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Edited by

Manuel Garcia-Ruiz,

Jordi Nofre

VI International Conference on Night Studies

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Manuel Garcia-Ruiz,

Jordi Nofre

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Are you Being Served?

Exploring Alcohol-Free Nightlife Spaces for LGBTQIA+ Communities

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Abstract

LGBTQIA+ communities are more likely to experience alcohol related harm, such as alcohol dependency, and have poorer mental health, than cisgender, heterosexual populations. However, alcohol plays a central role in almost all LGBTQIA+ social and cultural spaces. This issue was debated in Scottish parliament in 2022. Alcohol-free nightlife (AFN) provides opportunities for LGBTQIA+ people to meet and socialise which are not centered around alcohol. These events are becoming increasingly popular, but have received little research attention. This study aimed to investigate the characterisation and sustainability of AFN, alongside its potential inclusivity for LGBTQIA+ communities.

Qualitative interviews with n=7 individuals who organise AFN events in the UK and n=9 focus groups with LGBTQIA+ adults interested in AFN in Scotland. The study used an intersectional theoretical framework and purposively included marginalised LGBTQIA+ subcommunities including adversely racialised groups, and participants who identified as working class. Qualitative data was analysed with Thematic Analysis.

AFN rewrites the socio-cultural script of alcogenic nightlife by offering a direct alternative, which replicates certain elements while radically changing others. AFN provided safer spaces for sober socialisation with new offerings such as earlier finish times, relaxation areas and collaborative art activities. AFN was popular among non-drinkers who felt marginalised by LGBTQIA+ drinking culture. However, AFN struggled to be financially sustainable in competition with Big Alcohol. Adversely racialised groups experienced unique barriers including a lack of diverse music options. Separate events for LGBTQIA+ sub-communities were desired and cultivating romantic connections in AFN were seen as challenging.

AFN represents a potentially important, innovative intervention which could disrupt harmful drinking cultures by providing a viable alternative.

Keywords:

LGBTQIA+; Alcohol-free Nightlife; Public Health

Who has a right to the city at night?

An exploration of ordinary versus spectacular nightlife

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Abstract

The urban night is both a natural feature of our planetary existence and socially produced and mediated through our daily rhythms and routines. Night can be conceived as not just a time, but a territory that can be “inhabited, traversed, and mapped” (Straw 2014, p. 186). Furthermore, the city at night can be understood as a space-time with its own set of labourers, residents, and visitors.

The night is increasingly viewed as a space or frontier to expand the daytime economy. As post-industrial cities work to attract the “creative class” and compete with other cities for global investment, the nighttime economy is presented as a space for expanding economic opportunities.

While the planning, design, and governance urban night predominantly focuses on the nighttime economy and its regulation, there is less focus on the everyday or “everynight” needs of people who work or use the city after dark on a regular basis. This paper explores the concept of ordinary nights /nightlife and argues it is through the exploration of ordinary nights and the experience of its inhabitants that we can seek to understand the richness and complexity of the urban night.

Keywords

Urban Night; Ordinary Nights; Everyday Urbanism

Beyond Fado

Exploring the Musical Landscape of Alfama's Santo Estêvão Area

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Abstract

In the complex dynamics of tourism, heritage, and urban regeneration shaped by overtourism, Alfama stands out as an emblem of Lisbon's cultural identity. With its picturesque charm and deep-rooted connection to fado (Castelo-Branco, Sánchez- Fuarros, 2023), the district embodies a symbol of tradition while also reflecting the profound social and economic changes transforming the area (Nofre, Sequera, 2019). Once primarily defined by fado, Alfama has become a major tourist destination, where traditional casas de fado draw both locals and visitors. Yet, beyond this iconic genre, the neighborhood has embraced a wider range of musical expressions, from informal gatherings and jam sessions to organized concert, enriching its dynamic and diverse soundscape.

This study explores these musical practices beyond fado, focusing on the interactions between local residents, international inhabitants, curious tourists, and musicians, both local and visiting. The research pays particular attention to the area surrounding the Church of Santo Estêvão, where music in the nighttime plays a vital role in shaping community identity.

Adopting an ethnographic approach, this study examines the social dynamics within live music spaces, considering both formal and informal practices. By investigating how music is performed, consumed, and experienced in the Santo Estêvão area, the research reveals an alternative musical identity in Alfama, one that transcends its association with fado and encompasses a wide range of genres and dynamics. This approach deepens our understanding of how music, as a dynamic cultural practice, challenges and enriches Alfama's established narrative, offering new insights into its interactions with the broader forces of urban transformation and community life in contemporary Lisbon.

