Receiving shadows: governance and liminality in the night-time economy

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses upon the emergence of the night-time economy both materially and culturally as a powerful manifestation of post-industrial society. This emergence features two key processes: firstly, a shift in economic development from the industrial to the post-industrial; secondly, a significant orientation of urban governance involving a move away from the traditional managerial functions of local service provision, towards an entrepreneurial stance primarily focused on the facilitation of economic growth. Central to this new economic era is the identification and promotion of liminality. The State’s apparent inability to control these new leisure zones constitutes the creation of an urban frontier that is governed by commercial imperatives.

KEYWORDS: Night-time economy; post-industrial; governance; liminality

‘Night spots are today overwhelming the street, and are also overwhelming the very life of the area. Into a district excellent at handling and protecting strangers they have concentrated too many strangers, all in too irresponsible a mood, for any conceivable city society to handle naturally.’ (Jacobs 1961)

Since the early 1970s, significant transformations have occurred within western cities. These changes involve two key processes: firstly, a shift in economic development from the industrial to the post-industrial; and secondly, a significant reorientation of urban governance, involving a move away from the managerial functions of local service provision, toward an entrepreneurial stance primarily focused on the facilitation of economic growth (Harvey 1989; Davies 1988; Hall and Hubbard 1996, 1998; Randall 1995). In some towns and cities these processes have been intimately connected with the development of night-time leisure economies (Lovatt and O’Connor 1995; Lovatt 1999), which we argue are based upon the allure of liminal opportunities. However, in order to understand the contemporary
significance of these economies it is necessary to examine some facets of post-industrialism and the changing nature of urban governance.

THE POST-INDUSTRIAL CITY: POLITICS, GOVERNANCE AND ECONOMIC CHANGE

A number of scholars have linked changes in the political economy of place to the decline of Industrialism and ‘Fordism’ and the emergence of Post-Industrial and ‘Post-Fordist’ modes of economic organization and forms of work (Martin 1988; Amin 1994; Esser and Hirsch 1989; Lash and Urry 1987). With the end of the postwar boom in the early 1970s, many British cities entered a new era of de-industrialization and post-industrial re-structuring (see Pacione 1997). Economic redevelopment in these cities often involved shifts from manufacturing to the provision of services and from lifetime employment to ‘flexible’ and temporary forms of working, often involving fixed-term contracts, seasonal, casual or part-time employment (see Taylor 1999: 11). Within the ‘Post-Fordist’ context, work is often conducted at times, and in locations (such as the city centre night-time economy) which in the Industrial/Fordist era would have been regarded as ‘unsocial’ or atypical (Gregson et al. 1999).

The increasing centrality of leisure identities to the post-modern self (Rojek 1993) is a reaction to changing local and global economic conditions, and has in turn spawned an increasingly complex mass of night-time leisure options through which flows new economic and employment opportunities. Indeed not only did we confirm that much of the labour force of the night is part of the hidden economy, paid cash in hand. Further, we noted that in London, marginal and excluded individuals such as illegal immigrants and refugees were being employed, usually in the more menial jobs. Many young men and women now experience their first taste of employment on a part-time basis in bars and clubs, only some of which the State will become aware of. Working in a bar on a part-time basis can be combined with part-time daytime employment, which is far easier to find than full-time labour (Byrne 1993). Moreover, the flexible, irregular and casual nature of much employment in the night-time economy provides numerous opportunities to earn money while remaining ‘officially’ unemployed (Beattie 1986).

Zukin has argued that within this post-industrial context, symbolic economies based upon abstract production in the fields of finance, information, art, fashion, and tourism (1998: 826) have become increasingly important. Cities, are re-inventing themselves as sites of consumption and leisure (Zukin 1991; Hannighan 1998), and such changes involve nothing less than a ‘process of restructuring in which many of those activities deemed peripheral to the activity of the “productive” or “Fordist” city have now moved centre stage’ (O’Connor and Wynne 1996: 4). Thus, in many British cities, the night-time economy, that ‘previously marginal zone of
space and time, is now being promoted as central to the image of a modern “European” city’ (ibid.: 9).

