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EDITOR'S NOTE

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Nocturnal cities : a fascinating object of study

1 At the time of writing this introductory text to this special issue, *Nocturnal Cities : Past, present, and Future*, the night in many cities from the Global South, East, and North is glowing again after a three-year pandemic period characterised 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., 2023). After this brief but intense and dark period of pandemic politics (Dionne & Turkmen, 2020 ; Lynch et al., 2022 ; Ryan & Nanda, 2023 ; Sommer & Rappel-Kroyzer, 2022), the urban night is once again as vibrant as it was in the years prior to the pandemic. Every weekend tens of thousands of people go out to dine, meet friends or dance ; thousands more work at night in back-office and logistics centres, supply centres, essential services and health institutions (Dušková & Duijzing, 2022 ; Lin et al., 2022 ; Shaw, 2022) ; many use nighttime public transport, ride-sharing companies, or take their own vehicle to get across the city (Halás & Klapka, 2023 ; Plyushteva, 2021). Meanwhile, a number of informal workers (domestic workers, street food vendors, street dealers and sex workers) carry out their activities at night, some of them taking advantage of the liminal anonymity of darkness (Koren, 2022 ; Seal, 2022).

2 The urban night worldwide presents a truly surprising and exciting range of tangible and intangible dimensions. On the one hand, the economic dimension of the 'night city' is of undeniable relevance, especially in the largest cities from the Global North, East and South. Among the most noteworthy aspects, one could mention job creation (often precarious), the volume of turnover generated by the nighttime economy, and the consequent revenues for the public treasury at both local and national levels (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003 ; Roberts & Eldridge, 2012 ; Zmyslony & Pawlusiński, 2020). Simultaneously, the nocturnal city also presents a dense network of informal economies which have a reciprocal relationship of existence and dependence on formal economies as well as on the formal regulatory environment of the nocturnal city (Charman & Govender, 2020 ; Shaw, 2015 ; Yeo & Heng, 2014).

3 Referring to all the nighttime activities mentioned above also leads us to speak of the urban night as a space-time of mobilities and mobile subjects – commuters at night ; night goers ; carriers ; transportation users ; bus, taxi, and ride-sharing drivers ; tourists, and visitors (Smith & Hall, 2013 ; Straw, 2018 ; Yun, 2022). In parallel, such agglomeration of nighttime activities demands a broad governance apparatus to manage the range of challenges and conflicts emerging from antagonistic needs and practices such as the collision between the subjective right to party versus the right to

rest, which, in some countries, is a fundamental right at constitutional level (Iannace et al., 2021 ; Kruczek et al., 2022 ; Toubes & Vargas-Sánchez, 2021). At the same time, the urban night is much more than what is purely tangible. Because the urban night is composed of "an affective atmosphere, emerging from the arranging of practices, bodies and materials" (Shaw, 2014, p. 87), 'the symbolic', 'the emotional' and 'the affective' impregnate the range of social, cultural, and economic activities (formal and informal ; institutional and non-institutional) taking place in the nocturnal city. Thus, talking about the urban night means recognizing 'the night' as a source of both individual and collective memories consisting of an uncountable number of personal life stories (Arts, 2022 ; Brandellero et al., 2022).

4 As it could not be otherwise, we should mention that talking about the night also means looking at the past. This willingness to gain a deeper understanding of our collective social and cultural life in the past leads us to take 'the night' as both analytical lens and case study (Straw, 2015) to assert the fundamental relevance of the 'Whos' and 'Hows' when writing our collective historical memory – which is a memory also written at night. As a first step in this historiographical exercise, it appears fair and necessary to give recognition to some journalists, writers, and travellers who have depicted the urban nightscape of the most culturally vibrant cities of the Western world in the age of the industrial city such as, among many others, Paris, London, New York and Barcelona (e.g., Bembo, 1912 ; Coroleu, 1887 ; Darzens & Willette, 1889 ; de Wissant, 1928 ; Delvau, 1862, 1867 ; Nevill, 1926 ; Ritchie, 1869 ; Sala, 1862 ; Shaw, 1931). Yet in the 1930s, and especially in later decades, a few historians and sociologists – mainly from the United States and United Kingdom – began to pay attention to the role of nightlife (and its multiple dark sides) in the reproduction of modern urban societies, thus recognizing the urban night, and especially nightlife, as a subject for scholarly analysis (e.g., Cressey, 2008 ; Erenberg 1974, 1984, 1986 ; Marrus, 1974 ; Morris, 1980 ; Ostrander, 1972 ; Travis, 1983). In this sense, both the descriptive texts of the urban nightscapes of the culturally vibrant port cities of the early 20th century and the later works cited in the previous paragraph can be considered foundational elements of what is currently designated as Night Studies.

