cogitatio

ARTICLE

Night-Time Urbanism and Sustainable Regeneration: Play, Public Space, and Revitalisation in Tokyo and Melbourne

Sidh Sintusingha [1] and **Alice Covatta** [2]

[1] Landscape Architecture Program, Melbourne School of Design, University of Melbourne, Australia
[2] Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Montreal, Canada

Correspondence: Sidh Sintusingha (ssint@unimelb.edu.au)

Abstract

As cities navigate the challenges of commercial decline, suburbanisation, and demographic transition, night-time urbanism has emerged as a critical yet underexplored dimension of sustainable urban regeneration. This article positions "night play" as both an analytical lens and a regenerative practice, foregrounding its potential to link cultural vitality, social inclusivity, and urban resilience. Two contrasting case studies are analysed: Tokyo's Sangenjaya, a bottom-up night-time ecology of tiny alleys containing a network of small bars and eateries shaped by post-war urban evolution, and Melbourne's White Night festival, a top-down, annual event attracting 500,000–700,000 visitors and generating a large urban economic impact. Through a mixed methodology of morphological analysis, embodied observation, discourse analysis, and urban policy review, the study compares emergent and curated forms of night-time play, highlighting their differing logics, spatialities, and regenerative effects. Findings reveal that informal, embedded nocturnal economies facilitate sustained, small-scale regeneration rooted in community and adaptive reuse, whereas planned, event-led activations offer high-visibility cultural and economic returns but risk temporal discontinuity and commodification of urban play. The research argues for hybrid approaches that combine the resilience of evolved nightscapes with the catalytic potential of curated events, positioning play as a tool for inclusive, culturally resonant, and sustainable urban futures.

Keywords

bottom-up practices; hybrid approaches; inclusivity; Melbourne; night-time economy; play; sustainable urban regeneration; Tokyo; top-down practices

---

1. Introduction: Regenerative Night Play in the Night-Time Economy

Van Liempt et al. (2015) wrote:

> Urban nightlife has much potential as a time of social transactions, as a realm of play, as "the time of nobody" which is free for one's own personal development….Compared to the daytime, the night offers a time for trying to be someone the daytime may not let you be. (p. 408)

Scrabble-Word.com (n.d.) defines the verb "play" as the ability to "amuse oneself by engaging in imaginative pretence."

Nocturnality in nature enables species to adapt to environmental constraints through spatial and temporal niche division (Levy et al., 2018). In cities, however, nocturnality emerges not from ecological necessity but from socio-cultural and economic desires. Urban nightscapes, illuminated and curated, become laboratories of play and leisure, generating distinctive spatio-social niches with the potential to drive sustainable urban regeneration (Gwiaździński, 2015). These night-time activities allow cities to diversify their temporal economies, extend public life into new rhythms, and experiment with alternative models of collective engagement (Boulin & Henckel, 2013), helping to mitigate the fragile transience of contemporary existence (Bauman, 2000).

Play, as Lefebvre frames within the "Dionysian side of existence" (1974/1991b, p. 178), is an urban force of excess, intoxication, and risk—offering space for creative escape from daily life. Stevens (2007) proposes that urban playful behaviour facilitates escape through separation from the everyday by creating boundary conditions and rules, enabling people to test and expand limits, and facilitating encounters with strangers. Caillois (1958/1961) further categorises play as competition, chance, simulation, and vertigo—producing temporary "waste" of time and energy that paradoxically generates new forms of social and spatial vitality. Within the night-time economy (NTE), such playful practices are increasingly mobilised as instruments of regeneration, repurposing urban spaces to stimulate social cohesion, cultural branding, and economic growth.

This article, therefore, positions regenerative night play as a conceptual bridge between theories of play and debates on sustainable urbanism, clarifying how informal and institutionalised night-time practices both shape and are shaped by wider governance and cultural dynamics.

The article locates its inquiry within the global expansion and diversification of the NTE (Hadfield, 2014; Straw, 2016), from the visions of 24-hour cities rethinking city life after 5 pm (Bianchini, 1995) and Colaboratório's (2014) *Night Manifesto*, to contemporary debates around inclusivity, governance, environmental impacts, and global-local urban identities (Pottie-Sherman, 2013; Tadié & Permanadeli, 2015; Yeo & Heng, 2014). It positions regenerative night play as a key lens for understanding the transformation of urban life after dark. Events such as white nights, night markets, festivals, and cultural programs reimagine public space, while informal, street-level practices generate their own urban scripts. These two strands—the curated and the emergent—often coexist in tension yet jointly contribute to shaping inclusive or exclusionary nocturnal urbanisms.

To interrogate these dynamics, this article selects two sharply contrasting yet complementary case studies. The first, Sangenjaya neighbourhood in Tokyo, is an example of a historically evolved, bottom-up nightscape where local businesses, informal appropriations, and embedded socio-spatial practices have sustained a vibrant *sakariba* culture. Such bottom-up phenomena manifest globally, including the rise of informal, small-scale nightlife "entertainment zones" in and around downtowns of mid-sized and large American cities (Campo & Ryan, 2008). The second, Melbourne's White Night festival, is a highly orchestrated, top-down cultural event designed to rebrand and activate the central city through mass spectacle, digital projection, and programmed urban play. The practice is more illustrative of the standardising and commercialising effects often associated with NTEs (Van Liempt et al., p. 412), as its economic contributions are substantial (Kolvin, 2016). For example, Sampériz et al. (2025, p. 11) found that "night-time spending (from 7 pm to 7 am) accounts for approximately 30% of direct spending" in Madrid's establishments.

These two cases are deliberately chosen to amplify the contrast between evolved informal nocturnal ecologies and institutionalised event-based regeneration strategies. By juxtaposing a *living nightscape* with a *staged night-time performance*, the study examines how different urban trajectories, governance logics, and community practices generate distinctive forms of spatial and social resilience. This comparative framework also makes a methodological contribution: showing how combining morphological analysis, embodied observation, and discourse/policy analysis enables a multi-scalar reading of regenerative, nocturnal urbanism.

2. Framework for Interrogation: Bottom-Up and Top-Down Production of Night Urbanism

The article argues for a deeper understanding of urban night spaces as environments that enable diverse multisensory experiences, activating Dionysian aspects of urban life, and enhancing everyday well-being. It foregrounds the socio-spatial dimension of the NTE, offering a street-level perspective often overlooked in literature that privileges policy and planning frameworks (Yeo & Heng, 2014). Here, night-time urbanism is conceptualised more broadly than the NTE: It refers to the social practices, spatial productions, and cultural economies that unfold after dark, while the NTE emphasises formal, policy-recognised economic activity—albeit firmly entrenched in neoliberal capitalism.

The article adopts a comparative urbanism framework to analyse how night-time play operates as both an everyday and an exceptional mode of spatial production. It conceptualises night urbanism as a dual process:

- Bottom-up, demand-led urbanism—"placemaking"—emerging organically through local initiatives, socio-spatial negotiations, and incremental adaptations; and
- Top-down, supply-led urbanism—"place-making"—orchestrated by institutions through planned events, cultural policies, and infrastructure-led regeneration (Project for Public Spaces, 2007).

The comparative strategy employed here follows a "contrasting types" approach (Ragin, 2014), deliberately juxtaposing two cases that differ in scale, temporality, and governance in order to illuminate a spectrum of nocturnal urbanism. While more analogous pairings (e.g., Roppongi Art Night and White Night Melbourne) could have been chosen, the article argues that the distance between Sangenjaya and White Night reveals how night-time play operates across divergent contexts and logics of production.