As the urban fortunes of many post-industrial towns and cities become tied to the vicissitudes of local and global markets in consumption, leisure and tourism (Urry 1990), it has become increasingly important to attract investment from external and ‘mobile’ sources. Thus, cities are forced to compete (Begg 1999: 805), and competitiveness is enhanced by economic agglomeration and specialization (Porter 1996). Furthermore, it is claimed that the advantages of ‘clustering,’ are especially salient for the ‘cultural industries’, especially when their ‘products’ draw upon specifically local or regional cultural assets, becoming infused with ‘imageries and sensibilities’ (Scott 1997), which connect product image to place (Molotch 1996). Consequently many local governments have come to regard cultural products and activities as an important source of post-industrial competitive- ness, prosperity and urban regeneration (Dziembowska-Kowalska and Funck 1999; Bassett 1993).

It is important to note that the type of ‘culture’ being promoted is often popular, rather than ‘high’ culture (O’Connor 1998). In the industrial city of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, working class leisure activities were strictly regulated and contained to ensure that they did not threaten the interests of capital, or the sensibilities of the ‘respectable classes’ (Thompson 1967; Cunningham 1980; Bailey 1978). However, in the post-industrial city such constraints have fallen increasingly out of step with market forces. The discourses of repression now appear archaic. Moreover, the path of competitive advantage leads away from regulation and restraint toward an invitation to transgression. Thus, in recent years local authorities in a number of British towns and cities have sought to facilitate and promote the growth of their local night-time economies. However, it is important to note that such policies are underpinned not only by structural and economic demands, but also by a fundamental shift in the political-ideological paradigm of local government.

THE NEW URBAN GOVERNANCE

Local governments are increasingly involved in partnerships with the private sector, having become ‘imbued with characteristics once distinctive to businesses – risk taking, inventiveness, promotion, and profit motivation’ (Hall and Hubbard 1996: 2). We have entered a new era of urban politics, in which the ideological rationale of local government has shifted away from a ‘municipal socialist’ stance, whose central function axiom was the provision of local welfare services, toward a ‘municipal capitalism’ which seeks primarily to facilitate local economic growth and development (Harvey 1989; Davies 1988; Hall and Hubbard 1996, 1998; DiGaento and Klemanski 1993).

As Harvey notes, what is remarkable about the contemporary context is
that the ‘entrepreneurial . . . consensus seems to hold across national bound-
aries and even across political parties and ideologies’ (Harvey 1989: 4). Indeed, Quilley suggests that British models of urban regeneration have
been highly influenced by the North American experience, (Quilley 1999: 189–90), and civic entrepreneurship and boosterism has a long history in
the USA (Ward 1998; Elkin 1987). However, recently the ‘growth machine’
(Logan and Molotoch 1987) has become central to the rationale of local
government. Within the entrepreneurial discourse, cities can only compete
in an ‘increasingly unpredictable and globalized economy by pursuing . . .
proactive strategies designed to secure competitive advantage over their per-
ceived competitors’ (Hall and Hubbard 1998: 2). Urban entrepreneurship
can involve a number of re-imaging and place-marketing strategies, and such
‘beauty contests’ (Jessop 1998) often centre around ‘flagship’ projects and
the hosting of prestige events (Ward 1998), and forms of de-regulation (for
example, a liberal approach to alcohol and entertainment licensing) can be
used as inducements designed to attract mobile capital (Harvey 1994).

The night-time economy refocuses concentrations of power away from
temples of industrial authority such as factories, mines, docks and ship-
yards, and from symbols of local political power such as the town hall. The
balance of repression has swung away from these workplaces and their cor-
responding civil institutions, in favour of a commercial ethic based upon a
hedonistic dynamic. Within the zones of liminality of the post-industrial
city, regional power is now located by asking ‘how many night clubs?’ and
whether the city has a ‘J. B. Wetherspoons’ or a ‘Piano and Pitcher’, both
national enterprises currently investing in the expanding night-time economy. They constitute highly visible examples of new concentrations of
demonstrable economic power, a power based like industrial society upon
huge capital investment.

