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University of Southampton

Faculty of Environmental and Life Sciences

School of Geography and Environmental Science

**Spatialising Genre: How Music Genres Shape Socio-Spatial Inequalities in Nightclub
Production in Amsterdam**

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

March 2021

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Abstract

Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences

School of Geography and Environmental Science

Doctor of Philosophy

Spatialising Genre: How Music Genres Shape Socio-Spatial Inequalities in Nightclub Production in
Amsterdam

by

Timo Louis Koren

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to the geographical study of cultural production a thorough understanding of how music genres shape and remake socio-spatial inequalities. I do so through a critical case study of cultural production in night clubs in Amsterdam, based on 36 interviews with promoters, short-term ethnographies at club nights and public conferences and a document-based analysis of newspaper articles, policy documents and archival material. I use music genres as a lens to understand social structures in the music industries, since genres organise people, music and cultural production within a system of symbolic classification. I combine this conceptualisation with a theoretical approach called the cultural industries framework to couple an analysis of production to an analysis of genre, aesthetics and representation. I make three theoretical contributions. First, I argue geographies of cultural production should be more sensitive to the formative functions of music genre and accompanying classification systems in music economies. I show how club's classification systems and production practices differ between the niche-edm genre (including house, techno) and the eclectic genre (including R&B, dancehall) and lead to distinguishable forms of gendered and racialised inequalities. Second, I posit the cultural industries framework could benefit from a more geographical lens. The thesis shows how nightclubs' cultural production is shaped by spaces of consumption, urban regulation and transnational cultural flows. Third, I contend that existing research on nightclubs has missed mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion engrained in cultural production, most prominently because the emphasis has been on clubber's experiences and governmental regulation. Next to door policies and council-led regulation, the economic organisation of nightclubs – organised differently per genre – explains cultural hierarchies in urban nightlife.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Timo Koren

Title of thesis: Spatialising Genre: How Music Genres Shape Socio-Spatial Inequalities in Nightclub
Production in Amsterdam

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me
as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this
University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other
qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of
such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly
what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission

Signature: Date: 17 June 2021

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“De Nacht Is Nog Jong, Net Als Wij Voor Altijd”

(“*The Night Is Still Young, Just Like Us Forever*”)

- Ronnie Flex

Chapter 1 Introduction

The aim of this research is to study the cultural production of nightclubs to contribute to a more spatial understanding of the patterns and mechanisms that lead to gendered and racialised inequalities in the cultural industries. Economic geography research on nightclubs and live music has highlighted the precarious and ambiguous place of musical creativity in cities (Bader and Scharenberg 2010; Lange and Bürkner 2013; Dorst 2015; Finch 2015; Kloosterman and Brandellero 2016) but has paid little attention to the formation of inequalities in labour and audience participation, particularly inequalities *within* the urban music sector. However, other social science approaches have highlighted inequalities in nightlife. I identify two perspectives. First, cultural geography and cultural studies have mainly addressed exclusion and inequalities through approaches that centralise the consumer or clubber (McRobbie 1994; Thornton 1995; Malbon 1999; Amico 2001; Pini 2001; Buckland 2002; Saldanha 2005; Garcia 2011; Cattán and Vanolo 2014; Misgav and Johnston 2014; Stirling 2016; moore 2018). Second, urban geography and urban sociology have focused on how regulation and safety lead to social inequalities in the nocturnal city (Hobbs et al. 2000; Chatterton and Hollands 2003; Talbot 2004; Marsh 2006; Hae 2011a and 2011b; van Liempt 2015; Fuller et al. 2018).

In this thesis I want to develop a third perspective to study nightlife inequalities that would benefit economic geographies of culture more generally: an analysis of nightclub's cultural productions. To do so, I adopt the so-called cultural industries framework to understand how the political, economic and cultural organisation of nightclubs produces social meaning and value (Hesmondhalgh 2013a). I argue that the specific meanings and values that nightclubs produce are specific to music genres that bind together production, consumption and criticism (Lena 2012). This has implications for the study of nightlife inequalities: genres are not just stylistic characteristics of music but shape production practices, cultural values and economic organisation in the music sector (Negus 1999; Lena 2012; Charles 2018). Genres link music to social identities (Born 2011), through shared consumption in specific spaces and places or as genres travel from one place to another, but through these processes, music genres also produce divisions between social groups (Lipsitz 1994; Niaah 2008; Lena 2012). This thesis advocates a spatial approach to understand better the role music genres play in the cultural production of nightlife, in particular the ways in which genres shape socio-spatial inequalities in the city at night.

This cultural production-focused approach leads to three theoretical contributions. First, I contribute to economic geography a perspective that draws attention to the entanglement of cultural and economic factors in the mechanisms that shape inequalities in the cultural industries. Second, I contribute to the cultural industries framework a careful eye for geography to equip the framework with analytical tools to study live music and performance. Third, I contribute to nightlife studies across academic disciplines a focus on the role of cultural production in the emergence, sustaining and contestation of social inequalities in the city at night. I make these contributions by focusing on nightclubs in Amsterdam. The Dutch capital is an understudied electronic dance music

hub, even though its nightlife policies have been praised and adopted by cities such as London (London Assembly 2018) and New York (The Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment 2019). Studying Amsterdam provides a way for nightlife research to move beyond its Anglophone focus (Montano 2013), to also highlight non-Anglophone musical transmissions and bring attention to a wider spectrum of geographically dispersed socio-musical identity formations.

1.1 Approach to Researching Nightlife

To develop this third perspective, I choose a different research object than the vast majority of existing research on nightlife in the social sciences: rather than clubbers/consumers or cities, the units of analysis are nightclubs. As mentioned, clubbing and nightlife have predominantly been studied from two main perspectives, that both engage with social inequalities and identity formations. The first is what Chatterton and Hollands (2003) refer to as experiential approaches. This strand of research emerged in the mid-1990s and mainly followed a consumer/clubber perspective (McRobbie 1994; Thornton 1995; Pini 2001). Here, the cultural studies framework that analyses youth activities vis-à-vis hegemonic society served as an important inspiration: their focus on the experiences of clubbers themselves can be read as a reaction to the moral panics surrounding illegal raves and drug use in the 1990s, and strongly focused on identity, style and (sub)cultural meaning.

In geography specifically, a growing attention for the experience and corporeality of space gained increasing momentum around the same time (following Thrift's (2007) coinage of the term non-representational theory in the 1990s), eventually leading to studies of electronic dance music cultures that show how clubbing is central to temporal individual and communal identity formations (Malbon 1999; Saldanha 2005). In addition, attention has been given to how queer¹ people navigate nocturnal cities in search of spaces where queerness occupies the centre rather than the margins (Amico 2001; Buckland 2002; Cattani and Vanolo 2014; Misgav and Johnston 2014; Garcia 2015; Moore 2018). While experiential approaches have done great work that highlights the cultural and social significance of going out, including the subtle forms in which social inequalities take shape, they have been criticised for not paying sufficient attention to more structural economic, organisational and political factors that explain geographically dispersed identity formations and inequalities (Chatterton and Hollands 2003; Carrington and Wilson 2004; Bassi 2006).

¹ In line with Garcia, I use queer as "an inclusive category that can span a range of sexualities and gender expressions" (Garcia 2018: 26) but that decentralises heteronormativity, beyond just gay and lesbian club communities (Wilkinson 2014). While queer was widely used among my interview participants, not all LGBT+ people identify as such and some researchers have given preference to the acronym LGBT (or a variation) (Browne and Bakshi 2011). I use both queer and LGBT+ as umbrella terms, recognising that while these often denote a collective expression of identities and political struggle in nightlife, the various sexualities and gender expressions under this umbrella are far from homogenous and may be subject to intra-community forms of marginalisation (Browne and Kim 2010). I refer to more specific self-definitions of gender and sexuality when describing specific promoters, audiences, club nights and venues. Here, I adopt the terminology of my interview participants. When discussing specific research by other researchers I adopt their terminology.

The second strand of nightlife research I group together as urbanist approaches. Here, rather than centralising the individual clubber, researchers zoom out and take the city as their unit of analysis. The main focus is on the urban and economic context that shapes where and how nightlife takes form in cities. There are two different theoretical perspectives here. The first one, mostly urban geography and urban sociology, focuses on governance and situates nightlife within a 'rights to the city' debate. The analytical focus is usually policy, regulation and protest as a way to explore how the city at night is shaped by political debates over the quality of life, persisting social inequalities and the struggle over urban rights (Luckman 2001; Talbot 2004; Marsh 2006; Eldridge and Roberts 2008; Hae 2011a and 2011b; Shaw 2014; van Liempt 2015; Bird 2016; Fuller et al. 2018). The second perspective, mostly economic geography, shifts attention to the economic value of nightlife, focusing on the urban as a way to understand the durability and economic success of nightclubs and music scenes in cities (van Heur 2009; Bader and Scharenberg 2010; Lange and Bürkner 2013; Dorst 2015). However, for the purposes of this research, urbanist approaches lack a thick account of cultural products: they explain to some extent why local authorities welcome some music genres more than others, but do not explain the historical, economic and cultural mechanisms that connect genres to audiences and the myriad of ways in which music genres shape discourses of production, regulation and consumption that expose how the link between music genres and social identities is less 'fixed' than one might expect (Stirling 2016). In particular, with the exception of door policies, urbanist approaches have devoted little attention to forms of regulation that are not governmental but are initiated by clubs themselves (Luckman 2001).

In this thesis I depart from these two frameworks for studying nightlife: I use a different research object than clubbers/consumers (as in the experiential approach) or cities (as in the urbanism approach) by focusing on nightclubs – specifically nightclubs' cultural productions (or: the production of social and cultural meaning). This is motivated by the two identified research gaps in nightlife studies: little attention for structuring economic and political conditions in the experiential approach and a lack of concern for the intricate workings of music genre in the urbanism approach. This thesis is not the first research to study nightclubs' cultural productions in relation to social inequalities. There is Böse's (2005) research on exclusion in Manchester nightclubs, Anderson's (2009b) work on the commercialisation of the Philadelphia rave scene and Gadir's (2017) analysis of decision-making processes with regards to gender and line-ups at an Oslo festival. Böse (2005) in particular points at the significance of music genres as she shows how social inequalities in nightlife are produced as gatekeepers in nightlife value one musical style over another. Music genres are characterised by sets of orientations, conventions and ideals that define production and consumption, so genre participants draw boundaries between those who do and those who do not rightfully 'belong' to a genre (Lena 2012), who does and who does not ascribe to the 'right' way of liking a genre (Straw 1991). To understand the entanglement of the cultural and the economic better, I contend that an analytical approach that compares genres can highlight

better how music genres perform the boundary work² (Lamont and Molnar 2002; Lena 2012) that leads to processes of inclusion and exclusion in the nightclub sector.

Apart from Böse (2005), these studies (Anderson 2009b; Gadir 2017) limit their focus to one music genre. However, socio-spatial inequalities are also produced as a result of hierarchical boundaries *between* genres (Gray 2005; Lena 2012). In this thesis, I compare two sets of clubs participating in two distinguishable genres: the niche-oriented electronic dance music (niche-edm) genre and the eclectic genre³. The niche-edm genre is a cluster of functionalist, minimalist, repetitive dancefloor-oriented music genres such as house and techno with a post-disco genealogy (Garcia 2011). I use 'niche-edm' to distinguish these styles from the maximalist, festival/stadium-oriented and well-known descriptor EDM (Reynolds 2013), as EDM artists have become unaffordable for the clubs under study. The eclectic genre refers to clubs that play Black⁴, Caribbean and Ibero-American musical styles such as R&B, dancehall and Latin mixed with pop and house. In Amsterdam, the latter genre of clubs is typically seen as culturally and economically less prestigious.

To analyse how the social meanings of music genres produce socio-spatial inequalities, I use a specific framework to analyse cultural production: the cultural industries framework (Hesmondhalgh 2013a; Saha 2018). I will now explain why this approach is capable to capture Amsterdam's nightclub sector as a dynamic whole shaped by various tensions (creativity vs. commerce, change vs. continuity, micro vs. macro processes) that shape nightclub's cultural production processes (Hesmondhalgh 2013a; Saha 2018). I will adapt this framework to the study of nightclubs with the aim to develop a cartography of the institutional and social spaces where genre ideals, practices and conventions shape music economies, under the conditions of global transnational media conglomerates (Gray 2005).

1.2 The Cultural Industries Approach to Nightlife

The cultural industries refer to those institutions (such as record companies or broadcasting organisations) primarily concerned with the production of social and cultural meaning – or in short: cultural production (Hesmondhalgh 2013a). Researchers have used two approaches to understand how cultural production produces, sustains, reproduces, and, at times, combats inequalities. The first looks at the cultures of production: how the social norms of workplaces in the cultural industries exclude access to historically marginalised social groups, including women and people of colour (Leonard 1997; McRobbie 2002; Fitts 2008; Milestone and Meyer 2012; Gavanis and

² Boundary work is the drawing of symbolic boundaries, "conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorise objects, people, practices, and even time and space" (Lamont and Molnár 2002: 168)

³ I provide elaborate definitions and typologies of the music genres under study in section 3.2.3.

⁴ I use Black to refer to geographically dispersed Afro-diasporic identities (Gilroy 1993). I also capitalise Black, because in the USA, the UK and the Netherlands 'Black' is a social category of self-identification. I use it in the same way as, for example, Latino. White is not capitalised, since promoters and clubbers do not use it as an identity marker for themselves, it is an unmarked social category (Essed and Trienekens 2008). For reference, see: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/informatics/punctuation/capsandabbr/caps> [accessed 7 December 2020].

Reitsamer 2013; Leonard 2016; McRobbie 2016; Reimer 2016; Mould 2018). The second looks at the texts or cultural objects (records, films, plays and club nights) that the cultural industries produce, which contribute to the marginalisation of social groups in society by a lack of visibility and audibility, negative and harmful stereotypes, patriarchal, heteronormative, and/or Eurocentric conceptions of artistic quality and trivialisation of political struggle (Morrison 1988; hooks 1992; Hall 1996; Gray 2005; Hall 2006 [1981]; Wolff 2006; Hesmondhalgh 2013a; Garcia 2018; Saha 2018).

Combining the two approaches, the cultural industries framework couples a politics of production to a politics of the cultural object (Hesmondhalgh 2013a; Saha 2018). This is necessary because the conditions of production do not inevitably explain the diversity in texts. The presence of historically marginalised groups in key roles in cultural production processes is no guarantee for less reductive representations of cultural identity (Saha 2018), just like independent businesses are no guarantee for fairer economic conditions (Hesmondhalgh 1998). This is because all actors compete in the same market in which, for example, a South Asian-owned independent record label in the UK finds itself needing to adopt essentialising, hegemonic representations of race in order to grow as a company (Saha 2018). To understand these complexities, research on cultural production requires a careful eye for detail and context, which is why I seek to apply this approach that combines production analysis and textual analysis to the study of nightclubs (Hesmondhalgh 2013a; Saha 2018).

In this thesis, I use music genre as a concept that encompasses cultural production and the cultural object, defining music genre as “systems of orientations, expectations, and conventions that bind together industry, performers, critics, and fans in making what they identify as a distinctive sort of music” (Lena 2012: 6). I advocate a spatial approach to genre: I investigate the spaces, places and global flows that link music genres to social identities (Lipsitz 1994; Niaah 2008; Born 2011; Lena 2012). Such an approach seems only logical considering that many of the genre labels used to describe music playing in nightclubs around the world are explicitly spatial: disco is named after the 1970s discotheques where the music was played, house refers to the nightclub The Warehouse in Chicago and dancehall derives its name from the Jamaican ‘halls’ where dance events were held. There is currently a substantial body of work that explains how music genres travel globally while retaining a homological relationship to identity, past and place in a myriad of ways (Gilroy 1993; Lipsitz 1994; Hesmondhalgh 2005; Niaah 2008; Born 2011; Shabazz 2014; Bramwell 2015; Charles 2018; Garcia 2018; Wilderom and van Venrooij 2019; Melville 2020). This dissertation analyses the cultural production efforts that maintain, remake and obscure music genre’s homological relationships to social identities by looking into the creation of the spaces of consumption – club nights – where music genres and social identities connect.

The focus on music genre is crucial to make this thesis’ three central theoretical contributions. First, music genres encompass stylistic characteristics, production practices and economic organisation (Negus 1999; Lena 2012; Charles 2018), which means they are a useful analytical contribution to an economic geography of cultural production that is capable of combining analysis

of cultures of production with analysis of the cultural product, leading to a better understanding of the interaction between cultural values and the economy.

Second, music genres are characterised by classification systems and take shape through interactions between consumption and production (Lena 2012). Combining these insights with the scholarly work that shows how music genres travel across the globe (Gilroy 1993; Lipsitz 1994; Niaah 2008), contributes a geographical lens to the cultural industries framework. It shows the significance of spaces of consumption, urban context and transnational cultural flows in the formation of local appreciations and socio-musical identities. This contributes to the cultural industries project to study processes of distinction beyond class (Saha 2018) and beyond rather static categories such as highbrow and lowbrow culture (Hesmondhalgh 2006), distinguishing it from Bourdieu-inspired sociology (Born 2010; Born 2011). Within music genres, gender and race (and also sexuality) are central to the cultural values of the musical styles of nightlife cultures such as disco, house, hip-hop and dancehall (Gilroy 1993; Rose 1994; Hesmondhalgh 1997; Lawrence 2003; Niaah 2008; Shabazz 2014; Garcia 2018). This provides a critical lens to understand these cultural values in relation to the cultural industries more generally.

Third, music genres bridge the study of regulation in nightlife research with the study of cultural production. Genre plays a role in nightlife studies as political bodies use associations between genre and identity to regulate nightlife, to determine what is acceptable nightlife and what is not (Talbot and Böse 2007; Hae 2011a; Hae 2011b). Nightclubs use genre orientations and conventions too, to shape a sense of who belongs where and when, and under what conditions. This highlights that regulation of nightlife is not just government-led (Luckman 2001): the inequalities produced through regulation also follow from club's own incentives.

I will make these contributions by answering the following research question: how do music genres shape the formation of socio-spatial inequalities in nightclub production in Amsterdam? This is the central research question of this thesis.

The sub-questions of the thesis are:

- How does genre shape the organisation of production and the cultural product and how does this lead to mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion?
- How do the temporal dimensions of space and place (on different geographical scales) shape the cultural production processes that lead to socio-musical identity formations?
- How do clubs' cultural production practices instrumentalise music genres to attract, select, regulate and segregate audiences?

1.3 Organisation of Thesis

The organisation of the thesis proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 explains the thesis' theoretical contributions to economic geography, cultural industries research and nightlife studies in more detail. Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology. To analyse cultural production in the nightclub sector, this thesis focuses on those workers who come in-between producers and the cultural

product who are primarily responsible for the symbolic production of club nights: promoters (Negus 2002; Kartosen 2016; Finlayson 2017). For this research I conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with 36 Amsterdam-based promoters in 2019, both employees of nightclubs as well as independent businesses⁵. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 90 minutes. To trace the cultural object beyond the repertoires of promoters, I conducted 111 hours of short-term ethnographies: in total I attended 28 different club nights and five public conferences and discussion panels. To understand Amsterdam's nightclub sector in its historical context as well as in the context of the global cultural industries, I embarked on a document-based analysis comprising of policy documents, newspaper articles, archives, dance music history books and TV documentaries.

Chapter 4 focuses on the economic organisation of nightclubs to locate mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that have previously gone unnoticed in nightlife research. By offering a detailed account of the role of genre in the economic organisation of nightclubs in Amsterdam I highlight how power dynamics between actors in the sector are engrained in the organisation of production. I use economic geography research to highlight the significance of spaces of consumption to cultural industries research, in combination with the genre-specific spatial and temporal dimensions of inclusion and exclusion. Last, I highlight specific production tools nightclubs use – such as the guest list – to better understand the interaction between consumption and production.

Chapter 5 focuses specifically on gender. I argue that because the eclectic genre and the niche-edm genre have different histories and ideals, they produce gender in different ways, despite their similar informal, masculine work environments. This contributes to the literature on gender and the cultural industries by showing the conditions under which political cultures can emerge in the 'fast, entrepreneurial' (McRobbie 2002) cultural industries. I give two reasons: international networks and genre histories. Moreover, I show how genre is used by clubs, not just political bodies, to regulate dancefloors by essentialising connections between gender and taste – a contribution to urbanist nightlife research. Last, I show how a political culture can upset classification systems in a specific music genre in ways that de-essentialise gender-taste connections. This signifies the potential to move beyond conditional inclusion (Gray 2005; Gavanis and Reitsamer 2013) towards small-scale institutional change.

Chapter 6 centres race and whiteness. First, by focusing on the transnational flows of music genres beyond just Anglophone countries, I highlight how whiteness is remade locally in ways that shape genre-specific inequalities. I provide a novel conceptual angle by not using rock, but electronic dance music as the white centre of popular music in Amsterdam's nightclub sector. Second, I focus on how promoters' urban imaginations produce spatial conceptions of race that inform and organise production and consumption. I argue collaborations between different nightlife actors rest on an unstable consensus: the shared premise of commercial viability and a white-centric conception of safety. This contributes once again a more spatial lens to cultural industries

⁵ For a more detailed overview of all respondents see Appendix A.

research. I highlight how whiteness, in various ways, shapes cultural production: as unmarked marker in the trans-local flows of music genres, in the defining and valuing spaces of consumption and in the urban representations that inform production.

Chapter 7 is the conclusion. I argue that genre shapes social inequalities in nightlife in Amsterdam in five distinct ways. First, music genres guide production practices that perform the boundary work between legitimate and illegitimate genre participants. Second, genre shapes the economic organisation of nightclubs. Keeping all production in-house is seen as a sign of cultural and economic prestige but limits and conditions the opportunities for newcomers and hybrid musical styles. Third, genres produce classification systems that produces cultural distinctions between different musical styles. Fourth, genre is a tool of regulation, conceptualising masculine and non-white audiences as a risk to a problem-free dancefloor. Fifth, genres shape the interaction between production and consumption, as critical clubbers employ genre ideals to take promoters to task, even though despite such efforts, social hierarchies are typically kept in place.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to the geographical study of cultural production a thorough understanding of how music genres shape and remake socio-spatial inequalities – particularly racial and gender inequalities. Rather than treating music genre as a purely descriptive term for a musical style, I understand music genre as a way to comprehend social structures and collective action in the popular music industries, as genres organise people, music and cultural production within a system of symbolic classification (Lena 2012). In order to analyse the role of genre in its full potential, I use the insights of critical social theories of cultural production – most notably the cultural industries framework, that combines a politics of production with a politics of aesthetics, genre and representation (Hesmondhalgh 2013a; Saha 2018). This provides a second theoretical opportunity: to investigate what a geographical analysis of the culture industries can add to a framework in which geography only plays a marginal role⁶. The nightclub sector, as part of the live music industries, appears an ideal case to do so, given the significant role of the club spaces where consumption takes place, the local and urban context and the international networked touring economy of DJs. To add a geographical focus, this theoretical framework connects insights from scholarship on nightlife and music in geography and cultural studies, such as the formation of musical identities and the role of regulation, to cultural production. In short, this theoretical framework will provide an overview on the (often unequal) distribution of the opportunities for emotional and musical enrichment in the city at night (Hesmondhalgh 2013b).

Section 2.1 starts with a discussion of economic geographies of cultural production, specifically those related to music and nightlife, arguing for the need for a more thorough understanding of cultural products and social inequalities in this field of research. In section 2.2 I turn to critical sociological theories of cultural production that have attempted to connect production and product, notably Adorno and Horkheimer's (1993[1944]) text on *The Culture Industry* and Bourdieu's (1996) theory of artistic fields, before introducing the cultural industries framework as a critique on these historically influential works. I argue the cultural industries framework is better equipped to analyse the complexities and ambiguities of commercial music production, particularly when it comes to race and gender. It engages with 'lowbrow' cultural production beyond a simplistic dismissal of 'pre-existing forms to cater pre-existing demands' (as Bourdieu does) (Hesmondhalgh 2006) and does not treat commodification as inevitably leading to sameness (as Adorno and Horkheimer (1993[1944]) do). Instead, the framework uses a Marx-inspired conceptualisation that posits that commodification enables production, producing goods for use and for exchange, but also has constraining and destructive aspects, making it a fundamentally ambiguous process (Hesmondhalgh 2013a). After explaining the rationale behind the cultural industries framework, I

⁶ While the cultural industries framework has not been subjected to this geographical critique (to my knowledge) my criticism does contain similarities with Pratt's (2004) comments on a lack of a spatial focus in the sociological 'production of culture' perspective.

will go more into depth into what a geographical analysis using this framework can add to studies of cultural production.

In section 2.3 I will adapt the framework to the live music and clubbing sector, drawing attention to how cultural industries research can be 'spatialised', as nightlife production is a form of place-making that reconfigures, segregates and excludes socio-musical identities (Bailey 2014; Melville 2020). The section focuses on the role of space and place in connecting music genres to social identities, highlighting that in research that makes these connections, the role of cultural production has often been neglected (Carrington and Wilson 2004). Section 2.4 deals with the urbanist literature on nightlife and regulation, placing nightclubs in their urban context and discussing how music genres shape state-led regulation and clubs' door policies. I emphasise that nightlife regulation is not only a practice of political bodies, but also that clubs use cultural production to regulate audiences. The last sections, 2.5 and 2.6, go into depth into studies of (institutionalised) inequalities in the music industries, specifically regarding gender and race. These discussions combine a focus on how gender and race structure cultural production with an assessment of the literature on the gendering and racialisation of music. It will connect these topics with the earlier arguments advocating a spatial approach to genre and the cultural industries framework. To investigate these new questions, the second half (section 2.3 to 2.6) of the theoretical framework engages with an interdisciplinary array of theoretical traditions, including cultural geography, cultural studies, critical theories of race, gender and sexuality and urban studies. In doing so, I contribute to building a critical framework for the study of social inequalities in the cultural industries that shows how genre and aesthetics are formative of socio-spatial differences.

2.1 Economic Geographies of Cultural Production

Economic geographers have sought to demystify the glamorous cities that are home to artistic geniuses by highlighting the social and material conditions that have created these place-myths (Lash and Urry 1994). Rather than perceiving the emergence, growth and persistence of economic agglomerations in the cultural industries as natural coincidences, they looked for explanations to why, where and when cultural industries thrive, focusing on politically and socially created regionally specific competitive advantages (Scott 2000). With respect to the music industries, the digitalisation of music production has made it easier to record from home, decreasing the importance of traditional recording studios located in cultural metropolises such as London (Leyshon 2009). The availability of inexpensive music recording software may allow musicians to live anywhere and online distribution through streaming services and digital files may allow artists to bypass traditional gatekeepers, but economic geographers have found that locality and cultural clusters remain important (Watson 2008; Virani 2012). In the record industry it has been argued that secondary clusters, such as Paris, have emerged outside of global music hubs such as London, Los Angeles and New York (Brandellero and Pfeffer 2011), while recently more attention has been devoted to the soft infrastructure of music scenes: the formal and informal networks musicians maintain with each other, cultural intermediaries and other creative producers (such as

(fashion) designers) (Hracs 2009; Hauge and Hracs 2010; Hracs 2016; Kloosterman and Brandellero 2016). When it comes to electronic dance music, such an approach highlights the way networks of artists, producers, promoters, clubs, record labels and record stores (and other creative disciplines) support each other within their local environment, while also maintaining international connections with creative producers in similar niches abroad (van Heur 2009; Lange and Bürkner 2013). The work on soft infrastructures devotes more attention to human agency, especially as it conceptualises cultural activity in the city as ‘scenes’ or ‘place-based communities’, rather than as ‘economic agglomerations’ as is the case in earlier geographical theories of cultural industries (Kloosterman 2015).

Both the agglomeration and scene perspective have highlighted the importance of local political and socio-economic context as prerequisites for sustainable cultural industries, whether it be through investing in research and training facilities (Scott 2000) or facilitating affordable rehearsal and performance spaces (Seman 2010). Regarding nightclubs, economic geographers have primarily studied the thriving house and techno scene of Berlin to theorise the significance of geography. Researchers have highlighted how a variety of factors have contributed to its establishment and continued cultural and economic relevance: an abundance of space, an initial lack of regulation, residential resistance to redevelopment plans, cheap rents, a slow pace of living and eventual incorporation in the city’s economic and cultural goals (van Heur 2009; Bader and Scharenberg 2010; Rapp 2010; Dorst 2015; Füller et al. 2018). So, through spatial opportunities, a friendly regulatory environment (for example, regarding curfews and drugs) and acknowledgement of electronic dance music’s cultural and economic value, Berlin’s clubs have become meeting places for the exchange and promotion of certain genres of electronic dance music (Rapp 2010; Dorst 2015). This has produced a cultural landscape of not only clubs, but also record stores and labels, which are all complementary to one another in further developing the genre (Lange and Bürkner 2013). A study on Dunedin, New Zealand highlights that its characteristics as a small student town (a young population, a demand for nightlife) provides opportunities for starting DJs that would not have been as readily available in larger cities such as Auckland or Wellington (McGregor and Gibson 2009).

In general, research in economic geography on cultural industries has shown where and when cultural production agglomerations emerge and grow (Scott 2000; Currid 2007; Kloosterman and Brandellero 2016) and where and when music scenes thrive (Seman 2010; Lange and Bürkner 2013; Hracs 2016; Virani 2016). However, this body of research has mainly focused on the challenges and struggles of cultural producers, scenes and industries to create or maintain a place in cities, but has not had a sufficient eye for the internal inequalities *within* those scenes and industries. An exception that shows the significance of music genre in the formation of these inequalities, is Fraser and Ettinger’s (2008) work, that shows that the 1990s London-based alternative economy of drum & bass records (‘dub plate culture’⁷) and pirate radio fostered the

⁷ Producers would press their records on cheap dub-plates that could only be played a limited number of times and where sold illegally. In this way, the scene could remain out of the hands of the mainstream record industry.

development of many genres popular among multicultural youth (jungle, drum & bass, dubstep, grime) that could not find a place at regular record labels. Here, the authors combine economic geography's preoccupation with value creation with a concern for the social meaning of marginalised cultural practices of young urban Black communities. While they do briefly analyse gender divisions in the scene, they leave the music itself out of the equation, as a result giving a somewhat limited explanation for why the genre was off-limits for 'mainstream' tastes and why there is a lack of participation of women. In order to understand why certain social groups take in a subaltern position in musical landscapes, music genre can be telling: genres come with specific conventions, histories and orientations that may not easily fit in hegemonic production practices or follow cultural ideals that are disregarded by powerful, business-defining industry players (Negus 2002; Gray 2005; Lena 2012).

Still, Fraser and Ettinger's (2008) article on dub plate culture is an important shift from work in economic geography that describes musical styles in vague terms, relying on general descriptors such as 'current trends,' and defining creativity predominantly in relation to economic innovation (see Scott 2000; Lange and Bürkner 2013). This brand of economic geography overlooks how in music the cultural and the economic are entangled, which becomes apparent in genre conventions: in the rock genre the recorded album is the most important cultural format (Negus 2002), but in 1970s disco the 12" vinyl single was introduced as a key audio carrier because the genre marketing was oriented towards DJs that use records for live mixing (Lawrence 2003). Similarly, for DJs in the niche-edm genre touring works differently than for live artists: since professional DJs mainly play on weekends at night and have less equipment than bands, they usually fly out every weekend and spend the beginning of the week at home, meaning touring is not limited to confined periods. These production conventions highlight that economic geographies of dance music would benefit from a more holistic, thick account of genre that could help explain how the economic is shaped by music genre's orientation, conventions, cultural politics and classification systems – and vice versa (Lena 2012). It is in the distinctions between genres and the social meanings and representations they produce, that popular culture manifests itself as a site of struggle, shaping and reconstituting social, political, economic and cultural relations (Carrington and Wilson 2004; Hall 2006 [1981]; Fraser and Ettinger 2008).

This understanding, in turn, calls for a geography of the cultural industries – and electronic dance music in particular – that is more sensitive to power, genre and social identities (Carrington and Wilson 2004). In Scott's widely cited economic geography monograph *The Cultural Economy of Cities* (2000) these issues get a mention on the very first page, when he states that even counterculture cannot resist commodification, mentioning Black consciousness, feminism, punk fashion and gay lifestyles. For Scott this is central to his understanding of the cultural industries, as exemplary of what he sees as the simultaneously progressive and regressive tendencies of capitalism. However, he does not engage with these four forms of counterculture in the remainder of the book. Scott (2000: 15) states culture raises important questions about identity and power, but in his analysis of, for example, French cinema he structures his argument around (a lack of) competitiveness and economic innovation (Scott 2000: 111), which shows that ultimately the main

concern of his theory is the economic structure of artistic fields, rather than the relation between cultural production and social inequalities, social meaning or cultural representation. That is why I will now turn to critical theories of cultural production from outside of economic geography (most notably in sociology and cultural studies) in order arrive at a theory of cultural production better equipped to explore the entanglement of the production of culture, genre and power.

2.2 Critical Social Theories of the Arts and the Cultural industries

This section provides an overview of social theories of cultural production that have sought to understand how the organisation of the cultural industries shapes artistic products. The first is Adorno and Horkheimer's Culture Industry perspective, that posits quite crudely that due to mass production and standardisation cultural products no longer need to pretend they are art (Adorno and Horkheimer 1993[1944]). I will focus on how this culturally pessimist narrative still shapes music and nightlife research to this day. The second is a discussion of Bourdieu's critical sociological framework that connects cultural production and artistic value to social differentiation (Bourdieu 1996). After explaining the theoretical underpinnings briefly, I will go into the criticism on this work, that highlights its limited applicability to the cultural valuation of popular music outside of the French context. Third, I will introduce the cultural industries framework as a theory that is much better equipped to deal with the contemporary ambiguities, complexities and struggles within cultural production (Hesmondhalgh 2013a), although it has not been applied to the nightlife industries yet (and seldom to the live music industries more generally). This comes with challenges and possibilities, which will be the focus of the remainder of this theoretical framework.

2.2.1 The Legacy of The Culture Industry

The classic framework developed by Adorno and Horkheimer (commonly known as The Culture Industry perspective) (1993 [1944]) highlights

how practices, form and content of popular music are made to conform to a range of organizational constraints and commercial criteria, highlighting the impact of patterns of capitalist ownership on the creative work of artists and the options available to consume. (Negus 1999: 490).

The position it takes is that culture loses its ability as a form of utopian critique as it is made into a product to be bought and sold by a monolithic cultural industry – the singular use of 'industry' suggests all different forms of cultural production are characterised by the same logic (Hesmondhalgh 2013a). It is a form of cultural pessimism that echoes in classic cultural studies narratives of alternative consumption as well, where subcultures are shaped by radical acts of resistance only to lose their political significance as they are co-opted by big business (Hebdige 1979; Krims 2007). More recently, researchers have argued that The Culture Industry perspective is not well equipped to deal with the ambivalences of advanced capitalism, where a concentration of ownership goes hand-in-hand with a deconcentration of control, exemplified in the way major

record labels start specialist 'indie' imprints that cater to specific markets (Krimms 2007; Hesmondhalgh 2013a). Moreover, even within the cultural industries and processes of commodification, the meaning of culture remains a site of political and social struggle (Hall 2006 [1981]), where under some circumstances radical narratives can be enabled through capitalist production (Gray 2005).

In his study of the music industry in the 1990s, Negus (1999) seeks to criticise an all too simplistic conception of capitalism as a homogenising force inevitably leading to standardised cultural products, a perspective he dubs 'industry produces culture'. He argues that the 'industry produces culture' approach insufficiently considers the larger cultural frameworks and narratives that inform industry practices (Negus 1999). These frameworks shape the organisation of the music industries, which means that 'culture produces industry' (Negus 1999). Genre forms an important part of his argument: he argues rock culture in the music industry has come with a set of practices, including the importance of the album, the Romantic notion of individual, masculine artistic geniuses who write their own music and ideas on how a band's career should develop (Negus 2002). While these are all cultural ideals that are specific to a music style and industry that developed in Europe and North America in the 1950s and 1960s, they have important economic implications for how music is produced, distributed and consumed. Negus sees the rock paradigm as the outcome of the sociological biographies of the staff working in the music industries, whose taste dispositions are influential in how the music departments of the big entertainment companies are organised, which explains why hip-hop departments are most vulnerable to budget cuts (Negus 1999).

However, the crude cultural pessimism of Adorno and Horkheimer continues to haunt nightlife and clubbing research. Anderson (2009b) uses Negus' framework to understand the commercialisation of the performance side of music production, notably the Philadelphia rave scene. Noting the decline of ideals of Peace, Love, Unity and Respect (which characterised rave cultures globally in the early 1990s) and homogenisation of audiences (increasingly white and middle class), she asks whether this alteration is just produced by changes in the cultural industry or whether other factors (social, cultural, political) play a role as well. Her work provides a useful addition to Negus' framework as it spatialises genre by looking for explanations beyond the increasing commercial viability of house, but towards regulatory practices regarding licensing and drug use and the development of sub-genres that led to audience divisions in the cities' clubs. This speaks to a point that I will discuss in sub-section 2.4 in more detail, namely that cultural industries approaches, for their lack of attention to musical performance often shows limited or no engagement with the urban context. However, Anderson's (2009b) empirical evidence for why rave's ideals have eroded is based on interviews with scene participants whose stories she appears to take at face value, not accounting for nostalgia or overestimation of underrepresented groups' presence (Malbon 1999; Puwar 2004). In more general terms, while commercialisation is not the sole driving force in the decline of a scene and its transgressive social values, it is still the main explanatory factor, echoing Adorno and Horkheimer's (1993[1944]) logic. In this way Anderson appears oblivious to the mechanisms of exclusion that shaped the dance scenes of yesteryear, even when they were

multicultural (as diverse publics do not mean that exclusion is absent), that 'commercialisation' by itself cannot account for (Hesmondhalgh 1997; Lawrence 2003; Melville 2020).

The Culture Industry perspective also lingers on in the ownership-focused political economy framework of Chatterton and Hollands' *Urban Nightscapes: Youth Pleasures, Pleasure Spaces and Corporate Power* (2003). The authors divide nightlife venues into three categories: mainstream (branded and themed clubs and pubs), alternative (anti-corporate or non-corporate, at least independent) and residual (from older working-class pubs to homeless people). Chatterton and Hollands (2003) argue that corporatisation of nightlife is the main driver behind the spatial transformation of the night-time economy, in which the same pub-chains dominate city centres all through the UK, catering to young, middle-class taste. At the same time, independently owned pubs and clubs are pushed to the periphery of the city and working-class pubs have become a signifier of the city of dirt, 'the old urban', representative of a different, bygone economy (Chatterton and Hollands 2003). Both non-mainstream types of nightlife are – given their lack of economic stability – more precarious. They are more vulnerable to regulation demands (as security and noise reduction often cost money) and more likely to be bought out (Chatterton and Hollands 2003). In their typology, middle-class taste is a somewhat confusing signifier here that can mean various things at once. Here, Chatterton and Hollands (2003) refer to the design-heavy themed and branded high street pub chains as exemplary. However, they do not explain why alternative venues focusing on niche genres would be any less middle-class in terms of production or consumption.

The typology of nightlife venues Chatterton and Hollands (2003) provide could benefit from academic criticism on Adorno and Horkheimer's Culture Industry ideas. For example, they describe alternative venues as less exclusionary spaces of consumption with a stronger sense of place and actively engaged audiences but endangered by corporate power and the entrepreneurial state. First, it is questionable whether independent ownership inevitably produces a more democratic and inclusive industry culture. Hesmondhalgh (1998) takes on this issue regarding the rise of independent electronic dance music labels in the 1990s. He notes that these labels resist certain industry practices, for example they are less album-centred, that there is a lack of interest in rock values such as authenticity and that individual star artists are less important because producers use pseudonyms and records are marketed through genre. However, writing in the 1990s on an industry that was much smaller than it was in the late 2010s, Hesmondhalgh (1998) was already sceptical about the direction that independent dance labels took: they did not sign their artists to better deals than majors and were keen to go along with major label distribution networks, while at the same time major labels set up specialised imprints copying independent label's mode of value creation and artistic legitimisation. Second, the relationship between alternative venues and governance is fuzzier than Chatterton and Hollands (2003) describe. Research on the Toronto DIY-scene shows it can be difficult to distinguish a grassroots indie scene from a top-down creative policy, as the latter creates the conditions for the existence of the former, and in their aim to enhance the cultural life of a city they may share similar objectives (even if they desire different outcomes) (Finch 2015). While DIY-communities and independent venues are sometimes resistant

to the use of culture as a means for economic growth, their contribution to the place-myth of cities means they often cannot escape being part of such a strategy (Keith 2005; Krims 2007).

2.2.2 Bourdieu, Artistic Fields and Cultural Production

Where economic geographers deconstructed the place-myths of cities as ‘naturally’ creative by highlighting the institutional context in which art is produced (Scott 2000; Currid 2007; Leyshon 2009; Brandellero and Pfeffer 2011), a similar approach is taken in the sociology of art when it comes to deconstructing the myth of the artist as individual genius through highlighting cultural production (Bourdieu 1988). The sociology of art shows that social inequalities in the arts are not ‘natural’ (the outcomes of a meritocratic environment where some simply are more talented than others) but require a sociological explanation. Most influential in this tradition is the French sociologist Bourdieu (1996), who argues that the artistic field is unique in its competition for cultural legitimacy, as actors position themselves more towards the ‘autonomous’ pole, informing their practice by a ‘pure, disinterested’ gaze rather than producing for sheer enjoyment or economic gain. In short: art for art’s sake. He couples this economic analysis of the struggle for prestige with a critique on the assessment of art: classification systems may seem ‘apolitical’, but they in fact reflect class-, time-, and place-specific constructions (Bourdieu 1984; 1996). Here, he analyses aesthetic judgment through a historical lens, tracing back the roots of the highly valued notion of ‘pure’ art to the social conditions under which this modernist aesthetic developed in the 19th century (Bourdieu 1988). This aesthetic has produced a hierarchisation of the artistic product that is then reproduced in various institutions (education, publishing, criticism), through which ‘highbrow’ taste and ‘lowbrow’ taste have become tied to class and form a key element in the social reproduction of inequalities (Bourdieu 1984).

While Bourdieu valued music as one of the most class-dividing forms of art (Bourdieu 1984), his empirical work on cultural production mainly focuses on the literary and visual arts fields (Bourdieu 1996). In music sociology, Bourdieu has been criticised because in popular music class divisions play out differently, given elite discourse values an omnivore taste over traditional ‘highbrow’ culture (Peterson and Kern 1996). Indeed, Bourdieu (1996) analyses small-scale production in more depth than large-scale commercial production, which he perceives as catering ‘pre-existing forms’ to ‘pre-existing demands’, overlooking artistic innovations that have taken place in the mainstream music industries and showing obliviousness to how popularity and prestige go hand-in-hand in consecration discourses⁸ formed around ‘commercial’ music (Hesmondhalgh 2006). It has been pointed out for example, that autonomy does not exist in opposition to commercialism, but is often a part of it: promoting an artist as individual genius is used in large-scale cultural production as a successful commercial strategy (Banks 2010). At the same time, studies more critical of Bourdieu have too often ignored small-scale production (Hesmondhalgh 2006) but have shown the entanglement of ‘mainstream’ and ‘underground’ musical styles and audience formations which

⁸ Making distinctions between the artistic works that are worthy of admiration and the many that are ‘profane’ (Bourdieu 1984)

suggests that mass production and restricted production cannot just be analysed in perfect opposition to each other⁹, as Bourdieu would posit (Thornton 1995; Böse 2005; Hesmondhalgh 2006). The criticism on Bourdieu also points at differences between French and Anglophone cultural consumption and production (Lamont 1992; Hesmondhalgh 2013b), pressing the need for an assessment of cultural production that is not only more sensitive to artistic genre, but also to institutional context, history and geography.

In her more general criticism of the academic project of Bourdieu, Born (2010) argues that his relational model lacks historical specificity. His emphasis on the position-taking of artistic actors is too structuralist, glossing over the site-specific, temporal meanings of artistic practices and the cultural artefacts they produce (other than class domination), thereby not sufficiently taking into account how and when artists or intermediaries (can) intervene in hegemonic classification systems (Born 2010). To apply this criticism to the field, she does ethnographies of what she calls 'symptomatic' institutions, analysing them at a crucial moment in time, in cultural history generally and history of the artistic discipline specifically. The first part of such an analysis would then focus on the internal divisions within a specific industry, as a way of understanding the characteristics of an artistic genre as well as the conditions for creativity. An example is her study of the neoliberalisation of the BBC in the late 1990s, an institution that already was a microcosm of class in Britain as its increasingly precarious employment conditions "weakened the ethical identification of its workforce" (Born 2010: 190). To 'keep up with the times', Born (2010) argues that the BBC started to broadcast increasingly populist content, which more and more resembled commercial television, while in general fewer artistic risks were taken. However, while the economic is important in this respect, it is not the sole explanatory variable. More specifically, with regard to television drama, Born (2010) argues that while high costs and risk averse policy contributed to its crisis, there was also an important need for reinvention as British social realism (the dominant genre) was thought to risk becoming a self-pastiche. Within subgenres of television drama, both economic conditions and socially informed possibilities for aesthetic innovation were conditional factors in its varying success (Born 2010).

Born's (2010) interventions can also be applied to music production: Haynes' *Music, Difference and the Residue of Race* (2013) on world music record labels provides an interesting example of the interweaving of institutional culture, economy, geography and the cultural objects it produces. Haynes highlights the construction of the term 'world music' for example, which originated from a music industry representatives meeting (including from radio, record labels and record stores) at a London pub in 1987 who decided to start a campaign to sell and stock all non-western music under one denominator (Haynes 2013). While it is a highly debated genre label, Haynes (2013) finds industry professionals defend it because it does its 'commercial work'. Here, she points out how commodification of culture is inevitably tied up with the industry's conception of the audience. A specific example is the way Youssou N'Dour's music was initially treated: his Mbalax blended

⁹ It is worth noting here that some nightclubs can be characterised as small-scale commercial production: small size does not inevitable mean they focus on niche music genres.

African-Caribbean music, western pop and Wolof Folk, but was still considered too dense and inaccessible for non-African audiences (Haynes 2013). As part of her argument for more analytical attention to aesthetics, Born (2010) already calls for a critical evaluation of western artistic criteria such as originality and novelty. The history of western art is often told as a story of innovation and progress (through categories such as ‘classicism’, ‘modernism’ and ‘avant-garde’), but such a linear analysis dismisses or ignores non-western forms of art that are centred around different value systems (Born 2010). Haynes (2013) contributes to that by adding hybridity to the equation. An analysis of how genre hybrids come to be thought of as commercially viable requires, in this case, an understanding of both the aesthetics of western and West-African popular music as well as the economic functioning of the music industry, which eventually provides a critical understanding of how music travels and takes on new meanings in countries of destination.

These historical, genre-specific analyses highlight the shortcomings and limitations of analysing all cultural meanings and production through class domination. Bourdieu’s distinction between ‘highbrow’ and ‘lowbrow’ culture is therefore likely to be of limited explanatory power to understanding the inter-genre and intra-genre distinction of the music that is played in Amsterdam’s nightclubs, which is also reflected in scholarly work on these musical styles. Disco, house, techno, reggae, hip-hop and dancehall have all been analysed in ways that highlight possibilities and constraints for an emancipatory cultural politics around race, gender and sexuality (Gilroy 1993; Rose 1994; Hesmondhalgh 1997; Lawrence 2003; Niaah 2008; Shabazz 2014; Garcia 2018). In a similar vein, the cultural consumption of the Black middle-class highlights consecration discourses that critically examine the whiteness of the western modernist tradition both in terms of its representations (imagery that devalues Black life and art) and its spaces (feeling out of place in museums) (Meghji 2019). Distinction materialises through a wide variety of repertoires that are not all reducible to class (Born 2010). In electronic dance music styles, boundary work (Lamont and Molnar 2002) often occurs through references to the emancipatory potential of night worlds of the past (in which gender, race and sexuality play a key role) (Garcia 2018; moore 2018), suggesting that quality criteria are formulated in socially engaged ways that (at least partially) divert from modernist conceptions of artistic value.

A socially reflexive account as evaluation repertoire of art is not fully recognised in Bourdieu’s work (Hanquinet et al. 2014; Meghji 2019). It is important to consider that music is representational, in that it offers experiences that shape our thinking about social groups, and that representation is tied to questions of aesthetic value. In his essay ‘New ethnicities’ (1996), Hall reflects on a debate between Salman Rushdie and himself about two films by Black filmmakers (*Handsworth Songs* (1987) and *The Passion of Remembrance* (1986)). Hall’s main issue with Rushdie’s dismissal of the films was not so much his negative judgment, but rather his use of “transcendental, canonical cultural categories” (Hall 1996: 448), that seemed to exist ‘out there’, as if they were universal. Hall explains the quality of the aforementioned films resides in their divergence from a film industry where Black people are only hired to play two roles: a noble savage or a violent avenger. In doing so, he pleads for another aesthetic position, one in which the quality of a movie can also be assessed by addressing its regime of representation, for example “its refusal to represent the

Black experience in Britain as monolithic, self-contained, sexually stabilized and always ‘right-on’” (Hall 1996: 449). While Hall does not address the cultural production of representations of race in his work (Saha 2018), he advocates through this debate with Rushdie for a more socially engaged repertoire of artistic valuation in response to historical, geographical and institutional context. This call for context is important for an analysis of club music genres: they are relatively recent musical styles (emerged in their earliest forms in the 1970s and 1980s) and characterised by genre labels rapidly following up on each other (suggesting different quality criteria).

To illustrate how classification systems in electronic dance music come into being, I will contrast two researchers who have analysed electronic dance music’s consecration discourses as part of an emerging canon, a system of evaluations and resources that privileges one set of practices, while delegitimising others (Gray 2005). As one of the first academics to write about electronic dance music, Straw (1991) analyses the emergence of the genre in relation to the canonisation of alternative rock. He argues that alternative rock culture has fostered a stable canon of earlier music, through reissuing and revisiting certain musical styles such as 1960s psychedelia, which makes a certain degree of connoisseurship necessary for new entrants in the scene (Straw 1991). Globally, this led to a common musical cosmopolitanism that is reproduced in local scenes through similar aesthetic values (Straw 1991). Dance music on the contrary, Straw (1991) argues, is not rooted in such fixed meanings, is more temporal and has no fixed centre, (one genre quickly follows up the other), so it brings together the worlds of subculture, top 40 and DIY fashion, drawing more diverse crowds. It is the lack of canonisation and the absence of clear formulations of artistic value that constitutes dance’s low entry barrier (Straw 1991). Straw’s (1991) idea of electronic dance music as a more democratic and inclusive genre has similarities with early studies of rave, which also focused on the genre’s potential as a transgressive agent in the dissolution of fixed cultural categories (McRobbie 1994).

Like Straw, McLeod (2001) shares an interest in the canonisation of genres, analysing the way electronic dance music styles quickly follow up one another as part of marketing strategies of record labels to sell a genre that originated in mainly Black, working-class urban centres to a largely white, middle-class audience. McLeod (2001) analyses the boundary work that genres do, with social differentiation not only understood in terms of class, but also primarily in terms of race and ethnicity, including references to gender and sexuality. For example, he points to the emergence of genre labels that strip a genre of its Black identity, such as the record industry led shift from house to techno, the music media term trip-hop or the addition of the adjective ‘intelligent’ to a genre with Black connotations such as jungle (McLeod 2001). Sometimes his examples lack precision: he understands trip-hop as a genre label that signifies whiteness, which surpasses how artists like Tricky, categorised under that label, use Black musical vernacular and express Black identity (Reynolds 2013). However, McLeod (2001) successfully offers a compelling ground of critique on Straw’s (1991) account of a seemingly hierarchy-free music genre, showing how in electronic dance music different forms of canonisation simultaneously developed throughout the 1990s.