Positioning Sangenjaya and White Night Melbourne at opposite poles of this spectrum highlights the interplay between informal resilience and formal spectacle. Sangenjaya embodies a vernacular NTE, historically shaped by post-war reconstruction, small-scale entrepreneurship, and adaptive reuse of urban space. Its urban life persists through micro-interactions, DIY spatial practices, and an embedded rhythm of nocturnal sociality. By contrast, White Night Melbourne exemplifies programmed urbanism, deploying lighting, large-scale projections, and temporary pedestrianisation to curate a consumable nightscape aimed at mass audiences and tourism markets. By setting these cases in dialogue, the framework enables analysis not only of their contrasts but also of their shared role in producing socially and culturally resonant forms of night play.

The comparative framework is underpinned by three methodological components:

- Morphological and historical analysis—tracing how the physical fabric, transport networks, and economic structures of each city have enabled their distinct night-time ecologies (Covatta, 2018). The analyses drew on planning documents, land-use maps, and archival photographs verified against government reports.
- Embodied fieldwork—through site-specific *flânerie*, participant observation, and visual recording of both tangible (architecture, lighting, street life) and intangible (ambience, social interaction) aspects of nocturnal experience. The fieldwork was conducted in 2017–2018 and 2024 in Sangenjaya, and during the 2018 and 2019 White Night events in Melbourne.
- Socio-spatial mapping—linking observed practices of play, performance, and consumption to the urban design and infrastructural conditions that enable or constrain them. Coding and analysis followed an inductive thematic approach (Saldaña, 2016) to identify recurring socio-spatial patterns related to play, mobility, and inclusion.

This integrative method illuminates how space, time, and play intersect in the night city. It also allows the article to capture the tensions between inclusivity and exclusion, spontaneity and control, and local identity and global branding that characterise contemporary night-time economies. Framed through this contrasting-types comparison, the study highlights how playful practices—whether grassroots or orchestrated—can enable regenerative transformation by producing opportunities for social connection, economic activity, and cultural reproduction (Roberts, 2009). In doing so, it shows how the night city generates possibilities that challenge and complement the restrictions of the daytime city.

3. Nocturnal City Case Studies

3.1. Sangenjaya: Unplanned Every-night Life

De Luca (2009/2017) wrote:

> The city is beautiful at night. There's danger but also freedom. The sleepless wander about: artists, murderers, gamblers....The light of day accuses, the dark of night absolves....At night no one ask for explanations....At night the city is a civil space.

Sangenjaya is well known for its distinctive identity, forged by a history of wartime destruction, resilience, and grassroots rebuilding. Today, it is considered one of Tokyo's most popular residential neighbourhoods

(Sekai Property, 2018), valued for its central position and connectivity to the capital's major infrastructural and commercial hubs, while retaining the intimate scale of Setagaya Ward. Sangenjaya's significance predates modern Tokyo: During the Edo period, it served as a rest stop for pilgrims en route to Mt. Oyama. Its formal name (Sangenjaya, adopted in 1932) and the local nickname Sancha (三茶 or "three tea house"), reference its historical origins at the intersection of two important roads—Setagaya-dori and Route 246 (see Figure 1).

During WWII, particularly between 24 and 25 May 1945, Sangenjaya and Taishidocho were heavily bombed by American air raids. In the post-war period, the neighbourhood became a logistics hub due to its proximity to the Tamagawa railway transfer station. It was rapidly transformed into an informal urban centre through DIY reconstruction by returning residents (Z Tokyo, 2017).

A key area within this transformation was Sankaku-Chitai, or "triangular area," a section of land defined by the convergence of former roads and now synonymous with dense, unplanned nightlife. The area initially grew as a black-market zone, catering to every imaginable need in the years of scarcity. Later infrastructural projects—such as the development of Komazawa Olympic Park Stadium and the elevated Route 246 highway for the 1964 Olympics—triggered a period of decline and depopulation.

However, the resulting vacancies became opportunities. New entrepreneurs appropriated and adapted the existing structures, preserving the post-war urban texture while introducing informal commercial functions. They recycled the clumsy shacks of Sankaku-Chitai into small businesses. Many of these spaces—*izakayas*, restaurants, karaoke bars, live houses, and snack bars—continue to define the nocturnal character of Sangenjaya today. Through this bottom-up, incremental process, the area has developed into a unique and vibrant night-time district that typifies the permeability of planning boundaries, where everyday life after dark adapts within, alongside, and at times beyond formal planning paradigms (Lefebvre, 1991a).

3.2. Morphological Analysis: Multi-Layered Sakariba District

Historically, during the Edo period, large-scale movement infrastructure—such as bridges and channels—stimulated the emergence of entertainment districts in the typology of *sakariba*, derived from *sakaru* (to flourish) and *ba* (place). The *sakariba*, a Japanese precursor to the "third place," provided vibrant social settings of tea houses, street performers, food stalls, bars, izakaya, pachinko parlours, and nightclubs. Described as a "zone of evaporation" (Linhart, 1986), these spaces filled the liminal temporal gap between *hare* (ritual/public life) and *ke* (private/domestic life), enabling temporary suspension of social hierarchies—a utopian "classless capitalism" (Hendry & Raveri, 2002; Slater, 2011). Revisiting Oldenburg's (1999) notion of the "third place" in this Japanese context highlights how *sakariba* functioned as culturally specific social infrastructures that blurred public/private distinctions.

With the shift from the water-based to the rail-based infrastructure—beginning with the completion of the Ginza subway line in 1927—*sakariba* districts clustered increasingly around transit nodes (Kowalczyk, 2011). Roland Barthes, visiting Tokyo, remarked on the social and commercial energy radiating from these modern infrastructure-catalysed entertainment districts:

> The Japanese station is crossed by a thousand functional trajectories, from the journey to the purchase, from garment to food: a train can open onto a shoe stall. Dedicated to commerce, to transition, to

> departure...the station (moreover, is that what this new complex should be called?) is stripped of that sacred character which ordinarily qualifies the major landmarks of our cities. (Barthes, 1970/1982)

Today, Tokyo's public transport network plays a critical role in determining neighbourhood vibrancy. Efficient mass transit not only facilitates commuting but also supports the regeneration of station-adjacent precincts. Importantly, the five-hour gap between the last night train and the first in the morning creates temporal voids around infrastructure. The temporal voids enable informal entertainment economies that target individuals lingering in the city by choice or circumstance to take root, though always within the elastic boundaries set by transport planning and urban morphology.

In Sangenjaya, beyond the huge Route 246 highway, the junction of the two rail lines creates a strategic node for residential life and commercial exchange. The Tokyu Den-en-toshi subway line links quickly to Shibuya—Tokyo's epicentre for fashion and transit—while the Setagaya Line, at three kilometers, is Tokyo's shortest railway that serves only the local neighbourhood. The mix has generated a district where post-war architecture coexists with modern developments—condominiums, towers, department stores, and commercial complexes—amplifying the area's potential for leisure, consumption, and spontaneous social interactions.

The cohabitation of legacy infrastructure and new morphologies forms a dense, hybrid urban fabric in Sangenjaya, exemplified by the Sankaku-Chitai area. Here, a complex of narrow, car-free laneways provides spatial freedom and a symbolic "forgiveness zone," where everyday norms dissolve. Navigating the space involves weaving through izakayas, snack bars, karaoke booths, and street-level nightlife, activating the Cailloisian sense of vertigo (Caillois, 1958/1961) in which the city becomes a "labyrinth of mirrors that multiply and distort" (Stevens, 2007, p. 44).

