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London Night-Time Commission Consultation Exercise:
Response by MSc Urban Studies Programme at University College London

This submission is made collectively by 24 London-based students from the MSc Urban Studies programme at University College London (UCL). This MSc, launched in 2008 as an initiative of the UCL Urban Lab, has been focusing this academic year in depth on the theme of the 'urban night'.

This focus has been an opportunity to engage with the broad array of exciting research currently being undertaken on the urban night by staff and students associated with the UCL Urban Lab. This has included Professor Matthew Beaumont's writing on nightwalking, Urban Lab events on 'Cities After Hours', and Dr Ben Campkin and Laura Marshall's work on LGBTQI night-time spaces in London. It also ties in with initiatives on night-time transport pursued by the UCL Transport Institute, as well as activities undertaken by UCL's Department of Science, Technology, Engineering and Public Policy (STEaPP) on smart innovations for London's night-time economy. We have also enjoyed sessions from Professor Matthew Gandy (University of Cambridge) on urban lighting and Dr Rob Shaw (University of Newcastle) on the nocturnal city.

Our focus on the urban night has also importantly allowed us to engage with a topic that has considerable interest within policy and practitioner circles at present – as evidenced by the ongoing initiatives of the GLA. This term we have sessions with several external practitioners detailing and reflecting upon their work around nocturnal city themes in London. This includes architects at Farrells, the Soho Society, Transport for London as well as union-representatives, filmmakers and bat-enthusiasts among others.

The responses to the Commission's six questions below draw on the critical insights accrued by students this year in understanding the 24-hour city and questions around the night-time economy. They were compiled through group exercises over several weeks and benefit from the diverse backgrounds of the MSc Urban Studies student group.

We did, however, have a few concerns about the wording of the six questions. Firstly, we feel that the consultation should have included an explicit definition of the night-

time economy. It is not necessarily a concept that all Londoners are familiar with, and one that deserves a more expansive and holistic approach as our responses here indicate. Secondly, the use of 'in other words' in questions one and two is a bit misleading, suggesting that the second part of these two questions has the same meaning as the first. But *strengths* and *weaknesses* of the night-time economy do not always correlate with *good* or *bad* features of the London night (the night-time economy is itself just one feature of the night). The fact that there are a lot of night workers in London is a strength of the night-time economy but not necessarily a 'good' thing about the city. Night workers are often low paid with long commutes on buses, not to mention the long-term health risks of disrupted sleep patterns.

We would be keen to share further information about these ideas and our wider work around London at night with the GLA and Night-time Commission. Please contact urbanstudies@ucl.ac.uk

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Question 1: What are the strengths of London's night time economy? In other words, what is good about London at night?

Transport

London's night-time economy is strong, in part, because of the city's infrastructure. The Night Bus network is an incredibly valued element of London's transport system and is essential to the functioning of the London night. The range of the network and frequency of the buses are a unique and valuable asset. It connects London's communities from the centre to the edge, and is a safe, reliable service for Londoners and visitors alike. Unlike the tube network, every London bus is wheelchair accessible, which is vital for this community's mobility at night. The relatively low cost and range of the network is also important for London's lower paid night workers. It means you never have to worry about how to get home.

Entertainment

London is fun! The diversity of entertainment available at night – from restaurants, pubs, clubs, cinemas, theatres, and music venues – provides an important space for leisure. It is also a strong reflection of London's diverse communities, and provides a special time for self-expression and exploration of oneself. From West End musicals to the electronic music nights of Dalston and Hackney Wick, the city has a place for everyone to go. The attractiveness of London's night-time entertainment also enhances the international reputation of the city as an essential place for tourists to visit, providing economic benefits.

Question 2: What are the weaknesses of London's night time economy? In other words, what is not good about London at night? What does it lack?

Venues
Although there's a lot of fun to be had in London at night, the city has lost almost half of its nightclubs and a third of its grassroots music venues since 2007 and a quarter of its pubs since 2001. Property development, infrastructure projects such as Crossrail, the rise in business rates, rent rises and increased business costs are all contributing to this crisis. Venues catering to the LGBTQ+ community have been disproportionately affected, as 58% have closed since 2006 (p.6). The result is a lack of diversity in London's night-time entertainment sector.

Safety and policing
There has been a lot of research showing that people, particularly women, feel unsafe at night. The answer to this is not necessarily more policing – as the experience of different groups suggests that increased police presence can have the opposite effect. More innovative methods of increasing safety at night need to be considered by the GLA, including a more strategic use of street lighting, increased door-to-door transport provision, and non-discriminatory safe spaces.

