

**The night-time economy in Sydney,
Australia: policies and actors pre,
during and post the Covid-19 pandemic**

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Certificate of Original Authorship

I, Alessia Cibir, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Institute for Public Policy and Governance, the School of Built Environment and the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

This study investigates the night-time economy (NTE) in Sydney, Australia. In this thesis, I examine the NTE in Sydney before, during and post the Covid-19 pandemic. Here the perspectives and experiences of key actors were relevant to understand how multiple actors attempted to shape policies, sometimes successfully sometimes not, by disrupting the status quo of existing governance arrangements. I also looked at the impact of Covid-19 on the NTE and how night entrepreneurs responded to it.

As most of the research was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, this research employed an online qualitative approach and digital methods using online semi-structured interviews, and online documents analysis. Interviews were conducted with four groups: residents, night business owners and representatives of business organisations across multiple sectors of the NTE, government representatives including elected representatives and government officials, and experts.

This study draws upon an interdisciplinary analytical framework to investigate the Sydney's NTE. The advocacy coalition framework was used to map out the policy actors and their beliefs. Policy entrepreneurship framework was used to investigate the actors' strategies adopted to shape policy change. As the NTE in Sydney was highly contested, I draw upon conflicting rationalities to analyse the contestations around the NTE and its policies. The blame games framework was relevant to highlight the actor's dynamic of interaction. Finally, I applied antifragility as a framework to analyse the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the NTE and the response of night businesses to it.

My findings indicate that the NTE as a policy field has seen an increased cast of actors impacted by or interested in the NTE and its policies. While past policy changes were accompanied by strategies of policy entrepreneurship and opposition, more recent changes in the NTE policy field are driven by policy windows, and changes in the image or narrative of the NTE. My findings also showed that while the Covid-19 pandemic was disruptive and detrimental to the NTE, it also brought to the fore practices of antifragility through the creation of social, economic and digital values. With contributions that extend the body of knowledge about night governance, this study provides a new understanding of the NTE as a policy field and potential solutions to improve future challenges.

To myself.

To the woman I was, I am now, and I will be.

To the night, policies and politics that have shaped my life.

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Alessia Cibir, June, 2024

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Preface

This thesis is the culmination of four years' work at the University of Technology Sydney, but my interest in the NTE developed many years before my doctoral studies. I have had the opportunity to present my work to audiences internationally, including Indonesia, the UK, Germany, Spain, Italy and Australia.

Night governance has been raised as a subfield of Night Studies, particularly within urban studies. Although I incorporate theoretical knowledge from public policies and entrepreneurship, the dominant perspective and background remain that of a former policy maker and not an urban planner as my previous education could suggest (my master's and bachelor's degrees are in urban planning and policies).

During the lifetime of this research project, I collaborated with *Stadtnachacht* [City After Eight], a research and consulting think tank in the NTE and urban development that is focused on the production and dissemination of knowledge and practices on night planning and management internationally. Initially established as a 10-years research project and founded by Dr Jakob Franz Schmid with the aim to measure the NTE and related policies, it was based in German speaking countries, but has expanded its scope to several countries, including Australia. The act of sharing knowledge within this network fosters a culture of continuous learning and improvement, driving advancements in night practice. Each contribution adds to the collective pool of knowledge, allowing individuals to build upon the ideas and experiences of others, push boundaries, and collectively shape the future of night practice and knowledge. In addition to my *Stadtnachacht* engagement, I have been leading the Night Governance working group within the International Night Studies Network, an academic network of scholars exploring the night from a transdisciplinary perspective. Within this, I curated the Night Governance panel to discuss the night policies in Australia.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Why study the NTE?

I begin this thesis with a confession. Back in 2018, I started delving into the topic of night cities and urban development while collaborating with *Stadtnachacht*, a think tank focused on nightlife and urban development. During my time there, I delivered a keynote speech in Brussels where I shared the challenges of working at night as a young woman in hospitality, festivals, tourism and night venues. I could never stress enough the precarious work conditions and disruption of accessing essential daily services due to the inevitable shift in my circadian rhythms (i.e., working in the night, sleeping in the day). At the same time, working at night provided me with opportunities such as flexibility and additional income, and observations of the relationship between places, time, and people. At the same time, as a former policymaker, I developed a certain interest in the night-time economy (NTE) and its policies. My journey as a policy maker has been marked by a commitment to designing and implementing effective policies to support the flourishing of my community. Despite such noble intentions, during my ten years tenure as the youngest female City Councillor, I observed the symbolic and tokenistic nature of governance processes. I also experienced policy implementation barriers such as bottlenecks due to resistance to change, political dynamics and institutional roadblocks. It is my policymaking experience which has equipped me with a grain of healthy cynicism when approaching night policies. These personal experiences paved the way for my current exploration into the NTE and its policies. Additionally, the desire to bridge the gap between my experience in public policy and the night led me to understand the different ways that governments can work to address effectively governmental issues. It is for these reasons that my thesis develops around the NTE, its policies and actors.

The NTE is now the subject of policy intervention as cities aim to become 24-hour cities and global cities (Acuto, Seijas, et al., 2021; Seijas & Gelders, 2021). Local, transnational, and global networks focused on night cities have emerged as platforms for global night governance. These networks promote policy and knowledge transfer related to how cities operate at night, their challenges, and innovations and overall function serving as institutionalised forums of debate. For instance, the MasterCard funded *24-Hour Cities* network organised a series of workshops addressing topics such as night mobility, safety during late hours, governance, strategies and policies associated with the night, and economic development (City Possible, 2023). Another example is the Urbact European program, *Cities After Dark*, which has been established to facilitate knowledge sharing among countries in Europe regarding nightlife policies through a peer-learning processes (City Diplomacy Lab, 2024). Additionally, international conferences attest the relevance of the NTE, and more broadly night cities promoting or discussing emerging opportunities and challenges. Examples include, but are not limited to, the annual Stadt

Nach Acht conference hosted in German speaking countries discussing harm reductions strategies in night settings, management of cities at night, cultural development, and community engagement. Another example is the annual IXNS.LX International Conference on Night Studies bringing together scholars and practitioners in an interdisciplinary flavour. Furthermore, the media, online platforms, and podcasts are spreading knowledge on the NTE shedding light on its significance and impact for the night cities. These emerging initiatives have challenged the orthodox view of the night as a space of fear and crime taking into consideration the interrelated dimensions such as cultural, economic, social values, public safety and wellbeing, night mobility, quality of life to name a few.

This shift reflects a growing acknowledgment that the NTE extend beyond mere entertainment and leisure, involving multiple rationalities at stake and evolving around the “right to cities at night” (Hadfield, 2006; Hae, 2012; Hollands et al., 2017; Yeo, 2020). As a result, multiple groups impacted by and interested in the NTE and its policies, have become involved – actively or less actively – in policymaking. Residents calls for the night as a “space of calm and rest” and demand assurances regarding quality of life and public amenities (Cibin, 2019; Henckel, 2016; Hung & Wu, 2020). Trade unions and industry lobby groups advocate for fair labour standards in night-shift employment, well-being and safety (MacQuarie, 2023). Creative performers and youth call for more opportunities and activities at night (Aubrey et al., 2001; Chatterton & Hollands, 2002; Hollands & Chatterton, 2002). Police and health authorities’ express concerns about public safety and health (Fleming, 2020; Wadds, 2020). Night business owners claim the night as a time-space of consumption, production, and services provision (Shaw, 2010; Wolifson & Drozdowski, 2017). Industry organisations and governments at different levels promote the NTE to boost urban attractiveness, competitiveness, and economic growth (Schmid, 2018; Wolifson, 2018b). Cities compete to attract public investments to develop their own NTE. All these different rationalities, often conflicting, competing or ignoring each other, pose governmental challenges and demand for negotiation.

The NTE has also become an object of investigation in the field of Night Studies, a “a new inter – if not trans – disciplinary field” of research focused on exploring the night (Gwiazdzinski et al., 2018, p. 22; Kyba et al., 2020; Straw, 2022). This area extends beyond the focus of the economic aspect which the term NTE suggests. Hadfield (2015) describes three waves of research in this burgeoning field. The first wave involves urban regeneration and culture-driven planning strategies to enhance the vibrancy of city centres (Bianchini, 1995; Lovatt & O’Connor, 1995). The adoption of ‘24-hour city’ concept was historically foundational in the deregulation of urban planning licenses. The second wave focuses on crime and the social, and environmental impacts of alcohol centric NTE. This approach focuses on the backlash from public health authorities, police, and residents concerned about urban liveability, public health, and safety leading to debates into the sustainability and regulation of cities at night (Roberts & Gornostaeva, 2007; Roberts & Turner, 2005). Deregulation of the NTE created opportunities for solidifying the influence of alcohol industries in urban governance and policies, and wide

media coverage on urban disorder and binge-drinking in urban areas (Hadfield, 2006; Hadfield & Measham, 2015; Wadds, 2020). The third wave examines gentrification and exclusion that often accompany areas undergoing urban transformation. It is referred to as gentrification of the NTE. Conversely, a re-examination of the initial optimism from the first wave is evident in case studies of places that managed to evade, adjust to, or reshape the monofunctional alcohol-centric NTE model embracing cultural resilience and demographic diversification (Eldridge & Roberts, 2022). A fourth emerging wave involves the study of “night mayors” gaining prominence globally as a new form of nocturnal governance (Seijas & Gelders, 2021, p. 5). This wave accounts for the fast propagation of night governance models “expanding the notion of nocturnal governance beyond licensing authorities and the police, to incorporate new actors with strong industry support and a focus on mediation” (Seijas & Gelders, 2021, p. 16). Although many studies have investigated the night, there is limited recognition of the actors impacted by and interested in the NTE and its policies. Even less is known about how the NTE evolves in face of crisis, such as the Covid-19 pandemic. This study investigates the NTE in Sydney prior to, during and post the Covid-19 pandemic, its policies and actors. Additionally, it is in the Night Studies that I locate my research and expand existing scholarship through a transdisciplinary perspective building primarily from policy entrepreneurship, advocacy coalition framework, conflicting rationalities, and antifragility.

1.2 The NTE and global city in Sydney

The global city has become a key concept to understand cities in advanced economies. Global cities are usually defined as places for specialized services, and production of financial services and innovations, usually clustered in the central business districts (Sassen, 2013). The concept of global city embodies a new arrangement and centrality of finance as a form of capital accumulation opposed to the previous cities’ role as exports of manufacturing products. Furthermore, global city embodies a new socio-political form where the welfare state is no longer central as it was in the cities which were dominated by mass manufacturing (Sassen, 2013). It is widely acknowledged that the global city thesis represents an indicator of the entrepreneurial or neoliberal approach of many national and local policies focused on infrastructure, land use policies intended to boost economic competitiveness (Brenner, 1998) and increase the competitive advantage and city’s profile in the world economy. However, the concept of global city is not without criticism. Critics argue that global city emphasises on economic competitiveness of cities and downplays other challenges that many global cities are facing. Examples of these challenges are insufficient investments in public infrastructures, lack of affordable housing, inadequate climate adaptation policies, and lack of financial resources for local governments in addressing the quality of life for its residents (Baum, 1997; Vogel et al., 2020).

Sydney is not immune to global city aspirations and at its heart is the NTE (Wolifson & Drozdowski, 2017). Since the adoption of the first NTE strategy in 2013 by the City of

Sydney, the NTE as a tool to pursue global city ambitions has been widely embraced by the New South Wales (NSW) state government and local governments, nightlife advocacy movements and business organisations (Wolifson & Drozdowski, 2017). The linkage between the NTE and the endeavour to make Sydney a global city is explicit:

Our status as a 24-hour metropolis is critical as we continue to expand our economy to cater for the needs of a growing population and reinforce Sydney's position as a truly global city, particularly in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, which requires us all to reimagine how we use space and increase productivity throughout the 24-hours of each day (NSW Government, 2020a, p. 5).

Local councils who have adopted a NTE strategy consider the NTE a driver to “build a world-class 24-hour city”, attract investments, revitalise city centres, promote vibrancy and economic development and promote city centres as thriving destinations (City of Parramatta, 2020, p. 5). Following Wolifson (2018b), this speaks to the claim that “the quest to secure global city status ... remains evident in ongoing policy ambitions at all levels of government” (Baker & Ruming, 2015, p. 67).

1.2.1 Why the NTE in Sydney?

This thesis focuses on Sydney's NTE for two primary reasons. First, the Sydney NTE has become an institutionalised policy field with relevant public investments devoted to it and a clear NTE governance framework. The NTE recently became a priority of the NSW state government. This is illustrated by the establishment of the Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner, and adoption of the *Sydney 24-hour Economy Strategy* (NSW Government, 2020a) which came into effect during the Covid-19 pandemic. Along with the shifts at the state level, many local governments have also adopted a NTE strategy (Burwood Council, 2023; City of Parramatta, 2020). A few councils have created a governmental office dedicated to the management of the NTE (e.g. City of Sydney and City of Parramatta). Other councils, such as the Inner West City Council, do not have a NTE strategy in place, but do have a strong cultural and creative development approach and Special Entertainment Precinct tool established in a recent state-led planning reform.¹

The second reason is that in the last two decades the NTE in Sydney has undergone substantial regulatory changes. In January 2014, the NSW government approved the popularly known ‘lockout laws’ or ‘last drinks law’, a statutory reform of liquor licenses targeting the Sydney CBD and an adjoining neighbourhood, Kings Cross (Wadds, 2020).

¹ Special entertainment precinct is a recently established planning tool in NSW to support live music and entertainment through extended trading hours (two hours on nights when live music is offered, and one hour on other nights), and favourable noise controls (NSW Government & Department of Planning and Environment, 2023). Special entertainment precincts are not new in Australia and were tested in Brisbane and Melbourne (see Darchen, 2013).

Under the lockdown laws licensed venues were required to stop the service and trading of alcohol after 3am and refuse the entering or re-entering of patrons after 1.30am. The lockdown laws, discussed in depth in [Chapter 5](#), remain one of the most controversial and contested NTE policies in Sydney with global reputational impacts (Wadds, 2020; Wolifson, 2018a). The lockdown laws were deeply contested and received wide media coverage and scholarly attention (Homan, 2019; Lee, 2016; Wadds, 2020; Wolifson, 2018b). The lockdown laws remain part of the collective and individual memory of many Sydneysiders, and a trigger for heated debate. A broader deregulation wave has occurred since the Covid-19 pandemic with the aim to support the NTE recovery (see [Chapters 7, 8](#)) and boost its development. Planning reforms include the acceleration of alfresco dining, and special entertainment precincts (NSW Government, 2023a, 2023b)

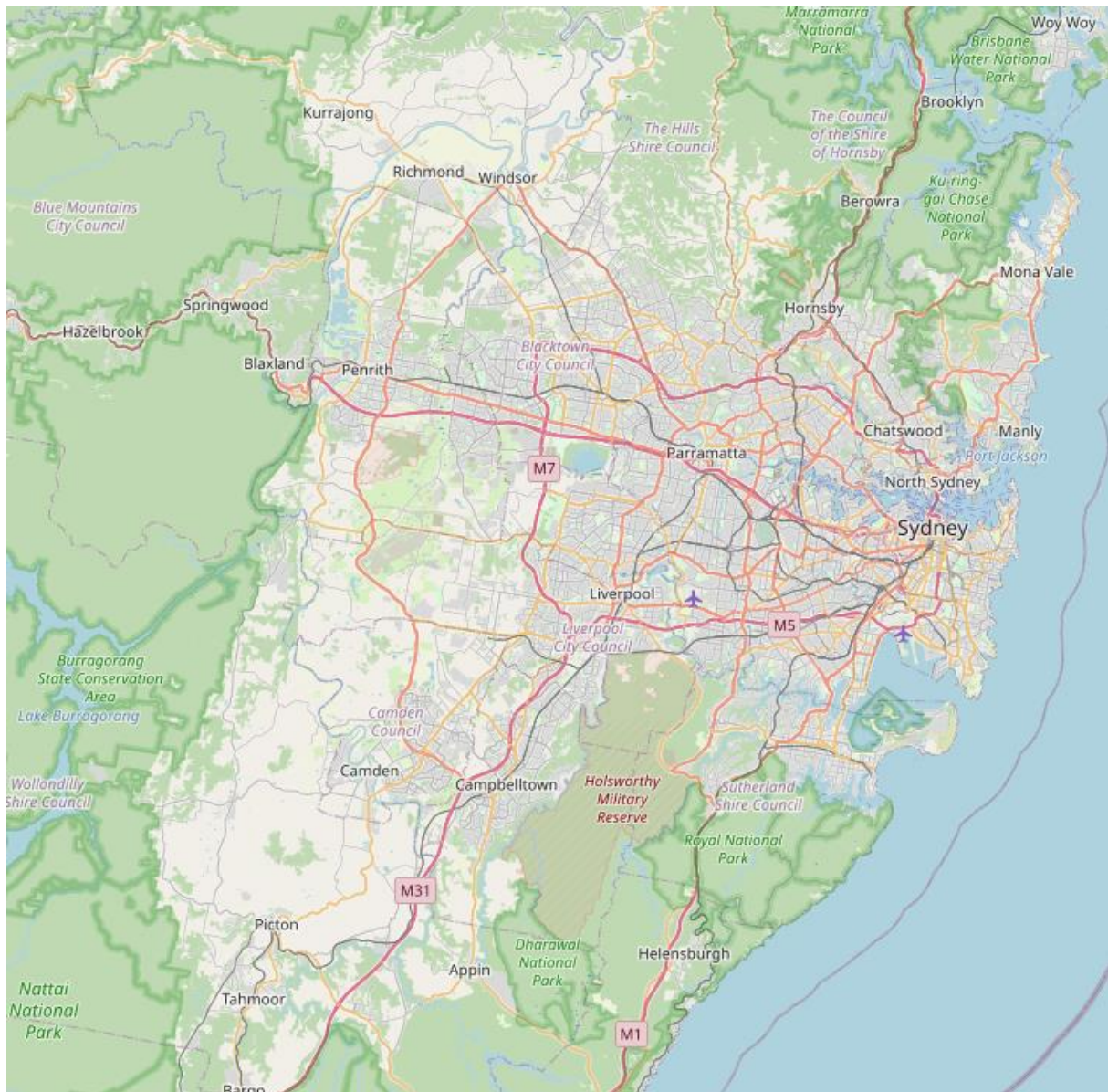
1.3 Sydney: the setting

In this research, the setting is the Sydney metropolitan area. Sydney is in NSW, , Australia.² Sydney spans approximately 80km from the Pacific Ocean on the east coast to the Blue Mountains on the western side. It also extends around 80km from the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park and the Hawkesbury River in the north-west and north to the Macarthur and Royal National Park in the south and south-west ([Figure 1.1](#)). Sydney is Australia's largest and fastest growing metropolitan area in terms of population. Sydney's population in 2021 was 5,231,147 (ABS, 2021). According to the NSW Planning Department (2024), Sydney population will grow to approximately 6.1 million by 2041 and most of this growth will be from people migrating to Australia.

The urban development of the metropolitan area has been heavily influenced by planning, zoning, and urban sprawl leading to the formation of town centres and high streets where most of the commercial activities are concentrated. More recently high streets have undergone a disruption in its original commercial and residential function due to the development of e-commerce (Roberts, 2015). Additionally, Sydney planning policies have been characterised by compact city, mixed-use development, and infill development to accommodate population growth, housing needs, and a better provision of public infrastructure (Bunker et al., 2017; Van den Nouwelant, 2017). As part of the housing crisis and population growth the NSW Government have adopted a Transit Oriented Development Program to boost housing density in proximity of transport hubs.

Figure 1.1 Map of Sydney metropolitan area

² Australia is a federal system involving three layers of government: the Commonwealth government or federal government, two self-governing territories and six states – NSW is one of these states, and local governments. Constitutionally, powers are attributed to the Commonwealth Government federal government or Commonwealth and some of these powers are shared with territories and states. Territories and states have a substantial degree of autonomy.



Source: OpenStreetMap (2023)

Unlike other international metropolitan regions (e.g., London), Sydney does not have a metropolitan government. Instead, it is made of 33 Local Government Areas (LGAs) each with its own local council. The fiscal capacity of many of these councils is limited. Governing and planning the Sydney metropolitan area as a spatial scale has been subject of fragmented governance (Vogel et al., 2020). The NSW state government plays a major role in shaping policy. Since 2015, the strategic planning for Sydney metropolitan area was primarily the remit of an agency, the Greater Sydney Commission. The Commission was established by the state government and disestablished in mid 2023.³ Initially created and funded by the NSW government, the Grater Sydney Commission has been

³ The Conservative coalition led by the Liberal Party led the NSW state government from 2011 until the most recent elections in 2023 when a changed of political leadership occurred with the newly elected Labour Government.

incorporated in the NSW Government Planning Department with the elections of the Labor Government in 2023. The overarching metropolitan strategy and the Greater Sydney Commission were aimed at providing a new coordination mechanism towards metropolitan governance. The Greater Sydney Commission was aimed to have clear responsibilities and filling the gap of a fragmented governance structure. The impact of the metropolitan strategy remains to be seen (Rogers & Pill, 2024).

Source: Reprinted from NSW Government and Greater Sydney Commission (2018).

Figure 1.2 Sydney global city: a metropolis of three cities



Within Sydney metropolitan area, the City of Sydney is one of the 33 local government areas (Figure 1.3). Its population in 2021 was 211,632 (ABS, 2021), approximately 4% of the total metropolitan area. The Sydney LGA is at the centre of the NTE and includes multiple night precincts, among them, Sydney CBD, Kings Cross, The Rocks, Surry Hills, and a part of Newtown (see Figure 1.3). The City of Sydney has the highest concentration of night venues in the Greater Sydney Metropolitan Area (Perry et al., 2022) and the City

of Sydney Council has undergone an entrepreneurial shift in its approach to managing the NTE (Wolifson, 2018a; Wolifson & Drozdowski, 2017). It has led the way in NTE management in NSW. The City of Sydney's approach to the NTE is discussed in [Chapter 5](#), [Chapter 6](#).

Figure 1.3 City of Sydney map



Source: edited from City of Sydney (2018)

The first people to inhabit Sydney were Indigenous Australians (45,000-50,000 years ago), that migrated from northern Australia. In NSW, Indigenous peoples were first dispossessed of their land by European settlers in 1788 with the establishment of a British colony. Since the constitution and proclamation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, Australia maintained the (ABS, 2021) limiting non-white immigration to Australia. This policy was abolished in 1966, heralding the modern era of multiculturalism in Australia. Overseas born communities in 2021 accounted for approximately 40% of the overall population in Sydney (ABS, 2021). The NTE and the nightlife more broadly in the main neglects the meanings of the night for Indigenous Australia and multicultural communities, themes which remain marginal in the public debate and any policy intervention.

Sydney is governed by a three-tiers of government. The federal government controls immigration, welfare, trade, and from time to time provides strategic advice on policies for cities. Additionally, it collects most taxation revenue which is then transferred to the states and territories in the form of tied and general grants (Rogers & Pill, 2024; Vogel et al., 2020). The state and territory governments are the second layer of government with substantial power and authority. Lastly, local governments. It is widely acknowledged that Australian federal system brings vertical fiscal imbalance “based on which level of government has the power to make decisions about public spending and taxation” (Grant & Drew, 2017, p. 112). Institutional sites of vertical conflicts in terms of tax revenue distribution exists because of the Australian Constitution assigning direct responsibility for cities to the states and local government themselves (Grant & Drew, 2017). The federal government has had indirect oversight over night policies. In this context, it is important to note that: 1) local governments’ responsibility for managing regulatory planning at the local level is deferred from the state/territory government; 3) the federal government may provide funding to the states/territories for large-scale infrastructure in cities, either as block funding or through one-off arrangements.

Since the early 20th century, Sydney has experienced substantial population and suburban growth. Numerous studies observed the policy challenges impacting the quality of life and the need for improved connectivity across spatial areas and better public transport provision and greater housing affordability (Rogers & Pill, 2024; Van den Nouwelant, 2017; Vogel et al., 2020; Wolifson, 2018b). The growth in population has intensified inequality (Rogers & Pill, 2024) and led to spatial mismatches for example where people can afford to live, and where people jobs are located. These dynamics have also impacted the NTE. Low-income households are located, in the main, far from the Central Business District (CBD). Urban development or re-development might lead to NTE displacement from the inner Sydney suburbs to proximate suburbs but also a reconfiguration of a NTE more family-oriented (Hughes & Weedon-Newstead, 2018; Van den Nouwelant, 2017).

Whether the reader might think of Sydney as a compact city active 24-hour, then you may be disappointed. The international airport located 8 km south the Sydney CBD, Sydney

Kingsford Smith Airport, operates under curfews that is between 11pm and 6am to limit noise over the well-established residential area surrounding it.

1.4 Research aims and questions

The overarching aim of this dissertation is to investigate the NTE, its actors and policies in Sydney. In this study, the following research questions shaped my analysis:

Research question 1: Who were the actors and what were their strategies to influence policy change in the Sydney's NTE before Covid-19?

Research question 2: What was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Sydney NTE and how did night entrepreneurs respond to it?

Research question 3: How has policy around the NTE in Sydney evolved post the pandemic?

My research adopted an online qualitative approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Salmons, 2021) to answer the research questions. The online qualitative approach was a forced adaptation in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. On one hand the Covid-19 pandemic led me to restructure my investigation and look at the NTE before, during and post-Covid-19 pandemic. On the other hand, the Covid-19 pandemic was an opportunity to raise new research questions (D. Hill et al., 2021), such as how night entrepreneurs responded to the Covid-19 crisis and see whether and how the Covid-19 pandemic acted as a disruptor force in the NTE as a policy field.

My research analysed the experiences and perspectives of those impacted by and interested in the NTE and related policies. Perspectives and experiences were a canvas to investigate how policies around the NTE are shaped, what are their impacts and what are the changes in the NTE policy field. The scope of the study is restricted by timeframes. I divided the analysis into four timeframes. The NTE before Covid-19 was investigated between 2007 and 2014 before the lockdown laws, 2014-2020 after the lockdown laws, 2020-2022 during the Covid-19 pandemic and 2022-2023 post the pandemic. Interviews with representatives of advocacy coalitions were conducted and complemented with documents analysis. Key advocacy coalitions were considered: police, health authorities, residents, local councils, state government, families of victims, night businesses and organisations, and nightlife advocates. Representatives from all these groups were interviewed, except for police and health authorities due to ethics limitations and bureaucratic obstacles. With respect to the police and health authorities the substantial number of public documents available allowed me to include their perspectives in the analysis. Interviews were triangulated with online documents such as government submissions, media releases, Facebook pages of public figures, organisations websites. The methodology is discussed in detail in [Chapter 4](#).

1.5 Theoretical framing

My theoretical framing uses the literature around night governance and policy change and three key concepts – conflicting rationalities, blame games and antifragility. These are briefly outlined below and discussed in detail in [Chapter 3](#).

1.5.1 *Night governance*

Night governance is a relatively new discipline in the fields of night and urban studies. The emerging literature on night governance studies focus on how the night has been incorporated in even more formalised institutional arenas (Acuto, Seijas, et al., 2021), the actors involved in agenda setting and policy making, and the blurring lines between private and public actors involved in the development of NTE management tools (Acuto, Seijas, et al., 2021; Seijas & Gelders, 2021; Van Liempt, 2013; Wadds, 2020). Night governance has few assumptions. First, governing the night is different than governing the day in that it poses several challenges such as crime, noise, conflictual use of public spaces, and provision of public transport at night. Second, governing the night requires a much broader and holistic approach (Roberts et al., 2020). Third, according to some authors, governing the night requires a collaborative or partnership approach between private and public actors (Acuto, Seijas, et al., 2021; Van Liempt, 2013). Fourth, governing the night requires mediation and negotiation amongst a plurality of perspectives and values. Night governance is where I locate my research and it's a valuable framework for investigating actors and policies in Sydney's NTE before, during and post-Covid-19.

1.5.2 *Policy change*

Amongst the multiple policy change theories, I use policy entrepreneurship and advocacy coalition framework. Both these frameworks address how policy change occurs. The policy entrepreneurship framework investigates the role of policy actors seeking to gain influence and shape policies based on their beliefs (Mintrom, 2019b; Mintrom & Norman, 2009a; Mintrom & Vergari, 1996). The policy entrepreneurship framework also explains why these actors are successful in doing what they do. Similarly, the advocacy coalition framework explains policy change, but it helps in mapping the beliefs of actors. The analytical framework on policy change helps to understand how the NTE evolved prior to, during and post the Covid-19 pandemic in Sydney.

Specifically, theories of policy change help to understand the actor's composition, and governance dynamics in terms of coalition building (Baumgartner, 2013; Mintrom, 2019b; Mintrom & Vergari, 1996). While studies on the NTE acknowledge an increasing cast of actors involved in the management of the NTE and the policy mobility as a result (Acuto, Seijas, et al., 2021; Seijas & Gelders, 2021), less is known about how and what happens in local contexts. In Sydney's NTE, policy change theories are relevant to understand the past, but also contemporary efforts at introducing change and navigating

the complex terrain of governing the NTE. Additionally, policy change theories help us to understand who is involved in the management of the NTE, who is “left out”, and who contributes indirectly to the night governance.

1.5.3 Conflicting rationalities and blame games

Conflicting rationalities and blame games are distinct concepts, however they share two similarities. They both emerge intrinsically in contested arenas, and they both pertain to the political aspects of policies. Conflicting rationalities are defined as a set of values, way of seeing, perspective or positions of policy actors in a specific setting (de Satgé & Watson, 2018; Watson, 2003). Conflicting rationalities is a powerful concept to investigate the power/knowledge relation around the perceptions of problems related to the NTE and its policies (Füller et al., 2018). Conflicting rationalities, albeit implicitly, have been investigated in the NTE (Füller et al., 2018; Hadfield, 2006; Henckel, 2016; Van Liempt, 2013), with little exploration about its implications for night policies and policy change. I therefore propose to use conflicting rationalities to investigate how problems are perceived and framed by a multitude of actors. Especially in Sydney’s NTE, conflicting rationalities is key to understanding policy claims, strategies towards regulation and de-regulation, problem perception and formulation and what are the consequences deriving from this.

Blame games are defined as policy actors’ interaction consisting in placing blame or receiving blames (Hood, 2002). Blame games usually occur between at least two actors or multiple actors (Drew & Grant, 2017), and underlines the subjective perceived harms or risks, issues of accountability and eventually policy failure or unpopular public policies. In Sydney’s NTE, blame games is a useful concept to investigate the consequences of conflicting rationalities and dynamics between actors.

1.5.4 Antifragility

Antifragility focuses on practices and abilities to adapt, survive, and thrive under uncertainty. Particularly, resilience occurs through adaptation, innovation, and experimentation, mitigating the effects of external shocks to systems and organisations. The antifragility concept illustrates that an organisation or system can resist crisis and shocks but even benefit and thrive from them (Taleb, 2012). Antifragility supports broader critical and normative reflections on how government should or should not intervene and to what extent in the governing of the NTE. Antifragility is useful to analyse the impact of Covid-19 on Sydney’s NTE and the coping practices of night business owners. It enables us to learn how to deal with uncertainties, “do things without understanding them – and do them well” (Taleb, 2012, p. 25).

1.6 Thesis outline

This thesis is presented across eight additional chapters. In [Chapter 2](#), I review the term NTE and night scholarship to understand how the term was used and for what purposes. Night governance, the origins and developments, the existing models, and its controversies are discussed. In [Chapter 3](#), I outline the analytical framework I use to investigate the NTE prior to, during and post-Covid-19 drawing upon policy. [Chapter 4](#) details the research design and methodological approach. I introduce online qualitative research as a flexible methodology to investigate the night during crisis – the Covid-19 pandemic. My philosophical positions and reflexivity as a researcher in international setting are also proposed. I discuss the interviews, data analysis and present the thematic analysis. The ethical implications of online qualitative research and the methods of data collection are also discussed. [Chapter 5](#) is the first findings chapter. It analyses the NTE in Sydney before the imposition of the lockout laws in 2014. [Chapter 5](#) maps the key actors, their beliefs and investigates their role in resisting or influencing policy change. The strategies of multiple actors are discussed along with the outcome - the introduction of the lockout laws. The conflicting rationalities around the NTE and its policies are discussed along with the consequences. [Chapter 6](#) analyses the NTE after the imposition of the lockout laws and key changes occurred in the NTE. I map out the changes in the actors' arena and their beliefs followed by an analysis of the strategies adopted in influencing policy change or resisting it, that is the repeal of the lockout laws and the adoption of the state strategy *Sydney 24-hour Economy Strategy*. [Chapter 7](#) examines the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the NTE, and the response of night entrepreneurs. [Chapter 8](#) examines developments in the NTE in Sydney post-Covid-19. Finally, [Chapter 9](#) revisits the research aims and questions. It summarises the key findings, proposes avenues of future research, discusses the limitations and draws out the theoretical, empirical, methodological and policy significance.

Chapter 2 A review of the night-time economy

2.1 Introduction

Within Night Studies, scholars have addressed the night from multiple disciplinary perspectives: historical (Beaumont, 2015; Koslofsky, 2011; Schivelbusch, 1995), economic development (Lin et al., 2022; Pugalis & Keegan, 2017; Zhang & Zhang, 2022), governance, criminological and sociological (Hadfield, 2015; Hadfield & Measham, 2015; Wadds, 2020), urban planning and design (Roberts, 2009; Roberts & Eldridge, 2009; Roberts & Turner, 2005), mobility (Duff & Moore, 2015), public health and night work (MacQuarie, 2023). In this chapter I review scholarship on the NTE. I begin with a broad review of the term NTE, its definition and conceptualisations ([Section 2.2](#)). I argue that the current conceptualisations do not consider the broader cast of actors and their agencies in shaping night policies. In [Section 2.3](#), I briefly review the origins and development of night governance in advanced economies. I argue that governing the night has been historically linked to government regimes, power, authorities and political cultures. As my research focused on Sydney's NTE, I review the meanings of the night historically in Australia for Indigenous communities and I contend that the night for Indigenous Australia remains absent from contemporary debates and policy discourse. In [Section 2.3](#), I discuss un-governing the night. [Section 2.4](#) summarises the key themes of the literature review around night governance, discusses the gaps and justifies the needs to undertake research on NTE policies and actors.

2.2 Defining the NTE

The concept of NTE has gained increasing academic and policy interests as cities around the world capitalise on the potential of the NTE to enhance productivity, increase footprint, reactivate public spaces, boost city attractiveness and competitiveness. At its core the NTE encompasses activities and practices occurring at night, but its boundaries, impact, and experiences are subject to much scholarly debate. This section reviews the various definitions and conceptualisations of the NTE and its role in contemporary cities. A universally accepted definition of the NTE has not yet been provided. Notions of NTE have changed over time, and have been informed by practical concerns, and philosophical positions.

The term NTE has its roots in early scholarship and planning practices developed in the UK (Lovatt & O'Connor, 1995; Roberts & Eldridge, 2009; Shaw, 2018). Since the 1990s it has been seen as the 'El Dorado' of urban planners and policy makers for promoting urban regeneration (Maris, 2009, p. 1). Leisure and entertainment have emerged as key

nocturnal activities in post-industrial cities. The decline of traditional forms of employment and the emergence of digital communications has seen the emergence of new forms of socialising. An increase of time for leisure and entertainment, the rise of financial sectors and the affordance of digital communications have pushed towards the “colonization of the night” where daytime activities expand into the night (Melbin, 1987). The NTE was viewed as a key mechanism to promote urban attractiveness and vibrancy through cultural initiatives, festivals, entertainment and leisure re-activation (Bianchini, 1995; Lovatt & O’Connor, 1995). The post-industrial cities who have shifted their office and residential developments that either incorporated or pointed to the cultural life of the city centre, the promotion of the city as a culturally vibrant realm, incorporated the idea of urban nightlife, a realm of play and of encounter associated with the night-time (Lovatt & O’Connor, 1995, p. 130). The primary assumption was that if people are out in the evening, they go perhaps to the theatre, cinema, gym or any other places, they will also use the restaurants, cafes, and bars. This was the core of urban regeneration policies in the UK (Lovatt & O’Connor, 1995).

The NTE has become relevant not just for major global cities (e.g., New York London or Berlin) but for middle size towns (Schmid, 2018), and remote rural villages (Song et al., 2016). Studies on the NTE have spread globally. While initial research was conducted in the UK, a growing body of literature focuses on the NTE in China (Chew, 2009; Farrer, 2018; Zhang & Zhang, 2022), Australia (Van den Nouwelant, 2017; Wadds, 2020; Wolifson, 2018a), Europe (Füller et al., 2018; Nofre et al., 2018; Schmid, 2018), US (Hae, 2012), Middle East (Amid, 2018; Khorsand et al., 2021).

The NTE is valued for its potential to increase employment opportunities, boost cities attractiveness and competitiveness, attract investments, increase tax revenues of local and state governments. Here, the NTE as a *Wirtschafts- und Standortfaktor*, i.e., economic and urban location factor, aims at fostering the urban attractiveness and competitiveness of cities, attracting new residents, attracting and retaining creative talents and developing tourism (Schmid, 2018). Therefore, cities promote themselves as nocturnal destinations (Eldridge & Smith, 2019; Nofre et al., 2018; Nofre, 2021b). For instance, Barcelona, Ibiza, and Bali, just to name a few are tourist destinations renowned for their vibrant nightlife. Additionally, many Chinese cities are investing in night markets for tourism development (Fang & Zheng, 2022).

The mainstream term NTE focusing solely on its contribution to economic growth has been challenged. The concept of NTE and nightlife which are often used interchangeably attempts to identify which type of activities or sectors are included or excluded (Chew, 2009; Farrer, 2018; van Liempt et al., 2015; van Liempt & van Aalst, 2012). For instance:

A subset of the cultural economy composed of bars, dance clubs, karaoke establishments, rave parties, live-music venues, and other nightlife forms (while not including the commercial sex industries) (Chew, 2009, p. 3).

Other studies conceptualise the NTE as a liminal time-space (Hadfield, 2009; Hadfield & Measham, 2015; Hobbs et al., 2000). The NTE as a liminal time-space was defined as “a largely unregulated zone of venture capitalism whose relentless logic excludes from its ever-expanding portfolio any innovation that is not oozing with profitable potential” (Hobbs et al., 2000, p. 710).

The varied understandings of the NTE pose questions about who the night is for, how the night is produced by whom, and what practices are more or less evident at night leading some authors to identify the NTE as “fragmented frontiers” (Hadfield, 2015; Shaw, 2018). It is recognised that there are multiple ways of inhabiting the city at night (Gwiazdzinski, 2015; Roberts & Eldridge, 2009; Shaw, 2018) and consequently the night city functions in very different ways. Additionally, the experiences and meanings of the NTE are shaped by class, gender, age (Roberts & Eldridge, 2009), cultural background and contexts such as the local culture of going out (Schmid, 2018). Roberts and Eldridge (2009a, p. 11) definition of the NTE captures this diversity:

There is no singular night-time or evening economy, but rather a number of different economies running side-by-side, in support or opposition to each other. This is as true in terms of the ways different cities function at night, as it is for different parts of the very same city. [...] that the late-night city is a diverse and complex ‘time-space’. It is a site where competing interests and desires can rub up against one another, or seemingly exist side-by side, with each party oblivious to the other.

The definition by Roberts and Eldridge (2009a) suggests that there is a plurality of ways of how night cities work. It recognises that conflict in night-time use may exist, but there is also the possibility of peaceful coexistence between different interests and activities. Additionally, this definition implicitly suggests that governing the night is not a mere remit of liquor license and planning, rather it might encompass a broad range of tools, from place-making to city-branding, from transport provision to policies for the welfare and wellbeing of night workers.

Previous studies have looked at how different groupings inhabit the cities at night - homeless people, drinkers, night workers, youth, residents, elderly, migrants, and tourists (Eldridge & Roberts, 2022; Hollands & Chatterton, 2002; MacQuarie, 2023; Shaw, 2018). Following, a debate around the “rights to the city at night” (Hae, 2012; Yeo, 2020) there has been recognition of the multiple meanings the night has as time-space of rest, leisure, work, profit, escapism, services. The limitations of the term NTE has led night scholars focusing on the night in a much broader sense. We have studies on nocturnal cities (Baldwin, 2012; Shaw, 2018), nightscapes (Farrer & Field, 2015; Qin et al., 2011), 24/7 cities, cities after dark, urban night, or simply night (Hadfield, 2015; Roberts, 2009, 2016; Roberts & Eldridge, 2009).

It is worthy to explore at least three other approaches to the night: the night as an urban frontier, the night as a time-space, and the differences between NTE and 24/7 cities. The

work of Murray Melbin, an American sociologist, first conceptualised the night as a frontier (Melbin, 1987). Behind this conceptualisation is the temporal extensions of certain activities from the day to the night, the “colonisation of the night”. Dietrich Henckel, a German scholar in urban planning, expanded Melbin’s definition of “colonisation of the night”. Henckel includes four categories: the night as “the other time-space” for amusement, entertainment and leisure, the night as extension of production time, the night as time for maintenance and repair, “the night of security (police, fire brigades, health care emergency, watchmen and private security) and keep functioning infrastructures (technical systems, electricity management) (Akademie der Wissenschaften in Hamburg, 2016; Henckel, 2019b). Since nightlife has become a feature of many cities, the NTE is often viewed as synonymous with all those activities that occur when the sun sets and contribute to economic growth and consumption.

A review of the definitions and conceptualisations of the NTE gives us some insights into how the night is experienced, produced, and inhabited. However, these definitions do not talk much about how different actors come together to shape night policies, that is the core focus of this research.

2.2.1 The NTE in Sydney

In the Sydney context, the most common terms used in the policy documents are NTE and 24-hour economy. It is widely acknowledged that these terms are placed within global city discourses (Wolifson, 2018b; Wolifson & Drozdowski, 2017). The NTE has been presented as a key contributor to economic recovery post the Covid-19 pandemic. According to the latest report published by the Council of Capital Lord Mayors, in 2021-2022, the Australian NTE contributed \$146 bn in sales turnover, surpassing pre pandemic levels by 5% in 2018/19 (Ingenium Research, 2023). According to the report, in Sydney, the number of NTE businesses increased by 6% in 2021/2022 and represents 5% of Australia’s NTE core establishments. The NTE seems to have recovered well from the pre-pandemic level registering a 17% increase from 2018/19. In 2021/2022, in Sydney, the NTE employment rebounded to 34,065 jobs marking a 5% growth between June 2021 and June 2022. However, the NTE employment level remains 6% down from the pre-pandemic level (Ingenium Research, 2023).

There is consensus around the positive benefits of cities undertaking an entrepreneurial stance to economic development. And this may suggest why the NTE is the primary term used in any policy discussion. Spatial clusters of NTE activities and the core consumption activities (food, drink, and entertainment) are commonly the focus of NTE policies. However, such emphasis can overlook the 24H hotspots which are key centres of the 24H city such as hospitals, 24H service and fuel stations, and night construction sites or 24H gyms which could be located outside the city centres or high streets. Another important consideration is the distinction between the 24H economy and the NTE. Policy documents do not agree on when the NTE starts and ends. While most policies tend to

use a 6 pm to 6 am definition (Burwood Council, 2023; NSW Government, 2020a), other use alternate timings such as 5 pm to 5 am (City of Parramatta, 2020).

In this study, I use a working definition to frame the NTE. The NTE as a complex system is an interconnected network of actors attempting to negotiate, cooperate, contest and compete over the direction and governance of the NTE. Rather than being a static or uniform concept, the NTE takes different forms and shapes over time, influenced by a combination of rationalities, interactions between actors, and their practices. This working definition recognizes that “there is no singular night-time or evening economy” (Roberts & Eldridge, 2009a, p. 11), and as such multiple interrelated elements mould the practices and policies shaping the NTE. By viewing the NTE as a complex system, this study aims to capture the changes and nuances of the NTE before, during and post Covid-19 in Sydney.

2.3 NTE and urban governance

Governance of the NTE has become a key focus due to the challenges and opportunities that the night brings in cities. Night governance provides a framework for studying actors impacted by and interested in the NTE and its policies, a key focus of this research. In [Section 2.3.1](#) I review how the night was governed historically. I suggest that the night has been highly linked to the historical governance apparatus and therefore related to power and authorities. As part of the historical tools in governing the night curfews have been implemented to address public concerns of safety and moral concerns. I referred here to curfews as they reoccurred in Sydney, before and during the pandemic as I will explore in [Chapter 6](#)[Chapter 7](#). Following, in [Section 2.3.2](#), I explore the urban governance of the contemporary NTE. Drawing on key studies, I aim to understand how and if previous authors explored shifts in governance paradigm within the NTE context, and how actors in the NTE are defined. The identification of the gap in this literature will justify the adoption of the analytical framework ([Chapter 3](#)). I will also draw upon the un-governing the night argument to critically investigate night governance.

2.3.1 Governing the night historically

Governing the night historically shows a pattern of regulation, de-regulation, and re-regulation through various policy tools, and that governing the night occupied the political and moral authorities of the time. As early as the sixteenth century, governing the night was characterised by regulation, discipline, and order. Due to the “deplorable state of affairs of ‘nocturnal activities’” (Schlör & Beaumont, 2016, p. 68), vagabonds and robbers, the authorities such as police, used the fear of the night and a rudimentary public street lighting system as an instrument of discipline and order (Koslofsky, 2011; Schlör & Beaumont, 2016). In many parts of Europe curfews and night watch were common tools to ban inhabitants from venturing out on the streets at night without reason or without carrying a light, and to provide community surveillance. Particularly curfews focused on the night activities of young people, apprentices and servants restraining

them from entering public houses (Koslofsky, 2011). Later, in the seventeenth century, governing the night became rooted in political and symbolic strategies aligning with the governing authority's ideology. This involved "nocturnalisation of political symbolism and everyday life ... to strengthen the supplement established symbols of spiritual and political sovereignty" (Koslofsky, 2011, p. 92). The governance apparatus of the time, baroque rulers, princes and kings, considered the festive night as a political tool to display royal authority and to distract the courtiers from political issues. The festive night was also a symbolic space of connection and communication between autocratic rulers, common subjects, and courtiers.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, governing the night expanded to regulation and surveillance innovation. The governing authorities at European courts exercised full control over the urban night helped by public street lighting on the main streets. At the same time, new street lighting was meant to control but also beautify cities after dark by making obsolete tools such as the curfews (Koslofsky, 2011). Over the course of the eighteenth century, governing the night involved behavioural and moral regulations (Schlör & Beaumont, 2016). The main governance apparatus at that time were the state, clerical authorities, and the police as 'moral guardians' who ensured that regulation was observed and rigidly enforced. People who transgressed the curfews in place faced severe punishment. Curfews were in place to regulate people going out at night and closing times of night premises such as taverns, ale houses, and saloons (Beaumont, 2015; Schlör & Beaumont, 2016). The restrictions evoked resistance from young people who made the night their territory (Koslofsky, 2011).

Over the nineteenth century, governing the night evolved around regulation and deregulation. The night assumed a form that we would recognise in contemporary cities facilitated by electric and gas lighting to promote what we now call nightlife but also as a tool to ensure safety. While theatres, pleasure gardens, and orchestras attracted the more educated and high-income residents and marked the growing importance of leisure time, the rise of bawdy dance, gin palaces and burlesque houses, were kept under control and policed as they were associated with vice, moral decay, drinking and prostitution of the working class (Schlör & Beaumont, 2016). Simultaneously, the rise of early forms of capitalist production and advances in commerce and industry boosted night work in manufacturing concerns and provided more opportunities for leisure (Baldwin, 2012; Schivelbusch, 1995). New night activities became common such as taxi services, supermarkets, cinemas, petrol stations, television and radio broadcasting, hospitals and hotels.

2.3.2 Governing the contemporary urban night

In the contemporary period, new themes around night governance have emerged: night inclusivity and accessibility through transport, mobility and commuting (Plyushteva & Boussauw, 2020), social justice, equity and gender (Eldridge & Roberts, 2013; Lin et al.,

2022; Reeve, 2019; Roberts, 2016), night shift work and migrants (MacQuarie 2023), sustainability (Almeida & Fumega, 2012; Gwiazdzinski, 2015; Henckel, 2019a; Roberts & Gornostaeva, 2007), the use of cities at night from religious communities (Amid, 2018; Khorsand et al., 2020, 2021), night and public spaces (Abusaada et al., 2021; Song et al., 2016; Yeo, 2020). Additionally, developing indicators to investigate the urban vibrancy and the spatial distribution of night-time activities has been explored (Li et al., 2022; Lin et al., 2022). Along with these emerging themes, the potential of the night and the impact of touristification have seen an increasing focus on night tourism (El Maalouf et al., 2015; Eldridge & Smith, 2019; Nofre et al., 2018; Nofre, 2021b). These developments reflect the current interest of many cities in undertaking endeavours to adopt night policies.

In addressing the multifaceted aspects of the urban night, the concept of night governance becomes a pivotal area of study as it seeks to navigate and manage the varied dimensions and implications of nocturnal activities (Gwiazdzinski, 2015; Hadfield & Measham, 2015; Hae, 2012). Over the course of the twentieth century, “governing the night appears to become a more fluid, differentiated and complex, yet pervasive, process” (Chatterton, 2002, p. 24). The shift from industrial to post-industrial cities is relevant to understanding both the development of the NTE and changes in night governance (Hobbs et al., 2000, 2003; Roberts & Turner, 2005; Shaw, 2018). On the one hand, night businesses and cultural movements such as raves and the dance scene, sensed an urgency to be organised and protect against no-tolerance policing over dance and music clubs (Hadfield, 2006). For example, the New York Nightlife Association was formed in 1996 as a voluntary business organisation of night businesses to lobby local politicians (Hae, 2011, 2012). Hae (2011) illustrates how *San Francisco Late Night Coalition and the Seattle Nightlife* challenged the distribution of powers between the state and police authorities. Additionally, studies have shown that raves were forms of resistance/opposition opening opportunities for more participatory and democratic forms of governance (Chatterton, 2002; Hae, 2011, 2012). In addition, members of alternative local small night venues mobilized against state crackdowns, and opposed mainstream, commodified nightlife premised on male oriented alcohol consumption and driven by powerful corporate night businesses (Chatterton & Hollands, 2002; Hae, 2011, 2012; Hollands & Chatterton, 2003).

Governing the NTE has become an evolving and dynamic field and practice. Studies have highlighted the role of “night mayors” in urban governance and its spread in cities around the world (Acuto, Seijas, et al., 2021; Seijas & Gelders, 2021), which is better explained as “policy mobility”. Night governance investigates new forms of organisations, the role of different actors and the processes behind the governing of the night. Hadfield (2015) identifies four different modes. The first mode, informal governance, involves processes for governing and enforcing actions as an alternative to control-focused regimes. Informal governance essentially uses negotiation and persuasion to create public value (Yeo & Heng, 2014). The second mode is formal governance, where public value is produced through law and statute, licensing and planning regulations (Hadfield, 2015). The third mode, police governance, involves the police using discretionary powers like other public authorities to control NTE, enforce statutory regulations, and prevent social

disorder, alcohol and drug-related violence, as well as night-time crime (Wadds, 2020). Lastly, the fourth mode is private governance where private actors actively participate in night policies through networking with public authorities.

