

Pubs in Public Life:

A Place for Liquor Spaces in the City of Vancouver

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CMNS 498

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April 22, 2010

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Overview

Vancouver liquor licensing bylaws has been described by members of the media, industry, government and general public as overly restrictive, especially in the areas of hours of service, geographical distribution and the cultural diversity of public liquor spaces. According to the City of Vancouver, the objective of city stewardship is to provide for the social, economic and physical well-being of citizens. A consultation of both academic research and the Vancouver community suggests that public liquor consumption sites can contribute positively to the social, economic and physical well-being of citizens. This paper explores how a reexamination and considered relaxation of liquor licensing bylaws could strengthen the viability and vitality of Vancouver.

Background

Vancouver is a world city, in the sense that people come from around the world to settle here and make it their home. It is also a place of population growth, where children are born, grow, and become adults. An important place for adults, both those new to adulthood and new to the city, to create social connections and develop their public identities is the public liquor leisure space. As a young adult, I have always found the local pub or bar to be a reliable place to forge new friendships and learn community information when I find myself in a new city. The connections I have made in these spaces have been integral to my sense of engagement in the cities I adopt, as well as the feelings of civic responsibility upon which I base my citizenship practices. It is in these spaces that I decide if I fit in a city, and whether I care about it enough to devote

time and energy on its improvement. Based on my conversations with other adults, I am not alone in this practice. It is therefore very important that public liquor leisure spaces properly communicate the values of the city to new and new-comer adults. Since the City of Vancouver positions itself as a city with “a welcoming, cosmopolitan lifestyle. [and] a wealth of activities at your doorstep” that prides itself on its inclusivity and diversity, its public liquor leisure spaces should reflect that (vancouver.ca, n.d.; vancouvereconomic.ca, n.d.). However, many voices in the city say that this is not the case.

Methodology and Definitions

This project relies on information gathered in interviews with representatives engaged with the policy, business, academic, advocacy and public dimensions of liquor in Vancouver. Local input was also gathered through secondary sources, primarily from media interviews. To ease the reading of this paper while respecting the confidentiality of interviewees, single name pseudonyms have been granted to interviewees. In the interests of consistency, those quoted from secondary sources will also be referred to by first name only, but full reference will be given to the source material. These local experiences are expanded upon by a discussion of academic social commentaries, historical accounts and policy documents. As well, this paper does not aim to obfuscate that its author is an active participant in the city and some of the public liquor spaces discussed in this paper. When an observation is discussed that is from my personal experience, it will be clearly noted.

This paper does not aim to consider all the different social spaces where liquor is present in Vancouver; instead the focus is centred on places defined by three characteristics: the availability of alcohol, the social mixing of people, and being in public. While the consumption of alcohol is not necessary to participate in these spaces, the presence of alcohol is necessary to be considered in this paper. Further, the space must be accessible by the general public; while private special events and club houses are important sites of liquor socialization, they are not included in this discussion.

Granted, it is inappropriate in some ways to describe places like bars and pubs as public, as they are privately controlled, have economic barriers of participation, and are often legally obligated to bar whole sectors of the population. This project is focused on spaces that are used as liquor leisure spaces; this distinction includes public spaces open to minors, provided they are used as liquor leisure spaces by some users. This inclusion is reflective of the state of liquor leisure spaces in the city; for a lack of appropriate establishments, other spaces are sometimes repurposed to fulfill the role of public liquor space. The lack of a easy and sufficiently nuanced liquor licensing system has also resulted in establishments straddling distinctions between restaurants and liquor leisure spaces, so in a spirit of full inclusivity, all liquor-serving public accessible places will be considered. The public consumption of alcohol without socialization, characterized primarily by illegal solitary drinking in public space, is, for the purposes of this study, not considered part of public liquor leisure, though the practice certainly has an effect on both the perceptions and reality of the interplay between alcohol and poverty, health, and public safety. For the remainder of this paper, "liquor leisure spaces" will be used to refer to these places that are publicly accessible, privately

controlled, licensed, legal, and provide alcohol for purchase. As this paper is chiefly interested in public communicative interactions between people, as accompanied by alcohol, it does not give focus to spaces where another activity holds a much higher prominence, such as a concert hall where one drinks in public, but watches a performance without interacting with other attendees in a meaningful way. This is an admittedly slippery distinction, but is meant to reinforce that the type of liquor-related social interaction that this paper focuses on is that which occurs in the spaces where the public conversation, as accompanied by liquor, with other patrons is the primary draw. This does not mean to discount from dance halls, music venues, or club houses, as those practices also populate the liquor leisure space, only to focus the attention on spaces whose draw is its provision of people, drink and space in public.

This study centres on the public liquor leisure spaces of the City of Vancouver, and consciously does not include spaces outside the city limits. While the borders between Vancouver and its surrounding municipalities blur for casual dwellers, those lines are meaningful to liquor space operators and the people that police and regulate them. Liquor governance differs between municipalities, so in the interest of consistency, only businesses and enforcers active in the City of Vancouver are featured. However, citizenship and socialization do not cease at city limits: contrasting and complementing experiences from other places are noted as alternative approaches.

Historical Overview

To better understand how liquor governance in the City of Vancouver developed into the licensing bylaws currently in practice, it is useful to offer a brief overview of the history of liquor licensing in Vancouver and British Columbia.

In 1886, the city of Vancouver was founded; its fifth bylaw was its liquor licensing policy, which outlined a schedule of fees for obtaining and retaining licenses for both the sale of liquor for home consumption and service in establishments (City of Vancouver, n.d.). While the bylaws in place outlined specific hours of service, and emphasized the importance of the proprietor's good character, historical accounts from that time period recall a veritable party town (City of Vancouver Archives, 1886). The city was bustling with activity brought by the port and railway, with a public saloon culture to match. In nearby New Westminster in 1880, there was a licensed establishment for every 13 people, not including unlicensed places (Pashley, p.26, 2009). Ron, a historian, noted that, "If you went back to Vancouver in 1900... you would have seen many bars, some open 24 hours, some that allowed women [though women were legally banned in 1910]. [Saloon culture was]... associated with all forms of entertainment, [and] was linked to prostitution, and other drugs, not just alcohol." These working class leisure spaces were a relatively new phenomenon, as it was only recently that changes in working hours had allowed people the free time and expendable income to pursue leisure, which Vancouver's working class men largely chose to pursue in the saloon (Rosensweig, 1983).

However, across North America at this time, there was a growing attitude that alcohol, particularly the public consumption of it, was a source of social ill. In BC these people banded together to form a Prohibitionist movement which successfully rallied to ban both the domestic sale and consumption of alcohol in a provincial referendum in 1917. However, a loophole existed that allowed for the import of alcohol from neighbouring provinces, until "March 1918, [when] under pressure from the provinces, the Federal Government eventually banned the inter-provincial trade of liquor into any province that was under prohibition. This stopped the legal flow of liquor into B.C. At this point, Canada came the closest it ever had to national prohibition." (Winelaw.ca, March 18, 2008). All the provinces except Quebec had some form of Prohibition; in Quebec hard liquors were outlawed for a short period, but wine and beer were never banned, due partly to the influential Catholic population, who regarded a proposed ban on wine as a religious affront (Heron, p. 180, 2003; Pashley, p.36, 2009).

