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The Multiple Facets of Nighttime Tourism

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Cities at night are glowing again after a three-year pandemic period characterized by the application of massive lockdowns, night curfews, social distancing, mandatory home confinements, and a strong punitive criminalization of the institutional-media-civic front against “the night” and the youth (Nofre et al., 2023a, 2023b). A simple glance at the development of the nocturnal city and its growing relationship with the tourism industry offers a picture of the pandemic period as a simple parenthesis in an apparently linear evolution. However, an attentive reading of recent academic literature as well as of media reports allows us to unveil a growing colonization of the nocturnal city by the tourism industry (Rouleau, 2017; Smith & Eldridge, 2021; Nofre et al., 2023c).

According to the OECD (2022), the tourism trends globally indicated a recovery of 60% of pre-pandemic levels by 2022, a situation that will probably improve by 2024, expecting similar rates to before the pandemic times in the global tourism (UNWTO, 2024). In this sense, recovery and transformation of the tourism sector imply the need for a review and a straightening between the different stakeholders involved, especially between the different bodies of government and business owners, and a substantive change in night policing and night leisure operation and offer. Nighttime tourism has reinforced its role as a central element for the urban branding and tourism marketing strategies of many cities worldwide (regardless of their size). These new strategies include new tourism products and experiences addressed to very niche markets, new heritage narratives, and reviewing the traditional concept of culture going far beyond the cultural and creative tourism (Calderón-Fajardo, 2023; Garcia-Ruiz, 2023; Irimiás, 2023; Nowacki & Stasiak, 2023).

City branding, heritage and night venues

Recently, Berlin techno scene received UNESCO Cultural Heritage status in March 2024, which is a figure of protection that – paradoxically – clashes with the deliberate use of this intangible heritage (techno scene) as a central driver of positioning the city on the global map of city-break urban tourism destinations by the same actors that have recently promoted its recent institutional protection (e.g., Schofield & Rellensmann, 2015; Garcia, 2016; Novy, 2018; Sark, 2023). Meanwhile, in the Asian region, Bangkok (Thailand) continues to be a benchmark in offering nightlife packages to the millions of tourists who visit the city every year, while Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam has recently opted to strengthen its nighttime tourism as a central strategy for attracting new tourist flows from both inbound and outbound tourism markets. In fact, Vietnam's National Development Plan 2030 foresees the promotion of nighttime tourism in 12 of the country's 58 provinces. According to the Vietnamese Minister of Culture and Sports, the main objective of this governmental strategy is to make nighttime tourism a trademark of the country (People's Committee of Ba Ria, 2023). At the same time, the nighttime economy spanning the dining, tourism and leisure sectors has emerged as a new driving force for economic growth nationwide in China, as some national media (e.g., Bowen, 2023; Yingxue, 2024) and scholars have recently noted (Ruan et al., 2023; Zhang & Zhang, 2023; Xiong et al., 2024). For example, in Beijing, for the 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, the local government decided to promote nightlife throughout the city as a platform to promote Chinese fashion, cuisine and lifestyle, extending the operating hours of stores, museums, libraries, bookstores “in order to tap into late-night consumption potential and boost the economy” (Sayers, 2022). In turn, community stakeholders, including officials, gaming operators, local businesses, and citizens in general from the Chinese special administrative region of Macau have been meant to collaborate in finding solutions to broaden the range of nighttime attractions in Macau beyond casinos and nightclubs (Lai, 2024). On the other side of the Pacific Ocean, in South America, Colombia's Bars Association has launched the “Tu Destino, Tu Noche” (Your Destination, Your Night) initiative, which seeks to promote nightlife consumption by tourists visiting Bogota and fifteen other Colombian cities (Ospina Henao, 2024). In Cuba, some authors have highlighted the need to strengthen and regenerate the nightlife system of its main tourist resorts, as in the case of Varadero (González Zayas & del Toro Soto, 2023). Last but not least, in April 2023, the British newspaper *Chronicle Live* reported that Britons were starting to substitute Magaluf (on the Mediterranean island of Mallorca) for Tanzania and Kenya to party for a few days and drink cheap beer (Lawton & Morris, 2023).

