

An International Culture of



Lates

An International Culture of Lates

The impact and role of international Museum Lates in the context of the night-time economy

A Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowship report
by Nicholas Stockman, Campaigns Manager, Culture24

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Table of contents

Introduction | Page 4

Definitions | Pages 4-5

The location choices | Pages 5-6

The aims and purpose of the project | Page 6

The research methodology | Pages 7-8

Executive summary | Pages 8-9

The findings | Pages 10-40

Context | Pages 10-11

1. [The Culture of Lates](#) | Pages 11-17

2. [Lates as part of a diverse night-time cultural offer](#) | Pages 18-21

3. [The social space](#) | Pages 22-25

4. [Regularity and festivals](#) | Pages 26-31

5. [Quality is the key to attracting audiences](#) | Pages 32-40

Conclusion | Page 41-47

Research findings compared to the objectives | Page 41

Applying the findings in the UK | Pages 41-42

Recommendations | Pages 42-46

Acknowledgements | Page 47

Introduction

I am the Campaigns Manager at Culture24, an arts charity based in Brighton, which supports arts and heritage organisations to have the confidence, imagination and skills to connect meaningfully with audiences of today. I produce Museums at Night, the UK's twice-yearly festival of museum/gallery after-hours events (Lates) and I lead Culture24's approach to developing the UK Lates sector.

My role encompasses the strategic development of the festival and between 2012 and 2016 I produced a highly successful strand of programming called Connect! which matched 42 contemporary artists with venues to create participatory events for the festival.

I've never worked in a museum; I escaped the music business in 2004 with only minor psychological damage, and went on to run Brighton's Fringe Festival until 2010. I am a Clore Short Course alumnus.

An International Culture of Lates is the international strand of a three-part study by Culture24 into the impact of Lates on the night-time economy (NTE). Designed to complement each other, the **Airbnb**-funded report, **Late Like A Local** and the **Arts Council England**-supported UK report, **A Culture of Lates**, contain evidence, findings and recommendations for NTE policymakers and museum programmers.

All of Culture24's data, charts, maps, reports and literature referred to in this report can be obtained for free by emailing LatesResearch@culture24.org.uk and requesting the login details to the Culture24Research Google Drive.

Definitions

Lates are events which start after 5pm that take place in museums, galleries, libraries, archives, heritage and sacred sites & historic houses. For the purposes of brevity the word 'museums' is used as shorthand in this report to refer to venues of all types where applicable.

This report makes no distinction between the terms 'Lates' and 'after-hours' as related to events. I am aware that some venues and venue programmers regard Lates as a term only used by big venues or only used to describe charged-for, income-generating events (or in some cases used to describe only free events). As no agreement exists which defines or limits the term Lates to meaning one type of after-hours event, I have used it to indicate any type.

The term 'extended hours' is used in this report to mean an extension of museums' normal opening hours whether accompanied by extra programming or not.

'The Night-Time Economy (NTE) refers to all economic activity taking place between the hours of 6pm and 6am.'¹

¹ Mayor of London's New London Plan, November 2017, Chapter 7, 7.6.1 <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan/draft-new-london-plan/>

Placemaking refers to ‘a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value’.²

I define a **Culture of Lates** as a situation where opening museums and galleries beyond 5pm is normal.

This report is a document of a journey to a small sample of places around the world that produce Lates, and a series of interviews with people in those places involved with the Lates, from whom, I believe, we in the UK can learn. Unlike the UK report it is entirely subjective and unashamedly biased towards the proposition that opening museums and galleries later into the evening is a good thing. That’s not to say that I agreed with every approach, strategy or opinion I encountered, or that I experienced only outstanding events but I did approach the interviews from a position that I shared with the interviewees, that we are involved in a strand of museum practice that we regard as progressive for the sector.

The location choices

I wanted to learn from programmers and policymakers across the world about what makes a great Lates event, about Lates festivals and how best to integrate Lates into night-time economy strategies. I considered visiting several areas in the world including cities and regions of the USA, Canada, Japan, Australia and Europe. My original intention was to visit Amsterdam and Vienna but desk research indicated that neither city had a particularly strong year-round Lates offer.

I decided to travel to Sydney and Melbourne because they are adjacent cities which had very different approaches to dealing with night-time economy issues. Melbourne’s mayor, Robert Doyle, had gone on record as wanting to support the NTE, “to make us [Melbourne] a real 24-hour city that’s a pleasant place to be.”³ Melbourne had implemented and abandoned a lock-out policy but in Sydney the policy passed into law in February 2014 and has created much debate ever since. Both cities have venues with late-night offers and both cities’ administrations had produced documents indicating that their museums and galleries were being included, even if as a minority consideration, as part of night-time economy strategy.⁴

I discovered Urban Night - an activity, including a website, at McGill University, Montreal, run by Will Straw, professor in the Department of Art History and Communications Studies. I contacted Will and he created a Facebook Hub, a discussion thread, asking his contacts for tips on Lates near them. This attracted 54 comments over a period of a couple of days – one contributor, Itzayana Gutiérrez,

² Project for Public Places, ‘What is Placemaking?’, https://www.pps.org/reference/what_is_placemaking/ [31st December 2009].

³ <https://www.timeout.com/melbourne/nightlife/how-melbourne-became-a-late-night-city> (accessed 26/01/2018)

⁴ http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/132224/2013-054826-OPEN-Sydney-Strategy-and-Action-Plan-FINAL-version-February-2013.pdf and <http://www.urbanalyst.com/in-the-news/victoria/4475-melburnians-spend-more-on-food-less-on-alcohol-night-time-economy-report.html>

mentioned Noche De Museos, a regular multi-venue monthly event in Mexico City. This became location target number one as I was not, and am still not, aware of any other city in the world with a comparable offer.

My desk research indicated that in Moscow museums extending hours beyond 6pm were quite normal. All museums run by the Moscow Department of Culture are open until 9pm on Thursdays. Some other museums and art galleries have even more extensive working hours. The Garage contemporary art gallery is open till 10pm every night and Moscow Museum of Modern Art (MMOMA) is open till 8pm, Monday to Sunday, and every Thursday till 9pm.

I travelled to Mexico City in July 2017 and Melbourne, Sydney and Moscow in late August and September of the same year. The three countries' cities included in the research are very different culturally, with contrasting traditions of museum visitation and historical approaches to venue accessibility, factors I consider to be an advantage in terms of one of the key aims of the Churchill Fellowship – to observe and learn from other cultures.⁵

The aims and purpose

This international research aims to: identify factors common to all successful regular Lates programmes in order to establish a framework for future practice; document the creative, high-quality practice that is part of the Lates offer; and investigate to what degree museum event programmers and civic administrators and policymakers are communicating and including Lates into night-time economy strategic thinking.

The primary aim of our three-part study is to produce useful data and benchmarking to inform future decision-making and establish after-hours events as a strand of museum practice worthy of serious reflection and dedicated consideration.

The aims of the combined studies:

- To produce data and insights from 15 years of UK Lates programming to establish terms of reference and a coherent framework, upon which programmers and policymakers can base future decisions
- To map the historic, current & potential capacity, impact and value of UK Lates, supported by international insights, within the context of the Night-Time Economy
- To gain insights into the current thinking of organisations in relation to Lates programming
- To better understand the motivations behind the visiting choices made by modern cultural audiences
- To help establish a supportive ecosystem in which Lates can thrive.

⁵ A full list of the organisations visited is available on the Culture224Research Google drive

The research methodology

I interviewed key venue programmers and night-time economy administrators and attended and observed Lates events in three countries. The interviews were mainly conducted one-to-one, though in Mexico City I talked to several people together, mediated by a translator at each meeting. I had a set of questions I replicated in each interview (where applicable) and built in flexibility to follow the interviewee in any direction they wanted to take, within the remit of the research. The interviews were recorded and transcribed into an individual word document per interview. I then took question areas and grouped all the responses into one tab of a worksheet according to the questions asked. This enabled me to start to draw out themes and topics common to all the responses to each question.

While conducting the interviews it soon became clear that certain themes were emerging and these would influence subsequent interviews. However in almost all venue interview cases I covered the following areas:

- Size of organisation and capacity of venue
- Strategy for extending hours or programming after-hours events
- Branding
- Frequency, days of the week and times that work best
- Programming successes and failures
- Partnerships and artistic collaborations
- Extent of liaison with organisations in town regarding integration with night-time economy issues
- Visitor participation
- Income generation
- Audience development
- Marketing

Typically I would end the interview with a question about what support the organisation would benefit from to develop their programme and ask for one tip or piece of advice for a venue thinking of starting a Lates programme for the first time.

As I was working on the UK research at the same time as this report, themes began to emerge that combined the findings from both studies. I was very conscious of attempting to build on previous Churchill Trust alumni's findings in related areas. One of Korantema Anyimadu's 2016 Churchill report recommendations for overcoming barriers to engagement in museums was: "*Make it social: People like social activities. Make the museum a space where people can come together and have fun!*".⁶ I wanted to see what other people thought and to see and hear about examples of social activity in Lates events.

I'm also standing on the shoulders of Rosie Eagleton whose 2016 Churchill report (Evolving Museums: Redefining cultural programming for an emerging adult audience) lists practical ways museums can run more effective Lates events.⁷ One

⁶ https://www.wcmt.org.uk/sites/default/files/report-documents/Anyimadu%20K%20Report%202015%20FINAL_1.pdf

⁷ <https://www.wcmt.org.uk/sites/default/files/report-documents/Eagleton%20R%20Report%202015%20Final.pdf>

of Rosie's key recommendations to venues is to develop evening programming - one of my aims with this research is to find evidence of how to do that successfully.

Audiences' voices are only heard through the mediation of museum staff in this report – I decided not to interview members of the public at International events as I could not ensure consistent questions in three languages. Culture24's UK research does include a public survey with responses to a range of questions from over 1,000 Lates attenders and people who haven't been to events. Combined with Google Analytics statistics and interactions on Live Chat through our MuseumsatNight.org.uk website I have made some general assumptions about customer demand that are implicit in this research:

- a) Generally, people have very favourable views on Lates
- b) Most people have not attended one
- c) When given the opportunity to attend or asked what they would do if they were given the opportunity to attend they react positively
- d) There is untapped demand for more events.

Executive summary

The first-hand evidence I gathered from some of the most knowledgeable museum public programmers in the world, the events they talked about and the events I experienced have made a prodigious contribution to my conclusions about how UK Lates can develop from here.

It is important we create a '**Culture of Lates**' in the UK to develop coherence and a joined-up approach to capacity building from venues and policymakers. A **Culture of Lates** is a commitment by policymakers and programmers to invest in Lates as the industry's contribution to the UK's night-time economy. It is a mentality which, once adopted, would make Lates and extended openings essential components of a location's diverse night-time cultural offer and help keep museums at the heart of their communities.

I expand on this idea and ways of supporting the sector to achieve a **Culture of Lates** in the UK report. My Churchill Fellowship research produced specific findings and they helped inform the overall recommendations.

