Community Cohesion and the Role of the ‘Local’

Report for JCPR

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## Contents

Summary .................................................................................................................. 3  
Introduction, Sample, Methods ............................................................................... 5  
Section One: History of Drink Culture & the British ‘Local’ in the Community  
   - What makes a good community? The role of pubs and other drinking venues.  
Section Two: Binge Drinking and Anti-Social Behaviour  
   - Motives, Values and Drinking Culture ................................................................. 18  
Conclusion: Community Participation in City Life and the Role of Pubs, Bars and Drinking Venues  
Appendix 1 .................................................................................................................. 24  
References ................................................................................................................ 26
Summary

This report examines community cohesion as a social issue and the historical and contemporary role that pubs play in this. Their origin is in the Roman ‘tabernae’ which served the thirst of the Roman legions. These eventually became taverns serving ales native to Britain. Pubs had many functions which varied between town and country, but they did operate as important centres of community interaction, often the only one apart from the home and church (p10). Criticisms of excessive drinking surfaced early. Bishop Anselm in 1102 warned of priests engaging in drinking bouts. Later, the consumption of gin (mother’s ruin) was seen as a major problem and there was a strong growth in the 18th and 19th Centuries of prohibition and of temperance movements (pp9 & 11).

Pubs were at the centre of many social movements, including demands for political change and over many years have provided a key public space in the heart of communities (pp10-11). There are many other factors that influence community cohesion, including crime, social exclusion and levels of employment, but the provision of space that can be used by people of different social groups and ages remain a key issue (pp12-15). Contemporary developments which involve pubs in such provisions include ‘The Pub is the Hub’ campaign which incorporates community services into village ‘locals’ (p15).

A more critical public debate about the role of pubs and bars in communities has focussed on issues of excessive drinking and anti-social behaviour particularly by young people in city centres. A number of factors underlie this, including free market inspired licensing policies, changes in corporate ownership in the drinks industry and niche marketing as well as a change in youth culture (pp16-17). This change derives in part from greater spending power and developments in individualism and gender relations (pp18-19).

A UK survey commissioned from YouGov shows some public concern about bars and pubs, with 33% indicating that their opinion has changed over recent years so that they now see them as ‘more of a problem’. There is a clear distinction in people’s minds between traditional style pubs which cater for a wide age group and bars in city centres which focus on young people. These were seen as ‘more likely to be associated with problems’ by 80% of the sample. But overall pubs and bars are still seen quite positively, as part of a local community where people can go and see friends and meet new ones. Sixty nine per cent saw them in this way, while the most common reason given for going to pubs and bars was to meet existing friends for social reasons (46% of the sample). Other reasons for going included to eat (19%) and for a quick or long drink’ (10%), while 19% just didn’t go (p17).

A second survey undertaken by the Media Group focussed on attitudes of young people in higher education to contemporary drink culture. 73% of these respondents thought that people around them were drinking too much and approximately 30% said that within this culture they felt pressured to drink more than they wished (p20).
There are a number of ways in which communities can be strengthened and responsible behaviour encouraged. Cities such as Leeds and Manchester have pioneered new approaches to public spaces and new types of outdoor venue which attract older people and families to city centres. The “continental café culture” where premises are used by many different groups and people of different ages is popular as a model. This in some key respects reflects the composition of the traditional local pub. There is a high level of public support for a move towards this pattern with 71% of the population supporting changes in the licensing laws to produce it (YouGov: p22).

Much of the social concern over binge-drinking has come from changes in the way young people drink and the manner in which this has been organised in new types of licensed premises. The subsequent impact on city life has generated much media and public debate. Some values have changed but the most significant developments have been in community structures and in the manner in which social drinking has been organised. These patterns will have to be changed again if there is to be a move towards more responsible behaviour. This will involve the building of cultures in which more traditional attitudes to the local pub and other drinking venues are reasserted alongside the development of wider forms of community provision.
Introduction, Sample, Methods

This report examines community cohesion as a social issue and historical and contemporary role that pubs and bars may play within this. The first section deals with the history of the 'local' and its development to the contemporary world. The origins of the pub are in the roman world and 'tabernae' wine shops which eventually became taverns, serving ales native to Britain. We show how the traditional 'local' evolved and had historic functions as a public meeting place. It was sometimes the only social centre outside the home or the church. Pubs were focal points for meetings and radical politics but drinking alcohol was also associated very early with social problems. Bishop Anselm complained in 1102 about priests going on 'drinking bouts'. We describe the later growth of prohibition and temperance movements and attempts to legislate for more orderly drinking. This section also looks at the changing role of the pub and how it developed as part of more modern communities. We also examine the key factors which shape the community as well as positive and negative influences on its cohesion and how the quality of relationships relate to the quality of life.

The second section of the report examines contemporary arguments of the harmful effects of the drink culture and concerns about binge-drinking and anti-social behaviour. There has been much public and media commentary on the current development of new forms of drinking, heavy consumption by young people and growth of what are termed vertical bars in city centres.¹ We explore possible reasons for these developments by examining changes in youth cultures, gender relations, town planning and the restructuring of the drinks industry. In the third section we look at the issue of community participation in city life and the role of pubs and bars within this. As part of this study we interviewed a number of academics and experts to gain further insight into the key cultural changes which may be affecting drinking behaviour. These included Andrew McNeal of the Institute of Alcohol Studies, James Curran of Goldsmiths College, University of London, and Dick Hobbs of the London School of Economics. We also commissioned research from YouGov on public attitudes to bars/pubs and how their role in the community is understood, the sample size for this was 2086 adults. They were asked first, how they thought about bars and pubs, whether they considered them more as part of a local community where people can go and see friends and meet new ones or as a source of social problems and friction.² The second question related to whether their opinion towards pubs and bars had changed in recent years and did they now see them more as part of the community or more as a problem. We wanted to understand whether contemporary debate on public drinking culture had impacted on wider public beliefs. The third question pursued this further and asked whether bars in city centres which

¹ Vertical drinking is a marketing term. As Alexandroni puts it "people drink more when they stand up. They drink even more if loud music makes talking difficult and if flat surfaces are taken away to prevent customers putting down their drinks." (2006: 1)
² For a fuller account of sample, methods, questions and replies see Appendix 1. Responses are also discussed in the text, p17, and are included in the summary at the beginning of this report.
catered mostly for young people were more or less likely to be associated with problems than traditional style pubs, which cater for a wider age group. We also wanted to assess the strength of public feeling on these issues and whether there was support for further legal changes to move towards different patterns of social drinking. We therefore asked a question specifically about continental café culture where premises are used by many different groups and whether there was support for changes in licensing laws to encourage this more continental style. Finally we asked about the purposes for which people used pubs and bars to investigate the extent to which they were still understood as having clear social functions such as seeing friends, eating or engaging in social activities.

