

**WHEN ISLAMIZATION MEETS (WESTERNIZED) NEOLIBERALIZATION.
A META-ETHNOGRAPHY OF NIGHTLIFE IN POST-SOCIALIST
SARAJEVO**

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ABSTRACT

The urban night constitutes a time of significant and productive economic activity in the post-industrial city. The promotion of certain modes of urban 'distinguished' nightlife plays an active role in promoting an increasingly standardised experience of city nightlife and the emergence of new socially sanitized, 'elitized' urban nightscapes. In Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), the old downtown has been turned into a consumption product and a symbol of social distinction for the new middle classes raised after the war conflicts of mid and late 1990s, taking 'distinguished' clubbing-based nightlife consumption as one of their main mechanisms of self-identity construction in times of Westernization as part of the post-socialist transition. Moreover the presence of a numerous international community of soldiers, diplomats, policy makers, and other foreign actors favoured the soaring of Westernized nightlife in post-socialist Sarajevo. Its urban night rapidly became the most important socio-political and cultural counterweight arena where the Islamization and neoliberalization of urban space encountered, involving the emergence of particular urbanscapes in the heart of Europe. However the international community retirement, especially significant five years ago with the closure of several international organisations, has involved the rise of increasingly segregated urban nightscape in social, spatial and ethno-national terms. Based on an ethnographic fieldwork carried out between 2008 and 2014, this papers aims at exploring the multifaceted subtextuality of the urban nightscape(s) in post-socialist Sarajevo by taking the urban night as analytical lens and case study (Straw 2014). This paper will conclude by suggesting the urban night in Sarajevo might be considered as a visible expression of the everyday urban geoethnopolitics of post-war Balkan region.

Keywords: nightlife, neoliberalization, urban space, post-socialist, Sarajevo.

INTRODUCTION

During these last two decades, many worldwide cities have reshaped their spaces, mainly through culturally-led strategies for urban regeneration. New forms of social organization, leisure, and cultural consumption, among other factors, have recently led to the conversion of many downtowns into 'theatres of consumption' (Ritzer 2010), in which night-time economy plays an important role. More specifically, the urban night has become crucial in the revitalization of historical neighborhoods in most European cities (Chatterton and Hollands 2003). New 'distinguished' urban nightscapes emerge demanding the participation of a variety of actors. However it frequently involves inclusionary/exclusionary processes and the spatial displacement of preexisting

traditional and working-class nighttime leisure activities (Ib.). Indeed new emerged 'sanitized' urban nightscapes play a significant role in several processes of culture-led urban renovation and gentrification (Nofre 2013). However, few studies have paid attention to the rise of a 'distinguished' nightlife as a consequence of gentrification and the emergence of a distinction-based lifestyle of new middle classes in global cities. In that sense, the aestheticization of the everyday life in the postindustrial cities seems to appear as key process in exploring the relationship between a 'distinguished' nightlife and gentrification (Ib.).

The spatial approach to the study of nightlife has gained importance over the last decade, with its emphasis on the close relationship between the strategy of city-securitization led by the inner city's elites and the promotion of a 'gentrified nightlife'. In that sense, Paul Chatterton and Robert Hollands (2003) pay special attention to the emergence of segmented, sanitized, and gentrified consumer markets. In addition, the authors also explore the economic processes governing the nightlife structure in Western European cities by focusing on the interaction between youth, central nightlife, marginal nightlife, music tastes, lifestyles, and dress codes. As they argue, gentrification and nightlife are associated with some of these issues, which strongly contribute to the elitization of the social space of the city. However, such a process of nightlife elitization usually involves some spatial displacements of traditional, working-class night-time leisure activities, as previously mentioned. Hence the rise of an alternative 'socialist-nostalgic-urban-nightscape' in South East Europe (Nofre & Martín 2009) might be seen as social and political contestation against the neoliberalization of urban space.

DEFINING 'NIGHTLIFE SANITIZATION'

