

***Nightlife and cities. Challenges and urban governance at
night – The vision of the European Forum for Urban
Security***

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Presented by Martí Navarro Regàs**

Nightlife and cities Challenges and urban governance at night – The vision of the European Forum for Urban Security

1. Findings and challenges

The need for cities to develop a nightlife policy that takes into account the specificities of nightlife has been the object of numerous recommendations and resolutions of Efus. The main considerations are:

- The use of the city changes at night: the needs and demands of citizens are not the same as during the day. Thus, the issues and possible responses should reflect these differences. At night, the usual points of references disappear; citizens experience an increased sense of uncertainty and worry that feeds a specific feeling of insecurity which is only partially the result of real crime.
- The rise of new “festive” spaces and the excessive consumption of alcohol have consequences in terms of both health and security.
- A large number of European cities, particularly student cities, face major challenges when managing nightlife at a time when public services operate at a reduced level or were designed for operation during the day.
- The potential conflict between “the city that sleeps, the city that plays, and the city that works” makes it necessary to organise coexistence among residents and to work to improve the quality of nightlife.
- That said, these cities need to promote the quality of their nightlife, which is part of their tourism offer but also matches the increasing flexibility of working time and the expectations of residents in terms of night-time leisure, all of which concur to its importance for the local economy.

The resulting conclusion is that the night must not simply be seen as an eventuality or something “that happens after the day” in a city’s action plan. It must be approached with an individual reflection and strategy that encompasses the understanding of both specific opportunities and distinctive issues and challenges.

2. Recommendations and guiding principles

The following guidelines are based on the commitment of local authorities to promote a nightlife policy that is shared and designed jointly with all the concerned partners and users. Such a policy must correspond to the local context and therefore be designed in stages and follow a number of principles for action while taking into account the specific context and potential of each city.

In order to “build” a strategy, it is important to first set a (political) vision (policy) of the issue that must be tackled, and to then translate it into a local action plan that includes strategic and operational objectives. In this sense, a common vision is fundamental and an important stage of the process.

Here are the most important principles to take into account when designing a policy on nightlife:

- to define shared objectives in order to create a common nightlife vision and/or culture;
- to clarify governance by organising the management and co-ordination of the strategy;
- to establish a mutual diagnosis;
- to develop a comprehensive approach, integrating the various dimensions of nightlife;
- to work in partnership;
- to communicate the strategy and assess actions put in place.

Determining shared objectives to achieve a common vision for nightlife

The first step is to agree and define the key objective of the nightlife policy, which can then be broken down into a local strategy outlining specific strategic and operational targets according to different fields of expertise.

This means that the common vision should be in line with the principles outlined in the introduction of this note, advocating co-existence between nocturnal activities (rest, work, party) by ensuring that all different dimensions of night-time and the interests of stakeholders are taken into account. The strategy should be aimed at preventive actions, control, repression and monitoring/care as part of an intersectoral and partnership approach.

Mayors have a central and legitimate role at the local level and as such can gather the relevant stakeholders and agree on a common vision of nightlife. It is important that the mayor encourage participation and commitment from all partners, working to avoid and mediate conflicting or competitive situations whilst representing the vision of the municipal team.

Agreeing on a method of governance; clarifying the management and coordination of strategy

In order to ensure that the global strategy will be followed, it is essential to name a local leader to manage the complexities of such a multi-dimensional and transversal project. A priori, the Mayor is best placed to be this leader. It is legitimate that he be the leader since he has the legal and organisational prerogatives in terms of public order and social cohesion (even though competences vary across countries), and because he can act as “moderator and mediator” between the various stakeholders. If led by the mayor, the management of nightlife can be considered as a cross-cutting competence that can thus be shared and coordinated among all the members of the municipal team.

However, the mayor can also give this responsibility to an elected official. Delegation varies among cities: some choose as head of their nightlife policy the First Deputy Mayor, or an elected official specifically tasked with coordinating the policy on nightlife, or the elected official in charge of prevention and security, or of culture... Choosing who will be in charge depends on the local political context but in any case, this must be a permanent and cross-cutting competence independent from the local political agenda (as is the case, for example, for the area of citizen participation).

The nightlife strategy leader will coordinate local services to ensure they work in a collaborative and complementary manner while respecting each service’s area of competence.