We also wished to explore the attitudes of young people to contemporary developments in drinking culture and to do this we questioned a further sample of 244 persons aged 18-23 in higher education. We asked them first whether they were ever concerned that people around them were drinking too much. We asked a further two questions which were about the pressures which they might individually might feel in relation to drinking culture. The first was whether they ever felt pressured to drink alcohol in the sense that they would be left out if they didn’t. The second concerned whether they ever felt pushed to drink more than they would choose because of pressure from others.3 We have not included a separate results section for the survey responses as we have integrated them into the body of the text where they relate to specific issues and to the themes of each section. We begin with the first of these and the history of the public house.

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3 A fuller account of questions and replies is given in Appendix 1. Replies are also summarised at the beginning of the report and are included in the text, p20.
Section One: History of Drink Culture & the British ‘Local’ in the Community

What did the Romans do for us? Many things, and the public house was one of them. Most sources place its origins in Roman ‘tabernae’ wine shops which quenched the thirst of weary legions alongside the roman roads. These quickly evolved into local ‘taverns’ and began serving ales, which were native to Britain (Historic-UK.com). Legislation, often linked to economic imperatives, and social control has had a profound impact on the evolution of drinking culture around the world and shaped the development of the British local pub. As early as 970 AD the Anglo-Saxon King Edgar, is claimed to have attempted to limit the number of alehouses in any one village. He is also said to have been responsible for introducing a drinking measure known as ‘the peg’ as a means of controlling the amount of alcohol an individual could consume, by inserting a peg into a drinking horn, hence “to take (someone) down a peg” (Earnshaw, 2000). However this legislation was quickly corrupted into an early form of drinking contest in which even clergy indulged, leading to a decree by Bishop Anselm in 1102 that “Let no priest go to drinking bouts, nor drink to pegs” (Earnshaw, 2000). In medieval villages parish guilds complimented the operation of the churches and offered communities an important social centre, however even these incorporated alcohol into social activities. Dyer observes how “they were involved in the great drinking sessions at church ales organised by the churchwardens as fundraising events” (1994: 419). Other secular community social activities included games events such as an early version of football (some regions even setting aside land for such games) and helped to fund social associations for women and the young (1994: 420).

The first national levy placed on alcohol was brought in to fund war known as the ‘Saladin Tythe’ but seems to have had little effect on its popularity. By 1309, the city of London, with a population of 30-40,000, had 354 taverns, which peddled mainly wines, and 1,330 brewshops where ale could be purchased (Earnshaw, 2000). Taverns were outlawed from remaining open after curfew in the capital in 1285 the “Statuta Civitatis London” (Earnshaw, 2000). The first official licensing of Alehouses is thought to have been sanctioned by statute in 1495, subject to the discretion of local justices of the peace (Earnshaw, 2000 and French, 1884: 127). The Alehouse Act of 1552 was designed to regulate all alehouses in order to address the perceived increase in disorder due to drunkenness (Monckton, 1969: 37 & London Metropolitan Archives, 1998). Each licensee had to “enter into a recognizance, or bond, to ensure that good behaviour was maintained in each alehouse” or risk a fine or the loss of their license (London Metropolitan Archives, 1998). Nicholas Dorn has observed that “alcohol-related legislation...reads like a role-call of crisis points in English history” (1983: 42).

Regulation was consistently a problem with many successive laws trying to control pricing several Acts in the Sixteenth Century and beyond restricted pricing to “such rates as should be thought sufficient” (French, 1884: 137). During the Sixteenth Century the monasteries (who had been offering up guesthouse accommodation prior to this point) were being suppressed and
this brought a distinction between ‘inns’, which provided accommodation and from which local people were forbidden to drink, and ‘alehouses’ which were not licensed to provide lodgings (Earnshaw, 2000). The first Government survey carried out in 1577 found there to be 17,595 drinking houses across 30 counties, which is around one alehouse for every 142 people (Monckton, 1969: 43). The first legislation specifically relating to drunkenness didn’t appear until James I rein during the seventeenth century, though Wrightson observes that it had little effect and the overcrowded alehouses remained a problem (Monckton, 1969: 37 & Wrightson, 1981: 6). Earnshaw notes Acts introduced in 1604 to “restrain the inordinate Haunting and Tipling of Inns, Alehouses and other Victualling Houses, and in 1606 for “repressing the odious and loathsome Sin of Drunkenness”, acts which were amended and updated without great effect over the next few years (Earnshaw, 2000). Sunday hours were first legislated in 1618 (Barr, 1995: 148 cited in Earnshaw, 2000). Then, in 1620, in a move to encourage drinking in the home, the Court of Aldermen ruled to allow chandlers to sell ale and beer (Ashton, 1983). A few years later there was a renewal of legislation from which French infers that all these measures had likely proven ineffective (1884: 185).

French argues that the imposition of excise on the sale of beer and ale in 1643 was the “most important single innovation affecting the drink trade during the revolutionary era” (1884: 207). This was meant to be a temporary measure to finance the war against the French but continued until 1757 (Askwith, 1928: 12). Clark points out that during the 1730’s the excise on alcohol accounted for a quarter of national revenue from taxation (Clark, 1983: 185). Additional duties were called on in 1689 for the same purpose and French notes that “Partly through hostility to France, and partly to encourage the home distilleries, the Government of the Revolution…prohibited the importation of spirits from all foreign countries and threw open the distillery trade, on payment of duties to all its subjects” (French, 1884: 245). This was to hit the sale of wine and brandy, which had become a popular drink, and duties on such alcohol were readily exploited (Earnshaw, 2000).

