Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy 2006, volume 24, pages 351 – 370

DOI:10.1068/c0526

Developing leisure and cultural attractions in the regional city centre: a policy perspective

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Received 31 January 2005; in revised form 15 August 2005

Abstract. Smaller regional cities and former industrial cities throughout North America and Europe have experienced fundamental transformations of their economies over recent decades, and authorities have continually sought new functions for the postindustrial era. Following on from retail, office, and residential regeneration within many city centres, leisure and cultural policies have also been adopted. The British city of Swansea, which has developed such policies since the 1990s, is a regional city which typifies these processes. Drawing on large-scale surveys and in-depth interviews, the authors argue that four policy challenges are facing the development of a thriving leisure and cultural economy in smaller regional cities across Europe and North America. These challenges involve creating a leisure and cultural economy which: embraces a wide range and variety of attractions; appeals to a broad spectrum of social groups; adopts an appropriate spatial strategy; and overcomes friction between the different component parts of the leisure and cultural economy.

Introduction

The development of urban leisure and cultural attractions has emerged since the 1980s as a significant element of policies designed to regenerate postindustrial cities across Britain, Europe, and North America. These approaches are increasingly associated with 'cultural clusters' or 'cultural quarters' and the wider cultural industries as mechanisms for urban regeneration (Miles M, 2005; Mommaas, 2004; Montgomery, 2003). In common with many formerly industrial Europe and North American cities, since the 1960s, the city centre in Britain has moved through a well-documented process of economic decline—losing primary and secondary production economies, residential population, shops, and offices to suburban locations (Evans, 1997). In addition, recent decades have seen leisure and entertainment functions relocating to new out-of-centre locations (Hubbard, 2002). At the same time, the attraction of the city centre has declined in relation to out-of-town centres (Hubbard, 2003) and entertainment in the home (Lovatt and O'Connor, 1995). City authorities have reacted to these economic and social changes in a number of ways over the last thirty years, with a number of successive approaches to city-centre regeneration. These phases have comprised a sequence of retail, office, and leisure uses, all the while attempting to build upon the vestiges of 'high' and 'popular' culture facilities of the past.

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The 'leisure and culture' approach to urban regeneration has been strongly developed in European cities such as Barcelona, Cologne, Dublin, Hamburg, and Rotterdam (see Bianchini and Parkinson, 1993; Jensen-Butler et al, 1997; McCarthy, 1998a; 1998b). Indeed, postindustrial cities across the world have been following leisure and cultural strategies to revive declining central cities. For example, such approaches have also been followed in Brisbane (Stimson and Taylor, 1999), Pittsburgh (Holcomb, 1993), and other cities in the United States (see Short and Kim, 1999). Alongside these European, Australian, and North American cities, British cities have initiated a similar trend through a combination of postindustrial uses to regenerate their economies. In fact, Miles and Paddison (2005) argue that the rise of culture within urban policy in Britain has been little short of extraordinary—even more so than in other countries. Examples have been highlighted in major cities such as Birmingham (Hubbard, 1996), Bristol (Griffiths, 1995; Griffiths et al, 1999), Glasgow (Booth and Boyle, 1993; Paddison, 1993), Leeds (Harcup, 2000), Liverpool (Madsen, 1992; Parkinson and Bianchini, 1993), Manchester (Williams, 1996), Newcastle–Gateshead (Hollands and Chatterton, 2002; Miles S, 2005), and Sheffield (Brown et al, 2000; Oatley, 1996). Research on leisure and cultural attractions in the postindustrial British city is of wide international relevance, as cities across the world continue to develop and embrace leisure-driven and culture-driven urban regeneration as a central plank of the new urban entrepreneurialism, closely tied with cultural globalisation (Miles and Paddison, 2005).

Leisure and cultural regeneration in city centres

The late 1980s initially saw a retail focus for regenerative policy, which later expanded to include a town centre management role. Associated with this early period were attempts at attracting offices to the city centre. During the late 1980s and early 1990s it was also considered essential to introduce more residential development and to repopulate the city centre in order to introduce an internal market and to contribute to wider regeneration aims. Closely linked with this, the focus was widened to encompass the development of the evening and night-time economy, and the wider 24-hour city by the early 1990s (Heath and Stickland, 1997; Lovatt and O'Connor, 1995). The attempt to extend the daytime activity of the city centre embraced a café-culture concept, late-night shopping, and other leisure activities focused on the evening, and was highlighted by Comedia's (1991) report (Ravenscroft et al, 2000). However, by the late 1990s this aspiration had in practice been overtaken by the market to become focused on 'popular culture'—dominated by leisure and entertainment uses of pubs and clubs (Chatterton and Hollands, 2002). Since the late 1990s there has been an interest in adding 'culture' as an additional element (Griffiths et al, 2003). 'Culture' is part of the aim to extend the leisure dimension of the city centre through a combination of 'high culture' and 'heritage tourism'—exemplified by the proliferation of theatres, concert venues, galleries, and museums. This has been extended since the late 1990s via a subset of 'crafts as arts', consisting of arts industries provided by artists, potters, and glass-arts industries, which focus on a social enterprise dimension (Worpole, 1992). An additional related element promoted by cities more recently is tourism, which straddles entertainment, sport, and high culture and heritage (Law, 2000; Page, 1995). Also since the late 1990s special events have increasingly been staged in city centres; these illustrate the trend towards popular culture, but some may cross to high culture (Hughes, 1999).

The elements of the entertainment, leisure, tourism, and culture spectrum are diverse, and what is included within this category for the purpose of policy is debated. It is clear that there are a number of overlapping elements associated with the leisure and cultural economy of the city centre which can be disentangled. Although the

boundaries of the various elements are unclear, for our purposes in this paper some distinctions can be made between traditional 'high culture' and 'arts', and 'leisure' and 'popular culture'. 'High culture' was historically inextricably linked with arts policies which were traditionally concerned with art collections, museums, theatre, and classical music. By contrast, 'the arts' is now seen to encompass visual art such as fine art, sculpture, and photography; performance art such as music, dance, and theatre; and literary art, including poetry.

There has recently been a shift towards a wider conceptualisation of culture to include popular culture and events programming. The wide spectrum of activities that can be considered 'cultural' appears to be ever increasing, and popular pastimes can be conceptualised as a cultural pursuit. For example, reference is often made to a definable 'pub culture'. Clearly, definitions of 'leisure', 'culture', and 'arts' are blurred and fluid and are open to interpretation, but there is a marked distinction between popular leisure pursuits and the more exclusive cultural activities. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) defines 'culture' as encapsulating visual and performing arts; audio-visual industries; architecture and design; heritage and the historic environment; libraries and literature; museums, galleries and archives; and tourism relating to these sectors (DCMS, 2004a, page 8). In this paper we are concerned with attempts at city-centre regeneration which consist of leisure and entertainment or 'popular culture'—particularly associated with the development of the 24-hour city. We are also concerned with 'high culture', including museums, galleries, theatre, and concerts as an associated addition. The contribution that these two distinct but related types of activities can make to the postindustrial regional city is a focus of the research.

