

NIGHTWORKPOD

A PODCAST ABOUT WORKING THE NIGHT SHIFT

LONDON'S, GLOCTURNAL CITIES' 'OTHER WORKERS' SERIES

EPISODE N°2

TRANSCRIPT
August 2018

CREATOR | PRODUCER:

Julius-Cezar MacQuarie | NIGHTSPARKS

GUESTS:

Georgina Perrry, Public Health Practitioner | UK
Phil Horsley, Fire Fighter | First Respondent | UK

VOICE OVER: Natalia Carata, Actress | UK

PEOPLE: Operations Manager, Professor,
Outreach Workers, Sex Workers, Fire Fighthers

PLACES: London, United Kingdom

CHRONOLOGICAL PERIODS:

Contemporary

THEORETICAL APPROACHES:

Ethnographic theory

TOPICS:

Night-Time Economy
Capitalism, Globalisation
Transnational Migration
Sexual & Public Health
Bodily Rhythms
Circadian Rhythms
Safety, Fire Fighting

DISCIPLINES:

Social Anthropology, Sociology

UNIT:

Centre of Policy Studies

You're listening to the NightWorkPod. I'm Julius-Cezar Macquarie, and I am an anthropologist. NWP focuses on night workers and the lives they lead awake, alert at night whilst majority sleep. In this episode, I invite two professionals and long-term London residents, a public health practitioner and a fire fighter.

Two important sectors of work, health and emergency services part of the fire fighting industry rely on professionals working the night shift through rotation. Both guests share how night shift work impacts on their circadian rhythms, and the challenges that each face according to the nature of the job that they have performed over the years.

Our first guest is George Perry. George is a public health practitioner running a tuberculosis screening program for newly arrived migrants to London. Over 13 years, George managed Open Doors, a clinical, case management and outreach service for at-street sex workers in several London boroughs. In the beginning this type of work challenged George, and her preconceptions on what it means to be a sex worker on the frightening and hostile streets in some parts of London, at night. She also shares how over the years she tried to redress the harshness of a global city like London, and the policies of social cleansing of the 'others' who cannot afford living in the city.

§

JCM: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this NightWorkPod. I'd like you to introduce yourself, tell listeners what you do and the kind of work you have been doing.

George Perry [GP]: So, I would describe myself, I suppose as a public health practitioner. I currently run a tuberculosis screening program for new migrants arrivals in London. In Southwark and Lambeth. But, for many years until the end of 2016, I was the service manager for Open Doors [OD]. OD is a clinical, case management and outreach service for sex workers in East London. Three boroughs in London - City and Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Newham. I did this job for thirteen years. I took it from a very tiny service when there were only three of us, working part-time, to a pretty large service; we were, at one point, up to sixteen of us.

Yeah, we were working with street sex workers, migrant sex workers. Sex workers who worked off-street, in brothels and saunas, and we were doing numerous pieces of work, really. Extensibly, our gateway to working with sex workers was through the offer of really high quality sexual health services. A specialist service, where sex workers would go; where there wouldn't be judged and they wouldn't be stigmatised. It's a really difficult disclosure to make some times. To have health professionals who support you because you are a sex worker; people face a lot of judgments and a lot of stigma. So, we had clinics, and we also had teams where we did the outreach. We then, supported sex workers, basically, in whatever aspect of social care they needed.

So, maybe they were suffering because they were homeless, sexual abuse, or they were living with issues of mental health or drug dependency or they may have been experiencing the challenges of being a migrant sex worker, which were complex, are complex for sex workers. Because, language can be a barrier; not knowing how British systems work; facing the very obvious discrimination that happens if you are a migrant trying to find your way in London. We would be able to support our street sex workers who needed our assistance and any of those issues. And that was really the case management element. And it was an extraordinary job. In one year we would work with almost 2,500 people. Mostly, female sex workers, some males, and some trans sex workers. Mostly females, large numbers of sex workers from Romania and Brazil. And then we had our indigenous, UK sex work population that we supported through our at-street outreach programs.

JCM: Please tell us how you used to find them or how did they use to find you.

