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Pubcrawling Lisbon:

Nocturnal Geoethnographies of Bairro Alto

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Introduction

The former fishermen's neighbourhood of Bairro Alto in Lisbon (Portugal) has today become one of the most crowded nightlife destinations in the Portuguese capital. Every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night, somewhere between 5,000 and 15,000 people congregate in an area featuring live music, cheap alcohol, badly-cut drugs, and flirting (Malet et al., 2016; Nofre et al. 2016, 2017). In fact, the urban changes occurring in this area over the two past decades may be understood as resulting from a complex, multifaceted, and simultaneous interplay between touristification, gentrification, studentification and the expansion of the night-time leisure economy (Nofre et al. 2017). However, the rapid expansion and commercialization of youth oriented, tourist oriented, alcohol-fuelled nightlife in the neighbourhood has also involved, among others impacts, the worsening of community liveability during the evening/night alongside the emergence of conflicts between different social actors in the urban night of Bairro Alto (Nofre et al. 2017, 2018). One of the critical challenges related to the governance of the downtown Lisbon nightlife arises out of the recent proliferation of open bar-pub crawls in the historic neighbourhood of Bairro Alto, where up to five local leisure and/or tourist companies organize (in-)formal pub crawls every night in this quarter.

This chapter sets out the results obtained from ethnography conducted over the last three years (2015-2017) on pub crawls in Bairro Alto. For the purposes of this chapter, we argue that the nightlife in Bairro Alto is experiencing a progressive *pubcrawlization*. By this term, we mean the expansion of tours taking in several pubs or drinking places across the neighbourhood, with one or more drinks at each venue over the course of the evening/night. In particular, this chapter focuses on how we may perceive pub crawls in Bairro Alto as micro-spatial and temporary universes of simulated evasion –in *Baudillardian* terminology– which are (re)produced by alcohol-fuelled bodies in a socially and physically degraded but hypersecuritized, tourism-led themed urban nightscape (Nofre and Martins 2017). Therefore, the first section to this chapter correspondingly focuses on how the recent expansion and commodification of Erasmus student-oriented and tourist-oriented pub-crawling in the urban night of Bairro Alto have recently involved profound changes on both the urban nightscape and the nocturnal soundscape in the quarter. Following this, we then examine the interpersonal relationships prevailing among pub crawl participants in conjunction with the other, different social actors in the Bairro Alto urban nightlife. The chapter furthermore explores how pub crawls in Bairro Alto emerge as informal securitized (re)productions of micro-spatiotemporal evasions of the (precarious and uncertain) everyday life of 'party tourists' in a hyper-excited nocturnal environment featuring carnivalesque and patriarchal expressions of (simulated) joy and happiness as performative and commodified inputs into the continuous production, reproduction and consumption of "heterotopic pleasurescapes of 'cosmopolitan distinction'" (Guerra and Nofre, forthcoming).

Methodology

Our ethnographic fieldwork was primarily observational in nature. After identifying local leisure and/or tourist companies running pub crawls and mapping their pub crawl routes, we focused our ethnographic research on examining the practices, sociabilities and consumptions of 'party tourists' and Erasmus students participating in pub crawls. Due to its growing importance and even dominance in Bairro Alto's currently prevailing nightlife, we decided to privilege The Lisbon Pubcrawl, launched in 2015 by Discover Lisbon –a local leisure and tourist company– in partnership with Erasmus Life Lisbon –with the latter a private firm set up in 2011 to provide accommodation, culture and day/night-time leisure services targeted at international college students arriving and temporarily living in Lisbon. The complexity of the research presented below required the deployment of a range of ethnographic techniques. We thus combined floating observation (Pétonnet 1982), consisting of free as well as inductive exploration of a certain urban space, non-intrusive observation (Webb et al. 2001, Lee 2000); and 'shadowing' (Czarniawska-Joerges 2007, Bartkowiak-Theron and Sappey 2012). Moreover, we completed a total of sixteen informal interviews with both pub crawl organizers and assistants during the fieldwork and focusing especially on gender issues. We collected qualitative data that was then processed and synthesized through meta-ethnographic analysis (Weed 2005) to capture the complex combination of emotions, feelings, atmospheres and practices that make up pub crawls in Bairro Alto. Finally, this ethnographic research took place in full compliance with the guidelines handed down by the EU Guidance on Research Ethics in Ethnography/Anthropology.

