

Commentary

Play space: historical and socio-cultural reflections on drugs, licensed leisure locations, commercialisation and control

Fiona Measham*

Department of Applied Social Science, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YP, UK

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Abstract

This paper will consider legal and illicit drug use in relation to changing leisure spaces, reflecting on different types of leisure space from the formal, controlled and purpose built licensed leisure locations of the modern urban landscape to the illicit, unregulated and wild zones beyond. Drawing on a range of literature, as well as empirical studies by the author, the historical and socio-cultural development of leisure space in relation to dance clubs, public houses and café bars in the UK will be considered. The relationship between spatiality, consumption, commercialisation and control is analysed through a consideration of changes in licensed leisure spaces; changes in the use of legal and illicit drugs within them; and state and commercial responses to these changes at local and national level. After pub and club space, the third and final consideration is the notion of head space, utilised and commodified in the pursuit of pleasure in late modern consumer society.

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Introduction

Research on drugs, leisure and spatiality intersects with some of the most interesting recent debate in cultural criminology, cultural geography and cultural studies, focussing on popular culture, urban space and the changing nature of the city. The changing uses and meanings of leisure space involve the creation of new locations and the transformation, subversion and reinterpretation of existing space. These leisure venues have developed with, without and against official endorsement leading to a range of policy responses which raise questions about the control of youth and young adult leisure time/space. The criminalisation of the most disreputable, disruptive and potentially threatening leisure time activities and space has occurred alongside the development of socially sanctioned and commercially exploited leisure. Furthermore, leisure space represents not only a site for the pursuit of pleasure in late modern consumer society, but is also an expression and reflection of the structural constraints within that society,

and – specifically in relation to the public house or café bar – is geographically, socially and symbolically located at the heart of the community in many societies.

Pubs and clubs have been key social spaces for young adults in the UK across the late twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. With the exception of a small number of studies of American bars (e.g. Spradley & Mann, 1975), British public houses (e.g. Hey, 1986; Hunt & Satterlee, 1987) and European bars (e.g. Sulkunen, Alasuutari, Nätkin, & Kinnunen, 1985), research on licensed leisure space is relatively sparse, however, and concentrated in the historical and anthropological literature rather than the alcohol and drug field. This is despite the historical and continuing importance of pubs and clubs to popular culture, and the identification of the criminalisation and control of popular and subcultural worlds as a central feature of cultural criminology (e.g. Ferrell & Sanders, 1995).

An historical and socio-cultural analysis of licensed and unlicensed leisure locations shows the relevance of context to our understanding of contemporary social and spatial relations in the pub and club. Whilst recognising the historical continuities of British drinking culture and the centrality of

* Tel.: +44 1524 594106.

E-mail address: F.Measham@lancaster.ac.uk.

pubs, clubs and dance halls to British leisure (Davies, 1992; Marsh & Fox Kibby, 1992; Tuck, 1989), this paper explores how meanings of space are made through consumption and control, by focusing on the discontinuities in licensed leisure space and their relationship to changing patterns of legal and illicit (i.e. illegal and quasi legal) drug use. This can be contextualised in the contemporary socio-cultural milieu which is more complex and multi-faceted than that of previous generations; where consumption is central to the leisure experience and where leisure is central to the construction and performance of image within a performative society (Rojek, 2000). This is evident across a range of aspirational, risk taking, status defining and image enhancing leisure time pursuits including the consumption of legal and illicit drugs. Thus, leisure represents a potential “controlled loss of control” in a culture of control and surveillance, mediated by structural constraints such as gender, ethnicity, age and socio-economic class (Measham, 2002). The differential occupation of physical and social space by different social groups is illustrated in studies, for example, of men-only clubs (Rogers, 1988), factories (Westwood, 1984), live gigs (Hanna, 1999), personal space (Scott & Morgan, 1993), and urban space (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003).

Utilising literature and data from alcohol and drug studies, cultural criminology, cultural studies, cultural geography and history, as well as a range of studies by the author, the commentary considers changes in two key contrasting licensed leisure locations – firstly dance clubs and then public houses. The relationship between spatiality, consumption, commercial development and state control is explored using a multi-disciplinary historical and socio-cultural analysis which focuses on the changing nature of the club and pub in the last 20 years in the UK, the place of legal and illicit drugs within such space, and policy responses to each, with the two pronged commercialisation and criminalisation of specific leisure locations. The third and concluding consideration – head space – draws together aspects of spatiality, consumption and leisure in the twenty-first century pursuit of pleasure.

