CHANGING OUR 'TOON'
Youth, nightlife and urban change in Newcastle

A Discussion Paper

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Newcastle is a top place to live and hang out… It's also got more bars per mile than almost anywhere else. Bit of a shame though that a mini clique of faceless corporations run the vast majority of them for the 'Sharon & Darren brigade'. During the week when they're quiet, its all cheesy student 'nites', but come the weekend? They don't wanna know you.

(Trent House Bar, Flyer, 2000)

Newcastle is buzzing 24 hours a day. Gone are the rigid licensing laws; pubs and clubs have varying opening hours, shops and coffee bars stay open into the night.

(Newcastle in the year 2020, Newcastle City Council, City Centre Action Plan 1999/2000)

That is what a lot of people want in Newcastle, a bit of fun. If you are waiting for things to get better, if your mam said to you 'you better not go out tonight, wait until things get better' you would be 35 now. You have watched the demise of the ship yards from the biggest ship building town in the world to nothing, Sunderland and Newcastle, you have watched the demise of the coal mines, you have watched the demise of heavy engineering. When are things going to get better? Answer is this is about as good as it gets so consequently people understand that you might as well go out now. That is why you see so many people walking around without a coat on, there is a toss up between two hundred and fifty quid for a coat or going out for the next few months. I would go out.

(Bigg Market Bar owner, 2000)

Introduction

Even a casual observer could not fail to notice that Newcastle city centre is changing, and changing fast. Who would have guessed ten years ago that the city would have added a new bridge across the Tyne creating an art/music corridor, been recently voted top U.K. city for tourism by readers of *Conde Nast* traveller magazine, or be bidding along with its neighbour to become the European Capital of Culture in 2008? At the same time, there is also a sense of unease and anxiety which often accompanies these 'success' stories and large-scale projects, centring partly on whom such developments are for, and who stands to benefit and lose from Newcastle's recent drive to become a more cosmopolitan centre. Nowhere is this paradox more evident than in one of the city's most famous assets - its nightlife. Today, the infamous Bigg Market struggles to compete with newly developing style and café bars on the Quayside and in middle class suburban areas like Osborne Road. Branded corporate theme bars are springing up, 'cash-rich' young professionals and students are increasingly targeted as consumers, and a number of favourite alternative venues have either closed down or bought up and transformed into trendy bars.

This document is a summary of findings from a recently published book by the authors on changing nightlife in Newcastle. The research was undertaken between July 2000 and January 2001 and comprised focus groups with consumers of nightlife and one to one interviews with a wide range of venue owners/ managers, promoters and DJs, police, licensing magistrates, local authority representatives and various other people involved in the nightlife industry. It is based upon wider research undertaken as part of an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) academic funded research project looking at night-life and youth culture in three English cities – Newcastle, Leeds and Bristol.

This wider project examines change in two, interconnected, areas. Firstly, we are interested in the changing identities and experiences of young adults. 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 rates and greater dependency on the family household. This extended adolescence has fuelled an array of consumer lifestyles and identities beyond those traditional identified as 'youth'.

Secondly, we are concerned with the dramatic and forceful transformations of cities moving away 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 21st 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 paradigm, 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 concern, 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, proponents of urban nightlife often say very little about who owns the night-time economy and that increasingly large corporate firms 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 grounded economic development. Second, most of Britain's core cities are pursuing a rather 'off the shelf' entertainment-led approach to developing the night-time economy, which begs the questions 'nightlife for whom' and 'in whose interests'?

While many 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 havens for 'high value added' entertainment and leisure activities with alternative, smaller scale and locally embedded activities undermined or pushed to the fringe. Large national and international firms, then, are playing a disproportionate role in shaping nightlife activity, especially due to the leverage they can apply on cash strapped local authorities.

Our work is structured around three main sections to develop an understanding of young people's use of nightlife spaces in Newcastle. First, we look at the **production** of nightlife through ownership changes within this 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 through the role of the police, magistrates, doorstaff and the local state. Finally, we look at the **consumption** of nightlife spaces by exploring a variety of young adult groupings' own 'lived experience' of Newcastle. The final section highlights some key issues which arise from our study. 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 book, of the same title as this document, containing the full details of this research is available from the Department of Sociology, University of Newcastle, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU at a cost of £5 (cheques payable to 'University of Newcastle'). A website with information about the wider project is located at: **www.ncl.ac.uk/youthnightlife**. Further copies of this paper and associated figures can be downloaded from there.

