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## Assessing the effects of artificial light at night on biodiversity across latitude – Current knowledge gaps

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1 **Assessing the effects of artificial light at night on biodiversity across**  
2 **latitude – current knowledge gaps**

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10 **Running title:** Light pollution and biogeography

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13 **ABSTRACT**

14 **Aim:** Exposure to artificial light at night (ALAN) is a risk factor for organisms. Considering the spread  
15 and increasing intensity of night brightness across the globe, and the key role of light at all biological  
16 levels, alterations of ecosystems are expected. Yet, we cannot predict the severity of the effects of ALAN  
17 in several biomes because little information is available outside the temperate zone. We reviewed current  
18 knowledge and identified traits that could be targeted to fill this knowledge gap in order to contribute to  
19 the elaboration of a biogeographical framework for the study of ALAN at the global scale.

20 **Location:** global

21 **Time period:** current and next decades

22 **Method:** We analysed the latitudinal variation of ALAN and focused on environmental factors that vary  
23 with latitude but that have been overlooked. We reviewed biological traits that exhibit latitudinal  
24 variation and depend on light and photoperiod and compiled information about the predicted changes of  
25 human demography and road networks across different world regions.

26 **Results:** Cloud cover amplifies ALAN far away from urbanized areas. Because of the increased  
27 frequency of overcast night skies, exposure effects may be stronger both at high latitudes and across a  
28 large fraction of the intertropical zone, though at different times of the year. Intertropical biomes host  
29 the largest fraction of global biodiversity. Although currently they are not the most exposed to ALAN,  
30 their human populations are growing, and urbanized areas and road networks are expanding. Hence,  
31 ALAN could have strong ecological consequences, with cloud cover as an aggravating factor.

32 **Perspectives:** Knowledge gaps currently limit our ability to predict the effects of ALAN in different  
33 biomes. Therefore, it will be important to start investigating the consequences of this novel  
34 environmental factor across the globe, in order to develop a relevant theoretical framework

35

36 **Keywords:** ALAN, light pollution, intertropical, latitude, global change, biogeography, exposure

## 37 1 **ALAN as an emergent global risk for biodiversity**

38 Habitat loss, climate change, pollution, invasive species, and overexploitation negatively affect a large  
39 part of the Earth's ecosystems, if not all of them (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005). Artificial  
40 light at night (ALAN) is emerging as another potential threat to biodiversity worldwide (Bennie *et al.*,  
41 2015b; Davies & Smyth, 2018). ALAN is mainly generated by urbanized areas and transport  
42 infrastructures, and exposure happens either via direct lights or via skyglow. The latter is produced by  
43 the scattering of light by atmospheric particles and aerosols from distant sources. It can be detected  
44 dozens of kilometres away from a major source like a city by animals (Kocifaj & Lamphar, 2014; Aubé,  
45 2015), whose sensitivity can be very high for nocturnal species (Kelber & Roth, 2006; Kelber *et al.*,  
46 2017). ALAN now alters the natural photic regime across a large fraction of Earth (Cinzano *et al.*, 2001;  
47 Longcore & Rich, 2004). Recently, it has been estimated that 23 % of land surfaces between 60°S and  
48 75°N are exposed to light polluted skies (Falchi *et al.*, 2016).

49 ALAN has been gaining attention from the scientific communities, authorities, and more  
50 generally societies. Concerns have initially sprung from astronomers that warned about the loss of  
51 quality of the nocturnal sky, and spread to other fields. New issues have been raised and expressed in  
52 reviews (Longcore & Rich, 2004; Navara & Nelson, 2007; Hölker *et al.*, 2010; Gaston *et al.*, 2013,  
53 2015) and opinions (Nadis, 2002; Smith, 2009) for the last 15 years. ALAN generates a broad array of  
54 effects on animals, and as far as we know to a lesser extent on plants or micro-organisms (Hölker *et al.*,  
55 2015; French-Constant *et al.*, 2016; Bennie *et al.*, 2017). These effects range from the molecular  
56 (Honnen *et al.*, 2016) to the community (Rich & Longcore, 2006a; Hölker *et al.*, 2015; Bennie *et al.*,  
57 2017), and ecosystem level (Lewanzik & Voigt, 2014; Sanders *et al.*, 2015; Knop *et al.*, 2017). As for  
58 the other major risk factors for biodiversity, ecosystem exposure to ALAN has been assessed at the  
59 global scale (Bennie *et al.*, 2015b; Davies *et al.*, 2016; Falchi *et al.*, 2016; Kyba *et al.*, 2017a; Guetté *et*  
60 *al.*, 2018). The field is expanding fast as revealed by the recent bloom of publications (Davies & Smyth,  
61 2018). Nevertheless, no framework has been developed to predict whether and how the intensity of the  
62 effects caused by ALAN varies across the globe yet.

63           Photoperiod is crucial for many biological processes and ecological interactions. It is a major  
64 environmental cue that resets circadian rhythms and prime seasonal change in activity (Coppack &  
65 Pulido, 2004; Hut *et al.*, 2013). Photoperiod varies widely with latitude and this affects the importance  
66 of light as a cue depending on the location on Earth. Similarly, a general biogeographic rule is the  
67 occurrence of latitudinal biodiversity clines, the intertropical zone hosting more species than temperate  
68 or arctic environments (Willig *et al.*, 2003; Hillebrand, 2004; Mittelbach *et al.*, 2007). Exceptions have  
69 been observed (Willig *et al.*, 2003) but the statement holds true for vertebrates such as freshwater fishes  
70 (Abell *et al.*, 2008), birds, mammals, amphibians (Jenkins *et al.*, 2013), insects (Guenard *et al.*, 2012),  
71 and vascular plants (Kreft & Jetz, 2007). Surprisingly, while the major biodiversity hotspots are mainly  
72 located within the intertropical zone, we do not know whether the effects of ALAN in biodiversity are  
73 stronger at low than at mid or high latitudes.

74           From a literature survey on Scopus (accessed on 22/09/2019) using the combination of  
75 keywords (tropic\* OR equat\*) and “artificial light”, “artificial” AND “light”, or “light pollution”, we  
76 identified eleven references (Erkhert, 1976; Thakurdas *et al.*, 2009; Lewanzik & Voigt, 2014; Bennie *et*  
77 *al.*, 2015b; Dorado-Correa *et al.*, 2016; González-Bernal *et al.*, 2016; Gupta & Pushkala, 2016; De  
78 Freitas *et al.*, 2017; Gineste *et al.*, 2017; Rivas *et al.*, 2018; Frank *et al.*, 2019). Another search using  
79 the combination ("artificial light" OR "light pollution") AND "latitud\*" accessed on Scopus on the same  
80 date yielded 59 hits. Four additional and partly relevant references were found. These were three reviews  
81 in which artificial lighting was not the main topic (Higuchi, 2010; Borniger & Nelson, 2017; Brelsford  
82 *et al.*, 2019), and one research paper on humans (Martín-Olalla, 2019). In comparison, a search using  
83 “light pollution” OR “artificial light”, and restricted to the Agricultural and Biological Sciences section  
84 yielded 233 relevant references. More information is certainly present but not necessarily in papers  
85 addressing directly ALAN as previously noted (Rich & Longcore, 2006b). Nevertheless, these figures  
86 highlight the publication bias between biomes and the fact that authors do not explicitly consider the  
87 biogeographical context.

