

**Border and Liminalities of the Night: Violences and Inequalities
in the Nocturnity (*Noctem*) of Young Residents of Tijuana****Frontera y liminalidades de la noche: Violencias y desigualdades
en la nocturnidad (*noctem*) de jóvenes residentes de Tijuana**Julio César Becerra Pozos¹

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the interrelation between nocturnity, youths, and systemic violence. Based on the theory of conceived and inhabited space, ethnographic work, and on-site exploration, a reconstruction of urban imaginaries “of the border” and “of the night” is presented, as well as the narratives generated by Tijuana’s young residents. Thus, a distinction between the night (*noctis*) and nocturnity (*noctem*) is exposed, along with some key elements that make up the accessibility, experience, and participation of young people in Tijuana nights’ nocturnity in recreational, inequality, transgression, and violence contexts. The results allow us to perceive nocturnity as a socially constructed space, complex and dynamic, with diffuse and rigid borders, that needs a comprehensive public policy that seeks the inclusion of the youth and the progressive decrease of the inequalities that affect them.

Keywords: 1. nocturnity, 2. youths, 3. inequality, 4. border studies, 5. Tijuana.

RESUMEN

En este artículo se analiza la interrelación de la tríada nocturnidad, juventudes y violencia sistémica. A partir de la teoría del espacio vivido y concebido, trabajo etnográfico y recorridos *in situ*, se presenta una reconstrucción de los imaginarios urbanos “de la frontera” y “de la noche”, así como de las narrativas generadas por jóvenes residentes de Tijuana. En ese tenor, se expone la distinción de la noche (*noctis*) y la nocturnidad (*noctem*), junto con algunos de los elementos clave que conforman la accesibilidad, la experiencia y la participación de las juventudes en la nocturnidad de la noche tijuanaense en contextos lúdicos, de desigualdades, transgresiones y violencias. Los resultados permiten vislumbrar que la nocturnidad es un espacio socialmente construido, complejo y dinámico, con fronteras difusas y rígidas, que necesita de una política pública integral que procure la inclusión de las juventudes y la disminución progresiva de las desigualdades que les afectan.

Palabras clave: 1. nocturnidad, 2. juventudes, 3. desigualdad, 4. estudios fronterizos, 5. Tijuana.

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INTRODUCTION²

If a group of unknown people about to become interlocutors in a televised debate—or streaming platform, for a larger audience—were asked to write a definition of “night” as the main argumentative axis of what their interventions will be during the broadcast, they would probably find the time of the program insufficient to reach a consensus or outlined notion. Beyond referring to the result of the luminous process generated by the Earth’s rotation, there is a wide diversity of approaches and responses that blur the meaning of the night into an unmanageable branching of the nocturnal that makes it extremely difficult to define a topic of conversation without it turning into a philosophical discussion.

But, how much would the subjectivity—understood as the process of giving meaning—of the concept of night change if a verb is added that transforms the idea into “going out at night”? In this way, although the spectrum of responses would continue to be vast, perhaps the starting point of the definitions would be somewhat compatible so that a rich common thread could be maintained—although loaded with contradictions and disagreements. In other words, there would be coincidences even when the dialogue took place between people with different biographical paths, cultural and economic contexts, as well as with different age and gender conditions.

In this sense, language is a construction, whose meaning cannot be entirely established by institutional instances, but is in constant dispute, is dynamic, and is configured by the uses of each cultural context. Nevertheless, looking up the meaning in the dictionary of “going out at night” can be a tool to make its polysemic meaning clear. Although the verb “go out” in the Spanish Language Dictionary has more than 40 definitions, strictly speaking “go out at night” could be defined as “going from inside to outside” (Real Academia Española, n.d.a, definition 1) during the “part of the day between sunset and sunrise” (Real Academia Española, n.d.b, definition 1). Following that line, the meaning is limited, but there remains a wide range of opportunities for interpretation. This does not intend to conduct a semantic or phenomenological analysis of the notion of going out, but to present the relevance of the night in its socially constructed and unique, multidimensional, dynamic, and sensitive nature (Becerra Pozos, 2018a, 2018b, 2020), and the inability to give it a rigid definition in the tangible universe given its cultural nature.

However, the above does not exempt the night (*noctis*)³ from containing measurable and observable physical elements in terms of public policy based on the transformation and enablement of urban space—for example, policies focused on roads, economic development, lightning investment, trade or land use—when the sun sets and the night becomes present. The flow and

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³ This Latin word is used in order to avoid confusion with the polysemic and colloquial use of “the night” and to make a distinction between studies of the economy of nighttime and studies of nocturnity, which focus on its social, playful, and divergent character.

pulse of the city are accentuated in the circuits and corridors of nocturnal consumption (Mercado Celis, 2021) where it is intended to break into—at least witness—the liminalities of the social order, which for some people implies breaking away from everyday life. Reflecting on the development of a collective conception of the night in its playful, divergent and social aspect (hereinafter called *noctem*), allows us to emphasize the unequal access of those who participate in it, including those who with their work produce Night Time Economy (NTE).

Considering the above, the objective of this article is to analyze the complexity of the interrelationship between nocturnity (*noctem*), youth and systemic violence.⁴ Likewise, it seeks to generate a configurational diagnosis of the impact of nocturnity in Tijuana on its young residents that makes visible the absence and the need for a comprehensive public policy on nocturnity that combats the systemic violence that most affects besieged youth.⁵

In order to achieve this purpose, the differences between *noctis* and *noctem* are presented as an alternative proposal for distinguishing nocturnal space and time, which incorporates elements from shift work, NTE and nocturnity, in addition to the theory of lived and conceived space (Lindón, 2007a, 2007b, 2013; Thrift, 2008). These ideas, at the same time, are supported by a brief conceptual overview of the approaches used to study the night and nocturnal space, taking into account the particularity of the border context. Likewise, through a framework of liminalities, mobility and borders of some nocturnal practices, the poles where *noctem* becomes precarious until it becomes residual and lacking in public policy that addresses it are shown. In other words, the aim is to help break the discriminatory and prejudiced bias attributed to a significant portion of young residents of Tijuana, Baja California, as well as their nocturnal consumption practices and circuits.

