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The Visuality of Scenes

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EVERY (NOCTURNAL) TOURIST LEAVES A TRACE: URBAN TOURISM, NIGHTTIME LANDSCAPE, AND PUBLIC PLACES IN CIUTAT VELLA, BARCELONA

JONATHAN ROULEAU

Résumé

Cet article vise à comprendre l'importance culturelle de la vie et du paysage urbain nocturnes en relation avec les récents discours sur les dangers du tourisme à Ciutat Vella, le plus vieux quartier de Barcelone. Barcelone est l'une des villes les plus visitées en Europe. Cependant, au cours des dernières années, les millions de touristes qui ont visité la ville ont éveillé des tensions entre les citoyens, les décideurs et les visiteurs (y compris autour de questions liées à l'état d'ébriété en public, au bruit, à l'hébergement touristique illégal et au surpeuplement des espaces publics durant la nuit). Une documentation de plus en plus abondante examine dorénavant les villes comme des lieux clés pour le tourisme de masse national et mondial ainsi que la façon dont ce phénomène est lié à l'utilisation de la culture en tant que stratégie de promotion, régénération, et création des places publiques. Au cours des dernières années, les décideurs ont souligné les activités culturelles nocturnes comme un moyen d'atteindre cet objectif. Néanmoins, bien que de nombreuses études examinent la représentation symbolique et le tourisme urbain, l'économie et le tourisme nocturne, ainsi que la montée et les répercussions de la ville 24 heures sur 24, il existe encore trop peu d'études de cas empiriques qui s'intéressent aux relations entre « chaque

nuit » (everynight), le tourisme ordinaire, les politiques nocturnes et le rétrécissement des lieux publics dans les villes la nuit. S'appuyant sur de vastes travaux sur le terrain, sur des représentations de la crise du tourisme dans les journaux et magazines catalans et internationaux, ainsi que sur des documents stratégiques municipaux, cet article est une contribution au domaine de la « nocturnité » (c'est-à-dire l'étude de la nuit) et à l'érudition des scènes urbaines. Il soutient que la crise touristique à Barcelone est étroitement liée aux voyageurs nocturnes et que la ville devrait aborder la nuit non seulement comme un moment de vie nocturne romantique, mais aussi comme une « occasion » qui crée des barrières pouvant déclencher des problèmes sociaux tels que des plaintes liées au bruit, un embourgeoisement, ainsi que des zones géographiques d'exclusion.

Abstract

This article interrogates the cultural significance of nightlife and urban landscape in relationship to recent discourse on the perils of tourism in Ciutat Vella, Barcelona's oldest district. Barcelona is one of the most visited cities in Europe, but in recent years the millions of tourists who visit the city annually have ignited tensions between citizens, policy-makers and visitors (including issues related to: public intoxication; noise; illegal property rental; overcrowding in public spaces at night). A growing body of literature has emerged that examines cities as key places for national and global mass-tourism and how this is related to the use of culture for promotion, regeneration and place-making strategies. Over the past few years, policymakers have emphasized nighttime cultural activities as a means for achieving this goal. Yet, while there has been a wide range of works that examine symbolic representation and urban tourism, economy and nighttime tourism, and the rise and consequence of the 24-hour city, there remains a lack of empirical case studies that emphasize the relations between “everynight”, ordinary tourism, nighttime policies and the shrinking of public places in cities at night. Drawing on extensive fieldwork, depictions of the crisis of tourism in Catalan and international newspapers and magazines, as well as on municipal policy documents, this paper is a contribution to the field of “nocturnity” (i.e., the study of the night) and to the scholarship on urban scenes. It argues that Barcelona's tourism crisis is deeply linked to nocturnal travelers and that the city should address the night per se, as not only a time of romanticized nightlife, but also as an “occasion” that creates barriers which may trigger social problems like noise complaints, gentrification and geographies of exclusion.

This article examines the cultural significance of nightlife in recent public discourse on the perils of tourism in *Ciutat Vella*, the oldest district in Barcelona. As the fourth most visited city in Europe, Barcelona hosted approximately eight million international tourists in 2016, a fact that has prompted tensions between citizens, policy-makers, and tourists. While Barcelona policy-makers had originally promoted its vibrant nightlife as a means of facilitating the city's cultural regeneration and attracting tourists, the illegal rentals of flats, the noise and overcrowding of public places at night, and some of the unsavoury activities associated with drunkenness, including public urination, have caused considerable anxiety on the part of locals, neighborhood associations, grassroots movements, and Barcelona Mayor Ada Colau's political party, Barcelona en Comú. Barcelona's nightlife is integral to its tourist economy, though the fallout due to its excesses threatens the city's livability and reputation in the minds of citizens and the municipal government elected in June 2015.