GP: In the beginning, the work that we did really focused on outreach. So, small teams would go out at night to meet sex workers out at night, and they would drive around the streets of the boroughs that we used to work in places that we recognised to be street beats. And that means, places where sex workers would go to sell sex. And the other teams would also go out on outreach. Those would go to the brothels and saunas. And those were properties that we would have known for a long time or we would be told about new properties through word of mouth or

we would find in the old days through adverts in phone boxes, through car adverts or at the back of newspapers.

So, we would go out in the car. And we would go out in the middle of the night to meet with sex workers, because that's when street sex workers work. And we would always have condoms. We would have hot drinks. And we would talk to sex workers, many of whom we would have known for long time. Always, some would be new to our service. About the work we could do for them. About the support we could offer. And we would encourage them to come and see us in our drop-in. And that's how we would make contact.

Sometimes, sex workers would come to the car and bring friends or new people that they just met working in the street. With our off-street work we were able to offer the option to come to drop-in, if the sex workers wanted to do that, but many of the off-street sex workers tended not to want to do that, not least because their lives were very nocturnal and getting up to come to a drop-in would be a very difficult thing to do. And we would meet them at our office and would work with them, and support them with any case management needs that

JCM: Thank you. Next, I have two related questions.

V i g n e t t e # 1

"Mother of Three"

I used to sell sex in a massage parlour and they would end up taking most of my money. On a good day I'd make 700 but I'd only get to keep 100 of that so now I work by myself on the streets. I am a mother of a three year old but she's with my parents back in Romania. It's difficult being here on my own, it gets lonely, you know. I send money back to my family in Romania. There are about 11 people who are relying on me for money. But it's difficult because work has been slow lately. Last night, around ten thirty, I was sitting on the steps where I usually wait for clients opposite a bus stop. A man got off the bus and smiled at me as he passed by. Around midnight the same man comes and asks me what I'm doing sitting there alone so I tell him I'm working. He asks how much I charge and if I want to go with him so I told him how much I charge for twenty minutes and that I only do it with a condom. He agreed so we went towards the alley behind the main road. We went to the back of this alley. And, on this back garden fence of the house. I was with my back to the fence and he was in front of me with his back to the road and I couldn't see his face because of the darkness and the hat he was wearing. First he lit a cigarette and pretended to look for money so I asked him to pay me for the second time before I did anything. He was pretending to get the money out of his coat but instead he took out a kitchen knife, and it put it to my throat and says: "Go down on me and make me happy without a condom." And, I felt my body go cold and I froze and all I could say was "please, please, why?" In the meantime, a hand stretched out from nowhere; it passed by my head aiming towards his arm holding the knife. I felt my body being pushed forward. By the time I realized what was happening, the fence had already fallen onto my back pressing me to lean towards him. And then the attacker though, ran with his knife. I ran too; and as I reached the car parked nearby the man in it, asked me if I was alright. And I think that man saw everything.

Story dubbed by
Nati Carata, Actress

What was surprising about working with this group of people? But more importantly, what was surprising about working at night?

GP: Well, there were many things that surprised me over the years. Many phenomena that I saw that challenged my preconceptions what it means to be a street sex worker. I was really surprised at the fraternity in the community that there was on the street. I was so aware of how frightening and hostile the streets could be particularly for women. I was overwhelmed by... I thought that the women would immediately take our offer of assistance and support, which would mean that they would potentially move away from street sex work, fairly quickly. My job has never been to insist that people move away from selling sex. But for me, definitely see some of our street sex workers work, it felt so dangerous and so desperate. And what I realised was that, that transition away from the street is a really difficult to do.

§

they had.

JCM: In 2013, Open Doors published [Findings of a Needs Assessment Conducted with Street](#)

[Sex Workers in the London Borough of Newham between February and April 2013](#). An actress will dub the story that was included in this report. It is based on a real-life experience of a street sex worker from Romania, who earned her bread and butter through sex working on one of the streets, in Newham borough of London, at night. This vignette is called, *I am a mother of three year old, and I so sex work*. See Vignette #1, p. 2.

