Hold back the night: Nuit Blanche and all-night events in capital cities

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Hold back the night: *Nuit Blanche* and all-night events in capital cities

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Late night events are an increasing feature of city entertainment and tourism. The phenomenon of *Nuit Blanche*, cultural festivals and museum nights has expanded across capital and other cities with a common aim and brand, but reflecting local and cultural aspirations. On the one hand, they provide an alternative to the problematic effects of late night binge drinking and mono-use of city centres by a younger cohort, and on the other hand, a global network of events that have expanded in scope and scale over the past decade. The article situates the event city within the competitive, ‘cosmopolitan city’ through a comparative analysis of late night events in capital cities, with examples from London’s night-time economy and programmes of extended opening of museums and cultural venues.

**Keywords:** late night events; museum nights; night-time economy; *Nuit Blanche*

**Introduction**

National capital cities, as well as regional and provincial ‘cultural capitals’, explicitly use their critical mass of cultural assets (GLA, 2008), diverse tourism flows and events, as part of competitive city and place-making strategies. These ‘eventful cities’ (Palmer & Richards, 2010) increasingly seek to celebrate their cosmopolitanism while at the same time maintaining their heritage legacy and touristic image. A particular manifestation of this global ‘festival city’ phenomenon are special events which seek to reconcile this traditional heritage (e.g. museums, historic sites) with new programmes that appeal to a wider visitor and participant group. Thus, cities are able to extend their cultural tourism offer and market, spread the geographic and temporal distribution of tourism activity and revitalise their historic venues. These events also present an opportunity for the capital city to reassert their identities and status to residents and visitors alike.

Particular examples of this phenomenon are *Nuit Blanche/Light Night* events and late night cultural festivals which have developed in European and North American cities over the past 10 years. Since Paris inaugurated the *Nuit Blanche* in 2002, a movement and network of such festivals has gained momentum. A number of events reference Paris, use the *Nuit Blanche* brand and in several cases French cultural organisations are active in sponsorship and event promotion. The latest addition to the *Nuit Blanche* brand is New York which held its first ‘bringtolightnyc’ festival in October 2010.

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Cities (e.g. Copenhagen, Dublin) use the late night opportunity to promote area-based cultural festivals and contemporary art events.

Features of these ‘white night’ events are illuminations on buildings and light installations, including fireworks displays, late night opening of museums and galleries and in some cases performing arts venues, parks, sports facilities (e.g. swimming pools) and live events in major squares and waterfronts. All of these events, however, seek to exploit and rediscover the evening and late night economy and respond to concerns over safety and crowding out of visitor activity by ‘mono-use’ of city centre spaces associated with excessive alcoholic drinking in bars/clubs and associated anti-social behaviour.

**Evolution of the night-time economy**

Any consideration of the role of capital cities in late night activity and events should first set the context within which extended opening hours and visitor activity have developed over the past 20 years. The temporal nature of this phenomenon distinguishes this concept, but this is variously termed the night-time, late night or evening economy, symbolised by the notion of the 24 hours or ‘24/7’ city (Jones, Hillier, & Turner, 1999). This has been manifested by the growth of late night events and festivals and the provision of hospitality and transport that has extended the visitor economy and calendar which was previously limited to specific zones and activity (e.g. cinemas, private clubs) and tourist seasons. Key factors have been the liberalisation and social trends which have fuelled late night consumption, producing problems of anti-social behaviour, negative media coverage and mono-use of city centres by particular users and usages, i.e. drinking establishments. However, as Thomas and Bromley (2000) observe: ‘In almost every situation the most adverse impressions were expressed by the least frequent visitors to the city centres . . . the perception of threat was far higher than the experience of threat’ (p. 1427). On the other hand, this phenomenon also represents the import of a more European continental lifestyle (Bianchini, 1995) associated with southern European cities with warmer climates, where ‘late night’ activity has long been normalised through cafe culture, relaxed licensing regulations and a more mature attitude towards open-air activity and mixed use (buildings, streets, users), with the associated infrastructure to facilitate this (e.g. transport, cleansing, lighting). How far cross-cultural behaviour can be successfully transferred is however questioned: ‘most European cities have very inclusive evening economy where people of all ages participate in a range of activities. In contrast the evening activities of British Cities are not so compatible with the inclusive ideals of the urban renaissance. They centre around young people and alcohol, leading to associated problems of crime & disorder, noise and nuisance’ (ODPM, 2003, p. 3).