Club space

Whilst recognising the long history of social dancing, this commentary explores recent developments in specific leisure locations relating to social dancing. In looking at the cultural distinctions and discontinuities rather than continuities between dance clubs and earlier dance halls and night clubs, this section focuses on what has been considered a ‘new’ social space, facilitating, at least for a short period, new models of social and sexual interaction.

The commercial development of British dance halls and night clubs evolved out of the music halls and gin palaces of the late nineteenth century which increased in popularity in the twentieth century to become a key social space for young adults by the end of the Second World War. Whereas

working class young women faced varying degrees of disapproval for regular drinking in public houses (e.g. Measham, *in press-a*), dance halls (and cinemas) were open to them as more ‘respectable’ leisure time pursuits in the first half of the twentieth century (Davies, 1992), an important historical difference in terms of the commercial development of public houses and dance halls as leisure locations. In the 1950s and 1960s, a boom in popular music and social dancing led to the commercial expansion of dance halls across many countries and from the mid-1970s onwards, mass social dancing continued in the form of discotheques and night clubs. Thus, social dancing at specified leisure locations has been a more or less central part of the weekend for a considerable minority of young people for over half a century.

In contrast to the dance halls, night clubs and discotheques of previous decades, it is the developments in contemporary leisure space within the last 20 years which provide the basis for an analysis of the relationship between consumption, commercialisation and control. The acid house parties, raves and dance events which developed from the late 1980s onwards in the UK have been portrayed as a watershed, a “wild zone”, which challenged the conventions of traditional leisure space (Stanley, 1997). Research and writings on British acid house parties, raves and dance clubs of the late 1980s and 1990s have explored the now well-documented ways in which these could be considered challenging spaces regarding the innovations of social interaction and patterns of consumption within them, as well as challenged spaces regarding official responses to the ‘decade of dance’ (Garratt, 1998; Henderson, 1993; Osgerby, 1998; Reynolds, 1998).

The original British acid house and rave scene developed out of, as an extension of and as a backlash against the increasingly individualistic and materialistic enterprise culture of the ‘Thatcherite’ 1980s. In this way, the antecedents of rave in 1980s materialism resulted in its characterisation as both an anti-commercial utopian egalitarianism (Garratt, 1998; Newcombe, 1991; Presdee, 2000; Reynolds, 1998) and an apolitical escapist hedonism for suburban youth (Kohn, 1997; Rietveld, 1993). (See McRobbie, 1999, for a critique of the escapism/pleasure versus oppositional/political radicalism debate in relation to the UK rave scene.)

The rave space itself has been considered challenging in terms of music, drugs and clubbers. The early rave ethos has been characterised as a non-egotistical creation and appreciation of music shared by DJs, promoters and clubbers; an evangelical passion for the potential of the empathogenic ecstasy; and an egalitarian desire to dance, socialise and have fun for young women and men from across the social spectrum. (For a consideration of the relationship between gender, socio-economic class, ethnicity, sexual orientation and 1990s British club culture see Measham, Aldridge, & Parker, 2001). Indeed, raves and dance events were characterised in contrast to the mainstream licensed leisure alternatives – the public houses and night clubs of the late 1980s and 1990s –

in terms of their lack of door policies or dress codes, the relative physical safety for women and men, and less threat of alcohol-related aggression and harassment prevalent in and around drinking venues (Gofton, 1990; Marsh & Fox Kibby, 1992; Tomsen, 1997). Henderson's research with young female clubbers, for example, identified a combination of safety and fun at dance clubs which "provided an exciting, exhilarating but also 'safe' social space" (Henderson, 1993: 125).

The developments across the 1990s in the UK and elsewhere in Europe illustrate the complex relationship between patterns of drug consumption and supply; and the regulation, licensing and policing of different dance spaces. An influx of drug dealers, organised criminal gangs, weapons and consequent violence in some of the unlicensed, unregulated and illegal raves in the early 1990s led 1992 to be characterised as the low point in the 'decade of dance', where "rave's 'living dream' . . . turned to living nightmare" (Reynolds, 1998: 190). The music scene and the clubs themselves fractured into firstly, the regulated, indoor dance clubs and corporate 'super-clubs' of the late 1990s and secondly, the outdoor (licensed and unlicensed) 'alternative' music festivals and raves (criminalised after 1994) which reflected the dual fortunes of the mainstream and the underground in popular culture. Shapiro has noted how the indoor–outdoor dichotomy of 1990s dance parties can be linked with official responses from the late 1960s onwards which have attempted to control these popular cultural events, so that indoor music events have tended to follow the commercially sanctioned route whilst it is the outdoor festivals which have tended to receive the full force of policing and legislative responses (Shapiro, 1999). In this instance we can see how location defines legality and context determines transgression.