88           Assessing the biological and ecological effects of ALAN at a global scale is now urgent. Yet,  
89 neither the systematic investigation of environmental factors varying at a biogeographic scale and

90 affecting the sensitivity of organisms to ALAN, nor the identification of the areas/ecosystems/biomes  
91 the most threatened now or in the near future, has been undertaken. We need a biogeographic framework  
92 to assess how the exposure risk for biodiversity varies across ecosystems or regions, and we present here  
93 the first attempt in that direction. We will focus on the latitudinal variation of environmental factors that  
94 affect the photic regime, summarize what biological processes vary with latitude, and provide a  
95 prospective view of the evolution of ALAN with a particular emphasis on the intertropical zone.

96

97

## 98 **2 The geographical extent of ALAN and its effect on biodiversity**

99 ALAN exposure at a given site depends on the distance to the light sources, their power and spectral  
100 composition (Luginbuhl *et al.*, 2014), the natural light regime (moon phase, visual barriers), and the  
101 atmosphere composition, including the presence and altitude of clouds. Cloud cover reflects artificial  
102 light downward and over large distances. For this reason, it has been identified as a major factor  
103 enhancing nocturnal light levels (Kyba *et al.*, 2011; Kocifaj & Lamphar, 2014). ALAN intensity, as  
104 measured by satellites, has kept increasing worldwide for the last decades, with local or regional  
105 variations (Falchi *et al.*, 2016), and changes were still recently detected over a short 5-year period for  
106 most countries (Kyba *et al.*, 2017a). All major ecosystems are now exposed (Bennie *et al.*, 2015b),  
107 including the intertropical zone (**Figure 1**). To highlight this point, we used the data from the last  
108 published World Atlas (Falchi *et al.*, 2016) and plotted the latitudinal distribution of ALAN in 5° bins.  
109 The highest mean values were observed between 30° and 40° in both hemispheres. The standard  
110 deviation was maximal for northern temperate latitudes. However, the largest variation occurred around  
111 10°N which is explained by the large expanses of darker land in Africa and brightly lit areas in northern  
112 Venezuela, Southern India, and Malaysia. ALAN keeps on increasing in this area. Between 2012 and  
113 2016, an elevation of upward radiance in the intertropical zone was detected at the country level (Kyba  
114 *et al.*, 2017a), while up to 35 % of the area covered by tropical ecosystems in Brazil experienced higher  
115 brightness at night between 2008 and 2012 (De Freitas *et al.*, 2017).

116

117 **Insert Figure 1**

118

119 Light intensities consistent with field measurements of ALAN alter the physiology of  
120 organisms, the behaviour of animals, and ecological processes. We will only outline the main traits and  
121 processes relevant to this article. For more extensive treatment, several review articles and book chapters  
122 have been published that can be referred to (Longcore & Rich, 2004; Rich & Longcore, 2006a; Perry *et al.*,  
123 2008; Gaston *et al.*, 2013, 2015, 2017; Stevens & Zhu, 2015; Grubisic *et al.*, 2018; Owens & Lewis,  
124 2018; Desouhant *et al.*, 2019). ALAN affects activity and time partitioning (Rich & Longcore, 2006a;  
125 Le Tallec *et al.*, 2013; Dominoni *et al.*, 2014; Da Silva *et al.*, 2015), orientation (Salmon, 2003; Pawson  
126 & Bader, 2014; Thums *et al.*, 2016), space use (Moore *et al.*, 2000; Stone *et al.*, 2009), foraging (Dwyer  
127 *et al.*, 2013; Cravens *et al.*, 2017; van Langevelde *et al.*, 2017), social interactions including sexual  
128 behaviour (Kurvers & Hölker, 2015; van Geffen *et al.*, 2015; Firebaugh & Haynes, 2016), and life-  
129 history traits (Van Geffen *et al.*, 2014). Foraging behaviour can be modified in opposite ways depending  
130 on the focal species (Dwyer *et al.*, 2013; Cravens *et al.*, 2017). At the sensory level, the effects of ALAN  
131 primarily depend on the spectrum and intensity of ambient light, and the photoreceptor characteristics  
132 (Endler, 1990). Individuals, in insects or amphibians for instance, can be attracted or repelled by unusual  
133 brightly lit areas (Hailman & Jaeger, 1974; Owens & Lewis, 2018), but more subtle process can be  
134 altered, like colour vision. Dim-light colour vision based on cones in insects and reptiles (Kelber &  
135 Roth, 2006), and rods in amphibians (Gomez *et al.*, 2009; Yovanovich *et al.*, 2017) has now been  
136 demonstrated. Therefore, the capacity of individuals to detect and select food items, or catch prey can  
137 be modified under ALAN because the contrast between the target and the background is altered.

138 Regarding **physiology**, ALAN is a major source of circadian disruption that generates  
139 metabolism, sleep and cognitive disorders, depression syndrome, and may increase risk of some cancers  
140 (Stevens *et al.*, 2013; Borniger *et al.*, 2014; Bedrosian *et al.*, 2015; Chellappa *et al.*, 2018). It inhibits  
141 the production of melatonin, a hormone that modifies stress response, mitochondria functioning,

142 oxidative stress, metabolism, and immune defence (Carrillo-Vico *et al.*, 2005; Tan *et al.*, 2010; Tallec  
143 *et al.*, 2016). Melatonin holds a central role in these processes because of its multifarious effects on  
144 circadian timekeeping and the regulation of biological rhythms (Hardeland *et al.*, 2011). The circadian  
145 variation of melatonin has been observed from bacteria to vertebrates (Tan *et al.*, 2010), and the effects  
146 of this molecule on clock genes have been demonstrated in vertebrates and arthropods. These molecular  
147 mechanisms likely date back at least to the cnidarian-bilaterian divergence (Peres *et al.*, 2014), which  
148 illustrates the taxonomic breadth of groups potentially affected by ALAN. The strength of the effects  
149 may depend on the diel activity patterns, with cathemeral species being probably less sensitive to  
150 changes in photoperiod than diurnal, nocturnal or crepuscular species. In plants, effects on physiological  
151 processes, including photosynthesis, and photoperiodism are expected (Aubé *et al.*, 2013; Singhal *et al.*,  
152 2019). Individuals need to be relatively close to the light sources but physiological effects have been  
153 observed (Bennie *et al.*, 2016, 2017; French-Constant *et al.*, 2016). The uncoupling between the thermal  
154 and photic cues caused by ALAN may affect the timing of seasonal processes like dormancy (Aubé *et al.*  
155 *et al.*, 2013; Hut *et al.*, 2013; French-Constant *et al.*, 2016; Solano-Lamphar & Kocifaj, 2018). However,  
156 the actual consequences for plant population largely remain to be investigated (Knop *et al.*, 2017;  
157 Macgregor *et al.*, 2019).