The construction of centres of leisure consumption to physically replace
nineteenth-century centres of production and their commercial and
bureaucratic infrastructures, is a marked characteristic of late twentieth
century British cities. Manchester is the most visible of these new cities, with
Leeds, Glasgow and others following behind. The velocity of the
capital hitting these old industrial and commercial centres has been quite
remarkable, and its trajectory ricochets around cities built on the rhythms
of industrial production as the configuration of the night-time economy
continues to evolve. As Mike Payne of disco giants First Leisure explains,
‘There has been a change in the city centre environment. Councils encour-
gaged bars and they have become important again. Now the nightstrip scene
is where the future is’ (Guardian, Jan 23, 1999). There are 78,000 pubs and
bars in the UK, and in 1997 there were 185 million admissions to nightclub
premises, with consumers spending over two billion pounds in those
premises. In 1998 the industry reported 199 million nightclub admissions.
This was up from 142 million in 1993, and it is predicted that by 2002 there
will be 238 million admissions, generating a predicted turnover of 2.5
billion pounds (Mintel 1998).
The existence of a thriving night-time economy is now taken as a prerequisite for any city hoping to make a claim upon progressive profitability. However, the post industrial response by cities that were forged in nineteenth-century assumptions of the fundamental project of the metropolis vary considerably, ‘demonstrat(ing) very different capacities, institutionally and strategically, for responding to the challenges of a post-Fordist world’ (Taylor 1999: 131). The emergent systems of governance are comprised of interconnected networks operating between the public and private sector (Rose and Miller 1992) and as a consequence the post-industrial city exhibits few elements of blanket co-ordination.

**LAST ORDERS**

Each economic era has made demands upon agents of social control to impose systems of discipline and regulation that will maximize the opportunity for profit, and attract investment. Further, these systems are tailor-made to suit particular sites and specific situations. For instance the imposition of industrial discipline in the mid-nineteenth century included not only the rigid routines of factory labour, but also the maintenance of pre-industrial militias to police disorder, political protest and industrial unrest (Silver 1967; Manning 1977). However, this combination of economic discipline complemented by military force was not regarded as universally appropriate, for in urban settings devoid of industrialism (Hobbs 1988) agglomerations of private and public policing were combined with policies designed to divide and separate disruptive segments of the population to maintain a semblance of order commensurate with the new commercial order (Cohen 1979).

As far as the internal territory is concerned, industrialism proved to be a hugely stabilizing and pacifying force, part of a ‘civilizing process’, based on the maintenance of socio-economic interdependencies, the internalization of behavioural codes and the State’s monopolization of physical violence (Elias 1994). These behavioural codes and their manifest demeanors were enforced by ‘[increasingly] stringent and widely approved urban policing . . . brought to bear upon the drunken and disorderly individuals whose rhythms were out of tune with industrial society’ (Brown 1991: 131).

Unlike the disciplines of the industrial era, the post-industrial leisure sector is not dependent upon rigid, repressive, and sublimating codes of restraint. On the contrary, its codes and practices are carefully wrapped in layers of imagery suggesting attractions of hedonistic free fall, unhampered by behavioural checkpoints, fostering an ethic of ‘aggressive hedonism’ (Gurr 1989: 369). Customers are encouraged to drink alcohol, and many venues utilize explicit references to drug culture to attract and retain its clientele (Collin 1997). It should be of no surprise that intoxication is the norm, and that unruly and violent behaviour is a central feature of an economy yet to develop a full set of codes and protocols comparable to
those that dominated social relations in the industrial era. Indeed, while such high levels of prosperity and popularity mark this sector, it may be naïve to suggest that such a coded device will ever evolve. Yet the levels of violence that currently pertain within the night-time economy are considerable. Further they relate largely to the age group most aggressively targeted by forces seeking to exploit opportunities offered by this new commercial frontier. As this new economy evolves, so too must new forms of control, and bouncers, privately funded security or doorstaff, are integral to the process of incorporation that is currently taking place in the night-time economy.