Nonetheless, in the UK, the night-time economy (NTE) represents an important element of the tourism and hospitality sector, particularly in the capital city. It is estimated that NTE activity contributed £66 billion to the UK economy in 2009, employing 1.3 million people (10% of all employment, 8% of all firms). In London, NTE activity made up of core (pubs, bars, restaurants, clubs, theatres) and non-core (accommodation, taxis, food and drink supplies, and relevant public services) activities turned over £10 billion in 22,000 firms (Table 1), a 17% increase over that in 2006. Confirming the capital’s dominance, 5 out of the top 10 boroughs nationally were in London (8 out of the top 20) with 50% of London’s 33 boroughs in the top 50 NTE turnover boroughs in the UK. The mix of NTE activity also reveals a shift away from pubs which have been in decline (40 close each week in the UK), towards restaurants and entertainment, including events and festivals. Increases between 2006 and 2009 were marked in outer London boroughs where late
night activity is expanding. The number of NTE firms and employees has also decreased in several London boroughs (Westminster, Islington) and regional ‘capital’ cities (Leeds), even where turnover has increased. Central cities have more larger employers (venues,
festivals) and have been able to produce scale efficiencies and more profitable activities as a result.

Prior to the reviews of late night licensing in the UK that led to the liberalisation of alcohol, entertainment and planning rules (HMSO, 2000; HoC, 2003), the discourses around the animation and mix of uses: land/property, economic, social and temporal, drew from Jane Jacobs’ seminal work in North America. Key contributions included critiques of mixed use (Coupland, 1999; Smith, 1996) and tourism (Maitland, 1997; Evans & Aiesha, 2006), in particular, a culture-led approach to city regeneration (Evans, 2005; Bianchini, Fisher, Montgomery, & Worpole, 1988), planning (Evans, 2001; Freestone & Gibson, 2006) and management (Comedia, 1991; Landry, 2006; Montgomery, 2004). The growth of inner city populations, urban tourism (Ashworth & Page, 2011) and greater diversity of activity and user groups have all combined to create a momentum that continues today. It is within this context that late night events have also evolved, and in some respects addressed some of the negative impacts and criticisms levelled at the NTE.

For example, Berlin and Copenhagen have longer established late night cultural events and festivals that have successfully offered a different experience, audience and geographic spread to that developed through late night bar/club activity. Berlin in particular has benefitted from a liberal licensing regime and responsive approach to music and other creative uses of space, many created in interstitial zones and spaces in former East Berlin (Evans & Witting, 2006). Dublin, suffering capacity constraints of a small over-heated late night Temple Bar zone (Montgomery, 1995), has subsequently also widened its coverage, adopting an area, or ‘quarter’ approach, which is a familiar strategy evident from other Nuit Blanche festival cities. As Roberts, Turner, Greenfield, and Osborn (2006) conclude: ‘environmental protection and urban management are key components of a set of holistic controls that can ensure a balance of alcohol-based entertainment and residential uses (p. 1123). This includes the strategic location of larger scale events and clusters of entertainment and related consumption activities, and routes/transport access to these areas. Larger capital cities therefore have the capacity and scale to accommodate and mitigate the concentration of late night activity and flows, including cultural and entertainment zones, and larger scale squares, parks and venues.

**London and late night activity**

A survey of local authorities in London conducted in 2004 highlights the factors and issues arising from this trend in NTE activity, with 100% of outer London and 91% of inner London authorities reporting a significant growth in evening/late night activities (Roberts & Gornostaeva, 2007). Applications for liquor licences increased by 45% between 1983 and 2003, the majority of these located in pubs and bars (71%) and restaurants (19%), concentrated in central London, but also in outer London (Table 2).

