On The Bounce: The Challenge of the Night-Time Economy

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Preface

This short collection of papers stems from the shared research interests of various members of The University of Newcastle’s Cultural Industries and Practices Research Centre (CIPS). The work of various academics and research higher degree students at CIPS has a bearing on the night-time economy, be it in the areas of Urban and Cultural Sociology, Criminology, Media and Cultural Studies, Tourism and Leisure studies. We decided, as the Christmas festive season approached, to tackle, in a preliminary and open fashion, a topic that has begun to make its mark, rather belatedly, in Australian public discourse and policy. It is hoped that these papers will help stimulate research, scholarship and policy development in the area of the night-time economy.

CIPS research assistant Michelle Mansfield contributed to the organisation of the Symposium. I would like to thank the Symposium attendees, who included people from local government, police, journalism, tertiary education and the local community, for their lively and informed contributions.

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1. Introduction

Talk of the Town: Considering the Night-Time Economy

David Rowe

The night-time economy is a phenomenon that has begun to interest many social science researchers, especially in Britain. However, the term ‘economy’ should not be taken too literally here because, while economics and commerce are critical components, there are other forms of economy than those strictly involving the production, exchange and consumption of goods and services. There are also social and cultural economies, in which groups of people, identities, values, and practices are created, modified, circulated and valued. The night-time economy is a striking manifestation of the increasingly intricate and dynamic relationship between these material, social and cultural economies (Lovatt and O’Connor 1995).

Since World War II, in many countries, there have been major changes to the fabric of everyday life (Harvey 1994; Lash & Urry 1987; 1994). In Australia, for example, relatively regimented lifestyles, as characterised by 9-5 working men and ‘domesticated’ women; meat and three veg; the six o’clock swill, and the exit to the suburbs, have been challenged and sometimes replaced by new, flexible arrangements. These include redundant male factory workers and full-time working women, often delaying and even eschewing motherhood; the ready availability of multiple cuisine; the languorous late night drink, and the rise of inner-city apartment living (Stevenson 2003). This may be a rather clichéd and simplistic picture, but it is nonetheless a recognisable one.

As working and leisured lives have changed, the night-time economy has emerged. The de-regulation of the labour market has progressively replaced day (and sometimes night) shift work with multiple working rhythms – task oriented, contractual, casual and so on, producing new leisure needs and different times for recreation (Gregson et. al. 1999). De-industrialisation has created large, vacant spaces in the centre of cities, where residences and restaurants, clubs and coffee shops, retail outlets and recreational facilities, co-exist in new ways (Harvey 1989;
Jessop 1997). The night-time economy has become symbolic of a new cosmopolitanism in a ‘24-hour city’ that contrasts sharply with the narrow conformity that has come, accurately or not, to characterise its day-time predecessor (Hobbs et al. 2000).

There have been two main ways of appraising the emergent night-time economy. The first is to view it as a benign and, indeed, highly beneficial development. Its promise to liberate people from the constraints of ‘industrial time’, and its potential to arrest the decline of the inner-city and to create thriving forms of southern-European style public sociability in regenerated urban space, has been of obvious appeal to urban planners, central governments and local councils. But the ‘cappuccino culture’ image of the night-time economy has often diverged from its reality. The centrality of licensed venues and alcohol consumption in many inner-city leisure zones has contrasted sharply with notions of sophisticated urban living (Chatterton & Hollands 2002). Questions of social order have come to the fore, with increasingly urgent demands to combat alcohol-fuelled, anti-social behaviour, and to foster a diverse cultural life rather than one organised around youthful drinking and ‘clubbing’.

These matters are addressed in considerable depth in a UK research study by Dick Hobbs, Philip Hadfield, Stuart Lister and Simon Winlow, Bouncers: Violence and Governance in the Night-time Economy (2002). Hobbs et al. are especially concerned with how the vast growth and concentration of night-time leisure has created an army of private security staff, barely regulated by government, who have virtually taken over the roles of the public police force. At weekends in the centre of Manchester, for example, they note that up to a 100,000 people are controlled by an estimated 1,000 bouncers (door-supervisors) and only 30-40 police, while in Nottingham the equivalent ratios are 50,000:400:20-25 (Hobbs et al. 2002: 43).

