

The night in Zinder, forgotten by public policies

ADAMOU Abdoulaye

Lecturer, André Salifou University;

Email: abdoulaye_noma@yahoo.fr

Laboratory: Societies, Territories, Environment

Abstract

Zinder, a conservative town with a strong *ulama* influence, where distraction, recreation and leisure activities are equated with the depravity of morals, is now seeing the development of nightlife. Indeed, urban growth, the demolition of the central market and the proliferation of passenger transport company head offices have made the city more attractive for certain tertiary services (such as banks, various offices, shops, recreational areas, restaurants, catering services, etc.) and the deployment of nightlife activities beyond the city center. This article examines the perception of the night by residents and other stakeholders, spatial practices and public night-time policies in Zinder. Answering these questions will help to lay the foundations for a better understanding of night-time issues and how they can be taken into account in the planning and development of tomorrow's city. The methodology is based on 14 focus groups and 32 individual interviews with residents, managers of the city's technical services, municipal police, national police, urban planning and various trade unions. The results show that night-time in Zinder is a forgotten area of public policy, despite the growing importance of night-time activities.

Keywords: night, perception, public policy, Zinder

1. Introduction

1. Background and rationale

Since 2015, the city of Zinder has seen a growth in night-time activities, generating morphological mutations in certain spaces with the appearance of large-scale stores and buildings and small-scale itinerant commerce, hence the concept of "Zinder by night" to speak as Adamou (2024)¹. A previous article showed that "sustained urban growth, the demolition of the central market (*Kassouan Dolé*) and the proliferation of passenger transport companies explain the changes in Zinder's nightlife". Adamou (2024 a) notes that *"nocturnal activities are expanding in time and space. The city that used to sleep at 10pm now stays awake until dawn in some places. What's more, nocturnal activities have conquered new spaces in the pericentral and outlying areas, in addition to the city center"*.

In the wake of changes in nightlife, the city of Zinder is faced with specific challenges related to night management. These issues influence how Zinder's inhabitants perceive the night, the safety of nightlife, and access to public services, all of which play a decisive role in policy implementation. This is all the more justified given that Zinder is a conservative city with a

¹ ADAMOU Abdoulaye (2024), Zinder by Night : quelles mutations de l'espace-temps, paper presented at the Nuits des Suds "symposium, September 20-22, 2024, Fez, Morocco.

strong *ulama* influence; it is a "city where distraction, recreation and recreational activities are equated with depravity of morals...".

To this end, it is useful to understand residents' perceptions in order to develop appropriate public policies that improve citizens' quality of life at night. The aim of this article is to analyze the perception of nightlife by Zinder's inhabitants and urban managers. Answering such a question will help lay the foundations for a better understanding of night-time issues and how to take them into account in the planning and development of tomorrow's city.

This study is based on the hypothesis that: the perception of night-time among Zinder's inhabitants and urban actors expresses a need for security and negatively influences public policies in terms of urban planning

The interest of this study lies in the fact that it will present the real stakes of nightlife, far from prejudices, by bringing out the challenges but also the opportunities it entails, especially as, as things stand, there is no program or agenda for the promotion of nightlife activities in Zinder. Urban policy does not include nightlife among the objectives of spatial planning and local initiatives. So how can we build a city for the city of tomorrow that will be viable 24 hours a day.

A review of the literature shows that residents' perception of the night is the primary concern of researchers. Indeed, as mentioned by GINZBURG Carlo (1989) and VERDON Jean (1994.), the first approaches to the night date back to the 1980s, from the angle of mentalities, imaginaries and representations. Since 2010, several publications have attempted to provide a theoretical and methodological framework for these *Night Studies*. (Calenda - Nocturnes _ espaces et pratiques de la nuit). The "Nuits des Suds" colloquium, scheduled for September 20-22 in Fez, Morocco, is part of this multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach to *night studies*, with a particular focus on night-time issues in the South. The variety of *night studies* shows that night is not just a place or time for dreams, nightmares, control or surveillance; it must be understood as a resource to be optimized or enhanced. In Alain Fremont's words (A. Frémont, 1976), night is, in fact, a lived space-time.

Once this is understood, it's possible to explore nocturnal urban practices and spaces. In this regard, the literature reveals with Luc Gwiazdzinski (*Ateliers d'anthropologie* n°48, 2020, Ce que la nuit raconte au jour Vers une approche nocturne des mondes urbains, , p.3) that : *"The first observation is that there has been a "gradual colonization of the night" by human activities, thanks in particular to the assertion of political power and the perfecting of lighting technologies. These have made it possible to move gradually from the "city on call" (health, safety), to the "city by night" (entertainment) and to the current period of "diurnalization" where daytime activities are moving into the night*

This observation led Adamou (2024) to publish an article entitled "Zinder By night: a mutation of space-time".

