

CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Studium humanitní vzdělanosti

(Liberal arts and humanities)



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Place, community, scene: an ethnographic study of Prague's Cross club

Bachelor thesis

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Prague 2020

Statement

I declare that I have created the thesis by myself. All sources and literature used have been duly cited. The work was not used to obtain another or the same title. This declaration and consent will be signed by handwritten signature.

Prague, May 23, 2020

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Signature:

Acknowledgment

I want to thank my supervisor David Verbuč, M.A., Ph.D., for his valuable advice, comments and materials throughout the research, data analysis and writing of this thesis.

I also want to thank Mgr. Martin Heřmanský, Ph.D., for his thoughtful consultations in Czech language. Furthermore, I want to thank my informants, visitors and management of Cross club, for sharing their thoughts, realities, and practices with me.

In addition, I want to thank my mother for her continuous support throughout my studies.

Abstract

This thesis studies the role of physical place and social space of Prague's Cross club in the creation of its specific scene. The main arguments are based on ethnographic research, held in the venue mainly during the years 2018 and 2019, with the use of participant observation and semi-structured interviews. The introductory part of this text contains a presentation of the terrain, a formulation of a research problem, and a summary of methodological issues. The main part of this thesis, consisting of three chapters, then deals with the description and analysis of the characteristics of the physical place and social space of the Cross club. Furthermore, it describes organizational strategies of the venue, which affect these aspects of space, as well as the influence that these different parts of the club have on its visitors and the resulting scene.

Abstrakt

Tato práce se zabývá rolí, jakou hraje fyzické místo a sociální prostor pražského klubu Cross ve vytváření jeho specifické scény. Hlavní argumenty jsou založeny na etnografickém výzkumu, který proběhl v klubu hlavně v průběhu let 2018 a 2019, pomocí zúčastněného pozorování a polo-strukturovaných rozhovorů. Úvodní část tohoto textu obsahuje představení terénu, formulaci výzkumného problému a shrnutí metodologických problematik. Hlavní část této práce, která obsahuje tři kapitoly, se dále zabývá popisem a analýzou charakteristik fyzického místa a sociálního prostoru klubu Cross, různých strategií organizátorů klubu, které aktivně tyto aspekty prostoru ovlivňují, a vlivem, které tyto různé součásti klubu mají na návštěvníky a výslednou scénu.

Keywords

Cross club, scene, space, place, ethnography, organizational strategies

Klíčová slova

Klub Cross, scéna, prostor, místo, etnografie, organizační strategie

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Introduction

In Prague's district of Holešovice, there is a crossroad dividing the area into several parts. Modern buildings are standing next to the old blocks of flats, and a subway station with a poor reputation. Right in the middle of this crossroads is a cultural hub, Cross club, well known both in Prague and abroad. Some enjoy it, some despise it, but this music and cultural venue with its unique internal and external design attract the attention of everyone passing by.

The Cross club is a multi-functional and a multi-genre music club in Prague, well-known for its diverse programming, unique metallic design and a specific reputation in some segments of society. The focus of the club is electronic dance music (EDM). However, it also offers space to different music genres, such as rock, folk, or jazz. On the other hand, the club also organizes other types of cultural events, for example, artistic exhibitions or theater performances. Furthermore, the venue is open every day in the year, with special thematic events also on holidays, for instance, Christmas Eve. Often there are several musical or cultural events held there at once. Because of this, diverse groups of people that would not meet elsewhere, are often gathered in one space in Cross club. One of the factors enabling this "crossing" of people and cultures is the club's architecture, and the other is its ideology, already implicated in its name.

On their official website, the managers claim the club is a "uniquely designed multicultural centre, which houses a real crossroads of cultures and a variety of styles and genres" (Crossclub 2019). This claim can also be seen in their spatial policies, for instance, affordable clubbing costs. Events there tend to be free, or there are sometimes fees between 100 to 200 crowns for more famous artists. The club's ideology intersects with its physical place, whose labyrinth-shaped, and multi-functional architecture enables the meeting of different cultures in it.

The club is located at Plynární Street and rents the whole multi-apartment building there. There are two club areas on the ground and underground floors, as well as the cafe area on the first floor. Most of the club's areas (except for the cafe), are decorated with self-made scrap-metal design.

Theoretical considerations and research problem

I first came into contact with Cross club, while taking music lessons in a rehearsal room in the upper floors of the building that houses the venue. I was immediately captivated by the unique design of the club. Therefore, at first, I wanted to research the

club's physical place and its influence on the visitors. However, during my preliminary research, I noticed a broad spectrum of different people and cultures that interact and coexist harmoniously in the venue to a certain degree. Moreover, many of the people I encountered mentioned this issue as well.

For this reason, I shifted my attention from only a physical place of the club also to other aspects of the venue, to study how the scene of Cross club is created and maintained. In this regard, Will Straw argues that the scene is a broad term, which can be distinguished according to location, a genre of cultural production, or social activities around which it takes shape (1991). He attempts to define the scene as a “cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation” (ibid., 373). Straw indicates that a scene is a social group encompassing a specific space and that this social formation is more heterogeneous than, for example, a community, which is defined as a more homogeneous social grouping (ibid.). Furthermore, while other social group notions used by scholars, for instance, community and subculture, examine relations between people exclusively, the notion of a scene is able to study the relation of “people to places, things and processes” (Straw in Janotti Junior 2012, 8). From this concept also stems my main research question: How does Cross club facilitate a scene and its various communities that regularly or temporarily gather in it?