Keywords

Urban Nightlife; Overtourism; Live Music Spaces; Alternative Soundscapes

Exploring nightwalking through videography

Experiences and interpretations of women walking at night in Accra and Helsinki

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Abstract

This presentation discusses the application of videography to explore the experiences and interpretations of women walking at night in two culturally distinct and geographically contrasting contexts: Ghana and Finland. This methodological approach examines the interplay between the street as a public space, the female pedestrian, and walking as a social practice in everyday night contexts in Accra and Helsinki. In this research, video serves a dual purpose, both as a data source and a means of theoretical exploration. In this methodology, we employ 1) walking with a body camera as one data source, 2) reflections by the researcher on the walking experience after watching the video recordings, and 3) interpretations of the video recordings by other women from each of the two geographies. The selection of Accra and Helsinki as contexts aims to investigate how cultural differences, intersectionality, and varying light conditions impact women's experiences and perceptions of walking. The study explicitly explores the cues present in these two differing urban environments. These environments shape women's experiences of walking at night, paying particular attention to cultural contexts, spatial layouts, and light levels, especially in relation to behavioural norms, inclusive activities, and safety perceptions. The 'unseen' aspects are highlighted through the replay of video recordings, allowing for an exploration of diverse sentiments associated with this urban practice – including safety, fear, adventure, precaution, recreation, domestication, alienation, imagination, freedom, mystery, inclusion, and exclusion. This research explores videography as a methodology to study the social practice of night walking. It illuminates the differential experiences associated with this phenomenon, particularly in relation to varying light conditions and women's contextual experiences.

Keywords

Accra; Helsinki; Nightwalking; Urban Light; Public Space

Reading Night

Mobilizing nightwalking literature as a design resource

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Abstract

Walking, like writing, is a form of enunciation, a way to transcribe space and time. With the illumination of the night city, and in parallel, the production of an active, wakeful night, the acts of walking and writing the night city found common ground. The advent of urban nightwalking literature provides insights into the perception and experience of emergent nocturnal spaces—insights applicable to our current period of lighting transition. This paper draws on largely auto-biographical nightwalking literature, written in Paris in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries, in order to apprehend shifting atmospheres of nocturnal illumination and their ability to reconfigure spatial perceptions. It frames readings of urban night literature as both a method of research and a design resource. To do so, it builds on an expanded view of architecture and urban practice, explored notably by Jane Rendell, to include writing. It also pulls from broader movements in urban literature wherein nightwalking narratives serve as a medium for questioning the possibilities of the city at a critical moment in its spatial and ecological development. In the current climate of global warming and light pollution advocacy, a rewriting of the urban night is already underway, one that has moved from continued accumulation to an intended reduction of artificial lighting. This paper asks how, as architects, urbanists and researchers, we might find alternate methods of transcribing and therefore, giving voice to an evolving night.

Keywords

Urban Nights, Urban Literature, Nightwalking

Transnational dialogues for night governance in contemporary Italy

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Abstract

Over the past fifteen years, many European cities, such as Amsterdam, Berlin, Paris and London (Seijas and Milan Gelders 2021), have implemented night-time policies to support nightlife and address the nocturnal segment of the 24-hour cycle that has been previously disregarded. Despite having been at the forefront of temporal politics and city governance of urban rhythms (Bonfiglioli 2006; Diamanti forthcoming; Mallet 2013), Italian cities have only recently begun to adopt night-time economy plans and night governance. Through an analysis of policies and public discourse, this paper looks at the different strategies put in place by Italian cities, in a comparative perspective, from Bologna, Trento, and Rome to other cities. In doing so, the paper aims first at mapping the different initiatives that are proliferating across Italy and are still at an early stage in looking at differences and similarities. Secondly, the paper also argues that the night as a global phenomenon can be explored in looking at transnational ties by inquiring formal exchanges among cities and institutions that have contributed to NTE plans across Europe and have been invited into conversation by Italian city administrators. In fact, the Italian cities that have been at the forefront of the “night revolution,” such as Bologna and Trento, are mutating strategies that have been designed in other European settings. The paper will look at the translation of such strategies in the Italian context with its own specificities and their adaptation.

Keywords

night-time economy, night governance, Italy, night studies

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Lighting the Way

Understanding Nocturnal Mobility and Community Perspectives on Sustainable Illumination

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Abstract

Since its advent, artificial light at night (ALAN) has facilitated nocturnal human activity, extending daytime activities into the night. However, ALAN is increasingly recognised as an environmental concern due to its contribution to light pollution, which adversely impacts both human health and wildlife. This duality presents a complex challenge: how can public spaces be illuminated in a socially and environmentally responsible manner?

Technological advancements offer an opportunity to rethink the nocturnal landscape. The modernisation of outdated lighting infrastructure provides institutions with a chance not only to upgrade technologies but also to critically engage in shaping the future of nighttime environments. A key question emerges: how should the nocturnal landscape evolve to balance human needs with ecological preservation?

To address this, institutions must foster dialogue with local communities to better understand their nocturnal mobility patterns, use of public spaces, and lighting preferences. What are the population's lighting needs? How willing are residents to accept reduced lighting for biodiversity conservation? What factors influence this acceptance?