Additionally, a reconstruction of the narratives generated by young residents of Tijuana is presented. Furthermore, the results of in situ tours of nocturnal circuits and districts, as well as areas with playful and divergent sociability practices where catalysts of altered states of consciousness are consumed in private, public and semi-private spaces in contexts with varying degree of inequality, are exposed. In this sense, through an approach that considers the night as a privileged space for the transitions of the biographical journey of young people, their playful moments and life projects are analyzed, whose accesses and experiences are strongly marked by contexts of inequality, class, gender and, subsequently, by structural, systemic and symbolic violence.

Some of the characteristic features of focusing this study on the border city of Tijuana are the similarities in the polarized imaginaries associated with the night and Tijuana; the distinctive orography, borders (both rigid and diffuse) and growth in a broken plate-like structure with

⁴ Understood as the violence that is fueled by the ideologies of state institutions and systems, is exercised by those in power and characterizes authoritarian regimes.

⁵ The besieged state is the product of neoliberal processes, collective imaginaries, and the prohibitionist state policy that invisibilizes and criminalizes young people from marginalized neighborhoods, who end up being thrown into a residual nocturnity.

irregular settlements; the heterogeneous composition of its inhabitants and floating population that generates a phenotypic plurality that is partially perceived as less racist than the rest of the country; the migratory status, cross-border agency and English proficiency that constitute aspects of distinction; and the breadth and diversity of its nocturnal practices, of which, in a metaphorical sense with the ocean, the depth and darkness of its waters are unknown.

Finally, these findings allow us to reflect on the elements that make up the accessibility, experience and participation of nocturnity in Tijuana's night—a socially constructed and dynamic space whose boundaries can be contradictorily diffuse and rigid—.

INTERRELATIONAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN NIGHT (NOCTIS) AND NOCTURNITY (NOCTEM)

Although the objective of this document is not to reconstruct the diverse and relatively recent opening to studies about the night,⁶ in order to make the symbolic, practical and interconnected distinction between night (noctis) and nocturnity (noctem) possible, it is necessary to briefly review the lines of research that are currently being developed in the American continent on this topic.

In this sense, among the lines of study on the night, the following elements are included: gender, sex and gender diversity, gender-based violence, transgression and resistance, as well as access, rights and appropriation of public spaces in relation to the history of social uses of the night, the youth, the NTE, work, cultural studies and socio-musical spaces. At the same time, there is an absence and subsequent need for academic production regarding the relationship between the night in a broad sense and violence, particularly in countries with armed conflicts and a strong presence of organized crime, such as Mexico and Colombia.

Likewise, when considering that “it has often been argued that in any definition of public policies, the conceptual basis from which it was formulated can be read, distinguishing the different currents of social thought that give rise to its design and implementation strategy” (Merino & Miranda, 2022, p. 168), most public policies on the night are characterized by a focus on the economic aspect and only address night-time consumption circuits, such as historic centers, tourist destinations or nightlife districts. Although the revitalization practices of these areas have proven to be a success in several cases for economic reactivation and reducing the perception of insecurity, they can also catalyze the symbolic barriers that shape the limits of the urban space, accentuating the conditions of inequality for young people in contexts of precariousness and violence.

Nevertheless, the listed research lines have an impact on the configuration of nocturnal practices of the young residents of Tijuana. The categories analyzed by existing research increase their relevance in the task of expanding the scenario of nocturnal leisure and sociability practices towards contexts and spaces external to the economic circuits of nocturnity supply—which would

⁶ For a radiography of the transition of studies on the night as an incipient and secondary field of urban studies and cultural consumption aimed at consolidating a theoretical and conceptual framework in the North American context, it is recommended to read Mercado Celis and Hernández González (2021).

be impossible without the vast production of NTE studies. Similarly, these studies allow us to recognize the different degrees of mobility and agency that diverse youth collectives can experience. In that sense, they allow us to glimpse that the experiences of youth are pressured—but not determined—by the imaginaries, preconceptions of the night, mental maps of the city, and forms of inhabiting public space, which have an impact on the multiplicity of biographical trajectories of those who participate in the noctem. In addition, in the case of Tijuana, this multiplicity must be added to the particular character of the border and systemic violence, not necessarily confined to the nocturnal space-time.

It is also worth mentioning that the relationship between youth and the night is historical. For example, in the case of the working-class youth studied by Willis (1988), although they initially rejected factory work as a way of life and to deny the father figure, they ended up accepting part-time jobs in the factories where their parents worked, only as a temporary measure. However, their adaptation to a relative financial independence and the gradual rejection of school ended up pigeonholing them in these jobs and, in addition, being the means that allowed them to afford nightly outings—to clubs, pubs, concert halls—with friends and romantic relationships.

On the other hand, the night space as an axis of study for the Latin American case had a conjunctural place with Margulis (2005) and Urresti (2005), who analyzed youth practices associated with nightlife in relation to issues such as identity, belonging, rituals, and consumption of addictive substances. However, characteristic of this trend was that initially the night was considered—without fully relating it to the nocturnal space, night and nocturnity—as the suitable scenario and domain of young people—in masculine—and of youth—in singular—, so that nocturnity was seen as a construction reclaimed and dominated by them.

Later on, the spectrum began to open up towards the plurality of the youth condition and the distinction of gender began to gain relevance. In this regard, the works of Mendes et al. (2010) and Ochoa (2008) could be mentioned, which are part of a larger project on youth, time use, nocturnity, spaces, and consumption.

