

## **Branded City by Night in the World Heritage Cities: The Case of Lyon, France<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Introduction**

The Competition between European cities today represents a major goal in the management of the cities. The historical cities are not left out in this arena of competitions and thanks to the attachment the label 'cultural heritage cities' they have become the first cities to acquire and build the branding acronym.

Initially, the cultural tourist opportunities are mainly made up of diurnal activities then widened with the tendencies for the night schedules. These include the late opening of museums, night tourist visits or cultural events developed during night time and the increase of festive events carried out during night times. Currently, the European cities are known for the strong interest for their night image, which leads to a logic of urban branding.

A case in point is the city of Lyon (France) which in less than twenty years changed its image from being known as an uninteresting "industrial" city, to being seen as a historical and innovating, European capital. The city enables the tracing of the process of the construction of the branded city. The research interrogates what the principle phases involved in developing and promoting the city brand are; what the products brands chosen for the city are; how officials ensure that local input from businesses, community groups, citizens and professionals are considered; and finally how the nocturnal promotion of the city are related to the building of the city branding.

This paper is part of my PhD research studies at the French Institute of Urban Planning. The presentation is organised around three main issues; first is make a short literature review on the extensions of the use of cultural opportunities and activities in to night schedules. This is followed by the case study of the city of Lyon, in order to see the change of its image from being known as an "industrial town", and concludes with a discussion of primary observations.

### **I. Extensions of the cultural activities in the night time schedules**

Like the human organism, the life of a city is to an extent governed by existent random alternations between day and night; the rhythmic oscillations between day and night. It can thus be argued that our cities breathe, dilate, they attract and they repel individuals who work, study, consume and or enjoy the city. It is observed that certain spaces are drained and while others are animated, certain zones are illuminated while others are darkened; some are closed whereas others work on a continuous schedule. This image of the city

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is a brief summary the PhD research being undertaken at the French Institute of Urban Planning, Université Paris 8.

"by night" or 24/24 at first was related to the rate of life of the great metropolis, but now is the main visible urban context of the Historical Centers, where the night-time activities is dependent on the number of tourist.

A series of ephemeral nocturnal manifestations in the context of the Heritage City can thus be found. This is seen in the realizations of "Nuits Blanches" in Paris, Brussels, Montreal or Rome, whose objectives have been to encourage activities in urban spaces during all night where diverse artistic and cultural spectacles are performed. In other cities like Turin, Montreal, Lyon and Venice, among others we find "Fête of lumière" where the use of illumination techniques is the axe of the spectacles.

Similarly, a series of night-time activities have been adopted gradually in certain Heritage Cities, such as the "Night of the Museums" in Munich, Berlin, Lausanne and Anvers, and the "Nocturnal Visits" that have been adopted by the cities of Rome, Montreal or Lyon. The spectacles of illumination and sound made in diverse patrimonial zones (the Castle of Versailles, the Coliseum of Rome or the Archaeological Zone of Chichén-Itza), are also at the moment a common practice in the of cultural heritage promotion. There are important number of Heritage Cities that have decided on the illumination of their historical zones through the implementation of "Illumination Plans", whose aim is to harmonize the historical illumination of monuments and the illumination of the public lighting system.

These series of events will be accompanied by the nocturnal supply of bars, restaurants, cinemas and local shops that contribute to the creation of a nocturnal urban culture, where the use and the practice of the Historical Centers will also be carried out during the night time.

The slogan "by night" created at the end of XIX century, has been adopted throughout the world, encouraging the tourists to discover attractions of the cities during the night. At the moment "by night" is used in all the scopes as a "trade mark" (Gwiazdzinski, 2005), to increases the value of any Heritage City.

In this context competition between various Heritage Cities is created to with a view to capture a large number of tourists, investments and wealth. Thus, today the Urban Marketing integrates the nocturnal dimension and, in the greater number of the cases, each Patrimonial City tries to create a nocturnal identity. This paper interrogates and illustrates how the city of Lyon has promoted the nocturnal dimension in through marketing and branding processes.