In Westminster City Council, for example, the total capacity of premises with late licenses in their ‘stress areas’ of the West End, Edgware, Bayswater was 64,000 with a closing time of 1 a.m.; 20,000 at 4 a.m. and 12,000 closing at 6 a.m. The development and management of evening/late night activities are therefore considered a major issue in outer London (91%), but less so in inner London authorities (64%), where late night licensing has been longer established, less residential conflicts arise and public transport is more available. The carrying capacity – the ability of an event area to cope with an optimum number of visitors at anytime, while maintaining a pleasant and safe experience – relies in particular on public transport, safety and cleansing resources of cities and city
Table 2. Late night/light night events and festivals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capital city [N]ational Regional</th>
<th>Event/festival</th>
<th>Year est.</th>
<th>Timing and duration</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Organiser/promoter</th>
<th>Annual visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta, Chicago USA [R]</td>
<td>Le Flash</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Early October 7 p.m. to 2 a.m.</td>
<td>Castleberry Hill, Cleopas Park, open air/ street, galleries, pubs/ clubs SW of downtown CBD, historic ‘landmark’ area</td>
<td>Artists Group and curators, Atlanta Cultural Affairs Dept</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain [R]</td>
<td>Nit Blanca</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Early July 6 p.m. to 5 a.m., museums until 2 a.m.</td>
<td>Montjuic Olympic Stadium and adjoining museums, gardens</td>
<td>Municipality of Barcelona</td>
<td>Main venue 15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin, Germany [N]</td>
<td>Long Night of Museums</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Twice a year summer and winter</td>
<td>Whole city area of 400 km² along five city routes</td>
<td>Kulturprojekte Berlin, City of Berlin, Museums</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels, Belgium [N]</td>
<td>Nuit Blanche</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Early October 1 of 3-day Arts Festival 11 p.m. to 4 a.m.</td>
<td>Central zone, venues all over the city</td>
<td>City Council Cultural Services</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago, USA [R]</td>
<td>Looptopia</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Early May 5 p.m. to 7 a.m.</td>
<td>Mixed-use district and central business BID area 7 boroughs – Norrebro, Vesterbro, Christianshavn, Osterbro, City, Orestad Frederiksberg</td>
<td>Chicago Loop Alliance</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copenhagen, Denmark [N]</td>
<td>Culture Night</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Mid-October 5 p.m.-2 a.m., museums until midnight</td>
<td>6 quarters – Heuston/Museum, Historic, Temple Bar, North and South Georgian, Trinity/ Docklands</td>
<td>Copenhagen Night of Culture Association</td>
<td>60,000–75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin, Ireland [N]</td>
<td>Culture Night</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Mid-September 6–11 p.m., bars 2 a.m.</td>
<td>Castle (light show), 4 points on central route, waterfront</td>
<td>Temple Bar Cultural Trust</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisbon, Portugal [N]</td>
<td>Luzboa</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2 weeks, biannually</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lisbon Municipal Council</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capital city</th>
<th>Event/festival</th>
<th>Year est.</th>
<th>Timing and duration</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Organiser/promoter</th>
<th>Annual visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lyon, France [R]</td>
<td>Fete des Lumieres</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>3–4 days around 8 December to 2 a.m.</td>
<td>Streets and parks in central area</td>
<td>City of Lyon</td>
<td>1–4 million (4 days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madrid, Spain (N)</td>
<td>La noche en blanco</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Mid-September 9 p.m. to 7 a.m.</td>
<td>4 areas - centre, southern and northern rim and university rim</td>
<td>City Council</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montreal, Quebec, Canada [R]</td>
<td>Nuit Blanche; Montreal en Lumiere</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>February, 1 night during the 10-day festival to 5:30 a.m.</td>
<td>City centre, Old port, Plateau Mont Royal, Pole Mainsonneuve, Pole Parc Jean-Drapeau</td>
<td>Hydro Quebec</td>
<td>275,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York [R]</td>
<td>Nuit Blanche bringtolightnyc</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Early October 7 p.m. to 7 a.m.</td>
<td>Greenpoint Brooklyn (industrial waterfront)</td>
<td>City of New York</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris, France [N]</td>
<td>Nuit Blanche; Nuit de Musees</td>
<td>2002-2007</td>
<td>Early October 2–7 a.m.</td>
<td>Central Paris served by metro routes</td>
<td>City of Paris</td>
<td>2 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome, Italy [N]</td>
<td>Notte Bianca Romana</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>August 8 p.m. to 8 a.m.</td>
<td>7–8 zones from centre to the periphery</td>
<td>Municipality of Rome, Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>1–2 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto, Ontario, Canada [R]</td>
<td>Nuit Blanche</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Early October 12 hours sunset to sunrise</td>
<td>3 zones City Hall, Yong-Dundas Square, Financial District, Liberty Village BIA</td>
<td>Toronto Metro Council</td>
<td>1 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK - Belfast [N]; Leeds, Birmingham, Brighton, Perth, Liverpool, Kirkaldy, Nottingham, Stoke, Sheffield</td>
<td>Light Night UK</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Mid-September/ mid-November 10–12 p.m.</td>
<td>Central area, venues, town squares, waterfronts</td>
<td>City Councils, Association of Town Centre Managers</td>
<td>Leeds 47,000, Birmingham 240,000, Nottingham 450,000, Stoke 15,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Other city Nuit Blanche events (with no data available): Helsinki, Finland; Bucharest, Romania; Rotterdam, The Netherlands; Tel Aviv, Israel; Sante Monica, USA; Riga, Latvia; Valetta, Malta.
centre entertainment zones. The temporal and geographic spread of visitor activity offered by the extended late night cultural city directly contributes to this increase in capacity and therefore their sustainability. Regional cities and towns that suffer crowding and mono-use conflicts are less able to offer a geographic spread and diversity of attractions, including gathering points and venues such as squares, parks and both cultural and hospitality facilities. Particular problems cited by local authorities include insufficient public transport at night, rubbish/litter on streets, fouling of streets/lack of public toilets and areas becoming unsafe and noisy. Late night capital cities again have the economies of scale and demand to provide night buses, extended metro and train timetables, as well as taxis. This enables the staggering of departures and greater dispersion in contrast to the overcrowding and flashpoints around minicab queues and fast food outlets that often occur in smaller concentrated areas with limited transport options.

