

## NIGHT AS OTHER FRONTIER or THE WELL-BEING OF THE NOCTURNAL CITY

Alona Rodeh, November 2021



**The deployment of street lights in the Industrial era achieved two interrelated goals. As described by historian Wolfgang Schivelbusch: it reduced people's fear of nighttime and expanded the time frame of economic activities. Fast-forward to the 21st Century; today, half of the world's population lives under high-intensity illumination.**

TURNING NIGHT INTO DAY: We are surrounded—in private and in public—by powerful artificial illumination technologies that influence our state of wakefulness and daily lives to an overwhelming extent. These technologies also heavily impact non-humans, which have even fewer awareness tools over their own well-being. Artificial illumination can cause, among others, sleep deprivation and a constant state of jet lag for humans, and loss of sense of direction for animals, from insects to sea turtles and migrating birds. This proposal puts a spotlight on the under-discussed and under-valued subject of OVER-ILLUMINATION.

RECLAIM DARKNESS ON AN OVER-EXPOSED PLANET: I focus on recovering my own and others interested in visual sensorial sensitivity. With experimental night walks and further artistic interventions, I wish to rewire NIGHTVISION and rebuild some of the sensual sensitivity we lost with technological evolutions that emerged with electrification in the industrial revolution but went wild with the extensive usage of LEDs in the 21st Century. This includes the personal usage of machines that emit light (such as mobile phones and light-saving blue light technologies at home) and illumination in the public sphere (street lighting, advertising billboards on mega LED screens, football stadiums projectors, etc.).

DE-COLONIZING THE URBAN NIGHT: Mapping the darkest public spots in the inner city. Practicing camouflaging and dissolving into darkness while dissolving FEAR OF DARKNESS through constructively walking in groups. Concerning the night was done through technology, in an attempt to expand working hours and leisure activities, as described above. As a result, urban spots, which are *still* dark, are perceived as dangerous places that women should stay out of. Therefore, practicing night walking can also become A FEMINIST PRACTICE: stepping into the darkness, surrounded by friends and colleagues, without fearing for their safety. Examining the darkest spots of the city surfaces also the presence of marginal communities in these. Often, dark areas are places of comfort for groups excluded due to race, gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration status, etc. How can these communities be embraced by darkness without being labeled as OUTCASTS?

TWO SIDES OF THE COIN: Mapping the brightest spots in the inner city as a counter-act. After experiencing darkness in such a profound way, it can be overwhelming to enter a shopping mall. Trying simple things such as wearing sunglasses at night will be tried out.

LOCAL DISCOVERIES: In light of the current post(?) -pandemic city and emphasizing the pressing need for more private-in-public places to expand to, night walks are a way to connect to our very local, site-specific relationship with our immediate urban surroundings. Through these tours, I lead paths into the semi-darkness of the urban sphere, mapping, observing, and assimilating into its various mental and optical states of exposure created by taken-for-granted technologies.

**This is not a new project, nor it is an adaption of existing work. It is a new phase of an existing multi-layered project: making this world a darker place.**