Summary of findings

1. Some cities have successfully created a culture of after-hours events and extended opening hours in museums
2. Lates form either an explicit or implicit role in the night-time cultural strategy of some cities around the world
3. Lates can contribute to the diversity of night-time cultural offer that city strategists have identified as essential for a harmonious night-time economy
4. Lates work best when they are social, fun experiences
5. Regularity is a key component of successful programmes – occasional festivals and regular programmes complement each other

6. Quality not price is the key to attracting audiences
7. Venue programmers want to share their focused Lates experience and knowledge
8. Venue programmers around the world are striving to push the boundaries of their offer and are challenging the notion that some people have that museums are boring and galleries are elitist.

Recommendations

Our three-part study the international and UK research projects, are designed to work together to produce one set of recommendations. Based on the findings, we recommend to all stakeholders that:

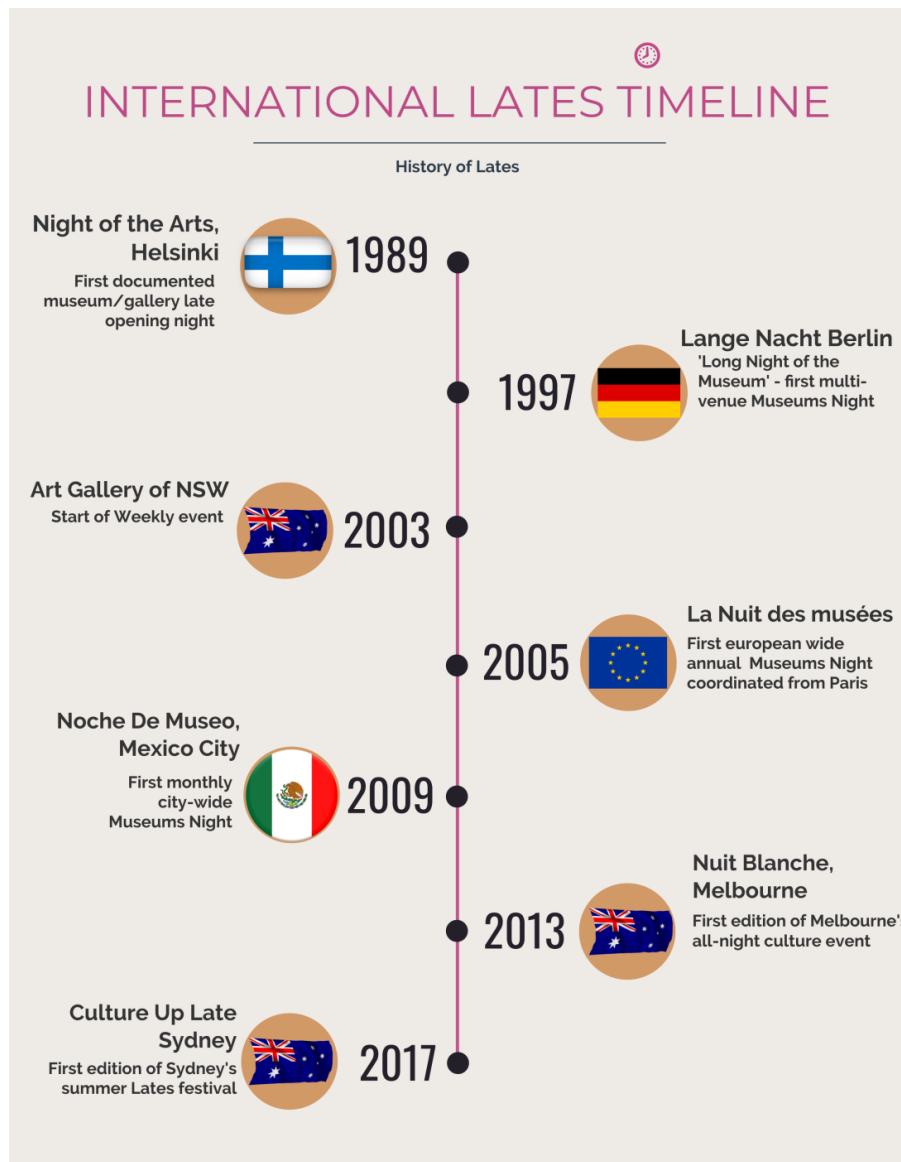
1. Regular extended opening and/or after-hours events are integrated into **venues' core provision**
2. Lates must be **part of an area's night-time economy strategy** and supported with effective marketing
3. Lates become **an established part of museum strategy**, valued and nurtured by leadership
4. **Museums should be community hubs**, perceived as social spaces that are open when most people can use them
5. Museums adopt the 'ladder route' to developing both **regular and festival Lates** event programmes
6. **Structures and platforms** are created that help museums get their product to market more effectively and enable customers to access information and tickets more easily
7. Lates event data is used by museum directors **engage with national and local night-time economy policymakers**
8. Regular opportunities are created for venue **programmers to meet and share knowledge**.

The findings

Context

One summer's night in 1997 Berlin celebrated the recent unification of Germany with a new idea to open up museums and galleries after-hours. That first year just 18 venues took part. In 2017, 80 institutions participated.

On Sunday 18 April 1999 the Independent newspaper reported 'that the Royal Academy [had] decided to open round- the-clock for one day only, becoming the first British gallery to open for 24 hours non-stop' for their Monet exhibition.⁸ Not long after this the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) started their Friday Lates programme and the idea that a visit to a UK museum was restricted to the daylight hours became a thing of the past.



⁸ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/hordes-cant-get-in-for-love-nor-monet-1088312.html> accessed 25/10/2017

2018 will see the tenth edition of the national and centrally-organised Museums at Night festival and some parts of the UK, such as London and Manchester, have a mature Lates offer. When the big London museums experimented with Lates in the early years of the new millennium they might not have expected that Lates would become the feature of the museum offer they are now.

Lates are popular with many museums because they regard them as a good way, some say the best, of attracting new audiences that are usually younger than the average visitor. Audiences respond well to Lates because they are on at a time when most people can access them.

Most strands of museum practice, such as collections, learning and marketing, have data-backed research to inform decisions on future practice and developments. This is not the case with Lates. Several studies have made reference to Lates, some of which are referenced here, but Culture24's literature review has not uncovered a single piece of research entirely dedicated to museum after-hours events.

1. The Culture of Lates

The economic context

Throughout the UK and the rest of the world the places that have a significant Lates programme are the ones where inspirational people are taking the lead. They may work at venues or at city authorities but it takes some determination, leadership and vision to initiate and develop Lates programmes against a background of squeezed public finances and tightening arts and culture budgets.

The difficult financial climate was a common factor in all the places I visited, even in Australia, which hasn't had a recession since June 1991, the month the National Gallery's Sainsbury Wing was opened and the final breakthrough in the Channel Tunnel was achieved when the last section of clay in the rail tunnel was bored away!⁹

Experiences

It is difficult enough to sustain free events in an economic climate of tight public finances but attracting audiences to charged-for events is challenging too when disposable income is at a premium. Fortunately for Lates programmers around the world people increasingly want to spend their spare cash on experiences, as opposed to things, and they want those experiences to be active and participatory. "*You've got all those clichés about the baby boomers – they are true! They want experiences*" as Tim Ross, TV heritage presenter and actor told me in Sydney.

Whether the notion that people are increasingly spending their money on experiences rather than 'stuff' applies to Generation X and Millennials too is open for debate but certainly the boom in events in museums in the last twenty years suggests that Lates are here to stay with room to develop.

The growth in Lates events has been fuelled by a talented band of 'Lates Leaders' eager to push the boundaries of what is possible in a museum. They are the

⁹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-39124272> accessed 28/12/2017

dynamos of the area of practice but often it is policymakers who create the conditions in which these people can do their best work.

Extended opening times

What drew me to Moscow was to try to find out who created the conditions for extended hours, why they did so and when it all started. I had a hunch that it may have started in Soviet times, a centralised diktat aimed at democratising museum access.

However Maria Privalova at the Moscow Central Library told me:

“Part of the 90s was that everything was 24 hours [it] was part of earning more money basically. So this was something that everybody started to do. It feels very not Muscovite that all these restaurants are [now] closing at 11, it’s crazy, they should be 24 hours. When something is not open at night I think it’s strange”

In Moscow the culture of late opening (beyond the museum sector) is deep-rooted: *“In Moscow lots of people usually work until not even 7 pm, but probably even 9 pm if you wanted to visit an evening event during weekdays the only way to do it is if the museum is working till later than 6 pm or 7 pm,”* Katya Vladimirtseva from the Garage Contemporary Art Gallery told me.

There is certainly still a culture of late and 24-hour retail opening in Moscow unlike any other city I’ve visited. I noted a 24-hour florist and many shops and retailers that had regular extended opening hours.

Maria thinks that retail and food and beverage outlets are reducing their hours while museum, galleries and libraries are still extending theirs and they are meeting somewhere in the middle around 10pm or 11pm! My guess is that the two sectors’ trading hours are pulled in different directions by the same force – increased wealth. As people earn more they need to work less, they have more disposable income so they can go out more.



A 24-hour Moscow florist

Most Latin countries are associated with a culture of eating an evening meal later and going to events deep into the early hours and Mexico City is no exception. However the historic quarter of the city, where many of the museums are situated, is an area that goes to sleep very early. Noche De Museos (literally Night of the Museums) exists in a complex environment, some parts of town are busy at night, some aren’t and not many museums open up late normally.

Noche De Museos

Noche De Museos (NdM) takes place on the last Wednesday of the month in Mexico City. 105 venues have taken part since its inception, 30 or 40 venues take part, organised in circuits (trails) and 10,000 people attend each month. The event is organised and funded by the Department of the Secretary of Culture of the

Government of Mexico City (CDMX) and managed by Ana Isabel Salazar Martinez, well supported by the city's Time Out publication. The organisers hold monthly meetings, open to any venues, to review the previous event and look forward to the next one.

I interviewed Ana Isabel and she accompanied me on most of my group interviews; her views and experiences are integral to understanding how NdM has developed. She said, "*The main purpose of the program is to attract new audiences to museums and cultural venues to publicize the heritage of Mexico City.*"

Museums Night in Mexico City started on 4 November 2009 as part of their Heritage Month. Originally intended to be the four Wednesdays in November, it extended into mid-December due to strong public demand. It became a monthly event soon after in 2010. Since then, for the most part, Ana has run NdM herself with a team of student volunteers who contribute their social media and administration skills as part of the mandatory 'social service' element of their University education.

Ana's drive and dedication is a key factor in NdM's success but good organisation and senior management-level support are also very important. A particularly impressive element of the management of NdM is the monthly meeting that takes place between events. I attended the July meeting ahead of the July event later in the month. It was attended by approximately 30 people.



The monthly NdM meeting

Although my presence at the meeting skewed the agenda towards the research project, the meeting usually covers a debrief on the previous month's event and discussions about the next one. A city-wide cluster of venues working together is the ideal size to make a regular meeting like this an efficient way of collaborating.

