

RAVE SPACES

How architecture can contribute to the imaginative ideologies of club culture.



Castlemorton Common Festival at night (Whitehurst, 2014)

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Research Plan
Public Buildings Fall 2021
"Music Marvel"

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Research theme: Club cultures

Nightclubs are often seen as the epicentre of weekend hedonism. Throughout history people have been coming together to drink and dance in nocturnal spaces filled with sounds from different musical genres. However, rarely is there a serious reflection on nightlife and club culture as an established cultural institution that has larger societal and political implications. Besides the hedonistic traits, club culture is linked with themes like experimentation, freedom of self-expression and resistance against political and societal ideologies, to name a few (Walker, 2017). Club culture, in this sense, implies cultural movements that occupy mostly nocturnal spaces, not just for a hedonistic escape of the 'real world' while collectively listening to music on large sound systems, but also for people to form their identity free from societal pressures and to peacefully protest against larger societal issues in the form of dance.

The earliest form of a nightclub can be traced back to the working-class dance halls of the 1800s in Paris, London and New York. Since then, the nightclub typology and club culture have been influenced by different developments. On the one hand there are the technical innovations that occurred during the second industrial revolution, where developments in audio reproduction and light-shows have radically changed the experience of nightclubs (Wilkinson, 2020). On the other hand there are also political, cultural and social events which have played a role in the development of club culture. Throughout history, oppressed groups have used dance events as a way of escaping the oppressive society they live in. Clubs create 'safer spaces' where people, whom are usually discriminated against and excluded from society, can socialise and collectively imagine alternative and less oppressive futures (Capolei, 2015). This subversive quality of club culture thus has the potential of becoming a viable form of resistance against societal and political status quos. For that reason nightclubs can be viewed as potential incubators of social, cultural and political change, which is necessary for an evolving society. Apart from nightclubs though, public buildings and outdoor spaces have also frequently been used to host dance events. The 90s UK-rave movement for instance, which is a movement within club culture, was known for occupying abandoned public spaces where parties were held which could go on for several days straight. Therefore, club culture isn't just restricted to the spaces of nightclubs but is able to occupy and influence areas on a larger urban and rural scale as well.

Further, to emphasize the importance of club culture within society, is its influence on pop culture as a whole. Music, fashion and art partially may thank their cultural progression over the past decades to the influence of different club scenes. Nightclubs have been hotspots for cultural experimentation and therefore have been incubators of grassroots movements which have gone on to grow into larger societal and political movements (Codrea-Rado, 2019). Once again, I take the UK rave culture as an example, which has invented new electronic musical genres as UK-jungle, acid house and drum-and-bass, of which the influences are still very present in today's music. In a way, UK-rave culture in the 90s was a form of 'street avant-garde', as termed by Simon Reynolds (Museion, 2021), due to the informal and experimental nature of this movement. Also, by experimenting and exploring identities, new subjectivities were able to emerge from nights out. Throughout the 21st century, however, club cultures haven't been recognized as these innovative movements in society and therefore are viewed as not being of importance anymore. This belief is being reflected by the rapid decline of nightclubs in many major cities around the globe.



"Exist to Resist". Ravers protesting against the Criminal Justice Act in 1994 which criminalised raves in the UK (Smith, 2017)



Early 00s rave in the UK (Smith, 2021)

Problem Statement: Gentrification and Commodification

Financial pressures due to gentrification and exploitation is the main reason for the decline of club culture in today's society. London for example, one of the cities that has been known to have a flourishing nightlife industry, has lost more than half of its clubs during 2007 and 2017. Some of the most iconic venues in club culture history have been forced to close due to redevelopment programs and unpayable rents which are continuously rising (Grigg, 2021). Besides the decline in nightclubs, not only in London but in many other cities all around the globe, club culture has been heavily commodified by capitalism over the past few decades.

The commodification of club culture can be recognized as from the start of the 21st century when the first 'superstar' DJs started to appear and clubs became brands, where investors are capitalizing on the culture which ironically stands for left leaning, anti-capitalist ideologies. Therefore, the original beliefs of club culture have slowly been fading away over the past decades, while nightclubs which have been able to survive the financial pressures have been turned into capital producing machines. These current nightclubs can't be mistaken with spaces in which certain club movements of the twentieth century were thriving for a utopia where people are freed from the systematic oppressions imposed onto them.