For some of those attending these outdoor and unregulated dance events, the lack of official sanction to this 'new' leisure space was part of the appeal, for as Thornton identified: "when raves moved clubs out of traditional dance venues into new sites like disused warehouses, aircraft hangars, municipal pools and tents in farmers' fields, it was partly in pursuit of forbidden and unpredictable senses of place" (Thornton, 1995: 22). Given the widespread media coverage of the emerging dance club scene since its inception as acid house, however, Thornton has questioned both "the persistent value of authenticity" and "the useful myth of the mainstream" (Thornton, 1995: 14) in the dichotomy between underground and mainstream perpetuated by the media, clubbers and some academics, and in the notion of rebellion or resistance through subcultural style. Redhead, too, has questioned the relevance of subcultural 'depth' models which portray authentic subcultures having been distorted by manufactured media coverage, when we now live in a "(post) modern culture, a culture characterised by depthlessness, flatness and 'hyperreality' as Jean Baudrillard has labelled it" (Redhead, 1993: 23). Indeed Presdee has gone further to argue that youth culture "is an endless search for the inauthentic; that is, a culture that is empty of the authority and the imperatives that come with authenticity" (Presdee, 2000: 114).

Drugs in clubs

The complexities of the relationship between spatiality, consumption, commercialisation and control can be illustrated by a consideration of the patterns of drug use of those attending specific dance clubs. Studies of recreational drug use amongst clubbers have revealed that UK clubbers have drug consumption patterns wider in repertoire and greater in frequency and quantity than national household studies of the general young adult population. For example, the lifetime prevalence rate for use of any illicit drug is 12% amongst 16- to 29-year olds in the general population in the 2000 British Crime Survey (Ramsay, Baker, Goulden, Sharp, & Sondhi, 2001), whereas the lifetime prevalence rate amongst clubbers ranges from 52% (Deehan & Saville, 2003) to 81% (Release, 1997), depending on club location, region, music policy and socio-demographic customer base.

Furthermore, when looking at the range of drug use between individual dance clubs playing different sub genres of dance music, there are considerable differences in quantities, frequencies and profiles of drug use between clubs. A study of legal and illicit drug use by over two thousand clubbers in the north west of England revealed quite different consumption patterns associated with the music policies of three different dance clubs located only a few miles apart (Measham et al., 2001). At one of the three clubs in the dance club study, the club space was utilised by different promoters holding individual club nights characterised by different styles of music. Thursday jungle/drum and bass nights hosted at the club attracted a customer base which varied in ethnic, gender, occupational and regional composition to the Friday night techno and Saturday night dance nights, and with markedly different associated patterns of consumption of legal and illicit drugs.

A more striking contrast in use of the same physical space for different social functions in the UK is provided by multi-arena leisure centres located on the outskirts of urban areas, which are used for a variety of functions including as dance venues. The second of the three clubs in the dance club study discussed above was one of these leisure centres regularly used for dance events (Measham et al., 2001). On Saturday evenings the multi-arena venue was transformed from indoor football and squash courts into a hardcore rave-style dance event for the evening which attracted up to 6000 customers, a physical transformation of space which was enabled by the use of flexible partitions, scaffolding, backdrops, mobiles, lighting rigs, sound systems and even indoor fun fair rides. Within minutes of the dance music ending at 2.00 a.m. another transformation of physical space occurred as the revellers were still making their way off the site; the cleaners were preparing the venue to become an equally popular meeting place for another influx of people in less than 4 hours time. As with many clubs, the evidence of dance drug use was more apparent after the party was over (Newcombe, 1992), and hence the 2.00 a.m. cleaning shift involved picking up discarded drug-related paraphernalia – empty plastic bags

and paper wraps that had contained the pills and powders of the night before – because the leisure centre played host to an indoor car boot sale at 6.00 a.m. on Sunday mornings which attracted thousands of customers from across the north west of England.