Multiple urban typologies shape this nocturnal landscape of play:

- *Echo-nakamise shotengai*: This sidewalk arcade transitions from day to night by housing both daytime retail and all-night *izakayas*. It acts as a spatial filter between the main road and the concealed Sankaku-Chitai interior. Unlike the traditional verandas or Italian *porticato*, the *shotengai* is structurally independent from the buildings, allowing for architectural flexibility. Its canopy also supports signage, drawing visual attention across the street (Shelton, 1999) and guiding people from transit hubs toward nocturnal consumption.
- *Yokochō*: Hidden behind the *echo-nakamise shotengai* and the billboards of Setagaya-dori lies Sangenjaya's nightlife nucleus. Originating as postwar black markets, *yokochō* alleys evolved into a compact cluster of bars and were once a pervasive typology. While many have disappeared due to redevelopment and the emergence of corporate *izakaya* chains (Futamura & Sugiyama, 2018), Sangenjaya's *yokochō* persists as a vibrant informal public realm. Almazan and Yoshinori (2012) describe them as urban relics and crucial "third spaces" (Oldenburg, 1999), enabling intimate interactions between proprietors and patrons, fostering community ties over time. At the same time, these spaces remain fragile: Their resilience lies in adaptability (Dovey, 2012), yet they are vulnerable to formalisation and spectacle when commodified for tourism.
- Singular urban typologies: Within the maze-like Sankaku Chitai are unique urban forms—a postwar *sento* (public bath, shut down since the Covid pandemic) opened from 4 pm to 1 am, a tower converted into bars and clubs, and a karaoke complex anchoring the triangle's southern tip. These contrast with the

intimate scale of the *yokochō*, offering larger, enclosed leisure experiences within a dense urban grain—and perhaps a glimpse of the future should the *yokochō* be redeveloped.
- Mechanisms of surveillance and control: a small police station, *kōban*, located right in front of the *yokochō*, patrols the community. CCTV cameras, bouncers, and other forms of surveillance were not observed during the fieldwork.

3.3. Visual Analysis: Night-Time Dynamism, Place Identity, and Human Scale

Entertainment districts in Tokyo, such as Shibuya and Shinjuku, often rely on large-scale visual communication—billboards, neon signage, audiovisual projections, oversized menus, hyperreal plastic food models—to compete for attention. These urban expressions echo Venturi et al. (1972)'s *Learning from Las Vegas* aesthetic and typify the "McDonaldisation" of downtown areas, where homogenised, branded experiences dominate the consumer landscape (see also Van Liempt et al., 2015). This process aligns with broader patterns of commercial gentrification that draw youth populations into increasingly commodified environments (Ma et al., 2018).

In contrast, Sangenjaya communicates at a more intimate, human scale. The informal public space of Sankaku Chitai exemplifies "architecture without architects," composed of vernacular spaces, everyday electrical devices, DIY design interventions, and idiosyncratic urban curiosities. During fieldwork, several features emerged as uniquely adapted to the night-time context. Lighting, in particular, plays a central role in defining place: Building-integrated sources such as lanterns and coloured lightbulbs articulate the entrances of individual venues, serving as mnemonic and wayfinding cues within the labyrinth. At the street and neighbourhood scales, overhead wires strung with lanterns and entry gates with names unify the alleys and visually stitch together the diverse spatial narratives into a cohesive, playful whole (see Figure 1).

At the city scale, Sangenjaya distinguishes itself through memorable urban landmarks, the most iconic being a giant sculpture of King Kong clutching a schoolgirl above the main entrance to the neighbourhood, welcoming visitors. In Japanese urban culture, mascots are a common tool for place branding and event promotion. King Kong appears in various forms and scales as puppets inside bars, on stickers, and in street art throughout the area. These playful symbols extend the neighbourhood's identity—beyond the archetypal elements of architecture—into the nocturnal imaginary, enhancing the surreal and performative atmosphere. Importantly, these informal, decorative elements flourish only under the cover of night; their visual and symbolic potency fades with daylight, revealing the area's physical decay and material fragility.

Complementing these tangible characteristics are the intangible dynamics of story-sharing and subcultural production (Mattson, 2015). Regular patrons, staff, and proprietors create a stable yet informal community of night actors. This shared social ecology facilitates the transmission of local lore and everyday urban memory. For example, a bartender interviewed in Sancha's *yokochō* recounted the transformation of her bar—from a traditional, family-owned post-war *machiya* house to a suspected brothel, then a *yakusyu* (herbal liqueur) bar until today. Despite infrastructure damage during the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake, the venue remains in operation, though precariously so, with its metal sheet partitions and jammed windows bearing silent witness to the area's layered history and resilience.

Sangenjaya's nightscape is marked by a disconnection from the rhythms of the diurnal city. This separation is reinforced by the absence of late-night transit, the juxtaposition of post-war structures with newer developments, and the unique nightlife it facilitates. Small-scale typologies such as *yokochō*, *shotengai*, and *sento* co-exist with large-scale infrastructure and mixed-use towers, producing a rich mosaic of urban forms and activities within a compact footprint. Immaterial features—such as the sense of community, shared night-time vernacular such as ironic toponyms like "Sancha" or "Carrot Tower"—imbue the space with identity and continuity.

The temporal distinction between day and night enables a form of urban escapism. After dark, conventional social constraints and divisions dissolve, giving way to moments of shared spontaneity and what Stevens (2007, p. 28, drawing from Gilloch, 1996) terms "re-enchantment": the transformation of toil into play, fetishism into curiosity, and drudgery into reciprocity. Unlike leisure, which often reinforces social stratification and consumption norms, (night-time) play could facilitate more inclusive modes of encounter and experience (Stevens, 2007, p. 29), yet these remain conditioned by broader structures of social stratification and consumption.
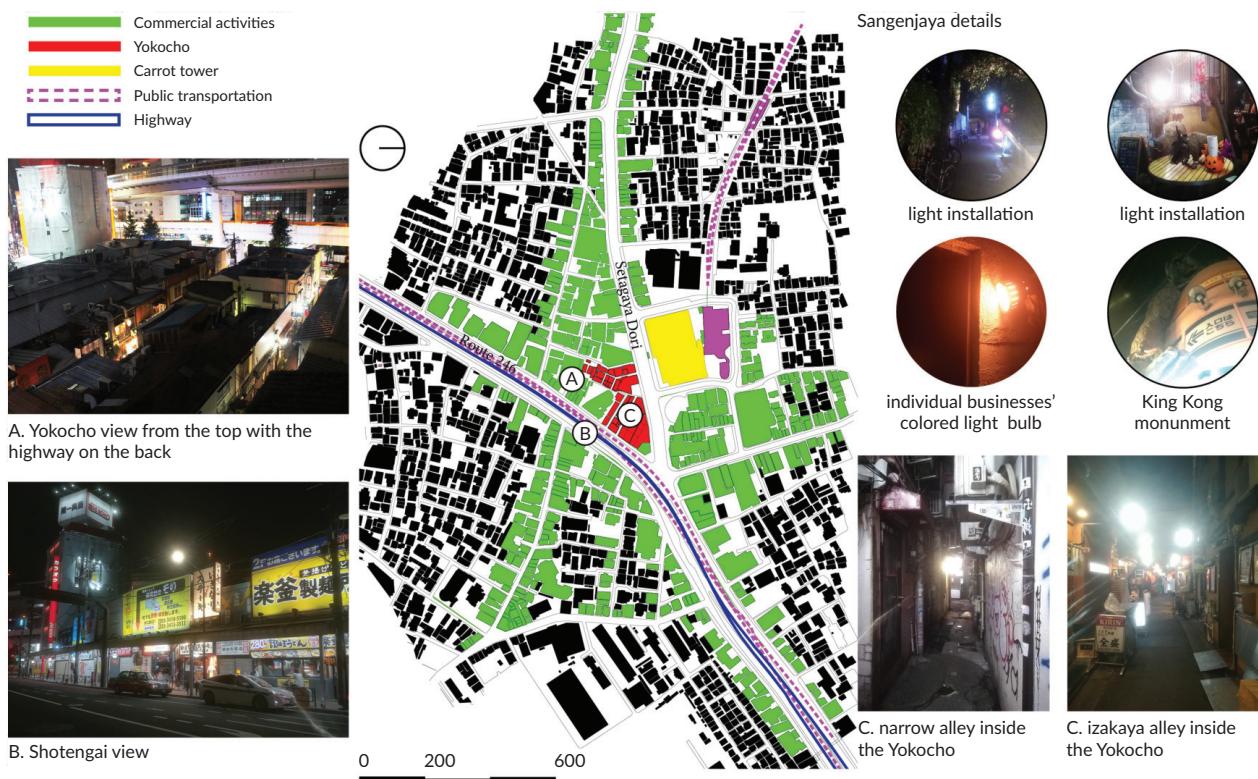
Figure 1. Sangenjaya map and visual details.