All the characteristics of the club I briefly describe in the introduction, from program to physical place, have an impact on the visitors gathering there. These aspects of the venue can be divided into different groups – into different types of space. In this regard, David Verbuč, in his study of DIY (do-it-yourself) house shows in the US, distinguishes between physical place and social space. The physical place consists of physical features such as architecture or furniture. At the same time, Verbuč defines the social space as a “set of social relations and practices constituted within a particular physical place” (2017, 121). The social space includes, for example, the presence of various social groups and communities, defined by age, class, ethnicity, or musical taste, and further by their behavior and interactions, as well as their ideologies. Furthermore, social space also includes various strategies and policies of the organizers.

Similarly, in answering the research question, I analyze the whole scene of the Cross club from the perspective of different aspects of place and space. Subsequently, I study the venue's physical characteristics, for instance, architecture and design, and club's social space, which includes numerous spatial policies (door policies, programming) that are shaped and facilitated by Cross club's management. Furthermore, part of the social space is

co-constituted by the visitors, formed by various social groups and individuals gathering in the Cross club.

Moreover, concerning the part of social space co-constituted by the Cross club's visitors, it is important to note that I studied this aspect of the club's space from the point of view of my research question. The clubbers are an essential aspect of the social space of the venue, but they are not an internal part of the Cross club. I briefly address some issues regarding the visitors of the club through the thesis to avoid presenting the Cross club's scene as purely management-driven. In this regard, the clubbers are not merely passive receptors of the management's strategies, but they actively negotiate the norms and relations of the space surrounding them (Verbuč 2017, Thornton 1995, Valentine 1995). Furthermore, the management strategies do not always bring the results that the organizers expect. Hence why, to take into account the role of visitors in the Cross club's scene, I examine their personal preferences that influence their movement and behavior in the venue, as well as how they 'create' their own space there. However, there are many other important and interesting issues regarding the visitors of the venue, which can be researched further.

I use the physical and social aspects of space as a basis for the three chapters in this thesis, each with its different thematic and theoretical considerations. Chapter One analyzes the physical place of Cross club as regulated by the management. Chapter Two then examines how the physical place of the venue influences the clubbers inhabiting the club. Finally, in Chapter Three, I focus on various spatial policies and strategies of the Cross club management, that consciously shape the social space of the venue.

These different aspects of space together create the scene of Cross club. While I separate them for more precise descriptions, they are, in reality, closely connected, and they actively influence each other and the resulting scene.

Methodology

To answer my research question, I use a qualitative research strategy. Miroslav Disman characterizes qualitative methods as a non-measurable investigation and an interpretation of social reality to uncover the meanings underneath the shared information. He compares the qualitative research strategy to quantitative strategy, which focuses on finding relations between two or more measurable variables (Disman 2002). The goal of

the qualitative method is to understand people in various social situations and their interpretations of those situations (ibid.).

While qualitative research is well-suited for answering my research question, there are also some issues. One of them is reactivity. Informants may have reacted to my presence and behaved differently than they would otherwise, or they may have been reluctant to talk about some topics because of my presence. To limit the extent of this problem, I used triangulation, so I compared the observed data with interpretations of my informants and between individual respondents.

Another issue of qualitative research is reflexivity, which means I tried to have in mind at all times, that my position, be it as a researcher, a caucasian lower-middle-class male, a student, a part-time security guard, and a rock fan, may influence my interpretation of the phenomena in the club, and the social patterns and cultural ideas gathered during interviews. This issue emerged mainly regarding the taste in music when I often researched electronic music as a rock fan. Furthermore, I was sometimes influenced by my part-time job as a security guard, mainly while observing the door policy of Cross club and visitors inhabiting the space. In this regard, I found myself in several cases judging the clubbers as ‘problematic’ according to their visage. Therefore, I view or unconsciously ignore, some phenomena and values differently than the members of various communities in Cross club, that have different social positions. To solve this issue, I worked with the interpretations of the people I met during the research to try to understand the scene of Cross club from the “native’s point of view” (Malinowski 1922). Interestingly, I came to appreciate electronic music, especially techno, during the research.

Research sample

Because of the wide variety in the club’s program, many different social and taste groups are gathering in Cross club. For this reason, I narrowed down the possibilities and focused mainly on three musical genres and corresponding events in the club – drum and bass (d’n’b), techno, and punk. I was observing 1-2 events from each of the researched genres per month for half a year. This focus also shaped my research sample.

The research sample included not only the visitors from the three observed genres but also the organizers of the club, which enabled me to explore the relationships between different aspects of the club’s space from both perspectives. To gain a club’s perspective, I interviewed the general director and owner of the club, Tomáš ‘Kenzo‘ Zdeněk, as well as external organizer Stefan Motika from Bigg Boss label. On the visitor’s side, I

communicated with both locals and tourists, but the main focus was on Czech informants and local expats, as they can be considered more as regulars in the club. This sample included mainly nine participants in the age range of 18 to 55 of both genders. Primarily, I conducted three extensive interviews with individual respondents that were present at the observed events. Furthermore, I participated in smaller conversations and interactions during my observations with people at the observed events, and I made notes about these conversations.