The acceptance of, and economic opportunities arising from, the NTE is clear. However, the benefits according to the survey of local authorities are also wider than just the commercial returns and income to incumbent local authorities and businesses, who also link a vibrant night life with attraction to residents and investors (Roberts & Gornostaeva, 2007, p. 140). Perceived benefits from NTE growth included:

1. improvement in vitality of the area (and reduced crime/fear of crime)
2. attraction/expansion of leisure venues (cinemas, theatres, gyms, cyber cafes, events)
3. new residents moving into the area
4. increased number of jobs
5. greater number of tourists
6. inward investment in other businesses

The Greater London Authority (GLA) study of the Leisure Economy (GLA, 2003), for example, found that on average each ward had gained 20 bar jobs between 1995 and 2000 (an increase of 12%) and restaurant jobs increased by 28%, presenting one of London’s ‘best sources of employment growth’. Attendance at non-alcohol-based venues also recorded an increase of 25%. In a survey of four London authorities (Camden, Lambeth, Newham, Southwark), the responsibility for events varied from Parks, Leisure and Projects departments (Pugh & Wood, 2004). In Southwark, the coordination of events between Leisure and Communications departments was seen to promote objectives of city positioning by the borough which was undergoing major regeneration and image improvement, and where: ‘events do support wider social outcomes such as economic regeneration and social inclusion’. The strategic planning of events was seen to be advantageous in meeting Council objectives in Newham (the main London 2012 Olympic borough) as: ‘a place where people want to live and visit, to put Newham on the map, and to work in partnership to add diversity and value’. In all boroughs, an increase in events activity and their significance was observed. In some cases, larger events had displaced smaller ones, and the policy goal was of achieving financial self-sustainability. On the other hand, the need for events for children and families was stressed. Events planning was generally allied with Leisure and particularly Cultural Strategies. A general trend is the geographic spread and redistribution of cultural and associated tourism activity to outer London and less developed destination areas, which has long been a policy goal of tourism and planning bodies of major cities (Evans, 2000), and one aspect of late night events and trails. These help create new visitor destinations as well as new experiences in central and existing venues (Evans & Pmpogenesis, 2009), which are seen, literally, in a new light.
Museum nights

In London, cultural venues already operate extended opening times on one or more nights of the week, some daily (e.g. Barbican 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.) including the British Library and Museum (8/8.30 p.m.), Hayward, National/Portrait and Whitechapel Galleries (9 p.m.), Royal Academy, Victoria & Albert (V&A) Museum and Tate Modern (10 p.m.). On the first Thursday of each month, over 100 museums and galleries in the East End stay open until 9 p.m. Over 50 venues are listed as having late night licences for drinking (i.e. after 11 p.m.) and/or music. Some cinemas have traditionally shown late night films, for instance, midnight movie nights with films presented by experts.