Gabriela Lopez is the Coordinator of Historical, Artistic and Cultural Heritage at the Secretary of Culture. She told me that a big challenge initially was paying staff for the extra hours, "*we found a mechanism so we could pay for the staff staying longer from six till nine, or to ten depending on the museum and depending on the area.*" On the subject of resources she said: "*All the effort is put by the museums and by her [Ana-*

Isabel], coordinating museums and that's it."

The city government plays an important role in resourcing Ana Isabel's salary and providing communication and PR support but they also steer event themes in an

interesting way. Liliana Nava Diosdado from the Museo Nacional De La Revolución said:

“Yes, the cultural policies not only of our museum but of the Secretary of Culture is to use our spaces to sensitise people about themes that may be are not well seen by the society. We are touching themes that are delicate, that we don’t want to see; as museums of the Culture Secretary we have an order to touch these themes.”

My interviewees in Mexico City made clear that the younger audience to Museum Nights aren’t necessarily more open to confronting ‘difficult’ issues at events. Invariably they are there to enjoy themselves and have fun and as we shall see this echoes feedback from other parts of the world.

This doesn’t mean that participating venues don’t use the night-time forum to address interesting themes, they often do and at the same time they can take the opportunity to challenge themselves. If the decision to open late sometimes requires a mindset change then the obligation to do so every month is one step further and more challenging, as Ana Rita Garcia-Lascurain from the Chocolate Museum explains: *“Having the obligation of doing something every last Wednesday of the month has been very motivational.”*

CASE STUDY 1

Placemaking: Cultural venue impact on place – The Chocolate Museum, Mexico City

Ana Rita Garcia-Lascurain, director of Fundación Mucho, the Chocolate Museum of Mexico City, used her experience in the Colonia district to graphically illustrate how the emergence of a cultural offer in an area can radically change the nature of a place for the better.

“This part of the neighbourhood in particular was very dead at night-time, almost dangerous, so when we opened up the museum, things started changing. We opened up 5 years ago... the theatre on the corner about 3 years ago and the language school about a couple of years ago. So from being an empty street it turns out there is this bunch of people coming to this museum and a language school.”

The museum and the school created joint monthly initiatives that made people more aware of the district and, rapidly, the area has become associated with a cultural offer. The museum has taken part in Noche De Museos in this context for four years, participating regularly every month, in an environment that people clearly feel safe enough to travel to and from in the dark of night.

“The area we’re in...it’s now taking life again. It used to be very quiet at night-time.”

In fact the area is thriving to such an extent that they are included in one of the circuits, “We have this Circuitos...we do collaborate with them, and we have also made several collaborations on Museums Night with other museums in the city.”

The area also has a neighbourhood organisation called Nuestro Barrio Juárez, (Our Neighbourhood Colonia Juárez) which runs initiatives which the Chocolate Museum and the adjacent Museum of Banking and Commerce take part in.

Australia

In Sydney and Melbourne, as in most western societies, it is normal to go out and enjoy a cultural offer while enjoying a drink and both cities have strong cultural and entertainment offers. Both cities have taken steps to balance concerns for public safety at night with maintaining their places near the top of international city destination lists. Museums' role in the night-time offer has started to make it onto the NTE agenda.

There are some very strong after-hours museum offers in the two cities but whether a **Culture of Lates** exists yet is debatable. Certainly there are some standard-bearers of pioneering practice - Matt Ravier working in Sydney, for instance. Matt started his work in this field by running an independent production company, the Festivalists, but is now working in the 'machine' as the Manager of Programming at the Australian Museum. The event he is most associated with is Jurassic Lounge, which has been running since 2011. "*Jurassic Lounge was the right idea at the right time – it's a huge party,*" Matt told me.

In Australia I met programmers flying the flag for Lates who are so important to the practice: I get the impression that without their drive the scene may be much the poorer. They are not alone – in both cities there are people within the council and state bureaucracies that are pushing hard for Lates to be on the night-time economy agenda.

Dr Tim Williams is CEO at The Committee for Sydney (CFS) which describes itself as "an independent think tank and champion for the whole of Sydney". We had a discussion about Lates and their role in the night-time economy that was recorded for a podcast.¹⁰ He took up the point of not wasting a precious public resource: "*That's a very critical point; there's a kind of under-utilisation of this public asset so let's try and find ways of using it more often.*"

Sydney is at a fascinating point in the development of its NTE strategy and Tim and the CFS are one of a number of agencies involved in developing the plan. In Sydney a decision was made to try a new programme of Lates they called Culture Up Late – an example of policymakers pushing Lates onto the NTE agenda.

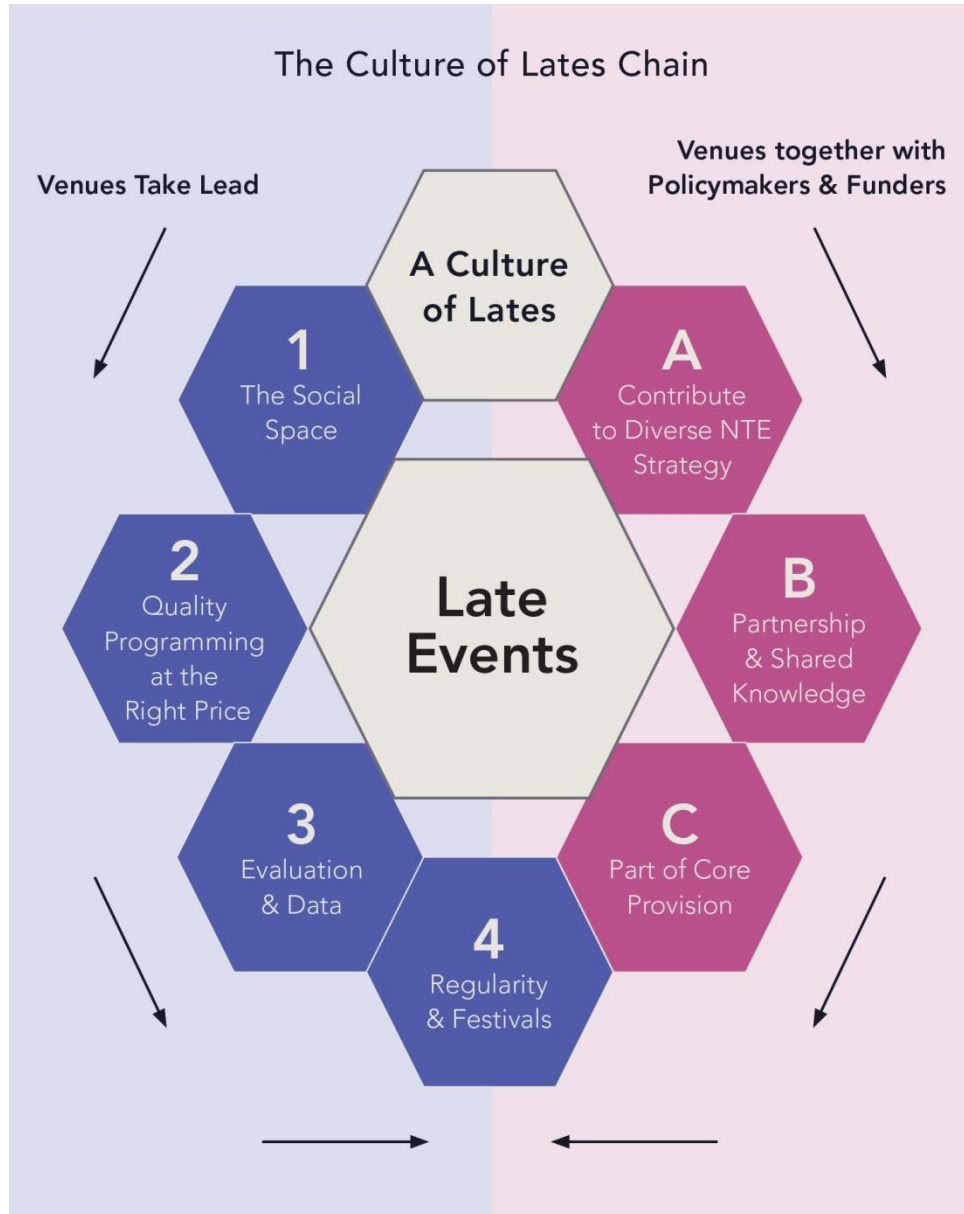
In Melbourne I learned how Museums Victoria (Australia's largest public museum organisation) is taking a proactive approach to developing their Lates programme: completely redefining the offer in their two biggest venues, Melbourne Museum and Scienceworks. They have created an institutional **Culture of Lates** that will see them exponentially increase their after-hours output in 2018.

The Culture of Lates Chain

Creating an environment where museums, galleries and libraries are open deep into the evening is dependent on people both inside and outside the arts and culture sector working together. In this report I have identified seven key attributes (see diagram below) that when put together can lead to a place having a Culture of Lates.

¹⁰ <http://www.sydney.org.au/cityscapes-with-nick-stockman/>

To help to understand how programmers and policymakers can both contribute to creating this **Culture of Lates** I've produced this diagram – The **Culture of Lates Chain**. It is a visual way of showing how the factors that lead to a successful Lates programme, which makes a contribution to a location's NTE, link together.



At the top of the chain sits the aim and the achievement of a Culture of Lates. This both initiates the chain and is its eventual successful output.

The links on the left-hand side of the chain describe the actions venues need to take:

- 1) Become a social space
- 2) Devise quality programming
- 3) Evaluate the programming

These actions will, hopefully, lead to successful events. A further development would be to share ideas with other venues that could lead to:

4) Commitment to complementary regular activity and festivals

This is the key point at which the venue should be in dialogue with policymakers as it is making a significant contribution to the night-time economy.

The chain works in the other direction too. On the right-hand side of the diagram, policymakers may also consider a **Culture of Lates** to be a desirable thing in their area, in which case they would want to start talking to their local venues whether or not they have an existing offer. Creating these partnerships between venues and organisations, such as local authorities or Business Improvement Districts, is so important to integrating events into a location-based strategy and support organisations such as Culture24,¹¹ Creative Tourist in Manchester¹² and Open Culture in Liverpool¹³, for instance, can help facilitate these conversations.

Ideally, each venue's Lates programme would develop and be supported by partner organisations to the point where it is considered so essential to both the venue and the town's offer that it becomes part of the venue's core provision. Policymakers and venues both play a part in this process, either party might initiate, but when they work well together a **Culture of Lates** is most likely to become established.

The places and times people socialise in are changing. Many people in the UK work late hours, night shifts or have jobs with irregular hours. Retail, cultural consumption, transport, vital services – so many of the things we do happen after 5pm. When we imagine what the future city will be like, late-trading museums should be part of the plan. Changing work and leisure patterns influence the way cities are designed and increasingly citizens play a role in creating these new environments through 'placemaking'.

Community involvement is fundamental to the placemaking concept. Nina Simon's book *The Participatory Museum* (2010) addressed falling visitor numbers to US museums and the lack of diversity in audiences by advocating a community-led approach to museum programming.¹⁴ She said: "Co-creative projects start with community as well as institutional needs," a fundamental shift from the orthodox curator-led approach. Again Lates can play an important role here as a platform for experimentation, inclusivity and access.