To select my informants, I used three types of sampling complementing each other: purposive sampling, the snowball method, and random sampling. The way of selecting the informants was mostly purposive, meaning it was “based on my judgment about what should be observed, and about what is possible to be observed” (Disman 2002, 112, translated). There are various types of purposive sampling with different emphases, objectives, and results. For my research, I tried to balance between emphasis on homogeneity (understanding the researched musical genres and events in Cross club) and variation (understanding relations within and without those genres, and understanding of the wider Cross scene and the relations between different aspects of space in the venue). I chose this type of sampling to be able to react flexibly to the data obtained during my research and to select informants accordingly. To limit the issue of reflexivity, I also incorporated the snowball method and random sampling. With the snowball method, the researcher meets several members of a researched culture, who then introduce them to other people. Because of this, I was able to observe the social relationships and connections within the scene. However, at the same time, there was a risk that I could unintentionally attach myself only to one social group, hence why I also used other sampling methods. The selection of informants then was sometimes also more random, as the informal environment of the club is fitting for encountering various informants during events, where people would sometimes spontaneously start talking to me by themselves (Stehlík 2010).

Furthermore, I also returned to the club and to my informants several times to address the additional questions that emerged during the writing stage.

Moreover, in answering my research question, I include quotes from my respondents throughout this thesis. I translated them from Czech to English, but I also provide their original in the footnotes to communicate the form and meaning as clearly as possible.

Research method

To study the relations between different aspects of space in Cross club, I used two qualitative methods of research, complementing each other: participant observation at the club's events and semi-structured interviews with informants, both during and outside of the events.

Participant observation is a method in which the researcher participates in the events together with the researched people to understand specific aspects of their culture (DeWalt – DeWalt – Wayland, 2000). The main benefit of this method is that the researcher has the first-hand experience with the observed phenomena, which facilitates its more profound understanding. This method also enabled me to establish a rapport with informants and the researched environment. During the observations, I created fieldnotes for later analysis. Moreover, to compare my interpretations with the “native's point of view” of the participants in Cross club (Malinowski 1922), I also conducted semi-structured interviews with the clubbers and the managers of the venue.

Semi-structured interviews then come from a qualitative questioning strategy, whose purpose is to obtain subjective interpretations of a respondent, affected as little as possible by the researcher's questions (Zandlová 2015). The interviews included longer sessions with informants as well as shorter conversations during the events. Through this, I was able to obtain data from my informants via shorter conversations on the spot when all of the experiences were fresh. At the same time, I was able to examine this information more deeply during the longer sessions. I recorded the longer sessions and then transcribed them, and I made notes from the shorter conversations.

Regarding the interviews, my questions to the visitors focused on their opinion on different aspects of space of the Cross club, for example, design, door policy, programming, or on people inhabiting the space. Furthermore, I asked how do they interact with the space of Cross club. On the other hand, during the interviews with the venue's management, I asked about the club's history and the reasoning behind their various spatial policies and strategies. Moreover, I focused on specific aspects of the daily operation of the venue, for instance, on how is the program schedule created.

Data analysis

I analyzed my data via a qualitative thematic coding. I started with open coding, meaning I segmented my transcribed interviews and my notes from the observations of the events, to reduce the amount of data. Furthermore, in this process, I isolated concrete parts

of the overall data with which I further worked in my analysis. I then coded, i.e., marked these parts with codes, which characterize the content of the individual parts, to find relevant cultural values, themes, and ideas embedded in them. The codes helped me identify patterns of specific social and cultural phenomena, to observe the connections between them, and in this way also to answer my research question. I analyzed the data during the research, immediately after their collection, to enable focusing the research further on specific issues, as related to the collected information. After I identified the relevant themes in my data, I continued with focused coding, where I concentrated solely on the selected themes. These themes concentrated mainly on the different spatial aspects of the Cross club, as well as the visitor's interaction and interpretation of them. In this way, I searched for the concrete ways in which the physical and social space of the Cross club facilitates the creation of Cross club scene.

Ethics and problems during the research

There are also several ethical considerations, that I need to address, regarding the research in a nightclub and as related to qualitative research in general. First, I tried to be aware of my position and biases at all times and work with the interpretations of my informants about various social phenomena in the club to avoid unconscious judgments from my point of view. This issue emerged, for example, regarding my judgment of visitors based on their visage. As mentioned above, this may have affected my perception of the observed phenomena, and I might have considered some values or meanings as less essential, even though they could be crucial to my informants.

Moreover, I asked every respondent for his or her informed consent for using the information they shared with me. Some of them wanted me to preserve their anonymity, and I did so by using nicknames and concealing their surnames.

In addition to the ethical considerations, I encountered several problems during the research. In this regard, one of the visitors I encountered, Adéla, refused to give me consent with sharing the information, because at first, she disliked that I am 'experimenting with the people she loves' (Adéla, personal communication, May 15, 2018). However, after properly explaining my intentions and research, she admitted that she misunderstood what I wanted to study and gave me her consent.

Finally, the volume of musical performance in Cross club is very high, often preventing having a proper conversation in the club areas. Due to this issue, it was impossible to hold interviews in the Cross club, as well as recording the conversations I

made there. Hence why I made notes about the conversations on smartphone and met with my informants in other places for the recorded interviews.