With a wave of legislation introduced and revived which controlled and criminalised the previously unregulated and unlicensed dance events, these out of town leisure centres on industrial and retail estates across the UK became a favoured location for legal licensed raves, attracting thousands of young people every weekend throughout the 1990s throughout the country, with many travelling many miles by car and coach to their favoured dance event. However, the Saturday night rave space within the leisure centre in the north west of England dance club study was contested by the local licensing authority on several occasions and the raves finally ended after a high profile dance drug-related death. Rave events such as these have been channelled from city centres to industrial estates on the outskirts of towns in Europe and North America, monitored, opposed by the police and licensing authorities and finally closed down. Hui observed, in relation to North America, that the isolation of rave events pushed into the socio-spatial periphery illustrates the power relations in the social construction of space (Hui, 2001).

The transformation in dance clubs was not only of physical space, however, but also the promised transformation of the individual clubber. As Melechi has noted, the subcultural distinction of acid house and rave lay in clubbers' pursuit of disappearance from the gaze of onlookers, of dancers from spectators, and of party-bound ravers from police surveillance; into dark and anonymous zones where "the spaces which club culture occupied and transformed . . . represent a fantasy of liberation, an escape from identity. A place where nobody is, but everybody belongs" (Melechi, 1993: 37). Whilst the dark and labyrinthine space of some city centre clubs suits this escape down the rabbit hole into Wonderland (Garratt, 1998: 321; Thornton, 1995: 57), the anonymous, cavernous, blank canvas of out of town leisure centres also provides a surprisingly suitable site for thousands of clubbers, in stark contrast to the purpose built dance halls and night clubs located in urban centres.

In many cases, the regulation of specific leisure locations and the consumption of legal and illicit drugs within them have been controlled through licensing legislation. The dance space split in the mid-1990s with one strand of development being the legal, commercially viable, licensed dance clubs with the growing involvement of the beverage alcohol industry, facilitated through the liberalisation of licensing, with a shift towards the commercial middle ground, dress codes, door policies and away from an earlier optimism at the potential inclusiveness of this 'new' social space. The other strand of development was the regulation and criminalisation of the 'rough' elements of the dance scene which took the form of unlicensed dance events, free and pay parties, music festivals and sound systems.

These two strands of development – the commercialisation and criminalisation of mid-1990s dance space – shadowed the two strands of the British government's approach at this time and illustrate not only the contradictions but also the potential dangers in the control of a cultural form. On the one hand, recommendations by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs were published by the Home Office, stating that "the objective should be to encourage legal raves at the expense of the illegal events where the risks to health and public safety are considerable" (Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, 1994: 4). The ACMD recommended that "the organisation of more legal raves be encouraged by local authorities . . . Raves at established venues such as nightclubs are, of course, much easier to regulate" (Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, 1994: 44).

On the other hand, only four weeks earlier the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act received royal assent. British legislation which attempted to legislate against raves – as a phenomenon and as a play space – had the unenviable task of defining the phenomenon and thus producing the first attempted criminalisation of a popular music genre in the UK. Much to the amusement of critics, the Act included the now legendary bureaucratic bungling in the definitions of rave location ("an unlicensed gathering on land in the open air of one hundred or more persons") and rave music ("sounds wholly or predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats"). (For a discussion of both the content and the subsequent implementation of the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, see Bucke & James, 1998). However, the rave scene had fractured and mutated, as British subcultures have done since the 1950s, into myriad sub genres before 1994 (with even the term rave starting to be superseded by dance), which thus lent the legislation an archaic air.

Rather more significant was the body of legislation introduced and revived throughout the 1990s which used licensing regulations as the spearhead in the control of dance space; for example, increasing the circumstances in which private entertainment, dance events and pay parties needed to be licensed alongside increasing the penalties for those holding unlicensed events (Redhead, 1993; Measham, Parker, & Aldridge, 1998; Shapiro, 1999). Despite the clear directive from the ACMD at national level, local licensing authorities became the vehicle for the regionally specific, changing fortunes in the commercialisation and control of dance clubs. Whilst a minority persisted in organising unlicensed (and after 1994 criminalised) ventures, the majority of dance promoters who continued organising events moved into licensed leisure space and became subject to increased scrutiny and regulation by local licensing committees. Thus, it was licensing committees, aware of the potential use of these leisure spaces for the consumption of illicit drugs, which sat in judgement on whether the new indoor licensed dance clubs could retain their licenses. If individual clubs came to the attention of the police or press (for example, through drug-related casualties or disorder), it was the local licensing authorities who could withhold renewal of venue licenses.