The night mayor

Recent studies have shown an international trend of institutionalisation of the night through the rise of “night mayors”. Their role is to manage their NTEs, mediate and negotiate between different interests and highlight the cultural and civic value of the night (Acuto, Edwards, et al., 2021; Seijas & Gelders, 2021). As the same authors define night mayors:

Night mayors – also called ‘managers’ and ‘czars’, among other designations – are usually individuals selected by cities to act as a liaison between nightlife establishments, citizens and local governments. Variations of the ‘night mayor’ title include ‘night-time economy manager’, ‘nocturnal delegate’, ‘nightlife advocate’ and ‘night ambassador’ (Acuto, Seijas, et al., 2021, p. 25)

By 2021, more than 30 cities had appointed a night mayor or variations thereof. The rise of “night mayors” reflects a shift in the framing of night governance. Seijas and Gelders (2021, p. 15) argue that the

Night mayor movement is challenging traditional approaches to nocturnal management focused on safety and control and creating a new form of representation that cities did not have before.

Night mayors play a key role in lining the NTE and city government. As Seijas and Gelders (2021, p. 321) argue,

Night mayors are individuals who are able to navigate the chaos and contradictions of darkness while working alongside city governments to make the night a safer and more inclusive space. By doing so, they become mediators or translators between two worlds – nightlife and city government that until recently had few devices with which to communicate.

More public private partnerships

The paradigmatic change in night governance can be also explained by a shift from government towards governance, i.e. the involvement of a wide range of actors from nightlife lobby groups, community groups and voluntary sectors (Chatterton, 2002; Hadfield & Measham, 2015; Hobbs et al., 2003). Studies on night governance have observed a shift from a managerialism form of governance to a more entrepreneurial stance. Studies described this shift as an embrace of neoliberal policies promoting the NTE and its economic potential (Wolifson & Drozdowski, 2017). Other studies observed the collaborative ethos of state and private actors such as industry lobby groups into the governing of the NTE (Chatterton, 2002; Hadfield & Measham, 2015; Roberts & Eldridge,

2009). In other words, those who were targeted with regulation and control, have become more involved in policy making. As a result, the formation of public-private partnerships has become common. It has been argued that although public-private partnership is effective in improving communication, and relationships (Van Liempt, 2013), they have the potential to undermine public accountability (Hobbs et al., 2000). Chatterton (2002, p. 28) argues that;

the emergence of public- private partnerships encourages the local state to come into line with the needs of business and creates platforms from which business elites can exercise political influence.

Another critical insight is derived from the work of Grant and Drew (2017, p. 45) which suggests that we need to differentiate between governing outside government, through the form of participatory governance or public-private partnership, and the mere “gathering of opinions of people to better inform public policy” or “inviting a group of “the little people” to participate in decision making.

NTE governance and the Covid-19 pandemic

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic (2020-2022) which halted the NTE in cities worldwide, we observed a dramatic escalation and enforcement of regulations and curfews of the NTE to prevent the spread of the virus. The shutdown demonstrated the social, cultural and economic value of the NTE in contemporary cities (Nofre, 2021a). The response of governments to the Covid-19 pandemic involved the adoption of containment measures such as curfews, shutdowns and keeping a safe distance. Large gatherings, informal parties, and night events, particularly in indoor spaces and night venues (bars, restaurants, music clubs) were considered a high-risk time-space for Covid-19 community transmissions (Le et al., 2022). In response to the lockdowns many DJs, promoters, and night lovers in general, reacted by streaming their initiatives (music sessions, domestic parties, talks, etc.) at their homes, garages or even from empty clubs (Nofre, 2021a).

NTE governance as planning the NTE

Schmid (2018), in the seminal work *Stadtentwicklungspolitische Instrumente für das Management der urbanen Nachtökonomie*, proposes what is now renown as ‘NTE approach’. At the foundation of his work is the recognition that the night requires a full understanding of the problems and opportunities to ensure effective policy implementation. Studies have emphasised a growing number of actors in the nightlife space. These are usually government officials appointed for management of the NTE, or representatives of the cultural and industry sphere, or a mix of public-private actors gathering in the form of commissions with the functions to advice local governments on the matters of the night (Acuto, Seijas, et al., 2021; Seijas & Gelders, 2021). NTE scholars use the term actors to refer to users and consumers of the night. Key consumers of the NTE are often excluded from decision-making. University students, couples and young

professionals are often excluded from the “governance equation” (Chatterton, 2002). Therefore, Chatterton (2002) argues that governing the night remains dominated by those who effectively shape and mobilise the night policies. In other words, the night governance is exclusionary and limited to those actors who can influence the agenda and policy implementations.

Currently, in the night scholarship fails to identify what exactly is changing in the NTE, - is it a governance approach? Is it the policy landscape? Is it the actor’s configuration? Who the actors are and what are their strategies to shape policies. Therefore, this thesis focuses on actors and policies in Sydney NTE and their strategies to shape policies. The current gap justifies the adoption of this analytical framework

2.3.3 Un-governing the night

Füller et al. (2018) analyse the discourses surrounding Berlin’s *fair.kiez* project, which aimed to address night use conflicts related to noise, unruly behaviour and littering in the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg nightlife precinct. A coalition of entrepreneurs in Berlin’s NTE, the local economic department, and the state tourism marketing organisation initiated the *fair.kiez* project. *Fair.kiez* is a case of participatory governance celebrated for bringing together conflicting rationalities (i.e., multiple actors with different perspectives). Füller et al. (2018) demonstrate that the *fair.kiez* project was a successful case of un-governing rather than mediation. Un-governing the night occurred through two major strategies. The first strategy is “manufacturing consent” that is transforming the public demands for action and governance of the NTE from residents’ perspective to a mutual understanding, and shared agreement about - there is no easy fix for the problem, we all agree that there are conflicts - and the establishment of possible solutions. In other words, it is better to raise awareness about the issues at stake and do something even if it does not solve anything. The second strategy is “marginalising the problem” through localising the problem to specific hot spots in the city. In the *fair.kiez* project night-time use conflicts were localised to certain streets which “emphasises the most visible effects but also negates the broader structural nature and citywide relevance of the issue” (Füller et al., 2018, p. 30). Furthermore, the night-time use problem was marginalised through “connecting the problem to a distinct, external group that has an ephemeral presence in the city” (Füller et al., 2018, p. 30). Moreover, the problem is marginalised through the adoption of window-dressing initiatives, or symbolic approaches. This is illustrated with the pantomime performances, an initiative funded as outcome of the *fair.kiez* project. Despite existing governance arrangement in Berlin, it becomes clear that participatory processes do not always effectively tackle NTE problems.

2.4 Conclusions

This chapter explored the definitions of the NTE and its major conceptualisations. Although there is no consensus as to what the NTE involves and who the night is for, I

argued that the definition proposed by Roberts and Eldridge (2009a) is useful for investigating the actors and their perceptions around the NTE and its policies.

This chapter has provided an overview of the NTE and its governance. I first reviewed the history of governing the night showing how night governance was historically related to power and authority. I then moved to a review of the studies related to the governance of the urban night and showed that the identification of actors interested in and impacted by the NTE is not as systematic as it should be. The shifts around the NTE governance are explained but with less devotion to the strategies that multiple actors put in place.

The review of the literature on night governance reveals a couple of key gaps in NTE scholarship. Certainly, in the case of Sydney, minimal research has been done on how the NTE evolved during and post the Covid-19 pandemic – i.e. what were the policy changes, what actors were involved and the impact of policies on multiple groups interested in and impacted by the policies out in place. I address this gap by looking at the NTE in Sydney prior to, during, post the Covid-19 pandemic, its policies and actors. Secondly, little attention has been given to policy change and the agencies of local actors in influencing such change. To tackle these gaps, I engage with policy change theories and the concepts of conflicting rationalities, blame games, and antifragility.

Chapter 3 A framework for analysing the night-time economy

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I delve into the analytical framework that underpins the thesis. Following Ostrom (2005), I use frameworks to explain a particular phenomenon, such as governing the NTE, and use concepts not just as a pre-established toolbox of theoretical categories but as a broad guideline for understanding why specific phenomena occur. This chapter is structured as follows. [Section 3.2](#) engages with theories of policy processes and two models of policy change: the advocacy coalition framework and policy entrepreneurship (Mintrom, 2019a; Sabatier, 1988; Weible et al., 2009). I present these models and the primary concepts, and I argue that models of policy change are extremely useful in Sydney's NTE context to understand the changes in the NTE as a policy field. [Section 3.3](#) examines the concept of conflicting rationalities (de Satgé & Watson, 2018; Watson, 2003) and its nexus with the NTE. I argue that conflicting rationalities are important to examine the problem formulation around the NTE and its policies. [Section 3.4](#) engages with antifragility (Taleb, 2012). I argue that antifragility and resilience are relevant for investigating the impact of Covid-19 on the NTE and the response of night entrepreneurs. [Section 3.5](#) concludes the chapter.

3.2 Policy change

In the realm of public policy and political science, policy change is used to explain how policymaking processes work, how policy changes occur, and how different actors interact with each other to introduce change. Many frameworks emerged to explain policy change (Baumgartner, 2013; Baumgartner et al., 2018; Kingdon, 1991; Mintrom & Norman, 2009a). I consider two of them: the advocacy coalition framework, and policy entrepreneurship. These two frameworks were selected as they apply to both retrospective and contemporary studies (Mintrom, 2019a; Sabatier, 1988), and their strength in focusing on actors and their strategies. Therefore, these frameworks allowed me to understand the NTE before, during and post the Covid-19 pandemic with a focus on its actors and strategies. Specifically, these frameworks will help to address the research questions in [Chapter 5](#), [Chapter 6](#), [Chapter 8](#).

3.2.1 *Advocacy coalitions framework*

The advocacy coalition framework defines advocacy coalitions as groups of policy actors actively involved in a policy issue (Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier, 1994; Sabatier, 1988). An advocacy coalition attempts to bring about policy change based on policy core beliefs, and

deep core beliefs through a coordinated set of actions and the establishment of coalitions (Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier, 1994; Sabatier, 1988; Weible & Ingold, 2018; Wiley et al., 2021). The shared beliefs are the ‘glue’ of politics” (Sabatier, 1988, p. 141). Advocacy coalitions act to shape policies by influencing the agenda setting, i.e. determining the priorities for government intervention (Sabatier & Weible, 2019). Resources to gain influence, strength, power and credibility are essential in shaping policy change. These resources can take various forms: information and knowledge, skilful leadership, public opinion, mobilizable troops, financial resources and formal legal authority to make policy decisions (Sabatier & Weible, 2019; Wiley et al., 2021). Sabatier and Weible (2019) determined that coalition resources significantly enhanced leverage, strength, and power. In advocacy coalitions the primary strategy to influence change is building coalitions. In this thesis, the advocacy coalition framework is useful to understand who the key policy actors interested in and impacted by the NTE and its policies are, and what are their perspectives.

3.2.2 Policy entrepreneurship

Along with the advocacy coalition framework, policy entrepreneurship is another concept that can be used to understand policy change. Mintrom (1997, p. 739) defines policy entrepreneurs as;

People who seek to initiate dynamic policy change ... They do this through attempting to win support for ideas for policy innovation. Policy entrepreneurs use several activities to promote their ideas. These include identifying problems, networking in policy circles, shaping the terms of policy debates, and building coalitions.

Like the advocacy coalitions, policy entrepreneurs are policy actors, actively involved in policy processes. Policy entrepreneurs can be individuals or groups from the public, private or NGO sectors who are willing to invest resources, time and energy to *resist or advocate for change* (Kingdon, 1991; Mintrom & Norman, 2009a). According to Mintrom and Norman (2009a, p. 650), policy entrepreneurs “desire to significantly change current ways of doing things in their area of interest” by working with others around and in policymaking and leveraging resources to promote a preferred solution and secure legislative intervention. A key feature of policy entrepreneurs is their propensity to disrupt or change the status quo, and therefore to overcome resistance (Mackenzie, 2004; Mintrom & Norman, 2009a).

Mintrom (2019a, p. 8) suggests that policy entrepreneurs share some attributes:

Policy entrepreneurs are likely to be ambitious in pursuit of a cause, to exhibit social acuity, to be able to pass a relevant credibility test, to display sociability and to be tenacious.

Mintrom (2019a) further elaborates on the attributes suggesting that policy entrepreneurs have the energy and serious commitment in driving policy innovation, and the ambition for a specific cause. This explains why they do, and why they invest time, resources and energy. Policy entrepreneurs usually display social acuity and learn how people think about issues, take advantage of their networks, and learn which kind of policy arguments, evidence, and political support best serve their cause. Credibility is another attribute. Policy entrepreneurs need to be credible to get others on board, and credibility can be achieved through celebrating past achievements and holding reputable positions within or outside government. Sociability is “the ability to empathise with others and understand other people’s needs” (Mintrom, 2019a, p. 9), in a way that sociability becomes a tool to build coalitions and expand their networks. Finally, policy entrepreneurs are tenacious. Tenacity is defined as “the willingness to keep working towards a bigger goal, even when that goal seems nowhere in sight” (Mintrom, 2019a, p. 9).

Policy entrepreneurship scholarship emphasises that there are many different strategies that policy actors can adopt to influence change. Comprehensive reviews of strategies in place to influence policy change have been conducted (Brouwer & Huitema, 2018; Meijerink & Huitema, 2010). At the very basic level of understanding the most common strategies are problem framing that is framing the narrative to attract consensus. Strategies include bringing the policy issues “out into the public domain and attempt[ing] to invoke a swell of interest intended to induce major change” (Mintrom, 2019a, p. 30).

Within the Advocacy Coalition Framework, the policy entrepreneurship model is complementary as policy entrepreneurs define problems to maximise the opportunities for expanding policy coalitions (Mintrom, 1997; Mintrom & Vergari, 1996). Policy entrepreneurs with high levels of social acuity can often perceive windows of opportunity where others may not. I will show in my findings chapter how these two frameworks work on the ground and how they help me explain the changes that occurred in Sydney’s NTE. Understanding the actions of policy entrepreneurs, why they engage in them and the conditions under which they meet with success or failure will help us make sense of the NTE in Sydney. In this thesis, I apply policy entrepreneurship to investigate the role of multiple actors in shaping policies around the NTE in Sydney.

3.2.3 The role of events in policy changes

In the policy change scholarship, a particular event can play a major role in policy change. Within the NTE context, examples of external events that can shift policy include the rise of nightlife advocacy movements, the expansion of transnational networks facilitating the mobility of NTE policies, changes in consumers’ behaviours, digitalisation, economic crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic. Recent scholarship has advanced the role of events. Mintrom and Norman (2009a) argue that it is not the event per se that produces change, rather it is how actors respond and interpret events. In the policy entrepreneurship

literature, events can be perceived as “windows of opportunities” especially from those actors with high levels of social acuity. In this case, these moments need to be interpreted and actors need act strategically (Mintrom, 2019b; Mintrom & Norman, 2009a). The response to the events in question will often determine what policy changes occur. In the case of Sydney’s NTE ([Chapter 9](#)), Covid-19 led to changes in regulation. Events may also support the core beliefs of the dominant coalition and reinforce or disrupt the status quo (Weible & Nohrstedt, 2012). Understanding the role of events will help me to investigate the NTE prior to, during, and post the Covid-19 pandemic and highlight what exactly has changed in terms of actors’ composition and policy landscape.

3.3 Conflicting rationalities and blame games

Conflicting rationalities and blame games both arise from controversial and contested spaces, and both refer to the political dimensions of policies. However, while conflicting rationalities emerged in southern urban planning theory, blame games emerged within political theory. The combined use of these concepts allows us to explore the politics behind the NTE as a contested time space. In the context of this thesis, conflicting rationalities and blame games serve as valuable concepts for understanding the politics of multiple actors associated with the NTE.

3.3.1 *Conflicting rationalities*

De Satgé & Watson, in their seminal work, *Urban Planning in the Global South Conflicting Rationalities in Contested Urban Space* (2018, p. 26), define conflicting rationalities as “a view, a ‘way of seeing’, a position or perspective, an argument, a way of making sense of the world and a set of values held by actors in a specific setting”. The authors argue that ‘conflicting rationalities’ emerge at the “interface” between the ‘wills to govern and improve’ and the “will to survive and thrive” De Satgé & Watson (2018, p. 188). The authors highlight identity, power struggles, state failures and conventional norms as key factors influencing policy issues.

Given that conflicting rationalities as a concept originated in the Global South, there may be questions about its applicability and transferability in a highly institutionalised setting and advanced economy, like Sydney’s NTE. While knowledge transfer typically flows from advanced to developing economies, I contend that applying the concept of ‘conflicting rationalities’ from the Global South to Australia offers opportunities for cross-context learning and innovation when addressing contested NTE policies. The use of conflicting rationalities in Sydney’s NTE facilitates exploring how problems related to the NTE, and its policies are perceived across multiple policy actors. This approach provides a nuanced understanding of different perspectives on the NTE.

3.3.2 *Conflicting rationalities in the NTE*

Building on this concept, specific instances of conflicting rationalities can be observed within the NTE scholarship. Conflicting rationalities have been investigated, often implicitly. Roberts and Turner (2005) examine conflicts related to noise in mixed-use city centres, where residents seek a liveable environment, while others prioritise nightlife and leisure activities. Similarly, studies note that conflicts arise in areas with a high concentration of night-time entertainment establishments. Henckel (2016) observes that night conflicts stem from issues such as excessive waste, noise pollution, perceived unsafety, alcohol-related crime, and inadequate public transport services. Another study analysed the night conflicts of urban space in Berlin and how these were processed into a participatory process through consensus building (Füller et al., 2018). Wolifson (2018b) explores the different perspectives of the City of Sydney local government and the state government with respect to the governance of Sydney's NTE. She demonstrates how their rationalities although conflictual, align in promoting neoliberal agendas focused on global city competitiveness and economic growth.

Other studies have suggested that night conflicts have increased with the rise of new organisations expressing different interests, leading to issues of representativeness in policymaking, redistribution of political capital, policy claims, and political protests (Gwiazdzinski, 2015a; Hae, 2011, 2012). As a result, state actors are pressured to take actions (Schmid, 2018), and night conflicts emerge. The NTE scholarship warns us that night conflicts are often complex and "highly subjective and influenced by the perception of the actors involved" (Henckel, 2016, p. 98 own translation). Another type of conflict arises between multiple actors in the NTE with respect to setting the priorities due to unequal power distribution and different levels of accountability. These conflicts are often exacerbated by a lack of trust and different perceptions of the same situation (Van Liempt, 2013). Additionally, night conflicts are not necessarily only residents versus night businesses (Van den Nouwelant, 2017), but other actors (health authorities, the police, the local and state governments, etcetera) come into play. The NTE is a site of contestation particularly when it comes to liquor licensing regulation and planning regulation (Hadfield, 2006; Howse et al., 2021; Lee, 2016).

One of the most interesting contributions in this area is the book *Bar Wars* (Hadfield, 2006) where conflicting rationalities emerge as argument and counterarguments around the liquor licensing legislation in British cities. Hadfield (2006) investigates the licensing litigation and the arguments of multiple groups: residents and non-competitor businesses, police, local authorities, campaigners including politicians and community leaders, applicants of liquor licenses, supporters of the application (e.g., local residents population and night time city users), licensing industry (i.e. commercial players who tend to advocate for cutting the red tape and promote boosterism regimes), and expert witnesses and licensing consultants.

3.3.3 *Blame games*

Blame games is defined as “a process of interaction” among actors (Hood, 2002, p. 22). The game occurs with at least two actors, outside or within government, who can be either blame makers (those who place the blame) or blame takers (those who are likely to be blamed), or with multiple actors (Drew & Grant, 2017; Hansson, 2018; Hood, 2002). There are two fundamental ideas behind blame games. Policy actors “choose between praising or blaming those who have direct responsibility in public policy” (Hood, 2002, p. 17). Actors shift the responsibility onto each other for an adverse event, acting as those who assign blame to avoid being the ones blamed (Hood, 2010). Therefore, there is a component of liability and responsibility (Hadfield, 2006). Secondly, blame games are more likely to occur in controversial policy decisions or contested spaces (Hinterleitner, 2020). Literature explores various discursive strategies showing how blame games manifest in the political life. I consider two - stories of causation and stories of failures. Stories of causation refer to ways in which policy actors actively manipulate images of various phenomena which are shaped into perceived problems through the strategic presentation of casual narratives (Stone, 1989). Stories of failure are associated with the negative aspects that the blame makers (those who place blame) promote (Hansson, 2018). In this study, blame games serve as a metaphor to explain the political interactions between multiple policy actors, and the consequences of conflicting rationalities as different problem formulations related to Sydney NTE before Covid-19 (see [Chapter 5](#)).

3.4 *Antifragility*

Nassim Nicholas Taleb introduces the concept of antifragility in his provocative and groundbreaking book *Antifragile: Things That Gain From Disorder* (2012). Nassim Nicholas Taleb is a mathematical statistician, risk analyst, hedge fund managers who has strongly advocated for a “black swan robust” society, that is a society which can survive and thrive the unforecastable events. Antifragility has gained traction in numerous disciplines such as business management (Ramezani & Camarinha-Matos, 2019, 2020), urban planning Chapter 7, complex ecosystems and economic development (Pugalis et al., 2017; Pugalis & Bentley, 2014). Antifragility is useful for understanding the impact of Covid-19 on the NTE in Sydney and the response of night business owners to it. Furthermore, exploring the impact of Covid-19 on the NTE and the coping response of night business owners can provide valuable insights into strategies for building a more antifragile NTE in the future. Its application raises some important and broader questions related to the NTE and its governance, I will discuss this critical stance in [Chapter 8](#).

Antifragility is the property and ability of a system to survive and thrive in an age of complexity, volatility, stressors, and uncertainty (Taleb, 2012). Taleb (2012, p. 13) argues that antifragility has one single property – it allows us to deal with uncertainty, “do things without understanding them – and do them well.” According to Taleb (2012, p. 45):

Antifragility is beyond resilience or robustness. The resilient resists shocks and stays the same; the anti-fragile gets better. This property is

behind everything that has changed with time: evolution, culture, ideas, revolutions, political systems, technological innovation.

Antifragility is different from resilience. But what is resilience then? Resilience is a highly versatile framework which has been applied in multiple disciplines across ecology, economic development, disaster management, urban studies and business ecosystems. Resilience is related to the capability to transform and adapt in the face of adversity (Pendall et al., 2010; Pugalis et al., 2017; Simmie & Martin, 2010). This interpretation of resilience focuses on how people, places, and businesses, respond to crises such as Covid-19. In the case of complex adaptive systems, or interdependent systems, such as the NTE, resilience is related not only to adaptability but also to transformability (Folke et al., 2010). Transformability is again not merely about resisting to shock and maintaining an existing equilibrium or structures, but it also involves the ability of a system to reconfigure, re-organize restructure and even reinvent itself (Folke et al., 2010). The ability to transform and innovate manifests itself through areas of experimentation and identification of what has been framed as “solution space”, that is a space in which potential for innovation and the possibilities behind that are identified and created (Corvello et al., 2022; Ramezani & Camarinha-Matos, 2020). In resilience thinking, social capital, networking and collaboration play a crucial role. Social capital enables access to resources, including information and financial aid, and peer support (Sagala & Óri, 2024). Social capital manifests itself in a variety of ways, bonding social capital which is characterised by the connections of individuals or businesses with the same demographic characteristics.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the analytical framework underpinning the thesis and suggested how the frameworks can be used to analyse the Sydney NTE before, during and post the Covid-19 pandemic, and how these frameworks will support the answering of the research questions. In [Section 3.2](#), I engaged with policy change theories discussing two models, the advocacy coalition framework and policy entrepreneurship (Mintrom & Norman, 2009a; Sabatier & Weible, 2019), and then focused on the role of events in policy change. I argued that the advocacy coalition framework is a useful tool to identify and map the policy actors involved in resisting or promoting change in NTE policies. I also discussed the role of events in policy change making the case that events such as the rise of nightlife advocacy movements, or the Covid-19 pandemic itself may precipitate policy innovation or the rise of new actors claiming a space in the NTE. Within these models, the NTE was considered as a policy field, and actors with interests in and impacted by the NTE and its policies were policy actors, actively involved in changing an existing unsatisfactory situation.

It is widely accepted that the night is a time-space of contestation (Cibin, 2019; Hadfield, 2006; Roberts & Turner, 2005; Van Liempt, 2013). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that policy change is not a smooth process. In [Section 3.3](#), I discussed therefore the

concept of conflicting rationalities (de Satgé & Watson, 2018; Watson, 2003) and blame games (Drew & Grant, 2017; Hood, 2002) as useful to investigate the politics behind contested policies. I posit conflicting rationalities in context, reviewing the existing night scholarship. I argued that the concept can be applied to investigate different perceptions of the problem related to the NTE and its policies. Finally, in [Section 3.4](#), I discussed the antifragility construct (Taleb, 2012), defined as the ability to survive and even thrive under uncertainties. I discussed the differences between antifragility and resilience and explained that antifragility will help to investigate the impact of Covid-19 on the NTE in Sydney and how night entrepreneurs responded to it. Having discussed the analytical framework, the next chapter presents the methodology I used in this study.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design I used to examine the NTE in Sydney before, during, and post-Covid-19. The chapter is organised as follows: [Section 4.2](#) provides an overview of the research design, its process, units of analysis and methods. I restate the research questions and objectives of the thesis and explain how qualitative research helped to answer those questions. In this section, I also reflect on the impact of Covid-19 on the research and my subsequent methodological adaptation moving from face-to-face interviews to online interviews. In [Section 4.3](#), I discuss self-reflexivity as a transcultural researcher and the use of English as a lingua franca. I contend that my interpretations and interactions with the field of study, Sydney NTE, have been an ongoing process of negotiation between my European background and the Australian context. [Section 4.4](#) discusses my primary method - online semi-structured interviews. I justify the method as the most appropriate to understand the perspectives of different actors around the NTE and its policies, and their strategies to influence policy change. An important component of this study was retrospective interviews. [Section 4.5](#) presents the online data analysis. The online data analysis was a powerful method for two reasons. First, my research started during Covid-19, therefore the NTE before that was beyond my direct observation. Second, online data analysis was an unobtrusive method to investigate the responses of night businesses to Covid-19. [Section 4.6](#) describes the thematic analysis for interviews and online documents. In [Section 4.7](#), I address the triangulation and reliability of the data collected. Ethical considerations behind the overall qualitative research and digital methods are therefore proposed in [Section 4.8](#).

4.2 Research design

The aim of this study was to investigate the NTE in Sydney, its actors and policies prior to, during and post the Covid-19 pandemic. The study addressed the following research questions:

1. What was the role of different actors in influencing policy change around the NTE before Covid-19 in Sydney? Who was more influential and why? What strategies did they adopt to influence change?
2. What was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Sydney NTE and how did night entrepreneurs respond to it?
3. How has the NTE in Sydney evolved post the pandemic?

To answer these research questions, I divided the study into four timeframes. Firstly, I analysed the NTE between 2007 and 2014 that is before the lockdown laws. Secondly, I

studied the NTE between 2014 and 2020 that is during the lockout laws and the co-design of the NSW 24H Economy Strategy. These two timeframes answered the first research question. The separation of a ten-year period, which is traditionally a suggested timeframe to investigate policy change (Sabatier & Weible, 2019; Weible et al., 2009), enabled me to provide a comprehensive analysis of the dynamics at play, and a more nuanced understanding of both policy stability and change over time, the interplay between advocacy coalitions and policy entrepreneurship, and identification of events that could shift the public opinion or influence the advocacy coalitions and entrepreneurial activities (Mintrom & Vergari, 1996). Thirdly, I looked at the NTE during Covid-19 (between 2020 and 2022) to answer the second research question. Lastly, I analysed the NTE post-Covid-19 (2020-2023). I focused on the primary changes in the NTE as a policy field post the Covid-19 pandemic until 2024 (the end of this research).

The nature of the topic and the research questions explained above led to the adoption of a case study as a qualitative methodology. The case study is not unanimously defined in the literature. Yin (2009, p. 92) states

a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

This emphasis on the contextual nature of case study was essential in my study for few reasons. First, the knowledge and understanding of the historical background, institutional and cultural factors was the first step to investigate Sydney NTE as an international researcher. Second, the analysis of the NTE prior to and during the lockout laws was pivotal in providing in-depth analytical insights into “why we are where we are now”.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p. 37) argue “a case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system”, that involves “delimiting the object of study”, in other words a case with boundaries. My case, as I described above in this section, was bounded by space (Sydney), time (2007-2014), and activities (e.g., strategies to shape policies, policies to govern the NTE, and copying mechanisms under uncertainty).

Case study has several advantages. Case study, as in depth investigation, enables the researcher to grasp the complexity of the object of study and the big picture of a series of events or a certain phenomenon (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2009). Therefore, it allowed me to grasp the complexity around the NTE in Sydney and conflicting rationalities around the NTE and its policies. A case study approach is a flexible approach for data collection and analysis relying on multiple sources of data and the application of different methods enabling eventually triangulation (Yin, 2009).

The case study in qualitative research has certain limitations or, as Flyvbjerg (2006) describes them, misunderstandings. Flyvbjerg (2006) identifies five key misunderstandings about case study, arguing that these critiques often stem from

oversimplification rather than genuine limitations of the methodology. I discuss two of these misunderstandings. The first misunderstanding is that a single case study cannot lead to generalisations. Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 227) counters this by asserting that even a single case study can produce valuable knowledge contributing to “the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or in a society”. This argument aligns with my understanding of the Sydney NTE as a case that highlights policy entrepreneurship and coalition-building as crucial strategies in urban governance.

The second misunderstanding is that a single case lacks relevance, making it unrepresentative or insignificant for broader contexts. Flyvbjerg (2006) rebuts this claim, arguing that individual cases - especially extreme or critical ones - can yield insights into broader issues and challenge existing theories, thus demonstrating their relevance and value in research. This argument resonates with my observations on international trends in the urban governance of the NTE, particularly in how local policies adapt to global challenges and opportunities.

The case study of Sydney NTE primarily relied on qualitative research. Denzin and Lincoln (2017, p. 43) define qualitative research as:

A situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices ... turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. ... This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

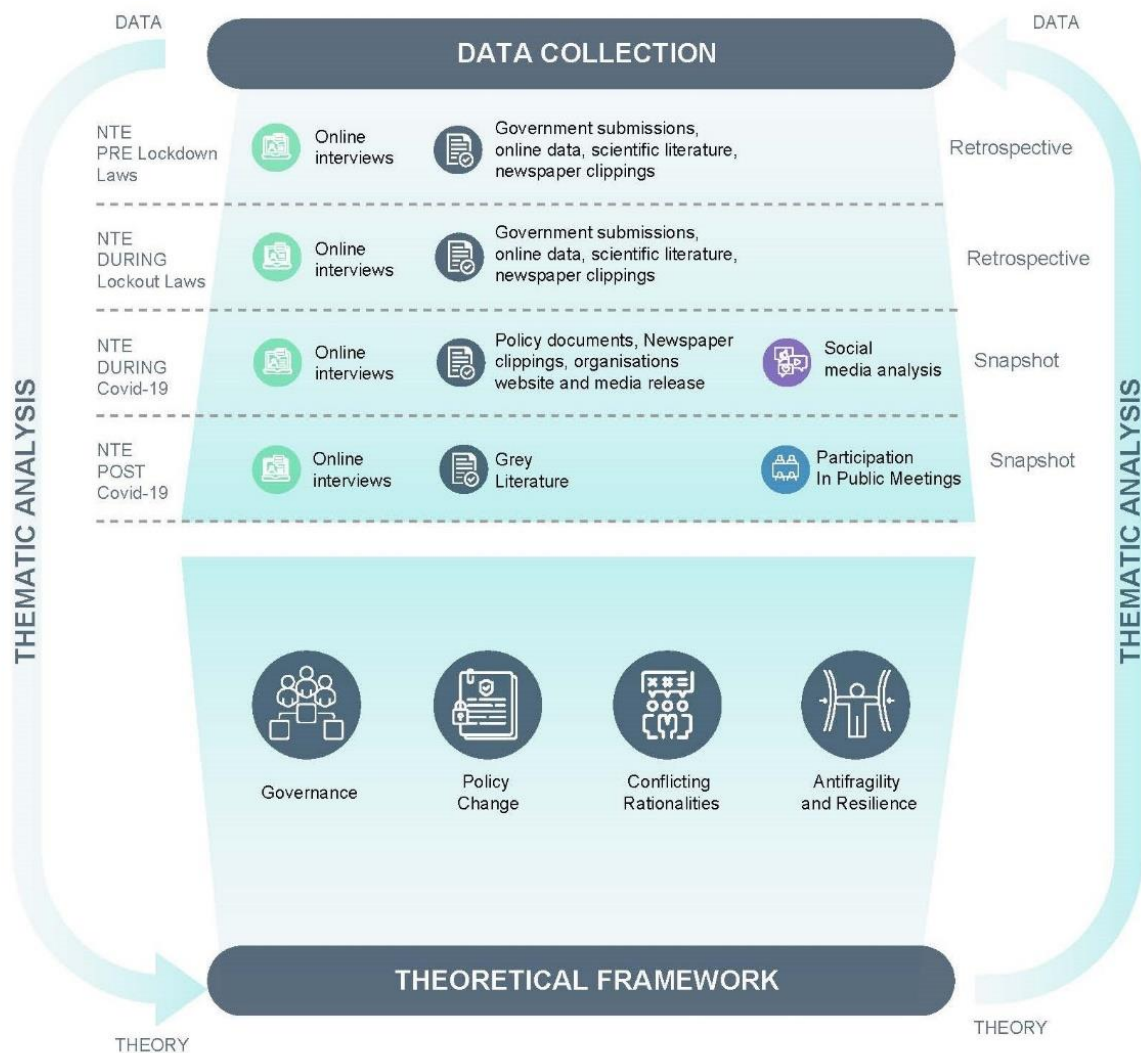
The definition highlights its focus on understanding meanings and experiences and in my case the experiences and perspectives of different actors impacted by and interested in the NTE and its policies, the impact of Covid-19 on the NTE and the response of night businesses to it.

My study was not mere qualitative research rather it was online qualitative research. Online qualitative research adds to the previous definition of an instrument, that is Internet-mediated communications platform to investigate those meanings and experiences (Salmons, 2021). The online qualitative approach was a forced adaptation due to the Covid-19 pandemic (see 4.2.1).

Qualitative research as a strategy of inquiry is well suited to investigate the NTE and its policies due to its unique ability to explore lived experiences, beliefs, and the perceptions of multiple agents impacted by and interested in night policies. Qualitative research was chosen as a strategy of inquiry also for its ability to explore policy implications that is understanding how policy and regulation impact the NTE by looking at the perspectives of interest groups such as local and state government, residents, night business entrepreneurs, policymakers and experts.

Figure 4.1 offers an overview of the ‘what’ and ‘how’ including the methods of data collection, the theoretical framework, and the research inference strategy.

Figure 4.1 Overview of the research methodology



4.2.1 Impact of Covid-19 on the research design

The Covid-19 pandemic had four major impacts on my research design. First, the pandemic shifted my research interests. Initially, I was focused on developing an evaluation framework of multiple night governance models. Shortly before my data collection phase began, and amid the pandemic, the NSW Government had adopted the 24H Economy Strategy and established a governance framework (Boon, 2021; NSW Government, 2020a). Therefore, I wanted to look at how, why, and what is changing in the Sydney NTE context and this led me to look at three major timeframes: before Covid-19, during Covid-19, and post-Covid-19. Secondly, the Covid-19 pandemic altered my

research methodology. Initially I planned to conduct face-to-face interviews and do participant observation of meetings around the NTE. However, due to safety guidelines and multiple lockdowns, I had to abandon these methods in favour of online interviews and online document analysis. This transition required me to consider new ethical challenges and develop strategies to overcome them (Section 4.8). Third, the Covid-19 pandemic was an opportunity to address a research gap in night scholarship and raise a new research question: What was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Sydney NTE and how did night entrepreneurs respond to it?

Although conducting research during Covid-19 was challenging, methodological adaptation opened new avenues. First, I explored and adopted new theoretical frameworks such as policy entrepreneurship and advocacy coalition framework (Mintrom, 2019a; Mintrom & Norman, 2009a; Sabatier & Weible, 2019; Weible et al., 2009). This allowed me to investigate the role of events such as Covid-19. Second, the antifragility (Taleb, 2012) framework was an explorative framework to investigate the impact of Covid-19 on the NTE, and the response of night business owners to it. Third, the methodological adaptation with inclusion of the digital methods brings to the fore often neglected debates around the interrelationship between the NTE and digital platforms. In night scholarship we have been used to thinking of the urban night as light-mediated, but we have never considered the night as digital-mediated. I will propose more considerations in Chapter 7.

4.3 Reflexivity: transcultural research in an international setting

Self-reflexivity and positionality are crucial in qualitative research (Berger, 2015; Bott, 2010) as they help to understand the role of the self, the researcher, in the creation of knowledge. Self-reflexivity is a “process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of the researchers’ positionality as well as active acknowledgment and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome” (Berger, 2015, p. 220). In other words, I acknowledge that my beliefs, personal experiences, and status as a researcher from Europe in Australia informed my understanding of the NTE in Sydney.

Transcultural research is usually undertaken in the context of a temporary or long-term stay in a country that is not the researcher’s own (Fuhrmann & Schiele, 2017). According to Cappai (2008), transcultural research requires knowledge about the community’s practices which can only be obtained through direct engagement with that culture. However, the ‘temporary migrants’ do not land at the hosting country and research site as a *tabula rasa* (Fuhrmann & Schiele, 2017). Researchers carry their cultural values, practices and prior knowledge (Mruck & Breuer, 2003), including educational experience and professional backgrounds. Understanding transcultural research has implications especially when it comes to European researchers conducting research in and about Australia due to its rich Indigenous history and multicultural present, and the relevance

of the cultural context in shaping the behaviours and experiences of policy actors. Therefore, cultural and place sensitivity was paramount for this research.

It is acknowledged amongst multiple epistemic traditions that the Eurocentric approach is one of the most dominant due to power dynamics shaping the contemporary world (Rehbein, 2013). European researchers conducting research in Australia are thus in a situation where their dominant epistemic tradition comes face to face with an already existing Australian one including its colonial history and its lasting impact on Indigenous Australia. Fuhrmann and Schiele (2017), drawing on other literature, show how epistemic traditions can enrich and complement each other. In so doing the transcultural researcher faces an ongoing process of renegotiation of practices and meanings in a 'third space' through their presence in the hosting country and research site. In the 'third space' both colonisers and colonised encounter a post(colonial) moment which is a complex and conflictual phenomenon. It is in the third space as an in-between space where an intermingling of various cultures, does not lead to their dissolving but rather to the forming of a fresh space of negotiation and new translations occur (Fuhrmann & Schiele, 2017).

Fuhrmann and Schiele's (2017) 'third space' resonates with my study, as I recognise that my research journey was an ongoing, and evolving process of negotiation between my European background and the local context which I studied and my analysis of the research findings. Throughout the whole process of talking with participants, analysing data, and reporting findings, my positionality as an Italian female studying at an Australian university about Australia remained at the forefront of my mind. My situation evoked the question of why I, a female Italian researcher, is conducting public policy research in and about Australia, and is this is not a task better fulfilled by an Australian? Also, what can I contribute from my positionality as an international researcher in and about Australia? This stresses the need for an international researcher conducting research in a foreign country to pose the question, "What makes them the right researcher for this job" (Fuhrmann & Schiele, 2017, p. 6).

Therefore, I propose a memo that summarises my international researcher status, how it was perceived, and the challenges and opportunities related to my positionality. As Memo 1 shows, it was in highly informative interviews where participants explicitly clarified tacit rules of Australian culture that I became acutely aware of being an outsider. Some interviewees had a non-Australian background, some had Australian citizenship, and some were temporary residents (like me).

Sharing my international researcher positionality with those who have lived or worked overseas diminished the distance between me, as a researcher, and interviewees, and enhanced my willingness and ability to freely talk in English without misunderstandings. On the other hand, having clarified at the beginning of the interview that I was an international researcher interested in studying Australian NTE, allowed me to observe a more open attitude of the interviewees in talking about

their life story, their narrative, their experience, and beliefs by not taking for granted that I had previous knowledge of Australian history and the contemporary context. Often it led to comparison with other European cities, Italian lifestyle and culture of going out or full explanations on 'how the Australian system works. (Memo 1, 25 July 2021)

My positionality as a transcultural researcher raised challenges. The first challenge was related to the fact that "outsiders' past experiences will not have equipped them to make sense of events in the same way that insiders would" (Easterby-Smith & Malina, 1999). Certainly, my interpretation of the tacit knowledge (local culture, meanings, and traditions) of an "unknown" context, Australia, was an additional task. This led to a constant self-training in the field pushing my positionality as an international researcher to adjust, negotiate and learn. Another challenge was the identification and recruitment of participants which could have been facilitated by prior knowledge of the context.

My status as a non-Australian also presented opportunities. The first one was that several interviewees felt safe to talk to me and provided me with deep informative interviews. Interviewees expressed confidence that being an international researcher I would be able to understand and represent their experiences and struggles better than an Australian researcher would. Secondly, many of the interviewees were keen to help an international researcher (i.e. me) to achieve her goal. It also increased their and my level of comfort and assisted in developing a rapport – the moment they heard my accent, one could hear the sigh of relief and feel the atmosphere relax. "Finally, we will have a fresh perspective", and "It's good that you are not from Sydney" were some of the comments.

4.3.1 English as a lingua franca: its use and meaning making

My positionality involved the use of English as a lingua franca. It was expected during my research to demonstrate language proficiency. It is widely observed that conducting research in English, as a second language speaker, can affect the quality of data collected and its subsequent analysis potentially leading to misinterpretation or missed underlying meaning (Schembri & Jahić Jašić, 2022; Wei, 2011). While I believe having a strong command of English enabled me to collect data through interviews, it perhaps affected my ability to grasp the full depth of participants' perspectives, linguistic nuances and intended meanings impacting my interpretative capacity. To mitigate these risks, I audio-recorded the interviews, I used reliable software for their transcription (Otter.ai), and I allowed more time to prompt the interviewee to ask for clarification during the data collection and contextualise the interview response in the data analysis phase. As Wei (2011) suggested, I also adopted a reflexive approach, to reflect on how my language proficiency and cultural background influenced the data collection and analysis. By acknowledging and addressing these factors, researchers can enhance the reliability and richness of their findings, ultimately contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the studied phenomena. Additionally, as De Satgé and Watson (2018, p. 27) also observe,

Language, as a key facet of identity, marks out the border between territories of meaning—territories that are more accessible and immediate when language is shared, but which are more distant, remote and difficult to penetrate in the context of cross-language communication and research.

This became evident during the interviews where most of the participants were native English speakers. The use of English as a second language positioned me as an outsider of the local context under study, Sydney's NTE. Despite having a strong command of English, conducting interviews in English posed some challenges in understanding nuanced expressions, idioms, or culturally specific references used by native speakers. Whenever it was the case, I asked the interviewee for clarification. In the process of English communication, a comparison to the Italian language was inevitable. English tends to rely heavily on the explicit content of the spoken words, with less dependence on non-verbal cues, making clarity and precision in word choice particularly important. Conversely, speaking in Italian often entails more expressive gestures, and a greater use of body language to convey meaning.

4.4 Online semi-structured interviews

Online semi-structured interviews as a research tool for data collection were used to obtain "a sense of how individuals view their situation and what their experiences have been" (A. Morris, 2015, p. 8). Semi-structured interviewing is a powerful method as it allows the researcher to obtain an understanding of the social reality under consideration through accessing interviewees' thoughts, experiences, feelings, interpretations, and perceptions of the NTE. According to Morris (2015, p. 8),

When the research involves obtaining a sense of how individuals view their situation and what their experiences have been around the research topic under consideration, in-depth interviewing is an appropriate method. [...] Any research question that can be answered by people talking about their experiences lends itself to in-depth interviewing.

Semi-structured interviews are particularly useful when the researcher is less interested in measuring and more interested in describing and understanding complexity (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; O'Connor & Madge, 2017; Salmons, 2014). Semi-structured interviews require "intense listening, respect for and curiosity about what people say, and a systematic effort to hear and understand what people tell" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 17). Interviews can be particularly useful for understanding social practices as interviewees are encouraged to reflect upon their taken-for-granted assumptions. Also, the researcher is likely to gain valuable insights based on the depth of the information gathered and the wisdom of key informants (Morris, 2015; Salmons, 2014).

Recent NTE studies have used semi-structured interviews. For example, Schmid (2018) conducted 19 semi-structured interviews in explorative research of good practices and

strategies for the management of the NTE in three German cities. Füller et al. (2018) conducted 11 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders involved in the *fair.kiez* [fair neighbourhood] project in Berlin, a city-financed project which attempted to address night-time conflicts related to noise and urban disorder. Hadfield (2006) used interviews with a broad set of actors (managers, night venues managers, private security, events promoters) to investigate litigation and courtroom interaction around the NTE issues. Other studies in Australia used interviews (Wadds, 2020; Wolifson, 2018b). Previous studies on NTE have also used participant observation, content media analysis qualitative surveys, and informal conversations, media, and document analysis to capture the experiences and perspectives around the NTE, its governance and policies (Hadfield, 2006; Howse et al., 2021; Schmid, 2018).

4.4.1 Interviewees' profile and themes

In this research, a total of 51 interviews were conducted between July 2021 and July 2023 mostly via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or phone. Participants were interviewed only once, except for four participants who were interviewed twice. Of the 51 interviewees, 29 were male, and 22 were female, I did not adopt a gender perspective, but this could be certainly a terrain for future research. Almost all interviewees were of Anglo-Celtic origin and future research needs to be conducted with groups with different cultural background. The semi-structured interviews were devised for a 60-minute duration, with the possibility of follow-up contact. However, the interviews with senior bureaucrats rarely lasted more than 45 minutes as I had to account for the limited time available of 'elite interviewees', especially during the COVID-19 response and recovery. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed through the software Otter.ai.

Four cohorts of participants were considered: residents, businesses within the NTE, government representatives, and experts. The tables below give a detailed profile of the interviewees. Table 4.1 illustrates the twelve residents in inner Sydney who were interviewed, most of them were long-term residents, and some were retired, except for a couple of interviewees who were university students. Recruiting residents was challenging, however, the interviews were high quality and extremely informative. Amongst these 21 interviews only four were involved in shaping policies, others were not.

Table 4.1 Interview profile of residents

Pseudonym	Position sector background	Area	Interview date	Sex
Lily	Long term resident, actively involved in the community	Inner Sydney	20/7/2021	F
Chloe	Long term resident with expertise in regulation	Inner Sydney	17/8/2021	F
Penelope	Short term resident	Inner Sydney	6/9/2021	F
Ava	Long term resident with experience in shift work	Inner Sydney	7/9/2021	F
Giancarlo	Short term resident, young university student	Inner Sydney	9/9/2021	M
Hamish	Long term resident actively involved in the community	Inner Sydney	20/9/2021	M
Kirsten	Long term resident actively involved in the community	Inner Sydney	28/9/2021	F
Katie	Long term resident, retired, actively involved in the community	Inner Sydney	29/9/2021	F
Luke	Long term resident, retired, actively involved in the community	Inner Sydney	29/9/2021	M
Anais	Long term resident	Inner Sydney	20/9/2021	F
Olivia	Long term resident, retired, actively involved in the community	Inner Sydney	29/9/2021	F
Emily	Long term resident	Inner Sydney	12/10/2021	F

Table 4.2 gives a profile of the 18 business owners, managers or representatives of business organisations that were interviewed. These interviewees are representative of multiple sectors involved in the NTE (sport, creative industries, hospitality, tourism, live music, night trade, and 24H services provision). Some of these interviewees were centrally involved in shaping policies.

Table 4.2 Interviews profile of businesses within the NTE

Pseudonym	Position sector background	Area	Interview date	Sex
Eli	Business owner in breweries sector	Inner Sydney	2/8/2021	M
Zoe	CEO of business organisation	-	4/8/2021	F
Jakob	Chair of a business organisation with expertise in stakeholders' engagement	Inner Sydney	6/8/2021	M
Lachlan	Business owner in hospitality sector	Inner, Western Sydney	26/8/2021	M
Aaron	LGBTIQA+ representative in the festivals sector	Inner Sydney	31/8/2021	M
Andrew	Chair of business organisation with experience in NTE advocacy	Inner Sydney	8/9/2021	M
Isla	Founder of a business in tourism sector	Western, Southern Sydney	8/9/2021	F
Caleb	Chair of business organisation, business owner with experience in NTE advocacy	Inner Sydney	10/9/2021	M
Rhys	Business owner of a licensed venue, live music events	Southern Sydney	15/9/2021	M
Ayla	Board member of a business organisation	Inner Sydney	20/9/2021	F
Peter	NTE advocate involved in campaigns	Inner Sydney	23/9/2021	M
Angelique	Director in creative industries	Inner Sydney	2/2/2023	F
Asher	Business owner of night venue	Inner Sydney	16/3/2023	M
Lucien	Business founder of events management and place activations	New South Wales	3/4/2023	M
Ethan	CEO of business organisation	-	4/4/2023	M
Austin	Business owner of 24-h trade and services	Western, Southern Sydney	12/4/2023	M
Mason	Executive of a business organisation	Western Sydney	19/5/2023	M
Malcom	Business manager in the sport sector	Wollongong	22/12/2023	M

Table 4.3 shows that 15 government representatives were interviewed; five worked in the NSW state government and ten were employed in local governments. These interviewees included elected representatives and government officials. They had varying areas of expertise, but all were involved with aspects of the NTE (regulation, strategic planning, place-making, economic development).

Table 4.3 Interviews profile of government representatives⁴

Pseudonym	Position sector background	Area	Interview date	Sex
Archie	Local government manager, expertise in NTE policies	Inner Sydney	20/7/2021	M
Noah	State government executive, expertise in NTE policies	-	21/7/2021	M
Thea	Local government manager, expertise in NTE policies	Inner Sydney	31/8/2021	F
Adam	State government executive with expertise in NTE policies	-	6/10/2021	M
Thomas	Local government employee with expertise in strategic planning, NTE policies	Inner Sydney	12/10/2021	M
Sophia	Government manager, expertise in cultural sector, NTE policies and strategy implementation	-	13/11/2021	F
Lee	City Councillor	Inner Sydney	25/10/2021	M
Arya	City Councillor	Inner Sydney	13/12/2021	F
Juniper	Government manager, expertise in regulation and NTE policies	-	23/3/2022	F
Oscar	State government executive, expertise in community engagement and policy implementation, NTE policies	-	26/4/2022	M
Liam	City Mayor involved and interested in NTE policies	Southern Sydney	13/3/2023	M
Hyacinth	Local government manager, expertise in NTE policies	Eastern Sydney	14/3/2023	F
Margot	Local government policy officer with professional experience in the NTE	Inner Sydney	27/3/2023	F
Alyssa	State government elected representative	Western Sydney	30/3/2023	F
Jenny Leong*	State government elected representative	-	5/6/2023	F

* Jenny Leong is not a pseudonym. Jenny is a state Member of Parliament for the Greens in Inner Sydney and agreed to be identified.

Finally, six experts were interviewed with different areas of expertise: regulation, urban planning, public health policies, nightlife advisory committee, tech and creative industries, local Australian governance and public policy (Table 4.4). Data collection through interviews stopped once thematic analysis of data reached saturation, i.e. 'information redundancy' (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 201). All the names used to identify participants in this study are pseudonyms, except in a few cases where names are real as data sources were publicly available.

