

Exploring nightlife in the university city of Cluj-Napoca (Romania): a mixed methods research study

EMANUEL CRISTIAN ADOREAN, JORDI NOFRE, OANA-RAMONA ILOVAN & VIOREL GLIGOR



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The university city of Cluj-Napoca in Romania is one of the clearest examples where 'the night' (including restaurants, bars, discotheques, clubs, and also museums, exhibitions, and theatres) has been essential for the vitality of the city. Despite the importance of 'the night' for the everyday life of the city, the role of the night-time leisure economy in the social and urban change of European post-socialist cities remains underexplored. Based on mixed research methods, this paper aims to examine the recent development of the night-time leisure economy of Cluj-Napoca. After a theoretical approach in which we highlight the long underexplored path that still exists in relation to the study on the political, social, cultural and economic factors of 'the night' in post-socialist cities from South-Eastern Europe, the paper shows a quantitative approach about a range of variables that define the different (and unequal) forms of consuming the night in the city centre of Cluj-Napoca. The second part of the paper shows the results derived from the quantitative study about the different perceptions and visions that employees, residents, venue owners, and municipals have about nightlife in Cluj-Napoca. The paper concludes by suggesting that a greater institutional attention should be provided to the development of the night-time leisure economy in the city centre of Cluj-Napoca in order to avoid the reproduction of 'segmented nightscapes' that highly feature the night in Central and Western Europe.

Keywords: nightlife, consumption, mixed methods, post-socialist cities, Cluj-Napoca, leisure economy

Emanuel Cristian Adorean (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1484-5288>) *Interdisciplinary Centre of Social Sciences, Faculty of Social & Human Sciences, New University of Lisbon, Colégio Almada Negreiros, Campus Campolide, 1099-085 Lisbon, Portugal, and Centre for Research on Settlements and Urbanism, Babeş-Bolyai University, 5–7 Clinicilor St., Cluj-Napoca, Romania. E-mail: adorean.ec@campus.fcsh.unl.pt
Jordi Nofre (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7367-1337>), *Interdisciplinary Centre of Social Sciences, Faculty of Social & Human Sciences, New University of Lisbon, Colégio Almada Negreiros, Campus Campolide, 1099-085 Lisbon, Portugal. E-mail: jnofre@fcsh.unl.pt*
Oana-Ramona Ilovan (<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2075-1808>) and *Viorel Gligor* (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3203-4283>), *Department of Regional Geography and Territorial Planning, Faculty of Geography, and Territorial Identities and Development Research Centre, Babeş-Bolyai University, 5–7 Clinicilor Street, 400006 Cluj-Napoca, Romania. E-mail: oana.ilovan@ubbcluj.ro, ilovanoana@yahoo.com, viorel.gligor@ubbcluj.ro**

Introduction

Visit the stunning, new party destination of Cluj, growing rapidly in popularity amongst tourists. Travel into the city centre, to party in incredible bars and clubs. (...) Meet the local and see how generous they are with their drink. (ArrivalGuides 2019)

Delirio Gay Club: Cluj's only LGBT club is a laid-back bar on weeknights, and a vodka-fuelled, scantily-clad late-night party at weekends. (Lonely Planet 2019)

Over this past decade, the growing number of tourists, visitors and university students in Cluj-Napoca in North-Western Romania has converted its nightlife in one of the most attractive and lively nights across Romania and beyond. The construction of this vibrant night in the city is resulting from a set of complex processes of multifaceted political, social, economic and cultural processes that have affected not only Cluj-Napoca and Romania themselves, but also most Eastern European countries after the fall of socialism in late 1980s and early 1990s until today. One of these processes is both population and economic stagnation in central areas of many socialist cities in the last years of socialist regimes (Simionescu 1984). On the other hand the transition from economic, social and planning state-led policies to a progressively neoliberal political economic framework (Turnock 1997; Benedek 2006; Martín-Díaz 2017) led to the flourishing of new economic activities in former socialist cities. This also included the emergence of new night-time leisure activities that coexisted together with the continuity of 'old' forms of formerly state-led nightlife facilities (Čengić & Martín-Díaz 2018).

In the particular case of Romanian cities, the socioeconomic revitalization of their historic downtown areas over this past decade has been mainly based on the promotion of processes of culture-led urban regeneration, as well as on knowledge and the promotion and expansion of urban creative economies (Stoian *et al.* 2014). This is the case of Cluj-Napoca, the country's largest university city, where urban tourism and creative economy have arisen as main drivers of urban development (Ciangă 2013; Deac *et al.* 2014; Bolog & Mathe 2015; Toma *et al.* 2018; Suciú & Năsulea 2019). In fact, the development of the free higher education sector after the fall of Ceaușescu's regime – among other factors – should be seen as a key factor explaining the current urban vibrancy of Cluj-Napoca. According to the Centre for Research and Consultancy for Culture, Cultural Vitality of Cities in Romania, Cluj-Napoca has the highest urban vitality index for the best performing cities in Romania (Stoian *et al.* 2014). This is crucial for the purposes of this paper, since night-time leisure economy is central in fuelling urban vitality in not only Western European post-industrial cities (Montgomery 1998; Chatterton & Hollands 2003; Chion 2009; Grazian 2009; Adorean *et al.* 2017; Shaw 2018; Ekenhorst & van Aalst 2019), but also in Eastern and South European cities (Pixová & Sládek 2017; Čengić & Martín-Díaz 2018; Olt *et al.* 2019). However, to date, much of literature related to nightlife continues focused on Anglo-Saxon countries, while very little has been said about case studies situated at both physical and academic edges such as European medium-sized former socialist cities.

