

NightWorkPod

Podcasting About Night Shift Work

Created by

Julius-Cezar MacQuarie, Sociology and Social Anthropology PhD



Series: London, the Glocturnal City and its 'Other Workers', the invisible night workers.

Episode: №1

Time: 17'58"

Description: In this episode, Julius-Cezar introduces the listeners to a world of work that is invisible to the diurnal eye and inaudible to the nocturnal sleeper. Prof Dr Ger Duijzings, Professor for Social Anthropology with a focus on Southeastern and Eastern Europe, joins the host to talk about his Nightlaboratory project.

Two other guests, Jeff (a London night bus driver), and an anonymous outreach worker with sex workers in East London, give their views and experiences of working at night.

Creator: Julius-Cezar MacQuarie, Social and Social Anthropology, PhD | Research Affilliate, Centre for Policy Studies, Central European University.

Keywords: Ethnographic theory, Transnational Migration, Anthropology of Work, Precarisation, Night-time Economy, Night shift, Night Workers, Interviewing, Glocturnal City, 24/7 cities.

Transcript:

Anon outreach worker: *London is very active tonight. Roads are very busy with cars, restaurants, it's a very different dynamic during the night, but still very busy. This city is always awake. At first, it seemed very odd to me to go to work when the rest of the house goes to sleep. Some people work the whole night. I go home before I do the outreach, I change and have dinner. I always dress in black and wear something comfortable, in case I have to run or... I never had an incident, but the streets are quite dangerous at night and you never know... You learn to leave with things that would frighten other people, but for me they become the ordinary ...*

JC: You've just heard the impressions of an outreach worker who wishes to remain anonymous ... Hello and welcome to the first NightWorkPod! NightWorkPod means podcasting about night shift work. NWP is inspired by my research into the sociology of the invisible migrant night shift workers in London. In this podcast, I introduce our listeners to a world of work that is invisible to the diurnal eye and inaudible to the nocturnal sleeper.

JC: I am Julius-Cezar MacQuarie, and I am an anthropologist. I took up research at night when I've learnt that night shift workers were invisible in the scholarly literature as well as from public debates. In this first episode we will hear the stories of a bus driver and an outreach worker.

JC: Before we hear their tales about working at night we invite our guest, anthropologist Ger Duijzings from Regensburg University in Germany, to tell us in a few words about his Nightlaboratory project. He knows his stuff when it comes to researching the nocturnal city. He shares what he found surprising and rewarding when talking to people working at night, and why he felt compelled to experiment with the nocturnal method to study those up and working in the night, the marginal groups invisible from the mainstream society.

Prof Ger Duijzings: *I would like to say a few words about the nocturnal city. I am an anthropologist and I am interested in people, 'other' people. Traditionally, anthropologists have studied the 'others' in colonial contexts. Nowadays, anthropologists study people often called 'others', the vulnerable people, minorities and marginalized groups that remain invisible to the majority of the population. So, in this project, the nightlaboratory project, I try to bring to light the lives of those people who make a living or work during the nights. I try to understand their lives from their own perspectives. They may do their work at night for various reasons. They, for instance, cannot find jobs in the day-time economy. They may be illegal migrants or they may not know the language, which blocks them from obtaining a job in the day time economy. They may choose to work at night because it may provide them with certain advantages, a higher pay, no bosses around or a quiet environment. All share one aspect – that they are invisible to the majority, all of us, who lead a so-called 'normal' life' at day time. In the nightlaboratory project, I started questioning certain established habits. That is, that we do our research at day time. There is a certain un-reflected diurnal dimension that we do our research in the day. So, I started to do these experiments, to be up on the streets at night, in London and other cities, to carry out anthropological fieldwork together with my student Cezar MacQuarie. I am trying to see who is up there, working and why, and to talk to them. After that, I also started to shadow night shift workers, such as security guards and call centre operators. It has been a rewarding experience. People often share the most intimate stories. That has been the most surprising element: people are very frank*

and are eager to talk to me. Many stories are very personal and universal. It doesn't matter very much if you are talking to people who work night shifts in London, Moscow, Sofia or Milan. These are some of the cities where I've done this time of fieldwork. They all share similar experience and they are very much alike.

JC: As our guest found, night shift workers tell inspiring stories of lives lived beyond the frontier of the night. Their stories are both universal and unique.