I take this fundamental tension as my point of departure, first tracing the history of Barcelona's cultural regeneration over the last one hundred years in order to provide a background for contemporary public and political discourses on tourism and nightlife. I argue that Barcelona's current crisis of tourism is deeply linked to its nighttime cultural scenes, which both contribute to a romantic construction of Barcelona and trigger local unrest over such issues as noise, gentrification, and the exclusion that marks

certain public places.¹ Following the critical tradition of the "Barcelona Model" by Capel, Degen, Delgado, and Vázquez Montalbán, my article seeks to contribute to urban cultural studies scholarship on contemporary cultural scenes and to show how highly visible touristic scenes produce, shape, and represent a contested city.

The Crisis of Tourism in Barcelona

[W]hoever ventures out at night will find it hard not to come across the following inevitable message on the doors of bars and clubs: "Please respect the neighbours' peace and quiet," a completely indispensable request and piece of advice in a city like Barcelona that has such a powerfully vibrant range of culture and entertainment to offer. (Ajuntament de Barcelona)

At night, Barcelona is a noisy city—perhaps the loudest in Western Europe (Martí 9). *The Ajuntament de Barcelona* (Barcelona City Council), as noted above, is well aware of this fact. Barcelona is the third most densely populated city in Europe, a statistic that does not take into account the tourists who gather there, primarily in the old city—approximately thirty-two million in 2016 (Plush). In addition to showcasing a variety of international festivals such as Primavera Sound, Pícnic Electronik, and Sonar, Barcelona is also quintessentially part of the European Mediterranean in the sense that it hosts numerous local *fiestas* that unwind far into the night, often in the city's public areas. The places in which where these cultural events

unfold may sometimes be conceptualized as spaces of "de-differentiation" (Lash ix), as one cannot easily distinguish the locals from the tourists. However, there are occasions when locals and tourists do not cohabit peacefully—in moments when tourists are (too) visible or audible, or when they are unwelcome to locals and public authorities.

On August 15, 2014, three naked Italian tourists strolled the seafront neighbourhood of La Barceloneta—one of the four neighbourhoods of *Ciutat Vella* (Old City)—for three hours while Vicens Forner, a Barcelonan photographer, immortalized the episode.



Fig. 1. Tourists walking naked in La Barceloneta in August 2014.

Several Catalan, Spanish, and international newspapers published Forner's photo and it circulated widely in social media. The incident prompted popular and media mobilization in relation to a leitmotiv theme of what Donald McNeill (1) terms the "New Barcelona" era: the impact of tourism on the city. In the days following the nudists' parade, a few hundred city dwellers took to the streets to demonstrate against what they called "binge tourism," or *turismo basura* (junk tourism). They also protested against unlicensed tourist flats rented on websites such as Airbnb, and to oppose the creation of a touristic monoculture from which they felt alienated. While the nudists' *flânage* had taken place in the middle of the day, the resulting protests resonated with broader concerns that, while not addressing nightlife exclusively, had strong nocturnal components. What was at stake were various articulations of the citizens' "right to the city" (*le droit à la ville*), to use Lefebvre's (121) famous phrase and, in particular, their "right to the night" and their "right to sleep." In January 2017, thousands of Barcelonans strolled down La Rambla, Barcelona's most famous street, to protest against gentrification and the number of tourists in the city. These events led to the creation of anti-tourism groups, such as the *Assemblea de veïns Plataforma Resistim al Gòtic*.

Tourism was a major issue in Barcelona's 2015 municipal election. After she was elected in June 2015 as Barcelona's first female mayor, the political activist

Ada Colau (of the *Barcelona en Comú* party, previously *Guanyem Barcelona*) imposed a one-year moratorium on short-term rentals and new licenses for hotel rooms. Colau wished to determine the number of tourists that the city could actually handle, in an effort to "stop the city becoming Venice" (Badcock). The mayor was not against tourists per se, as tourism represents 15% of the GDP in a city where 80% of the workforce is in the service economy (Degen and García 1029), but wished to see them less clustered in the Old Town. Indeed, most of the tourists who visit Barcelona every year end up visiting and sleeping in *Ciutat Vella*, which comprises four administrative neighbourhoods: La Barceloneta, El Gòtic, El Raval, and Sant Pere/Santa Caterina/La Ribera.

In March 2016, for the first time in its history, Barcelona implemented a plan, led by Ada Colau, to reverse the growth of tourism. As a way of controlling tourists in the Old City, Colau's government banned any groups that exceeded fifteen people from visiting Barcelona landmark La Boqueria Market at peak times, to prevent it from losing its identity and function (Amey). It is now also forbidden to sublet a flat for less than a week; licenses for new hotel rooms in the Old City will not be issued and hotels that will close will not be replaced. This *Plan Especial Urbanístico de Alojamientos Turísticos* (PEUAT) is aimed at unclogging tourism in *Ciutat Vella*, developing tourist facilities in peripheral areas, and stopping gentrification. Since 2012, travelers

who stay overnight in Barcelona pay a "tourist tax" that is mainly collected from hotels, hostels, and tourist homes, as well as from the cruise ships visiting what is now the busiest touristic port of the Mediterranean. City Councillor Gala Pin argued that the money could be used to offset the costs of tourism, "not only in terms of infrastructure, cleaning and security but also in terms of the floating population that is causing the indirect expulsion of local people" (LaGrave). In January 2017, Colau's presented the ambitious "Strategic Plan for Tourism 2020," a lengthy document that is mostly aimed at controlling tourism and making Barcelona less of a cheap destination for tourists.

