

Situating Women's Mobilities through The Labour Infrastructure in the Hospitable City

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To cite the published article: Alejandro González-Domingo (09 Apr 2025): Situating Women's Mobilities through the labour infrastructure in the hospitable city, *Applied Mobilities*, DOI: 10.1080/23800127.2025.2481543

To link to the published article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23800127.2025.2481543>

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Abstract

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This article examines how women's mobility and labour become infrastructural in reproducing hospitality in Barcelona. Reflecting on hospitality as a labour infrastructure, it delves into the differing bodily capacities and affective dispositions induced by high-risk mobilities associated with emergent intersectionalities. The micro-politics of tourism mobilities are linked to the controversial space-times where the kinaesthetic affordances of tourists impose daily and bodily burdens on women workers caring for temporary populations. Simultaneously, it reflects on the rigidity of urban transport infrastructures and the pressures on the social infrastructures that sustain urban life. Interviews with workers connect to the daily mobilities and their cumulative affections experienced in hotel cleaning, short-term rentals management, and the Airbnb call centre. Conversely, interviews with key informants and various scientific and policy materials complement the fieldwork to highlight the politics of invisibility surrounding women's mobilities and hospitality labour. The results indicate highly differentiated experiences for women that impact social reproduction and well-being prospects in the hospitable city. This research also demonstrates the value of viewing cities as infrastructural to unveil the invisibility of urban hospitality throughout the day and nighttime.

Keywords: hospitality labour; night work; women's mobilities; infrastructures; rhythms; affects; work-life balance.

Introduction

This article conceptualises hospitality as a labour infrastructure to critically engage with how women workers are significantly affected by daily mobilities at work. Critical scholarship on tourism mobilities has emphasised the need to explore the relational production of mobilities involved in adapting and performing spaces for the tourists' gaze (Sheller & Urry, 2004). This approach considers the “*ever-changing ways in which flows and territories condition each other*” (Massey, 2005, p.99). This perspective is complemented by increasing attention to tourism-related infrastructures and moorings as relationally produced, performative, and sensorial (Hannam, Butler and Morris Paris, 2013), linked with new directions of inquiry challenging the binary nature of mobility versus fixity (Adey et al., 2014; Jensen, 2016; Merriman, 2019, 2023). Merriman (2023, pp. 85-86) argues that, beyond viewing infrastructures and moorings as spatially fixed, scholars should also focus on mobilities generating other mobilities and engage with the “*affective resonances, atmospheres, vibrations, and enchanting qualities of mobility infrastructures and practices.*”

Barcelona is presented as a case study where increasing academic attention has been devoted to uncovering the conflicting cohabitation with tourists/transnational migrants. Notably, the contentious use of public spaces (Brandajs & Russo, 2021), the nocturnal conviviality with leisure (Nofre et al., 2017), and the acceleration of transnational gentrification processes related to short-term residential mobilities (López-Gay et al., 2020) highlight this issue. Paradoxically, hospitality workers are among those most affected by rising rental prices (Valente et al., 2023). This residential instability potentially intersects with women's roles in social reproduction, as they dedicate more time to care activities and face heightened exposure to violence, such as sexual harassment in public transport (Pérez-Sans & Andrés-Argomedo, 2020). For instance,

insecurity influences women's mobility during night shifts, compelling them to navigate threatening nocturnal public space designs in Barcelona (Ortiz Escalante, 2019). Moreover, dominant knowledge largely overlooks daily mobility experiences like commuting or night mobility, which rely on surveys and statistical methods. Commuting and night work are minimally explored topics in tourism studies (Plyushteva, 2018; Nofre, 2020) and are seldom treated as a policy concern: the endorsed Barcelona Tourism Mobility Strategy (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2017) fails to acknowledge this. This is striking considering the significance of the visitor economy in contemporary cities and the touristification of night-time economies (Nofre, 2020). Emerging literature indicates that night spaces are markedly different, and the labour aspect remains under-explored despite its implications for health and work-life balance (Shaw, 2022). These overlooked aspects prompt me to contemplate how urban hospitality operates not as a fixed infrastructure but as a city's continuous functioning, 24 hours a day. Consequently, the central inquiry of this research is to understand how it affects women workers whose physical presence and investments are crucial in fostering hospitality while simultaneously nurturing life in cities. Concurrently, I examine the politics of invisibility surrounding women's mobilities in the workplace, intricately linked to the functioning of tourist cities – “*the labour-intensive activities of maintaining and repairing urban infrastructures*” (Adey et al., 2014, p. 183). This provides a means to explore the interrelations between macropolitics - the contentious working conditions and commuting policies – and micropolitics – the affective dimensions of commuting and labouring in the hospitable city (Merriman, 2023). This is a societal issue, as the rhythms of transient populations blur the boundaries between day and night and between work, rest, and leisure (Eldridge & Smith, 2019; Shaw, 2022). I introduce the theoretical framework guiding this research in the following section.

