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The Global Nighttime Recovery Plan

by Philip Kolvin QC

The Global Nighttime Recovery Plan - a guide for us all

A group of night-time economy experts has come together to produce a blueprint for recovery and rejuvenation. One of the participants, **Philip Kolvin QC**, outlines its key messages

Cometh the hour, cometh the plan, in this case the Global Nighttime Recovery Plan (GNRP). While the night-time sector effectively collapsed as the pandemic took hold, former Amsterdam Night Mayor Mirik Milan and Berlin Club Commissioner Lutz Leichsenring set out with a simple but grand ambition to assemble leading thinkers from around the globe and put them to work on a group of principles to revive the sector. The benefits of the resultant text will long outlast the pandemic which inspired it.

The GNRP amounts to seven chapters, each with a different writing team, which combine to build a comprehensive guide for those whose concern is a vibrant and sustainable leisure economy. The homely aim of this article is to convey the essence of the work, while interposing hopefully helpful comment along the way.

Chapter 1: The Great Outdoors

From the outset, it was clear to city governors, the leisure sector, customers, health professionals and, ultimately, governments, that so far as possible leisure would need to migrate outside. Here in the UK, the Grand Outdoor Summer Café campaign, loosely allied to hospitality trade associations, persuaded ministers to action, resulting in the Business and Planning Act 2020 and its creation - the pavement licence - which circumvented much of the bureaucracy and cost of table and chairs licences, planning and premises licence variations, thus facilitating outdoor service and safe leisure environments. This has not been without consequence, with some blowback from local residents and others regarding noise and the reduction in free passage for motor vehicles. The experience has been replicated globally.

In Chapter 1 of the GNRP, a group of writers from Vilnius, Paris, Orlando, Berlin and New York examine the migration to the great outdoors and workable mitigations.

The measures adopted were a function of local regulatory regimes. In Vilnius, the aim was to permit any outdoor, municipally-owned space to be used for outdoor dining, with businesses sorting out allocations by talking among themselves. The scheme involved redirecting traffic to peripheral roads, thereby eliminating motorised transit

through the city centre, creating parklets out of parking spaces and simplifying the food truck permit system. In New York, the application process for pavement licences was simplified and takeaway alcohol was increased. In Paris, there were temporary street closures.

These measures came with some costs - planning, signage, communication and loss of parking revenue - which increased burdens on municipalities. They also spawned a degree of resentment among local residents. And the economic benefit for the sector was often nil (for those bars with no pavement space) to marginal (due to social distancing and extra staff costs). Nevertheless, the sense of life and wellbeing such measures brought are perhaps to be felt, not measured.

A number of cities laid on special events such as concerts and cinema, recognising the reality that it is better to provide controlled events than stand by as young people devise their own entertainment in an uncontrolled manner. Clashes in Paris between illegal ravers and police were well-documented. So, Vilnius provided free stages to encourage controlled outdoor events, while outdoor film screenings were shown on closed airport territory with commercial sponsorship. Berlin permitted informal gatherings of up to 1,000 people, including dancing and music; a welcome consequence was to keep the dire financial situation of Berlin's clubs, venues and culture workers at the fore of political discourse. As Lutz Leichsenring, former Club Commissioner and a principal architect of the GNRP put it: "Outdoor gatherings seem to have a significantly lower risk of Covid-19 infections than indoor events. Now it's the time to create a framework for safe and sustainable open air policies to provide legal alternatives to illegal events."

The Berlin example touches on an important nerve regarding the role of municipalities and the purpose of regulation. As the authors say: "... cities can choose to fall back on tactics of policing, control, and 'business as usual'. Or they can rise to the occasion with small-scale experiments and creative tactical urbanism: through communication, collaboration, and partnerships between city administration, nighttime advocates, event producers and local residents. This willingness to work together, experiment and rethink

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uses of open spaces will be essential for the months and years ahead.”