The first step of the process is to set up a body for exchange and joint drafting of the nightlife policy, in order to:

- facilitate its appropriation by citizens, private actors, local authorities and state services;
- define the scope of action, who will lead and manage the initiative, how it will be led and how it will function.

In order to ensure good coordination, it will be necessary to rely on operational steering committees that will gather the relevant departments (public health, security, urban planning, public transport...) that will coordinate the preventive and repressive actions as well as the monitoring of the situation on the ground. At this stage, it is no longer a question of fostering exchange and dialogue but rather of mobilising and coordinating the operational departments so that concrete responses are given to the issues of nightlife.

It is necessary to organise the coordination between day and night-time services in order to respond to the needs of the population in a continuous and fair manner, in particular by ensuring that complaints are equally dealt with during the day and at night, and that the actions will be followed up at night as they are during the day. This means for example that incidents that happen at night will be followed during the day when the administration works at full capacity.

It is necessary to reflect on the level of local management. Indeed, France and many other European countries are reforming their territorial administration and are giving increased responsibilities to large agglomerations because they are economic engines and a key part of the attractiveness of a region or country. Although cities are the legitimate level of governance for the management of the nightlife policy, they must organise dialogue on a larger scale: with other municipalities, within a metropolis, with the department (the French *département* is more or less equivalent to the county in the UK) or even the region. This is key to ensure that public action in matters of leisure/entertainment, spatial planning, transport etc., is consistent. In this sense, it may be worthwhile to consider a metropolitan or inter-communal management of nightlife policies.

Sharing a diagnostic to identify the actions that must be implemented

Prior to drafting a strategy, it is important to establish a diagnostic of the issues that need tackling, the challenges and local potentialities, based on varied and objective sources (university research, local survey, observations made by local services and private companies). The purpose of the diagnostic is to:

- identify the types of nuisance (noise, light, dirtiness);
- analyse the local strengths and weaknesses (existing resources, strong political support, potential partnerships, size of the local economy and importance of tourism, available legal and regulatory tools): analysis of the regulations that are in force, control schemes that can be mobilised, how well is the action integrated with other levels of power;
- define the priority areas on which to intervene in order to inform the final strategic decision.

It is also useful to diagnose the problems according to different timeframes (days of the week, time of the day or night, weeks, seasons) given that public activities vary accordingly. This diagnostic will be shared with the local partners: public actors and private sector (transport, commerce, cafés and bars, organisers of night-time events), as well as night-time users (citizens, occasional visitors, tourists).

Useful practices such as exploratory walks, neighbourhood surveys and Nightlife Councils have been successfully implemented in several cities (Montreal, Paris, Brussels). They can be adapted quite cheaply to the specific context of other cities and easily implemented in a locality or neighbourhood.

In addition, numerous cities and regions have set up local observatories that can contribute to establishing a local diagnostic (e.g. the Observatory on Public Peace of Paris, the Observatory on Crime of Toulouse, the Observatory on Drugs of Liege, the Local Observatory of Crime Prevention of Brussels, the Observatory on Health and Social Affairs of the Brussels Region).

Developing a global approach for action and including different areas of activity

When drafting a nightlife policy, numerous areas must be taken into account. They include: security, health, safety at work, mobility, culture, and economy. These areas can be grouped under four general themes that must be included in the local strategy.

- Area "Quality of life" in the neighbourhood (physical state of the neighbourhood, dirtiness, quality of urban planning, of the activities organised in public spaces, degree of social cohesion).
- Area "Attractiveness/Economic and cultural dynamism" of the city (variety and access to culture and services, usage and development of transport...).
- Area "Security" (muggings, theft, vandalism, feeling of insecurity).
- Area "Public health" (alcohol abuse, risky sexual behaviours, noise nuisance and damage, well-being and protection at work for nightlife professionals).

Defining a methodology based on partnership and intersectoral collaboration

Given the many facets of nightlife (impact on economic growth, on the feeling of insecurity, on the quality of life), the local strategy must account for the collaboration of private and public partners, as well as residents. This partnership can be activated when defining the issues that need tackling (diagnostic, see above), when implementing the action plan, and when evaluating the measures that are in place.

The key partners are: the regional administration, any authority in charge of spatial planning and with competencies regarding the management of business and alcohol outlets; the environment (noise); the local police; the municipal prevention and security department; private security firms (that protect private dwellings and businesses for example); victim support services; consulates and embassies (regarding the safety of tourists); shops and department stores (to negotiate the control of the sale of alcohol for example when there are large events in the city, such as the Braderie in Lille, France); bar and cafes managers and night-time

event organisers; hospitals; mental health services; associations against drug consumption; public transport companies; schools; neighbourhood committees, etc.