Using the Walloon Region of Belgium as a case study, we conducted three surveys among residents in February-March 2022, October-November 2022, and October-November 2024. A total of 3142 respondents shared insights into their mobility habits, attitudes towards light reductions, specific conditions for acceptance, and persuasive arguments for promoting sustainability.

Our research contributes to the ongoing dialogue between academia, institutions, and communities by offering two key insights: (1) a deeper understanding of nocturnal mobility habits, lighting needs, and factors driving acceptance of light reductions; and (2) practical recommendations for policymakers to implement sustainable lighting strategies that balance social needs with environmental stewardship.

Keywords

Nocturnal mobility, public lighting, sustainability, light pollution.

Night as a space for ritual practice in ancient Greece

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Abstract

This paper presents preliminary results on the experience of nocturnal religious activity in Classical Greece (480-332 BCE). Scholars have recognized the performance of night-long celebrations, known as "pannychis", in a variety of Greek cults, but discourse has centered on the origin or function of the rituals. In contrast, I suggest how archaeologists can reconstruct night-time experience and sensations that are engendered in participants' bodies by placing these activities within the built and natural environment.

First, I identify an emic conceptualization of the night in ancient Greece through a survey of all instances of the word "night" ("nyx") in the literature of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. Each entry is assigned a broad descriptive category to qualify its use. Then, this work is put in conversation with the archaeological analysis of sanctuary and ritual space, at places such as Brauron, Eleusis, and Athens. I propose that lived religion, which highlights the sensorial qualities and embodied acts of religious experiences, is a useful framework for defining the experience of ancient nocturnal rituals. In order to access this experiential dimension, I use a sensory inventory to categorize aspects of the ritual as well as the natural and built environment in which it takes place. This approach therefore explores the effects of the night on the ritualized body and is a new endeavor in the study of Greek religion. Using this framework to compare sites and practices outlines the ways the night shaped ritual experience and points to the integral role of nocturnal rituals in Greek worship.

Keywords

Greece, ritual, night-time, experience

Polycentric Nights

Rhythms of Transience and Deterrence in Southern European Nightscapes

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Abstract

Drawing on Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis, this research examines the governance of nightscapes in Southern Europe, focusing on how transient populations navigate contested urban, peri-urban and post-industrial spaces. It argues that Southern Europe's nocturnal conflicts manifest uniquely in its polycentric landscape, revealing complex rhythms of mobility and temporality. Through a Mediterranean lens, the study analyses the interplay between formal nighttime governance and informal spatial practices in local nightscapes, from seasonal nightlife hubs to infrastructural interstices. Examples from Italy illustrate how night-time regulations create spatio-temporal borders, selectively filtering nocturnal subjects and communities. These nocturnal policies emerge as rhythmic interventions, functioning as proto-deterrence mechanisms that normalise soft borders. Blending rhythmanalysis, mobility justice and regional polycentricity perspectives, this study reframes often-blamed nocturnal spaces as testing sites for governance strategies. It contributes to the emerging Southern European turn in night studies, highlighting how region-specific rhythms shape nocturnal governance and spatial justice across diverse (urban) settings.

Keywords

Rhythmanalysis; Nocturnal Governance; Polycentric Urbanism; Southern Europe; Proto-deterrence

Chueca by night

when the lights go out

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Abstract

For non-cis-heterosexual people, Chueca was a refuge where they could be free through the intimacy of the night. The nightlife industry is one of the main attractions of the city of Madrid, which, even during the pandemic, continued operating with relative laxity compared to other parts of the country. Chueca stands as an undisputed reference point in the capital for nightlife and modernity for much of the Spanish population, as well as a global symbol of a territory free from prejudice and the constraints of heteronormativity and patriarchy. However, this does not mean it is free of conflict. As a neighborhood shaped by capitalist dynamics and the site of one of Madrid's fastest and most recent processes of gentrification and turistification, the residents, visitors, and workers of Chueca have been rapidly replaced.

My aim with this presentation is to update the imagery of the neighborhood by exploring the tensions and balances that shape it, with a special focus on the day–night dialogue. Publicity and privacy—projected through day and night, respectively—offer a useful framework to begin to understand what we are really talking about when we talk about Chueca. My goal is to highlight different ways of building community—some more prosperous and dominant, others more marginal and liminal—and, ultimately, to help shed light on the following question: What is the meaning of a neighborhood like Chueca today?

To do this, I draw on the main findings from my fieldwork as a research intern. I have relied primarily on two classic techniques from social anthropology: over 40 hours of participant observation across nightclubs and key routes, and 16 interviews with two of its most emblematic figures and a range of people representing its social diversity.