The woman told this story to her outreach worker, on the day after the event. She in a crowded over ground train which was taking the two to the hospital where she was due for her check up. She seemed undisturbed by what has happened, and said to her outreach worker that such events happen regularly. It wasn't the first and it won't be the last time.

GP: When you are living and surviving on the street you build up a fraternity and a group of support; and maybe don't support you well, but a group of people that you know and that you could understand.

And, yeah, I began to learn that there was a real strength and support around that for a lot of the women. And that was often what made it hard to come off the street. Because to come off the street it meant that they would lose touch with that street community. And you know often some people were real scallies, you know, drug dealers that were up to all sorts of mischief. But, to come away from the street it meant that women wouldn't have that identity anymore. That was really hard to move away. So, that was real big surprise to me.

Another surprise for me, when I worked with off-street women, was to see how tough they were, how strong they were. For many of the migrant women, selling sex and earning money was about really sending majority of that money home. London is a real expensive city to live in. They had their outgoings to spend here, but they really needed to, and the expectations was

that they would send their money back to family. And that was their responsibility. And I learnt a lot about how women would be prepared to step up to that responsibility. Often they would face dangerous work environments, and boring work environments that they didn't particularly like that much. I also talked to women who would come to the UK, originally to work as waitress, in food packing, or flower packing and picking, and would go... this work would never pay me enough money that I need to send back home. And that's why I am gonna get involved with sex work. And a real sense of loyalty. A sense of duty and pride

that they were able to support families. So, I think this was a real big surprise for me.

JCM: Thank you. What do you think about the nocturnal city, about London, this city that never sleeps, on the backdrop of your experience of working with these people that you have just been describing?

GP: So, London is increasingly the city that never sleeps. I remember moving to London. And actually it did use to sleep, at about 2am.

JCM: When was that?

GP: Oh, I moved to London in '99. And I used to come up to London a lot before that. I remember thinking, actually, London does go to sleep. Things do... they do get quiet. But then, when I started working for the NHS. And I started to do, particularly, the night-time work, and working with sex workers. You know, we used to do the outreach. We tried outreach at lots of different times out in the night. Sometimes, we would do between 10 pm and 2 in the morning because they wouldn't have anywhere to sleep. So, what they would do, they would be out and they would sex work, and when morning would come it would be 8-9 am, they would find a place, and that could be perhaps with someone who would buy sex from them, someone who would buy drugs from

Vignette # 2

I tried in London, to redress the harshness of this city by being a human being, and offer human support, and I think that's the only way I could be in this city and keep my sanity, really...

Georgina Perry,
Public Health Practitioner

them, with another friend or in a stairwell somewhere, it really depended on their circumstances. And you know, because London is hard and tough, and it's got harder and tougher and it's got fewer and fewer resources out there. You'd know that probably when the light comes up, the place that many of the street homeless sex workers, they would go to stairwells in blocks of flats, bin areas, wherever they could lay their head.

JCM: On reflection, this service, long years of working with marginalised people what do you think that this experience of yours turned up to be like? Was it any different than what you imagined before you endeavoured to stand by to these people, the ignored people? [I often refer to the people at night, invisible lives, invisible people that we just don't think so often as being up and working in the nocturnal city]

GP: For me, it was a real privilege. I had a window into a world that many people would never have a view on. And I saw an awful lot of desperation in London. And I think, it depends what you are in this city for. Some people are here to make their millions. And some people are here because is this amazing, historical place. But, I came to East London. And I was really embraced by East London. And I really wanted to find, and understand how I could be of assistance to a community in East London. And because of my colleagues, most of whom were from East London, and because of the work that we were able to do together, I think we really did make a profound difference to a lot of people's lives. For me, that's been the reason to be in London. It's harder and harder to do that. The purpose of which I really believe is to do with social cleansing. To push people out of London that cannot afford to be here without some assistance. And you know, we really see the social policy playing out. We're seeing such cuts in NHS, to homeless and housing services, to drug and alcohol services, to mental health services, so actually the people we're seeing on the streets are increasing in numbers, but the

support that can be offered to them is less and less. I tried in London, to redress the harshness of this city by being a human being, and offer human support, and I think that's the only way I could be in this city and keep my sanity, really...