With increased powers and increased sittings of licensing committees through measures such as the 1988 Licensing Act, however, the role of local licensing authorities in relation to the licensing of dance locations was complex, regionally specific and not necessarily wholly negative. For example, in the north west of England concerns about clubbers' health and safety, as well as potentially dangerous dance drug consumption, led Manchester Council's licensing committee to adopt a progressive licensing policy. In 1993 Manchester Council and Lifeline (a local drugs advice agency) adopted the Safer Dancing policy (Newcombe, 1994), based on a 10-point strategy for safer raves originally devised by Newcombe in 1991 which itself drew upon the work of Merseyside health professionals in the 1980s in relation to harm minimisation, HIV/AIDS and injecting drug users. The Manchester Safer Dancing policy required that licensed dance clubs in the area follow dance drug harm minimisation practices in their clubs (such as the provision of free tap water) but also specified the use of space within clubs (such as the provision of 'chill out' space for customers to cool down between dance sessions).

It is interesting to note that rave space itself became potentially more dangerous to clubbers as it moved from unlicensed fields to regulated and licensed indoor premises under the watchful eye of police, licensing authorities and private security firms. The addition of a roof and four walls had alarming consequences. Overheating had rarely been a significant risk in the fields, caves, beaches and disused warehouses of the early acid house era, but the move to indoor, commercial club space changed the drug setting, which proved to be an unexpected factor in exacerbating the physical effects of dance drugs such as ecstasy in raising body temperature, particularly when combined with the physical exertions of dancing for hours. Medical studies suggested that the casualties of the rave scene appeared to be related to dance drug-related pharmacological and environmental complications such as heatstroke, dehydration and hyponatraemia (e.g. Henry, 1992; Henry, Fallon, Kicman, Hutt, Cowan & Forsling, 1998; Maxwell, Polkey, & Henry, 1993). The irony was that despite the ACMD concerns at potential risks to the health and safety of individual clubbers at unlicensed events, it was the move to licensed and legal raves which increased those physical risks which in the early 1990s were only starting to be understood by the medical profession dealing with the casualties.

Thus, a key factor in the regulation of club space and harm minimisation in dance drug use has to be the management of the physical space itself. Indeed, Manchester Council's Safer Dancing policy was originally devised over 10 years ago as a strategy not only to assist in the minimisation of drug-related harms as a consequence of dance drug use but also in recognition of the importance of health and safety obligations of club management to customers (Newcombe, 1994). Adequate ventilation, air conditioning, crowd control measures, onsite paramedics, club layout and facilities could potentially all play a part in reducing the impact of factors such as heatstroke and dehydration which contributed to numerous dance drug-related deaths in the UK across the 1990s

and which continue to do so. Yet, as noted by Burns and Orrick (Burns & Orrick, 2002) in relation to a Swedish dance hall fire which killed 63 teenagers, the criminal negligence, corporate misconduct and corporate violence of dance club owners and promoters have been overlooked by both officials and the media (Burns & Orrick, 2002).

With a recent upturn in dance drug-related deaths in the UK in the early twenty-first century and despite a possible levelling off in self reported ecstasy and cocaine use (Condon & Smith, 2003; Measham, *in press-b*), the contemporary significance of Zinberg's drug, set and setting is evident (1984). It appears that alongside reduced attendance and closure of the larger, corporate 'superclubs' of the late 1990s and a resurgence of interest in rock music and live gigs by some young people, dance club culture continues both in a rave nostalgia scene and in smaller 'cutting edge' dance venues where consumption of dance drugs appears to be both diversifying and intensifying. As ecstasy increased in availability and use and declined in price throughout the 1990s (to less than three pounds sterling per pill in the UK), the quantity of pills reportedly consumed in a night out has increased from 2.2 per session (Measham et al., 2001) to 4.7 per session in a recent dance magazine survey of readers (Mixmag, 2004). Whilst studies of clubbers show that ecstasy remained clubbers' self reported favourite dance drug throughout the 1990s, it was increasingly less likely to be their only dance drug (Measham et al., 2001). There was the rise of a different party drug-cocaine-seen as cleaner than amphetamines, safer than ecstasy and more glamorous than either. Both dance music and dance drugs moved beyond the confines of clubland, with the lead role here being taken by cocaine in the late 1990s (Parker, Williams, & Aldridge, 2002), as it pushed into urban licensed leisure venues which were themselves undergoing a transformation from pub to bar (discussed in the following). Whilst ecstasy was increasingly embedded in 1990s dance clubs, cocaine became the pharmacological additive to the new licensed leisure, illustrating the relationship between changing patterns of consumption and changes in leisure space.