Alongside all the blue sky thinking and innovative urbanism, proponents have to recognise that a key concern regarding outdoor events is noise. This cannot be left to chance. It is imperative for businesses to engage with local communities, for municipalities to take on a convening and monitoring role, and for good practice to be disseminated and encouraged. In Paris, an NGO named Les Pierrots de la Nuit took on the task of raising public awareness and helping professionals develop good practices, while in Philadelphia open data dashboards were used to publish regular feeds of crime and other incidents, spatial data and so forth. In Berlin, event organisers were encouraged to measure their own noise levels using phone apps to show goodwill and encourage responsible behaviour while in New York an infographic campaign entitled “It’s up to you, New York” explained the rules and encouraged responsible behaviour.

All this requires new thinking by local government, what the authors term “local government by the people for the people”, so “city authorities need to be close to their populations, to communicate clearly with their residents, to win the trust of their business communities and to encourage genuine partnerships and co-operation between all interest groups.” This implies a more nuanced and flexible model of city governance than a command and control regulatory framework.

Chapter 2: Gotta Dance

As is well known, no economic sector has suffered as much during the pandemic as the nightclub industry. In the UK, clubs were the last venues permitted to re-open, with many not surviving the Long Mothballing. Even now, venues are not secure, with patchy reports of customers not willing to return in the same numbers as previously, adding to the foreboding of many owners saddled with unsustainable levels of debt accumulated during the period of closure.

In Chapter 2, entitled *The Future of Dancefloors*, authors from the UK, Italy, USA and Belgium correctly point out that late-night venues were already under pressure from gentrification, competition (including from unlicensed events) lack of institutional support and many other factors, with Covid-19 simply accelerating and exacerbating these trends.

Such is the pace of development of the pandemic and the global response that the chapter, written last year, already has an historic feel, with interim measures advocated including use of outdoor space, test events, and time-limited shorter events including live concerts to a seated audience,

to test and refine hygiene measures. In London, Village Underground went the extra mile by converting itself to a cycle park and workshop, and used its alcohol licence by opening a bottle shop and exterior bar.

Others used their spaces to stream live events, which helped to keep hope alive and maintain a connection, however virtual, with their audience. Turin took it one step further, creating a virtual nightclub, hosting artists from around the world, and enabling customers to attend the club through their customised avatar, and to interact with other avatars, play with gigantic doughnuts and other toys and even create their own drinks. In a weird echo of real life, avatars queued for bathrooms and complained about taller avatars blocking their views of performers. The experiment will continue with the use of VR goggles to promote different levels of interaction between avatars, real people and artists.

Back in the real world, the authors recognise the important role of dancefloors as spaces for cultural self-determination, social inclusion, diversity and imagination and, conversely, the structural inequality (particularly for LGBTQ+ and BAME communities) engendered by their loss, a loss hastened by strict licensing schemes, surveillance and rigid policing. For practitioners, it remains perplexing that licensed venues are the only private, let alone public, spaces where disorder by non-compliant individuals results in closure and loss of livelihood. Their closure costs jobs, cultural content and onward horizontal and vertical impacts on the economic supply chain.

Solutions to this long-standing and well-understood issue are addressed only briefly in Chapter 2, with the authors advocating more informal night-time networks to foster partnership between business and regulators, co-ordinate communication strategies and respond to misinformation. They also recommend that venues develop common ground rules for safer spaces, based on crowd control, and atmosphere management and body language, with an emphasis on understanding the narrative of the evening, from customers’ arrival at the building, staff behaviour, circulation control, the exit process through to departure from the area.

Looking forward, the authors correctly point to an opportunity for cities to rethink how nightlife creators and businesses participate in the wider city development conversation. But the lack of any prescription in the context of dancefloors feels like a missed opportunity. Everyone with experience in the field knows forging a positive public agenda for late-night businesses is difficult, involving not just the co-ordination of multiple urban planning levers, but political engagement too in a world where there is little capital to be

gained by genuinely supporting nightlife and, most of all, making hard choices which will not always please an older, often entitled and politically connected local community.