Despite this boom the promotion of night tourism across the globe, “night-time tourism” concept has been around for some time. On the one hand, the expansion of nighttime tourism in many regions of the world is strongly related to the increasing democratization of mass tourism and leisure in contemporary cities and societies (Butcher, 2020), especially in Global North countries and some post-/neo-colonized countries from the Global South. In fact, a retrospective analysis of the evolution of nightlife (both formal and informal) over the last half-century in these regions unequivocally establishes that nightlife has been and is still central to the social and cultural life of many people regardless of their place of living, gender, social class, age, origin, sexual orientation, or cultural and religious background (e.g., Haslam, 2015; Sánchez-García, 2018; Charman & Govender, 2020; Khubchandani, 2020; Nofre & Garcia-Ruiz, 2023). Secondly, nighttime leisure economy has often been crucial for place branding strategies at both local and regional scale, ranging from large cities and their metropolitan areas, coastal tourism destinations, islands destinations, and even some snow tourism towns (Segreto et al., 2009; Cardona, 2019; Río-Rama et al., 2019; Bausch & Gartner, 2020; Nofre,

2021; Smith & Eldridge, 2021; Garcia-Ruiz, 2024). The sum of both factors has led to a growing demand for experiencing “authentic” – as synonymous with “aesthetically local” but highly hypersecuritized and socially sanitized – nightlife scenes in non-domestic territories, adding a new cultural and social value to the consumption of those tourism destinations that have a consolidated nightlife scene and that have progressively adapted to the leisure consumption patterns of their main tourism outbound markets.

Interestingly, a significant number of authors have since the mid-2000s paid some attention to the expansion of both so-called *alcotourism* and *party-tourism* in many cities and regions across the globe, becoming a driver of spatial, economic, and cultural change especially in central urban areas (e.g., Selännemi, 2003; Diken & Laustsen, 2004; Thurnell-Read, 2012; Sönmez et al., 2013; Iwanicki & Dłużewska, 2018; Carlisle & Ritchie, 2021; Mach et al., 2022). As Bell (2008) brilliantly notes, several cities in the early 2000s began to provide “ambivalently sanctioned liminal zone[s]”, emerging as attractive city-break destinations where tourists could “recharge and therefore re-enter society relaxed and refreshed” (p.293). It would not be risky to thus affirm that those central urban areas characterized by “an affectively-charged nightlife environment” (Duff, 2008) can be seen as “pleasurescapes[s] of transgressive sensuousness and carnal sociality” (John, 2001, p.48), where lived (and commodified) experiences of tourist parties emerge as an alternative and joyful mode of existence through producing and simultaneously reproducing a simulated, carnivalesque, evasion of the routines of everyday life (Nofre & Malet Calvo, 2019). Nevertheless, as Nofre (2021) argues, the touristification of nightlife has led to the appearance of numerous significant negative impacts at the spatial, social, economic, cultural, governance, environmental and public health levels, and arises – especially in European cities – as one of the most aggressive forms of material, symbolic and tangible and intangible heritage dispossession of local communities.

The question of the impact of the expansion of nighttime tourism on the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of local communities is of an emerging centrality that, however, has not yet attracted the attention of local administrations in most cities worldwide. For Nofre (2021), the disappearance of lifelong community-oriented venues entails the disappearance of nightlife spaces that have over the years been central for community building, for the construction of dense affective-emotional networks among neighbors and for the (re)production of singular collective histories and memories. Furthermore, some lifelong community-oriented bars, restaurants, clubs, and discotheques that disappear because of the extractive tourism industry (Hiernaux Nicolas, 2020; Parsons, 2024) have historical-architectural elements of interest and, therefore, be potentially subject to cataloging. All this means that the disappearance of these community-oriented venues does not only mean a loss of spaces of socialization for the local community and the expulsion of its protagonists but also a loss of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of our touristified cities. Otherwise, and paraphrasing Alari Pahissa (2014) in relation to the touristification of southern European cities, the dramatic touristification of our local nights – in form of for example (i) the transformation of community-oriented nightlife venues into tourist-oriented venues, or (ii) the proliferation of financial-hotel speculation and the reconversion of buildings where community-oriented bars and discotheques are located into tourist apartment buildings or hotels – is responsible for a “*tourist extractivism (...) that breaks up urban life fabrics*”. In some way, it would be not risky to affirm that nighttime tourism presents a certain interrelation with the process of touristification of the day-time tourist city, in which the neoliberal forces of urban transformation – in the terminology of Navarrete Escobedo (2019) and Canaza-Choque and Huanca-Arohuanca (2022) – operates from a position of apparent impunity.