Too narrow a focus?
The current vision of London's night-time economy focuses predominantly on leisure, entertainment and culture – the fact that the night tube only runs on Fridays and Saturdays is one indication of this. But the majority of London's night workers do not work in the leisure sector: data from London First suggests that most of the capital's night workers work in transport and storage, followed by health and social work. There needs to be more consideration of these people, their needs and their contribution to the city in thinking about and planning for the night-time economy, and *the Night Time Commission should include representatives from these two sectors.*

Too much emphasis on spending
The Night-Time Commission wants to promote all forms of cultural, leisure, retail and service activity. But there's already a strong emphasis on consumption in London at night – whether it's the consumption of alcohol in bars and pubs, expensive theatre tickets in the West End or late-night shopping on Oxford Street. By extending these, and other activities, is there a risk that the night will become dominated by consumerism?

Homelessness
Estimates show that 4,751 people slept rough in England on a snapshot night in autumn 2017, 1,137 of which were in London. This is up 18% from the 2016 figure. In 2017 London accounted for 24% of the total England figure, compared to 23% in 2016 and 26% in 2015 (p.3). More proactive policies need to be devised for dealing with this critical issue, from increased access and provision of shelters to long-term support to help people stay off the streets and find genuinely affordable housing.

Question 3: What are the threats to London's night time economy? In other words, are there issues or trends which we will have to address in the short, medium or long term?

Short-term threats
Licensing can be a source of threats for the night-time economy in the sense that it can hinder the establishment of new venues, such as restaurants, as well as the expansion of existing services and venues. However, it is important to understand licensing as a fundamental tool for guiding the night-time economy. It is also important to be aware of the **reality of the demand for night-time services**. In order to support the development of a night-time economy, it is important that it reflects the needs and preferences of Londoners, assuming that there is great diversity in demand. This will partly determine the success of the measures implemented, but if there is no demand for these new services then they will not last.

Medium-term threats
In order to promote the development of a night-time economy, there needs to be **a degree of continuity** in the policies about it. It is important to acknowledge the fact that political changes, particularly the mayoral elections every four years, might bring some uncertainty to the consolidation of a night-time economy. It is also important to acknowledge that in order to have a strong night-time economy, there is **a need to provide facilities for night-time workers**. One example is the need to improve the infrastructure related to accessibility and connectivity for night-time workers, otherwise the development of the night-time economy could seriously hinder their quality of life.

Long-term threats
Although the overall **impact of Brexit** on the labour market in London will take time to emerge and will depend on the negotiations regarding trade and immigration, it may be a long-term threat to the labour market in the night-time economy. Regarding **the ecology of the urban night**, it is important to be aware of the downsides that an increase in the night-time economy may produce. Changes in biodiversity, energy consumption, and light and sound pollution are only some examples of the possible environmental impacts.

Question 4: What are the opportunities for London's night time economy? In other words, how could London improve its night time offer? What should we be looking to develop?

Opportunity to diversify the night-time economy
London's night-time economy is in danger of becoming a mass produced, homogenised, mainstream space. Night-time venues in the city focus on catering to particular social groups that engage in high levels of drinking. We believe it is important that the GLA take action to allow more independent, alternative night spaces. By providing spaces such as these the GLA would be allowing diversity in what is on offer. Allowing space for people who may feel more comfortable in alternative night spaces, particularly in comparison to the chain pubs and clubs that dominate the market. One example is that many pubs and clubs rely on the consumption of alcohol and spaces that offer something different will diversify what is available to the public. **We believe the GLA should provide incentives for the production of new, alternative night spaces, alongside safeguarding alternative, independent pubs and clubs that already exist.**

Opportunity to provide a variety of services
London's night-time economy focuses heavily on leisure and cultural activities. Whilst we think this is important to promote and maintain in the city, **we believe there is an opportunity for the GLA to provide different services at night for the public.** One example of this is providing education for individuals who would like to extend their knowledge outside of typical working hours. Similarly other services beneficial to the public such as libraries, places of worship and community spaces could be open at night to provide a space for learning and enjoyment.

The night-time economy also employs a large amount of people and it is important to support their lifestyles by engaging with them and identifying what they need from the night-time economy in order to live a happy and healthy lifestyle. Longer opening hours of everyday amenities such as supermarkets and health services is therefore important.

Question 5: What innovations, or ideas from other cities, would make London better at night?

Amenities
- Night childcare places.
- Public libraries and spaces to work at night.
- Incentivise food trucks or movable stalls with healthier and varied food (Tokyo, Hong Kong).
- Shared taxi vans – routes covering night activities (Tel Aviv).
- Pop-up night-time toilets (Amsterdam).
- Public offices open at night for people that work long shifts during day.
- Nocturnal banks.
- Community centers that work as homeless shelters at night.