Objectives and methods

Based on mixed methods research (Johnson *et al.* 2007; Hesse-Biber 2010), this paper aims at examining the urban night in the student-city of Cluj-Napoca in North-Western Romania (Fig. 1). We begin with a short overview about night-time studies in post-socialist European cities. After this, we introduce the case study area for non-local readers by framing it in a post-transition political, cultural, and socio-economic context. The second part of the paper shows the results obtained after our fieldwork that was based on 1) online survey distributed among locals (including university students) (N=513; 456 answers in Romanian and 57 in English); 2) direct observation; 3) semi-structured interviews to venues' employees, owners, residents and policy-makers; and 4) *in situ* mapping of nightlife facilities. Previously to the web survey, in December 2017, the first author of this paper – who piloted the online distribution of the final questionnaire – conducted a preliminary online questionnaire (N=65; 50 answers in Romanian and 15 in English) to refine the web survey and prepare the final sample. In this sense, the final questionnaire was launched on the 5 January 2018 and ended on 18

March 2018. It contained 30 questions belonging to 17 topics and was divided into three main categories – personal data, consumption, and visions (Table 1). The final questionnaire was distributed online through a number of Facebook communities, such as *Campus Observator (Observator University Campus)*, *Campus Haşdeu (Haşdeu University Campus)*, *Cluj-Napoca, Eşti din Cluj dacă... (You are from Cluj if...)*, *Erasmus Cluj-Napoca Official*, and *Foreign Students Cluj-Napoca*. At the time of distributing the questionnaire, these community groups were current and/or former residents of Cluj-Napoca.

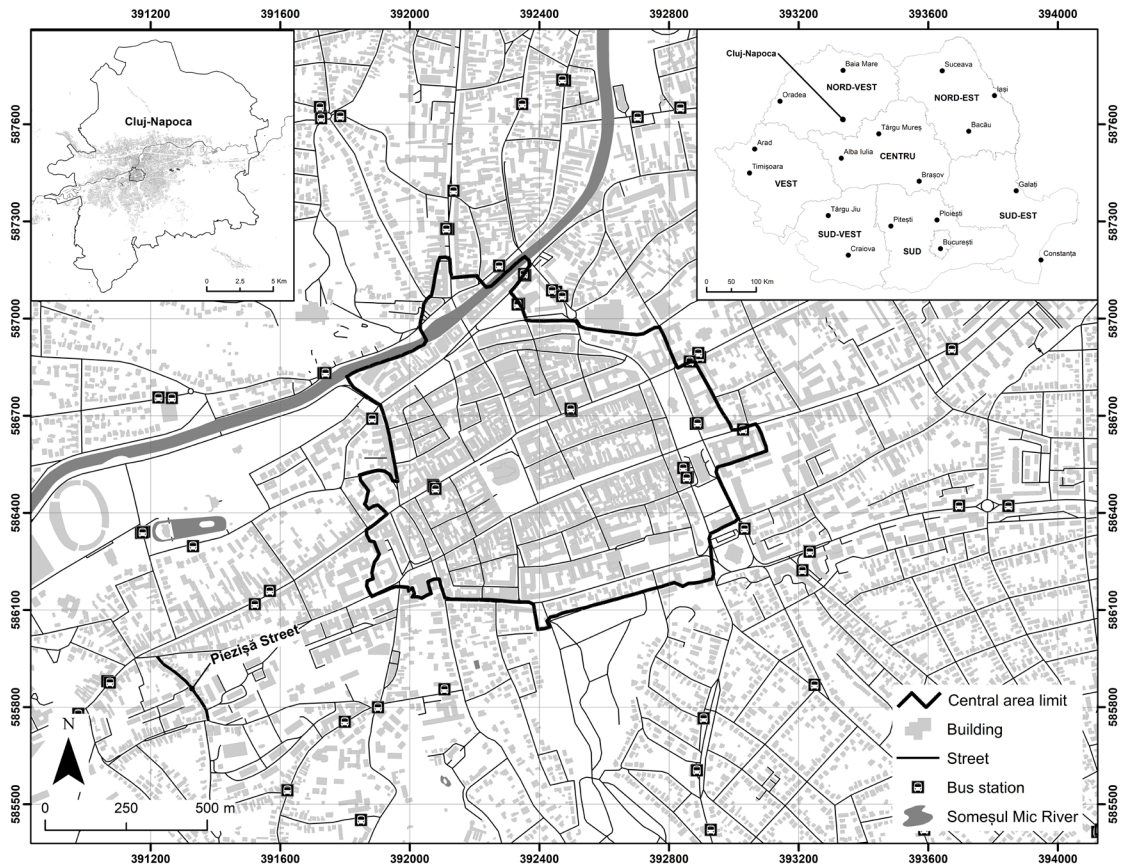


Fig. 1. Location of Cluj-Napoca, Romania and its city centre (source: authors).

Regarding the type of local actors of Cluj-Napoca nightlife, we were fully aware that some actors might be relevant informants for a better comprehension of the urban night in the city, namely police and security agencies, medical services, non-governmental organizations, volunteers and taxi drivers. However, due to cost, time, and human resources limitation, we decided to focus on local authorities, residents, employees, and venues' owners. Although a technician of the Department of Territorial Planning and Urbanism of the Cluj County Council accepted to be interviewed, it was impossible to contact members of the Department of Territorial Planning and Urbanism of Cluj-Napoca Municipality Local Council after numerous attempts. Our multiple invitations were refused by one employee of this department arguing that nightlife is a subject that is totally beside herself, since she does not know clubs from the city centre and nightlife is not in her sphere of interest. Facing that, and informed by the idea that "ethnography is an art of the possible" (Hannerz 2003, 213), we decided to design four different scripts for semi-structured interviews (residents, employees, venues' owners, and one single interview for the municipal who kindly accepted to be interviewed).