The night-time economy, therefore, raises matters of ‘muscle and money’: the control of urban space where legal and illegal drugs are consumed; the potential for protection rackets, violence and drug dealing among those who control that space, and so on. But the authors do not seek to demonise bouncers – they see the growth in their employment as an inevitable consequence of trends in “outlet density and hours of trading”. These should be the subject of public debate supported by locally-based
social scientific research, as government authorities, the police, business and local residents decide on the appropriate urban and cultural policies and planning that will govern the spaces of the night-time economy. In particular, the consequences of developing a “market-led monoculture of theme bars, branded pubs, and fast-food outlets” as opposed to the envisioned “vibrant, urbane, and inclusive marriage of culture and commerce inherent in the much-lauded concept of the ‘24-hour city’” (Hobbs et al. 2002: 246), have to be carefully examined. The ‘honey pot’ effect of night-time leisure zones means that these are important matters for all citizens, irrespective of where they live.

In addressing the night-time economy, a full range of interest groups must be consulted. Much recent debate on the night-time economy has been dominated by issues of after-dark safety, policing and licensing issues, with residents (many of whom have recently relocated in later life from the suburbs) and earlier-closing local businesses especially vocal. While they have valid concerns, there are also issues of diversity and inclusion that have not been given such audible public airing. These include how a rich cultural life can be sustained in the inner-city without excessive control over people, places and activities, and how those who are economically or culturally excluded from the highly commercialised environment of centralised leisure zones can exert their legitimate claims to use them and feel a sense of belonging when within those spaces. It is also important to consider what might be substituted for current uses and activities, given that the solution to a problem in one night-time economy space might simply transfer problems to other parts of the city and to the people who inhabit them.

These are the difficult subjects that this Symposium began to address from our own local context but with a focus well beyond. In asking how it might be possible to meet the challenge of the night-time economy, we are seeking to reconcile its cultural promise with its often disappointing lived experience.
2. Transcending the Opposition between Safety and Pleasure in the Night-Time Economy

Stephen Tomsen

The night-time economy could be understood as referring to the provision, servicing and expanding consumption of a range of night-time leisure activities that accompany night-time patterns of public socialising: including collective drinking, eating and seeking out different forms of paid entertainment (Hannigan 1998; Hollands and Chatterton 2002). In recent years, the night-time economy has been a focus of more attention for crime researchers and crime prevention officials. Most obviously, some of the commercial transactions of the night economy - like illicit drug dealing or some forms of sex work - have a direct link to criminal activity. But the association with crime and the need for crime prevention are more expansive subjects.

For participants, much of the inherent attraction of these after-dark activities is the contrast they provide with the conventional daylight world of work and its associations with restraint, rules and order (Hobbs et. al. 2000). Disorderly behaviour, heavy drinking, mixing freely with strangers, or looking for sexual liaisons as part of a 'good night, are all interpreted as measures of pleasurable risk-taking and the enjoyable breaking of social convention. This could even be more so with young people, who experience these night activities as short periods of apparent freedom from parental, school or workplace authority (Hollands 1995).

It is this carnivalesque quality of much night economy activity that shapes its attractiveness and our frequent ambivalence towards it. Many police, local authorities and citizens view collective disorder and the suspension of social norms as the root cause of serious criminal activities. This is not a necessary link, but the association with crime is based in empirical reality, and can be demonstrated by strong evidence. Problems including public disorder, vandalism, drink-driving, serious assaults (including homicides) and sexual assaults all peak on weekend nights and follow the rhythms of night-time socialising and leisure (see Hauritz et. al. 1998; Thomas and Bromley 2000). If these crimes do not occur within the direct confines of the night economy they are often associated with aspects of it. Improving police data and the
greater recent use of hospital casualty reports and records to study crime, all strongly reflect this association.