All in all, this section argues that the Bourdieusian framework has trouble explaining the ambiguities of commercial cultural production (Hesmondhalgh 2006). Since his model lacks historical, geographical and institutional specificity, its structuralism has an insufficient eye for the temporal meanings of cultural works (Born 2011), which means it is of limited applicability to contemporary popular music characterised by hybridity (Haynes 2013) or social reflexivity (Gilroy 1993). Electronic dance music is a case in point: the rapidly changing genre labels and the centrality of race, gender and sexuality in genre ideals (McLeod 2001; Garcia 2018) demand an approach that adequately captures temporal and geographical variation. It is worth noting while this thesis diverts from a Bourdieusian analysis on the basis of the arguments in this section, I do think some of Bourdieu's concepts such as 'distinction' or 'consecration' (Bourdieu 1984) or elaborations of concepts such as 'subcultural capital' (Thornton 1995) remain valuable, which is why I continue to use them in this thesis.

2.2.3 The Cultural Industries Framework

The cultural industries approach is better equipped to capture the complex relationship between cultural production and the cultural product than the theories of Adorno and Horkheimer (1993[1944]) and Bourdieu (1984; 1996). The cultural industries framework understands the connection between cultural production and the artistic product through the process of commodification: how aesthetic expressions of culture are turned into a commodity to be sold and bought (Hesmondhalgh 2013a). As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, the cultural industries definition follows a Marxist understanding of commodification as an ambiguous process that enables production, but also has constraining and destructive aspects (Krims 2007; Hesmondhalgh 2013a). This definition is not only applicable to large-scale commercial production by multinational corporations, but also helps understanding the practices of small-scale independent labels (Hesmondhalgh 1998) or the subaltern economy of the drum and bass producers and dub plate culture (Fraser and Ettinger 2008) better. Independent labels and distributors do not form a refuge of ethically motivated creativity that is economically autonomous: they do not exist outside of commodification but can highlight the enabling features of commodification for the sake of aesthetic, sociocultural and political-economic goals (Hesmondhalgh 2013a; Saha 2018). The cultural industries decentralise control, which enables diversification of cultural products, but this development goes hand in hand with a centralisation of ownership and capital (Krims 2007). This means that the major-indie divide is increasingly fuzzy: artists signed under major labels or imprints of major labels can under some circumstances enjoy high amounts of creative freedom, discursively an element of cultural production that independent labels often pride themselves on (Hesmondhalgh 2013a).

To understand the implications of this definition of commodification it is useful to consider Saha's (2018) nuances of the 'culture produces industry' perspective for overstating the role of human agency (this perspective is discussed in section 2.2.1). Analysing how representations of race are produced by the cultural industries, Saha (2018) points out that the 'culture produces industry' perspective suggests that the hiring of a more ethnically diverse staff will inevitably lead to less

reductive representations of race. As a counterexample, he describes a British-Asian indie label that, as it wants to cross over to the mainstream, finds itself caught between its own criticism of Orientalist ideas of Asian identity and employing similar stereotypical tropes because it seems the only way to move up (Saha 2018). The general conclusion then is that breaking from 'familiar' formats can have serious consequences for the anticipated reception and economic viability of the artistic work.

This is a consequence of the unpredictable market cultural industries operate in, an unpredictability they respond to through the use of rationalisation techniques (Saha 2018). Saha identifies three: bureaucratisation, formatting and packaging. Through bureaucratisation, record labels have developed standardised procedures to deal with the unpredictability of their workers (Saha 2018). Formatting is a related technique that focuses on the unpredictability of consumers: the creation of standardised cultural texts that can be recreated across different local contexts with slight adjustments (Saha 2018). In nightclubs, examples of formats are '90s hip-hop special' or 'ladies' night'. Packaging is attaching symbols to the cultural product in the marketing process in order to make it stand out (Saha 2018). Saha (2018) states that in these practices cultural values are so entrenched in the institutional logic that the cultural and the economic are hard to distinguish or untangle, which suggests that the role of human agency to make a difference is overemphasised in the 'culture produces industry' perspective.

To understand the cultural industries framework in more detail, I will now sketch out its characteristics and apply these to nightclubs. The cultural industries function as sites of industrial production: of circulation of texts (cultural works: films, records, books, newspapers, et cetera), of production of social meaning and of work of artists – which comes with characteristics that are unique to the modes of production in these industries (Hesmondhalgh 2013a)¹⁰. In Table 1 below, I apply these characteristics to the study of music-oriented nightclubs, as part of the live music industries rather than the recorded music industries (even though they are at times entangled in the contemporary music economy: some club promoters run a record label too). Table 1 expands and adapts 'Box 0.2' (Hesmondhalgh 2013a: 26) to the study of music oriented nightclubs. The left column presents the distinctive features as mentioned in Box 0.2 (Hesmondhalgh 2013a), to which I have added summaries of Hesmondhalgh's explanations of these features (Hesmondhalgh 2013a: 26-33). The right column consists of my application of these features to music-oriented nightclubs, based on my research.

¹⁰ Hesmondhalgh (2013a: 18) defines theatre as 'peripheral cultural industries' as its production are often semi-industrial or non-industrial, even though their primary aim is 'the production and circulation of texts'. Clubs could be characterised as such too, however, they are much more embedded in the global music industries as sites of production and consumption where social meanings are transmitted. The framework has been used to analyse theatre (Saha 2013) before.

Table 1: Incorporating nightclubs in the cultural industries framework

Summary of distinctive features of the cultural industries (adapted from Hesmondhalgh 2013a: 26)	Relevance the study of music-oriented night clubs (my additions)
Risky business (Cultural industries face high economic risks because they operate in an uncertain, unpredictable market.)	Similar to recorded music: the taste of clubbers is hard to predict, prone to trends and subject to change.
Creativity versus commerce (Because cultural industries aim to produce quality artistic products but also need to operate as a viable business, there is a strong tension between creativity and commerce.)	There are various, competing discourses on what a good clubbing experience is, including forms of cultural differentiation and distinction. As clubs are private businesses, they are always to some degree led by economic incentives. At times cultural ideals are hard to combine with economic realities. The creative versus commerce tension is a more flexible notion than Bourdieu's 'pure, disinterested gaze' (Bourdieu 1996) and easier applicable across different contexts.
Misses are offset against hits by building a repertoire (The products that cultural industries produce are not always profitable. The hits compensate the misses.)	Clubs use compensation strategies. Two examples. First, clubs often rely on well-known DJ's or popular concepts on Friday and Saturday, while they may take more risks (trying new formulas, showcasing local talent) on other days of the week. Second, some clubs have multiple rooms where different genres are played, thereby catering to multiple crowds.
Concentration, integration and co-opting publicity. (In terms of ownership structure, large entertainment conglomerations have an increasing number of subdivisions and frequently buy independent businesses)	This has been a trend in UK nightlife (Chatterton and Hollands 2003) but seems less common in the Netherlands (Nabben 2010). However, in Amsterdam it is common for larger entrepreneurial firms to take over independent businesses.
Formatting: stars, genres and serials. (Producing templates that once successful can be easily redone in the same or other local contexts.)	Many clubs use 'party concepts': templates for nights based on genre or theme that give visitors an idea of what to expect. Concepts travel mostly locally and nationally, but there are international examples too.
Loose control of symbol creators (musicians, DJs, directors); tight control of distribution and marketing. (The common perception is that artistic creativity should only be loosely controlled, artists should be autonomous)	In the niche-edm genre, DJs typically have more creative freedom than in the eclectic genre. Some clubs use 'briefings' that provide a template for the night. However, programming, sales, regulation and marketing is more tightly controlled by clubs.
High production costs and low reproduction costs (film sets, studio recording are relatively expensive but producing/distributing the medium that carries the artistic product is relatively inexpensive)	In this respect, night clubs and music venues share more similarities with theatre than the recording industry. Reproduction costs often remain relatively high: new events need new bookings, the same number of staff, re-use of lighting, et cetera.
Semi-public goods; the need to create (artificial) scarcity. (Even though reproduction is easy cultural industries opt for limited screenings or available copies)	Like higher reproduction costs, artificial scarcity is also less defining for clubs. Still, some techniques are common. For example, letting a queue wait outside when it is still empty inside or inviting a high-profile artist to perform in a small venue, even though options with a larger capacity are available as well.

While Hesmondhalgh (2013: 17) mentions live music performance explicitly as part of the cultural industries, there is little engagement with the live music industries, which is also the case for other research that uses the same framework (see Saha 2018). As shown in *Table 1*, the nightclub sector contains many similarities with the framework. However, there are also differences between record companies and nightclubs that need addressing to adapt the cultural industries framework to nightclub's cultural production. First, clubs create temporary experiences for people to come together in physical spaces, as part of the experience economy, suggesting a much smaller distance – and often an entanglement – between production and consumption (Pratt 2004; Brennan-Horley 2007; Kartosen 2016; Mears 2016; Jansson and Hrac 2018). Socio-musical formations, as they come alive in club spaces, are made through more direct interactions between production and consumption. Second, clubs are open at night and unwelcome near residential areas, pointing towards the significance of the urban and policy context in achieving creative and economic goals, which includes clubs implementing regulatory measures as part of their cultural production process (Talbot and Böse 2007; Hae 2011a). These first two points relate to the theoretical contributions this thesis makes to the cultural industries framework: they highlight the significance of geography, the formative role of the spaces in which consumption takes place and the urban context to cultural production. Third, clubs have high reproduction costs, with the number of club nights per month limited spatially and temporally. This means that it is a form of small-scale production, but – unlike Bourdieu (1996) would posit – often with a strong commercial imperative. In that sense, this study contains similarities with the way the cultural industries framework has been used to analyse theatre (Saha 2013). Despite these three particularities of nightclubs' cultural production, I still believe the cultural industries framework is flexible enough to suit this study, which I will further explain in the next section.

2.2.4 Towards A More Geographical Approach to The Cultural Industries

With respect to the recording industry, the understanding of commodification central to the cultural industries has been employed in research with a more profound consideration of geography. The first is Krims (2007) cultural geography analysis of two New York City hip-hop subgenres (reality rap and knowledge rap¹¹) as he seeks to understand how capital diversifies culturally but segregates economically and spatially. He describes a shift in the 1990s in the reality rap style of hip-hop from a lyrical focus on ghetto realism to fantasy characters and affluence, while the knowledge rap style moved from education and humour to ghetto realism (Krims 2007). Against the backdrop of a gentrifying, increasingly sanitised city Krims (2007) aims to show how the contours of urban space shape and limit representation: as the wealth of reality rap stars increased they started documenting their lavish lifestyles, providing a new cultural expression of an increasingly sanitised

¹¹ Krims (2007) notes a musical difference between the two genres: reality rap (for example Wu-Tang Clan, Mobb Deep) is characterised by what he calls the 'hip-hop sublime', samples and instruments form a dense combination of musical layers, with sharply dissonant pitch combinations. Knowledge rap (for example A Tribe Called Quest) and its use of soul and jazz samples is musically more consonant.

city, while knowledge rap criticised this 'selling out' and began focusing on the left-behind ghetto. The main argument here is that it is not possible to simply categorise knowledge rap as the subaltern and reality rap as the dominant voice, but rather that there is a complex continuity between two forms of expressive culture, explained by Krims (2007) as having to do with changes in the objective relations of urban production. While this is an important theoretical argument, theorising the blurred distinction between major label and independently produced music, the mechanisms that led to this change remain vague. Krims does not combine a theoretical focus on the cultural industries with an empirical one, neglecting for example how record labels have responded to the increasing popularity of hip-hop and introduced new commodification strategies following its popularisation that shape cultural outcomes (Fitts 2008; Balaji 2009).

Balaji's research (2012) on Atlanta's hip-hop scene shows how important the geography of gatekeeping is in the production of cultural values, in this case authenticity. Despite the abundant possibilities to scout new talent online, major labels still choose to rely on local gatekeepers, who know their way in Atlanta, know the spaces where emerging talent performs (such as strip clubs) and also function as a go-between for rappers who are not familiar with the corporate industry (Balaji 2012). Local gatekeepers' skill to speak in different tongues takes away the tension Southern rappers feel when negotiating with executives in New York City or Los Angeles. This is more than just production practice. The discovery of new talent by local gatekeepers also establishes two key cultural values of hip-hop: authenticity and street credibility (Balaji 2012). The cultural product gains social meaning through the interactions between various gatekeepers, which solidify attachments to place, as the music travels from the strip clubs of Atlanta to the boardrooms of Los Angeles. Given that this is how ideas of the 'authentic' Black voice are reproduced in the cultural industries, Balaji (2012) shows how historical constructions of the Other are an inherent part of cultural production processes (see also, Balaji 2009).

In his work on representations race in the cultural industries, Saha (2018) draws on the work of Gray (2005), and the latter employs a more spatial language to understand the making of racial representations. Gray (2005) observes that Black artists today are not solely excluded, but in fact at times populate prestigious institutional spaces. This complicates Black cultural politics, according to Gray (2005): it is not merely about visibility and representation, but about what the strategic moves are that make inclusion possible, under what circumstances these moves are carried out and what consequences these moves have on industry practices. Analysing the institutionalisation and popularisation of jazz, he points towards the necessity of interrogating the spaces and places where the genre ideals, practices and conventions are formed and debated, but also where they are popularised and commodified (Gray 2005). In his own words, Gray aims to "develop a cartography of the institutional and social spaces necessary to produce and sustain Black self-representation under conditions of global transnational media conglomerates" (Gray 2005: 30-31). This is a crucial geographical addition to cultural industries research: it highlights the importance of the different scales on which cultural production operates. An independent cultural venue faces distinct local challenges (rent, regulation) as well as global ones (concentration of large entertainment conglomerations).

This is closely related to Niaah's (2008) geographical approach to music history. She understands music genres such as blues, dancehall and kwaito through the lens of space by "a mapping of the material and spatial conditions of performance" (Niaah 2008: 344), which holds a focus ranging from the character of specific events and venues to the politics of location to trans-local ties. This highlights that cultural production is fundamentally mediated by space and place, stressing the importance of music or nightclub venues as nodes in the production, circulation and distribution of music genres, as sites where social meaning is transmitted. This pairs well with systematic attention to a club sector characterised by a commodification process through which social meanings are produced that are, like in the rest of the cultural industries, complex, ambivalent and contested (Hesmondhalgh 2013a)

This section (2.2.3) has shown the importance of geography to the cultural production of social and symbolic meanings. As live performance, music venues and nightclubs have seldom been studied through the cultural industries framework, it is necessary to devote more attention to the specific operations of nightclubs in the remainder of this chapter. Centralising clubs in the circulation of texts (Hesmondhalgh 2013a) has consequences for the social meaning of industry-defined or journalism-defined genres because line-ups and club nights are based around local themes that shape distinct social formations (Stirling 2016). Clubs – as sites of music consumption – reflect and produce the social relations between mass-produced texts, place, performance and identities (Niaah 2008). The latter part of this theoretical framework therefore deals with research on clubs and nightlife specifically, stemming from experiential and urbanist approaches in geography, but also from cultural studies and ethnographic music studies. Just like Born's (2010) criticism of Bourdieu is informed by cultural anthropology and studies of non-western music and Saha's (2018) analysis of race and ethnicity in the cultural industries is inspired by critical race theory, my research on cultural production and social inequalities in nightclubs is informed by geography and cultural studies literature on genre, clubbing, nightlife and music that gives insight in not only production, but also in the consumption and regulation of club music genres, providing a more intricate understanding of the different practices that make the clubbing sector.

2.3 Genre-led Geographies of Cultural Production

Music genre is a useful analytical tool to understand connections between texts, industries and audiences (Hesmondhalgh 2005; Born 2011; Lena 2012). Defining genres is an inevitably messy exercise, as genres are marketing and journalism constructions that describe musical styles without clear boundaries (Thornton 1995; Hesmondhalgh 2013a). In electronic dance music, (sub)genre labels seem to appear and disappear faster than in rock, leading to a wide array of subtle differentiation and classification repertoires that make up a cluttered whole (McLeod 2001; van Venrooij 2015). Still, more than mere musical descriptors, genres signify a set of conventions for people working in music to make sense of the artistic product they acquire, produce, release and promote (Lena 2012). Genres encompass musical lineages that link the past to the present, new technologies to make music and connections to sociocultural contexts (Hesmondhalgh 2005; Bramwell 2015; Charles 2018). For the purpose of this thesis, I define genres holistically as

“systems of orientations, expectations, and conventions that bind together industry, performers, critics, and fans in making what they identify as a distinctive sort of music” (Lena 2012: 6). Genres are characterised by boundary work: genres come with musical ideals, that genre communities use to denote who does and who does not ‘belong’ in a genre (Lena 2012). Defined this way, genres are a central part of the production and consumption of music, providing insights into how social relations – and also inequalities – are formed by and form around music commodities (Negus 1999; Hesmondhalgh 2005; Mansvelt 2005). This section provides an overview of research on the relationship between genre, place and space to understand better the contribution a spatial approach to genre can make to cultural industries research. First, it looks into the relation between genre and socio-musical identities, then it analyses the global cultural flows of music genres, and finally it discusses the nightclub as a space where genres and social identities connect.

2.3.1 Genre and Social Formations

Born (2011) sees genre as a crucial element in the ways in which music ‘materialises’ social identities. For Born (2011), this process of materialisation takes place in a variety of ways, through what she calls ‘the four planes of social mediation’. In two instances social identities are constructed through music: this is when music genres are formative of social identities or when the rituals around music create ‘imagined’ communities (Born 2011). One could think here about symphonic metal that inspired locally dispersed goth identities (Hodkinson 2004). In the third instance, social identities exist prior to musical styles, which means that music is employed as part of wider social identity formations (Born 2011). An example is how Maori in New Zealand use American hip-hop to express and understand local forms of subordination (Lipsitz 1994). The fourth instance is that identity is made by the institutions that produce and distribute music, such as record labels, that attempt to steer consumption (Born 2011). For example, early UK house record labels tried to cater to tabloid-driven moral panics about unlicensed raves to create a subversive identity for the house genre (Thornton 1995). In short, music makes identity, music sparks identity, music reflects identity and identity is made by the institutions that produce music (Born 2011).

Genre is a key mechanism through which these musical imagined communities and social identities are articulated, allowing for multiple, spatially dispersed articulations going on at the same time (Hesmondhalgh 2005; Born 2011). From this follows an incentive to analyse the spaces where music is experienced, as precisely these spatial arrangements are formative of the way communities form around music genres (Lena 2012). Genre’s social formations are thus not only made through musical innovation and accompanying experiences, but also have a strong institutional dimension. Music companies and public institutions depart from specific aesthetic ideals, sometimes embedded in a specific social and political context that shape the conditions for the possibilities for and reception of musical styles (Gray 2005; Born 2011). The ‘culture produces industry’-perspective (see section 2.2.1) posits genres are central to the organisation of the music industries: in the 1990s rock and country were seen as stable ‘cash cows’ while hip-hop was

considered a 'wild cat' with an uncertain 'potential market growth', which is reflected in investments (Negus 1999).

The institutional importance of genres enables and constrains the spaces available for music-based identity formations: music genres that do not easily fit within industry conventions, find themselves produced and consumed through alternative formats transmitted through unofficial channels – consider the importance of dub plates and pirate radio in the development of grime, for example (Fraser and Ettinger 2008; White 2018; Melville 2020). Nightclubs function as spaces where genres and social identities come together too: New York City's disco nightclubs of the 1970s shaped the music industries' appetite for functionalist danceable music, while places such as David Mancuso's The Loft, where people from different walks of life danced together, shaped a social and cultural ethos around these records (Lawrence 2003). As music is disconnected from localities, its histories and associations linger on and becomes reified in spaces like radio stations or nightclubs through the efforts of local gatekeepers (Maalsen and McLean 2016). These efforts, made in cultural production, have seldom been at the centre of analytical attention when it comes to the relation between genre and space.

Understanding this relation is key to grasping the sociological dynamics of music genres. Space is central to Shabazz' (2014) theory of Black male-dominated hip-hop production in the United States. He looks at the history of the genre that originated in the public spaces of the Bronx in the 1970s, as working-class Black people had no easy access to indoor spaces of cultural production. Black men gatekept these public spaces, which were deemed unfit for women, echoing the idea that public space is where 'boys' should play and 'girls' are monitored (Shabazz 2014). Black men developed a masculine toughness as a reaction to local unsafety, which explains why in popular culture Black men came to be perceived as the 'rightful storytellers of the hood' (Shabazz 2014). The perceived 'danger' expressed in hip-hop vernacular proved to have far-reaching commercial viability beyond Black youth. However, as ghetto-centric hip-hop narratives became entrenched in genre conventions, but since Black women could not employ the same vernacular of 'danger' as a result of exclusion to public space, this created barriers for women to be recognised by the record industries as 'rightful storytellers' of the genre.

A spatially informed analysis of cultural production can not only help to understand why there are still so few female rappers (Shabazz 2014), but also how in other music genres, certain conventions produce inequalities between men and women, which might for example explain why across Europe female promoters and DJs are severely underrepresented (Gavanas and Reitsamer 2013). One could draw a parallel here to the hegemonic masculine presence (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005) in much of Europe's nightlife production: rave was born in illegal spaces and to this day unlicensed events remain an important route to introduce young entrepreneurs to club work. It is the masculine, entrepreneurial spirit of discovering unused, cheap space (McRobbie 2002) that continues to characterise the nightclub sector and shapes a culture of informality (Brennan-Horley 2007), a blurring of labour, economic exchange, friendship, camaraderie and rivalry that can be described as homosocial (Evers 2009). As this competition for scarce space is

seen as an inherent part of contemporary cultural economies, there is a lack of attention to the critical topic of who gets to own and define these spaces (McRobbie 2002). I analyse this culture of informality in more depth in section 2.5.2 and Chapter 5.

A spatial conception of cultural production highlights that nightlife genres are dependent on the availability of space, which becomes particularly apparent in studies of nightlife communities who are denied opportunities by mainstream institutions. Bailey's (2014) research on ballroom culture focuses on the place-making practices of Black LGBT communities in Detroit, who seek to transform the exclusionary realities of the heteronormative home and white-dominated gay nightlife, by organising ball events. Ball events are performance competitions where members' performances, who each belong to different 'houses' that serve as alternatives to biological families, are judged by rotating juries according to an alternative gender system. Despite this form of competition, these events create a temporal sense of possibility and freedom as they offer sociocultural affirmation in the liminal space between various everyday oppressions, located in parts of the city that can be violent, or at least inconvenient (Bailey 2014). What Bailey's (2014) research makes clear is that Black LGBT ball events, as a form of cultural production, are a way for marginalised communities to temporarily make place for themselves, as they cannot rely on the luxury of safe, permanent night spaces. The precarious presence of ballroom culture as a nightlife genre, allows for a parallel with music, showing local social formations around music genres are reliant on the availability of space, whether mainstream or underground, licenced or unlicensed (see also Hazzard-Gordon 1992; Melville 2020).

A focus on the cultural production of nightlife spaces can emphasise not only how space is created for marginalised forms, but also how mainstream music genres become or remain hegemonic, for example because they are part of tried-and-tested nightclub formats promoters use to reduce risk. While it is tempting to analyse nocturnal music scenes through their potential as emancipatory havens, it is crucial to note that nightlife reproduces and creates inequalities in terms of class, gender, race and sexuality (Gadir 2016; Garcia 2018). This thesis seeks to understand the role of genre in the production of these inequalities. While these inequalities are a key part of this chapter generally, in section 2.5 and 2.6 I will zoom in on gender and race inequalities, respectively.

2.3.2 The Global Cultural Flows of Music Genres

Music genres are not bound to national territories and the myriad of ways in which they travel places has profound implications for the social identities that form around and through music. In *The Black Atlantic* (1993) Gilroy understands Black musical formations as shaped by histories of exile, relocation and displacement (which includes, but is not limited to, enslavement). Through common elements in Black urban experiences (racial segregation, the memory of slavery, religion), Black musical communities across the Atlantic Ocean have given rise to cultural expressions that can be characterised through their 'polyphonic' fusion of modernist and populist aesthetics, which includes a commitment to the ethical value of music that entails the possibility of envisioning a better future (Gilroy 1993) – their 'genre ideal' (Lena 2012). The transnational flows of these

musical expressions are not without complexities: the origins of reggae in rhythm and blues were concealed when it travelled to Britain as a Jamaican style, gaining global recognition as an expression of pan-Caribbean culture (Gilroy 1993). The Black vernacular is mediated by place: how did Donald Byrd's stay in Paris change his style of jazz? (Gilroy 1993: 18). Gilroy's work is not a theory that heavily engages with the global cultural industries as transmitters of texts, distributing musical outings across the planet in a complex and contested variety of ways (Lipsitz 1994), but the socio-cultural dimensions of the theory provide a much-needed specificity to understand how music travels. Gilroy's work points towards the routes that make interactions possible, the spaces and places where people meet and exchange intergenerational historical and cultural knowledge, where an alternative public sphere is formed (see also Bramwell 2015).

The global circulation of music genres come with its own set of problematics. As music circulates between countries as an interchangeable commodity, attachments to place are not necessarily erased, but rather transformed (Lipsitz 1994). This creates a dialogue shaped by unequal power relations, in terms of geopolitical realities, differences in opportunities, legacies of colonialism and organisation of the cultural industries (Lipsitz 1994). Gilroy's (1993) concept of a Black alternative public sphere presupposes reciprocity, but as music travels and Black musical forms are adopted by white artists, such reciprocity is often absent. The musical endeavours of former Talking Heads-singer David Byrne, a white American man, in the 1980s provide an example: inspired by the music he heard in his Manhattan-neighbourhood he recorded a samba-inspired album with Caribbean musicians, but while he sings that love is 'like pizza in the rain', he uses Cuban Yoruba chants as background vocals which resonate with the collective memory of slavery (Lipsitz 1994). For Byrne then, this music signifies little more than exoticism, a spice that "can liven up the dull dish that is white mainstream culture" (hooks 1992: 21).

Byrne's music is not produced in a political vacuum: the global cultural industries are shaped by social inequalities and are primarily located in the global North, which means that starting and sustaining a career for non-western artists is incredibly hard, as they find themselves at great distance from gatekeepers, have limited local resources and often need to conform to western notions of taste or are essentialised as 'traditional' (Lipsitz 1994; Haynes 2013; de Beukelaer and Spence 2020). However, there could be more research into how transnational and trans-local flows of music genres lead to local paths of commodification. Especially when continental Europe is the destination for Anglophone genres, where cultural industries and audiences formulate historically Black genres' 'exotic appeal' using localised repertoires (such as French hip-hop in France: 'music from our streets' (Hammou 2016)) or globalised repertoires (such as in American jazz in Italy: 'African-American cool' (Varriale 2016)).

As music genres circulate across the globe, it is not just the attachments to place that are transformed, but also the relationship of the past to the present. In electronic dance music scenes in Europe, a strong nostalgia for the genre's origins in 1970s/1980s clubs in New York (The Loft, Paradise Garage) and Chicago (The Warehouse) as nocturnal places of refuge for racialised, queer communities, has led to a fetishisation of the past (Garcia 2018). For predominantly white

producers and consumers in Europe these ‘origin stories’ that centralise Blackness and queerness function as markers of the genre’s subcultural authenticity, while the same historiography ignores the continued local social formations and innovations of queer people of colour in the genre (Garcia 2018). Mainstream histories of the introduction of house in Europe centre whiteness: when the house genre arrived in London in the late 1980s it was understood as a ‘fundamental break’ with all earlier popular music and with the West End club scene (Melville 2020). However, such a view ignores the continuity between house and rave practices and already established forms of Black cultural production in the city (Melville 2020). Again, the availability of (public) space (and whose spaces are consecrated) is a key issue: warehouse raves and outdoor sound system culture already existed among diasporic Caribbean populations in London, so house and rave promoters could build on their existing knowledge when organising unlicensed parties (Melville 2020).

The social formations of genres thus take shape through their relationship to the past. In *The Black Atlantic* this relationship is an intergenerational, shared field of ethics for Black diasporic musical expressions (Gilroy 1993). In the house genre, the hegemonic European whiteness of the genre has, in the late 2010s, increasingly become a point of contestation precisely because the past is only a romanticised historical reference but this romanticisation does not translate to (recognition of) local ethically informed practices (Garcia 2018). Such a ‘forgetting’ enables the formation of new, politically problematic socio-musical identities around genres: techno has its roots in Black Detroit, but white clubbers in Rotterdam (the Netherlands) in the late 2010s find the appeal of techno parties in the muting of sexual desire (influenced by ecstasy consumption), constructing a ‘white sexuality’ that defines itself against multicultural R&B parties that are made sense of as ‘unconfined, sexual Other’ (van Bohemen and Roeling 2020). Melville (2020) argues that in many places in the UK and Europe techno has lost its genre orientation towards Black musical traditions. Crucially, genre ideals are not fixed, but reshaped and transformed by time place, which sometimes entails a ‘forgetting’ of Black history, which is what the case of Rotterdam’s clubber makes clear. In the previous sub-section (2.3.1), I already argued that to understand the formation of musical identities an interrogation of the spaces and places in which these connections are made is crucial. The next sub-section explains why clubs, as sites of consumption, are significant spaces for such identity formations.

2.3.3 Nightclubs as Spaces of Identity Formations

In the music industries, do nightclubs function as spaces that shape or change the political, cultural and social orientations of travelling music genres? Whilst studies that take on an experiential approach to nightlife (research that focuses on clubbers’ experiences, or more economically put: consumption, see sub-section 1.1) have analysed the significance of clubs in socio-musical identity formations, there remains a gap in research on how production and consumption interact. The cultural industries framework typically pays little attention to the role of consumption outside marketing research (Hesmondhalgh 2013a), but in this sub-section I argue consumption/experience is key to understanding the nuances of nightlife production, as entangled as the two are in the clubbing sector (Brennan-Horley 2007; Mears 2016).

In research on clubbing scenes in Berlin, Chicago and Paris, specifically on clubs where a more minimal form of electronic dance music is played, Garcia (2011) asks the question of how a sense of togetherness – that clubbers so often experience on dancefloors and mention as a reason for going out – comes into being. He notes that small gestures of care and recognition during club nights shape a ‘liquid solidarity’: on dancefloors there is no explicit talk of norms, but there are tacit rules that seem to be followed collectively, reducing strangeness while maintaining anonymity (Garcia 2011). However, while these very loose forms of affection can override difference, they can also function as a cover for inequity and exclusion (Garcia 2011). As some of the clubs in the study are known for their strict door policies, Garcia (2011) argues they seek to create an ‘embedded diversity’: the kind of alterity that falls within a venue’s idea of risk-free difference and helps to construct a slippery, tacit togetherness on the dancefloor. To give an example, a club’s objective may be to create a safer space for women, while at the club gate racist or ageist stereotypes inform the bouncer’s or door host’s assessment of (the likelihood of) ‘inappropriate behaviour’ (Garcia 2011). In some cases, there is a disciplining effect at work: bouncer’s practices may produce certain types of identity and behaviour because clubbers have come to know the strategies that allow them in (Garcia 2011; moore 2018). This sub-section offers a detailed account of how the interactions between clubs and clubbers shape socio-musical identities.

Experiential approaches explain how the feeling of radical equality and togetherness, that is so often part of a romantic narrative of electronic dance music (Hesmondhalgh 1997; Anderson 2009b), becomes possible. Malbon (1999) conceptualises togetherness and its social significance in clubbing as a form of vitality: everyday life is disrupted, the mundane is forgotten and the ecstatic becomes possible. Using Dyer’s (2002) ideas on utopianism as a ‘structure of feeling’ in Hollywood musicals, Malbon (1999) emphasises the role of light, colour and movement in constructing this experience. However, many experiential approaches, especially those indebted to non-representational theory like Malbon (1999), tend to universalise the clubbing experience too much, neglecting urban and economic context, glossing over social exclusion as a bodily experience as a reaction to exclusion (Saldanha 2005; Noxolo 2018). There is however experiential research that does consider how power relations shape nightlife experiences. Door policies are one example of exclusion as integral part of clubbing experiences (Garcia 2011; moore 2018). Social exclusion as part of the clubbing experience extends to the dancefloor: research on the goa rave scene shows how the dancefloors change in the ‘morning phase’ as Indian tourists leave the scene and white, western tourists enter who find the regular night ‘a dull affair’ suggesting temporality as factor in racial and subcultural distinction (Saldanha 2005). A similar mode of distinction around dancing is expressed in club owners’ disdain for hen parties ‘dancing around their handbags’ (Gadir 2016).

Buckland (2002) gives the corporeality of ‘improvised social dancing’ an urban dimension: she focuses on how queer people find a place to dance in New York City. She places the night-time lifeworlds of her interviewees in the context of the city’s ‘quality of life’-campaign in the 1990s that affected queer clubs disproportionately. This shows how clubbing experiences vary across clubs: some are home to very specific audiences, audiences that are marginalised in other clubs. Nightlife

spaces create fluid forms of belonging and a sense of collective history (Valentine 1995). Buckland's (2002) work helps to situate Garcia's (2011) argument on embedded diversity in the urban environment, illuminating that clubs, in order to keep the illusion of utopian togetherness on dancefloors alive, sometimes articulate the need to be inclusive on their own terms, to provide a place for experiences that cannot be experienced elsewhere, while at the same time they cannot be too different in terms of local and national policy. Making place for marginalised identities can be the result of targeted cultural production efforts. For example, in work on a Tel Aviv gay club, Misgav and Johnston (2014) quote a promotor who recognises a division has emerged between gay men and trans women as a result of a different party ethos and deliberately programs a DJ close to the transgender community in the small room, who does not play loud trance, the household genre in the big room. In this way, the promoter allows trans women to claim space. Such considerations show club nights are mutually constituted by performance, production and consumption alike, which is reflected in cultural production logic and shows nightclubs' significance as sites where connections between music genres and social identities are (re-)established.

2.4 The Cultural Regulation of Clubbing Audiences

This section focuses on an aspect of cultural production that is central in nightlife studies: regulation. Regulation here refers to government-led practices seeking to structure nightlife, often directed at ensuring safety, reducing noise and disorder and minimising health risks. There is a substantial body of research that focuses on how councils regulate nightlife through licensing, zoning laws and nightlife districts (Chatterton and Hollands 2003; Talbot 2004; Marsh 2006; Hae 2011a and 2011b; Eder and Öz 2015; Füller et al. 2018). But regulation is not limited to the government: organisers and clubbers self-regulate night-time leisure spaces too (Luckman 2000). They have a (financial) stake in a 'well-behaving' audience as well (Hobbs et al. 2000) or seek to include only specific taste communities (moore 2018). Door policies are the most well-known example of club-led regulation – in Amsterdam these formulated by clubs themselves but bound by policy regulations. Door policies are typically made sense of in terms of safety: clubs see door policies as a way to maximise the chance of a 'trouble'-free dancefloor, to decrease violence and harassment. Researchers have pointed out that such policies are profit oriented as safety increases middle-class spending power and that policy executions exclude on the basis of a combination of class, race/ethnicity, sexuality and gender (Hobbs et al. 2000; Chatterton and Hollands 2003; Hobbs et al. 2007; Grazian 2009; Garcia 2011; moore 2018). However, door policies are also oriented towards critical exclusion (see sub-section 2.3.3). As club nights strongly rely on audience interaction, and a feeling of community is so highly valued, attracting the 'right' crowd is seen as crucial for success (Garcia 2011; moore 2018). Strict door policies can function as "gateways to a special fantasy" (moore 2018: 123) and especially for niche-edm clubs where heteronormativity is not central, people who do not have the right 'subcultural capital' (Thornton 1995) may destroy the special fantasy for those inside (Garcia 2011; moore 2018).

My research moves beyond the issue of door policies to focus on how regulation has become engrained in cultural production: how music genres are employed to steer the composition of audiences in music programming and music marketing (Böse 2005; Measham and Hadfield 2009). This section gives an overview on how city councils and clubs regulate nightlife space, which highlights another contribution: while researchers have flagged the role of genre as a regulatory tool that councils use to regulate nightlife (Talbot and Böse 2007; Eder and Öz 2015; Fatsis 2019), there could be more systematic attention to mechanisms through which this occurs, particularly as clubs also regulate their own dancefloors. Here, urban space structures spaces of consumption (Concha 2017).

2.4.1 Government-led Regulation of Nightlife

For city councils in the global North, nightlife is associated with cosmopolitan, bohemian city life, seen as a contributor to cities' attractiveness and even as a source of economic growth (Hae 2011a; Fuller et al. 2018). But it is also seen as a source of crime and trouble, as clubs are perceived as hubs for selling, buying and using of drugs and held responsible for noise and disorder (Talbot and Böse 2007). To understand these seemingly competing discourses, it is worthwhile to look at the conceptualisations, imaginations and stereotypes of nightclub music genres that inform city councils in policy and regulation. Such cultural ideas and ideals symbolise who belongs in specific parts of the city, as aesthetic discourse functions as a seemingly neutral language that disguises discrepancies in power (Zukin 1995). Governance aimed at specific nightlife genres forces participants to form a response that validates that their style deserves a place in the city, a response that often requires participants to present themselves as responsible, healthy citizens (Marsh 2006). It is useful to explore the interactions between nightlife and governance a little further. To do so I identify two different but interrelated targeted uses of music genres by city councils: the first is discouragement or repression of genres, the second is promoting or enabling genres.

The first genre-related way in which nightlife is regulated is to repress and discourage music genres through assumptions about the social groups that consume them. Most notably, there is an extensive literature on how (mainly) Black music genres have been policed in the UK and USA (Gilroy 1987; Böse 2005; for an overview, see Fatsis 2019). These include New York City's cabaret laws that mentioned 'live music with horns and percussion' as code language for jazz and prohibited more than three people dancing in unlicensed venues (Hae 2011b), the fixation on 'a succession of repetitive beats' in the UK's 1994 Criminal Justice Bill that focused on acid house raves (Reynolds 2013), and London Metropolitan Police's 696 form targeting grime by focusing on events that 'predominantly feature DJs or MCs performing to a recorded backing track' (Fatsis 2019). These examples show how genres 'stick' (Ahmed 2004) to (often racialised, classed and gendered) social groups because they are associated with crime and trouble (Talbot and Böse 2007; Stirling 2016). Government-led regulatory measures have a disciplinary function: a reggae venue in London started to program rave events as a strategy to 'upscale' and attract less attention from the police (Talbot 2004) and some corporate clubs in Istanbul stopped playing

arabesque music because of its associations with ‘poor taste’ (Eder and Öz 2015). Through the expectation that the local authorities will be less tolerant towards certain genres, nightlife venues reproduce hegemonic representational associations between genre and social status.

The second way nightlife is regulated is by enabling and legitimising certain genres through associations with cultural prestige. In cities like Berlin and Amsterdam electronic dance music is actively promoted by the municipality as local music scenes are seen as a vehicle for economic growth, especially when they attract tourists (Rapp 2010; Dorst 2015; Fuller et al. 2018; London Assembly Report 2018). In research on Berlin, nightlife is conceptualised as serving the market-oriented status quo: when local authorities sought to deal with residents’ criticism on nuisance in symbolic ways but did not want to intervene in a manner that would harm economic interests (Fuller et al. 2018). Such a conceptualisation misses the contradictions and ambiguities of cultural production: some Berlin’s nightclubs advocate or accommodate anti-neoliberal politics or forms of togetherness (Bell 2018) and clubs and music venues are precarious businesses that in most non-Berlin cases are no direct catalyst for economic growth (Finch 2015). Nightlife’s relation to gentrification has been elaborately described by Hae (2011a) with regard to independent venues in New York City: nightclubs attract affluent tenants to formerly unpopular neighbourhoods, given their association with bohemian life and creativity, but once this group has settled, the very same clubs are forced to close as a result of sound and disorder complaints or rent rises. Artists moving out of a neighbourhood as property prices go up is now a familiar trope in gentrification discourse, but Hae (2011a) argues that their move out is often preceded by nightlife venues, dubbing this phenomenon ‘gentrification with and against nightlife’. In Berlin, clubs have been used to showcase the city’s charisma in the outline of redevelopment plans, while they were simultaneously excluded from the very plans themselves (Rapp 2010). Urban policy and urban development are unstable and unpredictable, which means that music genres fit into certain policy discourses but not in others, excluding those groups for whom these genres are crucial to socio-musical identity formations (Talbot and Böse 2007).

2.4.2 Club-led Regulation of Nightlife

Political bodies regulate nightlife in pursuit of a sanitised, entrepreneurial city (Hubbard 2001), but clubs have their own incentives to regulate nightlife as well (Measham and Hadfield 2009). Nightlife regulation is not only government-led but also club-led. This section identifies two forms of regulation in nightclubs’ practices: direct and explicit forms, most notably door policies, and implicit forms, like location choice, music programming and promotion. This overview mainly focuses on explicit forms but argues more academic attention should be devoted to understand implicit forms. While some researchers would make a distinction between door policies based on bodily signifiers and cultural practices based on musical characteristics (Böse 2005), it is perhaps best to understand explicit and implicit forms of regulation as mutually constitutive, because door policies reject clubbers through an assessment of cultural capital to determine whether they ‘fit’ the club (Garcia 2011; Moore 2018). For clubbing tourists in Berlin this means they have to adapt to the local nightlife customs by making sure to dress and behave appropriately in the queue, for example

by avoiding looking preppy or drunk (Garcia 2011). Door policies are often seen as a 'last resort' for clubs to 'curate' their audiences (moore 2018). For some niche clubs, these policies are aimed at creating safer spaces, for underrepresented groups such as queer people or women, but these policies could (unwantedly) also give way to forms of discrimination around ethnicity, class and age (Garcia 2011; moore 2018). Door policies aimed at marginalised groups produce complex social constellations: this is exemplified in the popularity of gay bars as safer spaces for women because they provide refuge from sexual harassment as straight men frequently are rejected at the door (Milestone and Meyer 2012; Nicholls 2017), but this trend simultaneously brings up questions regarding the heterosexualisation of gay space (Browne and Bakshi 2011).

There are significant differences between the door policies of clubs. Measham and Hadfield (2009) make a useful distinction between two types of elites: cultural elites and consumer elites. The former prefers an underground aesthetic and dresses cool, values music taste and identifies as a 'genuine' clubber. The latter is a well-earning group that dresses smart and likes bottle and table service, preferring a more stylised interior over a club that is nothing more than a 'dark cube'. While these are two somewhat stereotypical ideal types, the point is to show that exclusionary door policies work in contradictory ways: a club that caters to cultural elites could turn away smartly dressed visitors whose intentions are assumed to be ingenuine, while consumer elite club would do the same to people who are deemed to casually dressed, not fitting into the glamorous appeal (Measham and Hadfield 2009). Clubbers often use similar repertoires to describe their preferred audience: in more leftfield house scenes there is a 'right' way of liking music (what combination of genres), a right way of responding to it (for example, how to dance) and wrong reasons to go out (intoxication or finding a partner) (Garcia 2011). Therefore, both explicit and implicit dress codes send out a message that visitors need to decode to understand where they are not welcome, which may contain strong classist, racist or sexist elements, as clothing and identity are entangled (Grazian 2009; Measham and Hadfield 2009).

As door policies are the most visible form of club-led regulation, they have also been researched in greatest detail and are central in the academic and popular imagination when it comes to exclusion in nightclubs (Thornton 1995; Malbon 1999; Hobbs et al. 2000; Hobbs et al. 2007; Grazian 2009; Measham and Hadfield 2009; Garcia 2011; van Liempt 2015; moore 2018). But Böse (2005) is right to point out that is just one of many strategies that clubs use to regulate audiences. Location is another one: clubs with remote locations, outside popular nightlife districts, may exclude less knowledgeable (and thus less 'fitting') clubbers (Garcia 2011). Clubs use mailing lists and social media to 'get to know' their audience, while entrance fees impose a barrier to social groups with less disposable income and deliberately letting people wait to create a longer queue is used to make sure only 'dedicated clubbers' enter (Measham and Hadfield 2009). Furthermore, music genres come with their own visual aesthetics, visible in flyers, posters and online marketing (Twemlow 2018). In some cases, genres can musically overlap but because they go accompanied by different visual identities, they presuppose different types of audiences, so the visual language alters connections between music genres and social identities (Böse 2005). So, in club night marketing genres function as a predictor for the demographics of the dancefloor.

While there is some mention in the literature of the connection between regulation, cultural production and music genre (Talbot 2004; Talbot and Böse 2007; Eder and Öz 2015), it has not been analysed systematically. Understanding how regulation is engrained in cultural production increases our understanding to why certain clubs are oriented towards certain demographics and their attempts to control the demography of their audiences. Genre, then, is a tool to visualise audiences. Club-led regulation – as part of cultural production – uncovers new terrain in cultural industries research when it comes to understanding mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. In the next two sections I will first provide an overview of research on nightlife inequalities concerning gender (section 2.5) and race (section 2.6).

2.5 Gender and Cultural Production: Dancefloors and Workplaces

As music makes, sparks, reflects and institutionalises identities (Born 2011), this also goes for gender identities. The topic of this section is the performance, consumption, regulation and production of gender (Nayak and Kehily 2013) in electronic dance music and other club music genres. The study of gender, which includes male, female and nonbinary identities, entails the ‘cultural elaboration’ of bodily signs through a range of cultural expressions, including hairstyle, clothing and even taste (Nayak and Kehily 2013). This makes gender geographical: its cultural expressions – the ways in which gender is performed, consumed, regulated, produced – vary across space (Massey 1994; Nayak and Kehily 2013). With respect to the cultural industries, gender continues to be an important topic of study, partly because we come to ‘know’ gender expressions through popular culture, but also because in these industries essentialist, binary representations are produced and reproduced that naturalise gender and reify inequalities between men and women (Milestone and Meyer 2012). Examples can be found in the performance, consumption, regulation and production of gender (Nayak and Kehily 2013). Performance is for example afterhours pub culture, laddish heavy drinking after work (McRobbie 2002). Consumption is the dismissal of artistic genres as ‘domestic craft’ (Milestone and Meyer 2012). Regulation comes into play in moral panics over irresponsible or ‘hysterical’ women (Nayak and Kehily 2013). Production could mean music documentary makers’ (unconscious) decision to only interview men as ‘creative rock star geniuses’ (Milestone and Meyer 2012). However, while the workspaces of the cultural industries continue to be dominated by men (McRobbie 1994; Davies 2001; McRobbie 2002; Gavanis and Reitsamer 2013; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2015; Leonard 2016; Reimer 2016), popular music (and other forms of art too) has produced identities that challenge traditional notions of gender, in some cases moving beyond the gender binary. Electronic dance music has often been analysed as a genre that has this potential (Straw 1991; McRobbie 1994; Pini 2001).

If we want to understand how music shapes gendered identities, music genres – as sets of conventions, orientations, and classification systems (Lena 2012) – are key mediators in how musical gender identities come to be. The punk genre in the late 1970s is seen as one of the first musical styles where women could make music under their own terms, with lyrics beyond the traditionally feminine topic of love (Milestone and Meyer 2012). In rock, the bohemian lifestyles of

musicians have been understood as a masculine postponement of the domestic responsibilities that come with adulthood (Cohen 1997). In majority male rock bands, female musicians are often assigned the bass guitar, because it is seen as a 'simple' instrument (Clawson 1999). As discussed in section 2.3.1, hip-hop comes with its own performances of gender, which are rooted in a specific urban context and reproduced in the white music industries (Shabazz 2014). The continued presence of barely clothed women in rap videos can be explained by genre-constrained opportunities for innovation: record companies that do not value hip-hop culturally stick to tried-and-tested commercially successful formats (Negus 1999; Fitts 2008). This section takes on the question of gender and genre in relation to the topic of the niche-edm genre and the eclectic genre. First, I focus on literature on dancefloors, noticing it appears skewed towards femininities rather than masculinities. Second, I focus on research on the role of gender in (dance music) workspaces, as integral part of cultures of production. Here, I notice that classification repertoires that discredit female artists (here: DJs) could also apply to cultural workers in intermediary positions in the cultural industries (in my case: promoters).

2.5.1 Challenging Utopianisms: The Gendered Dancefloor

Early cultural studies research on electronic dance music echoed a certain utopianism: that the genre could contribute to the dissolving of cultural distinctions (Straw 1991; Gadir 2016). These studies mainly focused on music genres with a post-disco genealogy (Garcia 2011): house, techno, electro. McRobbie's (1994) early observations of rave culture focused on mapping emergent modes of gender identity. While she notes that women are less involved in the cultural production of rave, she does witness an increased centrality of asexuality, which is visible in some of rave's accessories: women's ice lollies, whistles and dummies are a way of 'sealing off' - they are signifiers that dancing at raves does not equate finding a partner (McRobbie 1994). This is also observable in the prominence of mixed-gender friend groups and men's (temporary) transitions from laddish to friendly, fuelled by drugs such as ecstasy. McRobbie's (1994) work has been criticised for painting a rose-coloured picture of rave, bypassing internal subcultural distinctions (Thornton 1995) and all too easily reducing material objects to social relations (Nayak and Kehily 2013). However, reading McRobbie in the context of the early 1990s and as a follow-up to her earlier work (McRobbie and Garber 2003 [1976]) on bedroom cultures and the peripheral role of women in 1970s youth clubs in Birmingham, it becomes clear why she valued rave's progressive potential, even if it did not create a gender equal utopia. Similar sentiments, of women experiencing more freedom on the dancefloors of house and techno clubs, or even dominating them, continue to echo in more recent research (Pini 2001; Farrugia 2012).

In later academic work on clubbing, more attention is devoted to how clubbing produces stratified dancefloors. Thornton (1995) analyses how hipness, embodied by 'being in the know' (in dress, in dance styles, in slang, in not trying too hard), constitutes a type of capital through which clubbers and ravers distinguish themselves, usually against what is perceived as 'mainstream' - which Thornton acknowledges is a vague term, mainly defined by what it is not. This has a gendered dimension to it, as the mainstream is often perceived as female (Thornton 1995). In the 1990s

'Sharons', 'Techno Tracys' and 'handbag house' were used as degrading terms for women who were said to lack the required subcultural capital for going clubbing and supposedly joined the bandwagon merely because house became more popular (Thornton 1995: 100). Thornton (1995) is indebted to Bourdieu's (1984) concept 'cultural capital', which she extends to subcultural capital, but unlike the French sociologist she does not centralise class and income as structuring factors of inequalities. Instead, Thornton claims its "alternative hierarchy" is held together by "axes of age, gender, sexuality and race" (Thornton 1995: 105), but while the relation between age, gender and mainstream is explained in some detail, it does not really become clear how race and sexuality are constitutive of the clubbing experience. Even her discussion of gender feels limited at times: she presents her ethnographic fieldwork through just one elaborate description of a night out, not offering more structural explanations of how subcultural capital is made in gendered clubbing interactions (Gilbert and Pearson 1999).