Bairro Alto, A Touristified Nightlife Spot In Neoliberal Lisbon.

Every night, but especially on Friday and Saturday, thousands gather to drink outdoors in Bairro Alto.[3] They include local people, university students and tourists who feel attracted by

the vibrant nightlife of the quarter: cheap alcohol, joy and exultation become an easy way to meet new people within a nocturnal environment featuring a soundscape formed out of a noisy mixture of Brazilian, commercial American, pop-funk, Fado, jazz and rock music; thousands of partiers talking loudly, shouting, singing; dozens of taxis, garbage trucks and private cars blowing their horns on finding themselves blocked by the crowds taking over the middle of the street. Although new local rules regarding venue decibel limits and strict closing times were recently approved, in 2017, they have not had the expected impact in terms of reducing the noise level in public spaces. Many venues continue to leave their doors open to the street and the sound system levels of control installed in almost all venues in Bairro Alto get partially "modified" during opening hours in order not to lose clientele as live music and DJ sessions act as magnets for partygoers. New fieldwork, ongoing since late 2017, means that we may confirm that while police officers know about such a beyond-the-law practice carried out by many bars and clubs, they take no action against them. Instead, they focus on the young Afro-Portuguese people from Lisbon's suburbs who improvise small street parties with small sound columns connected to their smartphones. These black youngsters lack the purchasing power to consume inside the venues and, in numerous cases, many are also not permitted entry into venues (Nofre et al. 2016). Currently, CCTV cameras, dozens of uniformed police officers, dozens more plain-clothes officers, and venue bouncers reinforce the social and moral control over customers, especially over the "unwanted" (Ib.). Punks, squatters, Roma, and young local blacks from working-class suburbs are not invited to stay on, drinking, chatting or smoking on venue premises. In sum, noisy and nasty nightlife, drug dealing, cheap alcohol, alcohol-fuelled adolescents, youngsters and young-adults and masses of garbage accumulating in front of nineteenth-century buildings all shape this hypersecuritized nightscape.

Introducing Pub Crawls in Bairro Alto

In the urban nightlife of Bairro Alto, tourists, college students and locals drink in order to socialize, sharing time, space and experiences with their peers. Others drink just to escape from their harsh individual circumstances. Still others hope for an unforgettable night. Similar to other tourist resorts in Europe, such as Bulgaria or Spain (Tutenges, 2009, 2012, 2015), the nightlife in this neighbourhood of the Portuguese capital emerges as an "intensity machine that fabricates emotional energy for the masses" (Tutenges 2012, 132). The urban night in Bairro Alto appears therefore as an 'affectively charged' nightlife environment (Duff, 2008) in which the lived experiences of partiers are commodified and part of the production and (re-)production of alternative modes of existence contrary to the oppressive routinization of work, evoking joy and stimulating the out-of-the ordinary (Lefebvre 1974). In Bairro Alto, this is the essential role of pub crawls, as The Lisbon Pubcrawl[4] website correspondingly announces:

> A fun & eccentric mix between a tour and a bar hop! Our guides will show you the best local bars, which include a welcome drink in each of them or even a full hour of open bar of beer and sangria. Our pubcrawlers also get you exclusive drink deals in all the pubs and a VIP entrance to a top club in Lisbon (clubs vary from night to night). We work hard so that all our pubcrawlers have a once in a lifetime experience and that it enhances their visit to beautiful Lisboa! (The Lisbon Pub Crawl, accessed on September 15, 207, http://lisbonpubcrawl.com/about-us-2/).