The eighteenth century was notable for the introduction of restrictions on opening times, and the spread of gin-drinking, particularly in the capital (1995). Originally believed to be a cure for the plague, Geneva or ‘gin’ (later known as ‘mother’s ruin’) became so popular in the Clerkenwell slums it was sold out of wheelbarrows in the street (Dillon, 2003). A campaign against it was started by Middlesex magistrates in 1720; who claimed it was "the principal cause ...of all the vice & debauchery committed among the inferior sort of people" (Dillon, 2003: 52). The first Gin Act which avoided an outright attack on the powerful malt-distillers and concentrated on the taxation of London’s small distillers and gin-sellers was met by great protest and was repealed in 1929 (Dillon, 2003: 79). In the decade leading up to 1736 almost a thousand new gin-shops opened up in Middlesex alone bringing the total number to 7,022 and an enquiry showed many of those peddling gin to be the same involved in its regulation (Dillon, 2003: 109). It was even seen as damaging British farming since gin-drinkers lost their appetite and sold their clothes rather than buying new ones (Dillon, 2003: 109-110).
Prohibitionists continued to strengthen their campaign and push for new reforms to be brought in; the Middlesex Magistrates argued that “soldiers will be renowned for their strength and real courage, servants will be more obedient, honest and faithful, and all sorts of persons in low life will become more strong and robust, better inclined to industry and labour, and be less induced to rob and commit murders and outrages...” (Dillon, 2003: 110). The issue divided the press but exaggerated stories of scandal helped boost the prohibition cause (Dillon, 2003: 114-6). Ultimately however, it was decided to price gin out of wide distribution by introducing a costly license for retailers. Gin-drinking was restricted to alehouses, brandy-shops and victuallers and a substantial duty was placed on spirits sold in small amounts such that “a dram of gin would cost the same as a week’s lodging” (Dillon, 2003: 118). Eventually gin-induced drunkenness became a privilege only of the wealthy and it was hoped it would no longer affect employment. Yet one MP William Pulteney observed “If spirituous liquors... are of such a pernicious nature, that they ought never be tasted without the advice and prescription of a physician, we ought to take care of the rich, as well as of the poor” (Quoted in Dillon, 2003: 119). It appears that the ultimate decision taken in this case was induced by Sir Robert Walpole primarily with a view to retaining national income from the trade on spirits, which would have lost the crown up to £292,000 per year (Dillon, 2003: 120).

The social impact of this legislation was extreme. Two months after a parliamentary decision was made Jacobite terrorists exploded a bomb in Westminster Hall in protest (Dillon, 2003: 123). This triggered murmurs of unrest and fed a general dissatisfaction towards government (connected to anti-Irish sentiment) which spread throughout the capital and brought outbreaks of rioting and demonstration (Dillon, 2003: 132-134). The Public Houses became a locus of great unease and talk spread that “Sir Robert Walpole, and the Master of the Rolls will not outlive Michaelmas”, when the Act was due to come into force (Dillon, 2003: 136). However, it finally passed into effect uneventfully, partly due to a general assumption that it would in time be repealed. Alternatives were developed to take up the demand; ‘medicinal spirits’ were brewed by apothecaries and illegal street sellers continued supply gin, despite the claims on “The good effects of the Gin Act” planted in press articles by the reformers themselves (Dillon, 2003: 150, 153-154). Dillon argues that the craze on gin was stimulated by government itself in their attempts to boost the distilling industries and then crushed in a backlash caused by the panic over its popularity which had resulted in harm to public health through brewing of illegal hooch (Chisholm, 09/06/08). Eventually, prohibition attempts had to be abandoned as wholly ineffective and a policy of spirit sales limited to public houses combined with regulation of price through taxation was brought in under the 1751 Gin Act (Earnshaw, 2000). George argues that this Act “really did reduce the excesses of spirit-drinking. It was a turning point in the social history of London and was so considered when this time was still within living memory” (George, 1965: 36). Gin which had previously been told to take away in small shops, now began to be sold alongside other drinks in ‘Gin Palaces’. These were considered vulgar yet were so popular Dickens describes them as “perfectly dazzling when contrasted with the darkness and dirt we have just left...” (1836). He details a typical incident thus:
“It is growing late, and the throng of men, women, and children, who have been constantly going in and out, dwindles down to two or three occasional stragglers - cold, wretched-looking creatures, in the last stage of emaciation and disease.

The knot of Irish labourers at the lower end of the place, who have been alternately shaking hands with, and threatening the life of each other, for the last hour, become furious in their disputes, and finding it impossible to silence one man, who is particularly anxious to adjust the difference, they resort to the expedient of knocking him down and jumping on him afterwards. The man in the fur cap, and the potboy rush out; a scene of riot and confusion ensues; half the Irishmen get shut out, and the other half get shut in; the potboy is knocked among the tubs in no time; the landlord hits everybody, and everybody hits the landlord; the barmaids scream; the police come in; the rest is a confused mixture of arms, legs, staves, torn coats, shouting, and struggling. Some of the party are borne off to the station-house, and the remainder slink home to beat their wives for complaining, and kick the children for daring to be hungry.”

From: ‘Sketches by Boz’1836

It is clear that the pub had different roles, depending on where it was located and the clientele it attracted. Rural pubs were very different in character from those in industrial or commercial hubs. There are also regional variations, not just in architecture and layout, but also in the actual usage of the buildings themselves. Some maintained two bars separating the different social classes. In the middle-class lounge women were permitted to visit, there would be fewer spittoons, and beer was pricier (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003: 180). As Fowler notes, “in southern England many pubs traditionally consisted of an entrance to two bars, a saloon and a public bar, with an off-sales point in the middle. Here very occasionally snob screens may survive where in days gone by a man might stand at the bar for a quiet drink without the embarrassment of being seen by his servant or indeed master” (1998). Chatterton & Hollands contrast this situation with the city centres today, where segregation comes in the form of a separate venue, catering for a mere fragment of the gentrified middle class (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003: 180). Chatterton & Hollands observe that although it reflected class and gender inequalities of the society of the time the pub did fulfil “its historic function as a public meeting place and a source of community interaction” (2003: 181). It was often the only social centre outside the church and the home.