Keywords

Chueca, Nightclubs, Fieldwork

Sky tourism

accessing unpolluted atmospheres in inland
Australia

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Abstract

Remote and regional places in Australia, as elsewhere, are facing increasing burdens as a result of compounding spatio-economic distance from urban centres. One element of these places' distinction over urban centres is the supposedly unpolluted sky-scapes of regional and remote areas. This chapter examines how remote and regional places in the state of New South Wales (NSW) are using distance as a selling point in inland tourism, focusing specifically on night sky tourism. State tourism promotes Central NSW as 'one of the best regions in NSW for night skies with less cloud and light pollution than coastal and city destinations. It is also home to a variety of places to stay that are out of town with low light pollution' (Visit Central NSW, 2025). Night sky tourism economies seek to move people inland to better weather and cleaner atmospheres. This form of tourism enacts a broader form of settler colonial landscape engineering where inland Australia is presented as 'empty' for anthropocentric exploitation. The renewed emphasis on tourism occurs because the decades-long drought has severely impacted the regional pastoral economy and weather systems in Central NSW. The re-positioning of inland sky as a place-based commodity reaffirms the material and narrative practices of settler colonisation, which work to disorder Indigenous custodianship and sovereignties.

Keywords

Night sky tourism; settler colonialism; regional development; weather; aer nullius

The World as a dancefloor

Introductory reflections on geopolitics, neocolonialism, and EDM

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Abstract

This presentation aims to share research developed over the past year, focused on understanding the events that unfolded in the electronic dance music (EDM) scene following the attack on the Tribe of Nova festival on October 7. To approach this phenomenon, the concept of “psywashing” is proposed as a theoretical framework to analyze the neocolonial relationships present in the globalized reality of electronic music.

EDM emerged in a specific historical context marked by the fall of the USSR, the acceleration of globalization, and the narrative of the “end of ideologies.” Within this scenario, the dancefloor was elevated as a symbolic space of a “free” world, where the rhythmic crowd seemed to merge into a single being. However, when examining realities such as those of Ibiza, Tulum, or Goa, deep inequalities and neocolonial dynamics become evident—dynamics that have largely been ignored. Through a study centered on psytrance culture, we have identified these processes as a form of “latent psywashing.”

However, since October 7, a series of mechanisms legitimizing ultranationalist ideologies—such as Zionism—have been observed, fracturing the scene into two opposing sides. The subsequent events—parties organized to obstruct humanitarian aid, flag displays at festivals, dancefloor occupations by invading soldier-men—are what we refer to as “manifest psywashing.”

This research seeks not only to make these dynamics visible but also to open a critical debate on the role of electronic music in perpetuating power structures and inequality in a globalized world.

Keywords

EDM; neocolonialism; globalization

Troubling the Spectacle

Co-operating Alongside Nocturnal Nonhumans

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Abstract

Recognising the shared nonhumans worlds we live alongside requires actively accounting for daily and seasonal life-ways. Due to the mostly hidden activity of night creatures our understanding of their everynight is often incomplete. However, the action of engaging in meaningful practices with nocturnal nonhumans may literally mean not engaging, keeping distance, or making space.

In this paper I ask how we might consider night spectacles alongside questions of sensibility, nuance, and the ethics of nonhuman-human space. As a messenger for changing nocturnal worlds, I introduce the Powerful Owl, Australia's largest night raptor. All capital cities in Australia are nestled between or alongside significant forests and/or highlands. As more of the Powerful Owl's preferred habitat is cleared by human expansion the owl is forced to find new sources of prey within the urban and peri-urban. This is often to the detriment of the owls who find themselves in an ecological trap.

Citizen science projects are now building knowledge on the needs of Powerful Owls and the effects of humans on their life-ways. This helps inform more supportive systems within urban interfaces, builds shared knowledge, and a sense of community. It also helps inform choices for creative industries and the presentation of night spectacles. Referencing two separate works inserted into two different night environments I discuss where we might be improving and where we could do better in relation to night/light festivals and nocturnal nonhuman worlds.

As the urban fringe continues to erode the forest fringe and the climate continues to change, the cities are becoming an uneasy sanctuary for many nonhumans. Learning to be with each other can develop meaningful experiences and a rich night ecology beyond spectacle alone.

Keywords

Nocturnal Nonhuman Dark Spectacle

Sexual Geographies and the Gentrified City

An exploration of the regeneration of historical red-light districts in London's Kings Cross

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Abstract

Urban imaginaries speak to the making and remaking of 'space', 'place' and 'citizenship' in the ever-globalising city. Processes like gentrification have complicated the urban imaginary by regenerating sections of the city to develop upper-class spaces for residents, workers and consumers whilst addressing the twin 'threats' of urban and economic decay. That said, gentrification cannot, and should not, be viewed as a one-size-fits-all agenda. This is especially true in cities like London, where thirty-two (more-or-less) autonomous boroughs make decisions impacting their specific locality. Situated in the London Borough of Camden, Kings Cross has undergone rapid changes as a result of gentrification. With transport links across the UK and beyond, the anonymity associated with Kings Cross and its industrial past resulted in its historical red-light reputation. Under the forces of gentrification, however, sexualised venues and activities have been gradually weeded out of the area in an attempt to 'clean up' Kings Cross, an area that has been rewritten largely by and for its increasingly upper middle-class inhabitants. Drawing on urban geography and theories on space and sex, this research will shed light on the regeneration of a historical red-light district in which various sexualised venues and activities supported a wider sexual economy. Using a combination of ethnographic observation and qualitative interviews, this research aims to highlight the positive and negative aspects of gentrification that have contributed to the sanitisation of sexual geographies.