Another research that is relevant is that of Felice (2013), as it addresses the nocturnity and forms of sociability of young people from upper-middle-class sectors in the city of Buenos Aires. Her contribution lies in proposing two lines of analysis: nightlife as a form of entertainment and as a meeting point. The idea of “la previa”⁷ being the main purpose of the night out can be applied to the present study by reflecting that in Tijuana’s nocturnity, young people seek their recreation in collectivity, rejecting the notion that bars and clubs are the only non-massive entertainment options or the only spaces that generate community and social interaction.

In relation to gender and nocturnity, there are also analyses on the environmental characteristics and social behavior in bars, as well as the risk factors and dangers related to alcohol consumption in public, semi-public, and private places. In this regard, the study carried out by Parks and Buddie

⁷ Colloquial term that refers to the gathering that takes place before going to a nightclub, bar or pub, equivalent to “pre-game”.

(2008) stands out, which addresses the aggressions that women suffer in bars; while Agoff and Fernández-Esquer (2012) analyze the ethnography of cantinas from a gender perspective.

Similarly, in the research by Cecconi (2009), differences in prices for accessing nightlife establishments based on gender-differentiated rates are highlighted, a situation that also occurs in the Mexican context. The study also emphasizes that the relationship between beauty and masculinity has not been taken into account in research, at least not as much as it has been with femininity. The study also emphasizes gender differences in the nightlife scene when discussing the “should be” of men and women participating in the nocturnal leisure experience. Related to the topic of sexual diversity addressed in this article, the ethnographic works on nightclubs by Gallo (2014) and Chaves (2007) provide broader perspectives on issues related to this category: youth, exclusion processes, and diversity in night spaces.

Regarding the NTE, related research is fruitful as a starting point to propose gentrification and revitalization processes that simultaneously generate a residual night and displacement. In the works carried out by Yeo and Heng (2014)—which address public policies managed for the sustainable reactivation of the NTE—, the research by Nofre i Mateo and Martín i Díaz (2009)—referring to the study of nightlife and gentrification processes in Sarajevo—, as well as the one carried out in the port of Veracruz by Aguirre Aguilar (2000), the nocturnal experiences and processes of communication, violence, and exclusion in accessing semi-private spaces of entertainment and nightlife are evident. These authors address the topics of production, regulation, and consumption of urban playscapes (urban playful landscapes), while presenting a typology of the nighttime space in terms of its inclusiveness/exclusiveness and type consumption (mainstream, alternative, and residual spaces of nightlife consumption),⁸ in line with the transformation that has taken place in:

[Nighttime] leisure consumption in contemporary Western cities, which is characterized by growing social and spatial segregation (...) [leads] to a highly effective social segregation of the “nocturnal” urban space, which increasingly visibly polarizes the use of public space, sometimes even with episodes of symbolic violence (Nofre i Mateo & Martín i Díaz, 2009, p. 102).

Taking all this into consideration, it is to be expected that, in order to account for the complex interrelation between youth and systemic violence in the context of the border night in Tijuana, it is not enough to do so from a single perspective. That is why, as will be seen below, the distinction between night (noctis) and nocturnity (noctem) does not necessarily have a rural or urban character, nor does it allude to a natural existence produced by the movement of rotation and translation, but rather it is a social, dynamic, and subjective interconstruction. Noctis is defined as the part of the night in its most classic sense: that which refers to the tasks of reproducing the workforce and rest. It is the conception of a socially constructed and unrepeatable space, that is, a multidimensional, dynamic, and sensitive configuration that goes beyond measurable or tangible

⁸ Spaces for nightlife mass consumption—or conventional—, alternative and residual. These are ways of categorizing the activities practiced in spaces according to consumption models.

substance. Thus, although it is predominantly configured by rest, intimacy, and private space—the home—it can be understood as the daily part of “the night” and complementary, in the biological and psychosocial field, to the world of daytime work.

In contrast, nocturnity or noctem:

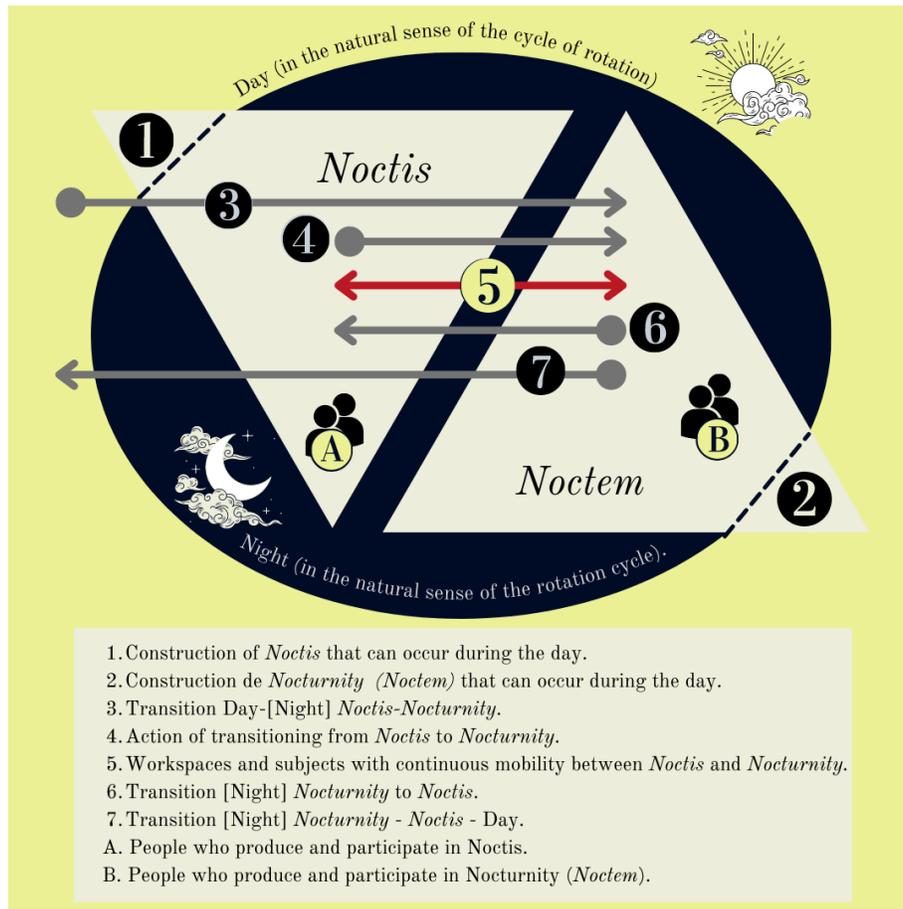
(...) is understood as a complex configuration of cultural, social, spatial, and economic aspects that can be unique and unrepeatable for each participant (Thrift, 2008; Pile, 2009; Pred, 1981); that, although it takes place during natural night-time (which we will simply call “night”), it is a construction filled with contradictions, both disruptive and normative (Miguez, 2010; Mendes et al, 2010; Margulis, 1995), of a specific leisure demand associated with a night-time economy (Nofre & Mateo, 2009; Su Jang, 2014; Bennet, 1997) that is also the arena for processes of exclusion and racism that regulate the night (Talbot, 2007), with an evidently urban character and whose spatiality does not extend throughout the entire city, but rather to specific circuits with diffuse liminalities (Chatterton, 2002) where different social classes (middle, low, high) and nationalities converge—perhaps with a predominance of the middle and working class—to satisfy their demands for social and cultural interaction, as well as nocturnal entertainment (Becerra, 2020, p. 133).

In short, nocturnity constitutes the socially constructed, multidimensional, dynamic, and sensitive space that configures the interrelationship between youth, sociability, work, and gender in contexts of inequality, transgression, play, and violence. Its spatiality does not extend throughout the entire city but is limited to specific circuits, nodes, and points that have diffuse liminalities. These circuits, in turn, are framed within a public policy around the night with different approaches and even absences.

Just as there is no single way of experiencing the noctis, in the same way, in the noctem, the experience is influenced by subjectivity, desire, and the expectations of those who participate in it, and it can occur beyond the night. Additionally, given the dynamic nature of both, it is possible to jump from one to the other within a single night-time period, which may replicate or extend beyond the biological daytime. For example, people who work in *maquiladoras* on the night shift, upon arriving at their home, replicate the noctis—using sleepwear, turning off lights, brushing their teeth, etc.—in order to produce a functional night of rest, even if it is during the day. As for the noctem, it is worth thinking about after-hours bars and clubs that open their doors when most other nighttime leisure economy spaces have closed and stay open well into the day. Another model are 24/7 casinos, without windows, with strong artificial lighting, and lacking clocks or any other indicator of time outside of them.

In summary and for greater clarity, Figure 1 illustrates a scheme of the night in its distinctions noctis and noctem.

Figure 1. Interrelational Distinction of Night in Noctis and Noctem



Source: Own elaboration based on Becerra (2018, 2018b, 2020), Lindón (2013) and Pile (2005).

THE NIGHT AND TIJUANA

Tijuana, by itself, has a historical trajectory characterized both by a particular, abundant, and diverse offer of nighttime economy in its uncontainable nocturnity (*noctem*), as well as by processes of (de)territorialization and exclusion marked by systemic violence contexts and macroeconomic interests that affect young people in conditions of precariousness and violence.

Likewise, Tijuana and the night have a lot in common, beyond the polarization of the imaginaries they trigger. This comparison substantially departs from the stereotype of a repository of excess industry and the ultimate headquarters of organized crime—reflected in works such as *El otro México. Biografía de Baja California* (Jordán, 1993) or the novel *Tijuana city blues*

(Trujillo Muñoz, 1999), among many others—which are associated with the so-called “black legend” of the origin of this border city, the most famous in Mexico and perhaps in Latin America.⁹

The point of comparison—as will be developed below—lies in four elements: 1) their similarities from urban imaginaries, 2) the possession of diffuse liminalities, 3) their heterogeneous quality marked by unequal access, and 4) the diversity of approaches for their study.

Urban Imaginaries

Urban imaginaries are considered to be those that refer to “networks or plots of specific, socially recognized meanings that give qualities to the city and its places” (Lindón, 2007b, p. 33). In this sense, it is possible to reflect on what could be some collective urban imaginaries shared about the night and Tijuana, and even about Tijuana’s night, which seems to be the customized receiving mold that fits both representations.

In the first place, it is found that, from the cultural industries such as cinema, literature, music and television,¹⁰ the urban night is represented in two tendencies from whose encounter, from the transgression, the plot usually emanates. On the one hand, it is seen as a privileged space for youth sociability associated with consumption, entertainment, partying, glamor, courtship, sexuality, creativity and transgression. From the other, the night is shown as the space of crime, danger, precarious lives and taken to the limit, sexual exploitation, excesses, depression and an environment that is extremely polluting.