Adamou and Harou (2020) are also interested in the evolution of night-time rhythms and practices in Niamey, the capital of Niger, and speak of "Les territoires nocturnes de Niamey: entre recompositions spatiales des activités et nouvelles pratiques" (Niamey's night-time territories: between spatial recomposition of activities and new practices).

Diversified rhythms and practices pose challenges of conflict between users and diverse nuisances to be addressed through public policies and urban planning in terms of nightlife. In this sense, we should say with L. Gwiazdzinski, (2014, pp.46-55) that *"The night is also a*

territory of innovation for organizations and public policies, with new forms of dialogue, compromise, mediation, regulation and governance.

This study focuses on three areas: residents' perception of night-time, urban night-time practices and spaces, and public policies and developments relating to night-time life in Zinder.

2. Methodology

This study is based on a qualitative approach combining field visits and oral surveys. The research strategy starts with direct observation of the field, which involved visiting nightlife venues (bars, clubs, shopping streets, cultural activities, etc.) to see what was going on. For a better understanding of the subject, we initiated an unacknowledged participant observation consisting of frequenting the places, as an actor, also taking part in the activities in question. In this case, the investigator, which we are, relies on a lived experience to make his narrative of the night in Zinder.

The oral survey is based on 14 focus groups and 32 individual interviews with residents, managers of the city's technical services, municipal police, national police, urban planning and various trade unions.

For the focus groups, we used the accidental method, which involved travelling around each of the five arrondissements that make up the city², in each neighborhood to find groups of people sitting at the fada (meeting place), identifying *Kaboukabou* or *Adeydeyta* stations (at railway stations, shopping intersections). These were interviews with groups of 4 to 16 people. In all, 102 people were involved. Some fadas are mixed (men and women)

For the individual interviews, the snowball technique was applied in each municipal district. This involved visiting nightlife venues to identify a person to interview, and then asking them to refer us to another. This approach took us to the streets, bars and dance clubs, shopkeepers, students, prostitutes and so on.

3. Results

3.1. Nightlife not always embraced by Zinder's residents

At this level, the survey aims to answer the following questions: What is nighttime like in Zinder (specifying the beginning and end of the night)? What do you think of nightlife in Zinder (very developed, developed, not very developed)? What are the risks of nightlife in Zinder? What are the names given to Zinder's nightlife? What's behind the scenes of Zinder's nightlife (false pretenses; what does Zinder's nightlife hide)?

3.1.1. A definition of night intimately linked to the prayer times of icha'a and fadjr

For the inhabitants of the city of Zinder, the definition of night is closely linked to the times of the I'sha'a prayer, which is the last prayer of the day, and the dawn prayer, which marks the start of the day (called Fadjr or *assouba*). The times of these prayers vary according to the season.

² Since 2010, the city of Zinder has been divided into five Arrondissements Communaux or ACZs (ACZ I, ACZII, ACZ III, ACZIV and ACZ V).

The Icha'a prayer is performed around 7:30 p.m. in winter and 8 p.m. in summer. Similarly, the dawn prayer is performed at 5 a.m. to 5.30 a.m., depending on the season.

The night is seen as a space-time where social control is less present, so it's a refuge to do what you want, discreetly or openly. But this freedom offered by the night is not without risk, danger or insecurity. A 24-year-old student declares: *"For me, night is the time when certain eyes don't see you, when everything is almost quiet. For me, the night starts at 7 p.m."*

3.1.2. Zinder's nightlife is not as dynamic as in other cities of the same size.

Nightlife in Zinder is synonymous with distraction, leisure and freedom. But it's not without its risks. At present, nightlife in Zinder is more lively, even if it fluctuates, with busy nights on weekends and other occasions (festivals; cultural events) and inactive nights on working days. For some, it seems monotonous, while for others it offers opportunities. Mr. Sani (29): *"For me, the night is good, I don't give a damn about other people's criticisms. I prefer to work at night to earn more. This has enabled me to build my own house, and I have two wives, one a teacher, the other a housewife. I'm a polygamist"*

Although Zinder's nightlife is growing steadily, most respondents feel that it is underdeveloped for a city with a population of around 500,000, and compared with other cities in Niger or the sub-region, which are often smaller. In fact, 15 out of 33 respondents (*Table 1*) thought that nightlife in Zinder was underdeveloped, 9 thought it was fairly well developed, and 9 thought it was very well developed. The latter category of people are mostly natives of the city, and compare the nightlife of today with that of previous decades. In fact, as one urban planner put it: *"I think that nightlife in Zinder is underdeveloped compared with Niamey, the country's capital, and even Maradi, the third largest city"*, and he added: *"It's underdeveloped because you don't have certain services at night from a certain hour onwards, and the venues are so undiversified that people all go to the same places"*.