⁴ Table 4.3 combines the profile of two cohorts of participants: government personnel, and parliamentarian and councillors. Interview guides, participant information sheets and consent forms are separate for these two cohorts see [Appendix](#).

Table 4.4 Interviews profile of experts

Pseudonym	Position sector background	Area	Interview date	Sex
Ivy	Academic expert in regulation	-	31/8/2021	F
Lars	Consultant in urban planning	-	21/9/2021	M
Jordan	Academic expert in public health policies	-	30/5/2022	M
Harvey	Board member of nightlife advisory committee	-	24/2/2023	M
Albert	Industry expert in tech and creative industries	-	19/07/2023	M
Benjamin	Academic expert in governance and public policy	-	11/12/2023	M

Recruiting and accessing participants' time and generosity were initially challenging due to a lack of personal networks and the Covid-19 lockdown. Concerning recruitment, I identified key stakeholders from media, and public documents and approached them one-on-one through LinkedIn, Facebook, or a professional email address. A few participants were recruited through snowball technique, that is asking interviewees to recommend others within their networks who may be appropriate to interview (A. Morris, 2015). In addition, a few participants were recruited through advertisements on local Facebook pages. The research advertisement posts were granted by the Facebook groups admin and aligned with the policies of each community.⁵ I also used *Stadtnachacht* website and its Facebook page as a recruitment tool. In this research, my transcultural researcher position was perhaps a barrier for finding, selecting, and accessing the participants due to my lack of a pre-existing network with key stakeholders and organisations. I also presented my research project and preliminary findings at one of the regular meetings of the Local Government NSW, Night Time Economy Council Committee in September 2022 to assess the interest of local government officials in participating in my study. Residents' associations and community centres were approached via email and asked to place invitation emails to their members and promote the recruitment of participants through their websites and social media channels (Facebook, LinkedIn).

The interviews addressed several topics. Regarding the NTE before Covid-19, interviewees were asked about perspectives around the NTE and its policies before Covid-19, strategies to influence policies before Covid-19 (policy entrepreneurship experience), the impact of Covid-19 on the NTE, challenges and coping strategies during the pandemic (antifragility experience), and opportunities and experiences around the

⁵ Examples of Facebook pages and groups were Potts Point commUNITY (2168 members), Potts Pointers: Buy, Swap & Sell (1542 members), Potts Point Buy Sell Swap (1070 members), KXC (King's Cross Church) Community Group (1813 members), Potts Point / Rushcutter Bay / Elizabeth Bay & Darlinghurst Local Group Potts Point (588 members).

NTE arising post-Covid-19. Not all the interviewees were actively involved in shaping the NTE policies or interested in them.

4.4.2 *Limitations and strategies to overcome*

Semi-structured interviews do have limitations as a method. Some interviews were highly retrospectives. I refer here to the interviews that focused on perspectives around the NTE prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and its policies. Strategies for policy change were also discussed. In the case of retrospective interviews, a limitation was that interviewees might have been prone to recall bias. Recall bias is defined as a tendency to reinterpret and rework past events (Blane, 1996). To assess the validity of retrospective interviews, I triangulated the interviews with secondary data sources such as historical accounts of the lockdown laws, news clippings, and other type of online data such as YouTube videos and podcasts.

The retrospective interviews were not necessarily negative. They often provided reflective clarity. With the benefit of hindsight, participants offered more thoughtful and reflective insights, potentially identifying patterns and meanings that were not apparent at the time of the events. Participants were also more prone to provide comprehensive narratives and detailed accounts of their experiences, allowing me to gather rich qualitative data. They also provided context and background that might be missing in real time data collection, helping me understand the circumstances and motivations behind multiple beliefs and events.

The use of zoom or any other digital platforms as media-mediated conversation can also be a limitation (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Janghorban et al., 2014; Salmons, 2014). I observed that some interviewees were easily distracted. The distractions stemmed from their home environment, including childcare responsibilities and pets, and work-related interruptions like emails. These disruptions, common in remote working setups, sometimes had a negative impact on the interview quality by disrupting the flow of conversation. Additionally, some interviewees engaged in conversation while multitasking such as driving, leading to added background noise and impacting on the audio quality of the interview. Night entrepreneurs were more prone to multitasking as they attempted to balance their work responsibilities amidst the pressure imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Several participants opted to switch off their video function, making it challenging for me to establish visual cues, like eye contact, and build rapport. The lack of visual engagement made it difficult to gauge if the interviewees were fully focused on the conversation.

4.5 Digital methods and online data

Leszczynski (2018) defines digital methods as heuristic techniques used to capture, identify, analyse, manage, and theorise social practices, materialities and the implications of the ever-increasing adoption of digital technologies. The use of digital methods

transformed my preconception of urban night and nighttime activities as “artificial-light mediated” towards a night that is “digital-mediated.” Digital methods in my research involved the analysis of online documents. In this study, I used online documents both to triangulate the interview data and to gain additional understanding and empirical knowledge. A variety of documents were reviewed: social media data, press releases and newspaper clippings, policy documents and government submissions.

Social media data offers opportunities to undertake research that links social media data and other data sources (Sloan & Quan-Haase, 2016). Facebook pages and YouTube channels were examined. The Facebook pages of individuals and organisations actively involved in past and contemporary NTE policies were scrutinised. Examples of Facebook pages consulted are: Keep Sydney Open; Last Drinks and Clover Moore Lord Mayor of Sydney. The keywords used to identify relevant data were lockout laws and NTE. Additional social media were retrieved through web scraping of night businesses’ Facebook pages to investigate the responses of night businesses during the Covid-19 lockdown. The Facebook posts and images were retrieved during 2020 and 2022, the beginning and the end of Covid-19. The night businesses were identified from local news sources. The businesses represented multiple sectors of the NTE such as hospitality, creative industries, events, sport, and night trading. The most representative photos were anonymised or redrawn and included in the findings reports. Social media data collection and analysis was a powerful and unobtrusive method of data collection for researching the NTE at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

News and media releases were searched primarily in the Factiva database which contains all print and online textual news articles published by Australian and international outlets. The search involved four phases. First, I looked at the pre-COVID-19 timeframes dividing the search in two (i.e., 01 January 2007 - 31 December 2014; 01 January 2015 – 01 January 2020). The primary keywords used were lockout laws OR Newcastle model,⁶ Last Drink Coalition, NTE or nightlife, and relevant stakeholders who may have played a role in influencing NTE policy. Secondly, I looked at the NTE during Covid-19 and post-Covid-19. The keywords were Covid-19 OR pandemic AND businesses, 24-hour OR nightlife OR night-time economy. Additionally, the websites of industry organizations, community groups, and government bodies were useful for retrieving media releases. News articles that contained the word “night” in the heading were included, others that did not explicitly refer to the night but to complementary aspects such as related programs, and policies were also included (e.g. articles referring to the NTE or major annual events such as Ramadan Night Markets, Vivid Festival). The articles included in the final sample were those that fully or partially mentioned the NTE (e.g., nightlife is back) or if they commented on the process of developing the NTE.

⁶ I will discuss the Newcastle model in [Chapter 5](#).

Documents produced within the *Joint Select Committee of Sydney Night Time Economy* (JSCSNTE) were included in the analysis. The JSCSNTE was extremely useful as it contained public hearings, government submissions from multiple actors, and the final report. These documents were highly valuable as they revealed the strategies employed to influence policies and the rationalities of the multiple actors involved. All these documents are publicly available.

Initially, the document's identification required the inclusion of the word "night" in the headings, if not "night-time economy". However, as multiple stakeholders have specific focuses that can overlap with the NTE, other words or specific key stakeholders appearing in media to discuss NTE related issues were included. For example, in the selection and extraction of the experience and perspective of health and police authorities before the introduction of the lockout laws.

4.6 Thematic analysis

Interviews and online documents were analysed through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a common method in social science, with various approaches and guidelines developed. However, there is consensus that thematic analysis is a creative, iterative and cyclical process (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006) that involves reducing the raw data – interviews, online documents, and digital videos and images – to codes, categories and themes. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82) describe themes as "something important about the data in relation to the research question and represent some level of patterned response or meaning within the data". Within the thematic analysis, I adopted an inductive and deductive orientation, critical realists would call it retro deductive. Inductive thematic analysis is data-driven i.e., themes are derived directly from data without preconceived theoretical frameworks guiding the process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It was the case where I investigated the impact of Covid-19 on the NTE. Conversely, deductive thematic analysis is theory-driven, i.e. the researcher's theoretical framework drives the emergence of themes that are likely to answer the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It was the case where I investigated the Sydney NTE before Covid-19, its actors and strategies to influence policies.

In developing my thematic analysis, I followed the steps suggested in Saldaña (2021). Because thematic analysis draws upon a high volume of data, I imported all the interview scripts and online documents into NVivo®, a software program to facilitate the organisation of the data, streamline their analysis, and establish links across and within multiple data sources. Following this step, I familiarised myself with the interview scripts and documents generating initial descriptive codes and using memos to annotate patterns of similarities and differences but also my interpretative insights. Descriptive codes were applied to sentences or full paragraphs in the case of interviewees and online documents. Descriptive codes were also applied to digital images, videos or Facebook post texts in case of social media data. Following this process, I applied and reviewed

codes using the same wording for similar codes and using my theoretical framework to unite different codes. I constantly reviewed the themes.

4.7 Triangulation and reliability

Data triangulation and reliability are crucial features of any research inquiry. Reliability was established in this study through data triangulation. As Creswell and Poth (2018) observe, triangulation serves different purposes in qualitative research depending on the researcher's interpretative framework. As suggested by previous authors (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Flick, 2004), in this study, I used data triangulation to corroborate interview findings and establish their validity using multiple data sources. For instance, in [Chapter 5](#) and [6](#), retrospective interviews discussing past experiences, and meanings related to the NTE and its policies before Covid-19 were triangulated with document analysis and previous studies on the Sydney NTE. Additionally, data triangulation occurred to gain additional knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Flick, 2004; Natow, 2020). As an example, in [Chapter 8](#) where I investigated the impact of Covid-19 and the response of night entrepreneurs, interview data were triangulated with social media analysis of night businesses' Facebook pages.

4.8 Ethical considerations⁷

In qualitative research, digitally mediated, there are some ethical considerations both in the data collection and the use of data. Online interviews raise similar ethical concerns compared to face-to-face interviews (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; O'Connor & Madge, 2017; Salmons, 2022). Informed consent is a precondition to ensure that the participation of interviewees is voluntary (A. Morris, 2015). Therefore, I sent an invitation email to potential interviewees with a participant information sheet and consent form ([see Appendices](#)). Both the invitation email and the information sheet included who is conducting the research, what the research is about, and research aims and why the person has been invited to be part of the research. In addition, what the interview involved, and whether there are any risks for participants were spelt out. At the beginning of each interview, I ensured that all participants had had the opportunity to go through the information sheet and consent form, and I sought consent for audio-recording the interview. As for online interviews, Microsoft Teams and Zoom were the preferred platforms, I ensured safety through the adoption of a password.

Concerning the use of interview data, as explained in [Section 4.4](#), I adopted de-identification strategies and used pseudonyms except for those who explicitly asked to be identified. This de-identification process started during the first round of coding where personal identifiers (e.g., name and affiliation) were removed from the interview

⁷ This research project received ethics approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Technology Sydney. See [Error! Reference source not found.](#) in this thesis for evidence of ethics approval.

scripts. Additionally, during the reporting of interview data, I assessed the risk of re-identification case-by-case to protect individual and organisational reputations. This was highly relevant in the case of 'elite' interviews. Therefore, occasionally the quotes were edited removing the first-person pronoun and replaced with general pronouns "it" or "they."

When talking about the NTE during Covid-19 pandemic, one interviewee raised discomfort about the Covid-19 impact on their NTE businesses and the inadequate response of the government. In that case, I offered some comfort, and I attempted to move on to a different topic, but the interviewee was keen to share their experience with me. In another case, an interviewee felt unwell. In these cases, I practised 'ethical mindfulness' (Morris, 2015), such as being aware and identifying particular 'ethically important moments' during the interview, a subtle indication that the interviewee feels stressed. In two cases the line of questioning unset the interviewee. I took stock of the situation, and I stopped the interview.

Obtaining ethics approval from external bodies to include the voice of health authorities, frontline workers, and police officers was not possible and unfortunately meant that I could not interview police and health authorities. An ethics application for interviewing police officers was submitted in October 2021 to the NSW Police Force Research Office. However, they declined to participate in the research. An inquiry was also sent to the NSW Health Sydney Local Health District, RPA Research Ethics and Governance Office for permission to interview key officials, but as it was in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic staff were unable to assist. The inability to interview key police and health personnel was partially overcome through an intense analysis of documents and news clippings ([Section 4.5](#)).

The literature on digital methods, online qualitative research and social media analysis is not unanimous and there is much debate about what needs to be considered private and what is public (Ackland, 2013; Hennell et al., 2020; Salmons, 2021). Additionally, there are no uniform guidelines to address ethical concerns. Considering online documents and social media data, I obtained an ethics exemption from the University of Technology Sydney. The documents consulted were publicly available and where statements were retrieved and used in the findings chapters the authors of these statements are identified. In the case of social media data used in the reporting of findings, the literature does not offer clear-cut guidelines for addressing ethical concerns (Ackland, 2013; Hennell et al., 2020). However, the social media data used were retrieved from public figures or night businesses' Facebook pages and are therefore publicly available. In the case of businesses, I anonymised the photos, edited or reproduced them to prevent the grey area suggesting that informed consent needs to be obtained but often it is unrealistic to do so, especially when the public figure has moved on, or when a large amount of data is obtained through web scraping.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter mapped the methodology to investigate the NTE in Sydney prior to, during and post-Covid-19. In [Section 4.2](#), I offered an overview of the research design. I discussed how online qualitative research was vital to conduct research during the pandemic but also to conduct research retrospectively. I reflected on the impact of Covid-19 on my research and made the case that online qualitative research allowed me to address research questions such as the impact of Covid-19 on the NTE and the response of night entrepreneurs. Additionally, the separation of data analysis in different timeframes – prior to, during, and post the Covid-19 pandemic – was developed during the research to further understand the changes in the NTE. [Section 4.3](#) reflected on my identity as a transnational researcher in international settings and the challenges that brought particularly in using English as a lingua franca and the ongoing negotiation of my identity but also meanings in the Australian context. In [Section 4.4](#), I offered an overview of online semi-structured interviews as a method of data collection, the interviewees' profiles and the themes focused on the NTE policies in place before Covid-19 such as the lockdown laws, their entrepreneurial strategies for shaping policy change, antifragility practices as a response to Covid-19. [Section 4.5](#) discussed the online data analysis. [Section 4.6](#) discussed the thematic analysis and coding process to analyse interviews and online documents. Following, I addressed issues of triangulation, and reliability ([Section 4.7](#)), and the ethical considerations ([Section 4.8](#)). In the next chapters, I turn my attention to the findings and analysis ([Chapters Chapter 5, Chapter 6, Chapter 7,Chapter 8](#)).

Chapter 5 The night-time economy before the lockout laws

5.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the following research questions - what was the role of different actors in influencing policy change around the NTE before Covid-19 in Sydney? Who was more influential and why and what strategies did they adopt to influence change? In this chapter, I analyse the NTE in Sydney before the lockout laws that were put in place in February 2014. This chapter draws on interviews, and online data (organisations' websites, news articles, council minutes, and government submissions). In so doing this chapter focuses on the perspectives and experiences of multiple actors. The chapter is time-bound (2007-2014), geographically limited (Sydney), and narrowed to a specific policy subsystem (the NTE). I chose the 2007-2014 timeframe for two reasons: 2007 is when the City of Sydney Council⁸ published its first NTE vision statement in the Late-Night Local Development Control Plan 2007 (City of Sydney Council, 2008; Van den Nouwelant, 2017). Secondly, in January 2014, the NSW state government announced and passed the so-called lockout laws, one of the most contested NTE policies in Sydney with global reputation impacts (Wadds, 2020; Wolifson, 2018b). This chapter is structured as follows. [Section 5.2](#) sets out the background and context to understand NTE policy change in Sydney before the lockout laws drawing on previous literature (Van den Nouwelant, 2017; Wadds, 2015; Wolifson, 2018b). I offer here a brief overview of the City of Sydney as the local council which has been historically at the forefront of the NTE management, and Kings Cross nightlife precinct which was the epicentre of nightlife, and I provide an overview of key events related to the tragic death of two young men. These tragic deaths were key events in the mobilisation of other actors claiming for regulation. [Section 5.3](#) maps the advocacy coalitions (i.e. groups of actors actively involved in policy change), their beliefs and key policy involvement. Key actors were police, health authorities, residents in Kings Cross, the City of Sydney Council, businesses, families of victims, and

⁸ Sydney is the capital city of the state of New South Wales, Australia. The City of Sydney local council is one of 33 local councils in metropolitan Sydney. As a local government area, it includes multiple-night precincts: Sydney CBD, Kings Cross, Surry Hills, and a part of Newtown: King Street which is shared with the neighbour Inner West City Council. It is estimated that the City of Sydney has the highest concentration of night venues in the Sydney metropolitan area (Perry et al., 2022). The City of Sydney Council is responsible for the development and implementation of planning statutory policies (development applications, local development control plan) which regulate the night trading hours of businesses (City of Sydney Council, 2008), night service provision such as waste collection management, lighting, and implementation of a night strategy (City of Sydney, 2013), funding provisions, cultural planning. The City of Sydney is also the site of global events such as the Mardi Gras parade and Vivid festivals occurring annually and characterised by temporal night activities across multiple areas.

the state government. [Section 5.4](#) analyses the strategies and roles of advocacy coalitions in influencing policy change, i.e. the introduction of the lockdown laws. I argue that the introduction of the lockdown laws was the outcome of a political process which saw the key influential advocacy coalitions composed of the police, health authorities, residents and families of victims acting as policy entrepreneurs.⁹ [Section 5.5](#) explores the conflicting rationalities (i.e. different problem formulation or perception of the problem) around the NTE and its policies of multiple advocacy coalitions. I argue that conflicting rationalities led to blame games¹⁰ and that the actors' dynamics based on blame games show the influential power of police, health, families of victims, and residents. [Section 5.6](#) concludes the chapter by discussing the findings.

The NTE in Sydney before 2014 has been widely investigated. Several authors investigated the NTE in the Kings Cross nightlife precinct, while others focused on the City of Sydney's approach towards night governance. For instance, Van den Nouwelant (2017) investigates the NTE from an urban planning perspective, how conflicts in Kings Cross nightlife precinct were portrayed in the media and the extent to which multiple actors were engaged in policy debates. Other studies take as their focus the NTE from policing of the night, the public-private partnership behind the provision of safety at night and the NTE from a social criminological perspective (Wadds, 2019, 2020). Much of the literature acknowledges the media perception of the NTE as a site of urban disorder before the lockdown laws and the moral panic that ensued as driving forces for the introduction of the lockdown laws (Van den Nouwelant, 2017; Wadds, 2015, 2020). Some studies focused on the rhetoric of the state, families of victims, and health authorities (Fleming, 2020; Quilter, 2013, 2016; Wolifson, 2018a). Despite the broad focus of previous studies, the strategies of multiple actors remained scattered and their agency unexplored.

This chapter differs from previous studies from a theoretical, methodological, and empirical perspective. Theoretically, the chapter draws as it does on advocacy coalition framework and policy entrepreneurship (Mintrom, 2014; Mintrom & Norman, 2009a; Sabatier & Weible, 2019), conflicting rationalities and blame games (de Satgé & Watson, 2018; Drew & Grant, 2017; Hood, 2002; Watson, 2003). Methodologically, this chapter draws on retrospective interviews and analysis of online data ([Chapter 4](#)). Empirically, it

⁹ Media played a relevant role in promoting contradictory and inconsistent debate around Sydney's NTE policy and governance (Wadds, 2015). See also Howse et al. (2021) for an analysis of news and media of Sydney's NTE before the introduction of the lockdown laws. In my thesis, the role of media is not a focus, but rather a tool used by multiple advocacy coalitions to set the agenda for government intervention.

¹⁰ As discussed ([Section 3.3](#)) blame games are interactions between at least two policy actors, or more than two, where these can be either blame makers (those who place blame) or blame takers (those who receive blame) (Drew & Grant, 2017; Hood, 2002). As Hadfield (2006) observed, shifting blame is also an argument and counterargument involving issues of liability.

considers the rationalities and strategies of multiple actors in introducing the lockdown laws or resisting them.

5.2 Sydney NTE before the lockdown laws: background and context

Before the lockdown laws, Kings Cross emerged as the epicentre of Sydney's nightlife (Van den Nouwelant, 2017; Wadds, 2020). Kings Cross is in the City of Sydney's local government area, and it is the starting point for any discussion around contemporary night policies in Sydney. Kings Cross was a mixed-use neighbourhood sparking debates on issues like alcohol and drug abuse, youth culture and violence. Contestation also evolved around gentrification, land values, quality of life, between night trading and neighbourhood residential amenities, and issues of urban connectivity and mobility (Van den Nouwelant, 2017). On the one hand, Kings Cross was described and perceived as an entertainment destination for the broader metropolitan area and promoted as a tourist destination entailing global city discourses. On the other hand, Kings Cross was a "community tied to domestic life" (Van den Nouwelant, 2017, p. 9). Similar to other international experiences (Hadfield, 2006; Roberts & Eldridge, 2009a; Roberts & Turner, 2005), Sydney's NTE was characterised by an intense debate around the cumulative impact of licensed venues in terms of noise, safety and reduced quality of life for residents.

Understanding how the lockdown laws came into play requires a timeline of key events. In 2007, the City of Sydney endorsed the Late Night Trading Premises Development Control Plan for public exhibition, a tool that establishes design and planning guidelines. The first ever NTE vision statement appeared:

The City's night-time economy is an integral part of its commercial, cultural and social fabric. Late night trading premises are an important part of Sydney social and street life that contribute to Sydney's image as a Global City and play an important role in the City's economic growth. People living and working in the city, as well as tourists are attracted to these places as a result of their diversity and vitality, and late night trading premises can provide employment and jobs with flexible hours, particularly for people that work in the hospitality and tourism sector (City of Sydney, 2007, p. 1195).

Residents strongly opposed the plan discussing the cumulative impacts of a huge concentration of licensed venues in Kings Cross. In 2008, a jointly organised community summit between residents, police and health authorities was held to discuss alcohol-violence issues, the forum represented the incubator for the promotion of the lockdown laws. Following the summit police adopted high visibility strategies to placate the anxieties around alcohol violence in Kings Cross (Wadds, 2020). At that time, the City of Sydney was trying to understand and address alcohol-violence issues through the appointment first of a night city manager, the development of a NTE strategy and international research. In 2009, the state government under enormous pressure,

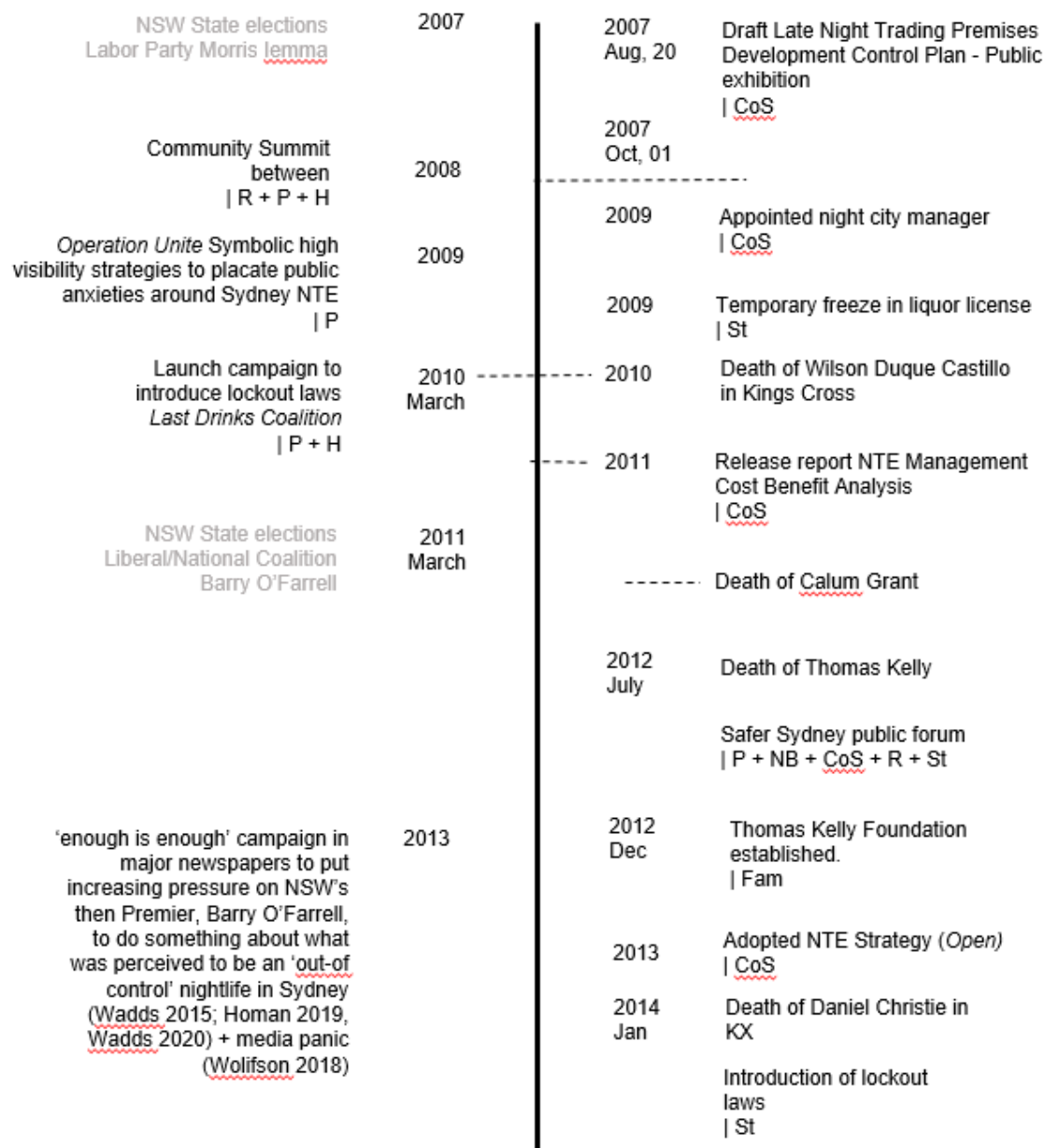
introduced the ‘temporary’ freeze on new liquor licenses in the City of Sydney (Wadds, 2020). It did not help. In 2010 the first of four tragic deaths happened in Kings Cross, followed by the launch of Last Drinks campaign, a wakeup call for the state government to introduce the lockdown laws.

In 2011 a shift in the political leadership of the NSW state government occurred with the defeat of the left of centre Labor Party, and the election of the centre-right Liberal-National Coalition led by Premier Barry O’Farrell. In January 2012, the high-profile killing of Thomas Kelly in Kings Cross, triggered a public outcry and “media furore” (Wadds, 2020, p. 107; Wolifson, 2018b).¹¹ The tragedy led to the *Safer Sydney* forum in July 2012. The forum discussed problems in Kings Cross nightlife precinct including the density of venues, lack of late-night transport, excessive alcohol consumption, and late-night trading hours (Quilter, 2013). In the same months, a national newspaper, News Ltd, launched *Real Heroes Walk Away* a national campaign to end violence on Australian streets at night and in pubs, and clubs (Quilter, 2013), promoting an “enough is enough” rhetoric (Wolifson, 2018b). The campaign contributed to an intensification of the public outcry and pressured the NSW state government to intervene to remedy a perceived “out of control” NTE in Sydney (Homan, 2019; Wadds, 2015). In December 2012, the family and friends of Thomas Kelly established the Thomas Kelly Youth Foundation to raise awareness of NTE harms and improve night safety. The Thomas Kelly Foundation was widely supported by the City of Sydney Council. Simultaneously the City of Sydney Council endorsed an Open strategy and action plan in 2013. At the heart of Open was the belief that diversification of the NTE through culture and small bars would have been a “panacea for alcohol-fuelled violence” (Wolifson, 2018b, p. 42).

Despite the increase in public pressure to introduce lockdown laws like those that prevailed in Newcastle, 170 kilometres north of Sydney, the NSW state government resisted. However, in January 2014, another young man, Daniel Christie, tragically lost his life after being punched on New Year’s Eve in Kings Cross (Quilter, 2015; Wadds, 2020). In February 2014 the NSW premier announced the introduction of the *Liquor Amendment Act 2014*, popularly known as the ‘lockout laws’ or ‘last drinks law’, one of the most controversial policy interventions with a global reputation impact (Wadds, 2020; Wolifson, 2018b). The lockout laws were a place-based policy that targeted the Sydney CBD Entertainment and Kings Cross precincts. Under the lockout laws licensed venues were required to stop the service and trading of alcohol after 3 am and refuse the entering or re-entering of patrons after 1.30 am. The lockout laws were intensely contested (Wolifson, 2018b). The history of the lockout laws remains part of the collective memory of many Sydneysiders, and it is from this point that I started the journey into the Sydney’s NTE. A chronology of key events is included in [Figure 5.1](#).

¹¹ See Wadds (2020) for a comprehensive account of the Thomas Kelly and Daniel Christie’s case.

Figure 5.1 Chronology of key events leading to the lockdown laws



Notes P refers to police, R refers to residents' organization, CoS refers to City of Sydney Council, H refers to health authorities, NB refers to Night Businesses, St refers to State, Fam refers to families of victims.

5.3 Advocacy coalitions and beliefs: a not so crowded landscape

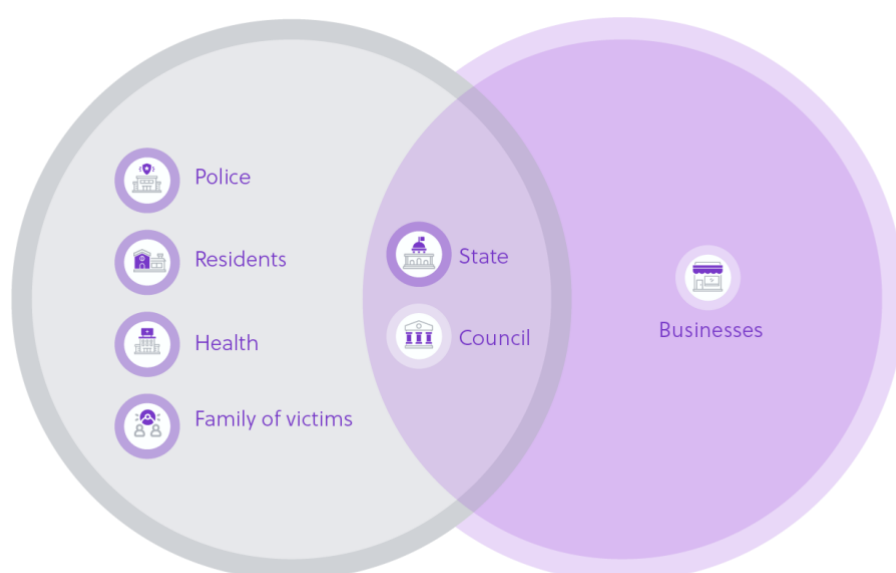
Before analysing the strategies and roles of multiple actors in shaping change (Section 5.4), it is essential to map and identify the key advocacy coalitions (Section 5.3.1), their beliefs, policy involvement and motivation for action (Section 5.3.2). As discussed in Chapter 3, advocacy coalitions are groups of policy actors actively involved in a policy issue who share policy core beliefs and coordinate their behaviour to influence the policy process (Sabatier, 1988; Weible & Ingold, 2018). Mapping the key advocacy coalitions

and their policy actors involved in resisting or driving change offers insights into the political dynamics at play (Mintrom, 2019a).

5.3.1 *Advocacy coalitions: a not so crowded landscape*

In Sydney's NTE before the introduction of the lockdown laws, the advocacy coalition's arena was not so crowded. Figure 5.2 shows the seven advocacy coalitions who were relevant: residents, families and friends of victims, police authorities, health authorities, City of Sydney Council, NSW state government, and night businesses. The lead policy actor in residents was the 2011 Residents' Association with local sphere of influence, advocating for protecting urban amenities, neighbourhood liveability, public amenities and improving the quality of life of residents. The lead policy actor in the health authorities was St Vincent's Hospital located in Darlinghurst which adjoins Kings Cross. St Vincent's Hospital treats all emergency cases emanating from Kings Cross (Fleming, 2020). St. Vincent Hospital is an internationally recognised research centre and health care provider, funded by NSW Government and is part of the public health system. The leading actors in night businesses were the Australian Hotel Association, a powerful lobby group with a national sphere of influence, representing Australian hotels and pubs with late-night trading licenses.

Figure 5.2 Advocacy coalitions within the NTE before the lockdown laws: a relational map



Although they had all slightly different focuses, they were all impacted by and interested in the NTE and its policies. Police, residents, health authorities and families of victims were impacted by the NTE harms, were highly committed to change, and shared the will for NTE regulation. They called for state and local government intervention to address alcohol-fuelled violence. However, there were differences with respect to motivations.

Police officers and health frontline workers were extremely concerned about assaults and resultant injuries (Essential Media Communications, 2010b; Kerin, 2010; NSW ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance, 2019; St Vincent's Health Network Sydney, 2019). Families and friends of victims experienced grief for the loss of a loved one and were driven by the hope that "no other family should have to put with this" (Davies, 2013; R. Kelly & Kelly, 2019). Residents were driven by feelings of fear, frustration, lack of public amenities and high noise levels that was impacting on their quality of life (2011 Residents Association, 2013, 2014). On the other side of the spectrum, the businesses and the state resisted. Similarly, the City of Sydney Council attempted different options to block the lockdown laws.

5.3.2 Advocacy coalitions: focus, policy involvement, and beliefs

Table 5.1 summarises the focus and key policy involvement of each advocacy grouping. While all these advocacy coalitions were involved in agenda setting for policy change or resisting change, others were more dedicated to the implementation of night policies. Both the City of Sydney Council and NTE businesses saw the NTE to pursue Sydney as a global city (Wolifson, 2018a; Wolifson & Drozdowski, 2017). Another aspect is the different policy objectives fell under different jurisdictions. For instance, while the primary policy involvement of families of victims was changes in the criminal law, a state government's responsibility (Quilter, 2013, 2014, 2015), residents were highly involved into contestation of development applications approved within the City of Sydney Council jurisdiction (2011 Residents Association, 2007, 2009, 2012).

Table 5.1 Advocacy coalitions, focus and key policy involvement

Advocacy coalitions	Focus	Key policy involvement
Residents	Urban liveability, quality of life, public amenities	Urban planning, liquor license bill
Families of victims	Justice	Criminal justice policy
Police authorities	Night safety	Liquor license bill, policing the night
Health authorities	Public health	Liquor license bill
City of Sydney Council	NTE management, NTE for Sydney global city	NTE strategy, urban planning, cultural planning, NTE management
State government	-	Liquor license bill, public health policies, planning reforms
Night business	NTE development, NTE for Sydney global city, Economic growth	Local urban planning, liquor license bill, immigration policies

An overview of the foci and policy core beliefs of each advocacy coalitions are presented in Table 5.2. The shared core desire of residents, families of victims, police and health authorities is evident: regulating the NTE through the introduction of the lockdown laws.

The coalition argued that without regulation of night venues, revellers, residents and night frontline workers would face potential harm. The core belief of the City of Sydney Council was that re-regulating the NTE through cultural policies and strategies, promoting a diverse, safe and “civilised” NTE would be the solution (Wolifson, 2018a; Wolifson & Drozdowski, 2017). Night businesses were generally against the lockdown laws, arguing that they would have a dire impact on many NTE businesses. These seven actors competed for introducing and resisting regulation. Interestingly, all these actors agreed at their most fundamental level that state and local government had a responsibility to support visitors, night businesses and the local population.

Table 5.2 Advocacy coalitions, core beliefs and policy beliefs

Advocacy coalitions	Deep core beliefs (normative and stable)	Policy core belief
Residents	NTE cumulative impact affects urban liveability, quality of life and amenities.	Regulating the NTE through enforcement and compliance will improve urban liveability.
Families of victims	NTE harms the safety of young people out at night.	Regulating the NTE will give justice and solve NTE alcohol fuelled violence.
Police authorities	Night and community safety.	Regulating the NTE will reduce harms, violence and ensure night safety.
Health authorities	NTE affects shift workers, health care service provision, NTE has financial, social, health costs.	See above.
City of Sydney Council	NTE is safe, vibrant, and diverse.	Re-regulating the NTE through cultural policies and strategies.
State government	Alcohol violence is a problem.	Regulating the NTE through liquor and planning license
Night business		Regulating the NTE would cause unequal market competition amongst night sectors/businesses. Street safety and public transport should be a priority. “We need pubs open until sunrise for Sydney to be a global city and protect our NTE.”

5.4 Strategies for policy change: towards the introduction of the lockdown laws

This section explores the strategies and roles of advocacy coalitions in promoting and resisting change in Sydney’s NTE, i.e. introducing the lockdown laws. I argue that the introduction of the lockdown laws was an incremental process of change that is best explained by the strategic actions of various actors: police and health authorities, residents, and families of victims who acted as policy entrepreneurs. As strategies are at the heart of policy change of policy change (Mintrom & Norman, 2009a), to understand why changing policies is hard or easy to achieve, an examination of the tactics in place from these different actors is required. The strategies of the police, health authorities, residents, families of victims are examined respectively.

5.4.1 Police and health authorities

One of the key strategies of policy entrepreneurs is leading by example which “helps to make the pursuit of policy change believable” (Mintrom, 2019a, p. 12). Police and health authorities acted as policy entrepreneurs leading by example, they proposed the trial of the lockdown laws following the ‘Newcastle model’. The ‘Newcastle model’, i.e. the lockdown laws, set the foundation for the introduction of the lockdown laws in Sydney. In March 2008, the NSW Liquor Administration Board (LAB), a quasi-independent judicial body, imposed the lockdown laws on licensed venues in Newcastle CBD in NSW, Australia. Licensee venues were required to close by 3 am and cease admitting people at 1 am, a so-called ‘lockout’. Newcastle lockdown laws were a response to community and police claims about social and violence disorder (Kypri et al., 2010). The use of ‘scientific evidence’ reinforced the proposed solution as credible. Lockout laws, with some variants, have been tested in other Australian cities — Melbourne, Adelaide, and Darwin (Homan, 2019).

Police and health authorities highlighted the success of the Newcastle model. The argument was supported by an academic study which found that the curfews contributed to a 37% reduction in police-recorded assaults in Newcastle’s CBD (Kypri et al., 2010). In a local news article from 2011, the former president of NSW Police Association, Scott Weber, stated:

The initiative was trialled in Newcastle, ..., and resulted in a 37 per cent reduction in assaults after dark...The Newcastle model is a tried and tested scenario and this is what we are waiting for any side of politics to jump on. (Minus, 2011).

Policy entrepreneurs, to be successful, need to gain support for their proposed policy intervention (Mintrom, 2019a). The proponents of the lockdown laws adopted attention and support seeking tactics to bring to the attention of the broader community and the policy makers the issue of night-time alcohol-fuelled violence.¹² As Wadds (2020) noted, Dr Gordian Fulde, the former head of the emergency department at St Vincent’s Hospital, appeared in 345 newspaper articles expressing concern about excessive violence and disorder in Sydney nightlife and the subsequent injuries presented to hospital emergency departments. The attention and support seeking tactics were essential to raise awareness and mobilise public opinion. An academic expert in public health policies had the following comment with respect to the introduction of the lockdown laws:

Health organisations had a massive role in this (introduction of the lockdown laws). And it was because they were able to ... highlight through political advocacy, “Okay, this is going on over here” (Kings Cross nightlife precinct) and nobody really minds what is going on over here. But have you ever peered into the emergency department late at night?

¹² See Wadds (2015) for an analysis of the Sydney’s NTE in the press.

It seems to me that in terms of the public perception, and political perception around that time (before the introduction of the lockdown laws), they [health organisations] had a massive impact. Because without that, I don't think the idea of the lockdown laws carry much weight at all. (Jordan)

Jordan kept reflecting on the success and impact of this tactic:

I think they [health authorities] shone a light on suffering that people didn't know was going on. I think that's where they were successful Using the experience of people on the frontline and telling the story from that perspective. It's kind of almost unquestionable, once you've told that story, once you've heard what it's like in the emergency department at three o'clock on a Sunday morning, it's really hard to get that image out of the mind.

Within the attention and support seeking strategy, the launch of a public campaign, *Last Drinks*, was vital to mobilise public opinion and influence change. The *Last Drinks* campaign resulted from a coalition of the police, nurses, emergency doctors, and obtained the support of the families of victims, and residents. Key organisations involved in the *Last Drinks* coalition were NSW Police Association, NSW Nurses Association, Health Service Union, NSW branch of Australian Medical Association. Many other organisations were involved through the NSW/ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance including community groups, police, emergency services and research institutions (Last Drinks Coalition, 2019; NSW ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance, 2019).

In March 2010, the petition of *Last Drinks* targeting state government policy makers and media at the NSW Parliament was presented (Essential Media Communications, 2010a), shortly before the NSW state election occurred in 2011 (Figure 5.3). The *Last Drinks* coalition called for “stronger restrictions on late night alcohol trading of licensed premises. This included a mandatory 1:00 am lockdown, 3:00 am closing time, restrictions on the sale of hard liquor and shots”, the so-called Newcastle model (Essential Media Communications, 2010b).

Figure 5.3 Last Drinks Coalition: a campaign for the lockdown laws



Police, emergency department personnel and nurses at the petition presentation in front of NSW Parliament from a YouTube video. *Source:* Screenshot from Essential Media Communications (2010b).

The *Last Drinks* campaign was an attempt to set the agenda, calling for regulation of the NTE and proposing their preferred policy solution: the Newcastle Model. More than 10,000 people signed the petition on the *lastdrinks* campaign website (Essential Media Communications, 2010a, 2010b), a testament of the broad support from the community. The Last Drinks campaign received support from health, police organisations, and alcohol research centres with state and national sphere of influence. It also commissioned a poll, to measure the public sentiment around the proposed policy intervention. The poll established that 85% of people in NSW would support a 3 am ban on alcohol sales (M. Kelly & AAP, 2010; NSW ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance, 2019; The Shout Team, 2011). The poll results demonstrated to policymakers that there was broad community support around their proposal for policy change and strengthened the police and health authorities' arguments.

The police and health authorities displayed social acuity and saw in the tragic death of Thomas Kelly, in 2012,¹³ a 'window of opportunity' to further press for regulatory intervention with respect to the issue of alcohol-fuelled violence. Mark Murdoch, at that time Assistant NSW Police Commissioner, declared in a radio interview:

We've been given a window of opportunity, albeit tragically, on the back of Thomas' death, for us as a community to wake up and say, "We've had enough of this rubbish." And now's the time to take some very demonstrable steps to try and pull the agenda back and get Kings Cross back in control. (Harvey, 2012)

Documents analysis showed how specific actors such as police officers and health workers engaged with senior politicians and government officials and up scaled their narrative to the national level. This way to obtain power over resources or change decisions was relevant to getting the collaboration moving. Police and health authorities clearly formulated what they expected from the state government and why it was of crucial importance to change existing rules or policies and/or mobilise extra resources for the police or health authorities. The following excerpt that appeared in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Sydney's primary daily newspaper, underlies this strategy, and shows the engagement between the police authorities and the state premier:

The Premier [O'Farrell] said he would "back the police with whatever solution they believe is required for a particular area". The Police Commissioner, Andrew Scipione, told the Herald he would take up the offer. "With this support guaranteed, we will be assessing the problems specific to each area and providing recommendations to the government that will address our concerns." (Nicholls, 2011)

¹³ Thomas Kelly was in Kings Cross to celebrate his friend's birthday. Suddenly, the young man got 'king-hit' around 10pm on 7th July 2012. The head injury was unfortunately fatal, and he lost his life on Monday 9th July 2012 at St Vincent's Hospital (Wadds, 2020).

The quote above suggests that the state government highly valued the concerns of the police with regards to the violence in Kings Cross. Noteworthy is that the health coalition and police had access to data related to crime and facial injuries and thus the ability to produce evidence to support their claim for regulation of the NTE in Kings Cross.

5.4.2 Contesting the notion that the lockdown laws were necessary

Document analysis revealed that oppositional strategies through counter arguments were adopted by a wide range of groups: such as: Australian Hotel Association, Club NSW, the Greens political party, Kings Cross Liquor Accord, the Labor Party which was the main opposition party in the state government at that time, and partially the City of Sydney. NTE businesses in Kings Cross were disparaging of the efforts by the police and health authorities to shut down the NTE in Kings Cross. A representative of a business organisation and night business owner of multiple venues, recalling the period before the lockdown laws stated in an interview:

Lockout laws simply lock people out. It does not solve the problem. The issue ... was a one-size-fits all policy. From that ...if you are a good venue with a good compliance record, no matter what the investment you put into your business, or live music, or the arts and culture that you were supporting, you were punished. (Jakob)

This is consistent with statements in local newspapers from another leader of a business organisation published in 2012 when the public debate was at its peak:

Blanket rules on Kings Cross venues would leave local restaurants subject to the same rules as local nightclubs, but more severe rules compared to restaurants on Oxford St. (Morris, 2012)

A representative of a business organisation and a fierce NTE advocate who strongly opposed the introduction of the lockdown laws recalled the significant influence of police and health authorities. He had a contentious analysis:

We are allowing services to dictate policy. Services are naturally not only risk averse but want to eliminate risk. And so, they threaten the government, then threaten the community with the lowest common denominator policies, because it's the easiest thing to do. And it also satisfies their authoritarian tendencies because most of them are sort of from a Christian or religious upbringing. And so, it just fits into their worldview that they know best. (Andrew, NTE business organisation)

A city councillor with policy making experience around the NTE had a similar view and stressed the role of the police in influencing policy change:

The police should not be a policymaker. Their job is to enforce the law made by politicians. There was a massive shift in how policing was conducted and that had a big impact on the NTE, huge impact, because

police became quite militant in the way that they managed and dealt with a licenced premises, noise complaints, and those sorts of things. And those policy shifts, I think, have been very detrimental to the NTE. (Lee)

Other interviewees who fiercely opposed the idea of the lockdown laws explained that some initiatives were proposed and developed by night venues and the partnership behind them. One interviewee discussing the numerous initiatives in place from businesses critically commented on the facts that some of those initiatives were or removed for state budgets constraints or rejected by state authorities. Jakob, a representative of a business organisation, and former business owner, commented on a specific service implemented to establish a direct line of communication with the police:

The model that was put into Kings Cross was very successful. ... We had police mobile phone numbers. ... If there were ... venues with issues, they could call a particular number and you have the police there within three minutes. ... it was supported by the venues greatly ... It was well accepted by the venues, and it was a fantastic service from the police. It made a big difference. Unfortunately, that service was removed for budgetary reasons ... We made various representations to government on improving the actual communication between venues with the government We've done basically, lots and lots of things, but there was no appetite from ... government to actually support us. ... We have always maintained, a strong relationship with the City, the police and liquor and gaming (state department). My view was that well-run venues *should have been supported by* all the (state) agencies and that the state agencies deal with the recalcitrant venues that would never do the right thing.

The City of Sydney

The City of Sydney was extremely concerned about the violence and crime in Kings Cross. Behind the initial establishment of the position Night City Manager and the adoption of the NTE Strategy, Open Strategy,¹⁴ there was a strong commitment to address alcohol related violence. A state government employee recall:

In 2009, the Chief Executive Officer asked someone to lead the City of Sydney's work around responding to alcohol related violence. And working with a newly formed state government committee ... especially in increasing cases in Kings Cross Oxford Street, and the CBD in Sydney. ... that led to a significant piece of work ... *Open Sydney*, produced in 2011. (Juniper, state government)

¹⁴ Open Sydney Strategy was outcome of a long period of incubation involving studies, reports and some forms of community engagement. Open Sydney Strategy represents an entrepreneurial governance shift for the City of Sydney (Wolifson & Drozdowski, 2017).

In the above quote Juniper referred to the report “Night-time economy management: International research and practice” commissioned by the City of Sydney (see Hadfield, 2011).

Juniper mentioned that the City of Sydney’s strategic approach involved understanding how other cities internationally addressed alcohol-related violence. Interestingly, the diversification of the NTE became a tool to address violence at night:

I think that very quickly it became apparent to me that we needed to reshape and refocus Sydney’s effort less around how do we tackle violence at night but more how do we diversify and kind of really reframe this as NTE.

The governance approach of the City of Sydney was echoed in another interview. Thomas, a government official with expertise in strategic planning explained how the City of Sydney worked towards the development and adoption of a NTE strategic plan:

They engaged with it [NTE] as a policy issue. ... Health and building specialists, they were absolutely amazing. They were probably one of the parts of the Council I saw that was really capable of thinking in a multidisciplinary way. So, they were thinking all the way from the LDP [Local Development Plan], right down to how the implementation. ... A lot of it was like ... research ... that show what the problem really was really broke the perception that it was like an advocacy or a lobbying campaign. Once they fleshed it out, it was sort of ... pushing it back into strategic planning. ... We have some really good strategic planners who are quite good at listening ... they started feeding it back up, you started to see a shift ... got a bit better at engaging with the problem rather than the perceived problem (Thomas)

The NTE was re-configured by the City of Sydney as a policy field where coordination with different departments of the local government, state authorities such as the police and liquor and gaming department was needed. Juniper described that formal structures were put in place:

There was a formal taskforce, ... because the ... level of violence that the government was seeing, and the media attention was quite significant. A formal taskforce was established that Head Deputy Secretary, the former Deputy Police Commissioner sat on it as well, ..., senior public servants, so *the Night City Manager* would attend, like *City of Sydney* CEO would attend There was that kind of formal structure, ... It was kind of after 2009-2010 ... There were formal mechanisms set up to try and tackle it [violence].

Other activities were pivotal in trying to address the alcohol-violence issues with multiple actors. Activities included community engagement, public forums and regular meetings with police, residents, and multiple state government agencies. Juniper explained:

The City of Sydney would invite state government to sit on the City of Sydney's NTE taskforce meetings, and so we'd have state government representatives ... from all the respective agencies ... Transport from NSW, we would drive them into any of four public forums that we'd be holding with impacted residents and businesses in Kings Cross ... Part of the *Night City Manager* job was being engaged with them really regularly so that *the City of Sydney* could work together on delivering solutions.

Juniper reflected on why the City of Sydney failed in its quest to halt the imposition of the lockout ultimately, the state government had the power:

I don't think we had the right structure If I reflect back on it. ... I think it's really important that you have the agencies that have got the capacity to pull the levers. And certainly, the City of Sydney tried to do that from a local government position, but you're not always operating from a position of power

5.4.3 Residents

Many residents in Kings Cross were of the view that something needed to be done. They were highly motivated in introducing changes, and they invested time and energy to do so. Hamish, a long-established Kings Cross, was passionate about trying to get the situation under control:

We had to do something ... We made as many moves as we could to try to get people to do something about it [the out-of-control situation in Kings Cross].