Canada's history of rum-running, the illegal smuggling of liquor into the USA during the nation's Prohibition (1920-1933), is colourful and well-documented (see Newsome, 1995), and the domestic trade of alcohol was also "a godsend for the criminal element" (Pashley, p.37, 2009). Distilleries were still allowed to produce for export and a great deal of liquor that 'officially' was sold to Mexico and Cuba, actually ended up in the USA and Canada. Home brewing for both personal and commercial use flourished. Perhaps, the most flagrant flouting of the law came from W.C. Findlay, BC's Prohibition Commissioner, who was arrested for smuggling large quantities of premium whiskey into the province from Washington state in 1918 (Hamilton, p.150, 2004). His arrest, and

subsequent light punishment of a \$1000 fine, added fuel to the strengthening public opinion that Prohibition was an inappropriate model of liquor governance.

While it was clear that Prohibition was not very effective at stemming either liquor trade or consumption, there was no appetite to return to the free-for-all that had characterized Vancouver liquor culture before its introduction. In 1919, the Moderation League was established by a group of business leaders, some who had previously been sympathetic to the Prohibition movement, to lobby for the establishment of government controlled liquor sales (Campbell, in Warsh (Ed.), p.173, 1993). In an echo of the Prohibitionist campaign during World War One, the Moderation group aligned its cause with the values of the post-war era. The right to enjoy alcohol responsibly was presented as one of the freedoms that the war had been fought for, and the establishment of a "British style" liquor culture was argued to be something positive. This same approach to influencing public opinion would be invoked after World War Two, when an advocate for liquor reform described the existing regulation as "just one step from making you stand out in the rain and hold up your arm and shout, "Heil Ottawa." (Campbell, p. 107, 2001). The Moderation League was effective in its pressure: in a 1920 provincial referendum voters were given the choice between Prohibition and "an Act to provide for the government control and sale in sealed packages of spirituous and malt liquors", and overwhelmingly chose the latter (Hamilton, p.173, 2004). It is notable that this was the first referendum in BC where women could vote, and they had been expected to vote "solidly dry, but had in fact deserted the cause in droves", reflecting an acceptance that Prohibition was "unrealistic, and even destructive to society" (Hamilton, p.175, 2004).

Nellie McClung, a spirited Prohibitionist from the Prairies, warned the BC government of the responsibility it was taking on: "if you allow liquor, you will have to take responsibility as you will be in partnership with the traffic" (quoted in Campbell, p.166, 2001). This vote legalized the government sale of beer, wine and hard liquor for home consumption across the province, but the sale of alcoholic beverages for consumption in bars, restaurants and public places was still illegal. The law also outlawed the sale of "near-beer", the low alcohol content beer that had been widely sold (and spiked) in hotel saloons and private (mainly veterans) clubs throughout Prohibition.

The Moderation League then lobbied the provincial government to legalize the sale of beer by the glass in hotels and private clubs and in this effort they were unsurprisingly joined by the British Columbia Hoteliers Association (BCHA) as well as brewers. Based on post-war sympathy for veterans the provincial government allowed private clubs to apply for a special license to serve beer by the glass (Hamilton, p.182, 2004).

Numerous hotels quickly established clubs, most with very low membership dues, to attempt to take advantage of this license (Campbell, in Warsh (Ed.), p.176, 1993). In 1924, the provincial government again set the issue of liquor consumption to a public vote: this time the plebiscite on whether people supported "the sale of beer by the glass in licensed premises without a bar under Government control and regulation", was rejected by the majority of the province, though it passed in Vancouver (LACB, as quoted by Campbell, in Warsh (Ed.), p.176, 1993). The first of these establishments, known as beer parlours, was established in Vancouver in 1925, and 1926 there were sixty in the city (Hamilton, p.190, 2004).

The BCHA stepped in to provide both that controlled environment and private policy enforcement. The BCHA lobbied successfully for only hotels to be granted licenses and in exchange, they carried out self policing that was even more strict than the written laws required (Campbell, 2001). This resulted in new universal, though unlegislated, regulations of the public liquor space. For example, women, who not only had played a significant role in repealing Prohibition in BC but had a long history of owning, running and using taverns in other areas of North America, were banned from beer parlours by the BCHA in 1926, even though it was not legislated (Rosensweig, 1983; Pashley, p.57, 2009). They were not allowed in the space until separate "Ladies and Escorts" entrances and seating areas were introduced. Asians, black people, and mixed race couples were similarly discriminated against in an unofficial yet universal way, while it was actually written into both federal and provincial law that Aboriginal people were not allowed in beer parlours (or given any access to alcohol) until 1951 (Campbell, p.12, 2001). As the hotels were private businesses motivated by profit, their approach was to micromanage the spaces so liquor consumption was maximized, while other activities, both constructive and destructive, were not able to flourish. Patrons were not allowed to stand with their drinks or play games, and no food, cigarettes or entertainment were provided. As the Reverend Harold E. Sexton said, the liquor regulations was "herding people into beer parlours where they may do nothing but guzzle" (quoted in Campbell, p.110, 2001).

Though the upper and middle classes were quick to condemn the beer parlours and those that frequented them, they still had a desire to gather in public to socialize over drinks. Another historical development that was influential in the push for diversified public liquor spaces, was the introduction of affordable charter flights during this time period. Common Canadians who traveled abroad returned home with a desire to recreate the vibrant public liquor leisure spaces they had enjoyed on their travels (Pashley, p.60, 2009). The positioning of beer as working class and spirits as middle and upper class was positioned the opposite way in early 20th century UK, where affordable gin had been seen as the poison of the working class and beer was seen as a civilized, healthy alternative (Jayne et al., p.453, 2006). A 1952 plebiscite was passed to allow for the opening of bars that could serve wine and spirits by the glass in licensed public establishments. These spaces, lobbied for by a higher, more influential class, experienced less surveillance and featured more amenities than beer parlours (Heron, p.329, 2003). However, there were still limits on the days and hours of service as well as strict behaviour rules. As the decades wore on, many of these rules were slowly altered or discarded, such as being able to drink beer on a Sunday, which did not occur until 1983 (Winelaw.ca, March 18, 2008).

Contemporary Liquor Governance

Today, the sale and consumption of liquor falls under the realm of responsibility of the province, which distributes licenses in two categories, liquor-primary, where sales are primarily focused on liquor, and food-primary, where food is the focus, and liquor is meant to be sold and consumed as an accompaniment. There are sub-distinctions within these licenses, including provisions for lounge areas and special distinctions for

cabarets and clubs, but all licensed establishments must fit within these two categories (LCLB, April 1, 2010). Municipalities are responsible for determining what zones of the city certain businesses can operate in, and for what hours. As shown in Appendix One, Vancouver has concentrated its liquor licenses in the downtown area. Further, while there are many liquor-primary licensed establishments outside downtown, the majority of these are semi-private establishments, such as rowing clubs and legions, where accessibility for the general public is inconsistent. Municipalities are able to impose stricter limitations on liquor service than those set out by the province, and Vancouver exercises this option. In the province, it is legal for both food and liquor-primary licensed establishments to sell alcohol between the hours of 9 AM and 4 AM, though there limitations made in every community on what businesses can serve alcohol at what hour. As Appendix Two shows, regular hours, even in the commercial areas of downtown are 2 AM on weekends, though some businesses have been granted extended licenses to 3 AM. Special Events extensions are a recent development that are rarely granted, and were most most recently enjoyed during the Olympics.

