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The city of the night
Luc Gwiazdzinski

Perpetually in search of emancipation from natural rhythms, little by little man has made urban life artificial. The diffusion of public lighting and the increase of political power have played a fundamental role in making the development of activities and animations possible and in permitting the appearance of a nocturnal public space. The urban night is a 'frontier', "the limit reached by the valuing and advance of colonists who settle in colonies on lands previously empty or little populated" (Brunet 1992). In this sense the frontier is a front where it is not neighbours that are addressed but the unknown.

A territory little explored
General oblivion. While we have known and studied cities for a long time, we often forget its nocturnal dimension. Apart from the pioneering work of Anne Cauquelin (1977), the British research into the night economy at the start of the 1990's (O'Connor 1998) and the recent Italian studies on nocturnal *loisirs* (Bonomi 2000; Castellani 2003), the scientific literature is still timid on this subject. This strange oblivion also applies to policies and planning: the night is either absent from the development prospects and urban management or limited to aspects such as pollution by sound and public lighting

New pressures on the urban night
Intensification of nocturnal activity. Colonisation is accelerating today. Society is revising its day/night rhythms and the city is being transformed. The pressure is increasing because of the individualisation of

behaviour patterns, of urbanisation, of the change to a service economy, of putting the planet on the Internet and of the growth in demand and territorial marketing. Little by little the economy is colonising the night. Industrial enterprises function with continuous rhythms to make plant profitable and in most sectors night-time work is no longer an exception. Service companies are moving towards continuous twenty four hour activity. Finnish nocturnal nurseries are being imitated all over Europe. The media curfew is finished for radio and television. The trend is towards increasing the regularity, the capacity and the frequency of transport services. Many shops are opening more in the evening. Those with nocturnal opening hours and night sales are enjoying success. The supply of night *loisirs* is developing and the night has become an economic sector in itself. 'Special nights' are multiplying: 'nights of fantastic cinema', 'of electronics', or 'of art'. 'All night' events are a success in Paris, Brussels and Rome and night walks and markets are flowering in the countryside. Biological rhythms also seem to have changed radically. People go to bed at 11.00 p.m. instead of at 9.00 p.m. as they did fifty years ago. *A shrunken heart and uncertain margins.* Urban night, defined as the period in which activity is reduced to a minimum, is limited today to the period between 1.30 and 4.30 in the morning. If 95% of the city sleeps after midnight, part remains awake: doctors, nurses, firepersons or policemen of the city guard, employed in transport, industry or in cleaning, bakers, café or restaurant proprietors account for 20% of night workers. For others the night is a time for

parties, for civic commitment, but also for exclusion. On the streets, tramps, the night walkers, prostitutes or insomniacs are the mythical figures of the 'night people'.

Make day on the night
A nocturnal archipelago. The night front progresses discontinuously in space: central districts reserved for nocturnal *loisirs* have developed in the historical centre of cities; out-lying districts are organising them-selves for competition; round the clock automatic vending machines are being installed everywhere, when the spaces of international flows of people cross and irrigate the metropolises with their 'permanent oases of services' (service areas, station and airport shops) for nocturnal nomads. The image that imposes itself is that of an 'archipelago'. It is neither a regular nor continuous front.

Conflicts that multiply. The pressures are accentuated on the night which clearly outlines the fundamental economic, political and social factors at stake. Residents who live near airports on the margins of agglomerations demonstrate against transport companies whose activities require continuous 24 hour functioning. These conflicts of a very mediatic nature see the city that sleeps pitted against the city that works, a local time of the circadian city and a world economy time, a space for flows (airport) and a space for stocks (residential districts). Residents in city centres confront noisy consumers in night clubs and discos. Urban violence explodes in outlying areas between 10.00 p.m. and one in the morning at a time when natural social frameworks disappear. Some railway companies have limited night stops for security reasons. Debates in Europe

on opening hours of night clubs and discos, the sale of alcohol and regulating 'free parties' recur frequently. *A frontier yet to be explored.* From studies of some metropolises we have been able to identify movements of conquest and of discontinuity that characterise frontiers and identify the lines of the front. This first approach examines the issue of our geographical concepts of space, of power and territory. The urban night does not correspond to any type of experienced space: neither to the fluid territories in which the inhabitants move as a function of ecological conditions; nor to rooted territories in which man forms close ties with a place and nor yet to territories of industrial spaces marked by functionalisation. We intend to address the night provisionally in terms of spaces as ephemeral experiences. The night must no longer be perceived as a territory abandoned to representations or to the market, but as a space for planning, a new frontier for scientists, decision makers and citizens. It is a factor at stake for everyone and relates to citizenship, urbanity and the establishment of the right to the city 24 hours round the clock. A more human city can be conceived of, more hospitable and harmonious starting with 'night planning' based on values which take account of the nocturnal. It is possible and necessary to illuminate the night of a new day. Together we can dream of nights that are better than days.

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