Theoretical Framework

The infrastructural turn influences the analysis of hospitality mobilities concerning the city's functioning in urban geographies (Graham & McFarlane, 2015; Latham & Layton, 2022; Stokes & De Coss-Corzo, 2023). Infrastructural thinking has provided a framework for analysing (infra-)structures “*in terms of the life and activity they support and sustain*” (Latham & Layton, 2022, p. 662). It is also essential to consider the various types of infrastructures, what they do, and what they comprise regarding the labour involved in infrastructural performance and functioning (Stokes & De Coss-Corzo, 2023, p. 430). This task also involves disentangling the relations and technologies through which social life separates, connects, and manages both the visible and the invisible (Graham & McFarlane, 2015). Meanwhile, I consider the work of Veijola and Jokinen (2008), who advocate for labour hospitality studies to evolve into *hostessing*, which resembles *infrastructing*—the doings and performances of hospitality service-making, where care, affects, and communication are constitutive aspects of work performance in new labour contexts (p. 170-171). All this entails reflecting on the diversity of daily mobilities, such as commuting, emerging forms of mobile work, and the dynamics at play. It also necessitates examining the different labour infrastructures that sustain hospitable cities and the controversial rhythms of hospitality that shape the cultures of urban life.

The first approach to grounding this conceptualisation is to consider the bodily dispositions involved in the functioning of hospitality infrastructure. Feminist scholars have become increasingly attentive to the performative emotions in hospitality service work linked to gendered and racialised processes (Veijola & Jokinen, 2008; McDowell, 2009; McMorran, 2013; Zampoukos, 2021). More recently, concerning the gig economy of platforms like Airbnb, research has explored the socio-technical interfaces involved in labour processes, the new digital socialites, and the intersectional gendered labour in

homemaking by Airbnb's hosts (Molz, 2014; Spangler, 2019; Roelofsen & Goyette, 2022).

Secondly, understanding how bodies are influenced to operate at specific intensities and moods is crucial for addressing diverse kinetics and the capacities to affect and be affected. This involves considering affects as a force of existence that can be known, acted upon, and rendered actionable, attempting to discipline labour dispositions (after Anderson, 2014). Affects are viewed as trans-personal forces of existence that “*exceed the personal*” (Anderson, 2014, p. 87). This also involves aligning with the mobility affordances not as a fixed characteristic of the designed environment (e.g. transport options; lighting), but rather as a dynamic relationship with multi-sensory and personal experiences (Jensen, 2016, pp. 591-592). Both dimensions contribute to forming the capacities to move and be moved.

Thirdly, I reflect on how the mobilities to and at work and those of tourists co-function and create unequal daily life arrangements. This involves examining the associated temporalities of tourism rhythms, which become somewhat systemic in the urban context, only becoming apparent when disrupted (Ederson, 2012, p. 59), as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. The vitality and regularisation of tourism rhythms depend on workers, ensuring the “*smooth running of tourist routines and timetabled activities*” (Ederson, 2012, p. 60). This is linked to the rhythmic reiterations and regularities that involve the biopolitics of labour and time within tourism spaces (Ederson, 2012). Concerning this concept of tourism rhythms, corporeal theories of relational spaces aid in grasping the emergent territory of the space-time of hospitality work in relation to the space-times of social reproduction. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) develop the notion of refrain to describe the momentary ‘consistency’ of spatial relations (p. 361). According to these authors, a territory emerges from the generative relationality of

diverse blocks of space-time, producing consistency through repetition, techniques, and habits. McCornack (2013, p.7) further notes that refrains can operate through affective complexes, described as “*hazy, atmospheric*”, always sensorial, embodying intensities of feeling through the movement of bodies. This notion is useful for understanding the interrelations of diverse space-times of tourists, workspaces, and social reproduction, and appreciating the affective and aesthetic qualities of those space-times, encounters, and relations.

Methods & Data

My fieldwork research plan, which encompasses questionnaires, methods for accessing research participants, consent forms, and issues about personal data, received approval from my university's Ethics Committee for Research into People, Society and the Environment. The fieldwork was conducted during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2021 and continued into 2023. This article draws upon some of the materials gathered for my PhD thesis, which addresses various issues related to tourism labour and living conditions in Barcelona. For this article, I integrated semi-structured interviews with workers and key informants alongside the analysis of policy documents, public transport campaigns and protocols, the Barcelona Metropolitan daily mobility survey, and associated research documents. The results section highlights the experiences of six women workers from diverse occupations, nationalities, and backgrounds, for whom commuting and working conditions significantly affected their well-being, hindering their health, caregiving responsibilities, and social ties, and were perceived as burdensome and threatening. The additional research participants whose insights were included in this study comprised seven key informants (employers, transport planners, labour unions, and researchers).