Chapter One – Physical space of Cross club

It is a chilly Sunday evening midwinter. I am walking from the direction of Ortenovo náměstí on foot. I can already see my destination, but even without sight, the target of tonight's voyage would be noticeable. Every step I take magnifies a certain sound resonating through the night – the sound of electronic music. The beats are muffled but still audible in the otherwise silent neighborhood. It is evident that Cross club is close.

After crossing a wide road situated on Argentinská street, I immediately notice paintings at the building on the corner of the road. Paintings of war illuminated by small white lights between them. Paintings reminding every passerby about the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, one of the most influential people of Third Reich, that was conducted less than two kilometers from my current position. After passing a corner of the building, an open door welcomes me. The sound of beats is now much louder and is coming from the insides of this massive building. Even though the doors are open, there is a sign pointing out that the main entrance to the club is even further around the corner.

Moreover, while the building, aside from the paintings, looks rather ordinary so far, after passing another corner, I am surrounded by a stream of lights and shapes representing famous decorations of Cross club. In front of me is a two-floor metallic scaffolding with a gate serving as the main entrance. After entering, I see several people smoking, socializing, and playing table football, even during the cold wintertime. I continue further through a door and finally make my way inside the club.

After entering, a stream of people going in, out or downstairs for the other club, drags me along towards the main stage. During the walk, we pass through a steampunk decorated room with a bar on the right, where several visitors are waiting in line to get their drinks, while others are socializing in a two-floor sitting area on the left. This space is filled with smoke and muffled music coming from a room in front of me, where the stage is situated. I carefully slip through people to this area, and music and lights immediately fill my senses. All around me are other visitors listening or dancing to the performance, and the whole space is permeated by light shining from walls, decorated with PC motherboards, ceiling with spinning disco ball, and stage with other shining decorations. The experience is immersive, and I slowly start dancing with other visitors.

Later on, after approximately an hour, I follow the flow of people to the other stage, located in the basement. After descending the stairs, I walk through a corridor with entrances to a three-floor sitting area, bar and stage, all occupying one long, curved

hallway, surrounded by bricked walls smoothly connecting to the ceiling. This underground space is bigger than the one on the ground floor but also less crowded. Again, there are lights everywhere. In the corridor, they are made of lemon juicers, do-it-yourself found-art style, while in the rest of the club, they are flickering out of every self-made decoration in sync with the rest of Cross club's design. I once again join the dancers, but after half an hour, the atmosphere becomes a bit suffocating, so I escape the space and go outside via stairway connecting the basement club and the scaffolding garden area. Even though I left the club, there are still other visitors all around me, and I can hear the music coming out of the open door to both clubs.

This short vignette, describing my first visit to Cross club, shows very well an experience that one can have while attending any of the events held there. One of the main reasons for the club's popularity is its physical place, with its unorthodox architecture and unique do-it-yourself (DIY) decorations. In this chapter, I therefore focus on the physical aspect of the venue, its history, and its location. Furthermore, I explore management spatial strategies regarding the physical place. These strategies include re-organization of the club's space, various modifications of the place, to adjust to program or security, and promotional strategies of Cross club that make use of the physical place.

Theoretical framework

The physical place is the most apparent aspect of the venue. It may seem less susceptible to organizational strategies than other aspects of the venue, however, the management can still utilize various ways to manipulate it for different purposes. These strategies then influence visitors. In this regard, the physical place is one of the essential factors for the creation and maintaining of the Cross club scene, and its specific characteristics have significant consequences for the people gathering in the venue. For example, the multifarious aspect of the venue's layout, described in Chapter Two, enables particular possibilities for visitors to course through several spaces with different purposes without interrupting their entertainment.

In this chapter, I use the theoretical considerations of various scholars, to describe and interpret the phenomena emerging in regard to the physical place of Cross club. First, Michaela Pixová, in her dissertation, examines the history of Cross club and various characteristics connected to its daily operation (2012). Furthermore, it is important to note the significance of the club's geographical location. To account for this issue, I turn to

Fabian Holt and his study of relations between musical venues and their surroundings (2013).

Regarding the management strategies, David Verbuč, in his study of house concerts in the US, argues that the physicality of a place and social space inhabiting this place are closely intertwined and actively affect each other. Therefore, I consult his research in this chapter to understand how these two aspects of space interact (2017).

This section offers a brief overview of different theories I use through this chapter to interpret the physical and social phenomena in Cross club.

The place, the style, the history

In this section, I provide a descriptive and historical context of the Cross club for a better understanding of its physical place.



Figure 1: The underground club bar area. Photo by crossclub.cz. In the back, it is possible to see the entrance to the sitting area. The dance floor is located behind the photographer.

The overall Cross club's space is divided into separate areas. The primary space of the club expands across the bottom two floors (underground and ground floor), each adorned with one stage, dance floor, bar, and side-areas for sitting and socializing (see Figure 1). The underground part is more spacious, with a size twice as big as the ground floor part. There is also a kiosk with fast food and an ATM on the ground floor, near to the

entrance. Furthermore, the upper floors of the building are also connected to the club. There is a cafe area on the first floor and several apartments and rehearsal rooms through the second to the fourth floor. Moreover, in the attic, there is room for exhibitions and theater performances. All parts of the venue are connected inside by two maze-like stairways and various hallways. At the same time, both clubs are connected to the outside area. This section provides extra space for sitting or smoking, and there is a two-floor metallic scaffolding (see Figure 2) that connects directly to the cafe on the first floor. This structure promotes the specific image of the Cross club, shelters the entrances to the clubs from weather, and enables access to the cafe directly from the outside area. Extending outwards from the scaffolding area is a courtyard with a summer stage for music events, and a wooden bar positioned opposite to the stage, next to the main road passing by Cross club.