These various policy measures might seem to be novel, but artists have already taken up (and shed light on) Barcelona's tourism crisis. Alejandro González Iñárritu's 2010 film *Biutiful* shows how multiple voices and bodies are unheard and invisible in the mainstream discourse on beautiful, touristic, and *modernista* Barcelona. In an insightful analysis of the film, Benjamin Fraser, drawing upon urban theorist Manuel Delgado, underlines the film's alternative story of Barcelona, "that is, the drab, grimy city full of labour inequality, the collusion of police with multinationals, the reality of sickness (cancer) and the lack of real possibilities for the immigrants who come from abroad hoping to make a better life for themselves and for their families" (20). A curated version of Catalan identity and the city's stunning architecture—as well

as the use of both in promotional media—have been central pillars of urban renewal in Barcelona, but the film skillfully shows how the construction of the Barcelona-ness is also one of exclusion.

Focusing specifically on the crisis of tourism, filmmaker Eduardo Chibás's documentary *Bye Bye Barcelona* (2014) examines the coexistence of tourists and residents in the city, particularly in its older quarters. One of the main arguments of the film is that residents no longer make use of certain parts of the city, such as the pedestrian-oriented central street La Rambla. Around 80% of the people who walk on La Rambla are tourists, and it was the filmmaker's hope that city residents would succeed in taking back the street (Chibás Fernández). The message may well have been heard. In May 2016, a "Special Plan for the Rambla" was approved. It is aimed at reducing crowding and clutter and giving the promenade back to local residents. The City Council launched a contest for the redesign of the street promenade in the hope of implementing the project in 2019. Like *The Venice Syndrome* (2012) and *Welcome Goodbye* (2014), two documentaries that examine the impact of mass tourism on Venice and Berlin, respectively, *Bye Bye Barcelona* does not argue for a non-tourist city, but rather proposes ways of achieving a more sustainable approach to tourism. Indeed, Chibás Fernández would like to see tourists visiting places other than Barcelona's most famous landmarks, and has expressed the wish that Barcelona-

promote itself differently, notably by publicizing and respecting the everyday life of its residents.

In the same vein, playwright Marc Caellas' theatrical work *Guiris Go Home* (2015)—"guiris" being a derogatory Spanish term for tourists—deployed, as characters, artists who cooked paella for those in the audience, or others, impersonating tourists, who talked loudly on their phones or went to the restrooms during performances. If these works by Fernández and Caellas differ in their form and approach—the former strives for a paradigm shift in the ways in which Barcelona attracts tourists, while the latter uses irony to depict what is perceived to be the deplorable state of tourism in the city—they both offer an imagined monolithic construction of the average tourist. Here, the tourist is more often than not depicted in caricatural terms, a view that has become, for better or worse, a dominant perspective in present-day Barcelona.

Before turning to the most problematic scenes of tourism in Barcelona, I will briefly trace the ways in which culture, in both its tangible and intangible forms, has been mobilized for urban regeneration. On the one hand, design and architecture have traditionally been used as vectors of change and mobilization in Barcelona, an approach that culminated in the 1992 Olympic Games project. On the other hand, marketing and place-making strategies have served the purpose of creating an urban imaginary, a symbolic Barcelona-

ness to which tourists are attracted. Present-day Barcelona, as a major tourist hub, is the result of rapid and drastic changes that have taken place, for the most part, in the last thirty years. We must go back even further, however, to understand the rich, productive, and transformative character of planning in the city.

Urban Planning, the "Roaring Twenties," and Nocturnal Life

In the mid-19th century the walls that surrounded Barcelona were dismantled. Catalan civic engineer Ildefons Cerdà—arguably the founder of urban planning as a profession, whose main ideas were articulated in the 1859 *El Pla Cerdà*—led a major urban renewal plan by widening the city through the creation of an "extension": the L'Eixample neighbourhood (Aibar and E. Bijker; Fraser; Soria y Puig; Ward). The objective was to link the Old City to the surrounding villages. This grid-like neighbourhood, unusual for Barcelona, was constructed with large, magnificent Hausmannian boulevards. The buildings of L'Eixample, no higher than three storeys and equipped with green spaces, became the residences for an elite Catalan bourgeoisie (Marshall).