The fieldwork started with framing the politics of hospitality labour and gender concerning the interconnections of workloads, work-life balance, and commuting. I conducted semi-structured interviews with key informants (utilising Zoom software) in privileged positions who could provide varied perspectives on the historical actions of labour unions concerning commuting, employers' practices, the dynamics and changes in hospitality and tourism work, and public transport planning. Following this initial contact and examining labour conflicts through media during the pandemic, I identified three highly contentious hospitality workspaces: hotel cleaning, short-term rental (STR) management, and the Airbnb call centre. I further investigated work-life balance and daily mobilities in hospitable cities by delving into the workers' narratives, considering the diversity of these hospitality settings. This was achieved through in-depth interviews with women living and working in Barcelona, whose participation was facilitated through unions, charities, and LinkedIn. The participant sample reflects common characteristics of the hospitality workforce in Barcelona, including age, length of work careers, nationalities, labour conditions, and caregiving responsibilities. The interviews with workers examined their working conditions, commuting experiences, and work-life balance arrangements. In the final stage of research in 2023, I further explored three significant issues through additional semi-structured interviews with key informants and the analysis of secondary sources: workloads, worktimes and work-life balance, the rigidity of night public transport offerings, and the production of knowledge regarding gendered mobilities and its translation into public policies in Barcelona.

The interview data were coded inductively and supplemented with a narrative analysis of workers' stories to capture accounts of labouring hospitality with significant others. A second analysis, informed by science and technology studies (Law, 2009), describes how labour was organised to perform specific services: hotel cleaning, STR

check-in and maintenance, and Airbnb call centre operations. The same approach was applied to transport planning practices during the night and the production of gender through the daily mobility survey and associated academic works. A third analysis involves reflecting on non-representational registers, guided by theoretical readings that utilise the workers' scenes and encounters regarding their body affections, dispositions, and commuting experiences.

Consequently, I constructed empirical vignettes concerning three distinct, yet interrelated labour infrastructures presented in the results section. Firstly, I briefly reflect on the macropolitics of the invisibility of gendered commuting and hospitality labour, aiming to provide contextual background to the workers' stories.

Results

Macro Politics of Women's Mobilities in the Hospitable City

Barcelona has a population of 1.6 million within a densely populated metropolitan area of 3.2 million, attracting over 33 million overnight stays according to official statistics from 2024. The rise of the Airbnb platform has led to a significant increase in tourist pressure since 2010 (López et al., 2020). Despite the tourism growth, the hospitality labour market is regarded as the lowest paid in the city, experiences the highest levels of discontinuity, and is more susceptible to residential instability, particularly among migrant women (Valente et al., 2023).

On the other hand, Barcelona has an integrated public transport system that extends into the metropolitan area, featuring dense train, metro, bus, taxi, and bike-sharing infrastructures. Metro lines operate until midnight and run 24 hours at weekends, reaching the first metropolitan ring, while bus services provide nightly routes daily. These

essential components shaping daily flows and intensities also represent rigid systems that struggle to accommodate the flexible rhythms of diverse tourists and workers operating around the clock. Leading unions acknowledge this issue regarding the feminisation and racialisation of labour divisions within hospitality services, alongside the flexibilization of shifts and high workloads: *“Many of their questions are about time management and balancing their personal and professional lives in an extremely complex sector, characterised by long and irregular working hours.”* (KI14, man, labour union).

The commuting of hospitality workers is not on the city's political agenda—an issue recognised by labour unions and policy officers. By 2017, the Barcelona council had issued a tourist mobility plan, but the labour dimensions were scarcely noticeable (Ajuntament de Barcelona). Laws governing in-company commuting plans prioritise large work centres (200-500 workers), where the hospitality labour infrastructure remains a spatially fragmented phenomenon. The struggles of political and labour unions have been focused on increasing public transport offerings at Barcelona airport. However, regarding the fragmented hours of hospitality labour, the rigidity of public transport fails to provide fair solutions on weekday nights, which further contributes to the invisibility of hospitality mobilities.

“Moving a metro all night is expensive. For how many users? Do we move the metro all night to serve 20,000 people? It seems a lot, but in the end, there are 1000 or 2000 people every hour, and we have ten metro lines ... you have 200 people per line ... two people per hour.” (KI23, man, transport planner officer).

In considering the production of knowledge about gendered mobility, transport planners and researchers in public institutions recognise the growing attention given to gender perspectives in Barcelona. Notably, the workday mobility survey of the Barcelona

Metropolitan Area has served as a key instrument informing transport and infrastructure policies over the past 20 years. The integration of gender and intersectional perspectives in the survey reveals that women spend more time on care activities than men, with the situation exacerbated for lower-income households and those in peripheral locations (Miralles-Guasch, 2010; Pérez-Sans & Andrés-Argomedo, 2020). Recently, a new survey on sexual harassment in public transport has identified the various episodes that women and other genders face, which has informed new metropolitan and regional transport policies. Furthermore, a scoping review of mobility and transport in Barcelona, conducted through the Scopus database, revealed 112 publications (December 2023), with the majority (103) published since 2010. A common aspect of most of these articles is the daily mobility survey. Using surveys to study gendered daily mobilities, alongside other datasets, is undoubtedly propelling burgeoning research into care mobilities in Barcelona. For instance, *“visualising trip motivations often associated with women and primarily related to household and care tasks”* (Gómez-Varo & Miralles-Guasch, 2024, p.152). However, relying on quantitative data sets still provides a tangible mobility narrative, as many complex issues are reduced to easily measurable indicators, overshadowing other mobility concerns (Law, 2009, p. 570). It also seems limited in comprehending commuting as a distinctly different experience, obscuring the ecology of such crucial daily phenomena (Bissell, 2018). These considerations help to frame the analysis on how micromobilities to/at work constitute a significant corporeal experience for women in hospitality labour.