Table 1: Perceived level of nightlife development in Zinder

Nightlife	Score	Comment
Highly developed	=9	More than before;
is developed	=9	comparatively before; commercial activities
Is underdeveloped.	= 15	Zinder's nightlife is underdeveloped compared with other towns in Niger, such as Maradi, Niamey and Agadez. Compared to cities of the same level in certain countries such as Benin, Togo, etc., Zinder's nightlife is not very well developed. You don't have certain services at night after a certain hour;
Total	33	

Source: field survey, July 2024

3.1.3. Risks at night in Zinder

The risks involved express the feeling of insecurity when going out at night in Zinder. Indeed, after 11pm and midnight, the risks are high: muggings, attacks by thieves, serious traffic accidents, cell phone snatchings, raids by the national police, encounters with sorcerers or dangerous animals such as stray dogs, etc. It all depends on the neighborhood or area you frequent. It has to be said that everything depends on the neighborhood or area you frequent. To limit the risks of aggression or attack and ensure the safety of residents, the defense and security forces (national police, national guard, gendarmerie) multiply patrols throughout the city until the early hours of the morning. Speaking of the risks incurred at night in Zinder, a Moto kaboukabou cab driver (aged 29) declares: *"At night, there are assaults, thefts, accidents, people don't respect the traffic lights at night. I had an accident on the way to hospital with a gentleman who had broken the red light"*.

3.1.4. Nightlife in Zinder: between vices and false pretenses

This question on the underbelly of nightlife in Zinder aims to identify the acts or activities most decried by Zinderers. Firstly, the sale and consumption of narcotics (drugs) and other criminal activities. Secondly, there is prostitution, adultery and bogus religious figures or marabouts. **Mr. Karim** (29) *"I'm an Adeydeyta tricycle cab driver. I work a lot at night. My clients include young girls and married women who prostitute themselves. They have a network; they call me and I take them to their clients or to a brothel. Other women work with crooked marabouts to perform sacrifices or other nocturnal rites to bewitch their husbands or co-wives. These are mystical and satanic things. But as it's well paid, I do it"*. As adultery is forbidden by the Muslim religion, it is not fully assumed by the actors, who develop their talents as "camouflagers". The camouflage concerns those who go out at night, changing their means of transport to be discreet, and who come in the morning to give lessons to those who assume their nocturnal outings.

3.1.5. Nicknames or stigmatization of Zinder's nightlife scene

There are several names or nicknames attributed to those who go out at night. The men are called: *"Yan tchouwa tchouwa"*; *"In kongilla"* to say that these men go out at night essentially to do their business. This is a rewarding experience for the man who is expected to fight even at night to feed his family. Others are humorously referred to as "night owls", "maquisards", *"In souwaga"*, *"Yan bariki"* or open-minded people who love life and are specifically devoted to night-time entertainment and leisure. In addition to these more or less flattering names for men, there are other, sharper terms reserved for young delinquents, such as *"yawan banza"*, *"Yan maliyasse"* and *"Yan papitika"*, describing them as rascals or thugs. The terms *"Yan palais"* or *"yan shayé shayé"* are used for these young people, most often unemployed, who sow violence in the night.

The labels are more discriminating and stigmatizing for women who go out at night. As soon as a woman goes out, she is frowned upon without asking why. She is pejoratively referred to as *"Zaboua"* in the singular and *"zabbi"* in the plural; this is a Hausa term for "the hen", meaning a roast chicken to be eaten or savored. They are also referred to as "pétasses", *"Karouwaye"* (Haoussa term for prostitutes), or *"Yan bonsoir monsieur"* (Yan good evening sir) in the case of women wandering the streets looking for sex among passers-by. When they cooperate with men to commit crimes, they are called *"El iska"* (thug or gangster). There's a tendency to lump all women together. And yet, there are many women who do business at night, particularly in

small restaurants, money-transfer kiosks, ready-to-wear boutiques, or when they're on call at hospitals, clinics, etc. "This is what prevents many women from working in the nightlife business. *"This is what prevents many women from going out at night,"* says a 43-year-old shop assistant.

3.2. Diversifying urban nocturnal practices and spaces

3.2.1. The actors and their nocturnal practices

- *a diversity of actors and users of nightlife in Zinder to be taken into account*

Zinder's nightlife is diverse. They include young girls and boys, travelers, motorcycle cabs (*kaboukabou*) and tricycle cabs (*adeydeyta*), entertainers, delinquents (thieves, drug dealers...), stationary and itinerant traders, women (married or free), prostitutes, the forces of law and order, stationary or itinerant traders, women (married or free), prostitutes, defense and security forces (the police), drug users, bands, *camoufleurs*, visitors, passenger transport agencies, service stations, restaurants, bars, butchers, bakeries, nightclubs, etc.

- *Three categories of night users in Zinder* sedentary people are the first category of night users; they don't leave the house or the neighborhood; they listen to the radio, go to the fada, watch television, revise their lessons if they are pupils or students, read the Koran, etc. This is the case of Moumouni (71) who declares: "I'm retired; after the Icha'a prayer, I just watch television and go to sleep. The night is for young people".