Much leisure-related and culture-related regeneration in the postindustrial city has been focused on the notion of cultural 'clusters' or 'quarters'. These are concentrations of leisure and cultural uses, often located in former industrial areas of the city centre, and usually combine authentic artistic and cultural activities with a variety of leisure and entertainment elements such as bars, restaurants, and cultural retail spaces (DCMS, 2004b; Mommaas, 2004). The 'cultural quarter' is a somewhat nebulous and slippery term (Mommaas, 2004); however, Montgomery (2003) attempts to conceptualise 'cultural quarters' drawing upon theories of urban growth, economic development, and urban design. It is argued that, despite their wide variety of forms, a number of essential ingredients make 'a successful cultural quarter'. These consist of: (a) a mixture of activity (for example, diversity of uses, an evening economy, and a small-firm economy); (b) an appropriate built environment (for example, fine-grained morphology, a variety of building types, and a good quality public space); and (c) cultural meaning (for example, a sense of history and progress, identity, and design appreciation and style). Further, Mommaas (2004, pages 516 – 517) states that 'ideal' cultural quarters "cater for dense project-based intracluster transactions ... as part of close face-to-face contacts between cultural professionals within an independent cultural community, accommodated within a self-managed and emotionally charged urban environment ... ." Planning and development powers have been used to preserve and encourage cultural production and consumption in 'successful' cultural quarters and as part of wider strategies for urban economic and cultural development (DCMS, 2004b; Montgomery, 2004). Montgomery (2003) further argues that the 'ideal' cultural quarter is a mixed-use public realm, which combines strategies for increased consumption of the arts and culture with cultural production.

Cultural quarters appear to date from the 1980s in the USA and have spread across the Western world, with researched examples being found in Sheffield and Manchester (Brown et al, 2000; Montgomery, 2004; Oatley, 1996), Dublin (Montgomery, 2004), Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Utrecht, and Tilburg (Mommaas, 2004), and Adelaide

(Montgomery, 2004). Many cultural quarters within cities have developed in an 'accidental' fashion over a period of some time, whereas some more recent developments, such as Manchester (Brown et al, 2000; Montgomery, 2004), Liverpool (Couch and Farr, 2000), Bristol (Griffiths, 1995), and Sheffield (Brown et al, 2000; Oatley, 1996), have been developed and marketed as purposeful models or policy instruments for urban regeneration (Mommaas, 2004; Montgomery, 2003). Montgomery (2004) provides evidence from a range of case studies which show that urban regeneration led by arts and culture works in a variety of contexts and that strategic planning and policy can achieve successful cultural quarters. However, Miles and Paddison (2005) argue that a more critical appreciation of the aspirations of culture-led regeneration is required.

Policy context

The shift towards leisure and cultural regeneration has been reflected in general policy initiatives by public and private sector bodies and has played a key role in shaping the changes taking place in postindustrial cities. Arts and cultural activities have been increasingly incorporated into wider policies for regenerating the postindustrial city at national, regional, and local levels of government (ACW, 1998; DCMS, 1998; 2000a; 2004a; 2004b; WAG, 2000). Explicit policies of the DCMS since the late 1990s have sought to locate culture at the heart of regeneration, and argue that the cultural element can become the driving force for regeneration (DCMS, 2004b; Miles and Paddison, 2005). Additionally, the Core Cities Group, which works in partnership with the government and other key stakeholders, has sought to promote a culture-led approach to regenerating cities (Comedia, 2002). These policies provide a context of established cultural provision and current tensions, particularly concerning conflicts between authentic cultural development and economic objectives (DCMS, 2004b; Mommaas, 2004). The regional dimension to cultural development is specifically highlighted (DCMS, 2000a) and The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) has recently developed arts and cultural policies within this context (DCMS, 2000b; WAG, 2000).

Within the framework of policies that have been adopted by national levels of government, an array of policies and strategies have been pursued by cities themselves, focusing particularly on measures concerned with improving economic competitiveness and tackling problems of social disadvantage and exclusion. Such approaches have filtered down the urban hierarchy to smaller regional cities, like Swansea, and commonly link cultural activities to economic and social policy objectives (CCS, 2002; Mommaas, 2004). However, there remain significant doubts as to whether government-sponsored cultural policies can live up to the bold claims made for them (Jones and Wilks-Heeg, 2004; Miles and Paddison, 2005).

Case study and methodology

The Swansea example

Within the context of the expanding consumption economies of postindustrial cities, in this paper we look at the role of leisure and culture attractions as a component of the wider regeneration process. The regional and former industrial city of Swansea is an example of a place which has embarked on the development of a leisure and cultural policy over the last decade. The rationale for looking at a smaller regional city stems from the idea that leisure and cultural attractions have much potential to offer cities of the scale of Swansea—of which there are many in Britain and throughout Europe and North America. Examples of the many other British cities with similarities to Swansea include Reading (Ravenscroft et al, 2000), Sheffield (Oatley, 1996), and Southampton (Pinch, 2002). Regional, former industrial, and often geographically peripheral centres, such as these usually display a narrow range of leisure and cultural attractions and are

overly reliant on mass activities like pubs, clubs, and cinema, complemented by a small number of municipal attractions. The development of a leisure and cultural policy in regional cities across Britain is less researched and has been a more recent phenomenon compared with large metropolitan capitals—such as Manchester, Liverpool, and Leeds—and regional cities with an international historic–cultural status—such as Bath, York, and Oxford—where a stronger and different set of circumstances and opportunities prevail.

Swansea was one of the earliest industrial cities in Britain, with an economy based on nonferrous metalworking, coal mining, iron and steel works, and tinplate manufacturing, which dated back to the 18th century. These industries dominated the economy until the mid-20th century, making Swansea an industrial city of global importance (Tallon et al, 2005; Watkins and Herbert, 2003). The city's deindustrialisation eliminated much of the traditional manufacturing industry during the second half of the 20th century. Swansea has progressed towards a postindustrial economy dominated by services, but problems resulting from the deindustrialisation process and the economically peripheral location of the city remain. City authorities continue to strive to transform the image of the city and to repackage and re-present the city by means of policies of place marketing, characteristic of most British and wider Western cities (Paddison, 1993).