3.4. Melbourne White Night: Planned and Designed Event

Melbourne's central business district (CBD) originated from the Hoddle Grid, a colonial land survey implemented in 1837. This imposed a rigid 800m by 1600m framework of streets over land traditionally inhabited by the indigenous Wurundjeri people. The grid comprised north-south roads spaced at 200 m intervals and east-west roads at 100 m intervals (see Figure 2) that initially accommodated both commercial

and residential functions. Expanding beyond the original grid, the city's growth accelerated with the advent of mass transit—trains from 1854 and trams from 1885 that catalysed the functional split between the CBD commercial and suburban residential land uses. Following WWII, suburban expansion driven by car-centric "Australian Dream" drained vitality from the CBD, which became largely inactive outside of weekday working hours (City of Melbourne, 2013).

In response, urban planners and designers initiated the Postcode 3000 strategy in the 1980s to re-populate and re-activate the CBD (O'Hanlon & Hamnett, 2009). This aligned with Melbourne's aspiration to become a creative, event-oriented city for leisure, entertainment, and tourism (O'Hanlon, 2009; Shaw, 2014, p. 142). The concurrent completion of the City Loop rail that encircles the Hoddle Grid enabled more trains to run to and from the CBD, reinforcing the CBD's centrality and its accessibility as an event stage. These initiatives proved effective, attracting residents, international students, and private investments. Testament to the success, these planned changes contributed to Melbourne being considered one of the most liveable cities in many global rankings over the past decade, including an unprecedented seven years in a row as the most liveable (2011–2017) by the Economist Intelligence Unit.

More recently, planning has focused on managing urban intensification, addressing increasing population density, housing unaffordability, and extending the temporal use of public spaces. The City of Melbourne's *Policy for the 24-Hour City* (2010) represents this shift, aiming to encourage activity and economic participation throughout the day and night. Within this policy framework, festivals such as White Night operate not only as cultural programming but also as methodological "tests" of a round-the-clock city, where questions of governance, safety, and inclusion are played out in concentrated form.

3.5. Morphological Analysis: Urban Intensification Towards the 24-Hour City

The morphological core of Melbourne's CBD is defined by the Hoddle Grid and its network of laneways, many of which have been transformed into iconic commercial pedestrian spaces. Over time, CBD land plots underwent consolidation and vertical intensification, introducing high-density commercial, retail, and residential typologies. Given the city's speculative origins, formal public open space in the CBD is limited, heightening the importance of its streets and laneways as vital social infrastructure. One early example of pedestrian prioritisation was the creation of Burke Street Mall on a street section between Elizabeth and Swanston streets in 1978.

Since the 1990s, policy and design interventions have aimed to pedestrianise and humanise the CBD. The closure of the city's major symbolic thoroughfare, Swanston Street, to most vehicular traffic in 1992 marked a significant urban shift—a process that took decades of mediation and negotiation. This was enhanced by the later installation of the tram "super-stops" (completed in 2012) that expanded sidewalk space into platforms that redefined transport infrastructure as public space (Sintusingha, 2013). The creation of the free tourist-oriented City Circle Tram (since 1994, utilising the old W-Class tram model) was expanded on New Year's Day 2015, into the Free Tram Zone (Yarra Trams, 2014) that covers the CBD grid and selected adjacent areas.

A key policy that stimulated the NTE was the launch of the 24-hour night network public transport services (trains, selected trams, and bus routes) on Friday and Saturday nights beginning on New Year's Day 2016.

This aligned with culturally established leisure times but was also associated with increased alcohol related harm, anti-social behaviour, and safety in public space (Curtis & Miller, 2019). This policy extended mobility but also necessitated new regimes of surveillance and policing—through CCTV, increased patrols, and alcohol restrictions—exemplifying how temporal intensification often brings countervailing strategies of control. The night network was meant to mitigate casualties from drink-driving while also augmenting the night economy (City of Melbourne, 2014). Meanwhile, the influx of international students since the mid-1990s helped transform the CBD and inner suburbs into a youth-oriented precinct, contributing to the city's vibrant NTE and complying with the trends of "studentification" (Ma et al., 2018).

Launched in 2012, Melbourne's annual White Night festival leverages these spatial and policy frameworks, serving as a symbolic and logistical rehearsal of the 24-hour city. The event transforms the CBD into a curated stage for nocturnal cultural expression, running from dusk until dawn. In the effort to broaden its appeal to families, public safety is ensured through extensive planning: The central part of the CBD along Swanston Street is cordoned off, alcohol is banned in public areas, and heavy policing is deployed—including on mass-transit routes leading to the event. These spatial and regulatory boundaries exemplify Stevens' (2007, pp. 34–36) argument that play requires boundary conditions, yet here the boundaries are state-imposed and formalised, segregating festival play from the unpredictable risks of the everyday night city.

However, this curated festival atmosphere raises questions about the participatory potential of play. The design of White Night centres on passive spectatorship rather than spontaneous engagement. While children's presence affirms safety, it also problematises Stevens' (following Mouledoux, 1977) argument that adult play, rooted in autonomy and complexity, is uniquely suited to the diverse and layered urban contexts of the inner city.

By utilising public transport to draw massive crowds towards and along Swanston Street (estimated between 550,000–600,000 in 2017; see Woodhead, 2017), White Night maximises opportunities for urban encounter, the performance and celebration of diversity (including Melbourne's multiculturalism)—consistent with Stevens' (2007) conception of non-instrumental social contact. Yet, the highly curated festival format constrains the boundary-testing and improvisation that characterise more organic forms of nocturnal play, such as those evident in Sangenjaya's everyday nightscape.

3.6. Visual Analysis: Urban Spectacle of Landmark Architecture and Projection Technology

From its inception, the White Night event utilised Swanston Street as the central activity spine. In 2018, this was expanded to and anchored by two major parks, Carlton Gardens to the north of the CBD and Alexandra Gardens to the south, across the Yarra River. Urban installations and decorations emphasised Melbourne's architectural landmarks, embedding live performances, light shows, and interactive artworks into laneways, façades, and public courtyards (Figure 2). Digital projection mapping animated key sites, blending real and illusory to create a surreal experience. Highlights included 3D projections on the World Heritage-inscribed 1880 Royal Exhibition Building façade and "story telling using 360-degree immersive projection" inside the 1913 La Trobe Reading Room at the State Library of Victoria (White Night Melbourne, 2018). Juxtaposed with live performances, these spectacles evoked forms of play described by Stevens (2007, p. 45)—particularly through vertigo and simulation—where memory, dreams, and distortions combine to create a

fantastical environment. The lighting scale is of urban street and civic architecture, designed for collective impact, targeting mass audiences rather than individuals.