§

Phil Horsley [PH] started working for the London ambulance service. After two years he decided to become a fire fighter and has serviced with a London fire brigade for 29 years. He worked shifts for over 30 years, and the shift rota included nights shift work, which is at the core of this podcast.

JCM: Hello Phil!

PH: You're OK mate?

JCM: Yes, yes, I'm really grateful that you agreed to come on the nightworkpod. And I would like to ask you to introduce yourself.

PH: So, my name is Phil and I have been a fire fighter, for 29 years now. I did a couple of years in the ambulance service. Basically, it's kind of over 30 years of working shifts, including night shifts, which, of course, is your interest. And the nature of my job has always been over those years, what we call, a first responder. So, dial 999, bosch, I turn up.

And, of course, I am not exclusively a night worker. I also work day shifts every week. So, I chop and change between days and nights, different rhythms. I often describe what it's like - feeling jet-lagged, that's how I describe to people. But, the point I am trying to make, personally, I never really got used to it. And it doesn't get any easier the older you get.

JCM: You mention about the difference in the way you experience night-shifts or rather not getting used to night shifts. Can you talk a little about that?

PH: For me, I'm chopping and changing. And my rhythm is as such when I finished my last night

Vignette # 3

Sound of a zip from an incident. A big incident. I won't go into it. But it was a big incident, many years ago. There were quite a few fatalities and we had to go around zipping up people in... body bags. And it was that sound. That sound had such an air of finality. You know, zip, ... that was it.

Phil Horsley [PH]
Fire Fighting Officer | First Responder

shift I stay awake for the whole of the next day so that I can go to bed on my first night off. Does that make sense? So, ... Because, if I just went home and went to bed that meant that all my time off... I should explain, I work 4-on, 4-off. So, it's 2 days, 2 nights and then 4 off. Well, we say it's 4 off, but we worked on the first day off. So, it's like an eight day cycle. So, on our first day off we work from midnight till 9:30 in the morning. So, it's not really a day off. So, it's more really, like a lot of people prefer, 5 days on, 3 off. It would make more sense really. It used to be 3 nights in the 24-hour cycle. So, the day was divided into 3 x 8 hours shifts. So, you had days, middles, and nights. And that was quite hard, but then obviously I was much, much younger. And so things didn't really affect you when you're a lot, lot younger.

JCM: When you say about affecting, in what ways? What are you thinking here? Can you tell our listeners in which ways? Is it mentally, is it physically?

PH: Yeah, it's kind of you tune out. Be kind of irritable. I guess. You know, if it's the middle of January or February in this country it can be quite bleak, the weather. You know, if you worked shifts you're much more prone to depression. I don't know if it's the tiredness or ... as I say it's this feeling of jetlag.

JCM: You're a family man, right?

PH: Yeah, I am a family man. I have two sons and they're grown up now. And again it's very easy to dwell on the negative aspects of night shifts. My job can be physically ...demanding, as well as the mental part. But, it's very easy to dwell on the negative aspects of working shifts. But, one of the positives is that I am around a lot during the day. So, I was around quite a lot to get involved with my sons upbringing. And I would be able to go to school to pick them up. Or I would take them in the morning, on my off-duty days. You know, you can off-set that imbalance. Of course, I work weekends. That's the other anti-social part. Not just the times of the day, but the times of the week. There's a lot of times when, conversely I'm not with them for important things to do with them. For example, parents' evenings or award ceremonies. You know, I have to be there. And you know, you kind of have to plan your leave accordingly. You know, emergency cover has to be the priority. It's my job. It is what I'm paid to

do. So there's times when I couldn't be... this sort of swings around. For the last 32 years I haven't known anything else. And as you know from all the people that you've been talking about when you're working shifts it's so much more kind of an investment in your life. Your job becomes so much more like your life style and influencing your life style. Because you're not around when the majority of other people are around.

JCM: What was most surprising for you, being up at night and working?