However, dancefloors are not just emblematic of the night-time economy: they are a petri dish where youth, music, art, tech and the creative industries in general feed off each other and find new expression. Like glaciers, their gradual loss has been noticed only by cognoscenti before slowly being clocked by society at large. Plans to save these spaces are now coming into focus. In the UK, Agent of Change places obligations on incoming developers to design dwellings so as to prevent future friction between their residents and neighbouring nightspots. In London, the Mayor took it a step further, by requiring housing developers to incorporate protection for the famous gay venue, the Joiners Arms. In Amsterdam, nightclubs were planned around the periphery of the city to reduce the scope for conflicts, and clubs were encouraged to diversify to sweat their buildings for 24 hours rather than relying on a few hours of alcohol sales on weekend nights. Good practice in this sphere continues to develop and should be noted and acted upon by municipal authorities.

Chapter 3: Innovation

This chapter's title - *Innovating for 24-hour Cities* – proclaims its broad scope. Led by UK's own Ali Turnham of MAKE Associates and Leni Schwendinger of International Nighttime Design Initiative, it advocates: (i) the activation of streets and spaces in the nocturnal hours; (ii) foregrounding the undervalued but critical role of illumination; and (iii) the development of more inclusive approaches to movement around cities after dark.

i) Activation

The authors commence with the encouraging point that Covid-19 has shone a light on the marginalisation of the night-time economy, on the Joni Mitchell principle that you don't know what you've got till it's gone. Their message is that this is a time of enforced experimentation, the best of which may be integrated permanently into our night spaces. They argue that it is important to act at a micro-level, eg, by making bars safer. But we also need innovative, macro city-scale activation strategies that draw people back to cities at night, alongside communication plans to tell them what is going on and how they may access it safely.

Debate in the UK and elsewhere often poses the false dichotomy of an early hours, strictly regulated economy or a free for all. The authors make the obvious but often ignored point that there is a middle ground in which there are "shades of night", which are adaptable to different uses and regulations. So, for example, in Asia and Latin America,

eating, drinking and shopping late into the night is common. And, cohering with the need for social distancing, they point out that longer hours might increase the footfall while reducing concentrations of people and therefore noise. This need not just be bars: health centres, municipal services, night markets and galleries might all take advantage of longer hours. Provided that this is promoted in a strategic way, taking account of residential sensitivities and alongside late-night public transport options, the economic and cultural harm of Covid could be the foundation of new regeneration efforts.

In many cities, the rise of home working and the loss of retail has greatly increased the stock of empty properties and therefore made more urgent the debate about the appropriate balance of uses to maintain the vitality and viability of centres. The authors advocate land use studies to understand the possibilities, which should be based around placemaking rather than an "anything goes" mentality such as the one which has characterised the relaxation of the need for residential permissions in the UK. They celebrate Paris for the "15 minute city concept" espoused by its mayor Annie Hidalgo, but comment that it is meaningless if it does not also apply at night.

The academic and practitioner Andreina Seijas sums up the theory. She suggests that post-pandemic, central business districts might gain new residents, while peripheral neighbourhoods might see a renaissance of their cultural and entertainment offer, decentralising amenities such as nightlife, which could help create medium-intensity entertainment hubs rather than congested areas characterised by conflicts between residents and revellers.

Perhaps the greatest reversal from darkness to enlightenment has come in Sydney, whose infamous lockdown laws from 2014 have transmogrified into its new "Sydney 24-Hour" economy strategy, the achievements of which include: the recognition of providing connected transit, shopping, healthcare and public services for night workers; a grant mechanism for neighbourhoods to expand their night-time offer, and the appointment of a 24-hour "Coordinator General".

ii) Illumination

Turning to lighting, the authors have not written a guide to lighting a city at night, but do underline some of the key benefits of lights, including safety (both in the centre and in the last mile), the promotion of a recognisable identity for a district, the raising of awareness for local initiatives, the identification of a welcoming venue and, of course, emphasis that the district is cared for. Lighting should be well-considered but does not need to be expensive, and cheap

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pilots can be used to test for later, permanent installations.

