong eating restaurant culture and this is now merging with pubs and bars. As a result, café bar culture based around eating and drinking has boomed in Bristol. There are many hybrid restaurant-bars around the city such as Budokan, Davy's Wine Bar, Severn Shed and the Watershed. Much of this is related to the growing prosperity amongst professional service classes who are increasingly using city centres as places of work, play and entertainment.

However, there is also evidence of a certain backlash against the trendier, stylish bars and their social protocols, in contrast to the more relaxed pub:

*'I find a big distinction between a pub and a bar. I feel I have to look smarter in a bar and I tend to wear stuff like jeans and jumpers and crap, and you sort of walk into bars, and particularly with the students who seem to make a permanent effort (Charles).*

Many people suggested that while bars had style, pubs had individuality and personality with the latter offering possibilities for chatting and socialising

*'That's something you definitely miss in bars. It's like a conversation of six of you all sat around a table or something rather than just talking to one person (Ian).*

*'The pubs are probably more individual, whereas the bars, maybe because it's not the kind of place I normally like to drink as much, but to me they seem very similar (Polly).*

There is some element of a 'brand backlash' (Klein, 2000) here with consumers rejecting the serial monotony of high street chain pubs and bars. As some consumers mused:

*'Then there's the pubs that they've tarted up. They lack character. Characterless. Yet they're not quite on to a bar where it's a different atmosphere, different environment, different drinks for example, different music. Between the bar and the old style pub. I don't like drinking in chainy things. I don't enjoy the night' (Charles).*

*Corporate clubs and corporate pubs like Inntrepreneur and S & N have got it so wrong, like Rock, throw money at it. It's bland globalisation thing that someone in Darlington has decided that's what Bristol needs and actually it's not. If you look what's happened to Whiteladies Road with the big pubs, that are aimed at students and middle class drinkers. I think there is a reaction to that and people are starting to go back to corner pubs and back street boozers. There's something interesting about them' (Ian).*

### **Country town versus cool city**

Bristol is constantly faced with conflicting images of rurality and urbanity. While some perceive the city as a backward town, others see it as a cool city, with a thriving nightlife and an unbeatable alternative and festival scene. Bristol's image is constantly evolving. During the 1990s the city received much press, due to the creation of the 'Bristol sound', which raised it's profile. It has also recently entered the race to become European City of Culture 2008. But historically it is not a place generally used to selling itself and is quite happy to hide under current perceptions. This understated nature is part of its charm:

*'I think it's a great city and it's very under-rated by people who don't know. Well people don't pass through this kind of way. If you ask most people from London what they think of Bristol, they think yokel, yokel, yokel. It's amazing they just assume that because you are in the West Country you are all farmers and inbred' (Laura).*

However, in terms of investment in its economic, cultural and entertainment infrastructure, there is less evidence of this rural city being ignored. London businesses are rapidly tapping into the Bristol market and realising the opportunities for new nightlife ventures. One of the distinctive elements of Bristol is its multi-racial nature, which has left an important stamp on the city's nightlife:

*'it is still a lot more cosmopolitan than many other cities, so we are a lot luckier than lots of other cities. I couldn't stand to live some where there weren't black influences at all.' (Promoter).*

### **Consumer satisfaction**

Even though some people have shed light on features of dissatisfaction within Bristol's nightlife in comparison to other cities there does seem to be an over-riding feeling of satisfaction. It is clear that local people think that Bristol is a great place to go out and rate the nightlife highly. It is seen by many to be very diverse and catering for all tastes, fads and fancies. People have the ability to pick and choose from a fairly large range of music and clubbing venues every night. The following selection of quotes highlight typical opinions we found on the city's nightlife:

*It's got a fabulous nightlife. It's got something for everybody. Yeah, there's something for everybody, you've got good dance clubs, gothic clubs, gay clubs, straight clubs, everyone's likes are covered basically. (Bar Manager)*

*A good blend between atmosphere and music you can always find a cheap pint, you can always find some good music and to be pretty honest just about everywhere has got a good atmosphere wherever you go (Dave).*