Residents told of how they lobbied various authorities to increase regulation and reflected on several tactics they adopted. Residents campaigned through handing out leaflets, letterbox drops, posters, and organised night walking tours with government officials. Additionally, residents wrote letters and made numerous submissions to local and state councillors and government officials. Hamish reflected on the submissions. He was highly critical of the City of Sydney who he felt did not take residents' complaints seriously:

The submissions we made ... gave us a voice. It allowed us to have a voice because without that from 2007, up until 2013, we virtually had no voice at all, or if we managed to have our voice [heard] by the Council, we were sort of waved away. We were given promises that never eventuated. [There were] ... crocodile tears, "Oh, that's terrible. It's so terrible that residents have to deal with that." Then we never hear from them [the Council] again. Making submissions to state government, to the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority [NSW], and having those submissions acknowledged, they might not have agreed with, whether as individuals or as a community group, it gave us a voice. We felt we were

being heard. We thought we might be moving one step closer to some sort of sanity prevailing on the streets, again, in our neighbourhood.

The above quote suggests that the major barrier for residents was the City of Sydney Council. Residents found more success in aligning with the police and health authorities; in so doing they adopted a venue shopping strategy. Venue shopping is a common strategy in policy entrepreneurship and involves finding the most suitable ally offering the best prospects for reaching one's policy goal (Baumgartner, 2013; Sabatier, 1988). If successful it can lead to policy change. They were deeply sceptical of the City of Sydney's willingness to act. Residents interviewed described how the strategic alliance with the police revolved around the establishment of a good relationship based on trust, collaboration, respect, dialogue, mutual understanding, and exchange of knowledge and information. Engaging with the police was, therefore, the only way to increase the possibility of the resident's group having some power and being listened to. Hamish explained:

Our only ally at that time was the local Kings Cross Police because all these [night] venues had conditions attached to them. Because Council was useless in dealing with making sure those conditions were met, we had to go to the Police and the Police became our greatest friend. ... Their job is to make sure that night venues, clubs or hotels are complying with their licence conditions. I and one other member of that resident's organisation decided to contact the police ... And over time, over about 3 or 4 years, we developed a very good relationship with a couple of members of the licensing branch. She [a policewoman working in the licensing branch] organised meetings with the local Superintendent of [the] Police Station. ... They kept organising meetings for us where we went to the police station and sat with the Superintendent and told them what was going on ... And they also gave us the ability, and the trust to be able to call them at 3 o'clock, 4 o'clock in the morning, when a venue across the road was blasting out music that was against the license condition ... The police ... would take our complaints, go to the venue, and shut it down. ... Without that backup, we could do nothing ... [The] police really came on side and helped us.

The alliance between residents, police and emergency workers was evident. For example, in 2008, the Darlinghurst Resident Association Group and 2011 Residents Association organised a public summit to discuss alcohol-related issues in Kings Cross, Oxford Street and George Street. Invited speakers included a St. Vincent's Hospital emergency doctor, a representative of the NSW police, a proponent of Newcastle model, and a representative of the Liquor and Gaming Authority (Figure 5.4). The following statements are retrieved from a submission to the parliamentary inquiry JSCNSTE:

For years residents and the local police and other emergency workers, including staff at St Vincent's Hospital casualty department, complained and warned government about the potential and real dangers of the night

time economy in Kings Cross, only to be ignored. (2011 Residents Association, 2019, p. 4).

Figure 5.4 Community forum and joint campaign



Left – Pamphlet of a community forum organised by residents’ coalition. The speakers were St Vincent Hospital, a representative of NSW Liquor and Gaming Authority, the Police, and an expert on the Newcastle Model. *Source:* (Darlinghurst Residents Action Group, 2022). **Right** – Image representing the local news headline and the joint campaign #KeepSydneySafe, of residents and NSW/ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance (NAAPA). *Source:* (Darlinghurst Residents Action Group, 2022). There were several occasions where residents supported police and health authorities in their endeavour to obtain regulation of the NTE.

5.4.4 Families of victims

The death of Thomas Kelly in 2012 mobilised the families of victims as policy actors.¹⁵ Like residents (Section 5.4.3), the families of victims adopted an experimental venue shopping strategy. Thomas Kelly’s father reflected on their endeavour to strengthen regulation in a podcast of *I Catch Killers* series:

I started to meet a lot of people or politicians including the Attorney General ... and I literally crawled out his office in the Parliament House and it sent me on a journey. It made me really angry ... I thought I’m not going to stop. ... So, I’d have meetings with all these politicians. It was like a revolving door.... I’ll just go in; they’d try to get rid of me as quickly as possible... I started to go to meetings with a Premier or the Attorney

¹⁵ The tragic death of Thomas Kelly and the moral panic followed by it has been extensively discussed (Quilter, 2013, 2014, 2014; Wadds, 2020).

General, I used to take someone who had credibility - ... -I'll take an emergency surgeon. You know neurosurgeons, the head of emergency from St. Vincent's, Andrew Scipioni [NSW Police Commissioner], whoever was appropriate for the particular meeting. (True Crime Australia, 2022 1:17:45)

The quote above suggests the strong ties between families of victims, health and police authorities. In 2012, the Kelly Foundation was established to call for all Australia to join a common battle. Like police and health authorities, the families and friends of victims largely used media to mobilise public opinion and raise awareness. A review of newspaper articles shows that Kelly appeared in approximately 60 articles from local newspapers between 2012 and 2014. The Kelly Foundation was supported financially by many including the City of Sydney Council. The families of victims in Kings Cross mobilised public consciousness by highlighting the need for policy that would enhance safety.

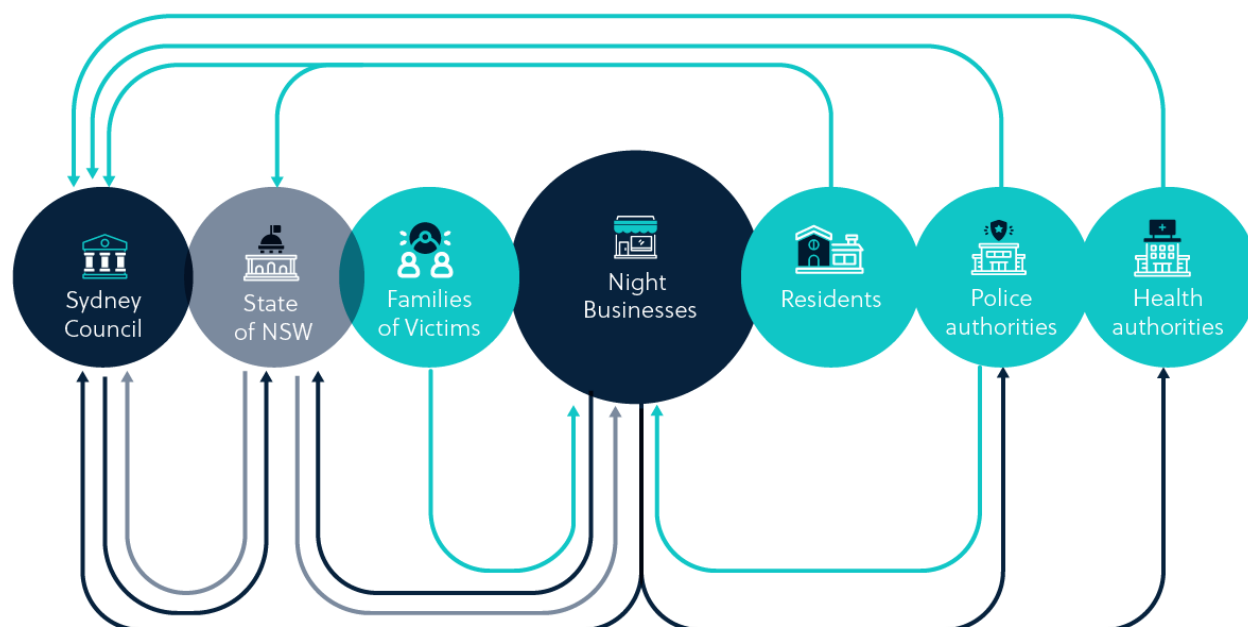
5.5 Conflicting rationalities and blame games

In the [Sections 5.3, 5.4](#), I mapped out the key actors and explored their strategies to influence the introduction of the lockout laws. In this section I analyse the actors' dynamics and their conflicting rationalities. An analysis of the interviews conducted and the documents scrutinised revealed that there were substantial differences in perceptions of problems around the NTE and appropriate policy options despite increased awareness. Conflicting rationalities (i.e. different problem formulations), led to blame games between multiple actors. As discussed in [Chapter 3](#), blame games can be conceived as dynamics of actors' interactions requiring at least two actors: a blamer and a blamed linked through arguments involving and placing blame (Drew & Grant, 2017; Hood, 2002). When different problem formulations arise, attributing responsibilities becomes more difficult, and conflicting rationalities result in the placement and diffusion of blame among multiple actors. Interviewees showed that: i) there was an attribution of responsibilities related to who and what was responsible for night-time issues, ii) there was an attribution of responsibilities related to who should have provided public services at night and effective NTE policies.

[Figure 5.5](#) details the blame games emerging from the different perceptions of the NTE and its policies between multiple actors. Analysing [Figure 5.5](#) what is evident is that NTE business were more passive blame receivers than active blame placers. Contrarily, families of victims, police, health authorities and residents were likely blame makers. This confirm that the coalition pro-lockout laws gained influence and was extremely powerful in introducing the lockout laws. It also appears that NTE businesses were more passive blame receivers than active blame placers. Perhaps this was due to no NTE specific lobby

organization existing at that time, rather multiple bodies played the role of being a NTE interest group (i.e., AHA, Liquor Accords, Business Chamber of Commerce).¹⁶

Figure 5.5. Blame games between multiple actors around the NTE



Arrows represent the direction of blame. Curved arrows show blamers and blamed linked through blame placing and blame receiving.

5.5.1 *Conflicting rationalities and stories of failure*

Interviewees formulated problems through stories of failure. Hansson (2018) suggests that lines of blame that can be associated with the negative aspects that blame makers promote. Interviewees blamed both the NSW state government and the City of Sydney Council stressing a failure in governing the NTE. The governance failure was viewed as a function of “over-regulation”, “weak regulation” or a “lack of regulation”. Lily, a long-established resident in Kings Cross, discussed the NTE in relation to neighbourhood liveability and blamed the State government and the City of Sydney Council for their weak governance which she claimed resulted in inadequate night services provision.

I think it's a very poor decision on the part of the state government and local council, not being able to manage the area in terms of getting people out of the area, bringing transport late at night or early in the mornings,

¹⁶ An innovative practice of self-governance on the NTE has been attested through the advocacy work of Keep Sydney Open which gained popularity immediately after the introduction of the lockout laws. Keep Sydney Open, its advocacy role and contribution to the public discourse has been extensively investigated in Wolifson (2018b). However, I will discuss their role briefly in [Chapter 6](#).

train services. People couldn't get out of the area, so that caused a lot of problems.

A group of engaged residents in Kings Cross made multiple submissions to the City of Sydney from 2007 to 2014. These submissions contested the place-shaping policies of Kings Cross at night, the poor compliance with established NTE policies from the NTE businesses side, and an unclear exercise of authority from the City of Sydney (2011 Residents Association, 2013, 2019; Crossing, 2014). Furthermore, one line of contestation evolved around the cumulative impact of spatially clustered NTE, which elsewhere has been defined as a sustainability dilemma (Roberts & Gornostaeva, 2007).

Kirsten who had been a resident of Kings Cross for 25 years, blamed the City of Sydney Council for not solving the issues related to the NTE:

The issues weren't addressed. The [City of Sydney] Council, basically, it was out of control. So, if we had cops on horses, the riot squad got 20,000 people packed in a street. The Council let down residents terribly. ... For noise ... they made it almost impossible. It ended up with the police trying to sort out fights and it was just violence. Councillors let us down terribly. The only thing that they did, they sent around the car three times a night, wait for this, to wash urine, vomit, and blood off the strip.

A state government official had a more nuanced analysis blaming the governance approach and abuse of power by the police authority:

An example of bad regulation is one-size-fit-all approach ... to treat all venues or all scenarios as being the same. And obviously there is just very real differences when you have a small number of people versus many people. If you look at the lockout laws era of Sydney, it was characterised largely by a one-size-fits-all approach to policing. Regulation could be one thing, but policing behaviours, if they are common between different venues, essentially becomes the bad regulation. So, if you [have] a 6-person venue versus a 2000-person [venue], well, clearly there's a difference, right? But if the police see it as the same thing as a dispensary of alcohol, then the police behaviours will tend to dictate the way that [a night] venue governs, irrespective of what the law says. In Sydney's history, there was a sort of rule of thumb, "You need a security guard, one for every 100 people in your venue". (Adam)

Similarly, a city councillor addressed the failure of police and policy makers in taking action to address night violence,

It needed to be fixed there's no doubt whatsoever. ... That was because the policymakers and the police weren't prepared to actually get in there and make the changes they needed to make (Lee).

Lee kept discussing the failure of participatory governance referring to a number of meetings and workshops occurred aiming to address conflicting rationalities. In his view,

policy failure emerges when the NTE policy in place does not address the actual problem or when people sitting around the table have more weight or complicate the broader picture. In discussing policy making around the NTE at that time, Lee stated

Polymakers around the night time economy have as much as if not more say than the planning people do. Planners get in the way of everything, they are like lawyers... you want to do something, and a planner will say "this is the problem with that". ... And so often we get things the wrong way around.

The above quote suggests that a more balanced approach between the technocratic and political side of NTE policy making is required, and often the technocratic rationality clashes with the political one.

Additionally, failure was attributed to the past liquor legislation in keeping people outside the night venues. Jakob kept discussing:

The actual issue in Kings Cross was the liquor act in itself, if someone was intoxicated, you have to refuse entry... most of the venues are complied with that laws. ..., So those people that were refused entry ... which would causing them violence (Jakob, NTE owner)

5.5.2 Conflicting rationalities and stories of causation

Conflicting rationalities and blame games emerged not only through stories of failure but also through stories of causation. Stories of causation were dynamic processes where the perceived problems are presented through casual narratives, i.e. A was caused by C. Interviewees cited deregulation of planning licenses as the key issue and the local council as the responsible party. In this way, rhetorically the problem was framed as one that related to poor regulation. A long-established resident argued that the deregulation of planning licenses resulted in more clubs, noise issues for residents and more drunk people on the street. He recounted his concerns prior to the introduction of the lockout laws:

This [violence] was going on 24 hours a day. You could step outside ... the front door of our building and ... step over people who were collapsed on the ground, drunk and unconscious from the night before and walk a few steps down and there was a fight going on at 10 o'clock in the morning. We were worried and we kept asking for help because these things [noise and violence] were just growing and growing and growing. With more and more drunks on the street, more and more clubs more and more noise. So, it went from about three or four, including just two pubs, to over 300 in that short time [between 2007 and 2014], and that lasted and got worse and worse and worse, up until the lockouts were introduced in 2014. (Hamish, resident)

Oliver Behrens from the NSW Police Association had a similar analysis of the problem. He made the following statement:

The more licenced venues you have, the more opportunity you have for drunk people to get back into licenced venues and continue drinking. The longer the drinking hours are, the more opportunity they have to increase their level of intoxication. (Minus, 2011)

Hamish blamed the City of Sydney for the proliferation of venues:

Council was very reluctant to accept any responsibility ... always saying there's nothing that they can do ... There was something they could do! They could stop issuing licences. They could stop approving the late-night trading hours. They said, "Well, this is all money. The economy needs this. The local economy needs these places [night venues]." And we were arguing that the economy doesn't need drunks and violence on the street ... posing a danger to residents. ... It should have been something that councils stopped all of that happening before it became a big trouble.

A representative of a business organisation and NTE advocate, blamed the health coalitions for the introduction of the lockout laws:

It's like St. Vincent's going on [about] the amount of head injuries which we're not seeing now because of the lockouts. And it's like, f... you. You work as an emergency [doctor]. Your job is not to f... stop people doing things. It's ... [to] look after people when they get injured. So, you don't shut everything down to stop people getting injured. Why don't you look at the people who are getting injured due to the fact, maybe it's alcohol abuse? Maybe that's because ... it's too terrifying for politicians to do that. So, they're just going to shut it down at the end. Like they're basically treating the symptoms, not the cause. (Andrew)

A couple of interviewees commented on the value of the NTE for urban vibrancy and that alcohol abuse and violence were overstated. Residents interviewed, especially those who nostalgically recalled Kings Cross as a "very vibrant" nightlife area and the NTE as an opportunity to socialise, acknowledged that there were issues, but that these were not confined to the night-time and venues. Aaron, an Inner Sydney resident and an operator within the festival sector commented that the violence generally occurred outside of the venues:

A lot of our venues were responsible [businesses] ... The things that happened, happened out on the street ... People in the venues were getting along, okay, and dancing and doing what they needed to do. (Aaron)

Chloe, an inner Sydney resident, who often frequented venues in Kings Cross, commented,

There [were] bouncers in all the venues. They all had bouncers. The police were around. Yeah, I think some young people get probably a bit out of hand, but it [was] not hardcore violence.

Other interviewees acknowledged lack of public infrastructure and poor night police patrolling as a major contributor to crowd management problems in the nighttime in Kings Cross. Jakob, a NTE business owner and strong NTE advocate discussed the NTE in Kings Cross prior the lockdown laws:

Friday and Saturday past 10pm at night with no services ... there were too many people with a very lack of transport ... lack of services, and there was also past 1 o'clock, there was noticeable lack of police patrols as well, there wasn't enough infrastructure to maintain the actual people in the area. ... So, the violence was higher than other areas of Sydney because of the volume of people.

The health coalition blamed night businesses for drunkenness and violence.

Because of the nightclubs ... you would still see people just hideously intoxicated, half-clothed, fights going on getting in and out of taxis. (St Vincent's Health Network Sydney, 2019, p. 3)

Some interviewees blamed inadequate policing for the violence on the streets of Kings Cross:

Rather than thinking about how to police that [crowd on the street] or realising that those folks are safer in the venues, if you can get those people to get into the venues and have a great time dancing and doing what they want to do that's better than just locking everything. ... Now it's become our police state. ... I think it was a police thing because a lot of our venues are responsible. ... The things that happened to cause the lockouts, happened out on the street. They weren't happening in the venues. ... and so, isn't that the police service we pay for? ... Isn't that their job to make sure everyone's safe and to move people on to where they need to go? (Aaron, NTE business)

The City of Sydney blamed the State government's irresponsible issuing of liquor licences. The Lord Mayor Clover Moore during a City Council minute stated:

I lobbied successive governments for reform ... Unfortunately, former Labor and Liberal State Governments – the authority responsible for liquor licences - continued to issue enormous numbers of new liquor licences in Kings Cross (City of Sydney, 2014)

It is widely accepted that the Kings Cross neighbourhood was deeply rooted in crime and corruption, and such issues were only partially linked to the NTE (Wadds, 2015, 2020). I have shown how the conflicting rationalities framed the problems around the NTE differently. Therefore, different actors might have scapegoated the NTE in Kings Cross by

distracting from structural problems such as a governance failure around the NTE. Hood (2002) argues that governance failure and blame games are inseparable in the political realm and that effective governance in terms of service provision and democratic accountability cannot exist without risk of failure.

In conclusion, the findings presented above provide key insights into the actors' dynamics and how the NTE was reconfigured as a contested time-space. The different perceptions of the NTE and its policies, and different ways to discuss the problems related to it led to blame games. Consistent with previous studies, a "reapportionment of blame argument" occurred, where actors sought "to shift accusations of liability and contributory negligence away from the operators of pubs and bars" (Hadfield, 2006, pp. 206–207). The introduction of the lockout laws was premised on an informal partnership and the lack of inclusion of conflicting rationalities.

5.6 Discussion and Conclusion

The first question in this research was, what was the role of different actors in influencing policy change around the NTE before Covid-19 in Sydney? Who was more influential and why? Which strategies did they adopt to influence change? As mentioned, to answer this question, I broke it down into two timeframes, 2007-2014 and 2014 to 2020. The period 2007-2014 was the focus of this chapter. The focus was the build-up to the introduction of the lockout laws. After reviewing the key events ([Section 5.2](#)), I mapped out the key actors and their beliefs ([Section 5.3](#)). Seven key actors had a direct interest in NTE policy in Sydney during this period - the police, health authorities, residents, state government, families of victims, the City of Sydney Council and night businesses. All actors were impacted by the NTE and its policies and all of them engaged in shaping or resisting policy change. Amongst these seven groups, the police, health authorities, families and friends of victims and residents were highly motivated in setting the agenda and push for the introduction of the lockout laws. They shared the view that more regulation of the NTE in Sydney was vital. Night businesses and the City of Sydney resisted drastic policy change. The state government eventually capitulated to the policy demands of the police, health, families of victims and residents' coalition.

[Section 5.4](#) explored the strategies of the most influential actors in shaping the introduction of the lockout laws. Mintrom (2019b) argues that policy entrepreneurs distinguish themselves from other interest groups by their efforts to bring policy ideas to fruition and in so doing, they disrupt the status quo of existing policy arrangements. Much of the empirical applications of policy entrepreneurship refers to policy entrepreneurs as individuals. The case of Sydney's NTE showed that the introduction of the lockout laws was outcome of policy entrepreneurship strategies, a collective effort of police, health authorities, residents and families of victims. Police and health authorities had skilful leaders promoting the lockout laws from an existing case and built a credible and persuasive argument supported by evidence. This enabled them to gain broader support. The use of the policy entrepreneurship framework uncovered the agency and tactics of

multiple actors in setting the NTE agenda through promoting their preferred policy solution: the lockdown laws. Police, health authorities, families of victims and residents acted as policy entrepreneurs, albeit with some differences in their strategies. Police and health authorities built successful arguments. They used strong evidence from robust studies to mobilise public opinion and frame the NTE problems as primarily a function of alcohol-related violence thereby establishing themselves as credible and influential actors. Residents and families of victims adopted an experiential venue shopping strategy and aligned with the police and health authorities to support the introduction of the lockdown laws.

The chapter highlighted the perception of multiple actors towards the NTE and its policies (Section 5.5). Conflicting rationalities are defined as different “way of seeing” and implies that “power is used (by actors in a particular context) to define what is counted as rationality and so what is counted as reality” (de Satgé & Watson, 2018, p. 26). Foundational is the idea that to understand rationalities we need to understand the place or context and, therefore the perspectives of actors in context {Citation}. The actors impacted by and interested in the NTE, and its policies expressed different perspectives around the problems related to the NTE and its policies leading to the so-called blame games. Like previous studies (Hadfield, 2006), blame games occurred in the forms of arguments and counterarguments.

This chapter makes two theoretical contributions to the night scholarship. First, it underlines that even with less power, actors can influence policy change in the NTE through shopping for the most powerful venue. This was exemplified in the positioning of families of victims and residents. Second, even those who are risk averse towards the NTE can act as policy entrepreneurs and shape change. Third, it underlines some sort of governance failure. Even though some NTE management mechanisms were in place (NTE strategy and nighttime city office) this has not prevented the introduction of the lockdown laws and has not solved any problem. One of the primary contributions is context related and empirically based. Coalitions can mobilise their troops quickly through strategic leadership, share information to reinforce their arguments, or create a pathway to the statutory reforms. This chapter laid the foundation to explore the Sydney NTE after the introduction of the lockdown laws which I now turn my attention to.

Chapter 6 The night-time economy during the lockdown period, 2014-2020

6.1 Introduction

In [Chapter 5](#) I showed how the lockdown laws came into play. This chapter analyses the Sydney NTE during the lockdown laws period (2014 – 2020) and addresses the research question - What was the role of different actors in influencing policy change around the NTE before Covid-19 in Sydney? Who was more influential and why? Which strategies did they adopt to influence change? This chapter draws on retrospective interviews and online data (submissions, public hearing, and the final report of the parliamentary inquiry Joint Select Committee on Sydney Night-Time Economy (JSCSNTE) ^{.17} Other secondary data sources include organisations' websites, Facebook pages, and media releases. The chapter is time-bound (2014-2020), geographically limited (Sydney), and narrowed to a specific policy field (the NTE). I considered the 2014-2020 timeframe for three reasons. Firstly, in 2014 the extremely controversial lockdown laws were introduced. Secondly, in 2020, the lockdown laws were scrapped and the NSW *24-Hour Economy Strategy* adopted. Finally, during this period, a trend towards the institutionalisation of the NTE occurred also at the local government level with multiple local councils adopting a NTE strategy (e.g., Burwood Council, 2023; City of Newcastle, 2018; City of Parramatta, 2020).

The chapter is structured as follows. [Section 6.2](#) sets out the background and context to understand the NTE in Sydney during the lockdown laws. I provide an overview of key events. [Section 6.3](#) maps the coalitions of actors actively involved in policy change, or resisting it, their beliefs and policy involvement. Two were the key coalitions: the pro lockdown laws coalition consisting of police, health authorities, academia, residents; the re-regulation coalition made up of Keep Sydney Open (KSO), local governments, state government agencies, night businesses, some residents. I argue that the actor's landscape has been filling up fast and was composed of adversarial and collaborative coalitions. [Section 6.4](#) analyses the strategies and roles of different actors in influencing policy change around the NTE before Covid-19. I argue that KSO initiated change, but the substantial change occurred during the JSCSNTE where multiple actors such as Night Time Industries Association (NTIA) took this moment as an opportunity to promote policy innovation. [Section 6.5](#) discusses the JSCSNTE parliamentary inquiry as a critical

¹⁷ Online documents analysed included newspapers clippings where direct statements from multiple actors appeared; social media Facebook posts from public profile figures, individual and organisation's submissions to the parliamentary inquiry JSCSNTE, and media releases. Selected documents were produced by multiple actors between 2014 and 2020.

juncture and a policy window. Within the JSCSNT, conflicting rationalities unfolded to discuss the impact of the lockout laws while policy entrepreneurs pushed for new NTE policies. [Section 6.6](#) discusses the scrapping of the lockout laws. [Section 6.7](#) concludes the chapter discussing the findings.

Substantial research has been undertaken on the Sydney NTE before Covid-19. Like international experiences (Hadfield, 2006), much of the literature observes that the NTE was a contested time-space where conflicting rationalities converged into the discussion around the impact of the lockout laws. An extensive study investigated the response of KSO as a grassroots pro-nightlife movement (Wolifson, 2018b), the role and position of the City of Sydney Council were also analysed (Wolifson, 2018a; Wolifson & Drozdowski, 2017). The positions and arguments of multiple actors through content analysis of news and media were analysed (Howse et al., 2021). Some studies focused on the populist rhetoric of the state, families of victims, and positions for and against the lockout laws (Hughes & Weedon-Newstead, 2018; Lee, 2016). Several studies focused on the impact of the lockout laws in terms of displacement (Hughes & Weedon-Newstead, 2018), implications for the music city, debates on urban liveability implications for the global city thesis (Homan, 2019), effects on rental prices (Perks & Maruyama, 2017), reduction in night-time assaults, alcohol related harms and hospitalisations from a public health and criminological perspective (Conigrave, 2016). However, the factors leading to the repeal of the lockout laws and more recent changes in the NTE policy field have not been explored. This chapter addresses this gap focusing on actors, strategies and their impacts.

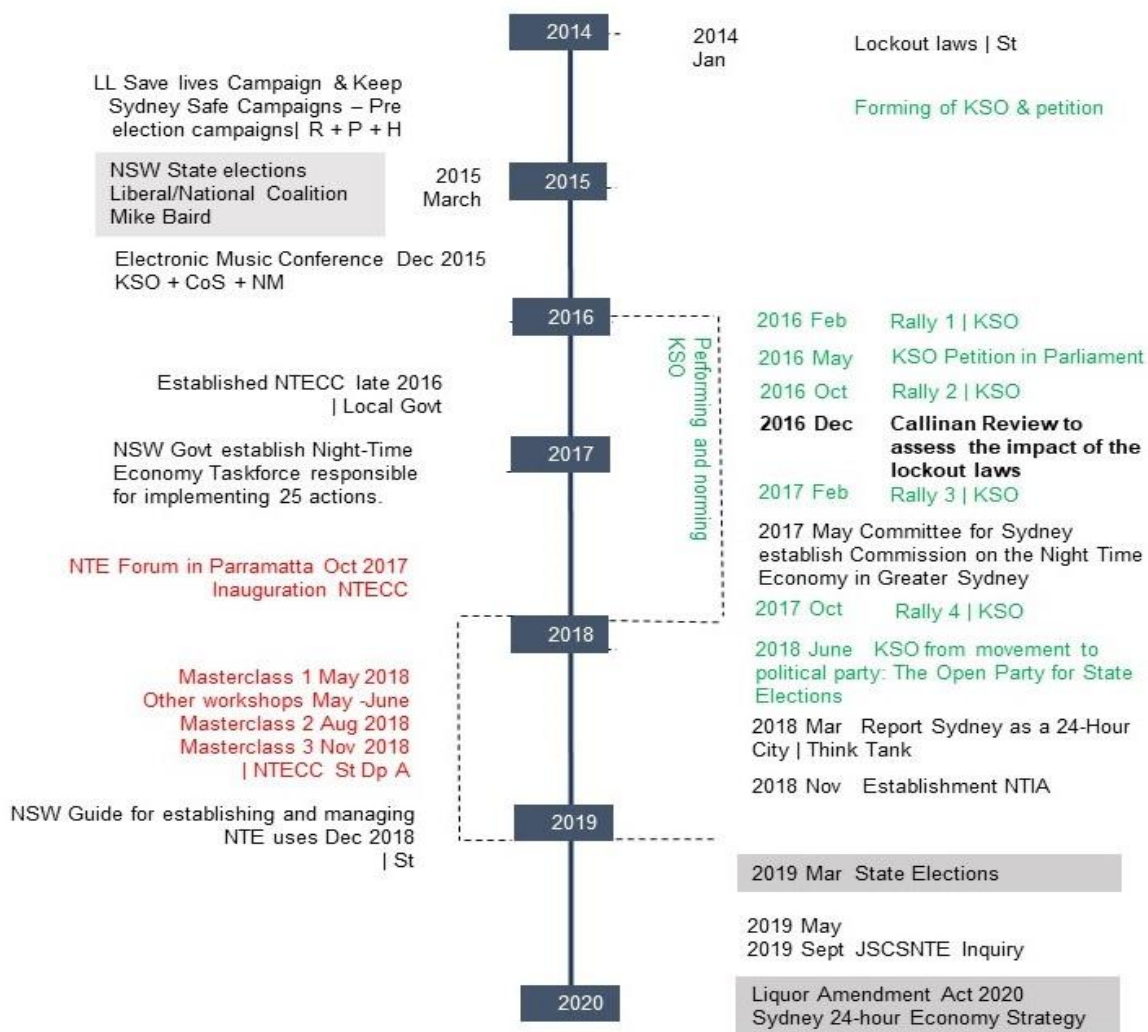
6.2 Governing Sydney's NTE after the imposition of the lockout laws: background and context

Governing the NTE in Sydney's NTE after the lockout laws increased complexity, due to the multiple actors and organisations impacted. Research and academic institutions came to support the pro-lockout laws coalition including police, health and residents. Immediately after the lockout laws were put in place, KSO was established to contest the lockout laws and its impact on Sydney nightlife (Wolifson, 2018b). The rise of KSO represented a power shift influencing public opinion and mobilising many supporters. However, its influence declined after becoming a political party in 2018. Additionally, the rise of emerging actors outside and within government, transnational nightlife networks, state agencies, local councils, not-for-profit think tanks, local councils and government, non-for-profit organisations, and state agencies weakened the power of KSO. Examples are the NTIA, newly formed industry organisation for the NTE, and the Night Time Economy Council Committee (NTECC). Along with the NTECC, state government departments became more involved in understanding policies around the NTE. A central player was the Night Time Industries Association (NTIA) established by night businesses 2018. The NTIA demanded the repeal of the lockout laws and re-regulation.

A chronology of key events is included in Figure 6.1. Figure 6.1 shows that several attempts to review the lockout laws or introduce changes were made. First in 2016,

during the “storming” phase of KSO, an independent inquiry, the Callinan Review, was established to review the lockout laws (Wolifson, 2018b). It has been argued that the Callinan review avoided taking into consideration “the effects of the lockout laws on nightlife as an important space of social and cultural development, expression, and belonging” (Wolifson, 2018b, p. 46). Following the Callinan review minor changes were introduced. The NTECC encouraged many local councils in Sydney to undergo an entrepreneurial shift and adopt a NTE strategy. The NTE in Sydney after the lockout laws were implemented became rooted in conflicting rationalities.

Figure 6.1 NTE before the repeal of the lockout laws in 2020: chronology of key events



Notes P refers to police, R refers to residents’ organization, H refers to health authorities, KSO refers to KSO, NTECC refers to Night Time Economy Council Committee, St Dp refers to State Departments, A refers to academia; JSCSNT refers to Joint Select Committee Sydney Night-Time Economy, NTIA refers to Nightlife Industries Association, St refers to State.

Close to the state elections in March 2019, several actors targeted political parties and candidates to advocate for or against the repeal of the lockdown laws. For example, the Night Time Industries Association launched *Unite for the Night* campaign to educate the major political parties on the NTE (English, 2019; Young, 2019). In sharp contrast, inner-city residents launched a pro lockdown laws campaign highlighting the benefits of the lockdown laws (2011 Residents Association, 2015, 2019).

The election was won by the right of centre Liberal/National Coalition. In January 2019, the NSW Government delivered mere \$1.5 million in funding to stimulate the NTE. Other state government initiatives were also payroll tax changes for NSW businesses, a program to activate nightlife precincts across Sydney, investments to live music, grants for Liquor Accords¹⁸ (NSW Government, 2020a). Between May 2019 and September 2019, the Parliamentary Inquiry JSCSNTE was established. Within this inquiry conflicting and competing rationalities unfolded to set the agenda for government intervention. Like other international experiences (Hadfield, 2006), conflicting rationalities manifested during the policy implementation of the lockdown laws where the impacts of the lockdown laws became evident and polarising (Homan, 2019; Howse et al., 2021; Lee, 2016; Wadds, 2020). Following the final report of the JSCSNTE, the repeal of the lockdown laws was announced in October 2019 by the then NSW Premier, Gladys Berejiklian. Announcing the scrapping of the lockdown laws, she commented,

Sydney has transformed dramatically over recent years, and we need to ensure we have a strong and vibrant night-time economy that reflects our position as Australia's only truly global city. (in Elsworthy, 2019)

In February 2020 the repeal of the lockdown laws came into effect with a reform of the liquor license legislation *Liquor Amendment Night Time Economy Act 2020*. In March 2021, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the state government appointed a 24-Hour Economy Commissioner and adopted a 24H Economy Strategy (Boon, 2021; Young, 2020).

6.3 Advocacy coalitions and beliefs

In [Chapter 5](#), I showed that the actors' landscape was constituted by the City of Sydney Council, state government, residents, families of victims, health and police authorities, and night businesses. After the introduction of the lockdown laws, the number of actors rapidly expanded. Before analysing the roles, strategies and the impacts of multiple actors in shaping change ([Sections 6.4](#)), it is essential to map and identify the key advocacy coalitions ([Section 6.3.1](#)), their beliefs, policy involvement and motivations for action ([Section 6.3.2](#)). As mentioned in [Chapter 3](#), advocacy coalitions are groups of policy

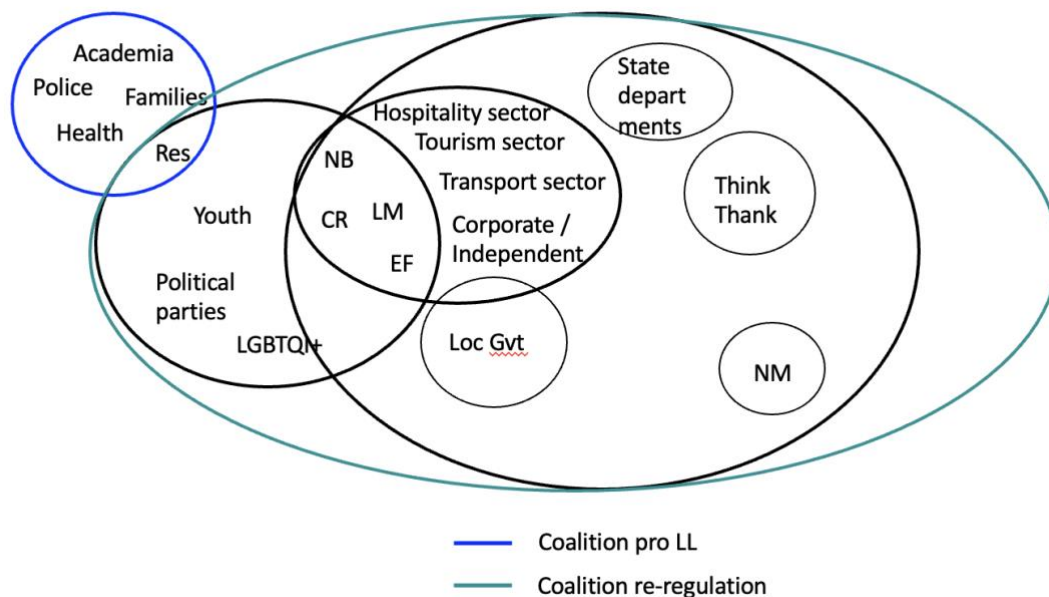
¹⁸ Liquor Accords in New South Wales are public-private partnerships and tools established to reduce alcohol-related harm around and in licensed venues. These partnerships involve community members, local councils, licensed venues, and government departments.

actors actively involved in a policy issue who share policy beliefs and influence the policy process through coordination and team building (Sabatier, 1988; Weible & Ingold, 2018). A map of the key advocacy coalitions and their policy actors offers insights into the political dynamics at play in resisting or driving change (Mintrom, 2019a).

6.3.1 Advocacy coalitions: the stage filled up fast

Figure 6.2 shows that two coalitions which were relevant during the period under review – 2014 to early 2020. The two coalitions were the pro lockout laws coalition, and the re-regulation coalition. The pro lockout laws coalition included the police, health authorities, residents and research centres. The re-regulation coalition was constituted by Keep Sydney Open which included several political parties, elected representatives from the City of Sydney, events and festivals representatives, creative industries representatives, high profile figures, night business managers, and live music sector representatives (Wolifson, 2018b). Furthermore, the re-regulation coalition included state agencies, local governments who gathered in the NTECC, and night business in the newly established NTIA. The re-regulation coalition was supported by the Committee for Sydney, a powerful local think tank, and a network of international NTE advocates from Europe and the UK.

Figure 6.2 Advocacy coalitions within the NTE before Covid-19: a relational map



Although they had all different focuses, they were all impacted by and interested in the NTE and its policies. Police, health authorities and a group of residents were satisfied with the success of the lockout laws and resisted any change. Research centres and scholars supported the coalition with the production of study and evidence to support the “success” of the lockout laws in reducing alcohol-violent assaults. KSO challenged the status quo and argued that the lockout laws had decimated the NTE and the international

reputation of Sydney as a global city. Local governments who were interested in the development of the NTE, experienced policy implementation barriers around the NTE and called for re-regulation of the NTE. Many night businesses were disappointed from the debate around the lockdown laws, experienced distrust in government and were highly motivated in changing the NTE narrative. Night businesses called for re-regulation and de-regulation, and new government investments.

6.3.2 Advocacy coalitions: focus, policy involvement, and beliefs

Table 6.1 summarises the focus and key policy involvement of each advocacy coalition. Not all these actors focused solely on the lockdown laws. For instance, local governments were mainly interested in NTE management, night strategies design, implementation, and capacity building. Similarly, the Committee for Sydney think tank was primarily involved in the design of the *24-Hour Economy Strategy*.

Table 6.1 Advocacy coalitions, focus and key policy involvement after the lockdown laws

Advocacy coalitions	Focus	Key policy involvement
Pro lockdown laws coalition	Night safety, public health, urban liveability	Liquor license bill
Keep Sydney Open	Civil liberties > Safe NTE for global city > International reputation > Social cultural value of the NTE.	Liquor license bill
Local Governments	NTE narrative: vibrant, inclusive, sustainable NTE for Sydney global city	NTE strategies, NTE management, 24H Economy Strategy
NTIA	NTE for Sydney global city Economic value of the NTE NTE narrative	Liquor license bill, 24H Economy Strategy
State agencies	-	Liquor license bill, planning regulations, cultural strategies
Think Tank	24H economy for Sydney global city	24H Economy Strategy

An overview of the deep core beliefs and policy core beliefs of each advocacy coalitions are presented in Table 6.2. The pro lockdown laws coalition shifted policy core beliefs from “NTE requires regulation” to “regulation is successful” (See [Chapter 5](#)). The pro lockdown coalition configuration remained stable advocating against any repeal of the lockdown laws. The pro lockdown coalition confirmed one of the advocacy coalition hypotheses that since a coalition together agrees over policy core beliefs (i.e., regulating the NTE is the way to improve urban liveability and quality of life, and safety), these beliefs are resistant to change and are likely to remain stable for a substantial period (Sabatier, 1988; Weible et al., 2009). The pro lockdown laws coalition argued that the lockdown laws reduced the rate of alcohol-violence, a new NTE was flourishing in Kings Cross and the measure saved lives. The City of Sydney was joined by other local governments in arguing that “A successful

NTE depends on the community feeling safe” (NTECC, 2018, p. 13). Re-regulation needs to occur through communication, integrated management, and local government consultation. For night businesses the NTE was over-regulated and its economic potential underestimated.

Table 6.2 Advocacy coalitions, core beliefs and policy core beliefs after the lockdown laws

Advocacy coalitions	Deep core beliefs	Policy core belief
Pro lockdown laws coalition	A city vibrancy and a successful NTE are about far more than alcohol.	Regulating the NTE has reduced harms, violence and ensured night safety. ¹⁹ Regulating the NTE was effective in improving neighbourhood liveability and quality of life. Regulation needs to stay. “Evening business economy is flourishing.” ²⁰
Keep Sydney Open	A safe and vibrant night is a success for Sydney global city and its reputation	Regulating the NTE impacted civil liberties, damaged the vibrancy of Sydney NTE, its international reputation as global city. ²¹
Local Governments	NTE should be safe, vibrant, diverse and sustainable. Sydney NTE is not just the CBD but the broader metropolitan area.	NTE requires integrated management. Re-regulation through collaboration and communication across government departments and within different level of government is needed. NTE narrative needs to change. Late night transport should be a priority. A governance framework for the NTE is needed.
NTIA	NTE is over-regulated and its economic potential underestimated. NTE is not just licensed venues, but it involves other sectors.	NTE requires re-regulation: better regulation, less regulation NTE narrative needs to change. Funding and investments should be a priority.

¹⁹ The success of the lockdown laws was emphasised across the members of the coalition in their submissions to the JCSNTE (2011 Residents Association, 2019; Police Association of New South Wales, 2019; St Vincent’s Health Network Sydney, 2019). The position of St Vincent Hospital about the lockdown laws was also analysed in Fleming (2020). See also Howse et al. (2021) who analysed the arguments and positions of multiple coalitions through content analysis of media and newspapers.

²⁰ See 2011 Residents Association (2019, p. 46). Evidence also suggests that the NTE profile in Kings Cross has changed after the introduction of the lockdown laws from youth oriented nightlife to new night businesses including restaurants and smaller bars, “targeting the local catchments and a more upmarket clientele” (Van den Nouwelant, 2017, pp. 158–161).

²¹ See Wolifson (2018b) for a comprehensive account of Keep Sydney Open, their strategies, and response to the lockdown laws.

		Regulation impacted business confidence and trust in government
State agencies	-	A governance framework for the NTE is needed
Think Tank	24H economy for Sydney global city	Re-regulation is the key: a NTE strategy, state leadership, and negotiation.

6.4 Strategies for policy change: towards the state led NTE strategy

This section explores the strategies and roles of the re-regulation coalition in promoting policy change in Sydney's NTE, i.e. the repeal of the lockdown laws and the adoption of the *24-Hour Economy Strategy*. I argue that the most recent changes are best explained by the policy entrepreneurship strategies of KSO, local governments, NTIA, state departments and Committee of Sydney think tank. Strategies are at the heart of policy change (Mintrom & Norman, 2009a). I identify three types of strategies that advocacy coalitions used to lead a process of policy change in Sydney's NTE between 2014 and 2020. These strategies were derived from the complementary activities of key organisations such as, but not exclusively limited to, Keep Sydney Open, NTIA, and NTECC. I describe how these organisations gained influence and what impact they had within the NTE. These strategies were employed in two concurrent phases. The first was a policy evaluation phase where the impacts of the lockdown laws were discussed prior to and within the JSCSNTE parliamentary inquiry. The second was an agenda setting phase where conflicting and competing rationalities proposed recommendations with the aim of persuading the NSW state government to maintain or repeal the lockdown and introduce a new governance framework around the NTE.

6.4.1 Keep Sydney Open: the pioneer

In the early 2014, Keep Sydney Open (KSO) emerged as a self-organised pro nightlife movement protesting the lockdown laws (Wolifson, 2018b). Interviewees actively involved in the KSO and recalling that period, explained that the drivers behind its rise were firstly the recognition of the importance of the "night-time space" as "the only time *where* Sydneysiders can meet and talk about who they are" (Peter) and secondly the enormous discontent around the lockdown laws and a fierce will to lobby the NSW state government for their repeal. Peter, who was highly involved in the KSO movement reflected on the tactics of KSO. He argued that they emerged as 'learning by doing' and were highly experimental. To investigate these tactics, we need to consider two temporal phases: the inception and the growth of the KSO.

KSO - forming

Initially, the KSO was a small group, and meetings occurred informally and symbolically in night venues. The KSO also created a Facebook page Peter, who was involved in the KSO from the start, highlighted the role of key individuals:

The guy [Tyson Koh] ...was operating by himself. He was a dj [and] ... a music producer, and he was really passionate about stopping these lockout laws (Peter)

At the beginning the KSO was lacking in direction:

It was me; he (Tyson Koh) had some other people helping him ... There might have been a group of 6-8-10 people ... Most of them would come and go. Most of them never really said anything in meetings. ... We didn't know what we were doing. All we had was a petition to stop these lockouts. (Peter)

The petition was extremely significant. It collected over 10.000 signatures and was presented to the NSW Parliament by Jenny Leong, The Green MP for Newtown in 2015 (Leong, n.d., n.d.). The petition asked NSW Government to 1) Commit to develop policies to ensure NTE diversity with consideration of safety, public amenities, transport, security and night venues density; 2) Recognise the value and contribution that live music, night-time culture and creativity make to Sydney and its residents, as well as its global reputation. 3) Scrap the lockout laws; 4) acknowledge that alcohol-related violence is not inevitable but reregulation through responsible planning and government initiatives can maintain Sydney's nightlife vibrancy and ensure its accessible to all (Leong, 2016). The petition did not lead to any significant change and a new phase for KSO began: the 'storming phase'.

The growth of the KSO

Between February 2016 and October 2018, the KSO organised four rallies against the lockout laws. The rallies, participation in public forum, an active Facebook page, and media presence were part of the strategy to gain support. Rallies and protests were supported by City of Sydney councillors, Jess Scully participated as a speaker. KSO activities highly engaged youth, residents, creative people and live music performers. Additionally, taxi drivers, convenience stores owners and NTE businesses were angry about the situation and joined the KSO endeavours. As Peter recalled:

And suddenly what we worked out was that this was a big issue. People were really angry about it (the lockout laws) ... All of a sudden, the activism went from a petition to a really big protest to suddenly a really big following on Facebook. ... Facebook followers went from 1 to 2,000 to 40,000 in a couple of weeks. And suddenly we could talk to people and escalate this issue.

Initially, the main argument evolved around the impact of the lockout laws as an attack on civil liberties and it was linked to a "nanny state rhetoric" (Magnusson & Griffiths, 2015). Following, the argument evolved around the "NTE is the soul of our city" and the adoption of the "global city rhetoric". Consistent with the global city rhetoric was part of a learning by doing process in which the Keep Sydney Open movement continually

reframed their rhetorical space until a more convincing argument was reached (Wolifson, 2018b).

KSO focused their attention on those who had been impacted by the lockout laws like the creative workers and NTE business owners (Keep Sydney Open, 2014, 2016, 2019). The emergence of NTE specific interests changed the perspective through which political leaders could gain popular support. It also re-distributed political capital between groups. The power and status exercised by health authorities, the state and the police were challenged and diluted.

We started to get in touch with a lot of different people. So, Tyson spoke with the Amsterdam night mayor ... and he had an ongoing conversation with him. And then our network extended into people like that across Western Europe... So as a small team running out, I think there was four or five of us who were running the political party. We knew we needed help. We knew we needed volunteers. We knew we needed candidates to run. And we knew we needed a team, so we had to build that team. And one way we worked out how to build that team was through ... regular meetings. (Peter)

The NTE was presented as a tool to promote Sydney as a global city. Peter quote is illustrative:

We could see that Sydney had once been a global city, and now wasn't. ... We started to use this term 'global city'. We could see that Sydney's reputation had been devastated. ... We started to use that [global city] and then we stumbled upon the 'night-time economy'. And we realised how powerful an argument that was. ... We worked out that we could attract liberal voters to our cause by using it ... And then as soon as the narrative, the story, and the movement [Keep Sydney Open] started building ... They all came around and started using this NTE phrase. ... The politicians are the last ones to get to the issue, right? Now that the issue is in the mainstream, the NTE is suddenly a big thing.

The KSO aligned with the City of Sydney perspectives around the NTE as a tool to promote Sydney as a global city. The strong ties between KSO and the City of Sydney were evident. Two pivotal moments were relevant for both KSO and City of Sydney: the Global Cities After Dark and Electronic Music Conference where international NTE advocates were also amongst the speakers (see 'Global Cities After Dark Has Unveiled Its Full 2018 Program', 2018).

Keep Sydney Open activists argued that the first review of the lockout laws and the establishment of the JSCSNTE in 2019 was largely the result of the opposition spurred by Keep Sydney Open, and concurrent to the change of Keep Sydney Open to *The Open Sydney* political party. A NTE entrepreneur involved in Keep Sydney Open rallies explained:

I think we shifted ... the opinion of the city around the lockouts. I think we made Sydney aware that they [lockout laws] were a bad thing for the city. ... I think that action of running in the [NSW state] election and forming a political party and taking votes off the government forced the government to have [an inquiry, the JSCSNT] ... I'm a firm believer that our advocacy directly led to that. And I don't think it would have happened if we didn't invest all that time fighting. Because an issue ... starts off very small, it gets louder and louder and louder until it hits a tipping point. ... I think it wouldn't have got to that point without us. I think that this is the main achievement, and I think, promoting the importance of the night-time space within Sydney. (Peter)

Figure 6.3 Keep Sydney Open storming



Source: Sam Whiteside in Keep Sydney Open (2017)

The attention and support seeking strategy was used by non-state actors such as KSO to demonstrate the significance of the NTE and to persuade a wide range of actors about the value of the NTE. The attention and support seeking strategy was applied through different activities - media, framing the NTE around the global city and discussing the impact of the lockout laws in terms of unintended consequences. Organisations like KSO endeavoured to change the discourse around the NTE from alcohol-related violence to Sydney nightlife is dead and from the latter to Sydney NTE as relevant for global city status.