In the next section, I present the accounts of women's experiences with micromobilities at work within three labour infrastructures of the hospitable city: hotel cleaning, STR management, and the Airbnb call centre.

The cumulative bodily affections of hotel maids

In this section, I explore how different induced affective mobilities emerge while infrastructure hostessing and social reproduction and how affects are mediated through the apparatus of hotel management. Three Latino-American hotel maids who had lived and worked in Barcelona for approximately 20 years were interviewed.

Cleaning hotel rooms implies high bodily kinetics and learning how (not) to be affected. The exploitative room quota system of the hotel industry can be understood as an apparatus to discipline body kinetics and affects, or, as McDowell (2009, p.64) posits, “*an exchange based on the manipulation of emotions and the satisfaction of desire*”. A performative apparatus through the affective and emotional embodiments of hostessing (Ibid.), fixing affective mobilities (after McMorran, 2013). This involves different practices of labour fragmentation such as occupational segregation, interpellation, surveillance, and targeting affects to encourage “to feel part of the family” through gifts and rewards or exploitative practices such as payment based on cleaned rooms (McDowell et al., 2009, p. 21). In more spatial terms, the room quota intensities are also considered here as relational enacted through infrastructures of connection and communication, as “*mobilities are always supported by a wide range of systems and infrastructures that create particular kinds of mobility spaces, ... and power differentials ...*” (Adey et al., 2014, p. 183). For example, Tufts (2015) points out the role of online booking systems in intensifying room quotas and improving tourists' mobility capabilities while *fixing* cleaners at higher kinetic intensities. Cleaning hotels is a backstage task, “invisible” to customer encounters, despite their bodies maintaining the hotel infrastructure. It involves highly affective labour as (generally) women need to keep working hard for long hours and repetitive shifts. The labour performance is embodied through repetitive movements, carrying and manual lifting of heavy stuff, bending and

standing, prolonged standing and moving for long hours, short rest periods and permanent emotional burden to finish the room quota in time. A reality reflected by a hotel maid and union-spoken person: “*We are immersed in a job where you have to work 10-12 hours a day*” (KI12, woman, union). The high prevalence of daily workloads along the working life course produces bodily exhaustion. This is coded as diverse bodily impairments and feelings of tiredness that exhaust the possibility of working at specific intensities and performing specific tasks. It is led by diverse occupational diseases and accidents, such as those reported by interviewees: *migraines, depression, embolism, fibromyalgia, cervical problems, osteoarthritis of the hands and the hip, damaged spine, and tendon rupture*. The revealing of these (infra-) labour practices and bodily impairments shows how affective bodies become infrastructural in hospitality, attuned through the disciplinary hospitality apparatus, mediating the daily rhythms of check-ins/outs and high occupational periods, where flexible working times and workloads intensify. These body impairments imply a subsidiary care infrastructure to maintain bodies at work where the family doctor becomes a health consultant and medication prescription: *spine and hip infiltrations, punctures to the head, muscle relaxants, diazepam, physiotherapy, and other pills for the heart, blood pressure, liver, and blood pressure*. The feelings of not having alternatives for change mediate into affective states:

“When you are ill, you are useless. That is what I thought when I was like that; I got down, I got terrified, I thought I was going to stay like that, that I was not going to be any good. Nobody would give me a solution, and the pain in my arms lasted a year. When I work, I need to take pills because it hurts.”. (W15)

Managerial interpellations keep them working under the threat of losing their jobs: “*Try to get well as soon as possible, because, of course, people are waiting to work*”

(W15), while medicalisation is institutionalised to affect their capacities to keep working. Coercion tied to occupational segmentation emerges as employers' practices to control affective labour, keeping bodies at high intensity: *“The hotel gives you your range of rooms, and you must get them out in your 8 hours, and if you stay 10 hours, then it is 10 hours, so it is your job.”* (W11).

These intensities are intimately related to domestic work and how tired bodies experience commuting back home, which also expresses a geo-historicity of the body (Anderson, 2014). This is the accumulation of past encounters and feelings with the city, shaping how the present is experienced:

“I got home, and I had to prepare dinner and lunch for the next day, so I spent the whole day doing that. I did not have time, I was dead, and on top of that, I had to commute for an hour.” (W15).