Informal pub crawls in Lisbon started in the late 2000s, when some hostel receptionists began accompanying their clients to Bairro Alto's bars and clubs. In fact, this represented a swift

means of acquiring extra-money to compensate for the (still today) precariousness of Lisbon's tourism industry. In turn, the European Commission-supported Erasmus Student Network in Lisbon (ESN) also started to organize their own bar crawl scavenger hunts in the middle of the Bairro Alto's upper side in which international college students (and also some locals) proceed through the neighbourhood's upper side and get free drinks as gymkhana-related activities take place. In 2011, two former ESN members founded Erasmus Life Lisbon (ELL), a private firm offering accommodation and leisure services to international college students temporarily living in Lisbon. Shortly after its launch, ELL started to organize pub crawls in Bairro Alto, gathering around thirty to fifty people at the junction of Travessa da Cara, Diário de Notícias and Rua do Teixeira, today's so-called Erasmus Corner, thereby opening up an unappealing and insecure drug dealing area to the circulation of an increasing number of foreign and middle-class students (Malet et al. 2016). In some ways, one could argue today's so-called Erasmus Corner in Bairro Alto (not the original, which was located some meters away from the current location) stands out as a multifaceted, complex, and simultaneous interplay between touristification, gentrification, studentification, and the expansion and commodification of nightlife in Bairro Alto. Here, touristification plays a central role in *pubcrawlizing* nightlife in the quarter. As The Lisbon Pub Crawl managers state on the company's website:

> Lisbon is vastly trending all over Europe about its diverse nightlife; that makes every soul satisfied. Between quiet spiritual Fado night and party life, everyone finds happiness. Because we Portuguese live for the night do not forget our normal timing: Party until the sunlight. (The Lisbon Pub Crawl, accessed on September 15, 207, See: http://lisbonpubcrawl.com/night-tours/)

Inside Pub Crawls: Simulated Evasion, Patriarchalism and Social Control

Nightlife environments may be understood as force fields of emotional energy in which individuals receive assistance in the difficult task of transgressing the confines of their ordinary selves and becoming wilder and more adventurous (Tutenges 2012). Partying therefore appears as an alternative mode of existence, beyond that of the oppressive routine of work, evoking joy and stimulating the out-of-the ordinary (Lefebvre 1974). In micro-temporarily transgressing their ordinary late-capitalist everyday lives, pubcrawlers are able to produce and reproduce micro-spatiotemporal evasions of their (sometimes precarious, uncertain) everyday lives in the middle of a hypersecurized neoliberal nightscape. In fact, the carnivalesque expressions of (simulated) joy and happiness might be perceived as somehow new and a different way of social distinction as regards the 'ordinary goings out' of locals, who usually have less purchasing power than 'party tourists'. For foreign party goers, joining pub crawls becomes an easier, "(…) 'secure' way of partying, have excitement, drink free alcohol, take some drugs like MDMA and cocaine and… get a girl easily" (Former pubcrawl organizer, 2009-2012, 38 y.o., Portuguese, male).

Before depicting the pub crawls with examples provided by our ethnographic experiences, we however first need to characterize the actors of pub crawls in Bairro Alto. On the one hand, there are the pub crawl organizers (hereafter, PO), who stipulate and maintain the social order within the crawl and try to control all the internal and external aspects of the timeframe set by the organization. This includes the established route of bars and the specific goal of POs; that is to say, to deliver the majority part of the pub crawl participants to the selected club at the end of the night (in so doing, POs can then claim their part in the agreement made between the club and the pub crawl organization). POs are usually a mixed

bunch of young locals, males and females (with five to ten present depending on the group size), wearing t-shirts in order to be identified as organizers. They direct the group from bar to bar while giving instructions about the rules of the night, organizing interactive games for participants and guarding the limits of the group. In so doing, they position themselves around the group, helping to shepherd it into another bar in order to prevent group members getting lost. When groups are larger (from forty upwards), POs usually divide up to take care of different sub-groups of people and ensure they all finally end up in the club. Among the POs, there is usually a leader figure, often a male characterized by being a super-talkative, friendly, talk-to-everyone, charismatic local guy, who continually adopts a behaviour characterised by exaggerated excitement and motivation. This individual is in charge of socializing with everyone and bringing together people who are mutual strangers (the pub crawl assistants) around lively, funny (even sometimes risqué) conversations. He acts as the social glue of this newly-formed, ephemeral social group or at least the most successful POs successfully fulfil this central task for the organization.