Summary of book findings

Understanding the 'Geordie' City - From coal capital to culture capital?

Long term social and economic transformations in the city-region are key to understanding the contemporary nature of Newcastle's nightlife. Like other cities, Newcastle has been subject to economic and social restructuring over the last three decades, although this process has been more traumatic than in many other cities and its effects continue to linger and shape local urban development.

While unemployment has fallen steadily to a record low of around 6% by 2001, largely due to the growth of service sector, the region is still characterized by unemployment twice the national average, low wages, part-time work, below national average educational achievement, low car ownership and social welfare dependency. Young people continue to be hit particularly hard, experiencing unemployment rates almost two times higher than adults and low pay. The gender character of the city has undergone rapid restructuring, especially through the growth of more economically independent women. Such transformations in the labour market have consequences for nightlife activity, not only in terms of the 'feminisation' of the leisure sphere (forcing bars and clubs to become more 'female friendly'), but also in displays of 'hyper-masculinity' through continued heavy drinking and occasional acts of aggression and violence by young men.

Newcastle city centre has recently embarked on numerous large-scale projects to develop a modern vibrant image. It has several strengths to draw upon, not least its strong local identity and the historic economic and cultural strength of its city centre. However, the wider city-region remains beset by problems of visible decay, social polarisation and deprivation, which are confounded by continued population loss. Today, the city's population is sharply divided between the legacy of its industrial past and attempts to create a diverse, post-industrial economic base. While there is some growth of a new class of service sector urban professionals and cultural workers, which is reflected in the move to create a more 'upmarket' city centre, Newcastle is significantly behind cities such as Leeds and Manchester.

Newcastle's nightlife is a patchwork of activity reflecting different periods in its economic, social and cultural history. While traditional Geordie drinking culture tries to find a place amongst the new, glitzy world of corporate theme, style and chain bars, the traditional 'boozer', community and alternative pubs continue to be squeezed to the urban fringes. What Newcastle's nightlife will look like in the coming years, then, is open to debate.

Producing Newcastle's Nightlife

Beer production and pub ownership has been subject to restructuring and concentration over the course of the 20th century. Since the 1989 Supply of Beer Orders Act monopoly ownership by brewers has been replaced by pub companies such as Normura and Punch (table 1). It continues to be a volatile period for the pub and bar market with 6,500 or 10% of the country's pubs up for sale at the beginning of 2001.

Nightlife is a significant national employer and sector of the economy. Nationally, in 1998 there were over 110,000 on-licensed premises with several thousand currently planned and there has been a 30% increase in the last twenty years. The pub and club industry has a turnover of around £22 billion pounds, equal to around 3% of the national GDP. In Newcastle, licensed premises employ around 5,400 people (3.8% of the total workforce). While the city centre pub, bar and club business is a lucrative one for certain companies and company directors, the Low Pay Commission (1998) has outlined the poor pay and conditions for many people working in the hospitality sector.

Branding nightlife has emerged as a core strategy for most operators, and has been extended from alcoholic products to whole outlets. 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 figure for city centres are generally much higher than this national average. Branding has attempted to reinforce niche consumer identities in the night-time economy. The design of pubs, bars and clubs has changed drastically over the last 10 years, especially through the explosion of themed, women friendly, mixed use environments. However, behind the façade of diversity, a uniformity is growing amongst Britain's city centre nightlife spaces. Nightlife provision in Newcastle is characterised by the following:

- Newcastle city centre has 111 pubs, 22 nightclubs with 20 proposed licenses which are concentrated on a number of well defined drinking circuits in the Bigg Market, Quayside, the station area, and the Haymarket. Over the last 50 years ownership has shifted from a range of small and medium sized local brewers to become dominated by larger operators such as Scottish and Newcastle and Bass (**figure 1** - **see web site**), and more recently the growth of 'pubcos'.

- Pubs and bars can be thought of as being owned by either 'national operators', 'local/regional operators' or 'single-site independents'. In Newcastle, ownership is dominated by national operators who own 66% of city centre pubs (with Scottish and Newcastle owning 24% alone) with local/regional operators such as Ultimate Leisure, 42nd Street Bars and Fitzgeralds owning 30%. Less than 5% are independently owned (**figure 2 - see web site**).