158         Because of the biological effects cited above, ALAN is expected to affect **ecological** processes  
159 like energy or nutrient fluxes or relationships in trophic networks (Longcore & Rich, 2004; Perkin *et al.*  
160 *et al.*, 2011; Gaston *et al.*, 2013; Meyer & Sullivan, 2013; Bennie *et al.*, 2015a; Mathews *et al.*, 2015;  
161 Sanders *et al.*, 2015; Knop *et al.*, 2017; MacGregor *et al.*, 2017; Miller *et al.*, 2017). More generally,  
162 the synchronisation between the components of any interspecific interactions can be altered (Bennie *et al.*  
163 *et al.*, 2015a; Helm *et al.*, 2017; Kronfeld-Schor *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, behavioural and physiological  
164 effects on individuals may scale up to the population, community and ecosystem level (Sanders &  
165 Gaston, 2018). Evidence of disruption on micro-organism, arthropod, and plant community has been  
166 provided (Meyer & Sullivan, 2013; Pawson & Bader, 2014; Hölker *et al.*, 2015; Bennie *et al.*, 2017;  
167 Knop *et al.*, 2017), but so far no evidence of large scale effects on ecosystems have been reported.  
168 Nevertheless, studies showing reduced efficiency of plant pollination by insects (Knop *et al.*, 2017;



169 MacGregor *et al.*, 2017) and bats (Lewanzik & Voigt, 2014), or increased predation on agricultural pest  
170 by insect (Miller *et al.*, 2017) suggest that large effects may occur in natural environments and  
171 agrosystems.

172

### 173 **3 Natural factors modulating exposure to ALAN at the global scale**

174 To understand how ALAN affects organisms and populations depending on their position on the globe,  
175 the geographical variation of factors that naturally determine the light-dark regime should be considered:  
176 photoperiod, lunar cycle, twilight, and climate. **Photoperiod** varies in a predictable way, with annual  
177 variation in daylength increasing with latitude, from about 0 % at the Equator to 100 % at the Arctic  
178 Circle.. In other words, photoperiod is more constant towards the Equator and more variable towards  
179 the poles.

180 **Moonlight** is the brightest nocturnal light source in pristine environments. The lunar cycle lasts  
181 29.52 days and is synchronous at all latitudes. While Moon phase and Earth-Moon distance change, the  
182 former parameter contributes much more to the variation of illuminance. Natural maximal illuminance  
183 on Earth and under optimal conditions is 0.32 lux and in the intertropical zone only. Because of its  
184 orbital plane, the Moon can be seen at the sky zenith, where illuminance is maximal, only at locations  
185 lower than 28° latitude (Kyba *et al.*, 2017b). Thus, the Moon is less bright at higher latitudes.  
186 Illuminance lies typically within 0.05-0.2 lux at mid-latitude (Kyba *et al.*, 2017b). Brightness varies  
187 with season because of the change in the distance to the Sun and elevation. Moon elevation is higher in  
188 winter than in summer.

189 The variation in duration and intensity of moonlight cannot be used to determine the exact time  
190 or date. Yet, moonlight is more and more recognised as a major feature on the nocturnal environment  
191 for animals. Effects on activity, orientation, and communication have been observed in invertebrates  
192 and vertebrates (Dacke *et al.*, 2003; Grant *et al.*, 2009; Kronfeld-Schor *et al.*, 2013). In particular,  
193 moonlight is expected to suppress activity to reduce predation risk, especially in open habitat species.

194 This prediction was confirmed in amphibians (Vignoli & Luiselli, 2013) and all groups of nocturnal  
195 mammals but primates for which higher activity during bright nights may reflect a better ability to detect  
196 predators and forage (Prugh & Golden, 2014). One direct consequence of ALAN is that elevated  
197 brightness tends to mask the natural photic variation as moonlight is attenuated against the skyglow  
198 background (Davies *et al.*, 2013a).

199 **Twilight** is the transition between day and night when Sun drops under the horizon. It is split  
200 into three periods that are characterized by the Sun declination and the colour of ambient light. During  
201 the civil twilight the sun declination lies between 0 and 6°. Light level drops sharply during the nautical  
202 twilight (declination 6-12°) and less quickly during the astronomical twilight (declination 12-18°).  
203 Irradiance turns from a red dominant spectrum to a blue dominant spectrum (Johnsen, 2011). After  
204 twilight, the irradiance spectrum of the sky depends on the Moon and other light sources. There is a  
205 latitudinal cline in twilight duration that is shorter at lower latitudes (**Figure 2**). Some authors have  
206 considered as “semi-darkness” the merged periods of twilight and lunar phases where at least 26 % of  
207 the Moon is visible (Mills, 2008). Darkness is a relatively vague concept given the variable visual  
208 capacity of species under dim light (Kelber & Roth, 2006). Nevertheless, the duration of natural semi-  
209 darkness remains constant around 4.5h at the Equator and varies widely from 0h to 9h at 75°(Mills,  
210 2008) and forms a gradient parallel to the photoperiod gradient. ALAN generates light levels in the same  
211 range of those observed during natural twilight and can, therefore, extend the duration of this period.  
212 Circadian rhythms which are reset with twilight. The rapid changes in light intensity and colour are  
213 reliable cues to determine the onsets and the ends of activities like foraging or mating (Daan & Aschoff,  
214 1975; Andersson *et al.*, 1998; Boulos & Macchi, 2005).

215 The importance of **cloud cover** in the global assessment of ALAN has probably been overlooked.  
216 Clouds amplify light emitted from the ground, extend the photophase in light-polluted areas whereas  
217 they mask celestial objects, dim their lights, and shorten the photophase in non-polluted areas. It is  
218 important to keep in mind that global models of ALAN underestimate exposure at ground level because  
219 they use upward radiance recorded from satellite images. The representation of a cloud-free world  
220 elicited by these images may thus bias our perception of the phenomenon. The spatial extent of ALAN

221 during overcast nights is much broader (Kyba *et al.*, 2011; Kocifaj & Lamphar, 2014). A logical  
222 conclusion is that, all other factors being equal, the intensity, spread, and the annual number of days  
223 with high levels of ALAN should be related to the annual number of days with overcast skies, although  
224 rain or mist could strongly attenuate light transmission. Because cloud cover is crucial to determine the  
225 spatial extent of ALAN, it is important to consider how uneven its annual distribution on Earth is. A  
226 recent multi-year study of cloud cover mapped the average cloud fraction (number of pixels covered)  
227 across the World during the day and at night. **Figure 1** shows the latitudinal distribution of cloud fraction  
228 between July 2002 and April 2018 excluding seas and large lakes. Higher values were observed in the  
229 Arctic and subarctic regions and within the intertropical zone where cloud cover was particularly high  
230 in Central Africa, the Amazonian basin and Central America, India, and south-east Asia (King *et al.*,  
231 2013). The annual variation in cloud cover is also the lowest for both areas. Owing to latitude and cloud  
232 cover, organisms in the intertropical zone often experience a stable photoperiod and on average a darker  
233 visual environment than in any other region on the globe. In the tropics, the variation in cloud cover is  
234 maximal and cloud cover low due to the presence of areas with arid or humid climates. Changes in the  
235 fraction of high clouds, and precipitation have been observed in the intertropical convergence zone but  
236 the expected trends for the next decades are still debated (Legates *et al.*, 2014; Mauritsen & Stevens,  
237 2015; Norris *et al.*, 2016; Wodzicki & Rapp, 2016). Rainfall is also expected to decrease or increase  
238 depending on regional trends (Kitoh *et al.*, 2013; IPCC, 2014), and uncertainty is higher for rainfall than  
239 temperature models especially in the tropics (Corlett, 2012). Furthermore, a consensual prediction is a  
240 higher frequency of extreme rainfall events, largely in the form of storms shorter than a day (Westra *et*  
241 *al.*, 2014), which may not affect the annual number of overcast days. More robustness in climate models  
242 related to cloud cover and precipitation is needed to more precisely assess the exposure of ecosystems  
243 to ALAN across the Earth.