On the other hand, there are the pub crawl participants (hereafter, PPs), made up of a mix of tourists arriving in groups from hostels, foreigners spending more than a couple of weeks in Lisbon (such as international students), local young-adults –especially males– and partiers passing by who join the group (sometimes in the expectation of free alcohol or socialization). Most PPs join the pub crawls having already been made aware of them either through information provided in the hostel where they are staying or through advertisements encountered on social networks when searching for leisure options online; others join groups at later phases, as we shall return to. Most PPs join in pre-formed groups of two to ten people: friends travelling together, same-hostel guests, student groups of friends and, although rarely, couples. The pub crawls often start in *Praça do Camões*, a square sited in the lowest part of

the neighbourhood and a well-known nightlife meeting point for locals and foreigners alike. At the square's centre, the POs gather the group of participants by displaying and waving the signs and colours associated with The Lisbon Pub Crawl to ensure easy identification by the PPs (with some having already paid online). However, the majority of PPs only pay on arrival in the square at 10:30 pm. In turn, POs actively recruit any young, foreign people (especially females) passing by and expressing any curiosity at the group, offering the "great deal" of free consumption along a route of bars (often omitting the actual number of bars; usually five) and entrance into a select club before 2am for €15 all inclusive. One of the most important recruiting techniques involves offering a free drink while in the square with the still forming group, even to those who have not yet paid and maybe will not in the end join the group, but nevertheless creating the appearance of a group of friends drinking together in the street. This beverage is served in plastic glasses from a large plastic bottle containing a low-quality mix of sangria and vodka prepared by the organization before reaching the square. Both the PPs recruited at the beginning and those that join the group during the night are identified with a wristband provided by a PO immediately after receipt of payment. After a significant number of PPs have already joined the group (at least fifteen to twenty) the PO leader climbs onto a step/bench and makes an excited speech about the "crazy Lisbon nightlife", encouraging everybody to drink up and enjoy the night ahead. The pub crawl has started.

Typically, the pubcrawl consists of walking to a bar, spending between half an hour and forty-five minutes, allowing time for successive (not free) drinks to be purchased and consumed before walking to the next bar, with the route enlivened by some PO organized games and interactions. However, it is not always easy for POs to make people get to know each other, which is necessary to keeping the group together until the end of the night. In

order to achieve the goal of persuading the maximum number of PPs to end the night in the respective organization selected club, the POs must engage the PPs in as many interactive games as possible to get them inebriated and attached to each other, thus increasing their expectations of having made friends, sexual partners or just as a group of people sharing an alcohol-fuelled night together. One of the most common games for heightening the PP excitement are drinking games. These sometimes include the classic challenge of finishing the drink first (which simultaneously serves as a convenient means of boosting the consumption rate) or "beer pong" and other variants that force the losers of a game to drink more. However, more aggressive "games" are also common, such as those that appear to force people to drink within the context of a social situation. In many cases, the PO leader picks out someone from in the middle of the most excited crowd, opens her or his mouth and pours in beer or some poor quality cocktail using a funnel, which is rarely denied due to social pressures and the danger of being labelled "boring" (one of the most repeated negative labels on pub crawls as opposed to the more positive "crazy"). When the victim is female, the pub crawl leader not only provides her with a role of centrality within the group (everyone gathers around, screaming and encouraging her to keep swallowing the alcohol) but also marks her out as an attractive object to the other PPs, a female who will also be drunk for the next few hours. Therefore, females frequenting pub crawls, somehow obliged to drink, are dispossessed of the power they hold of being able to decide, in an aggressive context that often ends in sexual harassment. Getting girls/women drunk is an institution of rape culture (Oliver, 2016). This is a pivotal issue in examining pub crawls in Bairro Alto: the production and reproduction of a patriarchal, heteronormative night.

When the crowd is sufficiently excited, it becomes time for a more explicit erotic construction of nightlife and the sexualization of the relationships between the PPs. However,

homoerotic displays of simulated affection within the context of these games -according to the heteronormative patriarchal standards followed by POs- must therefore be kept to a woman-woman pairing. To highlight one example of this, in what was one of our first pub crawl explorations back in 2015, we witnessed the following episode. The PO leader had divided the PPs into two different teams at the beginning of the night in order to stimulate socialization, drinking and competition. The games involved singing national anthems, dancing in funny ways before entering venues or doing so while the males carry the females on their backs. When the group was sufficiently drunk, the pub crawl leader convinced a girl from each team to engage in a passionate mouth kiss in front of the others, the loser being the one to separate first. During the kiss, an aroused atmosphere emerges, especially among the males, who started to make hard and direct sexual comments. After a while, when the group was walking onto the next bar, the female winner of the kissing contest approached the pub crawl leader suggesting that the next game should be two guys kissing, to which he responded: "that would not work". Following this line of thought, to the POs, females serve to attract more PPs and arouse the males in the group (always with the goal of keeping everyone together until arriving in the club), as demonstrated by the annoying insistence of POs in attempting to recruit any female passers-by throughout the night in order to boost the group's female percentage.

