

The 'civilising' effect of a 'balanced' night-time economy for 'better people': Class and the cosmopolitan limit in the consumption and regulation of alcohol in Bournemouth

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Author

William Haydock

School of Health and Social Care, Bournemouth University, Bournemouth House, 19 Christchurch Road, Bournemouth, BH1 3LH, UK.

Tel: 01305 224104

Mob: 07976 276066

Email: whaydock@bournemouth.ac.uk

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Abstract

The British night-time economy today has been characterised by academics across various disciplines as the result of neoliberal attempts to regenerate the evening economy 'on the cheap', leading to the dominance of 'mainstream nightlife' at the expense of subcultural traditional working-class alternatives. One preferable alternative offered is the ideal of a 'diverse' and 'inclusive' 'creative city', with a greater focus on 'culture'. This article shows how such ideas have been taken up in the planning and regulation of the night-time economy in Bournemouth. Despite the current emphasis on the value of making the Bournemouth night-time economy 'more diverse', offering more 'balance' than the current vista, policymakers, like drinkers, are aware of the considerable distinctions within the night-time economy. The emphasis on diversity as a policy objective can be understood rather as an attempt to encourage a particular drinking style. In this context, a 'balanced' night-time economy refers more to the overall atmosphere than the variety of consumer choice. The ideal drinking style is seen as characteristic of a wealthier group of customers, who will exert a 'civilising' influence on the town, as wealth is associated with broader cultural attributes of these 'better people'. It is therefore argued that local alcohol policy can be seen as neoliberal in the sense of actively creating a particular form of market, rather than letting a free market develop and determine outcomes. The intersection of cultural, economic and social factors suggests that the local approach can be understood as both reflective and constitutive of class. (250 words)

Keywords

Gentrification, licensing, local government, neoliberalism, planning

Main text word count: 5,988 (including notes and references)

Introduction

The British night-time economy today has been characterised by academics across various disciplines as the result of neoliberal attempts to regenerate the evening economy 'on the cheap' (Roberts, 2006), leading to the dominance of 'mainstream nightlife' at the expense of subcultural traditional working-class alternatives (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003; Hayward & Hobbs, 2007; Talbot, 2006; Winlow & Hall, 2006). While government visions of regeneration might have envisaged a 'café society' and the emulation of Bologna in Birmingham and Madrid in Manchester (ODPM, 2003), the reality, it is argued, has been a reliance on alcohol-led venues and the development of 'a homogenized drinking culture' (Winlow & Hall, 2006, p. 93).

Deborah Talbot has expressed concern that 'the development of night-time economies has tended everywhere to slavishly follow the laws of the market and mainstream consumption', with the danger that the Licensing Act 2003 would 'potentially strengthen the hand of well-organised and profitable chains or "drinking barns" to the detriment of "hard to manage" but possibly more culturally interesting premises' (2006, p. 166 & 169). As Winlow and Hall (2006, p. 93) have suggested, the night-time high street need not necessarily appear 'bland' and 'homogenized', but the visible variation, in their interpretation, amounts to 'forms of rather superficial diversity' providing heterogeneity within homogeneity. The superficial diversity remains an integral part of the market-led drinking culture.

Nevertheless, these distinctions are worthy of closer attention. Shaw (2010) has argued that such analyses have failed to engage with how drinkers themselves engage with the potentially neoliberal

creation of the British night-time economy. Although the diverse cultural styles enacted by drinkers are understood by Winlow and Hall (2006, p. 93) as “off the peg” rather than authentic’, they can still be understood as constitutive of class, drawing as they do on wider discourses of rationality and respectability, located within a broader symbolic economy (Haydock, 2010).

This article focuses on how such distinctions are understood by local policymakers, taking account of the argument of Kingfisher and Maskovsky (2008) that neoliberalism has limits and operates within particular contexts, with local variations. Understanding the night-time economy as an active creation of neoliberal modes of governance, rather than a natural development resulting from ‘the laws of the market and mainstream consumption’, this article analyses the local approach to the NTE in one case study location – Bournemouth, a large town on the south coast of England founded in the nineteenth century as a resort for the respectable middle classes.