Keywords

Gentrification; Sexual Geographies; Kings Cross; Regeneration; Red-Light District

Back to basics?

A comparative study of techno parties in the context of micro-festivals in western France, Berlin and Brandenburg

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Abstract

While some pioneers of the genre denounce the recuperation of techno culture by the dominant festival model's commercial, tourist and media logics, the pandemic has reshuffled the cards. Micro-festivals, adapted to government measures, have emerged. Breaking with the disproportionate expansion of the festival sector in Europe and the global promotion of standardised techno culture, these events are seen as offering a fresh take on techno parties that stays true to their original subversive spirit. Do these smaller-scale events represent a “back to basics” approach to techno partying, reviving the founding principles and values of Europe's first underground scenes? Or do they offer a fresh perspective on the discourses and practices associated with techno parties in light of contemporary cultural, socio-economic, and political issues? To what extent are micro-festivals of electronic music reinventing the techno party as collective, intimate and committed laboratories?

This study takes a comparative approach, examining Western France, Berlin and Brandenburg to analyse the motivations and issues underlying contemporary European celebrations. Although these regions are all steeped in techno culture, they have been shaped by different historical and socio-economic factors.

Keywords

Techno; Micro-Festivals; Subculture; Mainstream; Festival Industry

The Geopolitics of Light

In Search of Darkness at the Border Islands

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Abstract

The radiant sky above stands in stark contrast to the shadowy ground below. On Matsu—a border island that long served as a military frontline during the Cold War, positioned between Taiwan and China—residents had finally emerged from the darkness of wartime threats into the light, only to find themselves drawn into a new kind of conflict: the struggle to darken the night sky. In recent years, a species of bioluminescent plankton, *Noctiluca scintillans*, blooms off the coast of China in spring, later drifting across the border to reach Matsu. When disturbed, for example by waves crashing against the shore, these tiny organisms emit a natural glow that makes the waves shimmer with a soft blue light. Affectionate poets call them “Blue Tears,” as if they were the shimmering tears of the ocean. Blue Tear tourism has become a vital asset for Matsu and nearby islands as they transform from military outposts to peaceful destinations. To make these delicate glimmers visible, an environment of sufficient darkness must be created. However, crafting darkness involves more than overcoming the deep-rooted fears within their memories. The enemies from wartime memories always emerge from the shadows, launching sudden attacks. It also means confronting new threats, with the current enemies being those who bring light. Waves of fishing boats use powerful lights to attract fish. These modern, high-intensity lights illuminate both the ocean and the sky it reflects, making them as bright as day. This forms a conflict between light and darkness, more accurately, a struggle to create darkness to make the subtle light visible. Drawing in the ocean, island, and sky, and associating the human with the nonhuman, I believe this struggle sheds new light on the meaning of “geo” in geopolitics.

Keywords

Geopolitics; Light; Darkness; Blue Tears; Matsu Island

Invisible After Dark

Gendered Dimensions of Nocturnal Agricultural Labor in Morocco

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Abstract

Women in Morocco contribute in essential ways to the agricultural sector. They engage in a wide range of activities, including irrigation, planting, harvesting, weeding, and sorting agricultural products. Many of these tasks are performed at night or begin in the early hours; women often travel to the fields before dawn and return home at the end of the day or after dark, following long hours of labor. This paper seeks to bring visibility to their work, labor that is not only critical to sustaining local and national economies but also fundamental to the reproduction of households and family life. We focus on three forms of nocturnal economic activity undertaken by women in agriculture 1) daily agricultural wage labor without fixed contracts; 2) nighttime irrigation in community-managed water systems; 3) and seasonal migration to Huelva, in southern Spain, for the strawberry harvest. Through these examples, we explore how night labor contributes to the invisibility and stigmatization of women's work in agriculture. Adopting an intersectional approach, we demonstrate that women's strategies for navigating the socio-cultural and spatial norms associated with night vary according to the type of work they perform, as well as their marital status, socio-economic position, and age. With this paper, we aim to expand the gendered lens of night studies with insights into rural gendered nocturnal activities and argue that focusing on nocturnal labor in the agricultural sector provides valuable insights into the layered forms of marginalization and constraint these women face in their everyday lives.