*It is quite diverse, there is something for everybody, next to Rock there is a really big gay club (Steve).*

*It is quite good it is a perfect size that you can walk places and between bars. Taxis are not too expensive because it is not too far away from everything and at the same time it does have certain sections so depending on what mood you have a selection of what you want. You can go out to Clifton and there so many cheap promotions and there is always something going on (Sally).*

*You don't realise how lucky you are living in Bristol. It's just that a lot more people and a lot more variety of places to go. You know you do realise how lucky you are like the choices of places you can go. Like we've talked about the different places there is. There's not just one set place where everybody's got to go. You've got a choice of what you like and you can go there (Michelle).*

There is also some recognition of a changing customer base, especially towards more female-friendly and less drink-orientated venues. As one city centre police officer commented:

*I personally think there is a change in customer base, from years ago when you would have large groups of men, coach loads of people probably coming over from Wales, stag night mentality. There is certainly a better mixture in terms of the genders. More female drinking.*

Moreover, another police officer commented on the fact that an increase in nightlife has not equated to an increase in violence:

*'Nicer ambience and more affluent customers. There is an up-grading of behaviour. The pure yob and fighting cultures, I remember the old days by the Entertainment Centre, they were fighting every night. There was fighting all the time. It hasn't increased in line with the increasing numbers of people coming into the city*

However, one complaint about Bristol's nightlife concerns the price of 'going out' and the general growing affluence of city centre consumers. One person made the following comparison:

*I went out in Hull quite recently and went down to a club there. It's like Two fifty, and a pound a pint, and fifty pence a shot, and you know that's like one third of what you pay here. It makes a big difference to how much you're going to spend on stuff.*

## Gaps in provision

In spite of the city's obvious strengths in musical creativity, it has long been stated that Bristol suffers from the lack of a decent large live music venue, which marginalizes it on the national circuits of large bands. One local journalist commented:

*It's always been tight for space for locally produced independent parties, always been tight for space. There's no decent venue here. The Harbourside venue was looking like a dream before basically Central Government got itchy and cut all the money to the centre. It was going to be a 2,000 people concert hall and basically scuppered it. Again no central government money is being made to make venues available*

Many people have recognised how much talent and interest there is in live music in Bristol which is not being provided for, as the following quotes illustrate:

*This town is full of people making music' (Local Promoter)*

*There's not a lack of creativity, there's a lack of places to play' (Local Journalist).*

*I was recently sent a list of bands who have applied to play on the Main Stage at Ashton Court. There is a list of 3 or 400 bands. All local bands. That's almost a statement on the live music scene in Bristol itself (Club Manager).*

The Local Authority state that they are aware of the need for a large music venue and the Bristol City Centre Strategy 2000 outlines the need to develop “a multi-purpose arena. The provision of an 8,000-10,000-seat arena is already identified in the City Centre Strategy as a priority for the Temple Quay/Temple Meads area. Some public funding is likely to be required for this, and discussions are taking place currently with the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) and potential developers’. A large scale music arena, then, is certainly on the agenda. However, its relationship to fostering local cultural creativity is unclear.

Moreover, there were seen to be gaps in terms of “*places where you could just sit and eat and chill out on a balcony*’ (Sally). In spite of the late night licences, there are still few places which offer a more sober environment without loud music. Alongside this, there is also a push to try and open some venues that are not specifically alcohol-related. Bristol already has several cafés open in the evening that are not alcohol-focused, which is starting to alleviate this problem. New Trinity Centre is also running some alcohol-free nights.

One interesting comment made by an observer was that: ‘*from all the variety that there is here, they have a very small repertoire of places they go out*’ (Charles). Even though there are lots of bars and clubs, ultimately most people only access a few. Such comments may be due to people’s lack of awareness of options in the night-time economy.

