

BARCELONA BY NIGHT



From the open and tolerant pre-olympic times to the strictly regulated post-pandemic city

Abstract

Barcelona is *per se* a mediterranean city, both geographically and sociologically. Mild winters and hot summers favour life in the street. Our cuisine, architecture and events also welcome visitors from all over the world all year round which has its positive and negative side.

Barcelona was once the nocturnal capital we remember with nostalgia, as everything has changed so much and so fast, especially after the pandemic. Many residents have become over-sensitive to the nuisance.

Barcelona is “de-mediterraneanizing”. The municipality wants to project a pristine image of the city, mistakenly enforcing restrictive policies.

Yet, not everything is bad news: The local council has established the *Taula Ciutadana* (*citizens board*) to work all together towards a better Barcelona by night. Comissió Nocturna is glad to be sitting at this table.

1920s- 30s

Barrio Chino street



Villa Rosa



La Criolla



The 1900s Nightlife

Barcelona was one of the European cultural capitals in the 1900 and an important harbour city and like Marseille or Hamburg, it was a vibrant and tolerant city . In 1888 and 1929 , Barcelona hosted the Universal Exhibition.

The first international visitors felt attracted to the local, open, popular and exotic nightlife, which offered room for sexual encounters, alcohol, drugs and live performances.

1960s to 1980s A cultural and Social Revolution

New trends on cultural consumption (music, fashion, literature, cinema) coming from Europe and U.S → New ways of having fun, increasingly accessible for everyone (1970s-1980s)

The indirect effects of the US Hippie Movement & indirect effects of Parisian intellectuality on sons and daughters of Barcelona's upper classes: A growing need of self- and collective emancipation from oppression and repression.

Barcelona's **Gauche Divine** was a group of intellectuals, artists and professionals from the fields of cinema, literature, fashion, design, photography and architecture raised in bourgeois families. This cultural movement arose in Barcelona in the mid-1960s and would last until the early 1970's. Many of its members had no political ties to anti-fascism. By promoting an exaltation of modernity and sexual liberation, their 'activism' was seen as an aesthetical position linked to an opposition to the traditional ways of life of Spanish society at that time.

Barcelona under the Franco Regime

Many working-class venues (bars, taverns, popular wineries, and some music-halls) kept on working, but with some restrictions due to new rules on licensing, alcohol consumption and morality.

1953: Prohibition of Prostitution Act → huge impact on Barrio Chino's people, with the exception of US Navy 6th Fleet's soldiers (1951-1987) who were permitted to hire sex workers (male/female).

Late 1970s - Early 1980s: A crossroads for Barcelona's nightlife scene

Expansion of the 'nocturnal fabric' across the city. There are small pubs, bars, live music venues, even *discotheques* in almost every district.

The politicization of some nightlife scenes due to a deep social, economical and urban crisis. In spite of living in a still young democracy, the government continued to oppress anti-capitalist/anti-fascist groups (including LGBTQI's revolutionaries).

*Since late 1970s up to mid-1980s, 'heroin' and AIDS spreaded and provoked more than 3,000 deaths annually.

Late 80s : Pre-Olympic times

The sun, the beach, the light, neverending nights and no curfew !, enabled people to do whatever they wanted . Everyone was eager to discover and mingle with people from all walks of life.

Music brought people together, drugs, of course, helped. International musicians, artists and DJs were coming to Barcelona. The concept of *clubbing* was here to stay and a local scene was building up.

1992: The Olympic Games in Barcelona

17th October, 1987: Barcelona was nominated Olympic City . From then on the city underwent a total makeover. (*Barcelona, posa't guapa* slogan).

Although it is true that the city started to shine and open to the sea , many neighbourhoods such as El Raval or La Barceloneta lost their uniqueness.

Many night venues became commercial and somehow fake. Barcelona lost a few of its most lively grassroots venues and clubs were overstyled.

1993 ...and now...what? The post-olympic hangover

The early 1990s saw the birth of festivals such as Sonar (1994) or Primavera Sound (1996)

So the local council seemed to be favouring creativity, offering funds and space for it to develop. Yet, we must bear in mind the fine print: REGULATIONS !!

STATE LEVEL(Spanish Government): The national laws passed on venues : *Reglamento General de Política de Espectáculos y Actividades Recreativas (1982)*, since then barely untouched.