From pro-nightlife movement to political party: impact of KSO

In 2018, KSO turned into a political party running for the NSW State Legislative Council (Wolifson, 2018b). The newly formed political party was motivated by a perceived lack

of influence of KSO representatives, as the leader of KSO stated in a newspaper article: “government won’t listen unless there is a direct threat to their power” (Koh in Noyes, 2019). The clear motivation behind the formation of a political party suggests a political entrepreneurship strategy around threatening the government by reducing their electorate support with the hope to achieve NTE policy changes – scrapping the lockout laws.

A NTE businessperson involved in the KSO party reflected on the political impact that The Open Sydney party had in the NSW state elections in 2019.

Keep Sydney Open was 100% successful. Keep Sydney Open massively made the lockouts a main feature of that [NSW state] election (2019) and the lockouts went. Keep Sydney Open achieved what it set out to achieve. (Andrew)

Other interviewees reflected on the why KSO was unsuccessful for an extended period. An interviewee who worked closely with the KSO commented:

We need to push in this piece of regulation for change. I think maybe ... [why] Keep Sydney Open campaign took so long to get the changes [it wanted] is that it had a very steep learning curve, and it didn't have that policy advocacy. It didn't necessarily know exactly what it wanted changed. It didn't quite know how to articulate its public value. (Thomas)

An expert board member of a nightlife advisory committee with direct experience of the debates around the lockout laws, reflected on the debate arising from KSO’s advocacy

I think they (KSO) were very powerful at mobilising young people, very, very powerful. ... I feel like in some way the lockouts didn’t affect a huge amount of city nightlife ... and KSO, really drove this immensely negative narrative about Sydney, both here and globally, that Sydney was dead. ... I think they (KSO) were very powerful, and in a really sort of unharnessed kind of way not like a very destructive way that ultimately created the context for a lot of the reforms that have happened. (Harvey)

The overall transition of KSO to a political party was a clear political entrepreneurship strategy, threatening elected representative to introduce changes – scrapping the lockout laws. KSO was a key disruption of the status quo and the pro-lockout laws coalitions (Chapter 5), and a window of opportunity perceived as such from other actors with high levels of social acuity such as the NTIA and local governments which I discuss below. Following, the long and fierce advocacy of KSO, the actors landscape increased with the raise in influence of new actors – NTIA. KSO party received 81,508 primary votes for the Legislative Council, not enough to ensure representation in NSW Parliament. Short after the election – March 2019 – the state government opened a parliamentary inquiry (Section 6.5).

6.4.2 Local governments: “by councils, for councils”

Besides the KSO, another policy actor emerged in late 2016, the Night Time Economy Council Committee (NTECC). The NTECC initially involved council staff from five city councils across Sydney, with the City of Sydney leading the work (Local Government NSW, 2019; Local Government NSW & NTECC, n.d.), and Local Government NSW, peak body for local government in NSW.²² Today at least 16 councils are involved. The primary aims of the still existing NTECC are:

Share information on best practice approaches and contemporary issues to build knowledge and council capabilities to shape vibrant, safe and sustainable NTEs

Establish a consistent approach to the development and management of NTEs to achieve positive outcomes for business and the community

Advocate to state and federal governments on matters of common interest

Establish a network of night time economy policy practitioners across NSW councils

Promote awareness among councillors and staff of the value and benefit of taking a proactive approach to the development and management of the NTE and the work being done in this area

Promote the benefits of subscribing to the National Night Time Economies Report

Facilitate capacity building and develop collaborative partnerships around NTE initiatives (Local Government NSW & NTECC, n.d.).

The primary mission and involvement of the NTECC was not the lockdown laws.

To encourage a proactive development of night-time economies across NSW local government areas. It is important for local government to develop policies that shape vibrant, inclusive and sustainable night-time economy through economic development, community safety, arts and culture, planning and regulation and placemaking. (NTECC, 2018, p. 26)

The NTECC used team building amongst local councils to broaden the conversation around the NTE. support the exchange of expertise, knowledge and NTE governance

²² The council's member of the NTECC were initially City of Sydney Council, City of Parramatta Council, Waverly Council, Wollongong City Council, City of Newcastle Council. The council's member of the NTECC includes now: Inner West Council, Penrith City Council, Liverpool City Council, City of Canterbury-Bankstown Council, Lake Macquarie City Council, City of Ryde, Camden Council, Randwick Council, Northern Beaches Council, Burwood Council, Georges River Council (Local Government NSW & NTECC, n.d.).

practices, and foster the identification of cross-cutting issues related to the NTE. The strategies adopted were useful to increase advocacy and capacity building and discuss NTE policies and alternatives. Local councils were in close contact with the NTECC as Local Government NSW stated in its submission to the JSCSNTE:

Those on the NTECC are staff members with a diverse range of knowledge, including economic development, community safety, urban design, place-making, culture and advocacy. Councils from Greater Sydney and some regional areas attended NTECC's first event - the NSW Night Time Economy Councils' Forum held in October 2017. Following the Forum, council staff were invited to join an online Night Time Economy practitioners' network. The network comprises 160 council officers from over 50 councils in NSW. ... NTECC has two primary objectives – advocacy and capacity building – and has so far hosted four free NTE masterclasses for council staff which have been well attended. The most recent masterclass, Making Space for Culture, was held in June and had 100 people registered. The success of the NTECC shows there is a real appetite among councils in NSW to develop their night time economies and establish clear policies and strategies. (Local Government NSW, 2019, p. 4)

The effort of scaling up and team building was clearly described in an interview I conducted with a local government official:

There was really a formal mechanism through which those groups came together ... There were policies ... There wasn't really internal *conversation*, "How are we going to implement them? How are we going to achieve them?" That wasn't going on. We did a lot of the research. I think *we flushed out the people who needed to be involved in the conversation*. And then there was a lot of work internally, sorting out working groups, so getting kind of formal mechanisms to get the people from the different departments [within councils] talking to each other. ... It was probably six months or a year of just them learning how to talk to each other's. (Thea, emphasis added)

The quote suggests that the identification of who should sit at the table was highly relevant and strategic in pursuing change. The quote also suggests that there was a recognition amongst local government officials around weak communication between departments in the same council and between council and state.

Figure 6.4 Local governments: working from within



Edited and anonymised photos from documents provided by NTECC

Another local government official with expertise in place making and strategic planning who was involved in the working groups of the NTECC commented:

We were running that (NTECC), and it is still running. We have been meeting monthly for three or four years, putting together bits and pieces ... doing some more research. Setting up another working group where we sat down ... and said, “Okay, how’s this thing [going to] work? And we had these amazing conversations ... (Thomas)

The interviewees referred to the several meetings that occurred between 2017 and 2018. The meetings, masterclass and workshops addressed several topics such as NTE strategy development, NTE strategies assessment and accountability, effective stakeholders’ engagement, urban planning for the night and culture development (NTECC, 2018). At these meetings, as the interviewees suggested, invited speakers were both local government officials with different areas of expertise, representatives of multiple state departments, representatives from academia and representative of businesses. Other meetings occurred as part of the Sydney Night Time Economy Taskforce established by the state of NSW in 2017 with government agencies to the JSCSNTE.

By the time of the elections in March 2019 the NTECC was an established key player with policy advocacy capacity. Similar to KSO, the NTECC targeted candidates to the NSW Government promoting their key priorities: 1) the co-design of a whole of government NTE Strategy; 2) the establishment of a NTE steering group and an advisory panel for the implementation of the strategy; 3) allocation of public funding for local governments to boost their NTE; 4) improve late night transport and 5) further simplification of regulations (e.g., liquor licensing, planning, noise and building regulations) (NTECC, 2019).

6.4.3 Night Time Industries Association: lobbying from outside

The rise of KSO, the debate around the lockout laws, and the narrative around the NTE as a sphere of alcohol-related violence was interpreted by other actors as a “window of opportunity” (Mintrom & Norman, 2009b). In 2018, the Night Time Industries Association (NTIA) was formalised as a member-based industry organisation.²³ It was acknowledged in interviews that the inspiration for a NTIA came from the Londoner homonymous NTIA. Members included consulting and urban planners, local councils, corporate night businesses organisations, individual night businesses, media, representatives from festival and events sectors, and high cultural institutions. The NTIA skilfully worked around building a team that was representative of different sectors of the NTE to change the narrative. An interviewee reflected on a reframing the strategy focusing on the job potential and economic growth:

We really had a strong hand in taking a different path on how to engage with government and show them the impact of the lockouts and also show them a path out [and] that it wasn't about violence on the streets. It was actually about employment, it was about an economy, ... human connection. And it was very easy to get lost in the narrative that ... everything bad happened at night, so we enabled them to see a path outside that. (Zoe)

The argument was premised on a consultancy report that concluded that the “Sydney NTE is worth over \$27 billion if Sydney had a better performing NTE” (NTIA (Night Time Industries Association), 2019, p. 5). As part of the reframing strategy, the NTIA tried to expand the previously perceived impact of the NTE towards diversity of experiences and sectors which are not necessarily related to alcohol consumption. A representative of a business organisation involved in the establishment and management of the organisation commented on the motivations behind its formalisation:

We brought the commission together [NTIA], primarily because the debate at the time around the night-time economy in Sydney, felt as though it was very limited and very focused around licensing, around alcohol [and] the lockout laws in particular parts of Sydney. And I felt that there was a much bigger opportunity to talk about the night-time economy in a much broader sense, and particularly the economic opportunities of having a more diverse night-time sector. We really started that conversation with state government and with businesses and we wanted to bring together a coalition of different parts of the night-time economy ecosystem including owners, providers, regulators, artists, creatives. (Zoe)

²³ A homonymous NTIA model exists in the UK, similar models exist in other cities, for instance Berlin Clubcommission, Singapore Nightlife Business Association, LiveKommbinat Leipzig.

The quote above suggests two things. First, it is not the external event *per se* which produces change, rather how actors perceive events and respond to them is key (Mintrom & Norman, 2009b). Second, team building across different sectors of the NTE was a tactic to build capacity. Similarly, a representative of a business organisation, explained the linking strategy during the public hearing of the JSCSNTE:

Our organisation did not exist up until a year ago. It formed because a growing number of businesses across the night-time economy—arts, culture, live performance, hospitality, hotel, and retail—recognised there was a crisis and to fix it they needed to get on the same page and do three things. First, talk to government in an objective way about what the industry needs overall. Secondly, build alignment between the various participants in the night-time economy so that working together they can provide a compelling offer to the city's residents and tourists. Lastly, promote that offering to the punter [average consumer]. I cannot labour the point hard enough. Our membership base comprises organisations who to some degree compete with each other for entertainment dollars, but they are increasingly putting differences aside in order to address the multitude of challenges affecting the sector. (*Report on Proceedings before Joint Select Committee on Sydney's Night-Time Economy, 12 Aug 2019, 2019, p. 8*)

Another interviewee also acknowledged the broad collective effort. Harvey was a member of an advocacy board that was involved in the attempt to promote changes.

A year later, lockout laws came in ... it was a reset for Sydney. I think it was also a big signal to industry that "You know what? This can't continue". ... It was a big shock, for many people. It had a pretty negative impact on the economy, so there was shrinkage. And because it's an ecosystem, many industries within the nightlife ecosystem were impacted, including transport, newsagents, like everyone who was actually supported by nightlife, felt the impacts and built on the same reset, a signal that things had to change, and I think an opportunity to build back better. All of those groups that were involved in advocacy from, Keep Sydney Open, all the work that was done by so many people, including ... back in the day with ..., and working with him to start up Night Time Industries Association that the City of Sydney supported, together with ... Nightlife and Creative Sector Advisory Panel, so bringing together all of the sort of key sector leaders, so working with them to understand what their needs were, they had input into our policies and our programmes as well. So many different aspects of work over many years. We even had like a specific sort of initiative around changing the narrative, that we worked with our panel on many conversations with different stakeholders about self-fulfilling prophecies with the narrative that was being run out at the time, which was "Sydney's dead ... you're not helping". (NTIA (Night Time Industries Association), 2019, p. 5)

6.5 The Joint Select Committee on Sydney Night-Time Economy: a policy window

The JSCSNTE was a critical juncture (Kingdon, 1991), i.e. a unique opportunity “open for only a while,” to push for policy change. Using the word of one interview: “That momentum, the public inquiry into Sydney’s NTE” (Noah). In May 2019, the NSW State Government established the Joint Select Committee on Sydney Night-Time Economy (JSCSNTE), a parliamentary inquiry to: (a) maintain and enhance community safety; (b) maintain and enhance individual and community health outcomes; (c) ensure existing regulatory arrangements in relation to individuals, businesses and other stakeholders, including Sydney’s lockdown laws, remain appropriately balanced; (d) enhance Sydney’s NTE (Parliament of NSW, 2019). The JSCSNTE collected 273 publicly available submissions from multiple organisations and individuals, within and outside government. The state-led JSCSNTE was furnished with terms of reference, hosted three public hearings, night site visits, and answers to question on notice. The JSCSNTE concluded and ceased to exist in September 2019 with the release of a ‘Final Report’ (NSW Parliament & Joint Select Committee on Sydney’s Night Time Economy, 2019). The *Final Report* included 40 recommendations inclusive of *inter alia* the removal of the lockdown laws, encouraging arts and creative sectors for the NTE development, improving coordination across the NTE and the development of a clear NTE strategy and governance framework (NSW Parliament & Joint Select Committee on Sydney’s Night Time Economy, 2019).

Figure 6.5 The Joint Select Committee on Sydney’s NTE: a policy window



Screenshot of a public hearing within the JSCSNTE. The public hearing was video broadcasted and published by 7NEWS on YouTube. Justin Hemmes is the founder of a corporate hospitality company, Merivale. Justine Baker was at that time, the CEO of a corporate NTE business. *Source: 7NEWS Australia (2019)*

Conflicting rationalities around the implementation of the lockdown laws devolved into competing rationalities during an agenda setting phase where multiple actors reframed the NTE, reiterated night-time issues and proposed policy interventions. Such activity occurred alongside the state-led JSCSNTE parliamentary inquiry where

recommendations were made to identify what problems and opportunities will become the subject of state government action.

6.5.1 *Conflicting rationalities unfold*

We have seen in [Section 6.3](#) that actors had very different perspectives. Contestations unfolded around the implementation and assessment of the lockdown laws. Noteworthy is that not all of the interviewees spoke about the lockdown laws. It largely depended on whether the interviewee had been affected by the lockdown laws. Some of the 24H business people interviewed operated outside inner Sydney and the lockdown laws did not impact on them. For local government officials in Sydney's middle and outer ring, the lockdown laws were immaterial. Some of the residents interviewed were also not affected.

There was a broad consensus that the lockdown laws were successful in reducing violence, but that there were several unintended consequences. Adam stated:

It depends on what you define as success ... because if the ambition was to reduce violence, they were successful. If the ambition was to reduce violence, while maintaining city vibrancy, they weren't. Because the response had impacts beyond what was originally contemplated, which ultimately resulted in foot traffic decreasing into areas. I often say that the laws enacted to stop late admission to nightclubs. ... it came at a cost ... A large reduction in nighttime economy and venue closure. ... It's hard to make really good policy decisions quickly. I think they need to be evidence based.

Harvey had a similar analysis:

The lockdown laws were terrible. But in some ways, maybe without the lockdowns, and without the ...huge furore that followed them, we wouldn't have had that kind of momentum and the kind of political will as well that the government felt when they suddenly realised that they'd lost this huge segment to actually deliver very complicated policy reforms that operate across so many different areas of their remit.

Other interviewees stressed other unintended consequences - a displacement of night venues from the Kings Cross nightlife precinct to the inner-city suburb, Newtown. The displacement boosted the NTE and changed the character of the area. A local government official explained:

All of a sudden, these handful really trendy clubs and restaurants and bars opened in Newtown. ...Almost overnight... just boom. ... From two nights a week, it [Malbourhough Hotel] had four nights a week of people in the queue. ... Those early lockdown laws really changed the nighttime [economy] in Newtown (Archie)

Other interviewees observed that Kings Cross underwent a substantial NTE shift. Lachlan, a restaurant owner and venue manager opened his evening night business with his partner in Kings Cross during the lockdown laws. He explained that he previously owned a restaurant in another area of the city, however after consultations with hospitality consultants, he decided to open a night business in Kings Cross:

It's one of the most densely populated suburbs in New South Wales. ... Density means lots of people and that means potentially lots of customers. These consultants were also aware of future (urban development). For instance, right across from our restaurant there was a new apartment block, that would be opening a year after we started.

The quote above suggests that some groups perceive the evening and early night as an economic opportunity. Similarly, it is often widely believed that the 'evening economy' component is more welcoming, inclusive, accessible, and 'vibrant' (Wolifson, 2018a) focused on a 'civilised nightlife', dining and small bars, and perhaps more tolerable for residents) and therefore more palatable for city boosterism.

Conflicting rationalities around the NTE become more pronounced during the late-night and early-morning hours, as the priorities and needs of different groups clashed. While night business owners and their patrons view the post-midnight period as a space-time for economic development, socializing, escapism and entertainment, residents often perceive it as a critical time-space for rest. These clashes became especially acute when activities associated with nightlife, such as crowd noise on the streets, loud music, or late-night traffic, disrupt the peace of residential neighbourhoods. Additionally, the aftermath of a night out often exacerbated these tensions, with damages to public amenities – vandalised properties, defaced streets, overflowing trash bins – a visible impact of the NTE. The tension escalates as the night progresses, with noise becoming increasingly intolerable to residents who feel their right to sleep, and rest being infringed upon, while club owners and patrons argue for the freedom to enjoy the NTE.

The pro-lockout laws coalition was unanimous in celebrating the success of the lockdown laws in terms of reduction of violence and injuries, and improvements in neighbourhood liveability. This suggests that conflicting rationalities were concerned about the late-night and early-morning period as a 'danger-time'.

An excerpt from the JSCSNTE submission by the Police Association of New South Wales captures this view

Lockout laws have prevented significant amounts of violence and injury ...Police officers, paramedics, nurses and doctors no longer spend entire shifts going from assault to assault, breaking up brawl after brawl, and desperately trying to keep up with the wave of people injured by alcohol fuelled violence. ... The lockout laws remain necessary. (Police Association of New South Wales, 2019, pp. 3–4)

Similarly, some residents in Kings Cross also observed an improvement in the quality of life in the neighbourhood, a change in neighbourhood identity followed the urban development occurred during the lockdown laws. A resident stated:

The neighbourhood has now moved back to a safe ... high street again with cafes, and bakers and barber shops ... Because that (neighbourhood) changed so much during the four years of the lockdowns ... the neighbourhood has changed so much. (Hamish)

Other residents however felt that the area became just “boring”.

6.5.2 Debates around proposed policy interventions

While conflicting rationalities were unfolding around the impact of the lockdown laws, policy entrepreneurs exploited the JSCSNTE to reframe the problems around the NTE, propose a new policy image and the preferred policy interventions. Debates around proposed policy interventions involved actors within the re-regulation coalition such as Committee for Sydney think tank, NTIA, other business organisations, state agencies and NTECC. In JSCSNTE there was a broad recognition that the at that time governance of the NTE was fragmented, with many agencies and departments both at state and local government level overseeing the NTE (Committee for Sydney, 2019). Others emphasised the “strangling regulation” and the lack of investments as a barrier for the NTE development (Live Music Office, 2019; NTIA (Night Time Industries Association), 2019).

That momentum, the public inquiry into Sydney's NTE, the advocacy by the City of Sydney together with all the key industry stakeholders that contributed to that. I think the biggest win was state government setting up Team 24 [24HEO], and putting in place a strategy that was a catalytic moment for us. After many, many years of advocacy finally the state government came to the party, so to speak. And I think that has enabled us to really accelerate the agenda The more people you speak to the more people speak to the narrative and the vision and the more people get on board with. Oh, my God, like, of course, this is absolutely what's needed and an important thing to work towards. (Thea)

A broad consensus existed around three key themes: the establishment of a NTE governance framework with a coordination mechanism, the development and adoption of a NTE strategy with a key vision, and the allocation of public investments into the development of the NTE. According to the City of Sydney submission, a prospective NTE governance framework was an opportunity to combine different governance modes such as formal (top-down) and informal (bottom-up) approaches of governing the NTE, to move from a regulatory regime (command-and control) towards reregulation. A governance framework should have been provided to 1) provide leadership, co-ordination of NSW government agencies and multiple stakeholders; 2) improve capacity building, advisory capacity, and policy design; 3) ensure the local implementation and delivery of policy outcomes (City of Sydney, 2019).

The debate played around the NTE governance model that is how the NTE governance framework could have looked like and who should have been responsible to do what. Some proposed the establishment of a NTE Steering Group and the appointment of a Minister for the NTE as a replacement of an existing time limited NTE Taskforce.

The NTE Steering Group should also include local government representation, ideally from LGNSW, to provide a state-wide voice for all councils. The NSW NTE Strategy should: 1. Outline the vision, objectives and responsibilities for state agencies and local government 2. Set priorities for funding and investment 3. Outline key outcomes and measures 4. Be created in collaboration with local government, NSW NTECC, and industry. That the NSW Government appoint a Minister for the Nighttime Economy with a dedicated NTE office within the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and establish a NTE steering group comprising of state agencies, and local government representation, to develop and implement an NSW-wide night time economy strategy. {Citation}

Concerns around the establishment of a new NTE governance framework, particularly the appointment of a night mayor, were raised. Elected representatives from the local government were reluctant to support the model of the 'night mayor'. In the public hearings of the JSCSNTE, a city councillor commented:

I do not think we need a night-time mayor. I think that is a great gimmick and a great marketing tool, but that is about all it does. We are governed by lots of politicians: we have a Minister for small business, we have a Minister for the arts, we have a Minister for liquor and gaming. There are a lot of cross-jurisdictional areas that need to work together. So, I would not like to see a night-time tsar set-up; I would like to see more utilising the framework we have got. We have got a lot of regulation and we have got plenty of laws; we just need to use them better and collaborate better. (*Report on Proceedings before Joint Select Committee on Sydney's Night-Time Economy, 9 Aug 2019, 2019, p. 40*)

As the above quotes suggests, the appointment of a night mayor was viewed as a symbolic governance action that could have overcomplicated an already highly regulated hierarchic governance composed of state elected representatives and bureaucrats.

The Committee for Sydney recognised the important role of the Small Business Commissioner in acting as a champion for the Small Business Sector but remained critical about delegating a NTE remit to it.

We do not feel that the overall responsibility for Sydney's night-time economy should sit within the remit of the Commissioner. The night-time economy involves many participants beyond small business including government departments, local government, police, community organisations, cultural and educational institutions, and a variety of businesses. These require a high degree of co-ordination if the full potential of the night-time economy in Sydney is to be realised. In our

report, Sydney as a 24-hour City, the Committee advocates the appointment of a coordinating figure to bring together different agencies and participants in the night-time economy. We do not endorse a particular governance model but recommend that the figure should be a highly effective individual who is invested with the power and authority to bring parties together to develop a vision and drive towards it. We also suggest that the figure should sit at the heart of government and be strongly endorsed by the Premier on behalf of NSW Government. We therefore feel that placing a coordinating figure within the Department for Premier and Cabinet is an option worth serious consideration.

The criticism raised in the previous quotes suggests that the adoption of a night mayor model could be an additional unnecessary governance layer and a symbolic governance action, in other words an effective un-governing strategy (Füller et al., 2018). Albeit the reregulation of the NTE was conceived as a collaborative, proactive, and participatory approach and the cultural shift occurred in the state government, the establishment of a NTE governance framework can also be seen as a part of an institutionalisation process of the NTE. I argue that the push for the spread of night mayors did not account for the effectiveness and consistency of governance action. Whether the policy transfer occurs with no introduction of new ideas, lesson drawing enhances the power of a small group of actors where policy circulates amongst like-minded international and closed policy communities (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996). Simultaneously, night mayors might act as an agent of transfer to support local and state governments from ideas to implementation, foster policy-transfer initiatives, facilitate communication among actors, and bring in novelty to the specific policy or context (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996). There are also few points to be raised here: the policy idea was discussed among: local government, state government and NTE policy political entrepreneurs. This should by no means be considered an inclusive co-design governance arrangement.

Amongst the proposed development and adoption of a NTE strategy as a policy intervention, the strategy was perceived as “something very visible and tangible,” an overarching policy framework for local government, a platform to bring industry in, a clear state leadership to achieve the vision, and a clear commitment of the state in the governing of the NTE (*Report on Proceedings before Joint Select Committee on Sydney's Night-Time Economy, 9 Aug 2019, 2019, pp. 14–47; 52*). In the public hearing of the JSCSNTTE, a leader of a business organisation argued,

The removal of lockouts ... micro-regulations is an essential step, but it is not enough. We need a long-term brave strategy. We need leadership. We need supporting policies. Industry needs to collaborate with all stakeholders and Government. We believe the vision should be set from the Premier right down into the Ministers. ... This is an issue of interdependencies. It is planning. It is regulation. It is arts, it is culture, it is music, it is licensing, it is local government, it is employment, it is industry, and it is Sydney's brand and narrative. (*Report on Proceedings*

before Joint Select Committee on Sydney's Night-Time Economy, 5 Aug 2019, 2019, p. 15).

6.6 Lockouts are scrapped

Following the report released by the JSCNSNTE, in November 2019, the NSW Government responded endorsing most of the recommendations. The endorsed recommendations were, inter alia, the removal of the lockout laws, allocation of NSW Government funding to boost Sydney's NTE, the establishment of a coordination mechanism in the state to bring relevant stakeholders, the development and adoption of a NTE strategy (Ayres, 2019). Consequently, the NSW Government announced that the lockout laws will have been scrapped starting from January 2020. In a joint press conference, the former NSW Treasury declared:

We are looking at other areas ... we are looking at opportunities to make our city thrive after hour, when it's dark, Sydney is time to shine and there are opportunities whether it is through live music, small businesses, greater flexibility, improving planning and licensing, investing in open spaces, public spaces. ... We are a truly global city ... and a part of that the night-time economy is crucial. (7NEWS Australia, 2019)

The announcement was highly welcomed by many business organisations and actors including NTIA. Many interviewees described the relaxation of the lockout laws as "long overdue." The announcement remained contested by the pro-lockout laws coalition. In media articles the pro-lockout laws coalition contested the weight given to the submissions of the re-regulation coalition compared to clear scientific evidence produced and presented by the pro-lockout laws coalition. The pro-lockout laws coalitions hold that scientific evidence is way more relevant than the perspectives of stakeholders when it comes to policies (Kypri, 2019). An emergency department doctor who was lobbied for the introduction of the lockout laws declared in a local newspaper:

The committee's process isn't being respected and nor is the input and evidence presented by submitters. At this stage, given the Committee's report is being effectively ignored, we have no idea of how they have balanced known risk factors or projected what it will take to preserve safety (Silimalis & Le Messurier, 2019)

6.7 Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter examined the role of different actors in influencing policy change around the NTE during the period of the lockout laws – February 2014 to January 2020. After reviewing the key events ([Section 6.2](#)), I mapped the perspectives of the key actors ([Section 6.3](#)). Two key advocacy coalitions were identified: the pro lockout laws coalition and the re-regulation coalition. The pro lockout laws coalition included the police, health authorities, residents and a couple of research centres. These actors shared the view that the lockout laws were successful and should stay. The re-regulation coalition was led by

KSO who engaged with the night mayor's movement in Europe, the City of Sydney, youth and representatives from live music and businesses. The pro nightlife movement shared the view that lockout laws should be abolished, and re-regulation be introduced. In a following phase, the reregulation coalition included local governments, state agencies, and night businesses organisations, supported by the Committee of Sydney, a local think tank. These actors shared the view that re-regulation was needed through introduction of a NTE vision, a strategy and a clear state leadership. Not all the actors within the re-regulation coalition were actively involved in the scrapping of the lockout laws, rather they prepared the terrain for policy change. For instance, local governments gathered through the NTECC to develop credibility and build policy alternatives. The advocacy coalition framework (Sabatier & Weible, 2019) was a powerful tool to map actors, rationalities and their beliefs.

[Section 6.4](#) explored the strategies of the most influential actors in influencing changes. It became evident that KSO first attempted to challenge the existing policy arrangements around the lockout laws. Although they KSO had a substantial support base, it took a substantial amount of time for their key demand, scrap the lockout laws, to gain traction. The momentum to scrap the lockout laws intensified when other actors joined the KSO in calling for the scrapping of the lockout laws. Following on from the KSO, other policies actors such as local governments, state departments, the Committee for Sydney and night businesses organisations joined the re-regulation coalition. What seems clear is that KSO played an important role initiating the discussion to scrap the lockout laws and to establish the NTE as a policy domain. What followed that was a successful and skilful collective action of policy entrepreneurship which through building capacity gained credibility and successfully campaigned for recognition of the opportunities around the NTE, the repeal of the lockout laws and introduction of the 24-H Economy Strategy (see [Chapter 8](#)).

[Section 6.5](#) discussed the parliamentary inquiry on the Sydney NTE as a critical juncture (Kingdon, 1991), i.e. a unique opportunity “open for only a while,” to push for policy change. I observed that conflicting rationalities unfolded between and within multiple groups around the perception of the NTE and its policies. I also observed the competing rationalities over priorities for future government interventions. The re-regulation coalition was unanimous in asking for the establishment of a locus of authority in the state government jurisdiction, the co-design of a vision and strategy, and the allocation of public fundings.

Conflicting rationalities are defined as different “way of seeing” and implies that “power is used (by actors in a particular context) to define what is counted as rationality and so what is counted as reality” (Watson, 2003, p. 26). Foundational is the idea that to understand rationalities we need to understand the perspectives of actors in context {Citation}. The actors impacted by and interested in the NTE, and its policies expressed different perspective around the problems related to the NTE and its policies leading to the so-called blame games. Like previous studies (Hadfield, 2006), arguments and

counterarguments as to whether the lockdown laws should be repealed and how the NTE should be viewed were both an impediment but also a driver to policy change.

This chapter makes two theoretical contributions to night scholarship. First, it underlines that even with less power, actors can influence policy change in the NTE through shopping for the most powerful venue. This was the case for families of victims and residents who teamed up with the health authorities and the police. Coalitions can mobilise their troops quickly through strategic leadership, share information to reinforce their arguments and create a pathway to statutory reforms. This chapter laid the foundation to explore the Sydney NTE after the introduction of the lockdown laws which I now turn my attention to.

This chapter demonstrated that policy change (i.e., repeal of the lockdown laws and the development of NTE policy occurred as an outcome of a critical juncture, a “policy window” (Kingdon, 1991) and was also built upon the extensive work of highly committed and energetic policy entrepreneurs. It was during and shortly after the parliamentary inquiry JSCSNTE that actors with conflicting rationalities converged to discuss the impact of the lockdown laws and attempted to set the public agenda. Combined with the political will of state elected representatives, policy entrepreneurs successfully obtained the repeal of the lockdown laws, the adoption of a new NTE strategy and the establishment of a night governance framework which I will discuss in [Chapter 8](#).

In comparing the results of [Chapter 5](#), [Chapter 6](#), the strategies adopted by multiple advocacy coalitions in influencing policy change (the introduction of the lockdown laws, and their repeal) involved opposition and resistance. Consistent with the literature on policy change (Mintrom, 2019a; Mintrom & Norman, 2009a; Sabatier, 1988; Weible et al., 2009), policy change did not occur due to the presence of one single actor. Rather there were multiple coalitions showing that policy entrepreneurship is a collective act. The use of entrepreneurial strategies (problem framing, coalition building, etc.) was fundamental for proposing a legitimate and credible policy alternative to the lockdown laws.

Chapter 7 The night-time economy during the Covid-19 pandemic

7.1 Introduction

[Chapter 6](#) looked at the NTE between the implementation of the lockdown laws in February 2014, the scrapping thereof in January 2020 and the simultaneous adoption of the *24-hour Economy Strategy*. This chapter analyses the NTE during the Covid-19 pandemic, between April 2020 and February 2022. In January 2020 the first confirmed cases in New South Wales (NSW) were identified and in March 2020, following a first Covid-19 outbreak, the first lockdown was announced. In February 2022 Australia reopened the international borders to fully vaccinated visa holders to ensure economic recovery (Karen, 2022). Research on the NTE during Covid-19 is very scant (Acuto, Seijas, et al., 2021; VibeLab, 2021). However, historical studies on the urban night show that in past centuries the imposition of curfews has been a common policy tool premised on promoting safety and preventing crime (Ramezani & Camarinha-Matos, 2020; Taleb, 2012).

I address this research gap through the following question - What was the impact of Covid-19 on the NTE and how did night entrepreneurs in Sydney respond to it? I argued that Covid-19 was a disruptive event with unequal impacts, psychological impact and economic impact. NTE actors displayed antifragility through crisis management, adaptation, collaboration and innovation. In this chapter, I draw on the concept of antifragility (Ramezani & Camarinha-Matos, 2020; Taleb, 2012) to enable a more nuanced analysis of the impact of Covid-19 as a disruptive, but also enabling force for the NTE in Sydney. I drew upon interviews and online documents to answer this question ([Chapter 4](#)). The perspectives of residents, government officials and elected representatives were insightful and included. However, the perspectives and experiences of night business owners and organisations are the cornerstone of this chapter. Online documents were useful in understanding the antifragility practices of night businesses during the Covid-19 lockdown. Edited photos analysed from Facebook and reproduced drawings from interviewees' stories are included in this chapter as highly evocative and symbolic.

This chapter is structured as follows. [Section 7.2](#) sets the context overviewing the key events, and the primary measures in place to contain the spread of Covid-19. [Section 7.4](#) analyses the impact of the pandemic on the NTE. [Section 7.5](#) analyses the response of night entrepreneurs to the Covid-19 pandemic and [Section 7.6](#) concludes with a discussion of findings.

7.2 The Covid-19 in Sydney: context

In March 2020, following the first Covid-19 outbreak, a lockdown was announced, along with the closure of international travel borders. The lockdown involved limitations and ban on indoor and outdoor gatherings, 1.5m social distance measures, limitations of the number of patrons in indoor venues 1 person / 4 square metres (restaurants, cinemas, theatres), ticketed events and patrons seated. In the same month, the NSW government deregulated planning controls thereby enabling pharmacies and supermarkets to operate and deliver 24/7 “to guarantee communities have access to essential goods at all times during the Covid-19 pandemic” (NSW Government, 2020b). The first Covid-19 lockdown eased in July 2020. Within the Covid-19 lockdowns, some containment measures included the distinction between essential and non-essential services. Non-essential services were not allowed to operate. Amongst the non-essential services were entertainment venues, pubs, clubs, sports facilities, libraries, and cultural centres. Amongst the essential services were bottle shops, accommodation, petrol stations, and health care services (hospitals, pharmacies, and doctors). Restaurants and cafes were restricted to takeaway and home delivery.

A second Covid-19 lockdown occurred in June 2021 with the re-introduction of partial restrictions (e.g., drinking while standing at indoor venues and dancing not allowed 1 person per 4 sqm, limited capacity for outdoor events, and closure of gyms). Travel limitations within 10km from people’s homes were in place. In July 2021 additional restrictions were put in place for Greater Sydney (e.g., travel within 10kms of home). The Covid-19 containment measures were not evenly applied across the Sydney areas. Differences related to the consideration and identification of ‘LGAs of concern’ or hotspots. In August 2021, curfews from 9 pm to 5 am were introduced in 12 LGAs in the West and South regions of Sydney.²⁴ The second Covid-19 lockdown was eased at a different pace across LGAs between September and October 2021 (NSW Health, 2021; The Guardian, 2021). Finally, in February 2022, the national government announced the reopening of Australian borders for fully vaccinated visa-holders, and the removal of Covid-19 restrictions including caps on music festivals, and maintaining mandatory QR code check-ins for nightclubs and music festivals (‘NSW eases Covid-19 restrictions’ 2022).²⁵

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the policy response was an “incredible fast moving ever-changing space” using the words of an interviewee (Ethan). The Australian response to

²⁴ LGAs refer to Local Government Areas, the jurisdictional boundaries of local government in Australia. LGAs of concerns were the most Covid-19 affected areas as established by health authorities based on the number of active Covid-19 infections. The LGAs of concerns were subject to specific limitations in terms of mobility within the area and from/to the area itself. The 12 LGAs of concern facing curfews were: Bayside, Blacktown, Burwood, Campbelltown, Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland, Fairfield, Georges River, Liverpool, Parramatta, Penrith, and Strathfield (Nguyen, 2021).

²⁵ The QR code was a contactless tool implemented by NSW Government as Covid Safe Check-in.

Covid-19 was a “nationally coordinated approach with localised variations in governmental response”, at the state and territory level (Aroney & Boyce, 2022), for this purpose the National Cabinet composed of the Prime Minister and the premiers and chief ministers of each state and territory was established by the Commonwealth. Additionally, the National Covid-19 Commission Advisory Board was established in March 2020 to advise the government on strategies to mitigate the social and economic impacts of Covid-19 in Australia (Prime Minister of Australia, 2020). The NSW Government heavily relied on health experts, and numbers of community transmission to justify the introduction, relaxation or strengthening of Covid-19 restrictions.

Covid-19 set a precedent in terms of funding and investments by federal and state governments to support individuals and the economy. For instance, in March 2020 three economic packages were announced and released. The first package involved \$17.6 billion in business support and stimulus payments. The second package included \$66.1 billion to support businesses and households. The third one, \$130 billion for JobSeeker and JobKeeper Payments which involved income support and wage subsidies for businesses and their employees (Commonwealth Australia, 2020). JobSeeker, the unemployment benefit, was doubled.

As part of the Covid-19 response, both the Commonwealth and the state of NSW introduced temporary risk management plans for businesses across industry sectors. Risk management plans involved ensuring areas were well-ventilated, maintaining good hygiene practices, providing Covid-19 information and training to workers, maintaining physical distancing, encouraging Covid-19 safe behaviour through communications, and adhering to Covid-19 policy and business obligations (NSW Government, 2022b). Risk management plans and compliance with Covid-19 policies had an impact on the NTE as I will show later.²⁶

7.3 The Covid-19: changes in advocacy coalitions

In [Chapter 6](#), I discussed two relevant coalitions: the pro lockdown laws and re-regulation coalition who were relevant between 2014 to early 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic hit Sydney’s NTE immediately after the announcement of the relaxation of the lockdown laws and this was a disruptive event that altered the existing advocacy coalitions within Sydney’s NTE (Chapter 6). With the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic a range of new actors emerged in the NTE governance landscape, including federal government, national economic regulatory agencies and global nightlife advocacy movement. These new actors and their involvement highlighted the interdependence of health, macroeconomy, shift work conditions, economy emphasizing the NTE as a complex system (Section 2.2).

²⁶ Safe Work Australia and Safe Work NSW contributed to the dissemination of information about Covid-19 safety policies and regulations for employers and workers across NTE sectors.

As mentioned in [Chapter 3](#), events such as the Covid-19 pandemic can play a role in policy change, these can disrupt the configuration of advocacy coalitions leading to the emergence of new actors or reinforce the beliefs of primary actors.

Table 7.1 summarises the deep core beliefs and policy core beliefs of key actors drawing on interviews and documents analysis. Three striking observations need to be made. First, a deep conflicting and competing priorities evolved around NTE survival and safety of businesses and night workers and night users alike. Second, the increasing role of federal government as both regulator and enabler of the NTE recovery. As mentioned in Section 7.2, federal government was a key decision maker during the Covid-19 pandemic and in the immediate aftermath. Third, research institutes and workers' unions came to the fore emphasising the exhausting shift workers conditions particularly in the health sector, more broadly their vulnerability in terms of exposure but also job safety. Fourth, while some actors such as health and police perceived the night as a time-space for dangerous socialising, other actors such as governments and business organisations were concerned about the deep impact of Covid-19 on the sociability aspect of the NTE. It is also noteworthy, the shift from nightlife safety from alcohol-fuelled violence (Chapter 6, 7) to safety of communities, workers, and businesses from mental health impacts of Covid-19 restrictions.

Table 7.1 Advocacy coalitions, core beliefs and policy core beliefs during Covid-19

Advocacy coalitions	Deep core beliefs	Policy core beliefs
Health & Police	Night as a space-time for socialising is dangerous for health and safety of local communities	Regulating the night keeps our community safe and healthy
Business organisations	NTE is crucial for economic recovery	Covid-19 measures impacted the NTE, financial viability, economic loss
	Covid impacted mental health, confidence of businesses and workers alike	NTE access to relief packages is inadequate
		Business support packages are inadequate
Research Institutes	Night shift workers are more vulnerable than day workers and are at risk	Welfare policies (JobKeeper, JobSeeker) must increase, VISA holders and casual workers are left behind
Workers Union, Safe Work Agencies		
	Night as a space-time for work needs to be safe	
Federal Government	Safety of communities first	Regulating the NTE to ensure safety is a priority
	Covid-19 impacted economy, social and cultural life	Re-regulating the NTE through federal funding is essential to ensure the resilience of different sectors
Economic regulatory agencies	Covid-19 impacted households and businesses alike	Fiscal policies, monetary policies are essential, support payments to households and businesses are essential to support aggregate demand and employment

State government	NTE is crucial for economic recovery, city centres re-activation	Regulation is essential to manage and mitigate risks within the NTE businesses
	Covid-19 impacted the sociability of the NTE	Re-regulating the NTE through stimulus packages, night activation programs is essential to support the broader recovery
Global nightlife advocacy movement		Re-regulating the NTE is essential to keep the night afloat and safe.

7.4 The Covid-19 impact on the NTE - a flow-on effect

Four broad themes emerged from the analysis of interviews. The pandemic and associated lockdowns had an unequal impact across NTE sectors, geographical areas and communities involved in the NTE ([Section 7.4.1](#)). The economic impact of the Covid-19 on the NTE was detrimental for some but not for all. The constant uncertainty resulted in high levels of anxiety and stress ([Section 7.4.2](#)). Labour shortages and retention impacted multiple NTE sectors highlighting deep structural issues around the NTE ([Section 7.4.3](#)). I now analyse these themes in order.

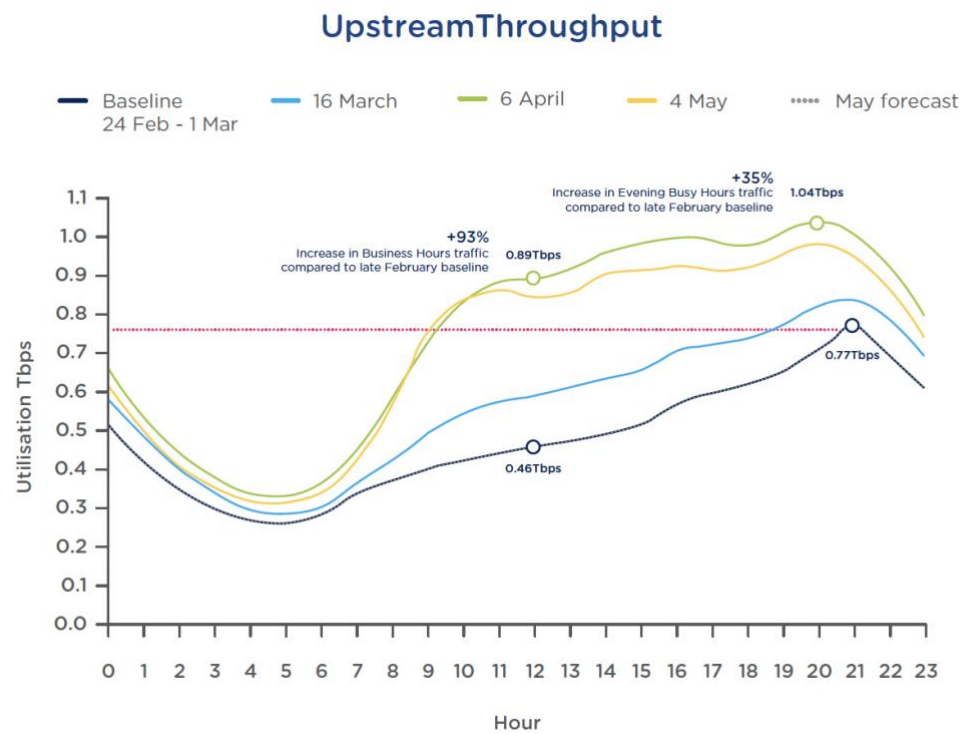
7.4.1 Unequal impact across NTE sectors and geographically

When interviewees discussed the impact of the NTE, there was consensus that the impact was profound. The previously vibrant nightlife precincts became suddenly silent due to curfews and mobility restrictions forcing businesses to shut their doors. A Kings Cross resident interviewed during the height of the lockdown in Sydney commented on the silence and how he was enjoying the quiet:

It's much quieter. For example, the East Village (shopping mall) is shut, ... completely closed. And they are probably our noisiest people because they do have extended (trading) hours, and they've got the rooftop terrace. The cafes, even the restaurants, made money just doing takeaway. It's far quieter, it's far quieter. But what I can say, it's turned out beautifully. (Kirsten)

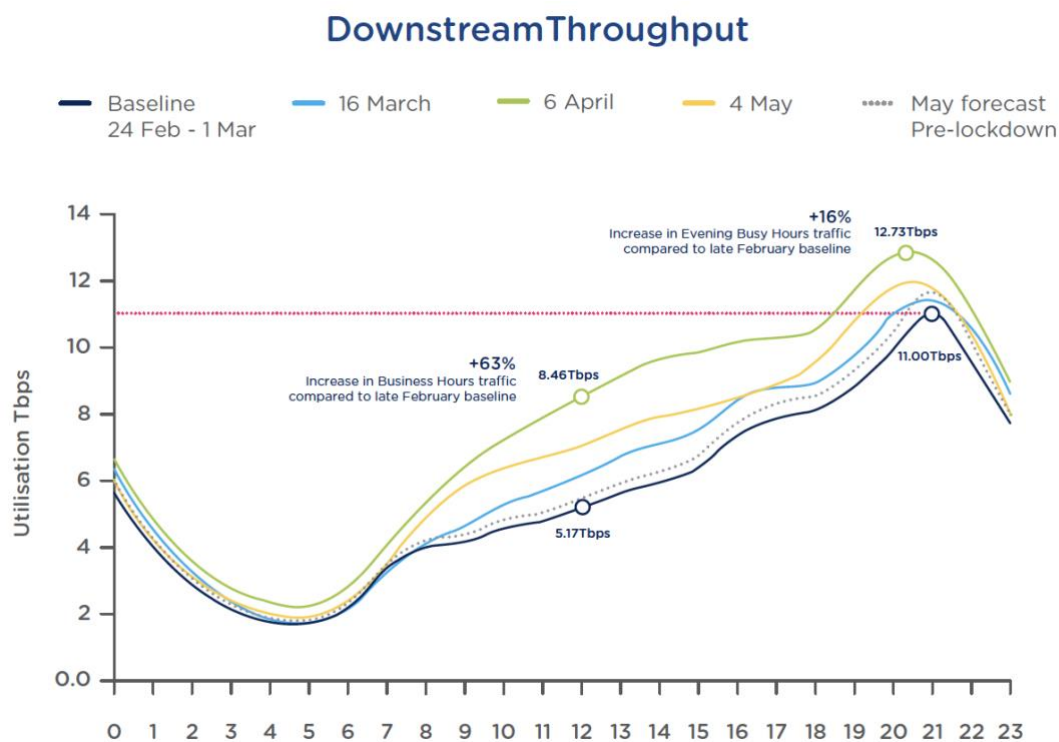
The lockdown meant that people were forced to rely on the internet for entertainment, social connections, and work. A report published by NBN, the enterprise established by Commonwealth Australia to design and operate broadband access for Australia, analysed the traffic profile of the NBN network across a 24-Hour Profile. The analysis showed an increase in internet usage in the early evening hours (5 pm to 7:59 pm) and busy evening hours (8 pm to 11:59 pm) (NBN, 2021).

Figure 7.1 Internet usage in a 24H cycle in Australia - Upstream



Source: NBN (2021, pp. 10–11)

Figure 7.2 Internet usage in a 24H cycle in Australia - Downstream



Source: NBN (2021, pp. 10–11)

Additionally, the rise of working from home, the restrictions on local mobility, the lack of tourists due to the international and domestic travel ban, led to uncertainty around the future of the NTE in the city centre. Many interviewees perceived the curfews and lockdown as an opportunity to discover or rediscover the NTE across different places in Sydney metropolitan area. Noah, a state government executive, noted:

Before COVID people were going to the office, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, it's just highly unlikely that we will go back to those days ... but also recognising the decentralisation of going out, is likely to be permanent. That's quite a good thing ... people have rediscovered their local suburbs ... You're seeing an uplift in nighttime establishments, across main streets. And it does create challenges for the CBD and for other major employment centres, but it's also given a whole new life to lots of areas that were previously more abandoned, so they're all opportunities. (Noah)²⁷

Figure 7.3 The Covid-19 impact on the NTE: events cancelled



Screenshot from a video published on Facebook during Covid-19 lockdowns by a NTE business in events sector. Images digitally modified to protect the identity of the night business.

The impact of Covid-19 was unequal across geographical areas. It depended on how intense the curfew was in the area in question and the nature of the area. A director of a business organisation noted:

²⁷ Albeit contested the urban development patterns, Sydney global city is characterised by CBDs with sprawling suburbs and urban centres radiating from them. However, “apart from the CBD, North Sydney, Parramatta and Inner city the remaining centres appear to exert little influence on employment distribution over the metropolitan area” (Moghadam et al., 2018). The CBDs revitalisation program targeted the following urban centres: Sydney, Blacktown, Campbelltown, Chatswood, Fairfield, Hurstville, Kogarah, Liverpool, Macquarie Park, Manly, Newcastle, North Sydney, Parramatta, Penrith, Sydney Olympic Park, Wollongong. (NSW Government, 2022a).

[Covid-19 was] initially devastating. We saw a lot of our restaurants closed, we saw all our bars and nighttime places sports, entertainment shut down, concerts were cancelled. Western Sydney shouldered the most impact when it came to COVID lockdowns ... which had a long-standing impact on the nighttime economy. (Mason)

Mason argued that the impact of the lockdown was particularly felt in Western Sydney due to the unequal distribution of public funding to support the NTE:

The funding was overwhelmingly given to the city [and suburbs] in the eastern blocks rather than Western Sydney. It has been a hard start for us to actually get moving again. (Mason)

The interview was consistent with a report released by the United Workers Union and Australian Catholic University which found that

Residents of Western Sydney and other LGAs of concern were forced to contend with tougher restrictions on physical mobility and night-time curfews than elsewhere in Sydney. (Barnes & Crosbie, 2022, p. 26)

Mason's observations were echoed by Auston, another night business owner. Austin owned six 24-hour service stations and convenience stores across Sydney. Some of them were in curfew areas (see [Section 7.2](#)).

We had four stores in the curfew zones where people weren't allowed out of those areas ... There was a curfew. Everyone had to be inside their house by nine o'clock. Those stores got impacted severely ... Like one store which traded heavily at night, all of a sudden wasn't worth opening at night because no one was coming in. And we had police patrolling the area. And if someone got caught, going into the site, who lived in the area, they'd be charged. They'd be fined by the police. It made it hard for a few months. (Austin)

The size of indoor spaces of NTE businesses but also outdoor spaces during Covid-19 were essential. On the one hand, the bigger the space of NTE business was more likely it was to accommodate people despite the imposed reduction in capacity and social distancing measures ([Section 7.2](#)). On the other hand, the existence of outdoor spaces not only enabled or could have enabled NTE businesses to expand their activities outdoors but also provided or would have provided nighttime activations. A local government official discussing the impact of Covid-19 made this point:

Everything's very narrow in Newtown ... Because they're [the night businesses] so small, these businesses ... lose a lot of money. If you are in Parramatta, or wherever, these places are built with a lot of space and the front (of the business) has also lots of space. King Street [in Newtown] is quite narrow ... so how many tables *can you* put at the front there? Not that many, so businesses will then struggle. (Archie)

In addition, other 24-hour businesses and health care support were available and thrived during the night-time such as: Health Direct Helpline, Doctors on Demand.