In the late-19th century, like many other Western cities, Barcelona went through a phase in which urban development and industrialization flourished. In a context of relative political stability and wealth, the bourgeoisie started promoting and underwriting Catalan identity through arts and architecture (Marshall). The Barcelona World's Fair in 1888 marked the beginning of a cultural movement that had deep Catalan roots: *Modernista* (Catalan Art Nouveau). The period between 1888 and 1910—commencing with the building of Domènech i Montaner's café for the World's Fair—witnessed the creation of the city's most prominent buildings, parks, and places (Casa Batlló, Casa Milà, Hospital de Sant Pau, Palau de la Música Catalana, and Park Güell). *Noucentisme*, an artistic movement aimed at reviving Catalan's classical past, began to replace *Modernista* in the 1910s, the reasons being twofold. The first of these were the criticisms of the aesthetic exuberances of *Modernista*, as voiced by Charles Voysey, an Arts and Crafts architect. He argued against what he perceived to be the "simplicity" of Catalan Art Nouveau, that is "the work of a lot of imitators with nothing but mad eccentricity as a guide" (Mackay 53). A second criticism was directed at the anti-academic roots of *Modernista* and the accusation, by an ascendant bourgeois class, that it was too progressive. Indeed, bourgeois nationalists who rose to prominence in the early-20th century sought new cultural forms with which to assert their power and identity, and found these in the aesthetics of *Noucentisme*.

In the 1920s, Barcelona entered its own "Roaring Twenties," a decade marked here, as in other cities of the West, by the development of a rich nightlife in which jazz music was prominent. In his book *Jazz Age Barcelona*, Robert A. Davidson has revisited the numerous articles on the Barcelona night published in the Catalan journal *Mirador* (1929-1937). In particular, Sebastià Gasch, a Catalan art critic (and later author of the 1957 *Barcelona de Nit: El Món de l'Espectacle* [Barcelona by Night: The World of Spectacle]) offered accounts of nighttime concerts and performances alongside sketches of the city's most marginal neighborhoods, such as *Barrio Chino* (Chinatown).² Sometimes referred to as a red-light district and commonly compared to the bohemian scenes of Harlem, Montmartre, or Soho, the southern tip of the neighbourhood of El Raval acquired an image involving drug abuse, prostitution, and crime. *Barrio Chino*, whose golden age took place in the 1920s, was portrayed in various media forms as a mostly male-patronized hub for vice. As McDonogh reminds us, while the quarter was comprised of several types of establishments (concert venues, neighbourhood and special interests bars or clubs, and establishments linked to prostitution), it was usually the "prostitution bars" that drew the most attention. These bars not only provided the material with which both local and foreign writers, photographers, and filmmakers (such as Georges Bataille, Joan Colom, Jean Genet, Ignacio Gil) constructed a romantic representation of Barcelona's nighttime cultural scenes; they were

also used by local residents within processes of social distinction. Underlining the gendered character of these spaces, Gary McDonogh notes:

"Spatializing" immorality allows others to differentiate themselves as virtuous by location and behaviour as space and virtue reinforce each other while intimately dividing social worlds. Good Barcelona men relax in good bars in good neighbourhoods, possibly with good women (who might also stay at home). (265)

Nevertheless, "bad bars" could benefit from a reputation that was perceived by some artists and writers as more authentic, and as providing an aura that could foster their creativity. Such "tourists of the marginal" (Ramon Resina 105) as Sebastià Gasch and his artist friend Joan Miró would often venture to the alternative bars of La Barceloneta—then a fishermen's neighbourhood—and *Barrio Chino*. As Robert Davidson notes, their *randonnées* were motivated by a search for difference and alterity in the outskirts and edgier areas of town. Their passage from "salon to tavern" was a means of finding inspiration in the crude, anti-bourgeois kitsch of the latter (109-13). Their gritty nocturnal journeys clashed with the up-and-coming *modernista* metropolis that had been crafted since the 1888 World's Fair. Representations of the El Raval district and *Barrio Chino* in the 1920s depicted the area as edgy and dangerous, a vision that persisted until the urban renewal movements of the 1980s and the 1990s.³

The “Roaring Twenties” culminated with the Barcelona World’s Fair of 1929. This was marked as a Spanish event, unlike the 1888 Barcelona Fair, which had been marketed as Catalan in character. Among its many effects, the 1929 Fair was a turning point in the electrification of Barcelona. As Hochadel and Nieto-Galan note:

[T]he spread of electric lighting altered Barcelona’s cityscape and reshaped the everyday life of its citizens. The nocturnal city became a new “site,” full of life, overcoming the routines dictated by natural light: from the “electric” night parties at the 1888 Exhibition, to the new facilities at the operating rooms of the clinics, and the electrical lights at the fun parks. The sophisticated display of lights and colours at the 1929 Exhibition was widely considered a triumph of electricity in the city. (15)

Electricity played a strong role in the transformation of urban landscape and it had a profound effect on the city dwellers’ routines, although these changes are beyond the scope of this article. While technological change shaped modern Barcelona, so, too, did the political situation and the dark age of the Franco era.