Figure 2: The metallic scaffolding area of Cross club. Photo by panvegan.cz. The gate serves as a main entrance to the venue.

The venue is famous for its self-made and steam-punk¹ styled design, mostly made from scrap materials, that immediately captures visitors' views. During the night, the interior layout of the club, as well as the courtyard, shine brightly through a variety of

1 Steam-punk is a science fiction sub-genre that incorporates design aesthetics inspired by industrial and steam-powered machinery.

ubiquitous lights, positioned in all corners and fused with the decorations, making the space look ethereal and psychedelic. While at first glance, the design looks unified, each area of the club is decorated differently from others. Both club areas and the metallic scaffolding are adorned with a similar basic design, created from machine parts and scrap materials welded together with colorful lights, but each of them varies in detail. For example, as mentioned in the vignette, the main stage area is ornamented with the PC motherboards attached to the walls. There is also an interactive board, around 1m x 1m in size, positioned next to the entrance to the dance floor area on the ground floor. There are lights on the board that can be turned on and off by visitors, who are in this way invited to interact with space and co-create the light design of the area. The basement floor then makes use of the old juicers or rotating wooden figures suspended from the ceiling in the middle of the dance floor. Moreover, outside on the walls facing the street, there are artistic pictures, portraying war themes about the Heydrich assassination, sprayed on the building. There are also two large movable statues in the courtyard of the venue. One of them is a pillar with rotating wheels on a pedestal flickering with lights, while the other is a sculpture welded together from various scrap metals (see Figure 4). The only area of the building that does not follow the metallic aesthetics is the cafe, which uses a significant amount of wood in its design. The walls are paneled with timber, together with reed knitting, plus the furniture and decorations are all made from wood in different shades of brown, creating warm naturalistic contrasts (see Figure 3). Furthermore, this space is decorated with several plants deployed throughout the space, and paintings hanging on the walls, giving it a more standard cafe look. ²

However, while the current physical image of the club has its roots in the past, it is very different from how it used to be. Pixová, in her dissertation thesis about alternative places in Prague, describes the beginnings of the club from the perspective of its early physical decorations:

One of the main personas in the club's existence has been František Chmelík, who was originally renting just a small part of the underused corner house for his printing office. Chmelík had no ambition to run a club, but when his friends started to hang out in his printing office, Chmelík started to run a tearoom for his friends in the basement. The tearoom soon gained popularity among a growing number of people and spontaneously started to turn into a club, eventually taking over the whole building. Simultaneously,

2 For different points of view on the physical place of Cross club, or description of various events there, see also *Prague Soundscapes*, featuring several case studies from different nights in Cross club by various authors (Jurková et al. 2014).

Chmelík was gradually decorating the premises of Cross Club with various objects found in scrap yards, turning them into sculptures that move and glow.

(Pixová 2012, 127)



Figure 3: The Cross cafe on the first floor. Photo by crossclub.cz.

Later, the organization of the club started to become more professionalized, and a need to think more rationally about the limits of physical space emerged, because of its growing size. As related to these organizational changes, significant shifts in design occurred, affected by the growing size, more substantial funds for decoration, and also due to some unforeseen circumstances. This process is illustrated by the following comment from one of the current owners of the club and its general director Tomáš Zdeněk:

In design, we advanced the most every time we made it [expanded] to another floor, or we had some smaller fire here in the past, and that “killed” some part of our design as well, or somebody from the municipality came, saying that we have to have some parts of the club approved. It also changed with the budget that we had available, which is connected to the growth of the club. You start looking at [the design] in larger parts, you have bigger possibilities with a bigger budget, now we can say we will invest 200 000 [crowns] into this,

which would be unreal 15 years ago. Back then, it was like, we have 5000 [crowns] here, so let's do something, bring something from your home, and we will put something together.³
(Zdeněk, interview with author, January 15, 2019)

All these factors influenced the changes in space. Some parts of the original design were destroyed, others had to be changed because of municipality approval, and some were expanded further, giving the club a more uniform and professional look. Moreover, while at the beginning, Chmelík did everything himself, later the decorations were made by a whole design team under his management.

The design of the venue was not the only part that changed throughout its history. Along with the physical evolution of the club, its vicinity has also undergone a severe shift. From a nearly depopulated neighborhood with a poor reputation, it transformed into a vibrant place with several office complexes, gyms, pubs, and shops growing around. Moreover, DOX, a center for contemporary art, emerged there. This is a process of gentrification⁴. In this process, the neighborhood is becoming more affluent, investments more profitable, and there is an increase in the business catering to middle-class customers. Furthermore, while examining reasons and consequences of this transformation is something outside the scope of this paper, it is still important to note that the presence of Cross club possibly played a role in this development and that the club was, in turn, affected by these changes. In this regard, Holt's study of musical venues in Berlin, New York, and Copenhagen (2013) shows how small underground venues often transform into professionalized, business-oriented mid-size venues for middle-class customers to survive in gentrified neighborhoods. This process is very similar to the evolution of Cross club and its physical place over time.