The Covid-19 pandemic was an unprecedented disruption as consumption and production were scaled back (Debata et al., 2020). According to the Reserve Bank of Australia (2022), Covid-19 restrictions had the most severe impact on business involving intense social contact such as food services and accommodation. Many small businesses did not survive.

The Covid-19 crisis further demonstrates these issues in quite a dramatic manner, in many small businesses around the world have simply collapsed due to the lack of demand from their regular customers and an inability to pivot to alternate ways of doing business (Sharma et al., 2020, p. 190).

Business owners interviewed stressed that the economic impact of the pandemic was severe. The hospitality, entertainment and creative sectors were very hard hit. Lachlan, a business owner in the hospitality sector, who owned several licensed venues, across Sydney observed:

Numbers were greatly impacted at the very beginning (the first lockdown), because people didn't want to come out, even though we were open and they could come, people were terrified. Our income dropped by more than 60%. (Lachlan)

Austin managed three 24/7 fuel stations and convenience stores in the south and west areas of Sydney:

We lost a lot of money. It was hard to manage. We tried to cut back on staff ... Some of the stores didn't even have locks because we've never locked them up ... We had to reduce our stock holdings [especially] ... fresh product we held in the store because a lot of that was going out of date. (Austin)

Financial loss was echoed by Angelique, a director of a theatre and manager of a licensed venue. Angelique mentioned that the economic impact was particularly severe due to events being cancelled due to actors or backstage crew contracting Covid:

Every time a performance is cancelled, a company loses money. And so, the financial cost to the independent sector, in theatres and the arts in general has been catastrophic. I cannot say that strongly enough, catastrophic. It still is.

Angelique kept going despite being continually impacted by the pandemic:

Last year in 2022, we had two companies that were so significantly impacted by COVID, that [they] ... lost a huge amount of money. ... We have companies that come in with a production budget of anywhere between 10 and \$20,000 to put their show on ... They source that money

themselves. They're rolling the dice on selling enough tickets to cover those costs and make their money back. ... If someone's sick, and you have to cancel a performance, you lose \$2,000 straight up front there. If you cancel a performance, you've got to move all those people to another performance, you've lost that money as well. You've lost a second performance. If you cancel a performance early in the season, the audience ... they don't book because they're not sure that they're going to get their money back ... I'm going to firmly say it is not over for the theatre sector ... At the moment being a venue inside a hospitality venue, if there's a wave of infections that come through the stage, as they were on a number of occasions last year, it hits hospitality staff first because they are working at, you know, there is a high risk of exposure. They're working long hours, all those sorts of things (Angelique)

Again, a CEO of a business organisation put it:

What was happening, especially [when] ... programming large-scale events again, so day long or month-long festivals. etc. The investment in those takes a long time. Whether that is around curating the actual content, but also the monetary investment through that is 6, 9 months, minimum and you don't earn anything until you open your box office. What has happened is that these large-scale performances have started up again and the box office has [had to] close again, so that money is lost. (Zoe)

Interestingly, not all the NTE sectors and businesses experienced a negative economic impact because of Covid-19. For some, the Covid-19 crisis generated a stable or increased revenue due to increased demand for certain products such as wellness and fitness, e-commerce (Debata et al., 2020). For instance according to a report published by Australian Post, which analysed the deliveries data, the percentage of customers who purchased each week increased in 2020 for the same period, growing from 6% in 2019 to 16% (Australia Post, 2021). An interviewee observed these differences:

There was kind of two categories ... the people that were thriving because they could not believe it like alcohol brands, like some local coffee shop that suddenly tripled their income because everyone was working from home going to the local coffee shop instead of going to the CBD. And suddenly ... thriving like bakery could not handle the number of people wanting to buy bread and cakes. ... a number of people that were thriving, and there were a number of people that just couldn't work. We were in that field, ... we were the first thing that was shut down was mass gathering ... And then we were the last thing that was allowed, again, was mass gathering. So, we weren't part of that pool of people that had the longest stop in their business in a way. It was extremely challenging. (Lucien)

Some people broke the lockdown restrictions and profited as a result. I interviewed Sajan who was an event organiser. He explained that he kept working during Covid-19 by

holding 'underground' events outside of Sydney where he was less likely to be apprehended:

During Covid-19, it went well! I made more money than before Covid-19. Everything was closed so we organised events underground in different areas outside Sydney. We had a group chat and two hours before the event, we told our friends, "Hey, it's going to be in that place, BYO!" In two hours, 200 people were there. Celebrating, meeting friends and dancing with our local DJs and artists. It was fun! We got shut down by the police once, but we kept going.²⁸

Similarly, Austin who experienced challenges during the second lockdown, explained that during the first Covid-19 lockdown his 24H convenience stores and fuel stations copied well:

During the first COVID lockdown we got very busy because we were the one thing that was open. We were the one thing people would go to. ...We traded beyond what we've ever traded before. Because everything was closed, like our coffee sales went through the roof, food sales went through the roof, snack sales went through the roof. ... We started selling things that we never had to sell before. The good thing is we've maintained I'd say 95% of that growth ... I got one store that does about 600 cups a day. (Austin)²⁹

7.4.2 Psychological impact: uncertainty and anxiety

The overwhelming majority of night business owners and organisations interviewed felt Covid-19 had a significant psychological impact. The forced closure of some night business and the lack of clarity as to when they would be allowed to reopen was intensely stressful. Zoe, the CEO of a business organisation, outlined the concerns of night businesses and the NTE:

People need to work out if they can survive. Are they going to pay their bills? Can they pay their rent? How long are we going to be in lockdown? Can I keep my staff? Am I going to survive? Lockdown is now a very hard space for the night-time economy. (Zoe)

Zoe's view was echoed by a state government executive who highlighted the uncertainty that the pandemic evoked:

²⁸ Sajan did not agree to be audio-recorded. The quote refers to fieldnotes taken from an informal conversation. Permission to cite these views was granted.

²⁹ Austin specifies that during the first Covid-19 lockdown, the increased revenue was okay, while during the second lockdown he experienced some challenges due to other factors as explained in the same section above.

With Covid, there was a huge amount of uncertainty about the impact of the pandemic and its effect on businesses and we didn't know throughout the process, what the sort of long-term impacts would be. I think to a large degree, we managed to do that. But you can always look back and try and improve on certain processes. But we didn't have the luxury of time, really, in doing that. (Noah)

The psychological impact was spread across NTE sectors, affected both night business owners and their employees. Much of this was due to a fast-changing regulatory environment leading to confusion. Austin discussed uncertainty in relation to the curfews implemented in the so-called “area of concern”:

They [Government and media] were just bombarding them [night staff] every couple of days with new information: “You’re allowed to do this, not allowed to do that. Are you living in an area of concern, but you don’t work in an area of concern? Yes, you can work at the store. No, you can’t work at the store anymore. ... The impact on them [night workers] was just being confused on what they could and couldn’t do. (Austin)

The regulatory environment and the risk of lockdowns was also a cause of stress for Lucien who had an events management and night place activation business: “It [the business] was under tremendous stress. Super hard because at any time you could be shut down by the health authority”.

Experiences of uncertainty around the regulation and consequent confusion and stress was also related to the eligibility or ineligibility criteria of government grants and support towards businesses. Rhys, a night business owner of a licensed venue who was interviewed during the first lockdown in June 2020, outlined the issues:

The biggest issue has been uncertainty about whether we've received that support and what the rules are. ... They change so frequently. There was a lot of confusion even among government sources ... with designers locked down by qualifying this time, or the full job, save up payment [Covid-19 Disaster Payments], as well as the Covid-19 Business Grant from state government, that all are nearly \$30,000. However, they've only just started paying the JobSaver in the last fortnight. And they still haven't accepted my application for the Covid-19 Business Grant. And it's purely because there's a technical problem with their website that keeps rejecting applications associated with my ABN (Australian Business Register), and they don't know why.

Experiencing anxiety and stress was also common in the NTE due to the responsibility of business owners and staff to implement and enforce Covid-19 regulations. Jakob, a chair of a business organisation, stated:

But the first *issue was to get* some of the people to accept the QR code. Believe it or not, a lot of people refused to provide the details with it or didn't want to sign in properly, which created quite a few mental health

issues, for some of the people working at those establishments during that period.

Austin also commented on the anxiety enforcing the regulations generated:

It was even harder the time where people must wear a mask. The abuse we'd call up from customers, staff would cop when they just say to a customer, "Can you please put a mask on there?" "No. You're not the police. You can't make me wear a mask". And then we had the police coming at us trying to fine us for not enforcing it. Then we had to get a ruling from the government to say we're not the police. We're just an operator who's running a service station ... You can't force us to enforce government policy. So, things got a bit ugly at one stage.

7.4.3 Labour shortage and retention: *"The straw that would break the camel's back"*

In discussing the impact of the pandemic on the NTE, a common concern amongst interviewees was labour shortage and retention of existing staff. Labour retention was a serious issue which was addressed partially by the JobKeeper Payment Scheme and JobSaver payment. JobKeeper Payment Scheme was a program from the federal government administered by the Australian Taxation Office, it was in place during Covid-19 and stopped in March 2021.

The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted how night jobs are often precarious. Many night employees are casual or are temporary visa holders and often fall through the cracks in terms of public support (Alexander et al., 2022; Black & Chow, 2022). Amongst the identified causes for the labour shortage were the Covid-19 lockdowns and workers leaving for other industries with better paid daily jobs. Also, the NTE was increasingly viewed as an unsafe workspace. Another reason for the labour shortages was the lack of international students and migrants due to the closure of the borders. It is also widely accepted that those industries employ a higher share of part-time, casual, temporary visa-holders, and youth (Alexander et al., 2022; Black & Chow, 2022). Interviewees identified the labour shortage as a common challenge across hospitality, private security and the art performing sectors. Other sectors such as health care was under intense pressure in addressing the pandemic. Several health professionals left the industry due to burn out and fatigue.

The chair of a business organisation recounted the difficulty of finding security staff during this period:

The biggest issue was trying to find staff. ... A lot of security guys left the industry. Also ... there were extra security guards in hospitals, or security guards in Westfield [shopping centre] and places like that, or even shops. They [security guards] were getting the same money for work in daytime than they were at night-time. (Jakob)

An executive in the NSW state government reflected on the labour shortages across multiple NTE sectors focusing on the value of night workers:

There was obviously a significant challenge, particularly for the hospitality industry, in recruiting skilled employees, particularly security staff. ... There are plenty of other sectors across the economy, who had similar experiences during the pandemic. But I think it was a reminder that we need to treat staff within the nighttime sector, with respect, ... dignity, and treat it as a career and don't treat them as expendable. (Noah)

Interviewees highlighted that during the lockdowns the lack of income was particularly challenging for both night workers and business owners. Angelique commented,

During the lockdowns, several people left our sector. A lot of people who could not work, because there's a lot of freelance, independent or contract work. There was no income. A huge number of people ... ended up having to leave the sector because they had responsibilities at home ... It's tough for women anyway, in this kind of environment. And it was even tougher, it was like the straw that would break the camel's back. (Angelique)

7.5 The antifragility response of night entrepreneurs to Covid-19.

I now turn to analyse the response of night entrepreneurs to Covid-19. Four broad themes emerged from the analysis of the interviews and social media: engaging in crisis management ([Section 7.5.1](#)), adapting to survive ([Section 7.5.3](#)), collaboration and the social space ([Section 7.5.3](#)), innovation and experimentation ([Section 7.5.4](#)). Understanding the response of night entrepreneurs to the Covid-19 challenges, helps better understand the capabilities and resources useful to build an antifragile, robust, and resilient NTE in the face of uncertainty. Interview and social media analysis revealed what quantitative studies have not; the experience of businesses across multiple sectors of the NTE practicing antifragility. Despite the overall challenges ([Section 7.3](#)), I argue that the action response of night entrepreneurs shows antifragility. This section allows us to understand how night entrepreneurs responded to the Covid-19 crisis through direct experiences, action response coping strategies were in place.

7.5.1 Engaging in crisis management

Engaging in crisis management was a common coping mechanism amongst night business owners. Crisis management was described as implementation and enforcement of Covid-19 regulations, i.e., reduced indoor capacity, adoption of QR code for visitors and adoption of a Covid-19 safety plan. Crisis management was an unexpected task for most of the interviewees. It was time-consuming and involved extra costs such as paying for extra deep cleaning. Angelique explained how implementing and enforcing Covid-19 regulation worked out for her business:

It's taken us a long time. ... We have a very clear Covid-19 management policy that we send out to all the companies that work with us. And we've been very strict on enforcing it. But it was ... difficult. ... The bureaucracy and the complexities, and the minutia of the regulations was extraordinarily time-consuming. ... There was incredible amount of time and cost attached to festivals *as well*, setting that up figuring out how do we isolate those seats. ... Once you've done that around capacity, the greatest challenge was enforcing it with audiences.

Angelique commented on how she moved from business management to people/visitors' management to ensure everybody was following the rules:

It was ... extraordinarily difficult to manage audience behaviour ... We had our reputation as being warm, welcoming, a cool place to come into "Hey, come in!" It became something that we needed to manage people. We needed to meet people at the door and get them to sign in. We needed to look at vaccination records and things like that.

Angelique explained the difficulties and how she and her team responded:

There was first and foremost the capacity regulations meant that we're at a venue that seats 80 people. And that sounds like a very small number. but it's an ideal size in the area that Kings Cross theatre precinct ... It's a standard kind of small venue to arts venue, we had to open on a 50% capacity, which meant that every second seat had to be emptied. There was incredible amount of time and cost attached to festivals, setting that up figuring out how do we isolate those seats? How do we make sure that? What's the best format or layout for our audience? ... Once you've done that around capacity, the ... greatest challenge was enforcing it with audiences. And we were dealing with people who would turn up with screenshots on their phone of the regulations telling us that what we were doing was illegal ... Our management is very complex. We are insisting that everyone wears a mask in the venue The actors are very close to the audience. And obviously, we're asking audiences to remain masked, so that the act is healthy. And we explained that's the way to keep theatres open.

Angelique had to ensure everybody was following the rules:

It was ... extraordinarily difficult to manage audience behaviour ... It became something that we needed to manage people. We needed to meet people at the door and get them to sign in. We needed to look at vaccination records and things like that (Angelique)

7.5.2 *Adapting to survive*

Adaptation was amongst the most common coping mechanism of night entrepreneurs. Interviewees described adaptation as a Covid-19 driven condition, "we had to adjust", and as a learning process, "taking on the lessons of the day and getting better along the

way”; “we were learning as we went along.” Adaptation was an active and creative problem solving, in other words an antifragility practice (Taleb, 2012). Adaptation involved a reduction or changes in the trading hours (from evening/nighttime to daytime or early evening); changes in business models (from *night out* to *night in*), and acceleration in the use of digital platforms as a tool to adjust night business models. Many businesses across hospitality, trade, and creative industries moved online. It was common to watch theatre shows from our couch, ordering food delivery and our medicines online. Adaptation was clearly encouraged by the need to survive, ensuring the safety of local community, and responding to Covid-19 regulations.

Adaptation of their business model was an ongoing learning process for night-entrepreneurs and Covid-19 gave them the opportunity to learn how to adapt and be flexible, despite uncertainty. A night entrepreneur of a small business described his experience:

The pandemic has been quite useful because it's forced us to have to respond and adapt repeatedly. Now we can't have people in the building at all. We've only been allowed to have 8 people or 10 or 25. I've adapted the [trading] hours, and I've adapted the layout of the business. I've adapted the emphasis on either books or coffee or live events every time to try and cope with that. ... The whole process has been quite valuable for getting insight into what works best for me. And it also because of the pandemic. Everyone knew there was an expectation that businesses were going to have to do whatever they could to survive. That kind of gave us permission to do stranger things than people might otherwise have expected. (Rhys)

Adaptation of business models was a common strategy within hospitality and creative industries, trade (supermarkets), pharmaceutical sectors (pharmacies and medical care on demand), and convenience stores who were allowed to stay open for 24 hours (Section 7.2). At the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, many hospitality businesses shifted from “dining out” (at the restaurant) to “dining in” (the house) providing take away and delivery options. While delivery and take away options were available pre-Covid-19, the pandemic acted as a further accelerator in the adoption of digital platforms. Other innovations included contactless payments, contactless delivery and live streaming of theatre and concerts. As an interview put it:

From an economic perspective, a lot of a lot of night-time venues, whether they're restaurants, bars, clubs, whatever they've been really hard hit by Covid lockdown and a lot of them had to adapt business models and do things like set seating for particular times to ensure that they could turn over enough people for keeping the revenue [going]. (Anais)

Adaptation involved also a re-arrangement of the staff rosters and their responsibilities to keep them employed. A night entrepreneur in the hospitality sector explained how he kept his employees in the workforce:

Now we rotate our staff... Because we are forced to have them work less but everyone can still work full-time and we keep the staff to do other things, keep them busy, keep workers working. They would be in the restaurant. And you'd be saying, "Okay, let's paint the walls" ... We encouraged them to have fun. (Lachlan)

Lachlan's experience clearly shows the creativity in developing innovative solutions and adapt. Similarly, another night entrepreneur explained that adaption involved re-arranging staff workplaces affected by curfews. Austin had 24H fuel stations in different areas. Some of them were impacted by curfews, others were not:

They're allowed to travel to work in this area, and they'll have to travel to work in this area. You know, we had to adjust, but sometimes I chose I'd say the trains, you know, because a lot of our staff called public transport, there'd be a bus or a train or whatever, they'd have to get to work, and we had to adjust all their rostering to suit the timetables of the railway network. staff would catch a train to work or catch a bus in so yeah (Austin)

As mentioned earlier, the Covid-19 pandemic led to a rapid uptake of digital platforms. Digital platforms were both a tool to keep connected with customers, providing real time information about the new or changing rules, but also updating them about new products, offers, and initiatives in place. Campaigns such as #supportlocalbusinesses and #keepourvenuesalive were commonly used in social media to support local businesses and particularly the creative industries. Digital platforms were also used to adapt business models and implement online orders or online streaming. More informal adaptive mechanism was also in place between businesses and residents such as the creation of WhatsApp groups and mailing lists. A founder of a NTE business in the tourism sector explained made this point:

Friends that work in the hospital industry are sending boxes home with wine tastings ... I've signed up for a box on the weekend. I walked past and I asked to be ... on their mailing list, and they're a caterer. They were already set up for this before, where I think all those foods and beverages they don't really know how to survive unless they're actively asking for your details. And then Covid-19, you get shut down, and then you just sort of go into panic unless you're getting those emails, or you can go back to the ones that you've been supporting. (Isla)

Businesses in the event organisation also adapted by moving event to spaces where Covid-19 measures could be implemented:

We had one instance where they [staff] had to have a letter saying that they were on their way to work, going into an area of concern ... We had one staff member who forgot his letter at home. It was like midnight, and he (the employee) was supposed to start at midnight, and he's called me and woken me up and I had to speak to the police. And then I had to go to the car, get my laptop, find the letter, I'd sent him via email and send that to his phone again. ... then the staff member could reach their workplace and start working (Austin)

The Covid-19 response of local and state governments enabled the adaptation of night businesses through offering the opportunity to expand their businesses using alfresco dining. At the time of the lockdowns, it was a viable alternative to 'keep the businesses in business' and overcome the Covid-19 restrictions:

During Covid-19 we saw the opening to cafés being able to spread out onto different bits of the footpath. More leniency about the idea of being small businesses being able to transition to selling takeaway that allowed for a sense of community and adaptation at a time that was necessary to ensure the survival of some of those businesses (Jenny Leong, MP)³⁰

7.5.3 Collaboration and social value creation

Along with adaptation, collaboration was another coping mechanism within and outside the NTE ecosystem. As mentioned in [Chapter 3](#), antifragility and resilience thinking focus on the informality of everyday interaction (Andres & Round, 2015), I suggest every-night interaction. Collaboration is a key feature of antifragility practices (Ramezani & Camarinha-Matos, 2020; Sagala & Óri, 2024). Many informal WhatsApp groups, Facebook groups emerged as support network for local businesses, these were made by local businesses for local businesses. Collaboration involved the relational capabilities between NTE businesses across sectors, between local government and NTE businesses, and between businesses and residents. Collaboration was necessary to respond to the increased demand of certain services and products. Chloe, a resident in inner Sydney, explained the social embeddedness of residents and night businesses in her neighbourhood during the height of the pandemic:

The local businesses that are struggling if they're open for takeaway, we still try even though it's cheaper to cook at home. We still try to buy some of their meals because we feel responsible. Like we want to help them survive. I think Covid-19 made those relationships a bit stronger because people are asking a lot more, "How are you?" And you ask them, "How's

³⁰ Jenny Leong agreed to be identified and granted permission with the quote. Ms Jenny Leong is Member for the electorate of Newtown in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly.

the business surviving?” That kind of thing ... a little bit closer, feeling a little bit more connected with them because they're a bit needy. (Chloe)

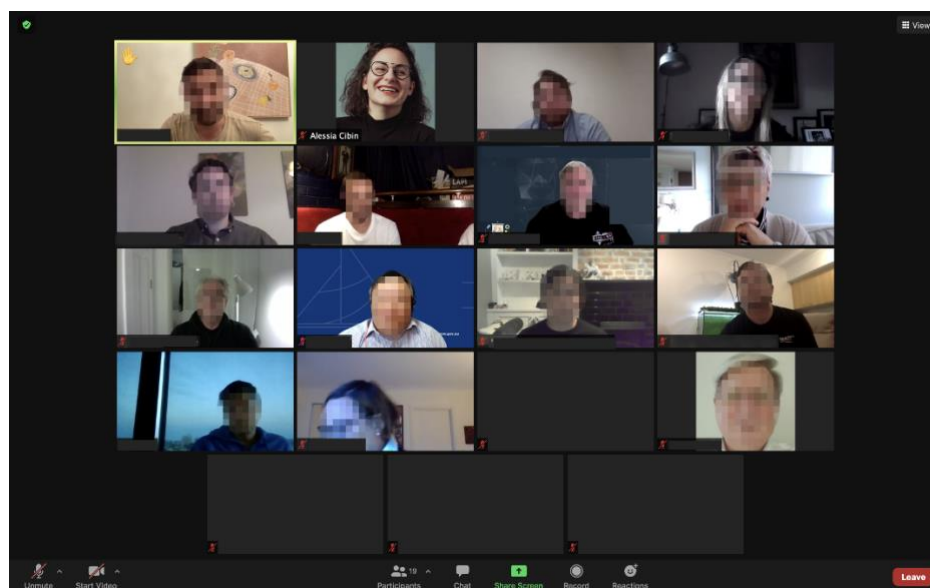
Like Chloe, another resident in the Inner Sydney displayed an emphatic and supportive behaviour:

We walk the dogs, and we see that they're [restaurants] open. We are making sure one night a week we're going to support this restaurant ... because otherwise they might close. (Kirsten)

The support from residents was vital for the survival of NTE businesses. The support was facilitated using digital platforms largely in use by NTE business owners to promote their products and nurture the relationship with residents and customers. Asher, a business owner of a night venue explained:

We had something to post on social media. We're kind of active at that time. We even did streets posters ... saying take a cocktail, cocktails available. ... It (digital platform) was good in terms of it kept the connection with our customers. So even though we're shut, we could still sell them something. They couldn't come [inside] here to get a drink, but they would come here to support us.

Figure 7.4 Collaboration online



Screenshot from a NTE webinar organised by a local government in Sydney explaining the type of financial support and government programs available for NTE businesses across sectors. Digitally modified screenshot to protect the identity of participants. *Source:* author (2020).

Figure 7.5 The NTE during Covid-19: social value creation



Photo from a Facebook post published by OzHarvest, a local social enterprise. Reprinted with permission. *Source:* OzHarvest (2020).

Covid-19 led to a stronger embeddedness of the NTE in social networks where business owners and organisations developed and used social capital to deal with the effects of the crisis. The social networks led them to share information and knowledge on the type of support available from government. Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic led in some cases to repurposing the value of business organisations as mediator between the state and the NTE. Asher explained:

It started as a group chat in the early days of Covid-19 to share information as to what everyone's doing, what help is out there. [President of Business Organisation Name] had formed [Organisation Name], just prior to Covid and we were kind of working on what our focus would be. Covid just sharpened our focus as to what we need to do as an organisation. It was lobbying on behalf of a similar types of venues and sharing information. So just being part of the organisation and being privy to the emails from state government, we just knew things that are happening, maybe like one step ahead. For example, there's going to be a wage subsidy for your staff, or there's going to be a grant available to apply for your small business or tax incentives. We could cascade information down there, but also [tell the members] don't freak out too much. Like, we should all qualify for this and this. Then you will have an email coming soon. It was good just to like, keep people at ease. If nothing else, just to like share information and let them know that there is a plan and there was something happening (Asher).

Lachlan explained that his night-time business evolved around hospitality and entertainment and commented on the collaborative response in place with food suppliers and landlords:

We have great relationships with suppliers. We have great relationships with our landlord...And we work together because we show them the picture of what it will be like when we get out of this situation.

Lachlan kept explaining that his landlord was very understanding and compassionate, “to the point of not charging us rent at all”. He further specified the collaborative response in place with his own food suppliers:

We had food that spoiled a lot and ... But because of the great relationships, we would say: “We lost all that food because...” [They responded], “We feel your pain, we’re taking that invoice. You don’t have to worry about that.” A lot of our suppliers worked really closely with us, to help us because they know that when we come back again, we will buy from them. (Lachlan)

7.5.4 Innovation and experimentation

Innovation and experimentation are fundamental to antifragility. In antifragility, “innovation and sophistication spark from initial situations of necessity” (Taleb, 2012, p. 48). Latin proverbs also indicate that “sophistication comes out of hunger” – *artificial docuit fames* – and “difficult is what wakes up the genius” – *ingenium mala saepe movent*. Essential, “the excess energy released from overreaction to setbacks” drives innovation (Taleb, 2012, p. 48). Innovation evolved around the introduction of new products – for example, breweries producing hand sanitiser or fuel stations selling toilet paper. In these cases, innovation came from the ability to identify current consumer demands and adjust business operations. It was intentional and provided a revenue source. The following quote is noteworthy:

We started selling things that we never had to sell before. Like, we had people coming in, and this is a classic Covid thing, *and* asking for pregnancy tests ... because everyone thought they were getting pregnant during Covid. That was just a weird one. We sold a lot more condoms during Covid than we ever have before. Pregnancy tests was something we introduced, but the biggest one was coffee. (Austin)

Innovation also evolved around moving an entire ecosystem and NTE experience online. It was the case of a partnership program between different NTE businesses in the hospitality sector and a local theatre in Parramatta. It was common in social media to find theatres actors streaming their performance or promoting local hospitality businesses (Figure 7.6). A state representatives explained their initiatives:

One thing that we did here in Parramatta was that we took our programming of Riverside theatres online. We won a national award for Parramatta lanes going online. And we saw people could order their food from different outlets in Parramatta and have at home delivered and then they sort of had the online experience. We needed to be able to adapt and have much more creative ways of still having that NTE remotely. (Alyssa)

Figure 7.6 The NTE during Covid-19: antifragility through innovation

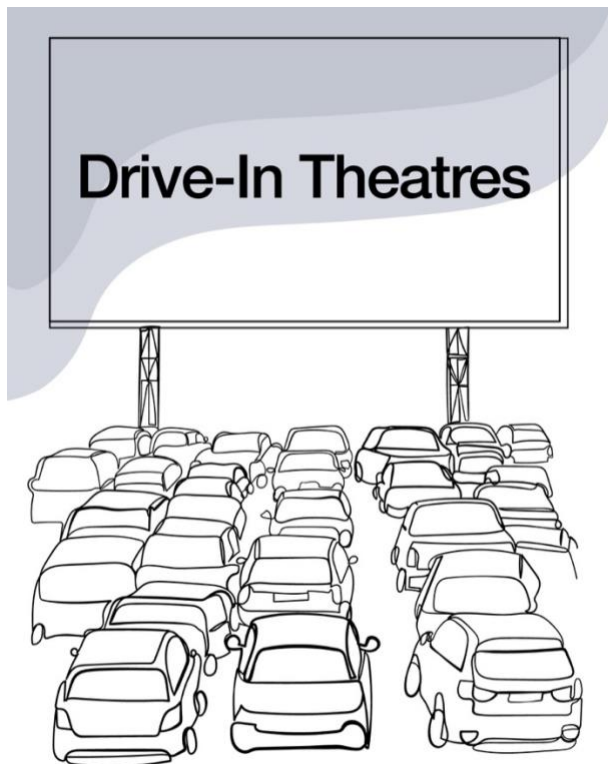


Photo published in a Facebook post in 2020. Reprinted with permission. *Source:* Riverside Theatres (2020)

Some interviewees, driven by an entrepreneurship acumen and creativity were able to intercept market opportunities and demands. Therefore, they explored and engaged with new sectors in the NTE and pioneered new projects (Figure 7.8). It was the case of Lucien who was the founder of a place-making and event management company:

We were the first one in Australia to launch a drive-in cinema during the first lockdown. We were sold out every night for four months. Then we moved that to Canberra where there was the same demand, and we were sold out as well. Then after that, in summer because people did not want to be indoors, we created a floating cinema in Darling Harbour keeping the social distancing. For us, the cinema industry was a lifesaver. Without that we probably would not be here today and in business. (Lucien)

Figure 7.8 The NTE during Covid-19: Lucien's story of antifragility



Re-drawing of Lucien's story during Covid-19 lockdown. The image represents the innovation of Lucien's company into expanding to a new sector which is outdoor cinema and theatre. *Source:* author (2022).

Other NTE businesses realised that Covid-19 lockdown was an opportunity to further refining marketing campaigns, or complete projects started before Covid-19 and entered state government funded programs to look for innovative solutions:

It is really hard for artists, it's very hard. And people within the NTE that I know, I've been sending them jobs, because I know that some of their businesses run festivals, ... I've got a pop-up show happening at central station where I'm going to do an event which will connect everybody. I've got that up my sleeve. And I'm looking at new business ideas that was in the NTE space. I'm part of an accelerated programme. I'm actually looking at other business ideas after what happened with Covid-19. And you have to keep up with it. Because otherwise it says you have to innovate the whole time with your business, or you're just sort of die really. (Isla)

Some interviewees suggested that night spaces have experienced a new life (Figure 7.7), a functional repurpose and these new functions were an unintentional outcome of Covid-19. Unconventional places to go out at night such as service stations and convenience stores which are often not spatially located in any cluster, rather they are spatially dispersed, became "the new club", a place to go to buy a coffee, and meet the neighbour. Austin explained:

The first lockdown ... we tried it out. We traded beyond what we've ever traded before. Because everything was close, like our coffee sales went through the roof, food sales went through the roof, snack sales went through the roof, because people were allowed to go for a walk each day and walk into a service station. Their local services, anything that was open, cafes were closed, restaurants were closed. There was only there was a choice of a service station or a big supermarket. And people didn't want to go to the big supermarkets. ... They came to the service station. They'd walk the dog to the service station or walk the kids to the service station. Get something to eat and leave. (Austin)

Figure 7.7 The NTE during Covid-19: the fuel station is the new club



Re-drawing of Austin's story during Covid-19 lockdown. The image represents the repurposing of a 24H fuel station and convenience store from fuel and basic service provisions to a place where to go at night. *Source: author (2022).*

7.6 Discussion and conclusion

In this chapter, I addressed the research question: - - What was the impact of Covid-19 on the NTE and how did night entrepreneurs in Sydney respond to it? Before summarising the results, I need to propose two key considerations. Historical accounts on the urban night suggest that the night in contemporary cities is light-mediated (Beaumont, 2015; Schivelbusch, 1995), that is the advent of artificial lighting enabled a more extensive and diverse night-time activities along with providing safety for night city users. This argument is still partially correct. I say partially because this chapter investigated a digital-mediated NTE. In this context, a digital-mediated NTE refers to how digital

technologies such as social media and online platforms facilitate and shape night-time activities, and every “nightlife” interaction. A digital-mediated NTE does and does not have spatial implications, as these technologies enable people to participate in night-time activities without being physically present in specific locations. Second, the curfews were historically seen as a policy tool to ensure public safety and prevent crime (Beaumont, 2015; Schivelbusch, 1995). During the Covid-19 pandemic, curfews were a policy tool in place to limit social gathering at night and address public health.

My findings revealed that the economic impact and the psychological impact of the pandemic were dramatic and uneven. The impact was especially intense in areas where curfews were put on place. There was agreement that the hospitality and creative sectors were most impacted compared to other sectors. The economic impact was not so bad for everyone, some night businesses kept operating.

The response of night entrepreneurs was analysed drawing on the concept of antifragility (Section 7.5). I identified four coping mechanisms in place: engaging in crisis management, adaptation, collaboration and innovation and experimentation. First, engaging in crisis management was the first response to supply chains disruptions and the need to adhere to Covid-19 safety management policies. Night-time business entrepreneurs considered engaging in crisis management as an unexpected task, time-consuming, costly and extremely stressful. Night entrepreneurs adapted to survive. Adaptation was an active and creative problem-solving process induced by Covid-19 and the need to survive. It involved several adjustments such as changing trading hours, adapting business models and shifting to digital platforms. Third, collaboration involved the relational capabilities between NTE businesses across sectors, between local government and NTE businesses, and between businesses and residents. Collaboration was pivotal to meeting the increased demand of certain services and products and creating social value. These collaborative dynamics provoked the NTE to be antifragile. This finding corroborated previous antifragility arguments that show how collaboration can contribute to new value creation, collective problem solving and respond to uncertainty (Ramezani & Camarinha-Matos, 2020; Sagala & Óri, 2024), in essence become antifragile. Fourth, the stories and experiences of night business owners revealed that innovation and experimentation was another coping mechanism. Underlying was the ability to assess what services and products were in demand, explore different NTE sectors, and repurpose spaces. While some innovation and experimentations were intentional, others were unintended such as the fuel station as the new club.

The first observation is related to antifragility and the NTE. Antifragility contradicts and challenges modern methods and the tendency to think that “innovation comes from bureaucratic funding, through planning, or by putting people,” consultants or experts “who never innovated anything” into conversations and policy developments (Taleb, 2012, p. 48). Additionally, antifragility contemplates risks and mistakes as it is from risks and mistakes that we learn, improve and even thrive (Taleb, 2012).

Chapter 8 The night-time economy post-Covid-19 pandemic

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I analyse the NTE post-Covid-19. The chapter addresses how the NTE as a policy field evolved post-Covid-19. The key argument is that post-Covid-19 pandemic, the government has become far more involved in the NTE and that various policies have been put in place to facilitate its growth and the workings of night entrepreneurs. This chapter is structured as follows. In this chapter, I argue that the NTE became characterised by pro-growth policies, and these were the outcome of years of policy entrepreneurship and coalitions. [Section 8.2](#) analyses the policies adopted by the NSW government to boost the NTE in Sydney. The NTE policies post Covid-19 were both the outcome of extensive policy entrepreneurship that occurred in the pre pandemic period (Chapter 6); and the strategy of policy entrepreneurs in seizing the post Covid-19 pandemic as an opportunity to implement NTE policies. [Section 8.3](#) examines the challenges facing the NTE in the contemporary period. The implementation of new NTE policies did not come without challenges consequential to the pandemic, reoccurring and unsolved conflicting rationalities. [Section 8.4](#) concludes the chapter.

8.2 Policies adopted to stimulate the NTE

Post the Covid-19 pandemic, the NTE has become a key in the broader economic recovery and governing the NTE has been characterised by pro-growth policies, deregulation and re-regulation. In April 2023, the state election saw a change in government from the conservative coalition (Liberal and National Party) to the left-of-centre Labour Party and the appointment of John Graham, a long-time advocate for the arts and NTE, as Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, further solidified this shift. In October 2023, the Parliament of NSW approved the so-called *Vibrancy Reforms*, a package including several elements to boost the NTE: activation of outdoor spaces at night through outdoor dining and street festivals, “sensible venue sound management”, and incentives for live music, vibrant coordinated precincts, and empowerment of the 24-hour Economy Commissioner “to deliver a sustainable, thriving night-time economy”, a review of liquor licensing and planning regulation and a focus on night-time for workers (Parliament of NSW, 2023). The broad policy shift was described as “support venues and festivals, make entertainment economically viable” (Parliament of NSW, 2023). As part of the vibrancy reform package, in 2024, the NSW Government announced the lifting of the concert cap to enable the hosting of an increased number of events, festivals and live music events in the two major stadiums - the Sydney Cricket Ground and Allianz Stadium ([Planning NSW, 2024](#)). Although the regulatory reforms are broad, I will focus on three key policies: the

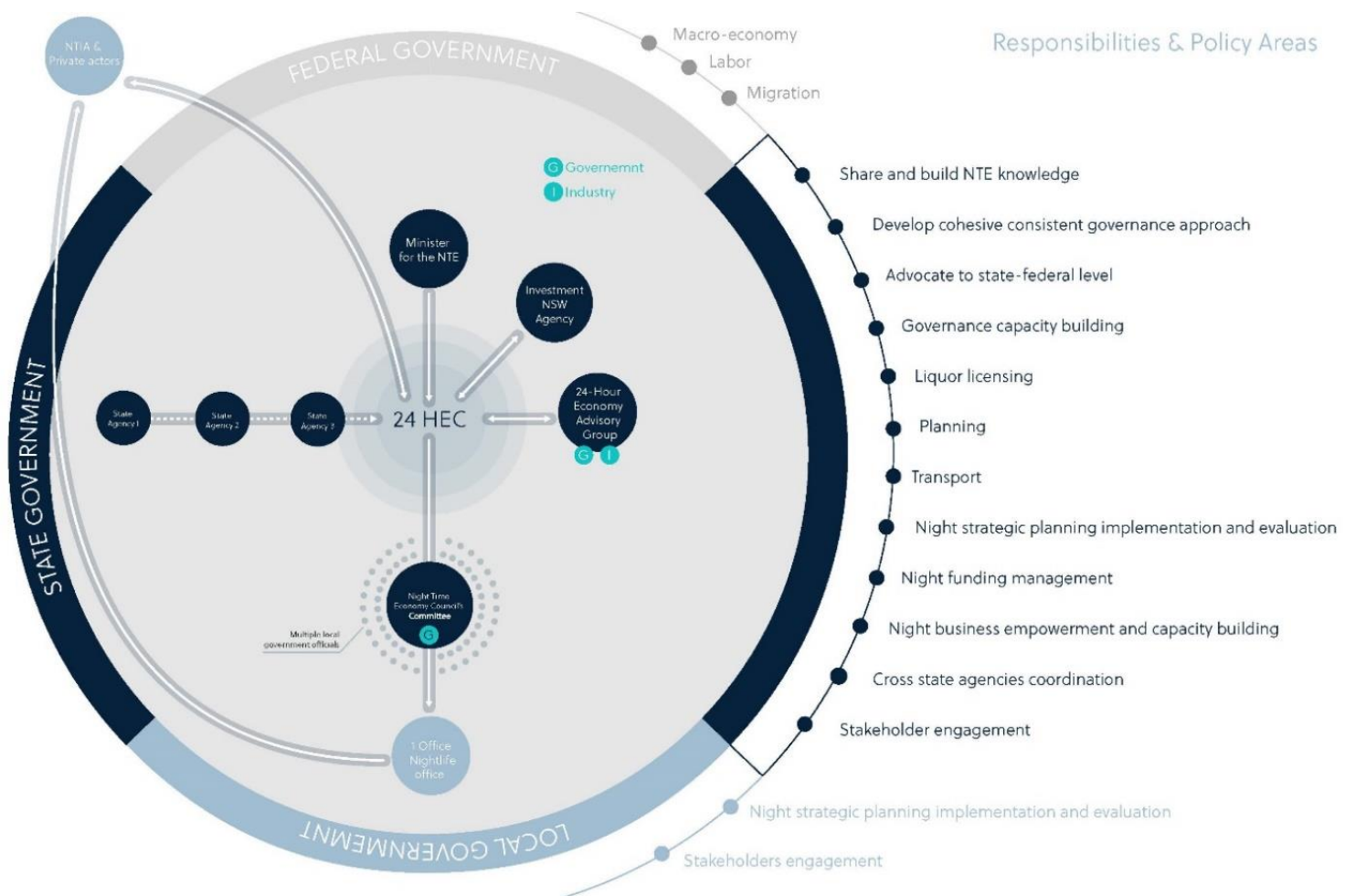
establishment of the Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner (O24HE), the *24-hour Economy Strategy*, and Outdoor Dining. Most of these policies were outcome of policy entrepreneurship and coalitions (Chapter 6).

8.2.1 Consolidation of the institutional architecture and role of governments

Post the Covid-19 pandemic, the consolidation of the institutional architecture occurred. The establishment of a NTE governance framework was outcome of policy entrepreneurship discussed in Chapter 6. As mentioned in [Chapter 1](#), Australia is a federal system based on three levels of government: federal, state, and local government. Therefore, the governance of the NTE relies on multi-level governance. [Figure 8.2](#) shows the institutional architecture of the NTE, as well as the responsibilities and the policy areas according to the three levels of government. The Federal Government is responsible for macro-economic policies and migration regulation and does not have a national NTE policy. However, it has had an impact on the NTE through two key regulations which were passed by the federal Parliament at the time of writing. The first is legislation to protect night workers within the gig economy. The legislation sets minimum standards on digital platforms to improve safety and rights for night workers, and criminalise wage theft (Australian Government 2024; Karp, 2023a, 2023b; Marin-Guzman, 2023). The second policy shift has been the rejigging of the migration system (Department of Home Affairs, 2023), driven by labour shortages exacerbated during Covid-19 and the need to intervene in the broader economic recovery ([Chapter 7](#)). Night businesses saw it as an opportunity to address the labour shortages in the NTE. The Federal Government is now cutting back on immigration due mainly to the housing crisis and the argument that excessive immigration is worsening the crisis (Dingwall, 2024).

Along with the federal government, [Figure 8.2](#) shows that the state government in the post-Covid-19 era is playing a key role in governing the NTE in Sydney with responsibilities in planning and liquor licensing regulation, transport, NTE strategic planning and coordination of state agencies. Lastly, local governments have strategic planning and stakeholders' engagement consultation responsibilities regarding NTE policies.

Figure 8.2 Institutional architecture of the NTE



Source: own elaboration

Along with the state government, local governments have revised their roles concerning the NTE. Local governments are key policy entrepreneurs, as we have seen in Chapter 6, and as such the revisitation of their roles and adoption of NTE strategies was a clear tactic to innovate the urban governance of the NTE. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Sydney has 33 local government areas each with its own place identity, urban and built environment characteristics, business configuration and the presence or dominance of specific communities with diverse cultural backgrounds. Not all councils across Sydney have prioritised the NTE. Only 17 councils have explicitly recognised the importance of the NTE and have relevant policies in place to stimulate it. They are at different stages. Some have initiated a process towards the adoption of a NTE strategy, while others have already implemented one.³¹ The NTE strategies promote a globalised vision of “NTE [as]

³¹ The city councils that have adopted a NTE strategy are City of Canada Bay, City of Canterbury-Bankstown, Georges River Council, City of Liverpool, City of Parramatta, City of Penrith, City of Randwick, Waverley Council, City of Sydney, Wollongong City Council, Lake Macquarie City Council, City of Newcastle Council, City of Ryde, City of Willoughby, Municipality of Woollahra, Burwood City Council. Inner West Council

safe, vibrant and diverse”, therefore they do not reflect localised place identities. Most strategies rely on community engagement as a preferred method for NTE strategy design.

Table 8.1 provides a high-level summary of the role of the local government in governing the NTE. Local governments are navigators of regulatory complexity, steering networks through the management of engagement processes and partnerships with state agencies and business organisations. Interestingly, very few local councils across Sydney have high-budget resources like the City of Sydney council. These councils rely on the state government to redirect resources. Post-COVID-19, local governments have become far more involved with managing and stimulating the NTE. This is reflected in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 NTE post-Covid-19: the role of the local government in governing the NTE

Role	Initiatives and Policies
Navigator	- Navigating internal complexity - Understand and navigate regulatory burdens
Steering Networks	- Hold and manage community engagement processes (e.g. surveys, “Have your Say”) - Provide capacity building for local government in NTE management (see NTECC) - Develop knowledge on NTE management, commission studies, data collection - Steer partnerships across different level of governments, state agencies and private actors to enable the NTE
Funding broker	- Redirect funding from federal and state government to local government - Providing grants for NTE diversification
Strategic thinker	- Lead the design and adoption of NTE strategies, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation - Lead the develop of a NTE vision
Night services and infrastructure provider	- Waste management (night collection) - Lighting provision
Land use planner and place maker	- Design and adoption of planning tools (e.g., Late-Night Trading Development Control Plan) - Approve planning and development applications - Activate spaces at night
Enabler	- Support businesses with regulatory application and processes
	- Provision of cultural facilities - Events and cultural planning - Use of assets (e.g., building) to promote NTE

which includes few nightlife hotspots such as Newtown, Enmore and Marrickville, does not have a NTE in place rather it has adopted a Special Entertainment Precinct, included pubs as heritage listed to protect nightlife and pushed for cultural policies and events planning.

Advocate and Promoter

- Lobbying federal and state government for funding, re-regulation
- Promotion of NTE initiatives, emerging trends and nightlife opportunities in their local areas

Whilst the remit of local government continues to grow, it is noteworthy that governing the NTE is perceived as a very complex policy space. A mayor in an inner Sydney area, in response to my question on the challenges posed by the NTE for local governments, responded,

And part of it is because it's [the NTE] ... a very tricky policy space. Very complicated. There are lots of very interrelated parts.

The Covid-19 crisis led to a consolidation of the institutional architecture for governing the night. Similar to other international experiences (Acuto, Seijas, et al., 2021; Seijas & Gelders, 2021), the O24HE was established as part of an institutionalisation of night governance practices. The O24HE is unique at the state level internationally and in Australia.³² The O24HE was established in February 2021, during the pandemic, under the leadership of the former Liberal state government (Boon, 2021). However, during the pandemic, its role was restricted. Later in 2023, the O24HE became a statutory appointment. The functions are established under the (24-Hour Economy Commissioner Act 2023 No 54, 2023):

- (a) to advocate for, and promote the interests of, the night-time economy State-wide,
- (b) to advocate for policy change, legislative reforms and other improvements about the night-time economy, including by attending relevant forums and conferences and being involved in negotiations between stakeholders,
- (c) to drive collaboration between government agencies to address common issues, and promote better policy development, about the night-time economy,
- (d) to provide advice, recommendations and reports to the Minister, at the request of the Minister or on the Commissioner's own initiative, about matters relating to the night-time economy,
- (e) to raise awareness and provide education about, and conduct programs and other activities to promote—
 - (i) understanding of issues affecting the night-time economy, and
 - (ii) compliance with legislation affecting the night-time economy, and
 - (iii) best practice in relation to other matters affecting the night-time economy,
- (f) to promote and enhance multiculturalism as part of the night-time economy,
- (g) to advocate for a mix of diverse cultural, social and business activities and experiences as part of the night-time economy,

³² Following NSW, in June 2024, the Queensland Government announced the appointment and budget allocation for a Night Life Commissioner (Queensland Government, 2024).

- (h) to encourage more collaboration across industry, local government and the NSW Government in delivery initiatives in relation to the night-time economy,
- (i) other functions conferred on the Commissioner by this Act or another Act.

According to the Act (24-Hour Economy Commissioner Act 2023 No 54, 2023), the O24HE is not subject to the direction and control of the Minister and may be supported by a 24-Hour Economy Advisory Council to be appointed by the Minister or under recommendation of the 24HEO.³³ The O24HE is part of the NSW Department of Enterprise, Investment, and Trade. Since 2023, the O24HE has been equipped with substantial funding. The latest NSW Government Budget allocated \$54.2³⁴ million to the night-time economy and creative industries including \$26.9 million to boost the NTE and empower local councils through grant programs, precinct-based initiatives and regulatory reforms; \$8.8 million to support cultural institutions such as Sydney Opera House, Sydney Observatory, Powerhouse,³⁵ Australian Museum and State Library of NSW; \$18.5 million for Sound NSW to strengthen the live music sector (NSW Government, 2024).

Interviewees discussed the role of the O24HE and praised the coordination effort within and between organisations suggesting that integrated management involved both horizontal coordination within the state government agencies and vertical coordination between the state and the local councils. An interviewee made this point:

If you look at the *24H Economy Commissioner* role, it sits in central government, access to police, planning, transport, health, and so forth, then ... the city councils who are a separate area of government. The *24H Economy Commissioner* ... needs to get everyone in NSW Government collaborating so that the enabling environment for the businesses to operate ... is created. But then the *24H Economy Commissioner* also needs to try and line up the local councils so that they have strategies that are aligned. Say 10 government departments within those government departments, it might be two or three teams, Transport these 3 teams,

³³ Albeit with some differences, London's night governance architecture is very similar to the one established in Sydney. In London, the Night Czar was nominated to ensure "London thrives as a 24-hour city", the Night Czar chairs the Night Time Borough Champions Network which aims to: "make sure London's political leadership has access to the latest insights and thinking on night time policy; drive the development of local, holistic night time strategies; ensure London's businesses, workers and communities thrive between 6pm and 6am" (Mayor of London, n.d.)

³⁴ At the time of writing one Australian dollar was worth approximately 65 US cents.

³⁵ Powerhouse is The Museum of Applied Arts and Science, a museum group governed by a Board of Trustees appointed by the Governor. Currently, Powerhouse includes Sydney Observatory and Powerhouse Ultimo in inner Sydney, Powerhouse Castle Hill and Powerhouse Parramatta (under construction) in the western suburbs.

Customer Services, there's 3/4 teams, so like 20 teams within government. (Adam, state executive)

Interviewees defined the role of government as a coordination tool to engage with different groups of stakeholders and as a steering mechanism. Noah, who was working in the state government at the time of the interview, portrayed night governance as “mediators or translators between two worlds – nightlife and city government” (Seijas & Gelders, 2021, p. 317).

Industry, which currently still arranges itself in what I call verticals - I'm a bar, I'm a pub, I'm a music, I'm a comedy, I'm a theatre ... But really, that vertical orientation is not how consumer thinking works. Consumer thinking says, “I want to experience going out”. Therefore, why transition from home to event and back again. It's all part of one thing. I eat, I drink, I watch, I play, do you think about sitting at home, and when you *do* evening entertainment, you press the button ... comes TV. You press another button food, comes to your door. When you go out? How complicated is the experience in comparison [to the institutional logics]. I spend a lot of my time saying to businesses ... how is your overall product coming together in a way that makes it easy for consumers, particularly an audience base who are used to using devices and bringing everything on demand? (Noah, state government executive)

Many interviewees praised the new leadership in place at the state level and recognised a policy shift - the recognition and boosting of multiple city centres across the Sydney metropolitan area. Alyssa commented,

The implementation of the night-time economy commissioner has been a good outcome of ... post lockdowns and post-lockout laws. I think that with the new state government, there is a definite shift in policymaking and focus from the Sydney CBD towards smaller suburban centres in Western Sydney (Alyssa, State MP)

Along with the leadership and coordination role and support agency for local governments, the O24HE was envisioned as the locus for funding provision related to place-based interventions and sustainable nightlife precincts:

Their role [24HEO] is very much as a leadership role and driving the agenda forward for all local governments and supporting local governments to support their local communities. (Thea, local government manager)

The above view was echoed by Andrew who was chairing a business organisation and had strong experience in advocating for the NTE:

The industry needs representation in government ... our guy Mike (Michael Rodrigues is the current 24 H Economy Commissioner) is the industry ... He is ... what we need. Mike is able to speak entertainment,

but he can also speak to the government. His role is to speak to government, ... to speak entertainment to government. ... It's vitally important.