## **II. The industrial's city searches of a new identity**

Until the 1980's the city of Lyon was "a city of work, was industrial and without nocturnal life" (Deleuil, 2000). This was in contrast to the strong night activities of the city of Paris. Thus, was a weak competitor to with the city of Paris, and its rank as second city in the national roll has always justified its ambition to become a city of the European scale. Lyon is therefore an innovating city in terms of urban management. At the end of the

1980's, several occurred in the public policies that were encouraged by several factors. The first was the decentralization of the governmental authority, giving autonomy to local governments in issues of urban management. The second was the creation of the European Union, EU, which encouraged territorial competition (Dupont, 1993)

The branding had the goal of creating a new identity, shifting the image away from the perception of the "industrial town sleeps early" in order to become "A European capital city" and to compete with other large European capitals like Barcelona, Berlin or London<sup>2</sup>. The city managers of Lyon who were aware of the cases of other European cities, decided at the end of the 1980's to change the image of Lyon, investing on the branding the city.

This resulted in the beginning of an "embellishment" policy for the city, installing several programs in the using the patrimonial zone as main object. These were:

i) A Green Plan, which focused on the treatment of green zones and equipment of greenery in the city.

ii) The Blue Plan, aimed to revalorization of the river's role in the city

iii) And finally, the Light Plan centered on the renovations of public space during the (night time) night, starting from the design of illumination (Image 00, Politics of the city)

Therefore, several policies of the management of public space were adopted. The illumination policy adopted by the city was carried out like "a branded product" of the city. It created links with several local stakeholder, and was formalized as a policy which strongly contributed to the building the branding of the city.

### **III Branded city by night**

The arrival of the local government for the period 1989-1995 marked the beginning of change of the image of the city. It started a policy of light in the city, in the form of a Light Plan (Plan Lumière). The main goal of the plan was to establish the directives and objectives that would be the vehicle of the public policy of lighting and the illumination of monuments, and the renewal of the role of the light in the city in general.

This new policy of illumination was started under the impulse of the mayor and the town planning board at the time, importantly with the

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<sup>2</sup> At the beginning of the years 1990 several English cities, Manchester, Newcastle, Liverpool, Leeds, Cardiff, developed programs tending to reanimate their centers during the night modifying their night practices. Thus they mobilized in great numbers the operations ranging from the security in public spaces during the night to urban regeneration as posited by Loew (2006, p.80)

support of private sector (the Electric association MAT électrique<sup>3</sup>). With this initiative a great number of actors were mobilized (tradesmen, professionals, industrialists, controls of buildings, tertiary sector, department stores, public organizations). (Image 00 Actors) The Light Plan was outstanding during this time, and has been an important aspect of promotion of the city.

The implementation of this policy was initially be carried out by:

- **The Light Plan (1989):** Centered on the illumination of the monuments and the historic sites and the setting of lighting were carried out mainly in the patrimonial zone.

Then there was:

- **The revival of a cultural tradition (1990):** The government started the tradition of the "Festival of lights"<sup>4</sup> in the city. It is the setting of illumination of the Heritage city and it was related to the spectacles of "Sound and Light".

And finally:

- **An exportation of the know-how (1994):** The "light designers"<sup>5</sup> with the economic support of the town of Lyon and the support of the electric companies carrying out various light settings in several countries (1994: St Petersburg, 1996: Havana, 1998: Hô Chi Minh- City, 1999: Theran), in order to make known its expertise.

These three actions were to form a system. This means, that the success or the failure of each action would have repercussion on the others. The actors who take part in the lighting plan also take part in the Festival of Lights.

Each year at the time of the "Lights Festival", the main projects of "light designers" made within the context of "Light Plan", were inaugurated. This system is based on a "spontaneity" that redefines and consolidates the adjustments and measurements of time, and thus become an important part of building the brand of the city. The brand of city is thus strongly founded on the city's night image.

It is important also to note, that the initiation of this policy of illumination, created the trade of the "Light Designer" (Concepteurs Lumière) who is legitimate and thanks to professionals of the Lyons media. During this period certain large manufacturers (for example

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<sup>3</sup> This association was created in 1990 on the initiative of the Lyons Counter of Electricity and EDF. One year later they install a place of exposure on the territory Lyonnais, action which will position at the town of Lyon like one of large poles as regards street lighting.

<sup>4</sup> The tradition of the "Festival of candle ends" is the beginning a religious festival celebrated on December 8 of each year, where the inhabitants put candles at the edges of the windows.

<sup>5</sup> The "light designers" is a new profession which was born from the marriage of the technical training with the level of the lighting and the design of illumination. It is a new trade which is consolidating itself and which especially was validated by the professional arrivals of the Lyons professional environment. The latter, have their origins in the professions of the architects, lighting engineers of the medium of the spectacle and engineering.