Moreover, another example of the gentrification influence is the Cross cafe/restaurant. Through time, the management transformed the cafe into a restaurant, to offer lunches for the growing number of hungry employees from nearby office complexes. According to Zdeněk, the focus on food therefore became one of the central parts of the venue (interview with author, January 15, 2019).

3 Designově jsme se nejvíc šoupli vždycky s rozšiřováním o nějaký patro, nebo jsme tu měli kdysi nějaký menší požár, ten taky zahubil nějakou část, nebo prostě přišel někdo z úřadu, že musíme něco dokolaudovat. Taky rostl ten budget, který se na to dal používat, to je asi spojený s tím růstem. Koukáte na to jako na větší celky, máte větší možnosti protože máte větší budget, můžete si říct, že investujeme 200 000 do toho, což by bylo nereálný 15 let zpátky. Tehdy to bylo jako, máme tu 5000 tak pojďme něco udělat, přineste něco z domova a něco smontujem.

4 Gentrification is a process in which real estate development is pricing out low-income residents, for example artists, and small specialized underground clubs that feature relatively unknown performers, while growing white middle-class presence in the neighborhood creates new markets for more upscale leisure activities (Holt 2013, 153).

With the description and historical context of the place provided, I now turn to explore how the management of the Cross club use and manipulate its physical place.

Management spatial strategies regarding the physical place

As Verbuč argues, the physical place can often shape the social and musical activities and social relations within particular music venues. He examines this notion in his study of house shows in the US. In one of the examples he provides, the relatively small size of living rooms used for concerts influences greater physical proximity and social intimacy between performers and listeners. Furthermore, there are no physical barriers at DIY house concerts, for example stages, that would be separating the audiences and performers, which adds to the notion of intimacy (2017). However, while the physical place can shape the social atmosphere and interaction, the social space can, in turn, also shape the physicality of place (ibid.). In this section of the chapter, I consequently explore different ways in which Cross club uses its architecture, design, or furniture for achieving specific social or musical objectives, as related to their goals, and types of events. Concretely, I include management's spatial strategies of modification of the venue for programming and security reasons and re-organization of the club's layout. Finally, I examine the promotional spatial strategies of the club, which make significant use of physical place.

I focus on these strategies because they consciously use the physical place of the venue for achieving certain goals, which then, in turn, influence the visitors of the club. For example, a division between free and paid areas, or specific image of the venue, determine to a certain degree what kind of audience will be present in the space.

Place modification strategies of Cross club management

One of the essential spatial strategies of the organizers is the actual modification of physical place. I identify two main reasons for these changes: programming and security.

First, the organizers change the space of the venue for every event, for instance, by moving furniture and equipment, or by adding decorations. The scope and shape of this alteration differ, based on various factors, for example, the expected amount of people coming to an event, number of performers, number of stages, and the music genre.

Every event has its own technical, practical, and decorative needs. These modifications may range from smaller, adding some chairs or plants, to larger, when it is

necessary to prepare equipment or change the layout of the space. The management then answers these needs for a smooth unfolding of every particular event.

The adjustments of design for different genres and types of events are a very significant part of the Cross club organization, which gives every night a unique atmosphere. In Zdeněk's words, some genres have set rules that govern their shaping of the place:

For example, drum and bass (d'n'b) [...] always have some kind of theme, and [our team] decorate the club according to the theme. For techno, it is usually made darker, mistier, or there are just some small lights or one installation. [...] Some events are set, with plants on stage, like palms and bamboos, so the space is made into a "jungle".⁵

(Zdeněk, interview with author, January 15, 2019)

As is illustrated in the quote, the actual decorative modifications depend on the genre and theme of the particular event. Most genres have a specific atmosphere associated with them, as it is evident from the examples in the quote. However, some events are organized in particular themes, as with the example of the jungle, or have expected decorative image, for instance, Christmas or Halloween, and the place is then distinguished accordingly.

Moreover, special effects, for example, lights and smoke, are a vital part of the performance space, and they also change according to the genre. In Cross club, the special effects generally consist of lasers and lights flickering into the audience from the stage, disco ball dispersing light into several directions (ground floor club only), and smoke. Moreover, there are many lights incorporated into the design, which also add to the experience of clubbers. Furthermore, there are countless variations of their movement and color palette, as each of these lights can shine in different colors, and the disco ball has the option of rotating, reflecting the glows in different directions. These combinations are unique for every event and depend on the kind of music played:

It is possible to say that the slower the music is, or the more 'listenable,' the less light there is, or it's less focused on some kind of visualization, and the wilder the music is, the wilder the lights are and everything. And the more 'enjoyable' the music is, the more colorful it is.⁶

(Zdeněk, interview with author, January 15, 2019)

5 Například d'n'b, holky vždycky mají nějaký téma, a podle něj se to vyzdobí. Na techno je to většinou udělaný, že je víc tma, mlha, a třeba jen nějaký malý jednotlivý světla, nebo jedna instalace. [...] Některý ty akce už máme daný, jsou tam nějaký rostliny na stage, třeba palmy a bambusy, celý se to udělá jako džungle, ten prostor.

6 Dá se říct, že čím pomalejší ta hudba je, nebo čím poslechovější, tím míň světla tam je, nebo je to míň zaměřený na nějakou vizualizaci, a čím divočejší ta hudba je, tím divočejší jsou ty světla a všechno. A čím zábavnější ta hudba je, tím barevnější to je.

