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The urban ecological transition and the future of Europe's nightlife industry

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The urban ecological transition and the future of Europe's nightlife industry

The current climate emergency and the emergence of a stagflation scenario in Europe have revealed the scarce presence of environmental and resilience-related goals not only in the economic and financial viability plans of the nightlife industry but also in the different tools of nightlife governance already introduced in some European cities. In fact, the recovery and resilience plans of more than a third of the countries of the European Union, which constitute the central mechanism for the ongoing ecological urban transition, do not mention the nightlife industry nor the creative night culture, whose importance is vital for many urban festivals. Despite that, some nightlife entrepreneurs have begun to adapt their businesses to the current urban ecological transition in Europe. Meanwhile, a large part of the scientific community does not seem to be interested in the economic and environmental challenges affecting Europe's nightlife industry. For the authors of this article, if nightlife is revealed to be central to the socio-emotional wellbeing of many people in our (post-)pandemic world, the 'greening' of the nightlife industry should arise as a central topic in the short and medium-term for academics researching in the fields of tourism, hospitality, leisure, and urban studies.

Keywords: nightlife industry, nocturnal cities, climate emergency, urban ecological transition, Europe

Introduction

The current climate emergency has led international organisations, national governments and local institutions worldwide to act decisively towards reorganising the economic and social activities of our cities. As Daniel A. Cohen (20220, p.2) argues, "each urban space will be touched by the effort to decarbonise, each urban space will be impacted by warming, and the slower we decarbonise, the more severe those impacts will be". This statement is not catastrophic in any way but simply reflects the projections for medium and long-term climate scenarios as a whole. For example, Huang et al. (2019) point out that current climate change models predict that the mean-maximum temperature in cities located across the globe will increase by 2–8°C in just a few decades. Facing such worrying projections, the fight against climate change, at the urban scale, has fostered the implementation of new ways of understanding and intervening in cities across the globe (Dhar & Khirfan, 2017; Castán Broto & Robin, 2021; Hurlimann et al., 2021). In this sense, some authors have begun to suggest that the integration of technological, nature-based, and social solutions can provide multiple co-benefits to address complex socio-ecological issues in cities while increasing resilience to potential adverse impacts derived from the current climate emergency scenario (Lin et al., 2021; Kabisch et al., 2022; Mahmoud et al., 2022). In line with this, the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has recently remarked that the successful adaptation to climate change do not only depends on governments but also on the active and sustained engagement of stakeholders, including national, regional, multilateral and international organisations, the public and private sectors, civil society and other relevant stakeholders (UNFCCC, 2022).

Over the past decades, dozens of scholarly authors and supranational institutions such as the World Economic Forum have reported that the expansion and intensification of urbanisation processes in the Global East, Global South, and Global North, especially during the second half of the twentieth century up to present days is a key factor in the

rising climate emergency (Bazrkar et al., 2015; Acuto & Parnell, 2016; Zhao, 2018; Trotta, 2022). However, and particularly, the body of research in urban studies continues to refer solely to a small part of our global urban world, while much of it remains as a still-underexplored-terrain (Acuto et al., 2018). On the other hand, and interestingly for this article, the volume of scholarly works about the so-called ‘daytime city’ and their related phenomena is more extensive than the bibliographic production about the nighttime city (Shaw, 2018). In fact, speaking of the ‘nighttime city’ is to put on the table the range of issues associated with the governance of the urban night (van Liempt et al., 2015; Cibir, 2021; Acuto & Seijas, 2021; Seijas & Milan Gelders, 2021); but also formal and informal economies, employment and labour, commercial and underground cultures, ‘old’ and ‘new’ forms of urban and metropolitan mobility, pollution, and safety at evening and nighttime hours (e.g., Brands et al., 2015; Nofre & Eldridge, 2018; Shaw, 2018; Henckel, 2019; Plyushteva, 2019; Yeo, 2019).