The authors point out that one priority is to use lighting to make city spaces safer for workers, be they transit workers, street cleaners or nightwatchmen. They also recognise that the community will often create its own atmosphere, whether Iranians bringing gas lights to picnic spots at night or strips of restaurants place-making with strings of fairy lights. And they highlight celebratory light night events such as Salford's "Lighting the Legend", a lantern parade organised by a community arts organisation. My personal observation is that a modicum of lighting of a bridge, underpass, building or along well-used pedestrian routes can transform a place, more than similar capital or revenue-based interventions. This chapter provokes the thought that, as the leisure sector gravitates outdoors, an understanding of the possibilities of light is an essential discipline for town planners and managers.

iii) *Movement*

The authors posit the following touchstone for night-time transit: it must be safe, affordable, efficient, reliable and inclusive. It would be hard to disagree with that, or with the immediately following sentiment that most cities were playing catch-up, even before the pandemic. They remind us that night-time transit is not just for revellers, but also for those working in the night-time economy, who go far wider than just leisure sector employees. Among many examples, they highlight Abu Dhabi, which has provided a free, on-demand microtransit service and Bogota which has supported free-e-bikes, in both cases for the benefit of healthcare workers. And they celebrate the holistic approach of Mumbai, whose "SafeCity" project, based on 10 core principles, is directed specifically at women, but results in a safer transit experience for all.

It is a difficult moment to reactivate night-time transit systems, since there is a lower demand and coffers are depleted, but it is right to stress that there is now a chicken and egg situation which needs to be dealt with. Just as businesses have borrowed to the hilt to stay alive, so transport providers need to pump-prime the system. If they don't, businesses, jobs and cultural value will continue to decline. But if they do, the night-time economy may increase commensurately.

Again, the authors offer cost-effective, albeit partial, solutions in what are straitened times: longer-term free or low-cost bike leasing, buddy-system walks, well-lit car parks, installation of on-street emergency call systems, safe havens and so forth. They also advocate ensuring funds are well-directed by planning for "movement inclusivity", ie, ensuring that transit systems properly serve particular sections of

the community, such as women, night workers, minority community, disabled users and those intimidated from travelling through fear of infection. They rightly point out that the proven incidence of infection on public transport is low, but there is a critical need to communicate this to those who have switched to using private motor vehicles out of misplaced self-protection.

In the UK, a major change has been the rise of low traffic neighbourhoods, which have been accompanied by significant modal shift towards walking and cycling, as well as pavement widening and parklets in town centres to accommodate seated customers. Local opposition in some areas has been trenchant, but on analysis these have tended to be vocal minorities, sometimes taxi trade associations, whose many legal challenges have been exposed as vapid. Visiting cities such as Copenhagen and Paris underlines that UK on the whole has some way to go in promoting diversity of travel methods and that those who consider that their motor-driven convenience trumps every other consideration are on the wrong side of history. Rather, enlightened towns and cities will be promoting active mobility and transit by updating transport and spatial plans. Modal shift is where climate protection, health protection and leisure planning meet. Now is the opportunity to drive that agenda.

Chapter 3 is the heart of the GNRP, with its clear-sighted analysis matched and fleshed out with inspiring examples from around the world. Its concluding message, that there is a newly urgent need for visioning, planning, designing and measuring for the night-time economy, represents a call to arms to town and city planners worldwide.

Chapter 4: Supporting workers

This important chapter focuses on an oft-forgotten topic in night-time economy discourse - the position of workers. As the authors point out, there are well-documented inequities between the producers and consumers in cultural industries, with a neologism "the gig economy" coming to exemplify the vulnerability and insecurity of night workers. Their dispersal across micro-workplaces makes unionisation difficult, and they tend to pass under the radar in national and local political debates. Nevertheless, the discomfiting picture of Barking and Dagenham workers shipped in nightly at minimum wage to serve wealthy customers in Westminster is replicated in towns and cities worldwide. For millions around the world, the pandemic removed even that basic living.

The chapter grimly reports the impact of the virus on night work, and the aid which night workers received. A survey across 11 countries showed that fewer than half received any aid at all, and only one in six said it was enough. The loss, of course, was not just income. For many workers, including in

particular artists and musicians who lost their occupation, the toll was also to their mental health. The authors emphasise that popular culture is as worthy of support as symphony halls and opera houses, but is not always seen in that way by government. They find the appointment of night mayors to be largely gestural, with no underpinning in legislative or regulatory power. And so, many night workers have simply found themselves cut adrift.

Not unnaturally, the authors advocate direct monetary grant schemes such as the USA's Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act as the key short-term governmental support measure, while underlining grassroots efforts such as crowdfunding by NYC Nightlife United and mutual aid schemes such as United We Stream Asia.