It is noted that the differences perceived by policymakers in local government are in close accord with those noted by drinkers themselves. Policy preferences reflect a favouring of particular drinking styles, which is not solely explained by neoliberal market rationality. In the particular approach taken to positioning itself as an entrepreneurial city (Harvey, 1989), Bournemouth’s strategy can be seen as a continuation of its historical position as a resort for the ‘better sort’ (Walvin, 1978, p. 88). That is, the regeneration approach taken can be seen as active gentrification whereby the city centre is reimagined in order to attract the middle classes (Cameron, 2003; Rousseau, 2009).

Thus, the operation of neoliberal alcohol policy in particular local contexts need not result in the ‘drinking barns’ that Talbot feared, which are now perceived themselves as the ‘hard to manage’ venues. However, the ‘culturally interesting’ venues that are cultivated are those with a particular congruence of economic, cultural and social capital consistent with a Bourdieusian understanding of class (Bourdieu, 1984). The preference of academics such as Marion Roberts for a ‘diverse’ and ‘inclusive’ ‘creative city’ with a greater focus on ‘culture’, over the predominant alcohol-led offer understood to be available in the 2000s (Eldridge & Roberts, 2008; Roberts, 2006) has been adopted in some localities, but the result is an emphasis on ‘eclectic’ and ‘quirky’ venues such as ‘cosmo bars’ that should be understood with reference to work on class and ‘omnivorous’ cultural capital, as well as the concept of ‘the cosmopolitan limit’ (Bennett et al., 2010; Skeggs, 2004).

Methodology

This analysis has emerged from an ethnographic study of Bournemouth’s night-time economy undertaken between 2006 and 2009 (Haydock, 2009). This comprised preliminary observation in drinking venues in the town totalling approximately 27 hours, followed by conversations with a total of 113 drinkers over 13 sessions of participant-observation totalling more than 18 hours. It is data from these sessions that underpins the analysis of distinctions amongst drinkers.

The study also included individual and group interviews with a range of related professionals: the ‘club chaplain’ⁱ, four youth work professionals, two drug and alcohol professionals, one bar manager, five bar workers, one door supervisor, the two MPs for Bournemouth and the night-time economy coordinator.ⁱⁱ Since this time, a report commissioned by the Borough Council has been published by planning consultancy FERIA Urbanism (2012), and as a result I conducted interviews with two councillors associated with the NTE: the chair of the licensing board and the town centre councillor.

This article focuses primarily on the interview data from the councillors. All interviewees and venues quoted herein are anonymised.

Diversity, cosmopolitanism and class

The concept of 'gentrification' has been a key concept through which to analyse contemporary attitudes to the NTE in Bournemouth. 'Gentrification', distinct from simply regeneration, can be understood as a replacement of one class of people with another (Cameron, 2003).

Such a definition depends on having an understanding of class. As Rosemary Crompton (1993, p. 1) has explained, 'class' is a concept employed in order to explain how societies produce an 'unequal distribution of material and symbolic rewards'. Thus class is more than a measure of income or status; it seeks to *explain* the reproduction of these inequalities as well as measure them.

This article is informed by Bourdieu's (1984, 1987) analysis of class, with the identification of various forms of capital – social and cultural as well as the more familiar economic capital. Cultural capital can be understood as a person's cultural practices and knowledge. Social capital amounts to connections, networks and group memberships which can be used as resources (Skeggs, 2004, p. 17). This approach is based on the argument that inequalities – even where apparently solely economic – are affected by social and cultural factors. These may affect how one views the world and therefore how one views other people, which can affect who is given a particular job, for example.

Bourdieu (1984) argues that 'taste' is therefore central to the operation of class. The dominant system of cultural value legitimates those cultural practices that broadly accord with a Kantian aesthetic. Bourdieu claims that this legitimate taste is defined by its distance from sensual, 'naïve' pleasures – the complex as opposed to the 'facile'. 'Popular' taste, by contrast, is more satisfied by a 'sense of revelry, the plain speaking and hearty laughter which liberate by setting the social world head over heels, overturning conventions and proprieties' (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 34).