This quote from the general director shows that the management uses special effects differently according to the type of music played there.

Overall, the rule of these modifications is, they are always “unique” and dependent on genre and type of the particular event (Zdeněk, interview with author, January 15, 2019).

Second, the physical modifications of the club are not only about decorations and genre-related aesthetics. Different genres also require different security measures. For example, during DJ events, there is usually a chain separating the stage from the audience in the ground floor area of the club. At the same time, there is no such physical separation established for live music events. According to Zdeněk, this is because audience members tend to climb on the stage much more if there is a single DJ playing electronic music, than when there are live concerts and performers (interview with author, January 15, 2019). However, in the basement club, there is no elevated stage, and a metallic barrier separates the audience and performers. There is a window for DJ to look through, so visitors and artists can still see each other. The area behind this barrier at the same time functions as a backstage. On the right side of the barrier, there is an open entrance to this space. Interestingly, this barrier is less effective in keeping the audience away than the elevated stage in the ground floor area, and the dancers and performers in the basement are, therefore, generally interacting more closely. I have, for example, seen occasions where dancers ventured behind the barrier, interacting with DJs.

Management strategies regarding changes in the layout of the place

Another practical space alteration by the club’s management is the re-organization of the place. There are many hallways, stairways, and entrances in the building, and the organizers sometimes adjust them for various goals. An excellent example of this strategy is the difference between paid and free areas of the club. The events in Cross club are often free, but some require admission (see also Chapter Three). However, a large number of the paid events still offer free access to the bar or sitting areas, and only require admission for performance areas. To enable that, the club re-organizes the layout of the physical place.

The ground floor club is generally entirely under admission if the event has paid entry, with security guards standing in the hallway monitoring people for material proof of payment (bracelet or stamp). They block both entrances to the bar area, as well as to the dance floor.

The underground club offers more spatial possibilities, as it is larger and easier to manipulate. In case of admission, usually, the performance area is blocked by security guards while the sitting area is free. Bar area between them is then divided into two sections by a folding metallic fence, one section for people with bracelets or stamps, and the other one for those without them. The reasons for this seem mostly economical, as the club can still sell drinks to people that do not want to pay admission for musical performance.

In both of these cases, when the entrance to club areas require an admission fee, there is usually an option to attend other free areas of the club: the outside sitting area or the cafe on the first floor. However, some larger events, for example, a Halloween night or weekend d'n'b nights may require visitors to pay admission to access any of the Cross club's areas. In this case, security staff guards the entrance to the outside sitting area. There are often two lines of guards, the first line guarding the entrances to the club, while the second line is preventing free access to performance areas inside. Finally, since the cafe closes sooner than the club areas downstairs (generally around 1-2 a.m., while clubs last until 5-7 a.m.), there is a movable metallic gate preventing access to upper parts of the scaffolding area that connects to the restaurant.

These different organizational strategies regarding the layout of the space have a direct impact on the scene of the Cross club because, through them, management can, to a certain degree, manipulate the type of people present in the space and their movement. However, the scene is not dependent only on the management, as their strategies can have different results in reality, compared to their expectations.

Advertisement

Last, there are promotional management strategies for attracting visitors that make use of the physical place of the venue. Through them, the organizers promote a specific image of the club, aimed at specific social groups and individuals with the help of particular aesthetics or cultural genres. While Cross club management promotes their operation on social sites (Facebook, Google Plus, YouTube, myspace, or CityBee), official website (www.crossclub.cz), and through the use of posters, fliers⁷ and other kinds of advertisement, the physical place itself plays a significant role in this regard. Arguably, the

⁷ Usually there are fliers with program schedule for every month. After that, the most attractive events, for example, most popular performers or genres, have their fliers. These prospects are generally available in the building of Cross club, hanging on the walls, on tables, and the window alcoves. Furthermore, most events featured on social sites have their banners.

most impactful factor in promoting the image of the club is the design. The Cross club can be seen and heard from a distance, and there are many trams, cars, and people passing by it every day. Moreover, the moving and glowing scrap-material decorations, along with the painted walls, are ensuring that this particular building will be noticed and remembered. The comments of the club's visitors also address this notion of promotional qualities of the venue's design:

It's "hitting the eyes," really...you always notice the Cross in the surroundings, and it certainly catches your attention, if you don't know it, and it makes you want to go there. Basically, be it during the day, or during the night, you just can't miss it.⁸

(Michal, personal communication, September 10, 2018)

This quote shows that the venue's outlook itself attracts the attention of people, be it visitors to the club or the café. Especially the paintings on the building and the unique metallic statues in the outside area immediately make one wonder what is hidden inside. Furthermore, while the design has an artistic value, it is a good business move as well, because it provides a permanent advertisement that cannot be seen elsewhere. The issue of design attraction was brought up, in one way or another, by all of the visitors I encountered during my research. Here are a few brief examples of the design attracting the attention of people:

It [the club] benefits from the fact that it is quite original, especially regarding the decoration. [...] I would go there to enjoy the decorations. I am still, after all this time, taken aback by the design.⁹

(Lucie, interview with author, September 25, 2018)

Also, because the club looks very different from other clubs...it is also a thing that draws in people that normally wouldn't go there or that do not listen to [electronic] music.¹⁰

(Michal, interview with author, September 10, 2018)

As the quotes show, the design can attract newcomers to the club, while at the same time, it can be a reason for regulars to keep attending events at the venue, adding to the identity of the venue.

