Part 4

AFTERWORD

Afterword: Night Mayors, Policy Mobilities and the Question of Night's End

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As I write this afterword, reports on two developments involving the culture of night have arrived at my inbox, retrieved by the daily Google searches I set up a few years ago for this purpose. One of these developments is an event – France's first-ever 'Conférence Nationale de la Vie Nocturne' (14–15 September 2017). The roster of speakers at this high-profile meeting, held in Paris, includes Mirik Milan (leading spokesman for the Night Mayor movement and himself the *nachtburgemeester* or 'night mayor' of Amsterdam) and Amy Lamé (appointed earlier this year as Night Czar for London). The long list of issues to be addressed at the event suggests something of the burden which discussions of the night are now called upon to assume: culture, tourism, security, public tranquillity, transportation, health, risk reduction, the economy and training. Like an earlier landmark event held in the same city, the 2010 'Estates General' on the Parisian night (Mairie de Paris 2010), the 2017 conference brings together city officials; official or informal representatives of night-time entertainment sectors; and an assortment of academic sociologists, anthropologists, urbanists and geographers.

The other news to arrive on this day was more modest in its journalistic eventfulness but no less symptomatic of the night's new status as an object of collective attention. This was notification of the launch of 'Politiques de la Nuit', a thematic new issue of the interdisciplinary French academic journal *Cultures et Conflits*. This volume assembled a group of sociologists, anthropologists and others to explore the multitude of ways in which the night is a site of political conflict. While some of the struggles analysed might seem minor and tame (like the efforts of night concierges in luxury hotels to overcome the stigmatisation to which they are subject) (Menoux 2017), others were marked by more obvious kinds of political urgency (such as the complex work by a wide range of Parisian social agencies to ensure the survival

225

of the homeless at night) (Bruneteaux 2017). The special issue of *Cultures et conflits* is the latest in a series of recent periodical issues, most of them in French, devoted to the theme of night.[1] What this issue made clear was the extent to which the night now serves as an effective point of thematic convergence for a variety of research projects studying such phenomena as social marginality, urban work and gendered leisure practices.

At one level, the notion that the night is a recent object of attention and analysis seems absurd. The night has always been with us, of course. In the history of urban governance, night has served for centuries as the pretext for regimes of policing, structures of social exclusion and complex systems for the regulation of moralities both public and private. In the realm of ideas, the night has been invoked within the aesthetic sensibilities of important artistic movements, from romanticism through surrealism and on to the cultures of house and rave music. The academic social sciences have long studied the night, even when they have not always acknowledged that they are doing so. Early twentieth-century sociologies of dance hall ritual or histories of urban theatre form part of a prehistory of current scholarship on the night, even when the *nightness* of these phenomena has gone unexplored.

Nevertheless, it seems clear that, over the past fifteen years or so, the ascension of the night as a focus for urban policymakers has run parallel to the growth of an interdisciplinary academic field I have elsewhere called 'night studies' (Straw 2017). The 'Night Mayor' phenomenon, with high journalistic appeal, is the most obvious cause of the former;[2] more broadly, as several articles in this volume show, the night has become a key site around which struggles over urban gentrification, public safety and the survival of a lively urban culture have gathered. The growth of an academic field studying the night not only occasionally intersects with these policy developments but has also followed its own, multiple logics. A scattered and incomplete list of these logics might include the following: the emergence and ongoing development of the notion of the night-time economy, as traced by Eldridge and Nofre in their introduction to this volume; the rise, in the discipline of history, of an attention to popular experiences of time (e.g., Delattre 2003); a growing interest in the cultural practices of urban subcultures and minoritarian (often LGBTQ+) communities (e.g., Yuzna 2013); the growth of urban cultural studies, often faithful to the work of Walter Benjamin and marked by an interest in *flâneurie* (i.e., in the practices of the urban strowler), illumination and other hallmarks of urban modernity (e.g., Montandon 2009; Beaumont 2015); a philosophical interest in the night, rooted in the work of Foucault and others, which embraces those elements of nocturnal behaviour and experience banished from the realms of daytime reason (e.g., Bronfen 2013; Dunn 2016); the 'affective turn' in cultural analysis, which has nourished interest in the ways in which the night shapes political sentiment and forms of social

solidarity (e.g., DeGuzmán 2014; Sharma 2014); and, across several disciplines, an interest in the ecological dimensions of night-time urban lighting (e.g., Bogard 2013; Hasenöhrl et al. 2014). Alongside these currents, and interacting with them in different moments, are the more specialised, local case studies of urban nightlife represented in this volume.