As with most other regional British cities, the local authority adopted a strategy to redress problems of decline and to stimulate regeneration during the 1990s, within which leisure and cultural attractions were emerging (SCC, 1990). The early attempts at leisure and cultural regeneration were dominated by the mass and popular culture, consisting of pubs, clubs, and multileisure venues. These are largely patronised in the evening, night-time, and at the weekend (Bromley et al, 2003). Spatially, these are focused on the Kingsway 'Bright Lights Quarter' and the Wind Street 'Café Quarter' (see figure 1, over) (Bromley et al, 2000; 2003). However, the market strength exerted by the pub and club operators steadily reduced the functional distinction between the two foci, to the detriment of the café concept, as the 1990s progressed.

With the creation of the new unitary authority—City and County of Swansea (CCS)—in Swansea in 1996 came a renewed focus on the regenerative potential of leisure and cultural activities (URBED, 1997a). The URBED report, commissioned by the local authority, introduced tentative recommendations which were fed into a new City Centre Strategy (CCS, 1998). This proposed eight themed 'quarters', which aimed to reflect the uniqueness of identities and roles of different parts of the city centre (CCS, 1997; URBED, 1997b; Watkins and Herbert, 2003) (figure 1). This was designed to allow "... a more focused marketing and promotion of areas to take place" (CCS, 1997, page 1). In fact, leisure already dominated the Kingsway 'Bright Lights Quarter' and the Wind Street 'Café Quarter', and the 'Retail Core' and the 'Parc Tawe' retail and leisure complexes were already clearly defined functional entities. However, the remainder were largely a tentative expression of planning intention rather than an emerging reality.

At this time there was no obvious concentration of cultural activities. Instead, they were dispersed and at some distance from the retail core. However, two ad hoc cultural quarters have begun to emerge around the northern and southern edges of the city centre, albeit loosely related to the initial 'quarters' strategy and reflecting historically 'accidental' developments. Located on the northern fringe of the city centre are the Glyn Vivian Art Gallery and Central Library, along with the BBC studio and the Swansea Institute College of Art. Additional cultural activities in this area are in the process of development in 2005. Similarly, at the southern edge of the city centre, the Royal Institution (Swansea Museum), the Dylan Thomas Literary Centre, and the Dylan Thomas

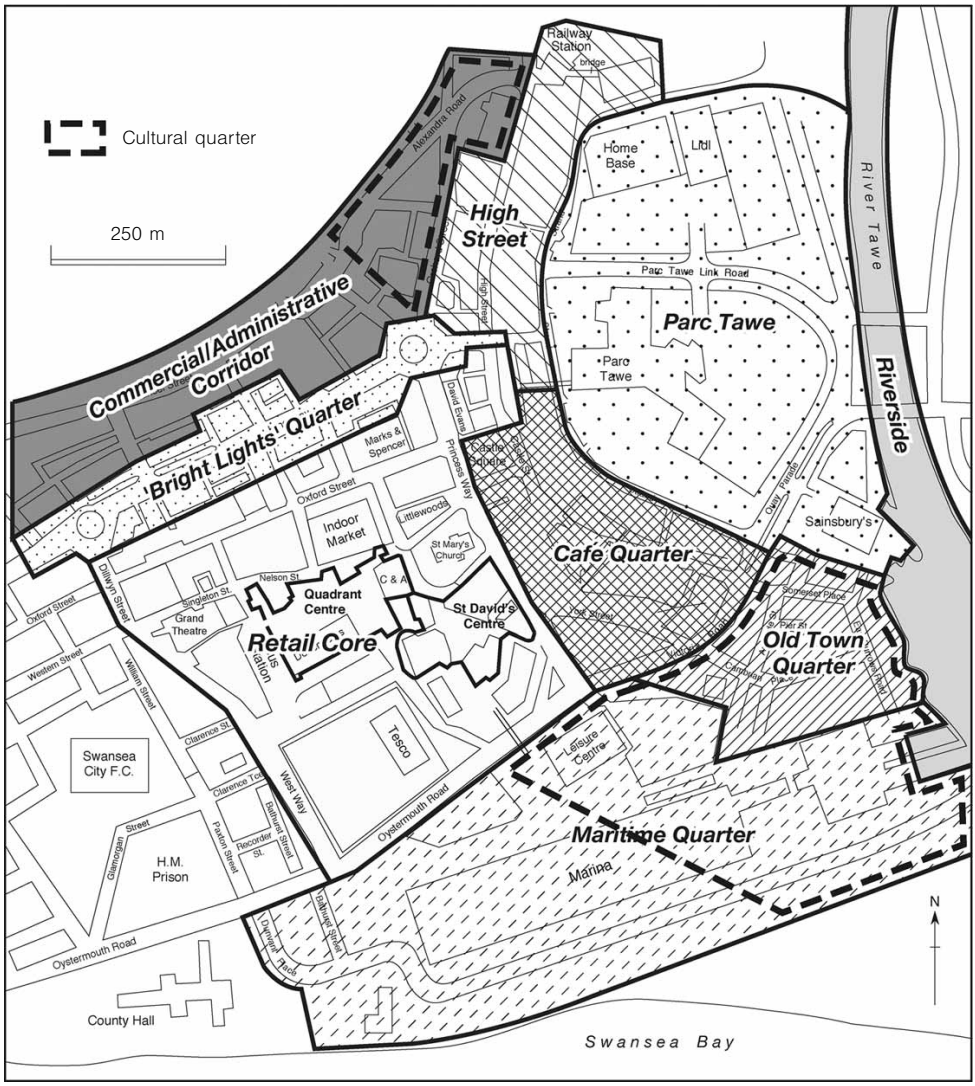


Figure 1. 'Quarters' in Swansea city centre.

Theatre are located in the 'Old Town Quarter', and the former Maritime and Industrial Museum has been transformed into the £30 million National Waterfront Museum.

Allied with the approaches introduced in the URBED report and the new City Centre Strategy, Swansea has attempted to develop place-promotion principles as part of the cultural policy of the city. Important here has been the promotion of the city as a literary place for cultural tourists, and authorities continue to develop a strategy to market the 'product' of the writer and poet Dylan Thomas to a niche market as a way of capitalising on cultural tourism (Watkins and Herbert, 2003). However, this approach has been rather opportunistic and piecemeal to date (Reynolds, 2003).

In addition to the largely private sector provision of leisure activities and the stronger public sector concern with culture there are also a small number of voluntary and community sector cultural attractions and social enterprises in the city centre, including a contemporary music enterprise, a print workshop, and art galleries.