Once the COVID-19 pandemic has been brought under control on a global scale, the reactivation of nighttime social and economic activities after months of massive lockdowns and night curfews has led in many cities to the emergence of new initiatives towards a better management of the urban night at spatial, social, economic, cultural, environmental, and public health levels. One of the clearest, most recent examples of the need for an appropriate institutional response to the increasing *nocturnalisation of cities* (e.g., Nofre & Eldridge, 2018; Shaw, 2018; Henckel, 2019) is the *24-Hour Cities Network*, which Bogotá City Council has recently launched in collaboration with the City of New York, and *City Possible*¹. In fact, and at the time of writing, tens of millions of people go out every week, at evening and night, to dinner, meet with friends, or even dance in either region of the world with a high degree of urbanisation. Additional hundreds of thousands of people work during nighttime hours in night logistic services, back-office centres, central markets, essential services, and health care institutions, and several informal workers develop their activities during nighttime hours. Many of them take nighttime public transport, Uber cars, or take their own vehicle (car, bike, or electric scooter) to get across the city. All this generates an ecological and carbon footprint that must be examined and evaluated for the implementation of mitigating measures that may allow the timely achievement of the objectives set by both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN Habitat’s New Urban Agenda. In other words, the enormous challenges posed by the current climate emergency demand moving forward towards a ‘night thinking’ about our city and society (Kyba et al., 2020).

There is no doubt that the ‘back to normal’ after two years and a half of severe restrictions (including massive lockdowns and night curfews) has made much more visible than ever how nightlife is central as a source of socio-emotional wellbeing (both individual and collective), community building, and mutual psychological support after hard times of isolation, quarantines, and social distancing (Ramello et al., 2020; Anderson & Knee, 2021; Nofre, 2021). However, it should not be forgotten that the nightlife industry has been the most affected economic subsector by the COVID-19 crisis in Europe (LiveDMA, 2021; Mazierska & Rigg, 2021). This ‘Big Crash’ has accentuated the need for the industry to respond to the range of challenges posed by the European Green Deal for making Europe the first climate-neutral continent in the world. In fact, the range of challenges posed by the current climate emergency, the economic crisis resulting

¹ City Possible is an initiative pioneered by Mastercard to create a new model for urban innovation towards more inclusive and sustainable cities. For further information, please visit: <https://citypossible.com/cpuserportal/public/cpuserui/home>

from both the COVID-19 pandemic and the war between Russia and Ukraine (and NATO countries) have revealed the scarce presence of environmental and resilience-related goals not only in the economic and financial viability plans of the nightlife businesses but also in the different tools of nightlife governance already introduced in some European cities.

This introductory section aimed to highlight how central the adaptation of Europe's nightlife industry to the current urban ecological transition is for its survival in the mid-term and long-term future. In this sense, the greening of the nightlife industry arises as a new research topic that should deserve more academic attention. This 'apparent' lack of interest, however, does not coincide with recent trends within the academic community of night studies, as the authors of this article have been able to verify in recent scientific meetings. However, there are some underlying structural and epistemological elements that deserve to be commented on.

From Academic Irrelevance to a Lively Research-Practice Field

Despite an apparent low relevance in the field of Social Sciences and Urban Studies, the interdisciplinary subfield of 'nightlife studies' counts with an institutional(ised) trajectory of more than four decades (e.g. Erenberg, 1984; Thornton, 1996; Chatterton & Hollands, 2003; Grazian, 2007; May, 2014; Abussada et al., 2021). Until the mid-2010s, the body of knowledge in the subfield of 'nightlife studies' has been mostly featured by the simultaneous interplay between the criminalistic/regulatory perspective and the neoliberal/economicist perspective (Nofre & Eldridge, 2018). However, and interestingly, these past years have seen a growth of works framed in the social and cultural approach to nightlife both in the past and in the present, with particular emphasis on (i) new historical approaches to the emergence and development of the nightlife industry especially in Western contexts (Bird, 2020; Beamish, 2020; Binas-Preisendörfer, 2020; Catterall & Gildart, 2020; Jones, 2020; Phillips & Pöğün-Zander, 2020; Winn, 2020); (ii) nightlife beyond the Western world (Adorean et al., 2020; Davoodi et al., 2020; Ghalehnoee & Nilipour, 2020; Khubchandani, 2020; Pinke-Sziva et al., 2020; Azad Armaki, 2021; Elshater & Abusaada, 2021; Khorsand et al., 2021; Salman et al., 2021; Wijaba, 2021); (iii) nightlife (both formal and informal) as central spaces towards enhancing community building and resilience, innovation, sustainability, and a source of socioemotional wellbeing and psychological mutual support under current harsh times (Chen et al., 2020; Karampampas, 2020; Ramello et al., 2020; Anderson & Knee, 2021; Borges, 2021; Nofre, 2021); (iv) LGTBQI+ nightlife spaces (formal and informal); and (v) the importance of nightlife for both individual and collective belonging, emancipation, and identity within heteronormative, capitalist, urban settings worldwide (Gorman, 2020; Khubchandani, 2020; Rodríguez, 2020; Adeyemi et al., 2021; Eeckhout et al., 2021).