PH: It's a funny feeling, really. And again, it might be the uniqueness of my experience. When someone dials 999, it's kind of quite desperate times. It's life or death. And when you turn up, you're kind of very suddenly flung into this high octane, heart rate, you know the expectation on you when you turn up, people think oh, great! The ambulance is here! Or great, the fire brigade is here and everything is going to be fine now. And it's you know, 0-100 mile-an-hour kind of rush, mixed up with expectation, and ... does that make sense?

JCM: Yes. Is that different than responding to a call in the day?

PH: Yes. There is an expectation when we're called in the night. Because there are so few people around when someone has called us that you never actually know until you turn up what you're going to get, but it's more likely at night because people are asleep that people are defenceless particularly if they don't have ... so, when the bells do go down, we say 'the bells do go down' when we are called in the night that ...there have been times when I went, like I said, from 0-100 in a split's second, and you can sometimes feel physically sick, you know. Some people can actually levitate because of the shock of the alert it's so great that you just have this kind of spasm that ... Some people would, 'jibbers, jabbers, oh, you fire fighters you can sleep all through the night'. Between midnight and 6 o'clock in the morning we are allowed to rest. I've always said, that's not like real sleep. Really, really isn't. You can rest with one eye open.

JCM: How would you say this service that you have done turned out to be from what you imagined that it will be when you have started.

Does it makes sense what I am asking?

PH: Yeah, it makes sense. I don't know... I don't think I thought about the future very much. I was quite young when I started the job. It's all I ever wanted to do. I grew up behind the fire station. Playing sports in the yards. And that was it. That was all I ever going to do, and... 30 years it's a relatively short space of time ...

So, some changes have been detrimental, I believe, around pay... and there's much more care around employees' health and safety. Our life's span has much increased, in line with the rest of the population, but that is... that pays tribute... that is a result of having much better breathing apparatus, having much better protective equipment. We know about cyanide gas, we know about all these hazards more efficiently. Our shifts, by and large stayed the same. But, they've changed a little bit. They've become a little less family friendly. But, when the Fire Service Act was .. And pensions and all that came in after WWII, fire fighters retired ... you know I've known fire fighters that they retired in their 50's and they're now in their 80s and they've been retired longer than they've been fire fighters, they've been retired longer than they've been working.

JCM: You being a fire fighter and a long-term resident of London for all these years, could you describe through your eyes how London has changed, at night, over these three decades?

PH: As I say, I'm 52 now. I've lived in London. I've been born in London and lived here all my life and ... like a lot of big cities, it wasn't a place to live in. It was a place to commute and work. And, you know, the pubs used to close at 10:30 - 11:00 pm. People would generally come for food. It was a land of warm, flat beer, cold chips and ... now,

Just seeing that, the kind of night life, around eating out, dinning out, the night economy ... I mean, when I was small... when my parents... we never went out. I mean, it just wasn't something we did. You see it on a Wednesday night even, people are out. We used to go to other cities when I was younger, in Europe and see Parisienne café culture or you go to America, you go to New York, the city that never sleeps. And I've seen London becoming more and more like that. Much more of a night economy, much more of a ... in terms of en-

tertainment, just seems to be so many more people around. And I think it's better for it. There are some downsides to it, you know, with gentrification it's become a lot more expensive to live here.

JCM: How do you think it affected you work and the shift into what it is today? [and I think it is a city that never sleeps]

PH: Well, I agree. On a sort of practical sort of level, whereas before you could really drive around London, at night, and it was almost a pleasure. I mean, when I first started driving, in the early 1980s people used to say, "do you wanna go out for a drive? Would you just like to go out for a drive? I mean, it's just something fun to do. And now, ... Now, if you say to someone, do you wanna go out for a drive, people would say, "are you mad?" You've seen the price of petrol? The congestion? The congestion charge? Road rage? And I just think, at night, it's just so much more traffic, you know, on the road.

And I think, again just anecdotally, I don't have any.. I think it does affect response time. You're not able to just zip about on empty streets, on empty roads like you used to ... sometimes, it's traffic jams, and again, the amount of road works are more likely to do this things at night because of the chaos. A lot more of kind of road works and building works, even, taking place at night because it's much more convenient to do.