In May 2009, museums in the UK joined with French museums in holding a late night opening weekend. Paris started its Nuit des Musees in 2007 with Museums of Modern Art, Bourdelle, Victor Hugo’s house and several others opening from 6 p.m. to midnight, with talks, installations (e.g. deckchairs in galleries), writing and drawing workshops. Since 2006, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe (which celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2009) has promoted the Museums Open Night which takes place concurrently in the signatory countries of the European Cultural Convention. The initiative promotes Europe/European cultures and provides the opportunity to attract a wider public, particularly young people. Over the weekend of 15–17 May 2009, Museums at Night was held in the UK, with museums and heritage attractions opening until midnight: ‘For us it was a really successful way of promoting the [National] Gallery to new audiences and those who cannot normally visit during the day’ (Culture24, 2009, p. 2), where a talk by the Velvet Underground’s John Cale and a late opening of the popular Picasso exhibition attracted more than 300: ‘the noticeable arrival of a more fresh-faced bunch than museums normally welcome was a particular trend. Generally we noticed a much younger crowd were in throughout the night’ (Culture24, 2009, p. 2). In some cases, museums stayed open throughout the night, e.g. Tate Modern from 5 p.m. to 5 p.m. the next day, while more than 120 people visited Florence Nightingale House in London ‘after dark’.

The forerunner of the Museum Night is Berlin, whose biannual ‘Long Night of Museums’ was established in 1997. Here the event adopts a thematic approach – in January 2009 Worldviews, and in August 20 Years After the Wall. Over 100 venues participate, including major government offices, public readings and concerts. Opening from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m., 40,000 attend, with a single ticket entry to all participating venues. The ticket includes free travel on shuttle busses between 3 p.m. and 5 a.m. Three zones of public transport are free, but only for getting to and departing from the event. The event is organised by the Berliner Museum association in cooperation with the City Council’s Kultur Projekte. Promotional and web information is available in English as well as in German, with the target audience both local and international.

In 2007 the GLA launched its Lates festival, with leaflets, website, calendar of events and a media partnership with thelondonpaper. This late night festival of after-hours art and culture was developed by GLA’s cultural campaigns team with the following objectives.

1. Demonstrating how the cultural sector contributes significantly to London’s late night economy.
2. Encouraging London’s world-class organisations to work together to present audiences with an integrated and unified offer.
3. Encouraging and developing audiences in the 20–35 age range by providing them with extended opening hours and encouraging this audience to regard these venues as places to meet, socialise and think.
(4) Ensuring that *Lates* events imaginatively re-vision this content for 20–35-year-olds.

(5) Using *Lates* as a flagship project to stimulate the cultural sector into providing more late openings and activity.

Museums and galleries were specifically identified, as they wished to build their late night attendances. An evaluation of the *Lates* launch in May 2007 and subsequent events in October 2007 and June 2008, where 68 events were held, found that most partner organisations had achieved their most successful late night events in terms of audiences.

- The British Museum reported a 100% uplift in audiences compared to their May light night events in 2006 and their biggest turn out for a late night event, with 6600 people in 2007.
- The V&A had over 4500 people attend their surrealist ball.
- The Hayward Gallery achieved over 3000 attendees at their Saturday night event for the artist Anthony Gormley, 50% higher than the following Sunday (normally their best day).
- The National Portrait Gallery’s *Fashionista Friday* was their second busiest Friday ever.
- 90,000 visitors came to the Tate Modern and Tate Britain from May weekend in 2007, over 120,000 people in 2008 with many events sold out.

Satisfaction with these events was high:

- 95% of the respondents felt the event they had attended met or exceeded their expectations
- 88% of the respondents said that they would return to the venue as a result of attending a *Lates* event
- over 50% of the respondents said that the *Lates* festival had improved their perception of London’s late night offer; 25% reported that as a result of *Lates* visit they spent more than they normally would
- across the whole sample this represented an uplift of £24 extra spend per head and for the 12 highlight events this had a consequent economic benefit of £2.6m.

These initiatives by major cultural institutions, which already dominate the cultural tourism and visitor economy of the capital city, demonstrate a desire to extend and in some respects redistribute the visitor flow. With many major venues experiencing peak visiting and overcrowding, particularly of tourists, between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m., the opportunity has been taken to relieve this by later opening, and to offer a different experience to regular as well as first-time visitors. The critical mass of venues and routes between these is a unique offer that capital cities provide and one that has enabled the late night festival to flourish and grow, year on year.