Concern over Contemporary Public Liquor Governance

A scan of local and national news media reflects a general consensus that Vancouver liquor policy is out-dated. Adjectives jump out of recent news articles, describing Vancouver liquor governance as “Victorian”, “Prohibitionist”, and “out-dated” (see Vancouver Province, 2008; CBC, 2009; The Tyee, 2009, etc.). News articles and conversations with locals identify early liquor service cut off hours and the lack of late-night liquor primary establishments outside the downtown core as areas where the city is thought to be lagging behind. A lack of thematic and cultural diversity in the types of

liquor leisure spaces in the city has also been identified, as well as concerns over the licensing and regulation of liquor serving live music venues (“View on Vancouver’s live music venues”, August 26, 2009; “Proprietor regrets loss of vibrant downtown scene”, March 24, 2010). Heather, a Vancouver city councilor, comments that “we are an urban city, and we still have some fairly small-town kind of policy that assumes everyone goes to bed early—and we don’t. People work different hours. We have a lively younger population, and even some of our old folks stay up late... There are very, very strong voices out there in the restaurant industry, the entertainment industry, and the creative industry and the music industry saying, ‘It’s time to loosen up a bit, let people go out a little bit later in the evenings. Don’t force them down to Granville Street; let people have a little more fun in their neighbourhood.’” (“Vancouver city council might approve extended liquor hours”, October 1, 2009). The City of Vancouver has recently introduced some changes to its liquor licensing regulations, specifically concerning hours of service in restaurants, and is currently reviewing its framework for live music venues. However some people, specifically bar owners and artists, are frustrated at the pace of change and are wary that despite recent movement by council, the situation will remain the same. That is worrisome for the culture, viability and liveability of Vancouver. There are many ways that the current liquor licensing approach limits or threatens the economic, social and personal well being of Vancouver and its citizens, but there are also many diverse opportunities to strengthen the city through the recognition and development of these spaces.

Cause for Concern: *The Granville Entertainment District*

The geographic space with the highest concentration of liquor primary businesses is the Granville Entertainment District, the strip of Granville Street in the downtown core where (one side of) Vancouver's liquor culture is most visible today. It is a place where the destructive aspects of public liquor leisure - violence, sexism and over-consumption - are most intense. This area is a "high street", and urban ethnographer David Grazian points out that the "many nightclubs, restaurants, and cocktail lounges [that populate 'high street' areas] rely on the physical attractiveness and sexual magnetism of female service staff and the promise of eroticized interaction to recruit customers... [and] like service staff, young female nightlife patrons are similarly expected to perform hegemonic femininity by adhering to constraining gender norms that include wearing snug designer jeans, low-cut blouses, and stiletto heels (Grazian, 2008). Young women report that sexualized role-playing performance are practically required for entry to many crowded nightclubs, particularly for underage patrons. Perhaps for this reason, men often target females (whether patrons or employees) as "fair game"... College men routinely hassle women in bars and cocktail lounges when "girl hunting," a collective ritual in which heterosexual men aggressively seek out female sex partners as a competitive male-bonding activity" (Grazian, p.913, 2009). This certainly describes the culture of the Granville Entertainment District: as Vancouver Police Department (VPD) Sergeant Wally states in a VPD produced video: "they come here to drink, get drunk, fight and to look for girls" (Vpdonline, 2008). Sociologist Tammy Anderson agrees that the highly commercialized, over sexualized establishments that populate the high streets foster the unhealthy and socially destructive activities that Grazian describes, but argues that different types of liquor leisure spaces foster different, and more

positive, forms of socialization. The places she identified as positive are “smaller, less well-known, independently owned or operated, and located in less commercialized areas” (Anderson, 2009). These spaces, while they do exist in Vancouver, are not the norm.

The concentration of liquor leisure in the downtown core is not a new phenomenon. When beer parlours were first legalized, none were allowed outside the downtown peninsula and downtown east side. In fact, no licensed establishments were legal on Vancouver’s west side until 1953. “The entire downtown was a segregated district, insulating the more comfortable working and middle class residential areas from disreputable behaviour” (Marquis, G. quoted in Campbell, p.22, 2001). The decision in the 1990’s to concentrate public liquor leisure along the strip of Granville Street in the downtown core has led to an increase in crime and public danger in the area. “When I first started, there was no concentration, no entertainment district, and patrol could handle it,” shares Sergeant Wally. “Then the city decided that they were going to make an entertainment district, so they started concentrating the liquor seats, and encouraging people to have nothing but liquor seats in this particular area, and now it’s got to the point that, with the number of seats, the attitude of the people down here, and the drunkenness down here, we’re just barely holding on.” A negative thing about the way the Granville Entertainment District is geographically laid out is that it is removed from a neighbourhood. Planners did this purposefully to keep the late-night noise of revelers away from residential areas (though people that live in the condos on Richards Street certainly deal with a high level of noise pollution), but by removing people from

their home communities for their liquor leisure they are subconsciously removed from their responsibilities as a citizen. "When I'm traveling or partying outside my city, then I'm in party mode and I tend to drink more," says James, a bar enthusiast. Another bar user agrees: "when I'm out of my city, even if it's just out of town, it's like it doesn't count." By situating liquor leisure in a place where most people are not from there, people feel less accountable for their actions. "When you look at it, it's not Vancouverites who are causing the problems [in the Granville Entertainment District]," says Sergeant Argent. "80% of the people we deal with [as police officers] are people from the suburbs." City councillor David Cadman agrees, saying that "because we have longer opening hours [in the Granville Entertainment District], we have people who come downtown from surrounding communities, and we're not getting the best of those communities, let's put it that way" ("The Quest for the Perfect Pub" August 25, 2006).

There have been reports in the media that the Olympics, and the relative peacefulness of the large crowds of people, many of whom were consuming alcohol, signaled a maturation of Vancouver liquor culture. Grant, a policy activist, agrees: "I think the Olympics were a great example of what Vancouver could be like. The downtown was lively all day, and not just 9-5, it was 24 hours. I think it showed a lot of people that Vancouver can be an exciting city, and Vancouverites can party, and party responsibly." Jill, a City of Vancouver licensing officer, disagrees: "sure, there weren't huge problems during the Olympics, but do you realize how much that cost in policing? It's not sustainable". However, "if you look at how much it costs to police the Biltmore [a live music venue near Main St and Kingsway] versus how much it costs to police an

individual club on Granville Street,” argues Grant, “I think you’d see that the problem isn’t in Mount Pleasant, it’s in downtown, and if you let the bars move out of downtown, if you don’t have ten thousand rowdy drunks pouring into one street every Friday or Saturday, then the cost of policing would drop.” He echoed the VPD officers’ frustrations: “the cops down there hate it. I don’t think that anyone who signs up to be a cop imagines that their job is going to be holding two drunk apart. But, it has become a source of revenue [for VPD administration]. The VPD now adds up the cost of policing Granville, and sends it as a bill to the bar owners in the form of increased property taxes. So they’ve got this source of revenue, and the thought of losing it is scary.” Whether or not this is a motivation for the VPD is beside the point. There is no popular appetite for a cessation of public drinking so the VPD will need to continue to devote some of its resources to policing revelers.