As Stenson and Watt (1998) have pointed out, town centres are contested places, and the realities of socio-spatial borderlines are not eradicated with the onset of darkness. Further, the gathering together in one place of individuals and groups who embody antagonisms that may be rooted in ethnic, racial, class or territorial motives, quite apart from random or alcohol inspired aggression, suggests that the city centre at night is no free floating postmodern Nirvana, overflowing with subversive and emancipatory potential (see Wilson 1991: 7–8; O’Connor and Wynne 1993): no sanctuary from the tensions, rigours and inequalities that infest the daylight hours (Savage and Warde 1993: 118; Hutchinson et al. 1998).

From our case study of Eastville, police statistics reveal that 66 per cent of all city centre violent crime, recorded during the last three years, occurred over the weekend period. Of this violence, at least twenty nine per cent was recorded as occurring within or directly outside licensed premises; 68 per cent occurred between 2100 hours to 0300 hours, with the level rising to, and descending from, a peak around the eleven o’clock closing time of the town’s pubs. Seventy per cent of violence took place at those premises within the one square mile of the city centre. One particular road, ‘Lager Street’, has, over the last three years, developed into an archetypal ‘nightstrip’. Within a stretch of two hundred yards there are contained, two fully licensed nightclubs, one ‘superpub’ with a special hours license, a further five pubs and a restaurant-bar, there are also a further three applications pending for special hours certificates. Lager Street has seen an increase in recorded violent crime of 106 per cent during the last two years with 79 per cent of recorded violence occurring between the hours 2100 and 0300.

It is in light of these statistics that senior police officers repeatedly raise concerns over the night-time usage of the city centre. A policy of habitual opposition to new licensing applications has recently been re-installed amid fears that police resources, struggling to cope with weekend demand, have reached what they define as their equivalent of the ‘tipping point’ (Skogan 1990). Their perception, one that our observations lead us to agree with, is that the city centre at night is a youth orientated segmented economy that is a no-go-area for older generations. Amenities such as the town’s theatres and cinemas (the site of the old cinema is now a 1400 capacity pub with a late license), have relocated out to the fringes of the
city centre, a move that makes economic sense given that over 70 per cent of respondents to the local community crime audit survey indicated they avoid entering the city centre after dark on a weekend (Eastville Community Safety Unit). In a plea to municipal planners, Delafons, concerned that the development of the night-time environment lacks commercial diversity, warns of the side-effects which ‘can detract from the character of a town centre and deter local people from using it, especially at night; so that what should be a thriving evening and night-time economy becomes an unfriendly and even threatening place’ (Delafons 1996).

As well as crime figures, analysis of occurrence logs to Eastville police command and control over the last three years indicates a degree of rationality to this fear: over 45 per cent of all logs for violence in the city centre are received between 21.00 hours and 03.00 hours. Both our observations of public order patrols and analysis of local Accident and Emergency statistics indicate that the vast majority of violence occurs in public space, between young males, either outside licensed premises or in transit between licensed premises (it should be noted that Eastville has no CCTV system). Where violence does occur within the private space of a licensed premise, calls to the police are less frequent because licensees are not inclined to draw attention to their premises, and it is at this point that private security in the form of bouncers often emerges to police this public space.

The night-time economy is based upon consumption, primarily of alcohol, and the breakdown of old rules and protocols has been hastened by the marketing strategies of entrepreneurs who put together special offers and packages aimed at both attracting customers to their premises and keeping them there. Scantily clad bar staff, striptease artistes, organized drinking games, hen nights, stag nights, and special nights for nurses and students are laid on, as well as fifty pence a pint nights, and the inevitable three shots of whatever’s not selling well for a pound.