POLICY MOBILITY AND THE NIGHT

If the current academic interest in the night can be traced back along these multiple threads, the growth of the night as policy sector has involved very different patterns. Rather than attempting a straight genealogy of policy initiatives directed at the night, it is more useful to briefly trace the processes that have surrounded one particular policy initiative, that of the naming of Night Mayors, Night Czars or other officials charged with protecting and developing the culture of night.

In briefly sketching these processes, we may follow two guiding principles offered within what are called policy mobility studies – that is, studies concerned with the ways in which policies move across time and space and with the transformations undergone in this movement. One of these is the notion of policy mobility as bound up with circulatory systems, a principle that may be interpreted at different levels of complexity, as Russell Prince suggests:

> Circulatory system descriptions might imagine policy in very narrow terms as just policy documents travelling across electronic networks and being 'applied' in different places, while descriptions that emphasize the way policy travels in a variety of forms might see policy as involving more than words on a page to include the relationships that get arranged around it. (Prince 2012, 318)

In the international take-up of the Night Mayor phenomenon, for example, we see multiple systems of circulation producing distinct clusters of actors and relationships. By 2015, it had become common for city governments in many parts of the world (or consultants advising them) to call for the naming of a city administrator dedicated to the protection and advancement of nightlife. The reports and statements in which this call was made followed one circulatory system, typically that of professionals within the policy process or quasi-professional observers (like myself) who followed and collected them online. The proposal for a Night Mayor was typically included in the lists of recommendations, which are a conventional concluding section of consultancy reports.

Alongside this system, news media interested (and bemused) by the notion of a Night Mayor sent profiles of Mirik Milan or Clément Léon (Night Mayor

of Paris since 2013) along other circuits, where they were picked up by journalistic feature writers and shared widely on social media. The youthful photogeneity of these figures, and their avowed connection to grassroots cultural activities, enhanced their newsworthiness and furthered the circulation of their profiles. Through these circuits, the notion of a Night Mayor was absorbed within the thinking of urban cultural activists and civil society groups seeking new tools with which to pursue their agendas vis-à-vis city governments.

The rapidly developing celebrity of Amsterdam's Night Mayor, Mirik Milan, helped to personalise the Night Mayor phenomena. His increasingly frequent visits to other cities, where he met with variable combinations of governmental and civil society actors, appeared to disseminate the concept of Night Mayor outside of the conventional pathways of urban policy mobility. In Canada, for example, we may trace the process through which personal visits by Milan, journalistic reports and local expert opinion interacted to put the notion of Night Mayor on the agenda of every major city in the country. In Toronto, a journalist who had learned of Milan's role through international press coverage questioned local municipal politicians as to their opinions of the Night Mayor phenomenon, pushing the concept into the terrain of public debate, where it has come closer to fruition. In Edmonton, where Milan himself spoke at a hospitality industry function, media used his presence as the pretext for raising the question of whether that city needed such a role. In Vancouver, a city resident who had recently returned from a visit to his native Holland was interviewed about the Night Mayor phenomena, translating Milan's actions into the language of local politics.[3]

In each of these cases, Milan's name and profile became the pivot around which discussion of the Night Mayor role was introduced, but the policy contexts for which that role might be imagined varied widely. In Toronto, the problem of nightlife has been framed as one in which gentrification is killing off live music venues; in Edmonton, it is the broader question of how a lively night-time culture might be brought into being. In the first, the night is a zone of conflict, while in the second it is more a terrain of promise. For the former, the Night Mayor is imagined as the champion of a threatened sector of cultural activity, for the latter, a visionary capable of remaking the city's cultural fabric.

The difference between these two visions of the Night Mayor confirms the utility of the second of the precepts offered by specialists working in the field of policy mobility studies: that we 'avoid the temptation to understand policy transfer through a straightforward import–export metaphor' (McCann and Ward 2012, 327). In cases where the notion of Night Mayor (or some variant thereof) has been considered or adopted, it has been shaped by local, political and administrative traditions. In France, Night Mayors have emerged as figures of civil society or in relation to associative groups and

often received only quasi-official recognition from city administrations. In Amsterdam, the position of the Night Mayor has been formalised, but the holder himself is chosen in a special election from within the nightlife sector. The most high profile of such appointments recently, that of London's Night Czar Amy Lamé, was made by the Mayor's Office, and most proposals for similar positions within Canadian or American governments imagine the role as akin to that of a manager of a limited economic or social sector within city government.