The local authority has increasingly recognised the potential value of the leisure and cultural economy as an asset for regeneration and, after the development of earlier amorphous and piecemeal initiatives, a formal cultural strategy for the city of Swansea was created (CCS, 2002). This was given added impetus by the recommendation by the DCMS that every local authority should produce a local cultural strategy to integrate cultural resources into local economic, educational, environmental, tourism, social, and health policies (Bianchini, 2004). Swansea's cultural strategy is aimed to address both social and economic regeneration (CCS, 2002) and to encompass public, private, and voluntary sectors, although the local authority continues to be the dominant partner. Clearly, leisure and culture are becoming significant elements in the regenerative strategies for the city centre of Swansea. It is equally evident that the slow pace of development of the cultural component is governed by the small scale of the city region.

Methodology

In order to explore the market for city-centre leisure and cultural activities, and to include provider and consumer views on this dimension of the changing city centre, three principal extensive surveys were utilised: an on-street questionnaire survey of visitors to the city centre (1215 responses); a survey of city-centre residents (191 interviews); and questionnaire surveys of people present at various special events staged in the city centre throughout the year (224 responses, gained from a Brazilian-style midsummer carnival, a late-summer contemporary music event, a Christmas parade, and a craft market—all held in late afternoons and evenings). All three surveys were designed to examine consumer characteristics, behaviour, and views relating to the leisure and cultural economy.

These surveys were carried out at the start of the research period and provided a base of information for more than thirty follow-up, in-depth, interviews and group discussions with a range of key informants involved in the production of the leisure and cultural economy in the city centre. They enabled the researchers to track the evolving role of leisure and culture in the regeneration of the regional city centre over a five-year period. Those interviewed consisted of gatekeepers and entrepreneurs involved in local cultural development; they included politicians, local authority officers, police officers, representatives from private sector enterprises, nonauthority urban planners, cultural entrepreneurs from the private and voluntary sectors, and representatives of voluntary sector arts and cultural groups. Their responses were used to explore and clarify the survey findings and to inform the policy implications.

The attraction of city-centre leisure and cultural activities

Daytime visitors to leisure and cultural attractions in the city centre

The daytime on-street survey of visitors involved a wide and varied population and revealed much about the leisure and cultural use of the regional city centre. Of the respondents, 41% were estimated to be under 30 years old, 32% were in the 30–50 age group, and 27% were over 50 years old. The gender split was 52% female and 48% male. In terms of social class, 27% were classified as having professional or semiprofessional occupations, 34% were skilled manual/nonmanual or semiskilled or unskilled, 15% were retired, 19% were students, and 5% were not employed—suggesting a balanced respondent profile. Of the respondents, 77% were drawn from within 7 miles of the city centre and 17% had travelled over 10 miles, illustrating a fairly wide trade area, representative of a regional city.

However, visits to the daytime city-centre leisure and cultural economy were relatively low, with the offer restricted to museums and the Parc Tawe multileisure complex.

Reasons for visits to the daytime city centre were dominated by shopping, with 92% regularly visiting the Quadrant Shopping Centre. Similarly high figures were recorded for other central area retail-dominated streets, but significantly lower proportions regularly participated in leisure activities: for example, 39% regularly visited Wind Street during the daytime for leisure activities and 45% visited Parc Tawe—the highest figure for any location.

The on-street survey of visitors to the city centre reveals a strikingly low level of overall participation in the evening and nighttime leisure and cultural economies, suggesting that this is a minority pursuit. Less than a quarter of respondents visited Swansea city centre after 5.30pm more than 'several times a week'. This is a considerably lower level of engagement with the city centre than in the daytime, when 73% of visitor respondents visited weekly or more regularly—for mainly retail visits. As many as 27% never visited the nighttime city, and for nearly 45% visits were no more frequent than 'not often'—a significant obstacle to the development of the evening and nighttime leisure and cultural economy. This is also a reflection of the focused offer available beyond the mass culture domain, and emphasises the current niche function of the nighttime leisure economy which can exclude certain groups. The social character of the frequent visitors can be indicated in terms of a number of social characteristics. For example, 49% of men visited the city centre after 5.30pm weekly or more frequently, compared with 36% of women; 73% of the under-30 age group visited weekly or at greater intervals, compared with only 11% of the over 50 year olds; and just 31% of the professional or semiprofessional social groups were frequent visitors, compared with a larger 48% of the semiskilled and unskilled social groups.

Irrespective of the frequency of visits, the mass cultural venues of pubs (80%), the cinema (69%), restaurants and cafés (66%), and nightclubs (57%) dominated visit patterns. 'High' cultural activities were less patronised by respondents, with theatres (25%) and concerts (20%) significantly less popular attractions in the city-centre leisure and cultural economy (table 1). This emphasises the dominance of pubs and clubs in the nighttime cultural economy of smaller regional cities.

The frequency of visits for visitors to the evening and nighttime city centre revealed that the proportions who never visited the nighttime city were 23% for men and 30% for women. In general, women visited the nighttime city centre less frequently than men. In terms of age patterns of visits, there is a marked variation across the spectrum (table 2). Older age groups of the population visited the evening and nighttime city centre much less often than did middle-aged and younger groups. In particular,

Table 1 On-street survey: frequency of visits to major evening and nighttime activities (source: authors' surveys).

	Pubs (%)	Nightclubs (%)	Restaurants (%)	Late-night shopping (%)	Cinema (%)	Theatre (%)
Daily	3.0	0.8	2.2	0.9		0.4
Several times a week	34.2	25.1	10.5	2.2	1.1	0.4
Weekly	28.4	36.9	21.5	12.6	8.9	0.9
Fortnightly	10.7	12.2	18.3	7.2	19.2	6.0
Monthly	10.3	12.4	24.0	18.4	41.8	26.7
Not often	13.4	12.7	23.5	58.7	28.9	65.5
Number	722	510	589	212	618	220

Note. Those who never visit the activity are excluded.

Table 2. On-street survey: frequency of visits to the evening and nighttime city centre by age (source: authors' survey).

Age group in years	Daily	Several times a week	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Not often	Never	Total
Under 30								
number	8	232	125	29	25	49	30	498
%	1.6	46.6	25.1	5.8	5.0	9.8	6.0	100.0
31 – 50								
number	5	40	62	42	39	104	96	388
%	1.3	10.3	16.0	10.8	10.1	26.8	24.7	100.0
Over 50								
number	3	7	25	9	12	62	196	314
%	1.0	2.2	8.0	2.9	3.8	19.7	62.4	100.0
Total								
number	16	279	212	80	76	215	322	1200
%	1.3	23.3	17.7	6.7	6.3	17.9	26.8	100.0

χ^2 533.202, 12 degrees of freedom, significant at the 0.001 level.

the figures for 'several times a week' decrease rapidly with age, and the proportions 'never visiting' strikingly increase with age—a finding supported by other local research (Bromley et al, 2000; Thomas and Bromley, 2000). Students as a social group participate most in the nighttime city and its leisure and cultural activities, with 85% visiting weekly or more frequently. These findings confirm the focused youth culture dimension of the evening and nighttime city.