Keywords

Agricultural Labor; Night Labor; Invisibility; Women; Intersectionality

A History of DJing in Portugal

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Abstract

This presentation aims to establish a framework for understanding the development of DJ culture and electronic dance music in Portugal from a historiographic standpoint, from the 1960s to the present time. It seeks to explore the different cultural trajectories within Portugal across various decades and regions, while also paying attention to aesthetic, technological, and sociological perspectives. The communication will draw on a wide range of sources, including academic literature, general and specialized media, audiovisual archives, online forums, amateur blogs, and interviews with key figures in the Portuguese DJ scene, along with cross-references from research in the areas of contemporary portuguese history and sociology. This research serves as an initial attempt to conceptualize the history of DJing in Portugal, shedding light on the broader dynamics of the movement, after the efforts made in the United Kingdom and United States of America (Brewster and Broughton, 2013) and in Brazil (Assef, 2000). Contextualization within the international sphere will be crucial to understand how the DJ arrives in the country and, from then on, the proposed narrative will cover major milestones in the development of DJ culture in Portugal, starting with the opening of nightclubs in the 1960s and 1970s, which were initially focused on vinyl-based dance floors playing popular Anglo-Saxon pop and rock hits. The narrative will then move through the evolution of the Portuguese nightlife scene in the 1980s, followed by a period of industrialization in the 1990s, which saw the rise of record labels dedicated to electronic dance music, as well as the growth of raves, music festivals, and internationally acclaimed DJ's. Finally, the presentation will explore how these trends continued to evolve into the 21st century, culminating in the current landscape of DJ culture and electronic dance music in Portugal.

Keywords

History; DJing; Portugal; Electronic Dance Music

Darkling Dialogues

Alternative Narratives for Cities at Night

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Abstract

The dominant narratives that concern the urban night are those of bright lights and sensory stimulation. After dark, the city transforms as the identities and boundaries of people and places shift and the routines and rhythms of the daytime are replaced. Yet, around a corner, behind a wall, deep in the pockets of the urban night, alternative stories wait to be told. These are latent and often overlooked since the complexity of their diversity and nuance does not readily conform to the way a city is portrayed. They may seem like the footnotes of grander narratives of the nighttime city, but this paper suggests that by revealing counter-narratives, hidden histories, and alternative voices we might expand and enrich our understating of urban nights and how to design with them. This paper examines the relationships between text, spatiality, cities, and imagination. It offers a creative non-fiction account of the city of Manchester, UK, after dark as a speculative mode to give expression to different ways of being in the nighttime city. In doing so, it seeks to inform new pathways for designing urban nights and the role of architecture and darkness towards a more inclusive, just, and biodiverse nocturnal city.

Keywords

Darkness; Methods; Nighttime Architectures; Nocturnal Ambiances; Writing

Designing with Darkness: Beyond Neoliberalism

The case of Harlow Town Centre, England

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Abstract

Urban design has been subjected to well-evidenced criticism for the part it plays in the neoliberal projects championed by central and local governments. Drawing on the particular case of proposals to regenerate Harlow, a medium sized post-war new town in eastern England, this paper elaborates, through secondary sources and stakeholder interviews, how proposals for its nocturnal town centre are framed by their current ideological and economic context. Nevertheless, the hours of darkness offer urban designers possibilities to construct alternative narratives for more equitable and convivial nocturnal experiences. The paper explores, using drawings, photography and film, how the architectural and artistic features of Harlow's townscape are being and could be even further developed to provide a sensorially rich night time town, thereby fulfilling the original design team's social intentions.

Keywords

Townscape, Darkness, Architecture, New Towns, Urban Design

Tourism After Dark

Mapping the Landscape of Night and Tourism Studies (1998–2024)

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Abstract

Over the past three decades, interest in the relationship between tourism and the night has gradually grown, forming a research field that is both diverse and somewhat fragmented. This reflects not only the interdisciplinary nature of tourism but also the way the night has emerged in research through scattered moments across different projects. This study takes stock of the existing literature from 1998 to 2024, aiming to highlight key themes, conceptual contributions, and the ways tourism and the night intersect. It also outlines gaps and suggests paths for future research.

Using a systematic literature review approach, and combining qualitative and quantitative insights, the study followed the PRISMA protocol and analyzed 142 publications from 80 outlets. Thematic analysis helped identify the main directions in which the field is evolving.

Four core research streams were identified: (1) how night tourism has developed over time; (2) the role of tourism in shaping the night-time economy and urban change; (3) tourists as night-time consumers; and (4) how tourism and the night are studied and measured. These are complemented by three cross-cutting themes: sustainability, governance and policy, and the growing influence of knowledge and technology.

Tourism and night studies enrich one another, revealing both synergies—like nightlife tourism—and tensions, especially when it comes to personal experiences or wider transformations in urban and destination contexts.

Keywords

Night Tourism; Night-Time Economy; Systematic Literature Review; Tourism; Night

Queer and Feminist Tejana Nightlife in the U.S. Southwest

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Abstract

This talk examines the nighttime economies and cultural practices of Tejana women who made a living as nightclub performers in South Texas during the 1930s to 1960s. These performing artists and entrepreneurs were at the forefront of shifting gender roles and racial relations as they forged entertainment circuits that stretched across the U.S. Southwest. They navigated newfound agency as breadwinners central to family economies even as they continued to face gender and sexual regulation from fathers and husbands. They laid claim to the contested space of the Texas-Mexico borderlands by asserting pride in their cultural heritage through skilled performances of ranchera and bolero song. In their performances, they put forth “queer” and feminist sonic imaginaries through an emerging public expression of gender and sexuality that reflected gente corriente, or working-class values. Through their performances across the U.S. Southwest, Tejana women found possibility in public nightlife spaces to open up “queer” and feminist publics that transgressed racial boundaries and re-imagined gender far beyond the confines of the domestic home. As they did so, they also created networks of care through relationship ties of comadrisimo between Tejana women performers, ties that would hold longstanding meaning in their own lives and the lives of the next generation.