Recent work informed by Bourdieu has suggested that, although 'legitimate culture remains heavily the property of the professional-executive classes', 'openness to diversity' is a key characteristic of the 'upper echelons of the middle class' (Bennett et al., 2010, p. 189). Moran and Skeggs (2004) make this point with specific reference to the concept of cosmopolitanism. Following Žižek, they argue that cosmopolitanism is a cultural resource that allows people to take the benefits of difference and exoticism but retain their universalist position of distance, since enacting a cosmopolitan identity requires 'knowledge and cultural competence' (2004, p. 138), and these resources are not equally available to all. Those with high economic, social and cultural capital are alleged to have easier access to these, and Skeggs (2004, p. 158) has argued that by being 'cosmopolitan' they accrue more value to themselves.

However, as with much identity work, if one is to be cosmopolitan, there must be an 'other' who is not cosmopolitan, and this, it is argued, tends to be the white working class, constructed as bigoted, intolerant and tied to tradition – in a word, irrational, and thus not true individuals (Haylett, 2001; Skeggs, 2004). That is, cosmopolitanism is not universally inclusive, and therefore analysis should be aware of what Skeggs refers to as 'the cosmopolitan limit'.

The development of Bournemouth's night-time economy

Bournemouth was created as a tourist resort in the nineteenth century and was deliberately designed to be for the 'better sort' (Walvin, 1978, p. 88), with the train station being kept out of the town centre in order to exclude 'day trippers' (Rawlings, 2005, p. 66). Crucially in terms of the current NTE, there were no pubs in the town centre – the licences to sell alcohol were held by hotels. In 1915, when Lloyd George altered the licensing laws because of his fear that drink was doing more damage to the war effort than the Germans and Austrians combined (Van Emden & Humphries, 2004, p. 235), Bournemouth had the lowest number of on-licenses per head in England and Wales, boasting just 5.82 on-licensed premises for each 10,000 inhabitants compared with a national average of 18.27 and the highest figure of 245.20 in the City of London (Dudley Herald, 1916). This history places the town in a different category from Blackpool, for example, which has had strong links with working-class leisure, and even Brighton which, regardless of its royal links, was understood as a place for pleasure in a way that Bournemouth was not (Shields, 1990).

More recently, though, Bournemouth has become known as a prominent resort for drinking, attracting stag and hen parties from across the country. This dual character of the town led one incoming mayor to state: 'Bournemouth happily sees blue rinse and hedonism existing side by side' (Bailey, 2008), although others have seen the development in a less positive light. The Lonely Planet's first guidebook for Devon, Cornwall and Southwest England stated: 'The former preserve of the blue-rinse brigade is now a hedonistic paradise of stag-and-hen party hell', claiming that sometimes 'it parties so hard it's a nation's drinking problem personified' (Magee, 2008).

This change comes in part from the active cultivation of a night-time economy by the local council, from the 1980s. Historian Keith Rawlings (2005, p. 144) has explained that this transformation was the result of authorities being told that some visitors would prefer to go to a pub rather than drink in the 'solemnity of our hotel'.

The local authority has certainly played an active role in attempting to stimulate and shape the night-time economy. For example, in 2006 a night-time economy coordinator was appointed, funded jointly by the local police, council and association of town-centre on-licensed premises, Town Watch. The post was described by the council as being 'to ensure that Bournemouth's Night Time Economy is safe, inclusive, vibrant and market leading' (Bournemouth Borough Council, 2006).

The role of the local authority in the expansion of the NTE was implicitly acknowledged by one of the councillors I interviewed in 2013:

I think there is no doubt that in the late-1990s and early 2000s the brakes were taken off and you had too many establishments of the wrong type.

What has emerged in Bournemouth, then, is in some senses the ideal neoliberal nightscape as described by the academics: the homogenised, corporate, multinational high street – and in fact the town could be seen as reflecting a purer form of this homogenisation, as it did not have the 'traditional' pubs to begin with.