Venues can perform an important placemaking role in the community they serve. **I believe that for a community to actually take a deep and meaningful role in the functioning of a museum, opening late needs to be a part of the plan.**

Creating a **Culture of Lates** in a location takes political will, institutional commitment and individual dedication. It's not easy but it can be achieved and having all three factors in place is a potent recipe for success.

¹¹ www.WeAreCulture24.org.uk

¹² <https://www.creativetourist.com/>

¹³ <http://culture.org.uk/>

¹⁴ <http://www.participatorymuseum.org/read/>

2. Lates as part of a diverse night-time cultural offer

Sydney lock-out laws

In Sydney, on New Year's Eve 2013, teenager Daniel Christie was attacked and eventually died, the victim of a random and unprovoked one-hit punch.¹⁵ This wasn't the first horrific incident of its kind in Sydney and as a response to a situation they felt needed immediate attention, New South Wales' state administrators targeted areas of the city centre populated by high numbers of bars and clubs with new licensing laws.

The Sydney lock-out became law in 2014 and will be enforced for the foreseeable future. The regulations are not straightforward but they essentially limit the point at which you can enter, leave and re-enter licensed premises in the central Sydney area after a certain time, and the laws place other restrictions on buying alcohol within those premises.¹⁶

I am not concerned here with the merits of the lock-out laws, they are a fact of life for Sydneysiders and visitors alike. The impact of the lock-out laws on Sydney are also a source of heated debate but are only relevant here in as far as they pertain to the museum and gallery world and what these effects can tell us about how Lates can develop within a night-time economy context.

Most of my interviewees in Sydney talked about the lock-out laws and the effect they were having on night-life in Sydney. As people both living and working in Sydney many people I spoke to were not positive about the lock-outs but there was some acknowledgment of the notion that they could lead to an opportunity for the museum sector:

“[We] see the different parts of the night-time economy as being complementary. Having a strong bar and club scene can still go hand in hand...now that we have the lock-out laws, I think we do need to think differently about what our night-time offer is and whether we have an offer and how do we coordinate that offer, so I guess in some senses it's an opportunity to see that we have a problem and to address it by working together.”

Rebecca Mouy, Policy & Projects Officer, Committee for Sydney

A diverse NTE

Alcohol will be an important part of night-life for many years to come. There are night-time establishments whose offer is orientated around alcohol with entertainment and/or culture secondary: bars. There are establishments whose offer is orientated around entertainment and/or culture, where alcohol is the secondary offer; they can be referred to as venues. These range from music venues and theatres to museums and galleries. There are premises, like nightclubs, that reside in a grey area which makes this distinction simplistic, however if the balance of a city's night-time offer is too weighted towards just bars or just venues the result is a

¹⁵ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-01-11/teenage-boy-assaulted-on-new-years-eve-dies/5195566> accessed 22/12/2017

¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sydney_lockout_laws accessed 22/12/2017

monoculture. If a city's night-time offer consists of a balance of both, then it can be described as diverse.

A diverse night-time cultural offer is now the stated aim in London, Sydney, Melbourne and many other cities.¹⁷ Museums can make a significant contribution to diversifying the city night-time economy particularly if they get support from the policymakers and administrators in city hall. The opportunity is there for venues to cater for people to start their evening off with four hours or so at a museum or gallery, with the option of consuming alcohol in a measured way as part of a cultural experience, and then go on to a club if they wish.

Graeme Evans stated in his report *New Events in Historic Venues* (London Metropolitan University, Cities Institute, UK, 2010) that in his opinion Lates can: *“reposition historic venues”* and *“provide a more positive alternative to the mono-use and problematic occupation of the city that represents a major barrier to evening and night-time economic activity for most resident and tourist visitors.”*¹⁸

Sydney's lock-out laws and the tensions between the competing priorities of residents and visitors that exist in all towns and cities have led policymakers to the realisation that museum late openings have an important role to play in a diverse NTE.

Dr Tim Williams told me:

*“It's a very critical discussion for us because we're trying to get a more diverse and vibrant NTE...we just want to extend the pleasurable day a bit longer than 6 o'clock. Global cities have a diversity of offer and it struck us that museums and galleries at night is part of that transformation.”*¹⁹

People who enjoy experiencing a location's night-time offer, and that includes most of us at one time or another, want a diverse range of opportunities. Matt Ravier, Manager of Programming at the Australian Museum, told me:

“All I know is that, and I've known this since we started Jurassic Lounge for the Australian Museum in 2011, there's a huge appetite in the city for diversified after-hours cultural offering that sits somewhere between just going to the pub or going to the Sydney theatre company or the opera.”

Alcohol is generally not available at Lates events in either Mexico City or Moscow, with some exceptions. Many Moscow museums have café/bars on the premises that do offer alcohol; they are just a bit more strict about taking beverages into the galleries. Should Anglo-Saxon countries follow this example? Certainly some events, particularly those emerging active offers such as escape rooms, treasure hunts and murder-mysteries can work well with or without alcohol.

¹⁷ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan/draft-new-london-plan/> Chapter 7, Policy HC6, Supporting the night-time economy, B3

¹⁸ <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/6113144.pdf>

¹⁹ <http://www.sydney.org.au/who-we-are/about-us/> (accessed 27/09/2017)

Is Lates' role in the night-time economy explicit or implicit?

One of the key things I wanted to establish in all the places I visited was whether Lates were being discussed as part of NTE strategy. Before Lates events can play a significant role in a diverse NTE they have to be recognised as a contributing factor by policymakers and the people that programme them brought into the strategic discussions.

If Lates are making a contribution to an area's NTE and discussions are happening at policy level the role that Lates play in these discussions can be split into two groups: explicit and implicit. Explicit is when Lates are being used as a lever to diversify the night-time economy as a consequence of published policy, as they are for example in Sydney and now in London. Implicit is when they are not part of a documented policy but are however performing that function, as in Moscow.

In my view the goal is to include Lates explicitly in published night-time economy policy. Once this is achieved Lates are part of an agenda and the sector has an ongoing role and stake in the debate. I would say that in Sydney Lates are now explicitly part of a policy to diversify the night-time economy. City of Sydney consulted widely with the sector and the public about their night-time economy strategy, as Matt Ravier explained:

“City of Sydney, so that was the organisation that was working on the late night economy strategy, so 2012 being pre-lock out laws, and I took part in several round tables where they invited different cultural practitioners around the city to have a say to help shape the strategy and I know the City of Sydney, the late night economy team came to a few Jurassic Lounge events and a couple of times have used it as a case study of successful after-hours cultural experience.”

The role of museums and galleries in the NTE is specifically referred to in the policy document Open Sydney Action and Strategy Plan 2013-2030, “*We will work with and promote later trading by cultural institutions such as the Australian Museum, State Library of NSW, Art Gallery of NSW and the Powerhouse Museum.*” (Goal 3, Diverse Sydney, 3.1.2, Later cultural venues and a cultural policy for Sydney, City of Sydney, 2013).²⁰

Grainne Brunson, Director Engagement, Partnerships & Development at Create New South Wales (NSW), told me an advisory committee made up of “*chairs of either the board or the trustees...of the cultural institutions plus the state significant organisations, and then other representatives,*” proposed the idea of Culture-Up Late (CUL) and it became an initiative of Create NSW, a state body. Grainne continued, “[*there were*] a lot of the problems around drinking certainly in the CBD area. So this [CUL] was a way of, I guess an attempt, to look at what else can you do in the city.”

²⁰ http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/132224/2013-054826-OPEN-Sydney-Strategy-and-Action-Plan-FINAL-version-February-2013.pdf

City of Sydney Council is the local government authority for central Sydney and Create NSW is the NSW Government's arts policy and funding body. So here then is a voyage from consultation, through policy to implementation, I'm sure by no means the first or only such journey of its kind in the world but one that is current and that I have been able to track.

Moscow's abundance of late opening cultural venues and Mexico City's NdM clearly contribute to a diverse night-time cultural offer. NdM was created by the city's culture department and many of Moscow's cultural venues are run by city authorities so it is implicit that the administrators recognise the value of extending cultural venues' hours. I have no evidence as to whether consultation and published policy fed into decisions to support late openings, this may not be the way they do things in Moscow or Mexico City, and I have no evidence, though some may exist, that either city has a night-time economy strategy. For these reasons I describe Moscow's and Mexico City's offer as implicit.

In Moscow, as well as extended hours for museums and galleries, all libraries are open till 10pm at night. Moscow hosts a Museums Night, like London does an Art Night and also, unlike London, a Libraries Night. For this year's Moscow Library Night, Maria Privalova's library was asked by the city authorities to open up for 24 hours: *"We were picked by Moscow Department of Culture to work till 6 o'clock in the morning, we saw it as an interesting task, and we didn't fight it so we had to figure out how to do it,"* Maria told me.

There's no doubt that Moscow's authorities are pulling the levers of the night-time cultural offer and with willing participants like Maria they are working hand-in-hand with institutions to broaden their appeal. I'm sure Moscow has similar night-time challenges to other cities but this tendency to incorporate cultural venues into the later hours offer springs from public demand.

Ideally UK cities will follow examples round the world and connect consultation, policy and implementation to support museums to develop their contribution to the NTE. Certainly the culture and heritage sector have the means at their disposal to offer a very competitive and high quality product.

Once venues are working together, for example on festivals, they become a stronger proposition for policymakers to support. The momentum goes in the opposite direction too. Once policymakers recognise that Lates are an important part of a diverse NTE they are more likely to support them. The end result should be much more choice for the customer.

3. The social space

That's edutainment!

Museums potentially have all the ingredients that visitors seek for a good night out. They are often in large buildings, many of which are situated in easy-to-reach locations. Many UK museums have superb facilities and they all have a dedicated workforce. Most venues are licensed to dispense food and beverages and can open late if they wish. Additionally, they contain treasure in the form of objects, from which stories can be extracted and used to create themes and topics for events laced with novelty and mystery. Museums appreciate that they have these attributes, but to exploit them they have to think about their assets not simply as a way of educating people but as a means of entertaining them.

Museum after-hours events attract younger audiences when they are successful at creating a friendly social space and the sector can be very proud of what has been achieved to redefine the museum in the minds of a new generation. However, for many people museums and galleries are still not places to hang out in, to meet friends at, relax and have fun in during the day.

In fact many people's idea of what a larger museum is like during the daytime now is the opposite of a relaxed space – the perception is of a frenetic place full of school groups or tourists which, of course, is great. Maybe the success of adult-orientated evening events is partly defined by the atmosphere being the opposite of the daytime.

However as Councillor (and mother) Jess Miller from City of Sydney pointed out, *"If they had said at the time we'll give you 'a Wiggles for the kid, cocktails for Mum' deal, would you like to become a member? Did you know that we open every Friday night from 6 o'clock till 10 o'clock, I'd have been like 'Sign me up!'"*

Most of us wear at least two hats at some point in our lives; the carer and student or the worker and dad maybe: we need different things at different times from our public institutions. Councillor Miller is making the point that as a mother she could have been attracted to the museum twice in an average week; once as a daytime visitor looking to entertain the kids, and again at night to spend time with friends. Museums have a big advantage over bars and in fact many cultural and entertainment venues are so flexible they can be many things to the same people.