## Fun versus Cool

There are several motivations behind a night out. One apparent contrast in Bristol is between those predominantly interested in having fun and being out with their mates and those who are in pursuit of a cool, stylish atmosphere and the consumption of specialist music. Such differences were revealed in the following quote:

*'If you go to Steam Rock and Kickers, The Works it is a sort of place you go because you really got hammered, but when you go to Creation and Rock the idea is to go for the music and it's not full of drunk people falling about trying to pull everybody it is not a meat market it is a nice place to go for a good night out and really enjoy myself (Claire)*

The stressful world of work for many young professionals in Bristol is encouraging them to find ways of release, and excess, in the city's nightlife. In particular, many young people employed in the city centres service sector are going to late drinking venues to have fun and relax from the stresses of work: *'It's just nice to go out and release, get drunk and enjoy yourself, especially when you've say got a job on the phones as well. I suppose it's quite stressful, like constantly stress'* (Paul). A key part of this is socialising together in a group of friends:

*It's more to do with who you go out with rather than where you're going. A lot of people go out to be cool, and just to go out drinking. Whereas we go out and it's one of those things you wake up and think oh my god., and you yet you'll suddenly find yourself laughing and having a good time and catching up with people.*

*'We're a big enough group to take over a place, a large section if a place, so we make our fun, and we have the same amount of fun at somewhere like Brannigans if we went there because we'd be together we'd make fun' (Charles)*

While this is nothing new, it is a source of concern as many young people are going out to get excessively drunk, rather than engage with a range of creative activities: *'They're going out with the intention of being absolutely hammered rather than just going out to have a nice time'* (Sean).

What is the future of city centre consumption practices? While having fun, hedonism and drunkenness has long been a motif for a night out, a night out is increasingly directed within the boundaries of corporate owned entertainment, branded drinks and profit rather than creativity. In this sense, we have to be aware of the rise of new chain bars as the 'new palaces of drunkenness' and the decline in spaces which offer opportunities for creativity, dialogue and tolerance.

## **Divided nightlife**

Throughout this report, we have stressed the zoned nature of the city's nightlife and the fact that Bristol has several different nightlife spaces, such as Whiteladies Road, Gloucester Road, Stokes Croft, Old Market, the Centre, Corn St and the Harbourside. While there may be some movement between these places, largely consumers in these areas have their own set of codes, aspirations and venues have a particular set of door policies, prices and entry requirements. In many ways, then, these nightlife areas are part of the divided city in which different groups of consumers rarely mix. This is being enhanced by the strategies of corporate firms, eager to attract cash rich groups at the expense of creating more pluralistic nightlife culture.

Many of the bars in the central area are becoming prohibitively expensive for many groups of young people. The new wave of style bars are particularly expensive, enhancing their exclusive nature. It is these elements of Bristol's nightlife that are starting to create polarisation between the rich and poor. The local authority is hoping to combat this segregation to a certain extent by opening up more links between areas. In particular, it is looking at ways to link Stokes Croft, Old Market and Broadmead to the centre. However, the historic neighbourhood form of Bristol has also meant it has retained a very strong culture of 'local' neighbourhood drinking.

## Conclusions

We have pointed to a number of trends which continue to shape Bristol's nightlife such as an increased role for large corporate players in the leisure and entertainment sector, a continued drive towards branding and theming and the creation of new style and café type bars, bar-club hybrids and specialist dance clubs. At the same time, local authorities and city councils creating new 'place images', within which creative and cultural activity and the night-time economy become key indicators of marketing 'success'. Finally, cities are increasingly catering for their more affluent, in-migrant, middle-class professional 'knowledge' workers by creating leisure and night-time entertainment which meets their needs, rather than those of poorer and less mobile sections of the city's population.

Bristol exemplifies many of these trends and has transformed its urban cores into a busy business and cultural destination. This has been aided by a prosperous population catchment, a strong role as regional employment centre especially in terms of a business service 'complex', the established cosmopolitan nature of its centre, the 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, especially up-market and stylish nightlife venues. The recent 'good times' for the city centre, then, has stimulated the growth of corporate and branded entertainment based around a range of upmarket bars, clubs and restaurants, which in many cases has also created opportunities for the establishment and growth of a diverse independent sector, based around alternative spaces and opportunities for small scale cultural entrepreneurs and intermediaries.