Like other elements of a new urbanism, such as pedestrian-only streets and bicycle-friendly development, the Night Mayor phenomenon has been marked by the temporal lag between European and North American initiatives. The ubiquitous discussion of the Night Mayor phenomenon in North America in 2017 is evidence that this lag is being narrowed. While the question of its implementation in Canada and the United States was marked, in its early stages, by the sentiment that the Night Mayor is an eccentric, typically European phenomenon out of place in North American cities, it is now more common to see North America as simply behind in its adoption. It is perhaps revealing of the initial difficulties of adaptation that the first such position in the United States was marked by obscurity – it was that of Night Mayor of downtown Iowa City, a position created by a non-profit business association and given to one of its board members.[4] The proposed Nightlife Ambassador of New York City, on the other hand, will be appointed by the Mayor to work within the Mayor's Office for Media and Entertainment.[5]

NIGHT POLICIES, NIGHT STUDIES

Policy initiatives directed at the night have their own, limited terrain of implementation, but they are rarely able to remain purely administrative in character. This is because they cannot help but raise the conceptual question of what kind of category 'night' might name. If the night is more than just a period of time – if it is a set of practices and behaviours, of pathways and places, of values and affects – then a fuller conceptual engagement with the very category of 'night' is required. Even the driest of policy documents about the night waver between calling it a block of time, an economic sector and a population. The uncontrolled accumulation of metaphors for the night ensures that invitations to a more theoretical engagement issue forth from every announcement of a new policy tool. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the current proliferation of official or quasi-official administrative roles intended to ensure the representation of the night within city government.

If we are to have Night Mayors (Amsterdam), Night Czars (London) or Night Ambassadors (New York), each of these terms casts the night as a

particular kind of space. At the same time, the models of governance implicit in each of these titles presume distinct kinds of authority. 'Night Mayor' suggests an alternative city invisible within the daytime city and in need of representation. 'Night Ambassador' evokes the model of a foreign land sending emissaries to another political entity in order to make its wishes known. 'Night Czar' builds on the sense, most common within Western governments, of a figure given atypical levels of authority and independence in order to confront a sector marked by challenges – like the 'drug czars' of American governments since at least the 1930s.

Studies of these figures may attempt to remain at the level of the purely administrative. Observers may compare the respective mandates and resources of Night Mayors and Night Czars and evaluate the extent to which they fulfil (or combine) such traditional roles as those of lobbyist, sectoral manager or representative of minority populations. An administrative analysis, however, will have difficulty avoiding a more conceptual, even theoretical understanding of these political roles. At what point, in the emergence of the Night Mayor or Night Czar, have we come to see the night in terms that are almost entirely spatial and territorial rather than temporal and cyclical? During the 2017 presidential election campaign in France, Christophe Vidal (the Night Mayor of Toulouse) asked all candidates how they intended to represent 'the 10 million people in our country who are active in the evening and the night in our country, those engaged in night-time leisure and those who suffer in the night' (my translation). The image offered here was that of the night as a political constituency (a riding or *circonscription*) with its own populations and need for representation (Ladepeche.fr 2017). At this point, we are already deep within an enterprise of fanciful political theorising, one that links backwards to earlier, more speculative ideas about night-worlds or nocturnal species.

THE END OF THE NIGHT?

In 2015, two British journalists published articles arguing that nightlife, at least for a younger generation, was dying (Burrell 2015; Mangan 2015). These claims invited (and only partially offered) a multitude of qualifications. The alleged death of nightlife was, in fact, the death of the nightclub and of the rituals of club-going among British youth, in particular. What was significant in these claims, however, was that they went beyond the familiar diagnoses of the decline of nightlife in once-prominent nightlife capitals. Obituaries for nightlife in Manhattan, London and Paris have been a recurring journalistic genre throughout the past 100 years and particularly common in the past decade or two. As the introduction to this volume by Adam Eldridge

and Jordi Nofre argues, anxieties over the imminent decline of nightlife in this or that city reveal a broader recognition of the vulnerability of the night and those who venture into it.

The articles by Burrell and Mangan did not lay the blame for the demise of the nightclub mostly (or at all) on the battles over gentrification, which continue to drive nightlife politics in so many cities. The problem was not that nightlife was being forced out of cities but that broad changes in sensibility and behaviour among young populations meant that the night-time outing to music clubs was no longer a viable or attractive option. The reasons had more to do with the shifting priorities and financial resources of a younger generation than with external forces weakening the nightclub sector. Social media, it was argued, sharply reduced the need for clubs as a means of meeting people; streaming services made them no longer necessary as a means of learning about new music. Inflated drink prices in bars and declining salaries for young people encouraged the purchase of alcohol in retail stores for home consumption. Could it be the case that, amid the appointment of Night Mayors and innumerable panels on saving night-time culture, the latter's most sacrosanct form (the nightclub) was in a period of irreversible decline?