Today's processes of gentrification are densely connected to the circuits of global capital and cultural circulation. More particularly, it includes the promotion of a 'distinguished' nightlife, not only as a form of cultural or leisure consumption, but also as a strategy of social, political and moral sanitization of the night-time inner city. Social sanitization in this text is conceived in the same sense that Johan Galtung (1958) suggested in his *The Social Functions of a Prison*, where the author argued that social sanitization had to do with the attempt carried out by institutions to decrease to zero the visibility of selected types of deviants. In the socially, politically and morally sanitized urban nightscapes – and using Baudrillardian terminology – employee behavior is predictable, besides politically and socially controlled (Nofre & Martín 2009, Nofre 2013). Its customers tend to have scripted interactions according to the latest linguistic trends in social distinction, that is to say, they neither want nor expect surprises. The true and the real disappear in an avalanche of a simulated nightlife. Customers of this 'distinguished' nightlife become 'simulated people' obeying well-established guidelines about how and what they are supposed to look, talk, drink, flirt, etc. Individual behaviors such as exultation, explicit happiness, laughing loudly, drink quickly, or sensual dancing are seen as inappropriate in the socially, morally, and politically sanitized nightlife. As Nofre (2013) argues in the case of the newly-emerged 'vintage nightlife' in Lisbon “Social informality that once featured at bohemian venues, where writers, journalists, and artists usually gathered, has given way to predictable, scripted de-politicized conversations. In the transformation of the bohemian into the vintage, glasses of wine, cocktails, and cigarettes still continue to decorate tables even after several decades, while political conversation has been eradicated. The vintage nightlife has been de-politicized, socially sanitized, and morally controlled” (Nofre 2013:117).

With no space for creativity, the 'distinguished' nightlife creates a themed, socially controlled environment strongly connected to the global new middle-class identity and its lifestyle project. Along with this, any underclass intrusion is jealously avoided by means of the ecology of fear (Davis 1998), which operates through the hypersecurization of the gentrified nightlife. Thus the 'city-securization' of the inner city and the promotion of a socially, morally, and politically sanitized urban nightscape become key strategies in gentrifying historical neighborhoods of the post-industrial city. That is the case of post-war Sarajevo, when numerous international communities of soldiers, diplomats and technicians were deployed in the city after the war. Their night-time leisure practices contributed to the rapid 'Westernization' of Sarajevo's urban night, becoming the most important sociopolitical and cultural counterweight arena where both Islamization and neoliberalization of urban space encountered (Nofre & Martin 2009). Moreover, Sarajevo new middle classes take 'distinguished' clubbing-based nightlife consumption as one of their main mechanisms of self-identity construction in times of hyper-modernized Westernization as part of the post-socialist transition of the city.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

By taking the urban night as analytical lens and case study (Straw 2014), this paper will show how today's urban nightscape in Sarajevo is increasingly segmented in socio-spatial and moral terms, becoming one of the most visible expressions of the everyday, multifaceted geoethnopolitics of post-war Western Balkan region. In that sense, the use of the term 'geoethnopolitics' refers to how the harmonisation of interests among the state, the dominant ethnic group and the subordinated ethnic groups are spatially expressed and inflected by social inequalities based on ethnicity, social class, and religious background and their intersection(s).

The study presented here is a result of ethnographic fieldwork carried out since February 2008 to date and is divided into three phases. The first phase (February 2008-August 2008) aimed at mapping the spatial structure of the urban night in Sarajevo, that is to say, routes, venues, and formal and informal time-spaces of nightlife consumption in the city. During the second phase (February 2009-August 2010), it was carried out an exploratory ethnographic fieldwork in order to better understand micro-context(s) of the Sarajevo's urban night and explore and identify the settings, actors and institutions involved in local and micro-local processes of nightlife-related changes. The fieldwork during this second phase was mainly characterized by its observational nature, using both "floating observation" and "shadowing". A total of 23 informal interviews in situ were carried out to customers and some venues' personnel. The third phase of the ethnographic fieldwork (February 2012 to present) has aimed at analyzing the increasing segmentation of the Sarajevo's urban nightscape in social, spatial and ethno-national terms. To date, 27 customers have been interviewed in situ during this third phase. Finally, during ethnographic fieldwork personal data were collected in form of hand-written notes. Interviewees were not informed about the purpose of our fieldwork and therefore their anonymity will be preserved. On the other hand, the whole transcriptions of interviews and focus group are stored in database accessible only to the four authors of this manuscript. No underage individuals were interviewed.

SPACE, POWER AND DISTINCTION IN POSTWAR SARAJEVO'S NIGHTLIFE

In Sarajevo (401,118 inhabitants in 2011) the post-socialist transition has involved the rapid neoliberalization not only of their economies but especially of their urban space (Martin-Diaz 2014). The rapid tertiarization of the city occurred after the war has led to the rise of new economic and financial activities involving the emergence of new topographies of power and control, or in other words, new urban elites that coexist with the 'old' ones (Ib.). In that sense, new middle classes emerged after the war have become the main protagonists of new 'distinguished' urban nightscapes in which old, traditional forms of night-time leisure in Sarajevo have been (spatially) marginalized as they were related to the old-fashioned 'socialist past' of the city. In fact, official data on nightlife in Sarajevo during the war are inexistent. That is why an in-depth ethnographic fieldwork appears as necessary in order to confirm that, as G., a 28 years old male living in Bosnia since the end of the war points out, that "During the war, there were some nightlife venues. People hang out even when Serbians were bombing the city. Nobody can kill the city's life"⁴. However not all the people that then were living in Sarajevo under the siege participated of that 'violent normality' as I, a 45 years old female born in Sarajevo, points out: "There was nothing ... Now the city center is full of nightlife venues... and you've got two new discotheques, Aqua, in Ilidza.. and one more in the Unitic Towers area"⁵. In any case, such different perspectives allow to confirm that "Today there are much more discotheques and pubs than four or five years ago" (I.)

