

Protocol: 11th Awareness & Diversity Roundtable

When Tuesday, 20.06.2023, 7pm - 10pm
Where Mensch Meier, Berlin

Topic **Precarious Participation.
Classism in Club Culture.**

1) Introduction - Discrimination dimension: Classism (Serkan Ünsal)

„You can achieve anything in life if you just try really hard“

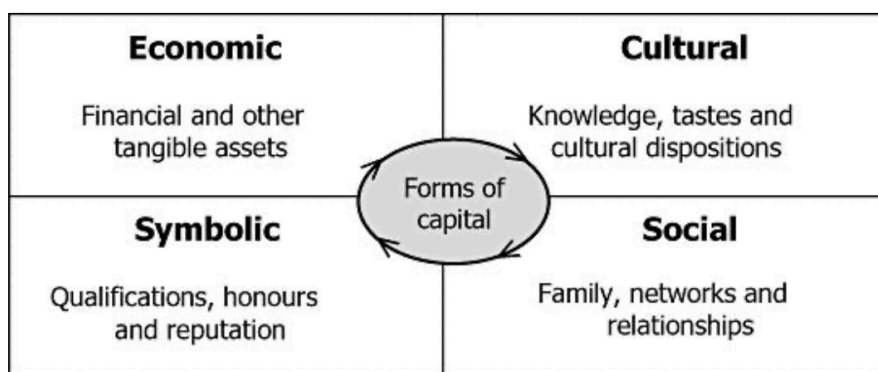
- classist statement because:
 - assumes that all people have the same starting points
 - ignores systemic barriers
 - disregards social and economic background and institutional discrimination
 - educational discrepancies
 - people are in different life situations and conditions; opportunities might not be there for a person to try as hard as they want to
 - on the flip side: even if you try work really hard and it doesn't work out, you are called lazy and unproductive in society; people judge you for not trying hard enough
 - > meritocratic thought > A meritocratic society or social system gives people status or rewards because of what they achieve, rather than because of their wealth or social position

Definition

- classism refers to a system of social discrimination and prejudice based on a person's social, economic, class or perceived social status
- Historical context in which it emerged: emerged in the black lesbian civil rights movement in the 70s
 - Barbara Smith (sociologist and civil rights activist) introduced the term
 - Smith is known for her work, addressing racism and sexism and used the term classism to highlight the systemic discrimination and prejudice based on social class
- classism targets people from the working class, homeless people, low-income populations

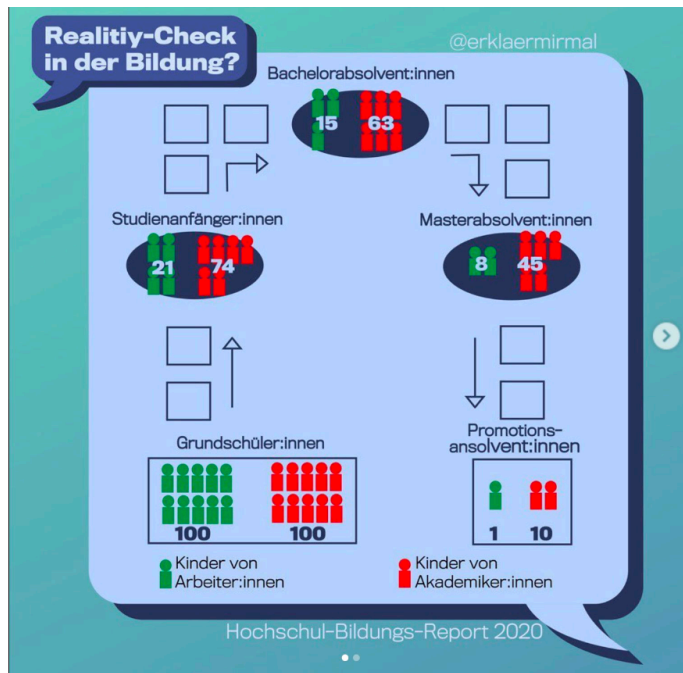
- Different forms of classism: working class (relies on manual labor for income), middle class (professionals, people with ‚Ausbildung‘), upper class (representing wealthiest and most powerful, often they own significant amount of property and have influence on economical and political decisions, they shape societal norms and values)
- These power dynamics contribute to the production of class inequalities and prevent social mobility)
- Most prevalent form of class division that exists: racism / racism creates class difference
- Discussion about what caused what: did racism caused classism, did classism caused racism? Maybe they emerged hand-in-hand?
- Examples of classism: unequal distribution of wealth, educational disparities, limited job prospects

Pierre Bourdieu - The Forms of Capital



Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "The Forms of Capital." Pp. 241-258 in Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education, edited by J. G. Richardson. New York: Greenwood Press.