Cause for Concern: *Transportation*

One of the most serious concerns for public safety associated with liquor is impaired driving. When asked about why he thought the Granville Entertainment District was unsafe, Grant cited the lack of safe and reliable transport at the end of the night; “the Skytrain stops at one thirty, and clubs get out later. So what do you do?” he asks, “there aren’t enough cabs, and the night buses run only every hour, and they’re always full. So you get in your car, and either you have a designated driver or you don’t.” Anne, a representative from the city, defers to Translink when asked about providing Skytrain service at later hours, and Translink points to the age of its technology as a barrier to 24 hour service, stating that “it is possible to run around the clock on occasion, but no

system can sustain a 24x7 schedule unless they have double sets of tracks like New York City. SkyTrain runs a longer service day than the London Underground, but it still needs that maintenance time to ensure reliable service during the peak period." 2-4 hours closures are required every night to complete maintenance tasks such as grinding the rails and inspecting the guideway (Translink.ca, n.d.). Sergeant Wally says that "something needs to be done with the cabs. There aren't enough cabs, and the cabs that are there, are cherry picking... You get cabs refusing to take people home, because they don't want to go too far from downtown. A few weeks ago, I had a group of girls who were refused a ride by three different cabs, they got frustrated, and started kicking at passing cabs. So I'm dealing with them, and next thing, there's a group of guys who want to intervene with me, because they want to pick up the girls. Next thing you know, I'm calling for a paddy wagon and cover, and for what? Because these girls couldn't get a taxi? That's ridiculous" (Vpdonline, 2008). Assistant Sergeant Lee sums up the issue as "these people are hanging around, not knowing where to get the buses, not being able to get a cab, and not being able to get the Skytrain" (Vpdonline, 2008). He says that when people are stuck, milling about drunkenly, surrounded by tens of thousands of other people, all doing the same thing, it is a recipe for trouble.

The responsibility for ensuring people get home safely actually falls to bar owners. Stephen, a bar owner, explained that "if someone comes here, and has 3 drinks, and they are fine to walk, and they walk out the door and get in the car that I did not know they were driving, and they crash and kill themselves, their family could sue me. How am I responsible for that person? Am I supposed to ask every person if they're driving?"

But if I don't I could be found responsible... It seems unfair to me, isn't [any bad decision] the responsibility of the idiot that's drinking?" Another bar owner, Andrew, asks "whatever happened to personal responsibility?" and bar users echoed the sentiment, saying that "if you're going out drinking, and know you're going to be getting drunk, it's your responsibility to not bring your car", and "it shouldn't be the responsibility of the bartender, because they are serving so many people, it'd be impossible to keep track." As a recent lawsuit in Vancouver has shown (see the Zesty Food Service vs. Lorna Pardy Human Rights case, the Canadian Press, Mar 29, 2010), an owner does not have to be present in order to be found responsible for what occurs in his establishment. Ron the historian pointed out another side to the discussion: "once a person is intoxicated, they are no longer expected, under the eyes of the law, to make sound judgments. Thus, the responsibility for their actions, transfers to the person who got them intoxicated." Some people disagree that so much responsibility for the safety of patrons rests on the shoulders of owners. "Shouldn't the cops be held responsible for public safety?" asks Andrew, "I can't remember the last time I saw a police road block, what does that say?"

Cause for Concern: *Private Enforcement of Public Regulations*

Will, a Liquor Control and Licensing Board (LCLB) inspector revealed that in the near future, enforcement practices will change so that staff will be held responsible individually for any illegal service or over-service, though owners will remain liable as well. This change shows that the LCLB is savvy to how liquor enforcement works in practice: very often, the servers who are responsible for the monitoring and cutting off of

liquor service are more interested in increasing bar tabs than public safety. "Selfishly speaking, as a server, you want to make money, and liquor is one of the best ways," admits Sylvie, a former chain restaurant server. "I'm sure there were some servers who would ID people, but there were also a lot like me, who didn't care and just wanted tips... Managers would encourage servers to upsell liquor... and I never had an experience where a manager asked me to not serve someone any more liquor. I think the only thing that would lead us to stop serving someone is if they were ruining the experience for other customers." Other establishments enforce the rules more strictly. "If I was doing front door security, and I let someone who I knew was under age in, then I would lose my job immediately," says Nathan, a bartender in a Gastown nightclub. Likewise, "the owner will be happy to tell you to throw someone out if they're drunk or out of line. He's in his office, watching the surveillance cameras. That's his business on the line." However, with other aspects of the job, there is more leeway. "People like to buy the bartender shots, and you're not supposed to drink on the job. But I don't let that affect me," Nathan admits, and adds that, with staff drinking, there is an unofficial "don't ask, don't tell" policy. As for policing patron drinking, he says, "I've cut people off before, but not very often as a bartender, because your interaction with them is so short. I've done it more as a security person, because I can see their behaviour away from the bar... As a bartender, it's hard to follow any rules [set out by the Serving it Right program] because a lot of the time people will come up, and they'll order five drinks, and you know they're not all for them. It's hard to tell how much they've had to drink, or if they've had drinks at another bar, or at home... Do I worry about it? No, not at all".

When he was informed that in the near future he could be liable for over-service, he

echoed the previously expressed view: "I shouldn't be responsible for someone else's actions. That's like if you tell me I should get a haircut and I do and it turns out really awful and I try to tell you it's your fault. It's ridiculous."

Cause for Concern: *Economic Barriers to Business Participation*

It is very expensive to obtain a liquor license, so there is pressure on owners to increase profits through increased liquor sales. Since the city of Vancouver does not issue new licenses very often and licenses are not tied to the property to which they were originally issued, people possessing licenses can sell them for a great deal of money. "I was offered a 50 seat liquor license for \$600,000. Most liquor licenses in this town cost half a million dollars, which means you can throw the concept of a relaxed, frugal city for young people out the window," says Dave, a local bar owner ("Why Portland Beats Vancouver", August 3, 2009). "People spend a lot of money trying to get liquor primary licenses," says Stephen, who paid \$200 per seat for his liquor primary license, as well as the thousands of dollars associated with canvassing the community for support, advertising his license application, and other administrative costs. Stephen contrasts the lengthy, expensive process to that of Toronto, where a license takes about one month to process and costs \$1055 for an initial two year license, and \$450 for a three year renewal, and Portland, where the process is similarly hassle-free and inexpensive (Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, n.d.; "Why Portland Beats Vancouver", August 3, 2009). Annual fees for BC licenses range from \$250-\$2200, depending on how much liquor an establishment sells per year (LCLB, n.d.) The high cost of obtaining and retaining a liquor license affects how the bar is operated: "if you

were to go out and get a liquor license for a club, you would have to be so focused on getting getting alcohol across the bar and selling alcohol at a premium price; you'd have to charge up the yin yang." says Dave. "You'd have to charge big cover, you're going to have to get people in there that want to drink, which is 22 year olds, and you have get them fucking loaded because you've got to make your money back" ("Why Portland Beats Vancouver", August 3, 2009). The high economic barriers of entry limit who can open a bar; "if you want to open a pub, most people can't, certainly young people can't. It's rich people that can afford to" says Stephen. "You know how many single owner bars there are in BC? One, and that's me," revealed Jim, an East Vancouver bar owner. "It's almost all corporately owned because they are the only ones who can afford it." These corporate groups tend to own multiple bars and venues, and, arguably, tend to create generic spaces. Examples of these groups include the Adelpia group, which owns Venue, Caprice and Celebrities nightclubs, Pivo and Dover Arms sports bars, and the forthcoming Gastropub in the Woodward's complex. Stephen remarked that "naming a place 'Gastropub' just doesn't make any sense to me: it's like naming a restaurant, "Restaurant", implying that he thought their establishments were unoriginal, and had a corporate sensibility. Personal visits to their establishments, as well as interviews with people who have patronized them, reinforce this impression of genericness. Similarly, the Donnelly group operates twelve liquor primary establishments in the city. "Donnelly group approached me about buying my business, which I took as a compliment." says Jim. "They think I'm valuable... Of course they do, because I've got soul, and try to put something special into my bar. But you can't just buy that." Shawn, a bar user, reflected on the diversity of small, liquor leisure establishments in Toronto; "there, you get tiny

places opening up, and they'll be small and have a dance floor. And that can happen, because it seems almost anyone can open a place if they want." That ease of entry into participation is appreciated by the creative people who want to establish unique spaces; "in the music and art world, if someone wants to start a venue, they just find an empty warehouse, and do it," says Lynn, a musician, "whereas it doesn't work like that in terms of doing it legally [in Vancouver]."