Finally, in what concerns to the legal and ethical issues, it is worth mentioning that, during the conduction of this study, we have been especially sensitive with personal data collection, use, storage, and processing. In this sense, participants were always informed about the purpose of this study and were provided with accessible means to contact the first author of this article. Their participation was voluntary, while no underage individuals have participated in the study. As confidentiality was ensured to all participants, questionnaire responses and interviews – that were digitally/manually recorded – were anonymized in all cases, and personal details were kept in a separate secure file. The transcription of interviews followed ethical and confidentiality procedures as recommended in the European Commission Ethics Guide on Ethnographic Research (European Commission 2014) and requested by the ethical principles and the highest standards of research integrity gathered in the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (ALLEA 2017) in accordance with European Union and Romanian national law.

Night-time leisure in the post-socialist city: a still unexplored terrain?

The development of 'Night Studies' in post-socialist European countries is recent, dating back to the second half of the past decade. The first works were centred on alcohol and drugs consumption, sexual practices, and uncivil behaviours during night-time leisure hours. For example, we should mention Bellis and others' (2008) work on sexual uses of alcohol and drugs in relation to health risks, which was conducted in nine European cities such as Brno (the Czech Republic) and Ljubljana (Slovenia). In turn, Calafat and colleagues (2010a) discussed culture-based differences in alcohol consumption during night-time leisure activities, as well as the influence of personal networks on nightlife activities, like the use of alcohol and drugs (Calafat *et al.* 2010b). Moreover, Calafat and others (2009) examined the relationship between nightlife activities and traffic risk behaviours, aiming at reducing traffic risk behaviour by improving night public transport services in the cities of Brno and Ljubljana, among other European ones.

In parallel, a number of scholars began to focus their research on Sunny Beach, an international nightlife resort in Eastern Bulgaria that was "a place of refuge and intimacy in the last years of socialism", and whose beachfront has known a dramatic tourist-oriented development since early years of post-socialism (Holleran 2016, 232). Hesse and colleagues (2008) examined alcohol use and associated risks within party travel packages in this nightlife resort by paying attention to differences between young people travelling with and without organized party activities. In turn, Tutenges and Hesse (2008) conducted a very interesting ethnographic research on the patterns of binge drinking in the same nightlife resort, while Tutenges (2009) published further results of this ethnography by focusing on safety problems in relation to heavy drinking during night-time leisure hours in Sunny Beach. In fact, research on this Bulgarian nightlife resort has continued over this current decade (Hesse *et al.* 2012; Tutenges 2012, 2013, 2015; Sönmez *et al.* 2013; Holleran 2016), where results "can be integrated as part of a wider culture of commodified debauchery which predominated many nightlife resorts" (Hesse & Tutenges 2011, 869).

Alcohol and drugs-centred approaches have dominated the study of the night in post-socialist European cities, advocating for a European alcohol policy that "must work to deter this form of nightlife" (Hughes *et al.* 2011, 1), while exploring new health and safety European standards for nightlife venues (Calafat *et al.* 2012). For example, in a comparative study between Slovenia and the United Kingdom, Sande (2016) advocates for developing harm reduction actions in nightlife settings. Similar research was published on drug use in the night-time economy environment of Pärnu and Tallinn in Estonia (Wood *et al.* 2016), while drug checking actions were implemented in the terrain in Slovenia (Sande & Šabić 2018), Hungary and Poland (van Hout *et al.* 2018). More recently, Beselia, Kirtadze and Otiashvili (2019) have conducted a qualitative study of drug use and harm reduction strategies in club settings of the city of Tbilisi in Georgia, one of the hottest spots for electronic dance music.

In recent years, nightlife has become central in the tourism marketability of some post-socialist European cities. This is the case of Ljubljana (Slovenia), where Bozic and colleagues (2017) carried out a study to better understand urban tourists' motivations to explore nightlife – which should be promoted as a pull factor besides cultural sights. This is also the argument of Pixová and Sládek (2017)

for the case of Prague in Czech Republic, although they also warn about the negative impacts driven by the dramatic touristification of the night-time leisure economy in central areas of the city (especially in form of expansion of pubcrawls) as well as by the lack of night-time-related policing. In fact, the focus on pub crawls is of a great scientific interest since it helps to shed light on the growing opening of post-socialist countries to Western European tourism markets. In some way, the growing low-cost tourist market in Eastern Europe has taken place in form of, among other phenomena, stag tourism. Indeed, today stag parties during night-time leisure hours is one of hottest topics among scholars researching on the night in post-socialist European cities (Thurnell-Read 2011, 2012; Iwanicki & Dłużewska 2018).

Interestingly, such a link between tourism and the night in post-socialist European cities allows us to remark the importance of the night-time leisure economy in the urban regeneration and socioeconomic revitalization of city centres in many Central and Eastern European cities after their transition to the capitalist system (Iwanicki & Dłużewska 2015; Iwanicki *et al.* 2016; Smith *et al.* 2018; van der Steina & Rozite 2018; Pinke-Sziva *et al.* 2019). In this sense, the night-time leisure economy has had a central role in the socioeconomic revitalization and even urban rehabilitation in, among other cities, post-socialist Sarajevo (Nofre & Martín-Díaz 2009) and Budapest (Olt & Lepeltier-Kutasi 2018). Whether nightlife has been used to provide a new use for abandoned venues located at the very heart of the city in form of, for example, *ruin bars* (Lugosi *et al.* 2010; Csanádi *et al.* 2011), recent overtourism and gentrification in Budapest has situated nightlife as a source of conflict with some local actors, namely residents (Olt *et al.* 2019; Pinke-Sziva *et al.* 2019; Smith *et al.* 2019).