But over the longer term, they focus on the necessity for government to recognise the precarity of night work, the need for data-gathering exercises to include night workers, state benefits to support them as they support day workers, and labour reform policies to accord night workers, who are frequently forced to be self-employed, the same rights as employees.

More ambitiously, they counsel private patronage for the creative industries, such as the COSIMO Foundation scheme in the Netherlands, which permits businesses to treat their funding of specific creative projects as tax deductible, in a way which would be familiar to users of Gift Aid in the UK. They also highlight Patreon, which allows fans of specific artists to pay to engage more directly with their work, through accessing exclusive content distributed via the platform. There are now over 200,000 creators on Patreon, updating a concept which originated in Roman times and is apparently recrudescing as a major form of support.

Most importantly, as the authors point out, while night-time governance is frequently consumer-oriented, municipal strategies must cease to neglect the workers on whom the whole construct depends.

Chapter 5: Night-time governance

The very existence of the term night-time governance is a hard-won triumph, signifying that the night, just like the day, has to be managed in a strategic way, with the management of urban spaces at night involving a broad ecosystem of state and non-state actors. The former include government and public service organisations. The latter include businesses, workers, artists and residents. Successful municipalities co-opt all stakeholders in the endeavour, sometimes through groupings such as business or residents associations, sometimes through schemes such as Purple Flag or BIDS.

Many cities wishing to make a statement have followed the lead of Amsterdam in appointing night mayors. Whether the appointment is anything more than an empty gesture rides not just on the personality and abilities of the incumbent, but also on the powers and resources they are given. As the Chapter 5 authors state, the night mayor is, in essence, an advocate, bridging night-time operators and local government, often arguing for better infrastructure or more sympathetic regulation, and sometimes acting as a mediator between various interests. They may be wholly independent of government, as in Amsterdam and Berlin, or funded by local government, as in New York or Paris. But however they are constituted, successful night mayors have tended to bring the main players together, diagnose the issues and propose solutions to local government to promote sustainable night-time economies.

It is fair to say that night mayors have not been universally acclaimed, with some questioning their utility, and even in places where incumbents can point to success, the exigencies of pandemic control have meant that the needs of the leisure sector have been pushed to the margins. Recently, the city of Melbourne ditched its night mayor proposal altogether, instead announcing a more conventional advisory committee, while in France a number of city mayors have instead appointed deputy mayors dedicated to the night-time economy. In other cities, the need for an appointee has been obviated by a committed and effective advocacy group, such as the Japan Nighttime Economy Association in Tokyo.

The conclusion of the chapter incorporates a useful toolkit, presaging Chapter 6, which recommends the establishment of a vision, data collection, team-building, pilot projects and so forth. The authors rightly resist the temptation to preference night mayors over other collective or political efforts to deliver such processes.

Chapter 6: State assistance

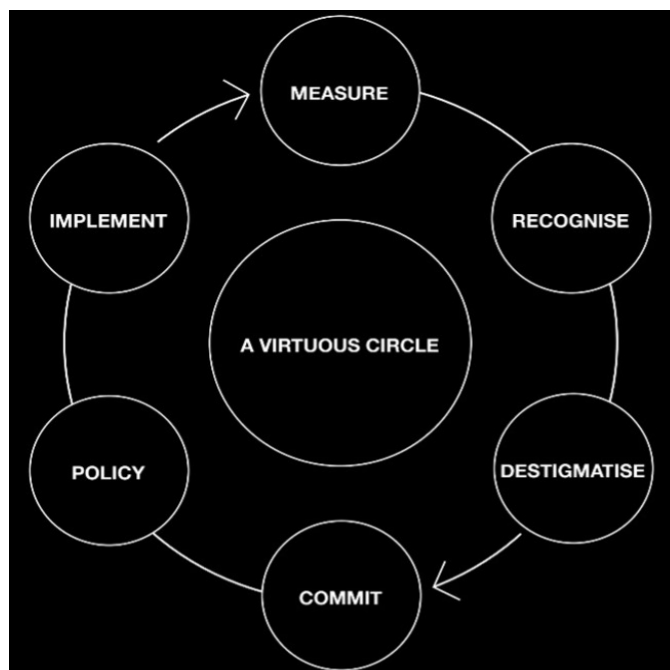
This chapter's thesis is that the state, whose role has traditionally been regulatory, needs a new mindset based on creative partnership. This means thinking strategically, using all its levers to create the conditions for revival and growth.