Important role of music as part of the offer

So many of the venues I spoke to said that music was the big attraction for their after-hours events. Musicians are so key to providing the content in Mexico City and music acts, particularly new breaking acts, play a big role in the National Gallery Victoria (NGV) in Melbourne offer. The night I visited a band played in front of hundreds of people in a large conference-style room on the ground floor. Entrance to the main House of Dior exhibition was included in the admission price and the music content was carefully matched to appeal to the audience attracted to the exhibition.

"We work collaboratively with a music programmer to gain access to high level performers. The series for The House of Dior is playful and quite upbeat and we're featuring many female artists. The design of the event is also a key part of the

experience to create a unique setting that will excite every visitor walking through the door,” said Donna McColm, Associate Director, Audience Engagement and Learning, National Gallery of Victoria

What struck me about the night was how a largely young female audience had dressed up for the occasion, creating an atmosphere a bit like a prom. It was a great example of the gallery space turning from passive to an active social space.

Even where a museum is limited by space, has neighbour issues or just wants to expand out of their physical space, music is a driving force. The Bulgakov Museum in central Moscow is dedicated to the life of Kiev-born writer Mikhail Bulgakov. The museum is housed in the third floor flat in which the writer lived and set his most famous novel, 'The Master and Margarita'. Museum Director Peter Mansilla-Cruz decided small-scale opera performances in the museum, though successful, weren't reaching the parts of the community he wanted to engage with, so he organised a music concert in the nearby Patriarch Ponds Park, where the first scene of the novel is set.

“I wanted to make the museum more visible and more well known in Moscow and in Russia...the main reason we're doing this I think is that we want the museum to be a part of the neighbourhood...to make it clear for everybody that the Bulgakov story and the museum are arts of this area. And I want the wealthy people from the area to be our partners, friends of the museum, our sponsors.”

Peter explained to me that he put the audience on a pontoon in the lake and the performers at one end in front of the permanent buildings which struck me as a nice alternative to the expected configuration!

The Women's Museum in Mexico City is trying to attract more men. *“At NdM there are some men because there is always some music and concerts and singers,”* said Roxana Rodriguez Braxo. They believe the bands bring in a male audience that would otherwise think the museum is not for them. Music is breaking down barriers and creating a social space.

Music is a great lubricator of sociability. Carolyn Meehan, Manager of Audience Insights at the Melbourne Museum pointed out that interacting with people is also a great way to learn:

“We've got a wonderful quote from a visitor to the first Nocturnal, who said it is so great to be able to do it [visit a museum] in a social sense, that they could be a kid again without being surrounded by kids, because with them there they can't do that. They also said because they were so relaxed and enjoying the space, they actually felt they learnt more.”

Playful interaction

So, giving adults the chance to be playful as well as social is a big part of a successful museum night and leads to more new knowledge being absorbed. The Art Gallery of NSW has grasped this idea of a museum as a social space, Ashlie Hunter, the venue's Art After Hours producer told me:

“A diverse offering is important, social offerings...where people can be together...we make sure we always make it about the art...so that when people come they have a deeper and more social experience of how to access art. A lot of people come into the gallery and say I don’t know where to start, I don’t know how to access it, I don’t know what I’m supposed to think, maybe I’m missing something here. Well we give people permission to just come in and be in an art gallery, find this as a civic space, find it as a place to then find inspiration and be moved.”

Attracting visitors with a less academically-focused programme was cited by museums in Russia and Mexico as a strategy behind Lates. *“We usually attract a very academic audience; we want to start bringing in a more social and fun audience.”* Claudia Marcela Ojeda Franco from the National Museum of Art, Mexico City told me.

On the evening of the July NdM I visited the event at the Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso. In addition to guided tours and a late opening of an exhibition, a salsa class was conducted in one of the rooms. Again opening up the space for a social, fun activity really created a buzz and added to the fiesta atmosphere.

Food and beverage

Food and beverage (F&B) are as important as music in creating an atmosphere of sociability at a museum. So many museums in the UK and around the world feel they have no choice but to farm out their F&B offer to third-party providers. This works very well in a lot of cases but it does limit the amount of money a museum can potentially earn from their after-hours programmes.

Earning a decent margin from food and drink can help to sustain performing arts venues, allowing them more flexibility to take risks with programming by taking pressure off the necessity to break even from ticket sales alone. **If more museums programmed more after-hours events it might become viable to bring more F&B offers in-house.**

Getting around

Shared social experience is a key part of a successful Lates event, and in Mexico City museums are extending this concept beyond the confines of the museum walls to be a key element of the journey to and from the events. The organisers of Noche de Museos, the Mexico City version of Museums at Night, are working with an independent company, similar in structure to a UK social enterprise, to provide a bicycle tour as an alternative way of navigating between their festival events.

Working with local transport providers, as Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums (TWAM) the producers of the Late Shows have done for years to help visitors navigate round Newcastle and Gateshead events, is not new but the way the Mexico City bicycle scheme creates a cohesive group does go a step further.

CASE STUDY2

Museum Bike Tours in Mexico City

One of the barriers to attending Noche De Museos is navigating around the vast city. L&S Proyectos Culturales A.C. (L&S) confronts the issue head-on by offering organised cycle tours between selected participating museums. La Vuelta A Los Museos (Museum Bicycle Tours) has been part of NdM for three years now, as Director Lizette Sanromán explained: “The bicycle tour is to go and visit three or four museums but to get off, go through the museum, we make the museum greet them. We take care of the bicycles. People enter, and then we go to the next museum.”

Each tour group accommodates up to 180 riders on their own bikes wearing their own helmets. For a fee of 100 pesos (£3.50) L&S provide ride organisation, technical back-up, safety oversight and liaison with the participating museums to provide entertainment tailored to the large group. There are stewards at the front, back and sides and a van called The Sweeper, “If somebody bursts a tyre, or if you can’t keep on going, we put them [the bikes] on top of the van. We have a big group, we go slowly, we take care of the front and the rear and we don’t let them open out. Every bike goes in a lane.”

The cycling part of the experience is tightly organised:

- Email address, ID and telephone number are required as part of registration in case of emergency
- The route is shared on Facebook so that people know where to pick it up if they are running late
- Each participant receives a badge or sticker with the visited museum’s logo on to identify those people who have paid for the tour

On arrival at the museum the group may be offered a hands-on activity, a music performance or talk by emerging artist groups (organised by L&S) which doesn’t preclude other parts of the museum being open to non-cycle tour participants at the same time.

The bike tours are attractive to sponsors and provide an alternative to petrol-powered travel. “Our project supports the use of the bicycle, we help the environment, we improve the greet and we bring the people to the culture. We are currently supported by Red Bull and Pascual Workers Foundation.” Importantly the tours are a group experience, an opportunity for participants to bond and another way for museums to work together in clusters. They guarantee an audience for the participating museum’s offer and reinforce the concept of the circuit of events. I hope we will see similar offers in the UK soon.

The last words on the importance of creating a social space go to Ashlie Hunter:

“Well I think there’s something really exciting about coming to a museum at night, you can have more of a social element to it, we bring out pop-up bars, we have drinks throughout the central court and we can have live music and it’s just from 5 o’clock on the Wednesday we have permission to create a really unique and different environment in the gallery. So as well as getting audiences that can’t make it through the day or on weekends that are busy, you’re getting a lot more people coming here for a social interaction and then therefore having these deeper art experiences through the programme.”

4. Regularity and festivals

Day/night and performance/visual arts programming comparisons

If a theatre programmed an event on a Tuesday one week, a Thursday two weeks later, then nothing for two months until a series of three nights from Thursday to Saturday it would be an unusual programming decision. That sort of ad-hoc approach to programming is not a feature of performing arts venues. Yet, that is the way some museums have approached Lates programming.

The night time is now the usual part of the day for people to attend the theatre though it wasn't always so. In Shakespeare's time, *"Most plays were performed not in the evening as they are now, but rather in the afternoon or during the daylight"* (Jamieson, Lee, 2017) – habits and lifestyles change and a customer-focused sector must adapt with these developments.²¹

Regularity

In all the places I visited, institutions and local authorities were grappling with how best to make a regular offer work and how regular that offer should be. Noche De Museos is the clearest example of city administrators and venues reaching a consensus that keeping it regular works: *"Keep doing them on a regular basis and don't break the cycle,"* is the advice of Ana Rita Garcia-Lascurain at the Chocolate Museum.

Gabriela Lopez posited another benefit: *"As well as I want them to work as a team, they're also the aspect of competition between them, so they really work on the contents of their Noche de Museos, on the quality of the programme."*

All the interviewees agreed regularity works but deciding on the frequency of the offer is dependent on gauging audience demand. Mexico City's monthly offer is an example of a city focusing almost all its efforts into one big showcase event – could they extend it to twice-monthly?

"There have been quite a few comments asking to have twice a month Night of the Museums. During the meetings that we have monthly we actually asked the head of the museum that attends the meetings their opinion and they are not keen on doing that," Ana Isabel Salazar Martinez told me.

Customer demand

Gauging customer demand is difficult. People use Facebook to find out about and declare they are going to events, though that doesn't always convert to attendance. In some ways moving from no events to an occasional offer is an easier step to take than developing from an occasional offer to a regular night or increasing the frequency of a regular offer.

This is what Museums Victoria is doing at Scienceworks where their offer is moving from occasional to regular and Melbourne Museum are expanding regularity from four nights a year to twelve.

²¹ "Theater Experience in Shakespeare's Lifetime." ThoughtCo, Sep. 5, 2017, www.thoughtco.com/theater-experience-in-shakespeares-lifetime-2985243

“That will be a big push around adult visitation and that’s something that could easily double the access (for adults to after-hours events at Scienceworks). We’ve come from a space where things happened sporadically and four or five times a year to a kind of middle approach where we are doing it monthly. And Planetarium nights will add another 50 nights a year,” said Elise Murphy, Acting Manager of Education and Community Programmes at Scienceworks.

Museums Victoria

My day of meetings across two Museums Victoria sites, led by Linda Sproul, Head of Programmes, was a hothouse session and a great insight into an organisation in the process of cranking up the frequency and quality of their Lates programme.

Their Melbourne Museum site has hosted Lates for years, revolving around one of the best known events in Australia, Smart Bar, which Jen Brook, Programmes Manager and Producer of Nocturnal told me, *“Ran for 8 years, and it was very much focused on expert talks. One of the learnings I guess we had from Smart Bar was they would work well in terms of trying to engage with an audience to have a regular pattern of programming.”*

Melbourne Museum’s offer has developed into a Friday monthly. I visited September 2017’s third monthly edition of Nocturnal on the same night the NGV held their weekly Late, hopping between the two with the help of buses and Uber. Nocturnal combines the social party approach of DJs, dancing, food and beverage with insights from one-on-one encounters with curators and objects. Linda explained:

“Nocturnal is an ‘attract’ programme – what is attracting them to come in through the door and purchase the ticket is the band. What may delight them while they’re here is wow, I’m talking to this curator, they are making that choice to come to the band but what they leave with is something different.”