Distinctions amongst drinkers

However, within this apparently homogenised space there remain, in Robert Hollands' (2002) phrase, 'divisions in the dark'. My research found that some were very keen to distinguish

themselves from the 'typical' drinker, using the idea of the mainstream to construct themselves as 'different' and cosmopolitan. Chris and Joey described Bournemouth as being dominated by a particular 'sort' of person. It was these 'same sort' of people who liked the 'same sort' of music, for example, in contrast with 'alternative' or 'independent' options.

This idea of distinction from the mainstream was a common trope amongst drinkers. A key theme was the idea of not drinking to get drunk, and valuing other aspects of a night – such as conversation or the taste of drinks – rather than intoxication. Steve, a young man in his late 20s who was a university graduate now working at an investment bank, told me he would like to see more places in Bournemouth with 'leather sofas' where you can sit and 'chat', as opposed to the stag and hen do's – that is, he wanted more venues for 'people like us'.

One specific bar that was particularly associated with the idea of difference was what I refer to as *The Chalk and Cheese*. One group spoke about it as offering 'different' music and 'different' beers – at which point Anna chimed in, saying that 'everything is different' there.

Tilly, in another group, suggested that one of the attractions of *The Chalk and Cheese* was the 'diverse range' of people there, making it 'different' to other venues. However, this diversity was not completely inclusive. Tilly's friend Matt sceptically pointed out that the venue was 'quite elitist' – but she saw this as positive, noting how she had seen 'skanks' and 'chavs' being turned away by the door staff. This had been justified on the basis that they did not have membership cards, but Tilly was proud to confess that she and her friends didn't have cards either but had never been asked: the cards were simply a means to screen people.

As Steve's point revealed, this distinction is a form of group-making; it serves to distance 'people like us' from others. This is precisely how Bourdieu understood class, and it is revealing that the limit to the cosmopolitanism of the 'difference' in *The Chalk and Cheese* is indicated by the term 'chav', with its class connotations (Hayward & Yar, 2006; Tyler, 2008).

The door policy of *The Chalk and Cheese* was explained clearly by youth worker George. Commenting on the 'West End' area of Bournemouth, discussed below, he said that there was less 'aggro' or violence there, 'especially with *The Chalk and Cheese* because it's very discriminating. I mean not discriminating in a naughty way but door policy, you've got to be a regular to get in'. He explained that this door policy had meant 'there's a real, there's, it's, it's a nice vibe in there which would be lost if it, if they were letting every--, not, and I don't mean that in a nasty way.' This 'vibe' can be understood as a drinking style or culture.

These distinctions had a geographical basis. Sally characterised the whole of the town centre of Bournemouth (in contrast to the 'West End', where *The Chalk and Cheese* was located) as 'chavvy' and 'aggressive'. Dean, a final year student like Sally, similarly complained that the town centre on a Friday night is full of 'chavs' drinking and 'getting fighty'. He elucidated by saying he did not have the time for an argument with a 'drunken chav' about 'what t-shirt' he was wearing, suggesting that as well as liking getting excessively drunk, and fighting, 'chavs' have a different sense of style – or 'taste', to think in Bourdieusian terms.

However, not all participants were keen on the 'West End' area. Sarah and Lisa disparaged the 'celeb clubs', which Pete described as too 'stuck up' – when all three agreed that their preferred

venue was anywhere with a 'good atmosphere' where you could have 'good fun'. Natasha, a bar worker, described these 'celeb clubs' as 'what you might call upper-class' venues. She clarified this by explaining that she thought people go to these places to say 'look at me and how much money I've got' – before correcting herself: 'look at me and how much money I'm pretending I've got'. The symbolic value of this (display of) economic capital was thus challenged, and was contrasted with the approach prevalent in the other end of town – 'the more chavvy end', as Natasha put it – where drinkers are more 'up for a laugh' and out simply to have a 'good time'. Chatterton and Hollands (2003, p. 116) found similar criticisms of apparently cosmopolitan venues in their work.