The chapter propounds a virtuous circle of activity, suggesting a series of steps for a disciplined, economic approach by state actors.

Measure

The first step is to build data sets to understand the make-up of the sector, assess benefits, identify gaps and ultimately measure success. This may include types, numbers and hours of venues, number and nature of jobs, footfall, age and demographics of customers, together with impact data

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Role of the state: the steps to take

covering environmental and criminal. A periodically updated evidence base forces concentration on characteristics, benefits and impacts, rather than political or journalistic soundbites about the sector, which all too often characterise public discourse.

Recognise

The authors ask national and local governments to accept three simple propositions:

- The hospitality and nightlife sector is a social good.
- It is part of what makes us human.
- It is worth supporting.

The purpose of presenting the argument in such reductive form is to encourage a change of mindset. If a council leader accepts that, then everything else of worth follows. It is, therefore, the most important step of all.

Recognition may happen in myriad ways. The authors suggest: headlining the night in relevant strategy documents, alongside other social goods such as housing, education and the environment; creating a post for a leader of the night-time sector; establishing a certification or accreditation programme to recognise quality in the sector such as Purple Flag in the UK and *Sello Seguro* in Bogota; and putting the night at the heart of social media messaging. Some cities have even sloganised the night with varying degrees of success. One notable example is Austin Texas, whose #KeepAustinWeird is a source of pride for a city whose revival has been built around tech and music.

The authors foreground Germany's Bundestag which in May 2021 reclassified music venues and clubs with "demonstrable cultural connection" as cultural venues alongside theatres, concert halls and opera houses. This carried regulatory benefits for the venues concerned, but had a far greater symbolic value in terms of state recognition of the sector.

Destigmatise

The authors argue that habitual stigmatisation of the night-time economy, seeing it as a negative force to be tamed, has led to curfews, lockdowns, prohibition and, in the UK, legislating for Alcohol Disorder Zones. Destigmatising it involves: renaming it (eg, "social economy", "hospitality sector"); redefining it (eg, 6-6); celebrating it; supporting it, and partnering it. All research shows that the sector is an important reason for people to want to live, work and invest in an area. So to stigmatise it is self-defeating.

Commit

In recent years, as city governments have recognised the importance of the sector, examples have abounded of the transition from regulator to committed supporter and partner. San Francisco created an Entertainment Commission. Toronto wrote a Nightlife Action Plan. Berlin produced a Free Open Air Charter. London produced a vision, *From Good Night to Great Night*, whose ten founding principles were intended as a gathering point for later, more detailed implementation activity.

Policy

The process of incorporating the night into policy is critical, since it bakes in the commitment and moves support from words to action. The authors suggest that night policy should support a wide variety of businesses at night, creating a diverse offering attractive to a wider demographic. This provides greater resilience to the sector, while drawing in spend from a wider proportion of the population, and insulating against crime by keeping a mix of age-groups on the street into the night.

For policy to be effective, it needs a sturdy evidence base, which will have been developed earlier in the process, and proper public consultation, recognising all stakeholders. In consulting, authorities should realise that many groups, including young users of the night-time economy and workers, are marginalised and hard to reach, or will not respond to traditional methods of consultation. Publishing a 100-page policy document online and then asking for comments will result in ascertainment of the views of those who have the time and inclination to respond to 100-page policy documents. More imaginative engagement is called for.

An exemplar recent policy is Sydney's 24-hour economy strategy, mentioned above, which completes the about-face from its lockdown (curfew) days. The strategy is built around the attributes of an ideal night-time experience as ranked by Sydney residents: safety, hygiene, personal space, affordability, transport, diversity, discoverability and welcome. It then systematically sets out the main opportunities for the city to pursue, including: place-making; diversification; cultural development; connectivity, and changing the narrative. The strategy is a demonstration of intent from a world city which has experienced the downsides of a restrictive, over-regulated approach. It provides a model which UK towns and cities would do well to study.