On the other hand, the growth and consolidation of the interdisciplinary subfield of nightlife studies has recently known the introduction of the so-called environmental approach in the study of the nighttime leisure economy. Indeed, some authors have begun to point out that the nighttime environment is coming under severe anthropogenic pressure (Gaston, 2019; Hu et al., 2021). Apart from the negative impacts derived from the expansion of the nighttime economy in central urban areas and coastal urban areas over the past two decades, on both terrestrial and aquatic flora and fauna – see Svechkina et al. (2020) for a brilliant literature review –, a growing number of authors has paid attention to the range of negative impacts to humans cause by air and noise pollution at night (Roberts, 2004; Atkinson, 2007; Ottoz et al., 2018; Iannace et al., 2021). However,

and particularly for the purposes of this article, it is worthy of mentioning that the specific topic of the carbon footprint of the nightlife industry and its potential role on the road to climate-neutral cities has so far received no attention from the scientific community at the time of writing.

To be fair, one should mention the imposition of severe restrictive measures to control the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic – which placed the sector in the worst global economic crisis in recent history – as the definitive trigger for the recent growth of collaborations between academics and nightlife industry stakeholders. In fact, until the outbreak of the COVID-19 global pandemic, there has been very little collaboration between Europe's nightlife industry and academia, mostly due to the lack of public funding for research on nightlife and the maximisation of corporate profits over the sector's participation in the development of actions for the common good. Both factors annihilated almost all possibility of industry-research collaboration during the years leading up to the pandemic –perhaps with the exception of Stadt Nach Acht Conference, whose first edition (2016) was organised by the Berlin Club Commission in cooperation with the European Network NEWNet (an academic initiative stemming from a research project funded by the European 7th Framework Programme for Research).

However, the closure of the nightlife sector as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic control measures was a turning point in the collaboration arena between industry and academia. For example, and from diametrically opposed positions, many nightlife studies' scholars, nightlife entrepreneurs and even large alcoholic beverage companies converged on a single objective: to save the night. While IndeeP's song *Last Night A DJ Saved My Life* (1982) inspired Jägermeister to launch a solidarity action in support of nightlife professionals across the globe, several scholars underlined the importance of protecting the nightlife fabric of our cities, as it constituted a source not only of economic wealth for cities (especially those strongly oriented towards urban tourism) but also of both tangible and intangible social and cultural wealth (Nofre et al., 2020; Mazierska & Rigg, 2021; Marshall, 2022).

Interestingly, the coexistence of the pandemic crisis with the growing impacts of the climate emergency on the urban economies of European cities has led to a rapid intensification of partnerships between the nightlife industry and academia in the form of proactive multi-stakeholder arenas for the discussion on the range of challenges, opportunities, policy actions and advocacy strategies towards more inclusive, egalitarian, resilient, sustainable, and competitive 'nocturnal cities'. An example of this is the alliance between LXNIGHTS Research Group (coordinated by the author of this article) and Vibe-Lab (an advocacy and research consultancy for the promotion of lively, diverse, nighttime communities) in the design of a COST Action proposal entitled "Next Generation Nights in Europe" for the creation of new theoretical, conceptual, analytical, and methodological tools for the discussion and promotion of more inclusive, egalitarian, resilient, ecological, and competitive nightlife industry in Europe in a mid-term and long-term horizon.