Notably, compared to previous episodes, White Night in 2018 featured fewer large-scale performances occupying major urban nodes. Instead, installations and performances were dispersed along thoroughfares, resembling a busking format rather than scheduled headline acts. This change aimed to reduce crowd bottlenecks and long queues from past years at popular installations/performances, encouraging smoother pedestrian flows between attractions. The significant physical expansion of the event's footprint—north into Carlton and south across the river—supports this interpretation. However, the crowd diffusion diluted a core aspect of play: the thrill of immersion in a dense, anonymous crowd. Caillois (1958/1961, p. 40) describes this as the pleasure of "collective turbulence," a form of vertigo stimulated by the energy of crowds—now somewhat compromised by the spatial distribution of attractions.

In 2017, an unscripted disruption challenged the choreographed spectacle. Activists protesting state legislation against rough sleeping hacked the projection on the State Library façade, replacing curated content with protest messages (Harmon, 2017). This moment subverted the state-managed choreography of urban play, exposing tensions around homelessness and the sanitisation of public space. Unlike Sagenjaya's porous "classless capitalism," White Night's heavily curated environment revealed social exclusions— particularly the absence of rough sleepers who normally inhabit the CBD spaces. Stevens (2007, p. 47) argues that audience presence is central to performative play; here, they find themselves in the battleground between top-down governance and bottom-up dissent, revealing Melbourne's contested narratives of inclusivity.
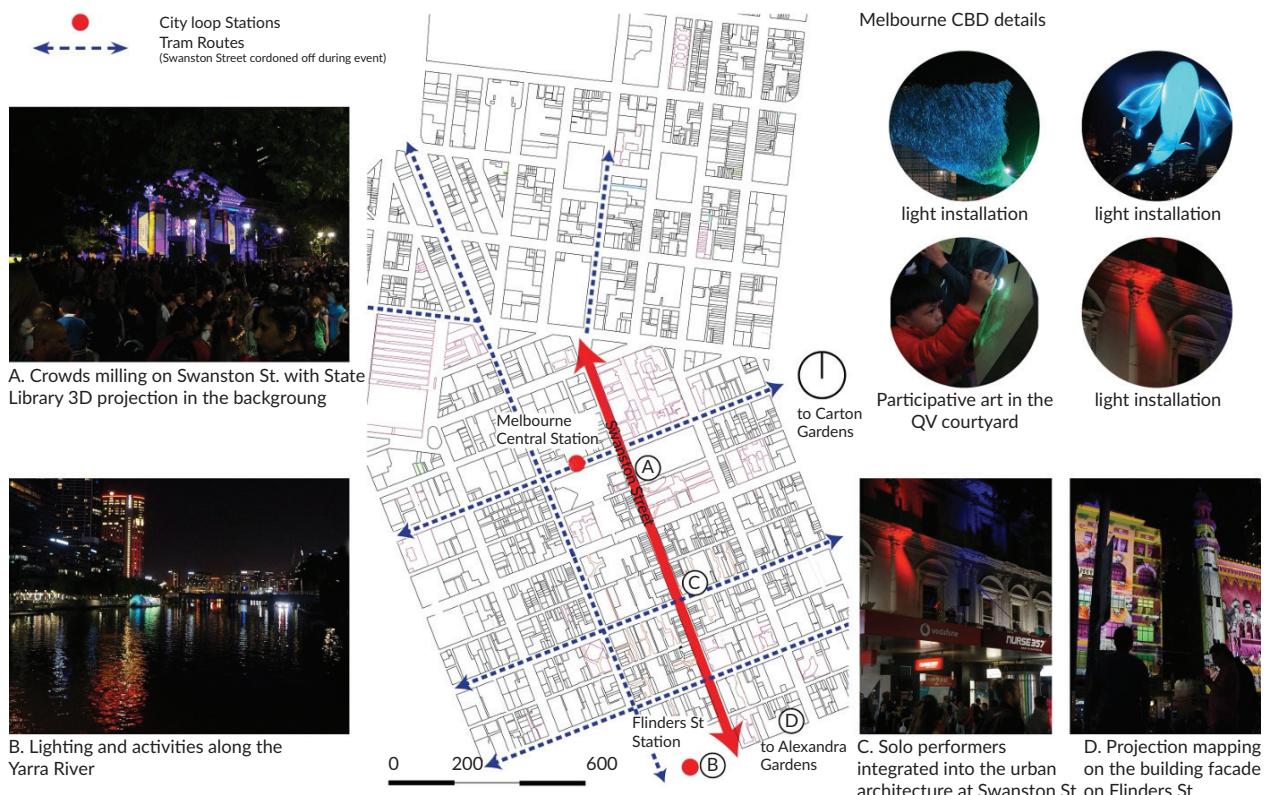
Figure 2. Melbourne CBD White Night map and images.

Following the event's growing popularity, White Night was shifted to winter in 2019 and expanded to span three nights (Thursday 22nd to Saturday 24th August), aligning with broader goals of activating the city year-round. Furthermore, the event was decentralised, staged in regional cities like Bendigo (1–2 September 2018, 7 pm to 2am) and Ballarat, in an effort to "share the wealth" (Razak, 2016). This expansion reinforced White Night's role not just as entertainment, but as an urban strategy for regional regeneration, place-making, and cultural branding within the broader project of 24-hour city-making. Disrupted by the pandemic for two years, White Night was hosted in Shepparton, Bendigo, and Geelong in 2022, and in Ballarat in 2024. These regional adaptations illustrate the mobility of the festival as a "policy assemblage," extending Melbourne's model of night-time spectacle to other urban contexts while testing the scalability of 24-hour city strategies beyond the capital.

4. Discussion: Evolved and Planned Night Play

This study presents two complementary modes of producing nocturnal urbanism through play: one emergent and lived, the other planned and choreographed (see Table 1). Both demonstrate how the NTE and urban consumption logics extend sociability and leisure into public space after dark. Taken together, they show how spatial and temporal dimensions of the city are mobilised to facilitate urban vitality, but through divergent boundary conditions and governance regimes (Lefebvre, 1991a; Stevens, 2007).

Sangenjaya exemplifies a historically embedded, bottom-up evolution of night urbanism. Its character emerged through layered responses to wartime destruction and Olympic-era renewal, producing porous alleyway networks that enable vibrant nocturnal play. In contrast, Melbourne's White Night represents a state-led, vision-driven approach, temporarily reconfiguring the CBD into a choreographed spectacle aligned with political, cultural, and tourism agendas. Where Sangenjaya's night play arises from residents and business-driven practices—social drinking, informal encounters, and spatial improvisation—White Night stages entertainment-play for a mass audience, often family-oriented and alcohol-free. The contrast reflects two urban logics: One is a demand-led city of adult social play, the other a supply-led event projecting an aspirational 24-hour city. This comparative framing helps clarify why the two cases are juxtaposed: Together they illustrate contrasting yet complementary modalities of nocturnal production—everyday immersion versus episodic spectacle. While Melbourne CBD's large resident international student population independently generates a parallel nocturnal urbanism, White Night remains a symbolic, periodic activation rather than a lived 24-hour continuum.

Despite their divergent modes of production, both nightscapes are catalysed by transport infrastructure and structured around pedestrian accessibility. Sangenjaya's commercial intensity is rooted in rail-based connectivity and intimate pedestrian alleyways, whereas Melbourne's radial rail system—enhanced by the 24-hour night network—intensifies and extends the spatial reach of nocturnal consumption. Notably, the temporal absence of public transportation from midnight to dawn at Sangenjaya enhances nocturnal immersion. Both cases affirm pedestrian-oriented design as a critical enabler of night play. At the same time, transport policy highlights boundary-making: Absence of trains in Tokyo sustains localised intimacy, while Melbourne's night network extends reach but introduces new regimes of surveillance and control (Curtis & Miller, 2019).

