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# Reviewing Policy Responses to the Night-time Economy through a Gendered Lens: Participation without Inclusion.

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## Abstract

This paper will examine public policies towards the UK's night-time economy through the lens of gender. The Treaty of Amsterdam (1999) set out a responsibility for all member states to assure gender equality in their public policies as well as in their public organisations. Prior to leaving the European Union and as a signatory to this European legislation, the UK introduced a duty towards gender equality in central and local government policies, made explicit in its Equalities Act of 2010. This Act covers many categories of discrimination including sex, sexual orientation and gender reassignment. The term public policy also covers a wide range of statutory interests, which, in the context of the UK's night time economy, includes licensing and planning, community safety, economic development and tourism, public space management, public health, transport and policing. For the sake of brevity and clarity, this chapter will focus on how policy makers have framed hetero-normative concepts of gender in the expansion of nightlife.

Hetero-normative nightlife, as many authors have attested, is deeply stereotyped along traditional versions of masculinity and femininity. The trope of 'raunch culture' and the figure of the 'ladette' have been demonstrated to be close to lived experience. There is an expanding academic literature that provides an insight, through ethnographic and qualitative research, of the nuances between mainstream and alternative venues, between the attitudes and behaviour of women and men and of the way in which they are modulated by social class. These fractures have persisted, despite women's increased participation in nightlife and some convergence in gendered roles in other aspects of everyday life.

Current analysis of gender policies distinguish between the categories of 'gender blind', 'gender neutral', 'gender aware' and 'gender sensitive'. The framing of gender aware and gender sensitive policies relies on a firm evidence base, particularly with regard to recognising difference through the use of gender disaggregated statistics. Through an interrogation of the policy documents, the review will note the variations in the evidence base for the two dominating themes of the night-time economy; health and well being and crime and disorder. Health policies have demonstrated 'gender awareness', characterised by concerns about the impacts of harmful and hazardous drinking on young women and the vulnerability of all women and inebriated young men liable to attack. By contrast policies towards crime and disorder have opted for gender blind approach, in a contested terrain where many commentators are calling out for a careful approach that challenges stereotypes of female vulnerability and male predatory behaviour. Nevertheless, there have been examples of gender sensitive policies and initiatives. Two are discussed, both from London, Safer Travel at Night which is

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addressed towards late night travel and the Women's Safety Charter, which combats sexual harassment in venues.

The paper will close by noting that while some cities have promoted gender aware policies towards the urban night, the impact of neo-liberalism and austerity have led to cuts in services and a drawing back towards a policy position of gender neutrality. Responsibility for safety and for public health is thrown back on to the individual. The final part of the chapter will consider the issues raised by the narrative set out above in the context of a wider geographical review. It will discuss whether the constitution of night mayors, now established in some cities in mainland Europe, has furthered the goal of gender equality. The chapter will conclude with a reflection on how the promise of a more inclusive urban night is yet to be achieved and how public policy might support this.

**Keywords:** gender, nightlife, public policy