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In a time span of 10 years, many English town centres have been transformed from being relatively deserted at night to being filled with concentrations of young drunken people out on the streets until the early hours of the morning. This paper considers this transformation: its origins, process, impacts, policy responses and the lessons that may be derived from it. The first section discusses the concept of the creative milieu and its relation to consumption. The second provides the context for the unprecedented expansion of night-time alcohol related entertainment in English town and city centres over the last decade. The third part of the paper discusses the impacts of the increase in licensed premises on cultural resources. The fourth section of the paper discusses the mutually contradictory tri-partite policy responses of the British Government 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. The fifth section provides evidence that by contrast, some local practice is ahead of national policy in its imaginative and integrated approach. Finally, conclusions are drawn with regard to the concept of the creative milieu. It is argued that the English experience demonstrates the need for a clear policy vision that comprehends the differences between creativity, cultural resources and the consumption of alcohol as a primary entertainment activity.



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Keywords

Culture; town centres; alcohol; night-time

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