- Bourdieu: how does capital/ wealth works in society?
- Economical capital: having inherited money, family history of wealth, grew up centrally in/ near the city? > access to good education? Single parent or child of single parent?
- Cultural capital: are parents educated? Did you speak other languages? Did you have books in your household? Were your parents reading? Music taste; have you ever questioned if you belong to academia? Are you the first person that went to university?
- Symbolical Capital: qualification: masters degree, exchanging degree for money
- Social Capital: Family networks and relationships, being part of a club, being a club goer (e.g. getting into the club without paying entry), inheritance (contacts, famous name)
- in terms of language: when you're coming from a certain migration background, speaking another language is not always being seen as valuable, more like sth. that holds you back > arbitrary
- There are prestigious languages and no-prestigious languages



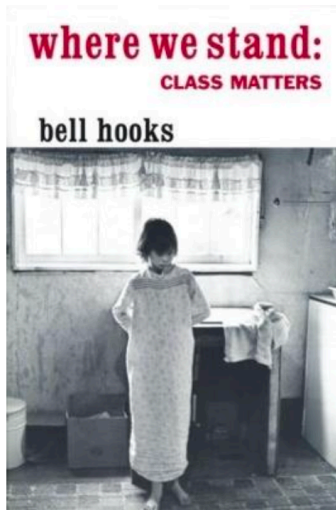
> another example of classism

“erklär mir mal ... Klassismus”; Instagram: @erklaermimal

How can class manifest in club culture?

- is there transparency over wages and salaries?
- Are there official job postings or are jobs distributed within the club/ social surrounding?
- How are the drink prices regulated? Is there maybe a possibility to give an extra donation or reduction?
- Is there a common agreement on (free) water distribution?
- Have people in leading positions gone through class related struggles?
- Is there different life circumstances within staff?
- Is the club attracting only certain people with their public outreach?
- Addressing minority groups?
- Is the club in touch with its neighborhood? > example of one club who gives every person who lives in a 500m radius to the club free entry > different ways of involving the neighborhood
- How can a club re-structure itself so that it stands critical towards classism?
- Most obvious thing is to re-distribute > could there even be a need-based salary?
- Reflect within your club who is affected by classism, how can a club manage to work towards more class equality
- Is the club engaging with and supporting local initiatives, artists, businesses?
- How is your public outreach looking? Are you communicating accountability for structural discrimination on your website?
- Are you visible on your Website/ Instagram - is it clear who works there? Is there a barrier between the club and the people coming? Are BIPOC working there and are visible? > might attract a broader and more diverse audience
- Are there people affected by classism or BIPOC in leading roles?
- Can you collaborate with people like this on an eye-to-eye Level?

Book recommendations:



hooks, bell. *Where we stand: Class matters*. Psychology Press, 2000.

UNRAST Verlag | Herbst 2020 | Seite 8



Francis Seeck & Brigitte Theißl (Hg.)
Solidarisch gegen Klassismus
organisieren, intervenieren, umverteilen

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Analyse & Anleitungen für konkrete
anti-klassistische Praxis

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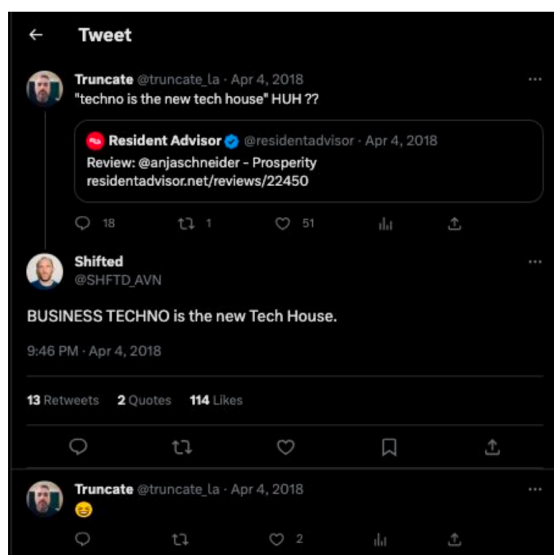
2) The inconsistencies of club culture - an intersectional perspective by Christine Kakaire