Undoubtedly, the colonization of 'the night' by the urban tourism industry constitutes a taboo in the sphere of local political debate in those cities whose local economies are heavily dependent on the tourism industry. The application of potential restrictions on the expansion of the tourism industry or even the imposition of degrowth strategies generates fear in local governments as well as in the main economic actors of the city. One could argue that the cataloguing of nightlife venues as local heritage represents an enormous challenge for keeping on generating substantial profits through the transformation of lifelong community-oriented nightlife venues into tourist-oriented venues. However, financial-hotel speculation and the consequent reconversion of buildings – whose ground floors are occupied by lifelong community-oriented venues that are usually rented – into tourist apartment buildings or hotels results in the destruction of local live music circuits and deprives the local community of meeting spaces that, at the same time, are source for community building, cohesion and socioemotional well-being (Kramer & Wittmann, 2023; Nofre, 2023; Ghaziani, 2024).

(Old)New strategies, tourist products, and experiences

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally altered the global tourism landscape, compelling a strategic pivot toward innovative, safe, and sustainable nighttime tourism practices. Night offers a canvas for unique tourism experiences that cater to emerging traveler preferences for open, less crowded spaces and an increased appetite for immersive experiences. This book explores the interconnection between various nocturnal tourism trends, but many others remain to be explored.

Beyond *traditional* nightlife, dominated by bars, discos, and organized parties, which undoubtedly attract a large part of visitors seeking *evasion tourism*, we can see an emerging change in the nightlife tourism industry, motivated by growing environmental awareness, as well as a shift towards more sustainable tourism. It is in this sense that astrotourism is emerging as an increasingly important new leisure offer (Soleimani et al., 2018), where sanctuaries such as the Atacama Desert in Chile (Pásková et al., 2021), Khajuraho in India (Khetrapal & Bhatia, 2022) or the Dark Sky Party Alqueva in Portugal (Rodrigues et al., 2021) are beginning to gain new followers and generate new dynamics of visitation, which paradoxically put at risk the protected premises in pursuit of stargazing (Escario-Sierra et al., 2022; Fayos-Solá et al., 2014). In this sense, studying the places and practices developed in natural or rural spaces that favor dark skies (Dunn & Edensor, 2020, 2023) is a topic of growing interest in the night tourism agenda.

Although in these places light pollution is reduced or considered non-existent, the fact is that in large urban centers, the realization of Light Festivals (Garcia-Ruiz, 2023; Giordano & Ong, 2017) and similar events such as White Nights (Evans, 2014; O'Flynn, 2012; Taheri & Hosseini, 2023) has continued. These events should not be confused with Christmas illuminations (Edensor & Millington, 2009; Garcia-Ruiz, 2019a, 2019b), nor with magical or fairy tourism; even if they use video projections or similar technologies (Lovell, 2018, 2019; Lovell & Griffin, 2018). They should also not be confused with heritage lighting (Giordano, 2017; Giordano & Crozat, 2017) nor with traditional recreational spaces in which during the night there is an intense and varied configuration of luminous elements (Edensor & Millington, 2013, 2018). Nevertheless, in both cases, this lighting can create iconic visual atmospheres, such as those of Siem Reap in Cambodia (Trew, 2020), Hong Kong, in China (Kwok, 2020) or Las Vegas, in the USA (Rothman, 2015; Weaver, 2011) that might attract tourists due to the highly *instagramable* scenes and photographic power. The truth is that since the end of the COVID-19 related restrictions, few new light festivals have appeared in the international

nightscape, but it is highly relevant to underline that these programs have been renewed in the cities that already held them, serving for the internationalization of municipalities and their city branding, their community development (Camprubí & Coromina, 2019), cultural democratization (and cultural democracy), or for the activation of night economies in low and shoulder season (Garcia-Ruiz, 2023).

Continuing with pre-pandemic trends, the development of atmospheres and memorable tourism experiences (Li et al., 2021; Paiva, 2023), has continued to be one of the dominant aspects of the tourism industry (Ruan et al., 2023) which responds to the growing need to manufacture products that satisfy a specialized nightlife consumer, who seeks a unique experience while discovering a new place. This exclusivity in the offer, the possibility of living an experience associated with a place, also influences the cases of *edutourism*, in which Erasmus students, to cite a mobility program, decide to choose a destination based on the nightlife ecosystem available (as well as its costs) and the socialization possibilities associated with a particular city or region (Calvo et al., 2024; Sánchez-Fuarros et al., 2023).

