

or everyday. This problematic notion of 'authenticity' can also be traced in the historical narrative in which the Bastakiya district of Iranian windtowers that have been central to UAE 'official' heritage projects are contrasted with informal sites (a Hindu temple, an Iranian restaurant and a neighbourhood square) evaluated as possessing "a greater sense of authenticity and history" (p. 88).

Nevertheless, Elsheshtawy's *Dubai: Behind an Urban Spectacle* should be celebrated as an alternative and empirically grounded reading of this city, without the hyperbole or ridicule that has been evident more widely. Dubai is now an advanced economy, intimately entangled with both the developed and developing worlds through transnational flows of culture, finance and people: influenced and influential, shaped by and shaping other societies. As a result, this book will be of interest to anyone who has ever wanted to go beyond the headlines, lecturers looking for new readings for courses on urban studies, transnationalism and migration, as well as those reflecting critically on emerging forms and sites of urbanity.

Katie Walsh

Department of Geography  
University of Sussex

### Planning the Night-time City

Marion Roberts and Adam Eldridge, 2009

London: Routledge

256 pp. £90.00 hardback; £27.99 paperback

ISBN: 978 0 415 43617 5 hardback; 978 0 415 43618 2 paperback

An expansion of the night-time economy, an increasing everydayness of late-night work and leisure activities, tourism and changing household-structures—these are major driving forces behind the 'night-time city' according to Marion Roberts and Adam Eldridge. The book's main concern might be

carved out as a claim for the better reintegration of town planning's and urban design's skills into the regulation of these trends in England and Wales. In order to develop possible relationships, the authors set out by unfolding the various aspects of night life in the public realm from lighting to work habits to narratives on the night, but focus particularly on alcohol-related developments subsequently because "in Britain its expansion has been problematic" (p. 1). From this point of view, the analysed material is—as the first word of the title suggests—oriented towards recommendations for urban politics and planning guidelines.

The first four thematic chapters are dedicated to the "City at night" as already mentioned (ch. 2), relevant external influences (like a cultural turn in urban policies, licensing or perceptions of the nocturnal city, chs 3 and 4) and factors that relate to the individual (like drinking priorities or health issues with a focus on "Binge-drinking Britain", ch. 5). These chapters, which act as a sort of lengthy introduction comprising nearly half of the book, are symptomatic of both the book's strengths and its weaknesses. On the one hand, Roberts and Eldridge are very considerate of regarding the heterogeneous, contested and contradictory character of a city's night and manage to keep that up throughout the book. Based on very rich material such as interviews with experts and focus groups, observations, countings and documents, they present different experiences and attitudes on various topics without judging one or the other as 'right' or 'better'. The tensions between fear and pleasure, between criminality and prosperity or between individual responsibility and economic or political pre-conditions are maintained. On the other hand, a research question and potential main findings get lost in this diversity. A missing research question also makes it difficult to understand the role of the descriptions of night life in foreign cities in countries like Spain, Finland,

Denmark and Australia. Those appear relatively arbitrarily chosen, whereas the Scottish example (p. 133) helps us to understand how health issues could be integrated into the English and Welsh licensing laws. Moreover, the problems that come with heavy drinking practices like binge drinking and its regulation by licensing may be a good reason to elaborate on that, but then it remains elusive why all the other aspects of an urban night have been described.

Concerning drinking practices, the authors note that licensing and town planning are the key instruments for regulation (p. 5, although they remind the reader at the end of the book that not everything has to be regulated). Town planning, however, plays only a minor part in the current political debate on night life, according to Roberts and Eldridge. As the authors are planners and urban designers themselves and the book's title is *Planning the Night-time City*, the reader expects to read more about past and future planning processes that are tailored to night activities in urban spaces. The main topic is, however, how licensing (not planning) regulates the night life (ch. 6) and how different approaches are made in other countries (ch. 7). The last three chapters then approach the field of planning. Yet instead of either proposing planning measures or questioning what planning could bring about, the authors take another step back and fan out further aspects that already influence the urban night, like policing, local authorities or transport (ch. 8) and various possible consumer perspectives (ch. 9). For each of those two chapters, they briefly sketch out some thoughts about planning possibilities. Physical and functional aspects like the concentration of venues or the width of streets get five pages in chapter 8 itself. The social aspects of chapter 9, however, seem to become an issue of planning guidelines and discourses (ch. 10) that foster another image of the night that is cultural rather than just

economic and just drinking-focused. The authors hint at stronger neighbourhood structures, at shifting the focus from solely the inner city to the whole city or at considering the need of the non-extreme party-goers like families (p. 215).

It is not an easy task to evaluate what a reader could learn from this book. On the one hand, it draws on a rich material and provides much information—about varieties of consumer needs and above all about the role of licensing for night time activities. On the other hand, it is not clear what this information aims at. Is it supposed to suggest planning measures? If so, the part on planning itself would be too short. Is it supposed to assess best practices of regulating drinking from an international perspective? If so, the chosen examples seem very random and too idealised. Conflictive moments of the 'continental style of drinking' are rarely mentioned. Is it supposed to remind us that the night city is not only about drinking and not only about the inner city (as the last chapter on night time futures emphasises)? If so, the focus on drinking as well as licensing makes the book heavily imbalanced. It would have been useful then to think about types of night activities and to suggest respective planning guidelines—without denying that these types cannot reflect all individuals' varied needs.

As mentioned, one connecting frame might be the link between planning and licensing. Those instruments are presented as the regulatory ones at the beginning of the book (p. 5) and their better integration becomes a claim in its end (p. 214). Yet then the space within the frame is filled with information that does not really assess possible or even missing links. However, seeing the book's strengths and weaknesses in the same facets, with the overall material perhaps being analysed too little and a common thread missing, its overall broadness gives the book the character of a dictionary. Anyone

who wants to know something about images of the night time city, about drinking practices in Britain or about the deregulation of licensing in Wales and England should have a glance at this book. While leaving questions open, the book also shows that there are

many answers to be searched for in an 'urban studies of nights'.

**Anne Vogelpohl**

*Center for Metropolitan Studies*

*TU Berlin*