The 1990s dance club had been a specific social space in which gender (Henderson, 1993), socio-economic class (Reynolds, 1997; Thornton, 1995), ethnicity (Banerjee & Barn, 1996; Measham et al., 2001) and sexual orientation (Lewis & Ross, 1995) intersected leisure space in ways quite distinct from traditional licensed leisure venues such as pubs and bars. Whilst pubs remained traditionally socially structured, the potential of dance clubs to radically reformulate leisure space was briefly in evidence. As the commercial development and expansion of club culture continued across the 1990s, however there was a blurring of the distinctions between dance clubs and night clubs so keenly felt by those attending the early raves and dance parties. Indeed, with licensed clubs playing host to raves on Friday nights and discos on Saturday nights, the most notable markers of contemporary dance clubs in the UK have become music policy and drug consumption patterns, rather than the physical space itself. This is because the impact of the regulation, licensing

and criminalisation of different forms of dance events shifted most activities into mainstream club space whilst only small numbers of outdoor, unlicensed and illegal dance events continued (McKay, 1998).

This move to legal, licensed and increasingly commercial dance venues from the mid-1990s in the UK is also associated with the reascendance of alcohol. In the early days of rave, many dance events were largely alcohol free or even had an “anti-alcohol bias” (Reynolds, 1998: 45), not only because alcohol was associated with traditional mainstream nightclubs and their alcohol-related violence and harassment, but more specifically because “people quickly worked out that alcohol dulled the E buzz” (Reynolds, 1998: 43). A growing disillusionment with the quality, price and possible health consequences of illicit recreational drugs (with some high profile dance drug-related deaths amongst clubbers), alongside the drug and gang-related violence and criminality, revitalised the fortunes of alcohol with the ‘chemical generation’ in the mid-1990s. The beverage alcohol industry began sponsoring dance clubs, offering cheap drinks promotions and marketing new alcohol products in youth, dance and lifestyle magazines to appeal to a new generation of drinkers. Large scale indoor commercial dance venues such as the Ministry of Sound in London and Bowlers in Manchester acquired licenses to sell alcohol. The retail trade developed pre-club feeder bars, post-club chill-out bars, breakfast clubs for those still keen to party into the morning, and free admission DJ dance bars which competed for trade with highly priced dance clubs, all facilitated by late licenses generously issued by local authorities to encourage the urban night time economy (Haslam, 1999). The next section will consider the role of the pub space in these commercial developments and its relationship to the consumption of both legal and illicit drugs.

Pub space

The pub and bar have been geographically widespread social settings in many societies, symbolically as well as physically and socially central to popular culture, and yet in many ways they are unique leisure locations, warranting more attention than the sparse research to date. A study of the public house or bar allows a consideration of the fluctuating fortunes of our ‘favourite’ legal drugs and the constraints upon their consumption, from the Gin Laws of seventeenth century England to the smoke-free bars of early twenty-first century New York City.

Historically, there is evidence to suggest that recreational drinking in British drinking establishments has traditionally been the preserve of lower class men since the sixteenth century (Bennett, 1991; Measham, *in press-a*; Warner, 1997). In the last twenty years, however, the UK has seen the decline and rebirth of both alcohol consumption and licensed leisure in an expansion which has enveloped ‘new’ consumers. Indeed alongside the well-documented dance club revolution, there has been a quieter but equally significant transformation

of licensed leisure that preceded, post-dated and responded to changes in clubland.

The transformation of licensed leisure locations can be seen as the result of several significant socio-economic and cultural changes in the developed world over the last 20 years. Firstly, the 1980s saw the erosion of the traditional working class male customer base for alcohol consumption in pubs because of both the decline in working class employment in heavy industry as a result of socio-economic restructuring, and the growing appeal of home-based drinking and entertainments (Gofton, 1990). Secondly, the 1990s dance drug and dance club scene opened up alternative leisure possibilities to traditional pubs and night clubs for young adults. Therefore, faced with the possibility of both losing the traditional market to home-based entertainments and also losing a ‘new’ psychoactive consumer market to the emergent dance club scene. Brain suggests that the beverage alcohol market underwent a transformation in the 1990s leading to the development of what he described as a “post-modern alcohol order” (Brain, 2000: 5). This transformation in licensed leisure space and in related drinking attitudes and behaviours in recent years is evident in the re-commodification of alcohol products and the redesign of pub space.