Following the conclusion of the Spanish Civil War in 1939, General Franco held power until his death in 1975. Throughout these years, Catalonia, defeated during the Civil War, was considered an enemy of the state and Barcelona’s infrastructures were left for the

most part unattended. The city was denied any right to celebrate and foster its distinct Catalan identity. As Degen notes, “[d]uring Franco’s era public investment within Barcelona’s city centre had been deliberately neglected as a way of punishing a city that had been the bastion of the republican and anarchist movements during the Civil War (132). Then, in the late 1950s, Spain promoted *desarrollismo* (developmentalism) by opening its borders to foreign tourists within an atmosphere of liberalization and *laissez-faire* (García and Claver 114). Those who benefitted most from these policies were real estate developers, who were allowed to build cheap, poorly constructed hotels and residential buildings in the inner city. However, as the tourists visiting Catalonia were mostly interested in its sunny beaches, few of them would actually visit Barcelona, which was the case until the 1980s and 1990s.

Post-Industrialism, the “Barcelona Model,” and the Aestheticization of Public Places

Barcelona, like many other Western cities, was severely affected by the decline of its manufacture sector. Between 1960 and 1985, the city lost 42% of its jobs in manufacturing and 69% of those in construction (McNeill 94). The response to this crisis was to be found in post-industrialism, that is, the rise of a knowledge and service economy and the embracing by cities of policies of cultural development (Degen and

García). Within these doctrines, urban cores assume new primacy relative to larger metropolitan areas and cities compete against each other in the attraction of tourists through the provision of cultural amenities. Since the late 1990s, Barcelona has made use of culture in a broad, encompassing way within its plans for economic development.

When the Catalan Socialist Party (PSC) was elected as the municipal government in Barcelona in 1979, it privileged small interventions in public spaces, parks, and streets in collaboration with the *Federació d’Associacions de Veïns de Barcelona* (neighbourhood associations) and other grassroots movements whose origins can be traced back to the Franco era. It was not until the 1992 Olympics project, however, that Barcelona’s transition to a post-industrial city gathered momentum, as the city became a major tourist destination. This transition was led by a charismatic mayor, Pasqual Maragall i Mira, grandson of the renowned poet Joan Maragall. During his period in office, from 1982 to 1997, Maragall initiated and managed Barcelona’s most colossal revitalization project since the creation of l’Exaimple. The “Barcelona Model” (Fancelli) would become a celebrated version of urban policy and planning widely appropriated in the Western world, particularly in the United Kingdom (Balibrea). It was born in 1986, when Barcelona was designated as host of the Olympics Games of 1992 and the Old City was declared an *Àrea de Rehabilitació Integral* (Integral Rehabilitation Area). This model also

had roots in the 1985 beautification campaign, led by the City Council, known as *Barcelona Posa't Guapa* (Barcelona Make Yourself Beautiful) (McNeil 14).

The Olympic Games of 1992 shaped, accomplished, and represented to the world the transition to the “New Barcelona.” The games provided Barcelona with the resources, both local and national, that Maragall needed to carry out the project. The entrepreneurial mayor focused on two major policy components: urban infrastructure, through the revitalization and preservation of historic buildings in the city centre, and administration of the games themselves. With respect to the former, architecture and the “monumentalization of the periphery” (Degen et Garcia 1027) were used as a means of giving back the city to its citizens and encouraging social cohesion. Politically, Maragall had always been more interested in crafting a Barcelonan identity and encouraging democratic citizen participation than he was with questions of class and ideology (McNeil 76). The political doctrine that came to be known as *Maragallisme* used the Olympics as a means for promoting Catalan identity and building a strong international image for the city and its region. If some people feared that the Olympic Games would be used to culturally “de-catalanize” Barcelona and Catalonia (McNeil 75), their fears were not realized. Catalan was one of the games’ four official languages, and the marketing of the Olympics placed great emphasis on Catalan identity.

The mandate for the planning of the Olympic Village was awarded to the firm MBMP (Martorell Bohigas Mackay Puigdomenech). Bohigas, a local starchitect, had been director of planning for the Barcelona City Council during the period 1980-1984, and his key ideas were laid out in his 1983 essay “Per una Altra Urbanitat” (“A Different Urbanism”) and 1985 book *Reconstrucció de Barcelona* (Reconstruction of Barcelona). Unlike many other Olympic projects, Barcelona’s is often seen as a success story. In 1990, the city won the Prince of Wales Prize given by Harvard University, and in 1999 it was awarded The Royal Gold Medal for Architecture, the first time that prize had been granted to a place and not to an architect. If economic accumulation was not the main motivation behind the Barcelona Model, its implementation nevertheless stimulated the city’s economy by attracting tourists to the city. In particular, the redevelopment of the old port into the Maremagnum project and the revitalization of the seafront made these sites into major attractions for tourists seeking to experience a Mediterranean way of life.