However, in other cities of Central and Eastern Europe such as Wrocław in Poland, local authorities have used night-time leisure economy in promoting the city as city break and clubbing destination (Iwanicki & Dłużewska 2015). This is also the case of Belgrade in Serbia (Joksimović *et al.* 2014), named the Europe's nightlife capital by the magazine *The Times* (Scurlock 2008). In the oldest urban quarter of the Serbian capital – Savamala – local creative entrepreneurs "(...) have created their soundmark – the sound of the cool, alternative, hipster nightlife which is now associated with Savamala" (Medić 2016). In wider terms, Bürkner and Totelecan (2018) explore urban leisure culture in inner-city Bucharest, while Țugulan (2018) takes the perspective of the 24-hour city to study the development of central areas of the city with high economic, social and cultural potential. Interestingly, the author points out the lack of social and entertaining activities in the districts of Bucharest, while 80% of those activities are situated in city centre. This is the main argument that leads Țugulan to propose the creation of a new strategy to disperse this agglomeration of activities to the city's districts, thus targeting better urban management.

This section has shown how the development of the transdisciplinary field of Night Studies in post-socialist Europe has been largely focused on both behaviour patterns of partygoers related to alcohol and drug consumption, sexual practices during night-time leisure hours, and the role of night-time leisure economy in developing central areas of some Central and Eastern European post-socialist cities. However, the study of 'the night' in post-socialist European cities still remains little addressed. Hence, the case of Cluj-Napoca appears as different from that of other post-socialist cities researched to date – and previously mentioned in this section.

Getting to know the city of Cluj-Napoca

Cluj-Napoca has a strategic spatial position within the territory, as it represents the articulation of the connecting roads between Southern Europe – via Bucharest, and Central Europe – via Budapest, alongside with the almost fifty aerial routes to more than twenty different countries from Europe, Asia and Africa (Bolog & Mathe 2015, 84).

The urban history of the city of Cluj-Napoca begins with the Roman city of Napoca, continues with the medieval city of Clus and the "treasure city" of Cluj (15th–17th centuries) (Ilovan *et al.* 2018, 106; Maroși *et al.* 2019), whilst starting from 1974 (during the communist period), the name of the city becomes Cluj-Napoca, it having been maintained until today. The identity of the city is reinforced by its current name's versions (Cluj-Napoca – Romanian / Kolosvar – Hungarian / Klausenburg – German), which is sustained by the multiculturalism that the city detains nowadays (mainly Romanians,

Hungarians, Germans), doubled by the multi-confessionalism (Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Calvinism, Lutheranism, Unitarianism, Greek Catholicism, Neo-Protestant cults).

On what concerns to the population dimension, it is worth noting that according to the last official census data (Romanian National Statistics Institute 2020), the city of Cluj-Napoca had in 2011 a total population of 324,576 people. However, taking into consideration the upward trend of the city during the last years, its population is estimated to be even higher. Furthermore, Cluj-Napoca hosts annually approximately 100,000 students in its 10 universities with programs in Romanian, Hungarian, German, English, and French (Bolog & Mathe 2015, 84).

Parallely, Cluj-Napoca is one of the main tourist destinations in the North-West region of the country. Although it does not have world-class tourist attractions, such as UNESCO attractions, the city has rich natural (e.g. Cetățuia Park, Central Park), architectural (e.g. St. Michael Church, The Orthodox Cathedral, Cluj Arena Stadium, Babeș-Bolyai University), historical (the historic centre of the city), and cultural (e.g. public squares, statues, museums, churches) tourist attractions, thus providing a complete leisure experience for travellers who want to visit the city.

The university sector, the flourishing economy and the overall ascendant evolution during the last years transformed the city into one of the most important development poles within the country, currently competing with the city capital at a series of development indicators such as salaries, real estate market, medical facilities, care services, sports and cultural facilities, and transport services (Ilovan *et al.* 2018, 105). For example, the housing rent in Cluj-Napoca is about 3% higher than in Bucharest. Additionally, the values of this indicator in the metropolitan area of Cluj-Napoca are 20% higher than in the capital's same area (Romanian National Statistics Institute 2020).

The European Youth Capital in 2015 and alleged by the European Commission as the Europe's most friendly city in the same year, Cluj-Napoca emerges today as one of the most dynamic technology hub in the country, as it boosts innovation and technological development in the creative industries and national university sector. Taking into consideration that the city hosts more than 1,300 IT businesses with more than 15,000 people employed in the IT sector, focused mainly on outsourcing and process optimisation, it is frequently considered the Eastern Europe's Silicon Valley (Europe Smart Cities Council 2018).

Urban night of Cluj-Napoca

With the exception of European capitals, university cities, as well as touristified cities of South European countries, nightlife has little relevance for the economic life of small and medium-sized European cities. Nevertheless, nightlife is central as space-time of sociability, social interaction, and community-building. The current existence of traditional communist-era bars in Cluj-Napoca informs us about profound differences in the conception, meaning and semiotics of 'leisure time' between communist societies and Western capitalist societies. In the 1960s and 1970s, leisure time was not simply an evasion from the oppression of labour as it is often argued to explain leisure time in the capitalist industrial city. While the 'work as oppression' and 'leisure as escape' binary shaped (and still shapes) Western model of nightlife, (state-controlled) leisure in former communist European countries had a decisive role to play in human development, since "work, recreation, family life, culture etc. [were] just forms of integral human time" (Martinić 1965, 112, cited in Čengić & Martín-Díaz 2018). The current nightlife vibrancy of former socialist cities in Eastern Europe has strong historical backgrounds that should not be underrated. It often shapes a diachronic continuity that is fundamental to understand the production, reproduction and consumption of very particular collective subjectivities among Eastern Europe young and adult-young population – sometimes even related to (post) communist nostalgia (Velikonja 2009; Todorova & Gille 2012).