- What are the stories we tell ourselves about what club culture is, what its purpose is, who it serves? How it operates and what it stands for? What its values are and who it prioritises.
- If we accept that language is a biased, imperfect framework of communication, what does our use of language in club culture also tell us? How can we be more critical?
- Intersectionality: "a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking" (Kimberle Crenshaw)
 - Different Matrixes of oppression, nuances are important, depends on the context you are in
 - For intersectional practice it is important to be in dialogue with each other
- Example: Stewart Haygarth; *The Prodigy*(1994) - Music For The Jilted Generation



Les Edwards – The Prodigy (1994) *Music For The Jilted Generation*

- > does it reflect a rave ideology?
- > police being on the other side is very present at the moment, not a friend or helper, difficult to work with
- > Representation of the ravers who are in the sun, surrounded by green space and blue sky as opposed to toxic, pollution, dark cityscape that has the police and law enforcement
- > white person with a sword in the center who thinks he can defend and save their side; both sides are apocalyptic



-how is language used to reinforce ideas of class?

- discussions about what is worthy, what is artful?

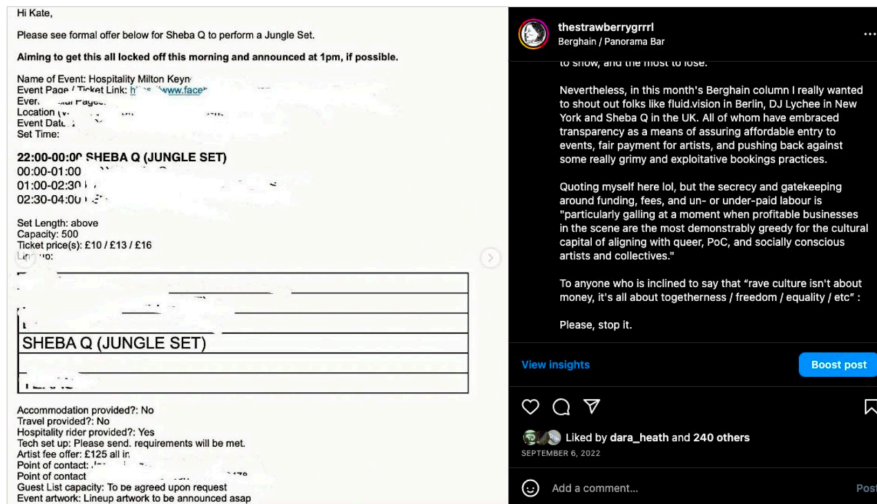
- classical music vs. dance music > categorisation of attached status

"Over the last 40 years, electronic dance music's low aesthetic status has continued to be expressed and negotiated in gendered, sexualized, and racial terms..."

Though its use of ever-advancing technologies may lend electronic dance music a futuristic look and feel, gendered and racialized high/low art hierarchies from eighteenth-century European philosophy have remained central to its reception. Traditionally, fine art, like the white cis-hetero man, is autonomous (it exists for no purpose other than its appreciation as art), whereas craft, entertainment, and other low-status forms of cultural production are, like white women and people of color, subordinate..."

—Robin James

James, R. (2020), Human Capital After All: Business Techno, Conception, and the Neoliberal Rescripting of High/Low Hierarchies - Post45.



> dodgy (booking) practices, unequal, unacceptable and exploitative working conditions > not only in terms of finances but also in terms of safety

- when we're thinking about intersectionality, one of the most frustrating „thought killing argument“ we often hear, when people are talking about club and rave culture and how things are changing, people love the default to „initially club culture was all about togetherness, freedom, peace and love“ but if we dig into the data from that time, these histories are more complex

- we have to be critical of rave nostalgia:

“For example, for some of the women in Pini's (2001) research, raves were uniquely inviting because ecstasy use altered the sexual politics of 'traditional' forms of clubbing: some women felt more at ease because men were more interested in dancing and enjoying the music than in 'picking up' a partner, hence women were less likely to be pestered.”

'The too-often taken-for-granted notion that EDM is about Peace, Love, and Unity (PLUR)'

Fraser, A., 2012. The spaces, politics, and cultural economies of electronic dance music. *Geography Compass*, 6(8), pp.500-511.