5 A comprehensive understanding of our nocturnal cities both in the past and the present allows us to better design the set of strategies, actions and policymaking tools towards safer, more inclusive, more egalitarian and more environmentally sustainable nocturnal cities. However, the volume of scholarly works about "daytime cities" outweighs the study of the "nocturnal city" (Shaw, 2018). In this sense, this thematic issue aims to reduce this knowledge gap between the daytime city and the nighttime city. In fact, little discussion exists between the multiple connections (some more visible than others) between both faces of the city. However, such unanimity is not reflected in the succession of project evaluation committees and research grants, which systematically (with a few exceptions) tend to undervalue the importance of investigating the enormous complexity of social, economic and cultural phenomena that are unique to the nocturnal city, and whose empirical knowledge is deemed necessary for achieving appropriate urban governance – in its most holistic conception.

6 This special issue offers a selection of the most recent work in the field of urban night studies at a global scale. The first article of this special issue is co-authored by Martin Magidi and Tawanda Jimu. In their article "Urban livelihoods beyond industrial ruins : The birth of an informal nighttime economy in Norton, Zimbabwe", they explore the

emergence of an informal nighttime economy in Norton, Zimbabwe as a creative response to daytime work scarcity, regulations, and competition. It reveals how residents, facing the decline of traditional industries and increased urban poverty, innovatively turn to nocturnal activities to supplement their incomes. Using Long's Actor-oriented theory, the study portrays these individuals as proactive agents who utilise the night as a vital space-time resource, circumventing daytime limitations. Through ethnographic methods, it showcases diverse ventures like night vending, informal fishing, and leisure activities, underscoring the community's resilience and adaptability in an economically challenging environment. This shift to nocturnal activities is both a survival tactic and a demonstration of entrepreneurial spirit, marking a significant adaptation in the face of Norton's economic hardships. This article enriches nighttime studies by providing a nuanced understanding of the nocturnal economy in a developing country, highlighting the informal sector's role, and underscoring the agency of individuals in adapting to and shaping their economic environments.

7 Julio César Becerra Pozos in his paper : "Towards a characterization of semi-private spaces of nocturnality (*noctem*) : diversity and differentiated access in Mexican bars" proposes a flexible stance to characterising private and semi-private spaces of the nighttime economy, challenging youth-centric views of the night and typologies centred on cultural consumption. Instead, it focuses on modes of production and service construction, which trigger various performances, interactions, and business models in the diverse offerings of Mexican nightlife. The concept of "noctem" is linked to differentiated accesses related to gender, transition, class, and other sociocultural elements. The text argues that nightlife goes beyond leisure, addressing systemic violence and inequalities in access to the night. Exclusion in nightlife is emphasised, conditioned by multiple factors, and a flexible characterisation of nocturnal spaces is proposed to destigmatize practices and shed light on experiences in contexts of inequality. Criticism is directed at the lack of attention on public policies and the nighttime economy. Ultimately, the text approaches nightlife from a multidimensional perspective encompassing the social, cultural, and economic aspects, highlighting the complexities and challenges inherent in the systematisation and classification of fieldwork in nighttime economic spaces.

8 Begoña Aramoyona in her paper "The invisibilisation of informality in the nocturnal city : the displacement of sex workers and domestic employees to private spaces" analyses how disparities in the public treatment of two forms of feminized, migrant, and racialized work in Spain are addressed : domestic work and sex work. It highlights how in/visibility and informalisation reproduce moral geographies in Spanish post-industrial cities. Despite local regulations and Law 4/2015 penalising street-based sex workers, there is a lack of institutional progress in understanding the real conditions of workers in nightclubs and private apartments. Media attention to raids in sex work venues is contrasted with the lack of surveillance over abusive conditions faced by domestic workers, especially live-ins. The analysis underscores how neoliberal cities prioritise cleaning public spaces, overlooking abusive situations in private settings. It argues that public strategy has contributed to the clandestinisation and vulnerability of these workers, displacing informality into private spaces. Furthermore, a connection is established between sex and domestic work in the global migratory context of women. Despite obstacles, the use of night and darkness by these workers is highlighted as a strategy of resistance to neoliberalism, patriarchy, and racism. She advocates for a

central focus on the survival practices of nocturnal subalternity to support future struggles for the "right to the nocturnal city" in the new agenda of urban and nocturnal studies.