Some bar owners argue that the market should determine where and when liquor should be served. "If there is sustained demand for liquor service, in a certain neighbourhood, at a certain time of day, that business should be allowed to meet that demand," says Andrew. "All these bizarre liquor laws... it just discourages creativity within a business," offers Shane. "That's what our whole free market system is supposed to be, to encourage businesses to be creative in how they get customers in, but the way the liquor rules are set out, it totally blocks that." One example of a small business being creative about attracting customers is Hoko's Sushi and Karaoke restaurant. "Hoko's was great, because anyone could book a show there. If you go to pretty much any venue, they ask you what type of music you play, and how many fans you have, how popular you are... It became a trial ground for so many kids who want to play a show," said Shane. Hoko's is located in the Downtown Eastside, and was the target of scrutiny from liquor inspectors, who eventually fined them for allowing a performer to have a beer on stage. "The inspector accused Hoko's of running a community centre, and I just asked, "what's wrong with that? I mean that's great. That's what we should have more of. But the liquor license that they had, has really strict rules

about what it's supposed to be... and puts things in really narrow categories... Hoko's were just trying to get people in there, and it worked. They did alright, until they started having these troubles, and they had to start enforcing these rules, like no dancing, then people stopped coming." Hoko's is now closed because it cannot afford to pay its fines, which amount to over \$10,000 ("City pulls the plug on Hoko's Sushi Karaoke Bar", Sept 10, 2009). "They weren't doing anything bad, they weren't hurting anyone. It was in the downtown east side, where all around you people are shooting heroin, and dancing is a problem?" Even BC liquor inspectors agree that there needs to be more options than just food or liquor primary for liquor licenses, as well more flexible zoning. Speaking with Will, the LCLB inspector, he admitted he felt that the city would benefit from smaller, neighbourhood focused pubs and bars, but that the way the city has been zoned, they are very difficult to establish. He also agreed that there should be more designations for types of spaces, so that places like Hoko's can operate legally and affordably.

Cause for Concern: *A Liquor Leisure Scene That does not Reflect the City*

The concentration of liquor licenses spaces in the hands of a small number of owners in limited geographic areas weakens the diversity of liquor spaces in the city. "Although there are place like the Granville Entertainment District which does cater to a lot of people, they aren't for everyone and if you want to do something a little off the beaten path you're going to have trouble," says Melissa, co-director of the documentary *No Fun City* ("How fun is your city?", March 26, 2010). One population not being served well by Vancouver liquor spaces are local musicians. Multiple interviewees lamented the reality that it is both very difficult for local bands to book shows at appropriate venues, and for

venues to remain in operation. What has resulted is an underground, DIY music scene where shows occur in illegal venues. "A lot of people think people just start these underground venues because that's the scene they're into, and that's true of a lot of the people, but at the same time if you wanted to turn these spaces into legal places, it'd be impossible," says Melissa. These illegal venues are not ideal for a variety of reasons. "I've seen shows in people's houses, in recording studios, in art galleries. There's also just a lot of straight up illegal stuff happening. From a policy perspective, that's dangerous," points out Grant, the policy activist. "There's a lot of venues in Vancouver that are hosting shows that wouldn't meet the bare minimum health and safety standards. But if those are the only places to play, that's where people are going to play". While there is an element of excitement and exclusivity for people that attend these underground shows, the fact that in order for them to remain in operation they cannot become widely known makes it difficult for local bands to receive recognition for their art. It is an often-repeated story, with The Japandroids most recently cast as the protagonists, where Vancouver bands need to leave the city to achieve sustainable success. By not providing artists with a legal and visible platform for their work, "the city loses," says Melissa. "If they don't try to hold onto the artist, then they lose all of what that artist could become. They lose that culture, the youth culture." Another population that is systematically barred from liquor spaces is youth, which is significant because frequently the only places to see or play live music is in a bar. A local community group is campaigning to open an all-ages alcohol-free venue for youth to play and see live music. "If anything, our organization is indifferent to liquor. We aren't crusading against booze, and we aren't campaigning for it," says Shane, the group's director. "What we

saw was tons of venues were shutting down, and a lot of that was because of legal problems. The city was basically telling us that it was illegal to have music. And we thought if the spaces had no alcohol, maybe it would be easier. We looked at three factors: all ages, alcohol, and being legal. There's lots of places that are all ages, serve booze, but are illegal. There's lots of places that are legal, serve booze, but aren't all ages, being bars. It seems you can only have two of the things, and we thought we could live without booze... [But, unfortunately] booze sales is what pays for most venues. It's the source of income. So to have a place with no alcohol, and with low cover charge, we're finding it will be difficult to pay for it." Having an official, legal venue is important for youth in more ways than just ensuring the building is safe. "These kids might not be cool enough to hear about these illegal venues that only last about a month or two before they get shut down" says Shane, who feels that playing music is as legitimate of a constructive pursuit for youth as other extracurricular activities, and should be supported and showcased in an equally visible and official way. "We're hoping to be supported by government, because we think that it's an important project, and the government subsidizes and supports a lot of places for youth that are alcohol free. It's not an issue when they want to build a tennis court or a skate park, but for some reason, music venues need to be a business" he says, adding that that a space "like a community centre, where people can make friends and meet like-minded people [is needed], so these artists and musicians don't feel like social misfits all their lives, and they can find a community of people that they can relate to".

Shane reiterates that the group is advocating for an alcohol-free space by necessity, not preference: "This is going to sound bad, coming from the director of an all ages venue organization, but [in a bar] people drink, they have a good time, they're not as nervous or shy. People tend to be more outgoing, people might be more likely to dance, feel relaxed and socialize. Basically, if youth were allowed in a bar, we'd have no problems with them [as venues]. I don't even know why we have a drinking age, I think that in France, for example, where kids grow up drinking wine, they have a healthier relationship with it. Whenever you prohibit something, kids don't understand how to drink, and then they get really drunk and get sick and get in trouble and they could die. Whereas if you grew up with alcohol, it wouldn't be such an X factor."