Other rhythms and care needs come into play when significant others are involved. When analysing work-home mobilities, the concept of the refrain (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) aids in understanding the various rhythms, space-times, and non-representational forces that shape urban inhabitation. In exploring this territory, Kauffman & Viry (2015, p. 3) propose analysing *“how we are linked – and to what”*, as well as the mobility requirements and the interpersonal and collective dimensions of mobility (drawing on Manderschied, 2004). Similarly, Jirón & Imilán (2019) developed the idea of care chains to trace the interdependencies of entangled relations necessary for performing labour and care in cities, facilitating an understanding of mobility as a means of urban inhabitation.

Thinking through these perspectives, I extend into other situations where labour flexibility and childcare mediate as “forces of existence” the affective daily mobilities. The diversity of tourism rhythms leads to different work requirements that must be adjusted to high occupancy periods. In maintaining a social infrastructure of childcare, low-wage migrants and single mothers need to mobilise the care work through relatives to meet the changing and demanding work requirements of hospitality cleaning. Similar findings have highlighted the gendered and class-based work-life balance in London, where migrant women rely on “other mothers” to make childcare possible within service labour rhythms (emphasis added by the authors, Dyer et al., 2011). The collective feeling of unfreedom emerges through the different voices interviewed, expressing the affective dimension of work-home territory:

“You have no time for yourself; you have no life. You leave work and go home, shower and sleep, and the next day, get up at 6 a.m. You have no family life. Sometimes, your children and family want to meet you, and you do not have time on Saturday, Sunday, or weekdays. To be a chambermaid is to be a slave.” (W15)

At the expense of domestic work, single mothers precariously structure their social care infrastructure, which involves fewer hours of sleep and moving children early into relatives' homes or kindergartens, leaving their children in relatives' flats at weekends. Reflecting on their memories shows how, during years of unequal childcare, different mobile arrangements are involved during the day and night. They are presented as stressed and tired. W11 got divorced after years of holding back on domestic work. She shares her feelings about their work-home mobilities since her son was born:

“It is hard to reconcile family life with work when you do not have someone to lend you a hand ... I used to go crazy, going out to work, going to my sister's house,

taking the child, that is, in the morning, taking the child, leaving the child with my sister, it was chaos... You usually start at 7, 8 or even 6 a.m. It depended on (hotel) bookings ... So, many times at 5 in the morning, I had to take the child and leave him with my sister. It was complicated."

One last instance shows how the flexibility of rhythms is also the target object of affective labour in the hotel apparatus. W17, a single mother, shares her experiences with punishment at work to avoid her mobilised workers' solidarity through the hotel maid union "Las Kellys". This involves partition shifts and late shifts, affecting her work-life balance capacities: *"I was afraid to complain because they could throw me out and leave me without a job."* Fear of losing a job is the target object of the hotel manager, also pointed out by the unionist interviewed, which acts as a force to risk and high commuting. The evening shifts compromise her commuting time and expose her to nighttime-threatened encounters with other men and sensorial atmospheres of darkness. It also shows how the rigidity of public transport offers is not attuned to flexible late shifts in hospitality. The punishment costs an extra hour of commuting during the night.

"... It was difficult in the afternoon because from three to eleven, I never left, almost always at midnight, and I did not have time to go to the metro. Then I took the bus to Plaza Catalunya, and from there, I took the night bus, which left me at Maragall. I got home at 1:30 in the morning." (W17)

Night commuting involves encountering fear enacted through different forms of violence against women (Ortiz Escalante, 2019; Farina et al., 2022). Even in the absence of human encounters, the affective night spaces – *"darkness, rain, loneliness"* (see McCornack, 2013) and her memories mediate fear (Anderson, 2014, p.85), affecting their mobility affordances (Jensen, 2016). Meanwhile, considering her low salary and family

responsibilities, taking a taxi every late shift when she lost the night bus was not straightforward. In her experience, many sexual and racialised encounters happen in the hotel and on the public street.

“One night, it was raining, and no one was there. I was walking to get a taxi because there was no bus, and a man was following me. I was walking fast because I felt scared. I had been mistaken for being a prostitute at a bus stop where I was sitting waiting for the bus, and a van passed by and the man inside it said to me, ‘How much do you charge? Do you get on?’ It happened frequently.” (W17)

On flexibility and multi-location in the Platform Hospitality

In this section, I explain how mobile work is embedded in infrastructuring hospitality through short-term rentals (STR), which involves a territory of hyper-flexibility that completely blurs standard notions of labour times and commuting.