As mentioned earlier, Cluj-Napoca city centre is a vibrant urban area during night-time hours, with special emphasis from Thursday to Saturday night. In fact, one could speak of nightlife studentification (Brands *et al.* 2014) in central Cluj-Napoca, with wider effects on the urban and social fabric of the area (Fig. 2). While the growing number of both national and international university students in the nightlife scene of central Cluj-Napoca has led to a slight increase of prices (drinks, food, entrance fees), some recent upward tensions characterize the local real estate market.



Fig. 2. A night in Cluj-Napoca city centre and Piezișă Street (source: authors 2019).

During evening and night-time hours, a range of recreational, commercial, public and cultural spaces as well as sports facilities are open. For example, some sport facilities like gyms located in the central area of the city are usually open until 10 P.M., while Sora Shopping Centre, which is open 24 hours a day – although partially open during night-time hours – is the only shopping centre located within the perimeter of the study area. The central area of the city also has small-scale commercial units and shops with a non-stop function, although these are not intensively used during night-time hours as our direct observation enabled us to confirm. On the other hand, and much more relevant, a range of cultural infrastructures and spaces (Maroși *et al.* 2019) are central in the evening and night-time economy of Cluj-Napoca, such as museums (e.g. Ethnographic Museum of Transylvania, Museum of the Orthodox Metropolitan Church of Cluj, or National History Museum of Transylvania; among many others); art galleries (White Cuib, Gheorghe Ilea, Quadro, Tranzit House, IMHO and Rachel Art); theatres (“Lucian Blaga” National Theatre and the Romanian Opera) and two cinemas (“Florin Piersic” Cinema in Mihai Viteazul Square and Victoria Cinema on the Heroes’ Boulevard). These four types of leisure spaces are also open during evening and earlier night-time hours until before midnight. In addition, some open public spaces such as squares and parks occasionally host music concerts (e.g. The Days of Cluj, Transylvania International Music and Art Festival, Transylvania Jazz Festival), film festivals (Transylvania International Film Festival), civic activities or political events (protests) and even recreational events like the Street Food Festival or Cluj Never Sleeps event.

Moreover, Cluj-Napoca had 66 bars and clubs at the end of our observational fieldwork (July 2018). 48 of them (72.72%) were located in the central area of the city (Fig. 3). In particular, Piezișă Street (a lively “Students’ Street”) appears as the most important nightlife spot of the city. Print and copy stores (4), restaurants (Blend, Dolce Vita, Indigo, Pezzo di Pizza, Spartan, Vikings’ House) and fast food providers (Mama Manu, Power Fresh Food, Sandwich Shop) alternate with clubs (El Comandante, London Pub, Ring Club), bars and pubs (Big Apple, Booaha Bar, Crema Café, Coyote, GAP, Join Social Bar, Living Pub, Molecular Beams, Niko, Solas Café, Studio 26, Unipub). Precisely, these two types of spaces (bars and pubs) are the main meeting points for thousands of high school and university students where they socialize, drink and chat. Besides Piezișă Street in the central area of Cluj-Napoca, three more nightlife spots can be identified: Union Square, Museum Square and Heroes’ Boulevard (Fig. 3). The main difference between these areas is that the ones located within the city centre include also cultural spaces (museums, cinemas) and public spaces

(Union Square, Heroes' Boulevard, Museum Square, Matei Corvin Street, Vasile Goldiș Street, Virgil Fulicea Street – all of them pedestrianized), while Piezișă Street only contains recreational spaces. Next section introduces the first part of our study about the urban night in Cluj-Napoca, by focusing on nightlife consumption in the city centre.