Without qualifying as night owls, the second category of night users are those who go to the *makaranta* (Koranic school) to learn and read the Koran; some stay at the mosque to listen to the imams' sermons. Younger people play soccer at night under the lights of public squares (e.g. Elfe traffic circle), if they don't go off to watch a soccer match at video club level, for the modest sum of 100 FCFA. Some civil servants take advantage of the night to practice walking, as a nocturnal sport to de-stress, keep fit and stay in good health; there are also pétanque clubs, and the smaller ones (children and teenagers) take up martial arts (judo, taekwondo, karate, rollerblading, etc.). Some primary and secondary school students and teachers give home lessons or practice classes during the night between 8 and 9:30 p.m. to pupils whose parents are fairly well off; these classes are intended not only to enhance the pupil's ability, but also to provide the teacher with an extra income. Those who have relatives in hospital or in the city take advantage of the night to visit them, while others take to the streets or the front of their homes to chat with friends and get a breath of fresh air after a busy day. This category of users returns home around 10pm; they rarely stay out past 11pm.

the third category of actors or users is made up of those who are qualified as night owls; they are in the trade (shopkeepers, itinerants,...), *kaboukabou* or *adeydeyta* for night-time urban transport, civil servants on duty (nurses, doctors, service stations; bakeries, restaurants, etc.), craftsmen (small-scale catering, hairdressers, tailors, etc.), and workers for passenger transport companies (dockers, guards, ticket collectors, etc.). All of these people say they go out at night to work for a living.

Some go out at night for fun or a stroll. They can be found in anonymous brothels, in public squares to see girls or chat with friends (at fada). They can also be found in restaurants, bars or bar-dancing rooms, chicha clubs, discotheques, etc. The night is also too hectic for celebrations and other social or religious ceremonies. In addition, Zinder hosts an average of three to four trade fairs, which also liven up the night in front of the Lawan Didi stadium and the youth center. Then there are the spontaneous or unregulated fairs improvised on the eve of festivals or during mouloud or "*waazin kassa*³", in streets or public squares with lighting

- *Night and gender: women as actors and users of the night in Zinder*

At night in Zinder, women can be found in a variety of places: at the start of the night, they go out to do their small business or to do some shopping. They can be found in shopping malls, at the front of the house, in the neighborhood, selling food products. After 10pm, they become rare. The ones you see outside are in the chicha clubs, in the inns or hotels, at the cercle messe or at Toudoun Jamouss, where they're called "filles de joie". More often than not, they're young prostitutes looking for customers. They can be seen smoking a joint from time to time. An officer of the national police force (aged 42) declares: "Yes, in Zinder we meet women at night. Sometimes they go out for their commercial or professional activities, other times they are free women called prostitutes who roam the streets looking for customers". It should be remembered that women are often stigmatized when they frequent the city at night.

3.2.2. The areas most frequented at night are perceived as both dangerous and suitable.

the spaces used are the places regularly frequented by the actors or users of nightlife in Zinder. These are therefore nightlife areas of varying intensity. Most of the places most frequented at night are located in the town center. Indeed, from the outskirts and intermediate zones of the city, night owls head for the central districts, where bars, dance halls, transport companies, public squares, "brothels", shopping centers and recreation areas, health centers, entertainment venues, restaurants, leisure activities, etc. are concentrated.

Users confuse dangerous places at night (places of insecurity, violence, conflict and drug sales) with their preferred places, which are places of entertainment and prostitution.

- *Dangerous nightlife areas in Zinder*

Dangerous places at night include such unsafe areas as: underprivileged suburbs, dark corners, rubbish dumps, bar and bar-dancing areas. In all, 16 places are perceived as the most dangerous in the city: Toudoun Jamouss, Karakara, the peripheral zone, Mela and the Kollya Market. Out of 209 responses, 82 respondents identified Toudoun Jamouss as the most dangerous place in the city, followed by 38 citing the Karakara district (which is a sensitive area). Next came the peripheral zone (14), Mela (12 responses) at the central station, the cercle messe (10) and the Kollya market (9). To a lesser extent, other places are also mentioned: Adoua Bani Biyé, Kara Lawali Hama, bar 18 and the place du rond-point post (El koriya)...

³ Interna onal preaching organized by the Wahabites known as "Izala

The perception of nocturnal danger in these areas is linked to news reports of violence: armed robbery, snatching, theft with aggression (motorcycle; cell phone), rape, fights, disputes, settling of scores (pitched battles between fadas and in palais) between delinquents, which can even lead to murder, etc.

the actors are usually idle youngsters, drug dealers and their customers (drug addicts), prostitutes and their customers, or each other because of a customer. There are also those who relieve themselves by drinking (Pastis, Flag, etc.). The motives are diverse, ranging from alcohol or drug abuse to juvenile delinquency and prostitution.