Culture and Leisure
- Night public plazas (Vienna; Plaza de Glories, Barcelona *Bruum Rumm* project by Arup's *Cities Alive* project; Bradford City Park redesign by Arup *Cities Alive* project).
- Regular night festivals (music, art). *London Lumiere* and *the Illuminated River* are enjoyed by many people but it would be brilliant to see things like this more regularly, drawing people into a range of London spaces at night. Some examples from across the world are here.
- Open House Weekend for visiting private buildings at night – this will help to break the boundary between private and public whilst encouraging people to think about and use the night in different ways (Barcelona).

Policy
- Extension of licensing at night to avoid overcrowding in the streets when people leave the venues. One of Marik Milan's (Amsterdam's night mayor) early successes has been helping to establish 24-hour licences for selected nightclubs on the outskirts of Amsterdam. It is hoped that the relaxation of licensing laws will help to relieve the pressure on the city centre, while regenerating pockets of the city lacking visitors during both day and night (Amsterdam).
- Changing the use of buildings that remain empty at night (Seattle).
- Elicit women's feedback on infrastructure projects to make sure that buildings keep women's safety in mind, particularly at night (lighting) (Cairo, Kigali, Port Moresby).
- Night activities should be equally dispersed through the city, and not just in central London, linking back to Amsterdam and extended licensing.

Question 6: In July, the Mayor published his Vision for London as a 24-Hour City. It contains ten principles for the development of London at night. What do you like or not like about the vision? Are the ten principles right? What would you add or exclude, and why?

What we like about the vision?
The stand-out factor of this vision was that it accounts for the diversity of different stakeholders in its ten principles and goes beyond the night-time economy by considering the role of 'our vital nurses, police, freight and transport workers whose shifts go through the night'.

What we do not like about the principles?
We have chosen to highlight some of the drawbacks and deficiencies that we felt emerged from *seven of the ten* principles for the development of London at night:

PRINCIPLE 1: BE A GLOBAL LEADER
- Whilst it is evident that London is a global leader in culture and finance, it is not clear as to why being a 24-hour city will enable London to qualify as a global city.
- The need to enhance London's brand through its night-time offerings also seems to be centred on promoting entertainment and culture for young demographics.
- This principle, and the others in general, seem to be ignorant of the diurnal routines of other groups and demographics such as families, children and the elderly.
- There also appears to be a 'creative city' bias within the vision in that there is a considerable focus on the night-time leisure economy.
- Whilst it is useful to learn from the night-time economies of cities such as Amsterdam, Paris, Berlin, San Francisco, New York, Tokyo and Melbourne, it is important to remember that London's neighbourhoods are much more mixed.

PRINCIPLE 3: PROMOTE ALL FORMS OF CULTURAL, LEISURE, RETAIL AND SERVICE ACTIVITY
This is a very ambitious principle. If business hours were to increase, it is important to think about the logistics to support longer business hours which include transport, labour, maintenance and surveillance.

PRINCIPLE 4: PROMOTE THE SAFETY AND WELLBEING OF RESIDENTS, WORKERS AND VISITORS
It does not seem as if enough consideration has been given to environmental causes. This principle can be interpreted as 'greenwashing' at night – where simply stating the environmental issues and 'potential' for change ticks the box.

PRINCIPLE 5: PROMOTING WELCOMING AND ACCESSIBLE NIGHTLIFE
- It is good that the provision of public toilets has been mentioned but what about increased rubbish collection?
- The improvement of public spaces is mentioned but it is not clear what kind of public spaces this refers to. Does this improvement include quasi-public (privately owned) or green spaces?

- Lighting is presented as a 'vital ingredient' of the night-time economy. However, this principle, and the previous one, should also account for the effects of lighting pollution especially that which the 'world-class' *Illuminated River* scheme may create.

PRINCIPLE 6: PROMOTE AND PROTECT INVESTMENT, ACTIVITY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP
Who is the Mayor's 'Skills for Londoners' programme for? This needs to be clarified in order to ascertain which groups or levels of 'businesses' and 'Londoners' would benefit.

PRINCIPLE 7: Promote domestic and international visits to London
- If tourism increases, what would the impact of this be?
- How sustainable would this increased tourism be?

PRINCIPLE 8: BE STRATEGICALLY LOCATED ACROSS LONDON TO PROMOTE OPPORTUNITY AND MINIMISE IMPACT
This principle is not clear enough in considering how London as a whole will be able to support the Mayor's Vision for London as a 24-Hour City.

What should be excluded?
The notion of the 24-hour city ought to be rethought. Will this 24-hour city be sustainable all year round? Would it be more efficient and successful to make the 24-hour city a seasonal initiative?

What should be added?
Whilst the vision accounts for a variety of stakeholders, a suggested addition is accounting for the role of homeless people during the urban night. It would also be useful to consider the role of co-working spaces as a new opportunity area that could be supported within the night-time economy.