The social costs in terms of safety are less obvious but also significant. In a night economy of limited scope built around heavy group drinking in pubs and clubs and fast food outlets, the attractions of a ‘relaxed’ social atmosphere are monopolised by groups of young men. Groups like gay men and other men repelled by scenarios of masculine physical confrontation, many women, older people, and longstanding or new inner-city residents, are marginalised by this outcome. At night they often feel ‘unsafe’ in urban entertainment zones or by virtue of living next to them.

Although much Australian crime research has studied aspects of this phenomenon (especially alcohol-related violence, policing and liquor industry regulation), local researchers have not matched the recent UK efforts to study the night-time economy in a broad and integrated way. The mix of rapid industrial closure and deregulation of the liquor industry, the rise of a poorly regulated private security sector with much ‘bouncer’ violence and illegal activity in pubs and clubs, have all contributed to the startling rise of a problematic and sodden night economy in many British cities (Hobbs et. al. 2002).

Our circumstances are not identical, but these problems have a familiar ring to locals. In fact, the post-earthquake 1990s growth of the night-time economy in Newcastle does have some striking parallels with the recent British examples. This was a solidly working-class city founded in heavy manufacturing (steel and shipping) and characterised by masculine traditions of heavy group drinking and occasional drunken rebellion (for example, the Star Hotel riot of 1979). The 1989 earthquake and industrial closures in the 1990s had some negative impact on night-time leisure and consumption. Nevertheless, an overall expansion now appears to have been fostered by the wider effects of a fragmentation of old work patterns, relaxed licensing laws, a general increase in disposable income for leisure activities, the shift to city living, and even more liberal attitudes to groups of young women socialising in public space. And the night-time attractions of collective leisure and disorder at public beaches may go unnoticed to crime researchers, but they are familiar enough to local police and residents in many parts of Newcastle.
There is no need to ape tabloid alarmism about local crime rates and patterns. Yet even allowing for more effective reporting and recording of crime in a regional city, it still appears that Newcastle has a significant and concentrated level of night-time crime with a close relation to public drinking and leisure activities. Local licensed venues figured prominently in the study of problematic New South Wales “hotspots” requiring police attention for assaults and other incidents that was conducted by the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research a few years ago (Briscoe and Donnelly 2001). This study found that over a two-year period 80 per cent of all assaults in local licensed premises occurred in 8 per cent of all venues. As could be expected, most of these occurred late on Friday and Saturday nights. But against a backdrop of venue deregulation, many assaults occurred very late and Newcastle stood out for the number of assaults that also happened on Thursday nights.

In relation to its overall population, Newcastle has the highest concentration of venues with 24-hour trading in the whole state of New South Wales. And the ‘clustering’ of a range of problems growing out of a minority of premises (such as public assaults and public order offending, domestic assaults, drink-driving, and vehicle crashes) has been confirmed by the ‘linking study’ conducted by a local team of health researchers analysing police and hospital records (Considine et. al. 1998).

Against the logic of wholesale drinking bans and curfews for specific groups, it must be stressed that drinking-related disorder and violence is a social process. It is not the inevitable outcome of intoxication. This behaviour has produced a lot of official, press and public mistrust of young people engaged in night-time leisure. But new strategies to plan, educate and shape social patterns of drinking (drinker education, anti-violence, and under-aged drinking campaigns) and to regulate venues (liquor accords, server intervention, and co-operative planning between local police, venue security, and local councils) have moved us beyond the simple opposition between blunt control and chaos. Safety and pleasure may yet be reconciled with each other in the future form of the night-time economy.

The challenging task for critical researchers is now to understand the complexity of how this could happen and the benefits and costs of the processes enacted to achieve
it. How do participants in night-time leisure reconcile the experience of a satisfying and exciting atmosphere and their own needs for safety? What competing rough and respectable visions of the night-time economy are inscribed in arguments about policing, regulation and crime prevention? What issues of accountability and regulation are involved in the greater use of private police in the night economy? And what social groups might be privileged or marginalised in these trends, and how can the competing interests of these be fairly balanced? There is an obvious need to enhance uses of the night-time economy in a way that encourages participant diversity and minimises irritation for other citizens. A broader research approach that acknowledges the multi-dimensional nature of this phenomenon – with its social, economic, health, legal, urban planning and governance aspects – would be an important first step to understanding how to achieve this goal.
3. Night Moves: Cultural Precincts and the 24-Hour City

Deborah Stevenson

In recent years (following UK initiatives) there has been a great deal of interest in Australia in facilitating the creation and operation of ‘vibrant’ urban centres and inner city precincts where all members of the community feel welcome and safe (at all times of the day and at night). Driving the agenda are several interconnected factors:

- The physical and economic decline of the inner city;
- The shift from a retailing/business economy to one focused heavily on leisure and tourism;
- The ‘problem’ of law and order.