Gadir's (2016) research explicitly uses persistent gender inequality as a corrective to the utopian narratives through which electronic dance music has been analysed, providing more depth to the academic understanding of the gendered dancefloor. As Gadir's (2016) interview participants (mainly male DJs) evoke the familiar trope that if women start to dance men will follow, her research highlights what type of sounds they think will 'get women to dance', mentioning catchy melodic riffs, vocal lines and soft or 'fluffy' timbres, alongside a distaste for conspicuous vocals (Gadir 2016). These musical characteristics are said to undermine the underground aesthetic of their DJ-set, and are dismissed as 'girly', which shows how gender in electronic dance music is naturalised and essentialised – even when instrumental – to form a distinction repertoire (Gadir 2016). Gadir's (2016) research provides a useful elaboration on the concept subcultural capital by making the implicit masculine bias of aesthetic norms explicit (see Wolff 2006), as she shows how conceptions of underground authenticity are gendered. However, while her work provides a thicker description of musical style than does Thornton's (1995), it remains vague what (sub)genres of electronic dance music she is analysing. As subgenres are racialised and gendered through a variety of quality repertoires (McLeod 2001), more in-depth discussion of how specific music genres shape the gendered atmospheres of club spaces could give more precise assessments of the centrality of gender as structuring category for electronic dance music spaces.

Stirling (2016) shows the potential of a thick description of genre, as she analyses how specific electronic music styles produce gendered dancefloors. Focusing on two dubstep nights in a venue in London, she attempts to understand why this bass-heavy, dub influenced music draws such masculine crowds. In a detailed, historical explanation of the consumption of dub, reggae and dubstep she analyses the development of these genres, tracking down the moments when and spaces in which more female-centred subgenres emerged, but also how they disappeared off the radar, resulting in an 'away-ness' (a term borrowed from Ahmed (2004)) – an absence of women that is perceived as 'natural', as if it has always been this way. In the collective imagination this is how genres 'stick' (Ahmed 2004) to certain bodies, how its relationship becomes teleological (Stirling 2016). Through an interview with producer Jam City, who is associated with dubstep but seeks a more inclusive aesthetic approach after being fed up with playing for crowds dominated by

men and masculine behaviour, it becomes clear how hard it is to subvert this teleological relationship (Stirling 2016).

Stirling (2016) stresses that the women in her research frequently stated they did not attend early dubstep parties despite liking the music, because the venue or night did not make them feel welcome, as the affective atmospheres primed introversion, non-danceability and/or musical connoisseurship. As such, her research provides a detailed investigation into the way the connection between gender and taste is naturalised, which has become apparent in other gendered classification categories as well, like commercialism/mainstream, sexiness and prominence of melodies and vocals (Thornton 1995; Gavanis and Reitsamer 2013; Gadir 2016). Stirling's (2016) elaborate discussion of gender inequality in electronic dance music provides a way of thinking about cultural production in relation to the live industry, centralising the venue as the space where gender is performed, consumed, produced and regulated (Nayak and Kehily 2013), a space that produces new forms of differentiation as genre histories are reproduced and reimagined.

A gap in the literature on nightlife music genres discussed in this section is the production and consumption of gender in clubs that focus on genres other than the niche-edm genre. Tan's (2014) research on Ladies' Nights in clubs in Singapore finds that such club nights are paradoxical spaces: heteronormative, erotically charged environments that sexualise their female visitors in marketing and promote a hook-up culture. Space is not just a neutral backdrop, as dancefloors are engineered in such a way, through "theatrical assemblages of dimmed lighting and pulsating music" (Tan 2014: 27), that distort awareness of the presence of asymmetrical power relations. This creates ambivalent atmospheres that enable groping and harassment, but despite this, the women Tan (2014) interviews feel a sense of accomplishment when they manage these situations well. At the same time, the men define 'preying' as a form of failed masculinity and derive empowerment from being able to hold onto oneself. Both male and female interviewees thus felt, in opposing ways, a constant tension between disciplining sexual desire and letting go. This corresponds to queer studies research that analyses how nocturnal space enables performances of hypermasculinity (Amico 2001; Livermon 2014). The main value of Tan's (2014) work lies in her conceptualisation of nightclubs as ambiguous environments that are simultaneously regulated and deregulated, where affective atmospheres¹² are actively 'engineered', even though she devotes little attention to specific commodification practices and strategies.

While Tan is not very specific about the music played in these clubs, her centrality of sexualisation suggests different gender discourses at work than in techno clubs. In Berlin's techno clubs, making "sexual advances" as a reason for going out is frowned upon (Garcia 2011: 138), while in a techno club in Rotterdam clubbers see the absence of 'sexual preying' as a result of ecstasy usage as its

¹² In Anderson's (2009a) terms, affective atmospheres are the always emerging, transforming 'shared ground' – that exceeds an assembling of human bodies – from which collective affects emerge.

main appeal (van Bohemen and Roeling 2020). This suggests that different genres of club music produce gender in distinct ways.

The literature in this section has been a corrective to accounts of nightlife that privilege nightclub's social formations solely as productive of positive forms of togetherness. I sought to understand how these dark and dingy spaces can create uncomfortable environments where a suspension, or loosening, of social norms leads to sexual harassment, which would require interventions by nightlife producers (Seawell 2017; Coyle and Platt 2018). Gender and sexism in nightclubs is not limited to what happens on dancefloors and in club spaces. The gendered dancefloor is to some extent also a result of cultures of production. This is the topic of the next sub-section.

2.5.2 Cultures of Production: The Gendered Workplace

More attention to cultures of production could offer a more in-depth understanding of how gender is produced in the clubbing sector, whereby it is important to note that club work is still predominantly defined by men (McRobbie 1994; Gavanas and Reitsamer 2013; Gadir 2017). In that respect, the way DJ'ing is understood as a craft and artistic skill, is one of the terrains where dance music work is gendered. Farrugia (2012) traces the history of the relation between gender, technology and sound back to the early radio days, when amateur broadcasting was considered a men's hobby, despite the presence of at least some female operators. In the 1960s hi-fi technology was advertised as a means for men to escape domestic life. This distancing of women from technology has become the basis of a common stereotype in music production and DJ'ing, with female DJs reporting frequent suspicion about their technological capacities (Farrugia 2012). Despite the existence of various women DJ collectives and female-only DJ workshops, female DJs keep facing the assumption that they learned from a male peer how to play (Gadir 2016). This is related to gendered stereotypes such as the 'supermodel' DJ (a good-looking woman who is said to only receive bookings because of her looks (Farrugia 2012)) and the expectation that DJs also produce their own tracks, rather than just perform, which primes technological skill over other DJ-values such as 'reading the crowd' (Gavanas and Reitsamer 2013). The latter argument does imply that the gendering of technological skill does not fully explain the underrepresentation, especially as in some subgenres the ability to blend records flawlessly is seen as less important than record selections, while in mainstream EDM pre-programmed visual spectacle takes away the need for mixing skills at all, even though EDM is probably the most male-dominated field in all of electronic dance music (Reynolds 2013).

Reflecting on gender inequalities, women DJs are less likely to see this as the result of the meritocratic functioning of the dance music world than their male peers (Gavanas and Reitsamer 2013; Gadir 2017). The desire for recognition is often perceived as a male characteristic, which means male promoters – who do believe in meritocracy – are inclined to say male DJs are more eager to make it (Gadir 2017). Furthermore, in at least some electronic dance music scenes, DJs are expected to be avid record collectors and play original selections. The homosociality of record collecting, informal distribution networks and the competitiveness of acquiring obscure tracks also

function as exclusionary mechanisms (Gavanas and Reitsamer 2013; Maalsen and McLean 2018). Meanwhile, some Amsterdam-based clubs book close to forty percent women (Goedegebuure 2019), which means that analysis needs to extend beyond exclusion and mere visibility towards the circumstances under which women are included in the club sector (Gray 2005), including ambivalent inclusion, such as tokenism or sexualisation (Farrugia 2012; Gavanas and Reitsamer 2013). The study of gender and DJ'ing could also benefit from more engagement with discussions about gender and distinction in other artistic fields. For example, as DJs are increasingly seen as artists in their own right (Hesmondhalgh 1998), autonomous authors so to speak (Banks 2010), research on gender and nightclub genres could draw parallels with the masculine coded 'author status' in cinema (Grant 2001) or the prevalence of aesthetics over community in the visual arts (Wolff 2006).

There has been considerably less attention to gender with respect to the work cultures of nightclubs beyond DJ'ing, especially when it comes to the day-to-day organisation of club nights and adjacent entrepreneurialism. This is remarkable because clubs have been used as a template to understand the informal work cultures in the cultural industries, including how it reproduces gendered inequalities (McRobbie 2002), but this has not resulted in much work that actually analyses the work cultures of nightclubs themselves (exceptions are Brennan-Horley 2007; Mears 2016). The cultural industries frequently present themselves as open and progressive, but economic flexibility, informality and financial precariousness reproduce gender inequalities: this includes the types of 'hobbies' that become careers, after-hours socialising and networking in pubs, gendering of work roles, temporary contracts and self-employment and bravado-laden entrepreneurialism (Milestone and Meyer 2012).

Informality includes the absence of formalised structures to combat workplace inequalities like unions, that makes that the 'critical questions' around workplace inequalities remain unasked (McRobbie 2002). The club sector is particularly characterised by informality, given that work on weekend nights is central to the job and the boundaries between work, hobby and leisure are often blurry (Brennan-Horley 2007; Mears 2016). However, nightclubs have shorter lifespans and are often institutionalised to a lesser degree than – say – record labels or museums, which also means that change can be implemented faster if critical questions are asked (Straw 1991; Gray 2005). In Chapter 5 I address the relationship between informal work cultures, genre and political struggle in more detail.

2.6 Racialisation, Genre and Geographies of Music

This section will define ‘race’ in this thesis. Racial inequalities were already touched upon in sections 2.3.2 (on the global flows of music genres) and 2.4 (on regulation). Race is a socially constructed category, one that inscribes people and objects with race-thinking, constituted within power relations (Wekker 2016; Saha 2018). In the context of this thesis, these power relations stem from European colonial-derived regimes that govern populations through making distinctions between whiteness and non-whiteness, those who ‘belong’ and those who are ‘other’ (Hall 1996; Hesse 2011). Race is the ‘complex and unstable product’ of racism, as the latter predates the former (Gilroy 2004). This ‘race-thinking’ is commonly thought of as merely biological (despite having no basis in biology), but extends to the cultural domain, as power/knowledge practices naturalise cultural and religious differences as well (Fields and Fields 2012; Saha 2018). In European academia, ethnicity – as a social system based on cultural difference (origin, history, language, religion) – is used more often than race, but race and ethnicity¹³ merge when processes of racialisation fix cultural differences, becoming two sides of the same coin (Lentin 2005; Wekker 2016; Hall 2019 [2000]). In everyday race discourse, whiteness is often not recognised as a “racialised/ethnicised positioning” (Wekker 2016: 2) but is “structured by political social imaginaries of the assumed difference of cultural, racial and classed others” (Çankaya and Mepschen 2020: 627), which is in and of itself an effect of its dominance, its place in the relations of domination (Wekker 2016).

Saha (2018) argues that the cultural industries are one of the key sites that ‘make race’: through racialisation cultural commodities become inscribed with race-thinking, which happens through a form of “power/knowledge that operates as a logic of production” (Gray 2016, cited in Saha 2018: 6). Geographers have argued that racialisation is spatial: (urban) landscapes or ‘territories’ make race knowable, as concepts such as ‘the ghetto’ are spatial evocations that serve to naturalise racialised inequalities (Lipsitz 2007; Neely and Samura 2011; Nayak 2011; Çankaya 2020). While some studies of cultural institutions and consumption indeed use spatial language to make sense of racialisation (Gray 2005; Meghji 2019), cultural industries research could benefit from a better understanding of the spatial dynamics of whiteness. Researchers have looked at whiteness as produced through the ‘racialised homogeneity’ of spaces such as museums and universities, where whiteness manifests itself as a discomfort with alterity (Ahmed 2012; Meghji 2019; Çankaya and Mepschen 2020), but there has been little attention to the cultural production efforts that produce and sustain white cultural spaces. This section seeks to add to these spatial conceptions of whiteness a better understanding of the role of cultural production. In sub-section 2.6.1 I focus on the racialisation of music and music genres more generally and in sub-section 2.6.2 I focus on the Netherlands in particular. These two sub-sections make the argument that while there has been a lot of research on the transnational flows and genealogies of Black music genres, an academic understanding of race in genres that consumers code symbolically white is still in its early stages.

¹³ In this thesis I will use ‘race’ when it refers to racialisation and ‘ethnicity’ when it refers to cultural self-identification.

In sub-section 2.6.3 I focus on the role of spaces of consumption and urban moral geographies of race, which help explain how cultural production sustains white spaces.

2.6.1 Conceptualising Race in Music

Music is one of the domains where race is imagined as natural. Black creativity is often not seen as the result of practice and discipline, but rather as innate, natural intuition (Lena 2012), with Black music's emphasis on rhythm as a connection to the pre-social (Frith 1992). This is tied to representations of sexuality: in the white imagination a wild, primitive sexuality is projected onto Black female singer's bodies (hooks 1992). At the same time, music genres like soul, funk, hip-hop and techno are understood as Black music, so should we continue to use this term? (Brackett 2005). The academic challenge in studying music worlds is to reject any naturalising or 'fixing' of race, to work against its essentialism, but to understand Blackness in music as an open signifier that connects histories, cultural practices, responses to racialisation, transnational ties and shared urban contexts – and to conceptualise Black musical expressions as polyphonic, divided by social categories such as age, class, gender and sexuality, and contextual factors such as cultural economies and political mobilisation (Gilroy 1993; Hall 1996). Black music can then be understood through genealogical lineages (musical practices and signifiers passed on through different generations), racialised experiences of marginalisation, transnational flows (such as the Black Atlantic world: the travelling counterculture of modernity) and sociocultural orientations (who music speaks to, who is spoken from) (Gilroy 1993; Rose 1994; Brackett 2005; Bramwell 2015; Charles 2018). Researchers have also highlighted dance as a space where Black musical forms come alive and are celebrated, including performance cultures and sonic traditions such as sound systems (Henriques 2003; Niaah 2008).

I understand musicians not as belonging to a genre, but rather as participating in a genre (Brackett 2005). This means that Blackness can be articulated through genres not symbolically understood by the public and music industry as Black (like rock) (Mahon 2004), that Black rock musicians seek recognition from Black music institutions like the MOBO Awards (Phillips 2021) and that Black musicians often tap into a diverse array of musical genealogies that are not exclusively Black (like Prince's admiration of Joni Mitchell) (Brooks 2008). At the same time, the genre conventions or 'aesthetic paradigms' of a symbolically white genre such as rock – like the electric guitar as focal instrument – can serve to marginalise Black, female genre participants that express different aesthetic positions (like the prominence of the voice in Big Mama Thornton's music) (Mahon 2011). Often as a result of power relations in the music industries, historically Black genres or songs have been adopted to articulate whiteness (Mahon 2011) – a case in point is the industry term 'blue-eyed soul' in the 1960s. However, whiteness is rarely an explicitly articulated part of music genres or musical identities (Van Bohemen and Roeling 2020), more often manifesting itself through othering other musical styles (Bannister 2006).

Still, conventionally, most genres express a 'proper place' for different types of music (Brackett 2005), which means that a genre such as grime can be qualified as a Black music genre because it

belongs to a historical and cultural 'music stream' of Afrodiasporic musicological elements (low-frequency drum, call and response) and evokes a shared urban context and sociocultural outlook (Charles 2018). To participate in the rap genre as a white grime artist, a meaningful, reciprocal relationship with the genre's historical Blackness will then have to be articulated (Lipsitz 1994; Hesmondhalgh 2005).

Taking this definition further, like hip-hop (Rose 1994), techno and house are also genres where the articulation of Black cultural identities was central to the genres' conceptions and developments (Denise 2014; Benabdellah 2018). As mostly instrumental genres, house and techno often do not literally evoke images of racialised space, as is common in soul or hip-hop, through references to the 'ghetto' or 'the projects' (Melville 2020). Instead, the spatial imagery of house and techno is the future. In the context of the genre's conception in racially segregated cities in 1980s USA, futurist imagery can be read as a rejection of this power geometry and understood as part of cultural currents such as afrofuturism where futurist imagery is used to imagine new worlds where racism does not govern Black lives (Albiez 2005; Benabdellah 2018; Melville 2020). While as the hip-hop genre travelled and was adopted as a 'sonic articulation of otherness' (Rose 1994) by racialised (but not always Afrodiasporic) and marginalised communities worldwide (Lipsitz 1994), the futurism of house and techno was not seen as a distinctly Afro-American vernacular, so the genre's futurist imagery was adopted in the UK and continental Europe, but the imagery's rootedness in Black thought was not, which shaped the genre's perceived 'race-lessness' (Melville 2020).

Since the electronic dance music genre has long been more popular in Europe than in the USA (Reynolds 2013), the cultural flows from Chicago and Detroit to Europe were presumably where the genres by and large – at least temporarily – lost their connections to Black musical traditions (Melville 2020). While describing techno and house – because of the innovations of Black music pioneers in New York, Chicago and Detroit – as 'essentially Black' regardless of geography would be dangerously close to essentialist race-thinking, a critical eye is needed for white (and other) European appropriations of the genre that use Blackness as a signifier of historical, subcultural value but disengage from emancipatory practices (Lipsitz 1994; Garcia 2018). The Blackness of house and techno and absence of a reciprocal relationship in European endeavours in the niche-edm genre has become another of popular culture's 'sites of struggle' (Hall 2006 [1981]). In recent years racism in electronic dance music has become a topic of debate and controversy, potentially a result of those historically excluded from the cultural industries having more proximity to fields of cultural production and more success in intervening in dominant production logic (Garcia 2018). A clear research gap lies in understanding where and when the genre 'becomes' white (Nayak 2011), particularly understanding this becoming beyond the arrival in from the United States to Europe in the late 1980s, as part of contemporary forms of cultural production and trans-local musical flows of dominant socio-musical identities.

2.6.2 Race, Whiteness and Music in the Netherlands

How to conceptualise the relationship between race and music in relation to the Netherlands? It is a country where research on race and popular music is very scarce, and where research that does take on this topic often focuses on British or American music (see Schaap and Berkers 2020), mirroring the ways in which music history writing in the Netherlands more generally follows the Anglophone playbook (Brandellero and Pfeffer 2015). To understand why Black music is seen as a label foreign to the Netherlands, despite the historical presence of Black music traditions in the country (Wermuth 2002; Weltak 2004), it is necessary to understand the discourse around race in the Netherlands. In this section I will first give a general overview of the use of race as social category in the Netherlands, before going into music specifically. While there has not been a lot of attention to race and ethnicity in music research on the Netherlands, I identify three themes in the work produced so far: inclusion/exclusion, appropriation and whiteness.

In Dutch academia race as a social science concept is often rendered irrelevant to the European context, conceptualised as an object from a ‘problematic past’ of colonialism and Nazi genocide (Nimako 2012; M’Charek et al. 2014). This becomes evident in policy research: where in the USA or UK it is fairly common to ‘tick the appropriate box’ when forms ask for racial (USA) or ethnic (UK) identity, in the Netherlands and other Western European countries a ‘colour blind’ conception is favoured, as registering ethnicity is seen as unfavourable – but this does not mean categorisations of race are absent from political, institutional or everyday speech (Essed and Trienekens 2008; Coenders and Chauvin 2017).

In recent years, the specific regimes of race and racism that the Netherlands produces have increasingly come to the forefront of academic attention. Dutch public policy produced its own racialisation discourse through the categories ‘allochtonen’ (‘those who are not from here’) and ‘autochtonen’ (‘those who are from here’) (Wekker 2016). This would seem to refer to country of birth, but the categorisations normalised speaking of third generation ‘allochtonen’, referring to the offspring of postcolonial migrants, Turkish and Moroccan labour migrants and refugees, which effectively means that non-white Dutch people will never become ‘autochtoon’ (Wekker 2016; Çankaya and Mepschen 2020). While in name also referring to white non-Dutch people¹⁴, ‘allochtonen’ has become a racialising category as its public usage divides the population into white and non-white (Essed and Trienekens 2008; Wekker 2016; Çankaya and Mepschen 2020). Recently, the term is increasingly contested and public institutions have started using alternatives. Still, race remains an absent presence in the Netherlands: absent as an official statistical category, present as a structuring variable of Dutch life (M’Charek 2014; Coenders and Chauvin 2017). Like in the UK, race and racism in the Netherlands are not limited to Black diasporic populations, given

¹⁴ Public policy often makes a distinction between ‘western’ and ‘non-western’ ‘allochtoon’. Its usage is exemplary of the Dutch geopolitical imagination as it renders migrants from former Central Yugoslavia ‘non-western’ but migrants from Japan ‘western’ (Essed and Trienekens 2008). However, in its public usage, ‘allochtoon’ has come to be synonymous with ‘non-western allochtoon’.

for example the continued presence of islamophobia as a racialising discourse (Saha 2018; Çankaya and Mepschen 2020).

Now back to the three different themes in research on race in Dutch music: inclusion/exclusion, appropriation and whiteness. The first is exclusion of non-white Dutch artists from the mainstream channels of music production and distribution. Weltak (2004) writes about the Surinam kaseko style (percussion-heavy jazz and calypso-influenced music) which was put into the market by Surinamese-Dutch small, precarious independent music labels in the 1980s, but did not benefit from the growing interest in 'world music' at the time and found itself not recognised by subsidiary bodies in ways that could aid sustaining the genre. The focus on music as part of the subsidised arts echoes other research where whiteness functions through the dominance of western, modernist criteria of artistic evaluation that discredit non-western and non-white artistic genres (Delhaye 2008; Trienekens and Bos 2014). This neglect by subsidiary bodies has meant that place-making efforts for musical styles that do not fit the western pop canon, but are championed by musicians in the Netherlands, have often been the result of atomised actions by individual music venues (Delhaye and Van der Ven 2014). Research on Dutch Asian youth shows how inclusion is managed in the commercial nightclub circuit: this group uses club nights to construct a Pan-Asian identity (without necessarily playing Asian music) and finds venues willing to host these temporal nights based on commercial viability, both attendance and bar revenue (Kartosen 2016).

The second is the appropriation of Afrodiasporic musical forms by non-Black musicians of colour in the Netherlands. The introduction of rock in the Netherlands is exemplary: following Indonesia's independence in 1949, Indos (with European/Asian heritage) and Moluccans¹⁵ were relocated to the Netherlands and developed musical styles that came to be called indorock in the late 1950s (Mutsaers 1990). Indorock was popular in the late 1950s, but when white rock bands started appearing, they took inspiration from UK bands, so Dutch rock's genre formations in the 1960s involved a 'forgetting' of pioneering indorock groups, and the latter found themselves relocating to Germany where demand continued (Mutsaers 1990). In the 2000s there has been academic attention for Dutch Moroccan rappers who use African American hip-hop vernacular to express racialised experiences of otherness in Dutch society (Gazzah 2008; Kooijman 2008). This includes the uncomfortable relationship of Dutch artists, fans and gatekeepers with 'authenticity' as a value in the hip-hop genre: as many understand the American context is not directly translatable to the Dutch, but do acknowledge its historical Blackness, genre participants that cannot convincingly express 'street credibility' reformulate authenticity to 'artistic innovation' (Wermuth 2002; Wermuth 2004; Haijen 2016). These reworkings of music genres highlight how race is re-made through transnational cultural flows, which includes new forms of 'race-lessness' (Melville 2020).

The third theme is the formation of whiteness. There are exceptions where white identities are explicitly articulated: in the 1990s the Dutch electronic music style gabber (a loud, fast, melodically

¹⁵ The Moluccans is a Polynesian island group. During Indonesia's independence war the Dutch military recruited Moluccan men as soldiers, after Indonesia's independence in 1949, the Dutch government decided to transfer 13 000 Moluccans to the Netherlands, the idea was temporarily, but the stay became permanent (Mutsaers 1990).

sparse from of techno) was appropriated by white supremacist groups causing intra-genre conflict (Reynolds 2013). Sometimes whiteness is articulated in concealed form, through the metaphor of trouble-free village life. Dutch-sung pop music from Volendam (a village just north of Amsterdam) is referred to as ‘palingsound’¹⁶ and characterised by a strong attachment to a traditional, idea of place (the fisherman’s village) (Brandellero and Pfeffer 2015). In consumption, whiteness is constructed through othering: in sub-section 2.3.2, I mentioned Van Bohemen and Roeling’s (2020) research on techno in Rotterdam, where a white sexuality is constructed around a muting of sexual desire, distinguishing itself from other genres like R&B. Sometimes genre consumers decode (Hall 1980) a musical style as white (Meghji 2019). In research on rock, Dutch (and American) rock fans expose and negotiate the symbolic whiteness of the genre, also pointing at spaces of performance, while reflecting on the role of gatekeepers and inclusive practices (Berkers and Schaap 2020). However, consumption-oriented research does not account for geographical variation: perhaps cultural production research can better explain why a genre such as techno is Black in 1980s Detroit, has Black and multicultural mutations such as Jungle in 1990s London (Melville 2020), but is read as white in 2010s Rotterdam (van Bohemen and Roeling 2020). Understanding cultural production efforts beyond musical traditions and international networks and cultural flows could help explain how, where and when the racial meanings of genres change. In the next section I offer two possible directions for cultural industries research to address these topics.

2.6.3 Towards A Spatial Understanding of Whiteness in The Music Industries

In the last two sections I explained what an analysis of cultural production and trans-local flows adds to the literature on race, whiteness and the cultural industries. Throughout this theoretical framework, I used examples of racialisation to lay out my theoretical approach to the cultural industries because race is central to the operations of modernity (Saha 2018).¹⁷ In this last section I explain two other contributions of a spatial approach the cultural industries to the literature on the cultural production of whiteness. First, there is the production of white consumption spaces, partly through club-led regulation. Second, the embeddedness of urban moral geographies of race in cultural production.

¹⁶ ‘Paling’ is Dutch for eel, which refers to the village’s fisherman identity.

¹⁷ In section 2.2.2, these include adapting non-western music to Eurocentric conceptions of taste and industry practices (Haynes 2013), reductive representations of racialised minorities and cultural identity (Hall 1996) and forms of canonisation that devalue Black innovation in popular music (Straw 1991; McLeod 2001). In section 2.2.3, I focused on industry practices: how record labels are organised according to genre, where hip-hop is the financially more precarious arm of the company (Negus 2002) and how difficult it is, even for record labels that want to, to resist reductive race-thinking as they try to meet the demands of the market (Saha 2018). In section 2.2.4, I showed how record labels use local gatekeepers to produce ‘authentic’ Black voices (Balaji 2009; 2012) and mentioned that – in some spaces and places – a radical Black politics can be enabled, not constrained, by the commodification process (Gray 2005). In section 2.3.3, I explained that race is also made through consumption; through distinction strategies of white tourists in Goa (Saldanha 2005).

As discussed in sub-section 2.4.1, the regulation of nightlife disproportionately targets Black music (Talbot 2004; Talbot and Böse 2007). This happens in the form of government-led regulation and policing (Fatsis 2019), but clubs also have their own regulatory incentives (Böse 2005; Measham and Hadfield 2009). I argued in section 2.4.2 that regulation is also embedded in cultural production. Through programming strategies, clubs try to attract certain audiences and discourage others, which is likely to sustain racialised hierarchies. For example, in Manchester club production in the early 2000s, the term ‘underground’ was used to refer to Black music of the past and current music of white-owned independent labels, but not to contemporary Black music and Black audiences (Böse 2005). Such conceptions, used unreflexively, produce white space: the literature on cultural consumption shows that for people of colour, white consumption spaces can be uninviting or alienating (Tolia-Kelly 2006; Meghji 2019). How does cultural production define a ‘somatic’ norm of white, middle-class masculinity that perceives racialised bodies as ‘out of place’ (Puwar 2004)? What is the role of comfort and discomfort (Ahmed 2012; Johnson 2017)? Answering these questions adds to the cultural industries framework a critical eye for consumption spaces, especially regarding the production process that conceives these spaces, which can help us understand how whiteness is made and sustained.

Second, urban imaginations produce ‘race-thinking’ through ‘city talk’ (Keith 2005), which is employed in cultural production. Geographical perspectives on racialisation posit that race becomes ‘knowable’ through evocations of urban space, which for example shapes policing practices: police agents see the presence of a Black person in a white-coded neighbourhood as suspicious (Çankaya 2020). This follows from a moral geography of ‘pure space’ that fixes the connections between space and race (Lipsitz 2007). The term ‘moral geographies’ here explains how moral assumptions and arguments shape conceptualisations of urban space (Driver 1988; Cresswell 2005; Reimer and Pinch 2020). Morality here is defined socially, not just as individual disposition, but also through the collective or institutional belief that a different organisation of space reshapes an individual’s immoral behaviour (Driver 1988). Historically, moral geographies of the night conceptualise night-time leisure spaces such as pubs or nightlife districts as characterised by a different morality: this prompts national and local authorities to govern the internal spatial organisation of bars and pubs (Kneale 1999) as well as regulate city areas by defining some forms of consumption as more ethical than others (van Liempt and Chimienti 2017; Hubbard 2019).

As night clubs produce moral geographies, they take on an institutional rather than an individual form (Driver 1988; Reimer and Pinch 2020) and imaginations of city and neighbourhood serve as implicit assertions to justify social connection and segregation (Lipsitz 2007). Analysing the role of urban representations in cultural production then becomes very interesting: the cultural industries produce urban representations, but urban representations shape cultural production too (Krims 2007). As nightclubs actively associate themselves with or disassociate themselves from neighbourhoods (Eder and Öz 2015) and use location as a distinction strategy (Garcia 2011), spatialised race-thinking becomes part of the ways in which nightclubs organise themselves and regulate the dancefloor more widely. Attention to both spaces of consumption and urban

representations equips the cultural industries framework with another two entry points to better understand the racialisation of music.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter addresses the three main contributions of this thesis. The first is to contribute to economic geography a research approach that combines analysis of cultural production with analysis of the cultural product. Section 2.1 pointed out the shortcomings of economic geography research on cultural production, focusing on music production specifically. I argue that a lack of engagement with exclusion and inequalities within the music sector is due to insufficient attention to the specificities of the cultural product. A ‘thick account’ of music genre (Lena 2012) can be a way forward towards a more holistic approach: genre is constitutive of cultures of production, the cultural object and cultures of consumption.

In section 2.2 I analysed social theories of arts and culture that might be better equipped to explain the relationship between cultural production, the cultural product and social inequalities. First, I challenge The Culture Industry’s cultural pessimism (Adorno and Horkheimer 1993[1944]), still implicit in nightlife research (see Anderson (T.L.) 2009), that commodification inevitably leads to sameness. This view frequently romanticises the past and glosses over past inequalities, for example in independent production (Hesmondhalgh 1998). Second, I criticise Bourdieu’s (1996) field theory where cultural production functions as an instrument of class domination. The focus on highbrow and lowbrow forms of art does not easily capture the various and rapidly changing forms of canonisation and consecration in commercial music production (Hesmondhalgh 2006; Born 2011). The cultural industries framework captures the ambiguities of music production better: it highlights how commodification can be enabling, constraining and destructive, which provides a more flexible model to understand the relationship between production, product and social inequalities (Hesmondhalgh 2013a).

However, to adapt the cultural industries framework to the live music sector more generally and the nightclub sector in particular, more attention to the intricate workings of space is needed. Here we arrive at the second contribution of this thesis: to provide the cultural industries framework with a lens that incorporates the significance of geography. This includes considering three different applications: the importance of the physical spaces in which music is consumed, the urban context in which nightclubs operate and the transnational flows that explain how new musical styles emerge somewhere and are adopted elsewhere. Section 2.3 focused on music genre and addresses the first and third application. First, I introduced a spatial conception of music genres: space is a strong mediator in producing the connections between music genres and social identities, because these connections are not ‘natural’ or ‘innate’. Second, I emphasised that the production of these identities cannot be seen outside of the global flows of music genres, which helps explain the geographical variation in connections between music genres and social audiences. Third, I demonstrated the significance of spaces of consumption in the formation of musical identities: the entanglement of production and consumption highlights how cultural

production efforts shape and accommodate musical and social identities (Misgav and Johnston 2014).

Section 2.4 also foregrounded the third main contribution of this thesis: urbanist nightlife research has not yet considered how inequalities in the city at night are not just produced by (local) governments governance limiting opportunities for marginalised social groups, but also through nightclub's own cultural productions. Regulation is not just council-led, but also club-led, as clubs have their own incentives to create 'problem-free' dancefloors free of violence, drugs and disorder. Door policies are just one of many strategies to regulate club spaces.

The last two sections of this chapter, sections 2.5 and 2.6, applied the theories of cultural production, the cultural product and social inequalities to gender and race, respectively. Section 2.5 analyses how the role of gender on dancefloors in nightclubs, including the role of space in the ways in which music genres 'stick' to gender (Stirling 2016) and in workspaces in the cultural industries. On the one hand, the literature suggests an informal work culture perpetuates gender inequalities, most prominently in terms of labour participation (McRobbie 2002; Gill 2014, see section 2.5). On the other hand, particular genre ideals and a lack of institutionalisation could also mean that quality norms are less strict, which could enable, for example, more gender equal line-ups. Section 2.6 considers how music becomes racialised, applying these theories to music in the Netherlands. I argue the Dutch context helps to understand where and when music genres become white (Nayak 2011). I look at the role of spaces of consumption, urban context and transnational flows.

I use the study of nightclubs in Amsterdam as a way to make three theoretical contributions: making economic geographies of cultural production more attentive of the cultural product, contributing to the cultural industries framework a spatial lens and adding cultural production as formative element of socio-spatial inequalities in the nocturnal city to nightlife studies. In the next chapter I will discuss how my methodological approach will enable these three contributions.

Chapter 3 Methodology

This section consists of two parts. The first part (paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2) specifies the research object. It zooms in on why Amsterdam provides a compelling, critical case for the study of the cultural production of nightclubs and gives a short overview of nightlife history in the city. After that, I explain the rationale behind the operationalisation of nightclubs, a conceptualisation of the music genres under study and the relevant roles in the club's production process I predominantly focus on. In the second part (paragraphs 3.3 to 3.5) I explain my research design that consists of three methods: qualitative interviews, document-based analysis and short-term ethnography. The mixed-method design is set up to adapt the cultural industries framework to live music, with genre as category of analysis that connects production, the cultural product, urban context and consumption. The interviews with 36 Amsterdam-based promoters form the main source of empirical material but are corroborated by 111 hours of short-term ethnographic nightclub and industry event visits to understand the cultural product in its spatiotemporal dimensions and a background document-based analysis (policy documents, newspaper articles, archives, dance music history books, TV documentaries) to understand the interviews in the historical and urban context of nightclubs and electronic dance music in Amsterdam and beyond. This places Amsterdam's nightclubs in the context of transnational cultural flows and the globalised music industry (Montano 2013).

Part one: Research site

3.1 Research Location: Amsterdam

3.1.1 Amsterdam: A Critical Case for Nightlife Production

The decision to choose for Amsterdam as research site follows out of three motivations. The first is the policy context: Amsterdam's so-called 'culture-driven' approach to nightlife which has been praised in policy reports on London (London Assembly 2018) and New York City (The Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment 2019), among other cities. This policy follows out of an overall change of tone in the 2000s as nightlife became to be perceived as less of a burden and increasingly as a vehicle for economic growth as it attracts tourism and 'young creatives'. This included the instalment of a night mayor in 2002, an independent broker who mediates between night-time entrepreneurs and the local authorities. This function has professionalised since 2010 and secured 24h permits for clubs outside of the city centre in 2012, a political response to long-lasting debates about curfews in the city. As, in comparison to Berlin, Amsterdam did not have the advantage of large shares of abundant space where nightlife can develop (Dorst 2015), the resurgence of its nightlife was the result of collaboration between clubs, the night mayor and city council. As shown in *Figure 2* (page 63), niche-edm clubs (financially precarious, 24h permits) were in 2019 almost exclusively located outside the city centre, while city centre clubs devoted

themselves increasingly to the eclectic genre. This highlights how cultural production is enabled and constrained by space, with Amsterdam a case where this is particularly apparent as a result of local policy and urban context, rendering it a critical case to explore a more geographical focus in cultural industries research.

The second motivation is to move beyond the Anglophone context (Australia, the UK, the USA) in which the majority of nightlife research is conducted (Montano 2013) and to centralise the transnational cultural flows between continental European cities, such as between Berlin and Amsterdam¹⁸. Amsterdam's nightclub sector has been studied through research on bouncers (van Liempt and van Aalst 2015), ethnic minorities' nightlife scenes (Boogaarts – de Bruin 2011; Kartosen 2016) and drugs (Nabben 2010). However, music-related research is scarce in the Netherlands¹⁹ and much of the non-Anglophone research does not analyse on how music travels between non-Anglophone electronic dance music hubs, if they mention musical flows at all. Amsterdam is one of those under researched electronic dance music hubs: the city hosts the largest electronic dance music conference in the world (Amsterdam Dance Event, 350 000 visitors annually (Hoorntje 2013)), and is has the highest number of clubs per city in the Netherlands, where electronic dance music amounted to 73.4% of all musical export in 2018 (Kroeske 2020). A focus on cultural production in Amsterdam can highlight the complexity of transnational flows in continental Europe, which may surpass Anglophone cultural transmissions.

The third motivation has mainly to do with racialisation and music. As Melville writes about electronic dance music in London: "With the rise of stripped-down rhythmically brutal forms of Euro techno, from Belgium and Holland, in the late 1980s, which moved rave further and further from the norms of Black music, Black ravers drifted away" (Melville 2020: 198). This highlights the central role of the Netherlands in what is referred to by activists and writers as the 'bleaching of techno' (Maxamed and Rennela 2020), the developments in production and consumption that have established the genre's whiteness (van Bohemen and Roeling 2020). In the Netherlands, the production and consumption of the niche-edm genre are locally defined by mainly white promoters, artists and audiences. Meanwhile, non-white promoters in Amsterdam find more opportunities in eclectic nights, just like club nights in the eclectic genre appear to have more multi-ethnic audiences. This follows from Amsterdam as a city where white Dutch citizens are no longer a majority (Crul 2016): while whiteness is constitutive of Dutch national identity (Wekker 2016), cities can be sites of a convivial multiculturalism that is unthinkable in nationalist imaginations (Gilroy 2004) but also sites where white nationalism takes on its spatial form (Hesse 1997). Nightclub production is formative of urban identities (Kartosen 2016), but its relations with whiteness, race and social inequalities are underexplored. Comparing two music genres (the niche-edm genre and

¹⁸ It should be noted that Berlin is now relatively well-researched (Garcia 2011; 2015; 2018; Lange and Bürkner 2013; Schofield and Hellensmann 2015). Other notable exceptions of research on the musical aspects of nightlife in other localities include work on Goa (Saldanha 2005), Istanbul (Eder and Öz 2015), Johannesburg (Duignan-Pearson 2019), Oslo (Gadir 2017), Paris (Garcia 2011), Rotterdam (Rietveld 2011; van Bohemen and Roeling 2020), São Paulo (Paolo de Paris Fontanari 2013), and Stockholm and Vienna (Gavanas and Reitsamer 2013).

¹⁹ Exceptions are Mutsaers 1998; Rietveld 1998; Dorst 2015.

the eclectic genre) in the same city helps to understand the local forms of boundary work (Lamont and Molnar 2002) that produce social relations. Including the eclectic genre in the thesis is a corrective for nightlife research and popular history that predominantly focuses on the niche-edm genre²⁰.

3.1.2 Historical Overview of Nightlife in Amsterdam

In this sub-section I will give a short historical overview of nightlife in Amsterdam in the last forty years, to provide necessary context to better understand the arguments made in this thesis. Historically, nightlife in Amsterdam was mainly located around Leidseplein (*Figure 1, X*) in the canal district. In the late 1960s two squats – a milk factory and a religious building – started as multidisciplinary arts centres where soft drugs were sold, contributing to early tolerant Dutch drug policy (Nabben 2010), but became official, regulated music venues over the course of the 1970s, and after a resident-led protest against redevelopment plans (Verlaan 2016). In the 1980s a second nightlife cluster started to grow around Rembrandtplein (*Figure 1, Y*), located on the eastern side of the canal district: nightclubs such as Escape, Flora Palace (later: iT), Odeon and RoXY were opened in former cinemas and theatres and in the nearby Reguliersdwarsstraat many openly LGBT+ bars with alcohol licences sprung up. In the 1980s squatting culture was influential in Amsterdam's cultural life. Many squat venues were located in the city centre, but some opened outside of the canal district, in the South (*Zuid*) and West neighbourhoods. At these venues – both regulated and squats – many DJs and promoters cut their teeth, some of whom would become key figures in the first Dutch house parties in the late 1980s (de Wit 2008). In the 1980s, Amsterdam's population was still in decline, its citizens were much younger than in the rest of the country, and the city was in economic decay (Kahn and van der Plas 1999; Savini et al. 2016). Urban policy at the time focused on revitalising inner city 19th century neighbourhoods, the crescent²¹ around the city's core canal district, and the share of regulated rental housing was around 50% (Savini et al. 2016). This provided the spatial conditions for an electronic dance music scene to emerge, both in the regulated nightlife circuit as well as in abandoned warehouses on the fringes of the city (Dorst 2015).

The common narrative for the arrival of house in the Netherlands centralises the influence from London: after the pioneering efforts of the Belgian Amsterdam-based DJ Eddy de Clercq at nightclub RoXY, the central spark for house music's popularity was a warehouse rave on KNSM-Island organised by Soho Connection – mainly Amsterdam-based Brits who were inspired by a night at the London club Shoom (de Wit 2008). In this narrative, the Netherlands is then house's next destination, after the Chicago and New York clubs in the 1980s, Ibiza, and the Ibiza-inspired Londoners who ran Shoom. However, while there is a tendency to describe the arrival of house as a musical break with everything that came before, it is also a tendency one should be wary of, as it obscures continuities with earlier, often Black or multicultural, music scenes (Melville 2020).

²⁰ See sub-sections 2.3.3, 2.5.1, 3.2.3 and 3.5.2.

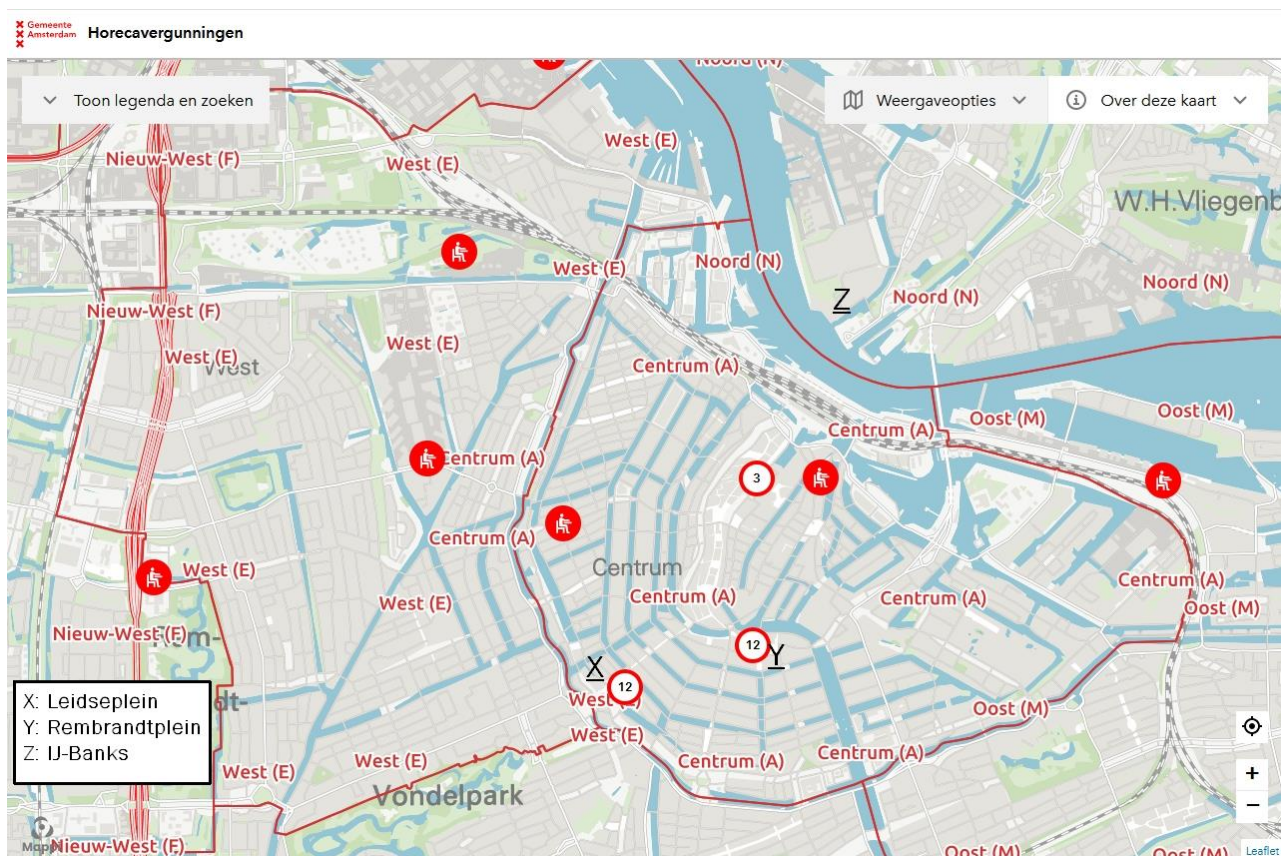
²¹ See Figure 1: West, Zuid and Oost neighbourhoods.

It is worth noting that many of Amsterdam's early house pioneers were gay men and drag queens (and kings) were much more visible in city's nightlife than in the UK at the time (de Wit 2008), a sexually liberal ethos possibly the result of more direct connections to underground American nightlife. DJs like Eddy de Clercq were, for example, directly influenced by visits to the New York City nightclub Paradise Garage in 1978 (de Wit 2008). While the United Kingdom remains influential as a perpetuator of house music's popularity in the Netherlands (another reason is the influence of UK music magazines (van Veen 2013), direct cultural exchange between the USA and the Netherlands remained in place throughout the 1990s – for example, Dutch DJs and organisers like Orlando Voorn and Miss Djax were in direct contract with artists and record labels in Detroit (Passet 2013; Veilbrief and Passet 2013). This suggests that popular narratives portray the routes of global musical flows as linear, which can obscure continuations of earlier local scenes (Melville 2020) as well ignoring transnational collaborations after a genre has 'arrived' in a new place of destination.

Figure 1: Map of venues with 'Nachtzaak'-permit.

(JACK in South East is not visible on this map but is in in Figure 2)

Source²²: Gemeente Amsterdam



²² Map retrieved from <https://www.amsterdam.nl/ondernemen/horeca/horeca-kaart/>, accessed 7 March 2019.

From the mid-1990s onwards, the Amsterdam's population started to rise again, along with national policies favouring homeownership and deregulation of housing associations (Savini et al. 2016). This coincided with the demise of nightlife. Just like in the UK, illegally organised house parties and the emerging use of the drug ecstasy were a source of moral panic and incentive for policy measures (Thornton 1995; Nabben 2010). Categorising ecstasy as hard drugs, the 1995 national policy document *Stadhuis en House* ('Town Hall and House') advised city councils to discourage drug use but also to care about the health of users, asking organisers to facilitate testing ecstasy pills for their toxicity. While this policy contained liberal elements and was not aimed at licenced venues, in the late 1990s Amsterdam started a zero-tolerance policy on hard drugs (Nabben 2010) with a series of clubs (temporarily) closing, including Mazzo (1996, 2004), iT (1999) and Escape (2003). In 1999, the pioneering club RoXY burned down, and a couple of years later iT closed for good. While Amsterdam's nightlife was generally considered to be flourishing in the early 1990s, after the turn of millennium newspapers reported a dearth of nightlife activity, accompanied by reports of new club openings expressing the hope Amsterdam 'may start swinging again' (Carvalho 2006; Veilbrief and Van Veen 2013). However, as late as 2010 the German magazine *Der Spiegel* reported on Amsterdam's dying nightlife, mainly attributed to the difficulty of obtaining and keeping the right permits needed to stay open late enough to operate a nightlife business.

While the arrival of house is perceived as a sudden explosion, the popularity of hip-hop rose more gradually. It was not until the mid-2000s until Dutch rappers started breaking into the national charts and club nights had remained a niche throughout the 1990s. In the early 2000s hip-hop popularised in Dutch clubs, but often in combination with a range of other genres and characterised by a different style of DJ'ing than house (more tempo changes, shorter duration of tracks) (Kerkhof 2013a). Where in house Amsterdam is seen as the forerunner, the eclectic style gained its initial popularity in Rotterdam, and attracted more multicultural audiences than house, before spreading out to the rest of the country (Kerkhof 2013a). With the opening of the club Jimmy Woo (city centre, near Leidseplein), the eclectic/hip-hop style of DJ'ing gained a foothold in Amsterdam's nightlife (Kerkhof 2013a). However, despite its popularity, DJs adopting this style found that in order to advance their careers they had to work their way up through international electronic dance music companies such as ID&T where they were met with resistance and outright racism by its fans (Kerkhof 2013b). In the late 2000s, this hybrid of house, hip-hop and Caribbean dance genres such as soca and dancehall eventually gained international popularity in the United States, categorised as Dirty Dutch or Dutch house, under the umbrella genre EDM (Van der Plas 2013).

In Amsterdam, tight regulations for nightclub permits and early (5am) curfews remained a topic of discussion in the 2000s, inspiring local action groups such as AiAmsterdam (referring to the tourism slogan iAmsterdam) and Stop de Vertrutting²³ ('Stop the Frump-ification') started

²³ 'Vertrutting' refers to the city becoming more 'feminine': a 'trut' is a Dutch swearword for an inelegant, boring woman. It has sexist undertones.

protesting a city that had become too regulated and sanitised. A breakthrough in policy came when the policy notion *Topstad bij Nacht* in 2010 coupled nightlife, creativity, economic prosperity and growth in tourism, offering an ‘enabling frame’ (Peck 2012) for a city seeking new pathways for economic growth. At the same time, the role of night mayor – an independent broker between nightclubs and city councils – professionalised and gained a major victory after securing a pilot with 24h permits for creative and innovative nightclubs located outside of the city centre, with Trouw (in the East (Oost) neighbourhood) as the first club with a 24h permit in 2013. Only allowing clubs outside of the city centre, the permit fits an explicit policy imperative towards the ‘rolling out’ of the city centre, giving more centrality to more peripheral areas such as the IJ-banks in North (see *Figure 1, Z*) (Savini and Dembski 2016). Some clubs outside the city centre came into being with help of the city council, through the so-called Broedplaatsen-policy: the city council offers vacant or under-used buildings to be used as temporary arts spaces, with its temporariness a key policy imperative that uses Berlin’s re-use of abandoned manufacturing industry as an inspiration (PMB Leerhuis 2012). This policy has been criticised as “subsidising broedplaatsen for some, subsidising gentrification for others” (Peck 2012: 472). Trouw, for example, was described by one its former owners as a ‘gentrification tool’ (van Bommel 2017).