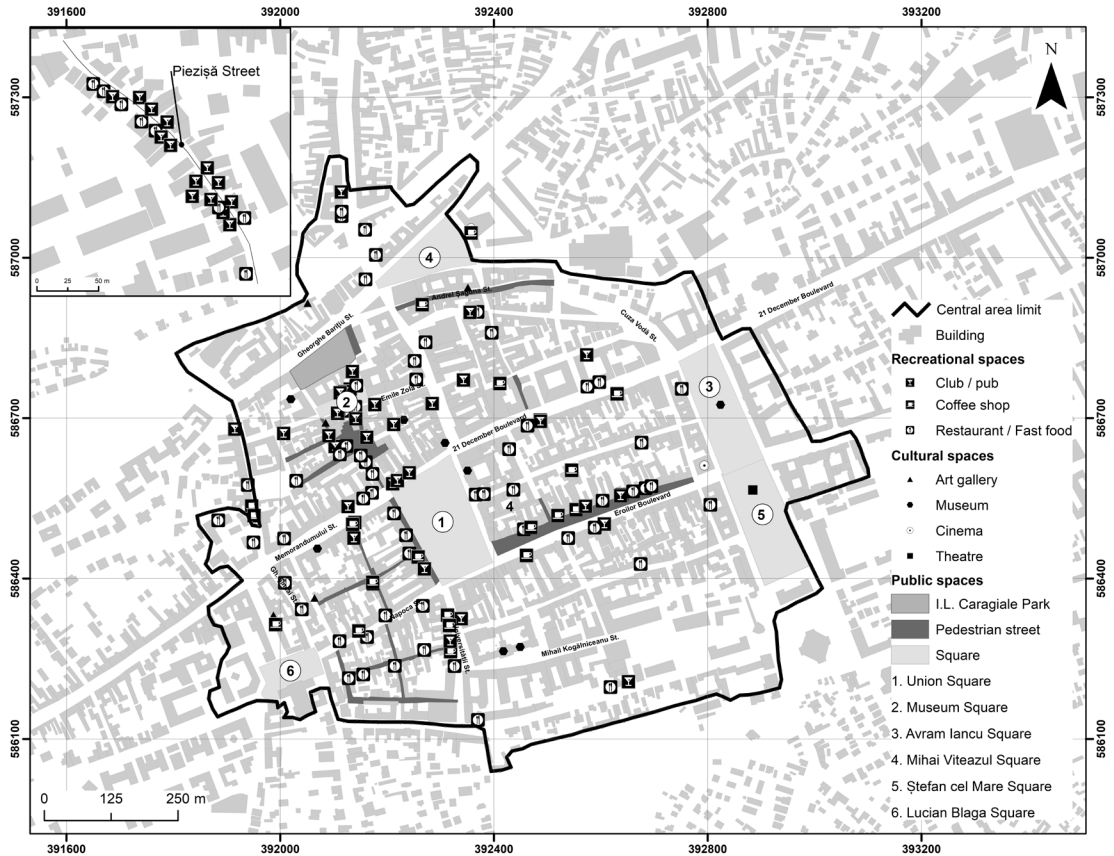


Fig. 3. Map of nightlife venues in Cluj Napoca city centre (2019) (source: authors).

Insider and a close-up view: patterns and particularities of the night-time leisure in the city centre of Cluj-Napoca

Our final questionnaire was administered to a sample of 513 respondents (341 women – 66.5%, compared to 172 men – 33.5%). Among them, 444 were Romanians (86.5%) and 69 foreigners (13.5%) from France (17, 3.3%), Hungary (14, 2.7%), Portugal (11, 2.1%), Germany (6), Greece (4), Netherlands (3), Italy (3), Spain (3), Switzerland (2) and one the following nationalities: Algerian, Austrian, British, Colombian, Israeli and Lebanese. This highlights the multicultural character of Cluj-Napoca. While reaching a certain percentage of foreign respondents was not a predefined objective, over 10% were foreigners.

The distribution of consumers by age revealed a significant predominance of persons aged 20–24 years (326 respondents – 64%), followed by the group of 25–29 years (81 respondents – 16%), and 14–19 years (67 respondents – 13%). Another interesting aspect was that the respondents aged 19–30 occupied over 87% of the sample. Additionally, between the 513 respondents, over 53% had already completed her/his Bachelor's or even had obtained a higher degree (MSc and/or PhD) or was carrying

out her/his postdoctoral research stay in the city. As expected, the share of students in the total number of respondents was very high (over 67%), highlighting thus their importance in the urban nightlife of the city.

27% of the respondents argued that the night atmosphere was the main reason for going out at night, 19% said that the diversity of specific activities played an important role, while 18% used to go out at night because they did not have time during the day. 35% of the respondents said they had visited the city centre of Cluj-Napoca over night for more than 5 years, 25% between 3–5 years, 21% between 1–3 years and 19% for less than a year. It is worth noting that amongst the respondents who answered the English version of the questionnaire, more than 50% said they had been visiting the city centre for less than a year, which confirms the temporary nature of their presence in the city. In addition, 36% of the participants said they went out in the city at night several times a month, 1–3 times a month for 31% of respondents, less than twice for 25% of respondents, and 8% used to go out 3 or more times weekly. The most suitable days for going out were Saturday (33%), Friday (32%), Thursday (11%) and Sunday (7%). 16% indicated the time interval 8 PM–12 AM as their preferred one for a good night out; 10% of the respondents indicated 9 PM–1 AM, and 11% of the participants mentioned the interval 10 PM–2 AM. Based on the three main groups we clearly identify in this questionnaire's field about time interval for going out, we can affirm that the average time that our respondents spent out when going out in the city is around four hours.

The transport provision for a going out in Cluj-Napoca is mainly done by taxi (30%), public transport (30%), and on foot (27%). The use of private cars for going out is very low (9.9%). However, the situation changes slightly after the party; 45% of respondents said they took a taxi to return home, 26% used to return home on foot, and only 16% did opt for public transport. Micromobility and soft urban means of transport are used only by 2% of the respondents.

Other relevant information we observed in the questionnaire's results is that there is a clear predominance of mixed groups of more than 4 people (53%), followed by those ones with up to 3 people (27%) and mixed groups of more than 7 people (6.62%). On the other hand, 10% of the female respondents stated that they do prefer to go out into girls-only groups.

When our respondents had to decide about the type of venue to go out, 19% of the 513 respondents used to go discotheques and/or clubs, while 14% preferred to go to coffee shops; 14% to taverns or bars; 13% used to stay at public spaces during night-time hours; 14% used to dine in restaurants; 11% did prefer to go to theatres or cinemas; 7% to belvedere points; 3% to shopping areas and 3% to pavilions or stadiums. Those who opted for casinos or betting houses, striptease bars, or other categories (e.g. friends' or colleagues' houses) were around 2% of the total. Furthermore, our respondents stated that the quality of nightlife spaces was very good. On a scale from 1 to 10, where the maximum value was 10, the average ratio was 7.61. More precisely, 21% (106) considered the quality of the nightlife spaces she/he did prefer to frequent as excellent (9 and over), while 64% (329) did consider that the quality was very good (7 and 8 points). Only 13% considered that the quality was fair (5 and 6 points), while less than 1% (4) considered that the quality of nightlife spaces in Cluj-Napoca was bad or very bad (less than 5 points).