Keywords

US-Mexico Borderlands; Queer; Feminist; Performance; Public

From Chinese Poetic Imagery to Cultural Night Tourism

An aesthetic exploration of the night

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Abstract

In recent years, cultural night tourism has emerged as a prominent form of experiential travel in China, often promoted through aestheticized visuals and poetic language on social media platforms. This study investigates how Chinese poetic imagery of the night is recontextualized and mobilized in the contemporary digital landscape, to shape the aesthetics of cultural night tourism. Through a qualitative content analysis of posts tagged with keywords such as “night tourism” and “poetry” in the Red Note, a popular lifestyle and social media platform in China, this study explores the visual and textual strategies by which ancient motifs are reproduced, reimagined, and aligned with modern tourist experiences. The analysis focuses on how these posts employ poetic references and visual narratives to evoke emotional resonance, construct symbolic meaning, and aestheticize tourism destinations after dark. Findings suggest that poetic imagery functions not merely as cultural ornamentation, but as a semiotic bridge that links traditional literary imagination to contemporary spatial consumption. The study also identifies patterns of motif transfer, including direct quotation, visual echo, and thematic reconfiguration, which together inform a hybrid aesthetic model of “poeticized night tourism”. By revealing how traditional poetic motifs are appropriated in digital tourism storytelling, this research contributes to the understanding of cultural mediation, aesthetic framing, and symbolic continuity in night tourism promotion. It also offers practical insights for heritage-based tourism branding in the era of digital marketing.

Keywords

Cultural Night Tourism; Poetic Imagery; Chinese Ancient Poetry; Social Media; Aesthetics

Developing Critical Phenomenology of the Night

Analyzing Lived Experiences of the Night During Precarious Times

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Abstract

In recent years, critical studies have showed an interest in adopting phenomenological methodologies to study the experiences of/in the night (Handelman 2005). However, there still exists a significant gap in the understanding of phenomenon of the night during precarious times. Even though violence is concentrated during nighttime, people cross borders under the safety of darkness and insomnia pervades during precarious times, critical studies have overlooked the importance of the spatial temporality of the night during period of crisis. Using the Partition of India (1947) as a case study for period of crisis, this paper will analyse interviews collected during fieldwork in India as well as the oral histories from archives like the 1947 Partition Archive using phenomenological frameworks to explore the role played by the spatial temporality of the night in the experiences of violence and migration. The Partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 into India and Pakistan (East and West) led to the displacement of 32.4 million people and the disappearance, and possible death, of 3.4 million. In drawing a thematic analysis of nocturnal experiences of survivors, this paper will highlight the importance of developing critical phenomenology of the night as a methodological tool to understand the nuances of nocturnal experiences of crises.

Keywords

Night; Violence; Migration; Partition of Indira; Phenomenology

Writing (in) the dark

opacity, autoethnography and the limits of academic knowledge at the queer rave

sér vales

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Abstract

How to convey the ethnographic reality of an underground queer techno-space without betraying, at the same time, the political struggle for opacity and the scientific demands for (at least some) degree of objectivity? This paper interrogates the possibilities of an autoethnographic writing that is able to faithfully represent and obfuscate the nightlife experiences of marginalized communities without compromising the survival of their already precarious ways of organizing and resisting economic and state-sanctioned violence. I argue that the social reproduction of the queer EDM scene depends upon its capacity to build a safer space for the blossoming of politically oriented pleasures and caring practices. In this context, opacity may be understood as a series of techniques directed to protect the autonomy of the precarious subjects and collectives that make up the scene—against increasing dynamics of exclusion from public and commercial nightlife spaces. Thus, the queer 'I'/eye is presented as a method that may unsettle established forms of ethnographic description, engaging at the same time with a longstanding tradition of queer poetics and theorizing. Somewhat paradoxically, this practice also intends to privilege other sensorial perspectives away from the hegemony of visibility, in line with a critique of transparency as a device for truth production that has its roots in decolonial thinking—incorporating, as well, the theoretical and methodological perspectives of queer phenomenology and sensory ethnography. Nonetheless, the ethical concerns and the political shortcomings of an opaquely queer autoethnography need also be considered, inasmuch as they can end up working against the aims of critical research—ultimately betraying the purposes of both ethnographers and participants.