'Greening' Nightlife: A long way to go

The fact that the scientific community has until recently paid little attention to the sustainability challenges that Europe's nightlife industry has been facing for a few years, does not mean that some nightlife entrepreneurs have not recently taken a step forward to

transform their businesses into 'green(er) businesses'. Importantly, the carbon footprint of clubbing is not irrelevant. According to E.On (a German-based electric utility company), a visit to the disco emits an average of 1.9 kilograms of CO₂ per person, meaning that the 5,500 clubs across Germany generate each around 90 tonnes of CO₂ per year. Or, put in another way: an average-sized club needs around 1,000 Kwh per weekend, which equals the emissions of an average household for an entire year (Heinic, 2019).

While some authors have recently begun to analyse the carbon footprint of music festivals (Collins & Cooper, 2018; Brennan et al., 2019), the impact of nightlife industry regarding its ecological and carbon footprint has received zero attention from the scientific community at the time of writing. However, this bleak scenario changes if we consider recent environmentally friendly initiatives by some nightlife business associations and consultancies in Europe (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Concrete Actions and Tools from the Live Music Sector in Europe, by LiveDMA.

Promoters	Initiative	Starting Year	Geographical Scope	Main Actions
Live DMA & PULSE	Digital Safaris on Sustainability	2020	Europe	To implement sustainability-related actions in music venues and clubs (eco-conscious catering, improving waste management and energy efficiency of buildings, and reducing the carbon footprint of the mobility of the audience and artists)
NKA – Norwegian Live Music Association	The Green Roadmap	2021	Norway	Measures oriented to organisations, businesses, artists and cultural workers, and authorities to contribute to the green transition
Dansk Live – Interest group for festivals and venues	Green Guide for Festivals and Venues in Denmark	2019	Denmark	Concrete actions in selected areas: (Waste & resources, food & drink, energy, water, transport; * among others not relevant for this article)
FEDELIMA – Federation of contemporary music venues & STARTER – Shows and Tours of Eco-responsible artists	Group Purchase of Reusable Bottles & STARTER Working Group	2020	France	Plastic use reduction and mutualisation of means and goods.
PETZI – Association for Swiss live music clubs	Vert le Futur	2020	Switzerland	Planning, organisation and implementation of sustainable events.

INTERREG Action: 4AD, 4 Ecluses, De Kreun, Grand Mix, Association Flap, Centre Culturel René Magritte, 3D Asbl, IeperFest IMOG, IDEA, and Extracité	Durability and Ecology in the Music Sector and its Organisers	2016	Northern France, Belgium	Concrete solutions for sustainable and inclusive development in the live music sector
Clubtopia (Berlin Clubcommission, BUND, ZENAT & Berlin Senate)	Green Club Guide for Berlin Clubs	2015	Germany	Waste-reducing measures, energy efficiency, and improved mobility of the audiences.
Green Touring Network	Green Touring Guide	2020	Germany	Reducing the carbon footprint of a tour

Note: This table only shows the most significant initiatives for this article.

Source: Author. Data provided by Live DMA. "Ecological Sustainability: the European Music Sector takes action!". Posted on 3 June 2021. Available at: <https://www.live-dma.eu/ecological-sustainability-the-european-music-sector-takes-action/>

The first aspect to note from the set of environmentally friendly actions shown in Table 1 is that five actions out of a total of eight (62.5%) were implemented after the first global pandemic outbreak of COVID-19. This means that they could not be fully deployed until 2022 due to severe restrictions on the nightlife industry. Therefore, it is necessary to have a proper time frame to in order to carry out a qualitative and quantitative assessment of the real effectiveness and impact of such environmentally friendly initiatives (i.e. from 24 months after the start of the initiative). In any case, Table 1 contains three initiatives whose relevance deserves to be the focus of our analysis. The first initiative is DEMO – Sustainability and Ecology in the Music Business and its Operators, which is part of the European Territorial Cooperation Programme Interreg France- Wallonia-Vlaanderen. This initiative, which started in 2016, gathers four nightclubs from France and Belgium (alongside music festivals and cultural centres) and seven organisations from the ecology and social sector to seek solutions for the sustainable development of the nightlife venues by improving waste management and reducing the ecological and carbon footprints of (i) the mobility of the audiences, (ii) the energy used in the events, and (iii) the range of foods and drinks consumed in festivals and clubbing sessions (DEMO, 2020). Three years after the conclusion of this project, there is no quantitative or qualitative data on the societal, economic or environmental impact of this project. In fact, DEMO's diagnosis document states that "the role of any cultural structure is to invite all citizens to be aware of their actions and behaviour" (DEMO, 2020, p.32). This statement allows to suggest that, although the strategic actions mentioned above are well-intentioned, any tracking and monitoring of its societal impact is not addressed, turning a potential evaluation of the societal impact of the project into a mere appeal to individual(ist) responsibility.