The commodification of nightclubs also meant the end of the innovative nature, or the 'street avant-garde', of club culture. In capitalism there isn't much room for creativity, as too much creativity will lead to products which are too novel to sell. For people nowadays it is easier to consume products which are relatable and recognizable, therefore capitalism has a culture of sameness and repetition integrated within it. This is apparent in today's music charts or Hollywood films, which are basically the same song or movie repeated over and over again in a new guise. While, under capitalism, technology has led to many new innovations in order to evolve society into a more productive one in everyday life, culturally, society hasn't seen much newness in the 21st century yet. As Simon Reynolds stated: "Everyday life has sped up, but culture has slowed down" (Fisher, cited Reynolds, 2014). This possibly explains why the relevance of club culture and its experimental nature has been in decline in recent decades. If nightlife isn't able to resist these capitalistic pressures and continues to be merely a commodity, large parts of potential cultural history will be erased (Codrea-Rado, 2017).

A cultural institution should strive to stimulate society to evolve culturally. But as it seems that the capitalist system stops this evolutionary process, today's cultural institutions should stimulate people to imagine new realities in order to break the repetitions of capitalism. However, in Capitalist Realism, Mark Fisher (2009) argues that the forces of Western capitalism are prohibiting people to imagine any alternative ways of living. The urgency of this situation is stated in the famous quote attributed by Fisher (2009) to Fredric Jameson and Slavoj Žižek: 'It is easier to imagine the end of the world, than to imagine the end of capitalism.' This is sadly true for most people today given the environmental crisis that humans face which essentially indicates a rather dystopian future for humanity. In order to find alternative ways of living, the use and stimulation of imagination can play a crucial role. Therefore the imaginative and explorative ideologies of club culture could help to turn our fear for the future into a hopeful and exciting one.

The market forces of neoliberalism are also affecting the Binckhorst, the site in which an architecture for music performance is to be designed. The process of gentrification is bound to happen in the Binckhorst as the future plans of this neighbourhood in The Hague show that basically every square meter will be developed by private investors. Although there are some indications for leaving enough space unbuilt, that could function as 'public space', the private owners of the land will be in power of the activities happening on their bought plot (Tuomisto, 2021). Especially the ambition of the future plans of the municipality of the Hague to turn Binckhorst into a cultural anchor of the city is contradictory to the fact that the area will be privatized. In a different perspective though, the

realization of a cultural building for music performance has the potential to become a resistance against the neoliberal market forces. Spaces for nightlife and club culture thus could become an important place to stimulate this resistance and realize the cultural ambitions of the Binckhorst. By providing spaces for communities to come together and employ the creative and imaginative ideologies of club culture, the Binckhorst could become this cultural anchor it desires to be.



Disconecropolis which shows the closing of London nightclubs (OMA, 2015)

Research Aim: Designing for Club Cultural Ideologies

Club culture has used various spaces to host indoor and outdoor events. However, the direct role of the architect doesn't seem to be a prominent one in any of these. Raves have usually taken place in spaces not designed to host this programme. Most clubs today were abandoned warehouses or industrial buildings which have later been renovated to established nightclubs. Bernard Khoury, architect of the B018 nightclub in Beirut, explains: "Clubs are never usually given an architecture, were never considered as anything worth investing architecturally-speaking. They are usually tucked underneath buildings. You rarely hear of a club that is given a serious architecture, or at least attempts to have some kind of political relevance." (Kafka, 2020). Therefore, this research firstly aims to contribute to the potential role of architecture within club culture to further develop the nightclub typology.

If there has been a time where architecture and nightclubs merged though, it would be during the era of the Radical Design Movement in the 1960s and 70s. This movement consisted of architects as Superstudio and Gruppo 9999 that had very experimental takes on architecture and urbanism. The nightclub was the architectural typology where these architects could afford to test these new ideas. Arising mainly as a critique on the ineffectiveness of post-war modern design, architecture was seen as a tool for societal change while rethinking and challenging the role of the architect in society. The disco thus became a new type of space for 'multidisciplinary experimentation and creative liberation' (Mousse, 2015). Other than the Radical Design Movement however, there haven't been many other architectural movements that are known to have reflected on the relationship between architecture, club culture and society. Besides aiming to contribute to the nightclub typology, this research will aim to learn from club culture in order to attempt to solve today's societal issues through architecture.