The fact that 85% of respondents considered that nightlife spaces in Cluj-Napoca are very good or excellent is not linked to high amounts of money spent per night. In contrary, for example, 4% used to spend less than 20 RON (less than 4 euro), 45% of the surveyed users (231 people) spent between 20–50 RON (4–10 euro) on a regular night out, 37% spent between 50–100 RON (10–20 euro), 11% between 100–200 RON (20–40 euro), and 4% spent over 200 RON (more than 40 euro). 54% considered the quality-price relationship of services and products consumed as medium, while 34% considered it above average, 8% did consider it excellent, and 3% stated that there was no accurate relationship between the quality of products and services and the price charged for them. Finally, 26% said that alcoholic beverages were the main good they had acquired and consumed during the night, while 15.19% did prefer soft drinks. 21% used to consume cultural activities such as films, theatre plays, museums and art galleries, live music events, and so on. In addition, 14% took fast food away as part of a typical night itinerary, 13% used to dine in restaurants, and only 7.16% spent money in shopping during evening hours. 1.18% spent some money on getting drugs, 0.78% on gambling (casinos, betting houses), 0.62% on other categories (tobacco, music) and 0.31% on sexual services.

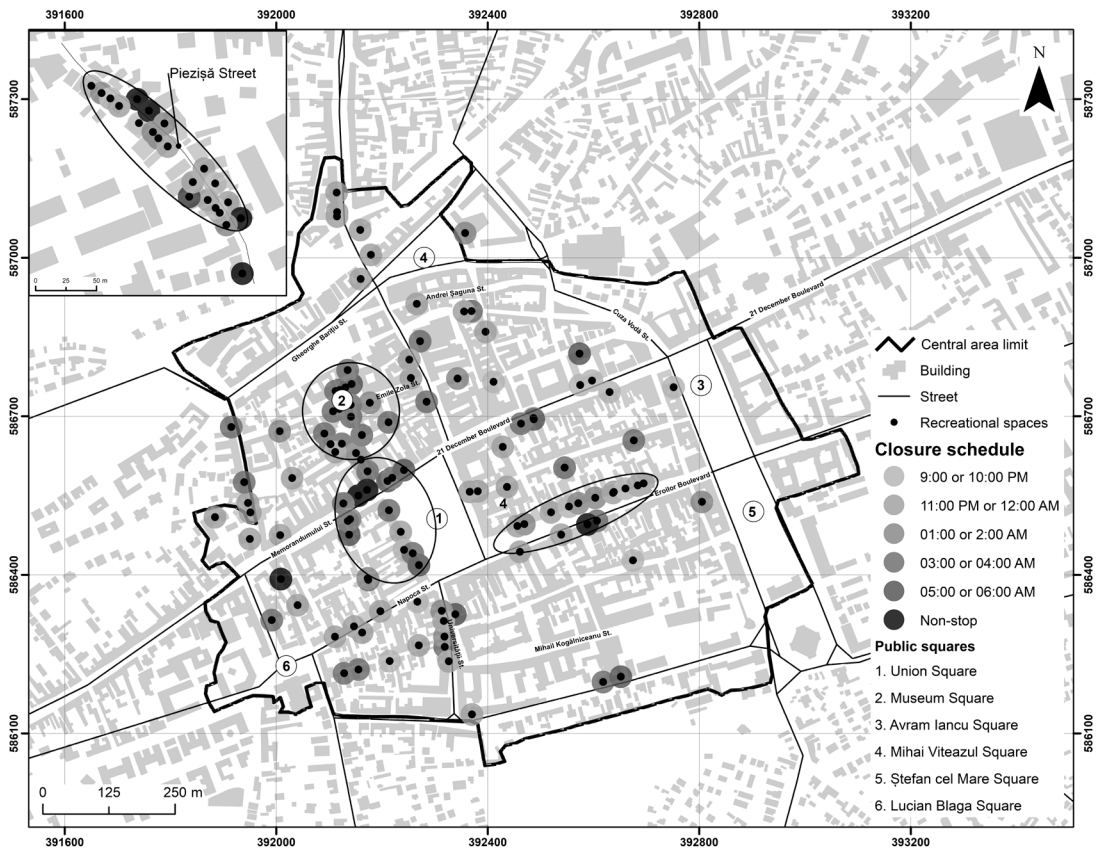


Fig. 4. Map of nightlife venues in Cluj-Napoca city centre versus venues' opening hours (2019) (source: authors).

Our web survey also included a section about strengths and weaknesses of the night in Cluj-Napoca. In this sense, 57% appreciates the diversity of nightlife facilities, and 25% appreciates the density of venues; 55% also appreciates the nocturnal atmosphere of the city centre; 42% states that the high level of socialization that takes place every night is a clear strength of the night in Cluj-Napoca. However, only 14% says that public safety is good or very good. 29% of our respondents considers public safety as a weakness of Cluj-Napoca's night. In turn, 27% says the quality-price balance of services and goods (26%) is awful. Despite no prominent weakness that we could identify through an analysis of the total number of answers collected, the set of weaknesses that our respondents have identified for the Cluj-Napoca city centre's night is diverse: the public safety level (151 responses), the quality-price relationship of services (138 respondents), the quality-price relationship of products (134 answers), the noise (41 responses), the relationship among the involved local actors (50 responses), the urban nocturnal landscape (45 responses), the diversity of specific activities (41 responses), the density of recreational facilities (37 responses), the vibrant character (31 answers), the social interaction (30 responses). Finally, very few responses refer to the saturation of bars on Friday or on Saturday evening, the unlawfulness of psychoactive substances' consumption that generate pleasure, the lack of transport by night or the lack of diversity in terms of thematic night-time establishments.

This examination of the nightlife scene in Cluj-Napoca would be incomplete without considering the different, sometimes even contradictory voices of other local actors of the urban night such as employees, residents, owners, and municipals. The second part of our study description starts with information collected during direct observation of the night in the city centre of Cluj-Napoca.