According to Harrison, during these early times the city of London was where the “dispossessed drifted, to fall into a sump of poverty, squalor and vice” (Harrison, 1974: 15). This people, ‘the mob’ were “not yet a class conscious of its identity but a seething mass constantly erupting in riots and commotions that kept the ruling class establishment in constant, uncomprehending dread” (Harrison, 1974: 15). During these volatile times, the alehouses and taverns of London are well-documented as having been focuses of discontent and promoting radical politics along with the pints at a time of strict Government control of the press. Oppressive censorship through legislation such as the Combination Acts had pushed dissent underground, and Harrison argues that, with Trade Unions not yet established as a channel for popular politics, the radical political movements, and press, which germinated and flourished in the taverns of London were very influential (Harrison, 1974: 32 & 40). The political movement would utilise readings, accessing even the illiterate, and Harrison argues that “such occasions provided the main centres for popular
politics, discussion and expressions of solidarity” (1974: 41). The ‘London Corresponding Society’ was one such movement, set up in the Bell Tavern in 1792, which gained a membership of 3000 by the end of that year (Harrison, 1974: 27-28). It produced and distributed many radical newsheets and pamphlets (Harrison, 1974: 27-28). E P Thompson shows how tavern meetings played an important part in the popular promotion of radical politics in his “The Making of the English Working Class” (1991). He notes that “illiterate labourers would...go each week to a pub where Cobbett’s editorial letter was read aloud and discussed” (Thompson, 1991: 782). He notes that pubs were also important to the burgeoning trade union movement; during the 1830’s the early unions met at pubs and taverns for masonic ‘oath-taking ceremonies’ to build solidarity among their members (Thompson, 1991:558-9).

What were seen as the negative effects of drinking were addressed in this period by the Temperance Movement which was established in the 1830s and sought initially to reduce alcohol consumption in order to improve the moral and physical condition of the working class (Shiman, 1988: 18). With the move from an agricultural economy towards industrialisation, factory employers began to demand a punctual workforce (Shiman, 1988: 4). Drinking was also seen as the cause of many of the social ills of the time, including domestic violence and also poverty due to the strain it placed on the income of low paid workers and their families. Interestingly, in 1830, for only four decades, the Beerhouse Act undid many of the measures introduced within prior legislation, allowing sale of alcohol without license from local justices. This situation was reversed by the 1869 Wine and Beerhouse Act, and extended licensing to selling alcohol off the premises (London Metropolitan Archives, 1998). However, the impact of the Beerhouse Act was important to the history of the local pub since it was through this legislation that ‘Beer Houses’ took hold, as establishments where beers and ales, rather than wines and spirits, were sold except on Sundays. This had an great impact on the development of the industry. It returned control to magistrates who refused to grant many licenses, prompting the breweries to buy up public houses thus strengthening the tied house system and encouraging a trend in monopolisation which continued into the twentieth century (Blocker, 2003: 506).

Beer was seen as an everyday drink, enjoyed even by children, and tolerated even by the temperance movement as being a secondary concern. It was hoped that it might curb the popularity of gin (Alwych History, 2006). Throughout history, ale and beer have formed a part of the staple British diet, the brewing process itself making it at times a much safer option than drinking water (Historic-UK, 2008). However, Howitt observed that the beer houses “have done more to demoralise the population of both town and country, than any other legislative measure within the last century” (Howitt, 1840:491). One of the Bills chief advocates was quoted as saying, “The Beer Bill has begun to act; everybody is drunk; those who are not singing are sprawling – the sovereign people are in a beastly state” (Smith, quoted in

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1 William Cobbett, an important radical leader, journalist and activist who used the production of newsheets and pamphlets including ‘Two-Penny Trash’ to promote his ideas.
The number of public houses rose by nearly 50% in England and Wales between 1831 and 1881 (Clark, 1983). The temperance movement soon was embraced by certain activists within the working class themselves; especially Chartists who sought suffrage for all men and thus to promote an image of the working class as ‘respectable’ and ‘responsible’ (Shiman, 1888: 33). Temperance advocates such as Livesey began to advocate complete abstention, drawing on perceived ‘successes’ of the American movement (Earnshaw, 2000). The first law prohibiting landlords from allowing alcohol consumption by minors (under 16) was established in London, then nationwide in 1872 (Earnshaw, 2000). In 1874 under increasing public pressure a parliamentary committee was set up to examine the causes and possible solutions of drunkenness. At this time housing conditions for the poor were deteriorating and many men spent time in the pubs since they offered a comfortable, heated alternative to their cold, cramped, often unsanitary homes. Bailey argues that although it was difficult to “supplant the public house in the affections and habits of the working man” the nineteenth century moves towards more ‘rational’ leisure activities did take their toll (Bailey 1978, cited in Chatterton & Hollands, 2003: 181). This led to a trend towards ‘public house improvements’ in the early twentieth century to stave off criticism of the breweries and the threat of state intervention (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003: 181). We can now look at how the role of the pub has changed in contemporary communities.

What makes a good community? The role of pubs and other drinking venues.

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion a common desire “to build a strong society where civility and courtesy are the norm, where people are at ease with change, and are committed to being good neighbours and active citizens.” (Commission on Integration and Cohesion in: Staffordshire County Council, 2007: 2). Theorists such as Chatterton & Unsworth have identified key elements of inner city cohesion and community development. They note a series of questions central to responsive planning including:

- Is there real commitment to social housing quotas or new development?
- Is there equal commitment to the economic and social elements of development briefs?
- Is there provision of quality open spaces within new developments to maximise opportunities for meeting, appreciation of public art, open-air events etc?
- Are opening hours of cultural venues being maximized to show commitment to 24 hour activity that is not alcohol-related?
- Are public spaces offered on flexible and cheap terms for non-traditional users? (Chatterton & Unsworth, 2004: 8).

Other authorities such as local councils have identified more general factors such as crime and levels of social exclusion as important indicators of breakdown of community cohesion and stress two core attributes which are displayed by a vulnerable community:

- It is an area that experiences problems that relate to community breakdown and fragmentation.
- It is an area where the trends indicate continual problems, recurring problems or an increasing problem.
Studies of community during the first part of the century find that partly due to low levels of migration and mobility, communities are built up vertically through kinship, as Jackson notes, where people of different ages - grandchild and great aunt - are brought together. The community is also brought up ‘horizontally’, where people of the same age but different families are joined in a strong social bond. Jackson comments that,

“Children lead an intensely social street life and park life.... The whole style heightens that intense and continuous sociability which is one of the strongest impressions of working class community.” (Jackson in Scotson, 1975: 34).