Lastly, and most importantly, the imaginative ideologies of club culture and it's relation to architecture will be explored. In other words, *how can architecture contribute to the imaginative ideologies of club culture?* To answer this question, a more detailed research will be done on the ideologies of club cultures throughout the past century and how these ideologies have contributed to changes within society. Club culture has often been a counterculture which is resisting the current status quo by imagining alternative ways of living. In today's society this would mean resisting capitalism and imagining a non-capitalistic future. Therefore, a better understanding of what an anti-capitalist architecture would entail is also needed. Creativity and imagination are two important aspects of club culture which potentially can form resistance against capitalism. Framing these themes as central to the research, I hope to explore how architecture can play a role in resistance and change. The imaginative ideologies of club culture should not only lead to the design of a nightclub but also inspire ideas for day-time activities. Essentially, the architecture will thrive to become a place where new realities can be imagined by night and created by day.



Space Electronic, 1971 by Gruppo 9999 (Mousse, 2015)



Acid house rave (Swindells, 2012)

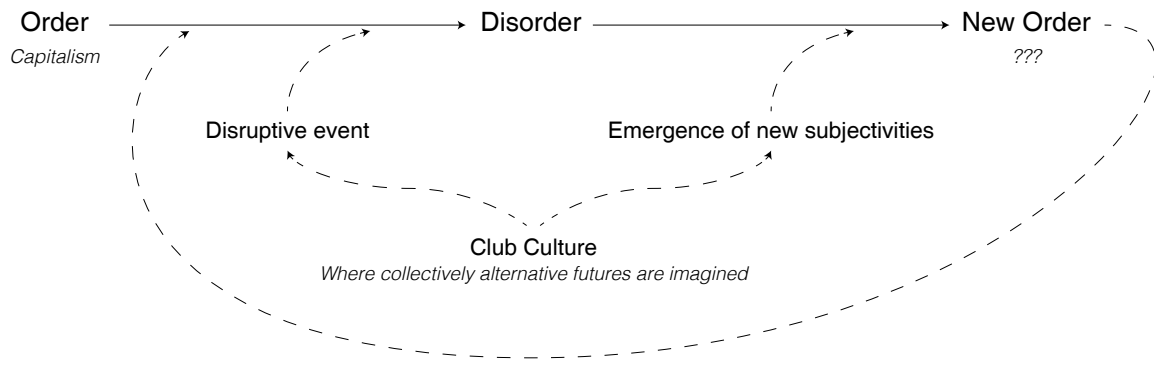
Research Methods: Learning from the Past, Speculating on the Future

To better understand the ideologies of club culture, different movements within club culture during the past century and the implication these had to larger societal and political issues will be explored. For example: The fall of the Berlin wall and the birth of Berlin Techno, Thatcherism and the UK-rave scene, and the post-industrialisation of Detroit and the emergence of Detroit Techno. Besides the societal and political issues that are connected to these movements, their influence on today's culture and implications on how today's society can learn from club cultural ideologies from the past will be argued for. This will be done through literary and documentary research.

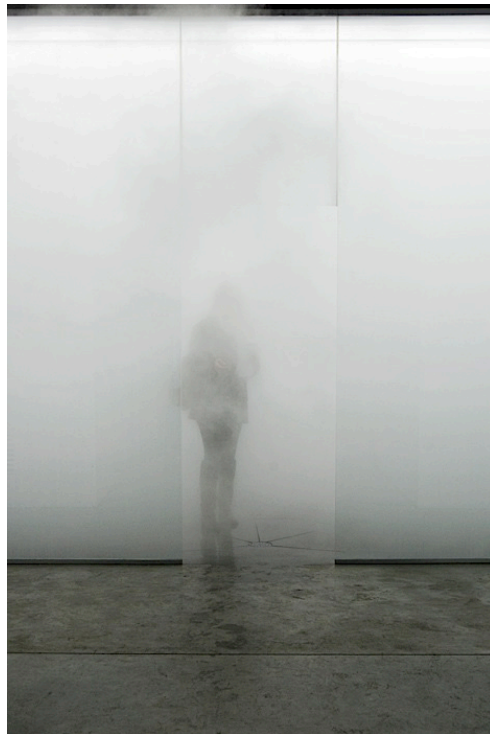
Furthermore, architecture will be used as a lens through which to better grasp the relationship between club culture and the spaces they occupy. Looking at different case studies will help to gain an understanding of the role of architecture in the history of club culture. Analysing the different forms of rave venues can help give an insight into what determines their 'success'. The focus will not solely be on architectural features but also how communities have informally transformed 'undesigned' nightclubs into the most renowned ones today. The appendix shows several case studies that may be of value to this research.