REGIONAL LEVEL (Catalan Government): 1990 Law passed on Leisure , Hospitality and Nightlife venues.

LOCAL LEVEL (Barcelona City Council): 2005 Bylaw: Legitimized random police repression against what was illegal (unwanted, non-official touristic activities), which directly affected the underground scene (after-hour clubs, warehouse raves, etc) or 1998 Barcelona Bona Nit Programme, which to establish a “normal”

nightlife. (? what is normal ;)

Nightlife in touristic Barcelona : 2010s

Tangible positive impact:

- Growth of the hospitality sector (GDP/ Taxes)
- Direct and indirect employment.
- Revitalization of some city areas.

Intangible positive impact:

- More free space and time.
- A more cosmopolitan and global city
- More diverse scene (live music, DJ sessions and festivals, visual artists..).

Negative impact of nightlife touristification:

- Cohabitation conflicts , especially at night : noise, garbage, unsafety feeling, rowdy behaviour and violence
- Job insecurity and exploitation.
- Money laundering
- Gentrification

All feeding back each other, thus :

- Enabling the existence of marginal activities and actors of the night (dealers, *lateros*, pickpockets, prostitution and so on) .
- Fierce competition for the use of space and venues opening.
- Spatial displacement of local partygoers.

COVID-19 impacts on Barcelona's nightlife

- Nightlife industry was closed since the 1st State of Emergency was declared (March 14th, 2020). So the first to close and the last to open completely. Nightlife was on the spotlight more than ever.
- Around a 94% of nightlife venues in Catalonia operate on a fixed-term rental basis and during the pandemic the rent still had to be paid monthly, as well as staff, bills and taxes an all this with little or no subsidy at all.
- Many nightlife workers had no legal contract→ They could not get any fund and were under temporary employment regulation (ERTE).

Since then:

- 935 venues (25%) have already disappeared in Catalonia (Sept. 2020).
- 17,000 direct jobs have been lost (the nightlife sector employs around 38,000 people).
- Hedge funds and foreign investors have started contacting nightlife venues. (urban development speculation).

and now....?

We must keep on fighting for our nocturnal cities . Comissió Nocturna will be there, rolling up our sleeves.

Now I hand it over to my colleague Andreina who is going to give you a great insight on what is going on now in Barcelona in terms of designing a strategy for nocturnal Barcelona.

And borrowing Andreina's words: **CARPE NOCTEM**

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ATTENTION

Atracciones- Bodega- El Baile Apolo



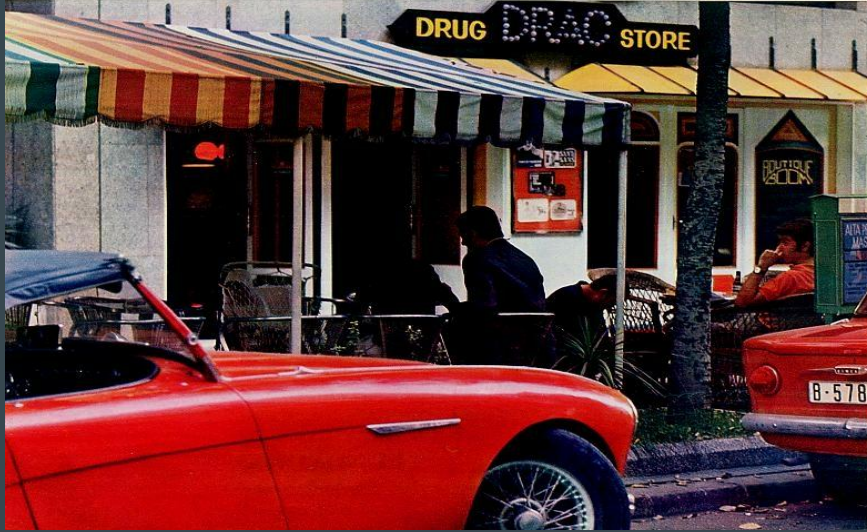
Dancehall: La Paloma



Cabaret: El Molino



La Gauche Divine. Tuset Street



Zeleste / Razzmatazz

70s Grassroots venue



1990s- 2000s Club and concert venue



Barcelona 1950s

Ildefons Cerdà urban planning



Barcelona 1992



Barcelona 1992 Masterplan