Gentrification in Amsterdam, with a city centre becoming more expensive since the 1990s (Savini et al. 2016), coincides with the rapid growth of the electronic dance music industries. This consists of two developments: an accelerated rise in DJ fees and a rapid increase in festivals. Marketing research from 2019 estimates an increase from 998 (2016) to around 1115 (2019) festivals in the Netherlands as a whole, including 155 in Amsterdam alone.²⁴ The two trends are linked: festivals generally have higher programming budgets than nightclubs, which allows them to make exclusivity deals with popular artists that restrict other performances in the area. Festivals can present a wide array of artists, often from multiple genres, programming mainstream and niche artists across multiple stages hosting a variety of music that would be impossible to program on a single club night (Montano 2011). This means that nightclubs are disadvantaged: top-tier DJs, especially in the EDM genre (see sub-section 1.3), rarely play in clubs, but instead at festivals or large music venues that can afford their fees and have the technical capacity to host their visually spectacular shows (Reynolds 2013). This means that electronic dance music clubs in Amsterdam now predominantly focus on emerging and underground artists and organisers. This has important spatial effects: in 2019, niche-edm clubs were virtually all located outside of the city centre, while eclectic clubs are mainly found in the city centre clubs near Rembrandtplein and Leidseplein (see *Figure 2*). This is a relatively recent trend and includes city centre clubs that focused on house and techno up until the mid-2010s but changed genre out of financial motives. The next sub-section will offer a more detailed conceptualisation of nightclub music genres in Amsterdam.

²⁴ <https://www.em-cultuur.nl/festival-overzicht-2019/> [accessed 9 November 2020].

3.2 Research design

In the first part of this section, I define the object of this research: nightclubs in Amsterdam. This includes a conceptualisation of the music genres under study. In the second part, I explain my focus on the role of promoter as key actor in the cultural production process of nightclubs.

3.2.1 Clubs: Definition and Corpus

In nightlife studies, researchers have operationalised nightclubs in various ways. In experiential approaches on nightlife, research sites are usually defined bottom-up. Ethnographers have put up adverts in niche magazines to find frequent clubbers to join on a night out (Thornton 1995; Malbon 1999). Buckland (2002) and Garcia (2011) also centralise consumers, gathering respondents through a snowball inspired approach. This research design offers authority to respondents in defining what clubs are relevant. While these approaches define clubs in ways that stay close to the experiences of audiences, the snowball or magazine approach risks conceptualising clubs only through a small circle of respondents that share characteristics in terms of age, gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity, class, taste, et cetera (Malbon 1999; Garcia 2011). In doing so, more glamorous, culturally edgy or elite clubs may be privileged (Chatterton and Hollands 2003). Top-down definitions, on the other hand, risk making rigid divisions between different nightlife establishments, producing typologies that are at odds with clubs' self-perception or audience experience. Ownership structure has for example been used as the basis of such a typology (Chatterton and Hollands 2003), but cultural industries research has shown that ownership structure is not always a good predictor for production practices and cultural ideals (such as the amount of creative freedom offered to artists) (Hesmondhalgh 2013a).

In this research, I define a club as a venue with a dancefloor and a DJ that programs weekly club nights, mostly after midnight. I arrive at a working typology of nightclubs with the limitations of economic top-down definitions and respondent-led definitions in mind. I used three routes: licence, genre and respondents. The first route: licences. Looking at licences includes clubs that receive little (social) media attention, which ensures attention goes beyond culturally edgy or glamorous clubs. A map (*Figure 1*) by the Amsterdam city council (*Gemeente Amsterdam*) of permits for bars, restaurants and venues identifies 35 places that are allowed open until at least 4am during weeknights and until at least 5am on Friday and Saturday²⁵. Most venues with this permit have a dancefloor. Bars do not typically get such a licence. Some of the places on this list have unique licences allowing them to be open later (until 8am) or do not have a curfew (24h permits). However, when it comes to electronic dance music clubs this list is not complete: a lot of venues that weekly program DJs are not on this list as they have a licence only until 3am. To make sure to

²⁵ Amsterdam has three main permits for bars, restaurants and venues: daytime establishments (*dagzaken*) (open until 1am during the week and 3am on Friday and Saturday), evening establishments (*avondzaken*) (open until 3am during the week and 4am on Friday and Saturday) and night establishments (*nachtzaken*). However, there are also exceptions: clubs around Rembrandtplein are allowed open until 8am. Moreover, there are currently nine 24-hour locations that have varying types of permits. This adds another seven venues to the list.

include clubs that do not (yet) have a proper licence, I also looked at genre. A 3am permit is given out to any type of café and restaurant, but I tried to filter out as many clubs as I could by looking at music programming. I made use of the event listings of electronic dance music web magazine Resident Advisor. By doing so, I identified a further 35 venues, which totals the number of venues to 70. While my corpus excludes locations that organise irregular parties or cultural institutions organising incidental parties, it is not far off to Nabben's (2010) estimate of 75 venues for dancing after midnight in the 2000s²⁶ (as opposed to a dozen in the 1980s).

To check these two approaches, I used a third route: interview respondents. Some venues are not yet added to council map or some have been closed. Respondents could often inform me on the latest developments. Among my corpus only two nightclubs do all of their programming themselves. From interviews with promoters, who are responsible for music programming in clubs, I also learned the extent to which nightclubs rely on external party organisations (external promoters), which was a reason to include this group. External promoters are important agents of cultural value and play a significant role in the production of nightlife, especially as they have a much closer relationship to their audiences. While the club as venue is the conceptual starting point, I interviewed external promoters as well, because they provide a different, 'outsider' perspective on venues and provide insight in the production practices of clubs I was not able to interview.

I interviewed 36 promoters in 29 interviews with interviews lasting between 45 and 90 minutes²⁷. This includes 19 club promoters and 17 external promoters. Taken together, they represent 16 venues and 13 external organisations. As it stands, the sample roughly reflects the demographic make-up of Amsterdam's club sector. My 36 respondents were between 21 years and 57 years old at the time of the interview, with a rounded-off average age of 32. 81% of the 36 respondents are in their twenties or thirties. Seven respondents do not identify as white, but as Black (five), Latino (one) and North-African²⁸. Eleven respondents identified as woman. I interviewed six external promoters who organise parties for LGBT+ audiences and identified as part of these communities. 24 respondents reported to have completed a university-level (or university of applied sciences) degree or were in the process of doing so.

I tried to approach promoters for 58 clubs (see sub-section 3.2.2). In the end, I received replies from 34 clubs. 16 clubs, represented by 19 promoters, were willing to participate. Going by club nights listed at these 34 clubs, I approached 32 external promoters. Here, I prioritised promoters who target audiences from marginalised social groups and promoters who are active in different

²⁶ I excluded (student) societies / private clubs or parties for which memberships or invitations are required. I also excluded strip clubs, as their focus is not on visitors dancing. Nabben bases his estimation on nightlife agendas in local magazines and it is likely that he would not include these venues either. Venues that organise incidental dance parties, for example as part of a cultural festival, are also not included.

²⁷ For an intricate overview of all respondents see Appendix A.

²⁸ All respondents of colour are men. While I approached female promoters of colour, they either did not respond or did not agree to an interview, also in cases where I used a snowball approach to gain trust. I do realise that the inclusion of women of colour in my interview sample could have provided a better understanding of the intersections between race and gender in cultural production.

parts of nightlife at the same time (for example, this a promoter who also organises unlicensed open-air parties). This led me to interview a further 17 external promoters, who work for 13 different businesses.²⁹ Music scene-based research of a similar scope has identified around thirty interviews as a saturation point (Virani 2012). However, while my interview corpus has a degree of demographic variation, inclusion of more participants with a social biography that diverts from the middle-class, white, heterosexual men that dominate Amsterdam's club sector could have provided extra depth to insights into power relations brought forward in this thesis.³⁰

3.2.2 A Typology of Nightclubs

To understand the different types of clubs and the role of promoters better, I will first present a typology of night clubs based on genre (this sub-section), to then explain the genres in more detail (sub-section 3.2.3), before defining the role of the promoter more precisely (section 3.2.4). Genres are 'sets of conventions' (Lena 2012), so to categorise club's conventions, I looked at their programming (themed and branded nights, line-ups) (Stirling 2016), use of genre labels (Lena 2012) and social media and marketing (Böse 2005; Garcia 2011). Together, this reveals information about clubs' self-positioning in the market and their commodification strategies. In sum, I use music programming, marketing, design and location to arrive at a typology of clubs. In total, was able to identify five different 'sets of conventions' (Lena 2012). See *Table 2*.

On the basis of this typology, I defined priorities: in this thesis I focus on the two biggest nightclub genres, the niche-oriented electronic dance music genre (niche-edm) and the eclectic genre. The focus of this research is on DJ-oriented nightclubs: this excludes two categories, live music bars and mainstream late-night bars, reducing the sample size to 58 clubs. I approached autonomous clubs and cruise clubs too, as during my interviews I noticed external promoters made little difference between these two types of clubs and niche-edm or eclectic clubs.³¹ However, the main focus and argument of this thesis concerns niche-edm and eclectic clubs. I will now explain the two genres in more detail.

²⁹ My aim was to interview more promoters in May 2020, as some email recipients had expressed interest but could not find the time in October/November 2019. However, due to the Covid19 pandemic, which forced nightclubs to close impermanently, I decided that while virtual interviews were an option, the context had become so radically different, new interviews would be hard to compare with the older ones.

³⁰ See also section 3.3.3 on positionality.

³¹ In the end, I interviewed two external promoters who also volunteer for an autonomous venue and had organised parties at a cruise club, while two other external promoters had organised parties at another autonomous venue. Two of the more hidden clubs for economic elites (VIP Clubs (Mears 2016)) are included in this overview, in one case as part of the eclectic genre, in the other the niche-edm genre, but I did not attend nor interview these clubs. Out of 25 clubs visited, two offer VIP tables.

Table 2: Elaborate typology of nightclubs in Amsterdam

	Music programming	Marketing	Design	Location	Number of venues (in 2019)
<i>Autonomous cultural spaces</i>	Club nights as part of a wider array of cultural activities. Politics reflect squatting culture.	DJ's are central in line-ups. When themes are used, they are often political.	Former squats. Minimalistic design. Re-use of building. Sparse lighting. Presence of political stickers, posters, and flags.	Outside of city centre, with one exception.	6
<i>Cruise clubs</i>	Music not central. Aims at different sexual subcultures within queer communities.	Sexual subcultures are central in communication. Music is secondary, but often electronic dance music.	-	In the city centre, but not in the main nightlife districts.	3
<i>Eclectic oriented clubs</i>	Emphasis on R&B, hip-hop, dancehall, Latin, reggaeton, pop, sometimes mixed with house.	Themed and branded nights, names of external co-promoters and genre labels are more prominent than individual DJs.	The club is lighter, more emphasis on visuals, glamorous. In some cases, there is table service and/or a VIP area.	City centre, near main nightlife districts, sometimes in more peripheral locations.	32
<i>Niche-oriented electronic dance music clubs</i>	Emphasis on electronic dance music genres with a post-disco genealogy (such as house, electro, techno and minimal).	DJ names and record labels are central in communication. External co-promoters are named.	Club design is often minimalistic and dark. Re-use of former function of building. Relatively sparse lighting. DJ booth on same height as dancefloor.	Outside of the city centre's main nightlife districts.	17
<i>Live music bars</i>	Live music after midnight, danceable genres: rock, funk, soul, afrobeat, jazz and salsa.	Bands are central in communication, but genres or themes are always included. DJs not listed, so excluded from definition.	Low stage, bar setting (wooden interior, stools, tables).	Mostly in city centre, with some exceptions.	4
<i>Mainstream late-night bars</i>	Emphasis on chart hits and Dutch-language classics.	Often does not advertise per night, venue is main attraction. Therefore, excluded from definition of club.	Bar setting (wooden interior, stools, tables), DJ's are often barely visible. Sometimes bar staff does music.	City centre, in main nightlife districts.	8

3.2.3 Conceptualising Music Genres in Nightlife in Amsterdam

In this research I focus on two nightclub genres in Amsterdam: niche-oriented electronic dance music and eclectic. To start with niche-oriented electronic dance music. Garcia (2011) uses 'electronic dance music' to denote genres with a post-disco genealogy: it refers to a cluster of functionalist, repetitive dancefloor-oriented music genres such as house and techno, that can be traced back specific practices developed in dance clubs in New York and Chicago in the 1970s and 1980s and by record labels through the distribution, production and consumption of disco in the 1970s, which have been applied more widely in subsequent musical contexts (see also Lawrence 2003). The musical characteristics of this cluster of styles includes the use of a clearly articulated 4/4 measure between 120 and 140 beats per minute, with a sound defined by the drum computer (Rietveld 2011). Its social history is important too: electronic dance music's roots can be traced back to nightclubs in New York, Chicago and Detroit in the 1970s and 1980s that were frequented by predominantly Black, Latinx and LGBT+ audiences (Lawrence 2003). Historically, the imagery of this music is often futuristic, inspired by both experimental European synthesizer music and Afrofuturist funk (Albiez 2005; Benabdellah 2018; Melville 2020). Beatmatching is seen as an essential DJ-skill: playing two (or more) records simultaneously, matching tempo differences using the pitch control slider and creating a 'third record' while adjusting volume or equalisation as one record blends into the next (Rietveld 2011; Attias 2013). Since the 1990s, electronic dance music quickly mutated in many subgenres, each with subtle differences and vernaculars of distinction, but most prominently leading to louder and faster variants, as well as non-4/4-oriented forms grouped together by labels such as jungle, hardcore and drum and bass (McLeod 2001; Reynolds 2013).

I use the genre label 'niche-edm' and not 'edm' or 'EDM' in the context of nightclubs in Amsterdam to avoid confusion with the more maximalist, visual-heavy electronic dance music styles that are dominated by superstar DJs such as Calvin Harris (Reynolds 2013). EDM DJs have become unaffordable for niche-edm nightclubs, even for those with a capacity of 2000 people, which means that clubs typically focus on certain musical niches within electronic dance music. Niche then refers to those forms of electronic dance music that resist expansion into the major label record industries, sticking with specialised, often independent record labels for example (Lena 2012)³². While these niches may indeed at times divert slightly from the musical characteristics mentioned in the previous paragraph, these clubs are held together by a common orientation and related production practices. Most important is that in niche-edm DJs are valued and marketed as individual artists, sometimes accompanied by the name of the record label. This cultural prestige has an economic aspect too: DJs are frequently professionals. While clubs cannot pay festival-rate

³² Lena (2012) posits that genres like house remain niche because of a lack of a canon and 'faceless' artists. I disagree with these reasons since there are forms of canonisation in the niche-edm genre and DJs are valued as autonomous artists (as explained in more detail in chapter 5). I think it has more to do with recorded output of house, techno and electro DJs: they release EPs and mix albums more often than 'traditional' albums and their music is often functionalist and instrumental, oriented towards the dancefloor. However, the most popular DJs in the niche-edm genre, like Nina Kraviz, Seth Troxler or Marcel Dettmann, are stars in their own right.

fees, niche-edm clubs spend significantly more on DJs than eclectic clubs. It is also an international genre: Amsterdam's niche-edm clubs frequently book foreign DJs who tour Europe by flying to different cities every weekend. Genre comes alive in the spatial orientations of the club space too: since virtually all clubs cannot compete with festivals in terms of visual spectacle and are music-focused, sound is central, so lighting is often sparse. The genre's homological relationship with the past has a spatial component: the styles developed in re-used locations such as warehouses and many niche-edm clubs are still located in re-used industrial buildings (Schofield and Rellensmann 2015). Genre participants often emphasise social values and ideals: the dancefloor is seen as a space where people from all walks of life should come together, where daytime inequalities should dissolve. These ideals are inspired by genre history, both queer nightlife scenes in the USA in the 1970s and 1980s as well as the UK rave scene in the late 1980s.

The other nightclub genre is the eclectic genre. This includes those clubs whose events focus on a mix of Black, Caribbean and Ibero-American musical styles such as hip-hop, R&B, dancehall and Latin, mixed with house, pop and sometimes rock (Kerkhof 2013a). In Amsterdam, eclectic DJs play a wide variety of genres, but typically rely more on melody and recognisability than the niche-edm genre where obscure tracks, abstraction and deep musical knowledge is valued more. This style is also characterised by shorter mixes, playing tracks for two minutes instead of four, many changes in tempo and a wide array of genres (Kerkhof 2013a). Its roots can be traced back to hip-hop DJs in the Bronx in the 1970s and Jamaican sound system culture before that, with the frequent presence of an MC as signifier of call-and-response elements (Brewster and Broughton 2006). In hip-hop, MCs (or: rappers) eventually became the stars of the hip-hop genre (Brewster and Broughton 2006). There are still not many star hip-hop or eclectic DJs, which is reflected in cultural production practices in the eclectic genre in Amsterdam today. Club nights are branded through themes and musical styles rather than the names of individual DJs. DJs are typically paid lower fees, which means that DJs are less often professionals and almost exclusively local. DJs in this genre find they can only advance their careers by crossing over to the niche-edm or EDM genre (Kerkhof 2013b). Visually and spatially, eclectic clubs typically focus on warm light and glamour (rather than immersive darkness like in the niche-edm genre), which places more emphasis on the social aspects of going out. While hip-hop is frequently analysed in terms of Black social struggle (Rose 1994; Krims 2007), participants in the eclectic genre value authenticity, like in hip-hop (Balaji 2009; Haijen 2016), but generally place less emphasis on the socio-political merits of nightlife. However, club nights in Amsterdam's eclectic genre more often welcome a multicultural public, as opposed to the predominantly white audiences of niche-edm clubs (see also Kerkhof 2013a).

Eclectic clubs are more frequently located in the city centre, while niche-edm clubs are typically found in more peripheral neighbourhoods. This is a combined consequence of nightlife policy and urban developments (as explained in section 3.1), but also of the higher weekly costs for niche-edm clubs programming international touring DJs (travel, accommodation, fees). The spatial distribution of nightclubs in Amsterdam in 2019 is presented in *Figure 2* and *Figure 3*.

Figure 2: Spatial distribution of niche-edm clubs (green) and eclectic clubs (orange)
(map: adapted from Google Maps¹).

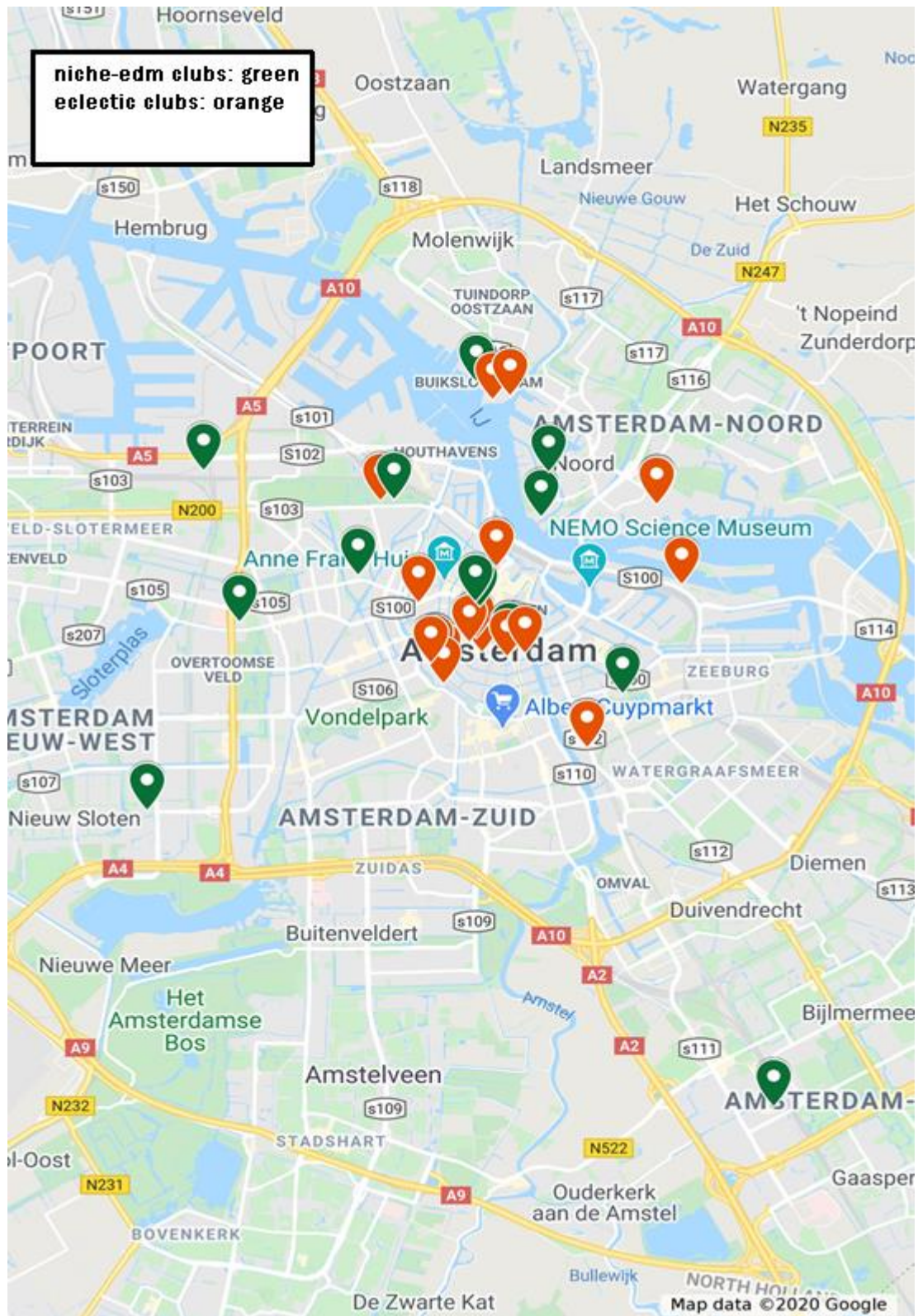
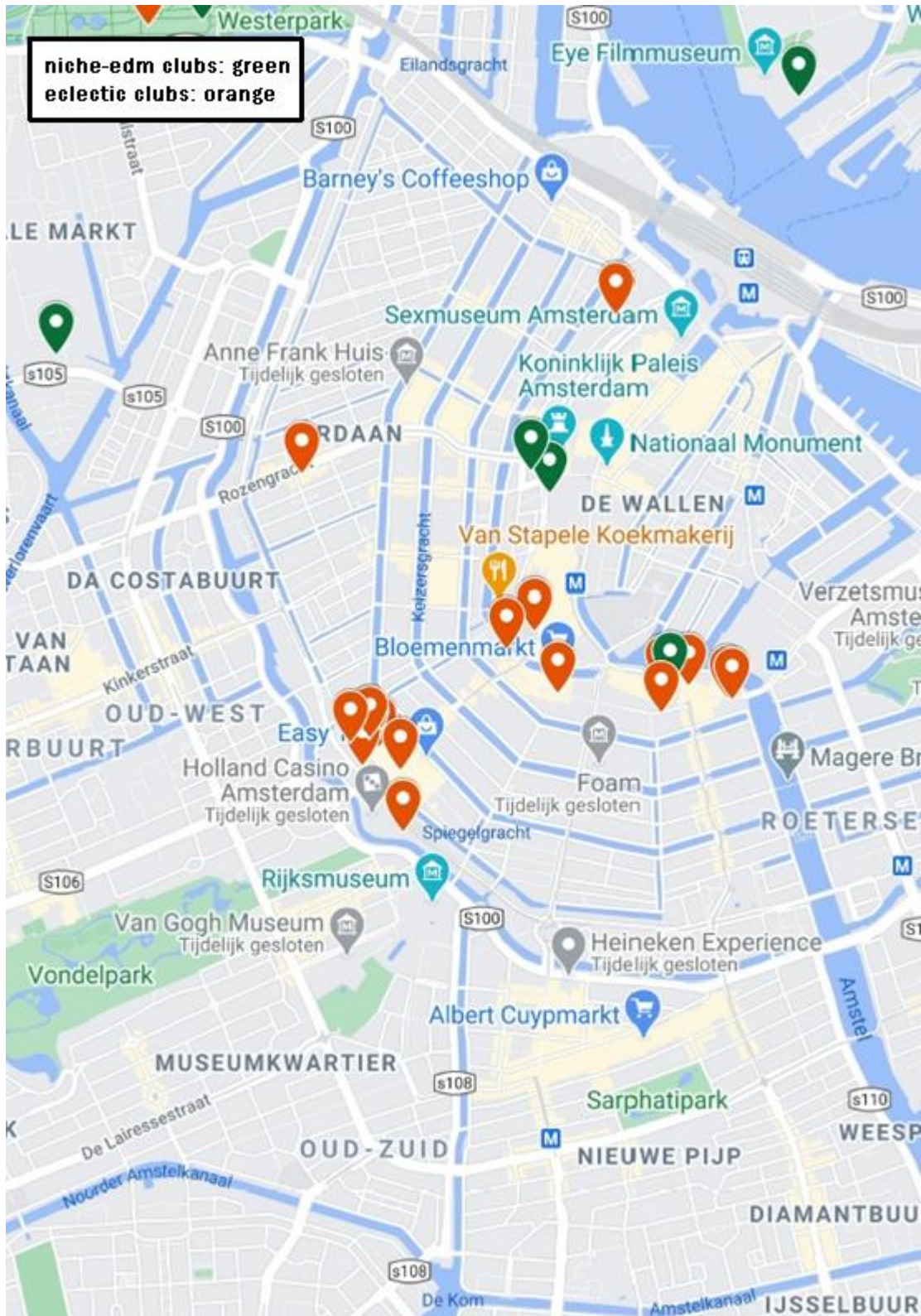


Figure 3: Spatial distribution of niche-edm clubs (green) and eclectic clubs (orange) in the city centre of Amsterdam



3.2.4 Promoters: Studying Cultural Production Through Intermediaries

After the club typology, this section defines the key cultural production workers in nightclubs. As this research concerns itself with cultural production, it asks the question of how culture produces meaning and value through practices such as acquisition, curation, consecration and institutionalisation (Bourdieu 1973). In the recorded music and film industries, social scientists have often studied cultural production by focusing on “those workers who come in-between creative artists and consumers (or, more generally, production and consumption)” (Negus 2002: 503). I focus explicitly on those workers in the cultural industries who bridge the interests of three groups: owners, core cultural workers (promoters) and consumers (clubbers). These workers fit into the broader category of ‘cultural intermediaries’ (Negus 2002) or the more specific ‘creative managers’³³ (Hesmondhalgh 2013a). In the recorded music industry these workers might be A&R managers while in publishing they are commissioning editors (Hesmondhalgh 2013a). In the nightlife industry the most common term is promoters, which includes both club personnel as well as freelancers and event companies (Kartosen 2016; Finlayson 2017)³⁴. Studying promoters’ reflections and motivations, cultural ideals, classification systems, collective memories and cultural histories, provides insight in how cultures of production take shape (Saha 2013). To understand promoter’s relative power, it is important to situate their repertoires within the organisational dynamics of their workplace and the broader economic functioning of the cultural industries (Balaji 2009; Hesmondhalgh 2013a; Montano 2013), in my case nightclubs, the regulated night-time economy and the music industries.

To provide a more specific picture of organisational dynamics, I will use the following example of the organisational structure of a niche-edm club based in Amsterdam, based on a personal interview with their HR-manager in preparation to the fieldwork. The management consists of two people, a creative manager and a financial manager. Together, they are the owners of the club. Their daily tasks are not specified, but they are responsible for both the creative vision as well as financial wellbeing of the club. In their daily work they are supported by an HR-manager, who takes care of all personnel-related tasks. During the week, a promoter, a communications officer, a producer and two or three technicians are present. The promoter has the main curatorial responsibilities: they select artists or external organisations, contact booking agencies and make agreements over the fees. From there onwards, the producer takes over, arranging for example the DJ’s travel and accommodation. The producer makes sure all technical requirements are met and decide on the plan of action for the weekend. During the weekend, the producer hands over the tasks to the club manager (responsible for external personnel (security, artists) and visitors) and the bar manager (responsible for internal personnel (bar staff and technicians)). The

³³ I do not adopt the term ‘creative manager’ for the purposes of this research, because as we shall see in this section, the role ‘creative manager’ is a distinct one in nightclubs, that differs from my interview population.

³⁴ I use promoters here rather differently than Mears (2016): in her research on VIP Clubs across the world, promoters are hired by nightclubs to attract women, most often fashion models, to accompany wealthy men in the VIP-section. The promoters in my interviews were occupied with the organisation of the club night, where musical programming and attracting audiences are entangled. As I will explain in section 4.4, the guest list continues to play a role in attracting the ‘right’ audiences, but never as blatantly gendered as in Mears’ case of VIP clubs.

communications officer is responsible for all external communication during the week, including social media, advertising and press releases. There are many differences between clubs, often dependent on their size, in how these different roles are organised. For many smaller clubs, these roles blend into one. In the eclectic genre, DJs are primarily local, which alters the role of producer. However, for the purpose of this section it gives an insight into the organisational dynamics of a nightclub.

This research focuses on promoters. In the dance music industry, promoter is the common term for the person responsible for artist line-ups (Finlayson 2017), although some clubs in Amsterdam use the word ‘programmer’ (*programmeur*). In clubs, the creative manager and the promoter are responsible for a club’s cultural value. The creative manager has more to say about the club’s overall style in general, including the spatial design and socio-cultural ideals, while the promoter eventually develops a vision of what the club nights should be like and follows contemporary musical trends more closely. The promoter is a key actor in the re-making of music genres through cultural production, but below the creative manager in the organisational hierarchy. Jansson and Hracs’ (2018) typology of curation-related activities is applicable to a club promoter’s tasks and helps to explain the role more systematically. First, there is the research process, finding out what DJs or party organisations are available and fit the club. Second, there is the booking process, asking DJ’s to play, making the line-up and deciding when to program which night. Third, there is the promotional aspect, communicating the DJ or the night to potential visitors. Fourth, the previous nights need to be evaluated and archived. Fifth, consumer demands and tastes need to be identified. As with any typology, some of these activities may in some instances blend into one.

Not all promoters work for clubs. I make a distinction between club promoters who are employed by clubs and external promoters who are temporally hired by clubs. External promoters are organised differently and there is a great variation in degrees of professionalism. In most cases, organising a monthly club night is not a fulltime job, but just one activity among many, as – like one club promoter I interviewed explained – external promoters start “making money” when the venue capacity is over 1000 people. I found external promoters are mostly freelancers or small businesses of between two and five people. In some cases, roles like booking artists and marketing are separated, while for other organisers they overlap. Some external promoters are active in the dance industry through other roles too: they are DJs or have a booking agency. Many external promoters do aim to make live music their fulltime job and see organising a festival as reaching that goal. To add to the complexity, there are club promoters who work part-time for a club and then work as external promoters for other venues. Interviewing external promoters gave the research new perspectives: they proved great resources in their abilities to see clubs from the outside and spot the differences between clubs’ production cultures.

Part two: Research methods

The rationale of the combination of methods is to analyse cultural production in a broad sense: through an analysis of the cultural ideals of nightlife promoters with an in-depth understanding of the cultural product situated in its historical, political and urban context. The combination of qualitative interviews and short-term ethnographies is designed to trace the cultural object from production to conception. The document-based analysis traces commonplace definitions and cultural ideals in the club sector back in time, providing insight into their formations.

3.3 Qualitative Interviews

3.3.1 Semi-structured Qualitative Interviews

The main part of the research consists of semi-structured qualitative interviews with 36 club and external promoters in Amsterdam. As an interview genre, semi-structured interviews are best understood when contrasted with more structured forms of investigation such as surveys and questionnaires (Cloeke et al. 2004). The latter genre departs from a fixed list of pre-stated questions that each interview participant needs to answer, which is useful for rigorous analytical comparison, but leaves little room for probing. Semi-structured interviews are more open-ended in practise, usually conducted with a topic list at hand rather than pre-written questions, which makes this type of interviewing more sensitive to the flow of the conversation (Cloeke et al. 2004). The main advantage of open-ended questions in their ideal form is that they do not pre-define social categories, but rather enable interviewees to make their own categorizations or respond to, define or make sense of those categories out there in alternative ways (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Lamont 1992). When it comes to the study of social inequalities for example, qualitative interviewing can lay bare not only the existence of socio-spatial boundaries, but also how interview participants value these social differences, how central these boundaries are in their 'maps of perception' and what type of difference is ignored (Lamont 1992; Rose 1997).

As the work of promoters deals with defining, classifying and categorising cultural products, this genre of interviewing is an efficacious way of researching how these workers make sense of producing club nights (Lamont 1992). Semi-structured interviews are specifically strong in getting to the imagined realities and cultural ideals of respondents, including a more thorough account of the ambivalence and inconsistency in the stories through which people construct their lifeworlds (Crang and Cook 2007; Lamont and Swidler 2014). Moreover, interviews provide me with the means to gather information about events and places at which I was not present (Lamont and Swidler 2014). In the case of clubs, this means discussions that took place on creative directions to be taken, changes in preferences (for example regarding politics, trends or taste), negotiation with the city council and other political bodies and key moments in the (lack of) self-perceived success of a given club space. It also provides the means for locating these repertoires in relation to the discursive uses of the electronic dance music genre as a whole, including the historical

events they see as formative, the state of the 'scene' or 'industry' today and the practices of peers in other cities.

3.3.2 Interviewing Promoters

In nearly all of the social science literature on qualitative interviewing, the interviewer-interviewee relationship and the accompanying power dynamics are either discussed in relation to interviewing precarious, disenfranchised populations (Crang and Cook 2007) or with regard to researching and obtaining access to influential elites (McDowell 1998; Harvey 2011; Wedel 2017). My interviewees (club and external promoters)³⁵, who can be classified under the umbrella of creative labour in western Europe, are an in-between category. The outcome of their work is influential in shaping the way we make sense of the world (Saha 2018) and their practices and discourses restrict access to cultural institutions for many (Brook et al. 2019), but the daily reality is often defined by precarious working conditions and no clear career pathway (McRobbie 2016). In practice, this means creative workers can often fall back on a relatively well-off social background to manage this precarity (Umney and Kretsos 2015). Managing a club falls into this category: clubs have considerable influence as taste makers, are sometimes part of major project investments and are instrumentalised by governments in processes of gentrification (Rapp 2010; Hae 2011a). At the same time, financially sustaining a club is difficult in an uncertain music landscape³⁶ increasingly dominated by festivals in cities, vulnerable as they already are to regulatory measures (Montano 2011).³⁷ Following this, I contend that a social scientist researching clubbing, or the cultural industries more generally, needs to uphold a position that holds a critical stance towards the limited space and resources available for culture and creativity in cities, but also should remain critical towards the corrosive effects of the cultural industries, as their practices reproduce or legitimise internal and external social inequalities.

While culture workers may have certain privileges in terms of social background that allows them to pursue this work in the first place, these can be invisible to them in their day-to-day experience when seeking to make ends meet or when the very existence of their employer is under threat. In terms of interviewing, that requires a reflexive flexibility. Here, it helped me to return to Bourdieu's arguments on reflexivity: he discusses the intellectualist bias of viewing the world as a spectacle, as a puzzle to be solved, rather than a set of concrete problems to be dealt with, which may lead, Bourdieu argues, to very different conceptions of the logic of practice between researcher and researched (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Qualitative interviewing thus requires not only thinking about the relation between the interviewer and the interviewee, but also about the role of

³⁵ There are stark hierarchies between club promoters and external promoters, but these will be explained in more detail in Chapter 4 and Chapter 6. For now, this more general explanation suffices to make the methodological argument.

³⁶ Precisely because for clubs the financial margins are tight, they are in some instances owned by powerful entrepreneurs in either the services industries or the music industries, who see the club as an investment where talent can grow or perceive the club as their 'passion project' that does not need to be profitable.

³⁷ Even before the Covid-19 pandemic starting early 2020, clubs in Europe were generally decreasing in comparison to the 1990s³⁷ (The Economist 2016), highlighting that running a club is a precarious business.

academic thought itself in its use of categories and concepts to talk about the lifeworlds of participants (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

Therefore, in the interviews themselves, I used open questions as much as possible to allow interviewees to use their own vocabulary. In follow-up questions, I would often take over interviewees' vocabularies, being sensitive to subtle differences. I kept the focus on practices, personal ideals and work routines, and during the interviews I refrained from asking questions that use academic concepts or reformulating respondents into academic language about social structures (such as: neoliberalism). However, this research also focuses on topics that people may find uncomfortable to discuss, such as gender, race/ethnicity and sexuality. Therefore, I tried to ask about these topics in terms of dilemmas that interviewees encounter in the workplace or as a reaction to ongoing debates in the music industries. Since gender inequality on line-ups at the time of my interviews was a prominent topic of discussion in Amsterdam's clubbing sector, I used this topic to probe about other inequalities, but only after a set of more general questions (although sometimes interviewees would bring up the topic of gender inequality at an early stage). In some cases, other inequalities than gender would then come to the fore. All interview participants who identified as Black or as another ethnic minority would bring up the topic of race without probing, stressing its centrality to cultures of production.

Another important element in interviewing promoters concerns the discussion of aesthetics and music genre. In reflecting on interviewing arts workers, Rose (1997) remarks that her interviewees often refused to talk about the meaning of specific works. She writes: "Instead, they talked of practice, process and the facticity of objects, and for very good critical reasons. They also talked of themselves in similarly performative ways" (Rose 1997: 318). This is very much consistent with the previous paragraphs on interviewing and reflexivity, especially as aesthetics, artistic quality and music genre can be difficult to bring across in clear terms. In my previous research involving interviews with Dutch literary publishers, I found that it becomes easier to talk about aesthetic dispositions and cultural preferences when the questions are posed in such a way that creative managers are encouraged to think more relationally about themselves, i.e. about what distinguishes them from their peers (Koren and Delhaye 2019³⁸). Those insights inspired the interviews for this thesis. As promoters often presented their artistic ideals in a fairly universal and fixed manner, I tried to probe to connect cultural preferences to economic and political dilemmas close to daily practice. Specific examples of setting up events or booking artists often revealed instances in which promoters need to compromise. These compromises were revealing in how curators enact values and how economic reality, policy measures, locality and cultural ideals shape each other.

³⁸ In general, my ideas on interviewing cultural workers are – in terms of practice – mainly derived from my master's thesis, for which I interviewed twelve creative managers in the Dutch literary field and four writers. Part of this thesis has been published as a paper in *Identities*, hence the reference. My ideas on positionality (paragraph 3.3.3) are mainly derived from a five-month research internship for which I interviewed same-sex mixed status migrant couples which given the personal nature of the interviews required an extra sensitivity with regard to gaining trust and relationship between researcher and respondent. This research has also been published (Chauvin et al. 2019).

3.3.3 Positionality

The respondents of this research are roughly the same age as I was during the 2019 fieldwork period: I was 27, while 81% of the respondents was in their twenties or thirties. Given that the sample is the 'creative core' of a music sector, some participants were familiar with press interviews. With those that were, the interview dynamic reflected a journalist-expert relationship. For more junior promoters, especially those in the eclectic scene that does not receive as much press coverage, the power dynamic was different. There, participants sometimes expressed uncertainty about whether the information they provided was of use to my research. I am of a similar age as the respondents and share social characteristics such as ethnicity (white), gender (male) and education level (higher educated) with most of my interview population³⁹. The demographic make-up of Amsterdam's club sector corresponds with other research on European nightlife: researchers have found that the spaces of cultural production in dance music are mainly inhabited by white, middle-class men (Gavanas and Reitsamer 2013; Rietveld 2013; Gadir 2017). While approaching potential participants, I found including external promoters enhanced the demographic diversity of my sample. This means that this requires a double reflexive flexibility: one that speaks to interviewing respondents with similar social biographies and one that responds to smaller and bigger differences in social biography.

I will first discuss interviewing respondents with similar social biographies. Whiteness is a social category that often goes unnoticed by white people themselves (Ahmed 2007)⁴⁰, but in interview settings can create a proximity or likeness over sharing the same cultural biographies and dispositions (for example, not being used to being excluded) (Ahlstedt 2015). White interviewees often seemed to assume I shared their political and cultural views (even though these varied among this group of respondents), while non-white respondents did not. For example, when a respondent with a North African background evoked the phrase 'white men' he apologised and said it was not intended as a personal offence, whereas the white respondents who employed the same phrase did not. The same goes for urban slang: when white respondents used slang, they assumed I knew what the words meant, but when Black respondents did, they corrected themselves and used a more formal word. While subtle, these interview experiences hint at the greater degree of comfort most white people felt in expressing their cultural and political views.

In approaching the interviews, I took some measures to make sure all respondents felt comfortable during interviews and which would work for various types of power relations. I let respondents define the interview context through choosing the location (Elwood and Martin 2000), I interviewed the respondent in their professional role, which adds authority (Sin 2003), I asked open-ended, non-confrontational questions (Crang and Cook 2007) and I offered respondents the explicit right to pause or stop the interview at any given moment. The right to pause was made explicit through a

³⁹ For an intricate overview of all respondents see Appendix A.

⁴⁰ Ahmed (2007) also notes that racialised minorities do perceive whiteness as formative of certain, especially institutional, spaces.

participant information sheet and consent form that all participants signed. Next to this, interviews are anonymised, and interviewees were sent a manuscript of the interview and given the possibility to make changes.

In the light of the above, it is worthwhile explaining my personal relationship to Amsterdam's club scene, as the degree of insider status strongly shapes the researcher's dispositions and affinities (Montano 2013). I moved to Amsterdam in 2010 to study and lived there until 2018, when I moved to Southampton for my PhD research. During those eight years I have gained some first-hand experience-based knowledge of how Amsterdam's nightlife has changed and is changing still. Throughout these years I went out regularly, which has provided me with some degree of tacit knowledge. During my studies and in the two years after that, I worked as an online music journalist, both freelance and voluntarily, and wrote gig and club night reviews and conducted interviews. As I took my master's degree at the University of Amsterdam, I became more interested in production cultures and cultural production. In 2017, I wrote an article for the Dutch version of (former) VICE imprints Thump and Noisey that focused on nightlife in its political and regulatory context (see Koren 2018). One interviewee said he read that article, but it remains hard to say whether these public outings had any influence on the interviews. From the aforementioned article, I interviewed one former interviewee again. A former colleague now works at a club and they generously used their network to ask five potential respondents for an interview. However, while I know the city's club landscape as a consumer and to some extent as a journalist, I have never actually worked for a club (or any music-related employer, like a record store) or local government body, neither have I attended a specific club on such a regular basis that I have become acquainted with the staff or have been put on the guest list. This means I am a relative insider, which has benefits in finding respondents, although I do not consider myself an insider to the extent I believe this research might influence personal relationships (see Montano 2013).

3.3.4 Data Collection and Storage

Recruitment and interviewing

Participants were approached in two ways. The first way was via email, the second way was via a key informant and a snowballing approach within the limits of my typology of clubs. To start with email: as clubs generally have little public information online, a contact person can be hard to find and I found that I got little response from club's general email addresses (often: info@name-of-club). I sent out a standardised interview request to all clubs I could find an email address of. Given that most email addresses on clubs' websites were general info@name-of-club-addresses, I looked up promoters' names using LinkedIn and Google. This way, I could address them directly or use a firstname@name-of-club-address instead, to which the response was better, which again gave the impression that some degree of insiderness is valued. As informality characterises the club sector, I found that email (which has come to have a 'professional' image) was not the most successful way to approach participants given the degree of non-response. In the second leg of fieldwork, in

October and November 2019, I started approaching promoters via the Facebook page of their party.

The second was via an informant (a former colleague) and a subsequent snowballing approach: recruiting interview participants by using participants' social networks in order to access research populations that otherwise remain 'hidden' (Browne 2005). The informant introduced me to five relevant interviewees. As one of the first participants revealed that they would not have taken part if it were not for this introduction, I made snowballing more central to my approach, asking interviewees to introduce me to potential participants that work for either niche-edm or eclectic clubs. This proved to be a successful method, especially when I noticed that some interview participants agreed to an interview after a colleague introduced me, even when they had not replied to my earlier email. That I had one informant to start with, shows the importance of being a relative insider to the local club scene for this type of research (Montano 2013).

Interview procedure

Interview participants chose interview locations themselves. Club promoters often chose the club itself, mainly in the adjacent café. External promoters opted for their office or for a café in the neighbourhood where they live. In two instances participants invited me to their home. I first presented interviewees with an information sheet and a consent form⁴¹. This states their right to anonymisation, to end the interview whenever they want and take a break or request to say something off the record. Before the interview I always made sure there was some time to ask questions. Anonymisation is the default on the consent form, but some participants explicitly stated they did not need to be anonymised. However, I decided to anonymise all interviewees as the club sector is relatively small, so disclosing some names might mean that participants who wish to stay anonymous would not be able to. All interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. Most promoters did the interviews alone, but five organisations preferred to do theirs as a pair. In cases where two people were interviewed, usually speaking time was roughly divided equal among the two interviewees, except in one case where the ratio one hour versus fifteen minutes. All interviews were in Dutch, except for one, which was conducted in English.

Transcription and storage

For most respondents, Dutch is their native language. I transcribed and coded all (but one) interviews in Dutch⁴², then selected relevant quotes to translate into English. This delay of translation is motivated by staying attuned to the local context and respondents' lifeworlds as long as possible (Temple and Young 2004). The interviews were recorded with a voice recorder provided by the laboratory of the School of Geography and Environmental Sciences. The recordings (in .mp3-format) and fully anonymised transcripts and field notes (in .docx) are stored according the

⁴¹ I emailed the participation information sheet and a consent form to participants, but in many cases the participant(s) had not read the documents beforehand.

⁴² For the one English interview I used the same set of Dutch codes.

University of Southampton Data Policy and are accessible to the researcher only, on a password protected computer. After the interview, the respondents were sent a Dutch transcript by email that they can comment on and add to if they wish. They will also be sent an electronic copy of the final thesis.

3.3.5 Data Analysis

The interviews were coded in-vivo: open ended coding follows from the semi-structured interviewing (described in sub-section 3.3.1). At first, I labelled sections relevant to the research themes and questions. After that, I applied initial codes to the labelled sections which were derived from my theoretical framework. During this process, I decided to let the subtheme 'design' drop, as during the interviews I found that not promoters but creative managers are typically responsible for overseeing club design. This process was followed by axial coding, which allowed me to think about different codes relationally and discursively (Virani 2012). Here, I tried not to divide all categories in crude binaries or hierarchies by ascribing subthemes rather than place quotes in binary oppositions. I treated concepts, labels and identities as inevitably messy (Cloe et al. 2004), which not only meant that I abandoned or revisited labelled quotes, but also that I kept using multiple labels where relevant for each quote at all coding stages. Sometimes research participants use dichotomies themselves. In the third stage of coding, I analysed participant's dichotomies by coding these as binary oppositions through a small selection of subcodes. During writing, I tried to keep a 'dialogue' going between the theoretical framework, interview material and the core chapters by returning to both theory and codes. In some cases, this led to adding new codes or extra labelled sections.

3.4 Short-term Ethnographies

The second part consists of short-term ethnographies at club nights to understand how genre encompasses both cultural production and the cultural product. This research conceptualises the club night as the cultural product of the clubbing industries, a 'product' that includes DJ performance, audience dancing and interaction, dancefloor design, lighting and visual effects, a sound system and the presence of non-dancing spaces. Ethnography, detailed and sensitive descriptions of participant observation and first-hand experience (Pink and Morgan 2013), is therefore crucial to understanding the club night (Garcia 2013). I define my approach as 'short-term ethnographies' (Pink and Morgan 2013): throughout three longer stays in Amsterdam (July 2018, June-July-August 2019 and October-November 2019) I made focused and temporally bounded visits to club nights totalling 28 club visits at 25 nightclubs and 90 hours of fieldwork. Next to club visits as part of an analysis of the cultural product, I also conducted ethnography at spaces where industry knowledge is shared: in October 2019 I attended an industry conference (Amsterdam Dance Event) and various public panels on Amsterdam's niche-edm scene that gave a more in-depth view of the type of political discussions my participants referenced to in interviews.

This included three days of fieldwork, amounting to another 21 hours of ethnographic research. This totals to 111 hours of short-term ethnographies.

The short-term ethnographies of club nights provided two important contributions. First, ethnographies of club nights permitted an engagement with the cultural product. They show how promoter's repertoires 'come alive', showing how genre talk translates into musical and spatial signifiers, from musical conventions (like the presence of an MC) to location, door policy and audience behaviour. Second, short-term ethnographies are a way to contextualise promoter's repertoires: participants may paint a rose-coloured picture of their club nights, for example overemphasising the diversity on the dancefloor (Malbon 1999), so ethnography is a way to locate and understand the disconnects between promoter's repertoires (what is said) and the club night (what is done) (Jerolmack and Khan 2014). Fieldwork at an industry conference and at public panels enhanced club visits: they provided insight into the functioning of the nightclub sector at large, including the dance music industries beyond nightclubs. Public panels with international festival organisers were particularly revealing: they showed different incentives, were generally more economically driven than clubs, which helped contextualise the interviews, showing how genre is also dependent on scale.

3.4.1 Ethics

Conducting ethnographies in nightclubs is not without its ethical challenges. Ethnographers Buckland (2002) and Garcia (2013) provide a useful ethical framework for carrying out fieldwork in electronic dance music clubs, informed by a conceptualisation of nightlife as a safer space for marginalised social groups. While the clubs under study are publicly accessible spaces (with an entrance fee), there are some considerations to make. The main concern is to respect the nightlives of people. At night, clubbers often enact another persona than during the day, and the stakes of breaching anonymity can be very high (Garcia 2013). Clubbers might not want their employer, family, relatives and friends to know about their consumption of alcohol or drugs, sexual or dress preferences, et cetera (Garcia 2013). This means that no photos on which clubbers are recognisable were taken. In clubs with a no-photo policy, no photos or videos were taken. In the field notes, no explicit individual physical characteristics are used to describe the clubbers or staff. A second concern is 'respecting the fun' (Garcia 2013). In nightclubs I did not identify as a researcher, because it can be experienced as disruptive, giving people the idea that they are being watched and making them less comfortable in enacting their night-time selves (Garcia 2013). The combination of these two concerns means that when conducting fieldwork, preserving the anonymity of both clubbers and staff is crucial.

Therefore, the ethnographies were carried out with a heightened sense of anonymity, explicitly choosing not to use some tools of the ethnographer's kit such as audio recordings of conversations. While spontaneous conversations with clubbers are inescapable in the natural flow of a club night, no interviews or structural research-inspired conversations were conducted on-site. This is motivated by reflections from earlier nightlife ethnographers: in research on Turkish,

Moroccan, and Chinese diaspora parties in the Netherlands, for example, the researcher found that most people were reluctant to agree to talk during the event (Boogaarts-de Bruin's 2011). Going by the methodological reflection on that research, on-site interviews appeared to increase the distrust of clubbers (Boogaarts-de Bruin's 2011). Not using chat as research method is consistent with a research design that mainly focuses on how cultural production 'comes alive', rather than a research focus on the clubbing experience. While I had brief chats with people while doing fieldwork, none of these were relevant to subject matter of this thesis.

3.4.2 Data Collection

Short-term ethnographies at nightclubs were carried out only at venues or parties of promoters that I also interviewed, either before the interview or after. In four cases I was not able to attend the party of an external promoter, either because I was not in Amsterdam at the date of the party or there was an overlap with another club night I wanted to attend. The fieldwork took place in July 2018, June-July-August 2019 and October-November 2019. I attended 28 different parties amounting to a total of 90 hours of club visits⁴³. The average duration of a club visit was three hours. Half of the time I visited clubs alone. The other half of club visits, one or more friends accompanied me, and their remarks often ended up in my field notes. Discussing nights offered new perspectives on the multiple things going on at the same time at a club night.