As part of these distinctions, it is important to note the attraction of what might be called a carnivalesque (Haydock, 2010; Hubbard, 2013) or Bakhtinian (Hackley et al., 2013) approach to drinking. For many people, the attraction of the NTE is not about comfort, conversation or relaxation. Those factors are precisely what pre-loading and home drinking provide, while going out into the NTE provides a certain edge, discomfort and 'buzz' (Barton & Husk, Forthcoming; Hubbard, 2007).

The vision of local policymakers

To some extent, the approach of local policymakers can be placed within a framework of neoliberal competitiveness, with the relevance of David Harvey's (1989) conception of an 'entrepreneurial city' clear from the way in which other seaside towns were framed by Cllr B as Bournemouth's economic competitors:

Some people are quick to rush to judgement and say "Oh, we don't want these stag and hens," but I've quite a lot of experience of seeing these stag and hens and they're, they're people with money and they're coming down here and spending it. And if we turn them away, well they're going to go to Torquay or they're going to go to Brighton, and what's, what's the long term consequence of that?

This is a clear instance of what Rousseau (2009, p. 785) refers to as 'a neoliberal logic of interurban rivalry'. Indeed, Cllr B was very clear about his belief in the free market in terms of the NTE:

As a natural conservative I'm very much against any extra taxes on business and I think that's what the late night levy was and businesses are already paying substantial licensing fees so we've ruled out the late night levy at this stage [Interviewer: uh huh] in addition the early morning restriction orders there were unintended consequences of that, we've also ruled those out.

At the same time, the councillors quite clearly did not take a view of the NTE that valued only income irrespective of culture. Rather, the spheres of the economic and the cultural were viewed as intimately linked.

Crucially, policy stakeholders were clear that Bournemouth's NTE was divided socially and geographically. They saw the differences within the NTE in very similar terms to the drinkers, with clear reference to class distinctions:

But another thing is that Bournemouth in the town centre seems to be divided into zones, there are people that drink at *Dune* [WH: uh hmm] and *Lemon Tree* but they won't come over towards Hinton Road. Long term we would like to see a greater flow and interaction

between people so that people are not intimidated to come down through The Square, perhaps try out some other venues. But there is very much a divide (...) part of it's age, part of it's also social/demographic as well. Put plainly, it's a bit posher on the *Lemon Tree* side. (Cllr B)

The conception of Bournemouth as divided was also evident in the Feria report, which used a series of maps to draw attention to different zones of venues within the town, as in Figure 1.ⁱⁱⁱ

[Insert Figure 1 here – caption Figure 1: Map from *Bournemouth by Night* (Feria Urbanism, 2012, p. 49)]

At the same time, however, both the report and the councillors suggested that there was little variety within the local NTE. The Feria report drew on the academic literature on the topic, with Marion Roberts' work on the 'creative city' cited, alongside Paul Chatterton's (Feria Urbanism, 2012, p. 23). The report states the desire for Bournemouth to become a 'more diverse and welcoming place' in the evening and at night-time, making it 'creative and inclusive' – suggesting that currently certain groups are excluded from the town centre. Similarly, both councillors placed a clear emphasis on ideas of 'balance' and 'mix' – they felt that currently Bournemouth town centre was too dominated by a single model of outlets.

However, the idea of a mix of venues actually implied a particular preferred model, rather than diversity in itself. The Feria report picked out *The Chalk and Cheese* as an example of a desirable venue, describing it as a 'cosmo-bar', recalling Skeggs' analysis of the 'cosmopolitan limit'. The particular attraction of *The Chalk and Cheese* was its 'mixed offer comprising food, drink and live music' (Feria Urbanism, 2012, p. 19).

This 'mixed offer' was framed in terms that presented such a venue as having higher levels of cultural capital or cachet. The report suggests that at least one area of the town 'could develop a better "café culture" linked to the arts, culture and the general bohemian nature of the area' (Feria Urbanism, 2012, p. 42). I would link this with Bourdieu's (1984) discussion of the Kantian aesthetic and classed taste. This aesthetic ranks intellectual, reflective pleasures above those that are immediate and sensory, and values choices that are not instrumental but based on 'pure' taste.

These ideas in the Feria report have been keenly taken on by relevant local politicians. Both councillors interviewed in 2013 referred to the report and ideas within it, using language and concepts contained within it. The NTE was seen as homogeneous, needing the addition of different types of venue.