Such communities are built up by membership of local associations and social activities such as church, games and of course the public house which plays a major role particularly for men. As Scotson observes “one of the paradoxes of ‘urban villages’ was that in addition to church or chapel, the public house or ‘club’ was another very active place of meeting” (1975: 36). However, the structure of communities underwent a great deal of rapid change during this time. Factors such as social mobility, migration, mass media expansion, the changing position of women in society and the transformation of economy away from manufacturing and blue collar industry towards the service sector have shaped new social needs and provisions. Such changes affect social cohesion and bring demand for new means of building communities which respond to the new structure of society.

The drinks industry as a whole was also undergoing change. As early as 1970 economic imperatives “meant that brewers and publicans were increasingly forced to sacrifice conviviality for efficiency and competition” (Mass Observation, 1970 Quoted in Chatterton & Hollands, 2003: 181). The story of twentieth century drinks industry is marked by monopolisation and economic change and as we will show this has an important role in contributing to patterns of consumption and their effects upon the community in British life. Traditional owners, entrepreneurs and local or regional breweries were slowly bought out by an increasingly small number of expanding national brewers, particularly since the 1950’s (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003: 33 & 38). In 1930 there were 559 brewery companies in Britain, a figure which, by 1998, had fallen to just 88 (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003: 33).

Complex monopolisation of the breweries and venue ownership has been a longterm trend in Britain which came to the attention of the Monopolies Commission as early as the 1960’s with blame placed upon the ‘tied house system’ of the brewers. Instead of reforming this system a policy of relaxation of licensing laws was adopted to “encourage competition” (Hutton: 71). This was again flagged up by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission Report in 1989 (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003: 32). Eighty-eight per cent of pubs at the time were owned by a small number of large breweries. The Supply of Beer Orders ruling in the UK in 1989 attempted to limit this, by restricting Brewery ownership to 2000 pubs and forcing the sale of at least one guest beer (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003: 33). Yet despite this over the last decade large
tenanted pub groups have become Britain’s biggest pub landlords (Goodman, 20/04/08). The ruling was not properly implemented with breweries only having to release half of the pubs they held over 2000 and some simply released their brewing function to avoid the restrictions (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003: 33). Ultimately monopolies have continued to grow with breweries and pub owners functionally separated (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003: 33). Chatterton and Hollands in 2003 point out that just four companies in Britain account for 81% of beer sales (2003: 33).

Some traditional brewers grew into huge entertainment conglomerates. These often own both premium-branded bars and unbranded (often older, traditional) tenanted pubs, and the latter are increasingly being dropped as less profitable in favour of more competitive ‘brands’ (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003: 33). The trend today is towards high branded venues with a diversity of function geared towards ‘lifestyles’ (food-sales, evening drink sales, hotels) (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003: 33). This can be contrasted with another notable trend towards ‘vertical drinking’. This is marked within the high street bars, owned by some of the ‘Pubcos’, who buy up the pubs sold off by the breweries and which have expanded rapidly (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003: 33). Often these venues remove traditional ‘extras’ such as pool tables, and even seating and tables to fit in more drinkers.

These companies took the lion’s share of the deregulated market after the 1989 Act (Goodman, 20/04/08 & Chatterton & Hollands, 2003: 34). Whilst the number of pubs has remained around 62,000 the number owned by breweries has fallen from 32,000 to 3,300 while pubco ownership now totalled 48,000 by 2000 (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003: 34). According to the British Beer & Pub Association around four pubs shut down every day; a rate of closures 14 times higher than in 2005 leaving 12,000 fewer pubs than in 1980 and “beer sales have not been so low since the depression of the 1930s” (Goodman, 20/04/08).

Alongside the squeeze, the trend towards branded pubs has become highly significant, particularly in city centre locations, where at least 30% of pubs are branded (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003: 39). Traditionally windows had smoked glass to obscure drinkers from street. This has been changing over last 20 years towards clear glass and bright, open spaces with colourful and stimulating décor in direct contrast to the atmosphere of traditional pubs. This also presents a representation of ‘openness’ and the acceptability of alcohol consumption as a part of mainstream public life. This also applies to the nightclub industry which has been affected by moves towards ‘multi-purpose’ venues which blur the boundary between a club and a pub by offering late-night drinking and dancing (particularly since the introduction of late licenses) (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003: 38-39).

Groups such as CAMRA ‘The Campaign for Real Ale’ have argued for a more traditional approach and that the public house needs support “as a focus of community life” (CAMRA, 2008b). Another current UK campaign that is given some degree of support by the drinks industry is ‘The Pub is the Hub’. This was set up with backing by the Prince of Wales in 2001 as a positive initiative to promote the local Pub as a centre of community. This movement
has seen various community services being incorporated into the provisions of the village pub including:

- A number of community groups including a playgroup and Parents and Teachers Association have meetings at The Beauchamp Arms, Dymock, Gloucestershire
- Sunday School and Church Services are offered in Weir Hotel, Weir, Lancashire
- A computer training club at The Miners Arms, Brassington, Derbyshire
- The Cock Inn in Combe, Oxfordshire offers a ‘prescription service’ in conjunction with a local chemist
- Some pubs are offering cheap meals for the elderly and even a ‘pick-up’ service to reach those with mobility needs
  (See Testimonials - http://www.pubisthehub.org.uk/)

Even the Post Office has become involved. As Sue Huggins, General Manager, Rural Post Offices comments,

“We have successfully partnered with a number of rural publicans, enabling both post office services and the pub to remain open in local communities. Pubs, like post offices, are often at the heart of village life and both are important to the viability of communities. We wish Pub is the Hub every success.”
(http://www.pubisthehub.org.uk/pithlive/about/testimonials/index.html)

However, much bar/pub provision has not been in the direction of offering community services. As we have indicated there has been a fracturing of provision. Once, one venue would have served all (whilst mirroring social divisions). Now, many branded bars serve market research defined ‘consumer groups’ (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003: 41). This generates a separation of classes and age groups. We will go on to discuss arguments about the consequences of this and the current public debate about binge drinking and its social impacts.
Section Two: Binge Drinking and Anti-Social Behaviour