The last 10 years has seen a vast increase in the choice of alcoholic beverages available which appeal to a new generation of consumers who are socio-demographically and culturally more diverse than the traditional male beer drinkers of the pre-1990s (Measham, *in press-b*). It has been claimed that these new high strength flavoured alcohol products, along with other consumer goods over the last decade, “have been increasingly advertised as lifestyle markers in sophisticated campaigns to appeal to and develop market niches in an increasingly fragmented alcohol market” (Brain, 2000: 5). Through the symbolic consumption of certain alcoholic drinks over and above others, along with the purchase of clothes, music and other consumer items, young adults both create and maintain their desired image and also distance themselves from their “undesired self” (Hogg & Banister, 2001). Furthermore, the new high strength alcohol products which developed at this time facilitated an increase in sessional alcohol consumption evident from the mid-1990s onwards amongst the young adult, male and female drinkers to whom these drinks were promoted (Measham, 1996).

Alongside changing patterns of alcohol consumption, licensed leisure locations themselves have been transformed since the declining attendance of the 1980s. British pubs have been dislocated from the traditional “masculine republic” sited on street corners in most working class communities (Harrison, 1971: 47), and have moved centre stage in post-industrial urban centres which are now saturated with a new generation of café bars, club bars, fun pubs, themed pubs and even ‘restyled’ traditional/nostalgia pubs. Thus, licensed leisure venues have captured a new generation of young adult consumers whose leisure sights were focusing on alternative leisure space in the 1990s; outdoor raves, dance clubs, shopping centres, gyms, coffee shops and

virtual space (Brain, 2000: 5). Indeed Hobbs et al consider that “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” (Hobbs, Lister, Hadfield, Winlow, & Hall, 2000, p. 704). Licensed leisure locations have become a core element in the commercial viability of the city centre night time economy such that this “previously marginal zone of space and time, is now being promoted as central to the image of a modern ‘European’ city” (O’Connor & Wynne, 1996: 9).

Whilst alcohol remains the firm favourite in the potential psychoactive repertoire of the twenty-first century, it is important to realise how young people’s pursuit of the “big bang” effect in terms of increased sessional consumption (Measham, 1996) is one indication of broader behavioural and attitudinal change. Young people inhabit social spaces in which the availability and consumption of recreational drugs has increased markedly across the decade; with up to nine in ten young people in the UK having been in drug offer situations by the age of 18 and up to two thirds having tried an illicit drug by that age (Parker, Aldridge, & Measham, 1998), with clear associations between leisure locations and consumption patterns (Measham et al., 1998). Alongside the relationship between dance drug use and dance clubs discussed above, recreational drug use has also now spread out of the clubs and into the new café bars. The British Crime Survey, an annual national representative household victimisation survey, has explored the relationship between drug use and attendance at pubs and clubs (Ramsay et al., 2001). The survey shows that past year prevalence of ecstasy and cocaine use for 16- to 29-year olds is twice as high for weekly clubbers as for the rest of the young adult population (10% compared with 4% for ecstasy, 8% compared with 40% for cocaine), and past year prevalence of ecstasy and cocaine is also more than twice as high for frequent pub goers as for the rest of the population. Young people who go to the pub three evenings a week or more are statistically significantly more likely to have reported past year ecstasy and cocaine consumption than less frequent and non-pub goers (9% compared with 4% for ecstasy, 11% compared with 3% for cocaine). It is argued here that this is an indication not only of higher recreational drug use amongst those young adults out and about in the night time economy, but also of increased recreational consumption occurring in the licensed leisure locations of the millennium.

Furthermore, in the commercial play space of the early twenty-first century UK, leisure is increasingly organised around the possibilities of pleasure, excess and gratification. Indeed “the projected impression of a hedonistic environment devoid of restraint is central to the allure of night-time leisure” (Hobbs, Lister, Hadfield, Winlow, & Hall, 2000: 714). Alongside the increasingly sophisticated commodification and diversification of psychoactive (legal and illicit) products and the blurring of the dance club/night club distinction of the early 1990s, we can see the boundaries of licensed leisure be-

ing pushed further with the move to sanitise, commodify and expand the sex industry (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003). This is illustrated in the merging of sex clubs and licensed leisure locations in the proliferation of lap dancing, pole dancing, strip clubs, sex clubs and sado-masochistic clubs which are aimed at a broad socio-demographic customer base.