- Pervasive misogynist and sexist attitudes in drum & bass, which had knock-on effects on the number of women attending.
- Forms of elitism in EDM (door and security policies that reinforce class, gender, racial... discrimination).
- Racist attitude of some 'Goa freaks' towards Indian tourists who do not welcome on the early morning beach; “hedonistic spaces that are generative of exclusion as well as inclusion.”
- Hedonistic spaces as reflections (and in some respects, possibly even celebrations) of neoliberal sensibilities about individual rights and consumption practices; in neoliberal thinking, individuals pursue their personal goals within atomized societies; “It is hard to avoid the conclusion that just such an element of raw individualism pervades EDM.”
- „there is also in EDM a strong entrepreneurial spirit, which has led many practitioners to start their own businesses and hence become neoliberal champions of the merits of competition and wealth accumulation. In these senses, the spaces of EDM reflect atomized societies generally, societies in which the individual pursuit of pleasure is a necessary element in valorizing cultural products, such as EDM“

- “These examples of exclusion, elitism, racism, and individualism call attention to the awkward place of politics within EDM: on the one hand, EDM rarely contains much of a political message, whilst on the other hand the spaces on which it hinges are riddled with political tensions and divisions. “
- capitalist accumulations:
 - Small independent record companies make profits, re-invest and try to grow whilst continuing to make profits
 - Event promoters engage in similar processes whilst producing raves or festivals or running club nights;
 - Some DJs and producers become wealthy by commanding enormous performance fees or selling recordings.
 - There is money to be made and there are jobs to be found in EDM.

Groove Magazin (2015) Techno Capitalism: The Globalization of Electronic Music

<https://artsandculture.google.com/story/techno-capitalism-the-globalization-of-electronic-music/OgWRpH5K6L8ADQ>

„William Morris has opened numerous doors for many in our scene. Without them, I would never have played at certain big festivals. At the same time, I still play for 600 or 700 euros at the Robert Johnson. And my booker at William Morris, Steve Hogan, also understands that that's the way it has to be.“

„At the same time, he promotes himself from service provider to entrepreneur. He is no longer the best-paid employee, but the boss of everything. An act of artistic emancipation and an economic move overlap here. This makes more sense for DJs than for other musicians: they are per se presenters, curators, mediators, hosts. Sven Väth has done it before, Chris Liebing, Loco Dice, Luciano and Jamie Jones are following suit.“

„Today, the big DJs (and their booking agencies) control the scene because a big event can't function without them. In this respect, it is obvious that the DJs become independent. The DJ organizes his own parties. He no longer controls only his own music, but the whole line-up, the decoration, dancers, drinks and so on. He emancipates himself from the restaurateur, to whose inventory he historically belonged.“

HOWEVER.. The scene also foregrounds ‘accumulation by cooperation’: relations of solidarity, reciprocity, generosity, caring, and empathy

Fraser, A., 2012. The spaces, politics, and cultural economies of electronic dance music. *Geography Compass*, 6(8), pp.500-511

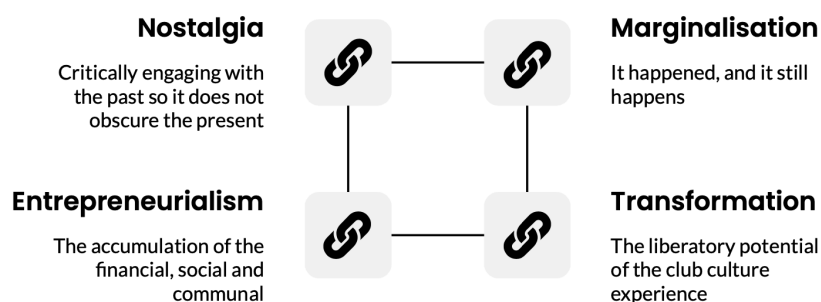
“Cooperative practices stem from the contexts in which actors in EDM operate and that they enable accumulation of profit and experience, economic and cultural gains.”

The four networks of the musical economy:

- Networks of creativity, eg. acetate dubplate culture in D&B “ensured a rapid flow of new music, ... which sought to produce buzzing, running, bubbling dance floors”

- Networks of reproduction: the global proliferation of the warehouse party and “running events in post-industrial vacant spaces ” has turned in to a cultural industry
- Networks of distribution: moving moving records, CDs and MP3s, and also distributing of people, ideas and sensibilities connecting disparate individuals coalescing in particular places.
- Networks of consumption: “an ethos of sharing something extraordinary [which] evolves between those within the dancing crowd” to foster an alternative experience; also the “the post-clubbing period is about reflection, recovery, sharing their experiences and engaging in quite different forms of interaction.”