244

245 **Insert Figure 2**

246

## 247 4 Biological traits vary with latitude

248 Because of its influence on annual daylength variation, climate, and its current correlation with  
249 economic development, latitude is a key factor that is expected to modulate the sensitivity of populations  
250 to ALAN. We illustrate how the latitudinal variation in photoperiod influences variation in circadian  
251 rhythms, photoperiodism for major life-history traits like reproduction or migration (Hut & Beersma,  
252 2011; Van Geffen *et al.*, 2014; Gaston *et al.*, 2017; Helm *et al.*, 2017), or the characteristics of sensory  
253 systems (Yammouni *et al.*, 2011). **Annual life-history events** are often synchronised with photoperiod  
254 so that organisms anticipate changes in forthcoming environmental conditions. Latitudinal variation in  
255 photoperiod determines changes in the timing of major events like migration, reproduction in birds, or  
256 diapause in insects. In birds, photoperiod is a major cue for the onset of gonadal maturation, moult, and  
257 migratory activity (Rowan, 1925; Gwinner, 1996; Dawson *et al.*, 2001; Coppack & Pulido, 2004; Bauer  
258 *et al.*, 2008). Great tits *Parus major* need longer days to initiate sexual maturation at mid-latitude than  
259 at higher latitudes, causing a cline in the onset of male gonadal maturation (Silverin *et al.*, 1993). The  
260 required daylength variation can be as small as 1h or less to initiate sexual maturation in temperate  
261 (Dawson, 2007) and subtropical species (Lewis *et al.*, 1974; Hau *et al.*, 1998; Coppack & Pulido, 2004).  
262 Photoperiod also largely contributes to induce diapause and to regulate voltinism in insects. Critical  
263 photoperiod for diapauses increases with latitude (Danilevskii, 1965; Bradshaw & Lounibos, 1977; Hut  
264 *et al.*, 2013) and the number of diapausing individuals with shorter daylength (Schmidt *et al.*, 2005; Hut  
265 *et al.*, 2013; Paolucci *et al.*, 2013). Photoperiod and local environmental conditions determine the  
266 number of generations per year, more generations being produced at lower latitudes (Altermatt, 2010).  
267 For instance, in the water strider *Aquarius remigi*, univoltinism is less frequent in southern populations,  
268 and change in growth occurred across a narrow range of 5° (Blanckenhorn & Fairbairn, 1995). In  
269 mammals, latitudinal variation in the timing of the breeding period was observed in the broadly  
270 distributed *Peromyscus* deermice and *Odocoileus* deers, and photoresponsiveness decreased with  
271 latitude in a mouse (Bronson, 1988).

272 **Circadian clocks** are found from cyanobacteria to plants and animals (Hut & Beersma, 2011). They  
273 generate endogenous circadian rhythms that synchronize physiological processes and activities of

274 organisms to the diel variation of environmental conditions. Light is the main cue used to reset circadian  
275 clocks, which explains why activity patterns and other behaviours change with latitude. In mammals,  
276 the occurrence of nocturnal and diurnal species is higher in the intertropical zone whereas crepuscular  
277 and cathemeral species are distributed at higher latitudes, thus reflecting the adaptation to larger  
278 variation in annual daylength and longer twilight periods (Bennie *et al.*, 2014). The photic regime of  
279 Arctic regions favours behavioural plasticity. For instance, populations of Reindeer *Rangifer tarandus*  
280 above 70°N lose their circadian rhythm of activity in summer and recover it in autumn and spring (Van  
281 Oort *et al.*, 2005), while the Arctic sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* undergo a drastic reduction of sleep  
282 during the mating period as a likely result of prolonged sexual activity under long days conditions (Lesku  
283 *et al.*, 2012). A large comparative study on shorebirds detected a latitudinal cline in incubation behaviour  
284 (Bulla *et al.*, 2016). The influence of photoperiod was lower at higher latitudes. Although the dataset is  
285 impressive, the study included temperate, boreal and arctic populations between 35° and 75°, and none  
286 from the intertropical zone. Latitudinal variation in diel activity patterns is observed at the intraspecific  
287 level too. In *Drosophila melanogaster*, ovoposition peaks at dusk at the beginning of the dark period. In  
288 a rare study ranging from 0° to 60°N, authors showed that the percentage of eggs laid during the dark  
289 period decreases from 80 % in Equatorial populations to less than 50 % in Northern Scandinavia  
290 (Allemand & David, 1976). Similarly, an earlier study showed that the onset and end of locomotor  
291 activity of five bird and three mammal species held in captivity at 47°N and 66°N varied more between  
292 days at higher latitude (Daan & Aschoff, 1975). Variation was reduced when species activity occurred  
293 during the civil twilight when light spectrum changes rapidly. Another study ranging from 37°N to 65°N  
294 across Europe found that the onset of dawn singing depended on latitude in some passerines. Under  
295 ALAN conditions, it was advanced for latitude-insensitive species only (Da Silva & Kempenaers, 2017).

296 **Sensory systems** experience circadian and seasonal regulation. In vertebrates, the expression of  
297 photoreceptors, and the detection of colour stimuli follow rhythms that are synchronized by photoperiod  
298 (Terman & Terman, 1985; Cahill & Beshare, 1995). In fishes (Shimmura *et al.*, 2017) and humans  
299 (Welbourne *et al.*, 2015) seasonal changes in colour perception occur. The visual system also varies  
300 with latitude. In fishes retinomotor movements are observed during which rods and cones move in

301 opposite ways across the retina depending on the time of the day (Yammouni *et al.*, 2011). Retinomotor  
302 movements during twilight track the changes in illumination and keep vision functional. They follow  
303 endogenous rhythms as demonstrated in individuals kept in the dark or exposed to light during the dark  
304 period. Fishes may rely more on changes in ambient illumination and less on endogenous oscillators at  
305 higher than at lower latitudes (Yammouni *et al.*, 2011).