- Newcastle has shown a resilience to branding compared to some other British cities (while 18% of city centre pubs are branded in Newcastle, the figures for Leeds and Bristol are 31% and 26%).

However, branding is set to increase and the number of superpubs with capacities of over 500 people have increased over the last few years.

- Newcastle's nightlife is dominated by certain styles of venues. Traditional pubs comprise one-third of venues while one-quarter are disco-bars, which are mainly concentrated in the Bigg Market. Themed pubs account for 12% of venues while alternative venues account for 6% of pubs and bars. Café bars and style bars are under-represented at 10% and 4% of venues respectively and residual venues such as ale houses comprise 6% of venues (**figure 3 - see web site**). Alternative venues are more prevalent in the Ouseburn area, while Osborne Road is likely to become a focus for themed/branded outlets.

- The city centre has a registered capacity for music and dancing of just over 30,000 (around 19,000 in 22 nightclubs and 11,000 across 33 pubs and bars). Newcastle's night club's scene is dominated by mainstream commercial venues (two-thirds of all nightclubs). Local/regional operators have a particularly strong foothold in the night club infrastructure.

- There are just over 20 live music venues in and around Newcastle city centre: 4 large touring venues and around 19 pubs. There are a number of well established and growing promoters of dance music in the city and a small but growing number of venues which host innovative DJ based music. The two student unions with five venues ranging from 300 to 1700 play an important and undervalued role in the city's club and music infrastructure.

Regulating Newcastle's nightlife

The whole notion of regulating night time activity is hotly contested. Historically, the night-time economy has been regarded as a site of excess, vice and crime and as a result has been subject to much legal, political and indeed moral regulation. More recently, nightlife activity has become accepted as part of mainstream economy and as a tool in urban regeneration. However, while for many regulation of nightlife equates to unnecessary bureaucracy, for others it is seen as necessary to balance different interests within city life.

The case for better forms of regulation for nightlife activity has been made in the light of continuing concerns about increases in late night premises, excessive drinking, violence and crime, drug dealing and gangsterism, pressures on police resources, limits on services like transport, and complaints from residential associations regarding noise and vandalism. The current system of licensing is rather esoteric and cumbersome and few fundamental changes have been made to the basic legal approach that has stood for almost two centuries. However, the Government White Paper on reform, *A Time for Change,* has proposed a radical shake up and simplification of the current licensing system in which local authorities will play a more central role in the granting of alcohol and public entertainment licenses

Newcastle is regarded as having a unique drinking culture based around a masculine Geordie identity and a high concentration of pubs which has led to a distinctive and tougher regulation framework compared to many other large British cities. This regulation framework comprises a number of players:

Licensing magistrates have traditionally played a key role in regulating nightlife activity. Their role is to maintain a delicate balance between (a) control and regulation and (b) allowing market forces to operate. However, in Newcastle it was felt that the magistrates were less in-touch with local and national trends in nightlife, both in terms of the needs and expectations of young people and demand for development in the city. For example, Newcastle magistrates continue to interpret national regulations for the granting of special hours certificates much more closely to the letter of the law compared to other large UK cities and as a result Newcastle has only 3 late night pubs/bars operating, with 2 more on a six month trial. In contrast, Leeds has granted 46 pubs/bars with a special hours certificate beyond 11pm and Bristol 45. As national reform of the licensing system beckons, there is evidence of a more liberal approach emerging from the magistrates. However, many people were concerned that the shift of control away from magistrates to local authorities could compromise the independence of the licensing system.

The police play a dual role in the night time economy: advising magistrates on the suitability of applicants and also policing nightlife activity. Historically, there has been a close relationship between licensing magistrates and police in Newcastle. Unlike many other large cities in the UK, both have given extra weight to law and order issues which has distorted the operation of the market and the development of the night time economy. Due to the high density of licensed premises in the central area, the police remain keen to tightly control further growth. While this situation is changing, and the police are keen to encourage dialogue especially through schemes such as Pubwatch, they continue to voice concerns over the growth in nightlife activity, especially that associated with 'vertical drinking bar-discos' and the consequences of more late licenses. Several people suggested that the police are less in tune with neighbouring large cities due to their reluctance to embrace staggered closing hours as a way of dissipating disorderly behaviour.