During club visits, I used a topic list to guide my note taking, which includes the exterior and location of the venue, the entrance (security, door policy, ticket booths, and cloakroom), the dancefloor (sound, visuals, and music), temporality (evolution of club night), liminality (dancing and other night-time behaviour) and uses of history (former functions, cultural references). I was not recognisable as a researcher, given that I fit the profile of a clubber (in terms of age, et cetera) which made me blend in. While there might have been possibilities to visit clubs on the guest list, I decided against it, as this meant I was not one of the more privileged guests and for example had to stand in the longer queue for paying visitors⁴⁴. The ethnographic fieldwork comprised basic observational behaviour (walking around, watching from the side of the dancefloor or balcony), listening and dancing (blending in). To ensure that my presence as a researcher did not interfere with the club as leisure environment, I made field notes on my phone, which were then typed out in more detail the next day. In most clubs there are non-dancefloor spaces where notetaking is not disruptive and given that texting is accepted behaviour, no one ever made any remarks about this.

⁴³ During this PhD research, I also went out whenever visiting other cities and kept a clubbing diary for comparative purposes, that helped me understand Amsterdam within its international European context (Montano 2013). These include visits to clubs in Berlin, Brighton, London, Manchester, Marseille, Rotterdam and Southampton. Before departing to Amsterdam for the first time, I attended two club nights in Southampton by myself to practice and experience club night ethnography before heading out on fieldwork.

⁴⁴ I was able to file expense claims for the cost of these tickets from my research budget. The budget did not allow for accommodation, which meant that I had to pay this from my regular stipend. Here, it helped that one part of the research was during the summer holidays, when I, generously, could stay in friends' houses who were abroad, while I had to rent a place for six weeks during the autumn leg of fieldwork.

Participant observation was mostly carried out at night, outside of normal working hours and partly during the weekend. Two parties I visited took place during the day, afterparties where I found myself being one of the few sober people. Amsterdam is my former home city and I benefited from this familiarity, especially considering that I have friends living in the city who were willing to accompany me at times. While disorder is more prevalent during the night than during the day, I experienced no situations in which I felt unsafe while carrying out fieldwork alone. Undoubtedly, this would be different for a female researcher or a researcher of colour. Working at night is physically demanding. Therefore, I limited the number of nights to conduct observation to a maximum of three nights per week and no more than five hours per visit. A couple of hours is necessary to witness the club night evolving and understand its temporality. Given that in clubs loud music is the norm, I wore earplugs during fieldwork. As I had to combine interviews and ethnography during my stays in Amsterdam, this often meant I was able to go out two nights per week⁴⁵.

During the Amsterdam Dance Event, a large electronic dance music industry conference, in October 2019, I attended various panel events spread out over three days. This included one full day at the official conference, where festivals dominate the program, and four fringe events organised respectively by a youth culture magazine, Amsterdam's night mayor, a nightclub and an international touring DJ. During these events, I took my notes on paper instead of on my phone because I write faster this way.

3.4.3 Data Analysis

After writing up the field notes in a detailed fashion, I coded the field notes using the same categories as the interviews. This allowed me to compare different data sets and code groups to analyse how my observations of club nights relate to interview participants' repertoires. In this way I could compare how genre manifests itself in discourse (interviews) as well as musically and spatially (club nights).

⁴⁵ While I managed to take some time off during the fieldwork period, this rarely amounted to a whole day as I always had the feeling I should do more, try harder to find new participants or visit more club nights. Since my fieldwork took place at night after friends and family finished work, this meant that during these research stays work and leisure were rarely separated. I often met up with friends first at a café, before departing to a club (in many cases alone). However, going to a café first made the transition easier in comparison to the nights I stayed at home by myself until after midnight, before heading to the party. While it is the norm in leisure environments such as nightclubs, I consumed no alcohol during these events, with some exceptions in the last half an hour of an event. Not drinking was alienating at times, making me feel like an outsider especially at events people were visibly drunk and flirting (for example, I felt awkward when a woman asked me to buy a drink for her). On most nights, however, it was the combination of enjoying the music, feeling a peculiar sense of tiredness, anonymity and witnessing crowd euphoria that made me feel like a part of the party. Abstaining from alcohol also had a positive effect on my health during my research stays: I often woke up tired, but never too tired to type out my field notes.

3.5 Document-based Analysis

3.5.1 Tracing Definitions and Cultural Ideals

To understand the historical, social and political conditions under which Amsterdam's nightlife has developed, the smaller, third part of the research is a document-based analysis. The focus lies on the linguistic and symbolic elements of the sources, analysing the social production and circulation of, and also the struggle for, meaning; how language and symbolism are constituted by and are constitutive of the shaping of an ideological environment regarding nightlife (Hall 1982; Cloke et al. 2004). They provide a historical and institutional context that situates cultural production in a specific time and place and in dialogue with different policy rationales and cultural ideals, highlighting the importance of temporality and locality (Born 2010). This discursive analysis then traces these definitions and ideals over time analysing how they interact, travel and change (Hall 1982; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Short-term ethnographies give a sense of what happens after the decision-making processes of promoters, while a document-based analysis provides insight into the historical context that shapes the environment in which these processes take place and helps embed the analysis in the context of the global music industries. Analysing historical processes and musical lineages is a crucial way to redress essentialism in data interpretation (Stirling 2016).

3.5.2 Documentary Sources

The document-based analysis consists of a background analysis of newspaper articles, policy documents and archival material.

Newspaper articles

Newspaper articles give insight into key events, the persistence of topics of public debate, competing voices and the presence and visibility of different (nightlife) advocates (Cloke et al. 2004). Newspapers are not treated as neutral transmitters of facts but rather as important agents in the production of meaning and the construction of knowledge (Hall 1982). The focus is on the period from 1988 until February 2020: the summer of 1988 is often considered to be the period in which the niche-edm genre became popular very quickly (de Wit 2008) while in March 2020 clubs in Amsterdam were forced to close due to the Covid19-pandemic. I collected articles from newspaper databases Delpher and LexisNexis for the four biggest national newspapers (*de Telegraaf*, *de Volkskrant*, *NRC* and *Trouw*) and one regional Amsterdam newspaper (*het Parool*). To collect articles, I used genre-based search items ("house", "techno", "dance", et cetera), venue descriptors ("club", "discotheek"), names of nightlife districts ("Leidseplein", "Rembrandtplein") and names of venues.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ I excluded album reviews and interviews with individual artists (which I already tried to minimise by selecting "at least three occurrences" for every individual club). I only selected articles where the club itself would be the focus, so I excluded articles in which, for example, their restaurant was reviewed. In total, 357 articles were selected.

Policy documents

Policy documents show the rationale behind public policy, from ideas on what the city should be to definitions of policy success. Policy documents are mainly collected from the city council.⁴⁷ I use the same timeframe as for the newspaper articles (1988 – 2020). In total, I found 44 policy reports and notions that focus on or discuss nightlife and/or night-time leisure spaces, in some cases as part of related topics such as the creative economy, noise regulation and drug use. The documents and correspondence found provide the output of nightlife policy. Like newspapers, I treat policy documents as formed by and formative of political ideals (Cloke et al. 2004, and like newspaper articles, these documents do not reflect the institutional dynamics in which they have been created, where (groups of) employees may have diverging views on policy and communication (Borén and Young 2012).

Archival sources, history books and TV documentaries

The nightclub *Trouw* has donated their archives to the Amsterdam City Archive (*Stadsarchief*). *Trouw* opened in 2009 and played a vital role in the resurgence of Amsterdam's nightlife, before closing in 2015. It was the first club to receive a 24h licence (Koren 2018). The archives consist of promotional material, internal documentation and external correspondence. The archive provides detailed insight into a club's internal policy. I subsequently analysed two popular Dutch dance music history books (*RoXY en de Houserevolutie* (de Wit 2008) and *Mary Go Wild: 25 Jaar Dance in Nederland* (van Veen and van Terphoven (eds.) 2013) and a TV documentary series (*30 Jaar Dutch Dance* (VPRO, 2018). I also analysed three English popular histories of dance: *Energy Flash* (Reynolds 2013), *Last Night a DJ Saved my Life* (Brewster and Broughton 2006) and *Rave On* (Collin 2018), plus a German history of Berlin: *Lost and Sound* (Rapp 2010) and an international catalogue on the history club design (*Night Fever: Designing Club Culture, 1960-2018*) (Rossi and Eichenbrand (eds.) 2018).

3.5.3 Data Analysis

The newspaper articles, policy documents and archival documents are, since they are a source of background information, only coded in one round (in-vivo). Time constraints prevented me from doing a more in-depth and relational analysis. However, the documents provided information that the interviews and short-term ethnographies could not. This is most clear in section 6.1 where the reception of house in the Netherlands in the period 1988-1995 is discussed. For relevant articles concerning this topic, I did an extra round of coding enabling comparisons with interview material and field notes.

⁴⁷ <http://www.amsterdam.raadsinformatie.nl>, <http://www.amsterdam.nl> [accessed 11 March 2019].

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the methods this dissertation uses to answer the research question and provides contributions to nightclub and music and cultural industries researchers. I explained the rationale behind choosing Amsterdam as a case study for this thesis: the Dutch capital is seen as a policy example in the global North, but due to a focus of nightlife research on primarily Anglophone cities, it has remained understudied. Choosing Amsterdam provides opportunities for a more detailed account of the idiosyncrasies of global flows of music genres and racialisation discourses around music. Section 3.2 defined the research objectives. I combine experiential and urbanist approaches to arrive at a typology of nightclubs and provided an in-depth conceptualisation of the specific creative workers under study: promoters. Rather than perceiving clubs as monolithic units, I conceptualised the diversity among nightlife venues which is a useful approach for future nightclub researchers. I distinguished two general nightclub music genres in Amsterdam: the niche-edm genre (minimalist musical styles with a post-disco genealogy (Garcia 2011)) and the eclectic genre (bass-heavy mix of Black, Caribbean and Ibero-American musical styles). I argue that these genres shape music production, consumption and the musical product. The main method in this thesis are qualitative semi-structured interviews. I paid particular attention to the process of interviewing creative workers, who especially when in their 20s and 30s, often possess a lot of cultural capital but a relative lack of economic capital. I use a multi-method approach: to understand their repertoires in a wider cultural context and in relation to the cultural product, I also conducted short-term ethnographies of club nights and industry events and performed a background document-based analysis. The next three chapters explain how the data gathered through interviews, short-term ethnographies and document-based analysis develop the three central contributions of this thesis: more attention to the cultural product in economic geographies of cultural production, contributing a more spatial lens to the cultural industries framework and highlighting the significance of cultural production to nightlife studies.

Chapter 4 **Beyond Door Policies: Locating Mechanisms of Inclusion and Exclusion in Nightclub Production**

This chapter seeks to explain how cultural production processes in Amsterdam's nightclubs (re)produce, and sometimes subvert, social inequalities. It focuses on the economic organisation of the cultural production process. I argue that experiential and urbanist approaches have paid insufficient attention to the role of production processes in shaping social divisions. In line with the cultural industries framework (Hesmondhalgh 2013a; Saha 2018), I investigate how the economic organisation of nightclubs shapes production practices that lead to social inequalities. By differentiating two different forms of production (in-house production and external co-production) I challenge the idea that all nightclubs operate according to the same logic. At the same time, this chapter also contributes to the cultural industries framework by adapting it to the live music sector. I use insights from economic geography, in particular research with a focus on spaces of consumption and curation (Hracs et al. 2013; Concha 2017; Jansson and Hracs 2018), to understand the interaction between production, consumption, space and time. This includes the temporal dimensions of social inequalities, venue spaces as part of music genre's classification systems and specific tools promoters use to steer consumption, such as the guest list. This helps to understand the variation in genre-audience formations across space.

The first part of this chapter (section 4.1) focuses on door policies: door policies have been at the centre of academic and public attention when it comes to analysing mechanisms of exclusion, and at times mechanisms of inclusion too (Thornton 1995; Malbon 1999; Hobbs et al. 2000; Hobbs et al. 2007; Grazian 2009; Measham and Hadfield 2009; Garcia 2011; van Liempt 2015; Moore 2018). I argue that to give a full account of nightclub-led processes of inclusion and exclusion, door policies are only the tip of the iceberg, and insufficiently explain the full extent of socio-spatial inequalities in nightclubs' audience formations. Indeed, a focus on door policies often presupposes that all clubs consistently operate according to the same logic. I argue that a focus on cultural production provides a more nuanced analysis of clubs' production practices that expose other mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion.

Section 4.2 focuses on the organisational structure of nightclubs: while many researchers focus on nightclubs as part of urban music economies consisting of a range of actors (Brennan-Horley 2007; Montano 2011; Lange and Bürkner 2013), the internal economic organisation of nightclubs has not been the object of study very often. Research on VIP clubs across the world shows how insightful this can be to understand economic, social and cultural hierarchies (Mears 2016). I identify two modes of production. The first is in-house production, where a club does all programming itself. The second is external co-production, where a club collaborates with an external organisation.

Section 4.3 investigates how the aforementioned organisation of cultural production in nightclubs mediates genre, social identities, time and space: as promoters attract audiences, processes of inclusion and exclusion take place. Section 4.4 zooms in on a specific technique that promoters use to bridge the gap between production and consumption: the guest list. While in the public imagination the guest list is only for the 'selected few' and 'industry insiders', I argue its use is much more widespread and in fact a crucial tool for promoters to attract desired audiences. I stress the guest list's potential is emancipatory: it can make space in nightlife for marginalised communities.

4.1 The Limitations of Door Policy Research

In section 2.4, I highlighted that not only local councils regulate nightlife, but also clubs have various incentives to regulate their audiences. Sometimes researchers understand these incentives as profit oriented: a safe space for white middle-class audiences will enable higher revenues (Chatterton and Hollands 2003). Other researchers see these incentives as cultural: venues do not want just any crowd but the 'right' crowd, because clubs fail when they try to be everything to everyone (moore 2018). These incentives include and exclude audiences. In both urbanist (city perspective) and experiential (consumer perspective) approaches to nightlife (see section 1.1), door policies are at the centre of the academic imagination when it comes to understanding mechanisms of exclusion in nightlife (Thornton 1995; Malbon 1999; Hobbs et al. 2000; Hobbs et al. 2007 Grazian 2009; Measham and Hadfield 2009; Garcia 2011; van Liempt 2015; moore 2018). Often, door policies are described as a last measure in the selection process, when self-selection does not suffice to produce the best crowd for the party (Thornton 1995; van Liempt 2015; moore 2018). Thornton writes:

If access to information about the club and taste in music fail to segregate the crowd, the bouncers will ensure the semi-private nature of these public spaces by refusing admission to 'those who don't belong' (1995: 22-24).

In this quote, audiences exist as a result of pre-existing supply and pre-existing demand (Hesmondhalgh 2006), strongly mediated by door policy. However, my interviewees devoted a much more peripheral role to door policies: they see such policies as one of many tools to get the right crowd composition. Researchers have devoted some attention to marketing: in early 2000s clubs in Manchester, genre-based advertising is used to target certain racialised taste communities over others (Böse 2005). However, marketing by itself does not explain why, even within the same musical genre, audiences tend to vary between time and place. Door policy-centred research usually mentions other factors too, such as ticket price, location and opportunities for new promoters (Measham and Hadfield 2009; Garcia 2011). However, nightlife research tends to only give limited explanations for the economic and cultural rationale behind these production techniques and conceptualises clubs as monolithic units with uniform identities. In Amsterdam in the late 2010s, this is at odds with production realities, since many clubs work with external

promoters, which means that they cater to multiple taste communities. This section calls for less centrality for door policies in research on club-led exclusion.

To avoid confusion, this section does not intend to downplay the role of door policy – from a clubber’s perspective, especially racialised and classed clubbers, rejection at the door is how exclusion becomes lived experience. In Amsterdam, a clearly formulated and publicly available door policy is compulsory for venues with security staff at the door. Security staff is mandatory for venues with a 4am (or later) curfew permit on weekend nights. While rejecting potential clientele on the basis of clothing is allowed, ethnic and racial discrimination is not. However, racism still plays a role in door policies, well-illustrated by the policy that the Amsterdam city council has in place to combat this: visits by so-called mystery guests. Clubs are visited by two couples, shortly after one another. The first couple is white, the second is not. If the club rejects the second couple and cannot explain that by making use of the house rules, the council reports back. If the club does not improve the execution of its door policy, the local council can decide to close the venue. Promoters themselves, in many cases, stress that door policies exclude certain audiences. For example, multiple respondents talked about personal experiences of being rejected on the basis of racist prejudice. In regulatory measures, door policy is the key moment under council scrutiny when it comes to (racist) exclusion of clubbers. However, a more structural analysis of the economic organisation and production practices of nightclubs illuminates other, complementary mechanisms that include and exclude audiences before they even reach the door.

Based on the interview material with Amsterdam-based promoters and short-term ethnographies in the same city, I contend that door policies give a limited view on mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in nightclubs for five reasons.

First, most clubs describe their policies as fairly limited. They tend to target aggressive performances of masculinity: drunken camaraderie, sexual preying, harassment and violence – this behaviour is tied to large groups of men (Grazian 2007; Tan 2014). Research on racial profiling in Amsterdam found that police construct Black men as hypermasculine (Cankaya 2020), this potentially extends to door policies⁴⁸. However, most research focuses on style-centred door policies that assess clubbers on the basis of their look or subcultural identity (Thornton 1995; Malbon 1999), for example through an ethnographic vignette of the Berlin-based club Berghain, a queer club open to heterosexual clubbers (Garcia 2011, moore 2018). In Amsterdam at least, clubs that assess subcultural aspects such as style and taste, like Berghain, are outliers rather than exemplary cases. Typically, venues or parties that do so, have a door host, who is more knowledgeable about the club scene, working alongside the security staff. To give an idea: a door host was only present at five of the 28 parties I visited for fieldwork. This suggests that most clubs do not explicitly select visitors on style at the door. I do not mean to suggest clubs and club nights

⁴⁸ In my interviews, the connection between ethnicity and masculinity was made explicitly on one occasion. However, it is one of the limits of my methodology that it does not grasp the connections between race and masculinity that are made ‘on the spot’ by bouncers and door hosts on the night – but are seen as politically incorrect in everyday speech.

that do not select on style are less exclusionary, but rather stress that they likely use other strategies that include and exclude audiences.

Second, promoters do align with the local council's compulsory door policy as a means to reduce violent incidents, especially when it comes to keeping an aggressive, preying masculine performance (Grazian 2007) at bay. However, they remain sceptical of their workings: they point at other practices, such as programming, location and guest lists, that are more effective in reaching audiences. Far-reaching door policies that assess subcultural, stylistic aspects are seen as the domain of only the culturally prestigious. Promoters are often ambivalent or downright dismissive about the function of style-centred door policies, seeing them as being at odds with ideals of inclusivity.

Third, clubs often cannot afford strict door policies financially. Turning many people away means a severe loss of income. Given that most promoters work with very tight financial margins and face unpredictable audiences, door policies can appear more lenient on the night itself, set against how the house rules are formulated on the club's public outings. Economic circumstances give door policies a temporal dimension and highlight the negotiated aspects: getting in at an early time or on a quiet night is different than on a popular night at the same venue. An understanding of such dynamics can be captured by cultural production research that highlights why and when door policies are stricter or more lenient. This shows that door policies are often inconsistent.

Fourth, door policy research assumes a distant relationship between clubs and audiences. However, club nights typically come into being organically as extended friend groups that keep expanding. Especially external promoters, who are not employed by a club, often have close ties to audiences. This means that clubbers often come from the same social circles as promoters, highlighting the role social networks play in the formation of audiences, which is not easily captured by an ethnographic focus on the door. This also suggests social networks are another way through which inclusion and exclusion in nightlife takes place. Fifth, a focus on door policies does not grasp how clubs and external promoters attract new audiences. Club promoters employ various strategies to create demand – recruiting external promoters and guest list tickets are two prominent tools to do so. Including new audiences can work exclude existing ones.

In the remainder of this chapter, these arguments that criticise the centrality of door policies form the point of departure for an analysis that highlights mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in the cultural production of clubbing. I do so in three ways. First (section 4.2), I explain that the organisational structure of nightclubs produces hierarchies between club promoters and external promoters. Because of these hierarchies, subordinate social groups find it hard to claim space that is durable (Bailey 2014), instead they find nightclubs often only enable them to temporarily make place (Podmore 2006). Second (section 4.3), I challenge self-selection and pre-existing demand as key explanations for the demographics of clubbing crowds (as the quote of Thornton (1995) at the start of this chapter implies) exploring the production efforts of club promoters and external promoters do as mediators between genre and audience, which enable and constrain access (Brook 2016). Third (section 4.4), I zoom in on the role of guest lists as an example of a promoter's

targeted efforts to find the right audiences, singling it out as a production practice that bridges club production and club consumption. This argument highlights importance of social networks for promoters.

4.2 The Economic Organisation of Club Production

This section will provide an explanation of the economic organisation of club production. Urbanist approaches have focused on club economies at the scene or industry level (Brennan-Horley 2007; Montano 2011; Lange and Bürkner 2013), but with little differentiation among different types of clubs. Chatterton and Hollands (2003) offer a typology of nightlife venues based on ownership structure, but group all types of venues (bars, pubs, lounges, nightclubs) together, so do not capture the specific dynamics of nightclub production. These dynamics and relational networks can be extremely insightful to understand the hierarchies that characterise nightclub labour, particularly how precarious (or sometimes free) labour is normalised in the leisure industries (Mears 2016). To address this gap, this section introduces two new concepts to understand nightclubs' economic organisation: in-house production and external co-production. I describe how these two different modes of production produce hierarchies, both economically and culturally, and how they are embedded in the economic context of the live music industries. I argue these concepts are useful tools to understand how nightclubs produce mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion beyond door policies.

4.2.1 Defining Two Different Cultures of Production: In-House Production and External Co-Production

On the basis of the interviews conducted for this thesis, I identify two distinct modes of club production: in-house production and external co-production. In-house production refers to clubs that employ promoters who book all artists and organise all club nights themselves. This means that clubs have a distinct, uniform identity that changes little from night to night. In the niche-edm genre especially in-house production functions as a cultural ideal: while only two clubs in Amsterdam have all programming and production in-house, many clubs who keep a part of the club nights in-house say they aspire to do more or all programming themselves. This style of production allows clubs to keep control over their identity and can lead to a culturally prestigious image of a 'tastemaker'. Since 2013's 24h policy (see section 3.1.2), this is institutionalised in Amsterdam as well. To obtain a 24h permit, venues have to formulate their identity by explaining why they are an enrichment to the city, while having your own programmer is valued over renting out to external organisations (OIS Amsterdam 2017; Amsterdam Alternative 2018).

In-house production is financially risky, as the following quote by this promoter explains:

It is tied to the profile we currently have, ehm but we're not going to ehm book a [name of top-tier DJ] for €15 000, that's, that's just not who we are now, and [name of other club] can do that because they have a bigger capacity and really chose that profile, it's great

they do succeed in that and that will be a full house, but it's not like it works to [book] a top-tier DJ and that we will inevitably sell out (...) and really that race to the top, we are not doing that, because content-wise, we program differently.

(Club promoter, eclectic, male, white, early 30s)

'Programming differently' refers to the other style of club production: external co-production. This means that club promoters do not book DJs directly, but book external promoters, who they then collaborate with in order to organise a party. This is a way of dealing with uncertainty that recalls common cultural industries practices such as major label's uses of 'imprints' (Hesmondhalgh 2013a) or 'local gatekeepers' (Balaji 2009). In a cultural economy where booking top-tier DJs does not automatically mean a sold-out house and DJ fees – in the niche-edm genre – have risen in the last decade (Finlayson 2017), in-house production is a financially risky style of programming. Collaborating with an external promoter allows clubs to speak to multiple audiences: external promoters have a close relationship with their following which can bring new audiences to the club. A monthly program full of collaborations with external promoters then allows clubs not to speak to a single uniform audience close to their own network, but multiple target groups. This style of programming also offers starting promoters, who do not have the financial means to own a club space, a chance to gain experience. External co-production means outsourcing a degree of control: clubs hand over certain aspects of promotion work, like booking DJs and marketing, while maintaining control over others, such as bar revenue. Unlike in-house production, external co-production is no cultural ideal: promoters often describe this production style as a 'realist' economic response to the market.

The two styles of production move along genre lines: niche-edm venues emphasise in-house production as a cultural ideal more strongly, while eclectic venues have resorted to a more economically realist approach. In some cases, changing production style involves changing genre: the venue in the quote in the previous paragraph used to program more niche-edm DJs, but realised 'their profile' had changed. Niche-edm venues are thus typically more oriented towards the more culturally prestigious in-house production. This means that they have to find ways to manage financial risk. This includes allowing some co-produced club nights and multipurpose use of space, (for example also running a restaurant in the club space). Locational choice is also key: as depicted in *Figure 2* (page 63), niche-edm venues are more often located in cheaper, peripheral areas of the city, relatively far from the city centre.

Cultural prestige is another way to manage risk. Niche-edm venues rely on international touring DJs to fill the space. As a result, clubs find themselves competing with music festivals for the same DJs. Festivals can offer DJs a lot more: they pay higher fees and make exclusivity deals with artists. Exclusivity deals disallow artists to play in the same city or country for a certain period of time before or after the event (typically up to two months). Clubs compete for DJs through providing good secondary conditions: they offer longer set times and a more devoted crowd. The spatial aspects of the venue play a role too: the relatively small size of nightclubs allows for a more intimate performance and offers better acoustics. Clubs invest in sound systems, but also in the

other design aspects such as wooden floors, offer more elaborate soundchecks and are unhindered by natural circumstances such as wind (see Attias 2013). Clubs' status as tastemakers plays a role too: international reputation can help clubs secure top DJs for lower fees, because they deem the club artistically worthy (Brennan-Horley 2007) or an example of progressive cultural politics (see sub-section 5.1.2). For DJs, playing at clubs of name, such as Berghain in Berlin or De School in Amsterdam, means recognition in the field and can lead to more bookings elsewhere or help establish an alternative or progressive image. Clubs then invest in social networks and personal relationships with DJs, hoping that when upcoming DJs who cut their teeth at their venue, will return to their venue to play for a smaller fee when their careers have launched. In these ways, a venue's subcultural capital (Thornton 1995) makes up for a lack of financial means.

This means that capacity says less than cultural prestige: large capacity (1000+) clubs who do not have an extensive social network and do not enjoy the same amount of subcultural capital among DJs, bookers and audiences, frequently notice the disadvantage. Many respondents feel that it has become impossible to compete for DJs with festivals and explain this as the reason to have resorted to a less DJ-oriented style of programming: external co-production.

But that [in-house production] just needs time, so in that sense from our side we just try and do everything we have to do ehm, but next to that we just really need those external parties who invite everyone for these events, who do [social media] posts, make sure these are distributed, because on your own it's not possible, then I would need a marketing team too and I don't have that, so that's why I work, why in first instance, I work with external parties.

(Club promoter, niche-edm, female, white, early 30s)

External co-production is a way to transfer the economic risk to third parties. In many cases, external promoters have to pay the venue a fixed fee as rent. On the night, the club typically takes home the bar revenue, while the external promoter receives the revenue from the ticket sales. There are variations to this deal: in some instances, starting promoters do not have to pay rent or pay less rent as attendance increases, while more established promoters hinted at receiving part of the bar revenue too. However, in broad terms these deals offer clubs a sense of financial security (guaranteed venue rent) to minimise losses on poorly attended events (external promoters take the main financial risk). Clubs make sense of this organisation of production as an economic necessity, but managing risk falls on the shoulders of even more precarious workers.

4.2.2 Temporarily Making Place: How Hierarchies Between Clubs and External Promoters Shape Production

As described in the previous sub-section, clubs hand over a degree of control to external promoters. Club promoters aim to maintain a degree of influence by carefully selecting external promoters, which they can do because they experience an abundance of supply but have limited space. This means they have developed various strategies for assessing new party organisers. The collaborations typically rest on an unstable consensus (Hammou 2016). The primary reason to

work together with external promoters is to reach new target audiences and to secure attendance. This means that the consensus is mainly formed around commercial viability: research on Dutch-Asian external promoters show they convince club promoters to program their party by promising attendance and a high bar revenue (Kartosen 2016). At the same time, club promoters point at the necessity for some degree of 'quality control', as a means of safeguarding the venue's identity. This means that venues only temporarily make place: they include external promoters and their audiences in ways that do not change the club's core cultural production practices.

A general strategy for clubs is to not just book any type of music, but keep the overall program confined to a cluster of musical styles – these clusters are defined by genre, in this thesis labelled as the niche-edm genre and the eclectic genre. Niche-edm promoters typically put more weight on musical vision, while eclectic promoters prime the ability to draw a crowd and tacit factors such as personality. For many smaller external promoters organising club nights is not a full-time job, so club promoters point at the need for professional standards, such as meeting deadlines. Since musical vision is the prime reason for collaboration, niche-edm club promoters rarely complained about the quality of DJs external promoters booked during my interviews. Eclectic club promoters were frequently more critical, although they gave more weight to a theme or concept that stands out and the ability to draw a crowd. In both genres, the ability to draw a crowd means drawing a 'good' crowd: this entails more than just a full house, but includes a normative, cultural conception of the particular crowd a party attracts. As we shall see in section 6.3.2, a 'good crowd' may also mean a white conception of a 'safe' crowd, both in terms of commercial viability and regulation.

Clubs benefit from bringing in external promoters because they have a different social network and therefore attract new audiences. Indeed, the close relationship between external promoters and audiences means that clubs use external promoters as predictors for the type of audience an event will attract. Many external promoters highlight that on the first nights they organised, their friends were the core audience. In some cases, organically, in other cases steered by the party organiser, the initial core invites their friends, making these parties grow like an extended friend group that keeps expanding. See, for example, the following quote:

Ehm, the group of people that came, were, let's say our direct circle of friends, it was easy to keep them coming, but now I notice more and more people I don't know, who are not per se part of our first target audience, even though they are the people we wanted to attract.

(External promoter, eclectic, female, white, mid-20s)

This has consequences for cultural production: since external organisations know their crowd, clubs use this knowledge to 'create' their audiences. It provides a tool of inclusion and exclusion: selecting certain external promoters over others changes the audience. Before connecting this to the use of door policies in section 4.2.3, I will first explain how external co-production produces hierarchies that define who controls space.

For external promoters – in particular those of underrepresented social backgrounds – there virtually no or little opportunities at clubs that do all or most programming themselves (in-house production). At clubs that mainly follow the logic of external co-production, they have more chance. Similarly, external co-production provides a way for clubs to diversify, to attract audiences they see as out of reach for themselves and speak to niches otherwise not represented in the city's nightlife. However, such inclusionary moves remain characterised by the economic hierarchy between clubs and external promoters (as explained in sub-section 4.2.1).

It's more like you suddenly think: you know what we're going to do, we're going to organise a club night for ehm yes gay Turkish boys. That is a specific target audience and if you do that you have to make sure you have artists that speak to that audience and ehm people who co-organise it who really know that. Then you have a way to attract a new target audience. But for the rest, there are so many different types of nuances in nightlife, so you're constantly busy speaking to new target audiences.
(Club promoter, eclectic, female, white, 50s).

While this quote is an example of diversifying audiences, it also shows it is a temporary move. In the case of this example, a gay Turkish Dutch audience becomes the central audience for one night, but not throughout all events. Temporary inclusion does not lead to structural organisational change. This is important, because literature on lesbian communities in Montreal and Black LGBT communities in Detroit has found that these social groups often do not own venues themselves, so to remain territorially visible, they have to rely on more mainstream venues temporarily making place, with going 'underground' to non-institutionalised spaces as the only alternative (Podmore 2006; Bailey 2014). Temporarily making place can then be understood as an effect of power: space is made available for marginalised groups on designated nights, out of an incentive to cater to the widest audience possible, but not in ways that challenge club's core operations.

Within the context of the wider organisation of club production in Amsterdam, it becomes clear why it is difficult for disenfranchised social groups to claim space for 'emotional enrichment' (Hesmondhalgh 2013b) in the nocturnal city. Clubs not only control who can and cannot organise a party at their venue, they also transfer the financial risk to external promoters. They earn venue rent and bar revenue but outsource the responsibility for the audience to the external party. Since external promoters' revenue is ticket sales, many do not make enough to be fulltime professionals. In conclusion, many clubs manage their precarious position in the live music industry by relying on even more precarious external parties.

4.2.3 External Co-Production, At Times, Alters Door Policies

In external co-production, the external promoter may draw an audience that is at odds with the club's general, publicly formulated door policy. With in-house production door policies are typically more consistent: the venue departs from a general, relatively fixed identity and has a roughly similar audience in mind every weekend. External co-production sometimes alters door policies.

When an external promoter has a certain target audience, this can create tensions between the external organiser and the club's door policy and core audience. For example, an eclectic venue's house rules state that people with bum bags worn across the body can be denied entry (in their words: because these bags are associated with drug crime). Then, this club hosted the after party of a big urban festival. The festival was attended by a large share of English people, about half of the 12 000 attending in total the promoter estimated, many of whom decided to attend the after party. A lot of these men wore bum bags, because, in the eyes of the promoter, that is considered a more common fashion trait in England. As the festival audience showed up at the door, eager to see the major American rapper that headlined the night, the club decided last-minute to make an exception for shoulder bags for that specific night. In the words of the promoter, they were coming for just one night anyway, so rejecting them would simply ask too much of the door staff's capacity and 'teaching' them the house rules was a lost cause.

Sometimes external promoters incite more structural door policy change. An organisation ideologically committed to providing a place for a young, multicultural crowd, explains:

At the start of the evening, I always have a little chat with the door host, because for example at [name club] it's quite, well, more bottle-buyers, like a bit high class people who spend a lot of money, whereas we are 180 degrees different, but we're in that club, so I find it's important that no one is judged on what they're wearing for example and people wearing jogging pants should just be allowed entry.

(External promoter, eclectic, female, white, mid-20s)

The use of 'jogging pants' signifies a fashion trait, a form of clothing with racialised and classed connotations (Grazian 2009), which becomes a metonymy for an audience that diverts from the club's core public, in terms of clothes but also spending power (they are typically younger, late teens/early 20s). The external promoter says that despite their efforts, people still get rejected. In the case they have her number, they call her, upon which she goes to the door and tells the staff that this person is allowed entry. This is an example of how a close producer-consumer relationship mediates door policies. For this promoter, maintaining such a relationship is a key production practice, because close ties to the audience can enhance their ability to draw a crowd, which is the reason why clubs select them over other potential organisers. These two vignettes situate door policies: they are mediated by the organisation of cultural production. Moreover, it shows the limits of analysing club's audiences through pre-existing supply and pre-existing demand, with door policies as mediator. The external promoter in the quote above realises that a feeling of belonging on a club night is about more than taste preferences, it requires efforts to make people belong in places where they usually do not, which includes minimising the fashion threshold. Such subtle inclusionary practices are not easily captured by an ethnographic focus on door policies.

Since external co-production allows clubs to select audiences through selecting external promoters, this does not mean that door policies necessarily become more inclusive (as in the previous example), lenient door policies can also help a club merely appear more inclusive. For example, a Black external promoter whose club night attracts a multicultural crowd said they recently stopped

collaborating with a venue who kept asking them to attract more students. Himself a student, he criticised the club for conflating students with whiteness, mentioning that other parties with a multicultural crowd had experienced similar difficulties at the same venue and that events on the more prestigious weekend nights attract predominantly white crowds. He concluded by saying that the venue “is not a racist club, because they let everyone in, but I do think they want to render a certain image”. Again, a focus on external co-production illuminates how audiences are monitored before they even reach the door. Inclusive door policies are no guarantee that exclusion does not take place. The distinction between in-house production and external co-production contributes a detailed account of the organisation of nightclub production and gives insights into how promoter’s efforts steer audiences, which includes many variables that explain the demographics of club nights beyond musical taste, such as mobilising social networks, creating a feeling of belonging and making place for new audiences. In the next section I will apply these insights to understand the role of cultural production in creating the spaces where identity formations take place, investigating how music genres become tied to social identities.

4.3 The Dynamics of Genre: How Cultural Production Connects Music to Identities

To understand how music genres become associated with social identities, it is crucial to understand the spaces that provide the possibilities and constraints for these to develop (Born 2011; Lena 2012; Shabazz 2014). This section focuses on the geography of genre in the cultural production process: its temporal, local, transnational and micro-spatial aspects. Genres make, reflect, spark and institutionalise identities (Born 2011), but do so in ways that are dynamic and negotiated (Stirling 2016; Charles 2018). This section shows how an analysis of cultural production can aid us in understanding why connections between social identities and genre vary across space. I provide different examples of cultural production efforts that seek to associate genres with social identities, but also efforts that actively seek to disassociate themselves from (sub-)genres or use spatial strategies to disassociate themselves from target audiences commonly associated with a genre. The first example shows how a niche-edm external promoter sought to re-establish the connection between house and techno and gay communities in Amsterdam. The second example is an eclectic club promoter for a venue that targets an older audience who explains how not programming certain strands of hip-hop prevents their public becoming ‘too young’. The third example highlights the spatial strategies of an eclectic external promoter to change the associations between genre and social identities in efforts to enhance genre’s cultural prestige. Together, these examples show – within the context of in-house production and external co-production – that space is actively created to enable and constrain musical identity formations in nightlife in Amsterdam. I argue that especially the temporal dimensions of genre-audience connections are often obscured in earlier research. In general, this nuances conceptions of audience formations solely driven by ‘pre-existing demand’ and ‘self-selection’ (as in Thornton 1995).

4.3.1 Connecting Queer and Techno

Genres are characterised by homological relationships with the past (Hesmondhalgh 2005). The niche-edm genre has a post-disco genealogy (Garcia 2011), with origin histories that can be traced back to the night worlds of queer communities of colour in New York and Chicago in the 1970s and early 1980s (Lawrence 2003; Garcia 2018). In section 3.1.2, I highlight that as house arrived in the Netherlands, many early pioneers were white gay men (de Wit 2008). This homological relationship continues to shape cultural production: I interviewed a niche-edm external promoter who felt in the early 2010s that the connection between “the gay community”⁴⁹ and house and techno had been lost. At the time, there were small, one-off parties he attended but they did not attract many people and mainly took place in autonomous venues with their roots in the squatting movement, not in niche-edm clubs with larger capacities, of say over 500 people. Seeking to re-establish this connection he had two sources of inspiration. The first was local history: from older friends he knew that venues in the 1980s and early 1990s that pioneered house and techno were shaped by Amsterdam’s male gay communities. But looking around, he noticed that many parties for the gay community were more pop-oriented, not really focusing on his own musical interests. The second source of inspiration came from travelling to Berlin, where he saw how the queer and techno community were entangled.

When a friend asked him to set up a gay techno night at a niche-edm venue, one of the aims was to re-establish this ‘lost connection’ between genre and audience. In his words:

We felt it was lacking in Amsterdam, in the form that we liked, namely with music we liked, there just weren’t enough parties like that. Hm, so we had a long brainstorm session, about what we wanted, ehm by digging into the past ehm we found out that a lot, that the gay community was more a forerunner than, well a lag-behind-runner⁵⁰, but that whole image, that wasn’t really there anymore in Amsterdam.

(External promoter, niche-edm, male, late 30s)

This story reveals the historical, homological relationship of genre to social identity, including the observation that these change over time, and not always in a linear way (see also Stirling 2016). The example also highlights the role of transnational flows of cultural production knowledge. In the early 2000s, as air travel became cheaper, Berlin became a hub for so-called techno tourists (Rapp 2010, Garcia 2015), which included many promoters or visitors who started promoting later in their hometowns. In my interviews, this promoter was by far not the only one to mention Berlin as a source of inspiration, and such mentions frequently included explanations of how their club nights applied certain aspects of nightlife (such as club design) there to venues or parties in Amsterdam.

⁴⁹ Here, the promoter used the English word ‘gay’ in a Dutch interview. Throughout the interview it became clear that he uses gay as term that comprises more than just male gay clubbers but included a wider range of non-heterosexual sexual identities. In this section I use this terminology and make it explicit when I mean gay men.

⁵⁰ The word lag-behind-runner is directly translated from the Dutch word ‘achterloper’ which is used here as the opposite of forerunner (*voorloper*) but like the English translation does not exist in the dictionary.

However, as genres travel from one location to the other, genre-audience connections may change – that British niche-edm audiences in the 1990s were much whiter than their American counterparts in the 1980s is testament to that (Melville 2020). The niche-edm promoter in this example realised that re-establishing connection between genre and audience needed more than transferring a marketing concept from Berlin to Amsterdam. Rather, he and his co-organiser realised that in order to make sure gay clubbers would come to a venue that usually had a more mainstream audience, they would have to mobilise their social networks. They organised the event at a popular club (at the time), so they knew that most nights – regardless of what was on – sold out pretty quickly. To make sure it would become a gay party, the two promoters handed out special tickets in their gay networks that would allow entry in case the regular door sale sold out. As the first party was successful, aided by the popularity of the venue it was organised at, it paved the way for subsequent editions. Its success helped re-establishing the connection between house/techno and LGBT+ communities in Amsterdam, making it visible on a more mainstream level and creating a platform for more nights of this scale.

This expands on ‘temporarily making place’ as a concept (see sub-section 4.2.2): in creating temporary space for certain audiences, temporary connections between genres and social groups are established. This captures the dynamic characteristics of genre, combining its temporal dimension with its rootedness in locality. Earlier research on genre has captured this temporality: in research on the genealogy of dubstep, Stirling (2016) locates periods in history where predecessors of the style (most notably: lovers rock) were characterised by different gender divisions. However, this research does not fully capture genre’s spatial dimension, including the cultural production efforts that create necessary space in venues for socio-musical identities to be formed. With regards to regulation, Measham and Hadfield (2009) do capture genre’s local dimension: they contend that club owners and authorities mainly associate genres with social identities through their local audiences. This acknowledges the importance of locality: as music genres travel, they may be consumed by the different audiences in their places of destination, as opposed to their origin. However, Measham and Hadfield (2009) do not capture adequately that temporal dimension, as connections between audiences and genres not only vary across space, but also over time. In Amsterdam, ‘gay’ may have been mainly associated with ‘pop’ in the late 2000s, its connections with house and techno were much stronger in the late 1980s or the late 2010s. To capture the dynamics of genres, a temporal as well as a spatial lens is necessary.

This example of cultural production counters the idea that in the cultural industries all workers assume ‘pre-existing demand’, rather, they actively create space for unrepresented identities – and space is negotiated rather than fixed. It is noteworthy that in nightclub’s commodification processes production and consumption are entangled – but incorporation in cultural production processes can prove vital for recognition and belonging. For example, I interviewed a niche-edm club promoter who organises a night with a large queer audience, which was at least partly the result of the club’s efforts, but which was not labelled as such. The club received criticism for organising a party for the queer community without making it explicit. The promoter noted this relates to a discussion within that scene, where some say open categories of gender and sexuality

are more inclusive and do not have to be made explicit, while others argue that including sexuality explicitly in the communication for a party is a crucial element of recognition. Another niche-edm external promoter I interviewed offered a related narrative: he organises a party aimed at a mainstream audience, but with a small queer following, and recently received criticism for not having a non-binary gender option in the ticket provider's personal details form. While these are examples of how consumption influences production, it also shows the centrality of cultural production for clubbers in the establishment of socio-musical identities, as these clubbers ask for inclusion in and recognition through the club's commodification process rather than expressing the desire not to be commodified at all (see Balaji 2009; Saha 2018). For them, it is not the 'if' of commodification but the 'how'. This has shown how cultural production is an active agent in the 'renegotiation of space' (Leonard 1997) as it temporally establishes connections between genres and audiences.

4.3.2 Dissociating Audiences: Genre-Based Strategies of Inclusion and Exclusion

Promoter's efforts are not only directed at establishing new genre-audience connections, but also clubs employ music-led strategies to dissociate themselves from certain audiences. Dissociation refers to obscuring the links between a commodity and another entity or making sure desired negative associations prevail (Ibert et al. 2019). Case in point is a club promoter in the eclectic genre working for a venue that seeks to speak to an older audience (late twenties, thirties). This is partly born out of financial incentives: this age group is expected to spend more money on drinks. Door policy is one way of doing that: Thursday's student night is more lenient than Friday and Saturday, when the club explicitly aims for an older crowd. However, door policy does not suffice: specific uses of genre play a role in ensuring that older clubbers come back, but also that younger clubbers will not be tempted too much to try and enter. This club tries to influence their DJs through a briefing, explaining what kind of music should (not) be played at what time. Take for example:

When you're eh a bit older to say it like that and then can't really appreciate that Dutch hip-hop or you don't know it, it's hard to then, to mingle in, so we have the policy, we don't forbid it, so you can play one that everyone knows, a Bizzey, or a Poke like I just said, but we don't eh want the Lil' Kleine and eh Jonna Fraser⁵¹ and that kind of stuff, because, that is possible though on Thursday.

(Club promoter, eclectic, male, white, late 30s)

The briefing is a formatting technique that centralises a target group's relationship with a genre by omitting contemporary local hip-hop tracks. This difference in music between Thursday and the

⁵¹ Bizzey, Poke, Lil' Kleine and Jonna Fraser are all well-known Dutch rappers. The first two – Bizzey and Poke – have released hits ('Traag' and 'Loco' respectively) that the promoter thinks have crossover potential, while the latter have released no such songs.

weekend is not communicated online, as the event pages for these nights use the same genre labels. However, the promoter does create an intra-genre division in the eclectic genre: later in the interview he contrasts contemporary Dutch hip-hop with 90s/00s American R&B and hip-hop. The promoter posits the former style has a following among the youth, so creates a shared experience based on what is novel, while the latter style creates a collective feeling on the basis of nostalgia. Where Dutch hip-hop alienates the older audience, nostalgic hits dissociate the younger audience. Priming 90s/00s R&B and hip-hop becomes a way of upscaling the venue, using formatting techniques such as briefings to change the connotative meaning of place. Dissociation is not only used by mainstream venues, but also by alternative ones: I interviewed a promoter of an independent, grassroots venue who said that when they note an increase of men in formal shirts, they program and play punk more often. Again, this shows how nightclub production works through the logic of dissociation.

4.3.3 Spatial Strategies: Genres, Audiences and Cultural Prestige

To underline the temporal and spatial dimensions of music genres as mediators for identities, this sub-section highlights that nightclubs' production efforts steered towards enhancing cultural prestige also rely on a new definition of the audience. This is inspired by economic geography research on spaces of consumption that, using the concept curation, argues that these spaces add symbolic value to cultural commodities because they function as quality stamps (Concha 2017; Jansson and Hracs 2018). That comes back in this example of promoter of a Latin party. In the music industry, Latin is a catch-all phrase for contemporary pop music from Latin America, most often sung in Spanish, which includes sub-genres such as reggaeton. The genre saw a big increase in global popularity in the second half of the 2010s. After Spain, Portugal and Italy, the Netherlands saw the highest number of Latin songs hit the charts in 2017 (Plantinga 2018). In reflecting on how this genre finds an audience in the Netherlands, this promoter explains his venue choice in Amsterdam and the rest of the Netherlands:

What's very important, are the locations. We are very conscious to be in music venues, places where eh, we play [name of a popular Dutch three-day alternative music festival] consciously, those are places where not Latin – first, we don't want to be on the same program with other Latin parties, but second, our audience is very important, so we're not going [to organise] at the dodgy places, we're very consciously do not have a VIP-area, we don't do tables, we don't sell bottles, all very important things to keep the dodgy crowd out.

(External promoter, eclectic, male, Latino, late 30s)

There are a number of elements to unpack in this quote. First, the reference to music venues to create symbolic value: in the Netherlands, many cities have a larger music venue (1000+ capacity) that is subsidised by the local council. For this promoter, organising a party at these venues and hosting a party at an alternative music festival are strategies to legitimise the genre culturally and

also to distinguish the club night from others in the same genre. The remark about VIP areas⁵² and bottle service should also be understood in Amsterdam's urban policy context: the local council associates VIP tables and bottle service with organised crime, which is why there are strict rules around them (for example: it is impossible to pay for tables in cash) (Rengers and Thie 2017). VIP tables are not so commonplace in Amsterdam⁵³: only a handful of eclectic venues have them, while none of the niche-edm venues do. What echoes in the quote of this promoter is a governmental discourse that seeks to regulate the spatial organisation of venues out of moral concerns (Kneale 1999). 'Dodgy' (or the Dutch word '*fout*'), which the promoter uses as a descriptor for a venue with a crowd characterised by a combination of lack of taste and not being fully law-abiding. As the club night has no door policy, this 'dodgy crowd' sometimes does attend the parties, but only to find, in the words of the promoter, that it is "not their party". 'Dodgy' remains perhaps a vague descriptor, although it could be implicitly associated with class. Space – music venues – then become a way to curate the audience: alongside promotion material (no glitter, no sexualised images of women on the flyer), the promoter uses the social meaning of place to dissociate the 'dodgy' crowd from the genre.

The symbolic value of place can be a key element in reproducing the local, temporal connections between genres and audiences – to prolong the temporariness of making place. As this party became successful in Amsterdam, the promoter decided to organise the event in other Dutch cities as well, consistently organising the club night at music venues. This strategy of dissociation (Ibert et al. 2019). attempts to create similar audience demographics from place to place, despite some differences between cities. The promoter described the crowd as a mixed audience, predominantly white, but with large percentages Spanish migrants and Latinos. To make sure the latter two groups experience a sense of belonging at the party in a genre of venues that is predominantly white-run and highly institutionalised, strategies of dissociation are paired with association. The Latin party addresses cultural identity explicitly. When I attended this party during my fieldwork, the MC often addressed the room in Spanish, asking people from various Latin American countries to put their hands up, a way of recognising that part of the audience explicitly. Addressing social identities in genre articulations is how genres become entangled with social identities, a concept known as 'addressivity' (Brackett 2005). This 'addressivity' here functions to sustain the homological relationship between genre and social identities. These relationships are then reproduced over time, which is how genres 'stick' to social identities (Stirling 2016), while the concept dissociation (Ibert et al. 2019) helps to explain the spatial dynamics of genre in more detail. How these genre mechanisms lead to gendered and racial inequalities will be the topic of chapters 5 (gender) and 6 (race). In the remainder of this chapter, I want to zoom in to a specific

⁵² In the example above, the choice for subsidised music venues is not born out of direct economic necessity, as the promoter states he could make more money in clubs that do offer VIP arrangements (although the strategy of creating more cultural legitimacy may prove financially beneficial in the long run).

⁵³ VIP tables are, like bottle service and champagne, symbols of glamorous wealth and central to elite clubs across the world (Mears 2016). For clubs not oriented at elites, VIP tables are financially attractive, but many promoters remarked in the Netherlands they are not as common. This mirrors my experience: two out of 25 clubs visited offer VIP tables and bottle service.

production practice in the nightclub sector that deserves more academic attention as in the analysis of inclusion and exclusion in nightlife: the guest list.