Museums Victoria has wide institutional and staff experience, good historical data and in-house marketing expertise of after-hours public programming to inform their decisions to increase the frequency of their offers. The key to expansion is a quality *regular* offer, as Alex Fisher, Melbourne Museum’s Senior Partnerships Coordinator explained:

“The fact that this is an ongoing, first Friday of every month event is something that is really important to me that we maintain and that we build awareness, and if Melbourne is completely aware that that’s when it’s on if they can’t make this Friday, they can come to the next one.”



The DJ's view of *Nocturnal* at the *Melbourne Museum*, September 2017

Festivals & regular events

For one night a year most of Melbourne's cultural venues open up through the night for White Night (WN). A WN, or *Nuit Blanche* as it is known in many countries, is an annual all-night or night-time arts festival.²² Melbourne's WN is highly successful at getting a lot of people out onto the streets and into venues to enjoy culture together. It is a very different offer to a Museums Night but as many of Melbourne's museums and galleries take part and attract huge numbers of people, it performs a similar function, achieving critical mass, as Moscow's Museum Night or Berlin's Long Night of the Museum. Dozens of cities around the world now hold WN festivals but how successful WNs and Museum Nights are at leading to repeat visits after the festival night is unclear.²³

Maria Privalova, who in her previous role as director of Moscow Institute for Social and Cultural Programmes has studied the interaction between annual festival events and regular programmes said "*we try to promote the idea that it has to be done as a marketing thing for culture in general, so that should be a selling point for cultural activities later on.*"

For her, the annual festival moment is only valuable if it supports regular participation in cultural activities and for that to be possible there must be a regular offer available: "*the events which are happening within the institutions which work regularly then it*

²² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuit_Blanche (accessed on 18/12/2017)

²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Night_festivals#Britain (accessed 18/12/2017)

[Museum Nights] has to be about trying to promote those institutions in general for a long run, allowing them to sell themselves better with the audiences,” she says.

Maria cites research based on the Net Promoter Score system NPS (see *explanation panel*) showing that visitors would invariably be more likely to recommend the event they visited than the venue (in some cases by a big margin), as evidence that the danger with festivals is that the quality of experience is what makes an impression on the visitor, not the place it happens in.

Net Promoter Score – an explanation

The definition of Net Promoter Score, according to Wikipedia, is a management tool that can be used to gauge the loyalty of a firm's customer relationships.²⁴

The system is based on the idea that if a person rates something highly they are very likely to recommend it to a friend. *“The Net Promoter Score is calculated based on responses to a single question: “How likely is it that you would recommend our company/product/service to a friend or colleague? The scoring for this answer is most often based on a 0 to 10 scale”.*

The scores are grouped according to set criteria into promoters, passive and detractors and a net score calculated. The aim is to find more out about how the product or service is perceived by the customer or visitor (with the outcome presumably being improvement in that service or product).

“People are satisfied here,” Maria said, citing the Modern Art Museum, where the interview took place, as an example, “and they would recommend the night itself but they’re not going to recommend the place because they kind of don’t really associate what they see here with the venue.” Maria adds, “Well that’s our explanation, we don’t know it but that’s the way we think about it.”

I don’t think this is necessarily evidence not to produce festivals but it does demonstrate venues have to do more to make themselves attractive to event audiences and consider programming more events that reproduce the experience enjoyed so much by the festival night attendees. If visitors can start to associate the events they enjoyed so much with the venue they enjoyed them at, they may be more likely to return to that venue when the offer is slightly different.

Yana Shklyarskaya, Head of Exhibitory Projects at the State Darwin Museum, Moscow, pointed out the importance of first impressions:

“Young people who have attended our events they actually came to the museum for the first time in their adult life. And of course in their perception they start viewing the museum not just as part of their education where they actually have to go but it’s also a place where they can make friends.”

²⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Net_Promoter (accessed 18/12/2017)

All the cities I visited are combining festival moments with regular programmes. In Sydney, Culture Up Late, taking place in the summer months of January and February 2017 and focusing on a weekly offer for a limited period of six to eight weeks, was an attempt to introduce some coherence and familiarity to the night-time offer for the customer. Its first season produced some interesting legacy as several venues told me they would continue with weekly summer late opening whether or not CUL continues.

Sophie Harrington, Partnerships and Festivals Manager told me the Powerhouse is looking at going ahead with a summer season in 2018, “[Even] if it’s not an initiative the government does, [we will] be doing it on our own and put budget towards programming.” This is also the Australian Museum’s strategy, Matt Ravier said: “It’s something that we’re going to do again.”

When devising schemes like CUL or venue offers like Nocturnal a commitment to regularity requires an obligation to consistently offer quality programming.

“There’s a reason why we’re not currently open late (every night or week), it’s because if we just open late no-one comes. To put on an amazing programme so that when you come after-hours you are satisfied with the offer they [the museums] have to be resourced to do that,” said Matt Ravier.

Quality is rarely cheap so who should pay: visitors or the public purse? The AG of NSW has produced Art After Hours every Wednesday since 2003 except for a period of around three years when the events switched to Thursday and Friday nights. About four years ago the relationship with their main programme sponsor came to an end. Ashlie picked up the story,

“There was a moment of switching over through partnerships, and there was a gap and the programme became absorbed into core funding. So it was obviously a priority and a successful thing that we said that this will operate with or without sponsorship...it was a matter of going 'Well, the show must go on, this is such a vital part of our flagship programme.' I think that the Wednesday night programme, and Wednesday night access is just a priority point now and I think our priority is to open more and more going into the future.”

It had got to the point for the Art Gallery of NSW that Art After Hours was so integral to their public programmes offer that even with the loss of their major sponsor they didn’t want to interrupt that regular offer. They were willing to risk funding the events out of their core budget at least until they picked up another sponsor and this strategy worked, “*I think that the Wednesday night programme, and Wednesday night access is just a priority point now and I think our priority is to open more and more going into the future.*”

Every city I visited has either an established or burgeoning regular Lates programme alongside a festival offer. Mexico City combines the two in Noche De Museos; Sydney has started Culture Up Late next to regular offers like Art After Hours; Melbourne runs White Night spiking regulars like Nocturnal; and Moscow has Museum, Art and Library Nights complementing extensive late openings.

There is a symbiosis here. Culture Up Late was able to spring into action at late notice precisely because it used so many existing offers. The infrastructure, experience and expertise needed to successfully run these nights resides in the venues.

Repeat visitation

Visitors need the certainty that an event will be repeated, combined with moments of thrilling surprise: they are simultaneously predictable creatures of habit and enigmatic impulse buyers. The big moments are important: they can be seen as shop windows for the regular events – the shiny, eye-catching product, which draws people into the concept of museum Lates.

I talked about Melbourne's White Night to Jen Brook at Melbourne Museum: *"Last year we had 21,000 people coming through the museum but we also had about another 100,000 or so, maybe 120,000 in the plaza."* That's a lot of people to deal with even for a museum the size of the Melbourne Museum. It would be great to think they would all come back sometime over the next 12 months. As Maria Privalova said: *"What I was hoping to get from these kinds of cultural events would be linking them to continuing cultural consumption."*

She is rightly sceptical about the idea that the audience returns, there's not enough evidence to prove this either way. Gabriela Lopez thinks visitors do return at least to Noche De Museos, *"There are people that come every month, I mean they repeat. Some people just visit us once and that's it, but people come back which is very interesting."* My hunch is that you stand a better chance of a festival audience returning if the experience orientated offer is repeated regularly as Melbourne is trying to do with Nocturnal.

Matt Ravier is as clear as anybody I've spoken to on this point:

"The idea with Jurassic Lounge was not to convince them to therefore come back the next day and buy a ticket; it didn't matter to us if they didn't immediately convert to day-time visitors. It mattered to us that by the time they had kids or became old enough to become a donor or a member or hire a venue for a corporate event etc. that the museum occupied a place in their heart as a place that mattered to them. So it was more about keeping that point of contact for audiences as they grew older rather than suddenly converting them to coming during the day."

5. Quality is the key to attracting audiences

Free or charged for or both?

If Lates are fundamentally about audience development and audience development is about attracting hard to reach audiences then it follows that making these events free is more likely to succeed, doesn't it?

Colleen Dilenschneider's 'Know your own bone' blog uses data to evidence the assertion that price is not the deciding factor when people choose cultural organisations to visit. In her article 'Admission Price is not a Primary Barrier for Cultural Center Visitation' she says: "Free admission is not a cure-all for engagement. In fact, data suggests that free admission has relatively little sustained impact on attendance."²⁵

In Mexico City you get a fantastic festival for free every month. You can join a cycle tour to get around (you pay for this but it is cheap) and the events are organised in easy-to-access circuits. Social media drives the marketing; student volunteers do a lot of free work. The city government resources the central organisation but only to a really low level, so very little of the stretched public purse is paying for the fun. It's a great model but it does have tensions. It takes one person's tremendous dedication to organise it, it relies on musicians giving their services for free to provide much of the content and most of the events last a couple of hours and rarely extend past 10pm.

It's difficult to see how you could reproduce this exact model in the UK or if you'd want to. Certainly the Musicians Union might have grounds to complain on behalf of their members.

In Moscow there will be at least one museum, gallery or library open on any night of the week you wish to visit, many will be free, though if you want to take the afternoon off work and arrive at 2pm you will probably have to pay to get in.

In Australia you have some of the most immersive and participatory museum events on the planet but you may have to pay a high ticket price to experience them unless you wait for the annual White Night to come round in Melbourne (in January 2018 it was confirmed that the Australian Museum is continuing with the Culture Up Late brand for a series of charged events, though not as a Create NSW initiative).²⁶

Effect of daytime pricing

Clearly, there is a relationship between a venue and/or a country's daytime charging policy and the approach to after-hours charging. The success of Europe's annual Nuit Des Musées event, which Museums at Night in the UK is affiliated to, must at least in part be due to the events being free when most of the venues taking part charge for daytime admission.

Most publicly-funded UK museums and galleries offer free access during the day – does this mean Lates in the UK should usually be free?

²⁵ <https://www.colleendilen.com/2016/05/04/admission-price-is-not-a-primary-barrier-for-cultural-center-visitation-data/> (accessed 25/01/2018)

²⁶ <https://australianmuseum.net.au/landing/cultureuplate/>

It is entirely understandable that customers would be reluctant to pay a fee for accessing museum facilities after 5pm when there is no extra programming offer, especially when in the UK they are used to accessing that space without paying during the day. However if venues want to extend their hours as part of a community engagement strategy, for example, or simply to meet the demand that we are being told there is to be accessible at times when people want them to be, who will pay for the extra staff costs?