In this respect licensed leisure locations have turned full circle to emulate the wider role of drinking establishments in pre-1850s British society. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that theatres, concert halls and music halls developed out of and increasingly physically separate from public houses, at first in separate function rooms within pubs in the 1850s, and in separate buildings from the 1860s (Harrison, 1971: 324–325). Before this, the drinking establishment was physically and socially at the heart of entertainment, community affairs and commerce. Prostitutes plied their trade in the pub alongside musicians, singers, dancers and comedians, sometimes with a brothel physically located above the pub which might employ the same staff to serve alcohol to customers earlier in the evening then to provide sexual services for those same customers later in the evening (Clark, 1983; Hey, 1986; Measham, *in press-a*; Walvin, 1978). Thus, the multi-function licensed (and licentious) leisure locations developing in the twenty-first century – promising alcohol, music, dancing and sex – have their roots in the pre-1850s British public house.

Head space

Drinking and recreational drug use occur at specific times and in specific places. The counter balance to the control, stress and performance of our work lives, is the distinct physical, social and ‘head’ space we mark out to facilitate a “controlled loss of control” in leisure time and in the consumption of a range of legal, prescription and illicit drugs to medicate for the problems and maximise the pleasures in an increasingly stressful world. As Brain has noted, “the responsibility for success in contemporary societies is placed squarely on the individual rather than being the responsibility of state or society. The pressure such responsibility creates is offset during bounded hedonistic consumption by the rewards of such consumption” (Brain, 2000: 12).

The “controlled loss of control” is a calculated hedonistic act which aims to achieve a desired, structured and controllable altered state of intoxication, by pharmacological or behavioural intervention. Such planned hedonistic consumption is evident in ‘binge’ drinking (e.g. Engineer, Phillips, Thompson, & Nicholls, 2003; Measham, *in press-b*) and recreational drug use (e.g. Measham, 2002). Here we see the connections between the changing nature of physical and social leisure space, the consumption of legal and illicit drugs within such space and the implications in terms of personal, mental or ‘head’ space for individuals. Legal and illicit drugs are located within this symbolic mental space of the ‘wild zone’. Thus, in a world of risk management, within a society

of shifting sands of moderation and excess, the pursuit of the “controlled loss of control” is an increasingly desired aspect of the leisure experience. Drugs are both the consumer products with which to purchase the desired ‘time out’, to create ‘head’ space, and also represent escape from and rebellion against the surveillance and regulation of consumer society. The desire to lose control, to lose oneself is, therefore, within the bounded settings of certain leisure locations and certain leisure activities which include the pursuit of the “controlled loss of control” through the recreational use of legal and illicit drugs in pubs and clubs.

Concluding thoughts

This commentary has explored the relationship between consumption and control in contemporary leisure space by a consideration of the discontinuities in historically, socially and culturally context-specific leisure locations, the role of alcohol and drug use within them and the two pronged response of commercialisation and criminalisation. Firstly, a consideration of the development of dance space shows the relationship between social space and social control in the licensing and policing of certain cultural forms, despite a brief potential fluidity in social and sexual interaction in dance clubs by comparison with public houses in the twentieth century. Secondly, the transformation of licensed leisure locations has taken pubs from their physical and social location predominantly in working class (male) communities to their centrality as café bars in the late modern urban leisure landscape. Thirdly, the utilisation and commodification of ‘head’ space is evident in the pursuit of pleasure facilitated by pharmacologically altered states of intoxication experienced by the majority of young adults in the twenty-first century. The commodification of calculated hedonistic excess illustrated by determined drunkenness, recreational drug use and commercial sex is centred on the diverse and multi-purpose licensed leisure locations of the twenty-first century. Hence within 10 years we have moved from the criminalisation of a cultural space (the unlicensed rave) to the commodification of criminal culture (within licensed leisure space).

The commercialisation of indoor licensed venues and the criminalisation and/or containment of outdoor and unlicensed raves have removed neither the popularity nor the perceived problem of leisure space. The contradictions and complexities in the regulation of leisure space are evident in the proliferation of licensed leisure venues in the UK which have facilitated increased sessional consumption, increased dance-drug-related deaths and increased night time violence and disorder, whilst unlicensed and unregulated outdoor events were arguably less problematic both for participants and for criminal justice and health services. The commercialisation and criminalisation of leisure locations outlined in this commentary raises questions about appropriate policy responses to changes in consumption-based leisure which involve millions of customers, whilst developments in the UK across the

1990s highlight the importance of extending harm minimisation policies not only to local authorities, and to beverage alcohol and leisure industry staff within the night time economy but also to leisure space itself.

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