Cheap drink and other bait are usually offered on mid-week evenings to maximize profits outside of the weekend deluge that signifies peak business, when drink prices can remain high without fear of dissuading custom. During the week custom must be attracted, and it is here that the drinks promotions work their charms. The promise of half priced bottles of lager, or two or three shots of spirit for the price of one, a free Tequila with every pint or a free cocktail upon admittance to a night-club is often enough to seduce custom away from local drinking establishments, or away from the television and mid-week hibernation and back to the city centre to spend money. Bars often offer cheap drinks on the same night as their competitors, not as a form of direct competition, but to create a varied and cheap drinking environment, multiplying custom rather than competing for it.
As noted above, the bulk of investment in the night-time economy is centered on the ‘business of pleasure’ (Bailey 1986) and is characterized by a flow of capital aimed at the development of licensed premises. That the focus of this capital investment is predominantly upon city centre sites is, we found, typically lamented by the police yet largely welcomed by the town planners, whose primary aim is to regenerate the city and preserve the city centre as a focus for public usage. As one town planner in Eastville suggested ‘the office market is dead, the residential sector is dead and the retail sector patchy . . . the leisure sector is so strong that it is just about the only sector where we are seeing new planning applications . . . licensed premises can generate investment that other usage types can’t’. However, the hedonistic drive that underlies serial fashions must be cultivated and stimulated, and the problem with this reality, as identified by police and commentators alike, is that the development of licensed premises can quickly saturate an area. What Jacobs labels ‘the economic equivalent of a fad’ (1961), occurs because a low risk investment is one ‘where success is already a well-established fact’. The resulting clustering of licensed premises have well documented implications for crime and disorder (Hope 1985; Tuck 1989).

Nationally, applications for new on-licenses are currently running at over three thousand a year (an increase of over 38 per cent from both 1992 and 1995). There are now over 110,000 on-licensed premises; this represents an increase of 28 per cent over the last twenty years. These most recent figures show that there are now 78,000 pubs and bars, 30,000 restaurants and hotels, and 4,000 licensed clubs (2,000 of which are over 300 capacity venues), a respective increase over the last twenty years of 16 per cent, 44 per cent and 25 per cent. (Home Office Liquor Licensing Statistics, England and Wales: 27/98). The pub and club industry, which unlike modern automated production is body-intensive, now employs approximately 500,000 people at the point of service delivery, and turns over twenty-two billion pounds, equal to 3 per cent of the UK Gross Domestic Product. The average turnover of a pub is £265,000, although the busier, larger city centre unit can have a turnover, similar to a large nightclub, of between one and three million pounds (BLRA 1998).

Hidden from the licensing statistics is the increasing scale of many modern drinking establishments as venue size can range from the ‘super-pub’ which can be anything up to twenty times the size of the traditional pub, to the cafe-bar where capacity can be less then one hundred. The former, an increasingly prevalent sight on the landscape of our city centres, represent huge investments in the local economy, the weight of which many local authorities, already overloaded with licensed premises, find difficult to turn down. One premise in central London, the first of a chain, recently opened at an outlay of three million pounds; this single leisure complex has a capacity of over two thousand and features seven different bars, a restaurant, a delicatessen and a late night license.
Another significant contemporary feature of the city centre drinking environment is the growth of so called ‘Chameleon bars’ that function as pubs during the day and nightclubs by night. As one operator suggests, ‘During the day we offer a comfortable, pubby environment for shoppers and people wanting lunch or a drink after work. Later, the music is turned up and the lights turned down to attract a younger crowd. The daytime customers wouldn’t recognise it by late evening’ (Jeremy Blood, Marketing Director, Rat and Parrot Group, in Fenn 1999). Although recently the law has tightened up on such premises, its enforcement has not (Marsden vs Shipley 1998 1 WLR 1438), and their continued development is the response of leisure operators seeking to exploit a niche in the market by offering a cheaper, late night drinking facility then previously found within the conventional nightclub scene.

Wary of this threat, the nightclub leisure corporations have responded by introducing their own ‘themed’ late-night bars and so the significance of the late-night market is escalated. This process is complemented by a more flexible approach to regulation by licensing authorities whose officials, acting at a local level, perceive considerable benefit for the city that appears more in step with its European neighbours. The outcome has been to expand both the size and the scope of the night-time economy as evidenced by the granting of an increased number of ordinary and late-night license applications.