Table 1. Comparative night-play urbanism: Sangenjaya (Tokyo) vs White Night (Melbourne).

Dimension	Sangenjaya (Tokyo)	White Night (Melbourne)
Space	Public-private interface	Public space
Demographics, area, and density	~13,098 residents in Sangenjaya district within ~0.48 km^2 area in July 2025 (Setagaya Ward, n.d.); density ~27,286/km^2	~54001 residents within the CBD within ~2.38 km^2 area in 2023; before the pandemic, 900k people would come to work and visit daily (City of Melbourne, 2024); density ~22,689/km^2

White Night attendance: 300 000 (2013) → ~500 000–580 000 annually (2014–2016) → 2019 record 718 000 (Premier of Victoria, 2019) |
Mode of urban evolution	Organic, bottom-up: post-war rebuilding, informal mixed-use development, pedestrian alleys. Consistent with Jacobs' (1961) prescription of population density, mixed uses, old buildings, short blocks, etc.	Succession of planning decisions, building up of a new 24-hour identity. White Night is a top-down cultural spectacle: a staged event managed by the state (White Night Melbourne, n.d.)
Role of transport infrastructure	Proximity to Tokyu Den-en-toshi and Setagaya light-rail; pedestrianised alleys support night commerce ("Sangenjaya area guide," 2024; "Sangenjaya: Uncovering Tokyo's hidden gem," 2024). No public transportation connection between 1 am and 5 am intensifies nocturnal urbanism.	Melbourne's night network (24-hour trains, select trams, and bus routes Fri–Sat) amplifies reach. Radial rail system anchors White Night event catchment.
Economic indicators and ROI	Informal economy: local cafes, bars, and *izakayas* thrive in a niche setting (no available direct ROI figures)	Not consistently made public due to commercial-in-confidence rules. A 2015 event generated AUD 16.8 million (Premier of Victoria, 2015), with AUD 8 million direct and ~16 million indirect income (Razak, 2016)
Mode of illumination & aesthetics	DIY: coloured bulbs, lanterns, small-scale signage by business owners	Large-scale projection mapping and digital art on landmark façades (e.g., Royal Exhibition Building; see Boon, 2016; Premier of Victoria, 2019)
Spatial-temporal rhythm	Daily night activity, intensifying on weekends. During the daytime the Sankaku Chitai is sleepy and shut down, in contrast to the surrounding commercial and residential activities.	Annual overnight event on one or more nights; otherwise, regular night-time commercial activity continues (Greggor, 2019). The CBD is a major employment centre during the day (retail, finance, tourism) and hospitality, recreation by night.
Social environment & inclusivity	Local adult community, non-familial, mix of socio-economic groups; spontaneous interactions.	Mass public event, family-friendly, multicultural, and alcohol-free zones; inclusion curated and managed.
Governance and planning actors	Informally governed by residents, small businesses.	Central coordination by the government, police, event planners, and City Council.

Another unifying thread between the two cases is the performative power of artificial illumination. Both deploy light to transform urban architecture into a stage of fantasy and social activation, consistent with Van Liempt et al.'s (2015) observation that lighting technologies recast urban nocturnes as arenas of regulation, imagination, and consumption. For Sangenjaya, DIY lighting—lanterns, coloured bulbs, improvised signs—produces intimate, street-level atmospheres, while Melbourne's White Night relies on digital projection mapping, large-scale installations, and augmented realities to orchestrate a collective urban spectacle. Lefebvre's (1991a) dialectic of escape through play—simultaneously real and illusory—therefore frames both cases, though at different scales: one through intimate atmospheres of everyday sociability, the other through the spectacular aesthetics of projection and mass gathering. Night play thus emerges as a mode of spatial and social reproduction, extending freedom through atmospheric and symbolic transformation.

The rules and rhythms of night play are differently bounded and administered. Sangenjaya's codes are culturally embedded and self-regulated, producing subtle flows of sociability, tolerance, and mutual recognition. Melbourne's night play is explicitly managed through surveillance, event planning, and police presence, shaping both the temporality and character of urban experience. This distinction reflects a broader functional duality: Tokyo's nocturnal transitions are deeply cyclical and rhythmical, reinforcing localised immersion, whereas Melbourne's CBD exhibits a more uniform day-night continuum punctuated by episodic spectacle—and moments/cycles of contestation and protest.

While nightscapes are often sites of exclusion—by class, gender, or social norms (Van Liempt et al., 2015), these cases illustrate different modalities of inclusion. Sagenjaya's every-night *sakariba* culture promotes spontaneous interaction across social difference, extending the tradition of quasi-democratic urban play. White Night, conversely, constructs inclusion through design and curation, inviting families, tourists, and culturally diverse audiences into an otherwise adult and youth-oriented night-time city. Yet this inclusivity is highly bounded: The temporal displacement of the homeless and visible street poverty underscores the selective politics of nocturnal regeneration, where conviviality is secured through exclusion. Both cases, in different ways, reveal the night as a stage for negotiating urban belonging, identity, and spectacle, demonstrating that regenerative night play operates within both the freedoms and constraints of contemporary urban governance.

5. Conclusion: Night Urbanism and Sustainable Urban Regeneration

Sangenjaya and Melbourne's White Night illustrate two contrasting yet complementary pathways to night-time city-making: one evolved and embedded, the other planned and choreographed. Sangenjaya represents a living, bottom-up ecology of nocturnal urbanism, where small businesses, residents, and visitors continuously generate social and spatial vitality through informal practices. By contrast, Melbourne's White Night exemplifies a top-down, policy-driven strategy that temporarily transforms public space into a curated spectacle, mobilising culture and light as tools for economic regeneration and city branding. This juxtaposition highlights a spectrum of nocturnal urbanism—from demand-led, everyday social play to supply-led, event-based activation—each offering insights into sustainable urban regeneration.

From a sustainability perspective, Sangenjaya's model exemplifies incremental regeneration, adaptive reuse, layered informality, and socially embedded urbanism (Hirayama & Ronald, 2007; Sorensen, 2019). Unlike large-scale urban renewal schemes, it offers an organic form of regeneration rooted in everyday life,

vernacular practice, and bottom-up agency—traits increasingly recognised in contemporary Japanese planning discourse as central to resilience and social sustainability (Balsas, 2022). In this regard, Sangenjaya can be read as a counter-narrative to Japan's post-growth urban future—offering insights into inclusive, small-scale, culturally embedded regeneration beyond mega-projects and creative city branding. In contrast, Melbourne's model leverages strategic cultural investment and infrastructural continuity to generate large-scale visibility, tourism, and economic return—but often at the expense of spontaneity and the displacement of marginal or informal night users. Shaw (2014) reminds us that Melbourne's planning-led reinvention supplanted its former underground creative scenes—raising further questions about who gets to play, and on whose terms. Sangenjaya is inescapably under pressure from gentrification rooted in its own commercial and cultural successes ("Tokyo apartment guide," 2024). In the logic of late capitalism, as Stevens (2007) observes, play is increasingly exploited for instrumental purposes, reinforcing urban competitiveness through commodified experience.

Still, play retains disruptive potential. Both cases demonstrate that play functions as a driver of regeneration, but along different urban trajectories: one accumulative and lived, the other episodic and branded. Melbourne's White Night borrows from the language of amusement parks, inviting cross-generational participation and reconfiguring temporal norms of public life. The drawing in of families with children into urban night play opens new possibilities and theories. Meanwhile, Sangenjaya sustains Japan's tradition of *sakariba*, maintaining a vibrant third space that tolerates contradiction and diversity. Both examples reinforce the importance of temporal diversity (Mallet & Burger, 2015) and spatial informality, echoing Boffi et al.'s (2015, p. 14) call to safeguard the night as a distinctive, valuable urban time—not merely a marginalised or commodified interval.