*Nuit Blanche* brand and charter

The adoption of a wider late night economy in ‘northern’ cities has in many respects transformed the landscape of their visitor and city centre economies, management and land use (e.g. retail, hospitality), and it is within this context that late night festivals and events have
evolved. In some cases, these have developed from existing festivals – religious, cultural, seasonal – or more often, been the result of new festivals created from scratch as part of city branding and promotional initiatives (Evans, 2003). Nuit Blanche and other all-night festivals have therefore joined a global network of ‘serial events’ such as marathons and biennales.

While late night opening of museums and light night events have been established since the 1990s, notably in Berlin and in St Petersburg’s ‘White Nights’ (although not actually ‘all night’), the Nuit Blanche originated in 2002 with Paris where Christophe Girard, Deputy Mayor first proposed this event 1 year after taking office, and the concept has been quickly adopted in other cities (Table 2). In 2006, five capital cities – Paris, Rome, Riga, Brussels and Madrid – organised an exchange programme for artists, each welcoming an artist/theatre company from each city. The following year, Bucharest joined these six cities to formulate a shared artistic project based on the creation of a ‘lounge area’ in the heart of each Nuit Blanche, holding its first event in September 2008 (Jiwa, Coca-Stefanik, Blackwell, & Rahman, 2009). In many cases, there has been a rapid build up of activity, scope and attendances at these events in only a few years, as they move from local (special interest, artists, area/business improvement), sub-region, city, to international appeal and status.

This evolution of Nuit Blanche events has therefore spawned a European network with common aims, and this reflects their cooperative nature and a celebration of the expansive European Project. For instance, the ‘twinning’ of Paris and Rome, European Museum Nights and networks of national events across several cities, e.g. in Ireland: Dublin – Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Galway; France: Paris – Amiens, Brison, Metz ; Italy: Rome – Specchia, Genoa; and the UK Light Nights cities of Belfast, Birmingham, Bournemouth, Brighton, Leeds, Liverpool, Nottingham, Sheffield, Stoke and Kirkaldy and Perth in Scotland. The following European Charter has been developed to promote and coordinate the Nuit Blanche branded event, indicating the global scope of this European project which has spread to Canada (Montreal, Toronto, Halifax), the USA (Atlanta, Chicago, Santa Monica/Los Angeles, New York) as well as Peru (Lima), Israel (Tel Aviv) and Malta (Valetta), with Nuit Blanche events now held in over 120 cities.

1. Nuit Blanche is a free cultural event that is open to all, held annually at the end of summer or the beginning of autumn – and which will go on all night.
2. Nuit Blanche gives pride of place to contemporary creativity in all its forms: visual art, projections, installations, music, stage and street performers, circus and fairground arts.
3. Nuit Blanche presents all the different aspects of public space: places that are usually closed or abandoned, outlying areas, prestigious locations or places that form part of the city’s cultural heritage, revisited in an unusual way by the artists.
4. Nuit Blanche enables cities organising the event to reflect together upon current developments for urban nights, to implement suitable services and means of organisation (city economy, signs, lighting, security, services).
5. Nuit Blanche provides a perfect opportunity to promote ‘soft’ forms of mobility: encouraging cycle paths, the use of trams, public transport, river shuttles.
6. Nuit Blanche fosters exchanges between city centres and peripheral areas.
7. The Nuit Blanche Europe partner cities have decided that a joint artistic project will be carried out each year, with the aim of developing exchanges between the cities and between European artists and audiences.
Late night cultural festivals have also evolved independently of the *Nuit Blanche* brand and network, notably in Atlanta, Chicago, Dublin and Copenhagen. Here, local cultural development agencies rather than city/mayors organise the event, albeit with city council funding and infrastructure support. In the UK, which so far has not created a *Nuit Blanche* branded event, the Association of Town Centre Managers (ATCM) coordinate a *Light Nights* network which does emulate the *Nuit Blanche*, although lacking the all-night programme of events and extended opening. The reluctance of these regional cities to go the full ‘all night’ reflects disquiet with the perceived negative social effects noted above. The UK *Light Nights* events thus seek:

- to create a feeling of community spirit; engender an awareness that the city is united and that there is a sentiment that everyone has something in common;
- to bring social causes to people’s attention and to encourage donations towards a charity fund with publicised beneficiaries;
- to allow people to experience different forms of art and entertainment and to experience things that they would not normally;
- to promote the work of voluntary organisations;
- to create an awareness of what the city has to offer to residents and visitors alike.