Many of the discussions and interventions that are being espoused are increasingly coming from what has come to be called cultural planning, which is an approach that focuses in particular on the development of creative or cultural precincts. And there is a growing literature of ‘tool-kits’ setting out how you go about doing this. Significantly, a cultural planning approach represents a big shift away from policing and law and order solutions to urban problems.

According to this literature the most successful inner cities are those that not only provide a range of retail, residential, and commercial (including entertainment) facilities but also nurture local cultures and the expressive arts. In addition, it is argued that they should also be places of activity 24 hours a day, seven days a week, twelve months a year. This idea of the 24-hour city has really gained currency and is at the heart of current thinking in urban cultural precinct redevelopment (Heath and Strickland 1997).

According to the main blueprints a successful cultural planning solution is about the convergence of strategies that address three interconnected elements:
People

According to cultural planning perspectives, the fundamental requirement for a successful inner city precinct is the presence of people. Different types of people – families, workers, and holiday-makers, people of different ages, and those from a range of ethnic and racial backgrounds (Lovatt and O’Connor 1995; Bianchini 1995). Not all those people will necessarily use the precinct at the same time, of course. But at any one time there will be a mix. One of the big problems of many inner city precincts at night is mono-culturalism and mono-activity— too many young people doing too much of the same thing (Chatterton and Hollands 2002; Hobbs et. al. 2002). The aim is to offer the kinds of facilities that will attract a range of people and to foster and cater for diversity. So there might be a mix of theatres, businesses, restaurants, night clubs, artists’ studios, student accommodation, middle-class apartments, hotels, and so on. There is also evidence that suggests that people are safer in places where there are other people, either on the streets or living close by.

Having a range of different transportation modes is also pivotal so that people can easily get out of the precinct.

Time

In some ways the idea 24-hour city destabilises how we traditionally have thought about cities and their rhythms (Heath and Strickland 1997). Its underpinning rationale is to move away from a dichotomous view that puts the activities that occur in a particular precinct in the day time on one side of the ledger, and those that occur at night on the other (which is what often tends to happen in our cities). And then all the strategic planning that is done in relation to this space occur in relation to these quite discrete fault lines. So, in effect, you have two separate cities instead of one city with overlapping and intersecting functions. They run parallel to each other.

The idea of the 24-hour city tries to break down these zonal ways of thinking and starts from the premise that the inner city should be a place where there is a diversity
of activities and facilities on offer at different and overlapping times (which, of course, attracts heterogeneous people who come to the city for a range of reasons). It proceeds from the fact the ‘things’ happen at night.

One of the most influential works on this subject is a book by Ken Worpole published in the early 1990s called *Towns for People*. In this book Worpole (1992) argues that, in order to address the changes that have occurred in work and leisure in the city over the last several decades, we need to change fundamentally the way that we think about time and public culture and their relationship. He uses the notion of ‘time-shifting’ to describe a process of moving/altering the times of activities to ensure that activities in the city occur at times that better coincide with people’s needs and interests, and will help to generate a critical mass of activity. He argues that changing the way we think about what happens in the city at different times is the only way to ensure that places don’t become desolate and dangerous, particularly at night.

**Creativity**

Creativity is a key ingredient to all the formulae for building successful inner cities – creativity in design, activity and cultural expression. But, also, creativity in the way we think about both the problem and the solution – not seeking one solution and sometimes even seeing the problem as part of the solution.