Drugs are sold just about everywhere, day and night, and the activity is widespread throughout the city. At night, however, the drugs are found mainly in places where the buyer and seller can meet. In the imagination of the Zindérois interviewed, 29 places are dedicated to drug sales. Here too, Toudoun Jamouss tops the list with a score of 16 points, followed by Marché Kollia (14 points), Mela autogare centrale (8 points), Adoua Bani Biyé (7 points), Karakara (6 points) and Tachal Agadez, autaoga (5 points). Other places cited include: Karar Lawali Hama, Konan Rahama, Roumboun Laka, Karar Karouwaye, around the Dolé market, etc. In addition, chicha clubs, certain squares, schoolyards and land reserves are also used as drug consumption areas. As for prostitution, it can be seen in bars, hotels, inns, empty plots, on the outskirts (towards the Kanya racecourse), in the city's corridors and streets, and in some entertainment venues. 17 locations were cited as places where prostitution takes place at night. The most frequently cited places were Toudoun Jamouss (30 points), cercle messe and Toudoun poste (11 points each), the Kouran daga district (streets and corridors). There's also La mare, Guidan Gala... In addition, a respondent (Issiaka, 42, nurse) explains: *"You should also know that some girls don't go to these places (bars, hotels), as they live with their families, but are called by their partners. They have their phone numbers and photos listed in hotels or hostels, which are actually brothels. They network with touts, who are usually motorcycle cab or tricycle cab drivers"*.

**- Preferred spaces that coincide with those described as dangerous:
paradox or normality?**

Preferred spaces are mainly located in the city center. These places are chosen for their centrality (N'Walla), their security, their discretion (Kouran daga), their level of night-time entertainment (Toudoun Jamouss), their permanent commercial activities (bus station), and the presence of women. In the imagination of those interviewed, nightlife areas are also perceived as areas of noise or noise nuisance. These include dance bars, public spaces, clubs and restaurants, fada places and soccer video clubs. Yet some of these so-called favorite spaces are also cited among the city's most dangerous. Which seems paradoxical (figure 1)

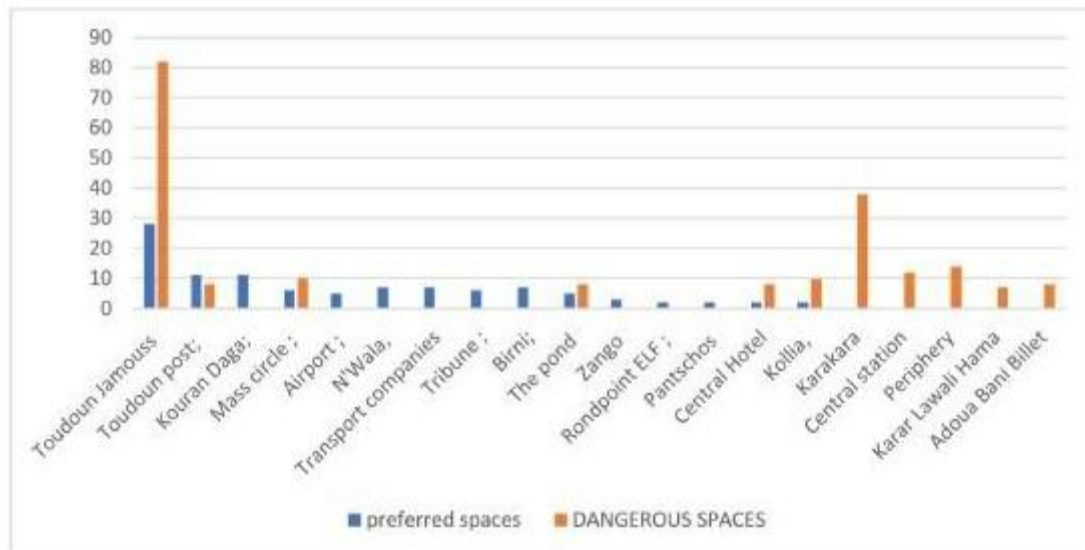


Figure 1: Coincidences between preferred and perceived dangerous locations

Source: field surveys, July 2024

Night-time shopping is the most widespread activity in the city. To varying degrees, it can be found both in the city center and on the outskirts. However, its scale diminishes from downtown to the suburbs. A total of 22 locations were cited for night-time shopping. The most noteworthy were: the transport company storefronts, with 35 points out of 130 (the STM and Rimbo stations were particularly noteworthy), the street leading from the traditional wrestling arena to the sultanate (23 points), and the dispensary district with its emblematic Toudoun Jamouss space (11 points). Other well-known commercial sites considered no less important include: La gare centrale, Tondoun poste (El koria or place Maï Kanti), between the MJC and the ENSP, in the vicinity of the marché dolé ...

