LOCAL AND REGIONAL **TIME** AGENDA

Topic 4

URBAN **NIGHTTIME** POLICIES

TIME POLICIES AS TOOLS FOR
more sustainable, inclusive, egalitarian, and healthier nocturnal cities

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Since the early 2010s, a remarkable number of initiatives and strategies around the globe have sought to design higher quality, more equitable, healthier and more environmentally sustainable urban environments. Examples include the Emerging and Sustainable Cities Program of the Inter-American Development Bank's Housing and Urban Development Division (2010); the World Bank's Global Platform for Sustainable Cities (2016), and the United Nation's New Urban Agenda (2017). In Europe, the sheer number of initiatives promoted to achieve the so-called urban ecological transition (e.g., URBACT, Urban Innovation Actions, Urban Development Network, European Urban Initiative, New Bauhaus Initiative) make the case here unique. But the initiatives have a common shortcoming: their objectives and working methodologies are conceived and **conceptualized exclusively from and for the "daytime city"**.

Interestingly, recent urban planning theories about the development of the proximity, or 15-minute, city model (Allam et al., 2022a, 2022b; Khavarian-Garmsir et al., 2023), offer a new framework for fostering sustainable, liveable and healthy urban environments. However, to date, no publication has presented the role of "nighttime leisure" and "nighttime culture" (formal or informal) in the 15-minute city.

Existing scholarly works on the 15-minute city refer to leisure exclusively as children's play in public neighbourhood spaces or sports practised by citizens (e.g., Di Marino et al., 2023; Janpavle & Īle, 2022). But we would do well to recall that **urban planning is intrinsically linked to moral values** about the future shape of our habitats (Gébert et al., 2023; Krarup, 2022; Lau et al., 2021). The fact that the nocturnal city of the future is absent from the numerous works published on implementing the 15-minute city model there-

fore begs the question: beneath the expanding the 15-minute city model, is there a moralizing anti-night agenda?

It should come as no surprise. Indeed, modern and contemporary urban thinkers in both the Global North and Global South have chiefly concerned themselves with the "daytime city". In contrast, from time immemorial, the local and regional ruling classes have seen **the "urban night" as synonymous with sin, vice, crime, and immorality** (for different points of view, see for example Talbot [2007] and Raymen & Smith [2019]).

The "dark side" of nocturnalizing cities

Only in the early 1990s was the nighttime leisure economy taken up as a key strategy in the socioeconomic revitalization and urban regeneration of British cities' degraded central areas (Bianchini, 1995; Lovatt & O'Connor, 1995). Subsequently, many cities outside the UK adopted this strategy and many more replicated it in Europe and far beyond (e.g., Chatterton & Hollands, 2003; Nofre & Eldridge, 2018).

In fact, a look at the evolution of formal and informal nightlife over the last half-century confirms unequivocally that these have been and remain central to the social and cultural life of many people across the globe regardless of place of living, gender, social class, age, origin, sexual orientation, or cultural and religious background (e.g., Haslam, 2015; Sánchez-Garcia, 2018; Khubchandani, 2020; Nofre & Garcia-Ruiz, 2023). Commercial nightlife in particular has often played a crucial role in place-branding strategies local and regional alike, with examples ranging from large cities and their metropolitan areas to coastal tourism destinations and even some snow tourism towns (Segreto et al., 2009; Cardona, 2019; Río-Rama et al., 2019; Bausch & Gartner, 2020; Smith & Eldridge, 2021).

But whether in urban areas, coastal tourist destinations or (albeit to a lesser extent) snow tourist destinations, the expanding nighttime leisure economy has propagated negative impacts on spatial, social, cultural, health and governance levels. From a broad spectrum of negative impacts, several are common in different regions of the world, namely, non-informed and high-risk alcohol and drug use; environmental impacts (air, noise, and light pollution, excessive waste production, and energy consumption); traffic congestion; worsening community liveability; health impacts to residents due to noise and light pollution; labour exploitation and/or precarization; in-

dividual and collective unsafety among sexual, gender and ethnic minorities; and exclusion, marginalization, stigmatization, and criminalization of (often racialized) vulnerable populations (Nofre & Eldridge, 2018; Nofre & Garcia-Ruiz, 2023).

Exploring time policies towards a more holistic governance of the nocturnal city

"Urban nightlife" is far more than the nightlife industry. Every evening around the world, tens of millions go out to dine, meet with friends, and dance. In turn, millions more work nighttime hours in logistics centres, back-office centres, central markets, essential services and healthcare institutions. Many in these groups traverse the city in nighttime public transport, ride-sharing vehicles and their own vehicles. Meanwhile, domestic workers, street food vendors, drug dealers, sex workers and others employed in the informal economy work during nighttime hours, sometimes taking advantage of the liminal anonymity of darkness. The nocturnal city is thus a complex system –in the terminology of Ortman et al. (2020) and Rybski and González (2022)– comprising a dense network of informal and formal economies, mobilities (at urban and metropolitan scale), social and cultural activities (in domestic, private, and public spaces), and multiple actors (both formal and informal, institutional and non-institutional).

Nevertheless, **initiatives designed and implemented to govern the urban night are recent and still scarce** in relation to the global urban system. In general terms, existing initiatives are characterized by simultaneous interplay between an economicist approach –or the 24-hour open city as a temporary extension of the productive city (e.g., Evans, 2014; Seijas & Gelders, 2021; Lin et al., 2022)– and a hyper-securitarian one (Brands & van Doorn, 2018; Wadds, 2020; McGuire et al., 2021).

But, while common, this way of designing mechanisms to govern the urban night is often ineffective in the face of the extremely complex task of striking a fair balance between the variously colliding rights that an ever more nocturnalized global society inherently entails (Koslofsky, 2011). (In 2022, Shaw referred to this same process as the "diurnalization of the night"). In this sense, a strategy to govern the nocturnal city based on the **interplay between a time policy approach** (Mückenberger, 2011) **and chrono-urbanism** (Gower & Grodach, 2022; Khavarian-Garmsir et al., 2023) offers an excellent opportunity to reflect on and discuss how our urban

nights must be in future if they are to successfully foster more environmentally sustainable, socially inclusive, egalitarian and healthier nocturnal cities and integrate researchers' knowledge, private sector and institutional expertise, and local community initiatives.

A time policy-driven approach to governing the urban night inevitably involves a strategy that we might call "nocturnalizing" the day. The digitalized economy increasingly blurs the line between leisure and non-leisure activities, which, by permitting nightlife-related activities (i.e., dancing and live music) during the day and not restricting establishments' operating hours to the night, may facilitate this process.

In practical terms, nocturnalization would make it possible to:

1. Progressively ease entry and exit traffic at nightlife venues;
2. Reduce the intensity of nighttime use of public space;
3. Diversify nightlife establishments' offer of cultural programming; make it easier for local communities, including families, to participate in community events held in collaboration with the public administration.

Hence, this time policy-driven approach is an unexplored opportunity to pacify nighttime public space in areas characterized by abundant nightlife venues, making it possible to substantially reduce noise pollution at night and, consequently, improve residents' resting and sleeping conditions. In sum, a time policy approach to exploring new forms of urban night governance offers an unbeatable chance to finally design the cities of the future in which 'day' and 'night' are no longer in forced opposition.

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