4.4 The Guest List as Production Tool

The last section of this chapter zooms in on the multiple uses and meanings of the guest list. Economic geography insights on exclusivity as spatial strategy to deal with uncertainty (Hracs et al. 2013) are used to contribute to the cultural industries framework, which mainly analyses abstract rationalisation techniques to manage unpredictable crowds, such as packaging and formatting (Hesmondhalgh 2013a; Saha 2018). Despite its widespread use as a tool to curate the audience (moore 2018), the guest list has not received a lot of attention in door policy-oriented research. In most clubs, being on the guest list means free entrance. At popular venues, its privileges can be modest, for example, free entrance before 1am or jumping the queue. In the common imagination the guest list is associated with the famous and fabulous (Lawrence 2003). Indeed, many Amsterdam clubs use the guest list to attract ‘cool’ people and industry representatives, as an exclusivity strategy (Hracs et al. 2013) to boost the symbolic and cultural value of their party. However, during my interviews, two other uses of the guest list caught my attention. The first is the guest list as economic necessity: given the proximity of promoters to consumers (Brennan-Horley 2007), it is a tool that deals with the unpredictable movements of audiences using personal relationships and social networks to ensure full dancefloors. Here, promoters bank on the idea that ‘imagined’ exclusivity works as a powerful promotion tool as well (Hracs et al. 2013). The second understudied use of the guest list is the list as tool of critical inclusion: ensuring commonly excluded, disenfranchised social groups are able to attend parties. In this section I identify three uses of the list – create exclusive audiences, ensure attendance and critically include audiences – that help locate mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in nightclub production.

4.4.1 Creating Exclusive or Prestigious Audiences

Since audiences are key to club’s cultural prestige, clubs in search of prestige use the guest list as an exclusivity strategy to curate their audiences (Hracs et al. 2013; moore 2018). In a 2010 brainstorming for a new club night on Sunday, the Amsterdam-based venue Trouw, that was open between 2009 and 2015, documented in the minutes:

We do want to step away from our rave kid image. The main message has to be along the lines of: the best Sunday Amsterdam has to offer. To create the feeling of a ‘cultural sanctuary’ (*vrijplaats*)⁵⁴, we want to appoint ambassadors, who set the right example. And already set the right vibe.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ ‘*Vrijplaats*’ is a word commonly used in policy discourse (PMB Leerhuis 2012). It fits within the wider discourse of ‘broedplaatsen’, temporary spaces for cultural entrepreneurship (Peck 2012).

⁵⁵ Trouw (2010), *Trouw op Zondag: Notulen 13 Oktober 2010*. [Document]. Non-inventoried archive of Club Trouw, City Archive Amsterdam.

Here, the guest list works through appointing ‘ambassadors’, a term commonly used by nightclubs for tastemakers who help bring a party under attention. Clubs use ambassadors to create a ‘buzz’ around a club night, hoping that if these tastemakers attend, other people will follow suit. In exchange, ambassadors receive a guest list spot. In Trouw’s case, the list is used to get rid of their ‘rave kid image’.

The move fits into a wider strategy of cultural legitimization. In 2013 the venue was the first in Amsterdam to obtain a 24-hour permit and they did so by framing the club as a cultural institution. Trouw aimed to be a city-within-a-city (moore 2018), offering nightlife culture beyond dancing and hedonism, for example by hosting night-time contemporary art exhibitions. In the 24h-permit application document⁵⁶, the club associates itself with the Berlin club Berghain (but none in Amsterdam) and contemporary art museums such as Palais de Tokyo in Paris. The guest list plays a crucial role to attract the audience necessary to enforce the intended new cultural stature. The club’s idea is that by attracting a core group of people who fit in to their envisioned audience, other clubbers with similar taste, style and behaviour will follow suit.

Targeting a tastemaker crowd, like in the example above, to make a club culturally attractive and prestigious, and economically successful, is arguably the most test-and-try use of the guest list (Lawrence 2003; moore 2018). Ambassadors can be part of club promoter or external promoter’s personal network, but in other cases clubbers organise themselves through social media. Since club nights and nightclubs, in the economic context of the 2010s, often have a short lifespan, this is a way for devoted audiences to keep in touch. Promoters use that knowledge to create the right audience. For example, multiple promoters mention using a private Facebook group consisting of dedicated clubbers to offer guest list spots to, because they are known to set the right vibe for club nights. This also works the other way around: when influential members of that group like your party, it is seen as a stamp of approval. This shows the extent to which clubs are dependent on audiences: door policy research perceives the club as a closed-off institution that decides who looks right and who does not. The efforts these promoters make – finding ambassadors, mobilising Facebook groups – show a different dynamic of power, where clubs actively use the prestige of audiences already out there to create demand. Here, the guest list is exemplary of a much more dynamic conception of power and hierarchy in club production: while clubs have the final say, their power is not absolute. External promoters (see sub-section 4.2.3) and culturally prestigious audiences are mediators in the cultural production process.

4.4.2 Ensuring Attendance

The use of the guest list is not limited to fabulous or those ‘in the know’. Many promoters produce long guest lists to manage unpredictability, since nothing is seen as more fatal for a party than an empty dancefloor. Especially for external promoters in the eclectic genre guest lists can be an

⁵⁶ Trouw (2012), *24 Uur Trouw Amsterdam 2012-2015*. [document]. Non-inventoried archive Club Trouw, City Archive Amsterdam.

economic necessity: they compete with other promoters for similar audiences on the night and for a spot at the club – a poorly attended night may lose their slot, with many others around waiting to take it. This leads to long guest lists, as described in the following vignette of an eclectic club:

When I arrive at 12.30am, there seems quite a big queue. They've made two lines, one for guest list and one for regular entry. I'm a bit confused which one is which, because the queue for the guest list is so much longer. In fact, there is no one in line for the regular queue. When I walk past I'm joined by a couple of women who've decided that this is indeed faster, and that's true. There is a small black cord, behind which the door host (a young woman with blue hair, dressed in black leather) stands, joined by a bouncer. After letting in the first group of the guest list queue, the door host turns to me and asks if she can help me with anything. This comes across as a bit odd, because it's a line you would expect at a clothing or bookstore, not in front of a club. But I answer that I would like to enter and she asks if I'm alone (I am) and then hands me a ticket.

(Field notes, 18 July 2019)

This anecdote provides a corrective to popular accounts that associate the guest list with cultural prestige: promoters bank on the 'imagined' exclusivity (Hracs et al. 2013) of the guest list. This also happened at another, niche-edm party I attended: a starting promoter had sold out the venue, but as too many people from the guest list turned up – presumably on there to deal with the audience's unpredictability – it was long unsure whether people with a pre-sale ticket, including myself, could actually enter. Many promoters, especially in the eclectic genre, talked about a 'guest list culture' in Amsterdam, where people only attend parties for which they are on the list. They pointed at club nights that have more than half the audience on the list. Here, an elaborate guest list becomes a sign of a lack of prestige because it shows the party is not popular enough. Senior external promoters in the eclectic genre, who have become full professionals, see a small guest list as a sign of economic prestige and express a sense of pride in not needing a huge guest list to guarantee a crowded dancefloor. In an interview with younger external eclectic promoter, he noted that many of his peers do not put any effort in marketing anymore, because they feel guest lists are more effective, but that he still does, not just to directly promote the next club night, but also to ensure the party's longevity by remaining visible to outsiders. This shows how using guest lists is an economic necessity for some, while not using them is a sign of distinction for others.

The guest list is not only a source of distinction among different external promoters, but also more importantly reinstates the economic hierarchy between clubs and external promoters. As I explained in sub-section 4.2.2, external promoters pay venue rent and take home ticket sales, while clubs keep bar revenues. So, for clubs, in this construction there is less financial risk since they are less dependent on paid visitors. But external promoters rely on ticket sales, so the longer the guest list, the less money they make. Some external promoters try to manage that risk by only allowing free guest list entry until 1am, after which all visitors should pay. Again, this also is beneficial to the club: the more people are early, the more time they have to consume. It highlights

that in the club sector artificial scarcity has strong temporal and spatial dimensions (Hracs et al. 2013).

In the club sector, especially in the eclectic genre, the widespread use of guest lists means that the ticket price inflates. As more and more small, starting external promoters have long guest lists, it becomes increasingly hard to convince people to buy a ticket, limiting the income of organisers. Looking at the guest list from the perspective of external promoter's careers, the widespread use of guest lists makes it harder to grow and create financial stability since so many rely on handing out free tickets. This shapes not only the economic hierarchy between clubs and external promoters, but also shows the importance of social networks for newcomers to promotion work. This shows that understanding the economic organisation of clubbing production on a detailed level helps understanding how mechanisms of exclusion on the basis of race, gender, class or sexuality take place.

4.4.3 Critically Including Audiences

The third role of the guest list is critical inclusion: I use this term for organising the list in such a way it ensures a lower threshold in nightlife for disenfranchised social groups. First, I will show how the guest list is used to include new groups. Second, I will show the potential of a critical list to subvert power structures. To start with including new audiences:

Together with the door host, we really went to gay bars and saunas and the gay places of Amsterdam, going there and handing out tickets and eh hanging up posters and sort of, come, you are welcome, come to us. The first one-and-a-half year we did that, I think.
(Club promoter, niche-edm, male, white, early 30s)

This promoter used to work for a club where he said the atmosphere was “boorish”, a masculinity that reminded him of football stadiums. For the venue he set up himself, he was inspired by a queerer masculinity that he had experienced going clubbing in Berlin and that he wanted to make more central in Amsterdam. His venue does not self-identify as a gay club but wants to welcome all sexualities. The guest list is a more tacit tool of inclusion: as the composition of the guest list is usually hidden from the public eye, it is a way of experimenting with curating new publics without making it an explicit part of marketing. In another example, a Black external promoter in the eclectic genre said he used the guest list as way to include groups of non-Black ethnicities who he believed felt a high threshold to attend a majority Black party. The guest list is then a way of ensuring belonging. He added that after a while, when people keep coming back, he takes them off the list. This again shows the multiple uses of the guest list: it does not solely confirm insider status but can also function to make outsiders feel welcome.

The guest list also has the potential to subvert power structures beyond inclusion of marginalised social groups. During a panel session at an Amsterdam Dance Event fringe conference called

Support. Organize. Sustain directed at niche-edm insiders in October 2019⁵⁷, promoter Seva Granik, academic/DJ/promoter madison moore and promoter and DJ Juliana Huxtable argued for “reparative door policies” that subvert power structures by taking away financial barriers for “precaritised communities”. This is also the practice of a small non-profit niche-edm external promoter that organises fundraising parties in Amsterdam: they have no guest list for music industry employees, because every visitor should donate to the cause by paying the entry fee. The promoters reserve the list for people who do not have the financial means to attend (they offer free entry to queer people, people of colour and refugees), an effort to build a closer relationship with the organisations and groups (often queer community organisations) they are raising money for. This use of the guest list challenges the hierarchy between external promoter and club promoters: venues have their own permanent guest list, regardless of the co-organiser of the club night, that they are asked to give up. This also shows the limits of ‘temporarily making place’: the external promoters want to ensure marginalised groups will feel at home at their parties, but the presence of a large cohort of guest list crowd means that their ability to define the club space is limited. Unsurprisingly, since it challenges existing hierarchies between actors in the club sector, this use of the guest list remains rare.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has used a detailed analysis of the economic organisation of nightclubs to generate new insights about a range of production practices that yet have only been briefly touched upon in nightlife research and would benefit from a more detailed and situated account. This challenges common assumptions about the functioning of nightclubs. I have situated the role of door policies in the context of a wider set of strategies that clubs use to include and exclude audiences. My interviews and short-term ethnographies give reason to think the role of door policies is smaller than is commonly imagined. While racist and classist profiling indeed provides a useful example of a direct form of racism (Çankaya and Mepschen 2020), I argue we should be careful in centralising door policies in the analysis of exclusion and nightlife. Beyond door policies, in the domain of cultural production, there is a myriad of practices that lead to social inequalities in audience and labour participation.

An analysis of the economic organisation of clubbing production highlights these: since in-house production is financially unattainable for most clubs, they rely on external co-production. Clubs need collaborations with freelance external promoters with close ties to their audiences to ensure attendance. This equips them with another tool to steer crowd demographics: selecting external promoters to attract audiences. This allows clubs to ‘temporarily make place’ for marginalised social groups, while keeping existing production hierarchies intact. This chapter challenges common assumptions about the guest list: rather than a tool to accommodate the fabulous, for

⁵⁷ The panel referred to is ‘Make Room: Finding and protecting space for marginalized communities’, held as part of the Support.Organize.Sustain event on 18 October 2019, at Tolhuistuin in Amsterdam.

many promoters it is an economic necessity to compete with peers. The guest list has potential beyond exclusion: some promoters use it as a tool of critical inclusion to 'repair' nightlife inequalities. This highlights the critical role of cultural production in socio-musical identity formations.

This chapter provides three theoretical contributions. The point of departure was to highlight what a thick account of cultural production adds to nightlife research that departs from a consumer's perspective (the experiential approach) or a city perspective (the urbanist approach). A focus on nightclubs (the cultural industries approach) has highlighted how the economic organisation in a club leads to mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. This leads to the first contribution: I conceptualise clubs not as monolithic units with uniform door policies, but rather as dynamic entities shaped by production hierarchies. At times this allows clubs to temporarily make place for underrepresented communities but rarely in ways that challenge these hierarchies. I introduced three new concepts with regard to nightclubs: in-house production, external co-production and temporarily making place. These concepts are useful to guide analyses of economic organisation as well as analyses of club nights.

The second theoretical contribution is introducing cultural production as a lens to understand how genres connect to social identities, combining local, transnational, temporal and microspatial dimensions. While these dimensions have all been analysed separately in earlier research on music and nightlife (Measham and Hadfield 2009; Stirling 2016), this chapter provides a strategy to combine all four dimensions. This helps to understand why the socio-musical formations around the same genres vary from city to city and from place to place.

The third contribution is to the cultural industries framework. This framework often conceptualises the bridge between production and consumption through a set of abstract rationalisation techniques such as formatting and packaging (Hesmondhalgh 2013a; Saha 2018). This chapter has shown the importance of spaces of consumption: economic geographers have highlight how space and time shapes the interaction between production and consumption (Hracs et al. 2013). Promoters know their audience: this is why they see social networks as a more effective production tool than door policies – which imply a more distant relationship. Consumption also directly influences production: clubbers see inclusion in commodification practices as a recognition strategy. In the next section I will use these empirical and theoretical insights in an analysis of the production of social difference, not tied to various social categories like in this chapter, but specifically to gender (chapter 5) and race (chapter 6).

Chapter 5 **Genre-led Geographies of Gender in Nightlife**

Production: Similar Work Environments, Different Discourse

In this chapter I compare how gender is made in two different clubbing genres: it focuses on genre as production of space. In contrast to consumption, gender inequality in electronic dance music production has sparsely been analysed. This chapter aims to provide a new perspective by analysing the relationship between genre and gender not just as the outcome of the promoter's political dispositions or national discourses (as is the case in Gadir 2016; 2017). Rather, in line with the cultural industries framework, I contend that the relationship between gender and genre is shaped through cultural production practices that are not just motivated by individual dispositions, but also constrained and enabled by the social, economic and regulatory context of the club space (McRobbie 1994; Böse 2005; Hesmondhalgh 2013b; Saha 2018).

Genre contexts have the potential to illuminate how the production and consumption of gender varies across space (Massey 1994; Maalsen and McLean 2016). Research on gender and rock has for example highlighted how 'authentic' performances of masculine vulnerability limit the spaces available for female performers (Cohen 1997) and how the prestige of instruments such as the bass reflect bands' intra-gender dynamics (Clawson 1999). Similarly, work on gender and hip-hop has shown how the racial and urban history of rap has shaped particular performances of tough masculinity that has excluded women from an early stage (Shabazz 2014) and how record companies reproduce sexism by sticking to tried-and-tested rap video formats (Fitts 2008). In my interviews, I found that when it comes to discussing gender, genre is often more telling of one's response than subject position: promoters in the same genre share similar discourses regardless of gender, sexual orientation, education or race/ethnicity. So, promoters in the eclectic genre use a set of repertoires to talk about gender that are absent in interviews with niche-edm promoters and vice versa. The former understands the relation between gender and music mainly in terms of regulation, as gendered conceptions of music are used to produce 'women-friendly' dancefloors. The latter defines DJs as individual artists, which means that gender discussions are mainly focused on line-ups, showing similarities with other artistic genres such as the visual arts.

Through examining two genre-led production cultures, this chapter centralises three contributions to cultural industries research. Following the cultural industries framework set out in Chapter 2, I provide a combined analysis of the culture of production and the cultural product (Hesmondhalgh 2013a; Saha 2018): I provide an analysis of the culture of production in Amsterdam's clubbing industry in section 5.1, before extending this analysis to club nights (i.e., cultural products/texts) in sections 5.2 and 5.3. Section 5.1 focuses on the first contribution: it illuminates the presence of political struggle in the nightclub sector. Researchers have often conceptualised cultural industries like the clubbing sector as 'fast, entrepreneurial cultures' characterised by informality, where difficult questions remain unasked (McRobbie 2002). In this section, I will first confirm that in

Amsterdam nightclub work is indeed characterised by informality. Then, I will show how two different genre geographies help explain why a political culture has emerged in one faction of the Dutch capital's nightclubs but to a much lesser extent in the other.

Section 5.2 focuses on gender in the eclectic genre: promoters aim to regulate nightclubs by programming 'women-friendly' music genres in an effort to prevent dancefloors from becoming 'too masculine'. I contend that in this way, promoters essentialise the relationship between gender and music genre. This provides a second theoretical contribution: I add a spatial dimension to cultural industries research by analysing how, in the eclectic genre, fixed associations between genre and gender function as production tools that regulate the dancefloor. A focus on cultural production highlights that nightlife regulation is not solely government-led, as is the case in most urban geography research (Talbot 2004; Hae 2011a; 2011b), but also an internal incentive for clubs. It builds further upon the insights in chapter 4 (specifically section 4.1) that stress that door policies are only one of club's multiple regulatory strategies.

Section 5.3 focuses on gender in the niche-edm genre: here promoters discuss gender mainly in terms of representations on line-ups. I argue that genre-specific discourses about the DJ as autonomous artist have provided a classification system for promoters and an object of critique for activist clubbers. The chapter describes how the niche-edm genre has been consecrated by genre participants, to then identify how some genre participants have exposed these genre norms as masculine. This brings us to the third contribution: an expansion of analyses of inclusion in the cultural industries. Along with recognition, visibility and conditional inclusion (Gray 2005; Gavanas and Reitsamer 2013), inclusionary practices have the potential to upset existing production norms, which could be a fruitful object of research.

5.1 Political Struggle in A Fast, Entrepreneurial Culture

The underrepresentation of female DJs on niche-edm line-ups has been a prominent discussion in the (music) press (Friedlander 2016; Wilder 2018; Goedegebuure 2019). In 2019, Amsterdam newspaper *Het Parool* analysed the line-ups of 32 niche-edm festivals in the city to find that on average the share of female artists was 15.7 percent (Goedegebuure 2019). Alongside the festival sample, five subsequently analysed clubs showed a slightly higher average: 18.6 percent. Two out of five clubs have close to a third women DJs on their program, the highest reported share. These clubs have a different position in the music industry than festivals: they program less well-known DJs and typically reflect a more underground segment of electronic dance music. The newspaper article focuses on the niche-edm genre, so clubs that only partly program this genre or mainly organise events in the eclectic genre are not included. A similar tendency can be found in academic research: gender inequalities in the nightclub industry have so far mainly been analysed in the niche-edm genre (Farrugia 2012; Gavanas and Reitsamer 2013; Gadir 2016) or with little consideration of musical style (Chatterton and Hollands 2003; Grazian 2007; Tan 2014). A lens that compares genres has not yet been employed, even though researchers note that progressive sub-genres are not representative of all of electronic dance music, let alone other nightlife genres

(Stirling 2016; Gadir 2016). This is important, because as female DJs are increasingly included in the dance music scene, analysis needs to extend from recognition and visibility to the different modes and conditions of inclusion (Gray 2005; Gavanas and Reitsamer 2013). Moreover, this discussion rarely extends to cultures of production.

It appears that in Amsterdam gender inequality is not limited to line-ups but extends behind the scenes. To give an idea: I approached 32 clubs (so: excluding external promoters) and in 24 cases the promoter was a man. There is not a big difference between the eclectic genre and the niche-edm genre: in the former, 4 out of 17 recipients of my request identified as women, in the latter this is 4 out of 15. Among my respondents, which includes promoters for sixteen different clubs and external promoters, 11 out of 36 identified as women⁵⁸. This is no surprise as over the years the cultural industries more generally (McRobbie 2002; Milestone and Meyer 2012; Gill 2014; McRobbie 2016; Reimer 2016; Mould 2018; Brook et al. 2019), and the music industries in particular (Leonard 1997; Fitts 2008; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2015; Leonard 2016) have been understood as predominantly masculine environments.

The clubbing industry has been used as a template for the work culture of the creative industries as a whole, characterised by long hours, after work socialising and informal networks (McRobbie 2002). Club's work cultures themselves, however, have been subject to some qualitative analysis (Brennan-Horley 2007), but not with gender as focal point. In general, the argument goes that in an informal work culture, critical questions around inequality remain unasked (McRobbie 2002; Gill 2014). The aim of this section is to take that argument to Amsterdam's clubbing industry in the late 2010s. On the one hand, the city's night-time music scene can indeed be characterised as a masculine environment, on the other, critical questions have come to the fore as part of a public political struggle for more gender (and ethnic/racial) equality on line-ups and on dancefloors. However, while male promoters are overrepresented throughout all of Amsterdam's clubbing sector, the gender debate mainly takes place in the niche-edm genre. Before analysing how that difference can be explained, I will first explain the continued prominence of an informal work culture and how that shapes gender inequality in the clubbing sector. Then, I will analyse how in such an informal, masculine environment, political ideas permeate nightlife production, albeit differently in the two genres.

5.1.1 Informal Work Cultures and Masculine Environments

I have indicated the significance of informal relationships in the clubbing sector in section 4.2, when I described how parties grow like extended friendship groups that keep expanding and professionalise over time. Answering my question of how they started organising club nights, my respondents frequently described informal trajectories. Some started through organising illegal parties, learning the tools of the trade outside the regulated club circuit. Others were avid clubbers themselves and landed on jobs or opportunities to put on events through personal contacts. For

⁵⁸ For an intricate overview of all respondents see Appendix A.

many, the line between friend and colleague is blurry. More recently, there seem to be more formalised routes into the clubbing sector available too: three respondents in their early twenties mentioned an internship as part of an event management degree (or equivalent)⁵⁹. Informality extends to programming: in the eclectic genre DJs are frequently local and recruited through personal networks or social media, while in the niche-edm genre DJs are more often international, but building personal relationships is still considered important. The *Booker's Guide* ('Trouw Programmeurs Handboek') from the Trouw archive⁶⁰ provides some insight. These guidelines speak of befriended labels and bookers and state that every club night is preceded by a dinner with the promoter (or owner) and the (often international) DJs. So, relying on personal contacts is not just a characteristic of starting organisers, but also a more formalised part in established parts of the club sector. Still, while the degree of bureaucracy varies among club and external promoters, in general throughout the interviews it appears that a culture of "self-generated economic activity" (McRobbie 2002: 520; see also Brennan-Horley 2007) continues to shape club promotion to this day.

As noted in the introduction to this section, there is a body of research that analyses informal work cultures in relation to gender inequality. One element of this is women staff attempting to become 'one of the guys' in a male-dominated sphere by adopting similar vocabulary, as research on the British music press in the 1990s argues (Davies 2001). In my interviews, many female respondents adopted a 'one of the guys'-narrative to explain why they felt in the right place in nightlife production. Feeling comfortable with homosocial norms is seen as a prerequisite to work in Amsterdam's clubbing sector, like in the following quote, commenting on whether the number of men working in nightlife influences the work atmosphere:

Eh no, but maybe that is because I can handle a masculine atmosphere well. Eh and also maybe like that masculine straightforwardness then, eh what women sometimes don't have ehm and I've just [met] a lot of nice, I'm constantly surprised how many nice people exist, do things here, so actually I'm just very masculine, how they are. No, maybe it's a bit more straightforward and clearer in their goals, technically competent eh plans in their head ehm, so that, that finds – I attribute that to men, which is maybe sexist too but eh that is what I find.

(Club promoter, niche-edm, female, white, early 30s)

'Straightforward' is used to code the work culture in the clubbing sector as masculine, highlighting it is part of, in McRobbie's (2002) terms, 'a fast, entrepreneurial culture'. The norm becomes visible through the exception: a male, niche-edm promoter mentions that as he started working at a new club, the amount of discussion about for example the creative direction of the club was new to him ("I want to do things instead of talking all the time"). While he understands that these conversations that take multiple perspectives into account are helpful, because fast decisions are

⁵⁹ For an intricate overview of all respondents see Appendix A.

⁶⁰ Trouw (2012), *Trouw Programmeurs Handboek*. [document]. Non-inventoried archive Club Trouw, City Archive Amsterdam.

not necessarily the best ones, he admitted having to adjust. Straightforwardness is not the only norm. When reflecting on the lack of women promoters, both in their club and in Amsterdam more generally, male promoters sometimes resorted to a naturalised conception of gender that they saw as odds with club work. This includes for example the fact that setting up club nights is physically demanding and requires competitive entrepreneurial skill. In this way, supposedly meritocratic norms are constructed around conceptions of competence understood as masculine.

This highlights a research gap: research on female DJs has highlighted that women's technical competence and musical knowledge is put into question (Farrugia 2012; Gavanis and Reitsamer 2013; Gadir 2017) but has not extended to how competence is gendered for those working in intermediary roles in nightlife. Promoters work in core creative roles in the music industry (Negus 2002), so along with entrepreneurial skill, musical knowledge is perceived as a key competence. Analyses of 'serious' music fandom (Davies 2001) and record collecting (Maalsen and McLean 2018) have shown how male dominated environments construct women's knowledge and consumption of music as superficial at best. This corresponds with the experiences of women in the clubbing sector. Female respondents mention not being taken seriously in predominantly male meetings, being mistaken for 'the girlfriend of' or experiencing that other women working in the sector are more open to new ideas⁶¹. This extends to debates around gender inequality on line-ups: a female respondent lamented that media outlets tend to centralise opinions of (financially successful) male nightlife entrepreneurs over female promoters and commentators with formal expertise (such as a degree in gender studies). Such a comment fits within cultural industries research on labour that shows gender inequality prevails even when women are significantly higher qualified than men (Skillset 2010, cited in Gill 2014). This is embedded in the cultural industries logic that defines competence through entrepreneurialism (Gill 2014), which here is sustained by music media's valuation of entrepreneurial success over academic competence. Since there is no formalised structure in place to criticise such notions in Amsterdam's club sector, ideas of competence are constructed and reproduced through informal personal networks.

Informality affects the perception of female promoter's expertise. The blurred boundary between friend and colleague works differently for women, as in an informal heteronormative work culture, casual manners enable flirting. The role of unsolicited flirting is illustrated by the following examples:

The first approach is oh chill, it's a chick, or something, that's the vibe you get a bit. But the other way around it's the same: I have the same thing with men, okay chill, I only work with guys ehm, one chases his dick a bit too much and you're gonna play into that of course.

(Club promoter, niche-edm, female, white, early 20s)

⁶¹ Informality and personal networks continue to play a role: as a female respondent working as niche-edm promoter states, men might more easily book men, simply because there are more men in their extended friendship circle.

As the quote shows, the assumption of lack of competence (“oh chill, it’s a chick”) is entangled with flirtatious behaviour, which shows how a casual work culture disadvantages female newcomers. The next example shows that informality is so entrenched in the clubbing sector that as a woman you need to set the boundaries of what business is in a business meeting.

Yes, I have sometimes, I’ve hung around with men all my life, so it’s not so bad, the only thing is in the beginning when they just know you, [a man] from a different organisation or something, ehm and you don’t know each other so well that they try to seduce you but you have to cut that out right away.

I: Oh, yes, yes.

You have to make really clear like: this is strictly business, and then it’s over.

(External promoter, eclectic, female, white, early 20s)

Both respondents acknowledge that they have to deal with a work environment in which they are sexualised at first instance, but also that they have developed coping strategies to deal with unsolicited flirting in the workplace. This highlights these women’s abilities to navigate the heteronormative work cultures of nightclubs’ back offices, but precisely the acceptance of these gendered norms reproduces the inequalities perpetuated by informal workspaces and the continued importance of ‘social milieus’ (Clare 2012, cited in Gill 2014; Clare 2013). In comparison with earlier work on gender and line-ups in electronic dance music, this section’s focus on intermediary positions highlights the relevance of interpersonal relationships.

5.1.2 The Emergence of An Informal Political Culture

McRobbie’s (2002) core argument is that an informal work environment erodes a political culture where critical questions around inequality are not asked (see also, Gill 2014). However, while Amsterdam’s clubbing sector can be characterised as informal, over the last years debates centred around (but not limited to) gender inequality hint at the emergence of an informal political culture in the niche-edm genre (while in the eclectic genre this debate has not sprung up to the same extent). I characterise this as informal because it is not organised traditionally, in formal staff councils for example, but rather exists as a result of the entanglement between production and consumption. When I asked niche-edm promoters to comment on gender equality, they often appeared to have an answer readily available, which seems to evidence that they had thought or talked about it before. The questions were answered in a routine manner. While talking about gender inequality may make men uncomfortable because it is a topic they are not often asked to address, among my respondents only one interviewee (a promoter in the eclectic genre) expressed discomfort with the question. Unsurprisingly, when reflecting on the discussion, male promoters frequently construct the issue as being brought in from outside: often critical clubbers, mainly women, bring gender inequality to their attention via social media and face-to-face conversations. In this way, women break in into tight, homosocial networks of predominantly male promoters who previously did not reflect on their booking practices. The close relationship between producers and

consumers means that promoters feel they have to respond to criticism and cannot just lay clubbers' concerns aside. The critical questions may not be asked by people in key positions in the industry, but they are asked by people in the same social circles. I will sketch the workings of political critique in the niche-edm genre using two geographical explanations, before turning to an explanation for the differences between the niche-edm genre and the eclectic genre.

The first explanation concerns the international, networked economy in the niche-edm genre. As explained in section 4.2.1, successful international underground DJs attribute cultural legitimacy to clubs and often play there for non-financial reasons. Since many DJs share the concerns of activists concerning gender equality, they have the possibility to put pressure on clubs. As an interviewee explains:

And in that [niche edm] scene you just notice it's becoming more and more a theme that artists occupy themselves with, there's even guys who don't want to play when women don't make up half - .

I: And that's at your parties or more in house and techno?

More in the house and techno scene let's say. At our club, hm yes, it's a theme, we're not gonna say no to a good line-up with only men, just because there's only men on it, if you know what I mean.

(Club promoter, eclectic, male, white, early 30s)

This points out that local activists at times are supported by prominent international artists when fighting local causes. Like the Riot Grrrl-movement – a network of feminist punk producers and consumers – in the 1990s, niche-edm's political culture is geographically dispersed, trans-local rather than local, as activists and politically conscious DJs connect through online platforms and travelling (Schilt 2004). The 2018 Konstantin controversy is a good example of this. After the German DJ Konstantin commented in Groove Magazine that women needed to lose their 'female qualities' and become 'manly' to become good DJs, Amsterdam-based feminist activists started a petition aimed at the Amsterdam Dance Event to demand promoters to take his name off the line-up. They were supported by international DJs too, adding to the pressure. Eventually at least one out of three events decided to cancel Konstantin's performance and another club decided to stop booking him in the future.

Cultural prestige has a trans-local dimension, as prestigious clubs in key nightlife cities function as quality stamps and collaboration with these venues is a way to build international prestige. Some popular international artists play independent venues for a smaller fee to support the dance music ecosystem – this frequently means venues with politically or culturally progressive values, such as gender equal line-ups. This means that for niche-edm promoters, cultural prestige is at stake in this discussion, so even promoters that – for example – see booking more women as undesirable 'tokenism' feel the need to protect an image of openness. In that way, it is not simply the cultural dispositions of cultural intermediaries that explains why in certain fields more progressive stances

are adopted, but rather, it shows how cultural production logic, embedded in an international cultural politics of prestige, enables certain practices (Saha 2018).

The second explanation relates to clubbing's historical geographies. When explaining the rationale behind creating an inclusive clubbing industry, club and external promoters refer to international club scenes in the past, mainly New York's disco venues in the 1970s or Chicago's juice bars in the 1980s – home to LGBT+ and Black and Latino populations. Defining electronic dance music as a protest culture shares similarities with the cultural flows of rap, which is made sense of as a protest genre to this day globally by artists from various racialised and working-class communities because of its origins in Black, economically deprived areas in 1970s New York (Lipsitz 1994; Shabazz 2014). In my interviews, local histories of queer or minority ethnic genre communities were seldom mentioned in these type of discussions (in line with what Garcia (2018) observes in Berlin's club culture), although an exception is the promoter who took inspiration from Amsterdam's early 90s LGBT+ scene in the early 90s (see section 4.3.1). As house arrived in the Netherlands, white gay men played a prominent role in spearheading its popularity, involved in setting up clubs like iT and RoXY (de Wit 2008).⁶²

While more established promoters sometimes use American club histories uncritically as a universal template for electronic dance music, other promoters understand it as a responsibility to improve the imperfect present. Like with rap, the definition as a protest genre can be both a simplification of reality (because not all electronic dance music/rap shares the same politics) and a moral incentive to do better. This adds a new perspective to cultural studies' criticism of utopian representations of electronic dance music (Gadir 2016; Gadir 2017; Stirling 2016): while the perception of house leading to inevitable inclusive dancefloors indeed glosses over persistent inequalities, the dancefloors of the past do enable a political consciousness in clubbing production and consumption in the niche-edm genre, creating an informal political culture, mainly around the axes of gender and sexuality⁶³.

In Amsterdam two genres with different production practices create distinct gendered geographies. Eclectic promoters are not entrenched in international cultural networks in the same way, meaning that political culture has not influenced cultural production in the same way. First, DJs are a less prominent part of marketing output which makes inequalities less visible. Second, while hip-hop but also genres such as R&B or dancehall could be interpreted and used politically, my respondents did not do so. Third, DJs are predominantly local and found through the personal networks of the promoter, clubs do not typically collaborate with international peers and it is less

⁶² These clubs feature heavily in popular Dutch histories of electronic dance music like the documentary series *30 Years Dutch Dance* (30 Jaar Dutch Dance, VPRO, 2018) or the book publication *Mary Go Wild: 25 Years Dance in the Netherlands* (25 Jaar Dance in Nederland, Mary Go Wild, 2014), so they are by no means obscure histories for people working in the industry.

⁶³ In section 6.1 the role of these histories will be analysed in more detail, the argument laid out in that chapter in short is: promoters are inspired by Black and Latino American genre communities in the 1970s and 1980s, but do not see race as a cultural category with local relevance, so there is comparatively little attention to how the niche edm genre has been used by Dutch artists and clubbers of colour as medium for aesthetic expressions. Whiteness thus shapes the moral, historical commitment to equality: gender takes in a more prominent position in debates and practices than does race. In chapter 6 this will be explained in more detail.

common for DJs to travel for gigs – signifiers of the absence of a trans-local political culture. Because of this local rooted-ness, the gender discourse produced in the eclectic genre is primarily confined to the club setting. As will be explained in more detail in section 5.2, gender is primarily made sense of as part of a regulatory discourse: essentialist conceptions of ‘feminine’ musical aesthetics are employed to create ‘women-friendly’ dancefloors. Here, gender is a local and contemporary discourse, mainly understood through references to local peers, while historical or international ties are largely absent. By and large, this means that eclectic promoters who do not book any women are held accountable to much lesser extent than their niche-edm colleagues and do not experience their cultural prestige at stake.

5.1.3 Sustaining Male-Dominated Cultures of Production

As highlighted in the introduction to section 5.1, despite two different political cultures, female promoters are underrepresented in both the niche-edm genre and the eclectic genre. In the remainder of this section, I will explain why public criticism of gender inequality on line-ups does not always extend to criticism on male-dominated production cultures. The close relationship between consumers and producers is invisible to outsiders, so this can have the effect that in the clubbing industry men receive the credit from making nightlife more open to women. As a promoter reflects:

For the people who give criticism, what’s frustrating for them, is that they see [themselves] as free consultants, because they’re constantly occupied with bringing the bad news, being an annoyance, and because of that not eh, when they enter a conversation where people think here we go again, ehm, for example me, because I receive this criticism, I can implement it and move forward and maybe potentially make another more progressive step which [influences] my position strongly, ehm from a mainstream [perspective] it is seen as: look how progressive this is. So, I benefit and they don’t. So, I do get their frustration.

(Club promoter, niche-edm, male, white, late 20s)

This quote illustrates well how gender inequality persists while more progressive measures may be implemented, as the struggle that leads to them remains invisible. This may influence the gendered perception of competence and skill too, as women do not receive credit for these changes, despite putting them on the agenda. So, while criticism may lead to change, such as more gender diverse line-ups or even measures that make the dancefloor a more welcome place for women, they do not necessarily have an effect on the gendered power structures of the clubbing industry.

This also comes to the fore in the criticism of a female promoter on gender representation on line-ups as a PR-strategy:

But on the other side, the fact that a lot of people shout like yes, but we’ve got this percentage of women on our line-up. I think oh god, that’s ehm, it doesn’t come out of

people's hearts, or the souls of the people in the organisation. It comes more from an idea of okay, it's very important now to have more balance in your, gender balance, that's important and it makes good PR and promotion, and I'm like yes, when a festival books a lot of female DJs, maybe it's for the wrong reasons these days.

(Club promoter, eclectic, female, white, 50s)

The quote, that describes gender diverse line-ups as a PR move, makes clear: while we may see more women on line-ups, that does not necessarily mean a lot has changed behind the scenes, in terms of the individual predispositions of promoters or production practices. In fact, in male dominated cultures of production more equal gender representations on line-ups may even reproduce unequal power structures in the workforce, as men are attributed credit and expertise, but are not likely to re-evaluate their own position (Brook et al. 2019). So, the existence of an informal, fast, entrepreneurial work culture helps to explain gender inequalities in Amsterdam's club production (McRobbie 2002), but they do not explain the differences between the niche-edm genre and the eclectic genre in terms of their different outcomes regarding gender representation. These are better understood through genre: their trans-local musical histories and distinct production cultures. To understand how two different cultures of production make two different geographies of genre and gender, a closer look at the entanglement of the production and consumption of gender (Nayak and Kehily 2013) in the two genres will be the subject matter of the next two sections.

5.2 The Eclectic Genre: Producing Paradoxical Heteronormativity

For promoters in the eclectic genre, discussions around gender do not primarily evolve around line-ups, but focus on the intention to create 'women-friendly' parties. In my interviews, I noticed eclectic promoters frequently employed the term women-friendly (*vrouwvriendelijk* in Dutch) to describe their venue or their parties, while none of the niche-edm promoters did. In a review for the eclectic party Meisjes Blijven Meisjes (which translates to *Girls Will Be Girls*) during the 2019 Amsterdam Dance Event, journalist Britt Wissman highlights the term women-friendly too, which features heavily in the event's marketing. She is surprised to find that while it is indeed a 5000-capacity club night that centralises the female visitor, it only does so in ways that centre a very traditional femininity, one of roses and perfume, and does not visibly do anything to, for example, make the dancefloor a safer space for women or play music devoid of sexist lyrics (Wissman 2019). Talking to promoters, I found the term is key to understanding how gender is made in the eclectic scene, as it connects genre, dancefloor and the construction of social identities. First, I analyse how the phrase women-friendly makes connections between 'soft, singalong' genres and femininity. Second, I focus on how these connections become part of the cultural production process, as they function as an attempt to create problem-free dancefloors. Third, I discuss how the gendering of 'feminine' genres creates not only essentialist conceptions of femininity, but also of masculinity. In doing so, I highlight the significance of club-led regulation in the cultural production of club spaces.

5.2.1 What Does 'Women-Friendly' Mean?

To give an idea of how the descriptor women-friendly works in the eclectic genre, this quote provides an insightful illustration:

Personally, I really have the philosophy it should be women-friendly. Because eh, you've got for example one track that's a hit, that's then a song where boys start moshing to state it a bit simple, and I try to stay away from that. But something like a singalong, like Ronnie Flex, that's something women really like and I find it important that eh women, accessible, that it's accessible for women, that it's nice for them, because there is no bashing.

(Club promoter, eclectic, male, white, early 20s)

In the quote above, the link between musical style and gendered dancefloor behaviour is made explicit: moshing is how young men make space, excluding the women who prefer songs to sing along to. The dichotomy here is often made by eclectic promoters: music coded as masculine, such as the hip-hop subgenre trap, evokes moshing and jumping, while tracks to 'sing along too' (which likely have a more prominent, melodic chorus) are associated with femininity. In the quote above, the Dutch artist Ronnie Flex, known for melodic and catchy R&B and dancehall-inspired tunes, signifies these 'softer' sounds. Using the phrase 'singalong' links femininity to accessible or mainstream music (Thornton 1995). The idea that music genre genders the dancefloor through behaviour is not new. Gadir's (2016) study quotes a club owner who laments groups of women who do not have the right, serious style of dancing for techno. Stirling's (2016) research on dubstep parties, describes a laddish atmosphere in club spaces that excludes women from the genre. However, what is novel, is that in Amsterdam's eclectic club production essentialist genre-gender associations work in a different way: they are explained as an incentive to make more space for women.

Another prominent finding from Gadir's (2016) interviews with male, niche-edm DJs is that they seek out tracks that 'make women dance': "prominent or catchy melodic riffs (particularly those in high registers); vocal lines (particularly those involving female voices); and soft or 'fluffy' timbres" (Gadir 2016: 121). In my interviews, niche-edm promoters do not explicitly make these associations between women's musical tastes and 'soft' sounds, but they do feature in the eclectic genre. For example, in the following quote, in which a promoter/DJ explains what music he plays to make sure women stay in the club and keep coming back, in order to create a club space that is not 'too masculine':

Well, those are the house edits that have a bit of those R&B elements in them, eh women are sensitive to that, to R&B, ehm so I try to go in that direction, lots of vocals, huh, happy, and then you've got them, and the men will just stay as well. Ehm, so those are the elements that you use to let's say make sure there's a thread in the evening.

(Club promoter, eclectic, male, white, 40s)

By connecting an innate feeling ('sensitive') to a music genre, this promoter naturalises the connection between gender and taste. Using the common trope that when women start to dance, men will follow suit (Gadir 2016), it becomes clear how gendered conceptions of genre do not take in a peripheral, but rather a very central place in clubbing production. Female clubbers are made sense of through an essentialist conception of femininity that understands the musical bandwidth of female taste as limited to the 'softer' genres. By making space for women, a heteronormative environment is created that aims to get rid of a masculinist, more visceral party style of jumping and moshing towards a more convivial atmosphere of singing and dancing. 'Sexiness' is never far away here: R&B and dancehall were in my interviews frequently made sense of as more 'sexy' genres, providing room for flirting and courtship, which makes clear how women-friendly dancefloors are at best ambivalent atmospheres, spatially engineering or reproducing hegemonic gender relations (Tan 2014). This relates to genre as well: gendered production practices use musical styles to steer dancefloor behaviour, rather than disentangle the two. The term women-friendly is not used for practices that could make 'masculine' genre parties more welcoming spaces, practices aimed at minimising sexual harassment for example. Defining musical styles as women-friendly and using it in clubbing production is how gender 'sticks' (Ahmed 2004) to genre (Stirling 2016).

During an eclectic club night in October 2019, I realised how the term women-friendly relates to post-feminism, defined as a consumerist and sexually assertive mode of femininity (Tan 2014):

At one point there is a Halloween costume contest, when two men and one woman are put forward. The crowd decides who's the winner by shouting as loud as possible. When the woman wins after two rounds, the MC shouts 'feminist power', then prompts the woman to dance on stage to celebrate, which she doesn't seem to want to do at first, but then eventually does. The DJ plays many celebratory air horns during the track.
(Field notes, 31 October 2019)

For the MC, femininity, feminism and female presence seem interchangeable concepts, all with roughly the same meaning. However, this allusion to feminism during the club night might celebrate female presence, but as the expected prize winner is then expected to dance for the whole crowd, it offers a celebration that does not go beyond assertive display of a 'sexy' femininity, a performance entrenched in the heteronormative imagination. The discursive significance of the paradoxical term women-friendly becomes clear when we look at a party that tries to do the opposite. A promoter for an eclectic venue mentioned they do a dancehall party for the BPOC LGBTQI+ community, where an awareness team makes sure that despite sexy and promiscuous dancing personal boundaries are not crossed. Also, DJs are instructed not to play songs with sexist or homophobic lyrics. Crucially, this club night uses a different vocabulary than other eclectic parties: it explains their practices not as women-friendly, but rather aims to create a safe space, a phrase common in anti-sexist and anti-racist activism and at times adopted in progressive niche-edm circles. This situates women-friendly as a paradoxical concept, a signifier that produces

essentialist conceptions of genre and gender, not looking beyond the mere presence of women on the dancefloor.

5.2.2 Regulating Masculinities

In promoters' repertoires, the term women-friendly genders genre and engineers 'the affective atmosphere' (Tan 2014) of the club space. Much more than a term that aims to create more space for women – in production, on dancefloors, as artists – women-friendly shows how clubs and parties employ music genres to regulate nightlife spaces. In section 4.1, I argued that musical programming is used as a production practice to circumvent strict door policies. One of the common agreements among respondents across genres is that large groups of men harm the atmosphere of a club night. For example, one promoter referred to these groups as "ticking time bombs". While most promoters across genres agree on the need to reject large groups of men at the door, respondents in the eclectic genre see musical programming as another way to ensure dancefloors are not male dominated. In most research on gender and electronic dance music the focus is on how masculine spaces exclude women or how women make place for themselves (McRobbie 1994; Pini 2001; Farrugia 2012; Gadir 2016; Stirling 2016). However, in the eclectic genre the gendered club manifests itself in more contradictory ways: essentialist conceptions of femininity are used to regulate masculine behaviour, creating an atmosphere that seeks to paradoxically engender female sexiness and male restraint (Tan 2014).

Women-friendly is thus more than a musical descriptor. It is a term that provides insight into how clubs are regulated and produces an essentialist conception not only of femininities, but also of masculinities:

Yes, we're also a women-friendly club and from the start we tried to bring that to the fore in all our communication, and we notice then, yes notice that it just does the atmosphere in the club good. When you have groups of men, which is possible here, I mean, it's not like we reject every group of men, but yes, a group of men with - and this is just a number - more than four that's possible, but one way or another, that can also come across as intimidating and well we have a stage in front of the DJ and to be honest it just looks cosier when a group of women stands on that podium because you're really standing in front of the DJ, you can't see the DJ anymore, so everyone just sees it instead of a group of five men, eh I don't mean that in a discriminating way, but it just looks cosier if you have that with a group of women.

(Club promoter, eclectic, male, white, late 30s)

In this quote, the wish to be 'women-friendly' serves as a justification for rejecting large groups of men. Here, we can enhance our understanding of gender and nightlife by going the beyond the position of women in electronic dance music, taking on board insights from queer studies of gender and sexuality in club spaces that have devoted more attention to how places produce reductive and essentialising conceptions of masculinity (Amico 2001; Livermon 2014; Misgav and

Johnston 2014). In the quote above, a 'boorish' conception of masculinity is central in the example of the stage in front of the DJ. As heterosexual men are primarily associated with rough, homosocial movement such as jumping and moshing and male sexual restraint is ambivalently valued by clubs, sexiness – sexy dancing specifically – becomes out of reach for men. In fact, the heteronormative, masculine perspective is very central in favouring a group of women spontaneously on stage to evoke a 'better' atmosphere as opposed to a group of men. So, men are categorically disassociated from (sexy) dancing⁶⁴. A focus on production practices makes clear how musical programming and door policies go together in policing a 'right' way of doing masculinity. Paradoxically, such a production repertoire expects men to behave in essentialist ways (ticking time bombs, jumping, moshing), while at the same time it symbolically distances itself from other repertoires of masculinity (sexy dancing). In this way, women friendly as a concept produces not only essentialist conceptions of femininity, but also of masculinity.

5.2.3 De-essentialising Gender and Genre

To conclude this section, it is important to stress that while promoters may essentialise or naturalise connections between genre and gender, which becomes a part of production practices in terms like women-friendly, historico-geographic context helps to understand why musical characteristics alone do not tell everything about the gendering of genre. Disco is a good example: a genre that is like R&B also characterised by a strong melodic focus and diva vocals but comes with different gender codes. In Amsterdam, the genre functions as a bridge between the eclectic and the niche-edm genre: many eclectic clubs used to have disco nights, but eventually deem it not commercially viable enough. Similarly, many niche-edm promoters program disco DJs too, but see it as a more accessible genre. However, some promoters in the latter genre, including a queer organisation, expressed a dislike of disco, coding the style as masculine. The short disco boom of the late 1970s has created different narratives as the genre is revisited in different eras and spaces. Historically, disco has been associated with the mainstream, but also with Black people and queer identities, and has been formative in the birth of house. The genre faced a backlash in the late 1970s that materialised in the Disco Sucks movement that saw the genre as inauthentic and had racist and homophobic undertones (Lawrence 2003). In the late 1990s, disco has featured in American popular culture as a genre that brought back a nostalgia for urban freedom and a desire for the libidinal city (Krimms 2007).

Because of its short-lived popularity, but lack of continuity afterwards (Rietveld 2011), in Amsterdam in the late 2010s disco is primarily associated with reissue culture: discovering the forgotten acts of yesteryear and playing them again. Promoters would thus code the genre as masculine, not because of its musical characteristics, but because of the purist record collecting associated with it, including the accompanying homosocial aspect of the same hidden gems circulating among a small group of DJs who own copies of these records (see also Maalsen 2016;

⁶⁴ It should be clear here that the clubs and parties discussed in this section mainly target a heterosexual crowd. At eclectic parties oriented at a male gay audience different discourses may prevail.

Maalsen and McLean 2018). This adds a new temporal dimension to Thornton's (1995) argument that the feminine is associated with the mainstream: as the conceptualisation as mainstream disappears, the association with femininity does too. This goes back to the local and temporal dimensions of genre's social formations, discussed in sections 4.2 and 4.3: genre discourses change over time and vary across space, which also means that classification systems – and the way they are gendered – are not fixed.

In this section I analysed how gender and genre constitute the club space in the eclectic genre. I traced the use of the term women-friendly to understand the significance of cultural production: viewing the club space through this angle highlights for what ends connections between gender and genre are made and under what circumstances they are employed. In the eclectic scene, these connections come to the fore as a production practice that aims to regulate the dancefloor. It adds to the cultural industries framework the significance of the regulation of space in cultural production in the live music industries. Regulation through musical genre has mainly been analysed in the context of government policies (Talbot 2004; Marsh 2006; Hae 2011a and 2011b), but not as an internal regulatory incentive coming from clubs themselves (club-led regulation). This section contributes to the literature on gender, music and dancefloors (Gadir 2016; Stirling 2016) by highlighting how nightclubs production practices essentialise masculinities. In the last section, I aimed to show how situational these connections between genre and gender are: while they are naturalised in popular discourse, my discussion of the position of disco in Amsterdam's contemporary nightlife highlights their local and temporal dimension. The example of disco already reinforces what I stated in section 5.1: that the production and consumption of gender in the niche-edm genre differs from the eclectic genre. To understand this different discourse in more detail, I will now turn to the niche-edm genre in the next section.