Certain of the patriarchal practices carried out by pubcrawlers might easily be deemed aggressive, offensive and (self-)denigrating, though transformed and morally sanitized by their own promotional claims: "A fun & eccentric mix between a tour and a bar hop!" Indeed, all those behaviours are unfortunately often imbricated within the normative leisure practices of night-time partying in western cities. Therefore, pub crawls such as these are not only producing and reproducing the aggressive patterns of sexual normativity, but also reinforce

the class structure in effect through offering a pleasurescape that balances the ordinary and lived tensions of late capitalism.

Final Remarks: Pub Crawls as Heterotopic Pleasurescapes of Cosmopolitan Distinction?

Darkness provides various opportunities for simulated transgressions of the ordinary life otherwise always delimited by the social, cultural, economic and political order in our post-recession cities. This chapter has examined the recent expansion of nightly pub crawls in Bairro Alto in Lisbon (Portugal) as an exciting, vibrant, and unique mode of experiencing the 'nocturnal tourist city'. By focusing on the biggest pub crawl in the neighbourhood, The Lisbon Pubcrawl, this chapter sheds light on how 'party tourists' and international college students do not only transgress their ordinary late-capitalist everyday lives but also create a hyperexcited nocturnal environment featuring carnivalesque expressions of (simulated) joy and happiness that may also be seen as a heterotopic pleasurescape of cosmopolitan distinction.

Pub crawls can thus be read as an example of heterotopia (Foucault 1967), which emerges as a fruitful approach for examining both their cohesive roles and their roles as space-times for the simulated, carnivalesque evasion of ordinary life (e.g., Foucault 1967, Bakhtin 1968, Lefebvre 1974), as detailed in the second half of the chapter. Bakthin's (1968) intriguing conception of the closely associated carnival form of pub crawls allows us to understand them as:

(…) a temporary release from the strictures and regulations of ordinary time and to act as a site of potential resistance where people are momentarily permitted to invert social

norms through collective playfulness, frivolity, exuberance and escape from routine. (Wilks and Quinn 2016, 26).

In this sense, the PPs are transgressing ordinary life and daylight norms through drinking games and behaviours driving collective excitement in an ambiance nurtured by the POs, who construct an imaginary of immediate happiness, sincere friendship and local authenticity. Thus, this transgression of the norm is merely apparent and functions both as a mechanism of prestige for PPs and as a means of achieving temporal well-being, interrelated with the pleasurescape that most of them are enjoying: doing tourism in Lisbon. The real core of this institution of transgression based on alcohol, sex and partying stems from providing a sense of evasion from the everyday life of late capitalism. Thus, it would be reasonably plausible to suggest some parallel connections with music festivals as carnival inversions of ordinary life (e.g., Ravenscroft and Matteucci 2003), where the norms and social structures of everyday life are transcended and challenged (Jaimangal-Jones et al. 2010). Pubcrawlers therefore coexist in two simultaneous realities as they are physically present in the urban nightscape of Bairro Alto while also being transferred to a different spatiotemporal context distinguished by the intense production, reproduction, consumption and celebration of "a new reality of joy and abundance" (Beyers 2016, 357). In sum, pub crawls emerge as a spatiotemporal arena of simulated, carnivalesque evasion of ordinary life where (self-)identity and lifestyle merge and encounter a collective articulation through the creation of heterotopic identities closely interrelated to social and cultural capital, distinction and cosmopolitanism and not just around a form of global citizenship (e.g., Held 1995, Harvey 2000, Hannerz 2004, Skrbiš and Woodward 2011), but also around "cosmopolitan tastes, styles and patterns of consumption" (Molz 2011, 37).

Endnotes

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3. See França (2013) for an in-depth urban history of the Bairro Alto neighborhood.

4. The Lisbon Pubcrawl is a service offered by the Lisbon-based urban leisure company Discover Lisbon, launched in 2015.

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