Visitors were also questioned on their views of those aspects of the nighttime economy which are often closely associated with leisure and cultural attractions and special events in the city centre. A total of 34% considered that there were not enough activities on offer in the evening and nighttime city, with only 27% being satisfied. This suggests that there is significant scope for expansion and widening particularly oriented towards the sections of the population aged over 50 years old. In terms of the quality of offer in the evening and nighttime leisure economy, 42% were happy and 25% were unhappy with the provision of leisure in the city centre, with the older people being less enthusiastic. Related to these points, nearly a quarter of respondents to the on-street survey felt that the city centre has too many pubs and clubs—rather than a more balanced array of leisure and cultural venues—although 48% did not share this concern. Once again, the general pattern masks the age division between the under-30 and over-50 age groups. Half of the over 50s believed that there are too many pubs and clubs whereas over three quarters of the under 30s were not in agreement. This has clear implications for the expansion of the leisure and cultural economy of the city centre, especially in attracting wider social groups. Clearly, the expansion of leisure and cultural facilities would have to reach beyond the mass pub and club culture which currently dominates in the regional city.

Respondents to the on-street survey mentioned that there should be a wider range of facilities (24%), more and better policing (24%), and the development of a safer environment (15%). There is a clear conflict here: any possible expansion of activities would require addressing the safety issue. The expansion and enhancement of the leisure and cultural economy, including a greater range of venues and the provision of special events, has a key role to play in widening the attraction of the regional city centre.

Visitors to special events in the city centre

Provision of an events programme has become an important aspect of the leisure and cultural economy of the postindustrial city (DCMS, 2004b; Hughes, 1999). The contribution of special events is especially important in the evening and nighttime, and at weekends. In the smaller, regional city, these events can assist in the development of a more positive image of the city centre. Since the late 1990s the local authority, in partnership with the private and voluntary sectors, has developed a range of special outdoor events, usually revolving around some form of music or carnival entertainment. The value of these events to the leisure and cultural regeneration of city centres lies in terms of their enhancing participation for a wider range of people and reappropriating public space.

To assess the role and regenerative potential of special events in the city centre and their place within the wider leisure and cultural policy of the city, an events-visitor survey was used to assess broad views on the current events. The majority of respondents were in the 20–49 years age band, with an underrepresentation of under-15 year-olds, late middle aged, and elderly people compared with the general population. A total of 58% of respondents were female and 42% were male. Around half of visitors to special events could be described as 'regular' visitors to the evening and nighttime city (45% visiting weekly or more frequently)—significantly more than in the wider population captured in the on-street survey. Also the vast majority of all respondents (82%) lived within 4 miles of the city centre. This indicates a narrow sphere of influence, which suggests potential for much wider participation. Despite this, around half of the visitors were not regular visitors to the city centre—even though they were local.

Opinions relating to nightlife and special events in the city centre show that respondents valued the efforts made by the local authority in providing such events. There was a significant demand for more of the same activities: 55% of respondents mentioned that they would like to see more outdoor events and live music in the city centre. Similarly, 47% of respondents to the on-street visitor survey stated that the provision of outdoor events makes the evening and nighttime city centre a more attractive place (table 3), amongst both youthful (48%) and older age groups (41%). From the events respondents themselves, however, there were substantial calls for a stronger family dimension to the events (32% mentioned) and better policing of the events (26% mentioned).

Substantial disquiet was expressed concerning drunkenness (52% mentioned), rowdiness (37% mentioned), and violent crimes (35% mentioned). Clearly, the negative views on the largely early-evening special events in the city centre were similar to those concerning the well-documented problems of the broader nighttime city (Bromley et al, 2000; Thomas and Bromley, 2000). There is evidently a notable degree of conflict between alternative cultural regeneration policies, especially concerning the clash between promoting a mixed activity, family-based environment, and the ultimate outcome of a perceived unsafe, alcohol-dominated, youth-focused environment.

In terms of developing venues for special events in the city centre, problems often revolve around the success of the attractions in terms of the high numbers of visitors and the problem of limited capacity. For these reasons, in recent years many of Swansea's high-profile special music events and festivals have migrated outside of the city centre. This presents a problem to those wishing to develop the city-centre leisure and cultural economy. Without suitable facilities it is very difficult to use special events as a regenerative strategy in the city centre, because if the events are successful they outgrow the locale which they were initially designed to benefit.

Table 3. On-street survey: attitudes towards the evening and nighttime city centre (source: authors' survey).

Attitude statement	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	No strong view (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Total
There are not enough activities in Swansea city centre after 5.30pm	7.3	26.2	39.7	24.2	2.7	1158 100.0%
I am happy with the quality of leisure provision in Swansea city centre after 5.30pm	2.7	38.9	33.6	21.9	3.0	1164 100.0%
There are too many pubs and clubs in Swansea city centre	7.5	16.8	27.5	37.1	11.1	1161 100.0%
I would visit the city centre more often in the evening if there was more to do	6.9	37.4	27.1	26.1	2.5	1164 100.0%
Outdoor events make the city centre more attractive for me to visit in the evenings	8.4	38.6	34.7	15.9	2.4	1165 100.0%

City-centre residents and leisure and cultural attractions

The recent growth in the city centre residential population has boosted the leisure and cultural role of the regional city centre through the introduction of a new pool of consumers, both for nighttime popular culture venues and for high-cultural facilities. The age profile of 'resident' respondents revealed that 32% were under the age of 40 and 41% were over 60 years of age. The sample was made up of 46% male and 54% female. Professionals or semiprofesionals accounted for 18%, and 53% were not actively employed—including retired people (40%) and students (5%).

In the daytime 97% of resident respondents visited weekly or more regularly for shopping. However, 50% claimed to never visit the city centre during the daytime for leisure purposes and only 28% visited leisure attractions monthly or more frequently. This demonstrates the dominance of shopping visits during the daytime, and suggests only a limited spin-off from the residential population for leisure and cultural attractions. This probably reflects the relatively elderly age profile of the city-centre residents.

Amongst city-centre residents there was a low level of participation in the evening and nighttime economy. As with the visitor survey, less than 25% of residents visited the city centre in the evening several times a week or more, and as many as 36% never visited the nighttime city. There is a considerably lower engagement with the city-centre nighttime leisure and cultural economy than with the daytime retail economy. The low participation in the evening and nighttime economy of the city-centre population again largely reflects the sizeable proportion of elderly residents living in the city centre. For this older age group, almost 70% never visited the evening or nighttime city centre. However, amongst the younger age groups the level of participation is high: over 57% of those aged under 30 visited the evening and nighttime city centre at least several times a week (table 4, over). Nevertheless, engagement is similar to that found in the daytime on-street, visitor survey, so at least there is an increase of visitor numbers to the leisure and cultural economy generated by the resident population.