The second initiative that deserves our attention is Digital Safaris on Sustainability, which was launched by Live DMA (an European network supporting live music associations) and PULSE (a cultural network for ecological transition in Flanders)

in 2020. This initiative aims at exploring and implementing eco-conscious catering, improving waste management and energy efficiency of buildings of live music venues, festivals, and clubs across Europe.² The initiative also aims at reducing the carbon footprint of the mobility of the audience and artists (including DJs, music groups, and dancing performers, among others) participating in the events organised by the venues. According to its website,

“the Digital Safaris are a place for the exchange of concrete tips on how to think and act in a sustainable manner in your live music venue, club or festival. They are also a place of free expression regarding the challenges linked to the ecological and social transition of the live music sector.” (Live DMA, 2020).

However, Digital Safaris on Sustainability is a relatively recent transnational initiative whose quantitative and qualitative assessment presents severe difficulties in being successfully carried out since (1) there is not sufficient time frame to perform a proper analysis of its societal impact, and (2) there are no public data on its implementation nor its societal and environmental impact. Once again, and similarly to the DEMO project mentioned above, well-intentioned actions promoted by Digital Safaris on Sustainability lack follow-up and monitoring mechanisms.

Last but not least, the third initiative is Clubtopia, which is a joint action between Berlin Clubcommission, BUND (a local environmentalist NGO with nearly half a million supporters), the national confederation of popular music venues in Germany (Livekomm), ZENAT–Center for Sustainable Tourism at Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development, and the Berlin Senate for the Environment, Transport and Climate Protection. Clubtopia thus tackles sustainability and climate issues within the Berlin club scene leading to clubs, venues and parties towards a new ‘green clubbing’.³ In doing so, the project seeks to encourage club and party organisers to come together “with the aim of developing an eco-friendly code of conduct for their nightlife activities”.⁴ In much the same way as DEMO, Clubtopia’s actions refer to waste-reducing measures, energy efficiency (by fostering the use of eco-friendly lighting, cooling and heating systems, and efficient water installations), and improved mobility of the audiences. However, very few certified green power providers in Germany are fully ecologically clean, the hoped-for reform of building legislation has not yet happened, and many clubs have short leases that prevent them from making long-term investments to transform the premises into a zero-carbon economic activity, as Clubtopia denounces.⁵

‘Green Nights’: An unrealistic fantasy?

Despite the existence of some private initiatives aimed at reducing the ecological and carbon footprint of the nightlife industry, it is worth mentioning that these initiatives are unevenly distributed geographically across Europe. The main reasons for this uneven distribution are the different levels of environmental awareness among citizens in different countries (Bacsi, 2020; Eurobarometer, 2020) and the limited existence of

² For further information on Digital Safaris on Sustainability, visit: <https://www.live-dma.eu/digital-safaris-on-sustainability/>

³ For further information on Clubtopia, visit: <https://clubtopia.de/sustainable-clubbing/>

⁴ Ibidem

⁵ For further information, please visit: <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/nwUBAEqtV1Iekw>

initiatives at the local level towards enhancing and fostering 'greener' nights. One could rightly think that the launch of the Next Generation Funds would facilitate the 'green' transformation of Europe's nightlife industry. However, and surprisingly, the 27 National Recovery and Resilience Plans adopted in response to the economic crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic do not make any reference to the nightlife industry, despite the fact that the volume of the sector is €65bn, it is made up of 492,833 establishments, and employs 1,224,288 workers in the whole Europe (IbisWorld, 2022).

