

Nocturnal Ethnographies: aesthetics and imaginary of the night

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Special issue of *Ethnologies*. Nocturnal Ethnographies: aesthetics and imaginary of the night

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Night has emerged as a field of studies for ethnographers working in a number of disciplines, from Anthropology to Geography, from Media Studies to Sociology. Since the first pioneering works at the end of the 20th century in the social sciences, mainly focusing on the urban night (Bianchini 1995; Cauquelin 1977; Lovatt and O'Connor 1995; Melbin 1978; Schivelbusch 1995), or nocturnal rituals and dreams (Bulkeley 1999), a new interdisciplinary field has emerged: Night Studies. Night is thus conceived not as a mere extension of the day, neither as its negative counterpart. On the contrary, scholars increasingly working on night argue for the necessity of an interdisciplinary understanding of nocturnal times and spaces from a social, cultural, biological, ecological, political, and media-related perspective (Becquelin and Galiner 2020; Candela 2017; Kyba *et al.* 2020; Gwiazdzinski, Maggioli and Straw 2020). Ethnography is often used as a methodological access point to study the night in relation to urban life, infrastructure, media, rituals, and ecological matters.

If histories, geographies, architecture and the politics of the night are burgeoning fields of current research, we aim at exploring the aesthetic, sensory, and imaginative dimensions of night from an ethnographic perspective: How do ethnographers conduct research at/on night? Are there specific sensibilities that emerge when the night falls? What sort of imaginaries and aesthetics do the nocturnal hours invoke?

In anthropology, night, as a spatio-temporal dimension, has been long left in the shadows of the day, and only recently has it received attention from ancient to contemporary contexts (Becquelin and Galiner 2020; Diamanti and Boudreault-Fournier, forthcoming; Galinier *et al.* 2010; Gonlin and Nowell 2018; Schnepel and Ben-Ari 2005). One of the main arguments brought to the fore to support the claim for ethnography to have a long-established day-centred tradition in the discipline of anthropology, is the privilege we, as humans and researchers, have given to sight as the main access point to experience and knowledge. This becomes even more central for some specific approaches to night in subdisciplines such as audio-visual ethnography, that relies so heavily on a sense, namely

sight, that is actually impaired by darkness, while having the extremely rich access point that is sound, or sensory ethnography, that provide tools to study night from a sensorial perspective. We argue that the many constraints that the nocturnal dimension impose on the researcher - bodily, sensorial, physical, but also technical - should be understood as a starting point to better study the night with a specific nocturnal approach, in exploring its aesthetics, imaginaries, and sensibilities. As imaginaries of the night have been nurtured by writers, poets, and filmmakers in what Elizabeth Bronfen, in her book *Night Passages*, call the “aesthetically reimagined night” (2013: xiii).

This issue of *Ethnologies* aims to foster the debate by gathering interdisciplinary contributions on ethnographic studies that engage with the night from an imaginative and aesthetic perspective. Our goal is to map nocturnal ethnographies, and understand how night affects scholars’ research, what kind of tools and techniques are proposed to study such a specific spatio-temporality. We aim at including different disciplines and scholars conducting ethnographic research when darkness comes, from Anthropology and Folklore to Sociology, from Media studies to Geography.

Themes:

We are particularly interested in receiving contributions on nocturnal ethnographies touching upon:

- Sensory
- Sound;
- Images;
- Material;
- Media;
- Urban life;
- Infrastructure...

Manuscripts submission:

Ethnologies is scholarly journal, which publishes articles in French and English evaluated through a blind peer review process.

Proposals (max. 150 words) can be written in either English or French and should be sent to the issue editors at the following email address:

ediamanti@johncabot.edu et alexbf@uvic.ca

The results from the selection process will be announced on **May 15, 2021** and the deadline to submit the full texts of the articles will be **September 15, 2021**. The articles will then be evaluated through a blind peer-review process. The selected articles will be published in **Spring 2022**.

Final submissions should be no longer than 7,500 words and can incorporate illustrations (audio,

visual, still or animated) whose publication rights should be secured by the authors.

Guidelines for submission in English: <https://www.acef-fsac.ulaval.ca/en/ethnologies/authors>

Calendar

- May 1, 2021: proposal submission;
- May 15, 2021: announcement of proposal selection;
- September 15, 2021: manuscript submission for peer review;
- Spring 2022: publication of the accepted texts.

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