Night play situates sustainable urban regeneration at the scale of lived experiences of individuals, bridging the gap between the planners' and designers' conceptions and everyday practices. In this context, play operates as a social mechanism that facilitates inclusivity, adaptability, and cultural richness built on meaningful social encounters and connections.

This comparative framework—juxtaposing a bottom-up ecology with a top-down festivalisation—demonstrates how night-time urbanism offers both methodological and conceptual insights. Methodologically, the combination of ethnographic observation, discourse analysis, and urban policy review allows for a grounded reading of how play is organised and contested across contexts. Conceptually, positioning play as a driver of sustainable regeneration highlights its dual potential: to facilitate inclusion and resilience, but also to be co-opted by market logics and governance agendas. By drawing these strands together, the study advances current debates on NTE and cultural urbanism by showing that sustainability is not only about economic vitality but also about safeguarding informality, cultural attachment, and the temporal diversity of urban life.

Policy and design implications emerge clearly. First, temporal diversity—allowing different modes of night play to coexist—is essential to building resilient and inclusive night-time economies. Second, spatial informality should be recognised as an asset rather than a liability, sustaining the small-scale social ecologies that underpin long-term vibrancy. Third, cultural programming and infrastructure investment can amplify night-time activation but must be balanced against risks of commodification, overregulation, and social exclusion. For cities navigating post-industrial transitions or seeking to enhance night-time vitality, a hybrid

approach that combines the embeddedness of Sangenjaya with the strategic visibility of Melbourne offers great potential for sustainable and culturally resonant urban regeneration.

Ultimately, the urbanism of night play remains difficult to control and cannot be fully engineered. As cities seek to utilise NTE as a regeneration strategy and manage the night for commercial gain, a deeper understanding is needed of how play operates across urban scales and cultural differences (Gallan, 2013). Its regenerative potential lies in the interplay between spontaneity and design, local attachment and global aspiration, and social inclusion and economic ambition. Recognising and maintaining this balance will be critical as cities increasingly turn to the night as a frontier for cultural expression, social life, and sustainable regeneration in the 21st century.

Acknowledgments

Funding

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

LLMs Disclosure

ChatGPT was utilised to assist in the language editing of the article.

References

Almazan, J., & Yoshinori, N. (2012). Urban micro-spatiality in Tokyo: Case study on six yokochō bar districts. In J. Burian (Ed.), *Advances in spatial planning* (pp. 311–330). IntechOpen. https://doi.org/10.5772/33326

Balsas, C. J. L. (2022). Historical and conceptual perspectives on urban regeneration: A prolog to a special Issue. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, *15*(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1108/JPMD-04-2021-0045

Barthes, R. (1982). *Empire of signs*. Hill and Wang. (Original work published 1970)

Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid modernity*. Polity Press.

Bianchini, F. (1995). Night cultures, night economies. *Planning Practice & Research*, *10*(2), 121–126.

Boffi, M., Colleoni, M., & Del Greco, M. (2015). Night-time hours and activities of the Italians. *Journal of Urban Research*, *2015*(11), Article 3052. https://doi.org/10.4000/articulo.3052

Boon, M. (2016, February 22). Record turnout of 580k at White Night 2016. *Limelight*. https://limelight-arts.com.au/news/record-turnout-of-580k-at-white-night-2016

Boulin, J.-Y., & Henckel, D. (2013). *Space-time design of the public city*. Springer.

Caillois, R. (1961). *Man, play and games*. Free Press. (Original work published 1958)

Campo, D., & Ryan, B. D. (2008). The entertainment zone: Unplanned nightlife and the revitalization of the American downtown. *Journal of Urban Design*, *13*(3), 291–315. https://doi.org/10.1080/13574800802319543

City of Melbourne. (2010). *City of Melbourne's policy for the 24-hour city: A framework for action.* https://mvga-prod-files.s3.ap-southeast-4.amazonaws.com/public/about-council/committees-meetings/meeting-archive/MeetingAgendaItemAttachments/111/1959/CSC_53_20080909.pdf

City of Melbourne. (2013). *Postcode 3000: A city transformed?* [Exhibition]. https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/postcode-3000-city-transformed-exhibition

City of Melbourne. (2014). *Beyond the safe city strategy: 2014–17.* https://participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/beyond-safe-city

City of Melbourne. (2024). *Overview—CBD.* https://participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/neighbourhoods/cbd/overview

Colaboratório. (2014). *Manifesto da noite/Night manifesto.* https://issuu.com/invisiveisproducoes/docs/manifesto-19_digital

Covatta, A. (2018). Planning a local and global foodscape: Tsukiji fish market in Tokyo. In Y. Cabannes & C. Marocchino (Eds.), *Integrating food into urban planning* (pp. 172–186). UCL Press.

Curtis, A., & Miller, P. (2019, July 21). All-night public transport hasn't reduced alcohol-related harm in Melbourne. *The Conversation.* https://theconversation.com/all-night-public-transport-hasnt-reduced-alcohol-related-harm-in-melbourne-118999

De Luca, E. (2017). *The day before happiness.* Penguin Books. (Original work published 2009)

Dovey, K. (2012). Informal urbanism and complex adaptive assemblage. *International Development Planning Review*, *34*(4), 349–368. https://doi.org/10.3828/idpr.2012.23

Futamura, T., & Sugiyama, K. (2018). The dark side of the nightscape: The growth of izakaya chains and the changing landscapes of evening eateries in Japanese cities. *Food Culture & Society*, *21*(1), 101–117. https://doi.org/10.1080/15528014.2017.1398474

Gallan, B. (2013). Night lives: Heterotopia, youth transitions and cultural infrastructure in the urban night. *Urban Studies*, *52*(3), 555–570. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098014552934

Gilloch, G. (1996). *Myth and metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the city.* Polity Press.

Greggor, C. (2019, April 16). White Night is set for August, but some big changes are coming. *Broadsheet.* https://www.broadsheet.com.au/melbourne/entertainment/article/white-night-set-august-some-big-changes-are-coming

Gwiaździński, L. (2015). The urban night: A space time for innovation and sustainable development. *Journal of Urban Research*, *2015*(11), Article 3140. https://doi.org/10.4000/articulo.3140

Hadfield, P. (2014). The night-time city. Four modes of exclusion: Reflections on the Urban Studies special collection. *Urban Studies*, *52*(3), 606–616. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098014552934

Harmon, S. (2017, February 19). White Night Melbourne: Activists hijack projection to protest against rough sleeping laws. *The Guardian.* https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/feb/19/white-night-melbourne-activists-hijack-projection-to-protest-against-rough-sleeping-laws

Hendry, J., & Raveri, M. (2002). *Japan at play: The ludic and the logic of power.* Routledge.

Hirayama, Y., & Ronald, R. (2007). *Housing and social transition in Japan.* Routledge.

Jacobs, J. (1961). *The death and life of great American cities.* Random House.

Kolvin, P. (2016). *Manifesto for the night-time economy.* Cornerstone Barristers. https://cornerstonebarristers.com/wp-content/uploads/old/night-time-economy-final.pdf

Kowalczyk, B. (2011). Invisible (Tokyo Station) city of transformation: Social change and its spatial expression in modern Japan. *Asian Studies*, *15*(3), 23–38. https://doi.org/10.4312/as.2011.15.3.23-38

Lefebvre, H. (1991a). *Critique of everyday life—Volume 1.* Verso.