Although we do not intend to be exhaustive in this introduction about the possible challenges of night tourism, we cannot fail to mention the need to re-imagine transportation in the post-pandemic. Sustainability and the impact on transportation seems to be one of the most significant issues today, be it from the abandonment of air transport and the adoption of the train as preferred means of transportation (Curtale et al., 2023; Kantelaar et al., 2022), or the use of bicycles, cabs, and other circular or driving platforms for urban enjoyment or dislocation (Morhayim, 2018; Plyushteva, 2021). As the world navigates the post-pandemic era, the night opens up a realm of opportunities for tourism that is safe, sustainable, and enlightening. By interweaving light festivals, astrotourism, edutourism, and many other niche forms of tourism, destinations can offer diverse, rich experiences that cater to the evolving preferences of travelers, ensuring the resilience and continued growth of the tourism industry.

Understanding Night-time Tourism

This book, *Understanding Night-time Tourism*, contains a set of academic papers on nighttime tourism that aim to offer an interdisciplinary view on a research topic that, as mentioned in this introductory part of the book, has not received sufficient attention. Undoubtedly, there are a multitude of aspects that are not addressed in this book. But it is precisely the findings contained in the chapters of this book that are intended to pave the way for future research on the multiple and complex facets of nighttime tourism.

In "Mediating Night-Time Culture in the Historic City: Re-purposing Growth Economics in Heritage Tourism," authors Anna Louise Hill, Jenny Hall, and Brendan Paddison investigate the intricate dynamics of managing the Night-Time Economy (NTE) in York. Their work sheds light on the challenge of aligning the city's historical essence with the economic and cultural demands of its stakeholders. The research identifies two main themes: the natural evolution driven by market forces and the need for strategic, visionary leadership in the NTE sector. Hill, Hall, and Paddison argue for a governance approach that balances economic stability with cultural integrity, advocating for a collaborative management model that includes the Business Improvement District (BID), local businesses, public entities, and the City of York Council (CYC). The study highlights the drawbacks of individual leadership due to potential biases and differing cultural interpretations. It also points to the impact of neoliberal trends, demographic shifts, and the critical role of strategy in integrating NTE with broader cultural goals. Emphasizing the importance of multi-agency cooperation, community involvement, and media

influence in shaping public perceptions of NTE initiatives, the authors suggest that further research should focus on the specific needs of local communities and the possibility of diversifying nightlife to mitigate stakeholder conflicts and encourage economic development without compromising cultural diversity.

The significance of urban nightlife in attracting Erasmus students to Krakow is explored in depth by Łukasz Matoga, Robert Pawlusiński, and Magdalena Kubal-Czerwińska through their study, "Urban Night-life and Edutourism: What Attracts Erasmus Students to Krakow?" The study discusses the dual role of nightlife as both a key attractor for students choosing their exchange destination and a potential element of a city's brand. Highlighting Krakow's appeal, the authors note the city's historic allure, favorable location, accessibility, low living costs, and vibrant student life as significant factors. However, they raise concerns that the emphasis on nightlife and other non-academic attributes may overshadow the academic value and reputation of local universities. The study suggests that improving the academic product environment could enhance Krakow's educational appeal without limiting access to its nightlife, which plays a crucial role in the students' social experience and their perception of the city. The research underscores the need for a balanced approach in urban policy and marketing strategies, considering the broader implications of educational tourism and the potential for students to become ambassadors for the city.

"Lights On Romania: Dynamics of Proximity Tourism in Cultural and Urban Activation" by Manuel Garcia-Ruiz offers a comprehensive examination of how proximity tourism interplays with cultural and urban spheres, particularly highlighting the Balkans, a region often underrepresented in scholarly discussions. Through the lens of the Lights On Romania festival, Garcia-Ruiz illustrates the transformative power of grassroots initiatives in democratizing culture and redefining urban experiences with light-based art. The festival's strategic expansion across diverse neighborhoods and its inclusion of installations in culturally significant sites underscore its role in fostering community engagement, social cohesion, and a renewed perception of urban night space. Furthermore, the adaptation to COVID-19 constraints underscores the festival's resilience and the essential role of proximity tourism in sustaining cultural vitality and economic activity under challenging circumstances. Garcia-Ruiz's analysis posits Lights On Romania as a pivotal case study in understanding the sustainable impacts of cultural events on local communities, highlighting the festival's contribution to economic stimulation, community identity, and the reactivation of urban night-life, while emphasizing the broader implications for proximity tourism and cultural entrepreneurship beyond major urban centers.