## 306 **5 A predictive biogeographical framework for ALAN is lacking**

307 Beyond the characteristics of the light sources, exposure to ALAN depends on the time of the  
308 year, latitude, and climate. Logically, individuals should be less exposed during long-day periods than  
309 during short-day periods. **Figure 2** illustrates for three towns at low (6°N), medium (43°N), and high  
310 (64°N) latitude the monthly variation in sunrise and sunset, as well as the time of the astronomical  
311 sunrises and sunsets. Before astronomical sunrise and after astronomical sunset, the sun does not  
312 contribute to the ambient light level, and it is a conservative approach to determine when sky brightness  
313 will be for sure elevated beyond its natural value by ALAN, at least during moonless nights or under  
314 overcast skies. We represented the number of extra-lit hours due to ALAN before and after the  
315 astronomical twilight for two lighting scenarios. Lights are turned off at midnight in the first scenario,  
316 as an energy-saving measure, and remain turned on all night in the second. The pattern is the same for  
317 the two scenarios, but the number of extra-lit hours due to ALAN is larger for the second. At high  
318 latitude, there are no extra-lit hours for about 5 months, which period is used for breeding in many arctic  
319 species. One can predict the disruption to be mild or non-existent then. In contrast, ALAN duration is  
320 maximal during wintertime. Effects could be positive if artificial light allows longer foraging periods or  
321 negative if it raises activity and metabolic cost beyond sustainable levels for organisms. At low latitude,  
322 the extent of artificial lighting is constant throughout the year. Therefore, disruption may affect any life-  
323 history events regardless of annual timing. At mid-latitudes, the number of extra-lit hours is minimal  
324 around summer equinox, which often corresponds to the end of breeding for birds or amphibians, but is  
325 the main active period for insects or bats. The extension of ALAN is maximal in winter and the concern  
326 is the same as for arctic organisms with the addition that reproduction occurs in winter for some

327 mammals too. In temperate species, the seasonal effect of ALAN may be more diverse than at lower or  
328 higher latitudes and depend on the taxonomic group.

329         We have knowledge about the latitudinal variation of some traits and expectations about how  
330 exposure to ALAN may change across latitudes and seasons. Yet, we still do not know whether and how  
331 latitude determines the short or long-term responses of individuals and populations to ALAN. We make  
332 some propositions to go forward in that direction by pointing to candidate traits that would deserve more  
333 attention. We also make some predictions about the evolutionary responses that could be expected at  
334 different latitudes. Most physiological or behavioural traits are potentially affected but we can  
335 nevertheless identify some traits to address key issues, namely whether and how the strength of ALAN-  
336 induced effects varies with latitudes, if some periods of the year are more critical for biodiversity  
337 exposed to ALAN, and whether these periods change latitudinally. A major pending question is whether  
338 latitude can predict at least qualitatively the time taken by populations to develop responses to ALAN  
339 exposure.

340         As mentioned above, a longer photoperiod could have beneficial or detrimental effects on  
341 individuals in terms of time and energy budget. Thus, it is important to determine whether diurnal and  
342 nocturnal species respectively prolong or delay their activity period, and how they partition key activities  
343 like foraging or reproduction during a day. In this regard, light pollution may contribute to the stronger  
344 homogenizing effect of urbanization on nocturnal moths than on diurnal butterflies (Merckx & Van  
345 Dyck, 2019). The latitudinal effect on incubating bouts in shorebirds (Bulla *et al.*, 2016), where ALAN  
346 exposure was not assessed, or on the advanced onset of dawn singing in passerines (Da Silva &  
347 Kempnaers, 2017), illustrate which type of behaviour could be targeted. Focusing on activity alone  
348 may not unravel the complexity of the disruption process for organisms. The diel distribution of feeding  
349 bouts was altered in mice, resulting in obese individuals (Fonken *et al.*, 2010), while activity and  
350 metabolism were uncoupled in amphibians exposed to light at night (Touzot *et al.*, 2019). These lab  
351 studies highlight the need for analysing together activity and metabolic budgets or relevant proxies when  
352 other physiological measurements cannot be made. Because physiological constraints may be stronger  
353 at higher than at lower latitudes, short-term effects on survival may be quicker. More generally, we do

354 not know well how circadian clocks are affected by ALAN in most species. Even less do we know about  
355 how the clocks of populations located at different latitudes respond to novel photic regimes. Birds  
356 provide a good illustration of our limited capacity to predict the effects of ALAN in animals. Life-history  
357 traits like the onset of breeding, migration, dispersal, moult are important for individual fitness and  
358 population growth rate. They are all potentially affected by ALAN even in populations at low latitudes.  
359 The increase in the apparent daylength by ALAN may lead to maladaptive decision by desynchronizing  
360 the onset of biological events and the time window of optimal climate/trophic conditions.  
361 Desynchronization may affect the reproductive output and survival of individuals in resident  
362 intertropical species and migratory species. For instance, the extension of the photoperiod by ALAN  
363 could affect photorefractoriness, i.e. the loss of sensitivity to long days that prevents the initiation of  
364 spring migration and maturation. Slight changes in migration timing in a context of climate change may  
365 have negative consequences for bird populations. We simply do not know whether the sensitivity to the  
366 disturbance generated by ALAN depends on latitude and hardly what to predict. At the sensory level,  
367 ALAN is expected to affect the efficiency of visual tasks carried out at night or under crepuscular  
368 conditions like orientation (Somanathan *et al.*, 2008), or the selection of food sources (Kelber *et al.*,  
369 2002), or mates (Gomez *et al.*, 2009). Adaptation to the light/dark transitions may be partly inefficient  
370 in populations that do not use photic cues to reset the circadian rhythm of their visual system (Yammouni  
371 *et al.*, 2011).

372           The novel pattern of annual daylength variation generated by ALAN may not be necessarily  
373 harder to overcome, at the evolutionary scale, than the colonization of higher latitudes for a species  
374 though. Latitudinal clines in activity illustrate the evolutionary potential of some populations to adjust  
375 to spatially heterogeneous conditions even over a few degrees of latitude (Blanckenhorn & Fairbairn,  
376 1995). In the long-term, populations are expected to develop higher resistance to this novel disturbance  
377 (Hopkins *et al.*, 2018). For instance, urban populations of a moth developed a lower attraction to light  
378 than populations from less non-polluted areas (Altermatt 2018). A major issue is which response type  
379 should be favoured at different latitudes and what time scale is relevant for such changes to occur. The  
380 stability of the natural daylength and the ALAN period should favour adaptation to a longer photophase



381 at lower latitudes unless the physiological and ecological costs of plasticity are small (DeWitt *et al.*,  
382 1998). In contrast, plastic phenotypes able to respond to varying daylength should be selected at higher  
383 latitudes. In this regard, it has been argued that individuals rely more on transitions between the light  
384 and dark period than on internal oscillators at higher latitudes, whereas the opposite pattern should be  
385 observed at lower latitudes (Gaston *et al.*, 2017; Helm *et al.*, 2017). Whether plasticity is adaptive in  
386 winter time, when the higher numbers of extra-lit hours may require a higher energetic demand, remains  
387 to be tested. We observed a limit to the studies on the latitudinal variation of biological traits. The  
388 behavioural and physiological clines observed at the interspecific or intraspecific level spanned a  
389 fraction of the latitudinal range between temperate and higher latitudes. Information about the transition  
390 between the intertropical and the temperate zones is lacking. However, such knowledge is necessary if  
391 we want to build a biogeographical framework robust enough to predict the latitudinal effect of ALAN.  
392 This publication bias has been noticed for the study of the evolution of breeding in mammals (Bronson,  
393 1988). It is likely that the historical distribution of laboratories and the difficulty to identify species or  
394 groups of species spanning the entire latitudinal range, as well as the logistic constraint of these studies,  
395 account for the current situation. Up to now, only a few species distributed across the whole range like  
396 *D. melanogaster* have been tested (but see Bronson (1988) for mammals).