Philips) opened up facilities in the area and thus creating a expertise hub in terms of the manufacture of electric material.

The strong work of the city branding carried out around the setting of lighting of the city, was put on hold by the next municipal government (1995-2001). It stifled the Light Plan<sup>6</sup>, and further projects of illumination in the city were carried out. The existing Light Plan was kept but without being updated and no more the large budgets was to be allocated for the illuminations. This decision was due to the fact that the new municipality government had very different vision of public policies.

It was left for the next local government to once more take the Light Plan like a product brand, bringing an important marketing for the city on the way. The existing Light Plan was examined to clarify its importance on the European agenda and addressed several issues:

**- A new approach of Light Plan due to strong criticism:**

The New Light Plan will be examined and will extent the urban territory beyond the Patrimonial Zone under the terms such as; sustainable development, energy saving and the innovation in terms of technology.

And at the same time, this initiative will be left as the remainder of the "system" of the city branding by night followed by,

**- A new approach of export of the Know-how:** This will take the form of an organized network under the axis of the city LUCI<sup>7</sup> (Lyon acting as lead partner). In the beginning the partners were professionals, will be widened to include the universities and the city managers.

And finally,

**- A new Approach to the event "Festival of Lights":** The event will be re-named like "the Festival of the lights" in order to expand its sphere of activity. At the same time the festival's name will be a registered as a trade mark thus creating a product brand. On the level of the organization it goes master key of a network of sponsoring which financed the event towards a "Club".

These actions followed on the heels of the fact that the city had already changed the negative image that weighed on it, thanks to the creation of a brand "city by night". Therefore, in order to preserve it and to continue to be seen like the leaders, the city had to carry out a kind of Re-branding its product brand the "city by night", in particular in the whole of the system make up (Plan Lumière, Fête of Lights, LUCI).

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<sup>6</sup> At the beginning the management intended to stop the Light Plan, but it had such a support from the tradesmen and part of the population that this opposition was abandoned.

<sup>7</sup> Lighting Urban Community International

It has now become common practice in the management of the patrimonial cities in European and elsewhere to consider the principle of regeneration in order for the city to reposition itself in a market which has become very competitive. This has been helped by the setting up of the lighting of the cities and the opportunities of cultural activities and night leisure.

## **Conclusions**

In the case of Lyon the process of building the brand of the "city by night", has its origins in the setting of lighting of the heritage city. The Patrimonial zone still remains privileged in the intervention or regeneration even though the policy has been to extend the plans towards the periphery. The event of the "Festival of Light" developed especially in the heritage zone. Therefore, the process of the construction of the brand "city by night" was very successful in the case of Lyon and it opens up the questions the social aspects.

The questions are; what is the impact of the various uses of night public spaces beyond the perimeter of the patrimonial zone? Have residents of the peripheral areas been enabled or empowered to participate in the construction of the city branding? What are the benefits to the residents in the areas regenerated in the process of light plan or was it geared only towards tourists and were the neighbours who use the places in their everyday lives consulted in the Illumination Policy?

However, Lyon is a descriptive case for the new dynamics of the night in cities whether heritage ones or not. The night are no longer anymore the time only used for resting, but has become the new canvas or land where the branding "urban by night" must take into account the social dimension of the city. It thus must encourage the accessible practice of public spaces uses to the various users.

The government has recognized that it could not act alone in the building the branding "city by night". It has thus made undertakings to building relationships with the private sector (enterprises, professionals, material producers) and Universities resulting in a network organized around the pole of expertise.

In spite of this one can ask the question whether the town of Lyon made the city branding without the statements making it clear. This question arises from the fact that in the French media the practice remains a little wretched before the eyes of citizens who are not comfortable with the idea of equating branding with the city being on sale. In this manner, terms like "communication city" and "radiation city", should be promoted more by the governmental authorities.

Finally, the desire of the town of Lyon to change its "negative" image towards becoming a "European Capital" was successfully done. Currently Lyon appears among the important European cities-areas and it takes into account its distinctive identity. Also it is seen as a dynamic city, attractive and competitive. The brand "city by night"

has contributed to attracting more tourists, new external investors and even new inhabitants. All of these have been part of the branding and urban marketing policies by the city.

Even though the brand of the city by night means a policy of city illumination, on its own will not deliver effective regeneration. It is central to the generation of new economic opportunities, provision of new social or improved services and the bringing of improvements to the life of the citizens.