Table 4. Survey of city-centre residents: frequency of visits to the evening and nighttime city centre by age (source: authors' survey).

Age group in years	Daily	Several times a week	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Not often	Never	Total
Under 30								
number	2	18	5	8			2	35
%	5.7	51.4	14.3	22.9			5.7	100.0
31 – 59								
number	1	23	18	8	6	9	13	78
%	1.3	29.5	23.1	10.3	7.7	11.5	16.7	100.0
Over 60								
number		3	3	4	3	11	54	78
%		3.8	3.8	5.1	3.8	14.1	69.2	100.0
Total								
number	3	44	26	20	9	20	69	191
%	1.6	23.0	13.6	10.5	4.7	10.5	36.1	100.0

χ^2 95.137, 8 degrees of freedom, significant at the 0.0001 level. 'Daily' and 'several times a week', and 'monthly' and 'not often' were merged for χ^2 analysis.

However, amongst residents as a whole, and irrespective of the frequency of their visits, the most popular reasons given for visiting the leisure and cultural economy of the city centre at night were for pubs (89%), restaurants (81%), the cinema (70%), and nightclubs (53%). Additionally, 25% visited social clubs, and 10% participated in bingo. When the reasons for nighttime city visits were examined with reference to the actual frequency with which the activities were undertaken, pubs were visited by 57% of respondents weekly or more often. Although visits to pubs were numerous, only 21% of city-centre residents visited nightclubs weekly or more often. For restaurants the figure for weekly or more frequent visits was even lower at 13%. Respondents relatively infrequently undertook other evening and nighttime activities; for example, cinemas were visited 'not often' by 31%. Even though one of the most widely regarded attractions of city-centre living is the excitement of the leisure and cultural economy, a significant majority rarely participate in the evening and nighttime economy (table 5).

Table 5. Survey of city-centre residents: frequency of visits to major evening and nighttime activities (source: authors' survey).

Activity	Daily (%)	Several times a week (%)	Weekly (%)	Fortnightly (%)	Monthly (%)	Not often (%)	Never (%)
Pubs	1.3	32.5	24.3	12.8	6.2	12.0	11.2
Restaurants	2.2	4.7	8.0	22.7	15.4	27.6	19.5
Cinema			5.6	14.6	17.9	31.8	30.2
Nightclubs		8.8	12.9	8.8	9.6	12.9	47.3
Late-night shopping	1.3	3.0	2.1	2.1	3.0	38.2	50.5
Social clubs	1.1	4.6	5.4	1.3	2.1	9.5	75.9
Bingo			1.6		1.6	5.7	91.0

Note. Those who never visit the activity were excluded.

Key informants' views on leisure and cultural attractions in the city centre

To provide additional insight into the existing and potential contribution of leisure and cultural activities to the city centre regenerative process, the views of key informants, representing the local authority, the private sector, and voluntary and community interests, were obtained on a variety of fundamental issues.

Support for a pub and club culture

There was widespread support for the manner in which the market-led approach to development had resulted in the emergence of the 'Bright Lights' quarter of the Kingsway, both as an income generator for the city centre and as an attraction to satisfy the youth market for leisure.

> "It's a kind of youth culture thing ... and I think in many ways it informs the jubilance, surrealism that I sometimes see in the Kingsway, or thereabouts, occasionally when I've been down. There is a positive surrealism, which ... I've never seen anywhere else, it's fantastic" (artist and arts lecturer; Reynolds, 2003, page 281).

In addition, the manner in which the 'complementary' 'Café Quarter', initiated in the early 1990s, has subsequently undergone a transition via the same market forces to become increasingly indistinguishable from the Kingsway was also considered widely to be unproblematic, despite the deviation from the original intention:

> "I think Wind Street has regenerated because it's evolved round young people who want go out ... there's so much; there's lots of people, lots of things to do. You've got the bright lights area of the Kingsway where there are probably more people around at 2 o'clock in the morning than 2 o'clock in the afternoon. It needs to be a living city. It needs to be a 24-hour city. I think our policies of 11 o'clock hours for pubs are stupid. We need to be more like the Europeans. If there's business there and people want to be there, these are adults, why not? If they want to stay there until 4 in the morning, stay there until 4 in the morning" (Chair of Culture and Recreation Committee, CCS; Reynolds, 2003, pages 280 – 281).

Need for balance and diversity

However, at the same time, there was strong support for the contention that the current domination of leisure and cultural activities by the pub and club culture needed to be balanced by greater diversity—both to expand the market beyond the youth focus and to temper the negative connotations of the existing offer previously noted in the 'consumer' surveys. A councillor commented on his concern to "give a levelling to the alcoholic mix that currently takes place in Swansea" (Reynolds, 2003, page 299). Consistent views on this issue were expressed by other key informants:

> "[Cultural development] would help to make it a better balance between drinking and leisure activities generally. The pub is fine to a point, but only to a point, and we don't want to grow too great a reliance on that if trends change, so we want to have a good diverse mix" (Director of Development, CCS; Reynolds, 2003, page 279).

> "At present it's still very poor ... drinking, clubbing, shopping. There isn't a ... I wouldn't say Bohemianism—but that kind of café activity going on" (Assistant Director, Culture and Recreation, CCS; Reynolds, 2003, page 283).

> "I think possibly the biggest issue is about reducing the extent to which town is becoming a 'no go area' because of the proliferation of pubs and late night licenses and nightclubs. If we can provide or encourage a whole range of activity which isn't pub based, then that will hopefully provide safer streets and a more ... balanced local economy rather than one which seems to be very much based on the extent of

heavy drinking that can be capitalised on" (Manager of Arts Centre and former Chair of the Arts Council for Wales; Reynolds, 2003, pages 279 – 280).

A similar view was proposed in the URBED report for the city centre, which suggested the need for a range of thematic 'quarters' to enhance functional diversity (URBED, 1997a).

Thus, consistent with the views of respondents to the on-street survey, a wide range of key informants consider that a greater diversity of leisure and cultural activities is desirable in the city centre. This is in close accordance with Bianchini's (1995) earlier support for a culturally diverse and vibrant 24-hour economy that caters for a broad socioeconomic and demographic mix of people. Crucial to improving this offer would seem to be the need for further investment in cultural, and particularly arts, activities in order to provide alternatives to the strong popular culture provision. This is also consistent with the arguments of Bianchini (1995) and Brown et al (2000), who suggest that culture has a prime role in place marketing through the provision of a broader consumer base and the creation of a more diverse image. This suggests that market forces need to be tempered by a proactive planning viewpoint if the vision of a diversity of thematic 'quarters' is to be delivered.