Platform labour necessitates a new form of labour embodiment, or as Rossi (2019: 1419) suggests, *“an intensified relationship with urban society”*; a task that becomes the measured unit of work (Ibid.) and involves an extensive use of urban infrastructures. This also relates to other discussions on well-being and mobile work (Gorman-Murray & Bissell, 2018), particularly how multi-location check-in and cleaning blur the conventional aspects of commuting and the boundaries between work and home, involving practices of anticipation, waiting, and point-to-point movement both day and night. Over the past decade, STR management companies have proliferated in the city, representing a new business activity in urban hospitality, which has led to varied forms of property and corporate management (Cocola-Gant et al., 2023). In Barcelona, the interviewed unions highlight the low levels of inspection within this type of hospitality and the absence of union representation, which enables employers’ strategies to extract

further surplus from workers' bodies. I present an analysis of the mobile labour infrastructure for hosting tourists to address the bodily implications of the phenomenon. Bennett's (2010, p.6) concept, termed "vibrant materialities", urges us to view materials as "things" rather than merely (inanimate) "objects" external to humans. This approach seeks to understand the mediation of materials, spaces, affects, and human bodies in specific mobile contexts (Jensen, 2016, p.594).

The socio-technical infrastructure that precariously and temporarily orders the service of mobile check-in and cleaning in multi-location hospitality is at stake here. To develop an account, I introduce the stories of two workers whose lives are somehow connected. The first (W13) is a European migrant working at a STR agency who used to manage more than sixty flats in Barcelona before COVID-19. As they manage apartments in different properties dispersed throughout the city, the check-in service is localised at the apartment upon the arrival of customers. This is connected to other remote tasks performed at the office by other workers. Apart from these multi-property management companies, this burgeoning market still needs to rely on outsourcing to independent contractors (Cañada & Izcara Conde, 2021), particularly the mobile work of checkers and cleaners. This is the case of the second (W21), a Barcelonian self-employer who managed six STR flats and several outsourced services of multi-location check-in. In this case, the office is at home, and another woman, an undocumented migrant, helps her to clean and check in. This involves long shifts to accommodate the different tasks and (un)expected times of tourist arrivals. She shares what the working day looks like:

"I do the office work until 10 a.m. Then, we go to clean the flats and deliver all the supplies. Then it starts to overlap with check-ins ... from 2 p.m. until midnight ... the

guests write to you now and then ... I spend the day triangulating communications.” (W21)

Multi-location mobile work is immanent to Airbnb’s rules for hosts. Their guidelines idealise meaningful encounters but, in practice, imply welcoming customers to a “domestic” environment. She considers outsourcing mobile checkers a way to commit to Airbnb’s values: “... *a more personal, warmer relationship rather than a cold thing like a smart lock*” (W21). Nevertheless, beyond this statement, policy registers must make a last security check against young guests coming to get drunk and prevent neighbourhood conflicts. Airbnb also provides a series of rules for hosts, such as maintaining close communication before and upon arrival. In addition to these “rules”, the Barcelona apartments license incorporates the obligation of providing 24-hour service to customers and attending to complaints within 30 min. The multi-location service incorporates machines and devices of connectivity and information such as online booking systems, 24-hour cell phones, motorcycles, credit card machines, many keys, smart locks, ... and mobile workers permanently in active mode. The 24-hour phone call holds a performative power to enact the bodies of these women at any time outside the “working hours”.

“If I have the phone on call, I cannot go to the bar or someone's house. I have the dataphone to collect last-minute bookings. I have a bag with 50 keys to the flats in case of an emergency. The city council forces you to be there within 30 minutes if there is a complaint about a flat. Otherwise, you get a fine. So, it is stressful. Moreover, if you do not have calls, you are always okay, it is on.” (W13).

Multi-location-based mobile work involves flexible commuting as a continual shift between being present at work and being distant. Moreover, even when there is a

physical absence, an imagined presence may depend on multiple connections. Embodying the service involves staying “active” and enacting her body in a particular manner: having the phone constantly with her and being on call: *“If I do not have calls, it is always with me. If I go downstairs to pee, I pick up the phone. He is like your boyfriend (laughs), very heavy. It is stressful!”*. (W13)

On-call night work is the most controversial service, involving exposure to risky encounters and accidents while extending work outside daytime office hours. As noted with hotel maids, the exposure to night space, affectively charged, as threats of (un)expected encounters:

“I have already had an accident, a very small one, but I fell, nothing serious. You know that with a motorbike, something happens, and you can die. Then you have the stress of driving at night, on the road, with drunks.” (W13)

Once a last-minute booking enters the booking system, inform her by phone. She needs to take her motorcycle at night and do the late checking. The 24-hour phone-in call also activates night alerts to attend. She felt unsafe driving and dealing with groups of young male customers. Integrating a dataphone partly solves the problem of confronting rude customers alone.

“Then you arrive at a flat at night or get a call for a night complaint, then party ... or a last-minute check-in, and these are always terrible profiles... That is why now, rather than moving around at night, we swipe the card, and if the payment does not go through, it is over.” (W13)

Late check-ins also need to be accommodated within the rigidity of public transport night offers, involving, in many cases, informal practices. W21 moves on a

motorcycle, but her partner relies on the metro, closing at midnight during weekdays. She subcontracted informal mobile checkers to avoid missing connections and perform late check-ins. However, many still rely on the two because flights are usually delayed, so they establish 11 p.m. as the last hour to check in: *“There are many delays, and in the end, they go to late check-in”* (W21). When flights are delayed several hours, alternative forms for late check-ins consist of leaving the apartment keys at one of the many luggage-locker shops and doing the formal check-in and police registration the next day.