The police are keen to stress that Newcastle does not have the same level of problems such as gang violence, guns and drugs compared to other larger metropolitan centres in the UK. Arrests for drunk and disorderly, wounding/assault and drug offences have all increased over the 1990s in the city centre (up 81% from 1991 to 2000). However, these increases do not simply signify a more dangerous city centre but can be accounted for, in part, by different accounting methods over the period, greater police effectiveness and presence and increased use of the city centre by night-time revellers. Most recently figures have levelled off and in general the police felt that compared to 10 years ago, they have a greater level of control over nightlife activity and that safety had increased. The number of sex crimes reported in the city centre last year was 56, with 33 of these occurring on a night out.

Nightlife security has emerged as a major employment sector over the last two decades and is set to become more professionalised through the Private Security Industry Bill. While Newcastle continues to have a reputation for tough and unaccountable door staff, a city wide registration scheme for the 600 odd door staff has improved the situation, recently reinforced through the Newcastle upon Tyne Act (2000). It has been suggested by some that the scheme has cut door crime by 75%. Whilst recognising that they sometimes have a difficult job to do, many respondents recounted negative experiences with doorstaff, especially in relation to overly aggressive behaviour and restrictive attitudes to dress style.

Local authorities have complimented their functions of local welfare service provision with promoting local and urban economic development and inward investment. While there has been less inward investment from large national/multinational operators in Newcastle's nightlife compared to other UK city's, the local authority is now faced with a period of more significant interest from these operators in places such as the Gate, the Quayside, St James' Boulevard and Grainger Town. To ensure a balance of nightlife provision, the city council needs to ensure that smaller scale, local nightlife activity is encouraged alongside larger corporate schemes. The city's bid to become the European Capital of Culture in 2008 could be play an important part of this process.

Many smaller operators felt at risk from large scale entertainment PLCs and that the City Council had not struck the right balance between small, independent and larger corporate nightlife activity. Moreover, many small-scale entrepreneurs felt undervalued by the local authority compared to larger pub operators who were seen to signify more 'serious' inward investment decisions. Because of its precarious financial situation, Newcastle City Council faces the challenge of encouraging capital generation whilst also ensuring a balance of nightlife provision. Places such as the Ouseburn Valley are a test case for this balancing act.

Cultural intermediaries such as promotional agencies, listings magazines and advocacy groups play an important role in developing Newcastle's nightlife. The city has a number of listings magazines such as the well established *The Crack* and the newer *North Guide*, a handful of established promoters, and organisations like Generator which promotes music in the city. All of these groups play an important role in developing and promoting the night-time economy, although further support is required. Other media such as static advertising billboards in city centres and nightlife internet websites, as seen in Leeds and Manchester, need to be experimented with here.

Residents raise a number of issues for a compact city centre such as Newcastle, especially considering the City Council is promoting the city centre as both a residential and a nightlife destination. The number of households in the city centre has increased by over 1,000 in the past ten years to around 4,211 (January 2000). Noise, nuisance, rowdy behaviour, violence, litter and public urination have been become common complaints for residents in flashpoints areas such as the Quayside areas and Osborne Road. Curiously a

survey of Quayside residents showed that while 40% had noise complaints, 50% paradoxically wanted longer licensing hours.

The current debate about how to regulate nightlife activity, then, is complex. It involves a varied range of interest groups and quite different types of regulation, ranging from formal (i.e. CCTV etc), and informal approaches (dress style and door policies), not to mention matching legal statutes with social and economic need. Moreover, there are conflicting messages: while city authorities continue to promote city centres as nightlife entertainment destinations and the UK's liquor licensing laws are set to be liberalised, a raft of measures are being introduced to crack down on unsociable behaviour.

Consuming Newcastle's Nightlife

A number of wider social trends and changes are affecting the lives of young people and their nightlife activities. First it is evident that: 'youthful' behaviour now extends beyond that of a teenager in a period of 'post-adolescent'; young people are seeking to redress the balance between work and play; as the population ages, young people will constitute a smaller proportion of the total population than in the past; and finally, many young people continue to face social and economic problems such as low pay, unemployment and poor housing.

Second, visiting pubs, bars and clubs is a core element of young people's lifestyles, but the experience of going out to these places has changed drastically over the last decade largely through the advent of 'clubbing', dance music and late night hybrid bar-clubs. Moreover, the role of drinking alcohol has changed in society from a community based to a lifestyle activity. While the range of alcohol products has grown immensely and drinking has become more women friendly, over 70% of beer sales in the UK is now dominated by 3 brewers. 18-24 year olds are now the heaviest drinkers in the population, with 36% of males and 24% of females drinking over the weekly recommended limits.