In 2009, nightlife in the city of Sarajevo was featured by a strongly socio-spatial duality. Most venues were concentrated in two well-defined areas: the old town, and the suburban working-class neighborhoods. In the old downtown (Stari Grad) 'distinguished' urban nightscape emerged after the war, formed by the venues located at three streets of the city center: Ferhadija, Zelenih Oeretki, and Branilaca Sarajeva. In 2009, this area represented the 61.11% of the whole nightlife supply in Sarajevo (Nofre & Martin 2009). Night-time economy emerged as one of the most important of urban revitalization not only in the city center but also in some Sarajevo's suburban areas such as the Bosnian-Serbian working-class suburb of Ilidza. Since its opening in the year 2002, Aqua Diskoteka had been mostly oriented to lowly-educated young-adult working classes, mainly aged between 16 and 35 years old.

During the first exploratory fieldwork in 2009, Mk. a 29 years old Serbian Bosnian born in Sarajevo, confirmed us that young and young-adults going to Aqua Diskoteka "(...) are low-skilled teens and some young adults who love that kind of music [turbo-folk] and even Balkan hardcore". However, Mj. (24 years old) asserted that turbo-folk is broadly listened among not only young and young-adult Bosnian Serbian working classes but also among young middle-class university students who usually consume American and Latin commercial music. For the second group, some 'distinguished' nightlife venues such as La Vita (closed in 2012), Pravda, Café Alfonso, Opera, Central Café (closed in 2012 as well), Club Jez, Marquee, Hacienda, Mash, Galerja KO (closed in 2010), among others, operate as spaces for consumption of social distinction, in which the consumption (and everyday exhibition) of Italian-style fashion clothing among new Muslim middle classes must be considered as sign of class-based distinction.

These 'distinguished' venues play a key role in Westernizing the urban night of post-socialist Sarajevo (and thus, the city). However some primary qualitative data gathered during the first two phases of the ethnographic fieldwork allow us to better understand the multifaceted nature of urban nightscapes in Sarajevo. On the one side, US and British

commercial music is punched (or played in live) together with turbo-folk, which has its origins in the Balkans in the early 1990s during the violent implosion of the Socijalistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija. In 1993, turbo-folk was (sometimes unfairly) associated to Serb xenophobic, racist and paramilitary nationalism involved in the Bosnian War (1992-1995). Since then, turbo-folk and Balkan hardcore (Monroe 2000) have been converted into pivotal elements for the construction of the ethno-national self-identity for Bosnian Serbian people. Alexei Monroe (2000) suggests both music styles “fuse love songs and older folk tunes that are either implicitly or explicitly ethnically Serbian with contemporary dance music. ‘Turbo’ is a music in which harmony always overcomes all difference and no space is left for doubt - in yourself, your lover or your nation. It is not just high-octane “party” music, but music perfect for paramilitaries in need of both national(ist) kitsch and high-adrenaline musical forms”. However there would be no contradiction in punching turbo-folk (or Balkan Hardcore), Western (American and British) commercial music and the existence of some opposed ethno-nationalist agendas (Bosnian Muslim, Bosnian-Serbs and Bosnian-Croats). Actually they must be considered as forms of social, political and cultural resistance and otherness by contesting the rapid neoliberalization of urban space and the Islamization of the everyday life in Sarajevo.

