CONFESSION

Last night I
binge-watched
the moon.

Dossier: German Nights

Introduction by Will Straw

> Josiane Meier and Dietrich Henckel,
> Urban Lightprints: All But Static
> Jakob F. Schmid, Stadtnachacht:
> Mapping German Nightlife
> Sheraz Khan and Christine Preiser,
> 168 Hours Berlin–Friedrichshain: A
> Spatiotemporal Analysis

Recent treatments of nighttime in cities often participate in what is sometimes called the "cartographic turn"[1] in cultural analysis: the use of maps as devices for organizing and presenting data. This turn remains contested. The form of the map has been embraced for its capacity to set places and phenomena in intelligible relation to each other, laying bare relationships of complicity and conflict.[2] It has also been criticized for the ways in which the flat spatiality of the map might obscure difference and relations of power.[3]

Maps of the nighttime sky, with its constellations of stars, are among the earliest of what we might call night-maps. But the last hundred years are dotted with attempts to map the nighttime life of cities. Randomly, we might point to the following examples: art historian Anne Cauquelin's maps of nighttime populations in the public spaces of Paris, which show, from one hour to the next, the concentrations of people in a shrinking number of locations as morning approaches[4]; nighttime entertainment maps showing the circuits of restaurants or dance clubs in a city, such as those produced by Montreal newspapers in the 1960s[5]; maps of criminal

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activity that, within a broader cartographic turn in criminology and policing, distinguish between levels of crime at different moments in the 24-hour cycle[6]; mappings of spaces of nocturnal festivity in Paris during the 1930s[7]; and maps of human movement that, through continuous sensing or photography at intervals, capture the rhythmic dimensions of urban spaces.[8] More recently, maps based on mechanized data input or satellite photography have registered levels of nighttime illumination in cities.[9]

This very proliferation of map-forms diminishes the absolute truth claims of each. At the same time, the variety of visual styles used in mapping betrays the aesthetic impulses behind them. As Orit Halpern has shown, in her book Beautiful Data, attempts to render information visually regularly move between two poles. One of these is the search for forms that convey a sense of objectivity and irrefutable truth; the other is the desire for aesthetic invention, for ways of conveying information which will hold a viewer's attention and sustain the desire to look.[10]

This dossier brings together three short studies of nighttime activity in German cities. In Urban Lightprints: All But Static, Josiane Meier and Dietrich Henckel study aerial views of Berlin to note the shifting intensities of illumination. Lightscapes emerge here through the combination of commercial activity (like nighttime entertainment venues) and public utilities (such as transportation hubs). Jakob Schmid's Stadnachacht: Mapping German Nightlife uses data from location-based services to reveal the clustering of

nightlife entertainment venues. This shows the proximity of nightclubs to transportation lines, and the preference of both for dense, mixed-use areas where, possibly, conflicts over noise may be avoided. Sheraz Kahn and Christine Preiser, in 168 Hours Berlin-Friedrichshain: A Spatiotemporal Analysis, collect data using more conventional forms of observation in order to describe the structures, accessibility, and purpose of all spaces within a neighbourhood that had once belonged to East Berlin. Their map shows the fluctuating uses of spaces over the 24-hour cycle and across several days and reveals what they call the "overlapping regions and times of the night."

Night-maps perpetuate that nocturnal sense noted by Caroline Renard: that it both space and time.[11] The night is a period of time, but it is a "territory" as well, with its own populations, rituals and forms of citizenship. Across the practices of the night, that territory may be occupied or traversed, regulated or made free.

NOTES

1 See Jacques Levy, "A Cartographic Turn?" EspacesTemps.net, 27 February 2012, http://www.espacestemps.net/articles/a-cartographic-turn.

2 See Fredric Jameson, The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World Aesthetic (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995).

3 Alberto Toscano and Jeff Kinkle, Cartographies of the Absolute (Alresford, UK: Zero Books, 2015).

4 Anne Cauquelin, La ville la nuit (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1977).

5 Will Straw "'A City of Sin No More': Sanitizing Montreal in Print Culture, 1964–71," International Journal of Canadian Studies 48 (2014): 137–152.

6 Marcus Felson and Erika Poulson, "Simple Indicators of Crime by Time of Day," International Journal of Forecasting 19, no. 4 (2003): 595–601.

7 AWP/Marc Armengaud, Paris la nuit: Chroniques nocturnes (Paris: Pavillon de l'Arsenal/ Picard, 2013).

8 Chris Beyer and Dominique Royoux, "Cartographie des attracteurs temporels et photographie panoramique, des outils innovants au service de l'observation des rythmes du territoire," Nouvelles perspectives en sciences sociales: Revue internationale de systémique complexe et d'études relationnelles 10, no. 2 (April 2015): 159–198.

9 LoNNe, Loss of the Night Network, European Cooperation in Science and Technology, http://www.cost-lonne.eu/lightpollution/the-new-world-atlas-of-artificial-night-sky-brightness.

10 Orit Halpern, Beautiful Data: A History of Vision and Reason since 1945 (Durham, North Caroline: Duke University Press, 2014).

11 Caroline Renard, "La nuit: Durée, espace, noir," Cinergon 8, no. 9 (1999/2000): 49.

NIGHTTIME RITUAL

I sing myself
to sleep,
then six hours
later, sing
myself awake.