397

## 398 **6 Prospective view about the geographical spread of ALAN: a concern for** 399 **intertropical biomes?**

400 The increase of ALAN essentially results from demographic growth and economic development, *i.e.* the  
401 greater use of electricity. World population is forecast to grow from 7.5 billion in 2017 to 9.8 billion in  
402 2050 and over 11 billion in 2100 (United Nations Department of Economic and social affair Population  
403 division, 2017). Between 2017 and 2050, the intertropical region including Western, Middle and Eastern  
404 Africa should increase its population by 217 %. South-Eastern Asia, and the region including Central  
405 and Latin America (but excluding Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay), should grow respectively of 23 %

406 and 21 %. In comparison population in Europe and Eastern Asia should decrease by 4 % and Northern  
407 America raise by 20 % (United Nations Department of Economic and social affair Population division,  
408 2017). Larger use of lighting can also be predicted according to prospective studies that forecast the  
409 expansion of urban areas and road networks. Roads generate light by their traffic, but they also facilitate  
410 new settlements and the expansion of existing settlements. A recent study predicted an increase of 185  
411 % of the global urban extent between 2000 and 2030 for the land category with the highest probability  
412 of being urbanized (Seto *et al.*, 2012). In Africa a 590 % increase of urbanized areas is expected with a  
413 concentration of this process in five areas, four of which are located in the intertropical zone.  
414 Furthermore, the percentage of urbanization in 34 World major biodiversity hotspots is predicted to  
415 triple during that period. The largest changes are expected in regions undisturbed by urban development  
416 so far, and all concern inter-tropical areas (Seto *et al.*, 2012). Regarding road networks only 43 % of the  
417 emerged land (except Antarctica and Greenland), were considered roadless, *i.e.* distant more than 5 km  
418 from a road, in 2016 (Ibisch *et al.*, 2016), a distance at which a nocturnal light source is detected. In  
419 tropical and subtropical countries, one-fifth of national parks is crossed by at least one main road (Caro  
420 *et al.*, 2014). Expansion of logging creates roads and gaps that are likely to increase exposure to light  
421 in the vicinity of human settlements (Laporte *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, population growth, urbanized  
422 land, and road networks are expected to keep growing in the next decades especially in areas of high  
423 conservation value and in the intertropical zone (**Figure 3**).

424 International initiatives seeking to increase the access to electricity in developing countries are  
425 welcome (see for instance [www.AREI.org](http://www.AREI.org)), but they may contribute to the increase of night brightness  
426 in preserved environments. There is little doubt that a larger fraction of land in the intertropical zone  
427 will experience higher levels of ALAN in the next decades. The increasing use of LEDs for outdoor  
428 lighting may further deteriorate the nocturnal environment and generate more deleterious effects for  
429 biodiversity than older technical solutions (Cajochen *et al.*, 2011; Davies *et al.*, 2013b; Pawson & Bader,  
430 2014). For a given power, LEDs provide better lighting conditions than older sodium lamps because  
431 they stimulate a broader range of the visual system of many organisms (Davies *et al.*, 2013b). In addition,  
432 this cheaper technology tends to favour greater use of nocturnal light (Kyba *et al.*, 2017a). Countries in

433 the intertropical zone are developing their territory and will likely use the technology that is the most  
434 disrupting for biodiversity. By doing so, they will generate a more sudden change than the one  
435 experienced by wildlife earlier in other parts of the World. Such a rapid transition in lighting has been  
436 documented in Peru (Kyba *et al.*, 2017a). At a broader scale, an increase in nocturnal light was detected  
437 by satellites in the tropical/subtropical biomes. The proportion of the area that experienced higher  
438 brightness raised by 2 % between 1992-1996 and 2008-2012. The largest increase was observed for  
439 needle-leaf and mixed forests that occupy a restricted fraction of the total area but host rich endemic  
440 biodiversity (Bennie *et al.*, 2015b).

441 **Insert Figure 3**

442

## 443 **7 Conclusion**

444 We are clearly lacking a biogeographical framework to predict how species adapt or acclimate to ALAN  
445 and by which way. We do not know in which biomes ecological networks are the most sensitive to the  
446 elevation of nocturnal brightness, which ecosystems will be the most strongly exposed in the near future,  
447 and to which extent climate modulates exposure to ALAN at a given latitude. Only fragmentary  
448 information is available to generate testable hypotheses. Climate has probably a still unappreciated  
449 influence on the intensity of the biological and ecological effects of ALAN. In particular, more attention  
450 should be paid to the geographical variation in cloud cover. A higher sensitivity to change in nocturnal  
451 ambient light is expected in organisms from ecosystems where cloud cover is frequent because nocturnal  
452 light intensity is often low. Furthermore, within the same latitudinal range, areas where rain, fog, or mist  
453 is frequent may be less exposed than arid areas where moonlight is more present most of the nights, and  
454 negative effects on organisms and ecosystems may be milder. In forest, light exposure depends on the  
455 position of the organism relative to canopy. A large fraction of tropical forest biodiversity lies at the  
456 canopy level where individuals are more easily exposed to distant sources of ALAN. Under the canopy  
457 where the light level is very low, species are probably less exposed, but they could be highly sensitive

458 to small changes in light intensity. Species naturally living in forest edges, clearings, riparian or open  
459 habitats may be more exposed and suffer more from new lighting conditions. In this regard, roads or  
460 clearings in tropical forest generate a barrier effect, many organisms avoiding gaps as narrow as 30  
461 meters (Laurance *et al.*, 2009). The occurrence of ALAN in an otherwise dark environment could  
462 strongly enhance the barrier effect for these species (Lewanzik & Voigt, 2014).

463 Building a theoretical framework that describes how biogeographical factors modulate ALAN  
464 is a necessary step but it may not be sufficient. The spread of light at night co-occurs with the other  
465 drivers of biodiversity decline such as habitat fragmentation, chemical pollution, invasive species, that  
466 all generate stress for individuals. Negative synergistic effects of multiple stressors on organisms and  
467 populations are well known (Sih *et al.*, 2004). Climate change is likely the main global factor to focus  
468 on. A recent review highlighted the negative effects on animal fitness of changing climate under stable  
469 photoperiod (Walker *et al.*, 2019). The evolution towards a less frequent or less reflecting cloud cover  
470 would reduce exposure of organisms in terms of intensity and duration but also the size of the areas  
471 experiencing light pollution, compensating in a way the expansion of urbanized area. In contrast, more  
472 clouds are likely to enhance the biological and ecological effects of ALAN. Temperature, the main focus  
473 of attention of climate change, is also relevant. It modulates biological rhythms entrained by light  
474 (Underwood, 1989; Helm *et al.*, 2017), resets circadian clocks (Chen *et al.*, 2015), affects gene  
475 expression in insects and mammals (Helm *et al.*, 2017), alters the daily expression peak of melatonin in  
476 lower vertebrates (Mayer *et al.*, 1997), and induces seasonal shift from nocturnality to diurnality in  
477 insects and mammals (van der Vinne *et al.*, 2014; Helm *et al.*, 2017). The sensitivity of insects to  
478 warming is believed to be the highest in the intertropical zone because individuals are already close to  
479 their thermal tolerance threshold (Deutsch *et al.*, 2008). The annual covariation of temperature and  
480 photoperiod at a location determines an environmental envelope that enlarges in both dimensions with  
481 latitude (Hut *et al.*, 2013), as a result of increasing temperature and daylength range. Global warming  
482 changes one dimension of the envelope while ALAN changes the other dimension, giving rise to entirely  
483 new conditions with unknown consequences about the desynchronization of physiological and  
484 behavioural rhythms at the individual level, and the timing and intensity of interspecific relationships at

485 the ecological level (but see Miller (2017)). Effects are expected at any location on the globe but  
486 predicting the outcome of the interaction remains difficult since temperature is rising faster at higher  
487 latitudes (Hansen *et al.*, 2006) and light at night strongly changes the photic regime year-round at lower  
488 latitudes.