Programming costs money, and to do it well often a lot of money, ask any theatre or music venue. Many museums have offered free after-hours events as part of their public engagement, accessibility and/or outreach and learning programmes. They have either produced their events independently and/or taken part in national or city-wide festivals such as Light Night in Liverpool²⁷ or the Late Shows in Newcastle & Gateshead²⁸ both affiliated with Museums at Night and both run on a free admission basis.

Once a venue decides to programme into their extended hours can they be expected not to charge? Furthermore if they don't charge are they building in a reliance on ever-diminishing public funding, creating an unrealistic expectation in the customer and undermining the value of the event in the visitor's eyes?

The blockbuster!

In the UK larger institutions generate income from blockbuster, high-impact "large-scale loan" exhibitions.²⁹ These shows are charged for, can be difficult to get into without membership and are often criticised for being overcrowded. In the minds of the visitor, **are Lates events a more accessible and participatory alternative or complement to blockbuster shows?** Instead of equating Lates with an extension of free daytime access, which is not based around events, they must be perceived by the museum sector for what they are – additional programming, which costs money if it is of high enough quality. If the museum sector values its Lates events highly enough to charge for them then the visitors will be prepared to pay for tickets as long as they feel they are getting value for money.

Working together

High-quality museum programming develops in many ways and usually relies on collaboration or co-production. Collaboration can take many forms. The method that produced the highly successful Jurassic Lounge event was the venue contracting a producer. Matt Ravier's company, The Festivalists, the creators of Jurassic Lounge, was hired by the Australian Museum with the brief to create an event that would attract a hard-to-reach audience. Matt told me:

²⁷ <http://lightnightliverpool.co.uk/>

²⁸ <https://thelateshows.org.uk/>

²⁹ https://www.huffingtonpost.com/mutualart/making-the-best-of-the-bl_b_1614492.html accessed 22/12/2017

“Jurassic Lounge was the right idea at the right time, at the time in 2011, our predictions at the beginning were 300 people and we doubled that on the opening night and never looked back and really most nights we hit 1,800 capacity and that was on a week night. The Museum was the client and they paid us a flat fee in exchange for programming, producing and promoting the event. So it included all the marketing and publicity as well, they did nothing in terms of marketing and publicity. The reason behind that was that if they weren’t currently reaching 18 to 35s then doing the marketing defeated the purpose. Either they would use their own channels and therefore would reach people who weren’t in the target market, or they would try to develop marketing and Comms networks they didn’t currently have. So instead we did that for them and that was very successful.”

The museum, very wisely, let Matt’s company focus on what they were good at, which in Jurassic Lounge’s case was just about everything! However the museum was playing a long game, now Matt works for them and Jurassic Lounge is an in-house production, as Matt added:

“Part of its success was it was run by people, as in us, from the outside, who weren’t part of the institutional culture which is sometimes quite risk averse. And so we took risks not just because we wanted to take risks but because we didn’t realise that what we were doing is taking risk,”

In this case somebody at the Australian Museum in 2011 figured, we’re not going to risk doing this ourselves but we will take a calculated risk on getting somebody in to do it for us! After years of success using outsourcing how does a venue transition to an in-house model?

“The programming department didn’t exist, and what we had before was a series of night talks for members, organised by the membership department mostly for members, you had a school holiday programme run by a kids’ programmer, which was in a different department, and then once a year you had the science festival which was organised by a third department and then you had Jurassic Lounge, which was outsourced to an external company. So the idea was they (1) created a programming department to reinvest in public programmes as a way to develop new audiences, deepen engagement, increase visitation, increase representation and put all of these activities under one roof as much as possible and (2) then recruit a team to make that happen.”

Hey presto! Your three-step guide to creating a successful public programme, find a talented promoter, invite them to run highly successful events and bring them in-house!

Outstanding programming

I’ve picked out some other event programming I was told about or experienced on my travels that I think we in the UK can learn something from. Not all aspects of these events will appear new and ground-breaking to everyone reading this report. Many of these types of events have been tried in the UK before but in my opinion

there is at least a certain élan about either the idea, or the execution of the idea to merit closer inspection.

“Elizabeth Farm is the oldest still-standing European house in the country...you participate in gambling early 19th century style and then you learn some traditional crafts, then do other sorts of activities, learn how people slept, what types of beds that they lived in, then play a game and then it’s a series of characters in role play.”

Caroline Butler-Bowden, Director of Strategy and Engagement at Sydney Living Museums

“We’ve also done things like performance art, that can be the performance element. We’ve done one where we worked with Legs on a Wall, who do abseiling dancing, on the turbine hall wall...they’re rigged into the ceiling and they dance along the wall hence Legs on a Wall.”

Sophie Harrington, Partnerships and Festivals Manager, MAAS

“For Sydney Living Museums, for example, we did a night called Mayhem, which recreated famous parties from Sydney’s history, using the curators and the collection as a backdrop to create something that was educational but also heaps of fun, where people dressed up in the clothes of the era, took on roles, a lot of role play.”

Matt Ravier at the Australian Museum

“[On] the “Black Night” all the museum, all the palace, was without light and we told the visitors to bring light, so the cellular or the flashlight, torch, and they visited the collection and there is a difference, if you have a light or you are lighting the piece it is another experience. We had 4,000 visits and no dead and no accidents.”

Monica Espinoza Vicens, Museo Palacio De La Inquisicion, Mexico City

“So we have done several Museum Nights in which the blind people were actually the guide, the tour guides of the museum so you go around the museum with a different experience. We discovered that the way of interpreting was very different and one that we liked.” What would a blind person pick out? “Everything, well in our case smell, the shapes of things from the wooden doors and everything; things that you would never pay attention to and then you take away all the importance from everything that you can actually see... there is less light at the museum [at night]. So you can again focus on other things.”

Ana Rita Garcia-Lascurain, Fundación Mucho, Chocolate Museum.

Case Study 3

Tim Ross: Man About The House

Man About the House (MATH) is a programming concept conceived by Tim Ross, a former radio broadcaster and comedian, initially for Sydney Living Museums (SLM) at Rose Seidler House, one of the finest examples of mid-20th century modern domestic architecture in Australia.

The event involves Tim talking in passionate and amusing terms about the modernist house in which the event is happening, accompanied by musician Kit Warhurst. “The whole idea is that people come and immerse themselves in that site,” says Caroline Butler-Bowdon, Director of Strategy and Engagement at SLM, who originally commissioned the project.

In May 2014, Man About The House received the Australian National Trust Heritage Award for its role in raising awareness about the importance of conservation of heritage. Tim has now taken Man About the House around different sites in Australia and on to London including the iconic Post Office Tower.

Tim told me: “The trick is it’s about presenting history, architecture and design in a fun and interesting way. Architecture is so Instagram friendly so everyone comes to the house, takes mean photos, bang, and my followers went up and it’s a business that I pretty much run through Instagram.”

Man About The House attracts a new younger audience, introduces them to heritage in a different way, and Tim has some incisive insights into this demographic’s habits. “It’s 25 to 55. You’ve got all those clichés about the baby boomers – they are true! They want experiences. They’ll never buy your merchandise, you can’t sell them a book, so that’s what I love, that’s the only reason Kindle works because Baby Boomers are tight. So they don’t want any more stuff, but they want something to talk about when they go and see the specialist.”

Tim singles out the welcome and ambience of a MATH event that particularly appeals to his audience: “The modernist house lights up the land, when we’re doing them in warmer months where you get that transition period, so you’re there; it’s warm, its light and then bang before you know it, it’s night. [During] the second act the house is like a lantern. When we’re talking about opening up cultural institutions to new audiences making them feel welcome is really important... it’s demystifying that approach to stuff and to be honest as much as cultural institutions like to think they want people to come in, they sort of hate people as well!”

Tim makes a really important point here about how museums can use Late events to counter the off-putting image of a museum. Many museum buildings are physical manifestations of power structures, imposing neo-classical Victorian edifices, embodiments of a hierarchical approach to culture. Nowadays this negative image is often reinforced by uniformed security and bag checks. Venues may not be able to change their buildings or security procedures but they can counter this with just a friendly welcome and an invitation to come inside and enjoy yourself.

Tim is not so much a breath, more a whirlwind, of fresh air in the heritage interpretation world. MATH demonstrates how personality and humour can be a new way in to history for venues wishing to present their spaces in a contemporary fashion.

Case Study 4

24 hour library people, holiday prize, big smile (write out)

Programming four hours in an evening in a museum can be a challenge but what would you do if you were told to be open for twenty four hours? Maria Privalova told me how the Moscow Central Library responded when they were presented with this situation.

“This year in our Library Night we had the young audience because we made a disco in the library so it really felt like high school, a high school disco. We were one of the few spots which were named the ‘real’ nightspots, which means that we had to work till six o’clock in the morning. And we had to find a way to keep people there till six o’clock in the morning. How do you force them?”

“They picked us, I mean we didn’t fight it because OK let’s try it, so we had to figure out how to do it, so we decided that we needed two things. So one of them was that we asked one of the shop chains which have these farmers’ products to support us. They would give us some amount we could spend on their products to give breakfast. We had breakfast in the library and the other thing was how do you keep the crowd till the morning, so I suggested that we make some kind of a contest, and we were lucky enough that my colleagues found some support so the main prize in our contest was a weekend trip for two to Cyprus and what they had to do was they had to re-write a classic book, any classic book, as a horror story. We had a room of like 80 people at five o’clock in the morning, most of them wrote this horror story, and we were announcing the results. And yes, that worked! We did that! What we found was they [the visitors] were youngsters, so it was mostly people of 18, 19, 20 years old.”

Maria thinks hundreds of people stayed through the whole night: *“Yes, we invented this contest to have them in the morning so we bribed them, they followed, so we had them, we had this room full of people. It was fun. I was one of the judges with all these stories, it was crazy. Now I want to wait until the end of the year, and I actually want to check, so one of the conditions to take part in the contest was that you need to have a library card, of course, and so I want to check who of the people who actually came to our library night ever, ever came back. I’m not sure they ever did.”*

Maybe the youngsters figured they’ve spent enough time in the library for one year without needing to go back! This is a great way of doing really focused audience segment targeting without being prescriptive. Maria could have stipulated an upper age limit on the competition but the sheer physical hardship of staying up all night probably put most people under 20 off taking part!



The winners show off their prize at the Murder Mystery event at the Australian Museum, September 2017



“Light Time, which focused on the art and science of light with different artists, was particularly successful. It was around enjoyment and social activation of the exhibition. We had the DJ playing underneath the actual artwork in the space and people experiencing that in new ways lying down, lounging and also a kind of a laser harp performance in the foyer. So these were spaces that the lights were turned down low and activated in new ways and just an experience that saw 500 people come and gather and feel quite social about the space.” Elise Murphy, Acting Manager of Education and Community Programmes at Scienceworks.

The use of a shadow puppet theatre show at the Interactive Museum of Economics in Mexico City also struck me as an unusual combination of content and venue. These examples of event programming from three continents are a reminder to me of the breadth of choice already available to museum visitors and the fact that these events are available at night at a time when most people can access them is a great thing.

Schedule – programme when people can come!