Implement

The authors acknowledge that there is no global blueprint for implementation, since the most apposite measures will emerge from data-gathering, research, consultation and policy. They present ideas across four themes: financial, regulatory, promotional, and physical, echoing examples from earlier in the GNRP.

Financial support, it is said, goes beyond handing out cash. It might involve reviews of licence fees, rating, night travel charges and so forth. The authors highlight Colombia, which recognised tourist and leisure activity as a social and economic right, contributing to a healthy, productive life and the cultural identity of communities, and restructured its property taxes accordingly. It also canvasses business improvement districts (BIDs) and hotel levies as means of leveraging funds into support of the sector.

The review of regulation is not the same as deregulation. It might mean doing things in a different way. Pre-warned multi-agency visits are less burdensome on operators than multiple visits from different agencies. The introduction of pavement licensing simplified but did not remove the consent process for outdoor provision. The relaxation of cumulative impact policies, as occurred recently in Liverpool, does not mean that the sector is not regulated: rather it throws focus on the record of compliance of each venue. Agent of Change principles do not disregard nuisance but prevent it. What underpins all of this is the change from regulation as "doing to" to "doing with".

Examples of promotional work by towns and cities are legion, from organisation of light nights (ie, public realm events based around illumination) to street festivals to city of culture schemes, the establishment of night BIDs, the introduction of street hosts, the creation of cultural quarters, and social marketing of the sector. All the while, it is of course important to measure the impact of such activity, in terms, say, of footfall, economic return or customer satisfaction, in

order to plan effectively and economically for further activity.

Physical provision need not equate with major development. The introduction of pavement licensing provided more space for leisure at often nil or modest cost. Repurposing warehouses, print works, rail depots and multi-storey car parks comprises sustainable recycling of infrastructure, often out of earshot of sleeping citizens. Even in centres, creating community-run pop-ups out of former retail units maintains vitality, provides jobs and builds community cohesion. As retail declines, so leisure can help to fill the void.

The authors point out that the night-time sector has been at the forefront of economic casualties of the pandemic. This has forced the recasting of the role of the state as a partner to investors and creators in the sector. The pandemic has accelerated several trends, including the falling away of retail and the growth of home entertainment. In some cases, councils will need to reimagine or even repurpose their centres to create a culture-led revival. The flight of cash to suburban areas provides a real opportunity for towns and cities to strengthen local communities, reduce reliance on public transport and promote active travel.

These are seismic changes, but the authors end on a note of optimism: "By embarking on a structured process and taking a strategic approach, city elders can harness the ingenuity of the industry to their own levers of power to create sustainable leisure economies for the post-Covid generation."

Chapter 7: Measuring the night

The distinguished authors of this chapter, led by Michael Fichman of University of Pennsylvania, bemoan the dearth of data regarding the night-time economy, pointing out that governments need data to devise policy and govern in a responsible manner, and that communities need data to enable them to participate in public discourse. Without data, one governs blind. That, they say, was the common order pre-Covid, and must never prevail again.

As anyone who has tried to do it knows, the measurement of the night throws up intractable initial difficulties. Are we measuring all life at night, including, say, the caring professions and call-centre workers? Or are we just measuring the night-time economy, and if so how? Is every pub worker a night worker? Or just those who work at night? And where does that begin and end, and so on? And even if you know what you are after, is there data to cover it? So, as they say, someone marketing a music venue may be recorded in a broader job category in official data. It is important to recognise both the limitations of the data collated and that measurement is a process not an end-point.

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The authors echo the argument in Chapter 6, stating that a data-driven night-time governance approach can be a virtuous circle of policies, programmes and outcomes, which can be used to combat the reactive or intuition-based policies and narratives which have long characterised discussions about night-time issues. They give a clear example of local regulatory decisions being driven by a place-based fear of crime, but the fear being driven by exposure to media stories about crime rather than objective incidence data.

With relevant data, however, a government office can conduct night-time specific analyses to understand the dimensions of the economy, undertake public messaging, calibrate strategy, allocate resources, execute programming, document outcomes and so on. While the authors could not adduce evidence of completion of a virtuous circle in the night-time domain, they explain that there are good examples from adjacent public health fields of cyclical decision-making, and that the approach has become relatively standard in the world of business.