An important aspect of this partnership concerns public transport. Indeed, apart from measures to reduce risk in party scenes or to ensure that night owls get back home safely, it is important to analyse the flow of people at night in the city and to adequate the public transport offer (the urban traffic being different at night). Several European cities are now considering 24h public transport, which requires good coordination of public services (link between the day and the night) and some urban planning (public lighting, security of access points, management of emergency services, presence of shops...). It is also important to make it easy to access the city from the suburbs, which goes a long way to making the city open and inclusive.

It will be useful to plan accompanying measures and times for exchange with the partners: this will make them feel valued and will contribute to the mobilisation of the local partnership. Consultative, monitoring or even regulatory bodies, such as the Night Councils and the local administration in charge of alcohol outlets (Commissions de débits de boissons in France) can contribute to boost the local partnership.

Nightlife must not be developed at the expense of residents but on the contrary include all the categories of population. Involving residents is indeed another important challenge of the nightlife strategy. The municipality can mobilise various participatory bodies (neighbourhood committees, youth committees...) but it also must be proactive and contact categories of the population that it seldom listens to. Indeed, it is important to not only enrol those residents that are dissatisfied and complain to public authorities but also to listen to those who never complain. The public authority must organise a balanced consultation with dissenters, users of the city at night, local residents and those observers of nightlife that are not dissatisfied but can bring their own views and analyses. Once again, some useful tools in this respect are exploratory walks, neighbourhood surveys and Night Councils.

Ensuring communication with the partners and to the public

Communication should be clear and targeted and avoid promoting vested interests or bombastic announcements in the media that end up being counter-productive. Rather, the public authority can clearly inform the public and its partners about its vision of nightlife, the measures it is considering, the control tools, and the schemes for dialogue and regulation. In this respect, the city's Direction of Communications has a key role to play.

This communication on the nightlife strategy must target both the municipal staff (internal communication) and the public (external communication), in particular tourists, partners and the media.

Evaluating the policy on nightlife, its achievements and pitfalls

The nightlife policy must also be based on a strong, participatory evaluation process that includes both qualitative and quantitative data (measuring the level of noise, the number of complaints, conducting surveys, number of interventions, alcohol sales volume...). As this is often a controversial issue, it is important to be able to state objectively the local vision and the strategy, and to present the effects of the measures that have been put in place (following local consultation processes with residents and other levels of governance). Given the variety of stakeholders and fields in question, it is difficult to precisely measure their impact and efficiency.

It is important to define the evaluation criteria, both quantitative and qualitative, according to the strategic objectives. All the partners must take part in the evaluation, knowing that data collection and analysis will depend on them. In addition, doing so will demonstrate that there is a real desire to involve them throughout the whole process: at the beginning of the action and the diagnostic phase, during the implementation and at the assessment and evaluation stage.

3. Types of actions: specific issues and responses

Prevention measures that are adapted to different categories of the public

At night, different categories of the public use public spaces and consume, each in their own way. In order to ensure a fair sharing of public spaces and monitor risky uses, it is necessary to:

- take into account the gender: at night, women and some sexual minorities (LGBT) feel more insecure because there is a heightened risk of bullying or sexual attacks. By collaborating with women's associations¹ or organisations that defend minorities, it is possible to set up specific actions that will prove very useful (such as making sure that they are received appropriately at the police station; exploratory walks; awareness-raising campaigns in public transport²);
- take into account homeless people, who are more at risk and can be the object of complaints or violence³;
- take into account the tourists. Indeed, cities must ensure their security and attend to their needs in order to maintain a quality tourism offer, but they also have to ensure peaceful coexistence between tourists and residents by encouraging visitors to respect the local customs and way of life.
- It is also necessary to maintain and develop links between the city centre and the surrounding areas by giving suburban residents, in particular young people, access to nightlife (this can be done for example by providing training to nightlife professionals on the need to fight discrimination).

¹ Garance asbl and Initiatives Bruxelles in Belgium, or Ruel'L and Stop Harcèlement de Rue in France

² See the new measures planned by the French State Secretariat for Women's Rights, aimed at fighting harassment of women in public spaces, in cooperation with the Paris subway company RATP and the national railway company SNCF, autumn 2015.