To refer back to Colleen Dilenschneider's article on pricing that I started this section with, she found that it was not pricing as much as scheduling that was a huge barrier to visitation to cultural venues. In another of her articles she cites data, indicating people don't reorganise their life schedule to visit [American] cultural institutions and that they would visit more often if they were open at convenient times.³⁰

I am not arguing for pricing people with low levels of disposable income out of museums, quite the opposite, I would like to see more museums to be open for free more often. However if the communication of the value of an experience is as good as the experience itself people from all income levels will be attracted to attend the event, no matter what the price is. Lindsey Green said, in her online blog:

*“The fundamental misconception within the sector has been that providing low-cost/free experiences means that you will be accessible to everyone. This is lazy thinking and completely misunderstands how people think about money. It suggests that if you're on a low income you don't spend on things you find valuable.”*³¹

If we can combine free extended hours and fairly-priced charged events we may be able to successfully balance audience development and income generation and the two aspirations might be mutually compatible!

³⁰ [schedule-is-the-top-influencer-of-visitation-to-cultural-organizations-and-nobody-is-talking-about-it](#) (accessed 26/01/2018)

³¹ Why don't they come? Visitors on low income and the myths around admission price, Lindsey Green <http://www.franklygreenwebb.com/2017/10/05/why-dont-they-come-visitors-on-low-income-and-the-myths-around-admission-price/> 5/10/2017, para. 4

Conclusion

Research findings compared to the objectives

At the outset of this research my aim was to find the places in the world where high quality after-hours events take place and to probe into their role in the location's NTE. I particularly wanted to find examples outside of the USA as most of the evidence connected to this area thus far has come from North America. I believe that the four cities I eventually settled on visiting represent a good cross-section of the kind of practice I was interested in looking at.

I wanted to meet the people in museums and galleries at the forefront of pushing forward Lates practice and the policymakers outside of venues who recognised their (the people and the events) value. I met many of the venue people in which the knowledge and experience of Lates in their city resides. I would have liked to get higher up the administration chain in Melbourne and Moscow particularly but I think I got some insight into the issues in these cities from venue people.

My other objective was to experience as many high quality events as possible. It was essential to be in Mexico City for the monthly NdM event and the meeting a fortnight before. I would have liked my trip to Australia to have covered a Jurassic Lounge event but now there are only two a year that wasn't possible.

I have a set of answers to the questions I posed to the people I met. If I had visited other places the findings may have been slightly different but I believe my conclusions and recommendations would have remained broadly the same. Once I returned home, and I spent time thinking about the evidence I had collected other questions suggested themselves. For instance further exploration of connections between visitors to festivals and their regular attendance at cultural events in Moscow could tell us a lot about how to devise events that will attract people to repeat visitation.

I've resisted asking these additional questions as the need to draw a line under the research is vital: the report's conclusions need to be expediently published as much as they must be useful and founded on strong evidence. Hopefully somebody will be interested enough to pick up on these themes and explore them in more depth in the future.

Applying the findings in the UK

Can successes, innovations and positive experiences in another city or country be applied to the UK where current circumstances and historical context are so different? The UK is pulling out of a major international trading block and free movement of labour system in a way and on a scale that has not been attempted anywhere else in the world before. We are also eight years into an austerity programme with no end in sight which has remoulded the role of the state in public service intervention. For the first time in two decades domestic visitor numbers to

museums and galleries are declining in central London.³² These factors must be taken into consideration when planning for the future but they should not inhibit us from being bold and brave.

The lessons from abroad are not necessarily an exact template for the UK museum sector's future progression but they give us some strong pointers regarding how we can go about our business in a more coherent way. I have set out a list of recommendations for the UK museum sector and developed a set of actions that Culture24 could take to support museums to develop their Lates programmes.

The publication of this report's recommendations, in tandem with the '**A Culture of Lates**' and '**Late Like a Local**' reports, represents a landmark for Lates events practice in this country. We now have some evidence, opinion and ideas on which we can base future actions.

Recommendations

In this section I expand on the eight key recommendations that have been developed out of the conclusions across all the research:

1. Regular extended opening and/or after-hours events are integrated into venues' core provision

It is now commonplace to enjoy a drink and a bite to eat outside a restaurant or café on the pavements and pedestrianised precincts of Britain's town, cities and villages. Twenty five years ago this was considered a continental lifestyle more associated with Paris or Milan than Peterborough or Manchester. My guess is that many factors have driven this change, for instance: relaxed licensing laws; indoor smoking bans; climate change and town planning to create more pedestrianised spaces. Habits and culture can change rapidly and there are forces behind these changes that stem from public policy as well as public mores.

I've seen examples from all round the world of the hand of state and local government helping to develop the night-time availability of visual culture. The Mendoza Review (Neil Mendoza, 2017, page 21) identified, "16 different sources of government funding that have been granted regularly to the museum sector over the last 10 years" including from the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, local authorities and the national Arts Councils.³³ These organisations have various means at their disposal to support venues to open for longer hours should they wish to, ranging from advocacy to funding mechanisms. However what a great example to the rest of the world it would be if our sector took the matter into our own hands and unilaterally declared some minimum standard of late opening.

2. Lates must be part of an area's night-time economy strategy and supported with effective marketing

³² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-31533110> accessed 22/12/2017

³³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-mendoza-review-an-independent-review-of-museums-in-england>

The International research has helped identify gaps in the UK's offer, none more so than in London. The capital is blessed with large numbers of museum, galleries and libraries that open late either on an ad-hoc basis or regularly during the year. However the Museums at Night festival, produced by Culture24, is not on the scale of other comparable big cities around the world.

Culture24 proposes a complete revamp of the Museums at Night festival in London with the aim of creating a world-leading offer. One approach could be to offer one paid-for ticket to be exchanged for a wristband which gains the holder admittance to all the events on any of the one, two or three nights of the festival. The venues would programme content that can either be dropped into at any time of the evening or schedule a programming offer that repeats at regular intervals during the night.

3. Lates become an established part of museum strategy, valued and nurtured by leadership

I propose Lates can be seen not so much as an extension of free daytime culture but more as programmed events that are a complement to blockbuster exhibitions. I believe in the minds of customers Lates can feel like a big-ticket-experience. The Guardian's Stephen Moss identified the death of the Blockbuster as long ago as 2011³⁴ but like the quote attributed to Mark Twain³⁵, the reports of the death of the blockbuster have largely been exaggerated. Philip Johnston writing for the Telegraph online was still lamenting the challenges of negotiating a blockbuster three years later.³⁶ Blockbusters are very popular and people are prepared to pay for them, as they are for a top theatre show.

The evening is when people spend their disposable income, performing arts venues are open and there is a food and beverage offer on the high street. If the museum has a strong quality offer it can add and compete with the other night-time economy players and give customers a memorable experience-based visit. Museums should not be shy of producing a paid-for quality offer as the bigger institutions do now with their blockbuster exhibitions.

4. Museums should become community hubs perceived as social spaces open when most people can use them

Lates can be both an audience development and an income generation tool. If the funding model is sustainable, regularly extending hours, including a programming offer, is a great way to attract new audiences and place the museum at the heart of the community. Without losing sight of the museum's role as custodians of precious objects, museums can also serve as a meeting place for people and their ideas.

5. Museums adopt the 'ladder route' to developing both regular and festival Lates event programmes

³⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/may/09/blockbuster-exhibition-national-leonardo> accessed 22/12/2017

³⁵ <http://www.twainquotes.com/Death.html> accessed 22/12/2017

³⁶ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturenews/10776195/Tired-of-the-blockbuster-exhibition-Join-the-queue.html> accessed 22/12/2017

The quality, range and ambition of museum lates events have undoubtedly improved over the years as has the sector's willingness to charge.³⁷ Venues need the confidence and support to programme high quality content and then the ability and freedom to market these events to the target demographic.

If your museum is producing a night-time event it is part of the night-time cultural offer, competing with the performing-arts sector, and hopefully learning from the institutions and business that have successfully occupied this space for a long time. Do your research, identify a gap in the market, set a frequency and stick to it, get your marketing in front of your target audience and don't give up! I recommend as a guideline a laddered approach to enable venues to plan their development of their programme in a sustainable way. This Programme Development Ladder could be used as a guide for museums that want to grow their Lates offer.



³⁷ See A Culture of Lates

6. Structures and platforms are created that help museums get their product more effectively to market and enable customers to more easily access information and tickets

There are many ways the sector could be supported to reach more customers more effectively. For example Culture24 will start offering all year round Lates event listings on the MuseumsatNight.org.uk website from early 2018.

Once the year-round listings offer has been established the next step could be to offer a dedicated online ticket booking service. For the venue this offers another route to market and from the customer's point of view it would be the first website in the world to offer tickets for multiple museum Lates events in one place.

7. Lates event data is used by museum leaders to engage with national and local night-time economy policymakers

Director-level engagement with night-time economy issues is starting to happen. For instance, in London, the Tate Director Maria Balshaw is participating in the Greater London Authority's Night-Time Commission. More interaction and advocacy from museum directors specifically on the issue of after-hours events and their contribution to their town or city's night-time cultural offer would be helpful.

8. Regular opportunities are created for programmers to meet and share knowledge

Everywhere I visited the people I met were eager to talk about their experiences and wanted to hear more from their colleagues around the world. Much of this dialogue can be facilitated on web-based systems: for instance webinars or forums but nothing beats getting together in the same room to really start to incubate ideas and provoke discussion. Additionally, programmers have told me that an annual or biannual Lates conference or symposium bringing together the world's greatest thinkers and practitioners to discuss best practice, debate hot issues and explore new developments could be useful.

Culture24 has extensive experience supporting the sector to develop their skills in, for instance, marketing and digital literacy. We have developed a collaborative action-learning process, which has been successfully applied to our Let's Get Real³⁸ project, the methodology of which could be applied to Lates programming and marketing.

Culture24 has successfully produced 'creative practitioner marketplaces' as a way of introducing venues to new content providers. These events give the practitioners an opportunity to showcase what they do and the venues the chance to meet them and talk to them about the events they produce. These kinds of opportunities would also be valuable to Lates event programmers.

³⁸ <http://weareculture24.org.uk/projects/action-research/>

The resources section of the Museums at Night website could be expanded to include support that can be applied to any event all year round. I also think the Mexico City bicycle tours can be successfully replicated here in the UK but would need some form of subsidy or grant to underpin them financially.

Eight actions Culture24 could take to support UK venues to develop Lates

1. Present Lates listings all year round on the Museums at Night website and explore the business case for providing a Lates online ticketing service
2. Produce a conference which explores the issues from this research and gives practitioners the opportunity to meet and share practice
3. Support museums to adopt the 'Programming Ladder' route to developing their Lates event programmes
4. Support more clusters to work together and collaborate to create circuits for visitors to easily enjoy more events
5. Reach out to BIDs to support their local museum's Lates offer
6. Develop a service which provides advice, support and creative content that helps venues use Lates to reach new audiences and generate income
7. Support wherever possible the creation of environmentally sustainable transportation schemes such as Mexico City's cycle tours
8. Work with partners to produce research which helps develop Lates practice, for example a secondary spend economic impact study

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