As an example of the bridge mediated by transgression from a depressive mood to euphoria or towards the possibility of transformative reclamation that gives way to the plot, one can mention the movie *Begin again*, where the character played by Mark Ruffalo, immersed in a whirlwind of depression and alcoholism, meets the talent and creativity of Kiera Knightley in a bar (Carney, 2013). There is also the case of Rami Malek, portraying Freddie Mercury in *Bohemian Rhapsody*, who transcends his shyness to become an icon when he attends the presentation of the band Smile at a university bar, becoming the vocalist of what would later be Queen (Singer, 2018). Another example is Ted Mosby (played by Joshua Thomas Radnor), who goes from frustration to falling in love when he meets Robin Schebatsky (Cobie Smulders) for the first time, again, in a bar (Fryman & Greenberg, 2005). The list of scenes of this type of emotional transition that occur in the specificity of a bar can be endless. What is worth emphasizing is that, if the transitions between glamor and danger, excesses and criminality, or sexuality and risk were to be considered in

⁹ Referring to the well-known version that historically reduces Tijuana as a city conceived to satisfy the demand for nighttime economy for American citizens, from the period of prohibition of alcohol consumption in the United States between 1920 and 1933.

¹⁰ Television encompasses audiovisual productions for mass and consecutive consumption such as action or drama series—regardless of whether they are broadcast on open television, cable system or streaming platform—cartoons, animations, sitcoms, and documentaries.

audiovisual representations of the night, transgression would continue to be the binding bridge between the poles of the imaginaries.

This bridge, in turn, allows the focus to shift to the urban imaginaries of the city of Tijuana, which can be thought of in a similar complementary opposition: a city of decadent vice versus a metropolis of innovation. Is it a privileged space for fun or a hotbed of crime? Tijuana is a creative transcultural city, but it is also trapped in time, as it lives off the resale of American waste. Particularly, nostalgia is a theme that has already been investigated and reflected upon in literature and film. Some examples of this, which also provide a rich analysis of the cultural representations of Tijuana, are the works of Palaversich (2012) and Candelario (2015).

Similarly, cultural productions also give, and are, evidence of the multiplicity of products where the weight of the imaginary associated with the night and the city of Tijuana, frame a polarization of subjective appreciations in extreme poles. In the same vein, we could mention Pablo Sáinz-Garibaldi (2020) with the collection of journalistic chronicles in *Calafiero*, Shinpei Takeda (2019) with the documentary *El México más cercano a Japón*, or Rodrigo Ruiz Patterson and Del Monte (2019) with *Bad Hombres*, where the contrasts of the border city are portrayed with a journalistic approach, through stories that range from everyday life to the circuits of organized crime in the city and violence against migrants. Similarly, as an example of the narratives about the pulse and tension of organized crime violence, the legacy of journalist Jesús Blancornelas, who was murdered in November 1997, could be mentioned.

Similarly, this reflection could also apply to musical elements such as the animation produced by Hubley (1966), inspired and accompanied by the songs Spanish Flea and Tijuana Taxi, about the creation of the city and transportation in Tijuana. Or the iconic songs Tijuana makes me happy (Nortec Collective, 2005) and Welcome to Tijuana (Manu Chao, 1998), which have a language that mixes Spanish and English, and describe the contradictions of the previously mentioned urban imaginaries.

In short, Tijuana and its nocturnity awaken polarized imaginaries. Even so, when thinking about Tijuana's nightlife, there is a greater inclination towards danger, transgression, and illegality, which creates a bias and causes its rich everyday life and potentiality to be minimized or at least to make it invisible. This situation causes Tijuana to be invested with a de facto negative and contaminating condition for those who, from an external position, refer to it.

Diffuse Liminalities

The diffuse boundaries and borders of "the night" and Tijuana are intertwined with the polarization of imaginaries. The night goes beyond a temporal limitation, that is, the less luminous twilight interval (the time between sunset and sunrise), which in this city would be from 7:56 p.m. to 5:40 a.m., on average. It is also not possible to confine the city within geographic limits: Tijuana is not only the 1 239.49 km² that make it up, representing 1.73% of the national extension (Metropolitan Planning Institute of Tijuana, 2022). The practical, symbolic, and polysemic uses of the night and the city transcend these limitations.

As will be seen later on, the configurational character of the night in its sense of nocturnity, nocturnal time economy, or what has been called noctem, has diffuse liminalities, which are analyzed from a conception of space as socially constructed and unrepeatable; multidimensional, dynamic, and sensitive (Becerra, 2018a, 2018b, 2020), so it is not viable or desirable to frame it under a criterion of solar cycle or based on a schedule. Similarly, the city of Tijuana has challenged urban development plans and even viability expectations by extending the urban sprawl to hills and orographic contexts that would not have been considered suitable for housing.

Heterogeneity Marked by Unequal Access

Although the heterogeneous quality of Tijuana and nocturnity was mentioned in the section referring to urban imaginaries, there are other elements that account for this characteristic. One of them is the polycentric condition of the city that gives it a broken plate-like structure, marked by a gradient of commercial and land uses, as well as a diversified private and public investment. In addition to this, there is the emblematic condition of the city as a migrant melting pot—or of migrant origin in first or second generation—both nationally and internationally.

In addition, in accordance with what has been mentioned in other research regarding the dynamism and acceleration in the rhythms of life in large cities, the validity and use of spaces and sites is constantly transformed (De Certeau, 1984; Duhau & Giglia, 2008). In the particular case of Tijuana, diversified and varied offers of entertainment, hospitality, gastronomy, and even a growing industry of paralegality that satisfies the demands of drugs and prostitution of the population have been created.

However, access to the offerings of the NTE and the possibilities for experiences of nocturnity are markedly unequal, which increases the heterogeneity of the city and of nocturnity itself. In this sense, access is conditioned by elements of class, gender, phenotype, consumption patterns, identities, location/context of housing in the city, agency, and mobility status at the border, as well as by English language proficiency. Although this will be further discussed later, it is worth noting that these conditions are unfortunately embedded in a strong context of inequality and violence that is accentuated in the young population, which is the first to experience the consequences of gore capitalism (Valencia, 2016), particularly expressed in situated-sieged (Nateras Domínguez, 2016, 2019) and divergent youth populations.