- Zinder's nightlife hubs: Toudoun Jamouss, the emblematic night space threatened with extinction

Based on the results of the survey, there are nine nightlife hubs in Zinder:

- Toudoun Jamouss: with a score of 294 points, this area crystallizes the nightlife of Zinder, and is cited as a place of distraction, insecurity, prostitution, alcohol and drug sales and consumption, as well as trade. The area is threatened with extinction due to climate change: with the exceptional rains, the houses in this area are falling down, making it less attractive, especially at night.
- The Cercle messe: this is the second most important venue, cited 99 times by respondents; it's a night-time space dedicated specifically to entertainment (orchestra, bar-dancing) and prostitution. Faced with the deterioration of Toudoun Jamouss, many prostitutes are turning to the Cercle messe.
- La mare and 18 sapeurs Pompier: 93 for their entertainment and discotheque activities, as well as their bar-dancing.
- the frontage of transport companies (notably STM and Rimbo): 86 for commerce, the permanent presence of motorcycle cabs and tricycle cabs and the high passenger frequency throughout the night.

- Karakara: cited 76 times, not for its appeal but because of the insecurity it represents at night, with the risk of assault for night owls who venture there.
- Birni-Arène de lutte traditionnelle: this route is cited 70 times for the permanence of trade since the demolition of the Dolé market (in 2015), which led to the opening of several stores.
- Gare centrale: 63 is the place for small shops, crafts and restaurants at night. It's the busiest place at the start of the night, from 7pm to 10pm. Its dynamism drops off after 11pm.
- Toudoun Poste (Hôtel central, El Korya): 55 This public space is also a crossroads for commerce, traffic, leisure and other distractions. It also embodies the city center
- Kollya Market: 39 for its start-up and drug sales.

Other nightlife hotspots were also mentioned. These include certain bus stations (Tachal Agadez, Tachal Magaria, Tachal Matatmeye...), bars, restaurants; crossroads or traffic circles, around small neighborhood markets (Adoua bani biyé), hotels and inns (club des cadres), etc.

These results indicate that Toudoun Jamouss is the emblematic space of nightlife in Zinder; it is seen as both a dangerous and a favorite spot for night owls (*figure 2*).



Figure 2: Word cloud of emblematic nightlife spaces in Zinder Source: Field surveys, July 2024

3.3. Public policy and urban planning at night

3.3.1. No program or agenda to promote nightlife in Zinder

There is no **urban policy** that integrates nightlife through the creation and development of dedicated spaces. Indeed, local authorities attach little importance to nightlife, as there has never been a weekly, quarterly, half-yearly or annual nightlife plan. As a result, support for cultural events is rare. Only trade fairs are encouraged. There are no city decorations or fireworks displays on the eve of the holidays. Ousseini (45, Teacher) declares: *"I know of no local nightlife policy in Zinder. Only the Centre Culturel Franco-Nigérien (CCFN) regularly draws up a weekly diary of socio-cultural activities, which it organizes mostly at night".* In

addition, the sweeping of major thoroughfares initiated by the Mairie and the decentralization of police stations initiated by the Ministry of the Interior are to be commended.

There are no specific regulations in force for nightlife. There are only regular patrols organized by the FDS, who scan nightlife areas and suspicious locations. They ask users for their identity card and check that the individual or group is not carrying a weapon, narcotics or other prohibited products. The police also stop disturbances and other activities carried out in the neighborhoods by young people who go wild all night long. However, there is often an abuse of power, as **Mahamane, a** canvasser (56 years old) notes: *"the police sometimes take money from prostitutes during night patrols"*

3.3.2. Ways to promote nightlife in Zinder

In all, the respondents put forward 12 proposals for improving Zinder's nightlife. Of these 12 proposals, three main priorities emerged: improving urban night-time safety (38/83 proposals), developing public squares (20/83 proposals) and combating drug abuse (*Table N°2*).

Table N°2: Ideas for tomorrow's nightlife in Zinder

N°	Outlook	Frequency
1	public lighting	8
2	Designing public squares	20
3	Hygiene and sanitation;	5
4	creating jobs for young people	6
5	encouraging night-time entrepreneurship	9
6	Fighting drug abuse	14
7	Organize game contests	3
8	Developing communication routes	6
9	enhance safety.	38
10	promote socio-cultural and religious activities	5
11	create free wifi areas	2
	Total	83

Source: field survey, July 2024

The adoption of clear public policies and urban regulations favoring the safety of night owls and nightlife areas, must be a major concern for the state and municipality (*figure 3*). This would include the fight against organised crime, the development of public squares, the electrification of outlying districts and the installation of street lighting on major thoroughfares. As one resident (Harouna, Urban planner, 49) puts it: *"The nightlife policy must not neglect the pavoisement of traffic circles, public squares and squares. The municipality also needs to set up a system for monitoring and collecting night-time taxes"*



Figure 4: Word clouds for better nightlife in the future

Source: field surveys, July 2024

In addition, a precise agenda should enable us to create jobs for young people by encouraging night-time entrepreneurship, so that all services are available at night. This agenda should make it possible to improve places of entertainment, and strengthen cultural and sporting activities to encourage the development of new nightlife hubs (places for reaction, commercial activities, entertainment, major cultural and sporting events, etc.).