Binge drinking is not a new phenomenon. As we have seen, from well before the time of the Victorian gin palaces, there has been a great deal of social concern expressed at the consequences of drinking. Some pointed to what was seen as a moral and physical decline and many in the Temperance Movement believed that social problems would radically reduce along with abstinence from alcohol. More recent concerns about binge drinking have been fuelled by an apparent increase in consumption, notably amongst females and by the visibility of excessive drinking and anti-social behaviour in British town centres. In May 2008 it was reported that hospital admissions linked to alcohol had more than doubled since 1995, deaths linked to it were up by 19% from 2001 and that one in ten admissions were for young people under eighteen (NHS Information Centre). Research for the Home Office has linked binge drinking to criminal activity and violence (Richardson and Budd 2003). The conclusions of this study are widely cited by groups such as the Institute for Alcohol Studies and Alcohol Concern and key findings have been highlighted such as that young people who binge drink are nearly three times more likely to report committing offences than those who drink without usually getting drunk and five times more likely than people of the same age who don’t drink (IAS: 2007). Other theorists have pointed to the very rapid growth of the on-license trade in Britain. Hobbs, for example notes that there has been a 30% increase in the number of such premises in the 25 years before 2003 and that applications for licenses were running at 5,000 per annum which was an increase of 145% over such licenses granted in 1980 (Hobbs, 2003)

The reasons for these developments are complex. In part they relate to changing patterns of alcohol use in different social groups. Andrew MacNeil of the Institute of Alcohol Studies spoke with us of the effects of foreign holidays on drinking patterns amongst women, including the growth of wine drinking and the legitimising of greater consumption. Rising living standards in Britain also increased the disposable income of young people and the amount which could be spent on leisure and drink. This was at the same time as the intense competition between retail outlets such as supermarkets was reducing the price of drink in real terms. The growth of on-licence premises was initially seen as very positive by local authorities and as a key element of urban regeneration. As Marion Roberts notes:

“"The reasoning behind (local councils) permissive attitudes may be attributed to genuine desire to encourage urban regeneration and to breath new life in what were perceived to be ailing town centres. The decline of manufacturing industry in the late 1980s and a planning regime that permitted out of town development had led many town and city centres to be in a serious state of decline." (2006: 5)

Roberts also criticises central government policy and notes its contradictory responses “as it tries to reconcile planning policies that promote ‘cleaner, safer and greener’ town centres with, on the one hand, free market inspired licensing policies and on the other, ‘tough’ policies towards crime and anti-social behaviour” (2006: 2) A key policy change was the 2003 licensing act which removed the criterion of ‘need’ in terms of local provision. Roberts
notes how the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, which had overall responsibility for town centres, resisted attempts to limit the upper capacity on the number of licensed premises in an area (2006:12). However, it could also be argued that the government was effectively rationalising a series of changes that were already well underway and which it chose not to resist.

At the same time, the drinks industry was also going through a period of intense competition. Hollands and Chatterton have demonstrated how the UK industry has become dominated by large companies that are publicly quoted and who own chains of nightclubs, bars and restaurants as well as traditional pubs (2003). Andrew McNeill of the Institute of Alcohol Studies also spoke with us of the decline of the traditional pub because of competitive pressures in the industry and the need for volume in sales. This gave rise to niche marketing and the focus on specific groups such as young people who could be catered for in what were termed the inner city vertical drinking bars. As he commented:

There is a trend (in the industry) towards age segregated niche marketing. This comes from the need for volume because of the costs of local taxation and rents. It is a highly competitive market. At one point, one of the biggest owners of pubs was a Japanese bank. Someone in Tokyo is not going to worry about what happens in the British high street. (29.5.08)

But British MPs did worry and reflected media and public concern when a parliamentary committee concluded that the proportion of drinking venues in town centres was too high. The committee warned that the prevalence of ‘vertical drinking’ venues with few tables and chairs and high volume music was creating ‘anti-social ghettos’ and keeping many people away (BBC, 2003). The drinks industry was also accused of attempting to mould the drinking patterns of young people. The Observer for example ran a headline saying ‘Drink Giants Plans To Fuel Binge Britain’. The article quotes the manager of a town centre super-pub as saying, “How we make our money is to make people binge drink: the more people drink the more I get as a bonus. The more alcohol you sell, the more bonus you get: they give you a target to reach”. The British Beer and Pub Association responded to these arguments by saying that food was now a boom area for pubs and that targets could be met by selling more of this (23/10/05)

The survey which we commissioned from YouGov does show an increase in public concern about bars and pubs, with 33% indicating that their opinion has changed over recent years so that they now see them as ‘more of a problem’. There is a clear distinction in people’s minds between traditional style pubs which cater for a wide age group and bars in city centres which focus on young people. These were seen as ‘more likely to be associated with problems’ by 80% of the sample. But overall pubs and bars are still seen quite positively, as part of a local community where people can go and see friends and meet new ones. Sixty nine per cent saw them in this way, while the most common reason given for going to pubs and bars was to meet existing friends for social reasons (46% of the sample). Other reasons for going included to eat (19%) and for a quick or long drink’ (10%), while 19% just didn’t go.
The main source of concern seems to be the change in the patterns of drinking and a key factor in this has been the growth of bars which target young drinkers. There is an absence in these bars of more adult company which could provide a restraining influence and in a sense there is a greater capacity to misbehave. But this does not in itself explain why young people would necessarily want to do so and to drink excessively once other restraints were removed. Much of the literature in this area focuses on changes in access to drinking by young people. The issue of motivation is perhaps less well explored although there are psychological studies which focus on individual traits such as extraversion, neuroticism and anxiety (Kuntsche et al, 2006). An important area for future investigation is how broader patterns of social and cultural development relate to changes in values and patterns of drinking behaviour.

**Motives, Values and Drinking Culture**

At its simplest, the question is, why do some see drinking to excess and the behaviour associated with it, as having a high status. This is not the case for all cultures and societies. In an earlier study, we examined the attitudes of Chinese students to the drink culture of young British people. Many of the students were very shocked when they first came to Britain and made comments such as:

“Young people get drunk – the behaviour is frightening”
“Too many drunk people, terrible young people everywhere”
“I hate the teenage people with little education, gathering around, holding booze, talking rubbish” (Philo, 2007: 10)

One described his experience of going first to York which met his expectations of traditional Britain and then the contrast when he travelled to Leeds:

“(York) was almost the same as I thought – but more beautiful – very gentlemanly. A man in a car stopped to let me cross. Then I went to Leeds – it was rough and dirty. Girls danced on tables with no underwear – wore short skirts, were vulgar.”