This account of the contemporary world runs counter to those images of drunken crowds and noisy club districts, which still push municipal governments to enact measures to control or transform their nights. It contradicts, as well, the claim of cultural theorists such as Jacques Rancière, to the effect that what drives cultural participation in the contemporary world is less the scarcity of meaning (of expression, of style) than that of social connection (Rancière 2006, 89). It must be noted as well that, if a certain kind of nightlife might indeed be in decline, this has not slowed the worldwide spread of nuit blanche art events, extended museum nights, bookstore nights, nocturnal bicycle rides and the general rush of so many social and cultural actors to occupy the night.

NOTES

1. Others include issues: no. 3 (2013) of *Le magasin du xixe siècle*, no. 11 (2015) of *Articulo: Journal of Urban Research*, no. 453 (July–August 2015) of *L'Ena hors les murs: Magazine des Anciens Elèves de l'ENA* and no. 26 (2015) of the Quebec journal *Intermédialités*.

2. See, for coverage of Night Mayors and their equivalents, actual or proposed, in many cities, the following: Martin Pinguet, 'NEW YORK : BIENTÔT UN MAIRE DE LA NUIT POUR CALMER LES TENSIONS ENTRE POLICE ET RIVERAINS?' *Traxmag*, 5 May 2017, http://fr.traxmag.com/article/41693-new-york-bientot-un-maire-de-la-nuit-pour-calmer-les-tensions-entre-police-et-riverains; 'Christophe

Vidal, maire de la nuit 2014, interpelle les candidats sur l'économie de la nuit', *Lade-peche.fr,* 18 April 2017, http://www.ladepeche.fr/article/2017/04/18/2558456-chris tophe-vidal-maire-nuit-2014-interpelle-candidats-economie-nuit.html; 'New York, Edinburgh Mull Appointing Night Mayors', *IQ News*, 15 May 2017, https://www. iq-mag.net/2017/05/new-york-edinburgh-mull-appointing-night-mayors/#.WVGkM mjyuM; John Thistleton, 'How a Night Mayor Can Solve Tuggeranong's Nightmare', *Riot Act!* 23 May 2017, https://the-riotact.com/how-a-night-mayor-can-solve-tug geranongs-nightmare/204222; Emma Kennedy, 'The Stuff of Night Mayors – Why Dublin Needs One', *Independent* (Ireland), 22 March 2016, http://www.indepen dent.ie/life/the-stuff-of-night-mayors-why-dublin-needs-one-35757327.html; 'New York City to Create New "Nightlife Ambassador" Position', *Washington Times*, 16 June 2017, http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/jun/16/new-york-city-to-create-new-nightlife-ambassador-p/; Washington Fajardo, 'Prefeito da Noite', *O Globo*, 16 June 2017, https://oglobo.globo.com/cultura/prefeito-da-noite-21478690.

3. Petti Font, 'A Night Mayor Is a Great Dream for Vancouver', *Ottawa Metro*, 24 May 2016, http://www.metronews.ca/views/vancouver/urban-compass/2016/05/24/a-night-mayor-is-a-great-dream-for-vancouver.html; Kevin Maimann, 'Does Edmonton Need a Night Mayor?' *Metro*, 13 May 2016, http://www.metronews.ca/news/edmonton/2016/05/13/amsterdam-night-mayor-gives-edmonton-advice.html; Alex Ballingall, '"Night Mayor" Promotes Peace between Day and Night Interest', *Toronto Star*, 30 April 2016, https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2016/04/30/night-mayor-promotes-peace-between-day-and-night-interests.html.

4. Liz Zabel, 'New Liaison Says Iowa City Offers More "besides Its Reputation"', *Gazette*, 18 June 2017, http://www.thegazette.com/subject/life/people-places/new-liaison-says-iowa-city-offers-more-besides-its-reputation-20170617.

5. Jem Aswad, 'New York City to Name a "Nighttime Ambassador" to Advocate for Music, Nightlife', *Variety*, 16 June 2017, http://variety.com/2017/biz/news/new-york-city-to-name-nighttime-ambassador-1202469125/.