The Touristic Scene(s) of Barcelona

We may approach Barcelona’s current status in relation to its various “scenes,” as theorized by Alan Blum (164-188). Blum argues that a scene is defined by the visible and shared public co-intimacy between locals

and strangers, most often tourists. In their visibility and theatricality, scenes become a key feature of urban experience. This is the scene described by Barcelona’s city government as it seeks to offer a highly evocative representation of its night:

Barcelona at its most multifaceted and intense unfurls at night, the time for theatre, drinks with friends, music and dancing. This is when the Catalan capital’s most risqué, hidden-away and discrete spots open up, where the day lengthens and the nightlife bursts out: this is where the city at its most eclectic and select and where lovers of opera, grand settings, ground-breaking small-format theatre, cabaret, beer, wine, gin and tonic and exclusive cocktails, the old dance halls and the latest discos all come alive.
(Ajuntament de Barcelona)

This description interweaves, in romantic fashion, the visible and hidden aspects of Barcelona’s nighttime scenes in order to paint the night as a time of infinite possibilities. Tourism brochures and media representations of Barcelona (including films such as Woody Allen’s *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (2008), Whit Stillman’s *Barcelona* (1994), and Pedro Almodóvar’s *All About My Mother* (1999)) celebrate the city’s nightlife by aestheticizing it. The promotion of nighttime entertainment and leisure has become central to urban policy because it is perceived as giving cities a comparative advantage over others in the attraction

of tourists. Barcelona has joined other cities in recognizing the importance of its nighttime economy, a phenomena defined by Brabazon and Mallinder as “the appropriation of night-time urban spaces by the leisure and entertainment industries” (168). The development of a nighttime economy has become one of the key components of post-industrialist discourse on the organization of urban economies around culture and leisure. Nevertheless if Barcelona has a thriving nightlife scene, it is not a 24-hour city per se (where the distinction between day and night is blurred); rather, nighttime is intimately tied to leisure and entertainment, in other words, to the consumption of a certain type of culture. This embracing of the nighttime economy by the City Council has raised a number of issues. Instead of generating the diversity and vitality described in the above quotation, commercialized nightlife produces spatial segregation in the ways in which it excludes those who do not have the means (or desire) to participate in a rowdy sociability tied to the consumption of alcohol. The restriction of entertainment options described by Brabazon and Mallinder as increasingly characteristic of post-industrial cities has particular applicability to Barcelona:

Concerns with regulation serve to emphasize the extent to which the perception of night-time economies have become synonymous with social management and the degree to which these economies, once a seeming panacea for the revitalization of moribund post industrial and post-colonial centres, are now symptomatic of an alcohol fuelled monoculture. (Brabazon and Mallinder 167-8)

The most problematic dimensions of Barcelona’s nighttime economy are visible in its waterfront scenes.

Waterfront scenes

The opening of the city to the sea was a key component of *Maragallisme* (Nello 41). Barcelona, like many other coastal cities, has placed great emphasis on the redevelopment of its waterfront, a key focus of the international discourse on creative cities since the 1990s (Carta and Ronsivalle). In La Barceloneta, a 1.3km² triangular enclave and the youngest of the four districts of the Old City, the urban revitalization undertaken as part of the Olympics Project involved the removal of train tracks, the sanitizing of water and sand along the 2.2km of beach, and the revitalization of the beachfront promenade. These transformations were undertaken with an emphasis on the production and consumption of art and design.

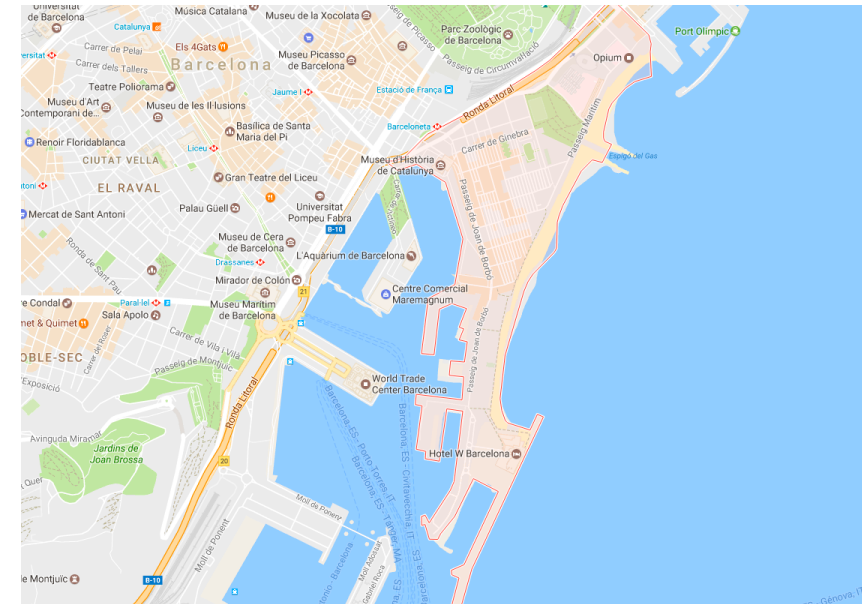


Fig. 2. The neighbourhood of La Barceloneta.