In summary, the perpetuation of imaginaries about the night and Tijuana—situated in contradictory poles that can be located in various contexts—gives rise to diffuse liminalities that generate social inequalities and violence that are primarily accentuated in young people in Tijuana.

STUDY APPROACHES

All of the above reaffirms the impossibility of thinking about night and Tijuana as static entities. That is why research and studies on both function as instant photographs where, by focusing attention on those situated at a pivotal point, radiographs can be obtained that allow monitoring the evolution and marks of the trauma caused by social fracture—for example, the eruption of the so-called war

on organized crime in December 2006—. Despite this, to understand the complexity of both phenomena, it is necessary to see the photos together, as if it were an album.

Furthermore, both topics have been studied from different perspectives. Some of these include cultural, urban, anthropological, sociological, ethnographic, musicological (ethnomusicological), geographical, light architecture, public policy, non-representational theory, affect and emotion studies, labor studies, sociodigital technologies, and of course, contributions from art, literature, and design. Although it should be noted that there is still an evident need for these investigations to be carried out in a transversal and joint manner, moving away from academic trenches and the straightjackets of monodisciplinary structure. However, as a positive development, there has been a recent opening of research perspectives with multi and transdisciplinary approaches that enhance the possibilities of study and allow for a more faithful capture of the complex reality of Tijuana and the night.

Differentiated Access in the Configuration of Nocturnity (Noctem) in Tijuana

Look, almost nobody is from here, but I am really from here, well, not my parents because my dad is from Juchitán [Oaxaca] and my mom from Chilpancingo which is in Guerrero (...) but I was born and raised in La Mariano (...) but it wasn't until now, that I moved to El Soler and I'm 25, that I can say I am getting to know the Tijuana that everyone talks about (Checo, Call Center worker, 25 years old, personal communication, May 13, 2022).

Throughout this article, we have discussed the diffuse liminalities that characterize the night and cities, particularly in their noctem character, and in the context of the city of Tijuana, so that, given the introductory nature of several of the topics addressed in this article, it is evident how futile it would be to try to explicitly or deeply delve into the topic of the night life economy that this city offers, as this is not a business or market study. At the same time, these elements allow us to glimpse how impossible it is to create an X-ray that shows the entirety of the complexity of the noctem in which the youth living in Tijuana participate, build, and experience.

However, based on the preliminary results of the first stage of fieldwork in the postdoctoral research project that gives rise to this document, it is possible to present some key aspects that shape the noctem of this particular border context, with an emphasis on young people.

The starting point is found in the polysemic diversity of the nocturnity that is configured by different levels of accessibility, experience, and participation. In the shared narratives of the participating young people and in the referred, guided and in situ observations, the breadth of nocturnal practices and offerings becomes present, which, in turn, are framed in a variety of interests, aspirations, and imaginaries around the desirable nocturnal experience,¹¹ where even the

¹¹ Another project within the aforementioned research project will focus on the analysis of narratives derived from desirable and lived experiences, as well as the perceptions of youth across different degrees of inequality. The goal will be to highlight the violence, discrimination processes, resistance modes, and appropriation that those who participate in Tijuana's nightlife experience.

practice in terms of times, rhythms, and spaces is defined according to the unique and unrepeatable biographical trajectory of those who co-produce it.

There was a time when downtown was for tourists, only for *gringos*, foreigners (...) and look, wealthy people, at least those who stay on this side [of the border] on the weekend, go to *La Cacho*, *Zona Río* and some who want to feel alternative come to downtown, but they don't set foot outside *La Revu*, they just go to *El Mamut*, that's it. What did we have left? Nothing. But in recent years it seems that *La Revu* and the entire area have returned to us (Juan Antonio, student and worker, 23 years old, personal communication, April 17, 2022).

Similarly, although the diversity of nocturnity is imbued with phantasmagorias (Pile, 2005), it can be mapped based on the circuits and nighttime districts (Mercado Celis, 2021), which allows for accounting for the different intensities in the flows of NTE in the areas anchored as nodes of these activities in the collective mental maps of the city. Thus, in Tijuana's noctem, different types of outings are experienced: a) as a couple—from the whole gender spectrum; b) group outings—with a wide range of age, gender, socioeconomic, neighborhood, etc. diversities; c) collective outings—both recreational and as school, political or ideological associations (such as bikers, taggers, lowriders, academics, feminists, etc.); and d) solitary outings—this being the modality where gender has greater relevance due to the possibilities and limitations of agency and risk.

In turn, these outings take place in different spaces that could be characterized as: a) specifically designed for nighttime entertainment—such as bars, nightclubs, lounges, *cantinas*, casinos, stripclubs, *pulquerías*, *neopulquerías*, breweries, bar-restaurants, café-bars, pubs, *mezcalerías*, and their derivatives—; b) multipurpose spaces—concert halls, cultural or alternative venues, cafes, restaurants, dance halls, party halls, etc.—; c) private spaces—such as family or multifamily homes, shared rental apartments (roommates), or, in the rarest and most unusual cases, owned properties—; d) mobile units—private vehicles where the fun happens (for “cruising and drinking beer”); taxis, Uber, and rental party buses, limousines, vans, and Hummers—; and e) improvised, reappropriated, and contested public and semi-public spaces—such as garages, parking lots, abandoned houses and businesses, sports fields, parks, street corners, underpasses, porches, vacant lots, and hills—.

Based on the above, in order to reflect on those who are excluded from the right to the noctem, it is necessary to consider that practices, the offer, and interests are framed within the margins of accessibility, experience, and participation that are configured according to class, gender, phenotype, identities, location/context of housing, as well as mobility agency in the border and English language proficiency. However, as will be seen below, in some cases, this is accentuated by being distinctive and perhaps exclusive to the border life in the city of Tijuana.