Besides exploring events from the past and case studies there's a certain fascination with the aspect of the imagination within club culture. Therefore, research will be done on how architecture can contribute to one's imagination. The imagination of human beings is in general stimulated by (partially) eliminating or blocking one's senses or perceptions. Acousmatic sounds, for instance, are de-visualised sounds which means one does not know what the sound-source is. This offers listeners a certain freedom in exercising their imagination. By de-visualising sound one's imagination wanders off and starts constructing its own sound-image, imagining the world where these sounds are coming from (Kim, 2010). In this case sounds are used to stimulate the visual imagination, something music can be very powerful in. Based on this notion, research will be done to architectural elements and materials that de-visualize one's perception of space in order to leave space for the imagination of the user. Due to the fact that the imagination is a subjective theme, awareness of my own perception of the relationship of my imagination and the physical world will be of importance. In a later stage research by design could further explore the relationship of architecture and one's imagination by testing ideas with different subjects.

Finally, philosophies and theories will be employed to add an extra layer of meaning and understanding to the eventual architectural design. Possible theoretical themes that could come to use in this research are: rave culture, sound, music, capitalism, feminism, imagination, escapism and futurisms. The combination of these themes will hopefully provide a range of concepts which could be utilized in the design of a place for musical performance which would become a creative hub where new subjectivities are able to emerge. On the one hand I wish to better understand the notions of capitalism and how this system is able to gain power and control over society and how club culture can essentially be viewed as anti-capitalist, while on the other hand different theories will be employed in order to provide concepts on how the current order could potentially be disrupted. The diagram on the following page shows how club culture potentially can be an incubator of disruption and change within a society. These theories, in combination with the knowledge provided by the other research methods, will then be reflected through an architectural design for music performance in the Binckhorst, The Hague.



Simplified diagram of how Club Cultures potentially incubate cultural change in society (Author's own).



Blind Light by Antony Gormley, where fog de-visualises the space (Gormley, 2007)



UK rave scene protesting against Thatcherism (Electronic Beats, 2017).

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APPENDIX: CASE STUDIES

Radical Design Movement



Piper Turin, 1966 by Pietro Derossi, Giorgio Ceretti and Riccardo Rosso (Mousse, 2015)



Space Electronic, 1971 by Gruppo 9999 (Mousse, 2015)



Le Mach 2, 1967 by Superstudio (Soyer, 1967)

APPENDIX: CASE STUDIES

Nightclubs in the past



Hacienda by Ben Kelly (1982)



Electric Circus, 1967 by Chermayeff & Geismar (Bowery Boys, 2013)



Palladium New York, 1985 by Arata Isozaki (Codrea-Rado, 2018)

APPENDIX: CASE STUDIES

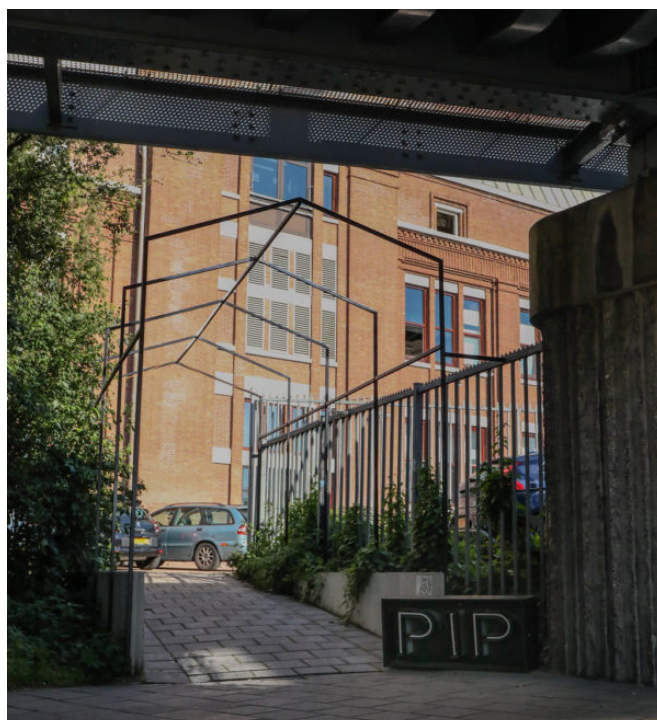
Existing nightclubs



B018 by Bernard Khoury (1998)



Berghain, 2003 by Studio Karhard (Eede, 2019)



PIP Den Haag, 2007 by Steven van Lummel en David Schoch (PIP Den Haag, 2007)

APPENDIX: CASE STUDIES

Outdoor rave: Castlemorton Common Festival



Castlemorton Common Festival, 1992 (Freepartypeople, 2021)