5.3 The Niche-EDM Genre: The Autonomous Artist as Object of Critique

In this section, I would like to add a new research direction to research on inclusion in the cultural industries: under what circumstances the struggle for inclusion can upset production norms and reshape quality criteria. In the niche-edm genre, the most visible public debate around gender inequality and clubbing production concerns line-ups. More than in the eclectic genre, promoters perceive DJs as individual, unique artists – influenced by a type of modernist cultural classification system I will refer to as the authorist discourse (Grant 2001). This means discussions around promoter work share similarities with other non-club music genres and artistic fields (such as visual arts, literature and cinema). One of the similarities is the emergence of a canon: a system of evaluations and resources that privileges one set of practices, while delegitimising others (Gray 2005).

As electronic dance music popularised in Europe in the early 1990s, Straw contrasted the genre with rock, arguing the absence of a canon produced more diverse audiences (Straw 1991). The indie rock canon is shaped by white male subjectivities, around values such as authenticity,

connoisseurship and anti-commercialism (Bannister 2006). Crucially, such a canon also produces gendered, racialised and sexualised Others to define itself against, in indie rock's case for example the 'feminine' mainstream (Bannister 2006)⁶⁵. However, other researchers have argued that electronic dance music has created its own forms of subcultural distinction (Thornton 1995), including the idea that DJs and producers are artists in their own right (ie. the authorist discourse) (McLeod 2001). These forms of social differentiation emerged through collective efforts of record labels, music media, musicians, promoters and fans (McLeod 2001; van Venrooij 2015). This is relevant because historical ideas of genre permeate into the production practices of niche-edm promoters.

To stand out, niche-edm promoters typically try to become synonymous with a signature sound (or cluster of signature sounds), which they safeguard through quality ideals that, like canons, produce others. In this section, I will analyse how quality criteria produce gendered others and how these quality criteria are destabilised in emerging repertoires on gender inclusivity. First, I will explain the workings of the authorist discourse, zooming in on how the techno genre has been legitimised and consecrated in Amsterdam: repertoires that seek to establish why some genre outings are worthy of admiration, while others are not. After that, I will focus on the main contribution of this section. Studies of inclusion in the cultural industries have increasingly focused on how underrepresented groups have been conditionally included (Gray 2005; Gavanas and Reitsamer 2013; Saha 2018), but less on how recently hegemonic quality norms are put into question as a part of political struggle (Hall 2006[1981]).

5.3.1 The Authorist Discourse in Electronic Dance Music

As DJs in the niche-edm genre are seen as individual artists, this sets the scene for debates around gender inequality. A key value of this discourse is the autonomy of the artist, the western modernist ideal which entails that artists should be guided solely by artistic principles (and not by economic incentives) (Bourdieu 1988). In Banks' (2010) terms, commodifying DJs as autonomous artists is both a normative ideal that grants artistic legitimacy to promoters as well as a precondition for cultural production. While DJs are valued for developing their own distinctive musical style, promoters are valued for producing coherent programmes that display specialist knowledge. In general terms, when gender representation on line-ups was discussed in interviews, promoters see this stylistic specialisation as a barrier to creating gender equality, because it diminishes their subcultural capital and marketing potential as a trusted organiser. While Banks (2010) does not discuss this, in many cases artistic autonomy as a cultural ideal not only implies artistic practice devoid of economic incentives, but also of political ideals (Morrison 1988; Elliot and Wallace 1994). Analysed in these terms, many promoters perceive calls for gender diversity as an undesirable political intervention in an autonomous artistic domain where the artistic object should transcend politics.

⁶⁵ Chapter 6 highlights how rock produces racialised others, such as the 'smooth, polished' sound of Black genres such as soul and disco (Davies 2001; Lawrence 2003).

In Amsterdam's club sector, two things are going on here. On the one hand, there is a group of niche-edm promoters who seek to legitimise electronic dance music culturally through consecration strategies (Bourdieu 1984) that imply an 'aesthetic modernism' that highlights the genre as a disinterested form of art that deserves cultural status (Gray 2005). They do so by using a vocabulary that echoes modernist quality criteria highlighting the artistic autonomy of the DJ and perceiving social goals such as gender equality as secondary ideals at best. On the other hand, there is another smaller group of promoters who use these classification systems for niche-edm subgenres such as techno as an object of critique, stressing they do not do justice to the socio-political histories of house and techno that conceptualise the genre as a place of refuge for people who do not fit into the white, patriarchal norms of everyday society. In this way, they challenge autonomy-inspired production norms. To understand these two lines of thought in more detail, I will now turn to a discussion of the techno subgenre to first discuss the consecration strategies within the authorist discourse, before turning to criticisms on these strategies that identify this discourse as masculine (Grant 2001).

As a subgenre, a consecration discourse has emerged around underground techno (McLeod 2001): it is understood by respondents as a more minimalist and louder variant of repetitive but gradually progressing electronic music. Given techno's association with industrial cities such as Detroit and Berlin, the genre has spatial and architectural connotations. The keywords that the club Trouw uses in a brainstorm for their techno night *Imprint* are telling in that respect: "raw, dark, black/white, industrial, stone, glass, steel, old empty buildings"⁶⁶. Flyers and online marketing are typically minimalist too: abstract imagery with little else but the name of the artists and the club night. Similarly, DJs are valued for their live mixing abilities, deep knowledge of the genre and their ability to play lengthy sets (Brewster and Broughton 2006). Techno promoters generally find DJs should not rely too much on visuals and should focus on groove instead of climaxes such as drops. EDM, which is very much focused on the drop and spectacular visuals (Reynolds 2013), is perceived as techno's mainstream other⁶⁷.

This classification system has emerged as a reaction against traditional rockist values, such as authenticity, writing your own material and being able to play an instrument (Bannister 2006; Gavanis and Reitsamer 2013). In terms of spaces, clubs in former industrial locations are generally favoured over big festival stages, which can be understood as an aesthetic preference akin to brutalist architecture, appreciating the sincerity of 'as-found' material (Schofield and Rellensmann 2015). Therefore, most respondents associate the genre with dark venues and heavy but minimal lighting, such as stroboscopes. These are all characteristics that shape techno as a commercially viable niche genre: it has a limited but dedicated audience, making it a hard genre to access for starting promoters, but a relatively safe financial bet for more senior promoters. As such,

⁶⁶ Trouw (2010), *IMPRINT Kernwaarden (Notulen Wo. 3 nov 2010)*. [document]. Non-inventoried archive Club Trouw, City Archive Amsterdam.

⁶⁷ In the Dutch documentary series *30 Years of Dutch Dance (30 Jaar Dutch Dance, 2018)*, house/techno becoming mainstream is described through the image of 'vacuum cleaning housewives who would first be appalled, but now think: hey I can go to house party too'.

a classification system has emerged that for many promoters in Amsterdam, but also in other cities, offers a discourse that culturally legitimises techno as a serious form of art with longevity.

However, this consecration discourse has provided other niche-edm promoters who do not adhere to this classification system with an object of critique. Critical niche-edm promoters perceive the genre as inherently political, rendering autonomy on socio-political grounds an impossibility. Whereas in the Trouw example in the previous paragraph the club night is described in 'pure' aesthetic terms, these promoters seek to deconstruct this aesthetic genre ideal for what it has come to mean socially, culturally and politically. As they distance themselves from techno's aesthetics, promoters often do so by explicitly coding this aesthetic as masculine, arguing it has given rise to an archetype of the male DJ. As one promoter puts it:

Music made by men and they are from Berlin and they like industrial clubs and the music is dark and a track will be called 'The Dark Sea' and the picture on the cover is a black and white photo.

(Club promoter, niche-edm, male, white, late 20s)

When techno is coded masculine in this way, it serves a different purpose than when subgenres such as R&B are coded feminine in the eclectic genre. Rather than describing techno as essentially masculine, I understand such a repertoire as a critique on the time-and-place specific discourse that has been built about contemporary techno in Europe, where for example the afro-futurist and protest roots of the genre are not seen as central anymore (Benabdellah 2018; Melville 2020), given that the genre is now associated with a certain type of white man. In the academic literature, the utopian ideals of electronic dance music have rightfully been criticised for universalising small, specific scenes in certain places at certain moments in history, as if the genre inevitably brings about equality and togetherness wherever it travels (Gadir 2016; Stirling 2016; Garcia 2018). This has become a corporate discourse too: when I attended the Amsterdam Dance Event in 2019, a poster by their business partner Absolut Vodka hung all over the city stating: 'On the Dancefloor Everyone Is Equal'. However, for the handful of promoters that criticise techno's masculinity, they do so out of a moral commitment explicitly inspired by a historical understanding of electronic dance music as protest music, but also inspired by peers in other (European) cities, specifically Berlin.⁶⁸ As is common in academia, these promoters criticised dance music's romantic conception as an inclusive genre where people from all walks of life come together, stressing instead that there are still persisting inequalities in dire need of repair. For them, the past then serves as a hopeful reminder that a better tomorrow is possible. In the next sub-section, I will describe how criticism on the authorist discourse in techno translates into production practices that divert from autonomy as an artistic ideal and production norm.

⁶⁸ In the next chapter this moral commitment will be analysed in more detail: especially how niche-edm promoters primarily understand inclusivity in terms of gender and sexuality, not so much in terms of ethnic or racial inequality.

5.3.2 Questioning Quality: Finding Alternatives for 'The Autonomous Artist'

So, a historically informed moral commitment forms the basis of the search of some niche-edm promoters for production practices that ensure more gender equal line-ups. I will outline below how this leads to questioning cultural production norms, rather than perceiving change as a possibility within pre-existing conceptions of quality. I will discuss three production incentives that do so: reflecting on the role of personal networks, challenging the DJ-as-auteur narrative and rethinking classification systems.

The first is recognising that existing personal networks may reproduce gender inequality on line-ups. The following quote shows a promoter realising their network consists predominantly of men:

It costs a lot, mainly – you have to actively do something, because like I say, the current network of [name of venue] is DJs of whom 90% is male. And then it's easy to just continue, but at one point you have to say, deliberately, and I'm now thinking about how to do that, like guys, really guys, ehm, I have less spots for you, because we're gonna [book] more women.

(Club promoter, niche-edm, male, white, late 20s)

This quote is by a promoter who, at the time of interviewing, was relatively new at the venue, and he is talking about the 'network' his predecessor left behind, consisting of so-called resident DJs. For niche-edm clubs, residents are important because they define the musical identity of the club or party. Many promoters will book international headliners, but have local residents play before or after to maintain a consistency in sound. In this case, the residents have been affiliated with the club for a longer period of time than the promoter. This puts the promoter in a difficult position: he has to say no to people who expect they will be able to play at the venue. Building a new network of resident DJs is a bold move, because changing the club's residents means changing its musical identity too. A clearly defined musical identity is precisely what is seen as a sign of cultural prestige in in-house production, as also discussed in section 4.2.

Apart from this club, promoters of two other venues talked about changing direction too. All three are in their mid to late twenties and say their status as newcomers helps. Senior promoters have built personal relationships with local and international top-tier DJs (still predominantly men) for over a decade, so saying no to established names means risking this relationship, especially as it's likely that the DJ in question defines the sound of a club or party and is able to attract a crowd. For younger promoters saying no is difficult too, as senior male DJs see playing at their venue as offering a favour, displaying a sense of entitlement to play at the club. However, the younger promoters are more critical about reputations. As one male club promoter in his mid-20s put it, booking established names is something they might have done in 'the old landscape', but they have decided to say no more frequently choosing for more diverse (in terms of gender and race/ethnicity) talent instead. The role of newcomers is relevant in terms of institutional change in the cultural industries: clubs typically have a short life span and people in their twenties take in key

programming positions⁶⁹. This may mean that, under certain circumstances, changes in production cultures could be enabled faster than in hierarchical artistic institutions that carry a bigger historical reputational burden.

The second is challenging the authorist discourse around DJs. As stated in section 5.3.1, a classification system has emerged around DJs to establish them as artists in their own right, around skills such as mixing abilities, musical connoisseurship and an ability to read the crowd. A respondent criticised the first two of those skills, stating they have fostered an ideal type of the DJ that has become too important in the industry. Just a couple of years back, he says, he would indeed go and see one of his favourite DJs and stand next to the booth, studying how “he would twist the knobs”, but ultimately, he found this definition of a good DJ is too limited. His description of booking a Black feminist collective describes a move towards a new definition:

Their [the DJ collective] energy and their way of looking at music is so refreshing I think and so different and inspiring for people – except for the people who spend all day standing above record crates and are sour about the fact that we give people a chance now who may not have the same DJ skills or may know a bit less about music than them, but I think they do really have a fresh new idea about what nightlife is, which is more than just good music and things, it's about fucking inspiration, and making people feel at home.

(Club promoter, niche-edm, male, white, mid-20s)

This quote demarks a shift in quality criteria from a narrow conception of aesthetics characterised by in-depth musical connoisseurship to one rooted in a genre history that values the progressive social aspects of nightlife, which includes the moral responsibility to give historically underrepresented groups a place on the line-up. Artistry is not defined through the stylistic and formal qualities of a genre, but departs from an historical conception of the genre, where inclusion and the night as a place of refuge are more important than playing the best obscure tracks. This echoes academic critique on the homosocial competition of record collecting (Maalsen and McLean 2018) and gendered conceptions of technical skill (Clawson 1999). It challenges the autonomy ideal of the authorist discourse: the DJ is less important as auteur, but functions increasingly as a mediator of a collective experience. This provides a new, non-linear perspective on the development of the dance industry: rather than the inevitable path to commercialisation (see Anderson 2009b), a star system is developed in the higher echelons (Hesmondhalgh 1998; Reynolds 2013), while small niche venues and promoters attempt to create a counter-narrative. In broader terms, electronic dance music history shows not just a linear progression towards a more mainstream cultural industry and the erosion of progressive values, but also a constant power struggle between actors promoting different understandings of the genre (Lena 2012).

⁶⁹ An investigative journalism article on ethnic diversity in the museum sector by Dutch newspaper NRC points that out: it is common for museum curators to work in the same job over fifteen years, well beyond the lifespan of most clubs. In combination with the lack of available positions, this hinders change, the article argues (ter Borg 2020).

The third is, rather than challenging the position of the DJ, a diversion from specialisation: while finding a niche helps to establish cultural prestige and a reputation as ‘tastemaker’ (see section 4.2), some promoters say a looser approach to musical style within the confines of the niche-edm genre makes it easier to ensure more gender equality on line-ups. In this way, promoters approach quality norms not as neutral and universal, but as time-specific constructions in need of constant revision. In the academic literature, the mainstream is often coded as feminine (Thornton 1995), with musical characteristics such as diva vocals and soft timbres (Gadir 2016). Many niche-edm promoters perceive genres such as pop and R&B as part of the mainstream, which they localise in city centre clubs and understand as homogenous and superficial. But there are exceptions, such as the promoter quoted in section 5.3.1 who criticises the underground techno aesthetic, by reflecting on booking a popular female DJ who is perceived as more mainstream than the artists they usually book (and who constitute their underground reputation). He was criticised for the decision, but said he liked how booking her changed the dancefloor, as the club now welcomed a culture of fandom too, where clubbers would ask for autographs. It is important that he did not explain, like in the eclectic genre, this adoption of a more mainstream sound to create a more ‘women-friendly’ dancefloor, but rather as a critique of the masculine seriousness of an underground techno aesthetic of minimalism and melodic sparseness. More generally, a more open approach to musical style means that a socio-political conception of genre gains prominence over stylistic specificity and aesthetic purity, prompting promoters to rethink quality norms.

5.3.3 The Role of Progressive Criticism

The reflections on production practices do not come out of nowhere: in sub-section 5.1.3 I already touched upon the role of external, public criticism. In the niche-edm genre there are roughly two responses to the debate on gender equality on line-ups. The largest group of promoters, often more senior, do not necessarily rethink selection criteria, but respond to criticism by making sure at least a small percentage of women is included on line-ups. Such measures do not necessarily follow out of cultural intermediaries’ political dispositions (as explained too in section 5.1.3). A handful of promoters mention they have started reflecting on their selection criteria and procedures (as evidenced in the previous sub-section). Meanwhile, external criticism does not stop with gender representation. Two queer niche-edm external promoters with a more peripheral position in the field push for a rethinking of the dominance of binary, white-centric gender conceptions. Issues that are being put on the agenda include intersectionality⁷⁰ (how mainly white women profit from inclusivity measures), a conception of femininity that is more fluid and not limited to cis-women (as reaction to ideals of masculinity in cis-gay communities) and combatting transphobia in LGBT+ scenes (who face discrimination for passing as straight). This shows the same dynamic as explained in sub-section 5.1.3: as political criticism from consumers reaches cultural producers, the first traces of how inclusionary practices can change hegemonic artistic and production norms

⁷⁰ An interesting parallel here can be found in the Riot Grrl movement in punk in the 1990s: women of colour criticised the universalist definition of ‘Riot Grrrl’ for glossing over the experiences of non-white, non-middle-class women, neglecting internal inequalities (Schilt 2004).

become visible – but gender and other inequalities in the workforce remain intact (Delhay 2008; Ahmed 2012). This, then could provide a further research objective for studies on the patterns and impacts of inequalities in the cultural industries. The niche-edm genre is part of an artistic field that is ‘faster’ and less institutionalised than – for example – the visual arts. This has the potential to foster new insights into institutional change in the cultural and creative industries more generally: under what circumstances do critical changes in artistic norms actually lead to taking away barriers for disenfranchised populations?

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an analysis of two genre-based geographies in nightclubs in Amsterdam. While the work environment in both clubs in the niche-edm genre and the eclectic genre can be characterised as masculine, through its emphasis on speed, entrepreneurialism and informality, I note the emergence of a political struggle, particularly around gender inequality, in the niche-edm genre. I argue that this struggle has gained prominence in only one of the two genres because of a difference in production cultures and genre ideals. An emancipatory cultural politics is seen as central to niche-edm history and has as such become part of its international economy, where international stars align themselves with smaller clubs they see as carriers of a progressive politics. I then moved on to investigate how gender is produced, regulated and consumed (Nayak and Kehily 2013) differently in the two genres.

In the eclectic genre, gender has become part of a regulatory discourse: promoters essentialise the connection between gender and taste through the category ‘women-friendly’ that they use to create problem-free dancefloors. This not only essentialises feminine taste as oriented towards the melodic and mainstream, but also masculine behaviour as boorish, rough and unsexy. In the niche-edm genre, gender inequality comes to the fore as part of discussions on representations of line-ups. I show how a classification system has emerged around techno, in order to create a discourse of cultural legitimisation around the sub-genre, which activists use as a critique. Some promoters have adopted this criticism and are moving towards a quality repertoire of music that values community and inclusivity over formal aesthetics (see for visual arts Wolff 2006).

This chapter makes three contributions to the literature on cultural industries. The first one concerns the possibility of the emergence of an informal political culture in a fast, entrepreneurial and informal work environment (McRobbie 2002; Gill 2014). Understanding workspaces through the lens of genre, helps to understand how genre ideals provide a shared narrative for critical clubbers to fight for equality. The short lifespan, informal international networks and relative lack of institutionalisation of nightclubs are topics to be explored further to understand how informal political cultures emerge in the cultural industries. The second contribution concerns regulation: while it is a topic that features heavily in urbanist literature on nightlife (Luckman 2001; Chatterton and Hollands 2003; Talbot 2004; Marsh 2006; Hae 2011a and 2011b), club-led regulation beyond door policies has not been explored in the same amount of detail. This chapter emphasises

how club-led regulation shapes the gendered dancefloor through essentialist conceptions of genre, gender and taste.

Third, I add to cultural production research that shows that historically marginalised groups are not merely excluded, but also conditionally included (Gray 2005; Gavanas and Reitsamer 2013; Saha 2018). I highlight that under some circumstance calls for inclusion led to renegotiation of production norms. While we should be wary of romanticising small-scale production (Hesmondhalgh 2013a), further research on the lack of institutionalisation and short lifespan of clubs could help explain the conditions under which quality norms are upset. During my interviews, some niche-edm promoters mentioned that, while gender equality is now a topic of discussion, this has mainly benefited white women. On the other hand, Black and minority ethnic promoters found they are more easily given a chance in eclectic clubs as opposed to niche-edm venues. This suggests that genre-led mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion work different for race/ethnicity than they work for gender in Amsterdam's clubbing sector. Therefore, that will be the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter 6 **The Niche-EDM Genre as the White Centre of Popular Music: Geographies of the Cultural Production of Race in Amsterdam's Club Sector**

In the academic literature, race, ethnicity and racism in music-based nightlife scenes is mainly made sense of in terms of regulation (Gilroy 1987; Talbot 2004; Talbot and Böse 2007; Hae 2011a/b; Eder and Öz 2015; van Liempt 2015, for an overview see Fatsis 2019). While this literature understands club-led regulation mainly in terms of door policies, this chapter focuses on how nightclubs' cultural production practices racialise music and audiences – in particular, on the spatial dynamics of whiteness in nightclub production. In everyday discourse, whiteness is an 'unmarked identity' rather than a racialised positioning (Essed and Trienekens 2008; Wekker 2016), but its imagined neutrality is based on othering social groups through racialising discourses (Çankaya and Mepschen 2020), which can be seen as the working of its dominance (Wekker 2016). Unsurprisingly, the whiteness of cultural institutions is often decoded by those who are excluded from the category (Meghji 2019). In music, rock has been exposed as the white, masculine 'somatic' norm (Puwar 2004) that defines production practices and cultural ideals, producing gendered (the 'mainstream') and racialised ('unacceptable' sexuality) others (Bannister 2006). This chapter focuses on whiteness in cultural production, highlighting the spatial and temporal dynamics through which it operates (Çankaya and Mepschen 2020).

As part of the spatial approach to the cultural industries framework, I argue whiteness operates on different scales. First, I argue for a better understanding of how music genre's transnational cultural flows change music's relationship with race and ethnicity, emphasising the role of cultural production in understanding where and when genres 'become white' (Nayak 2011). Second, I emphasise the value of an urban lens in cultural industries research: promoters use evocations of urban space that racialise audiences, which highlights the role of club-led regulation as part of cultural production in segregating the city at night. Third, whiteness functions through the production of spaces of consumption: white-centric conceptions of comfort (Ahmed 2012; Meghji 2019), an unstable consensus based on commercial viability (Hammou 2016) and essentialising genre-audience connections (Mahon 2004; Brooks 2008) work to sustain whiteness in nightclub production.

I engage with these concerns through a novel conceptual angle. In the previous chapter (specifically section 5.3.1), research participants code the techno subgenre not only as masculine, but also, in the European context, as white. In academic research, rock has mainly been the genre of analysis that signifies the white centre of popular music that has produced racialised others (Straw 1991; Frith 1992; Negus 1999; Davies 2001; Bannister 2006). Like rock, techno is a genre with origins in Black communities in the USA (Albiez 2005; Benabdellah 2018), but its terms of

production and consumption in the Netherlands and Europe are mainly defined by white producers and audiences. A key difference between rock and techno are their narratives of sexuality: in a case study of the Rotterdam club scene, Van Bohemen and Roeling (2020) argue that techno clubbers (re)produce a 'white sexuality', in which a 'muting of sexual desire' through music and the drug ecstasy are the basis of a moral superiority that constructs parties in the eclectic genre as the 'unconfined Other', where hooking up is seen as much more central. In hooks' (1992) terms, a narrative of sexualisation, dissociated from whiteness, is projected onto Black bodies. While the Rotterdam study focuses on consumption, this chapter centres production. In this way, it aims to help foster a scholarship that analyses whiteness in popular music through other genres than rock.

My first concern is Amsterdam's historical relationship to Blackness and whiteness in electronic dance music. Most studies on race and the cultural industries focus on the Anglophone context (see Saha 2018 for an overview). While in Dutch academia race as a social scientific concept has long been rendered irrelevant for the contemporary European context (Nimako 2012), in sub-section 2.6.2 I highlighted it has increasingly come to the forefront of academic attention (Essed and Trienekens 2008; Wekker 2016; Coenders and Chauvin 2017; Çankaya and Mepschen 2020; among others). However, this has not been the case for the study of culture in the narrow sense of the word: we currently know very little about how race produces cultural and musical hierarchies in continental Europe (Varriale 2016), in countries that may not inhabit a central position in the cultural flows of Black music genres, but where those same genres are among the most popular. This chapter's focus on whiteness contributes to filling that gap.

My second concern is the cultural industries and the urban landscape. While the regulation literature has not centred on cultural production (Hobbs et al. 2000; van Liempt 2015; Fuller et al. 2018 – see Chapter 4), it has highlighted how regulation restricts cultural production through racialisation (Talbot 2004; Talbot and Böse 2007; Hae 2011a/b). While this highlights how cultural production is constrained in the urban landscape, the ways in which the music industries utilise spatial imaginations of race (Lipsitz 2007) are still an unexplored topic. This is important precisely because the cultural industries produce representations of the urban, but urban imaginations shape cultural production as well (Keith 2005; Krims 2007). This shapes collaborations between clubs and external promoters: associations with disorder, as the result of a white discomfort with alterity (Çankaya and Mepschen 2020), undermine already unstable relations resting on a shared consensus based on 'commercial viability' (Hammou 2016).

In the first section (6.1) of this chapter I provide a short historical overview of the racialisation and whiteness of electronic dance music in the Dutch context, including comparisons with the parallel development of hip-hop. It situates the idea that despite past scenes inspiring a moral commitment to inclusivity (see section 5.3.1), promoters understand inclusivity through the lens of gender and sexuality, while Blackness as a cultural category remains a distant one, both geographically and historically. The second section (6.2) examines how whiteness is reproduced through a narrow conception of musical style and a strong emphasis on venue identity. These two cultural ideals, as part of in-house production, make it harder for niche-edm venues to give historical linkages

between (for example) Black identity and techno new local meanings. This sub-section mainly uses interviews with seven male promoters of colour, five of whom identified as Black (out of a total of 36 respondents⁷¹). These conversations were crucial in decoding whiteness, highlighting the possibility of producing new local meanings and illuminating the constraining effects of in-house production. Out of seven promoters of colour, only one was employed by a club. This suggests external co-production offers more opportunities for (temporal) inclusion, but not without contradictions and pushbacks. The third section (6.3) focuses on the eclectic genre: while there is a commercial incentive to cater to a wide variety of taste communities, this production ideal rests upon a hierarchical and unstable relation between venues and external promoters which only temporarily makes place (see section 4.2.2) for non-white musical identities in search for 'lucrative target audiences' (Kartosen 2016). These collaborations rest on a consensus based on commercial viability and strict regulation.

6.1 The Whiteness of the Niche-EDM Genre in Amsterdam

For me it's that I say: oh I have the right to be here, you know. Ten years ago or something I didn't know that, I thought it was for white people, you know, and that I, that I have that feeling, now I also try to get that across to other eh Black people and people of colour, or queer, who do not know that.

(External promoter, niche edm, male, Black, late 30s)

In this quote, an Amsterdam-based Black promoter reflects on learning about American histories of house and techno, which helped him to find a sense of belonging in a world he experiences as predominantly white. This shows how recognition of the queer and Black origins of niche-edm genres inspires local interpretations and political commitments. However, there has also been criticism of white European promoters' narrations of electronic dance music's past: they often freeze the status of queers of colour as originators in the past, use it as a marker of subcultural authenticity, while hiding from view the present-day contributions of local communities in Europe and beyond (Garcia 2018). In this section I would like to expand on this argument by using the framework of Van Bohemen and Roelen (2020) that highlights how in contemporary Rotterdam techno sexuality is constituted as white through processes of othering. This is embedded in a national political discourse where even conservatives and right-wing populists use acceptance of gay marriage and gender equality as Dutch virtues to label cultural others as 'backward' (Mepschen et al. 2010; Wekker 2016). This section aims to understand the contemporary whiteness of niche-edm spaces better by analysing Amsterdam as a point of destination point for the global flows of music genres.

This section highlights two cultural flows. The first flow is the appropriation of American house in late 1980s in Amsterdam, as it travelled from Black discotheques in downtown Manhattan and

⁷¹ For an intricate overview of all respondents see Appendix A.

former factories in Chicago to, first, the more culturally elite club RoXY in a former cinema in Amsterdam's city centre (De Wit 2008). The second flow is the more recent inspiration that promoters take from queer scenes in Berlin, as Amsterdam's techno enthusiasts travel back from dark, sweaty and smoky dancefloors of clubs in former industrial buildings, only to look for appropriate abandoned buildings in their hometown. The first sub-section contrasts two narratives in the reception of electronic dance music about the racialisation of music genres – one that emphasises or essentialises Blackness and one that presents itself as colour blind – that both exclude the possibility of the niche edm genre as a medium for non-white Dutch countercultural aesthetic expressions⁷². The second sub-section aims to show that, as the niche-edm genre in the Netherlands is now coded white, the rediscovery of dance music's political roots in a white context shapes the genre-specific moral commitment to equality. While the Berlin queer nightlife scene is an important inspiration, its whiteness (Garcia 2018) travels unnoticed as Amsterdam-based promoters adopt its practices. This helps to understand why promoters in the Dutch capital start with gender and sexuality in their social justice commitments and see ethnic and racial equality as a secondary priority. The Berlin-Amsterdam connection highlights the trans-local flows of white musical identity formations, which are usually not analysed in this manner, as opposed to the travels of Black musical expressions (Gilroy 1993; Gray 2005).

6.1.1 'Becoming White': Two Early Racial Narratives of the Niche-EDM Genre

As electronic dance music popularised in the Netherlands from the late 1980s into the early 1990s, two different narratives can be identified that both highlight the genre's relationship to Blackness. The first narrative emphasises race/ethnicity. While many of the intermediaries (journalists, promoters, et cetera) among the early adopters of house in Amsterdam were white, they publicly emphasised that house is a Black genre. They did so in two ways: through the 'innate' rhythmic qualities of the music and through its early cultural production in inner city American metropolises. Eddy de Clercq, a Belgian native, is a pioneer figure who popularised the house subgenre to Amsterdam in his role as programmer for the venue RoXY, a former cinema in the city centre. In the late 1970s he travelled to New York to visit the nightclub Paradise Garage, about which he recollects: "You had the feeling you'd been on another planet. Sometimes I had the impression I'd ended up at an African tribe" (De Wit 2008: 85). And: "You can't imagine that as a white European, to see people in trance like that" (De Wit 2008: 45). Here, to describe the response to African American music predominantly made with electronic equipment, De Clercq falls back into a stereotype where Blackness is read as exotic, shocking and primitive (Frith 1992).

The national newspaper *de Volkskrant* is the first to cover house extensively and places it in a larger tradition of African American music (Van Veen 1989). This continues in the years to follow:

⁷² This is based on two public history books (*Mary Go Wild: 25 Jaar Dance in Nederland* and *Roxy en de Houserevolutie*), a documentary series (*30 Jaar Dutch Dance*) and 357 newspaper articles from *de Volkskrant*, *het Parool*, *NRC* and *Trouw*. See sub-section 3.5.2.

techno is understood as a product of the Black consciousness of post-industrial, disenfranchised Detroit (Van Veen 1992) and in a report on London (UK), the subgenre jungle is quoted as being “Black music. It has the street feeling of the ghetto, just like reggae” (Van Veen 1995). Here, Blackness is not conceptualised as innate, rather, genres are seen as a product of racialised poverty which adds a subcultural authenticity (Garcia 2018) to the music. These social embeddings are also understood as geographically distant: the article on jungle questions whether similar connections between genre and Black identities could emerge in the Netherlands (Van Veen 1995). The popularity of bubbling, a sped-up version of ragga and dancehall, among the Surinamese and Antillean communities in the Netherlands is mentioned as an example of Black Dutch musical expressions but was not attributed the same subcultural authenticity as jungle in the same newspaper that year (Van den Eerenbeemt 1995)⁷³. This sense of geographical distance is also put forward in academic research: in an overview of house in the USA, the UK and the Netherlands, Rietveld mentions the role of Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean cultural production in the USA and UK but posits the main Dutch musical contribution is adding “European sensibilities” (musical influences from Belgium and Germany) to house production (Rietveld 1998: 8).

The second narrative deracialises electronic dance music, adopting an explicitly universalist, colour blind approach to describe the genre. For example, in a 1993 article in the newspaper *Trouw*, DJ Pieter Franssen is quoted: “The Netherlands doesn’t have a hip-hop culture. There is no breeding ground for it. Our ghettos are not as bad as in the United States. House is neutral and doesn’t carry a heavy cultural load” (Bosch 1993). The comparison with hip-hop is insightful, because like jungle it was thought that the Netherlands lacked the racialised poverty that is conditional to produce meaningful hip-hop. While at the time hip-hop may have been a peripheral genre, few people today would deny that the hip-hop genre has been a vehicle for musical expressions of non-white Dutch identities (Gazzah 2008; Kooijman 2008). However, when it comes to the house genre in the Franssen-quote, its social history is obscured, bringing to the fore a ‘neutrality’ that is rendered its appeal. In the same *Trouw* article record label manager Fred Berkhout is mentioned saying: “For white kids house is the musical trend of the nineties” (Bosch 1993). This quote, probably unintentionally, discloses that the supposed neutrality of house serves as a marker of whiteness: neutrality constitutes the often unmarked racial norm that peripheralises non-white aesthetic expressions (Essed and Trienekens 2008; Trienekens and Bos 2014).

Its neutrality does not mean that house was readily accepted in the 1990s: while the genre enjoyed mainstream success, critics deemed it simplistic and commercial, employing a rock-inspired cultural hierarchy that questioned the genre’s authenticity (Wermuth 2004; De Wit 2008). However, the genre narrative is a colour-blind one, despite the participation of racialised minorities and audible hip-hop influences in chart hits, which suggests the music may actually contain elements that articulate Black or other racialised Dutch experiences (Wermuth 2004). While the first narrative highlights subcultural authenticity, this second narrative highlights the house genre’s

⁷³ Tellingly, bubbling also does not have its own chapter in Mary Go Wild’s history of Dutch Dance (van Terphoven, A. and van Veen, G. (eds.), *Mary Go Wild: 25 Jaar Dance in Nederland*. Amsterdam: Maslow).

mainstream appeal. The main difference is that the latter sees Blackness as social category that is not just irrelevant to the Dutch context, but to the niche-edm genre globally.

In sum, what the two narratives have in common is that they do not consider Dutch niche-edm as a vehicle for non-white aesthetic expressions. However, the first years after the arrival of house and techno in the Netherlands provide ample ground to revisit the genre's histories in ways that give more centrality to the formations of Black and minority ethnic aesthetic expressions within global musical flows. While a full historical overview is beyond the scope of this section, I would like to point out three points of departure that might inspire an alternate history that decentres whiteness (Garcia 2018). The first is the presence of a Black queer party community in Amsterdam: Wekker (2016) writes briefly about a party scene in the Bijlmer neighbourhood in the late 1970s and early 1980s that was largely underground, as many members were rejected at the door at mainstream nightclubs. The larger historical project could be to understand how this cultural moment waned (Wekker (2016) mentions the AIDS epidemic as one factor) just before house popularised in Europe, to be primarily adopted by white gay men (De Wit 2008). There is a potential, interesting link to present-day observations that see European queer communities of colour come together in venues that do not specialise in the niche-edm genre (Garcia 2018), in Amsterdam at parties such as Kalinichta (with dance music from "Slovenia to Lebanon") or Pon di Pride (dancehall).

The second are the early entanglements of the niche-edm genre and eclectic subgenres. Prominent Black producers like Orlando Voorn and Guan Elmzoon (All Star Fresh, King Bee) started their careers as hip-hop DJs in 1980s before switching to techno and house. DJ Moortje's bubbling DJ-style⁷⁴ – popular in the 1990s – in which he speeds up dancehall records re-interprets Caribbean diasporic music styles, recalls rhythmic influences from the Curaçao⁷⁵ drum music genre *tambú* and was marketed in the context of the UK subgenre jungle (Van den Eerenbeemt 1995). Miss Djax' record label Djax Records was a prominent niche-edm label, but also put out many early Dutch rap artists, who were being ridiculed for "playing ghetto" in the early 1990s (Kuyper 2000). 'Dirty Dutch' and 'Dutch house' started musical signifiers for (mainly) Black DJs who mixed house among a wide variety of Black musical styles, before being marketed under the EDM umbrella in the United States in the early 2010s (Kerkhof 2013b; Van der Plas 2013).

The third point of departure involves tracing the routes (Gilroy 1993) between the Netherlands and Detroit: Black Dutch DJ/producers Orlando Voorn and Steve Rachmad collaborated and exchanged knowledge with pioneering Detroit techno producers such as Juan Atkins, Derrick May and Kevin Saunderson (Veilbrief and Passet 2013). Orlando Voorn lived in Detroit for a while, while Derrick May lived in Amsterdam for six months (Veilbrief and Passet 2013). In the city of Eindhoven, Djax Records released many singles by Detroit-based artists (van Veen 2000). Taken together, these three points provide a scattered, incomplete overview that shows that there are alternative points

⁷⁴ DJ Moortje influenced international touring DJs like DJ Chuckie and Hardwell, prominent names in the EDM world, while the prominent American producer Diplo has also appropriated the bubbling subgenre.

⁷⁵ The Caribbean island Curaçao was under Dutch colonial rule for centuries and is now a constituent country as part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

of departure possible that decentre whiteness in writing Dutch electronic dance music and nightlife history.

6.1.2 Trans-Local Whiteness: How the New Default Travels

This short overview of different narratives serves to understand the position of current-day promoters in Amsterdam, for whom whiteness in the niche-edm genre has become the default to which other ethnicities are 'added'. This highlights that concepts like distance, networks and trans-local flows, that characterise economic geographies of cultural and music production (Pratt 2004; Watson 2008; Lange and Bürkner 2013), have been conceptualised with little acknowledgement of the importance of race and ethnicity (an exception is Jackson 1999). Among promoters there is a sense that the niche-edm genre in Amsterdam, in terms of its production and consumption, is predominantly defined by white people. This whiteness is seen as outcome of historical developments, which is described through a sense of mourning:

It's difficult, because it's not enough, but eventually we ended up in such a position that, with the reason that these music genres originated out of a sort of rebellion, right, going against the establishment, and how fucking ironic is it then that the white establishment walks away with it and eventually take lots of credit with it.

(Club promoter, niche-edm, male, white, early 20s).

This promoter makes explicit the dissonance of the political origins of the niche-edm genre with the situation in contemporary Amsterdam. What I already noted, using Garcia's (2018) argument, is that in Europe house and techno's Blackness are fixed in the past, instead of being reworked to function as contemporary aesthetic expressions of local non-white identities. Mourning the loss of rebellion indeed places countercultural identities in the past rather than the present. In contrast to rap: in the 1990s the Netherlands was thought to lack the racialised poverty that inspires meaningful rap (see sub-section 6.1.1), but since the 2000s among many other ethnic groups Dutch Moroccan rappers successfully adopted rap's genre language to narrate their experiences as a cultural Other (Gazzah 2008; Kooijman 2008).

In this sub-section I would like to contrast the historic perspectives of electronic dance music promoters with their contemporary orientations, turning to my interview data again, to highlight the importance of global musical flows to the racialisation of music (Lipsitz 1994). White niche-edm promoters functioned as intermediaries in trans-local flows by travelling to Berlin and taking inspiration home to Amsterdam. In comparison, two Black promoters on the borders of the eclectic and niche-edm genre did not refer to Berlin but mentioned their travels to London and South Africa, places where they had encountered inspirational music worlds. Taking this argument further, the possibilities for a genre to become a sustainable vehicle for non-white aesthetic expressions does not so much depend on its 'origin' as Black musical expressions, but rather on the contemporary local and transnational cultural flows in which its cultural intermediaries, artists and audiences participate (Gilroy 1993; Jackson 1999). The contrast between Berlin and London/South Africa

suggests that to understand the racialisation of music genres, it is not enough to just look at how Black music travels, but also at how white musical identities are constituted not just as the endpoint of appropriation, but also through trans-local cultural flows, following from similar disengagements with Black musical histories found across multiple cities in continental Europe.

In the discussion of techno and masculinity in section 5.3.1, the promoter coded the stereotypical DJ from Berlin not only as masculine, but also as white. Another promoter explained his preference for contemporary American techno over Berlin techno by noting the influences in the former of other Black genres such as soul and hip-hop and describing the latter as “soulless”. While such categorisations risk essentialising the relationship between genre and race, they do disclose whiteness as an unmarked category. For most promoters, it indeed remains an unmarked category as they talked about travelling to Berlin or collaborating with promoters from that city. Berlin was referred to by one niche-edm club promoter as “the Mecca of the techno world”, which describes its status in the niche-edm genre, and this was readily followed by the intention to bring “something of that culture here”. Many promoters were inspired by the German capital’s club scene because of its combination of freedom, anonymity and centrality of queer communities. Berlin is known for its specific clubbing norms, such as long queues that assess subcultural capital, which extend to inside the club: the intention to ‘hook up’ is seen as ‘going out for the wrong reasons’ (Rapp 2010; Garcia 2011). Van Bohemen and Roeling (2020) describe this sexual disinterestedness, fuelled by drugs such as ecstasy, as a ‘white sexuality’ that defines nightlife in the eclectic genre as the unconfined, cultural other. The international orientations and collaborations of white promoters reveal that Berlin, which is relatively close to Amsterdam and allows for weekend trips, serves as a source of direct, applicable inspiration - as opposed to the distant American night worlds of the 1970s and 1980s.

During my interviews with male Black promoters, who made up five out of 36 respondents⁷⁶, Berlin was more peripheral or went unmentioned in their geographical imaginations. One promoter mentioned his travels to London, which he had experienced as a city of multicultural, inter-genre possibility. He described it as place where musicians are not pigeonholed like they are in the Netherlands, resulting in artists from different genres meeting and collaborating more. This also means that there are more club nights that mix different genres, something he felt is lacking in Amsterdam. He lauded the radio culture with its many different genre-based stations, which allowed easy access to in-depth knowledge of multiple sub-genres. Last, he mentioned the access to DJ opportunities, which came from clubs but even more so from online radio stations that are a platform for emerging DJs to gain skills without the pressure of the dancefloor. This is not to say that London’s nightclub sector is devoid of structural inequalities. Rather, to the interviewee it represented a cultural geography of European nightlife shaped around a sense of opportunity and diversity. This can be contrasted with Berlin. There, the appeal for promoters was the freedom and anonymity they experienced on dark dancefloors, while its ethics mainly centre around (white)

⁷⁶ For an intricate overview of all respondents see Appendix A.

queer practices. In the London example, accessibility and multiculturalism are at the heart of the interviewee's geographical imagination. It couples an aesthetics of cultural goods (genre hybridity) to an ethics of production (guaranteeing low thresholds), inspired by the existence of opportunities for racialised minorities. Cultural flows come with ethical practices and discourses, which highlights how these flows are formative of social and musical identities that arise in the place of destination as genres become embedded in a new local context. Pursuing this line of reasoning in more depth can aid academics in better understanding why the connections between social identities and music genres vary across space.

Understanding the role of the cultural flows of the past and the present, in combination with local history and infrastructure, helps to understand what ethical considerations in cultural production prime over others. As a promoter explains, reflecting on intersectional criticism by local activists that the club's commitment to gender equality on line-ups had mainly benefited white women:

I think we found that a balance or thread is important, especially in the beginning, that there were not just men playing, we committed to that, and didn't communicate it externally, it's something we tried to do our best in so that our line-ups are balanced in a self-evident way, but we also found that with regard to cultural background, we gave that a lot less attention.

(Club promoter, niche-edm, male, white, late 20s).

This quote shows how this club's attempts to create a more inclusive program departed from a colour-blind perspective on gender, only to later realise that ethnic and racial inequality had not been paid attention to. As said at the beginning of this sub-section, the current generation of promoters have inherited a sector where throughout the years race was deemed absent and irrelevant. This means that in the Netherlands, as one female external promoter remarked, gender and sexuality are at the forefront when it comes to understanding inequality in the club scene. A case in point is the Goedegebuure (2019) newspaper article referred to in section 5.1, which focuses on gender inequality without any reference to ethnicity, an issue two respondents mentioned too. The moral commitment derived from American LGBT+ communities of colour in the 1970s and 1980s has been locally applied to in first instance mainly benefit white women and white gay men. At the same time promoters and activists put in efforts to highlight the significance of race in the genre, where Blackness functions as a category that adds a political and subcultural legitimacy to the genre (Garcia 2018) – which also explains the criticism on white techno mentioned in section 5.3.1.

What is still hidden from view for many white promoters, is how Blackness can be a cultural category that is relevant to Amsterdam, including how it can encompass a range of local non-white identities or multicultural collaborations. The question then is what the subcultural marker of Black music does for the niche-edm genre, whether it can lead to more opportunities for local explorations in the genre that do not centralise whiteness. In this section I have sought to show it is not just the local and national, but also the international orientation of promoters that shapes the whiteness of the niche-edm genre in Amsterdam. In the next section I will delve deeper into how

whiteness as an unmarked norm forms the basis of cultural production as I discuss how a narrow conception of musical style produces racialised cultural hierarchies.

6.2 How Nightclub Production Sustains Whiteness

To understand how race continues to produce cultural hierarchies in the cultural industries, it is not sufficient to only look at the cultural dispositions and racialised geographies of promoters to understand how unequal opportunities are distributed, but also to focus on how whiteness is sustained through the production process as promoters strive for cultural legitimacy (Gray 2005) or seek to rationalise the unpredictability of the market (Saha 2018). While enhancing diversity in terms of line-ups and audiences is often stated as a goal, clubs often find themselves in a contradictory position because diversity is at odds with production norms around cultural prestige and commercial viability. As explained in section 4.1, in the clubbing sector there is a distinction between in-house production and external co-production. In the niche-edm genre many promoters perceive in-house production as a more prestigious form of programming that aids the club in building a strong, recognisable identity and caters to the cultural industries' highly valued ideal of cultural autonomy (Banks 2010). However, this also means it is hard to centralise other publics on selected nights through temporarily making place⁷⁷ for external organisations with different cultural ideals. The first part of this section focuses on how in-house production sustains whiteness. The second part will focus on the contradictions of external co-production: clubs seek to make new connections with organisations to find new target audiences (to increase their market), they do so in preconceived ways that try to minimise unpredictability. External co-production temporarily makes place for non-white publics, but 'fixes' (Hall 1996) the relationship between genre and racialised identities. Non-white external promoters need to formulate their artistic position in ways that fits hegemonic white narratives of race (Saha 2018).

In this section, I centralise interviews with seven male promoters of colour in both genres. This group decodes (Hall 1980) the whiteness of the niche-edm genre. Analysing whiteness through the repertoires of those excluded from the category is thus vital in exposing how whiteness functions (Essed and Trienekens 2008). Ethno-racial inequality is already visible in the hierarchical relationship between in-house production and external co-production (see section 4.2): six out of seven promoters of colour are external promoters. This approach enables me to identify the hierarchies and boundaries in cultural production that sustain the whiteness of spaces of consumption and shape the unequal distribution of opportunities in Amsterdam's clubbing sector.

6.2.1 In-House Production: Uniform Identities and Cultural Prestige

As explained, in section 4.2: in-house production means that all programming is done by staff members employed by the venue. In the economic reality of club production, this is not the case for

⁷⁷ See sub-section 4.2.2 for the introduction and explanation of this concept.

most clubs, who seek to reduce risk by collaborating with external promoters. In-house production has significance as a cultural ideal and a sign of prestige: in the interviews many club promoters expressed the wish to do most or all of their programming themselves. This goes hand in hand with a desire to create an explicit musical identity for their venue to establish a reputation as tastemakers, which inevitably involves a selection process: committing to a cluster of subgenres means others are left out of the picture. As I explained in section 4.2, this mode of production is highly valued by policy makers. It is also important to note that external co-production is not fully compatible with safeguarding a venues' identity, but is a different way of programming: it mainly involves selecting external organisations rather than booking DJs.

External promoters navigate club's identities and target audiences to decide where to organise their parties. This is the case in the following quote, in which a promoter talks about his ideas to start a recurring party around the South African niche-edm style gqom (a combination of kwaito, techno and house) but is not sure about its location:

The electronic scene is really in those, in those clubs that a large share of the multicultural population does not know, so what you're looking for is a club with a central location, that feels a bit underground, a bit like [name of club], but then closer to town, easily accessible, recognisable eh and that doesn't [have] a clear identity of another target audience than the one you need to reach.

(External promoter, eclectic, male, Black, early 40s)

This can be understood in the context of the cultural flows of Black diasporic music genres: while gqom may share stylistic similarities with niche-edm genres such as electro, the promoter realised that if he would produce the gqom night in a niche-edm context, gqom risks losing the possibility of connecting with "the target audience". Instead, producing the night in a club in the eclectic genre might be able to keep its connection to a Black or multi-ethnic crowd as the style travels from South Africa to Amsterdam. It shows how already established venue identities matter in cultural production as promoters seek to create new genre-audience formations. A clear venue identity may be praised in the field and by the council, but this quote shows it can also be experienced as an obstacle. Maintaining in-house production as a cultural ideal, risks decreasing the opportunities for new genre connections.

Black promoters see more opportunities at venues that have a looser sense of identity, where the program is not narrowly defined by genre and that are not associated with a certain audience. However, even when a club is thought to be ideal for a certain night, the spectre of cultural prestige in the niche-edm genre can limit the possibilities for hybrid nights to emerge. Like this example a promoter gave about a venue he thought would work for his night that fuses house and hip-hop (among other genres), but that rejected his idea:

Perfect, two rooms, accessible, people know it already, people are open to good music and to hip-hop, you can program two rooms, would have been perfect. But well, they didn't want to, for example.

I: [name of venue]?

Yes. Because they didn't believe in the concept, that it would fit, and they wanted to establish themselves more as a mature, cool, good electronic house slash techno club and an eclectic night like [name of party] then would be out of tune.

(External promoter, eclectic, male, Black, late 20s)

Here, we see how this notion of prestige produces a cultural hierarchy where house and techno become the 'mature' genre, in opposition to hip-hop which is commonly thought to attract a younger crowd. The promoter encountered genre boundaries that limit the potential of musically hybrid parties. In the Amsterdam context, club communities of colour have a closer affiliation to hip-hop than house, which means that a party that fuses the two genres has the potential to include new audiences in the venue. However, because most venues tend to increasingly focus on either primarily the niche-edm genre or the eclectic genre, parties with a musical ideal of hybridity fall short in being fully incorporated in both genres and have trouble finding institutional recognition. The night then does not 'fit' with the rest of the program, it is 'out of tune', which denotes it falls outside of the club's genre ideals. Institutional whiteness manifests and reproduces itself by not recognising how these hierarchical boundaries may disadvantage non-white promoters and audiences.

The use of 'accessible' that both Black promoters quoted in this section use is an interesting term that points towards two competing urban imaginations of Amsterdam. It is a term that needs unpacking. For the two promoters cited, accessibility was defined as easy to reach by public transport and located in the city centre. This suggests an acknowledgement that cultural participation is constrained by space (Brook 2016). In my interviews, niche-edm promoters have a different perspective on the city and prestige. Niche-edm venues are typically located outside of the central canal district (see *Figure 2*, page 63). As explained in section 1.2, locational choices can be understood as an outcome of gentrification and fits within policy that uses culture to invest in peripheral areas (Savini and Dembski 2016). For many niche-edm promoters, the city centre – populated by eclectic clubs – has come to signify a commercial sameness in terms of music (with R&B as the homogenising denominator), while it is also described as a "boozing-and-tourists-climate" where people go out to get drunk rather than to listen to new music.⁷⁸ This produces a geography of race and cultural production in the club sector that differs significantly from other cultural sectors in the city. For example, the Dutch literary publishing industry is primarily located in Amsterdam's canal district which it constructs as white, while it locates multicultural in neighbourhoods such as Zuidooost and Nieuw West (Koren and Delhay 2019). That clubs' racialised geography is antithetical to literary publishing can be explained by nightlife's fore-runner role in gentrification (Hae 2011a) and that cultural participation is not typically confined to neighbourhoods (Brook 2016). As a result, this has produced two competing views of the city with

⁷⁸ The link with 'going out for the wrong reasons' and a white techno sexuality, as discussed in sub-section 6.1.2, is clear here.

incompatible conceptions of prestige, which makes it hard to find ground for coordination (Hammou 2016) between the two genres.