9 Rosa Fina's work "In search of nocturnal characters in eighteenth-century Lisbon", meticulously explores the intricate dynamics of nocturnal life in Lisbon during the eighteenth century. Focusing on the pivotal transition from the old to the modern world, Fina investigates the evolving meaning of the night through a multifaceted lens encompassing security ordinances, legislative changes, and the diminishing influence of traditional authorities such as the Church and the Inquisition. Her paper unfolds against the backdrop of a shifting sociocultural landscape, where reason and technology gradually replace ancient myths and superstitions. Fina's examination extends to the dissolution of the Inquisition in 1821 and the subsequent rise of anticlerical sentiments, providing a comprehensive understanding of the transformation in perceptions regarding nocturnal threats. With a keen sociological perspective, Fina emphasises the changing narrative from supernatural perils to human-driven violence, ultimately situating the night as a crucial arena for testing and implementing societal measures. This research by Rosa Fina contributes significantly to our nuanced comprehension of the nocturnal realm in eighteenth-century Lisbon.

10 The article "Nocturnal urban imaginaries : the rise and fall of Turin as a 24-hour party city" by Giacomo Bottà and Enrico Petrilli, through qualitative analysis of interviews, investigates the changing perceptions and experiences of the night in Turin's post-industrial urban landscape. It introduces the concept of 'nocturnal urban imaginaries' – specifically 'confetti', '24-hour party', and 'Notti Bianche' – and assesses their impact on local governance, policing, and the nature of nightlife. The paper argues that increased regulation and control of nightlife diminish its potential as a space for enjoyment and escapism. Linking these imaginaries to Turin's transformation from an industrial to a post-industrial city, the study highlights their role in shaping the city's nocturnal character. It emphasises the need for balanced nightlife management, considering not only safety but also its social and emotional value. The article underlines the significance of urban nightlife's spatial and temporal aspects and calls for future research to explore the performative impact of nocturnal imaginaries on urban life, broadening the understanding of urban nightlife and its role in urban studies.

11 Yolanda Macia's article "'The things one does for friends' : sensitive links of living in the night of the central city and the suburban night in Mexico City" significantly enriches urban night studies by illuminating the interconnectedness of central and suburban night experiences in the Mexico City Metropolitan Zone, challenging the traditional notion of their separateness. It delves into the social dynamics of nightlife, particularly emphasising how nighttime leisure activities shape and are shaped by friendships, a less explored aspect in this field. The study highlights the crucial impact of socioeconomic and gender factors on access to and participation in urban nightlife, bringing attention to social inequality and inclusivity issues. Through the concept of 'sensibilities' the article provides a novel perspective on how subjective experiences and emotions inform individuals' nighttime experiences, thereby enriching the understanding of the emotional dimensions of urban nightlife. The research underscores how these night experiences reflect and reproduce urban segregation and exclusion processes, contributing to the broader discourse on urban sociology and geography. Furthermore, by focusing on Mexico City, a major urban centre in the

global south, the study offers valuable insights into the unique dynamics and challenges of nightlife in cities outside the traditionally studied contexts, thus broadening the geographical scope of urban night studies.

12 Finally, Jordi Nofre, Manuel Garcia-Ruiz, and Alejandro Mercado have written an epilogue, whose first section presents a series of research topics that are already in discussion in the interdisciplinary area of Night Studies. The authors remark that this list is not exhaustive and it aims to draw attention to the plurality of research objects that make up the "nocturnal urban past, present and futures". The second half of the epilogue denounces the absence of 'the night' in the design of the so-called "15-minute city", which is the main paradigm of ongoing urban development in many worldwide cities (especially from the Global North). This epilogue thus sheds light on the urgent community, institutional, industry and academic need for debating and discussing the role that the 'nocturnal city' should have in the construction of climate-neutral cities in the long-term future. Finally, the last lines are to thank the journal's editorial committee and its management assistants, reviewers, copyeditors and readers. It is precisely to the latter that we ask to make the article as widely known as possible.

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