In what will (I predict) become a checklist for city analysts, the chapter appendix lists dozens of night-time data sources, including those relating to mobility and transportation, safety and public health, sound, regulation, economic activity, creative space, built environment, public space and communities including their demographics, values and needs.

The authors advocate open data portals for access by communities, NGOs, state actors etc, one example being London's Night-time Data Observatory established by the Greater London Authority. They do, however, caution that care needs to be taken in how data is collated, and also in publishing the collection methodology so that its reliability can be tested. And they make the important point that data without any comparison prevents one charting the success or otherwise of one's interventions, hence the need for longitudinal collection. Better still if common methodologies can be used regionally or nationally, to enable meaningful comparisons between cities or regions.

What data one collates is, of course, a function of what one is trying to find out. For example, Sydney's 24-Hour economy strategy adopts a measurement framework with key social, economic and cultural indicators linked to the plan's objectives. The first prompted a participant demographic study, a night-time economy satisfaction score, sentiment analysis and a measure of alcohol- and drug-related violence. The second was informed by analysis of raw numbers of night-time businesses, the sector's value and growth and its contribution to gross state product, total consumer spend in the 6-6 witching hours, and the number of people employed

in Sydney's night-time economy. The third was associated with the number of cultural activities taking place, the number of tickets sold, the city's cultural reputation score, additional public space created and public space activated at night. As may be seen, this was an innovative and systematic way of measuring the night-time economy to inform policy decisions.

While government agencies are a principal source of data, they enjoy no exclusivity. Increasingly, data sources from non-government actors are becoming more common and available. Third party data sets can include business listings, mobility data sets, eg, from Uber, credit card data, marketing data etc, all of which can be bought, scraped or accessed via API software. The authors rightly caution, however, that use of third-party data carries serious data protection issues which require consideration. Hence, they advocate a nightlife-specific data protection standard, building on ideas in the European GDPR.

Furthermore, as the authors point out, not all data is quantitative. To ignore qualitative data is to miss "the stories and unquantifiable feelings [which] make nightlife, music, culture and community truly what it is..." They strongly support the collation of qualitative data while counselling against reliance on anecdotes and single-method studies of qualitative data. Instead, they suggest studies bringing together many sources and methods, including interviews, focus groups, field research and literature reviews, citing examples from around the world where this has been done to great effect. One notable study conducted across six countries in Africa and the Middle East, which gave voice to local stakeholders and grassroots communities in a way which standard consultation methods never could, revealed the important message that digital infrastructure, access and know-how were their top needs. Hence, a qualitative study has helped to inform government policy and ensure that money is spent wisely where it will make most difference.

Finally, despite the expertise underpinning the production of this important chapter, the authors recognise that data is the servant and not the master of nocturnal governance. They end with a quote from urban theorist Shannon Mattern: "The city of the night is too joyously vibrant and too complicated and multi-faceted to be completely quantified. You cannot put a number on that joy."

Conclusion

Publication of the GNRP is a revolutionary moment for politicians and practitioners, academics and activists. In one stroke it has turned support and promotion of the night-time economy into a discipline, worth of study alongside other elements of urban geography. The expertise has been

there for many years in individual towns and cities, but now it is visible and accessible to all, replete with real life experiences from cities across the world, with each chapter suggesting further reading on the topics covered. The benefit for policy-makers is that their interventions can be planned based on evidence and data rather than guesswork, and measurements of success can inform future initiatives.

My personal observation is that the UK has much catching up to do, having been locked for some time in stifling debates about cumulative impact areas, as though these are the only medicine on the shelf, medicine which great northern cities such as Manchester and Liverpool are abjuring, without

terminal effects. The kind of progressive thinking coming out of Germany, Australia, Colombia and the Netherlands leaves our nation looking isolated, and not splendidly.

The GNRP recognises pros and cons in all of its examples. To imbibe it, as everyone interested should, is not to drink the Kool-Aid, but to inform ourselves of the possibilities, and to promote them in the places we care about. The message is simple: leisure is culture, and worthy of our attention.

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