Yet, this growth is not without its pitfalls and contradictions. It is important not to take such success stories at face value and recognise that many young people are disenfranchised from such prosperity and that the urban night time fabric is increasingly socially and geographically divided. Further, many independent entrepreneurs may face limited options in the light of growth of large corporate players. Many of these latter type continue to focus upon profit maximisation through beer sales which undermine attempts to create more tolerant and pluralistic nightlife spaces and continues to create problems of social disorder. Alcohol consumption is still often the *raison d'être* of a night out and issues of disorder, sexism, violence and drunkenness remain. Our analysis suggests that a solution to many of these problems does not rest with the development of large corporate-owned licensed themed venues, but more local coalitions of producers/consumers/cultural entrepreneurs. In many cases these alternative

independent spaces are for the most part self-regulating, with many not even requiring door staff or policing resources. While the upgrading of the mainstream may eventually begin to sanitise and regulate nightlife behaviour through pricing 'trouble' out of the market, it will do so only at the expense of excluding the city's poorer residents. 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. Finally, the dominant audience for nightlife is increasingly mainstream, higher spending, consumption groups such as young professionals, aspiring 'townies' and university students. Other groups of young people are disenfranchised within the current range of nightlife provision on the basis of price, style, dress or demeanour such as 'alternative' cultures, groups of teenagers, or those with few resources.

Whether we are looking at Bristol, Glasgow, Manchester or Leeds, there is a certain air of inevitability in the way in which urban nightlife will develop. However, there are a number of different choices and ways forward, each of which have different policy implications for nightlife entrepreneurs, the local council and consumers. First, Bristol could simply become 'Anywhereville UK' and continue to accommodate and embrace the global corporate world hoping that they can become its 'flavour of the month' with big brands such as Starbucks, McDonalds or Gap. This very much appears to be the current trend. The city can get lost in its own hype and begin to substitute image for reality, advertising over people. In terms of nightlife, it can continue to bend over backwards trying to attract major pubcos ignoring regional and local operators. As such, smaller, locally owned nightlife spaces will continue to be squeezed and marginalised and the city will lose its uniqueness and distinctive flavour as it becomes more like many other cities.

Balancing the global, national and the local is probably a more likely scenario, and this scenario is evident in Bristol at the moment. This involves the city council working together with all interested parties in the night-time economy, and not allowing sectional interests and the profit motive to solely influence the types 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. Alternatively, the city council, other regulators and capital interests could be more radical in their orientation and could begin to actively promote local nightlife cultures, emphasising diversity, creativity and social cohesion. To encourage this model, mechanisms would need to be established to favour certain types of nightlife activity, encourage many more opportunities for local entrepreneurs and massage property markets in

their favour. It would involve more support and training for budding young cultural entrepreneurs in the region and the provision of flexible and affordable premises for those interested in the creative industries, if possible, in the city centre.

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. This approach would stimulate diversity, creativity, and involve young adults as active contributors to nightlife culture rather than just passive consumers. Which way the city ultimately chooses to go is up for grabs. But, Bristol will have to work extremely hard to promote creativity, diversity, safety and inclusiveness, in order to counter-balance the seductiveness of 'corporate glam'.

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## Appendix 1. Definitions of styles

These definitions refer to only the pubs and bars in the city centre excluding other venues with full on licenses such as casinos, hotel bars and private clubs and were established by the authors as a way of categorising nightlife venues according to their overall atmosphere. The following descriptions were used:

**Style Bar:** One off, individual, décor obviously highly designed and stylised. By nature fairly new. Could be part of a large company which owns many pubs but a style bar would not be branded.

**Café Bar:** High levels of design, serves food & coffee, lots of seats/tables, range of clientele/atmospheres throughout day. Can be independent or part of a national operator.

**Traditional Pub:** Characterised wood tables, patterned carpets etc Can be either corporate or owner-run so includes branded traditional pubs.