It is clear that in China, such behaviour would be seen as shameful and would bring great loss of face both to the individuals involved and their families. This highlights the issue of why the behaviour that is seen as vulgar by the Chinese is viewed more positively by some groups in Britain. Andrew McNeil pointed to the greater accessibility of a drinking culture for women but why is the specific ‘vulgar’ behaviour seen as attractive? It may be that some of these changes relate to developments in gender relations and that as women become increasingly independent they can act, drink and misbehave like men. Professor James Curran of Goldsmith’s College, London commented on this to us:

“The legacy of the past was that femininity was defined in terms of being demure, submissive and non-initiating. Economic independence has enabled a different understanding of being feminine. Alcohol provides a passport from the past to
the future. It offers the possibility of being independent like men, you can be
loud, you can shriek with laughter, you can talk loudly about men on the other
side of the street. You can be happy. So alcohol is not simply a matter of
pleasure. In your right ear is a voice saying what you want to be and alcohol stills
voices in your left ear that are inherited from your grandmother.” (1.6.08)

The questions which follows from this is, what is it in rule breaking behaviour
that attracts both men and women? To break rules and challenge existing
structures of authority can be seen as a form of social power which brings
status from peer groups. We can see examples of this in the misbehaviour of a
child in the classroom who makes other children laugh instead of working and
in the group of lads who shout, jostle, sing and otherwise proclaim their
control of the streets after they’ve had a lot to drink. The point is that alcohol
can legitimise some forms of behaviour and provide a rationale for the rule
breaking, which for some then becomes socially acceptable.5 This has deep
roots in our culture whether it is working class youths at football matches or
upper class ones at Oxford throwing each other in the river after finals.
Consider the famous example of Winston Churchill, when accused by a
woman MP of being drunk in the House of Commons. The MP, thought to be
Bessie Bradock allegedly said, “Mr. Churchill you are drunk”, to which he
replied “And you Madam are ugly, but I will be sober in the morning”. He has
therefore broken two rules, by being drunk and being rude to a woman. If he
had been so rude whilst sober, it would be unacceptable but the context and
the reference to alcohol and to him being drunk have the effect of excusing his
response and it ends up being celebrated.

Rule breaking behaviour and drunken excess is certainly not new. But it does
seem possible that our society is going through a period of greater
individualism, with the growth of free market values and the decline of some
community structures as large numbers of people move in search of work.
Young people experience a greater personal freedom and the culture of
enjoyment and excess is celebrated in films such as Animal House, Porky’s
and American Pie. In another study we showed how a BBC youth programme
wound up its series with this comment from the host:

“We don’t care what you lot are doing now. We are going off to get trolleyed,
absolutely plastered (with motions of drinking from co-host)” (BBC2, The
Sunday Show, cited in Philo and Miller 2001)

Drinking and enjoyment are sometimes seen as almost synonymous in this
culture and there is considerable pressure on young people to join in. For
example, birthday cards for people who are 18 frequently contain references to
the new ability to drink legally. When students arrive at University they are
encouraged to join clubs and societies, for a whole range of activities such as
drama or hill walking. But as one student told us, the advertising leaflets for
these may contain as much about pub crawls as about the supposed activities
of the club:

5 There is obviously a continuum of types of rule breaking which will attract more social
disapproval as they progress – with boisterous behaviour and relatively minor ‘letting off
steam’ at one end and more serious and extreme rule breaking such as violence and major
social harm at the other.
“Just go to Fresher’s week. Every second leaflet you get from clubs is about doing pub crawls or where they are getting smashed later. The whole student culture is about drinking. When I wanted to join the drama group, the first message I got from them was about what pub they met in, how cheap the drink was and how late they stayed out” (7/6/08)

To pursue these issues, we questioned 244 young people who were in higher education, aged 18 – 23 in Glasgow; and area that traditionally has had high levels of alcohol consumption. They were asked about the culture of drinking and whether they felt pressured to be part of it as well as their attitudes to the behaviour of others. The first question was “are you ever concerned that people around you are drinking too much?” to which 73% replied “Yes”. The next two questions related to how they felt about pressures on themselves to drink. The first related to the issue of potentially feeling ‘left out’ of a collective culture of which they were a part. The question was “Do you ever feel pressured to drink alcohol in the sense that he would be left out if you didn’t?” The second of these related specifically to pressure from peers. The question was, “Do you ever feel pushed to drink more than you would choose to yourself because of pressure from others?” These last two are potentially difficult for people to answer, especially in a brief questionnaire, since to agree is in a sense an admission of weakness. But as it turned out 31% said yes to the first question and 29% to the second. It is therefore quite a dramatic result that between a quarter and third admit to feeling such pressure and apparently to drinking more than they would otherwise choose. Given also that a majority are concerned that people around them are drinking too much, then the obvious issue is how can this culture be changed to encourage what would be seen as more responsible attitudes and behaviour. One possible solution is to alter the nature of drinking venues, away from being vertical binge bars and to promote access and participation in events and activities in city centres by a broader community, involving a wide variety of ages and social groups.
Conclusion: Community Participation in City Life and the Role of Pubs, Bars and Drinking Venues

The key issues to be addressed are first, how is it possible to develop a greater diversity of community involvement in the night time economy and second, what is the specific role of bars, pubs and other drinking venues in this development either positively or negatively? The right to personal freedom, to go out, to travel and to feel safe are key elements of the quality of life. The expectations which people hold of these, profoundly affect their ability to participate and be part of their own community. At present, as Marion Roberts notes, the problem of alcohol disorder actually prevents a wider participation:

“There is a vicious circle whereby ‘older people’, that is those over 35 are deterred from going out at night by alcohol related disorder, yet their absence means that the types of cultural activities that they would tend to support, such as gallery, library and museum visits do not attract sufficient people to enable them to open for longer hours” (Roberts 2006: 16)

Some city councils, such as Leeds, have attempted to address this by developing a vision of the city around a notion of ‘Europeanness’. As Chatterton and Unsworth comment, this is based on ideas of 24 hour activity, café society and city centre living, intended to foster inclusion. In Leeds for example they describe how:

“A French boules court along with chess tables, have been built in a new public square in the business district, while the council has established an annual European street market and German/Belgium festival..... Emphasis was placed on street legibility, improving street furniture, lighting and public transport. “(2004: 2)

A programme of populist festivals and street events was also included in these developments. As the town centre manager told a House of Commons committee:

“We have a large new outdoor venue in Leeds, a large square, and what we have tried to do over the last two or three years since that has been opened is to put on events deliberately designed to attract families and older people into the city centre..... We have had young children in the city centre at 10.00 or 11.00 at night... and we have never had any trouble. It has been very successful” (cited in Roberts 2006: 15)

The second key issue is the role of drinking venues and the question of how to make city centres feel safe in the face of alcohol linked problems. Roberts writes of a pioneering new approach, when Manchester police joined with the city council to form ‘Manchester City Safe’. This partnership pioneered a number of actions including:

‘A radio net scheme to link up local taxi drivers, venues, the police and the city council. Litter bins have been introduced that can not be upended. Drinks companies have been persuaded to give an annual award to best run bar. The city council subsidised the Greater Manchester Transport Executive to run new night bus routes for six months until the service could become self-supporting.
The buses were made safe for travellers by police controlling the queues.’  
(Roberts 2006: 14)

This still leaves the problem of whether it is possible to change the culture of drinking which is now associated with young people, binging and vertical bars. Dick Hobbs of the London School of Economics argues that this is in some respects a new culture, which is being learned by young drinkers without guidance from older people, who would once have been standing beside them at the bar. He described how the protocols of drinking are new and how they vary from those of the traditional pub:

‘In the past you would learn the protocols of drinking in a local pub and if you staggered into someone you would be turfed out or told you couldn’t have any more. Now the protocols are learnt in the new youth market – now instead of having one or two people drunk you have thousands altogether. Alcohol is used to get drunk – it’s just another drug’ (interview 9.6.08)

There are several ways in which the ‘new’ culture could be modified. The physical layout of vertical drinking bars could be altered by enforcing the provision of seats and tables, as with the changes made to football stadiums, when seats were demanded on safety grounds. The Scottish government has recently suggested that additional costs be imposed on late opening bars and clubs to pay for extra policing. This would have the likely effects both of putting up drink prices and calming the atmosphere in inner cities late at night. The issue of the role of police and security was also raised by Dick Hobbs, who pointed to the American system, in which police are supplied via the local City Hall:

‘In the States if you want a bouncer you go to the City Hall and you hire a cop for the night and the police sign on for the overtime’ (interview 9.0608)

For this to be developed in the British context may require legal and contractual changes in the role of the police. There is actually considerable public support for legal change to the licensing laws which would move Britain towards the more continental café style and away from the culture which is associated with the vertical bars. The last of the YouGov questions which were put as part of this study asked whether licensing laws should be changed to encourage the more continental approach, where premises were used by many different groups and by people of different ages. This is also in some key respects the culture of the traditional British local pub. The response was very positive with 71% agreeing or strongly agreeing that there would be changes to the licensing laws to encourage such a development (only 17% disagreed or strongly disagreed). As we have seen above, in spite of the apparent growth of a hedonistic and individualist culture, there is still a substantial majority of young people who are concerned about the effects of excessive drinking amongst those around them.

Much of the social concern over binge-drinking has come from changes in the way young people drink and the manner in which this has been organised in new types of licensed premises. The subsequent impact on city life has generated much media and public debate. Some values have changed but the most significant developments have been in community structures and in the
manner in which social drinking has been organised. These patterns will have to be changed again if there is to be a move towards more responsible behaviour. This will involve the building of cultures in which more traditional attitudes to the local pub and other drinking venues are reasserted alongside the development of wider forms of community provision.
Appendix 1: Methods, Samples and Survey Results 2008

YouGov

The YouGov Survey of 2086 UK adults was conducted using an online interview administered to members of the YouGov panel who have agreed to take part in surveys. An email was sent to panellists selected at random from the base sample according to the sample definition, inviting them to take part in the survey and providing a link to the survey. YouGov normally achieves a response rate of between 35% and 50% to surveys. The responding sample is weighted to the profile of the sample definition to provide a representative reporting sample. (Abstracted from YouGov 2008)

When you think of pubs and bars...
How are you MORE likely to consider them? (%)  

As part of a local community 69  
where people can go and see friends and meet new ones.  
As a source of social problems and friction 17  
Other 7  
Don’t know 8

How, if at all, has your opinion of pubs and bars changed in recent years?  

I see them more as part of the community 16  
I see them as more of a problem 33  
Other 5  
No Change in my opinion 42  
Don’t know 4

Do you think that bars in city centres which just cater for young people are more or less likely to be associated with problems and friction than traditional style pubs which cater for a wider age group?  

MORE Likely to be associated with problems than ‘traditional pubs’ 80  
LESS Likely to be associated with problems than ‘traditional pubs’ 4  
No Difference 12  
Don’t know 4

Some people have argued that Britain should adopt a more ‘continental café culture’ where premises are used by many different groups in the community and by people of different ages.
To what extent do you agree that British pubs should change licensing laws to encourage this more continental style?

Strongly agree: 23
Agree: 48
Disagree: 12
Strongly disagree: 5
Don’t know: 12

Which one of the following is your MAIN purpose for going to pubs and bars?

Activities (such as darts, cards, quiz nights, karaoke): 2
To meet a new partner: 0
To meet existing friends for social reasons: 46
To meet new friends: 1
For a quick or long drink: 10
To eat: 19
Other: 1
Don’t know: 1
Not applicable – I don’t go to pubs and bars: 19

Glasgow University Media Group

Survey of 244 British young people in higher education aged 18-23, randomly selected in Glasgow; Questionnaires administered face to face.

Are you ever concerned that people around you are drinking too much?

Yes: 73
No: 26
Don’t know/Other: 1

Do you ever feel pressured to drink alcohol in the sense that you would be left out if you didn’t?

Yes: 31
No: 69
Don’t know/Other: 0

Do you ever feel pushed to drink more than you would choose to yourself because of pressure from others?

Yes: 29
No: 70
Don’t know/Other: 1
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