³ See the practice of the Brussels local police and its "Hersham" unit, which intervenes to prevent nuisance linked to the presence of homeless people as well as to prevent crime against them.

Laws and regulations, and tools for regulation and control

Local authorities must know and use the laws and regulations intended to prevent and fight nuisance and regulate nightlife, while at the same time preserving the night-time economy and cultural activity. Each country has its own regulations concerning the closing time of bars (free hours, competence of the mayor or the State).

Control and monitoring services ensure that regulations are enforced (for example by measuring the level of noise, reporting offences, enforcing alternative penalties, this being done by the police, the city council or in collaboration with regional and environmental control services⁴). Here again, it is necessary to work in partnership or at least in collaboration with supralocal levels of governance (greater metropolis, department/county, region, national State) in order to ensure the consistency of public action as regards the control, regulation and eventual sanctioning related to noise, the sale of alcohol, and urban planning. Some examples of local practices include:

- The Nantes Municipal Commission on Drinking Outlets examines all matters related to the operations of drinking outlets (cafes, bars, restaurants, etc.). Based on objective data, it gives reasoned and motivated opinions to the municipal authority, which can decide to sanction or not (the scale of sanction includes a warning, a summons at the Mayor's Office, or restrictions on the opening hours).
- In Belgium, since 1999, the law on Communal Administrative Sanctions (SAC⁵) allows municipalities to sanction anti-social behaviours that can damage the quality of life of residents, such as littering, noise nuisance (day or night), graffiti, urinating in the street, or dog fouling.
- In Brussels, the 'Alhambra' regulation targets nuisance linked to street prostitution.

⁴ In Brussels, the Institute for Environmental Management (Institut bruxellois de Gestion de l'Environnement, IBGE) helps communes by conducting, upon request, noise measures when residents complain about nuisance.

⁵ This system contributes to reducing backlogs in the courts and prosecution services while ensuring effective sanctioning. The communal penalty is of a maximum of €350 (€175 for offenders minor of age). Furthermore, offenders are summoned for a talk about the consequences of their act and may be sanctioned with alternative penalties such as repairing the damage they have done or doing community service. They can also receive a financial penalty collected directly by the municipality.

A risk reduction policy that combines security, health and well-being

The targets here are risks linked to the consumption of drugs or alcohol that can seriously affect health; risky sexual behaviours; nuisance linked to consumption in public spaces, and harm caused by noise or health hazards linked to night work. For example, it is important to provide staff with appropriate equipment and to organise work shifts to minimise the health hazards of night work. Several types of actions can be implemented as part of a partnership approach promoted by the municipality:

- Appropriate health and social control of the public, the uses and the venues in collaboration with social and health agencies and other organisations (such as associations for the prevention of drug abuse in party scenes, or coordination with hospitals), in order to implement targeted actions for specific audiences or about specific uses. It is recommended to partner with student, tourist and youth associations.
- Partnership with public transport companies to prevent risky behaviours and organise the flow of people and mobility so as to curb noise nuisance and accidents due to alcohol abuse.
- Organising the training of night professionals (hospitality sector, bars, public officers...) to raise awareness on risk reduction measures.
- Ensuring the prevention of risks linked to night work (equipment and appropriate training for the people who work at night in order to improve their quality of life and to minimise the risk of incident and the arduousness of their work).

Examples of practices:

- Several municipalities have organised preventive schemes that include the use of volunteers who give out, at night, advice on prevention in the streets and party venues (e.g., the Evening Watchmen in Nantes (FR), Fêtez Clairs in Paris, the association Modus Fiesta in Brussels and its Quality Nights scheme, the Tightrope Walker in Poitiers, and the Gentlemen noceurs in the Brussels region).
- The Soul Tram scheme in Bordeaux (FR) is a partnership between the transport company Keolis, the mobile prevention team Tendance Alternative Festive (TAF) and the association

Allez les Filles that seeks to reduce anti-social behaviour linked to the abuse of alcohol in the tramway system and subsequent feeling of insecurity among passengers.

- In Poitiers (FR), the Party Label scheme organises two large preventive events (between 10pm and 1.30am) in the city centre, with pop-up information booths. Participants can win a prize (free non-alcoholic beverages, tickets to night-clubs, cinema tickets...) by having their 'night passport' stamped at the booth.