In Eastville city centre, as well as an increased number of licensed premises there is a detectable change in the nature of the existing licensed premises. This change echoes a move away from the ‘traditional’ based drinking houses that cater for a wide array of customers, towards the loosely defined youth culture based or ‘fun’ pubs where the set-up is geared specifically towards attracting groups of young people. (Of course one person’s fun can quickly turn into another person’s hell, because it is to the vicinity of just these types of premises that police patrols are called incessantly). Within such establishments in order to access the high disposable income of the upper echelons of the youth market; entertainment provisions are installed, stone floors are replaced by wooden dancefloors and a cross-section of quality bitters is replaced by a narrow selection of strong lagers. Those premises that fail to adapt will go under. For instance, over the last decade, of the fifteen traditional pubs in Eastville city centre only four are now left. In their place have stepped the large impersonal (quasi) disco-bars that feature an undercurrent of heightened sexuality, a dimmed-down lighting rig, a booming sound-system and always the necessary cast of bouncers on the door.

While we would not wish to deny the existence of various audiences and consumers of city centre leisure based upon market differentiation and manifested by the ‘multiplication of urban spaces’ (Graham and Clarke 1996: 172), that typifies late modernity, very few British cities can have serious aspirations of mimicking the ‘gay villages’ of Manchester and London, or the chic cosmopolitan sensibilities of Barcelona, or
Amsterdam. Indeed given the meteorological realities of British summers, a version of Cafe Society is unlikely to last longer than a couple of weeks a year.

Youth dominate both the private and the public spaces of the night-time economy, and although ‘a much more sophisticated and mixed economy (featuring) more elegance variety and refinement’ (Montgomery 1998) may constitute the planning professionals ideal, the reality is that the night-time economy is a largely unregulated zone of quasi liminality awash on a sea of alcohol. For the night-time economy is a largely unregulated zone of venture capitalism whose relentless logic excludes from its ever expanding portfolio any innovation that is not oozing with profitable potential. For instance the booming city centre of Wolverhampton, whose alcohol based night-time economy has thrived on private sector investment has had to resort to seeking development funds from non-commercial sources such as the Lottery and the European Regional Development Fund to finance an artists quarter.

RECEIVING SHADOWS

‘We improve our grasp of the ecology of a region by recognising the night-time activity of raccoons, owls, and rats, as well as by knowing the spatial dispersion of these and other animals. The same area of a forest or meadow or coral reef is used incessantly, with diurnal and nocturnal creatures taking their active turns’ (Melbin 1978: 5).

The distinction between day and night is commonly regarded as ‘the most fundamental zoning demarcation between the intensity of social life and its relaxation . . . Night-time was a “frontier” of social activity as marked as any spatial frontiers have ever been. It remains a frontier, as it were, that is only sparsely settled’ (Giddens 1984: 119). We traditionally approach the night as a zone of time and space that is riddled with ambiguity. At night men and women seek out times and spaces that are demarcated for leisure (Sennett 1990), it is a time of release from civilizing influences or ‘ceremonial codes’ (Goffman 1967: 55) of both occupational and domestic labour inherent to the ‘... temporal regulation of the day . . . ’ (Giddens 1984: 144). However, apart from a release from the rigours and restraints of the daylight hours, the night also inspires fear and apprehension

Night . . . a place associated with death and the grave, is opposed to the day . . . The link between night and death, which is underscored by nocturnal sounds like the howling of dogs and the grating of the sleepers’ teeth, similar to that of the dying, is marked in all the taboos of the evening: . . . bathing . . . looking in mirrors, anointing the hair, touching ashes – would have the effect of in a sense doubling the malignancy of the nocturnal darkness . . . (Bourdieu 1977: 148)

The dualism of the night that celebrates a relaxation of the restraints
associated with the workplace and the home, acknowledges and utilizes the nights association with decline via a celebration of dissolution and degradation that constitutes a recoding of agency in the wake of decline.

The decline of the sun... is in a sense the paradigm of all forms of decline, in particular old age and all kinds of political decadence (... his sun has fallen) or physical decay... to go westwards, towards the setting sun... is to go towards darkness, night, death, like a house whose westward-facing door can only receive shadows. (op. cit. 153)

Consequently ‘going out’ at night is something of an adventure (Simmel 1950: 243–6), for it is beyond the parameters of routine time and place, and is experienced in isolation from the mundane circumstances generated by the responsibilities of work and family. ‘In its periodicity and episodes, the adventure gives zest and meaning to life’ (Lyman and Scott 1970: 18). The episodic loosening of the bonds of restraint imposed by paid employment and domestic labour, when repeated as an eternal recurrence in the same space by successive generations, leads to the emergence of ‘... the zoning of time-space in relation to routinized social practices’ (Giddens 1984: 119).