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Rebecca Horn's *L'Estel Ferit* (the Wounded Shooting Star), Frank Gehry's *Peix* (the Fish), and the Arts and MAPFRE Towers (the two tallest buildings in the city) are among the most famous landmarks used to aestheticize this area. In an often-unacknowledged way, Horn's sculpture—sometimes dubbed *Homage to Barceloneta*—was:

designed to commemorate the lost, rusted beach restaurants, the landscape that had developed over generations before the sudden shock of demolition and their replacement by new white sand and new palms (non-native, but expected by visitors). (Eaude 285; original emphasis)

The neighbourhood has now become a *passage obligé* for tourists in search of a Mediterranean experience, but these visible landmarks are all central among its attractions. This is the Barcelona highlighted in so many of the images promoting tourism. In the past fifteen years, La Barceloneta has also become an international centre for nightlife, largely as a result of its lively discotheque scene.

La Barceloneta has one of the most active club scenes in Spain. The neighbourhood is comprised of two distinct but interrelated nighttime cultural scenes. These gravitate towards different types of cultural experience and are relatively isolated from each other geographically, but they often involve the same participants. One of these is the restaurant and bar scene of the residential part of La Barceloneta.

Fig. 3. Rebecca Horn's *L'Estel Ferit*.



Fig. 4. La Barceloneta.



Fig. 5. The CDLC Club, the ARTS and MAPFRE Towers, and Gehry's Peix.



The Catalan character of this scene is obvious, as it is constituted by restaurants that offer regional cuisine and includes a few bars patronized mostly by locals. However, the heart of La Barceloneta's night is usually not associated with this portion of the neighbourhood. The second cultural scene gravitates towards discotheques in the north-eastern part of the neighbourhood. These clubs are largely frequented

by tourists and are usually accessed through the beachfront promenade (Catwalk, CDLC, Opium, Shôko, Sotavento). Some of these close at 6am and are major venues on the international DJ circuit.

The club scene in La Barceloneta targets young people and students by offering them an alcohol-fuelled culture. The issues that have come to surround this scene are

not principally related to people actually partying in clubs, as the latter are quite isolated from the residential area of La Barceloneta. Problems arise, however, when patrons leave the bars and noisy crowds spill over into the streets (and flats) of the residential part of the neighbourhood.⁴ This creates what Luc Gwiazdzinski has called a *citoyenneté discontinue* (discontinuous citizenship) (197) in the neighbourhood, as residents

feel they are losing their right to the city, to the night, and to sleep. In Gwiazdzinski's terms, the nighttime tourist scene exacerbates the tension between *la ville qui dort* (the city that sleeps) and *la ville qui s'amuse* (the city that plays) (130). Tourists not only navigate along the traditional routes and spaces crafted for them by the city, but they also structure and shape both space and time through their itineraries. They follow a circuit from beach (day) to restaurants (evening) to bars (evening/night) to discotheques (night) to public places (night). These places, as McDonogh suggests in his study of Barcelona's bars, "become public markers in the description and control of zones of vice" (264).

The deeper we get into the night, the more problems emerge, notably in relation to the use and appropriation of public spaces. By day, public places in La Barceloneta are invested by locals, families, and tourists. Indeed, one can find plenty of stores that are aimed at different types of consumers, but these represent the same variety one would find in Kuta, Bali, or Cancún, Mexico. As Ada Colau has claimed, the area is being transformed into a "theme park" (Hancox), one that may, in Vázquez Montalbán's critical diagnosis, be understood as a "simulacra" of Barcelona-ness. At night, these same public spaces lose a portion of their public-ness, though the pertinence of that notion itself is challenged by the ways in which these spaces encourage (or demand) various forms of consumption. The further one goes into the night, the narrower the

cultural experiences offered by the city becomes, and the area turns into a space of exclusion because the public spaces are often patronized by young males who drink until the public transit system opens again. Locals, especially women, may not feel safe in certain of Barcelona's public spaces.

The tensions surrounding nightlife in Barcelona's waterfront district are not limited to those between club-goers and the residents of surrounding neighbourhoods. They also extend to exclusionary practices that mark entrance to discotheques and other sites of nighttime entertainment. In 2002, after a night out at the Maremagnum disco complex, a young immigrant from Ecuador was beaten up and thrown into the sea, where he later drowned. The murder was the climax of the various racial tensions that had been recurrent in discotheques, notably the exclusion of Black and Roma people. The *Ajuntament* closed the clubs of the Maremagnum in 2004. Today, only one bar—La Sureña—is located in the Maremagnum complex and it closes at 12am. As part of the [atNight project](#), Mar Santamaria Varas, Pablo Martínez Díez and Jordi Bari Corberó produced a [map](#) showing differences in the investment of Barcelona's public space during night and day. The club scene is in the upper-right corner of this map; the W hotel is at the bottom-left. A second [map](#) shows the routes that taxis use during the day and at night in La Barceloneta. These taxi routes present a part of the nighttime flow of La Barceloneta. Although

both day and night rides circulate along main axes, the W Hotel scene and that which gravitates toward the main nightclubs draw the most taxis at night. At night, these scenes become *archipels nocturnes* (nocturnal archipelagos), in the sense that cultural options and the people who consume them are more homogeneous (Gwiazdzinski 159). As the map above demonstrates, cultural consumers of the night are more aggregated and visible in specific places. Different people invest in different places at different times, and the type of activities in which they participate also have a temporal dimension. The overcrowding of (noisy) people in public spaces also has a seasonal dimension that could be worth examining, as the phenomenon of *archipels nocturnes* is exacerbated in the summer.