Newcastle's nightlife is distinctive due to lower average incomes and savings, yet a higher propensity to consume amongst the regional population, the historic strength of the city centre leisure market, a larger proportion of older revellers, more entrenched gender roles and class cultures, a declining and less diverse consumer base and a smaller professional and business community, circuit drinking, and a dominance of mainstream, chart-based clubs and vertical drinking. The city's nightlife is characterised by a number of segregated consumption areas:

Mainstream Nightlife based Newcastle's 'party city' image and the Bigg Market. Although this area plays a central role in Newcastle's nightlife, it faces a number of challenges in terms of competition from new venues, under-investment, lingering perceptions of violence, and a growing sophistication amongst its consumers.

Style Nightlife based around the growth of mixed use, style and café oriented bars. Although the growth of these venues is largely limited to certain areas such as the Quayside, continued growth may begin to erode local elements of the city's nightlife and the traditional pub market.

Alternative Nightlife which cater for particular identity or subcultural and music groups which are typically found on the fringe of the city centre. Over the last decade, such venues have been squeezed further out of the city centre or have closed altogether due to increasing city-centre property costs, the changing priorities of pub operators and a greater use of branding and theming. Distinctive alternative nightlife venues include the Pink Triangle and the Ouseburn Valley, while groups challenging corporate domination in the city include Rabble Alliance and Eclectic City.

Suburban Nightlife which has emerged as city centres become saturated and entrepreneurs search for new profit areas, cheaper venues and less restrictive licensing. Osborne Road has emerged as an 'up-market, classy' suburban nightlife destination to rival city centre nightlife, characterised by young professionals, affluent students and hotel residents. However, the residential nature of the area has created a number of conflicts of use, with the number of reported incidents doubling in the past year.

Student Nightlife The 40,000 students leave a significant imprint on the city, with an annual spending power of over £203M, with nearly £50M on entertainment alone. Although student nightlife is only evident at certain times of the week and the year and in certain places, there is evidence of blurring as local and student preferences and lifestyles begin to overlap somewhat.

Clubbing nightlife in Newcastle remains undeveloped compared to neighbouring large cities and there are very limited options for 'independent' clubbing. The problem is confounded by a smaller consumer base, the loss of several well established clubs and restrictive licensing.

Residual Nightlife takes the form of working class, local, community pubs, or ale houses, within the city centre which are largely set to disappear due to various urban regeneration schemes and changing corporate priorities of their owners (including selling off stock).

Issues for discussion

A number of issues emerge from this discussion, which are relevant for those involved in producing, regulating and consuming the city's nightlife. Below, we discuss the main ones.

Producers

Ownership The most dramatic signature of Newcastle's nightlife is the nature of ownership which is dominated by national and established local/regional operators. This has reduced possibilities for small scale, independent operators and venues.

Under/over provision The problem in Newcastle is not a lack of venues but a lack of diversity of venues. The city centre is largely focused on the needs of three dominant consumption groups – students, traditional Bigg Market drinkers and more style oriented young professional drinkers, while traditional ale houses and alternative pubs will continue to decline or survive only on the city fringes.

Local cultures, regional provision and national brands Newcastle's nightlife remains somewhat resilient to branding compared to other large cities due to the historic market strength of local/regional operators. National operators remain cautious about introducing brands to the area. However, the current priorities of large PLCs means that national branding is inevitable for large parts of the city centre which will erode some of the distinctive elements of the city's nightlife. There is some evidence of a shift away from the local 'party city' brand of vertical drinking bar/discos towards mixed-use late night bar-club concepts and more up-market style bars.

Fostering creativity Opportunities to create a broader nightlife economy are not being fully exploited. In particular, a lack of small scale entrepreneurs, lack of access to capital and tight licensing regulations has inhibited new nightlife business ventures. The local authority needs to strike a balance between small scale and larger scale nightlife developments. Newcastle also suffers from a lack of a national profile, or the wrong kind of national profile and some smaller entrepreneurs felt that they have historically faced a lack of support from public agencies.