Discussion

C. Comolli's (2014) study of urban mutations and the geography of the night in Bordeaux shows that this enables us to "*apprehend people's relationship to the night in the city*". As part of this study, the analysis of the perception of the night among the inhabitants and urban players of Zinder first involved a definition of the night from the users' point of view. Zinder residents' definition of night is closely linked to the hours of *icha'a* and dawn prayers. Despite a certain growth in nocturnal activities, Zinder's nightlife is still perceived as less dynamic than in other towns of similar size. In addition, most of those interviewed perceive the night as a time and space marked by insecurity, due to the many risks involved. beyond 23 and midnight, apart from the feeling of insecurity,

In the case of Zinder, the present study reveals that men's relationship with the night is not totally assumed. This gives nightlife a diffuse, even disparate character.

An analysis of Zinder's urban nightlife practices and spaces reveals a diversity of actors and users of nightlife, giving rise to conflicts and serious traffic accidents. Practices show that Zinder's emblematic nightlife space is Toudoun Jamouss. It is perceived as both the most dangerous and the most popular place for night owls. Toudoun Jamouss is located in the traditional Dispensaire district, where the majority of dwellings are made up of dilapidated banco houses. This year, due to climatic variability, Zinder has experienced exceptional downpours that have reduced several brothels, liquor cellars and other nightlife establishments in this emblematic district to rubble. Entire streets are littered with the ruins of houses in need of rehabilitation. But the mayor's office remains unmoved, with no plans for redevelopment or

rehabilitation to revitalize this quintessential nightlife spot. On the contrary, we're witnessing a certain shift in the importance of nightlife around the cercle messe, which is attracting an ever-increasing number of young people. With land rents in the city center, big businessmen are buying up run-down houses to build boutiques, workshops, etc., thus driving out the prostitutes who are considered undesirable. If the process continues, in a few years' time Zinder's emblematic nightlife area will be transformed into a commercial zone. This change of function from entertainment to commerce could reinforce the daytime capacity of the place over its night-time capacity.

This study raises the question of "gender and the night" in Sahelian cities. The case of Zinder shows a certain stigmatization of women who go out at night, even for profit. Admittedly, the relationship with nightlife is generally a problem for users, many of whom do not take responsibility for their nocturnal outings because they are seen as debauchery and a lack of faith. The latter develop camouflage talents between vices and false pretenses, but among the actors who frequent the night, it is indeed women who are the most stigmatized treated with the most discriminating qualifiers. And yet, women want to be actors and users of the night, which offers many opportunities.

This article focuses on gender and the night, pointing to a certain discrimination against women in Zinder, preventing them from exploring and exploiting this space-time. However, the study shows that women do play an active role and use the nightlife in Zinder through their various activities, even if they are often forced to hide to avoid criticism and stigmatisation. The situation of women corroborates the comments of P.Lapalud and C. Blache (2019, p. 25), who denounce the status of women at night in the following terms: *"The metaphor of Little Red Riding Hood reminds women and little girls, through the imagery of the dark forest and forbidden places, that the night is not a space/time for them"*. This metaphor fits in well with the place reserved for women who set out to conquer the night in Zinder. Indeed, after 10pm, women in the town of Zinder are, rightly or wrongly, likened to prostitutes roaming the streets in search of customers. What's more, they are often stigmatised, as if women did not have the right to roam the urban nightlife for any purpose. While men who go out at night are sometimes praised for their nocturnal activities, women who go out at night are given less flattering names. Treated pejoratively as 'zaboua', she is forced to abstain or give up her nightlife plans. Such stigmatisation, combined with various forms of aggression, has led P. Lapalud, C. Blache (2019, p.25) to assert that *"The fear of women in the public space is therefore not so much the result of reality as of a social, sociological and historical construction"*. The aim of this construction is to delegitimise women in favour of what the same authors describe as 'male hegemony'. A hegemony they see as the instrument of 'a binarising system'

On the whole, in Zinder, circulating at certain times of the night lends itself to suspicion: and several expressions are used to qualify the actors: "he didn't sleep at home last night"; "mai dadaro" as described in the song by the emblematic Idi Nadadaw (traditional singer), "at night all cats are grey" from the song by Mywey, the Ivorian singer. Living at night is therefore synonymous with debauchery in Zinder's collective imagination. As a result, there have been riots in the city of Zinder, during which nightlife areas such as bars and brothels have been ransacked by demonstrators, thus limiting investment in this area, particularly by inhabitants of Zinder (Anti Charlie Hebdo riot; "mai Bougé" riot). This corroborates Cecilia Comollia's

assertion that *"for a majority of the population who do not go out, the night still remains a mental frontier, imbued with prejudice"*. In Zinder, too, night owls suggest that emphasis should be placed on the security of nightlife areas, given the upsurge in urban violence, especially at night and more specifically in nightlife hubs.