489 The demographic and macro-economic projections for the next decades support the expansion of ALAN  
490 across the World and particularly within the intertropical zone. Because synergies with other drivers of  
491 global decline are not known so far, even if some may be anticipated, prevention and caution remain the  
492 most appropriate approaches. We did not attempt a meta-analysis of the papers published on biological  
493 rhythms or ALAN for species in the intertropical zone but it is no doubt that there are many less than  
494 papers devoted to temperate or high-latitude species. The time is ripe to shift the balance and start  
495 investigating the effects of ALAN at different latitudes. In particular, attention should be given to the  
496 capacity of intertropical species to respond to the novel conditions generated by ALAN and climate  
497 change. A good starting point could be to focus on groups originating from the intertropical zone. Habitat  
498 loss, climate change, overexploitation have received so far the main attention in many areas for obvious  
499 reasons. It should be acknowledged that ALAN might be a more insidious form of threat to local  
500 biodiversity. Eco-tourism has been a major source of income for several countries and it is becoming a  
501 major contribution for new ones particularly in countries benefiting from hotspots. It may also contribute  
502 to accelerate the change of the photic environment at night. In this regard, a recent global study showed  
503 that the increase in ALAN was much higher around protected areas than farther away (Guetté *et al.*,  
504 2018). The demand for biodiversity will keep on growing with the global human population. A  
505 cautionary message would be to remind that increasing population, infrastructures and facilities, and  
506 more generally the use of electricity for nocturnal lighting may be harmful even in the most  
507 environment-friendly areas that value biodiversity as a resource for their economic development.

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950   **Data accessibility statement** - Data be will made available in Repository upon acceptance of

951   the manuscript

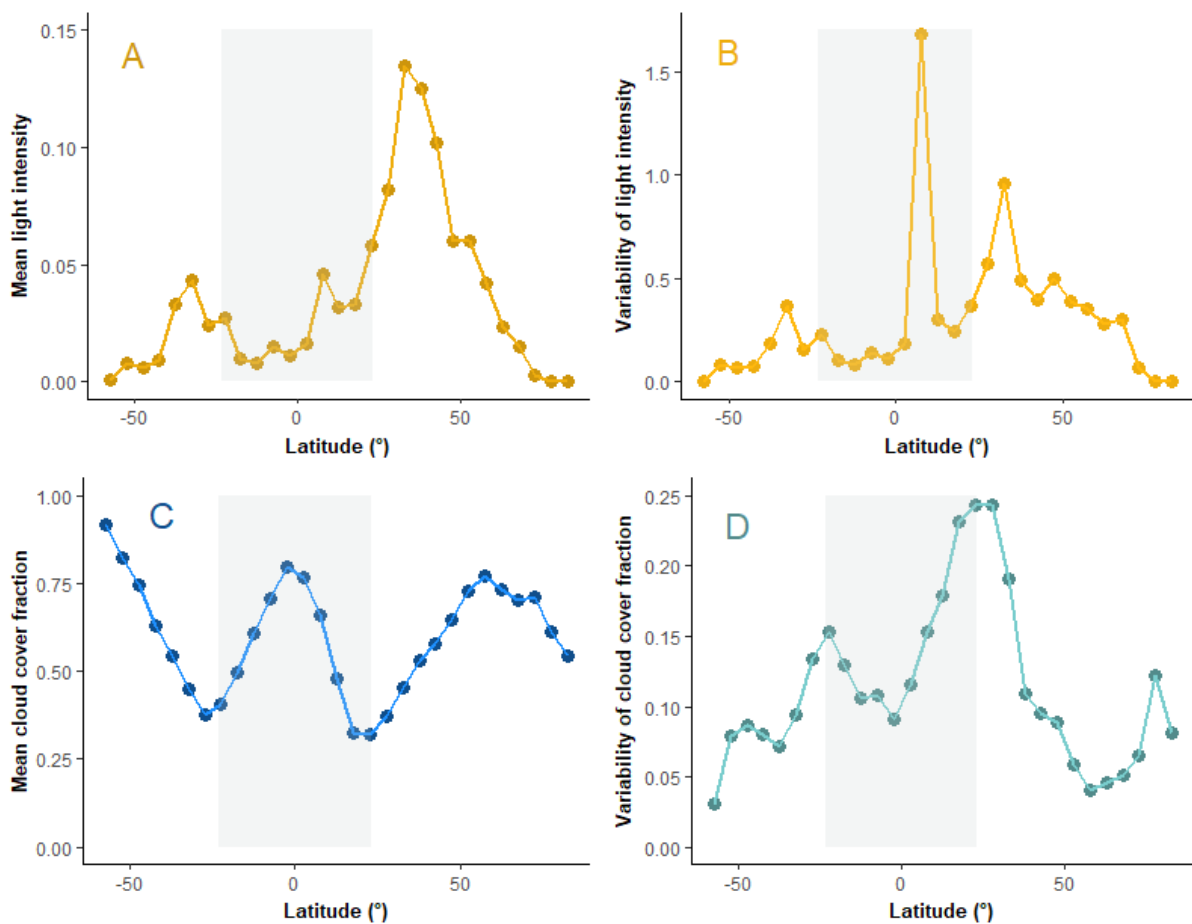
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953 **Figure 1** Mean latitudinal distribution of ALAN and cloud cover fraction (A and C) as measured from  
 954 satellite images and their standard deviation (B, D). Data were binned in 5° categories. Only terrestrial  
 955 areas have been included in the analysis. Seas and large lakes have been excluded. The grey band  
 956 represents the intertropical zone. Original data reused with permission. For ALAN, the unit is relative  
 957 and expressed as the ratio of the difference between the observed pixel value and the reference value of  
 958 a natural sky (174  $\mu\text{Cd}/\text{m}^2$ ) to the reference value. Data source: Falchi et al. (2016), NASA, MODIS  
 959 mission, and Giovanni only data system. For a global map of cloud cover fraction over the period 2002-  
 960 2018, see Supplementary information.