Following light night events in Birmingham, Leeds and Nottingham in 2008, several more cities now offer their residents and visitors the opportunity to experience their city at night from a fresh perspective. The sentiment of reclaiming the night in these city centres is also strong, as is the commercial potential: ‘Light Night gives the general population the chance to “take back” the city from the demographic group that normally occupies the city in the evening and at night. Because there are different ways for local, national and international companies to get involved there are strong, varied opportunities to attract advertising, sponsorship and also media attention to the city’ (ATCM, 2009, p. 1). For example, Stoke’s 2010 light night event was rated as ‘Excellent or Good’ by visitors and a third indicated that their experience of light night had changed how they saw their city.

The *Nuit Blanche* concept and brand has therefore been a popular vehicle to develop a distinct cultural event and a vehicle for city promotion and achieving local economic, cultural and community objectives. Commercial firms have also adopted the concept, with the drinks company Smirnoff promoting a 14 city Nightlife Exchange project. On 27 November 2010, these cities swapped their ‘late nights’ taking a selection of artists, clubs, DJs etc., and ‘exporting’ them to their partner city. London and Miami swapped ‘authentic’ all-night events with venues in Limehouse, east London and Miami’s warehouse district – both non-central areas of each city.

The following section summarises light/late night events – listed in Table 2 – both stand alone and as part of wider festivals.

**Nuit Blanche impacts**

Total attendances at these events range from the smaller 40,000 to 100,000, and mega-events from to 1 million (Lisbon, Lyon, Toronto) to 2 million (Paris, Rome). Their scale has developed rapidly on an annual basis. Paris first attracted 500,000 in 2002 and now attracts 2 million; 40,000 visited Dublin’s first all-night culture festival in 2006 and over 100,000 in 2008; Rome saw 1 million in 2005 and receives 2 million today; Toronto attracted 425,000 in 2006 and over 1 million in 2008. This expansion reflects the
A growing number of events, venues and geographic area covered, but also the success in marketing and generation of excitement around what has become a ‘must see’ event. Some visitor surveys have been undertaken, including Dublin (PCC, 2008; Tourism Research Centre, 2007) and Rome (Cherubini & Iasevoli, 2006; Armenia, Fiorani, & Menguzzo, 2008). Satisfaction with the quality of these events was high – Rome 90% (42% ‘Excellent’, 48% ‘Good’) and Dublin 94% (65% ‘Very’ and 29% ‘Somewhat Satisfied’). Nearly half of the visitors to this event participated in two or more activities and nearly 80% travelled by foot or public transport. Visitors to these late night events are primarily local/city residents, ‘domestic’ (whether staying overnight or not) with a growing international tourist or visitor. So that while Dublin’s Culture Festival attracts 100,000 visitors, 75% of these are from Ireland (62% from Dublin), but the remainder (25,000) are from the UK/Europe and the USA (PCC, 2008). Likewise, 94% of Rome’s Notte Bianca is attended by Italians, but in 2004 this meant that 120,000 participants were from other countries. A similar number (130,000) of tourists came to Toronto’s Nuit Blanche for the 2008 festival.

Several events form part of longer cultural festivals, running the whole weekend, for 3 or 4 days and even up to 10 days. Late/light nights tend to fall on a Saturday evening/ Sunday morning in September or early October. This timing sometimes coincides with cultural or religious festivals (e.g. Barcelona – Grec), but this is also a post-summer/pre-winter event opportunity, after the peak holiday and ‘closed’ city summer season. In some cities, the event therefore seeks to spread tourism into the low season.

Information on the cost and revenues associated with these events is limited. In part, this is due to their free/open nature and difficulty in counting attendances (these are estimated from transport, police and venue counts). Some are part of longer festivals and budgets for the all-night element are not specified (e.g. Festival des Lumière, Lyon – 4 days, €1.8m expenditure; Montréal en Lumière – 10 days, C$6.75m). Several cities operate volunteer programmes to provide support services such as in guides, safety and clean-up. Others have been developed by groups of artists and local organisations. Larger events combine city, cultural and commercial partners, including in Canada headline sponsors such as Scotiabank Nuit Blanche, Toronto and Hydro-Quebec High Lights Festival, Montreal.