Boundary crossing from the eclectic genre to the niche-edm genre makes the cultural hierarchies between the two genres extra visible. The notion of prestige extends to the cultural valuation of DJ'ing. As explained in section 5.3.1, one of the main qualities a DJ ought to have is a 'deep knowledge' of music. The promoter from the quote in the previous paragraph also works as an agent for DJs. Towards the end of the interview, the promoter (a Black man) discussed with his colleague (a white woman) a male Black DJ on their roster, remarking: "You notice it's harder to get him to certain places". She responds saying: "Well, I don't even think it's his colour or because he's a man, more that he made a switch from hip-hop to house, people think, well, show me first." She concludes with: "You notice in the house scene, and you really taught me that [name of colleague], that knowledge is the biggest thing you got to have." While this conversation ultimately rejects racism as the key explanation, it reaffirms the hierarchical boundaries in place between the two genres. Cultural legitimacy is derived from venues that are predominantly white in terms of production and consumption, because they are in the position to define what constitutes expertise – and this is apparently not broad and inter-genre musical knowledge. This brings us back to the Black feminist collective discussed in section 5.3.2: valuing nightlife as a socially transgressive space involves a critical re-evaluation of classification systems and their role in reproducing whiteness. This includes the boundaries that make it harder to move from one genre to the other.

It is also important to highlight Blackness as a marker of prestige, in terms of its subcultural authenticity (as discussed in the previous section). While Blackness is indeed celebrated as source of the niche-edm genre, this does not mean it is valued when it is recognised as a contemporary cultural expression in the genre (Garcia 2018). As a promoter recalls:

I had a discussion with someone the other day, who played me a track and that is super Detroit techno and then Chicago house and super like a hi-hat, and that person was like: wow that's so ratchet. And I thought that was so strange, it is also in the sense that Black, that people do not [like] Black music really, there is not a lot of Black music being booked, except the big names like Kerri Chandler and Omar S, because it's, people subconsciously do not like it, if you get what I mean. So it's like ratchet, because it's Black music?

(External promoter, niche-edm, male, North-African, early 20s)

'Ratchet' here is a derogatory term that is used to devalue niche-edm music in which Blackness is read. The importance here is that 'ratchet' signifies this track belongs to another realm of music, that it falls outside of the imagined boundaries of the niche-edm genre. This promoter/agent then relates this to the Black artists on his roster, that he finds have more difficulty in getting enough bookings. As the niche-edm genre is generally perceived white, reading Blackness into music becomes a way of placing an artist outside of the domain of the genre. The three promoters of colour in this section have exposed whiteness at work in examples like this. They show how the conception of prestige in the niche-edm genre devalues hybridity, locational choices, inter-genre

knowledge and sonic signifiers of Blackness. Through not critically reflecting on these boundaries and devaluations produced by hegemonic workings of cultural prestige, whiteness reproduces itself.

6.2.2 Anticipating Audiences: The Role of Spaces of Consumption

It is not just the cultural ideal of in-house production that shapes a commodification process that constrains the possibilities for non-white promoters. External co-production has its own contradictions: when cultural prestige becomes less important as a key driver in programming club nights, economic rationale starts to play a bigger role. This entails assessing club night's commercial viability by predicting the unpredictable market. As laid out in section 4.2, club promoters often ask external organisations to reach target audiences they see as out of reach, external promoters who have closer ties to these audiences. This section examines how racial othering manifests itself in external co-production: as club promoters try to visualise the audience, they constrain the space of possibilities for external promoters, who in turn have to convince club promoters to choose a different path of commodification. In doing so, I expand on the cultural industries argument that race is made in the commodification process, and that despite the intentions and dispositions of cultural intermediaries, reductive representations are engrained in the logic of capital (Saha 2018). The cultural industries framework mainly analyses consumption through market research (Hesmondhalgh 2013a), as explained in sections 2.2.3 and 2.3.3. In this sub-section, I highlight that in the nightclub sector spaces of consumption facilitate direct interactions between club promoters, external promoters and consumers. These interactions can also 'fix' (Hall 1996) racialised genre-audience connections and sustain whiteness.

In the clubbing sector, where cultural producers are frequently in the same space as their audiences, promoters are likely to be more readily confronted with the constraining (but at times enabling) role of consumption in representations of race⁷⁹. So, while external co-production has the possibility to facilitate space for a wider variety of nightlife's social identities, it is not without its constraints and contradictions. This points once again towards the significance of spaces of consumption in establishing or sustaining the connections between genres and social identities. In this section I will give three examples. The first example shows how the desire to reduce risk and uncertainty makes it more difficult for a spectrum of non-white identities to arise. The second example highlights how external co-production as a commodification practice has the potential to twist conceptions of the audience, making non-white musical identities less uniform. The third example is about the difficulties that arise when attempting to escape racial othering, but the audience reception is at odds with promoter's incentives.

The first example reveals how parties that centralise Southern American and Caribbean diaspora genres – in this case Latin – are perceived as homogenous by a club that in the period this anecdote is set in, the early 2010s, organised both eclectic and niche-edm nights.

⁷⁹ This is different in the recorded music industry, where production and consumption are spatially separated.

Well, they used to have a night called [name] and they thought it looked too similar, but that wasn't the case, but in their perception it was like that, they sort of thought it would be a copy and that it wouldn't work, because [name of other Latin night] just didn't work either.

(External promoter, eclectic, male, Latino, late 30s)

In the early 2010s Latin did not enjoy the same popularity it did in 2019. The quote shows initial steps towards including new genres do not lead to more inclusion when financial targets are not met. This shows that clubs value external promoter's proximity to their audiences, but only to a limited extent. As explained in section 4.3, as genres travel, they do not have pre-made connections with audiences, these are constituted spatially in the local context. While this is the basis for how clubs work and attract audiences, when the genre is not seen as a trend and lacks commercial appeal, the genre can be dismissed as homogenous, prohibiting new or further genre-audience connections to be established. In this way, the venue misses out on opportunities to produce a wider spectrum of identities around the same genre. Reducing uncertainty (as a key element of cultural production) then is only compatible with a wide variety of social identities around the same genre when the local commercial viability of a genre has been established.

The second example is about a niche-edm festival that was organised in Amsterdam South-East, home to the largest Afro-Caribbean Dutch population in the city (van Gent and Jaffe 2017), which sought to include this public by also hosting a hip-hop stage. A local promoter native to *Zuidoost* was asked to help organising this, but had his reservations:

I had the feeling: we shouldn't do hip-hop, it's much lower in beats per minute, and eh dance at the time was a primarily white affair and I thought like, then you have a sort of, a stage with lots of Black youth who do hip-hop which doesn't fit, eh and there was a sort of stigma at the time, it was just, it was tedious do have it fit like that, so I said maybe we should go more towards afrobeats, afrohouse, eh eh things that are higher in beats per minute, that was actually the first reason, to do something that's close to the population here but which in one way or the other fits the dance scene.

(External promoter, eclectic, male, Black, early 40s)

What we see happening here is how the festival promoters departed from a certain imaginary of the audience that draws a firm boundary between the eclectic and the niche-edm genre. By offering a counter-imaginary, this promoter was able to twist the narrative and bring forward new possibilities for genre-audience connections. The promoter said that this initial attempt was to some extent unsuccessful: it added diversity on the production side but did not change the demographics of the audience. However, it provided an incentive to start a new club night that attracts a majority Black crowd and has been running successfully for over five years now in eclectic venues. This shows the enabling possibilities of external co-production, but also shows how establishing new connections between genre and audiences requires long term attention and careful consideration of the symbolic meaning of venues, since neighbourhood demographics do not inevitably translate into audience demographics.

Being in the wrong venue reveals how spaces of consumption constrain cultural production efforts that try to produce new representations of race. In the Dutch nightlife podcast *De Schemerzone*, promoter Bram Owusu talks about a night he used to co-organise: Dansé Dansé (Mazian and Van Meyeren 2018). The night was initially based on the promoter's parents' record collection: LPs from countries like Ghana and Cameroon. But while they, organisers and DJs, wanted to break with stereotypes about music from the African continent, they felt hindered by the predominantly white crowd with stereotypical perceptions about African music, who expected 'easy' danceable records over innovative and experimental tracks. Eventually, Owusu said, the concept was limiting. The key element is that the white gaze did not speak through the concept of the club night but through the audience's reception of the concept, which limited the range of possible artistic expressions. As club nights aim to fill a dancefloor and to keep the people on that dancefloor dancing, consumption stands out as a crucial factor in the production process, not only in the ways in which promoter anticipate audiences, but also in the direct feedback loop as the night unfolds. This shows how the production and consumption are entangled (Mansvelt 2005), fixing racialised conceptions of music that external co-production is not able to bridge.

Taken together, these examples have shown that that cultural hierarchies and racial boundaries are not just made by clubs striving for prestige in the field, but also in trying to attract and making sense of the unpredictable audience. Striving for prestige is not the only way in which the whiteness of Amsterdam's clubbing sector is sustained, as the commercial logic of external co-production often reproduces whiteness as well. While external co-production opens up possibilities for non-white promoters, they still find themselves caught up in the economic logic of clubbing production that values reducing uncertainty, is often unable to take long-term risks and primes a full dancefloor over musical experiment. The organisational hierarchies between club promoters and external promoters and the dissonances between them in their conceptions of audiences can constrain non-white cultural production, as it limits the opportunities to make new connections between genres and social identities.

6.3 Cultural Diversity, Consensus and White Discomfort

The previous two sections of this chapter mainly dealt with venues in the niche-edm genre, through the eyes of promoters of colour. This section will focus on promoters in the eclectic genre⁸⁰. As eclectic clubs mainly work through external co-production and often seek to represent a broader collection of musical styles than niche-edm venues, they have a different idea of the audiences in their club. They often depart from a notion of pluralism: through working together with different external promoters, they seek to represent the city demographically and in terms of musical trends. As most eclectic clubs have a stronger commercial incentive than niche-edm clubs, promoters with minority-white audiences are able to find common ground for coordination (Hammou 2016) with eclectic clubs on the condition of commercial viability. In these discourses, the idea of cultural

⁸⁰ For an intricate overview of all respondents see Appendix A.

diversity plays a key role: venues aim to cater to an audience as wide as possible, but mostly do not align explicitly with certain communities (Malik 2013). This means that race as category is not often specifically named, rather, promoters make use of a spatialised vocabulary of the city, that imply race through metaphors such as neighbourhood (Keith 2005; Lipsitz 2007; Nayak 2011; Çankaya 2020). As the cultural industries produce moral geographies of the city through cultural production, this links the representations of race made in cultural production (Saha 2018) with spatially concrete formations of racial inequality in the city at night (Keith 2005).

This section shows how genres connect to ethno-racial identities through imaginations of the urban landscape, which adds a new, spatial dimension to cultural industries research where locality and territoriality typically play a minor role. While this topic has already been explored theoretically (Krimms 2007), my focus on cultural production and specifically promoter's practices highlights the mechanisms through which representations lead to material socio-spatial formations. The first sub-section focuses on how race becomes thinkable through the urban landscape as a result of intersections with gender, as moral geographies justify how cultural production temporally segregates audiences (Lipsitz 2007). The second sub-section investigates how these moral geographies shape external co-production, pointing out how venues temporarily make place, but mostly only on the grounds of unstable points of coordination (Hammou 2016). It is a consensus around commercial viability rather than moral or political ideals: for clubs in Amsterdam, ethnicity mainly comes into view as 'a lucrative target audience' (Kartosen 2016). Commercial viability is not the only aspect of this consensus: a white discomfort with alterity (Çankaya and Mepschen 2020) places the burden of regulating dancefloors on non-white external co-promoters.

6.3.1 Moral Geographies of Race and Gender

Eclectic venues typically do not use one tried-and-tested formula for club nights⁸¹ but aim to reduce uncertainty by organising events around specific subgenres catered to a specific audience. In explaining how through external co-production, the venue makes sense of target audiences, as they do not aim to specific ethnic communities, but rather aim to cater to as many audiences as possible. In this promoter's example, genre, race and gender collide.

I like to program as diverse as possible because it means all sorts of different people come to our club. That is sometimes ehm, it's at the same time a weakness and a strength of [name of their venue]. Because it's a pity that you don't really have one crowd, but it's also great that with [dub/reggae night] you have lots of Rastas inside and eh the following week with [Latin night] lots of dolls [*"poppetjes"*], to put it like that.
(Club promoter, eclectic, male, white, early 30s)

⁸¹ In Amsterdam there is only one club that programs the same headline DJ every Friday and Saturday, with varying support DJs.

The fact that the promoter says having multiple audiences is a strength and a weakness, highlights how the inclusion of non-white genre communities is part of a consensus-making between club promoters and external promoters. It is not fully compatible with the promoter's idea of prestige, but coordination with other subgenres is necessary for professional and commercial purposes, meaning that differences are bridged through commodification (Hammou 2016). What we see here, through the invocation of "Rastas" in relation to reggae, is that genre functions as a way to racialise and gender the audience: reggae is coded as Black and masculine. Latin is coded feminine: the Dutch word '*poppetjes*' is gendered as it emphasises looks (make-up, high heels), but carries the connotation of lifelessness or a lack of agency. Music genre serves as a proxy for gender and race. What is interesting is that the promoter says their programming should reflect the city: "For every niche, for every trend we see, in the city, we want to give that a place." The ideal of musically representing the city hints at the central point of this sub-section: that in clubbing production race and gender are made through spatial conceptions of genre.

The urban landscape functions as a discourse through which race becomes knowable (Lipsitz 2007; Çankaya 2020). Promoters use spatial language to situate the presence of racialised bodies in their venue. See for example the following quote:

If I'm looking at the weekends, it's pretty much 27 [years] and up, uhm I'm not saying it's all people who went to university, but we don't have a designated audience you know, we have girls from *Oud-Zuid* [South] with blond hair to semi-gangsters from *Zuidoost* [South-East] who stand here with dreadlocks and that just always goes well.

(Club promoter, eclectic, male, white, late 30s)

Here, it once again becomes clear to what extent the spatial production of race is gendered and classed. The "girls" from the affluent South neighbourhood are defined primarily by their blond hair, which can be read as a marker of innocent whiteness. A discomfort with alterity (Çankaya and Mepschen 2020) shows as Black men with dreadlocks from the South-East of the city are described as "semi-gangsters". This affirms how in nightlife production Blackness is associated with crime and disorder (Gilroy 1987; Talbot and Böse 2004). What is the moral geography that is being produced here? What the promoter seeks to establish in the club falls within Garcia's (2011) idea of 'embedded diversity: the kind of alterity that falls into the category of risk-free difference. The quote shows that 'embedded diversity' has a spatial dimension: it is made sense of as a mixing of 'pure' and 'impure' territories (Lipsitz 2007). Diversity is constructed as a mixing of territories, where different people from different places come together to dance to the same music. This is an exception: the rationale of external co-production works across the monthly program by offering different target audiences their own night, only temporarily making place for new publics.

So, the moral geographies of external co-production make race through spatial associations, as it segregates production and consumption:

We have some guys, they do [name of party], who are from Amstelveen and from Zuid [South] and ehm, I connected them to a couple of guys who I know who are from 'het

Gooi [affluent region just outside of Amsterdam], but they live in Amsterdam now, so what you try and do is put people together and so you have a dispersal actually through all of demographic Amsterdam actually.

(Club promoter, eclectic, male, Black, late 30s)

This shows how white musical identities are produced in urban space: Amstelveen, Zuid, and het Gooi are all understood as affluent, white areas. By bringing these spatial demographics together in a club that predominantly hosts eclectic nights, it becomes clear how on some nights the club will have a predominantly white crowd while other nights can be characterised as multicultural. Whiteness may remain an unmarked racial category, but the organisation of the cultural production process shapes it through evoking a racial and spatial imaginary. While Amsterdam is statistically not as ethnically segregated as many cities in the USA, imaginaries of the urban landscape are a way of designating race into a pre-defined space (Çankaya 2020). There has been a lot of attention to how music genres are expressions of spatial conditions (Shabazz 2004; Krims 2007), but in this strand of research there has not been much attention to how space produces hegemonic white, middle-class identities. Work in this vein has the potential to connect the spatial production of genre and social identities to the conversation on privilege in the arts: the urban landscape is a way of defining who seemingly ‘naturally’ belongs where and when (Koren and Delhaye 2019; Çankaya 2020), where the nation and nationalism take on its spatial form (Hesse 1997). Understanding how privileged white musical identities are made, ensures they do not go unnoticed, which can aid identifying the structural mechanisms that produce socio-spatial inequalities.

6.3.2 An Unstable Consensus: Commercial Viability and A White-Centric Concept of Safety

The logic of external co-production racialises and segregates the city at night. Still, for minority-ethnic external promoters eclectic venues offer temporary spaces where their endeavours are recognised and legitimised. Even if their position in the hierarchy of production is often subordinate and temporary, the logic of commodification offers the potential of a coalition based on coordination and consensus (Hammou 2016). This point of consensus and coordination revolves around commercial viability: venues constantly need new target audiences to maintain their place in the market, while external promoters see the commercial incentive of city centre eclectic clubs as a potential to find common ground, more so than the cultural prestige of niche-edm venues. Here, we return to the promoter from section 4.2.3 who faced a club with a lenient door policy, but whose favouring of some external promoters over others, prompted parties with multicultural audiences to leave:

The programmer approached us, yes the manager thinks you [are] Black⁸², he said I don't mind but this is what he thinks. So you know it's going on, but you don't have that at [name of another club #1], we did it there only just once, and at [name of another club #2] you don't have that either. They [club #2] just wants a full house, and how you do that, that's your business, as long as there's no trouble. Look, if there would be fights every month then okay you got to keep an eye on your crowd, but if you're crowd is Black, I'll just call it that, but it fills the house, then why should it matter?

(External promoter, eclectic, male, Black, late 20s)

This shows the opportunities and limits of external co-production. In the quote, we can very clearly see how regulation is tied to 'a white discomfort with alterity' (Çankaya and Mepschen 2020) that enables and constrains the possibilities for non-white cultural production. The promoter's connection of "trouble" and "fights" suggests that regardless of what actually happens at club nights, Black promoters still have to go the extra mile to convince clubs not to give in to the old stereotype of Black people as 'violent avengers' (Hall 1996).

Multiculture in club nights exists by the virtue of its logic but is also conditional on two grounds: commercial viability and a white-centric conception of safety. The first condition is commercial viability: while this may work for popular subgenres, it is a demand harder to meet if you want to convince a club promoter of a genre that does not enjoy much popularity yet. This links back to section 6.2.2 where the dissonance between club promoters and external promoters was discussed: the promoter of the Latin party experienced the constraints of not being able to 'prove' his club night concept was commercially viable. The local context of the club is relevant here too: as city centre eclectic clubs face high rents, some club promoters posited a full house is basically a requirement on weekend nights, which means that the early adopters among the external promoters have less time to 'build' a new concept over weeks or months. So, while external co-production temporarily makes place for Black music genres, it does not necessarily ensure a variety within these genres.

The second condition is regulation. As touched on briefly in the previous section, in the discussion of the word "fights", the presence of non-white others breaches the comfort of white space (Ahmed 2012) through associations with trouble, disorder and violence. As external promoters bring audiences from peripheral, stigmatised urban areas to city centre clubs, they are also held responsible for the crowd they bring in. Given that the club promoter ultimately has a say over the future of these collaborations, Black promoters are hyper-aware that anything that happens during the club night will be brought back onto their plate. The organisational hierarchy between the club and external promoters thus adds to the instability of the temporary coalition.

⁸² Here the promoter used not the word 'zwart', which would be the most common translation of the English 'Black', but 'donker' which would literally translate to 'dark' in English where it has strong connotations of personality, but not ethnicity, like it has in Dutch. In Dutch, 'zwart' would be considered more politically correct than 'donker'.

So the first time we were in [name of club], in that small room, there were two fights and in the briefing the next day a staff member said: yes I liked what you did in that room, but the target audience you attracted is a pity. Then I thought: but wait, we didn't do any promotion, so you know, it was your people who came to our room, but because those people have, I assume, a darker skin colour, and we have that too, they thought it was our target audience, but it wasn't necessarily.

(External promoter, eclectic, male, Black, early 40s)

As a consequence of external co-production, the responsibility for audience behaviour is not shared between venues and external promoters. This can be read as an outcome of the power dynamic in which external promoters are ultimately attributed responsibility for controlling the crowd, even when they have much less to say about for example the security staff. Regulation in nightlife is key in how race structures spaces of consumption (Talbot and Böse 2004). This has implications for applying a cultural industries framework to live music and nightlife: audience research may establish the commercial viability of cultural products, but in nightlife this also rests on a white comfort (Ahmed 2012) – a white-centric notion of safety – that highlights how regulation structures cultural production, influencing Black and minority-ethnic club endeavours specifically.

As outlined through the idea of cultural diversity in external co-production, the space created for non-white promoters mainly comes from a commercial incentive. It rests less on supporting Black and minority-ethnic parties from a moral or political standpoint, standpoints that could inspire clubs to make sure these parties are liberated from the forces of the market (Nwonka and Malik 2018). In terms of audiences, demographic diversity often exists as an ideal over securing space for marginalised populations. See for example the following quote by a club promoter on including a party with a majority Black audience:

Those guys, those girls, they could, they had a different location, I'm not going to name that location, but they had a different location and there they were told that it was too Black, the party. That also something I took with me, somewhere I thought yes: I feel bad about it too, I mean what I like to see most is a night that's a representation of the Netherlands. So that you have white, Black, Turkish, Moroccan, everything mixed, that it just works, ehm, but well, if that doesn't work, but there are a thousand Black people really enjoying themselves, then it's also fine.

(Club promoter, eclectic, male, Black, early 30s)

This quote comes from the same promoter that, in sub-section 6.3.1, talked about the various white external organisations he brought together to collaborate. This is where whiteness goes unnoticed as it manifests itself in space: it is when majority Black spaces start to form that segregation is being questioned. White, elite self-segregation is typically not questioned to the same extent (Cousin and Chauvin 2012). Temporariness of space and the conditionality of external co-production remain an effect of power: while under certain circumstances it is possible for non-white promoters to claim space at eclectic venues, this does not challenge the power relations within the organisational structure of nightclub production.

This chapter has addressed the significance of racialisation and racism to understand Amsterdam's nightlife. However, to fully understand non-white Dutch nightlife expressions, it is necessary to focus on experiences beyond those of Afro-Caribbean Amsterdammers, as is the case in this chapter. In part, this is also the outcome of promoter's moral geographies, that often leave prominent social groups like Turkish and Moroccan Amsterdammers – both as producers and consumers - unmentioned. This underrepresentation is addressed in this quote:

Since I started going out I never had any role models, in the sense of, I'm North African, queer, you didn't have any DJs who were North African or queer, or Arabic, something, I could never identify with anyone and that made me feel sorry.

(External promoter, niche-edm, male, North-African, early 20s)

In the Amsterdam context, earlier research has shown that Moroccan Dutch, Turkish Dutch and Asian Dutch youth participate in nightlife scenes partly outside of the mainstream, institutionalised circuit (Boogaarts-de Bruin 2011) – especially when they are not perceived as 'lucrative target audiences' (Kartosen 2016). While insightful, this research does not analyse these efforts in the context of mainstream, institutionalised nightclub production that (conditionally) includes, but also excludes. One element that requires proper attention would be the centrality of alcohol sales to nightclub's business models (especially when it excludes Muslim promoters and audiences) (Valentine et al. 2010), which is increasingly important in the context of external co-production where venues get the bar revenue and external promoters take home ticket sales. In my interviews, two female promoters mentioned venues' stances towards lesbian parties (in the past and today) who expected that predominantly female crowds would drink less. Research on Asian parties in the Netherlands also finds that external promoters pride themselves on beverage revenues (Kartosen 2016). To better understand the experiences of Moroccan and Turkish Dutch youth⁸³, it is necessary to look beyond mainstream clubs towards the cultural productions of other spaces – ones that are not commonly associated with nightlife or exist outside of the definition of 'nightclub' adopted in this thesis.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has brought to the fore the various ways in which whiteness, as the unmarked hegemonic norm, operates in Amsterdam-based nightclub production. I focused on the spatial and temporal dynamics, highlighting different geographical contexts: the transnational flows of music genres, spaces of consumption and urban context. These contexts have both distinct and overlapping elements.

The first section has focused on the history of club music genres in the Netherlands. I show that following the arrival of house in the Netherlands two distinguishable repertoires on the racialisation

⁸³ A subsidised music venue mentioned a night specifically oriented at Dutch Moroccans, another venue mentioned a night for queer Muslim youth. Generally, these audiences were seldom mentioned.

of music can be identified in Dutch press and historiography. First, house's roots in Black communities in the USA were recognised and contributed to the genre's symbolic value. Second, a colour-blind conception of house took hold, effectively obscuring house and techno's role as musical expressions of marginalised urban experiences (Melville 2020). Like in the reception of hip-hop in the 1990s, race and ethnicity were constructed as social categories of little relevance to Dutch musical expressions. In Dutch hip-hop this changed after the turn of the millennium, but house and techno remained understood as symbolically white genres in the Dutch context, only further perpetuated as promoters took inspiration from white queer scenes in Berlin to formulate their genre ideals to inspire an implicit 'white sexuality' (van Bohemen and Roeling 2020).

Whiteness is then sustained over time in spaces of consumption, through cultural production logic: striving for cultural prestige happens through producing demarcated venue identities that devalue multicultural hybridity and commercial incentives and the quest for commercial viability opens up more opportunities, but often in ways that risk reproducing fixed, essentialist genre-audience connections. In the last section of this chapter, I focused on the urban dimensions of external co-production in the niche-edm genre. I showed that in an effort to represent the city culturally, promoters produce moral geographies of race and gender that highlight how urban representations inform cultural production as it segregates spaces of consumption. Collaborations between clubs and external promoters rest on an unstable consensus based on commercial viability and strict regulation, which emphasises the conditionality of these collaborations in which racialised minorities are seen as lucrative target audiences, but otherwise recede from view. In sum, whiteness manifests itself in various forms: in relation to sexuality, as implied in notions of cultural prestige and as discomfort with alterity.

This chapter has departed from a novel conceptual angle: rather than rock, I conceptualised the niche-edm genre as the white centre of popular music. Since the production and consumption of the niche-edm genre in Europe is primarily defined by white producers and audiences, this allows me to add attention for the spatial and temporal dynamics of whiteness to the literature on race and the cultural industries. This helps to understand how music genres become white, how this whiteness travels and how whiteness is sustained (Nayak 2011). Highlighting these dynamics means that the whiteness of the niche-edm genre in Amsterdam cannot just be explained through its role as recipient of Anglophone Black cultural forms. Attention is needed to the ways in which different forms of whiteness are constantly remade as genres travel between white music worlds across continental Europe (and back to the Anglophone world). The emphasis on the Berlin-Amsterdam connection and the alternative path of Dutch hip-hop illustrate this necessity. This points at the temporal dynamics of music genres: homological relationships with the past (Hesmondhalgh 2005) are subject to change. At the same time, there continues to be a need for histories of European music that decentre whiteness.

There are also lessons for economic geographers: just like temporary events are characterised by power dynamics (Schüssler and Sydow 2015), so are trans-local flows. This body of work typically pays little attention to race and related power dynamics and inequalities in conceptualisations of

distance, networks and trans-local flows, even when it concerns world music (Brandellero and Pfeffer 2015) or multicultural cities like London (Watson 2008). A dialogue with the global flows and complexities of Black music production in cultural geography and cultural theory (Gilroy 1993; Lipsitz 1994) has huge potential. This chapter suggests that knowledge in this vein contributes to a more in-depth understanding of how whiteness is sustained in the cultural industries, as space reproduces privilege. I have highlighted how urban imaginations in the niche-edm genre become part of a logic of cultural prestige that devalues certain locational choices. Similarly, regulation emerges as a topic in the eclectic genre that highlights how spatial imaginations of race are gendered and classed. Place is only temporarily and conditionally made, which, in the end, is how cultural production sustains spatial boundaries.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

This thesis used nightclub production in Amsterdam as a case study to investigate how music genres shape socio-spatial inequalities. In section 7.1 I conclude they do so in five ways. Genres shape production practices of nightclubs, genres inform the economic organisation of clubs, genres generate specific classification systems that value some cultural outings over others, genres are a regulatory tool for promoters to create 'trouble-free' dancefloors, and the varying cultural ideals of genres shape the interactions between producers and consumers. In section 7.2 I explain that the thesis that leads to these conclusions makes three contributions to the academic literature. The first is to make geographies of cultural production more sensitive to the formative function of genre and cultural classification systems in producing inequalities - particularly gender and racial inequalities. The second is to make a stronger case for the significance of space in cultural industries research outside of geography. The third is to show how analysing cultural production locates new mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that have remained relatively invisible in existing nightlife research. In section 7.3 I explain what these contributions tell us about avenues that would further advance research on cultural industries, cultural production, cultural labour, nightlife and music genres. In section 7.4 I stress that the relevance of this thesis goes beyond nightclubs and cultural production, given the frequent use of nightlife in the popular imagination to produce a vision of what 'life on the other side' (moore 2018) could look like.

Before answering the research question, I will first provide a short overview of the thesis. I sought to meet the objectives of this thesis through a variety of methods: over the course of multiple fieldwork periods in 2019, I interviewed 36 Amsterdam-based promoters who either work for a club or are self-employed party organisers. I made 28 club visits, totalling to ninety hours. To capture industry discourse, I attended five public panels, totalling to 21 hours. I conducted a background document-based analysis that comprises of 357 articles, 44 policy documents, six music history books, one TV documentary and one club archive. The resulting analysis brought forward a strong case for the significance of genre-led mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in night-club production in Amsterdam.

I made this case over the course of three chapters. In doing so, I distinguished between the niche-edm genre and the eclectic genre. In chapter 4, I focused on the economic organisation of the cultural production process, to highlight mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that frequently go unnoticed by the public eye, in contrast to door policies that are more immediately observable. I highlighted that to understand how music connects to social identities, an intricate understanding of the cultural production of the spaces and places where music is produced and consumed is crucial. This chapter offers new tools: a better understanding of the economic organisation of nightclubs and specific production practices such as the guest list helps to understand how club promoters and external promoters include and exclude social groups. This helps to understand both geographical variation in socio-musical identities and inequalities in music economies.

Chapter 5 looks at two different genre-led geographies of gender: how is it possible that both the niche-edm and the eclectic genre can be characterised as informal work cultures that perpetuate gendered divisions in (and beyond) workspaces, but only in the niche-edm genre a political culture emerged that asks ‘difficult questions’ (McRobbie 2002) around gender inequalities? I contribute a historico-geographic explanation: in the niche-edm genre gender equality is constructed as one of the genre’s historic cultural ideals and sustained through international networks of promoters, artists and clubbers. Eclectic promoters more often make essentialist connections between gender and taste, using ‘women-friendly’ music as a category to attract more women to their parties. This focus on the spatial and temporal aspects of genre highlights that classification systems are not universal and hopes to inspire social scientists to better understand how and why hegemonic categories of cultural classification change over time.

Chapter 6 focuses on whiteness and race in nightclub production in Amsterdam. The three sections of this chapter focus on how whiteness in music travels and how whiteness is sustained in a multicultural European capital. It highlights the spatial dynamics of whiteness, as different scales make clear how whiteness manifests itself in various forms: through cultural prestige and commercial viability, sexuality discourse and a discomfort with alterity. The trans-local flows of music genres highlight what promoters value and implement: they recognise historical Blackness (the American night worlds of the 1970s and 1980s) in these flows but reflect less on contemporary whiteness. Spaces of consumption in the niche-edm genre gain prestige through taking on a uniform venue identity as part of in-house production. This narrow conception of style often excludes the possibilities for non-white Dutch aesthetic expressions. External co-production offers more possibilities, but collaborations between clubs and external promoters are conditional: they rest on an unstable consensus based on commercial viability and a white conception of safety. Moral geographies that associate Blackness with crime and disorder are part of a white discomfort with alterity and inspire regulation through cultural production. Taken together, the chapters in this thesis lead to the following answering of the research question.

7.1 How Genres Shape Socio-Spatial Inequalities

The research question of this thesis is: how do music genres shape the formation of socio-spatial inequalities in nightclub production in Amsterdam? In short, music genres shape the economic, social and cultural dynamics of the spaces and places of production and consumption in nightlife. This overview shows how genres – as sets of conventions, orientations and classification systems that bind together production, consumption and the cultural product (Negus 1999; Lena 2012) – produce socio-spatial inequalities in nightlife in Amsterdam. This section identifies five different ways.

First, genres guide production practices. The ideal of DJ as autonomous artist has given rise to an international touring circuit as festivals have outbid most clubs in competition for the same DJs. Some clubs have been able to compete with festivals due to the importance of a genre ideal of nightlife as place of refuge and communality, which helped sustain an informal political culture.

Many Amsterdam-based clubs, who used to do both eclectic and niche-edm nights, found themselves resorting to the former genre. In the late 2010s, the niche-edm genre was seen as more culturally and economically prestigious than the eclectic genre. For example, niche-edm DJs are more often full professionals. This hierarchy limits the opportunities for local promoters, many of whom are of colour, who organise nights that are a hybrid of the two genres. It also limits the opportunities for eclectic DJs who face boundaries as they aspire to participate in the niche-edm genre.

Second, genre shapes the economic organisation of nightclubs. Niche-edm venues are oriented towards in-house production, which is seen as prestigious by the local council and by genre participants. This asks of venues to have a recognisable identity. Such identities are formulated through narrow aesthetic criteria such as minimalism, dark and industrial spaces and deep musical knowledge. While inclusivity and communality are central to niche-edm's genre ideal, in practice it is difficult for socially progressive club nights centred around other musical styles to be accepted by niche-edm venues – they may be told they 'do not fit'. Genre also shapes external co-production: club promoters use external promoters to widen their musical scope and include new target audiences, but production is characterised by strong hierarchies, which means that venues only temporarily make place for underrepresented audiences, instead of working towards inclusivity on a durable basis.

Third, genres produce classification systems. Promoters assess DJs through a set of quality criteria. This explains for example the differences in orientation between the niche-edm genre and the eclectic genre. The former prefers minimalism and obscure tracks, while the latter primes fast mixing and recognisable melodies. The boundary work of genre participants (Lena 2012) provides a way to make sense how music produces distinctions, particularly music that is generally categorised under the umbrella of commercial production and whose quality criteria are not easily explained by a highbrow/lowbrow dichotomy (Hesmondhalgh 2006). As I have shown in this thesis, genres produce cultural and spatial hierarchies and repertoires that are not easily captured by a place-less focus on artistic autonomy and political disinterestedness (Born 2010; Born 2011). For example, the spatial cultural ideal of the niche-edm genre that favours dark, industrial venues in peripheral locations does not hold up over time but can be seen as a result of relatively recent transnational cultural flows, historical rediscoveries, local policy endeavours and urban economic context.

Fourth, genre informs the regulatory strategies engrained in nightclub production. While I argued against naturalised conceptions that link genres to social identities, 'fixed' conceptions inform promoters production practices as they seek to regulate dancefloors. I have argued that while the academic literature on nightlife has focused on door policies (Thornton 1995; Malbon 1999; Hobbs et al. 2000; Hobbs et al. 2007; Grazian 2009; Measham and Hadfield 2009; Garcia 2011; van Liempt 2015; moore 2018), cultural production is central to regulating audiences and deserves more attention in nightlife research. Regulation through genre comes alive as promoters associate melodic genres with femininity and mobilise these associations in attempts to create 'trouble-free'

dancefloors. Similarly, promoters use older clubber's nostalgia for certain genres while targeting their spending power or display white urban imaginations associate Blackness with crime and disorder. In short, regulation through cultural production functions through associating and dissociating genres with audiences.

Fifth, genre shapes the interaction between cultural production and cultural consumption. This thesis has argued against uncritically assuming pre-existing demand (Hesmondhalgh 2006): clubs use production tools (like guest lists) that actively (re)route clubbers' nightlife consumption. However, promoters' essentialist conceptualisations of genre-audience connections may work to limit options for new socio-musical identity formations. At times, clubbers may also understand novel club night concepts in simplistic ways or simply show no interest at all. Consumption also has a critical function. Critical clubbers share the cultural ideals of the niche-edm genre and take promoters to task for a lack of gender equality on line-ups, among other examples. While their efforts may indeed inspire clubs' actions steered towards making nightlife a safer space for marginalised social groups, they often do not necessarily effect power hierarchies. Instead, venues benefit from adopting criticism: as clubbers' efforts remain largely invisible to the public eye, promoters receive credits for a progressive image in media coverage.

7.2 Theoretical Contributions

This thesis made three main theoretical contributions. The first contribution is that lays out a geography of cultural production that bridges cultures of production, the cultural product and social inequalities. In the theoretical framework (section 2.1) I noted the lack of attention in economic geography research on music economies for the social meaning of cultural goods. I used a sociological conceptualisation of music genre (Lena 2012) to address that research gap. Genre provides a tool to connect production, consumption and the cultural product. I placed this conceptualisation of genre in the cultural industries framework, which helps connecting a politics of production to a politics of the cultural product (Saha 2018). I argue this combination is a more helpful addition to economic geography than a classic Adorno-inspired or Bourdieusian sociology of cultural production. The cultural industries framework criticises Bourdieu for not accounting for artistic innovation in large-scale commercial production and assuming pre-existing demand (Hesmondhalgh 2006). In this thesis, I showed that in nightclub research scale is not always a particularly good explanatory variable for a nightclub's cultural orientations (there are tiny, solely profit-oriented venues) and that promoters are active agents who establish connections between music genres and audiences, at times they define clubber's preferences.

I adopt earlier criticism that Bourdieu's cultural production framework is too static and structuralist (Born 2010): while Bourdieu's work can be adopted to include racial and gender inequality (Koren and Delhaye 2019; Meghji 2019), it does not easily account for the spatial and temporal dimensions of music genres, particularly the geographical variation in genre-audience formations across the world. In this research I focused for example on genre's homological relationship with the past: how the niche-edm genre's origins in USA metropolises in queer communities of colour are

adopted by white, middle-class audiences in Europe (Garcia 2018). Here, it is not the social background of clubbers, but rather the transnational networks and production efforts that form around the music genre that explain socio-musical identity formations (Lena 2012). In concrete terms, this means that people's musical orientation is not just formed by class, as classic Bourdieusian analysis would suggest, but that intermediaries actively mediate the spaces of consumption that steer musical orientations along a range of social categories. This is particularly relevant for the niche-edm genre whose sub-genre participants include – depending on time and place – working class communities (Reynolds 2013), queer communities of colour (Garcia 2018; moore 2018), white middle-class cultural elitism (Garcia 2018; van Bohemen and Roeling 2020), the middle class as a whole (Chatterton and Hollands 2003), consumer elites (Measham and Hadfield 2009) and multicultural audiences (Melville 2020). Throughout this thesis, I have shown that in some cases, very different people listen to very similar music in the same city, but consume this music apart from each other, segregated through space (see also Böse 2005)⁸⁴.

The approach advocated in this thesis⁸⁵ – that combines the cultural industries framework with music genre research – is therefore a helpful approach for economic geographers who want to study the entanglement of the economic and the cultural, particular with concern to music economies and geographical variation. I have shown the value of comparing the trajectories and cultural production of two distinct music genres in the same geographic location. Genres have been compared in many ways before, for example through institutional trajectories (Negus 1999; Gray 2005; Lena 2012), comparing similarities in different musical styles across cities (Niaah 2008) or by following the historical routes of genealogically related musical forms (Gilroy 1993; Stirling 2016; Melville 2020). By comparing two genres in one city, I highlighted the contingent temporal and spatial dimensions of genre, strongly mediated by cultural production. This allows for a better understanding of the trajectories of music genres, especially those trajectories that challenge all too static connections between taste and social background (Stirling 2016).

The second contribution is to the cultural industries framework: I added a geographical focus that enables the theory to analyse the live music industries better. This spatial lens consists of three elements.

First, there is attention to spaces of consumption. This is necessary in a nightclub sector like the one in Amsterdam, where ties between producers and consumers are close. This means that promoters in the live music industry, especially in small scale venues, do not always depart from an abstract conceptualisation of the audience – promoters befriending consumers on Facebook occurs alongside Facebook analytics. The direct interactions between producers and consumers change the social meanings of music genres.

⁸⁴ Some of the factors that shape audiences can be more contingent: as I suggest in sub-section 6.3.2, alcohol is central to club's business models and can disallow certain socio-musical formations to arise.

⁸⁵ It is worth noting while this thesis diverts from a Bourdieusian analysis on the points mentioned here, it does adopt some of Bourdieu's concepts or elaborations of concepts such as 'distinction' (Bourdieu 1984) or 'subcultural capital' (Thornton 1995).

Second, I focused on urban context: council policy and regulation have a big role in where venues are located. In my overview of clubs I showed that niche-edm genre clubs are typically outside of the canal district (*Figure 2*, page 63), while city centre clubs in many cases have come to focus on the eclectic genre as a result of locational factors. Next to that, urban imaginations inform cultural production as they produce spatial conceptions of gender and race. Clubs also have their own incentives to regulate spaces of consumption, which then becomes part of the production logic, an example is the term ‘women-friendly’, introduced in section 5.2.

Third, I highlighted the importance of transnational musical flows. Cultural production plays a key role in how genres gain a foothold in countries of destination and transnational musical flows help explain how social meaning are transmitted. In chapter 6, I highlighted how after the arrival of house in the Netherlands, the sub-genre was seen as a Black artistic expression in the American context, but that it is not perceived as a legitimate vehicle for Dutch expressions of racialised Others. This highlights the importance of tracing where and when whiteness – as unmarked, hegemonic category in the global North – is (re)produced (Nayak 2011).

The third contribution is to the literature on nightlife inequalities, which has mostly been conducted using experiential or urbanist approaches (see section 1.4). These two literatures have mainly understood club-led forms of exclusion through door policies. I have shown club-led exclusion is not always as visible to the public eye as door policies are. I did so through an analysis of cultural production and the economic organisation of nightclubs that locates mechanism of inclusion and exclusion in the production process. Genres play a role in the urbanist literature, for example in analyses of council-led or police-driven regulation that polices Black music cultures (for an overview Fatsis 2019; see also chapter 6). My research adds to that body of research an understanding of club-led regulation through music genre: a form of regulation that is not limited to external forces but extends to the production practices of many clubs themselves. Clubs’ orientation towards commercial viability and trouble-free dancefloors are examples of that. This adds precision to the paradoxical role of nightlife in urban cultural economic developments such as gentrification, in which clubs are both victims and agents, as nightlife simultaneously works ‘with’ and ‘against’ gentrification (Hae 2011a and 2011b). I introduced nightclub practices that could function as research tools to understand club-led regulation better: examples are external-production and ‘women-friendly’ music.

7.3 Avenues for Further Research

The theoretical contributions and social relevance highlight why nightclub production is an important area of social scientific research. Since nightclubs have been understood as a template for the work cultures of the cultural industries the relevance of their production ethos extends beyond the sector itself (McRobbie 2002). This study has brought up avenues for further research. The first topic is institutionalisation. In the 1990s, electronic dance music researchers have argued that the lack of a canon led to a more inclusive genre (Straw 1991). While that argument may be naïve and romanticist (Gadir 2016), my research did show how a political culture can emerge

within and through a music genre. To what extent can such a political culture be effective? This brings up questions about cultural institutions and the history and entrenchment of quality criteria that shapes the path for inclusion (Gray 2005). Nightclubs, with their short life spans, probe the question what the role of a lack of institutionalisation is in enabling progressive change. While on the one hand clubs are typically precarious, informal and threatened by regulation and gentrification, their small and flexible organisation also means that they can implement new ideas faster and that these ideas reach the higher layer of management sooner. The cultural industries framework has mainly focused on commercial and large-scale production. This thesis has shown that both commercial and independent small-scale production can bring up new questions regarding institutionalisation.

The second topic for further research is to better understand the non-musical contingencies in spaces of consumption that enable and constrain socio-musical identity formations. I highlighted the role of bar revenue in the production hierarchies between club promoters and external promoters, which – as I highlighted in section 6.3.2 – means that some social groups are not seen as target audiences, as they are hidden from the promoter's imagination. This means that to understand spaces of consumption as sites of taste formations, more attention is needed for factors that at first glance do not seem to have anything to do with music and genre in a strict sense, but more with the cultures that form around it. The entanglement of techno and ecstasy as formative of a white sexuality is one example from earlier research (van Bohemen and Roeling 2020). Another example is the significance of different ideas about venues' design, accessibility and the city centre's urban charisma. Since music is social, the social formations around music are not just formed by the musical characteristics of the songs, but also by a range of more contingent factors, from substance use to accessibility by public transport, that can help explain spatial variation. A more holistic understanding of spaces of consumption can be a fruitful avenue forward for music genre research that works against static conceptions of genre and taste.

The third avenue concerns the ethnographic method in nightlife studies specifically. Ethnography is a test-and-try method in nightlife research (Malbon 1999; Buckland 2002; Saldanha 2005; Garcia 2011; Misgav and Johnston 2014) but has not been applied to cultural production. Mears (2016) research on VIP clubs, in which she accompanies promoters in the economic elite nightlife echelon to parties, is an exception and testament to the potential of this method to generate rich information on and theoretical insights into the organisation of labour. The potential also comes back in the reflections of academics who previously worked as clerk in an electronic dance music record shop (Montano 2013) or as a promoter of parties (Kartosen 2016). Since people generally do not always do what they say (Jerolmack and Khan 2014) and the cultural industries are characterised by a tension between creativity and commerce (Hesmondhalgh 2013a), ethnographies that focus on the day-to-day work in clubs, like the interactions between club promoters and external promoters, have the potential to be extremely insightful in locating mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. My interviews already highlighted that these interactions are central to the formation of social inequalities. So, long-term participant observation may be a

tricky method in terms of access but has the potential to understand mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion as part of cultural production in unprecedented detail.

While I was writing this thesis, most clubs in Europe were closed following government restrictions as a result of the Covid19 pandemic. This resulted into an unprecedented crisis in which clubs found themselves between a rock and a hard place, not quite belonging to either the hospitality sector or the cultural sector. As I write this, some of the clubs that were the main characters of this thesis have closed for good. Others have a new, temporary function – one venue uses the dancefloor as an arcade hall, another became a take-away restaurant. This brings me to the last, obvious agenda for further research: what can the study of inequalities do to help rebuild club cultures? What happens to the inequalities I wrote about in this thesis when nightlife rises from the ashes? Or have small venues and external promoters proven that they can better adapt to precarity? For example, because they were never full professionals anyway. How can the study of nightlife inequalities help city councils who seek to revitalise nightlife but can only devote a limited budget? These were questions running through my mind while writing this thesis, following news articles detailing how clubs and promoters adapt to the pandemic, and I hope future research will answer them.

7.4 Wider Social Relevance

The relevance of this research goes beyond theoretical contributions to geography, cultural studies, cultural sociology and political economy. The emphasis on social inequalities touches on public debates on the topic in the cultural industries and other occupational fields. The arguments about the production hierarchies between club promoters and external promoters are examples of how inequalities are perpetuated by the economic organisation of companies. The research also highlights urban manifestations of inequality, showing how opportunities for emotional and social enrichment (Hesmondhalgh 2013b) are unevenly distributed in the city at night, bringing in the classic critical geography question ‘whose city, whose cultures’? (Zukin 1995) into public debates about urban nightlife. Last, the results highlight the cultural dimensions of socio-economic inequalities: production hierarchies are to a great extent informed by the cultural and the aesthetic, which comes alive in my research through my emphasis on the workings of music genres.

In this thesis I have also tried to, at times, provide a more hopeful agenda. While nightclubs are by no means egalitarian spaces, they may be spaces of hope. Whether that is through individual, utopianist experiences that makes clubbers feel ‘like everything is possible’ (Malbon 1999) or through enabling nocturnal dwellers to develop subversive night-time personas to break free from day-time responsibilities (Garcia 2013; moore 2018). This extends to cultures of production: I have portrayed nightlife’s potential as a political culture that upsets hegemonic social and artistic norms. Some of my respondents have provided ground for such rethinking, whether it is through innovative uses of the guest list or emphasis on hybridity and communality. Sometimes, nightclubs offer a vision of ‘life on the other side’ (moore 2018) and prompt producers and consumers to work against the rigid essentialism (Gilroy 1993; Hall 1996) of daytime society. Nightlife may constitute

'slippery forms of togetherness' among strangers that promise 'a collectivity without identity' (Garcia 2011). A critical understanding of when nightlife upsets social norms, and what enables and constrains this to happen, contributes to imagining new possibilities for fairer societies.

Appendix A List of Interviewees

Respondent	Genre	Gender	Age	Interview location	Club/ External	Ethnicity	Education ⁸⁶
1	niche-edm	M	28	Work	Club	white	University
2	eclectic	F	53	Work	Club	white	Unknown
3	niche-edm	M	24	Work	Club	white	School
4	niche-edm	M	30	Work	Club	white	School
5	niche-edm	M	38	Café	External	white	hbo
6	niche-edm	M	27	Work	Club	white	hbo
7	eclectic	M	28	Work	Club	white	University
8	eclectic	M	23	Work	Club	white	University
9	eclectic	M	43	Work	Club	white	hbo
10	eclectic	M	31	Work	Club	white	University
11	eclectic	M	27	Work	Club	white	School
12	niche-edm	M	24	Work	Club	white	University
13	eclectic	M	37	Work	Club	white	hbo
14	eclectic	M	32	Work	Club	Black	School
15	eclectic	F	25	Work	External	white	hbo
16	niche-edm	F	57	Home	External	white	hbo
17	eclectic	M	32	Work	Club	white	School
18	niche-edm	M	26	Café	Club	white	hbo
19	niche-edm	M	37	Café	External	unknown	School
20	niche-edm	F	22	Work	Club	white	hbo
21	niche-edm	F	26	Café	External	white	University
22	niche-edm	M	37	Café	External	Black	hbo

⁸⁶ Education here is according to the Dutch system. The international name for HBO is University of Applied Sciences and it is similar to Polytechnics in the UK. MBO is vocational training. School is used for respondents who reported not completing tertiary education. When respondents were in the process of completion, I noted their current degree.

23	niche-edm	F	30	Work	Club	white	hbo
24	eclectic	M	27	Café	External	Black	hbo
25	eclectic	M	39	Work	Club	white	mbo
26	niche-edm	F	42	Café	External	white	University
27	eclectic	M	37	Café	External	Latino	School
28	eclectic	M	43	Work	External	Black	mbo
29	eclectic	M	42	Café	Club	white	hbo
30	niche-edm	M	25	Home	External	white	hbo
31	niche-edm	F	27	Home	External	white	hbo
32	eclectic	M	29	Work	External	Black	School
33	eclectic	F	21	Work	External	white	hbo
34	niche-edm	M	23	Café	External	North-African	University
35	niche-edm	F	28	Café	External	white	School
36	niche-edm	F	49	Café	External	white	hbo

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