First and foremost, it is imperative to mention that an element that conditions the Tijuana nightlife experience is the relational and subjective character associated with age. Currently, the construction of nocturnity is not interpreted as a unique or privileged space of youth, but as an intergenerational meeting arena, where the condition of youth is intimately related to performance—young people and those who appear to be young—in such a way that the opposite pole of youth is not necessarily adulthood, but old age.

On the other hand, it is likely that the main ordering elements of the nocturnal experience in Tijuana—as well as for the Latin American case—can be analyzed from the perspective of social identities and gender. The former correspond to the “symbolized and meaningful thresholds of affiliation/differentiation and belonging/exclusion, inscribed in specific socio-historical contexts and socio-cultural networks” (Valenzuela Arce, 2014, p. 17). On the other hand, the gender perspective enables the analysis of the existing discrimination and social inequity in the relationships between men and women, from where the inequality in access, control and decision-making about existing resources, the sexual division of labor, and levels of economic, social, and political participation are constructed (Lagunas-Vázquez et al., 2015).

As an example of the above, the following is a fragment of an interview with a young woman, who comments on her perception of safety and liking for bars in Tijuana:

It depends, because it's not like I could tell you, 'here it's fine' or 'there it's not because we get harassed'... because the truth is, it depends on who you go with. Look, for example, at *La Terraza*, the atmosphere is really cool and I can go with my girlfriends, guy friends, or even just another girl and me and it's all good, we can be dancing and everything. But at *Tropics*, you have to go with a guy or male friends, because if not, as soon as they see you come alone or with another girl, a guy will come up to you with a “hey friend” [imitating man voice] face, you know? But the truth is, even with all that, I like *Tropics* more, but I know I must go with guys, male friends (Tania, university student, 23 years old, personal communication, February 7, 2022).

Continuing along those lines, the testimony exemplifies the relationship that social identities establish with spaces of appropriation for nocturnal practices (noctem), where preference, choice or restriction is marked by criteria of class, gender and construction of taste. In that sense, Tijuana's youth social identities are not a homogeneous block and, therefore, their participation and access in the city vary undeniably. In this regard, the following account is quoted:

The downtown area has always been for the “gabachos” (derogatory term for Americans), maybe now you see more people from Tijuana, but those of us from here don't really go to *Dandy* every Friday, you know? My friends and I prefer to go out for some craft beers, have dinner, chat, it's not all about spring break, partying and screaming, although sometimes it is, but in general we feel more comfortable in *La Cacho*, maybe *Plaza del Zapato* or *Container* (...) but for sure people hear “they're from Tijuana” and immediately think we spend all our time in *La Revo*, but it's not like that (Jorge, graphic designer, 25 years old, personal communication, April 24, 2022).

The spectrum ranges from those who have access to elite spaces—where the spending per person in one night can exceed the monthly minimum wage (5 255 MXN)—to those who are excluded from the NTE. However, identity constructs consider subjective elements that do not necessarily work as an equation, where higher spending equals higher income, or where greater access equals higher spending. Instead, the urban imaginaries and phantasms of those who visit NTE spaces generate associations of class, taste, identity, and collectivity that can be observed in phrases such as “the rich kids go here,” “the bohemians gather there,” “the crowd likes this place,” “that's a biker bar.”

However, this phenomenon extends beyond these spaces to seep into other ways of experiencing the night, reaching those that, for various reasons, have more limited and even rough, dangerous, and violent accessibility (which will be further reflected on later).

In relation to the spaces that are part of the main circuits and corridors of the NTE, those that are currently anchored to the mental maps of the urban imaginary in the city of Tijuana could be summarized, in general terms, in the Zona Norte, the district of nocturnity (Mercado Celis, 2021) in the Zona Centro, and the Avenida Revolución, the Plaza del Zapato (now with less attendance), the Plaza Río, and the gastronomic nightlife corridor of the Zona Río. However, considering the blurred boundaries of nocturnity and Tijuana, it is difficult to assume that nocturnity only happens in those places. Doesn't the practice of nocturnal sociability occur in other gentrified spaces such as the Playas de Tijuana delegation of district 11 or in exclusive neighborhoods such as Chapultepec, Burócrata Hipódromo, Madero—better known as La Cacho—or Agua Caliente? And going to the other pole of the diffuse urban fabric, neighborhoods with a marked condition of inequality such as Camino Verde, El Florido, Mariano Matamoros—in all its sections—, or those quasi-encapsulated by geographic and systemic structural violence, such as the El Niño neighborhood, are not exempt from this practice.

T- When I was younger, we hardly ever went down to downtown, my friends and I would grab a 12-pack, the speakers, and head to the hills.

E- Which hills?

T- What do you mean which hills? It's all hills around here, we would just go to the one that was closest to us, who knows what they're called.

(Tino, maquiladora employee, 23 years old, personal communication, February 22, 2022).

In that sense, from an NTE approach, it follows that these poles end up blurring in studies of nocturnity. Moreover, in the case of areas in precarious conditions, there is a gap in terms of public policy regarding the night that goes beyond the regulatory, criminalizing, and surveillance functions of nighttime. This situation, in turn, highlights two important points. The first is that nocturnity practices (noctem) are not limited to NTE circuits, but emerge or languish throughout the spectrum that constitutes the urban sprawl. The second point is that for many people, narratives about the night in Tijuana are often based on a sense of nostalgia and longing for the past—that is, they are based on the phantasmagoria (Pile, 2005) of the city, which further complicates thinking about a radiography of the night in a border context, as its perception is not only organized spatially, but also temporally. As an example of this, a participant's response to the question “where do you like to go when you go out?” is presented, which also highlights the transformations and associations of the same nocturnity circuit.