I was just saying to someone the other day, again the first station I went to, when I first started working, nearly all my colleagues were male and married and almost none of them... none of their wives worked. Now, not only that everyone's wife works, I mean, the wives ... quite a lot of them, they're earning more in the last thirty years. It's been one of the big changes that I've noticed.

JCM: For people who work at night and listeners of the nightworkpod, what would you say to them?

PH: You know, from having spoken to you, it's kind of transparent that your kind of mission is to get the night workers' voices out there and heard, and while they're listening, maybe I'm preaching to the converted... nighters, are the most critical, important workers, and when you're working shifts and particularly a lot of the people that you're interviewing are working just nights that

it's just such a great sacrifice of a kind of a normal life, and these people are paid really ... not worth for the work that they do, and the contribution that they make to the night-time economy, to the running of this city, and they're so kind of hidden and their problems all so kind of hidden ... and I kind of, really think we need to pay some mind. I'm sure that they already do. You know, the night porter in a fruit and veg market, the driver that is getting the food to the supermarket for you, it's such a critical, important part of the running of this great city, and it's really kind of they're asleep at home and we can work, and we can function in this city because of this people kind of sacrifice, maybe a bit of a dramatic word, but they kind of put themselves out for the little reward ... and I'll leave it at that and I'll say thank you.

JCM: Thank you, thank you.

PH: Thank you, Cezar. Thank you for everything that you do in this endeavour.

§

JCM: *I will end this series with one more episode when I invite Marion Roberts, Emeritus Professor in Urban Design at the University of Westminster, whose specialist's interests are the night-time city and gender related topics in Urban Design.*

MR: Well, one thing I think that it's kind of plus and minus that's been really good. I... my passion is film, and I really like the way that there's been an increase in the number of art-house cinemas. Picture House chain, and the Curzon chain across London it's terrific. The shame is that they're not paying their workers properly, and there's still an ongoing dispute that's been going on for the last eighteen months at Picture House, but otherwise that's been so positive for me as a person.

JCM: *You've been listening to nightworkpod, a podcast about working the night-shift. Nightworkpod is produced by me, Julius-Cezar MacQuarie. I created nightworkpod between London and Budapest.*

The first two episodes were produced with the support of Centre for Media, Data and Society at Central European University, in Budapest.

If you like what you've heard there are a few ways that you can help me out. First, tell all of your friends in real and digital form, diurnal or nocturnal about this show. Read the text that comes with this episode on podcasts.ceu.edu where nightworkpod episodes are hosted.

Review the show on itunes. You can donate to support this show production via my website: [LightSparksCreatives \[dot\] myportfolio\[dot\]com](http://LightSparksCreatives[dot]myportfolio[dot]com). And you can also contact me @ [nightsparkslab](https://www.facebook.com/nightsparkslab) facebook page.

Thank you, and I hope you enjoyed this second episode. Tweet-the-word and tune in for the third episode coming soon.

§

A c k n o w l e d g e m e n t s

I show my gratitude to the past, present and future guests appearing on the nightworkpod. Without their contribution there would be no podcast about working the night shift. My thanks and gratitude also extends to actresses and artist, Nati Carata who kindly gave me permission to use the text that she has dubbed in the film [Invisible Lives: Romanian Night Shift Workers in London](#).

§

R e f e r e n c e s

Marrinnan, T. & Macarie, I-C. (2013) *Invisible Lives: Romanian Night Shift Workers in London* (UK). Available at <http://bit.ly/invsblelvs>

Perry, Georgina and Macarie, I-C. (2013). *Findings from Needs Assessment Conducted with Street Sex Workers in the London Borough of Newham*. Homerton University Hospital NHS Trust. Open Doors: London. Available at <http://bit.ly/ODreport>

C i t e a n d S u b s c r i b e

MacQuarie, J. C. (2018) *Nightworkpod: A podcast about working the nightshift*. Available at <https://podcasts.ceu.edu/series/nightworkpod-podcast-about-working-night-shift>

Correspondence should be sent to Julius-Cezar MacQuarie, Centre for Policy Studies, Central European University. Email: macarie_iulius-cezar@phd.ceu.edu / imailfromdrjc@gmail.com