



After dark

Description

It was an ordinary Friday night out in Edinburgh's Grassmarket, except that the two guys at the front were wearing EEG headsets. The occasion was a talk by visiting fellow Carlo Ratti, who



Data from the Epoc Emotiv headsets was then

used in three different projects exploring the use of EEG data in urban environments.

The projects put me in mind of the common observation, backed up by research in urban geography, that "negotiating the city is a very different proposition in the hours of darkness, potentially involving heightened sensations of anxiety and excitement" (120). That quote is from an article by Phil Hubbard.

In a more recent article, Ilse van Liempt and colleagues observe that the night generates a particular atmosphere, conducive to certain activities and emotions – even criminal acts, clandestine rendezvous, rebellion and unconventional behaviour.

The idea of “going out” at night is clearly an important social practice. Most of us don’t work at night, and so it’s associated with leisure. To “go out” is to act contrary to the instinct to retreat to the confines of hearth and home (or television). It’s a sign of sophistication and urbanity.

Getting out

We don’t venture into deserted woods and fields at night, but to *go out* is to affirm our trust in the bright lights of the city, the police service, transportation and other trappings of sophisticated, civilized urban life. It’s also to enjoy the company of kindred spirits and strangers with whom we “share the night” (2). There’s a lot of night at this time of year and this latitude, and *going out* is a way of extending the day and keeping cheerful until the days lengthen.

What did the workshop participants do with the EEG data? They fed it into Grasshopper and Arduino



Bibliography

- Hubbard, Phil. 2005. The geographies of “going out”: Emotion and embodiment in the evening economy. In J. Davidson, L. Bondi, and M. Smith (eds.), *Emotional Geographies*: 117-134. Aldershot, England: Ashgate.
- van Liempt, Ilse, Irina van Aalst, and Tim Schwanen. 2014. Introduction: Geographies of the urban night. *Urban Studies* 0042098014552933.

Note

- Carlo Ratti’s visit was organised by Fabrizio Gesuelli.



Category

1. Architecture

Tags

1. brain
2. city
3. EEG
4. emotion

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