The arts (particularly those that are local), in both their traditional and non-traditional forms, can play a central role in making a place culturally, socially and economically sustainable (as well as lively and safe). Also important here can be inclusive public art, architecture and urban design, as well as the presence of a diverse range of retail outlets and public facilities. The key it seems is to think laterally – public art can be static displays but it can also be innovative forms of shading, lighting, design, and street furniture. And the research suggests that successful urban cultural precincts are places where art is produced as well as consumed and displayed. So there are workshops and studios and, ideally, also artist’s accommodation and subsidised studio and workshop spaces for local filmmakers.

As the creative industries also include much more than the traditional arts, it is recommended that creative industry development within city precincts should be quite
broadly focused. Entertainment has an important and obvious role to play, and cultural planners argue that it necessary to have a range of opportunities – from, say, performances by leading musicians or actors to more locally focused celebrations and events. The desirability of involving University and TAFE colleges in some of these initiatives has also been explored. This presence may take the form of student galleries, perhaps a student radio station or media centre, or student studio spaces, along, of course, with student residential accommodation.

**Concluding Comments**

The night-time economy is a complex phenomenon requiring a range of interconnecting strategies and an interdisciplinary sensibility if we are to have any chance of addressing its challenges. At the level of government (local and state) it also needs to be addressed through a cooperative approach that transcends bureaucratic divisions. But the first thing we need to do is to think about the potential of approaches such as that proffered by cultural planning. In other words, the evidence is pretty overwhelming that dealing with the night-time economy is not simply a matter of addressing law and order. Instead, we need to find a way of moving beyond a narrow security or policing focus to consider some more interesting (and, potentially, fruitful) convergences that take us, in particular, into the realm of the cultural and the social.
This paper interrogated issues surrounding the production and regulation of the night-time economy in relation to the governance and cultural impact of live music in Victoria, Australia. Its purpose was to provide, through a case study approach, a brief sketch of the lived experience of the night-time economy illustrating the above mentioned theoretical positions. The Fair Go for Live Music campaign, a broad-based alliance of diverse stakeholders, was initiated in response to increasing governmental (both state and local) regulations imposed on live music venues. The various changing social, economic and demographic conditions feeding into the night-time economy as a site of contestation were identified in relation to events that transpired in the City of Yarra (Fitzroy, Collingwood, Richmond) and the City of Port Phillip (St Kilda). These issues revolved around local government attempts to manage competing interests between increasing numbers of local residents and consumers looking to enjoy the night-time economy historically embedded as the pub-scene in St Kilda and Fitzroy.

The presentation discussed the outcome of urban revitalisation programs and planning schemes and the changing socio-demographic reality of inner-city suburbs, including the movement toward gentrification, residential living and higher population densities. Alongside these shifts is an increasingly fragmented political scenario characterised by overlapping jurisdictions (local and state), overlapping legislation (such as the Planning and Environment Act 1987; Liquor Control Reform Act 1998; and, Environmental Protection Act), and tension between local councillors and their local bureaucrats. Within these contexts key events were identified as incendiary sparks that led to the broad-based mobilisation of core stakeholders, musicians, venue owners and the general public, as part of the Fair Go campaign to save live music in Melbourne.
These ‘incendiary sparks’ included: the fining of bands and venues for bill postering; a proposal for the redevelopment of the locally iconic Esplanade Hotel (The Espy) in St Kilda (whose Council received over 10,000 individual objections to the redevelopment); and a case in which a single noise complaint from a local resident having recently moved into the proximity of the Empress of India Hotel (North Fitzroy) placed severe constraints on its operation as a live music venue (and, therefore, its financial viability).

The response saw the establishment of VicMUSIC as an incorporated non-profit representative voice, which lobbied the State government to recognise the cultural and economic importance of live music. The mobilisation of discourses emphasising the local Councils’ self-image as progressive and ‘culturally’ aware, and the use of street petitions and sympathetic print and electronic media, led the Victorian State cabinet to endorse the setting up of a ‘live music taskforce’. While this outcome was favourable to the interests of local live music ‘vendors’ and consumers within Melbourne’s night-time economy, these issues have by no means been resolved. The case study outlined in this brief synopsis sought to highlight the tensions involved in struggles for representation, legitimation and authority that is a constant feature of the night-time economy. Furthermore, it demonstrated that it is precisely this dynamic and contested nature of the night-time economy that makes it a potential site of both increasing regulation of a dominant leisure monoculture, and also a stimulus for expanding cultural enrichment and diversity.
References