Conclusion

During the high season (June to August), Barcelona's nighttime cultural scenes are a key component of its tourism industry. Arguably, however, the city's nighttime cultural identity is less well-defined than those of Berlin and London (with their club-based music scenes). In Barcelona, the nocturnal economy may be seen as a nighttime extension of the Mediterranean ethos of "sun, sea, sangria," of a never-ending fiesta. Interestingly, Barcelona does not have the most permissive nighttime culture in Europe; in many neighbourhoods, although it is legal to open new bars (which can close at 3am), it is illegal to establish a discotheque (which can close at 6am). At the same time, the city is engaged in deregulating its nightlife in other respects. Thus, since April 2016, any bar, café, or restaurant can now host concerts. The new policy is aimed at encouraging emergent musicians and at stopping the proliferation of illegal music venues. It is also part of a larger plan to decentralize the cultural scenes in the city. Finally, in response to the expressed desire of citizens to reclaim public spaces, the City Council announced in 2016 that it would create citizen areas in which only residents would be able to drive automobiles. A trial plan would be implemented in L'Eixample and then expanded to other areas of the city.

Barcelona has a deep and rich history of critical social movements, many of which emerged during *Franquismo*, which provided a clear target for opposition. These movements have criticized the Barcelona model for a long time, as have scholars such as Horacio Capel and Manuel Delgado. Historically, neighborhood movements have tended to be tied to their own community rather than to a specific political party. In her transformation from housing rights activist to mayor, Colau challenged this traditional version. *BComú's* "feminized democracy and politics" are generally well received because they shed new light on urban problems. For example, in 2016 the political party created the Department of Life Cycles, Feminisms, and LGBTI, whose goal is to develop working groups, reports, and campaigns aimed at fighting sexist discrimination and violence as well as tackling problems such as the feminization of poverty. Still requiring further study are issues related to tourism and their effects on cultural scenes in the city, which remain overlooked in the "Strategic Plan for Tourism 2020." While the anti-tourism groups received the Plan positively, others fear that this will create more illegality in the room-rental sector and that this "war on tourism" will negatively affect Barcelona's economy. With 2017 as the United Nations International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, it will be necessary to examine these policies as their impacts unfold.

Images Notes

Figure 1. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/21/naked-italians-protests-drunken-tourists-barcelona> Accessed March 2 2017

Figure 2. <https://www.google.ca/maps/place/La+Barceloneta,+Barcelona,+Spain/data=!4m2!3m1!1s0x12a4a30709605c93:0x2600fae14082f052?sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiMyfai44rNAhVr9IMKHZYJB6sQ8gEIGjAA> Accessed March 2 2017

Figure 3. Rebecca Horn's *L'Estel Ferit* in La Barceloneta. Jonathan Rouleau, June 2015.

Figure 4. <http://www.barcelonina.com/the-tiny-barcelonas-today-la-barceloneta/> Accessed March 2, 2017

Figure 5. <http://www.holidaysinbarcelona.co.uk/wp/beach-clubs-to-relax-party-in-barcelona/> Accessed March 2 2017

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Notes

¹ In 2015, I spent four months doing fieldwork in Barcelona (April to July). However, I started doing research on the crisis of tourism earlier, as I became interested in the topic during a one-month visit to Barcelona in August 2014, having witnessing firsthand the protests that followed the naked tourists events in La Barceloneta.

² The term Chinatown has nothing to do with the presence of a an Asian population; this quarter was labeled as such in the 1920s by Francisco Madrid, editor of *El Escándalo*, who drew a romantic analogy between Barrio Chino and Chinatowns in the world.

³ As McNeill notes, "By the mid-1970s, the district was in a state of terminal decline. Hard drugs, prostitution, organised crime and appalling housing conditions were the reality behind the bohemian reputation" (33). In the past few decades, however, the City Council has led many social renewal actions that have often materialized in urban regeneration initiatives. Examples include the Rambla del Raval, which grew from the demolition of five city blocks and more than fifty tenement buildings, the Cat by Fernando Botero (located on the Rambla del Raval), the Filmoteca (a cinemathèque), the Contemporary Art Museum of Barcelona (MACBA), and the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona.

⁴ *Cap pis turistic* (no tourist flats): the barriò's blue and yellow flag often bears this slogan.