Connecting these ideas; they are not mutually exclusive



Transparency

- Who is in permitted in the room when the most powerful actors in club culture make their decisions?
- What transparency ought we demand to counteract diversity-washing, queer-washing, greenwashing, etc?
- At which intersecting points are those in the scene being asked to negotiate for their worth?
- What could an ethical entrepreneurialism model look like?

Belonging

- Who do we look to to tell our stories?
Who makes the decisions about the stories being told?
- How can our individual transcendence or pleasure-seeking plug into an experience that is truly communal?
- In which cultural spaces are we reproducing neoliberal competition: fees, EOY lists?
- Where could industry regulation or collective bargaining counteract precarity?

- diversity/ inclusion > critical towards it, because it still has the sense of power dynamic > choosing to include/ diversify but should be turned around > all of these people belong here but they are not here, so what do we need to do to create the space of belonging
- e.g. going to the front page of RA and asking „who are the people who make these decisions?“
- Ranking and categorisation in club culture > do we need it? what does it do for community building? And what values are transported through this?

Q&A

Example and Discussion: Aslice

- platform where DJs contribute a part of their fee to the producers
- Issue lies in it being something that's voluntary
- Great that the system was being created but not sure how effective or how much it can scale just it depends on people first of all surrendering a part of their fee but also committing to the process of uploading everything that they play
- Problem is somewhere else > producers should've been paid fairly in the first place
- neoliberal symptom of people solving structural things, sounds like a nice idea in the first place but it's part of the bigger problem
- Classism and racism is so intertwined that even though it's a nice idea to offset some of the issues regarding payment, that any technology that is basically brought out by white dude is already biased; there is no way that the algorithm is gonna favor people that are part of a marginalised group > „white technology“
- Bias in the databases that they are using
- how can we change the rooms that exists or do we have to build new rooms?
- Owners of the clubs and people in the offices are only white men; you can see BIPOC, LGBTIQA & FLINTA working in the club/ during the night but not in positions of power (management, booking...)
- past can illuminate the present: how is it possible that club culture and music emerged from marginalised from BIPOC and queer communities, how is it possible that we're now doing diversity and educational workshops on how to re-center belonging where the roots and context is so clear; how could it shift so much through e.g. white-washing?
- Black Artist Database > there is the tendency within popular music culture to be like „that originated in black culture“, treat it like Jurassic Park and looking at it lovingly/ like the era is over > there was no broken continuum of black electronic music; process of dispossessing people/ culture

3) The perspectives of classism in the club: staff, program, audience (Mate - Mensch Meier)

- position of Mate: cis-female, white, able-bodied, studied but looking at the background: faced classism and sexism; brought up in a non-academic farm family; broke the cycle and studied art therapy; family was not expecting her to do anything else than raising children and take care of the animals; Has 3 jobs, this working class feeling of the need to do something; people in the leftist scene; works at Mensch Meier as Awareness, works as funeral assistance and is becoming a psychotherapist for children
- Words have power: e.g. „asozial“, „Proll“ > unreflected way of describing higher/ lower class; lower class is not violent than the higher class > stereotypical thinking; „Antifa-Macker“; even using the word „dumm/ „stupid“ is classist (and ableist)
- Awareness for Awareness
- The life expectancy of people who are affected by classism is 9 years less than the average > don't have the same access to health care, not enough resources to buy healthy food
- Shame around class; people don't want to talk about it and their situation
- Clothing: Slim line between what is „trash“ and what is „cool“
- hedonism is a privilege
- Class appropriation through clothing for the sake of being „edgy“/ „hip“
- Mensch Meier
 - Collective has to change
 - Landlord is capitalist and wants more money
 - Club is not getting as full as other clubs / or what would be needed to pay the staff and club expenses
- Staff
 - everyone at Mensch Meier is working for the minimum wage (no difference between bar, cleaning, booking and awareness)
 - night shift workers are more likely to face illnesses because their biorhythm is disrupted and confused
 - night work: exhausting, higher health risk (smoke, staying awake sober..)
- Program
 - artists are paid at least 250€ but „bigger“ artists don't play below a certain number
 - it's a risk to be or become an artist; learning costs time and equipment costs a lot of money; it's a risk to build up an artist career and it also needs a lot of self-esteem to perform in front of people
 - privilege to be an artist
 - DJ culture is very competitive
 - the way people talk and categorize certain music genres is classist; e.g. Pop as „trash“ - it's not a trash party, it's a Pop party
- Audience
 - Mensch Meier want to keep parties financially accessible, e.g. refugees got in for free, entrance fee less than 15€, nowadays it goes up to 20€