The role of the independent operator Independent operators play a distinctive role in the night-time economy: they are platforms for closer links between consumers and producers, offer opportunities for nightlife entrepreneurs such as DJs, musicians and other performing artists and often underpin a number of spin off industries in fashion, music and art; they encourage the local/regional circulation of capital due to the local roots/commitment of owners and through the use of local labour and suppliers; they are the lifeblood of a diversity of nightlife practices and have a greater ability and desire to provide experimental and less profit motivated nightlife and promote and spread opportunities for often marginal youth cultural styles in cities. And finally, they often offer a more diverse product compared with many larger national

branded venues. However such independently owned nightlife is increasingly being eroded within Newcastle city centre.

Critical mass In reality, the small catchment of the city raises significant barriers to the development of a diverse nightlife infrastructure. Moreover, the on-going decline of young people in Newcastle, problems retaining university graduates and a lack of high disposable incomes amongst local youth, confound attempts to maintain a diversity of nightlife provision.

Regulators

Over-regulation A further striking characteristic of Newcastle's nightlife is its tight regulatory regime. The licensing magistrates and police have historically kept a very tight control over the development of the city's nightlife due to perceptions of social problems such as violence, drugs and underage drinking and a historic high density of venues in the central area. While many of these may have reflected real problems, most people felt that this tight control has inhibited the development of a diverse night time economy. In particular, there is an urgent need to address the lack of diversity amongst post 11pm venues and many people felt that door staff have failed to move with the times and need to introduce more liberal door policies.

The role of the local authority Regulatory and licensing frameworks need revisiting considering the increasing dominance of large corporate nightlife operators in city centres driven by a desire to maximise profits and alcohol sales amongst young people. Local authorities clearly have a stronger role to play in determining the 'type' rather than simply the 'amount' of nightlife activity. While the local authority has embraced the idea of the 24, or 18 hour economy, it is often motivated by getting the best deal on derelict or underused sites for large operators. Not enough is said about what forms of intervention and regulation work best for both investors and the people who live in that city.

City living and city nightlife The number of housing units and nightlife spaces both continue to increase in this small and compact city centre leading to constant sqirmishes between angry residents and nightlife entrepreneurs. In mediating between these various interest groups, the local authority, magistrates and police should keep in mind differences between different types of nightlife venues such as those between nationally owned superpubs and small locally operated mixed use venues and consider zoning licensed premises away from residential areas.

The views of consumers Within the regulatory framework of nightlife, there are very few examples of regulators consulting consumers. This is a particular problem as there are some notable discrepancies between the views of users, owners and regulators of nightlife activity, especially in terms of diversity of provision, late night licenses and transport. For example, previous research has indicated that nearly 80% of young people support extended drinking hours in the city.

From Party City to Arty City? The 'party city' image is often associated with the boisterous overindulgence of the Bigg Market, and also 'social problems' such as underage drinking, violence, and highly gendered behaviour. The limitations of this image are clear, but attempts to develop a more cosmopolitan image for the city raise a number of fresh issues. While the 'party city' may belong a fading era of highly class and gender bound patterns of activity, those of a more 'arty city' point to an increasingly polarised, sanitised and exclusive nightlife provision. The question is what role do existing local nightlife practices have in the continued redevelopment of the city centre as a premium art and cultural destination?

Transport and Safety Nearly all or interviewees suggested that the late night transport infrastructure was lacking in Newcastle. Considering that nearly all other English core cities have some form of late night transport this issue needs urgent attention. Dialogue needs to be initiated with transport providers on this issue. This is particularly the case considering that Newcastle is currently under-performing as a regional nightlife destination. Other cities in the UK have experimented with schemes such as 'walk safe' in which women are provided with safe places to wait for public transport or offered free transport home if they become stranded.

Consumers

Local identity and attachment to place In spite of limitations with Newcastle's nightlife, most people have something positive to say about it. Notwithstanding some of the changes in ownership and regulation outlined above, a distinctive local nightlife brand is still at the heart of the Geordie identity. On the downside, there was seen to be a lack of 'classiness' and a critical mass of younger, trendy consumers in the city's nightlife, as well as intolerance towards gender and ethic differences. Whether seen as a good or bad thing, many people felt that it would be extremely hard to diversify traditional Geordie consumer behaviour.

Emerging nightlife identities However, there is some evidence of a move away from a traditional identity based around a mono-culture of masculinity, manual work and traditional class cultures as many young people are displaying more individual 'mix and match' lifestyles. Yet nightlife activity still remains heavily structured around some of the economic and social constraints faced by local young people.