According to C. Comelli (2014), Bordeaux presents *"a policy that is more focused on control than pleasure"*, as she points out: *"Indeed, Bordeaux's night-time users see their freedom constrained by the limited means of transport available, but also by an arsenal of regulatory measures limiting opening hours, the sale and consumption of alcohol"*. As in Bordeaux, the national police patrol the areas deemed dangerous. This patrol is obviously useful for nighttime urban security, but it also annoys the prostitutes, who feel that the police are more pressing towards them. In Bordeaux, efforts are being made to resolve conflicts between the city that sleeps and the city that has fun. Comelli (2014). In Zinder, the municipality takes little interest in nightlife despite its growing importance. At present, the city of Zinder has no policy on nightlife. The same applies to other towns in Niger. Indeed, in an article entitled *"Territoires nocturnes de Niamey : entre recompositions spatiales des activités et nouvelles pratiques"*, Adamou and Harou (2020, p. 39) demonstrate the ignorance of nightlife on the part of municipal services, the presence of diffuse drug territories and a territorial recomposition of nightlife activities, which tend to leave the city center in favor of pericentral or even peripheral areas

Urban planners and managers in Niger need to make the night their own, as more and more city dwellers frequent the night for a variety of reasons (work, leisure, entertainment...). Among other ideas for tomorrow's night-time urban planning, L. Gwiazdzinski (2005, pp209-210) suggests *"Imposing a 'right to the city' at night"*, a notion put forward by H. Lefebvre and developed in the European Urban Charter, which is not limited to the daytime period but takes account of the changes imposed by the continuous pace of the economy and networks: a right to the city for everyone, everywhere and at any time. The other also proposes *"Penser un urbanisme de la nuit - Dans un espace-temps où les notions de sécurité et de liberté sont essentielles"*. L. Gwiazdzinski (2007, p. 6) goes so far as to call on the scientific community and urban managers (...) to define the methods and tools for balanced spatiotemporal planning, both within conurbations and on the scale of city networks". The author believes that *"taking time into account in urban planning is a necessity"*.

Implementing the proposed solutions, with a view to an urban policy that promotes nightlife in Zinder, *"... requires a change of narrative, a taming of spaces at night, places of poetry, towards possible shared sensitive experiences..."*. (P.Lapalud, C. Blache (2019, p. 26)

Conclusion

The case study of the city of Zinder gives reason to L. Gwiazdzinski (2021, p.147) who notes that 'Night has long remained a forgotten dimension of the city, a *terra incognita*, a *finis-terre*. Few researchers have found the subject worthy of interest, and even fewer have approached it as a 'geographical object'. This is due to the fact that the night is a space-time that is little known because it is little explored by elected representatives, town planners, those involved in the making of the city and researchers, and at the same time is often perceived as a territory of danger. This is why, when people talk about the night in Zinder, both city dwellers and elected representatives express the need for a safety-first approach, denying the opportunities it offers in terms of urban planning and development, as well as in terms of night-time entrepreneurship.

This study fills a gap in the urban analysis of Niger's cities. It uses the example of the city of Zinder not only to illustrate the lack of interest shown by researchers and planners in the night as a changing space-time, but also to help understand night-time activities so that urban players can better understand local social dynamics and better formulate appropriate public policies and improve urban services 24 hours a day.

By studying the perception of the night by the inhabitants of the city of Zinder, this article has enabled us to understand their social and spatial nocturnal practices. This understanding must be a prerequisite for the development of any suitable public policy aimed at improving the quality of life of citizens at night. The results of the study indicate that the perception of nighttime among Zinder's inhabitants and urban actors expresses a need for security and the lack of interest in nightlife on the part of Zinder's public policy actors. In Zinder, the definition of night is closely linked to the hours of *icha'a* and dawn prayers. Despite a certain growth in nocturnal activities, the night is still perceived as less dynamic in Zinder than in other towns of similar size. In addition, most of the people interviewed perceive the night as a time-space marked by insecurity, due to the many risks incurred. Beyond 23 and midnight, apart from the feeling of insecurity, many users do not take responsibility for their nocturnal outings, as they are assimilated with debauchery and lack of faith. The latter develop camouflage talents between vices and false pretenses. Among the most stigmatized of all those who frequent the night are women, judged by the most discriminating qualifiers. And yet, women want to be actors and users of the night, which offers many opportunities.

An analysis of inhabitants of Zinder's urban nightlife practices and spaces reveals a diversity of actors and users of nightlife, giving rise to conflicts and serious traffic accidents. Practices show that Zinder's emblematic nightlife space is Toudoun jamouss. It is also perceived as both the most dangerous and the most popular place for night owls. The study reveals that there is no program or agenda for promoting nightlife in Zinder. However, residents suggest three priority actions for a better nightlife in Zinder: improving security, developing public squares and combating drug abuse. Nightlife in Zinder is influenced by significant safety and infrastructure challenges. Reflections on the quality and safety of night-time activities will contribute to the general well-being of residents.

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