Interestingly, Bosnian ‘moderate’ Muslims and the other two ethno-national groups above mentioned take and couple both Western commercial music and turbo-folk as radical contestation to the increasing Islamization of the city occurred since the end of the war (Karčić 2010).³⁷ As broadly confirmed during all the length of the ethnographic fieldwork, the urban nightscape in Sarajevo has become the main arena in which such social, political and cultural contestation to the Islamization of the city takes place. In that sense, the soaring and popular support of hyper-sexualized Balkan music-female celebrities (such as Sandra Afrika, Dijana Jankovic, Rada Manojlovic, Jelena Karleusa, Hajde Skote or Dijana Bliznac, among many others) must be considered as the most visible expression of a certain ‘pan-Balkan porno-nationalism’³⁸ –in Monroe’s (2000) terminology– that would refuse the social and political regression proposed from the Islamic revival established in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo after the war. Actually official videos of female celebrities related to ‘pan-Balkan porno-nationalism’ are flooded of luxurious cars, jewels, yachts, and expensive nights, and youthful hedonist hyper-consumption. This pseudo-utopian world is somehow reproduced in ‘distinguished’ nightlife venues of Sarajevo. New Muslim middle-class girls usually dress expensive (apparently) Italian-style fashion clothes, with refined make-up on their faces, and usually have boyfriends (the urban night as well as the everyday life in Sarajevo is extremely heteronormative and patriarchal) driving luxurious cars, just like those female celebrities appearing in most ‘pan-Balkan porno-nationalism’ related video clips.

SOCIALIST NOSTALGIC NIGHTSCAPES OF RESTISTANCE IN THE NEOLIBERAL SARAJEVO

Islamization of the everyday time-space and Westernized neoliberalization of the city involve the emergence of some other social, political resistances. Balkan youth is subject to an intense nationalist pop culture promoted institutionally since the end of the Bosnian

37 For a very detailed explanation, read the Harun Karčić’s (2010) work on the Islamic revival in post-Socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina.

38 The term ‘porno-nationalim’ is explained in the Alexei Monroe’s (2000) work on Balkan pop culture and paramilitarism. It will be further developed in Nofre & Martin-Diaz (forthcoming).

war. In that sense, ‘Turbo-folk’ and Balkan Hardcore may be seen not only as an ex-Yugoslavian, paramilitary pop culture but especially as collective fear reaction against (Westernized) globalization. Although ‘turbo-folk’ usually talks about love and romantic stories, its subtextuality contains a profound “emotional-nostalgic”, national identity expressing a feeling of belonging to the “missed Jugoslavija”. It would be about not only re-interpreting Balkan identity, but especially claiming a “return to the Balkan world of emotions and passion, away from the ‘boring’ European lifestyle (...), an escape into an emotional world, free of neoliberal, rational, and individualistic Western reality” (Volčič & Erjavec 2010: 111, 114).

Current precarious times especially for Balkan youth have involved the Western/American neoliberal ‘dream’ has relinquished of all its encouraging promises of political, social and economic growth and stability. A profound deception rises by favoring the emergence of new socially, politically contested urbanscapes. Moreover, the international community retirement occurred during the past five years has involved the disappearing of one of the most agents of Westernization of the city. If on the one side new ‘distinguished’ neoliberal nightlife appears as social and political contestation to the Islamization of the city, ‘socialist-nostalgic’ urban nightscapes appear as contestation to both Islamization and neoliberalization of urban life and space. For a little minority, the consumption of these ‘socialist-nostalgic’ nightscapes in Marsal Tito (19 Bihacka St.) o Nostalgija (10 Mukevita St.) becomes one of the few means of expressing social and political contestation in the neoliberal Sarajevo, although the consumption of such ‘socialist-nostalgic-retro’ urban nightscapes become a certain inoffensive ‘bohemian-activism’ for the neoliberal penal state –in Wacquant’s terminology. Indeed, ‘socialist-nostalgic’ nightscapes’ must be considered in two main directions, that is to say, as a new form of consumption of social distinction, and as social, political contestation to the Europeanized neoliberal capitalism. Actually its customers usually are Bosnian Muslim middle class university students, for whom consuming the ‘socialist-nostalgic’ urban night is about an alternative not-so-commoditized way of social distinction.

FURTHER STEPS OF THIS RESEARCH

Preliminary findings presented in this text confirm the great scientific interest in continuing to exploring the multifaceted subtextuality of the urban nightscape(s) in Sarajevo. Over this year 2015 around further 10 in-depth interviews are expected to be carried out in order to better understand how the urban night in the Bosnian capital may be considered as a visible expression of the everyday urban geo(ethno)politics of post-war Balkan region. Having in mind these recent findings shown above, we argue that the urban night has become one of the most crucial arenas in which ethno-national tensions in post-war Balkans can be monitorized. In that sense we will continue to analyzing how the consumption of nightlife in Sarajevo is inflected by social inequalities based on ethnicity, social class, and religious background and their intersections as well as how urban night-related actors negotiate their common interests, redefine new alliances and address ‘new’ and ‘old’ conflicts related to urban coexistence. It should help to explain much better as done to date the complexity regarding new and old attitudes and values among younger generations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, shedding light on the rise of new serious challenges regarding the real efficiency of the European integration of Balkan countries which must be addressed urgently.

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