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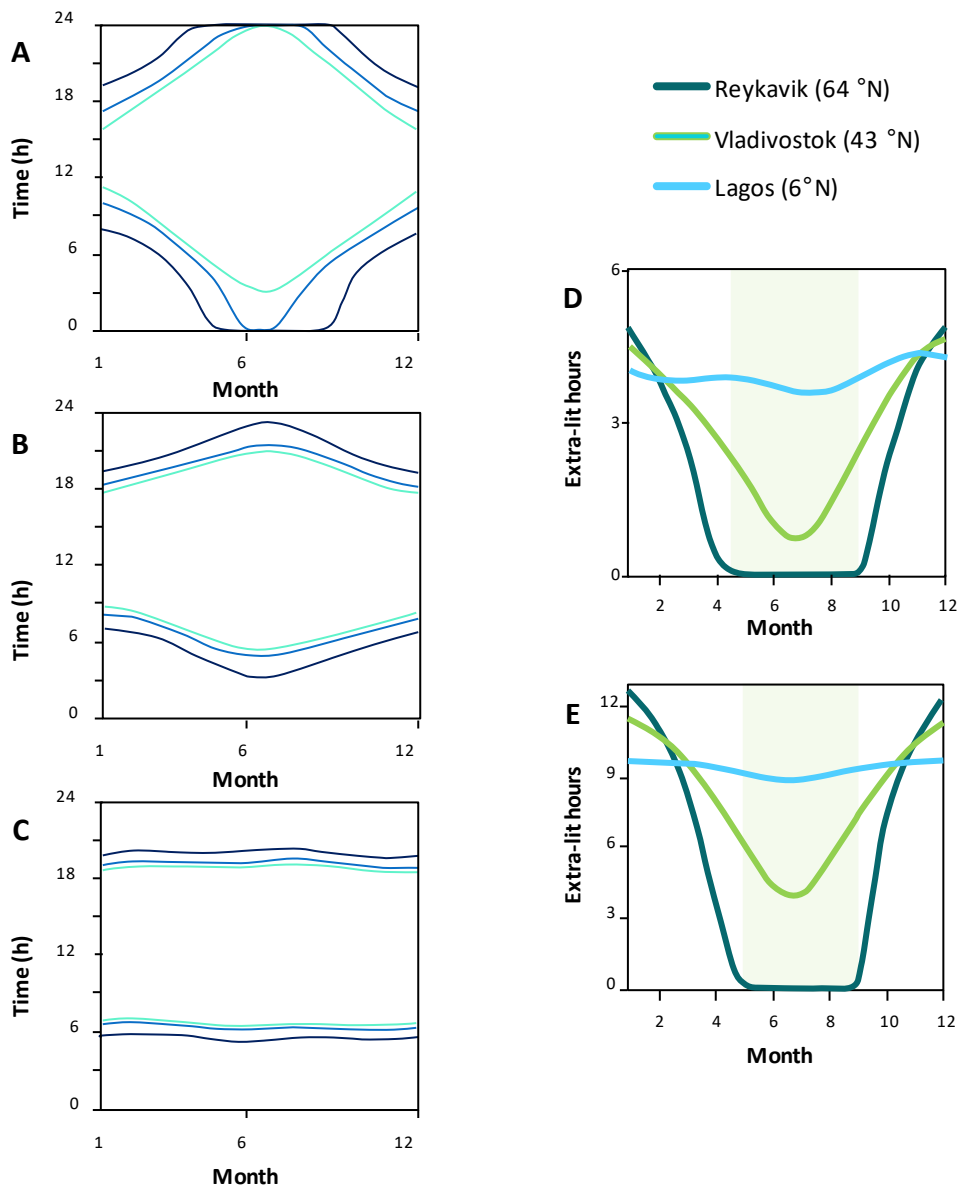


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965 **Figure 2** (A-C) Annual variation in twilight for three towns at low, mid, and high latitudes. Twilight  
 966 represents the periods of the day when sun declination is between  $0^\circ$  and  $18^\circ$  below horizon. When the  
 967 declination is lower, the sun does contribute to ambient light. The right column shows for two lighting  
 968 scenarios the annual variation in the time period when ALAN elevates the ambient light level outside  
 969 the twilight periods. Artificial lights are turned off at midnight (D) or stay turned on all night (E). Sources  
 970 : <https://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/grad/solcalc/> ; <https://earthsky.org/?p=235797>.

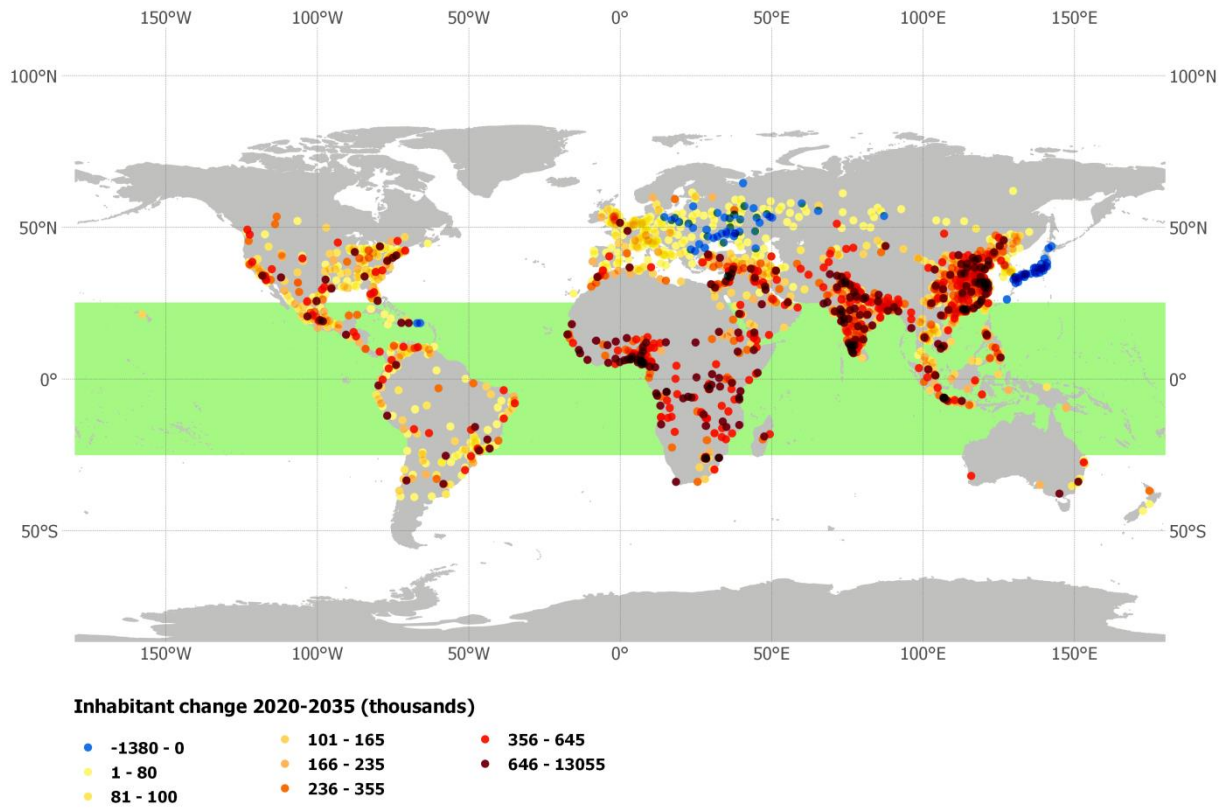
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973 **Figure 3** Expected change in Urbanization/demography between 2018 and 2030 (Source UNICEF,  
974 United Nations). The green latitudinal band represents the intertropical zone.

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