Smaller scale cultural and arts activities: the significance of the voluntary sector

An additional issue, which was not addressed in the questionnaire surveys of 'consumers', was the position and potential contribution of the smaller scale cultural and arts activities provided primarily by voluntary and small-scale commercial enterprises. These consist of, for example, an eclectic mix of music and performing-arts venues, artists' studios, art and pottery galleries, community cafés, and meeting rooms for societies. Such activities can contribute to the diversity of functions offered and, in the process, widen the consumer base of city-centre facilities. It was notable, however, that a wide range of informants—particularly those representing the voluntary sector—expressed both interest in and concern on this issue.

In particular, the voluntary sector considered that there was insufficient support for small-scale cultural and arts activities and the problems they face if they are to contribute to the emergence of cultural quarters in the city centre. This is exemplified by the emergence of the node of cultural activities in the vicinity of the concentration of late-19th-century civic buildings on the northern edge of the city centre, including the Faculty of Art and Design of the Swansea Institute of Higher Education, a Music Technology centre, and a Digital Media Centre. The emergence of this node reflects historical circumstances and an element of opportunism on the part of Swansea Institute, rather than a concerted and integrated policy directed by the local authority. However, large-scale initiatives of this kind, although they create a distinctive quarter, can reduce the opportunities for smaller scale community arts and cultural activities by reducing the supply of small, cheap premises. For example, the proposal from the Gwalia Housing Association for student housing and a mixed commercial ground-floor development in the Old Police Station was initially intended to incorporate opportunities for small-scale cultural and arts enterprises. However, the association's financial planning programme required a commitment for longer term lets and for higher rentals than the voluntary sector can normally afford. This effectively excluded small-scale arts and culture users; instead, the current proposal includes a commercial restaurant, although the association is now making a more concerted effort to understand the needs of arts and cultural groups.

Similar circumstances led to the displacement of the Dragon Arts Centre, the Red Gallery, and the Attic Gallery from the intended 'Café Quarter' in Wind Street:

"... the pubs moved in ... we only rented the accommodation, we didn't own it; the landlord wanted to turn the building into a pub [for] the leisure market, so yes, we were forced to leave .... I did play a role in trying to persuade council planners to continue with that [cultural café quarter] policy but unfortunately they lost control ..." (Manager, the Attic Gallery; Reynolds, 2003, page 301).

A similar process is likely to be repeated in the Old Town and Maritime Quarters with the enhancement of the Dylan Thomas Centre and the completion of the National Waterfront Museum. In effect, it seems that if a 'fringe' cultural dimension, offering opportunities for smaller cultural and arts enterprises, is to emerge amongst the city centre quarters:

"It needs more public investment, more civic led, public led intervention to prime [it]" (Director of Community Design Services and urban planner; Reynolds, 2003, page 293).

This contention is also supported by the experiences of an attempt in the early 1990s to establish an Arts Centre by the voluntary Swansea Writers and Artists Group (SWAG):

"We set up SWAG in '92 ... we tried to get an Arts Centre built and we worked with planners and the big conglomerates ... at the bottom of Wind Street. We had architects on board and we had a five-storey building which was architecturally designed and that was to go in that space which is now a car park in the Salubrious planning area there ... (now a casino – hotel complex)" (spokesperson, Swansea Women's Jazz Archive; Reynolds, 2003, page 337).

However, the scheme did not come to fruition because of frustration at the slow progress of the project and a high degree of dependence on the enthusiasm of a small number of people—who ultimately became 'burnt out' (Reynolds, 2003, page 337). This is not an isolated example and it seems, therefore, that social entrepreneurs, in association with a local authority, may well have the potential to make a more significant impact on city-centre redevelopment—both in terms of added cultural 'offer', and as a component of local economic growth and investment. However, in the case of a medium-sized city this contention must be tempered by a realistic assessment of the limitations of a small catchment area:

"It would be lovely to say that we'll have *X*, *Y*, and *Z* new facilities but the reality is that Swansea has got a certain catchment population ... and I think it does reasonably well in terms of what's there at the moment" (senior planner, CCS; Reynolds, 2003, page 361).

Nevertheless, it appears that if a local authority is intent on the long-term maintenance and development of smaller community-based cultural and arts enterprises, it must become a proactive partner in planning-led development. Alternatively, it must intervene in the market place in a protectionist fashion, and ideally involve the end-users in the consultation process. It seems that it is only in this way that an element of 'Bohemianism' can be retained as an integral part of the 'mainstream' cultural quarters—rather than being displaced into 'fringe' locations and substandard premises. The importance of such action, based on cross-sector collaborative 'new partnerships' between the public, private, and voluntary sectors, has previously been noted by Worpole (1992), and a similar conclusion was reached by Brown et al (2000) in relation to the activity mix in cultural quarters in Manchester and Sheffield:

"The problem then remains as to how to square the notion of culture as a central driver for cities in the next century with the powerful networks around property development which emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s" (Brown et al, 2000, page 450).

However, it is debatable whether a city of Swansea's size can sustain a whole 'quarter' dominated by smaller scale cultural and arts activities as demonstrated in the examples given by Mommaas (2004) and Montgomery (2004). Instead, there is support from a number of informants from the voluntary sector and the Assistant Director of Culture and Recreation for the integration of the smaller cultural and arts activities as an element of the central city in general—rather than the creation of a specific quarter:

> "I just don't really see this cultural quarter thing. I mean, I think the city centre should be the cultural quarter. I think these facilities should be dispersed all the way through the city centre rather than have one area, which is the cultural quarter ... I don't think [Swansea] city centre is big enough to actually identify one area, which can be a cultural quarter" (architect and urban planner; Reynolds, 2003, page 304).

Either way, there is more general support for the basic contention that these activities require an element of public-led intervention if they are to contribute to the wider cultural life of the city centre. There is a need to ensure the availability of a modicum of suitable low-cost premises in centrally accessible locations if this element of cultural diversity is to be encouraged. Alternatively, the evidence of the Swansea experience suggests that a 'quarters' approach in a broadly laissez-faire context is likely to result in a cultural life dominated by mass consumption, popular leisure activities centred on pubs and clubs, or larger scale civic and educational activities. By contrast, smaller scale cultural and arts activities are likely to be displaced in the redevelopment process.

Policy implications for the leisure and cultural economy

The Swansea research reported here emphasises the policy challenges facing the development of a thriving leisure and cultural economy in smaller regional cities in postindustrial societies, compared with larger, more geographically central, and affluent cities. Four key interrelated policy challenges involve creating a leisure and cultural economy which: embraces a wide range and variety of attractions; appeals to a broad spectrum of social groups; adopts an appropriate spatial strategy; and overcomes friction between component parts of the leisure and cultural economy.