Cause for Concern: *Unhealthy Attitudes Regarding Alcohol*

The idea that continental Europe has a healthier relationship with alcohol is a popularly held one and was referred to by multiple interviewees. Ron, the historian, tempers it: "if you look at the stats, you see that these places, like France and Germany, have a slew of liquor related problems, including ill health and driving infractions." However, it has been shown historically that prohibiting alcohol is ineffective, and dangerous in some ways. During Prohibition, people would make their own homebrew, the cheapest version being wood alcohol, which is fatal in all but small doses. There were reports across Canada of deaths from bad batches of this "canned heat" (Pashley, p.38, 2009). Due to the continued abuse and unhealthy use of alcohol, Ron says he does not "see it as a problem that the government has the dual responsibility of selling and policing liquor, because they are the ones responsible for the cost of it. They lose millions each

year on it". According to the BC Health Commissioner, at the end of the year, after balancing the profits of liquor sale and the costs of liquor-related policing, governance, and healthcare, the province of BC loses \$62 million per year (BC Health Officer, December 2008). This translates to higher liquor costs, as Ron notes: "sure in the USA liquor is cheaper, but you're paying for your healthcare."

One tactic that people opposed to liquor have historically utilized is cultivating a public sense of public drinking and public drinking spaces as deviant. The reputation of a place can have a very real regulating effect on how people interact with it (Campbell, p. 9, 2001). The dries were very colourful in their characterization of the people, places and activities they deemed unfit, but this casting occurred in more subtle ways as well. The very experience of being in a beer parlour reinforced the notion that those inside were somehow deviant. Indeed, as Nicholas Pashley points out: "in beer parlours, you were treated like dirt. The only people who could stand going there were people who were used to being treated like dirt. And they needed to drink because of it!" (Pashley, p.112, 2009). As one bar owner noted, the customers who inhabit the bar have the power to define the culture of the space; yet the effect is also reverse: the space can define the patrons, and influence how they view themselves and their place in the world.

Contemporary attempts to classify drinking and public drinking spaces of drinking in public as deviant and shameful has multiple negative repercussions. Firstly, reinforcing class distinctions and negative stereotypes drives wedges between people from different backgrounds. Both working class and upper class people enjoy drinking alcohol, but, especially at the time of the beer parlours, primarily working class people

enjoyed it in public. The mutual enjoyment of drinks could bridge groups, but instead the classification of public drinking as deviant reinforced differences. Related to that, the shame associated with public drinking can lead to secrecy, and drinking in private. Being in public can serve as a social training guide for respecting healthy and appropriate rates of consumption, while drinking alone does not have that same type of monitoring built in. Thirdly, the classification of drinking as deviant has led to people, particularly young people, practicing consumption as a form of rebellion. It was not until after Prohibition that drinking amongst middle class youth became normalized (Blocker, in Holt (Ed.) p. 232, 2006). Thanks to its reputation, as reinforced by pop culture, alcohol has become a symbol of rebellion and disillusioned youth were drawn to alcohol use as an expression of their difference (Blocker, in Holt (Ed.) p. 233, 2006). There are health concerns about young people and drinking, as well as concerns over relying on consumption as a form of expression. Stuart Ewen points out that, in the human search for "wholeness" - for a sense of identity - the work realm does not deliver that sense of wholeness, and rather, it is in their leisure that people look for satisfaction, and "one of the most available routes to satisfaction is consumption" (Ewen, 1988). When consumption, particularly the consumption of something potentially harmful, like alcohol, becomes the choice method of constructing identity, rather than through social connections or creative thought, there are negative implications for both the individual and their society.

Cause for Concern: *Lack of Public Liquor Leisure Advocacy in Government*

The people and organizations that make up the anti-liquor lobby are well-organized. “If you start to talk about loosening up the laws, you get groups like Mothers Against Drunk Driving, who reply with, “why, so more children can die?” says Stephen. “I have children, I don’t want them to die, but it’s like that, and so no politicians will touch it. There’s some sort of pent up, anti-alcohol attitude in this province. And there’s a lot of people living here that think that’s OK, who think we don’t need to be as free with our alcohol as other places in the world are. So there’s certainly a lot of sympathy for it... [And if I try to be an advocate] there’s not a lot of sympathy for me, because people assume that because I have a pub license I’m loaded, so they think I’m just being greedy.” Kate, Melissa’s documentary co-director, says that “what we hear from city council is that they don’t hear from our generation. Who they hear from is older people, who don’t want [venues and bars]” (“How fun is your city?”, March 26, 2010). This city council has made strides to reconsider and revamp both liquor and music venue regulations, including simplifying rules related to private liquor stores, and extending restaurant liquor service hours. However, Stephen says that it is premature to say that the rules are relaxing. “If you look at the lack of flexibility, at the really silly things you can get a contravention for, it’s all still just as backwards,” he says, citing examples from his own restaurants and bars, such as requiring staff to carry patrons’ drinks on a tray when they are moving from the dining room to the bar area.

Opportunity: *The Public Liquor Space as Community Space*

The public liquor space fills a public need. Functionally, these spaces have historically provided venues for bands and events, as well as more basic amenities, like heating,

gathering space, hot water, cheque cashing and a place to receive mail (Rosenzweig, 1983). Contemporarily, there are examples of the public liquor space providing training and classes. For example, in the UK, Prince Charles has sponsored a program called "The Pub is the Hub", explaining that "the country pub, which has been at the heart of village life for centuries, is disappearing in many areas. Providing services from the pub, such as a post office or a shop, keeps an essential service in the village." Some of these services include offering postal service from within the pub, internet and computer training courses, and programming for seniors (Pub is the Hub, n.d.). This program addresses the reality that communities need a public hub on which to anchor their civic life, as well as attempting to stave off the erosion of an important fixture of British culture. Pubs have been closing at an alarming rate in Britain, with one recent report stating that the 52 pubs were closing per week ('UK is losing 52 pubs each week', July 22, 2009). The British government has taken the issue so seriously, it has appointed a Minister for Pubs ('John Healey appointed minister for pubs', Feb 8, 2010). While The Pub is the Hub is focused on supporting rural pubs, the need for a public hub is also felt in the city.

Opportunity: *The Public Liquor Space as a Source of Social and Monetary Capital*

Areas where people are connected through both tight and loose bonds have been shown to have less crime, whereas places characterized by anonymity, sparse acquaintances, unsupervised teen peer groups, and a weakened control of public space, face an

increased risk of crime and violence (Putnam, p.307-314, 2001). Not only do strong social networks make for a safer neighbourhood, they also make for a more economically viable one. American social scientist Robert Putnam's work says that "where trust and social networks flourish, individuals, firms, neighbourhoods and even nations prosper" (Putnam, p.319, 2001). At all social and economic levels, social capital has been found to be at least as important to determining success as human capital - that is the capital of experience and education (Putnam, p.321, 2001). Social networks are incredibly valuable for finding and securing employment; a study in Atlanta went so far as to claim that each employed person in one's social circle increases one's annual income by \$1400 (Putnam, p.324, 2001). It is the casual acquaintances, such as those forged at the local pub, that prove to be most valuable in a job search. Close friends interacting in heavily overlapping circles tend to hear of the same opportunities while, as Mark Gramoetter points out, there is "strength in weak ties" (as cited in Putnam, p.320, 2001). "As a freelance designer, I've definitely met potential clients in bars, as well as heard of new opportunities" says Brandon, a frequent pub-goer. Strong social networks strengthen neighbourhoods as well; areas that increase their collective social capital also increase their economic capital (Putnam, p.319, 2001). In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs says that "the first fundamental of successful city life [is that] people must take a public responsibility for each other even if they have no ties to each other" (Jacobs, p.82, 1961). While this is certainly key to a healthy and safe public life, another fact might resonate more with real estate conscious Vancouverites: "homeowners who are also good neighbours take their social capital to the bank"

(Putnam, p.307, 2001). The stronger the social network, the better the place is for kids and the more people want to live there and the more they will pay for the privilege.