Urban planning and entertainment in public spaces

It is scientifically proven that the architecture and urban planning of a neighbourhood, the streets, the urban furniture and the general public spaces have an impact on the users' sense of security, and this is even truer at night. Urban planning must take into account the multiple functions of public spaces and their use during the day and at night.

Urban planning of public spaces must be conceived so as to include partying from the start, including possible future uses, by taking into account both the time and space factors and the possible use of spaces at night. Thus, in places that become party scenes at night, the municipality must plan to increase cleanliness measures and equipment (waste bins, porta-loos...). It must also plan traffic so that the flow of people is made secure and fluid.

Some local authorities choose to move party areas to non-residential neighbourhoods. For example, in many Spanish cities, in the summer, the areas where people do botellón (i.e., drinking and hanging out) are moved to out-of-town beaches or woods. Others have moved permanently their party areas: in Liege (BE), the party scene is concentrated in the neighbourhood of Le Carré (the square) in the centre of the city; in Nantes (FR), many cafes and night-clubs are situated in the Hangar à Bananes (the banana warehouse), by the Loire River. However, this solution is not totally safe in particular when party scenes are moved near a beach or a river, and local authorities must ensure the safety of partygoers against the risk of drowning. Other issues are how to guarantee transport safety for those who go to these places, and the lack of social control. In spite of these risks, the concentration of party scenes in specific areas is a good option and more manageable when there are large events.

Apart from the architectural characteristics of party spaces, it is also essential that local authorities be involved in the choice of events that take place in those areas to ensure they have a positive impact for residents. To do so, the local authority can:

- consult and involve residents (e.g., groups of mothers watching over playgrounds, volunteer entertainers or educators...);
- plan cultural events (festivals, concerts...) so that various types of public use the party areas, also ensuring the fluidity of the flow of people at the end of evening shows and when bars close.

Examples

- In Italy, the municipality of Reggio Emilia renovated the area around the central station, which was taken over by alcohol and drug users. They opened the Caffé Reggio, an alcohol-free bar. It has had a significant and positive impact on the neighbourhood and attracts people of all ages and backgrounds. The presence of the Caffé Reggio also enables the municipality to better control the area.
- In France, the association Culture Bar-Bars, which is a partner of Efus since 2015, organises each year a cultural festival in several cities. It encourages night-time establishments to take part in cultural and festive events in collaboration with local authorities.
- Raising awareness and promoting cultural and artistic events: the Pierrots de la Nuit in Paris and the Gentleman noceurs⁶ in Brussels are projects that are currently (February 2016) being assessed or developed. Both seek to raise awareness among the public about the noise they make in the streets when they come out of bars and night-clubs, thus affecting the peace of local residents. These actors must be included in a global approach together with the police and/or social prevention professionals and organise communication campaigns (radio, billboards...) targeting partygoers.

⁶ Project implemented in Brussels with the support of the Brussels Environmental Agency (Agence régionale Bruxelles Environnement, IBGE) and created in 2013 by Chambellan Production.

Managing conflicts and facilitating mediation

Deploying on the ground people in charge of entertainment, awareness-raising and mediation (such as the Night Street Guards in Brussels, and the Night Correspondents or mediators in various French cities) is a good way to prevent tensions and conflicts (among neighbours, users of public spaces, clients of night-time venues), to reduce the feeling of insecurity and the risks, and to link with day-time services. Professional night staff as well as volunteers must have appropriate training and equipment and they must work according to regulations on night work (providing training on managing balance between private and professional life, stress management, dialogue and mediation, knowledge of municipal regulations...).

Some examples:

- In Milan (IT), the department of urban cleanliness organises evening rounds in the tourist areas to raise awareness among the public on the nuisance generated by dirtiness.
- The city of Brussels created in 2012 the position of Manager of Public Peace unit in order to improve public peace and quality of life in the city centre, where nuisance linked to night-time activities (prostitution, party scenes, bars...) creates tensions with local residents.
- Night teams have been set up in several cities, notably in Belgium and France: their presence in the street reassures the public and they can also mediate when necessary (Night Street Guards in Brussels, Night Correspondents in several French cities, night mediators in Evere, in the Brussels region...).

* Efus is leading a series of European projects related to nightlife security, for more information on the ToNite and SHINE projects please visit our website. You can also have a look at what kind of services Efus can offer you as a member and consult other information related to our activities and members.

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