**Ale House:** Very Traditional, scarcely changed, original features & loyal, regular clientele. Can be either brewery owned or independent. Often in need of redecoration. Often situated in run down areas.

**Theme Pub/Bar:** Main feature is that it follows an obvious style throughout, often with memorabilia, chalk boards, bar dress etc. Themed outlets include (1) multi-sited, national High Street Brands such as Sport, Nationalities (Australian, New Zealand, Irish) or student theme pubs or (2) single site concept bars.

**Disco Bar:** Vertical drinking, loud music, few seats, very busy Fri/Sat. Often closed during day and do not open till evening.

**Alternative Pub:** Defined by décor, but often due to music policy, clientele, attitude.

## Appendix 2. A week in Bristol's clubland

Night Club	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Creation	Higher Education (house)	Locus(RnB,Funk, House)	Pop Ya Cherry Up and Comin		Drive By	Slinky (Hard House)	
Evolution	Closed	Student Night	Sports Night	Bubblegum	Party Night (charts)	Party Night (charts)	
O'neills Music Rooms					In-house DJ	In-house DJ	
Po Na Na Fez Club	Rockstar (garage/hiphop)	Minx (Soul/Funk/hip hop)	PlayBaby (Soul/Funk/Gr ooves)	Deep House	Hush (funky house&club classics)	FDNY House&Garage	
Po Na Na Souk Club	All Jazzed Up	Phat (Funk)	Pop	Rainy But Funky	Lee Pattison	Saturday Night Funk	
The Cooler	Screamadelica (indie)	Streetlife! (70s)	The Grand Fromage (cheese)	Technique (breakbeat & elecktica)	Classic Chart Chunes	Ascension (RnB/Ragga/hiphop/garage/soul)	
Steam Rock Tavern	Funky Fruit Sport (student)	House, Garage , RnB	Flava (Uplifting House)		70s Funk	Party Time	
The Works		Student Night	Disco	Wired	Handbag	Meltdown (Charts)	
Rock	Fidget (hiphop, drum&bass, house)	Elusive		Fly (Hip Hop, Funk)	Scream	Rock	SafeHouse
McCluskys	Karaoke	Milkshake (students)		The Weekend Warm Up		Party Party Party	
Bar Latino, St Stephens Street		Latino	Latino	Latino	Sueno Latino	House	
Maze			Mmm Nice!	Contagious Funk and Hard Garage	Hard House	Hard House	
Bar Latino, Park Street	Funk	DJs	DJs	DJs	DJs	Funky Onion	

Benny's	Retro Night	Thirsty Tuesday		DJs	DJs	DJs	
Bristol Bierkeller		Blind Drunk		Alternative 80s	Loaded (Indie)		
Blue Mountain				Mo Gravy			Blowpop (Breakbeats/ hiphop)
Café Blue		Shag (funk/soul)	Hard House & Trance	Code Blue	Harder Baby		
Castro				Open Deck Night	Ground Zero Hard House		Sundaze
Club Met	DJs	DJs	DJs	DJs	DJs	DJs	
Dojo Lounge		Detroit	Hubba Hubba (disco/funk/oldskool)	Mojo (Funk)	The Melting Pot		
Kickers	Anthems (party/danceanthems)						
La Rocca			Popcorn				
Lakota		Charged(hardhouse/house)		House	Feverish	Urban Mist	
Lizard Lounge	Mad For It (party/danceanthems)	Student Night	Salsa Night	Cocktail Night	Party Night	Party Night	
The Mandrake Club			Wham	Rock Night	Clubbers Friday Nite Out	Clubbers Saturday Nite Out	
Queen Shilling		Karaoke	Live Entertainment	Student Night	Chart Night	House Night	
The Thekla			Drum & Bass		Drive-By	The Dig in/Drive By	
Winns Club			Deviant Night	Disco	Disco	Disco	
The Old Porthouse				Purple Heart (60s-80s)	Kute Club	Indie/Rock Night	