Lefebvre, H. (1991b). *The production of space.* Blackwell. (Original work published 1974)

Levy, O., Dayan, T., Porter, W. P., & Kronfeld-Schor, N. (2018). Time and ecological resilience: Can diurnal animals compensate for climate change by shifting to nocturnal activity? *Ecological Monographs*, *89*(1), Article 1334. https://doi.org/10.1002/ecm.1334

Linhart, S. (1986). Sakariba: Zone of 'evaporation' between work and home? In J. Hendry & J. Webber (Eds.), *Interpreting Japanese society: Anthropological approaches* (pp. 198–210). Anthropological Society of Oxford.

Ma, Z., Li, C., Liu, Y., & Zhang, J. (2018). The transformation of traditional commercial blocks in China: Characteristics and mechanisms of youthification. *City, Culture and Society*, *14*, 56–63. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2017.12.001

Mallet, S., & Burger, C. (2015). What is the place of night-time in the urban policy of a French intermediate city? *Journal of Urban Research*, *2015*(11), Article 3042. https://doi.org/10.4000/articulo.3042

Mattson, G. (2015). Bar districts as subcultural amenities. *City, Culture and Society*, *6*, 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2015.01.001

Mouledoux, E. (1977). Theoretical considerations and a method for the study of play. In D. F. Lancy & B. A. Tindall (Eds.), *The study of play: Problems and prospects: Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting of the Association for the Anthropological Study of Play*. Leisure Press.

O'Hanlon, S. (2009). The events city: Sport, culture, and the transformation of inner Melbourne, 1977–2006. *Urban History Review*, *37*(2), 30–40. https://doi.org/10.7202/038375ar

O'Hanlon, S., & Hamnett, C. (2009). Deindustrialisation, gentrification and the re-invention of the inner city: London and Melbourne, c.1960-2008. *Urban Policy and Research*, *27*(3), 211–216. https://doi.org/10.1080/08111140903161894

Oldenburg, R. (1999). *The great good place: Cafes, coffee shops, bookstores, bars, hair salons, and other hangouts at the heart of a community* (3rd ed.). Marlowe & Company.

Pottie-Sherman, Y. (2013). Vancouver's Chinatown night market: Gentrification and the perception of Chinatown as a form of revitalization. *Built Environment*, *39*(2), 172–189. https://doi.org/10.2148/benv.39.2.172

Premier of Victoria. (2015, August 10). *Melbourne's White Night returns for 2016* [Press release]. Office of the Premier. https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/melbournes-white-night-returns-2016

Premier of Victoria. (2019, August 25). *Melbourne's White Night brings record crowds* [Press release]. Office of the Premier. https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/site-4/melbournes-white-night-brings-record-crowds

Project for Public Spaces. (2007). *What is placemaking?* https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking

Ragin, C. C. (2014). *The comparative method: Moving beyond qualitative and quantitative strategies.* University of California Press.

Razak, I. (2016, December 12). White Night Melbourne to expand into Ballarat to 'share the wealth,' organisers say. *ABC News.* http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-12/white-night-melbourne-to-expand—into-ballarat/8113310

Roberts, M. (2009). *Planning the night-time city.* Routledge.

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Sampériz, J. d. l. O.-L., García-Palomares, J. C., Ramiro-Fariñas, D., Hernández Martín-Caro, M. S., & Gutiérrez, J. (2025). Consumption after dark exploring spatio-temporal patterns of spending in the night-time economy. *Cities*, *159*, Article 105726. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2025.105726

Sangenjaya area guide: Trendy and retro neighborhood in Tokyo. (2024, October 10). *e-Housing.* https://e-housing.jp/post/sangenjaya-area-guide-trendy-and-retro-neighborhood-in-tokyo

Sangenjaya: Uncovering Tokyo's hidden gem. (2024, April 11). *Japan Experience.* https://www.japan-experience.com/all-about-japan/tokyo/attractions-excursions/sangenjaya

Scrabble-Word.com. (n.d.). *Play*. https://scrabble-word.com/dictionary/play

Sekai Property. (2018). *Living in Sangenjaya: How is it like for foreigners?* https://en.sekaiproperty.com/article/1996/living-in-sangenjaya

Setagaya Ward. (n.d.). *Setagaya City statistics*. https://www.city.setagaya.lg.jp/toukei/index.html

Shaw, K. (2014). Melbourne's Creative Spaces program: Reclaiming the 'creative city' (if not quite the rest of it). *City, Culture and Society, 5*, 139–147.

Shelton, B. (1999). *Learning from the Japanese City: West meets East in urban design*. E & FN Spon.

Sintusingha, S. (2013). Intensifying Melbourne tram corridors: Freezing the 'Australian Dream.' In D. Radovic (Ed.), *Mn'M Workbook 1: Intensities in ten cities* (pp. 126–131). Flick Studio.

Slater, D. H. (2011). Social class and identity in Postwar Japan. In V. L. Bestor, T. C. Bestor, & A. Yamagata (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of Japanese culture and society* (pp. 103–116). Routledge.

Sorensen, A. (2019). *The making of urban Japan: Cities and planning from Edo to the Twenty-First Century* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Stevens, Q. (2007). *The ludic city: Exploring the potential of public spaces*. Routledge.

Straw, W. (2016). Media and the urban night. *Journal of Urban Research, 2016*(11), Article 3098. https://doi.org/10.4000/articulo.3098

Tadié, J., & Permanadeli, R. (2015). Night and the city: Clubs, brothels and politics in Jakarta. *Urban Studies, 52*(3), 471–485. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098014537692

Tokyo apartment guide: Overview and rent prices in Sangenjaya area. (2024, September 16). *Japan Property*. https://www.japan-property.jp/blog-rent/details96#:~:text=In%20Japan%2C%20it's%20often%20associated,want%20to%20experience%20local%20culture

Van Liempt, I., van Aalst, I., & Schwanen, T. (2015). Introduction: Geographies of the urban night. *Urban Studies, 52*(3), 407–421. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098014552933

Venturi, R., Brown, D. S., & Izenour, S. (1972). *Learning from Las Vegas: The forgotten symbolism of architectural form* (Facsimile ed.). MIT Press.

White Night Melbourne. (n.d.). *About us*. https://whitenight.com.au/about-us

White Night Melbourne. (2018). *What if…* https://whitenight.com.au/melbourne/program/what-if

Woodhead, C. (2017, February 19). White Night Melbourne 2017: Twelve hours of serious traipsing amid an ocean of people. *The Sydney Morning*. https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/white-night-melbourne-2017-twelve-hours-of-serious-traipsing-amid-an-ocean-of-people-20170219-gugavi.html

Yarra Trams. (2014, September 25). *Free CBD tram zone from 1 January 2015* [Press release]. https://www.yarratrams.com.au/news/free-cbd-tram-zone-from-1-january-2015

Yeo, S.-J., & Heng, C. K. (2014). An (extra)ordinary night out: Urban informality, social sustainability and the night-time economy. *Urban Studies, 51*(4), 712–726. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098013489743

Z Tokyo. (2017). *Sangen-Jaya's: The nostalgic triangle!* https://ztokyo.net/articles/deep_spot-sankakuchitai-sangenjaya

About the Authors

Sidh Sintusingha is a senior lecturer in landscape architecture at the Melbourne School of Design of the University of Melbourne. He practiced as an architect and landscape architect in Thailand and Australia. He researches on temporal socio-cultural, environmental, and scalar issues relating to urbanisation and retrofits towards urban sustainability in Asian cities.

Alice Covatta is an assistant professor at the School of Architecture at the University of Montreal. She is a Japan Foundation fellow, researcher for the Centre of Urban Design and Mental Health, co-founder of the COpE studio, and winner of Europan14. Her research has provided insights into new urban landscapes oriented toward promoting social values and the notion of public space.