At the time of writing, more than two years after the launch of the European Next Generation Funds in July 2020, the situation is dire for the nightlife industry of the continent. Even in the most tourism-dependent countries (such as Greece, Portugal, Austria⁶, Spain and Italy), where nightlife plays an important role in attracting tourist inflows, the respective national recovery and resilience plans do not mention either the term 'nightlife' or the similar terms 'nighttime cultural economy', 'nighttime leisure', or even 'nighttime economy' – although in this article we do not discuss the fundamental importance of the nighttime economy in a wider sense for the development of cities, such as central supply markets or airport logistics hubs (among other examples). In this sense, if we accept the inclusion of the nightlife industry and its creative scenes in the general framework of the cultural and creative industries (e.g., Comunian, 2011; Thiel, 2017; Lücke, 2020), the National Recovery and Resilience Plans of some of the countries mentioned above (such as Greece and Italy) have relatively well-defined strategies for the green transition of their national (daytime) cultural and creative industries. For example, in Greece, improving the competitiveness and resilience in the cultural-creative sector is the first main challenge for the country's strategy on modernising and improving the resilience of critical economic sectors (Greece's Recovery and Resilience Plan, 2021, pp. 386-413). Among the European countries most dependent on tourism mentioned above, Austria also presents auspicious lines of action for a more sustainable cultural and creative industry. In this sense, Austria's National Plan is strongly committed to strengthening the resilience of the cultural sector by supporting innovation and transformation towards sustainability. On the other hand, another country with a high dependence on tourism, Italy, is firmly committed "to improve the ecological footprint of cultural events (...), [and] to support the evolution of the business model of market operators, pushing them to adapt to new needs of the public administration" (Italy's Recovery and Resilience Plan, 2021, p. 114). Interestingly, Italy also aims to encourage a 'green' approach throughout the supply chain, reducing the ecological footprint of cultural production and participation, promoting innovation and inclusive eco-design to steer the public towards more responsible environmental behaviour (Italy's Recovery and Resilience Plan, 2021,).

The situation is radically different in the case of Spain and Portugal. In this latter country, the National Recovery and Resilience Plan highlights the brutal impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the cultural and creative sectors, remarking that both sectors are a pillar of the EU economy in the future. However, when the document presents the range of recovery proposals in the field of culture, there is no word on creative culture but the

⁶ It has not been possible to find the English version of the Austrian National Recovery and Resilience Plan. Information shown in the text has been retrieved from "Comission Staff Working Document. Analysis of the recovery and resilience plan for Austria; Accompanying the document 'Proposal for a Council Implementing Decision on the approval of the assessment of the recovery and resilience plan for Austria", European Commission, 21 June 2021. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52021SC0160&rid=8>

promotion of national cultural heritage and its digitalisation. Moreover, there is neither reference to 'nightlife' nor 'hospitality' in the whole document, while 'tourism' only appears indirectly in the Employment + Digital 20215 – Training program in digital technologies (p. 177). This absence is shocking since 18% of tourists referred to have chosen Portugal as destination because of its nightlife before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (Strategic Plan for Tourism in the Lisbon Region 2020-2024). In contrast, *Spain's Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan* (2021) presents the revalorisation of the cultural and creative industries as one of the major lines of action. But despite nightlife being the main reason for visiting Spain for 23% of tourists (Travé & Díaz, 2019), Spain's Plan specifies that only the digitisation of the publishing industry, libraries and museums are the cultural activities targeted to receive the funds. Also, and shockingly, *Spain's Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan* (2021) makes it clear that the digitalisation of Spain's cultural and creative industries is not included as an action under the so-called 'green transition' pillar of the Recovery and Resilience Mechanism Regulation (p.81). This is utter nonsense, especially in a country (Spain) where tourism, hospitality, and nightlife industries are not marginal in the national GDP structure (INE, 2022).

On the other hand, the cases of Germany and The Netherlands deserve special attention. In both National Recovery and Resilience Plans, nightlife and creative culture do not appear in the respective texts. Moreover, the term 'creative' does not appear in the German Plan, while the term 'culture' only appears twice (pp. 28, 41). In fact, what has been explained in the previous section about some initiatives by some nightlife entrepreneurs to accelerate the 'green transition of the sector in Germany (and more particularly in Berlin) reinforces the need to investigate in the future the reasons why the German Plan excludes the nightlife industry – which is fundamental, for example, to maintain Berlin's tourist attractiveness (Schofield & Rellensmann, 2015; García, 2016; Novy, 2018; Eldridge & Smith, 2019). Also, in The Netherlands, the country that gave birth to the figure of the Night Mayor, the National Recovery and Resilience Plan does not devote a single line either to culture or to the future of the country's cultural and creative industry (Rosana & Tsitse, 2022).⁷ In fact, the National Recovery and Resilience Plans of Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Slovakia, and Sweden, have no specific interventions in the field of culture, according to the brilliant report *Culture in the EU's National Recovery and Resilience Plans* (Rosana & Tsitse, 2022). Against this pessimistic backdrop in terms of countries' willingness to strengthen the environmental sustainability of their cultural and creative industries, the future of the European nightlife industry is more 'dark' than 'green'. If the transformation of nightlife into a greener economic, social and cultural activity depends exclusively on private initiative in 37% of EU countries, it would not be risky to say that the imposition of the green urban transition in Europe could jeopardise the future of nightlife in at least the ten EU countries aforementioned in the last lines of the previous paragraph.