Social networks have been demonstrated to be incredibly vital to the development of new economic centres, as exemplified by the story of how Silicon Valley became an economic hub: the horizontal networks of informal cooperation based on a culture of sharing born out of computer hobbyist clubs and situated in a compact geographic area, resulted in the birth of an innovative and economically successful locale (Rowland, p.334, 2006). In Canada, the social networks established outside of the work place in Ottawa's technology cluster resulted in sustained economic viability, even after the demise of Nortel, the area's anchor firm, for two reasons; through socialization people were able to make contacts with whom they could start new businesses, and the perceived value of their social network (coupled with the reality that many technology industry workers had marital partners who worked in the federal government) made people hesitant to leave the region.

That hesitancy to leave the area when employment ends is one of the major tenants of sticky labour market. Places where people do not want to leave because of their amenities or the existence of a strong social network hold onto their workforce and attract new people. Richard Florida identifies this as incredibly important to modern cities particularly because with the changing nature of work and the increased global mobility of firms and people, the highly skilled people who work in the creative and knowledge economy have the ability to choose where in the world they want to live

(Florida, 2002). To attract and retain those people and their firms, cities need to be good places to live. A healthy, vibrant and diverse liquor leisure scene is an important part of people's lifestyles (Oldenburg, 2001). Users and operators agree that Vancouver is nowhere near world class when it comes to its liquor policy ("Let restaurants serve liquor later", Oct 1 2009). "Everywhere else in Canada — Alberta, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Regina, Montreal all have way more liberal drinking laws than Vancouver," said Ashi, a Vancouver restaurateur. "I was just in a restaurant in Regina having a beer at a restaurant at 2:45 a.m. and I'm going to Europe [today]. All over the world people just laugh at this city and it's drinking laws. It's an embarrassment" ("Vancouver's 'archaic' drinking laws under fire" June 25, 2008). Vancouver has established success in attracting creative technology workers to start new media firms in the city, drawing in people and firms, most recently Pixar, with lifestyle amenities, a rich post-secondary trained talent pool and established other firms. However, the people who work in the new media industry tend to work non-traditional hours. City councillor Suzanne agrees, saying that "in terms of the need in the city and people who come to the city and traveling, and people who live in the city, and people don't all keep 9-to-5 hours anymore. Lots of people want to be up later at night for one reason or another. And I believe the city should be able to accommodate that." ("Vancouver city council might approve extended liquor hours", October 1, 2009).

A vibrant night time economy has economic benefits unto itself, though the development of that sector must be handled in such a way that does not displease the

people living near the night time economic actors. As Mark Jayne and his colleagues summarize:

“Over the past 30 years, many cities have reinvented themselves as sites of consumption (Zukin, 1991; Hannigan, 1998). This has been bound up with political and sociocultural change associated with Fordism, post-Fordism and neo-Fordism (Kumar, 1995), changes in the local state and the rise of the entrepreneurial city (Hall and Hubbard, 1998), and a decline in extractive and industrial manufacturing and a move towards a more service-based, cultural and ‘symbolic’ economy, which includes the support of leisure and the night-time economy (Lash and Urry, 1994; Lovatt and O’Connor, 1995; Scott, 2000)... Urban nightlife is constructed through a number of contradictory tendencies towards both deregulation and (re)regulation, and fun and disorder... This is an economy of pleasure, and the 24-hour city becomes the vehicle for economic growth, profit generation and entrepreneurialism. However, while the financial success of drinking has stimulated further demand for its deregulation, the night time continues to be heavily influenced by Fordist concerns for tighter regulation, social control and zoning, due to lingering moral panics and fear of disorder.”

(Jayne et al., p.457-458, 2006).

The City of Vancouver, particularly the downtown core, embodies this tension between those with interest in a capital generating nighttime economy, and a similarly intense desire felt by people who own homes in the area to protect to liveability and property value of their real estate by limiting the effects of the night-time economy. However, by

limiting that night time economy, the residents downtown core is threatening the urban lifestyle that their real estate promised “By making half of downtown Vancouver residential and knocking down a lot of the original buildings, I think we’ve lost a lot of the character of the city, and the energy... Downtown Vancouver, I think, is getting choked by these residential developers. There’s very little areas left for people to hang out” says Vincent, a downtown bar owner (“Proprietor regrets loss of vibrant downtown scene”, March 24, 2010).

Opportunity: *The Public Liquor Space as a Site of Citizenship Building*

Having a public place to socialize is increasingly important, especially for workers in the creative economy, says Cameron, a pub owner. “We need the social interaction, especially in the days of the Internet, where you can work from home in your underwear and you don’t need to go out. (“The Quest for the Perfect Pub” August 25, 2006).

“Sometimes I go to the pub, just to feel like I’ve done something with my day. If I didn’t, it would just be get up, go to work, come home. It would be depressing” says Leon, a liquor space user. Richard Sennett argues that the structure of modern team work “cannot satisfy the longings of insecure and isolated individuals living in what Zygmunt Bauman has described as ‘liquid modernity’”, and that the “uncertainties of flexibility, the absence of deeply rooted trust and commitment, and the superficiality of teamwork”, as experienced modern corporate team jobs, have lead to an “intense longing for community” (as cited in Johnson, 2006, p.3). Ray Oldenburg’s work argues that it is in the third space that we find our community and cultivate our public identity. The third space refers to the social space where one exists outside their home (the first space),

and work (the second space). Third spaces are where you can go, regularly and voluntarily, and spend time away from the responsibilities of work and home, socializing informally with the other people who frequent the space (Oldenburg, 1989, 2001). In terms of identity construction, this is a space where a person is free to cultivate and express aspects of their personhood outside their identities in the home or workplace. Oldenburg suggested that these spaces promote social equality, through the building and bridging of social capital. Social capital is a concept associated with Pierre Bourdieu, and refers to social wealth, which in the pub is represented by the depth and breadth of your social connections and social status (Campbell, 2001). Within the public liquor leisure space, connections can be bridged between social worlds that might otherwise not mix or value each other; this public sociability “seeks to encompass people across diverse social cleavages” (as cited in Johnson, 2006, p.2). Public places that encourage social bridging are integral to the social cohesion of the already diverse Vancouver region, as 70 per cent of all Metro Vancouver residents will be first- or second-generation immigrants by 2031, second only to Toronto, according to a recent StatsCan report (“Minorities to become new majority in Metro Vancouver”, March 11, 2010).

