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Sexual citizenship and night work of trans women in two nightclubs on República de Cuba street, in Mexico City.

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Abstract

This paper analyzes how trans feminine individuals configure and exercise practices of sexual citizenship within LGBTIQ+ nightlife venues located on República de Cuba Street in Mexico City. While dominant scholarship on trans populations in Latin America has emphasized structural exclusion, violence, and barriers to formal political participation, this research shifts the analytical focus toward everyday spaces of labor and sociability as sites of political production.

Drawing on an ethnographic approach that combines participant observation, in-depth interviews, and digital follow-up through Instagram, the study conceptualizes nightlife venues as differentiated social fields in which gender performance, economic survival, affective networks, and recognition intersect. Within these environments, trans women are not merely subjects of marginalization; they actively negotiate respectability, visibility, and belonging vis-à-vis clients, coworkers, and venue managers. These negotiations generate situated forms of claim-making that, although not articulated through institutional channels, nonetheless constitute practices of citizenship.

The findings demonstrate that nightlife spaces function as arenas of political subjectivation where embodied experience, aesthetic self-presentation, and labor relations shape collective meanings about rights, dignity, and social legitimacy. Sexual citizenship thus emerges not as a purely legal status but as a lived and relational process embedded in spatial, economic, and symbolic dynamics. By foregrounding the nocturnal economy as a key site of citizenship formation, this research contributes to debates on gender, politics, and urban space in Latin America, and reframes trans political agency beyond conventional understandings of social movements or formal representation

Keywords: Sexual Citizenship; Trans Women; Nightlife; Political Subjectivation; Ethnography; Mexico City; LGBTIQ+ Spaces; Gender Identity; Informal Labor.