'The other side of the moon': venues' owners, employees, neighbours and municipals' perceptions about nightlife in the city centre of Cluj-Napoca

When we asked the employees and the residents interviewed if they noticed any change in terms of evolution or involution in the spaces designed for night-time activities, the former argued that media had already highlighted a growing number of episodes of violence and theft during night-time hours, although the level of public safety had increased according to residents themselves as consequence of the improvement of street lighting and cleanliness. One interviewed resident in the city centre told us that "the centre [has] become more populous by strange individuals that you would expect to meet normally on the outskirts of the city". Meanwhile, the employees remarked the disappearing of some traditional venues and their substitution by new ones. Employees also remarked the pedestrianization of many streets as positive for the development of the night-time leisure economy in the area. In this sense, the employees also remarked that venues' technical equipment has been improved, customers' education level has increased, while the number of good quality artistic activities performed during night-time hours has increased as well. However, the employees also stated that the opening hours of the venues should be prolonged. While, at the same time, those entrance fees which were overvalued regarding the venues' services quality should be forced to be altered.

Both employees and neighbours agreed on highlighting a significant list of possible improvements that could be made. Besides them, we should emphasize a discount card for beverages and meals at certain times of the week, better conditions of accessibility to the venues, new indoor aesthetics, and new functionalities of the venues. The residents also affirmed that the diversification of cultural supply by taking into account the generational diversity of the community should be increased to include elder locals. Other aspects mentioned by both employees and neighbours where the necessity of keeping on increasing hygiene and safety levels in both public and private spaces during night-time hours. They also mentioned the introduction of public transport at night, the improvement of street lighting, and an increase of police patrols during night-time hours especially in the access of venues. For both, this action should be accompanied by the installation of surveillance cameras in spaces that have often been scenarios of episodes of violence, as well as by more strict drugs control in the entrance and the surroundings of venues. Last, but not least, the neighbours interviewed also argued that solving the situation of homeless people by local authorities and expanding parking spaces and pedestrian areas should be a priority, as these measures would lead to more cohesive, attractive and safer night-time spaces.

Venues' owners had different approaches to the range of topics addressed during our fieldwork. On the one hand, they did not show much concerns about residents and patrons' satisfaction but growing benefits, since they decided to open their respective venues in the central area of Cluj-Napoca due to the excellent conditions of the place in terms of marketing and business' visibility. The venue owners considered that the number of night-time users had increased considerably during the last years, with a higher number of partygoers during the Romanian academic year (from October to July). In this sense, our direct observation as well as owners' statements collected during the interviews allow to confirm the existence of the cross-national, cross-age and cross-social nature of partygoers in our case study area, while they also agreed on remarking the different sexual orientations of partygoers. When venues' owners were asked about their businesses' viability, they often stated that some critical factors were also determining, in some way, the financial sustainability of their businesses, namely the decrease of consumers during periods in which events were held in the city (e.g. Untold, The Days of Cluj), certain consumers' behaviours *is* the venues indoor premises, and the lack of financing sources for developing their businesses. Facing such a situation, many owners refused the idea of the definitive closure of their venues and disagreed in moving to other areas of the city with lower rent prices. In fact, this is the reason through which they remark the necessity of collaborating with the rest of local actors of the urban night in Cluj-Napoca towards more sustainable, safer, and vibrant nightlife in the city centre.

Finally, the only informant from the local administration that was interviewed pointed out that, besides profits and yields brought by the expansion of the night-time leisure economy in Cluj-Napoca city centre, the presence of a large number of people during night-time hours helps to increase security on the streets (at least at the level of perception). The municipal technician also argued that

the number of night-time users in the city centre has increased if we compare 2018 to 10 years ago, with excessive concentrations on public space especially in weekend days or during the celebration of festivals producing noise pollution, waste, and anti-social behaviours, which have also increased in the past years as direct consequence of the expansion of the night-time leisure economy in central areas of the city. The interviewee also noted that the night-time leisure economy in Cluj-Napoca city centre will continue to grow (although slowly) over the next 5–10 years. In the view of the municipal technician, the central area of Cluj-Napoca will no longer attract residents in the future, but rather visitors and tourists. Far away from seeing that scenario as a threaten for the vitality of the city centre, the municipal technician commented that the city has an amazing opportunity to foster its tourism development but, at the same time, such a decision would demand the participation of both local and national authorities that should assume a new approach in thinking, designing and governing the city integrating both the daytime city and the nocturnal city into a 24-hour open city.

Conclusions

Based on mixed research methods, this paper has examined the recent development of the night-time leisure economy of Cluj-Napoca city centre. After a theoretical approach where we shed light on the low number of research on the night in non-Western contexts, we have offered some statistical data derived from the conduction of a web survey that provides insights about the nightlife in one of the “unknown-to-date” university cities in Europe – at least in the field of the newly-emerged field of Night Studies (Gwiazdzinski *et al.* 2018; Eldridge 2019). While neighbours express their concern about the excessive development of nightlife in the city centre, employees and venues’ owners stressed the range of positive impacts driven by the expansion of the night-time leisure economy in the city centre. Meanwhile, the municipal technician admits that the local administration is interested in implementing the “24-hour open city” paradigm of urban and economic development.

These antagonistic visions on the development of nightlife in Cluj-Napoca city centre and its impacts at community level are common in nightlife districts of many cities worldwide (e.g. Nofre & Eldridge 2018). Undoubtedly, this poses a relevant challenge in governing ‘the nocturnal city’ – in Shaw’s (2018) terminology – in this university city of North-Western Romania. In fact, the growing number of nightlife commissions created across Europe and the Americas in these past years (Seijas & Gelders 2020) appears as an unbeatable starting point to design and implement a nightlife commission in Cluj-Napoca that would have the aim of 1) ensuring the community liveability of central neighbourhoods during night-time hours, 2) providing affordable nights (including transport provision); and finally 3) promoting inclusive and diverse leisure supply – enhancing local circuits, artists, and tangible and intangible cultural heritage of this historical capital city of the Transylvania region rather than reinforcing the tendency towards a hegemonic commercial nightlife.

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