8.2.2 24-hour Economy Strategy

Post the pandemic the 24-hour Economy Strategy was implemented. Like the consolidation of a NTE governance framework, the 24-hour Economy Strategy was the outcome of years of advocacy from policy entrepreneurs (Chapter 6). The 24-hour Economy Strategy had been developed during the height of the pandemic, but the virtual shutting down of the NTE meant it could not be entirely implemented. Policy entrepreneurs think and act strategically (Mintrom, 2019b, 2019a) and the re-regulation coalition was aware that to be successful in introducing change an alternative to the repeal of the lockout laws needed to be presented and negotiated with a broad cast of actors including the police and health authorities. The strategy involved persuading the state government to develop a *24-hour Economy Strategy*. Oscar, an NSW government executive, was involved in the co-design of the *24-hour Economy Strategy*:

We had a uniquely supportive political and governance-enabling environment. By the time this [24-Hour Economy Strategy] came to us, the NSW Government had already made commitments publicly in response to the 2019 Parliamentary Inquiry [JSCSNTE] on the night-time economy. It meant that from the Premier down to Ministers, and then down to my [position] with [NSW State Department Name] we were very much committed ... The other reason we were very fortunate is that we wanted to get something done quickly. We also had enough time to design a process for stakeholder engagement because we acknowledged there was no way this was going to succeed if it wasn't co-designed with industry and with local government.

Building consensus around a vision and strategy was the key to its implementation. Along with stakeholders' alignment, negotiations with police and health authorities were essential ([Chapter 5](#)[Chapter 6](#)). As Adam (state government) explained,

Something that we achieved through that consultative process, which I'm proud of, we were able to present the strategy to those stakeholders, not as a complete relaxation, an opening of the floodgates in terms of our role as government, rather to take a more sophisticated and enabling approach. And to give one example, the strategy made some significant commitments through things like sort of Purple Flag Program,³⁶ supporting small bars operating. There was also going through to leverage opportunities for more communication around safe night-time economy uses and practices and making sure that our lead agencies be

³⁶ The Purple Flag Program is explained on page *.

them transport, health or others would have an opportunity ... to communicate safe usage outcomes and to work with industry to develop spaces that will be known for safe and diverse opportunities for night-time economy activation.

The quote suggests that persuasive skills, conflict management and negotiation were essential to “sell the policy”. An interviewee who participated in the co-design of the *24-hour Economy Strategy* had an interesting insight reflecting on the climate in which the 24H Economy Strategy was being designed and adopted:

It [*24-hour Economy Strategy*] was a very risky proposition. When you think about the degree of stakeholder, particularly industry distrust in government off the back of the lockdown laws, [there was a] risk that something that went out under the government’s brand would [evoke] heavy criticism. Because we went through that [consultative] process, the strategy was launched to a great deal of extremely positive response from industry and the community (Oscar, state government)

It is instructive to examine how the adoption of *24-hour Economy Strategy* was portrayed positively amongst different stakeholders. For instance, a corporate hospitality and night venues company, the Solotel Group, welcomed the strategy stating,

The 24-hour Economy Strategy is the first unified vision and detailed action plan developed for government and industry to follow so as to deliver a fun, diverse and exciting nightlife to Sydney underpinned by arts, culture and public space activations” (Solotel, 2020).

The Solotel Group CEO commented,

The NSW Government’s process, and Minister Ayres’ collaborative approach has ensured that all sectors of the night-time economy were represented, and all voices were heard. ... We think this is a great step to restoring confidence in our industry (Solotel, 2020).

The think tank, Committee for Sydney, also welcomed the *24-hour Economy Strategy*, with the CEO, Gabriel Metcalf, remarking, “We know that bars, restaurants, retailers, and cultural institutions have been hit hard ... This strategy is part of how we help them bounce back” (Young, 2020).

The *24-hour Economy Strategy* design process was led by the NSW Treasury and was launched in September 2020 during the first Covid-19 lockdown in NSW but was only extensively implemented in the post-Covid-19 period. I observed that the *24-Hour Economy Strategy* is the first strategy developed by an Australian state government. Usually, night policies and strategies are developed locally at the municipal scale (Acuto, Seijas, et al., 2021). The NSW Government partnered with the Night Time Economy Council Committee (NTECC) and several state agencies including the NSW Treasury, Department of Premier & Cabinet, Create NSW, Department of Planning, Industry and

Environment Transport for NSW, Destination NSW, Liquor & Gaming NSW, Service NSW for Business, NSW Health, NSW Police Force, Office of Local Government Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner, NSW Treasury Precincts Branch. The implementation of the strategy at the time of writing resided in the O24HE within the Investment NSW department. The former Minister for *Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney* presented the *24-hour Economy Strategy* as such:

This 24-hour Economy Strategy is the culmination of years of thought leadership by industry and local government with key insights from the NSW Government packaged together into a plan to enhance the vibrancy, diversity, inclusiveness and safety of Sydney's 24-hour economy (NSW Treasury, 2020, p. 5)

In other words, we could argue that the introduction of the 24H Economy Strategy was a successful case of collective policy entrepreneurship.

The *24-hour Economy Strategy* has four primary aims: 1) to promote a shared vision for Sydney's 24-hour Economy; 2) propose and develop a strategic framework; 3) detail actions around five strategic pillars; 4) propose measures to monitor and evaluate the *24-hour Economy Strategy* (NSW Government, 2020a). The five strategic pillars are integrated planning and place-making, diversification of the NTE, industry and cultural development, mobility, improved connectivity, and changing the narrative around the NTE (NSW Government, 2020a). Several interviewees, when discussing the strategy, referred to it as an "evidence-based policy" in that it was the outcome of broad consultative and engagement processes:

I think that it's hard to make good policy decisions quickly. They need to be evidence-based. ... That's really what the *24-hour Economy Strategy* is ... An evidence-based approach to better regulation. (Adam, state government)

Adam reflected on the significance of the *24-hour Economy Strategy*, especially coming after the trauma of the Covid-19 pandemic. The following quote is representative of the broader policy entrepreneurship strategies that are expanding the notion of the NTE previously associated primarily with youth escapism and revellers:

It's exciting ... looking to reimagine Sydney's nightlife in the context of the pandemic recovery because everyone now understands the importance of social connection and being together in a way perhaps, we haven't valued it as much [before]. The government recognises that and the mental health issues about being isolated ... all the questions of making sure that you build a going out economy that is truly inclusive ... This is what the 24-hour Economy Strategy is about. It really says, "How do you remove the barriers for people leaving the house? That could be a family with a 3-year-old kid, all the way through to grandparents. Not just the 20 something year-olds who want to go out in a so-called party. It's broader than that.

Interviewees also commented on another component of the *24-hour Economy Strategy*: the 'Purple Flag Initiative'. Some interviewees argued that the Purple Flag scheme was not needed in Sydney as Sydney is "already safe." These interviewees acknowledged that the Purple Flag Initiative was envisioned in the UK as a "'performance standard' or 'purple flag' for authorities to demonstrate good practice in the management of the NTE within their jurisdiction" (Roberts & Eldridge, 2009b, p. 160). Other interviewees embraced the allure of such a scheme as a "branded 'kite-marking awards' initiative" (Hadfield & Measham, 2015, p. 518), fostering the public perception that "something is being done" in their communications with local constituencies" (Hadfield & Measham, 2015, p. 518). In other words, an effective way of un-governing the NTE ([Chapter 2](#)). Adam had the following analysis:

What the strategy says is: "Have we got an enabling environment for businesses to trade?" And then if we do, "How do you manage the risk thereafter?" That's where, in the 24-Hour Economy Strategy of NSW we recognise the purple flag, a city-wide accreditation scheme ... The concept is simple: for a district to have a flag, it needs to be safe, diverse, [have] good access [and offer] a wide consumer experience. The flag ... is not a regulatory requirement, but ... something that businesses want to aspire to. So, they start managing risk in a more flexible and sensible way ... It becomes about a [neighbourhood] ... sort of making sure that behavioural standards are kept in line with community expectations. (Adam, state government)

A big issue is funding. The adoption of NTE strategies and action plans does not necessarily find the necessary funding to implement strategies. Interviewees had different perceptions as to the role of local government in the NTE. However, there was consensus around the role of the local government as an enabler in inducing and promoting the development of the NTE.

The Covid-19 pandemic repositioned the NTE at the centre of the broader economic recovery characterised by a short-run response (Cibin, 2021), involving both economic stimulus and business support. Local governments provided support through direct assistance (grants and loans) and indirect assistance, for example the waiver of outdoor dining fees. Support for businesses included non-financial provision of services (training, information sessions to navigate funding availability at federal, state, and local government), expertise (e.g. mentorship), and visibility (e.g. awards).

Ironically the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted what needs to be done to get the NTE moving. It helped illustrate that you have to remove legal and procedural blockages and create new bodies. The policy changes around the NTE have seen new actors being involved and responsibility broadened beyond the local councils. The *24-hour Economy Strategy* was perceived as a tool to ensure a consistent governance approach across local councils and therefore ensure confidence in night businesses and reduce uncertainty. As a local government manager explained:

Each local government area is independent. When it comes to standards and consistency, they [O24HE] have a real role in trying to ensure that there is a consistent approach to how nightlife is developed and managed. For example, policing from one area to another can be quite varied depending on the area as far as how ... strict or how tight they control things. Business experience can be very varied. I think they [O24HE] have a real role with [respect to] ...that strategic development in a way it's consistent, so business have more certainty. (Thea)

Other interviewees commented on the strategy as the outcome of the historical evolution of the NTE and its policies, which I have explored in [Chapter 5](#), [Chapter 6](#). As the strategy was heavily implemented post-Covid-19, part of its components was reinterpreted as a key to the NTE recovery and revitalisation of city centres. As a state government official explained:

The strategy serves as guiding principles for the nighttime economy, like what a good night-time economy should look like ... And then because of the experience that we came through as a city, the governance strategy really has this concept of decentralised nightlife at its heart. ... speaks about the neon grid ... this idea about how Sydney can light up at different times of day and night. If you think about ... the impact of the pandemic ... it's been to forcibly make people spread out across Sydney. And of course, when you overlay then work from home, and an increased use of technology for many people ... then I think, in some ways, the strategy concept is already coming to life as people stay in their local areas more. (Adam)

8.2.3 Outdoor dining

Outdoor dining has been considered one of the most transformational policies of the NTE post-Covid-19 following what has been framed as a “mediterraneisation” of the NTE (Schmid, 2018) – expansion of NTE activities to outdoor spaces. Outdoor dining was initiated during the pandemic as a trial in The Rocks, a suburb in the City of Sydney LGA to support the recovery of the NTE and the re-activation of city centres (C. Kelly, 2021). Post-Covid-19, outdoor dining was implemented across the Sydney metropolitan area and became a permanent policy to stimulate the NTE (Koziol, 2022; McDonald, 2023; Ward, 2021). Outdoor dining was part of a broader review of the planning and liquor license re-regulation. It has enabled the use of private and public outdoor land by restaurants and cafes, and they can expand their activities without the need for further development application approval. The process was broadly conceived as a tool to “streamline” over-regulation.

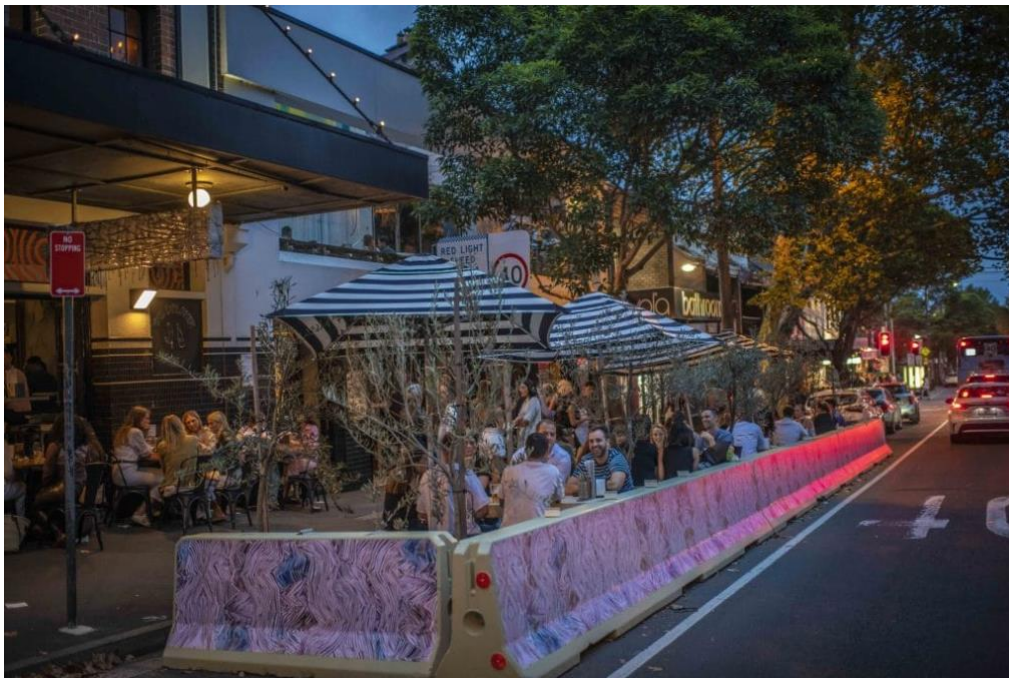
If you think about what we call alfresco dining, or outdoor dining in Sydney, it's a big focus of the government for two reasons. One is that in a context where venue capacity has been limited by physical distancing, this is an opportunity for venues to essentially expand their footprint and

therefore get back to their original trading capacity or closer to it. So, there's an economic reason ... The second reason is that Sydney enjoys a temperate climate, one that is suited to eating and drinking outdoors³⁷. ..., [Alfresco dining has] become a welcome addition to Sydney's going-out economy. So, I think that in terms of concrete examples of regulatory change, there's been a couple of examples in the short term. But I think that these things will become precedents for future change, as we examine the benefits to citizens and businesses, and provided those risks and competing interests have been appropriately managed. (Adam)

Noah, a representative from a business organisation had a similar view:

You look at somewhere like The Rocks. Alfresco dining has really transformed the area. It feels like a much more pleasant place, much more like a European ... boulevard and it's likely that infrastructure will remain in place. (Noah)

Figure 8.1 NTE post-Covid-19: outdoor dining



Source: Lawrence (2022)

Outdoor dining was not exempt from critiques, conflicting rationalities are at play. A Kings Cross resident complained,

Council have given most restaurants and cafes ... outdoor seating ... It means instead of car parking; they now have those barricades ... The

parking is being robbed from us. ... It's not the best eating area because you're basically sitting on the streets. (Kirsten)

8.2.4 *Big events and night activations*

Big events planning, and night place-making were viewed as crucial for boosting the NTE and reactivating city centres that had been struggling. This is in contrast with the early 1990s when big events were primarily used as an urban regeneration tool for post-industrial cities (Bianchini, 1995; Roberts & Eldridge, 2009). In the contemporary post-Covid-19 period, big events and night place-making have been introduced by local councils, business organisations and state government agencies. Caleb, a representative of a business organisation who strongly advocated for the NTE, shared his experience:

We put on an event once a month for three months called Shop Light, which really reinvigorated people to lifetime shopping. We had buskers out in the streets, musicians, and food tours ... DJs at the businesses. We had encouraged local businesses to open until 9 pm every night with their entertainment. We had some drag queens. It really did help. Once a month on a Thursday night, a fun vibe and atmosphere in the community to help businesses get out of COVID ... There was the shop light campaign, and we did immediate walking guide pamphlets. We did advertising for that. We did networking nights. Those were the sorts of things that we did ... Those were the things to really promote our businesses. (Caleb)

In the Sydney NTE, big events were not only perceived as a tool towards the broader NTE recovery but also as a symbolic policy tool for city-branding and changing the NTE narrative:

We've been through the lockout laws, and then the lockdown. So really sending a signal to the world that Sydney is open for business, and we're putting on these amazing events. I think they're very important for our reputation ... [to] be able to communicate globally about Sydney's nightlife. So ... having those events really attracts visitors. From a visitor economy perspective or destination marketing, those large-scale events are really foundational to actually bringing a larger number of people to the city to experience our nightlife and everything that we have to offer. (Thea)

Big events and other place activations were considered crucial to increase the foot traffic and revitalise the vibrancy of city centres. As a state MP argued:

We need to have that ongoing programming. When you look at events like Lunar New Year ... events that bring people into the city, we need to do those on smaller scale as well and be targeting different audiences. (Alyssa)

Since the end of the lockdown, many big events have been hosted in Sydney - the annual Mardi Gras pride festival (Figure 8.2); the annual one-month-long event Ramadan Nights festival in Lakemba, a suburb in the City of Canterbury Bankstown (Figure 8.3); the Vivid Festival, an annual worldwide festival of lights that takes place across Sydney CBD (Figure 8.4). In 2023, Sydney hosted the FIFA Women's World Cup and Taylor Swift concerts. Along with big events, place activations occurred (Figure 8.5).

Figure 8.2 NTE post-Covid-19: Mardi Gras pride festival³⁸



Source: Yusuke Oba (in Broadsheet, 2022)



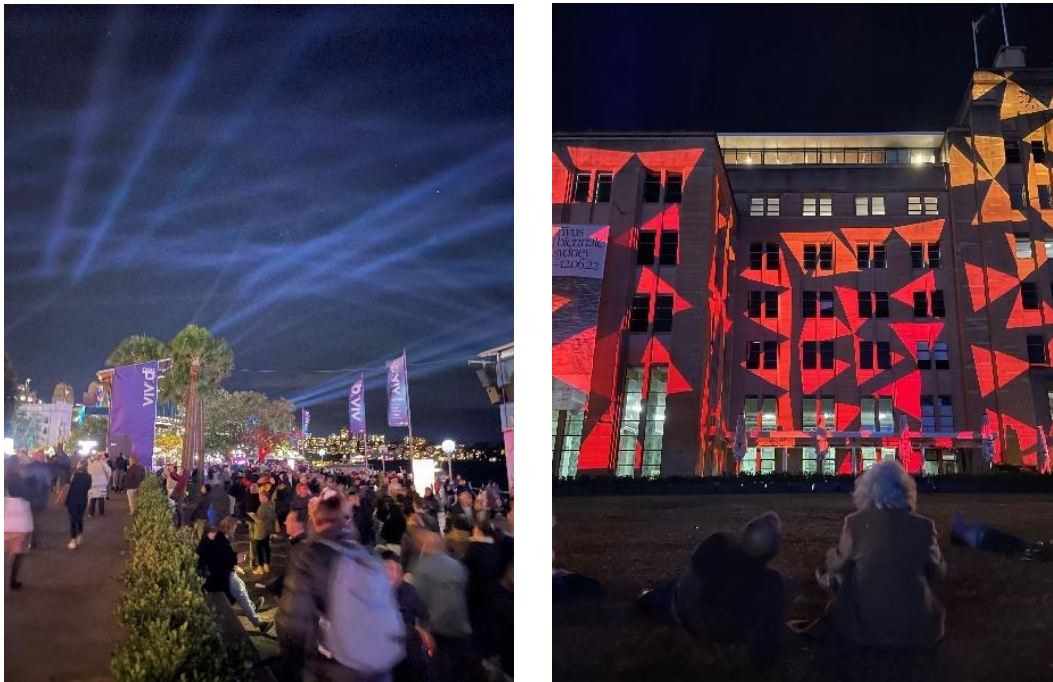
Figure 8.3 NTE post-Covid-19: Ramadan Nights in Lakemba



Source: author (2023)

³⁸ Photos show the Mardi Gras which occurred in 2022 at Sydney Cricket Ground sport stadium.

Figure 8.4 NTE post-Covid-19: Vivid Festival in Sydney CBD



Source: author (2023)

Figure 8.5 NTE post-Covid-19: a night out in Harris Park, Parramatta



Source: author (2023)

The photos show an informal Bollywood dance on the streets in Harris Park, a multicultural nightspot in Western Sydney. It adjoins Parramatta.³⁹

³⁹ Parramatta is a local government area located approximately 23 km west of Sydney CBD. It is widely considered the second largest business area in Sydney and is now the location of many government departments such as Department of Finance, Services and Innovation, Department of Planning, Industry & Environment. Parramatta is undergoing substantial infrastructure investments. At the time of writing the Parramatta light rail came into operation, and Sydney Metro West railway link is under construction.

8.3 Challenges facing the NTE in the contemporary post-Covid-19 period

This section delves into the key issues confronting Sydney's NTE as it navigates the post-Covid 19 period. In any complex system – such as the NTE – there are elements of risks or events harnessing the system itself (Taleb, 2012). Examples of these challenges have been historically conflicting rationalities unruly behaviour and urban disorder, introduction of restrictive policies (Chapters 5, 6). In the common contemporary understanding, governance has become the panacea for challenges and opportunities surrounding the NTE. However, governing the NTE entails element of risks which could be the inability to address effectively all the interrelated elements in the NTE – economic, social, cultural, and urban transformations. While this might lead to a governance failure, it also represents opportunities to let the NTE evolving into an antifragile system.

The post-Covid-19 challenges facing the NTE are questionable grant funding, conflicting rationalities, the increased cost of living and limited transport and mobility. The challenges are examined in turn and the opportunities to nurture an antifragile NTE are also drawn.

8.3.1 Questionable funding

Amongst the interviewees, a constant theme was investment and funding around the NTE. On the one hand, a thriving and vibrant NTE was seen as a driver for further investments. As a state government executive commented, “We want places that are exciting and thriving and diverse, to attract investment, and to really fuel that.” There was scepticism around some of the funding on offer. Some grants and fundings were perceived as symbolic, or an effective un-governing tool (Füller et al., 2018). Lucien, a night business owner within place-activation, was highly critical of the City of Sydney's grants program:

The City of Sydney, for example, have been organising grants, they have been doing lots of stuff to try to boost the *night* economy. But it's bull ... It's like. “Okay, we have a lot of money now. And let's give Shaun \$1,000 here, ... Let's have a street party”. ... In my opinion, this is ridiculous. You [should] ... utilise that money to change things in the long run. You don't spend it on short actions that like 10% that people have heard of [and that] is not changing the vibe, and getting customers used to going out more often or late at night. This is a whole perception [issue]. You need to make things secure. You need to have public transport at all hours.

Lucien's view was also echoed in an interview with Alyssa, a state government Member of Parliament, who argued that the allocation of state funding to temporary night activations was not necessarily supportive of local businesses:

It requires a sustained state government commitment and that means more than just one-off grants. ... Following COVID-19 ... the state government implemented things like those street parties, etcetera, but

they're ... fast, quick sugar hits. They're not planned, and they're not well executed ... They don't bring people into support the local businesses. They bring food trucks, etc. And there's only a bit of spin-off to the existing businesses. What we need is for funding to be granted to local governments and to community organisations that coordinate events in conjunction with local government so that we have a sustained programme, ongoing annual events that businesses can rely on to draw crowds.

On the other hand, the fundings and investments from governments were welcomed by interviewees as crucial for boosting the NTE. A state government official commented,

There's an opportunity for investment in those spaces ... We have seen investment from federal government, in music and festivals and those kinds of large-scale cultural events. And I think those have been a massive benefit for the NTE. So that kind of investment and engagement in those ... cultural activities can ... support the NTE to grow in Sydney and other places. (Margot)

Thea, a local government manager, was anxious about the future of NTE funding:

I think funding is another area which is going to be important in moving forward ... I am not so sure that the volume of money that we've seen in the past couple of years [during the Covid-19 pandemic] will continue, but I guess it's about how government funding will support creativity and culture more broadly, and nightlife. There are existing programmes. [However], how they're reshaped to really support individual unique places, developing their identity, and developing and growing areas into really thriving healthy nightlife places is crucial.

We have seen that the allocation of public fundings to governments at different levels has become a crucial feature of governing the NTE (Section 8.2). However, the “financial dependence” of the NTE towards government fundings might not necessarily lead the NTE to an antifragile system – that is a system able to regenerate itself (Taleb, 2012).

8.3.2 *Conflicting rationalities*

Post-Covid-19 conflicting rationalities continues to be a significant issue for the NTE. Night noise and resultant neighbourhood complaints remain one of the biggest challenges for the NTE. Elected representatives and government officials acknowledged that noise and neighbourhood complaints are one of the biggest challenges in governing the NTE. Alyssa explained the dilemma from the NSW state government perspective:

We know we're struggling with ... balancing the impacts on noise. [For example, with] environmental impacts. Very few people realise that the current building requirements in NSW do not require double glazing. Therefore, all these new apartments do not have the necessary

treatments so that those residents are not impacted by noise into the evening.

Residents keep opposing new planning development applications for businesses wishing to operate at night, sometimes embarking on court action to stop NTE development. For example, residents in one of Sydney's wealthiest neighbourhoods opposed a restaurant extending its opening hours to 11PM, despite the restaurant being a couple of hundred metres from the nearest house. One of the residents stated,

I object ... due to a significant increase in the duration of loud music and particularly the deep bass beat effects that reverberates from the venue and can be heard from inside our house (Parkes-Hupton, 2024).

Night business owners reported that residents' complaints stifled their operations. The experience of Lucien, a night business owner, was informative:

They [the waste collectors] started coming in whenever they could to empty our bins. And then a couple of times, they came in at like 10, 11, 12 o'clock, 1 o'clock in the morning to empty our bins ... And then the neighbours would complain to council. Then council tried to fine me \$8,000. They wanted to shut me down and I got into a big, big, big dispute.

You have people who've never worked ... in a night-time economy ... They've never run a business, and they just didn't know what it took to run a small business ... They were the biggest stumbling blocks because they just keep coming up with really dumb ... decisions.

The recognition of the cultural and economic value of the NTE led local and state government to adopt what I call protectionist night policies. Examples of protectionist night policies are the inclusion of clubs and pubs as heritage listed properties (Inner West Council, 2022a, 2022b). Protectionist NTE policies often clashes with urban development ones that is the need to provide more housing versus the need to preserve the local urban identity. Elected representatives and government officials acknowledges the potential of the NTE as a "location factor" to boost attractiveness and competitiveness (Schmid, 2018). Alyssa emphasised the importance of the NTE for revitalising an area:

A focus and investment in the night-time economy is going to bring great opportunities to Parramatta. We already know that Parramatta has two very significant night-time centres within its LGA ... in terms of major events ... I want to see Parramatta in neon lights on the map ... Not only for Sydney and NSW in Australia but internationally and I think we have

a very big role to play as a destination and that will become even more so with the opening of the Western Sydney Airport.⁴⁰

Conflicting rationalities also evolved around the vision of the NTE. Similar to what was noted in the UK context (Eldridge & Roberts, 2022), the diversification of the NTE is largely rooted within neo-liberal policies where the economic potential of city centres is the key, and suggests a shift in the dominant narrative from alcohol-fuelled NTE to a “diverse, safe and vibrant NTE”. In this way, the diversification of the NTE has been deployed to promote the reputational and economic benefits that might accrue (Eldridge & Roberts, 2022). The result is a commodified NTE which not everybody is in favour of. I provide two examples of the conflicting rationalities at stake and the challenges linked to NTE diversification. The first example is related to the successful Night Markets in Lakemba that celebrate the end of Ramadan.⁴¹ A religious community leader was critical of the event:

The night markets had evolved into something diametrically opposed to what Ramadan was meant to signify – fasting and developing self-restraint rather than feasting and indulgence. For us to be eating above and beyond what we would normally be eating, it defies the very spirit and essence of Ramadan (in Varga, 2023)

Interviewees stressed that a diverse NTE needs to consider that a commodified NTE is only one part of it, and the city identity and the role that culturally diverse communities play in shaping urban identity need to be recognised. A state government official highlighted that the NTE needs to take cognisance of the different views within the community:

What needs to be recognised is the multicultural nature of that community [Western Sydney], and how not all of them celebrate and gather in the same way at night. That culture means something different to many of the communities in Western Sydney, places of huge heritage and richness of ideas and family connectedness. It is essential that when we think about the nighttime, we also think about the safety of all cultures, all people, and all genders. ... Some parts of the narrative, it's (the NTE) often seen as a space for young people, or a space of having a Negroni ... How people feel safe, and how people can have an opportunity not just to be consumers, but to be participants in building our city identity [is important to recognise]. (Sophia)

⁴⁰ Western Sydney Airport is under construction and will commence operating in 2026. It will be the first international airport in Sydney to have no curfew. Around Western Sydney Airport a big urban development area will host mixed-use urban development.

⁴¹ Ramadan Nights is a month event occurring annually in Lakemba within the City of Canterbury Bankstown located in the Inner Southwestern Sydney. The event is co-hosted by City of Canterbury Bankstown and NSW Government.

Sophia's quote highlights that there is not just one NTE but many ways in which cities work at night (Roberts & Eldridge, 2009). Additionally, it stresses the relevance of place identity and belonging. The NTE often has a very practical function. A 24H business entrepreneur commented:

A lot of things revolve around service stations at night ... We are open for the people who work night shift, for people leaving to go to work early. ... We are like the central hub for tradesmen coming in at 4 in the morning, 3 in the morning. You get people leaving work at midnight. They come in. You get people on in their way to work ... (Austin)

8.3.3 Increased cost of living, working at night, transport

Many Australian households are struggling due to high inflation and the massive increase in interest rates since May 2022. The latter has led to increased mortgage repayments and rents. The high interest rates and inflation have also impacted on the NTE. NTE business organisations and night business owners, discussed the increasing cost of living and the resultant pressure on night businesses. The increased cost of NTE labour was a major concern. Jakob, who owns a couple of licensed venues and was involved in a business organisation, stated:

You were paying 80 grand (per year) for employees pre Covid-19, now, ... it's 100 or 120. The price of labour has gone up a lot. For experienced staff ... they come with a price. ... It created this [situation] ... Alessia will come and work at a venue. She wants X (\$). She doesn't really like the environment after 14 days [and she leaves]. That's put a lot of pressure on a lot of people just to try and stay open, remain open. It's still going on.

Jenny Leong, a state government MP representing Newtown, a key NTE area, argued that the high rents were making it exceptionally difficult for night-time businesses:

The rents ... are too high. Often what we see is a closure of late night [businesses], kebab shops and things like that, which is really concerning to people that want to go out. And ... I think how we ensure that there are late-night eating options is critical to make sure that it's [the NTE] not just about alcohol...

Other interviewees echoed how the cost-of-living pressures were impacting the NTE. Ethan, an executive of a business organisation advocating for NTE interests, stated,

That's the real issue for the industry [NTE] is ... the macro-economic impacts, inflationary pressures. All those interest rates rise. All these things kind of [result] ... in a slowdown in consumer spending behaviour ... It's a key issue now.

The increasing cost of living has forced individuals to undertake night shift work in addition to caring responsibilities and daily jobs. An interviewee explained:

At the moment now we're getting a lot of mums whose husbands work during the day, and they might work 1 or 2 nights a week because of mortgage stress cost of living going up. They'll come to work at 11:30pm midnight until 6am, then go home, take the kids to school, sleep for a few hours during the day, and then do it again. ... A lot of that is happening. (Austin)

Jakob highlighted the difficulties night businesses face:

If you're paying \$15,000 a month in electricity, and next month, you're paying \$25,000 a month and your wages ... have gone up by 15%. ... There's only so many people will pay for chicken sticks on the table or a beer before going, "It's too expensive", or they cut back ... Certainly, costs are really going to have an impact on the industry.

Media articles highlighted the pressure on the NTE, reporting on the increased cost of labour, rents, insurance and energy (Bannister & McCaughan, 2024; Burke, 2024; Green & Whiting, 2024). The owner of a restaurant commented,

We've never seen it this hard ... There are compounding pressures, one on top of another, and it makes the traditional form of hospitality venue more and more difficult [to keep afloat] (in Valent, 2024).

Media articles highlighted the decreased disposable income for recreation and night outs and the dramatic consequences for the hospitality sector and licensed venues (Carpenter, 2024; Ross, 2024), breweries and distilleries (Armstrong, 2024). Furthermore, the work from home and flexible working arrangements, a trend established since the Covid-19 pandemic, has put further pressure on city centres (McCallum, 2024). Festivals are not immune to the increased costs, soaring premiums and excessive fees (Bannister & McCaughan, 2024; Burke, 2024; Dowling, 2024; Green & Whiting, 2024).

Night transport and mobility was discussed as an ongoing challenge for both night city users and workers. An interviewee observed,

One big problem in the city is transport ... If they [people] go out and have a night out in the city ... they can't afford to get home. You've got cab drivers [charging] \$100 ... We're trying to get them [the government] to try and [sort this out]. We need to do something about making sure people can get home and are not forced to pay a ridiculous amount of money. (Jakob)

Other interviewees stressed that night mobility and connectivity is relevant to both facilitate people movement between different areas across Sydney but also within the same area. There was a broad sentiment across interviewees that night public transport

and its infrastructure are weak, and therefore not supporting adequately the NTE. The following quote is representative of this point:

We need to leverage new transport infrastructure such as the light rail, so that we can support our nighttime economy. One of the biggest challenges we have is ... connectivity with transport ... there is this major assumption that people from Southwest and Western Sydney are going to catch public transport, ... They're not connected enough within their own areas to rely on ... transport late into the night, youth will use public transport, but we need to [make sure they are] reliable and safe. I don't believe that we actually have ... enough focus on that at the moment. (Alyssa)

The increased cost of living, lack of transport and mobility have challenged the spatial and economic accessibility of the NTE threatening the inclusion of low-income demographics. While this highlights the fragility of an increasingly commodified NTE, it opens opportunities for a more antifragile NTE through learning about the multiple night business models and efficiency in gathering for multiple groups, and exploration of initiatives which moves beyond commodification towards value creation.

8.4 Conclusion

Governing the NTE post-Covid-19 has been characterised by pro-growth policies, deregulation, re-regulation. There was a consensus that the NTE was essential for the broader economic recovery and reactivation of city centres. Consistent with broader international trends (Acuto, Seijas, et al., 2021; Seijas & Gelders, 2021), the NTE has undergone the consolidation of a governance architecture and the appointment of a O24HE. Comparing this result with [Chapter 6](#), we could conclude that the re-regulation coalition including state agencies, business organisations and local government have now enough power and authority. The advocacy coalition and policy entrepreneurship literature suggest policy change alternates between periods of stability and periods of dramatic change (Kingdon, 1991; Sabatier, 1988). There is no doubt that policies to stimulate the NTE are the outcome of years of policy entrepreneurship through coalitions and these policies have undergone an acceleration post-Covid-19. This is reflected in the spread of big events and night places activations, and alfresco outdoor dining. A major shift has been the adoption of policy tools aimed at promoting NTE business confidence, reducing uncertainty and changing the narrative from “NTE alcohol-fuelled violence” to “diverse, safe and vibrant” NTE ([Chapter 5](#), [Chapter 6](#)).

Despite an increase in NTE funding and programs, there are some new and ongoing challenges in the contemporary period. One key challenge is inflation and the increase in the cost of living. It has put a lot of pressure on NTE businesses. Many are struggling to stay afloat as people decrease their spending on recreational night activities. Another ongoing challenge is conflicting rationalities in the NTE. Broader NTE literature suggested that the NTE is a contested time space (Cibin, 2019; Hadfield, 2006; van Liempt

& van Aalst, 2012). Conflicting rationalities are not going away. This is especially so in wealthier areas where residents are prepared to go to great lengths to protect their ambience. The issue of cultural clash is also an ongoing challenge.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I revisit the research aims and questions ([Section 9.2](#)), and I summarise the research findings ([Section 9.3](#)). I acknowledge the research limitations ([Section 9.4](#)). Next, I discuss the research significance from theoretical, methodological and empirical standpoints ([Section 9.5](#)). Following, I propose lines for future research ([Section 9.6](#)).

9.2 Revisiting the aims and research questions

This research aimed to explore the NTE in Sydney before, during and post-Covid-19 pandemic. In doing so, the study focused on the perspectives and experiences of multiple actors impacted by and interested in the NTE and its policies. The research questions were:

Research question 1: Who were the actors and what were their strategies to influence policy change in the Sydney's NTE before Covid-19?

Research question 2: What was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Sydney NTE and how did night entrepreneurs respond to it?

Research question 3: How has policy around the NTE in Sydney evolved post the pandemic?

As discussed in [Chapters 3, 4](#), the timeframes sub-division allowed me to understand and show the nuances of policy change (Mintrom & Norman, 2009a; Mintrom & Vergari, 1996; Sabatier & Weible, 2019; Weible et al., 2009). The first research question was analysed based on two timeframes: 2007-2014, and 2014-2020. In 2007, the first NTE vision statement appeared in policy documents of the City of Sydney, and in 2014 the NSW state government announced the introduction of the contested lockdown laws. In 2020, the lockdown laws were repealed and the NSW 24H Economy Strategy was adopted. The second research question analysed the NTE in Sydney during 2021 and 2022 when Covid-19 lockdowns repeatedly occurred in Sydney and curfews were adopted. The third research question investigated the NTE post-Covid-19. A qualitative online methodology was used to address these questions including interviews with four cohorts of participants: residents, night business owners and representatives from business organisations, government representatives – elected representatives and government officials at both state and local government levels, and experts ([Chapter 4](#)).

9.3 Summary of findings

9.3.1 *Towards the introduction of the lockdown laws*

In [Chapter 6](#), I analysed the NTE before the introduction of the lockdown laws. The advocacy coalitions were not so crowded, if compared to the coalitions post-lockout laws. There were seven key actors: the police, health authorities, residents, the NSW state government, families of victims, the City of Sydney Council and night businesses. All these actors were impacted by and interested in the NTE and its policies in Sydney and were involved in shaping or resisting policy change. The City of Sydney was equipped with stakeholders' engagement tools, a night city manager and a NTE strategy. A substantial proportion of the NTE entertainment businesses were in the City of Sydney council area. Despite the existence of a night governance structure, the City of Sydney was unable to prevent the introduction of the lockdown laws in early 2014. The police, health authorities, families of victims and residents acted as powerful policy entrepreneurs. They shared the view that the regulation of the NTE in Sydney needed to be significantly strengthened. The police and health authorities used strong evidence from robust studies to support their claims that the lockdown laws in other locations had been successful in reducing alcohol-fuelled violence. They mobilised public opinion and framed the NTE problems as alcohol-related violence. Residents and families of victims adopted a venue shopping strategy that was looking for powerful allies and credible actors to advance their call of NTE regulation and finally teaming up with the police and health authorities to support the introduction of the lockdown laws. Contrary to previous research suggesting that the lockdown laws were the outcome of moral panic (Wadds, 2020), my analysis showed that the introduction of the lockdown laws was the outcome of policy entrepreneurship strategies.

We can argue that the coalition promoting the lockdown laws was successful based on their attributes and strategies (Mintrom, 2019a). As Mintrom (2019a) suggests policy entrepreneurs who hold positions around or within government are considered credible. It was certainly the case concerning the police and health authorities. Their position enabled them to attract and expand their coalition and involve families of victims and residents. Police and health authorities skilfully framed the problem of NTE as a function of alcohol-violence used and expanded their networks and scaled up the change process by engaging with organisations that had national spheres of influence. The use of the policy entrepreneurship framework uncovered the agency and tactics of multiple actors in setting the NTE agenda by promoting their preferred policy solution — the lockdown laws.

9.3.2 *Towards the relaxation of the lockdown laws*

In [Chapter 7](#), I analysed the NTE during the lockdown laws. The advocacy coalitions became very crowded due to an increasing number of actors impacted by and interested in the

NTE policies. One coalition pro-lockout law included police and health authorities, residents, and academia. The other coalition which I called the re-regulation coalition, included the Keep Sydney Open nightlife movement, a group of government representatives within the Night-Time Economy Council Committee and the newly formed Nightlife Industry Association. Additionally, the re-regulation coalition included state agencies, and international night mayors, local think tanks and multiple cross-sector organisations in the NTE.

Conflicting rationalities unfolded over the impact of the lockout laws in the NTE, the primary vision of the NTE. The pro-lockout laws coalition argued that the lockout laws were successful in reducing alcohol-related crime and improving neighbourhood liveability. The re-regulation coalition acted as policy entrepreneurship establishing the NTE as a policy field, as reflected in the case of Keep Sydney Open who extensively opposed the lockout laws. Other actors were marginally involved in the debate around such for example the Committee for Sydney, and the Night Time Economy Council Committee. These actors built teams, engaged in peer learning, and capacity building and expanded the framing of the NTE as not only related to liquor licensing but also to place-making and strategic planning. It was the case of NTECC. Similarly, the Nightlife Industry Association reframed the NTE as encompassing very different sectors and issues related to economic potential and productivity related to the NTE.

Consistent with previous studies (Hadfield 2006), the NTE has been a contested time-space. Both the introduction and the relaxation of the lockout laws involved conflicting rationalities. Conflicting rationalities played out in terms of how problems were formulated leading to blame games amongst multiple actors ([Chapter 5](#)). Conflicting rationalities evolved around the impact of the lockout laws and policies related to the NTE ([Chapter 6](#)). Despite the institutionalisation of the NTE, conflicting rationalities are still part and parcel of the NTE in Sydney ([Chapter 8](#)).

The scrapping of the lockout laws was the outcome of both a critical juncture that is a window open only for a while (Kingdon, 1991; Mintrom & Norman, 2009a), and policy entrepreneurship strategies. The critical juncture was the Joint Select Committee Sydney Night Time Economy parliamentary inquiry where conflicting rationalities converged to discuss the lockout laws and competed to set the new priorities of government intervention. Combined with the political will of state elected representatives, policy entrepreneurs successfully obtained the repeal of the lockout laws, the adoption of a new NTE strategy and the establishment of a night governance framework. In the NTE during the lockout laws, it became evident that being a policy entrepreneur is not a guarantee of obtaining a successful policy change, as the framework suggests. Rather, political will and policy windows needed to be open to allow policy entrepreneurs to succeed.

9.3.3 *The NTE during Covid-19: uneven impact on the NTE and practices of antifragility*

Chapter 7 investigated the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the NTE and the response of night entrepreneurs. During the pandemic, regulatory policies were put in place to ensure public health and safety, amongst these measures were curfews. The implementation of curfews and broad regulatory policies is a recurring trend, we know from historical accounts that curfews were implemented to ensure public safety and prevent crime in nocturnal cities (Beaumont, 2015; Schivelbusch, 1995). During Covid-19 curfews and repetitive lockdowns were implemented to ensure public health and safety.

Night business owners displayed four coping mechanisms to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic which I framed as practices of antifragility. engaging in crisis management, adaptation, collaboration and innovation and experimentation. First, engaging in crisis management was the first response to supply chain disruptions and the need to adhere to Covid-19 safety management policies. Night-time business entrepreneurs considered engaging in crisis management as an unexpected task, time-consuming, costly and extremely stressful. Night entrepreneurs adapted to survive. Adaptation was an active and creative problem-solving process induced by Covid-19 and the need to survive. It involved several adjustments such as changing trading hours, adapting business models and shifting to digital platforms. Third, collaboration involves the relational capabilities between NTE businesses across sectors, between local government and NTE businesses, and between businesses and residents. Collaboration was pivotal to meeting the increased demand for certain services and products and creating social value. These collaborative dynamics provoked the NTE to be antifragile. This finding corroborated previous antifragility arguments that show how collaboration can contribute to new value creation, collective problem solving and response to uncertainty (Ramezani & Camarinha-Matos, 2020; Sagala & Óri, 2024), in essence, become antifragile. Fourth, the stories and experiences of night business owners revealed that innovation and experimentation was another coping mechanism. Underlying was the ability to assess what services and products were in demand, explore different NTE sectors, and repurposed spaces. While some innovations and experimentations were intentional, others were unintended such as the all-night service station becoming a major meeting point.

9.3.4 *The NTE post Covid-19*

After Covid-19, governing the NTE has been characterised by deregulation, re-regulation and symbolic policies such as the Purple Flag Accreditation Scheme, funding and the NTE strategies. The NTE became a key part of the broader economic recovery and reactivation of city centres. Despite the institutionalisation of the NTE, and an increase in NTE funding and programs, there are some new and ongoing challenges. One key challenge is the increase in the cost of living which has put NTE businesses under pressure. Another key

challenge is conflicting rationalities around the NTE and urban development. The conflicting rationalities between residents, businesses and councils over issues of noise, and the ability to work at night manifesting through opposition to city councils to planning development applications and complaints. Conflicting rationalities around the NTE and its policies speak to the claim that the NTE is and remains a contested time-space (Hadfield 2006).

The NTE has undergone the consolidation of a governance architecture and the appointment of a 24-Hour Economy Commissioner. Comparing this result with [Chapter 6](#), we can conclude that the re-regulation coalition including state agencies, business organisations and local government has enough power and authority. The advocacy coalition and policy entrepreneurship literature suggest policy change alternates between periods of stability and periods of dramatic change (Mintrom, 2019a; Weible et al., 2009). There is no doubt that policies to stimulate the NTE have undergone an acceleration post-Covid-19. This is reflected in the spread of big events night places activations, and alfresco outdoor dining. A major shift has been the adoption of policy tools aimed at promoting NTE business confidence, reducing uncertainty and changing the narrative from a “NTE alcohol-fuelled violence” ([Chapter 5](#), [Chapter 6](#)) to a “diverse, safe and vibrant” NTE.

9.4 Limitations of the research

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the case study approach does have opportunities and limitations. On the one hand, it is widely recognised that the case study approach enables multi-faceted explorations and in-depth understanding of complex issues in the context where these occur (Yin, 2009). Thus, the case study approach to studying Sydney’s NTE between 2007-2014 was essential for investigating the complexity of perspectives and strategies of actors in shaping policy change, and the copying mechanism or antifragility practices of night businesses. On the other hand, the case study approach has been criticised for not providing room for generalisation and transferability (i.e. findings may not be transferable to other contexts and cannot be generalised to broader populations) (Gomm et al., 2009; Yin, 2013). If we assume that this is correct, then we should argue that the agency of multiple actors was pivotal in the NTE policy changes occurred in Sydney, and this might not be true in any other cities. However, it is observed that the issue of case study generalisability is one, of many others, misunderstanding of the case study approach (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 228) argues that

One can often generalize on the basis of a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalization as supplement or alternative to other methods. But formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas “the force of example” is underestimated.

The case study was developed through online qualitative research heavily relying on digital methods, as a tool to build a retrospective analysis – the pre Covid-19 timeframe,

and as a tool to conduct research during Covid-19. Due to the restrictions imposed by the government in response to the Covid-19 pandemic nearly all my interviews had to be conducted on Zoom or by phone. I acknowledge two limitations related to this method. First, socioeconomic factors and digital literacy might lead to digital divide therefore some groups may be underrepresented in online research. Second, access to technology and the internet might have limited the representativeness of the sample and its diversity. In some cases, poor internet connection and participants multi-tasking while doing interviews affected the data collection. However, I was able to schedule a follow-up interview or ask asynchronous questions.

The overall research was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic which not only led to the adaptation of the research topic, but also challenged the recruitment of participants as most of the organisations and individuals were coping with the Covid-19 pandemic ([Chapter 4](#)). Additionally, the failure to obtain ethics approval to interview police and health authorities made it challenging to understand their perspectives and strategies to influence policies in Sydney's NTE before Covid-19. However, this limitation was partially overcome by the direct statements that were retrieved from rich secondary data sources, online data including media, and government submissions.

The interviews and some of these documents were produced after the introduction of the lockdown laws. Interviews were retrospective and therefore subject to recall bias. Participants had enough time to re-interpret and re-work past events (Blane, 1996, p. 751). However, the substantial amount of documentation available allowed me to triangulate interview data to largely overcome this limitation. In addition, the interviews conducted engaged with residents, government officials, policymakers, and night businesses so the views and actions of police and health authorities rely not only on the documents available but also on the perceptions of other actors.

Some interviewees spoke more about their perspectives on the NTE but were not directly involved in shaping policies before the introduction of the lockdown laws. Spatially there was some bias. Most of the interviewees were in inner Sydney, albeit some government officials and night businesses from other areas participated in the study. Therefore, the participants' sample cannot be considered geographically representative of Sydney. Further exploration of the NTE and a better-nuanced approach in terms of place-based NTE must be developed. Although the NTE encompasses several economic sectors including services and infrastructure provisions (Henckel, 2021; Roberts & Eldridge, 2009), the social media analysis focused mainly on the creative industries, hospitality, events, trades, and health care. Other sectors and activities occurring at night such as transport and mobility, informal NTE, and health care were excluded.

9.5 Research significance

This study proposes three contributions: theoretical, empirical, and methodological. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the night scholarship through

the adoption of an interdisciplinary analytical framework which enabled a policy analysis of Sydney's NTE. The adoption of the advocacy coalition framework allowed me to map the actors and their policy beliefs, and their rationalities and position them in what I call regulation coalitions, re-regulation coalitions and de-regulation coalitions. The adoption of policy entrepreneurship is novel to night scholarship. The framework facilitated my ability to explain how the NTE policies change over time. Although previous research has noted the relevance of actors and rationalities (Chatterton, 2002; Hadfield, 2006; Seijas & Gelders, 2021), there has been little endeavour to investigate the interrelation between actors, agency, politics and policies surrounding the NTE. Policy entrepreneurship enabled me to emphasise the agency of actors and the strategies behind the adoption of different NTE policies. Additionally, it is widely accepted that policies are not often a smooth process rather conflicting rationalities are a common phenomenon (de Satgé & Watson, 2018; Watson, 2003).

This research has shown how night policies shape the NTE, identifying key learning lessons for future night policies. The motivation was to utilise recent academic literature about specific spheres of night-time economy public policy that is not usually used and to thereby enhance our knowledge of the NTE and related policies.

This study makes a significant empirical contribution. It is the first study to investigate the NTE before, during and post the Covid-19 pandemic globally. It contributes to the body of knowledge of Sydney's NTE and its policies. The study enables comparative reflections based on different timeframes. The study contributes to the NTE in Sydney, by addressing the current challenge of governing the night and its multiple nuances, where different governments (local, state and federal) have different responsibilities, and the complexity of aligning interests' groups and overcoming conflicting rationalities is ever-present. Policymakers, government officials, business organisations and civil society are all concerned about sustainable interventions for the night-time economy. By engaging with the perspectives of those involved in the NTE either directly or indirectly, this study shows how night policies can be more effectively designed, implemented, and evaluated.,

From a methodological perspective, this study introduced online qualitative research and digital methods as an innovative method to examine the NTE. The NTE has traditionally been investigated through a range of qualitative and quantitative methods such as participant observation, document analysis and mixed-methods research (Eldridge & Roberts, 2022; Hadfield, 2006, 2009; Roberts & Eldridge, 2007). In my study, online qualitative research and digital methods were a methodological adaptation born from the Covid-19 pandemic and the challenges posted by the restrictions. I was forced to shift from face-to-face interviews to interviews conducted on zoom or by phone. Noteworthy is that the online qualitative research and digital methods enabled new avenues of data collection. The analysis of Facebook posts from night businesses that allowed me to understand the responses of night entrepreneurs in the immediate aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic was crucial in my analysis. Online research methods contributed to enhanced data collection techniques through multimedia integration. Researchers can

collect data in various formats, including text, audio, video, and images, thereby providing richer and more nuanced insights. Online research methods are easily adapted and scaled to fit different research objectives making them versatile tools. Online environments such as social media, forums, and virtual worlds provide new settings for ethnographic research, allowing researchers to observe interactions and behaviours in their natural digital contexts. Overall, the further implementation and adoption of online research, enhances the methodological toolkit available to NTE researchers, offering new opportunities.