The Divided City Newcastle's nightlife remains highly segregated around a number of geographical areas as outlined above. Such segregation reflects tensions resulting from the on going social and economic restructuring on the city and the region between for example, what people referred to as the 'charvers' and 'slappers' of the Bigg Market, young professionals and the students. Such group stereotypes highlight the divided nature of nightlife in terms of codes of acceptable behaviour.

Increasingly, the city's nightlife is being recast and sanitised around the needs and desires of 'cash rich' young people. Many feel that this shift is an improvement on Newcastle's older masculinist image and culture. However, further upgrading of the 'toon' is likely to diminish many traditional aspects of Newcastle's nightlife. Moreover, many groups of young people continue to be disenfranchised from the city centre for reasons of price, access, safety or style. Of particular concern is the overwhelming 'whiteness' of the city at night in spite of the city's significant ethnic minorities.

Diversity and Homogeneity Overall, our research suggests that Newcastle's nightlife remains aimed at the dominant consumer groups of students, white collar service workers and Bigg Market revellers. The city centre lacks small, diverse, nightlife venues with a more 'creative' philosophy towards nightlife provision. Many people expressed pessimism concerning the possibilities for choice and retaining the city's distinctive nightlife culture in light of the growing dominance of large scale corporate nightlife developments.

Consumers and producers Within mainstream nightlife experience of themed, multi-site pubs and bars, the division between those who produce (the owners) and consume (the customers) is clear. Control over what happens in the venue in terms of style, music, lighting and products largely resides at head office, which is often in London or the home counties. A night out in a pub or bar, then, is increasingly guided by company policy rather than local consumer demand. Newcastle has several strong local and regional operators who claim to have a better 'feel' for the needs of local clientele, However, they too are increasingly involved in brand and theme development rather than opening up the venue to the influence of the consumer. Our research has shown that single-site independently owned venues show a greater blurring between owners and consumers, through the exchange of music, ideas, business deals and networks of trust. However, as highlighted above, while the city centre is teaming with nightlife venues, there are fewer places for creative interaction between owners and consumers.

Young people in the city centre Outside consuming and drinking, there are few other opportunities for young people in the city centre and several groups of young people in Newcastle have been villainised for just hanging out, often due to their negative effect on consumers. Newcastle, at night, is a ghetto for post 18 drinkers with few mixed use, age flexible spaces and there is an acute demand for more accessible spaces for young people such as a skate park, youth café or club/music venue.

Conclusion. Future nightlife scenarios

Many people are often keen to compare the city's nightlife with other neighbouring metropolitan centres. In particular, Leeds, Glasgow and Manchester were cited on numerous occasions as models for the way in which Newcastle's nightlife needs to develop. While these cities have no doubt built up broad night-time economies, the extent to which they are useful models for Newcastle needs to be assessed much more closely. Newcastle faces its own set of issues such as a strong local nightlife culture, smaller youth catchment, declining population base, historic lower levels of entreprenuership and smaller disposable incomes. This period of rapid change for Newcastle's nightlife presents an opportunity for those involved in regulating, producing and consuming the city's pubs, clubs and bars to think about how it should develop. Whether we are looking at Newcastle, Glasgow or Leeds, there seems to be a certain air of inevitability about the way in which urban nightlife will continue to develop. However, we suggest there are a number of different choices and ways forward.

First, Newcastle could simply become 'Anywhere-ville UK' and continue to accommodate and embrace the global corporate world hoping that they can become its 'flavour of the month' bringing in big brand retail, food outlets and bars. 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 pub companies marginalising 'home grown' activity. As such, smaller, locally owned nightlife spaces will continue to be squeezed out and the city may lose its uniqueness and distinctive flavour.

Balancing the global, national and the local is probably a more likely scenario. This would involve 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 authority 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 private 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 begin to actively promote local nightlife cultures, emphasising diversity, creatively and social cohesion. 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. This would entail a significant change in cultural values and philosophies based around more inclusive public space, encouraging the intermingling of different age groups and mixing night-time activities in which alcohol consumption, on its own, played a much smaller role.

Table 1. Pub ownership in the UK

	Outlets	Managed	Leased/Tenanted
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

Total for top 10   29,817 (48% of all pubs in the UK)

*Brewer

Punch includes Punch Taverns, Punch Retail, Inn Business, Vanguard, Wellington
Normura includes Unique, Inntrepreneur, Phoenix, Inn Partnership, Wizard Inns