JC: My research is about this city - London - and more specifically, about the invisible armies of workers. I found that people employed on night jobs were mostly male migrants. They either provide the night service to travelers going to their homes after dark; or like the sleepless bats of Spitalfields night market, they load exotic fruits and vegetables six night a week. Fire fighters keep safe London's residents and some brave NHS workers give sexual health advise to night sex workers on the streets of East London. I was priviledged to hear their stories, which I now share on the nightworkpod. Next, are impressions of a night bus driver in London.

JC: Could you please tell me your name?

JM: *My name is Jeff Morrیده.*

JC: How long have you worked as a night bus driver in London?

JM: *I worked for four years, when I was doing my degree in health and social care. I worked for nine years altogether.*

JC: And you say you have a bachelor's degree in health and social care?

JM: *Yes, I have a degree.*

JC: And how come you do bus driving?

JM: *During 2008, the financial crush came and there was no way I could find a job. So, I decided because my wife just gave birth. So, I thought to give it a try to bus driving. And I became addicted to it, and I continued for nine years. I was thinking that I am going to get out, but it hasn't happened.*

JC: Why is that?

JM: *I think it is because of the experiences I have. One experience that I recount, I was coming down with the bus on a very steep road and at a roundabout there was a cyclist that was coming from one of the lanes on my left. And it was kind of dark, it was about 9pm, in the winter time. When I came it was with a very high speed, fast and I think he didn't see the bus when he was coming in. By the time he negotiated how to go through the roundabout, he tried to brake. By braking he slid under the bus. I could not see right in front of me, but I could hear that I was dragging something, like a bag. When I looked at the front door I could see the cyclist moving up and down, but when I looked to my right, below the door I could see the biker. The bus was running at about 5 miles per hour and I had about 20 passengers on the bus. It is a double decker bus. I put the hand break and I commanded someone on the bus to call 999. While he was under the bus I told passengers that no one should move from the bus because when they moved he was going up and down and shouting. I pulled him out before the fire brigade and ambulance arrived. Only when these two arrived I realized what I was doing. I didn't realise because I was high on adrenaline. I didn't realised, but I was taking the action that I was supposed to be taking at the time. When the police came they couldn't believe what I have just done.*

After they came, I had a sit down, and the police said that I was very brave to have done what I just did. But it was what the police or fire brigade would have done. So, that I was quite a nice experience. I loved it, I loved it.

JC: Jeff's experience does not include only experiences of the kind that he just recollected how he saved the reckless biker who just happened to go under his bus, but also others when he needed to save himself from other passengers jumping on his bus, as he recollects next.

JM: Once, somebody came on the bus and took out a knife and he wanted to travel about three stops and he didn't have the money. I asked him where he was going, and he said he wanted to go about three stops. Usually, you ask people if they were OK or not, but this gentleman showed me the knife and he told me to drive the bus. I told him, go and sit down and enjoy the ride, and everything is going to be alright. He put the knife back in and laughed. He told me, 'you know, you are very, very nice bus driver and he did not take another action and enjoyed the ride.

JC: Where you not scared?

JM: At first, I was scared, but when I told him that he can go free of charge and enjoy the ride, I was happy after that.

JC: And you did not call the police?

JM: No, I did not call the police because he came off before I reached my destination.

JC: Perhaps, you remember how this podcast started, but if not or you just joined this podcast, let's reverse to the beginning...

"Anon: London is very active tonight. Roads are very busy with cars, restaurants... it's a very different dynamic during the night, but still very busy. This city is always awake. First it seemed very odd to me to go to work when the rest of the house goes to sleep. Some work a whole night. I go home before I do the outreach, I change and have dinner. I always dress in black and wear something comfortable in case I have to run or... I never had an incident, but the streets are quite dangerous at night and you never know. You learn to leave with things that would frighten other people and they become ordinary ..."

JC: Be prepared to be shocked by the next guest. This outreach worker is reflecting back on her experience of working with vulnerable women, street sex workers out a night on the streets of East London.

Anon: You know, what is very surprising about the women who work at night in London, some may not realise it, but I was told by some women that they were afraid to go to the train station during the day or to public space because they do not get out in daylight and do not know how to orientate in the day. They told me that they cannot read the people's body language during the day. They are afraid. Odd, isn't it!

Anon: I have been working for four years and a half in a sex worker project, doing outreach, development and case management. We are now working with the most vulnerable of the sex workers.

They are people who are quite heavy drug users. So, they work to feed their habit. They are homeless. They are at risk of sexual and domestic violence. Some of them are migrant and work on the streets because they can't speak English. They don't have skills, very few connections and find it very difficult to find legal jobs.