Opportunity: *The public liquor space as democratic space*

Liquor serving third spaces strengthen democracy because they respect an internal democracy. No matter what your status is outside the bar, when you are inside you must show the servers due respect and everyone must wait their turn equally (Jayne et al, 2006; Anderson, 2009). Within the pub points of conversation that are divisive or

alienating are actively discouraged by the bar staff. One could argue that the reason for staff to do this is not to promote democracy but rather to ensure that patrons stay in a jovial mood so they spend and tip more. Regardless of intent, the encouragement of interactions that create connections and the discouragement of activities that alienate other patrons or show disrespect to either staff or other people result in positive social training. That social training is particularly important in the age of digital socialization. In social networks built on the internet, you can easily only socialize with people that are like you. You do not need to be patient with people that you find annoying or difficult. The problem with that, according to an internet blog, is that “peacefully dealing with incompatible people is crucial to living in a society. In fact... peacefully dealing with people you can't stand is society. Just people with opposite tastes and conflicting personalities sharing space and cooperating, often through gritted teeth (Wong, September 9, 2007). Pub life and drinking are “a form of dialogue, an engagement that held out the offer of diversity and heterogeneity” (Bahktin, 1984, as cited by Jayne et al. p.456, 2006). Furthermore, interacting with people in the physical public world combats feelings of isolation, even by just being in public. By knowing or even only recognizing someone at a public liquor space, people develop more of a sense of social connectedness. These “shared human landmarks combat the supposed anonymity of modern urban life, everyone that knows Man X are connected to one another, regardless of how weak those ties might be” (Borer, p.58, 2006). These familiar faces combat the anonymity of modern urban life that Georg Simmel wrote about over a hundred years ago (Simmel, 1903).

Finding and working through differences is an important part of being a citizen of a city. Jurgen Habermas argued that the coffee shop, a third space, was a key site in the development of bourgeois politics in 18th century Europe because it was a place where people could gather, debate, and construct their own opinions about the issues of their times independent from their families or media sources (as cited in Johnson, 2006, p.20). The public liquor space has been integral to the sharing and development of creative, social change in the history of Canada. For example, William Lyon Mackenzie and his band of Upper Canadian rebels met regularly at Montgomery's Tavern and it was from there that they started their infamous rebellion march (Pashley, p.22, 2009). More recently and locally, biographers of Greenpeace cite Bimini's pub in Kitsilano as a very important place in the early development of the environmental organization (Weyler, 2004).

While the liquor-serving third space has been described positively by many scholars, there are some concerned about the acceptance of a consumption space as a site of civic and democratic life. Karl Marx pointed out that commodification is a form of colonization, and this idea has been extended by theorists to argue that allowing consumption to dictate the space where we practice democracy, it limits how we conceptualize our world, and our ability to affect it, within the parameters of the prevailing capitalist system (as cited in Johnson, 2006, p.9). However, consumption spaces are not, and should not be, the only site of public interaction, and secondly, in recognition of the prevalence of consumption spaces in our society, those that foster positive social interactions and promote the democratic process should be encouraged.

As Tammy Anderson points out, places that showcase a commercialized ethos, organizational style, identity markers, and norms and behavior often do feature the normalization of unhealthy, and undemocratic behaviours that emphasize gender inequality, racism and other discrimination, however, places that are less commercialized are warmer, and facilitate more of the positive social behaviours that Oldenburg, Putnam, and Jacobs argue can occur in these liquor serving public places (Anderson, p.919, 2009; Grazian, p.910, 2009). Néstor García Canclini points out that while consumer choice is not necessarily the same as viable politics, “consumption can be good for thinking and acting in a meaningful way that renews social life” (as cited in Blue, 2009). Michael Borer points out that “the rise of business has contributed to the change in civic life, but its role in the rise of (a different sort of) civic life must be acknowledged” (Borer, 2006). While the rise of capitalism has contributed to the decline of noncommercial public space, it has created different, positive spaces. One local example of this is the Pumpjack Pub on Davie street which has raised over \$185,000 towards various causes, and often acts as a host for events for the neighbouring gay community (“Know your history”, August 3, 2006). Living in a capitalist society, it is important for people to be able to take ownership of the places where they construct their identities. Through the Pub is the Hub program, citizens in the UK are quite literally taking ownership of their neighbourhood pubs by turning failing private pubs into community-owned cooperatives (Pub is the Hub, n.d.) But in a more subtle way, locally owned public liquor spaces often allow the public to take ownership of the culture of the space. Describing one of his recently closed bars, Stephen said, “in the ten, twelve years we were there, we had countless weddings, breakups, wakes. It took on a life of

its own that almost had nothing to do with me anymore, and I marveled at this beast that we had created when we were just trying to make a living.”

Conclusion

The people governing the city have declared Vancouver to be a world-class city. To claim to even be a passable city, the policies of its government must enable the democratic process of the city, foster its economic vitality, and ensure the safety of its public. For Vancouver to be truly special, it has identified that it will stand out in terms of cultural vibrancy, liveability and progressive industry. A consideration of Vancouver’s historical and contemporary policy attitude to liquor policy reveals that its controlling approach actually limits the City’s ability to be a good, and great city. However, there are great opportunities to develop economically, socially and culturally by adjusting local liquor policy governing public liquor spaces. Both the citizens and government of the city of Vancouver have demonstrated awareness of the value and opportunities that the public liquor space offers. Over the next few years, it will be revealed if this awareness is converted into action.

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**Appendix One
Distribution of Liquor Primary Licenses in Vancouver**

| | Downtown Commercial Primary | Downtown Primarily Mixed Use | Downtown Primarily Residential | All Downtown | Non- Downtown Commercial Primary | Non- Downtown Primarily Mixed Use | Non- Downtown Primarily Residential | All Non- Downtown | Downtown Eastside | Total |
|--|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|---|--|--|----------------------|----------------------|-------|
| All liquor- primary licenses* | 41 | 85 | 11 | 137 | 4 | 27 | 60 | 91 | 11 | 239 |
| All liquor licensed places accessible regularly by public** | 36 | 75 | 9 | 120 | 2 | 19 | 28 | 49 | 10 | 179 |
| Hotels*** | 13 | 46 | 4 | 63 | 1 | 8 | 10 | 19 | 8 | 90 |

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* This table does not include food primary licensed businesses, of which there are roughly 1000 within the City.

** This section includes only places where the general paying public can enter. Places requiring patrons be members, or accompanied by members, are not included here. Hotels are included, while private clubs and legions are not.

*** This section is included as a reference to legacy of the past policy of only issuing licenses to hotels.

**Appendix Two
Hours of Service In Liquor Primary Licensed Establishments**

| AREAS | STANDARD HOURS | EXTENDED HOURS | SPECIAL EVENTS EXTENSION |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| DOWNTOWN | | | |
| Primarily Commercial | 11am-2am 7 days/wk | 9am-3am 7 days/wk | 9am-4am 7 days/wk |
| Primarily Mixed-Use | 11am-2am Weekends 11am-1am Weekdays | 9am-3am Weekends 9am-2am Weekdays | 9am-4am Weekends 9am-3am Weekdays |
| Primarily Residential | 11am-1 am Weekends 11am-12 am Weekdays | 9am-2am Weekends 9am-1am Weekdays | 9am-3am Weekends 9am-2am Weekdays |
| NON-DOWNTOWN | | | |
| Primarily Commercial / Industrial | 11am-2am 7 days/wk | 9am-3am 7 days/wk | 9am-3am 7 days/wk |
| Primarily Mixed-Use | 11am-1am Weekends 11am-12 am Weekdays | 9am-2am Weekends 9am-1am Weekdays | 9am-3am Weekends 9am-2am Weekdays |
| Primarily Residential | 11am-1am Weekends 11am-12 am Weekdays | 9am-2am Weekends 9am-1am Weekdays | 9am-2am Weekends 9am-1am Weekdays |
| Downtown Eastside (DEOD) | 11am-1am Weekends 11am-12 am Weekdays | n/a | 9am-2am Weekends |
| Note: Weekends = Friday and Saturday/ Weekdays = Sunday through Thursday | | | |

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