Cllr A explicitly referred to a 'quirky café bar' as the sort of venue he would like to see encouraged. This was contrasted with what was understood to be the standard offer in the town centre: 'what we want is quirky coffee bars, sort of bistro places, bar type restaurants, where people will sit rather than stand and pour lager down their throats'.

Cllr B stated 'I think one of the main worries about the Bournemouth night-time economy is the lack of balance'. Further detail from Cllr B makes it clear that 'balance' here stands for not simply consumer choice, but a preference for a particular atmosphere and approach to going out:

[W]hat you've got now is *Plate*, which is a, a thriving, not just a family restaurant, but it's a place that's busy from 6 until 11 and it's appealing to a really wide demographic. And it was dead site for a long time and now it's, it's something a bit different – with excellent food. And we need more things like that. Food-led outlets are a good way to go, rather than the horrible expression, but 'vertical drinking'. Everybody knows what that means, it's places with wooden floors, everybody's shouting, everybody's drinking and there's not really much scope for proper conversation or relaxation.

'Vertical drinking', which Cllr B wants to see replaced, is not simply about alcohol consumed; it's about the overall atmosphere: the aesthetic ('wooden floors'), the noise ('shouting') and the type of social interaction ('there's not really much scope for proper conversation or relaxation'). The attraction of greater 'balance' within the NTE, according to this councillor, would be the 'hugely civilising effect' it would have on the town.

The Feria report, with its references to reshaping the urban environment and offering more variety to consumers, had been interpreted in this way:

Interviewer: And so overall in terms of the night-time economy you've talked about balance of a mixture of activities, talking about dance and cinema and so on, um, is that what you would see as the long term vision for Bournemouth?

Cllr B Oh definitely I would very much pick up on the report done by Feria Urbanism the Bournemouth by Night report and it was all about doing gentle things to civilise the way people behave.

The term 'civilising' already has a sense of class distinction (Stallybrass & White, 1986), but these cultural distinctions drawn by the councillors were more directly linked to social and economic capital, suggesting the presence of a wider symbolic economy that could structure class distinction. The advent of 'balance', for Cllr B, would suggest the presence of wealthier consumers: 'clubs would be able to attract a more balanced crowd of people and they might actually make some more money, if they could get more of the higher spenders in, perhaps people who instead of wanting a cheap cocktail might order a bottle of champagne.'

Cllr A was clear that the type of places to be encouraged were those frequented by his friends – which would also be venues with a particular cultural and economic profile. A key example cited was 'the tapas place', which has 'that Spanishy feel about, it's a nice atmosphere'. The offer in such places would be a mix of food and drink ('a bit of both'), as opposed to the 'cheap pints of lager and fancy Mexican beers' apparently comprising the extent of the offer in *Sizzle*, a major chain recognisable nationally.

The *Lemon Tree*, which Cllr B used as the venue to locate the 'posher side' or town, was also cited positively by Cllr A, partly because 'a lot of my friends go there'. A key attraction was the cultural offer: 'they've often got live soft jazz music on there, which gives a sort of a, again, it's different to the thumping awful music that the kids like, so that attracts a different sort of clientele and that sort of premises is good.'

The exclusion from the NTE which concerned Cllr A was of 'wealthy' acquaintances of his:

I've spoken to many, well I've spoken to some, quite a wealthy chap who was staying in Bournemouth, I was due to meet him about something or other. And he went out, he headed off down Old Christchurch Road from the Lansdowne. He said 'I took ten steps into Old Christchurch Road, decided I didn't like the feel of the place so I turned round and didn't go out at night.' Um, and it seems to be taken over by, let's say our drunken friends, right through to 5 or 6 in the morning, which is a pity.

It might be argued that the carnivalesque drinking style is to be discouraged by local policymakers for the risks it poses in terms of crime and health – indeed, Cllr A suggested that people were 'less likely to perhaps get aggressive and cause problems' in venues that allowed people to sit and listen to live music as there is a different atmosphere and something other to do than drink.