Developing a wider range of leisure and cultural attractions

There was widespread support for the view that leisure and cultural policy in Swansea is market led and ad hoc, rather than comprehensively integrated into a planned 'vision for the future'. Overall, there is a lack of a coherent, cohesive, approach, and the provision of activities is opportunistic and project led rather than strategic and plan led. Overall, there is currently an overreliance on the private sector, with the result that activities are dominated by a youth-oriented pub and club culture. In effect, leisure rather than culture appears to be driving the expansion of the evening and nighttime economy—which creates a market-oriented monoculture. This process of 'leisurefication' often leaves indigenous, community-based arts and cultural groups experiencing some difficulty in gaining suitable sites and premises—a process recognised by the DCMS (2004a). Essentially, the market forces tend to displace small-scale voluntary cultural and arts activities as the city centre is subject to a progressive corporate takeover—driven especially by the financially powerful drinks industry (Chatterton and Hollands, 2003).

The public sector 'offer' is currently of much less significance from the participation perspective, despite the emergence of two distinct cultural quarters. There is also widespread support for the view that the current emphasis on large-scale civic and

educational projects could be tempered to advantage by harnessing the vitality of the voluntary and smaller scale cultural and arts activities. However, it is also recognised that this second dimension will require stronger proactive public sector intervention than currently exists if it is to contribute significantly to the leisure and cultural mix of the city centre. Representatives of such groups argue that there is a lack of understanding of the needs of the non-local-authority cultural sector. The development of effective partnerships would improve cultural provision and support smaller enterprises (Reynolds, 2003). In essence, local cultural enterprises require low-cost fringe locations which they can easily colonise.

Therefore, the key challenge is to develop a wider array of leisure and cultural attractions in the context of the more limited market of the regional city. A more attractive and balanced city centre requires leisure and cultural activities which encompass more independent, niche venues of music, art, and culture, as posited by Montgomery (2003) as a key characteristic of a successful cultural quarter. In addition there is currently too much emphasis on the nighttime economy attractions in the smaller regional city centre, which is reflected in the research. More inclusive and localised forms of cultural and arts facilities remain relatively underdeveloped. The local authority in the regional city needs to continue to foster a small number of municipal attractions, but the voluntary noncommercial sector needs encouragement. Special events are not likely currently to be a major contributor to the leisure and cultural economy because in a city-centre context they become victims of their own success and are forced to relocate elsewhere in the city. Although such events can contribute to image management, an appropriate quality and size venue combined with skilful management and marketing is required for the staging of successful special events in the city centre.

Attracting a wider range of social groups

If this greater variety within the leisure and cultural economy is achieved, then a broader spectrum of social groups will be attracted to the city centre. This will help to ensure long-term vitality and viability, and increase perceptions of safety. The long-standing challenge of attracting a wider range of social groups has been highlighted in previous research (Bromley et al, 2000; 2003; Thomas and Bromley, 2000). However, the satisfaction of this aim is likely to remain a considerable challenge given the current character of the nighttime city economy and its niche appeal to the youth market. The nighttime leisure economy should ideally be expanded to encompass older age groups. However, the scale of this potential market remains uncertain, and it seems likely to remain less buoyant because of conflicts of family, financial constraints, and ageing. High culture is also likely to remain attractive only to a relatively small niche market.

Adopting an appropriate spatial policy

In terms of the spatial distribution of leisure and cultural facilities, there are some arguments in favour of dispersal and others in favour of a concentrated 'cultural quarter' strategy. Such dispersal versus segregation arguments have been debated in terms of pubs and clubs in the nighttime economy (Bromley et al, 2000). Concentration enables avoidance of such activities, whereas dispersal across the whole city centre creates spatial fragmentation and dead spaces (Thomas and Bromley, 2000). However, a diffuse pattern of leisure and cultural development might be more 'sustainable' for the city centre as a whole, and offer greater potential to the voluntary sector for sufficient suitable space at an appropriate cost.

In light of the Swansea evidence, and the current situation in the city centre, it would seem that the most appropriate policy is to develop more coherent cultural quarters—resembling the international examples cited by Mommaas (2004) and

Montgomery (2004). In Swansea, the current distribution of leisure and cultural activities is diffuse because of the historical 'accidental' development of attractions which makes the development and marketing of a cultural quarter problematic. One difficulty is that leisure and cultural attractions are spread over at least two incipient quarters, with the northern focus driven by a 'traditional' educational culture spin-off from the Swansea Institute of Higher Education, whereas the southern concentration is more of a 'postmodern', market-led pub and club entity. Our research suggests support for the potential of a binodal distribution of leisure and cultural facilities in the regional city centre being as effective as a single cultural quarter with a dominant node and subdominant node. Such an approach could be incorporated in planning policy, and requires proactive local authority action to set aside areas for leisure and cultural development—particularly for smaller cultural enterprises to flourish. In the Swansea situation the dominant node is most appropriate in the southern Old Town and Maritime Quarters, whereas the subdominant node could usefully be situated in the northern corridor and could develop associations with the Swansea Institute for Higher Education. An appropriate spatial policy in the regional city centre may only require relatively small culture quarters to reflect the more limited nature of market demand, although Montgomery (2004) argues that smaller towns and cities can only support one such place: for example, a major regional capital such as Manchester has a greater market and potential than does Swansea. Clearly, the findings from this research are not equally applicable to larger metropolitan and smaller regional capitals.

Addressing conflict within the leisure and cultural economy

A fourth challenge is to overcome the conflict between the component parts of the leisure and cultural economy in the city centre (see Mommaas, 2004). Each of the sequential approaches to regeneration pursued by cities since the 1980s both interlock and conflict in the regenerative process. Many of the attractions remain appealing to niche markets, which reinforces the friction and conflict. A subtle approach to planning is required for long-term success, and there needs to be an awareness of the many elements of potential conflict between each of these uses in the contemporary city centre—both spatially and temporally (Bromley et al, 2003). This must take account of retail, residential, 'popular culture', and 'high culture' uses, and their respective visitor groups, to attempt to avoid conflict and friction in the development of leisure and cultural attractions in the regional city centre. If these four challenges are successfully addressed then the development of leisure and cultural attractions offers considerable regenerative potential for regional city centres.

Acknowledgements. The authors gratefully acknowledge financial support from the City and County of Swansea, the Welsh Development Agency, and Swansea Housing Association. They also thank the many key informants interviewed drawn from the public, private, and voluntary/community sectors. The authors also thank Nicola Jones and Anna Ratcliffe of the Cartographic Unit, Department of Geography, University of Wales Swansea for preparing the map. Lastly the authors wish to express their appreciation for the comments made by the editor and two anonymous referees.

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