In the case of the multi-property companies, W13 confessed that the company was growing very fast, buying flats or acquiring new property services. However, the night services, such as the 24-hour phone-on-call and many late check-ins, held on to her for many years. She pointed out how managers used economic incentives to coerce her and other workers to hold on to multitasking, constant customer complaints and late check-ins. After years of holding at the expense of her free time, low wages, and many frustrated negotiations, she points to her health problems and her family doctor as mediated encounters:

“My body gave signs that told me, ‘Hey, stop it now!’ My throat swelled up one day, but in one night, the doctor was freaking out. I had lows, I did not sleep at night, and many things like that ... I went to the regular family doctor. He told me ‘... .., you only have one life, and you have to look at your priorities’. That has helped me a lot to talk to my bosses ... they saw that I had physical problems, and voilà, they raised my salary and hired one or two more people to keep me going...”. (W13).

Multi-location mobile work in these experiences powerfully confronts standard work-life balance, blurring the separation and affecting well-being. Maintaining the home

as flexible tourism rhythms subsumes the social infrastructure, home, and the cultivation of social relations.

“It is very complicated to go on a trip, of course. It is unthinkable in the high season from May to October ... Shall we have dinner? Do you mind if we do it when I am off?’ Otherwise, you are tired, a rag, not a person; I get up very early ... and have no family responsibilities, but I have a dog that must go out ... nonstop until 10 p.m.” (W21).

All matter: the affective charge on years of holding on to these mobile jobs, the daily bodily dispositions, the employer affective coercions, and the unfreedom of this kinaesthetic territory create toxic forms of normality in the hospitable city.

At night, in the Airbnb call centre

The third case relates to the Airbnb call centre as a labour infrastructure offering a worldwide service 24 hours a day. It involves night work, which compromises safe commuting back home under the very rigid transport offer of the metro system. In this case, I report how night commuting is coped with and mediated by female workers’ solidarity.

Airbnb's call centre operated in Barcelona until COVID-19, when the headquarters decided to finalise the outsourcing contract during the first lockdown in June 2020. It was a workspace with approximately a thousand workers, mostly young European migrants with good language skills. The emergence of international call centres is seen as “the production of ‘a planetary labour market in digital work’ (Graham & Anwar, 2019, p. 1), where having to work through the night responds to the demands of international time zones (*Ibid.*, p.23). This international division of labour responds to

what Massey (2005, p. 95) argues: “*The impetus to motion, and mobility for a space of flows, can only be achieved through the construction of (temporary, provisional) stabilisations*”. The call centre is essential to maintaining the worldwide infrastructure of Airbnb, dealing with highly affective and emotional labour confronting customers' complaints and repairing their bad feelings, due partly to the disparate qualities offered through this platform. Keeping customer trust and security are two target objects that emerged in our interviews, to which a worldwide hospitality platform needs to intervene. An interview with a supervisor worker, a member of the work council, reveals that most workers were B2C agents earning the Spanish minimum salary, working under strict surveillance, and being pushed to work harder through economic incentives. While working shifts are strictly controlled through (normative) automatic daily registers under the supervision of the work council, during the northwestern high tourism season, work intensity is much higher – “*less time per call, more calls and complaints to deal with*”-. Moore (2019, p.126) states that monitoring technologies quantify the qualitative - *mood, fatigue, psychological well-being, and stress*, making workers permanently visible to management and rendering the sites of everyday workers' resistance penetrable by management. This work environment offers reasons why this woman (W14), a young Spanish worker, decided to switch to the better-paid night shift; otherwise, she could not easily afford the high rental prices:

“For the amount of work you had to put up with, absolutely not. That is why I went to the night shift, and it was a four-hour night shift ... you could get paid better.”

(W14)

However, attaching to the promise of a better life in the hospitable city involves her becoming a night-time worker. She used to move her residency to avoid long

commutes, particularly at night: “... *I do not like commuting at all ... I was moving to flats where the companies were located...*” (W14). However, she decided to stay at her last rental flat because she liked the comfort of the neighbourhood away from the tourist areas. Night-time workers are involved in longer commutes of more than an hour back home during weekdays as the night shift ends at 3 a.m. To counter-act against the night threats, workers on the night shift used to commute together as the leading practice, either by night bus or by taxi: “*We always tried to go all together, always, always. In fact, the best thing that ever happened to me was that my flatmate came to live with me.*” (W14). Solidarity emerges as a critical affective dimension in call centres to reclaim better labour conditions or feel safer during night commuting. She ended up sharing her apartment with another female coworker who used to commute back home to a metropolitan town outside Barcelona. Other women’s stories with night fear act as mediators of mobility affordances:

“It was not only my safety but also hers because I talked to her about it many times ... ‘Why are you doing this?’ ... She had to wait in Plaza España for 40 minutes for the bus to get to Sabadell. Sometimes, she would arrive at five in the morning. And waiting forty minutes in Plaza España is not nice, you know. Things also happened to her; they tried to steal her mobile phone at the bus stop ...”. (W14).