A mixing of cultures might in fact have the opposite effect. Rowe and Bavinton (2011) suggest that bringing together groups can lead to 'incivility and conflict' – and this was certainly Dean's fear regarding getting caught in an argument with a 'drunken chav' about his t-shirt', and George's explanation for why there was no 'aggro' in *The Chalk and Cheese*.

However, as we have seen, the approach of 'balance' and 'mix' is not designed to throw people together and offer greater consumer choice; it is to propose a particular model of night time enjoyment that is more 'civilised' than the carnivalesque. Integral to this strategy is to attract wealthier individuals into the night-time economy, and yet, as Cllr B was keen to point out, Bournemouth town centre is an area of cumulative impact for licensing purposes, and therefore there's a low likelihood of new premises being opened. This is to some extent a zero-sum game between drinking cultures, which is precisely the concern with gentrification: as one group moves in, another moves (or is moved) out. This dynamic was clearly referenced by Cllr A:

Well do we really want the whole town centre, you know, part of our other strategy is to encourage more, I've got to say this politically correctly, more better people to come and live in the town centre. It's very much a kind of bed-sitty area, people related to the catering industries, all that sort of thing. We're introducing sort of high-quality flats over in Horseshoe Common, there's other high-quality residential development sites on the drawing board. So we want to encourage more mature, professional people to live in the town centre, as that gives a bit of a buzz to the area. It's a bit of social engineering if you like.

This 'social engineering' – the movement out of 'people relate to the catering industry' in favour of 'better', 'professional' people, can be understood as a clear form of gentrification as a 'positive public policy tool' (Cameron, 2003).

Conclusion

Deborah Talbot was concerned that 'the development of night-time economies has tended everywhere to slavishly follow the laws of the market and mainstream consumption', with the danger that the Licensing Act 2003 would 'potentially strengthen the hand of well-organised and profitable chains or "drinking barns" to the detriment of "hard to manage" but possibly more culturally interesting premises' (2006, p. 166 & 169).

Although this could be seen as a fair description of Bournemouth in 2013, with its 'homogenized' night-time high street, this article has suggested that the pendulum has begun to swing the other

way: the Feria Report and the discussions of local councillors suggest a strong commitment to what could be seen as 'more culturally interesting premises'. However, much depends on the viewpoint of those defining what is 'interesting'. Talbot was also concerned that there was 'a clear neoliberal agenda to culturally engineer a family-friendly café style nightlife with responsible drinking' (2006, p. 168).

This statement gets to the heart of the tensions in neoliberalism suggested by this research. Where classical liberalism might respect the outcomes of the free market, neoliberalism retains clear preferences about the outcomes of structures (Haydock, 2014), with these preferences dependent on local contexts (Kingfisher & Maskovsky, 2008).

In the case of the NTE in Bournemouth, development and policy positions cannot be explained simply by the market in isolation – which, with the 'brakes' taken off, as Cllr B put it, might be said to have encouraged the development of ever more efficient 'drinking barns'. This is also the story of a particular town, with its own particular history. Councillors still have a desire to undertake 'social engineering', and ensure that the town centre is for, as Cllr A put it, 'better people' – a clear echo of historian James Walvin's (1978, p. 88) description of Bournemouth being designed for the 'better sort' in the nineteenth century.

From a small study of a single area, it would be difficult to assess whether the historical parallels with the period Walvin is describing are anything more than coincidence. It may be fruitful, therefore, for further academic research to consider in a similar light how recent local orientations fit either current national or local historical patterns. Would local policymakers in Blackpool or Brighton present their approach in similar terms, or are their positions shaped by their own distinctive local history?

ⁱ This was a post for a youth worker to offer help to drinkers on the streets, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights, funded by a number of town centre churches.

ⁱⁱ This is a post jointly funded by the Borough Council, the local Police and the on-licensed venues in the town centre to 'lead on projects and initiatives to ensure that Bournemouth Night-time Economy is safe, inclusive, vibrant and market leading' (Bournemouth Council, 2006).

ⁱⁱⁱ In this map, the area labelled 'Pier Approach' is what my participants referred to as the 'West End'.

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