The routinization of liminal practices requires designated spaces, and these city centre pleasure zones are entertainment quarters that function as zones of patterned liminality which must create the impression of being set aside and secluded from the principle arenas of normative, non-liminal social life (Turner 1974: 232). This stress upon the deliberate creation of a liminal impression is crucial, for central to our thesis is the opposition to strict culturalist interpretations of social phenomena. The night-time economy commodifies space and establishes created environments, spaces that are designed to exploit the potential of multiple audiences in a plethora of consumer options. However, the bulk of liminal arenas cater to a youth orientated market based upon alcohol, and in many smaller towns around the country, this is the only option.

The symbolic domain (Turner 1969: 80) of the night, harbouring none of the attributes of either paid work or domesticity, is made concrete by the construction of profit seeking venues, and it is the aim of night-time entrepreneurs to create a sense of communitas within the festival built around weekend rituals of liminality. Communitas is highly valued commercially for, when associated with a particular venue, it is converted into customer loyalty around the notion of an unstructured community of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of hedonism fronted by the ritual elders; promoters, DJs and, ideally, the true custodians of the liminal zone, bouncers (Malbon 1998: 273).

The temporary make believe nature of the ‘liminal masquerade’ (Turner 1974: 243) denies the routine existence of the material world, and creates via communitas a festival whose function is to be spontaneous, self generating, potentially dangerous, and revitalizing. Some of the night-time economy is situated in traditional locations, marking the site of liminal
locations for generations of night-time customers, and such locales are then the subject of heavy investment by commercial and municipal forces and ‘spontaneous forms of communitas are converted into institutionalised structure’ (Turner 1974: 248). We became aware during the course of our research of venues that had managed to harness this spontaneity, and by implementing various practices, most importantly non-intimidatory door strategies, communitas became a genuine characteristic of the venue. This was particularly noticeable in a few independent venues with their origins in late 1980s/early 1990s dance culture. As Malbon cogently notes, ‘This communal ethic, the pleasure of being with others, is born both from the sharing of space (a territory) and the proximity of that act of sharing, and from the establishment and maintenance of some sense of unity or membership.’ (1998: 273).

We consider the success of these exemplary venues elsewhere in our discussion of the ‘culture of the door’ (Hobbs and Hall 2000). However, at this stage we stress that such successes are few and far between and that for the most part liminal zones thrive on the promise rather than the deliverance of communitas. Further, far from being a zone of infinite possibilities, where individuals are free to explore a multiplicity of masked identities, the thread of structure through ritualized communitas within liminality is ‘... highly characteristic of long established and stable cultural systems, in which ... communitas has been thoroughly domesticated, even corralled’ (Turner 1974: 254). The night-time economy provides structured provision for liminality (op. cit.: 260), and with a choice of venues ranging from maverick independents to corporate chains, the social structure does not disappear within zones of liminality, but it is simplified, generalized (op. cit.: 262), and glossed by commercial forces with an innate understanding of the lure of liminality and the desires of individuals to envelop themselves in a sense of communitas lacking from the alienating humdrum rhythms of everyday life. The repertoire of liminal symbols employed by commercial forces includes imagery relating to, overt sexuality, inebriation, and egoism. References to affluence and exotic locations confirm that liminal festivals, particularly those that thrive upon fixed locations regularized by the establishment of entertainment quarters are sites for ‘... the circulation of wealth, of the most important trading, of prestige gained through the distribution of accumulated reserves’ (Caillois 1959: 123–6).

The night-time economy utilizes liminal traditions and in particular the desire for communitas, to establish the routinized festival of Friday and Saturday nights out as essential to the institutionalized order and ‘spontaneous forms of communitas are converted into institutionalised structure’ (Turner 1974: 248). This routinization of communitas via the establishment of the commercial exploitation of traditional forms of liminal expression into part of the bedrock of the local political economy constitutes, ‘not inversions of the social order but mirrors of it’ (Schechner 1993: 48). The transformation of the built environment of cities such as Manchester from industrial to post-industrial systems of accumulation,
emphasize the nature of the tension that is apparent in these spatially ordered liminal rituals, a tension that stems from the fact that though ritualized inversions of the social order are tolerated, in the form of drunkenness, rowdy behaviour etc. this is merely a ‘temporary respite from the conventional social order to which it would return’ (Jackson 1989: 80).