The large-scale all-night event in Rome has a budget of €3.5m of which the city funds 48%, Chambers of Commerce 39% and Sponsors 13%. Lyon’s light night receives 40% of its budget from sponsors. The estimated revenues generated in Rome are calculated at €30m in business/added value, plus hotel income, and with €1.12m received in transport revenue (€1 ticket). It is estimated that visitors spend on average €25. Toronto’s 2008 Nuit Blanche was estimated to have produced an economic multiplier impacts of C$16.7m (direct, indirect, induced effects), with C$18m in direct spending and C$7.6m in extra tax receipts. The regional government provides a grant of C$300,000 for this event with the City providing C$737,000 in cash plus staff resources (6 FTE per year) and C$2.2m generated in cash and kind from sponsors in 2009.

An important feature and rationale for these events is their arts and cultural focus, using the showcase opportunity and night-time atmosphere to present a range of contemporary art exhibitions, performances, installations and media in both traditional and unlikely settings. In some cases arts groups lead the event, e.g. Atlanta and even here and in Lisbon, collaboration with French Institutes maintains the global Nuit Blanche link back to Paris and the charter: ‘All projects must critically engage with the Nuit Blanche mandate to bring forward contemporary art while addressing public space and its relationship to the City’ (Metro Toronto, 2009, p. 2). Other late night events specifically target business improvement and regeneration areas, e.g. Atlanta, Chicago and Brussels which directly engages local neighbourhoods and young people with collaborating artists and amateur arts competitions.
(as in Dublin). Brussels, like Copenhagen and Lisbon, originated its late night festivals with EXPO and European City of Culture events, and these cities therefore seek to maintain the momentum and new cultural spaces opened up by these previous events.

**Conclusion**

The adoption of late night festivals and events in national and regional capital cities forms the latest move in rediscovering city centres that had been in decline (e.g. Times Square New York, Soho London), or dominated by exclusionary and increasingly anti-social behaviour and mono-cultural use of streets and venues. This has been an opportunity taken up by old as well as new world and re-emergent national capitals (Maitland, 2010; Maitland & Ritchie, 2010). Reclaiming the night has also provided an alternative and supplementary experience to the traditional night life of entertainment zones that cater for a narrow range of visitors and audiences. Cultural and heritage venue visits, once confined to day time, have been able to extend into the later evening and with special events such as Museum Nights and *Nuit Blanche*, through the night. This diversification and temporal shift has benefited under-developed visitor areas and established cultural institutions that have attracted a younger audience and provided different kinds of experience. The use of lighting on and around buildings and light installations – a long tradition in cities such as Paris and Barcelona (Alves, 2007) as well as seaside attractions, notably Blackpool Illuminations – has created a backdrop for a range of formal and informal activities which are enjoyed by locals and visitors alike.

*Nuit Blanche* and other late night festivals therefore engage both citizen and tourist, although starting out as primarily local and city events for residents, they have developed in size and scope and unsurprisingly develop into larger scale events that feature on city event and tourist calendars (as with cultural-touristic events such as Carnival Mas’ in Notting Hill, London and Caribana, Toronto). Crucially this reoccupation of the city at night provides a corollary to the deleterious effects of mass late night drinking, but rather than replacing this with another mono consumption based activity, a more open and fluid event has emerged that reflects the city culture, cityscape and social life in each case (and often, their more authentic festival roots), but under a recognised ‘brand’ that provides validation and recognition to newcomers to the city.

This is therefore a global trend and network (Castells, 1996) and a strategy that capital cities have best been able to exploit and which other cities are emulating, albeit at a smaller scale. This could be interpreted as a further serialisation and commodification of city spaces through an international brand – touristic rather than community/cultural-based. Larger and geographically concentrated events obviously risk the crowding out and negative impacts associated with such occasions, suggesting that Getz’s (2009) ‘triple bottom line’ approach to balancing social, environmental and economic impacts will need to be required here, as elsewhere. However, while the opportunity to participate in a growing international network and the development of *Nuit Blanche* and all-night festivals as place-marketing tools is apparent in these capital and cultural cities, their underlying rationales and content do vary. The opportunities they offer for cultural exchange, ‘creative city tourism’ (Evans, 2007) and community engagement therefore distinguishes them from other night-time entertainments and tourist events – maintaining their particularity while sharing universal values and experience with other cities. These events – whether embedded in historic rituals, or created anew – represent in some cases a shift in the legitimate use of the city at night, but in others, an established late night city culture that has found a new and increasing audience.
References