Conclusions

This research has explored the potential of viewing hospitable cities as a labour infrastructure. It aims to reflect on the corporeal dispositions and controversial rhythms associated with the mobilities and care of transient populations, while connecting to the macropolitics of invisibility. The findings provide a foundation for conceptualising hospitality as a labour infrastructure, building upon previous efforts centring on labour's

performativity (Veijola & Jokinen, 2008). These theories of the body at work consider the corporeal implications of hostessing – the labour embodiments (McMorran, 2013; Zampoukos, 2021) – and the power dynamics that regulate movements and dispositions at work (McDowell, 2009), as well as the emerging home-work socialites of technological mediation (Molz, 2014; Spangler, 2019; Roelofsen & Goyette, 2022) that help to illuminate the invisibility of labour behind the scenes of enjoyment and hospitable care (Sheller & Urry, 2004). My research insights broaden this perspective by emphasising the affective accounts (Anderson, 2014; Bennett, 2010) involved in the processes of disciplining bodies at varied intensities of work and moods, while extending into the relational configurations of infra-structuring hospitable cities (Stokes & De Coss-Corzo, 2023). This approach entails grasping the kinaesthetic territories (McCormack, 2002) of urban rhythms, spacetimes, and refrains involved in the reproduction of hospitality in cities. This has enhanced the understanding of how women's daily mobilities are subsumed into the rhythms of tourism mobilities, compromising their personal lives, health, and social relations.

Focusing on the (infra-)structure of hospitality helps address the challenges to workers' well-being beyond regulatory perspectives on labour and behaviourist accounts of commuting. The corporeality of hotel cleaning as an actionable relationship—movements, intensities, and dispositions—implies an exposure of bodies to cumulative affections that lead to impairments and submission to tourism rhythms. This relates to the *geohistoricity of bodies* (Anderson, 2014), acting as a kind of embodied memory that mediates lived experience. The spatially fragmented configuration of hospitality infrastructures and the rhythms of tourism mobility (Ederson, 2012) blur standard regimes of labour and rest times, as well as day and night (Shaw, 2022), with specific implications for work-life balance, floating between the “normal” schedules of tourists

and transgressing work-home relations alongside the confines of industrial working hours. The cumulative embodied effects and the burden of a long day caring for guests shape how commuting is perceived as routine. Leaving work is not associated with liberation but rather a sense of routine; the body must adapt to home care and prepare to return the next day. The Barcelona Metropolitan mobility surveys and transport planning inadequately account for these experiences and fail to address the nocturnal frontiers and spaces of hospitality. This rigidity in transport infrastructures and modes of understanding contributes to the invisibility of women's mobility at work. Consistent with similar findings (Bissell, 2018), qualitative research aids in visualising and comprehending commuting and labour as significant experiences affecting urban inhabitation forms. It reveals the emotional investment involved in short-term rentals' flexible and multilocation labour. It accounts for the problematic distinction between labour and rest, day and night, the informality of labour relations, the health implications of addressing the spatially fragmented STR, and the challenges of tourist scheduling. Additionally, it has enriched existing narratives surrounding night work and commuting in hospitality (Plyushteva, 2018) and the night work of women in Barcelona (Ortiz Escalante, 2017). This connects with nocturnal atmospheres and the role of cumulative memories from past encounters as formative forces of existence, framing night commuting as a significant experience for women. This contributes to our understanding of night commuting as a space of fear, even in the absence of violent encounters, thereby shaping the mobility opportunities for women.

The article also unveiled the habits of women hospitality workers who seek to counteract the rigidities of transport, night-time fears, labour exploitation, and tourists' rhythms. Solidarity, commonality, and care serve as affective dispositions for escaping toxic routines and transitioning into other forms of being with significant others. These

ways of navigating the difficulties of hospitality labour mirror the harsh realities of the hospitable city. In engaging with ongoing debates about the possibilities for care and well-being (Gorman-Murray & Bissell, 2018; Bissell, 2018; Gómez-Varo & Miralles-Guasch, 2024), hospitality employers, unions, transport planners, and city policymakers should consider the inconveniences of the global hospitable city as a labour and commuting phenomenon. This is important as it involves specific forms of urban living that hinder childcare opportunities, disrupt social relations of enjoyment, and lead to physical impairments that can result in permanent occupational illnesses. In reflections on the night-time economy (Nofre, 2020; Shaw, 2022), the missing perspective of workers' conditions ought to take precedence, particularly in light of the disruptions to social relations and health that working in the hospitable city entails. This research underscores the need to examine the specific boundaries of day and night and the nocturnality of the hospitality labour phenomenon. For instance, night-time commuting for women exposes them to fear as a fundamental nocturnal affect, transcending both individual and collective tactics as well as techno-urban designs.

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