- entry price increased because all costs have to be covered
- first hour of parties: half the price
- club culture became exclusive; it's a lot about lookism, the performance
- dilemma between having an „aware“ audience/ not too many cis male groups and the need to fill the club and pay the bills
- drink prices increased
- audience changed due to the rising prices
- „what's classy if you're rich but trashy if you're poor?“
 - The most expensive thing you own is a really old car
 - Having other people raise your kids
 - Police escort
 - If you're weird and rich, people call you eccentric but if you're poor, you're crazy
 - Dressing provocatively: when you're rich it's a fashion statement, where you're poor, you're a working girl
 - Rich people collect, poor people hoard
 - Walking around all day in a bathrobe
 - Having a lawyer's business card in your wallet
 - Having many pets
 - Having a big TV screen
 - Having multiple kids with multiple partners
 - Being bilingual
 - Minimalism
 - Being unemployed
 - Living in a country of the global south
 - Wearing jewelry with a lot of blingbling
 - Doing hard drugs

Check your class privilege game

- i'm white +1
- I have European passport +1
- Income more than 1000€ +1
- Income more than 1500€ +2
- Income more than 2000€ +3
- Income more than 2500€ +4
- For each child -1
- Single parent -2
- Family that could support me financially +1
- I have property or will one day inherit this +1
- Have ever received social benefits -1
- Parents received social benefits -2
- Studied +1
- One of your parents studied +2
- Both parents studied +3
- Born and raised in the former East -1

- Had/ could have advantaged through your family e.g. getting an internship +1
- Often seen/ asked for opinion by communities or professionals +2
- Often have no problems arguing with strangers +1
- Easily name 10 books and their authors +2
- It is rather easy to dress adequately for different settings and to mingle up +1
- Ever felt embarrassed of the social disadvantages/ class you come from -2
- Often felt alienated and rather shut down due to academic way of speaking -1
- Majority of social friend's circle is affected by classism -2
- When negotiating for salary you have to fight for every cent -2
- At home you had access to books and that was also encouraged +1
- Family lives in an under-privileged part of town or small apartment -2
- Come from the countryside -1
- External features such as bleached blonde hair or washed out jeans were the basis of discrimination -1
- Family watched Trash TV e.g. Bauer sucht Frau -1
- You are afraid when your washing machine breaks down and you cannot afford to immediately buy a new one -2

> highest privileged points are +20 and lowest is -20

Final Discussion

- Observation from a person working at the door: changing landscape of Berlin > entry prices rising, question of accessibility to clubs > changing crowd > rather a crowd with money, more entitlement
- There is no quick solution to high entry prices because rental costs, DJ and booking fees, transportation, energy costs, payment of staff are all rising
- Before covid: being able to go to more than one party
- Nowadays: people have to be more selective with their money and therefore they might opt for a bigger event/ venue that lasts for two-three days > wiping more niche/ diverse/ smaller parties
- not only offering soli tickets but also offering soli drinks
- it's not just Mensch Meier who is suffering at the moment, it's also other clubs
- One reason (which happened before covid): paying people with actual invoice and not just under-the-hand-money; since everything became more official, it also became more expensive for clubs
- High energy costs
- more expensive plain tickets > not only for DJs but also for tourists who come for a weekend to party
- A lot of venues > leads to less people in one place

- Seeing a lot of clubs that started Awareness but now watching it go down again because the money is not there anymore; where do you start to cut off? Cutting Awareness, the staff, the DJs? There are costs you couldn't cut off e.g. the rent > really hard
 - Clubcommission receives feedback from many people and parties (clubs, collectives...) > everyone is struggling
 - How it could work for the future: cross-financing
 - Doing corporate events which brings a lot of money or doing big parties could pay events which doesn't bring so much money
 - there is no transparency from the „highest“ to „lowest“ position in a club that's not structured like Mensch Meier or ://about blank
 - People that are keeping club/ club culture alive are working for the minimum wage or even for free and we don't know how much the people in power positions earn
 - Betriebsrat in every club?
 - Transmission:
 - working on a collectivization of the problem
 - Constantly repeating problems > so it might be time to collectivize that struggle and bring it together and support each other
 - Partnerships, memberships for clubs/ collectives; thinking about new strategies
- <https://www.transmissionnet.org/#> // transmission.platform@gmail.com
- Clubcommission is working on a campaign and statement addressing the economical tensions and bring the perspectives and struggles together