In the light of this brief discussion of liminality we are obviously in conflict with those writers who have adopted a somewhat romantic view that emphasizes the maverick nature of night-time dwellers and the essential dislocation of nightlife from the organizational and disciplinary restraints of the daytime (Becker 1963). Melbin describes this as a switch ‘from coordinated actions (daytime) to unconnected ones (night-time)’ (1978: 9). There is some element of truth to Melbin’s account, for as he goes on to explain, like the frontier of the American West, the night-time frontier is somewhat removed from conventional power structures. In the West this was caused by the physical distance between Eastern based governmental and legal agencies (ibid.: 9–10), while the primary administrators of contemporary cities ‘... are generally on duty only during the daytime. At night they go to sleep and a similar decentralization of power follows’ (Melbin 1978: 10). However, although the night-time frontier may lack administrative hierarchies, it is pure maverick sentimentalism to suggest that it lacks co-ordination. For actions become co-ordinated as in the West in its early stages by ‘The frontiersmen (who) not only enforced their own law, they chose which ... embattled shift of police of/bullet5cers, and the occasional environmental health or licensing of/bullet5cer, the socio-legal and administrative framework of our cities work hours ideally suited to day-based industrial production: the very foundations upon which our great cities were founded in the nineteenth century. The night-time economy comes into its own as city managers administrators and senior police officers are taking to their beds for the night.

Like the Western frontier, problems of incorporation (Trachtenberg 1982) in the night-time economy are manifested in lawlessness and violence, and are concentrated in certain places and at certain times. Consequently, the notion of a deviant area is problematic when applied to those cities which have developed a night-time economy based around space originally designated as industrial or commercial, and now situated as integral to modern city centres that also incorporate retail shopping and commercial and administrative office space. ‘In the day-time the areas are part of business districts. Many people shop at department stores nearby, or otherwise pass through and patronise eating places and businesses there. So the combat zone designation refers to these places only at certain hours and is not true for all the city all night’ (Melbin 1978: 12).
CONCLUSION

Post-industrial cities have invested heavily in developing 24 hour economies that require codes and protocols unique to a populace who in previous generations were subjected to rigid laws constructed to limit pleasure and leisure to forms commensurate with industrial production. Ambiguity dominates formal attempts to regulate the night-time economy, and attempts to enforce protocols and ensure the incorporation of the night-time population take place via the explicit expression of intimidatory devices that are embodied by commercial security staff in the form of bouncers or doormen (Hobbs and Hall 2000). The utility of these devices provides an essential co-ordinating element that sometimes blends and sometimes conflicts with the co-ordinating devices of the State as represented by what is normally a small police presence (ibid.).

Like our relationship to the night, the rules, codes, and protocols of the night-time economy are essentially ambiguous, yet distinct from those applied to the same physical settings during the daytime. For although the projected impression of a hedonistic environment devoid of restraint is central to the allure of night-time leisure, this impression is illusory. For when viewed from within, it is apparent that there are distinct boundaries maintained by commercial imperatives every bit as pragmatic as those employed during the traditional working day. The marketing of liminal licence, which is crucial to the appeal of the night-time economy is the key to the sectors ambiguity, and vital to any understanding of the inevitability of violence and disorder in a new economic era where ‘All is life, avarice, lust, deviltry, and enterprise . . . abounding in strange exhibitions and startling combinations of the human passions’ (Browne 1871: 348).

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NOTES

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2. For instance, in 1996 revenues from night-clubs and discos was 1,808 million pounds, and by 1998 this figure had
dropped to 1,784 (Mintel 1998). This drop in revenue however, was due to the extent to which the emergence of ‘dance bars’, newly equipped with late night drink licenses, open to two and three in the morning and not charging an admission fee, have captured a slice of the market.

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