CIPS Contributors

Associate Professor David Rowe is a Cultural Sociologist who is currently the Director of The University of Newcastle’s Cultural Industries and Practices Research Centre (CIPS). He has researched many areas of popular culture and everyday experience, his work embracing such areas as the popular music industry, sport, urban and regional tourism, and the popular media’s representation of society. Professor Rowe’s research record includes being a Chief Investigator on five major Australian Research Council projects, and many other research projects and consultancies on social and cultural subjects. His books include *Popular Cultures: Rock Music, Sport and the Politics of Pleasure* (1995); *Tourism, Leisure, Sport: Critical Perspectives* (1998); and *Sport, Culture and the Media: The Unruly Trinity* (2004, second edition).

Dr Stephen Tomsen is a Sociologist and Criminologist with research interests in violent crime, hate crime, masculinities and crime, crime and substance use, and aspects of the policing of public order. He was the principal researcher on the first ever, detailed ethnographic study of drinking-related violence in pubs and nightclubs. This research informed the South Australian Crime Prevention Strategy and an important Victorian community report on the regulation of ‘bouncers’ in that state. It also set the path for later applied Australian studies of crime prevention, targeted policing, and the management of drinking venues, such as the Surfers Paradise Safety Project. Dr Tomsen’s most recent research includes an investigation of ideas about drinking-related violence held by groups of young men and private security officers in Newcastle and the Hunter Region.

Associate Professor Deborah Stevenson is an Urban Sociologist who has been researching cultural planning and urban development for over a decade. She has published widely on these subjects, including the recent book *Cities and Urban Cultures* (2003). In 2004 Professor Stevenson co-edited a special issue of the *International Journal of Cultural Policy* on urban space and the uses of culture. She has worked as a cultural planning consultant to government and industry, including advising the ABN-AMRO consortium on social and cultural sustainability and the redevelopment of the Darwin Waterfront. Currently, she is a co-Chief Investigator on an Australian Research Council-funded project examining the global circulation and...
exchange of cultural policy ideas, strategies and cultural planning approaches in Australia, the United Kingdom, and North America.

**Mr James Nagy** is a PhD student in CIPS and the School of Social Sciences who has worked in the arts and cultural arena for over fifteen years. He has been the Executive Director of WAM (the Western Australian Music Industry Association), and as President of VicMUSIC initiated the ‘Fair Go for Live Music’ campaign. In 2004 he was a consultant to the Northern Territory Department of Arts and Music NT Inc, and from July to October was Executive Officer for Qmusic, Queensland’s peak contemporary music industry body.
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The Cultural Industries and Practices Research Centre (CIPS) was established to provide a focus for academic and consultative research into all aspects of cultural industries and practice. The work of CIPS is carried out by a group of researchers who are committed to conducting high quality, applied social scientific research into a broad range of cultural activities, especially those related to media, sport, leisure, the arts and tourism. CIPS is dedicated to contributing to the continued development of the interdisciplinary field of contemporary Cultural Studies. Aiming to be a recognised national and international centre of excellence for collaborative research, training, teaching, community-public education in the area of cultural industries and practices research within the field of cultural studies. CIPS also supplies independent consultancy services to government, industry and the community at regional, national and international levels.

CIPS provides an interdisciplinary Cultural Studies framework in order to conduct, resource and facilitate best practice research, research training and teaching in the area of cultural industries and practices. The Centre contributes to the enhanced understanding of culture in practice - both inside and outside formal institutions - and of the role of cultural industries in the social and economic life of neighbourhoods, cities, regions and nations. It is particularly concerned with how culture is influenced by the complex interaction of local and global forces, as well as by social, political and economic institutions.

CIPS promotes and facilitates collaboration by researchers from a range of academic disciplines, and from external bodies in industry, the public sector, and community, on a broad range of cultural issues. The Centre also provides support for and encouragement to postgraduate students and early career researchers, and acts as a resource for professionals working within the cultural field.
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by David Rowe

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