Oh, to a lot of places, but where Chips used to be there's nothing now. Before it was cool to go to “XXXXX” because that's where you could get anything, I mean pills, coke, weed... even crystal or crack, but everything was peaceful, no trouble or danger. And you always ran into your whole crew there, but now you go and you don't bump into anyone anymore. The people who used to go to *La Plaza* [del Zapato], since they banned drinking in public, now go to *Montecarlo* or *La Once*, but I still go to *Tropic's* and *La Mezcalera*, looking for a place with a

good jukebox. For example, I also go to *Porky's*, but it's not the same as when it was *El Porky's* and the same goes for *Chenson*, which will always be there, but now only young people go there and a few veterans (...) well, it also depends on what time you go (...) but those places are more like restaurants, like *Mamut*, or places that only play reggaeton and norteño music like *Las Pulgas*, are not for me (...) if I'm in a really good mood or if we go with a bigger group, I can handle *El 96* (Mateo, technology factory worker, 28 years old, personal communication, March 8, 2022).¹²

On the other hand, acknowledging that the experience of nocturnity is not limited to defined circuits opens the door to considering that it also occurs in divergent, paralegal, private spaces and in contexts of strong inequality and precariousness. At the same time, it is worth questioning, what is the margin of mobility in the offer of nocturnity and who has the greatest agency? And where are the ascending or descending limits of said offer marked? Or, in other words, how deep does the rabbit hole go?

And although there is no direct answer to these questions, it is likely that the keys to interpreting the phenomenon lie in the narratives of the people who reside in this border. These people are part of a broad spectrum that includes poles of precariousness and systemic violence, whose nocturnal practices are marked by privileges and consumption that escape the expectations of what is possible or are lost in the imaginaries anchored in multimedia productions.¹³

CONCLUSION

Desirable, Precarious and Excluded Nocturnity

As presented throughout this work, the night—in its broadest sense—is not only the repository of rest, intimacy, and privacy, but also has a transgressive, playful, collective, and predominantly young character experienced in urban spaces of diverse and diffuse socioeconomic contexts (called noctem). It is a dynamic space that configures identity processes in intra and intergenerational articulation for all kinds of youth. At the same time, it constitutes an arena of exclusion guided by economic and class interests, which reproduce structural, systemic, and symbolic violence that exacerbates inequalities in access to private, semi-public, and public spaces.

This promotes that besieged youth (Nateras Domínguez, 2016, 2019) are thrown into a residual and denied nocturnity, close to “social death in life” (Nateras Domínguez & Valenzuela Arce, 2020, p. 72). In this way, it contributes to the confinement of youth inserted in contexts of systemic violence to a death by drip (Muñoz, 2015) and by youth homicide (Valenzuela Arce, 2012, 2015) alluding to “the symbolic disappearance of youth as a social actor, their invisibility as a protagonist

¹² For security reasons, when a direct reference is made to spaces for the sale of illicit substances, practices of child prostitution, or any other illegal element, the name of the establishment or person is censored.

¹³ As mentioned before, given the scope of this proposal, it is suggested to further elaborate and analyze these narratives for a subsequent publication that may even allow for a discussion of residual and stratified nocturnity.

of the public scene and the metamorphosis of the youth period, which goes from being a transitional phase to being an intransitive phase” (Strecker et al., 2018, p. 431). Coincidentally, in response to this, the public policy of the state has been to maintain a posture of surveillance, criminalization, and regulation of the night from a regulatory and prohibitive framework.

Regarding the methodological and ethnographic aspects of studies on nocturnal spaces and practices, it is considered that from non-representational theory (Thrift, 2008), anthropology of experience (Díaz Cruz, 1997), lived conceived space (Lindón, 2007a, 2007b, 2013; Thrift, 2008), and the city’s phantasmagorias (Pile, 2005) materialized in an interconstructed distinction of the night into noctis and nocturnity/noctem (Becerra, 2018b, 2018a), subjectivity and the experience of those who participate (or wish to participate) in the night are prioritized, instead of the circuits of consumption spaces of the NTE where they predominantly take place. This allows for the expansion of the study of nocturnal practices towards diffuse spaces that are not inserted in these circuits, thus making visible the contexts of inequality and violence present in the non-traditionally protagonist part of studies on the night. In other words, in the sense of noctis, the nocturnal time is conceived as one in which rest, reproductive tasks, shift work, and the private sphere are complementary to sociability, entertainment, and violence.

On the other hand, situating and reflecting on the night in Tijuana implies an even more particular perspective. There is a wide range of diversity in transgressive, playful, and sociable practices in the noctem of the border, as well as in the polarizing gradient of its night time economy, which extends to spaces that escape formality and traditional business models. These, in turn, range from atypical dynamics in urban space—such as gathering to drink, smoke, and chat on one of the many hills that coexist with the city—to high-risk contexts with violence where territorial association not only provides a sense of belonging and identity, but also limits and restricts the mobility of those who, by desire or geographic affiliation, are associated with a community of lives on the edge. There are cases where neighborhood affiliation makes it dangerous to travel to neighboring colonies and go to the most representative nocturnity circuits in the city. In addition, there is the presence of a parallel economy that permeates throughout the urban fabric of Tijuana. The result is a configuration of the noctem in which the nocturnal experience is mainly crossed by constructs of class, identity, and gender, emphasizing that the danger and restrictions in access to the night, in a broad sense, are substantially intensified for youth in contexts of precariousness and systemic violence.

Finally, it is recognized that by analyzing the narratives of those who participate in the extraordinary character of Tijuana’s noctem on a daily basis, a more nuanced approach to the accessibility, agency, and mobility with which youth negotiate, resist, and perpetuate the impulses of the night time economy could be achieved. These considerations would also be fundamental for the construction of public policies for night management from inclusive, proactive, and non-criminalizing perspectives.

Translation: Erika Morales.

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