9.6 Future research

This study has opened avenues for future research on the NTE. The Sydney case study might be compared with other international contexts, e.g. cities in China, Middle East, Southeast Asia, Latin American. A further comparison might open cultural differences in seeing the NTE and its multiple ‘time-bands’, early evening, late night, early morning. Additionally, differences in institutional context might provide richer nuances on how policy changes occur, can be expanded towards what I define as “latent actors”, stakeholders who are difficult to be engaged with, who do not necessarily take part in public debates, those who are not actively involved into shaping the NTE policies but are actively involved in shaping the NTE, those who live, and experience the night. Amongst these latent actors, additional groups could be Indigenous Australia, culturally diverse communities, and non-Australian citizens who could work at night or run a night business, but due to the nature of their VISA status might have limited access to business support and welfare system. Additional groups whose perspectives would be interesting to capture, are property developers and landlords. The NTE in Sydney is crucial in newly developed mixed used areas. Future research can explore the sustainability of government policies to boost the NTE in these areas.

Further research should explore the NTE as *digital-mediated*, i.e. enabled through digital technologies and platforms. Historical accounts of an urban night suggest that the night in contemporary cities is light-mediated (Beaumont, 2015; Schivelbusch, 1995). Specifically, the advent of artificial lighting enabled more extensive and diverse nighttime activities along with providing safety for night city users. This argument is still partially correct because as we have seen in [Chapter 7](#), albeit in a very explorative nature, social media and digital platforms enabled night business to stay afloat and enabled “nightlife” interaction among NTE actors. Considering that NTE as digital-mediated enable to engage with night activities without being physically present in the urban realm, further research needs to explore the spatial and policy implications. Similarly, the role of attention economy in NTE development and transfer of policies practices can also be explored.

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Appendix A Interview guide - Cohort 1

RESIDENTS

GROUP 1

INTERVIEW GUIDE

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Thank the interviewer for agreeing to participate
- Restate the purpose of the research: Learn about how different groups perceive the night-time economy (NTE) and its policies
- Go through the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form
 - The interview will take 1-hour approximately.
 - There is no right or wrong answer.
 - No need to answer questions you don't feel comfortable about.
 - Stress confidentiality and deidentification.
 - Interview will be audio-recorded and securely stored.
 - Do you have any questions about this study or the interview?

TOPICS

1. Background
2. NTE in the neighbourhood before Covid-19
3. Regulating the NTE: lockout laws intro and relaxation
4. Covid-19 impact on the NTE
5. NTE policies and collaboration
6. Opinions on council/government intervention
7. Future

Topic 1. BACKGROUND

Resident

1. Can you tell me about yourself?
2. Do you live in the area? How long have you been living here?
3. Are you actively engaged in the community (associations, activities)?
4. Do you also run a business in the area?
5. Whereabouts you live (close to any evening/night venues)?
6. How is like living in the area?
7. What attracted you to the area?

Residents' organisation

1. Can you tell me about your role? How long? What do you like most?
2. Can you tell me about the organisation (mission, members, etc.)
3. How does your organisation bring together residents?
4. Has your organisation dealt with the NTE? How?

Topic 2. NTE IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD BEFORE COVID-19

Resident

1. Can you tell me about the neighbourhood at night before Covid-19? Can you describe it? Which kind of activities were available? What did you like most (vibrancy, safety)?
2. How was like living in the neighbourhood at night before the Covid-19?
3. Did you like going out at night in your neighbourhood? What were you used to do? How often (weekdays, weekends)? How were you moving around? Did you feel safe?
4. What were the positive aspects of nightlife in your area?
5. What were the problems related to the nightlife (alcohol abuse, violence, transport)?
6. How were these problems solved and by whom?
7. Did you have any issue related to the nightlife? Who did you ask for help? Can you tell me your experience?

8. At that time, what has helped you to improve your situation?
9. Who do you think should have been responsible for them?
10. What do you think is the most effective way to solve these issues? / What should have been the best approach to deal with issues?
11. What should the government/council/authority have done to alleviate these issues?

Residents' organisation

1. What were the main issues your members want your organisation to deal with?
2. What were the initiatives your organisation dealt with about the NTE?
3. Have you had any achievements?
4. Which role did your organisation or its member play in the neighbourhood around the NTE?

Topic 3. PERSPECTIVES ON NTE POLICY CHANGE (LOCKOUT LAWS INTRODUCTION AND RELAXATION)

1. Can you tell me about the introduction of the lockout laws? What do you think about them (reasons/issues)? What were the drivers?
2. Have you or your organisation contributed to the introduction of the lockout laws?
3. In your view, who was more influential in the introduction of the lockout laws?
4. Which kind of activities did you/your organisation put in place to ask for government intervention?
5. Which role did your organisation or its member play in the introduction of the Lockout Laws?
6. Were these activities successful?
7. Were residents consulted about the lockout laws? If no, would you like to have given your voice before their introduction?
8. What did they mean for the area? / How did the area change after the introduction of the Lockout Laws? How did the nightlife change?
9. Do you believe that lockout laws were effective to solve NTE issues?
10. What else could the state government have done? And the local council?
11. Can you tell me about the relaxation of the Lockout Laws? What do you think about it (reasons/issues/satisfaction)?
12. Haven't you ever participate in any meeting to talk about the NTE? Can you tell me about your experience?
13. How did your organisation or its member contributed to the relaxation of the Lockout Laws? How did you convince the NSW government to scrap the lockout laws?
14. What were the primary issues around the regulation? In what way? How did you manage them?
15. How did the NTE and the area change after the relaxation of the lockout laws?
16. How the NTE should be regulated? Do you think there should be more restrictive rules, more collaboration?

Topic 4. COVID-19 IMPACT ON THE NTE

1. How is like living in the neighbourhood during Covid-19?
2. Did you go out for an evening walk during Covid-19? Can you describe the neighbourhood at night?
3. Have Covid-19 restrictions affected your going out in the evening?
4. What was the relationship between businesses - residents?
5. How Covid-19 restrictions has affected the nightlife in the area?
6. Do you think there will be any long-term impact from Covid-19?
7. Are you happy with Outdoor Alfresco Dining, Dine & Discover?
8. Are you happy with activation initiatives in your neighbourhood for the nightlife (local council)?
9. Has Covid-19 impacted ways of thinking at NTE, policies?

Topic 5: STAKEHOLDERS COLLABORATION - RELATION

1. Have you been consulted about any initiative around the NTE? Can you share your experience?
2. Have you participated in any meeting about the NTE with other groups? Can you share your experience (e.g., Liquor Accord, Covid-19 recovery, community forums)?
 - Have the meetings been effective?
 - What has changed after the meetings? (e.g., working together has improved over times) In what ways?
3. Do the various organisations and councils work together?
 - What is the outcome/achievement?
 - Has collaboration improved over time?
 - Has working together improved over times? In what ways?
4. What is the relationship between businesses - residents?
5. What is the relationship between residents and the police?
6. What is the relationship between residents and local council?
 - Do you work together?
 - Have these relationships improved over time?
7. Do you think residents are adequately listened in policies around the NTE?
8. What would you do to be better listened?

Topic 6: PERSPECTIVES ON STATE GOVERNMENT/COUNCIL NTE POLICIES

1. Are you happy with the NSW government intervention?
2. Are you happy with the local council intervention?
3. Have the state and local council helped residents to solve their issues? Or from who have you received support?
4. What would you like the local council to do to improve the NTE and the neighbourhood that it has not been done?
5. Is there anything else the local council should be doing?
6. What might help residents?
7. Do you think residents are adequately listened by policy makers?
8. What would you do to be better listened and by whom?

Topic 7: FUTURE

1. How do you see the future of the NTE in the area? What should be the priorities?
2. Would you like to stay here?

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Is there anything you would like to add regarding the topic?
- Is it ok to contact you if there is anything I would like to explore further?
- Are there any other residents who you would like to recommend talking with?
- Encourage to contact me if anything else come up.
- Thank for the interview and time.

Appendix B Interview guide - Cohort 2

NIGHT BUSINESS OWNERS

GROUP 2

INTERVIEW GUIDE

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Thank the interviewer for agreeing to participate
- Restate the purpose of the research: Learn about how different groups perceive the NTE and its policies.
- Go through the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form:
 - The interview will take 1-hour approximately.
 - There is no right or wrong answer.
 - You do not need to answer questions they don't feel comfortable about.
 - Stress confidentiality and deidentification.
 - Interview will be audio-recorded and securely stored.
 - Do you have questions about the study or the interview?

Topics:

1. Background and engagement in the night-time economy (NTE)
2. NTE post Covid-19
3. NTE during Covid-19: impact, policy perspective
4. Covid-19 response for the NTE: perspective, initiatives and role
5. NTE before Covid-19 (*during lockout laws*)
6. Perspectives on NTE policy change (lockout laws and other policies)
7. Stakeholders' collaboration and relation
8. Future of the NTE

Topic 1. BACKGROUND AND ENGAGEMENT IN THE NTE

Business individual

1. Can you tell me about your business? (Size and number of employees, type of services/products, sector)?
2. To what extent your business run during the night-time? What are the business trading hours?
3. How long have you been running this/these business/es?
4. Where are they located, in which area? What attracted you to the area?
5. Do you also live in the area? How long?
6. What do you like most about your job?
7. Have you been involved in any policy around the NTE?

Businesses organisation

1. Are you a member of any business organisation? Do you feel represented by them?
2. Can you tell me about your role in the business organisation? How long? What do you like most?
3. Can you tell me about the organisation?
4. Mission, members, type of businesses, geographic area etc.
5. To what extent your organisation deals with night-businesses?
6. How does the organisation bring together night-businesses?

Topic 2. NTE POST-COVID19

Business individual

1. How do you see the NTE post-Covid-19? (From the Covid-19 reopening onwards)
2. What are the opportunities and challenges for the NTE nowadays? (Recession, decline of CBD, work from home still in place, global events, Covid-19 still here)
3. Concerning the challenges for NTE post Covid-19, how can these be addressed?
4. In your view, what role is the state government playing for the NTE?
5. In your view, what role is the local government playing for the NTE?
6. What should be the priorities around the NTE?
7. Are investments/innovation needed for the NTE post Covid-19? If so which type?

Businesses organisation

1. What have been the key initiatives your business organisation has been dealing with?
2. What has been the most successful one and why? What was the impact of this initiative?
3. How do you see the role of business organisations for the NTE in moving forward?
4. What is needed in your view to improve the response capacity in future crisis?
5. Have you been working with other organisations / state agencies / local government? Can you tell me about your experience? What has change after this collaboration (more trust, improved communication etc.)?
6. What have been the challenges for the implementation of these policies and how have you navigated them?
7. What are the takeaways from the management of the covid-19 crisis and post Covid-19 that we can take on board for building a resilient NTE in the future?

Topic 3. NTE DURING COVID-19

Business individual

1. What was the impact of Covid-19 and its restrictions on the NTE/your sector/ your business? / How did Covid-19 affect the NTE?
2. How was like running a night-business during Covid19?
3. Did Covid-19 affect your capacity to maintain your night-business? In what ways?
4. How did your work change during Covid-19? How has your business/sector adapted?
5. Which kind of innovation occurred during Covid-19 for the NTE?
6. How did NTE/your sector/ your night-business adapt along Covid-19 and its restrictions?
7. How did you feel about the fast changing of Covid-19 measures?
8. How other businesses and colleagues are supporting you? What were the initiatives in place in the sector?
9. Who have you approached for support (business organisation, City, State)? Can you tell me about your experience?

Businesses organisation

1. What was the impact of Covid-19 on the NTE?
2. Which sector/type of night business was more impacted from Covid-19?
3. What were the main issues your members want your organisation to deal with during Covid-19? (business model /investments). What were the primary requests for support by the businesses?

4. Which role did your organisation or its member play in the Covid-19 response for the NTE? Which initiative did you deal with during Covid-19 pandemic for the NTE? Have you had successes?
5. What were the main issues your members want your organisation to deal with during Covid-19? /
6. What were the primary initiatives of your organisation in place to support the NTE during Covid-19? Which activities were you involved in?
7. Have you had any successes?

Topic 4. COVID-19 RESPONSE FOR THE NTE

1. What type of support/initiative was most beneficial for the NTE/sector/businesses?
2. What do you think about the state government response to COVID-19 (Dine & Discover; Alfresco Outdoor Dining)?
3. What about federal and local government grants or other type of sponsorships?
4. Have government incentives helped the NTE?
5. Is there anything else the federal/state/local government should have done?
6. What might have helped your business? / How would you help night businesses?
7. Do you think all different sectors of the NTE are adequately understood by policy makers?
8. What would you do to be better listened and by whom?

Topic 5. NTE BEFORE COVID19 (during lockout laws)?

1. How was like running a night business before the Covid-19?
2. What did it mean for a business operating at evening/night?
3. What were the positive aspects and challenges of running a night business?
4. How did you copy with these challenges?
5. How were these issues solved and by whom?
6. Who do you think should have been responsible for them?
7. Which type of support was available for businesses?
8. Have you participated in any meetings around NTE (e.g., Liquor Accord, advisory boards, informal meetings)? What has changed after the meetings (working together has improved over times, trust)? In what ways?

Topic 6. PERSPECTIVES ON NTE POLICY CHANGE (LOCKOUT LAWS & OTHER POLICIES)

1. Can you tell me about the introduction of the lockout laws? What do you think about them (reasons/issues)? What were the drivers for the introduction of the lockout laws?
2. In your view, who was more influential in the introduction of the lockout laws? What made them so influential?
3. What did the lockout laws mean for NTE/businesses/your sector and the area? What was the impact of the lockout laws? Do you believe that lockout laws were effective to solve NTE issues?
4. How did the NTE change after the introduction of the lockout laws?
5. Can you tell me about the relaxation of the lockout laws (reasons, drivers)? What do you think?
6. Were you involved in any initiative to scrap the lockout laws? How did your organization or its member contribute to the relaxation of the lockout laws?
7. In your view, who was more influential in the introduction of the lockout laws? What made them so influential?

8. What has changed for night-time economy/businesses/your sector after it?
9. What can we learn from the lockout laws and the debate behind them?
10. In the last years, several changes occurred with regards the NTE (e.g., the repeal of the lockout laws, the establishment of the 24-Hour Commissioner, 24-Hour Economy Strategy). What these change mean for the NTE? How do you see them?

Topic 7. STAKEHOLDERS COLLABORATION - RELATION

1. Have you been consulted about any initiative around the NTE? Can you share your experience? (24H Economy Strategy NSW, Liquor Amendment Acts, Outdoor Alfresco Dining, Dine & Discover, Covid-19 Community Recovery Plan)?
2. Have you participated in any meeting about the NTE with other groups? Can you share your experience (Liquor Accord, Covid-19 initiative, public consultation)?
3. Have the meetings been effective?
4. What has changed after the meetings? (e.g., working together has improved over times?) In what ways?
5. If yes, can you tell me about your experience.
6. Do the various organisations and councils work together?
7. What has it helped to achieve?
8. Has working together improved over times? In what ways?
9. Have these relationships improved over time?
10. Do you think businesses are adequately listened in policies around the NTE?
11. What would you do to be better listened?

Topic 8: FUTURE OF THE NTE

How do you see the future of the NTE?

How could the local or state government better support the NTE?

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Is there anything you would like to add regarding the topic?
- Is it ok to contact you if there is anything I would like to explore further?
- Is there any other businesses who you would like to recommend talking with?
- Encourage to contact me if anything else come up.
- Thank for the interview and time.

Appendix C Interview guide - Cohort 3

PARLAMENTARIANS AND COUNCILLORS

GROUP 3

INTERVIEW GUIDE

30 minutes

BACKGROUND

1. Could you tell me about yourself, what has been your involvement with policymaking around the night-time economy to date?
2. Could you tell me about the position of the state government/local council regarding the night-time economy (NTE) to date?
3. What is your perspective regarding the NTE and what is needed to your vision be realised?
4. In your view, what are the key opportunities and challenges related to the NTE in your local government area (regulation, investments, etc.)?
5. What are the key strategies/tools in place to manage the NTE?

COVID-19 IMPACT ON THE NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

4. In your view, what is the impact of Covid-19 on the NTE?
5. What are the key policies in place to support the NTE?
6. Do you think the NTE will recover from the Covid-19 pandemic? If so, what will be the key policies facilitating its recovery?
7. How has Covid-19 impacted policymaking with respect to the NTE (acceleration, deregulation, etc.)?
8. How has the local council/state government worked with state government (and vice-versa) with respect to the NTE during Covid-19?
9. How has the council/state government worked with local communities with respect to the NTE during Covid-19?

NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY POLICY CHANGE

1. Looking back at the last 5 years, have there been any major changes in the NTE policy landscape? How would you describe them?
 - a. What have been the drivers of this policy/shift?
 - b. Who do you think have been more influential and why?
 - c. Can you tell me about the stakeholder's engagement process leading to the policy? How does the policy account of different stakeholder's interests?
 - d. What have been the obstacles to the local implementation of the policy on the night-time economy?
 - e. What has been the impact of this shift?
 - f. Considering the NTE policy, from your perspective, what are the central themes?
 - g. Where is the interest in NTE strategic planning focused (cut of the red tape, enabling, etc.)?

- h. What has been the impact of change in the state leadership in the implementation of the policy? Do you think that a turnover of representative will impact it?
- 2. Can you identify a key moment marking a shift in night-time economy policies? E.g., Sydney 24H Economy Strategy / City Activation strategies / Night Time Economy Diversification Grants, etc.

FUTURE

- 3. What are the priorities for the NTE in moving forward?
- 4. What is your hope for the future of the NTE?

Appendix D Interview guide - Cohort 4

GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL

GROUP 4

INTERVIEW GUIDE

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Thanks for agreeing to talk with me.
- Introduce myself PhD student funded by UTS
- Restate the aim of the research.
 - To explore how different groups perceive the NTE and the way it is regulated. Key focuses are the lockout laws, impact of Covid-19, NTE recovery post Covid-19
- Restate the PIS
 - The interview will take 30-45 minutes.
 - No need to answer questions you don't feel comfortable about.
 - Right to withdraw from this research at any time.
 - Stress confidentiality and deidentification.
 - Interview will be audio-recorded and securely stored.
 - Do you have any questions about this study or the interview?
- Introduce/Restate the topics of the interview.
- Collect verbal consent if needed.

TOPICS

1. Background
2. Perspective on the NTE
3. Perspective on the NTE and policies (lockout laws)
4. NTE during Covid-19
5. Covid-19 response for the NTE
6. Future

Topic 1. BACKGROUND

1. Can you tell me about your governmental role?
2. What do you like most about this role?
3. How did you become interested in the night-time economy?

Topic 2. PERSPECTIVE ON THE NTE

1. How do you see the NTE today in your area (opportunities and challenges)?
2. What are the core initiatives in place in your area (strategies, planning tools, funding's)?
3. Would you support more investments for the NTE? Which other?

Topic 3. PERCEPTION ON THE NTE AND ITS POLICIES (LOCKOUT LAWS)

1. Could you tell me about the introduction of the Lockout Laws?
2. What was the impact of the Lockout Laws on the NTE?
3. What are the lessons learned / What are the takeaways?
4. What else could have been done?
5. Could you tell me about the relaxation of the Lockout Laws?

6. Were you involved in any advocacy campaign? If so, can you tell me about your experience? What were the outcomes?
7. What has changed after their relaxation (perception of problems/opportunities, pro-active approaches)?

Topic 4. NTE during Covid-19

1. How Covid-19 impacted on the NTE (e.g. business models adaptation, struggles for festivals, workforce...)?
2. Which initiative/programs have you dealt with during Covid-19 pandemic for the NTE?
3. What have been the priorities in policy making for the NTE during Covid-19 (e.g. health, economic support...)? / What did you value most?
4. Are a number of departments involved in the formulation of Covid-19 response? How does communication with other departments work in relation to NTE issues?
5. What are the major challenges have you faced in responding to Covid-19?
6. How Covid-19 has shaped NTE policies? / Has Covid-19 impacted ways of policy making?
7. How has the Covid-19 changed our way to think about the night-time economy and their policies/regulations?

Topic 4. COVID-19 RESPONSE FOR THE NTE (Alfresco Dining, NSW Grants, City of Sydney Grants)

1. What's the role of your office in the Covid-19 response for the NTE (Alfresco Dining, Community Recovery Plan City of Sydney, NSW Grants allocation)?
2. In your opinion, what has been the most successful NTE policy during Covid-19? What are the reasons behind this success?
3. 66\$ million from NSW for Alfresco Restart Package. Would you support more investments for the NTE? Which other?
4. Have you opposed to any policy proposal in response to Covid-19? How did you manage it?
5. How does collaboration with other departments work in relation to NTE issues?
6. How does collaboration with other local councils' work?
7. What does collaboration mean for responding to Covid-19?
8. What have been the challenges to policy making during Covid-19 (regulation-deregulation-engaging with different stakeholders)?
9. To what extent has policy making for the NTE engaged with different interests?
10. Would you support more flexible policy making?
11. How would you deregulate the NTE for its recovery from Covid-19 while managing potential risks?

Topic 5. FUTURE

15. What's the future of the NTE in Sydney?
16. What are your next projects for Sydney's NTE?

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Is there anything else you would like to add on this topic?

Do you have any comments, observations or criticisms regarding my research?

Do you recommend anyone I can talk to within the government?

Appendix E Interview guide – Cohort 5

NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY EXPERTS

GROUP 6

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Background

Can you tell me about yourself, your area of expertise and how it is related to the NTE? How long have you been doing this job?

What do you like most about being an expert in your field?

Opportunities and impact of the NTE

How do you see the NTE nowadays?

How can the NTE be further developed in Sydney / the area?

What are the major opportunities and challenges linked to it? How do you think the challenges can be resolved?

Perceptions of the regulating the NTE

Do you think the Lockout laws were an appropriate response by government?

What were the primary actors involved in their introductions?

What were their activities in bringing the lockout laws into play?

What was the impact of the Lockout Laws on the NTE?

How do you feel about the relaxation of the Lockout Laws?

Collaboration with fellow experts and other stakeholders

Haven't you ever collaborated with other experts in issues related to the NTE? Can you tell me about your experience?

Have you participated in any meeting about the NTE with other stakeholders? Can you tell me about your experience?

Have the meetings been effective to solve issues?

NTE –resolving issues

What is the most effective way to solve NTE issues?

Could you bring an example of initiatives that did not solve any NTE issue? Why so?

Have you ever disagreed with a policy initiative around the NTE in your area? If yes, how did you manage it?

Views on government intervention

What are your views on advisory committees?

If you had any experience on community engagement, how would you describe it?

What are your views on community engagement? Do you think it is an effective tool for local government?

What would you like the local and state government to do to improve the NTE that it has not been done or it is not doing now?

How do you see the future of the NTE in Sydney / the area?

Appendix F Participant information sheet and consent form - Cohort 1



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESIDENTS

[UTS HREC ETH21-6131] – CONFLICTING RATIONALITIES IN SYDNEY’S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY PRIOR TO AND DURING COVID-19

WHO IS CONDUCTING THIS RESEARCH?

My name is Alessia Cibilin and I am a PhD student at UTS. My supervisors are Professor Alan Morris (Alan.Morris@uts.edu.au) and A/Professor John Wright (J.Wright@uts.edu.au).

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

The purpose of the research is to explore how different groups perceive the night-time economy in the areas concerned and the way it is regulated. A key focus is the impact of the lockdown laws.

WHY HAVE I BEEN INVITED?

You have been invited to participate because you have been living in Kings Cross Potts Point / Newtown neighbourhood, you have seen it changing, you know about the Lockout Laws, and, as such, have important knowledge to share.

WHAT DOES MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate, I will invite you to participate in a semi-structured interview that will last for approximately an hour. 1-hour semi-structured interview, it will be conducted only once, and it will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

With your consent, we will audio record the interview. This recording, or any transcripts of it, will not contain your name or any identifying details about you. Due to COVID-19 I may not be able to conduct the interview face-to-face. If this is the case, I can interview you via phone, skype or zoom, email, or whatever you prefer.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS/INCONVENIENCE?

There are few, if any, risks because the research has been carefully designed. However, it is possible that you could find a couple of the questions uncomfortable and/or embarrassing. In any case, you may refuse to answer any questions you don't feel comfortable about.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

Participation in this study is totally voluntary. It is completely up to you whether or not you decide to take part. If you decide not to participate, or to withdraw from the study, it will not affect your relationship with the researchers or the University of Technology.

WHAT IF I WITHDRAW FROM THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

If you wish to withdraw from the study once it has started, you can do so at any time without having to give a reason, by contacting Alessia Cibilin (/ Alessia.Cibilin@student.uts.edu.au). If you

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESIDENTS

[UTS HREC ETH21-6131] – CONFLICTING RATIONALITIES IN SYDNEY’S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY PRIOR TO AND DURING COVID-19

WHO IS CONDUCTING THIS RESEARCH?

My name is Alessia Cibi and I am a PhD student at UTS. My supervisors are Professor Alan Morris (Alan.Morris@uts.edu.au) and A/Professor John Wright (J.Wright@uts.edu.au).

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

The purpose of the research is to explore how different groups perceive the night-time economy in the areas concerned and the way it is regulated. A key focus is the impact of the lockout laws.

WHY HAVE I BEEN INVITED?

You have been invited to participate because you have been living in Kings Cross Potts Point / Newtown neighbourhood, you have seen it changing, you know about the Lockout Laws, and, as such, have important knowledge to share.

WHAT DOES MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate, I will invite you to participate in a semi-structured interview that will last for approximately an hour. 1-hour semi-structured interview, it will be conducted only once, and it will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

With your consent, we will audio record the interview. This recording, or any transcripts of it, will not contain your name or any identifying details about you. Due to COVID-19 I may not be able to conduct the interview face-to-face. If this is the case, I can interview you via phone, skype or zoom, email, or whatever you prefer.

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESIDENTS

[UTS HREC ETH21-6131] – CONFLICTING RATIONALITIES IN SYDNEY’S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY PRIOR TO AND DURING COVID-19

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WHY HAVE I BEEN INVITED?

You have been invited to participate because you have been living in Kings Cross Potts Point / Newtown neighbourhood, you have seen it changing, you know about the Lockout Laws, and, as such, have important knowledge to share.

WHAT DOES MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate, I will invite you to participate in a semi-structured interview that will last for approximately an hour. 1-hour semi-structured interview, it will be conducted only once, and it will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

With your consent, we will audio record the interview. This recording, or any transcripts of it, will not contain your name or any identifying details about you. Due to COVID-19 I may not be able to conduct the interview face-to-face. If this is the case, I can interview you via phone, skype or zoom, email, or whatever you prefer.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS/INCONVENIENCE?

There are few, if any, risks because the research has been carefully designed. However, it is possible that you could find a couple of the questions uncomfortable and/or embarrassing. In any case, you may refuse to answer any questions you don't feel comfortable about.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

Participation in this study is totally voluntary. It is completely up to you whether or not you decide to take part. If you decide not to participate, or to withdraw from the study, it will not affect your relationship with the researchers or the University of Technology.

WHAT IF I WITHDRAW FROM THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

If you wish to withdraw from the study once it has started, you can do so at any time without having to give a reason, by contacting Alessia Cibi (/ Alessia.Cibi@student.uts.edu.au). If you

Appendix G Participant information sheet and consent form - Cohort 2



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR NIGHT BUSINESS OWNERS

[UTS HREC ETH21-6131] – CONFLICTING RATIONALITIES IN SYDNEY’S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY PRIOR TO AND DURING COVID-19

WHO IS CONDUCTING THIS RESEARCH?

My name is Alessia Cibi and I am a PhD student at UTS. My supervisors are Professor Alan Morris (Alan.Morris@uts.edu.au) and A/Professor John Wright (J.Wright@uts.edu.au).

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

The purpose of the research is to explore how different groups perceive the night-time economy in the areas concerned and the way it is regulated. A key focus is the impact of the lockdown laws.

WHY HAVE I BEEN INVITED?

You have been invited to participate because you have been running a business establishment at night in Kings Cross Potts Point / Newtown neighbourhood, you have seen it changing, you have been impacted by the Lockout Laws, and Covid19, and as such, have important knowledge to share.

WHAT DOES MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate, I will invite you to participate in a semi-structured interview that will last for approximately an hour. 1-hour semi-structured interview, it will be conducted only once, and it will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

With your consent, we will audio record the interview. This recording, or any transcripts of it, will not contain your name or any identifying details about you. Due to COVID-19 I may not be able to conduct the interview face-to-face. If this is the case, I can interview you via phone, skype or zoom, email, or whatever you prefer.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS/INCONVENIENCE?

There are few, if any, risks because the research has been carefully designed. However, it is possible that you could find a couple of the questions uncomfortable and/or embarrassing. In any case, you may refuse to answer any questions you don't feel comfortable about.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

Participation in this study is totally voluntary. It is completely up to you whether or not you decide to take part. If you decide not to participate, or to withdraw from the study, it will not affect your relationship with the researchers or the University of Technology.

WHAT IF I WITHDRAW FROM THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

If you wish to withdraw from the study once it has started, you can do so at any time without having to give a reason, by contacting Alessia Cibi ([redacted] / Alessia.Cibi@student.uts.edu.au). If you

withdraw from the study, the interview recording will be erased, and the transcripts will be destroyed. However, it may not be possible to withdraw your data from the study results if these have already had your identifying details removed.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO INFORMATION ABOUT ME?

By signing the consent form you consent to the research team collecting and using personal information about you for the research project. All this information will be treated confidentially. The interview recordings and transcripts will be securely stored, and only Alessia Cibir, and my supervisor, Professor Alan Morris, will have access to them.

The interview will be deidentified. Your anonymity will be guaranteed with the use of pseudonyms on writing up the findings.

We would like to store your information for future use in research projects that are an extension of this research project. In all instances, your information will be treated as confidential and stored securely.

It is anticipated that the results of this research project will be published and/or presented in a variety of forums. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified, except with your permission.

WHAT IF I HAVE CONCERNS OR A COMPLAINT?

If you have concerns about the research that you think I or my supervisors can help you with, please feel free to contact us on [redacted] / Alessia.Cibir@student.uts.edu.au or Alan.morris@uts.edu.au /

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

NOTE:

This study has been approved in line with the University of Technology Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee [UTS HREC] guidelines. If you have any concerns or complaints about any aspect of the conduct of this research, please contact the Ethics Secretariat on ph.: +61 2 9514 2478 or email: Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au, and quote the UTS HREC reference number. Any matter raised will be treated confidentially, investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

CONSENT FORM**[UTS HREC ETH21-6131] – CONFLICTING RATIONALITIES IN SYDNEY’S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY
PRIOR TO AND DURING COVID-19**

I _____ agree to participate in the research project being conducted by Alessia Cibir
_____.

I have read the Participant Information Sheet or someone has read it to me in a language that I understand.

I understand the purposes, procedures and risks of the research as described in the Participant Information Sheet.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.

I freely agree to participate in this research project as described and understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without affecting my relationship with the researchers or the University of Technology Sydney or my Institute for Public Policy and Governance.

I understand that I will be given a signed copy of this document to keep.

I agree to be audio recorded.

I am aware that I can contact Alessia Cibir if I have any concerns about the research.

Name and Signature [participant]

____/____/____
Date

Name and Signature [researcher or delegate]

____/____/____
Date

Appendix H Participant information sheet and consent form – Cohort 3



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARLAMENTARIANS COUNCILLORS

[UTS HREC ETH21-6131] – CONFLICTING RATIONALITIES IN SYDNEY'S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY PRIOR TO AND DURING COVID-19

WHO IS CONDUCTING THIS RESEARCH?

My name is Alessia Cibi and I am a PhD student at UTS. My supervisors are Professor Alan Morris (Alan.Morris@uts.edu.au) and A/Professor John Wright (J.Wright@uts.edu.au).

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

The purpose of the research is to explore how different groups perceive the night-time economy in the areas concerned and the way it is regulated. A key focus is the impact of the lockdown laws.

WHY HAVE I BEEN INVITED?

You have been invited to participate because you were, are or will be an elected representative in The City of Sydney / Inner West City Council / New South Wales with experience in dealing with the night-time economy, knowledge on the Lockout Laws and Covid-19 impact on the night-time economy, and as such, have important knowledge to share.

WHAT DOES MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate, I will invite you to participate in a semi-structured interview that will last for approximately an hour. 1-hour semi-structured interview, it will be conducted only once, and it will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

With your consent, we will audio record the interview. This recording, or any transcripts of it, will not contain your name or any identifying details about you. Due to COVID-19 I may not be able to conduct the interview face-to-face. If this is the case, I can interview you via phone, skype or zoom, email, or whatever you prefer.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS/INCONVENIENCE?

There are few, if any, risks because the research has been carefully designed. However, it is possible that you could find a couple of the questions uncomfortable and/or embarrassing. In any case, you may refuse to answer any questions you don't feel comfortable about.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

Participation in this study is totally voluntary. It is completely up to you whether or not you decide to take part. If you decide not to participate, or to withdraw from the study, it will not affect your relationship with the researchers or the University of Technology.

WHAT IF I WITHDRAW FROM THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

If you wish to withdraw from the study once it has started, you can do so at any time without having to give a reason, by contacting Alessia Cibi (/ Alessia.Cibi@student.uts.edu.au). If you withdraw from the study, the interview recording will be erased, and the transcripts will be destroyed. However, it may not be possible to withdraw your data from the study results if these have already had your identifying details removed.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO INFORMATION ABOUT ME?

By signing the consent form you consent to the research team collecting and using personal information about you for the research project. All this information will be treated confidentially. The interview recordings and transcripts will be securely stored, and only Alessia Cibi, and my supervisor, Professor Alan Morris, will have access to them.

The interview will be deidentified. Your anonymity will be guaranteed with the use of pseudonyms on writing up the findings.

We would like to store your information for future use in research projects that are an extension of this research project. In all instances, your information will be treated as confidential and stored securely.

In any future publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified, except with your permission.

Covid-19 Safety Tracing Record. A record of the following details will be kept: 1) day and arrival time to location, 2) room used for research activity, 3) persons you have interacted with including name, mobile number / email address, length of time for interaction, 4) exit time from location. This record will be kept for a period of 28 days, stored confidentially and securely.

WHAT IF I HAVE CONCERNS OR A COMPLAINT?

If you have concerns about the research that you think I or my supervisors can help you with, please feel free to contact us on / Alessia.Cibi@student.uts.edu.au or Alan.morris@uts.edu.au /

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

NOTE:

This study has been approved in line with the University of Technology Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee [UTS HREC] guidelines. If you have any concerns or complaints about any aspect of the conduct of this research, please contact the Ethics Secretariat on ph.: +61 2 9514 2478 or email: Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au, and quote the UTS HREC reference number. Any matter raised will be treated confidentially, investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

CONSENT FORM**[UTS HREC ETH21-6131] – CONFLICTING RATIONALITIES IN SYDNEY’S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY
PRIOR TO AND DURING COVID-19**

I _____ agree to participate in the research project being conducted by Alessia Cibir
_____.

I have read the Participant Information Sheet or someone has read it to me in a language that I understand.

I understand the purposes, procedures and risks of the research as described in the Participant Information Sheet.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.

I freely agree to participate in this research project as described and understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without affecting my relationship with the researchers or the University of Technology Sydney or my Institute for Public Policy and Governance.

I understand that I will be given a signed copy of this document to keep.

I agree to be audio recorded.

I am aware that I can contact Alessia Cibir if I have any concerns about the research.

Name and Signature [participant]

____/____/____
Date

Name and Signature [researcher or delegate]

____/____/____
Date

Appendix I Participant information sheet and consent form – Cohort 4



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL

[UTS HREC ETH21-6131] – CONFLICTING RATIONALITIES IN SYDNEY'S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY PRIOR TO AND DURING COVID-19

WHO IS CONDUCTING THIS RESEARCH?

My name is Alessia Cibilin and I am a PhD student at UTS. My supervisors are Professor Alan Morris (Alan.Morris@uts.edu.au) and A/Professor John Wright (J.Wright@uts.edu.au).

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

The purpose of the research is to explore how different groups perceive the night-time economy in the areas concerned and the way it is regulated. A key focus is the impact of the lockdown laws.

WHY HAVE I BEEN INVITED?

You have been invited to participate because you are a government employee with knowledge on the night-time economy, experience in dealing with the night-time economy, expertise in stakeholders' engagement and conflict management, and as such, have important knowledge to share.

WHAT DOES MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate, I will invite you to participate in a semi-structured interview that will last for approximately an hour. 1-hour semi-structured interview, it will be conducted only once, and it will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

With your consent, we will audio record the interview. This recording, or any transcripts of it, will not contain your name or any identifying details about you. Due to COVID-19 I may not be able to conduct the interview face-to-face. If this is the case, I can interview you via phone, skype or zoom, email, or whatever you prefer.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS/INCONVENIENCE?

There are few, if any, risks because the research has been carefully designed. However, it is possible that you could find a couple of the questions uncomfortable and/or embarrassing. In any case, you may refuse to answer any questions you don't feel comfortable about.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

Participation in this study is totally voluntary. It is completely up to you whether or not you decide to take part. If you decide not to participate, or to withdraw from the study, it will not affect your relationship with the researchers or the University of Technology.

WHAT IF I WITHDRAW FROM THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

If you wish to withdraw from the study once it has started, you can do so at any time without having to give a reason, by contacting Alessia Cibilin ([REDACTED] / Alessia.Cibilin@student.uts.edu.au). If you

withdraw from the study, the interview recording will be erased, and the transcripts will be destroyed. However, it may not be possible to withdraw your data from the study results if these have already had your identifying details removed.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO INFORMATION ABOUT ME?

By signing the consent form you consent to the research team collecting and using personal information about you for the research project. All this information will be treated confidentially. The interview recordings and transcripts will be securely stored, and only Alessia Cibir and my supervisor, Professor Alan Morris, will have access to them.

The interview will be deidentified. Your anonymity will be guaranteed with the use of pseudonyms on writing up the findings.

We would like to store your information for future use in research projects that are an extension of this research project. In all instances, your information will be treated as confidential and stored securely.

It is anticipated that the results of this research project will be published and/or presented in a variety of forums. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified, except with your permission.

WHAT IF I HAVE CONCERNS OR A COMPLAINT?

If you have concerns about the research that you think I or my supervisors can help you with, please feel free to contact us on [redacted] / Alessia.Cibir@student.uts.edu.au or Alan.morris@uts.edu.au

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

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CONSENT FORM**[UTS HREC ETH21-6131] – CONFLICTING RATIONALITIES IN SYDNEY’S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY
PRIOR TO AND DURING COVID-19**

I _____ agree to participate in the research project being conducted by Alessia Cibir

I have read the Participant Information Sheet or someone has read it to me in a language that I understand.

I understand the purposes, procedures and risks of the research as described in the Participant Information Sheet.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.

I freely agree to participate in this research project as described and understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without affecting my relationship with the researchers or the University of Technology Sydney or my Institute for Public Policy and Governance.

I understand that I will be given a signed copy of this document to keep.

I agree to be audio recorded.

I am aware that I can contact Alessia Cibir if I have any concerns about the research.

Name and Signature [participant]

____/____/____
Date

Name and Signature [researcher or delegate]

____/____/____
Date



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY EXPERTS

[UTS HREC ETH21-6131] – CONFLICTING RATIONALITIES IN SYDNEY'S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY PRIOR TO AND DURING COVID-19

WHO IS CONDUCTING THIS RESEARCH?

My name is Alessia Cibilin and I am a PhD student at UTS. My supervisors are Professor Alan Morris (Alan.Morris@uts.edu.au) and A/Professor John Wright (J.Wright@uts.edu.au).

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

The purpose of the research is to explore how different groups perceive the night-time economy and the way it is regulated. Key focuses are the impact of the Covid-19 and the policies.

WHY HAVE I BEEN INVITED?

You have been invited to participate because you are an expert with knowledge on the night-time economy, with experience in managing the night-time economy, expertise in regulation and public policy, academic research, and as such, have important knowledge to share.

WHAT DOES MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate, I will invite you to participate in a semi-structured interview that will last for approximately an hour. The semi-structured interview will be conducted only once, and it will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

With your consent, we will audio record the interview. This recording, or any transcripts of it, will not contain your name or any identifying details about you. Due to COVID-19 I may not be able to conduct the interview face-to-face. If this is the case, I can interview you via phone, skype or zoom, email, or whatever you prefer.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS/INCONVENIENCE?

There are few, if any, risks because the research has been carefully designed. However, it is possible that you could find a couple of the questions uncomfortable and/or embarrassing. In any case, you may refuse to answer any questions you don't feel comfortable about.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

Participation in this study is totally voluntary. It is completely up to you whether you decide to take part. If you decide not to participate, or to withdraw from the study, it will not affect your relationship with the researchers or the University of Technology.

WHAT IF I WITHDRAW FROM THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

If you wish to withdraw from the study once it has started, you can do so at any time without having to give a reason, by contacting Alessia Cibilin (/ Alessia.Cibilin@student.uts.edu.au). If you

withdraw from the study, the interview recording will be erased, and the transcripts will be destroyed. However, it may not be possible to withdraw your data from the study results if these have already had your identifying details removed.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO INFORMATION ABOUT ME?

By signing the consent form you consent to the research team collecting and using personal information about you for the research project. All this information will be treated confidentially. The interview recordings and transcripts will be securely stored, and only me, Alessia Cibir, and my supervisor, Professor Alan Morris, will have access to them.

The interview will be deidentified. Your anonymity will be guaranteed with the use of pseudonyms on writing up the findings.

We would like to store your information for future use in research projects that are an extension of this research project. In all instances, your information will be treated as confidential and stored securely.

It is anticipated that the results of this research project will be published and/or presented in a variety of forums. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified, except with your permission.

WHAT IF I HAVE CONCERNS OR A COMPLAINT?

If you have concerns about the research that you think I or my supervisors can help you with, please feel free to contact us on [REDACTED] / Alessia.Cibir@student.uts.edu.au or Alan.morris@uts.edu.au

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

NOTE:

This study has been approved in line with the University of Technology Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee [UTS HREC] guidelines. If you have any concerns or complaints about any aspect of the conduct of this research, please contact the Ethics Secretariat on ph.: +61 2 9514 2478 or email: Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au], and quote the UTS HREC reference number. Any matter raised will be treated confidentially, investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

CONSENT FORM**[UTS HREC ETH21-6131] – CONFLICTING RATIONALITIES IN SYDNEY’S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY
PRIOR TO AND DURING COVID-19**

I _____ agree to participate in the research project being conducted by Alessia Cibir

I have read the Participant Information Sheet or someone has read it to me in a language that I understand.

I understand the purposes, procedures and risks of the research as described in the Participant Information Sheet.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.

I freely agree to participate in this research project as described and understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without affecting my relationship with the researchers or the University of Technology Sydney or my Institute for Public Policy and Governance.

I understand that I will be given a signed copy of this document to keep.

I agree to be audio recorded.

I am aware that I can contact Alessia Cibir if I have any concerns about the research.

Name and Signature [participant]

____/____/____
Date

Name and Signature [researcher or delegate]

____/____/____
Date

Appendix J Participant information sheet and consent form – Cohort 5



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY EXPERTS

[UTS HREC ETH21-6131] – CONFLICTING RATIONALITIES IN SYDNEY'S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY PRIOR TO AND DURING COVID-19

WHO IS CONDUCTING THIS RESEARCH?

My name is Alessia Cibil and I am a PhD student at UTS. My supervisors are Professor Alan Morris (Alan.Morris@uts.edu.au) and A/Professor John Wright (J.Wright@uts.edu.au).

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

The purpose of the research is to explore how different groups perceive the night-time economy in the areas concerned and the way it is regulated. A key focus is the impact of the lockdown laws.

WHY HAVE I BEEN INVITED?

You have been invited to participate because you are an expert with knowledge on the night-time economy, with experience in dealing with the night-time economy, expertise in stakeholders' engagement and conflict management, and as such, have important knowledge to share.

WHAT DOES MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate, I will invite you to participate in a semi-structured interview that will last for approximately an hour. 1-hour semi-structured interview, it will be conducted only once, and it will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

With your consent, we will audio record the interview. This recording, or any transcripts of it, will not contain your name or any identifying details about you. Due to COVID-19 I may not be able to conduct the interview face-to-face. If this is the case, I can interview you via phone, skype or zoom, email, or whatever you prefer.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS/INCONVENIENCE?

There are few, if any, risks because the research has been carefully designed. However, it is possible that you could find a couple of the questions uncomfortable and/or embarrassing. In any case, you may refuse to answer any questions you don't feel comfortable about.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

Participation in this study is totally voluntary. It is completely up to you whether or not you decide to take part. If you decide not to participate, or to withdraw from the study, it will not affect your relationship with the researchers or the University of Technology.

WHAT IF I WITHDRAW FROM THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

If you wish to withdraw from the study once it has started, you can do so at any time without having to give a reason, by contacting Alessia Cibil (/ Alessia.Cibil@student.uts.edu.au). If you

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESIDENTS

[UTS HREC ETH21-6131] – CONFLICTING RATIONALITIES IN SYDNEY’S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY PRIOR TO AND DURING COVID-19

WHO IS CONDUCTING THIS RESEARCH?

My name is Alessia Cibilin and I am a PhD student at UTS. My supervisors are Professor Alan Morris (Alan.Morris@uts.edu.au) and A/Professor John Wright (J.Wright@uts.edu.au).

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

The purpose of the research is to explore how different groups perceive the night-time economy in the areas concerned and the way it is regulated. A key focus is the impact of the lockout laws.

WHY HAVE I BEEN INVITED?

You have been invited to participate because you have been living in Kings Cross Potts Point / Newtown neighbourhood, you have seen it changing, you know about the Lockout Laws, and, as such, have important knowledge to share.

WHAT DOES MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate, I will invite you to participate in a semi-structured interview that will last for approximately an hour. 1-hour semi-structured interview, it will be conducted only once, and it will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

With your consent, we will audio record the interview. This recording, or any transcripts of it, will not contain your name or any identifying details about you. Due to COVID-19 I may not be able to conduct the interview face-to-face. If this is the case, I can interview you via phone, skype or zoom, email, or whatever you prefer.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS/INCONVENIENCE?

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESIDENTS

[UTS HREC ETH21-6131] – CONFLICTING RATIONALITIES IN SYDNEY’S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY PRIOR TO AND DURING COVID-19

WHO IS CONDUCTING THIS RESEARCH?

My name is Alessia Cibi and I am a PhD student at UTS. My supervisors are Professor Alan Morris (Alan.Morris@uts.edu.au) and A/Professor John Wright (J.Wright@uts.edu.au).

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Appendix K Example of advertising material for interviewees' recruitment



STADTNACHACHT

Pubblicato da Alessia Cibirin · 14 h ·



Participate in a study on the Sydney's night-time economy.

Why? You may help in shaping the regulation of the night-time economy. Your voice will be heard. You may improve your quality of life in the neighbourhood.

Alessia Cibirin

UTS Institute for Public Policy and Governance

#Sydney #research #Nighttimeeconomy

STUDY ON THE SYDNEY'S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY SEEKS PARTICIPANTS!

Have you been running a business and/or living in Kings Cross Potts Point or Newtown? Have you been impacted by the Covid-19? Do you know about the Lockout Laws? Participants must meet at least one of the eligibility criteria. Participation will involve 1-hour semi-structured interview.

WHAT?

This PhD study is about different views on the regulation and impact of the night-time economy in Kings Cross Potts Point and Newtown, nightlife precincts in Sydney.

TO PARTICIPATE

- Fill in the form:
<https://flipmsg.com/r/?gzdJEqb>
- Use the QR code:



Stadtnachacht
City After Eight



Institute for
Public Policy
and Governance

The study has received
ethics approval:
UTS HREC ETH21-6131

Appendix L Evidence of ethics approval

HREC Approval Granted - ETH21-6131

Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au <Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au>

Fri 25/06/2021 3:11 PM

To: Research Ethics <research.ethics@uts.edu.au>; Alan Morris <Alan.Morris@uts.edu.au>; Alessia Cibirin <Alessia.Cibirin@student.uts.edu.au>

 1 attachments (293 KB)

Ethics Application.pdf;

Dear Applicant

Re: ETH21-6131 - "Conflicting rationalities in Sydney's night-time economy prior to and during Covid-19"

Thank you for your response to the Committee's comments for your project. The Committee agreed that this application now meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) and has been approved on that basis. You are therefore authorised to commence activities as outlined in your application.

You are reminded that this letter constitutes ethics approval only. This research project must also be undertaken in accordance with all [UTS policies and guidelines](#) including the Research Management Policy.

Your approval number is UTS HREC REF NO. ETH21-6131.

Approval will be for a period of five (5) years from the date of this correspondence subject to the submission of annual progress reports.

The following standard conditions apply to your approval:

- Your approval number must be included in all participant material and advertisements. Any advertisements on Staff Connect without an approval number will be removed.
- The Principal Investigator will immediately report anything that might warrant review of ethical approval of the project to the [Ethics Secretariat](#).
- The Principal Investigator will notify the Committee of any event that requires a modification to the protocol or other project documents, and submit any required amendments prior to implementation. Instructions on how to submit an amendment application can be found [here](#).
- The Principal Investigator will promptly report adverse events to the Ethics Secretariat. An adverse event is any event (anticipated or otherwise) that has a negative impact on participants, researchers or the reputation of the University. Adverse events can also include privacy breaches, loss of data and damage to property.
- The Principal Investigator will report to the UTS HREC or UTS MREC annually and notify the Committee when the project is completed at all sites. The Principal Investigator will notify the Committee of any plan to extend the duration of the project past the approval period listed above.
- The Principal Investigator will obtain any additional approvals or authorisations as required (e.g. from other ethics committees, collaborating institutions, supporting organisations).

- The Principal Investigator will notify the Committee of his or her inability to continue as Principal Investigator including the name of and contact information for a replacement.

Approval is also given on the condition that organisational letters of approval are submitted to the Ethics Secretariat before any interviews with organisations or institutions commence.

This research must be undertaken in compliance with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) and [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#).

You should consider this your official letter of approval. If you require a hardcopy please contact the Ethics Secretariat.

If you have any queries about your ethics approval, or require any amendments to your research in the future, please don't hesitate to contact the Ethics Secretariat and quote the ethics application number (e.g. ETH20-xxxx) in all correspondence.

Yours sincerely,
The Research Ethics Secretariat

On behalf of the UTS Human Research Ethics Committees
C/- Research Office
University of Technology Sydney
E: Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au

Ref: E38

END