The study by Marcos Paulo Ferreira de Góis, titled "The Nightlife-Tourism Nexus in the Urban Regeneration of Porto Maravilha, Rio de Janeiro," unpacks the dynamics at play in the touristification of nightlife as part of urban renewal efforts. It points out the commodification of local culture, where native cultural expressions are turned into tourist commodities, sidelining local stakeholders and replacing traditional institutions with global brands. Gentrification emerges as a secondary theme, with government investments attracting new demographics, potentially privatizing public spaces and altering the fabric of community life. Furthermore, the research discusses the physical transformation of the harbor area, anticipated to reshape the skyline and intensify the demand for tourist accommodations, thus altering the nocturnal landscape of Rio de Janeiro. This comprehensive analysis underlines the profound impacts of urban renewal policies on the accessibility and character of nightlife in Porto Maravilha, projecting significant changes in the urban and social landscape.

Through the life story of John, a street drug dealer in Lisbon's Bairro Alto, Jordi Nofre's study, "Stigmatization, Marginalization and Leadership: The Invisibilities of the Tourist Night of Bairro Alto Explained Through a Street Dealer's Life Story," uncovers the nuanced realities of

socio-economic survival in urban nightlife. Nofre illustrates how street drug dealing serves as an alternative means of socio-professional inclusion for marginalized and racialized individuals like John and his crew, challenging the traditional academic perspective on illegal activities and social marginalization. The article posits street drug dealing not as an act of criminal lifestyle or subcultural opposition but as a non-violent, self-emancipatory strategy amidst the backdrop of increased poverty and social exclusion in post-Great Recession. Highlighting the blurred lines between legal and illegal activities in the tourist city's nightlife, Nofre suggests that such informal economies may be integral to capitalist systems and call for a reevaluation of urban informality as a form of resilience and survival strategy within the stigmatizing environment of the Tourist City. This complex interplay invites further research into the legal and illegal dynamics of nightlife economies and the role of marginalized individuals in shaping urban spaces.

José Ramón Cardona's study, "Evolution and Current Situation of Nightlife on the Ibiza Island (Spain)," underscores the pivotal role of nightlife in shaping Ibiza's global image and tourism resilience. Unlike other Mediterranean destinations, Ibiza's nightlife, dating back to the 1980s, has become synonymous with freedom and festivity, distinguishing it significantly from places with comparable natural attractions. This sector's robustness, mirrored in the consistent tourist demand despite rising prices, parallels the economic and image contributions of casinos to Las Vegas, albeit with nightlife as Ibiza's cornerstone. The island's nightlife prestige hinges on iconic electronic music venues and a select group of internationally recognized nightclubs, whose management demands continuous innovation and professionalism to maintain Ibiza's stature. While acknowledging the challenges of managing the nightlife sector without contributing to social issues, Cardona highlights the necessity for further research and careful consideration by other destinations contemplating nightlife as a key differentiator. This analysis presents Ibiza's nightlife as both a strategic asset and a complex field requiring nuanced understanding and management to sustain its contribution to the island's economy and international allure.

The impacts of nighttime tourism on the local communities and urban fabric of historic centers are critically examined in "Nocturnal Shifts: Assessing the Impacts of Nighttime Tourism in Mazatlán's Historic Downtown" by Miriam Nava-Zazueta and Alejandro Mercado-Célis. The study takes a close look at how the promotion of nighttime activities in Mazatlán's Historic Downtown, particularly following the renovation of the Angela Peralta Theater, has significantly altered the living conditions for the residents. Highlighted through the experiences of locals like Ignacio, the research reveals a transformation that caters predominantly to tourists' desires, leading to displacement, increased noise, and a sense of insecurity among the community. This examination sheds light on the broader consequences of urban renewal efforts driven by the aim to attract tourists, often at the expense of the local population's well-being and the authentic character of historic urban areas. The study calls for a balanced approach to urban planning and tourism development, one that equally values the preservation of local culture and the participation of the community in decision-making processes.

Finally, as editors of this book, we would like to thank the exceptional work done by the authors, the linguistic reviewers who have worked on the revision of each of the chapters, and Stephanie Hartley (Edward Elgar's supervising editor) for her trust and help in the construction of this book, which is destined to become a reference in the study of nighttime tourism worldwide.

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