Final Remarks: The Need for 'Greening' Nightlife Studies

The degree of success with which the Europe's nightlife industry will face its short, medium and long-term future is dependent on (i) a likely stagflation scenario in Europe derived from both the Ukraine-Russia war and growing domestic political and social

⁷ For reasons unknown to the authors and completely beyond their control, it was not possible to access the document in any of its language versions.

instability in China; (ii) an accelerating climate emergency scenario; (iii) an ongoing-but-still-insufficient ecological urban transition towards more sustainable and livable cities; and (iv) the lack of resilience strategies, mechanisms, and tools at local, national, and European levels for the readaptation of the sector in times of emergency. These four items aforementioned should make visible the urgent community, institutional, industry and academic need for debating and discussing the role that the nightlife industry should have in the construction of a so-called ‘climate-neutral Europe’ and on how Europe’s nightlife industry should be in the future to ensure a more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive ‘nocturnal cities’. In this sense, this article has examined how some private and public bodies of some European countries develop initiatives to adapt the nightlife industry to the objectives set by the ongoing urban ecological transition. The article has shown how, while some nightlife entrepreneurs have started to deploy a significant number of initiatives for the 'green' transformation of their businesses, public support through EU Next Generation Funds lacks in 37% of EU countries, leading the nightlife industry into a future of complex uncertainty in at least 10 of the 27 EU countries.

Interestingly, the fact that private actors have started to make moves to adapt their businesses and venues to Europe’s ecological urban transition should directly challenge the scientific community in terms of establishing the ‘greening’ of the nightlife industry as a new topic in our interdisciplinary research agenda. As this article has shown, the range of efforts undertaken by the nightlife industry in collaboration with non-profit cultural and/or ecologist associations in countries such as Norway, France, Germany, Denmark, or Turkey (see Table 1 above) focus predominantly on reducing the ecological and carbon footprint in the programming and management of their events. This line of action emerges as very interesting for the scientific community, as it would allow to monitoring the adaptation of the nightlife industry to Europe's ecological urban transition as well as to assess (quantitatively and qualitatively) the fulfilment of the objectives set for the implementation of low carbon cities in our continent.

What has been suggested in the previous paragraph, however, brings us to the central question on which the new research agenda proposed in this final section of the article should pivot: to discuss how the nightlife industry should be in the mid-term and long-term future, and how it would be able to contribute towards fostering and enhancing more inclusive, ecological, resilient, and competitive nights in a ‘climate-neutral Europe’. Importantly, this discussion intrinsically contains a debate on the spatial distribution pattern of nightlife activities in the city, which, at the same time, is strongly related to the still-unresolved-conflict between the right to rest of the residents and the presence of a high number of nightlife venues, especially in central urban areas (e.g. Roberts & Turner, 2005; Ngesan & Karim, 2012; Aramayona & García-Sánchez, 2019; Mach et al., 2022). Notably, the political and civic debate on the urban ecological transition of the nightlife industry should not be restricted to a purely environmental discussion (i.e. reducing its ecological and carbon footprint) but should take into account that the environmental discussion cannot be dissociated from two of its fundamental components: ‘the spatial’ and ‘the social’. In other words, the question of whether city centres can experience a sustained growth of the nightlife economy, or whether it should decrease, or whether these activities should be located away from urban residential areas needs to be considered in depth in researching the ‘greening’ of Europe’s nightlife industry. It is precisely at this point that we find a new area of research of maximum academic interest and of very high societal impact in the coming years.

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