Keywords

Queer Methodology; Epistemology; Representation; Techno-Musicking; Community-Organizing

Institutionalising Club Cultures

Comparing Amsterdam and Berlin

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Abstract

Nightclubs are facing increasing pressure due to a variety of economic and urban developments such as gentrification, densification, post-pandemic recovery and inflation. At the same time, there is a parallel trend of increasing governmental recognition and legitimization of club cultures in urban policy in cities in Western Europe, resulting in nightlife-specific funding schemes, subsidies and increased professionalisation. Nightclubs have traditionally been unsubsidised economies, but in key club culture hubs such as Amsterdam and Berlin this has changed due to the combination of economic pressure, the Covid-19 pandemic, and cultural recognition. This paper scrutinises this institutionalisation of nightlife into cultural policy, posing the question to what extent this provides a sustainable pathway forward for nightlife scenes. The paper does so by comparing two highly institutionalised nightlife scenes in Western Europe, Amsterdam and Berlin, as both cities often function as policy examples for local governments around the Global North. Based on document-based policy analysis and semi-structured qualitative interviews with 36 nightclub promoters in Amsterdam and 28 nightclub promoters in Berlin, we seek to investigate how they understand and negotiate these political moves towards institutionalisation. First, we explore how nightlife policy can create conditions that foster nocturnal creativity, for example by providing stability and opportunities, in ways that can (temporarily) free promoters from market demands. Second, we discuss the limits of institutionalisation, analysing the problems that arise as night cultures become embedded in institutional politics. The paper contributes to scholarship that seeks to understand how more sustainable urban cultural economies may take shape in gentrifying cities.

Keywords

Club cultures; institutionalisation; urban cultural policy; governance; music

The Opium Nightscape

Cross-Cultural Temporalities and the Sino-British Encounter

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Abstract

Opium occupies a crucial place in the nocturnal imagination of nineteenth-century English literature. In the works of Charles Dickens and Arthur Conan Doyle, opium dens in East London are portrayed as Foucauldian Heterotopias, spaces entangled with addiction, corruption and criminality. Besides being mapped onto London's labyrinthian nocturnal streets, the fictional opium nightscape, often rendered in an exoticized atmosphere, also reveals a deep entanglement with nineteenth-century British imperialism. By exporting opium to China, the British profited considerably from the widespread addiction it caused, which later precipitated the Opium Wars and marked the prelude to China's "Century of Humiliation".

Although the discourse of danger surrounding opium use was highly familiar in the nineteenth-century Britain, it was not directly imported into China alongside the trade. Opium was widely consumed in both public and private spaces in China, fundamentally changing how its consumers experienced the dark hours. Physiologically, the mental excitement induced by opium blurred the boundary between day and night for many people, disrupting their sleep patterns and body rhythms. Culturally and geographically, opium significantly transformed the nocturnal cityscape of late imperial China. Opium dens became a prominent part of nighttime social and leisure life, represented in a wide variety of textual and visual works.

This paper argues that opium was not only a global commodity, but also a powerful agent in shaping nocturnal landscapes during the Sino-British encounter. The circulation of opium imposed imperial influence onto late Qing China while also transforming the spatial and symbolic dimensions of night in both countries. By examining night as a time and space of cross-cultural transformation, this paper contributes to a more global and comparative understanding of nocturnal modernity.

Keywords

Opium, Nightscape, China, Britain

Moonlit Innovations

Reimagining the Full Moon Theatre for Sustainable Performance

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Abstract

This presentation examines the creative and technical process behind staging a theatre performance illuminated exclusively by moonlight. Building on the legacy of the original Full Moon Theatre conceived in 1991 in Gourgoubès, France, a multidisciplinary team recently reconstructed this concept in Hooke Park, Dorset, United Kingdom. This modern reinterpretation, undertaken over three four-day laboratory sessions, melded manual craftsmanship and fabrication methods to produce parabolic timber reflectors capable of focusing and amplifying moonlight. These newly designed reflectors, provide a resource-light approach to stage illumination, minimizing the reliance on electricity while emphasizing ecological balance.

A key component of the project is the development of an online “Full Moon Library,” designed to disseminate technical documentation, simulations, and practical guidance. This open platform encourages communities worldwide to replicate similar moonlit productions.

By engaging local stakeholders and international collaborators, the Full Moon Theatre endeavor highlighted the broader potential of context-sensitive design practices. Its emphasis on lunar phases underscores the delicate relationship between natural cycles and human creative expression. The outcomes suggest that integrating moonlit illumination into performance not only reduces energy consumption but also enriches the theatrical experience, offering a renewed sense of wonder and communal engagement.

Ultimately, this initiative serves as a blueprint for sustainable and immersive theatre production. By revisiting the original Full Moon Theatre concept and adapting it to contemporary technologies and environmental considerations, the project reveals how careful attention to nighttime ecology and open collaboration can inspire novel approaches to art, design, and community-building in the realm of night studies.

Keywords

Moonlight; Digital Fabrication; Light Concentration; Sustainable Theatre Lighting; Lighting Simulation