Anon: We do night outreach, we drive around working areas. We stop when we see women and give them free condoms and hot drinks. Most of the women trust us already. At night, they are most active, and alert and they can express their needs. So, during the day is harder to reach and stay in contact with them because of their nocturnal lives. Sometimes, they might find a place to sleep far from where their work. And it's also because of their drug use. During the day it's much more difficult for them to be active. So, during the night we find out about their needs and during the day we liaise with other service and advocate their needs or find them somewhere to live. Most of the sex worker projects in London are exiting projects, but we focus on their health and safety to support and help them manage their lives because we understand very well the complexities and challenges they face, and we don't set them up for things they can't actually do. When we stop and meet for the first time a new sex worker, we introduce the service, we talk about safety and we try to find out why she's out on the street. Is it her choice? Is she working for herself? We try not to be intrusive and gain her trust. Sometimes, we may look like the police or authorities, so what we try to do first is to make them understand that we're there for her and help her, not to judge her.

Anon: You might find this one strange, but after all these years I don't find sex workers marginalised because they are at the centre of my working universe. If they are marginalised, so am I. But, you know, I can only live in my skin. Also, for most of the people the subject of sex work is something temporal or exotic. For me, is the day-to-day topic. I know hundreds of women working in the industry for different reasons, they have different stories, from the most dreadful to the most exciting. I see sex work as business, some women are good at it, some are not. I know that many people would be shocked to hear me speaking like this, but I think the public is misled by the media who portray the sex workers as victims. Some need to do the job, some are coerced. Much less are coerced and trafficked as put in the press. Exploitation exists in all areas of work and business in the world, which is really, really bad and unacceptable.

JC: These people's compelling stories mix a strange set of feelings of staying unseen, on the one hand, from the eyes of the diurnals, the regular folk of London, who works from 9-5, and being fascinated, on the other hand, by the lives they meet and friendships that they forge each night before the sunrise. NightWorkPod is about Night shift work, and not about night life, but it includes references to the latter in a global city that never sleeps, with its revelers and party-goers, all activities being sustained and maintained night-by-night by those who work, at night. Glocturnal people, as I call them, who live and work in cities that never sleep. The workers whom appear in the NightWorkPod are the folks who keep these cities awake, spinning at an incessant speed and consuming round-the-clock, night-in, day-out.

JC: So far, we have been listening compelling stories of people who are maintaining the cities during the night. Their compelling stories belong to people who are maintaining cities at night. They are the human beings who are up and working when the rest of the city sleeps. These workers, through their stories reveal a different face of a global city that never sleeps. In the future episodes we will be focusing on the night effects that night shift work has on their bodies. Because working at night puts pressure on their bodies, on their circadian rhythm, their 24-hour biorhythm, and when working at night that rhythm is being deranged and the people talk about such interferences when people need to be up, working and alert in the night as opposed to being asleep, as experts on sleep tell us.

JC: In the future episodes, we will also consider other aspects, such as how do night shift workers balance their work with family and social lives because often people who work at night are invisible to the people who work in the day. In other words, people who work at night remain largely invisible to the rest, the mainstream society, who lead, as anthropologist Ger Duijzings said earlier, a so-called 'normal life'.

JC: When we think of working conditions, we think of employers who provide minimum, decent working conditions, to warm their food, to make a cup of tea, to have all these utensils when they have a break. So, we're interested if workers have a break area, an eatery where they can sit down and rest during the night shift. All these questions will come up and hopefully you will enjoy listening to people who will come on our next episodes.

JC: NightWorkPod was created under the kind instruction of Ian Cook and Dumis Holdis from the Centre for Media, Data and Society based at the CEU School of Public Policy. This podcast is brought to you under the university-wide Intellectual Themes Initiative to share cross-disciplinary research and more widely to engage the public on topics otherwise kept within the classroom walls or in the conference settings among academics. I hope you enjoyed this first edition and that you tune next time to listen to Phil, a London-based resident and fire fighter and to George, who ran an NHS Service called Open Doors, offering support and advice to street sex workers over two and half decades. Thank you for listening and till next time follow our series of nightwork podcasts on [soundcloud](#) and [facebook](#) under ***LightSparksCreatives***.

For podcasts on various topics please visit the [CEU's podcast library](#), which is an open and searchable hub for original research presented in audio format.

Julius-Cezar MacQuarie has a PhD in Sociology and Social Anthropology from the Central European University where he is affiliated with the Centre for Policy Studies. MacQuarie is an INTEGRIM Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Alumni. His research adopts an innovative nocturnal ethnographic strategy to capture the sizable segment of denizens up and working at night in the global cities. His next short film, 'The Sleepless Bat' is due for release in theatres in 2019.