Finally, there are also promotional design aspects cleverly incorporated into the interior design of the club, for example, holders with fliers placed on walls throughout the

8 Bije to do očí, fakt...když jdeš v okolí, tak si toho všimneš, a rozhodně tě to vždycky zaujme, když to neznáš, tak se tam chceš jít podívat. Prostě, ať je to ve dne nebo v noci, tak to nepřehlídneš.

9 On [ten klub] těží z toho, že je celkem originální, hlavně v tý výzdobě. [...] Já bych se šla pokochat tou výzdobou. Já jsem pořád, i po takový době, unešená z tý výdoby.

10 Taky protože ten klub vypadá hodně jinak než ostatní...to je věc, která přiláká i ty lidi, kteří by tam za normálních okolností nešli nebo je to hudba, kterou neposlouchají.

stairways and bar counters, or club program schedule hanged at the eye height above urinals at men's toilet and in the hallways. Moreover, the interactive board next to the ground dance floor area mentioned above is often used for promoting events, when staff members use it to write the names of the event or the names of performers on it. Lastly, to further facilitate the recognition potential of the venue, the club's management uses three big advertisement billboards on the side of the building facing the courtyard. Two smaller ones show a logo and a short description of the club. The last, bigger one, then features an advertisement for beer brand Platan served inside of the venue (see Figure 4). Moreover, there are two giant commercial advertisements on other sides of the building.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I provide the historical and descriptive context of the venue, Cross club, and examine how its management influence the physical place of the club, as well as the reasons and goals behind these organizational strategies. In this regard, I cover how the social space, regulated by the management, influences the physicality of Cross club. On the other hand, the physical place of the venue also affects the social space, mainly the visitors inhabiting the place. This influence is then the focus of the next chapter.



Figure 4: The building housing Cross club from the direction of Nádraží Holešovice. Photo by author. 2020. It is possible to see the advertisement on the building, as well as unique metallic statues that are part of the venue's design. The metallic scaffolding is situated on the left side of the building.

Chapter Two – Influence of physical space on clubbers

[Regarding the Cross club space] you just go in [the club], get something to drink and just start whenever you want, one dance there or just [a bit of] listening to the music, it depends on the mood, and when there is too much of it [dance or music], or you are in the mood for a change, then you just freely relocate to a different stage, or to a different place, where something else is happening...Or you just go up to the cafe, where you can take a break from the program, chat with friends...you can even go there just for the coffee and chat with friends, you don't have to go inside the individual [club] places, where something is happening, at all, but probably the most pleasant [clubbing experience] is when you manage to go through every [space of the club] during the evening...that's at least how I like it.¹¹

(Lucy, interview with author, August 20, 2018)

You come into several floors [large] club, where the beats are beating all over the place, and you are inside. So now you force your way to the bar, you buy drinks, and you go partying ... or ... you can sit down there, which is an interesting thing about the place. Or you can go outside, which I personally do quite often where there is the sitting [area], the garden [metallic scaffolding], and there are table footballs, which we often play with my friends.¹²

(Dominik, interview with author, September 24, 2018)

These two quotes briefly illustrate the clubbing experience of Lucy and Dominik. They point out one of the essential aspects of Cross club – its multifaceted place, with different spaces and areas that have different purposes, for example, drinking, smoking, or dancing, between which clubbers freely move throughout their night out. This characteristic of Cross club's physical place directly influences the behavior and movement of the visitors inhabiting it. In this regard, according to David Verbuč, it is not only important to examine the wider socio-cultural context of concerts but also the 'immediate physical' context of musical venues, because physical features of a particular place "affect the moods, behaviors, social interactions, cultural and social meanings, and the sounds themselves" (Verbuč 2017, 61). In this regard, the spatial physical characteristics of musical venues influence both audiences and organizer strategies of these places.

Consequently, the Cross club scene is not only facilitated by the management's spatial strategies about the manipulation of physical place, described in Chapter One, but

- 11 Prostě vlezíš dovnitř, dáš si něco k pití a začneš kde chceš, teď si tam zatancuješ, nebo posloucháš, záleží jak máš chuť, a když je toho hodně, nebo máš chuť na změnu, tak se jen volně překorzuješ na jinou stage, nebo do jiných prostor, kde se něco odehrává...Nebo můžeš vylézt nahoru do kavárny, kde si hodíš absolutní relax od programu, pokecat s přáteli...můžeš tam jít i jen na kávu a pokec s přáteli, nemusíš vůbec jít do jednotlivých míst, kde se něco děje, ale asi nejpříjemnější je, když se to zvládneš za tu noc tak nějak všechno...tak to mám alespoň ráda já.
- 12 Přijdeš do několika patrového klubu, kde to celý mlátí beatama a seš v klubu. Prodíráš se na baru, koupíš si pití a jdeš kalit...nebo... si tam můžeš jen sednout, což je zajímavost toho místa. A nebo jdeš ven, což já osobně dělám celkem často, kde je tam posezení, zahrádka, a jsou tam fotbálky, který často hrajeme s kámošema.

also by the physical place itself. Therefore, in this chapter, I examine how Cross club's physical place affects visitors' behavior and their social interactions there. Concerning this issue, I explore several physical characteristics of the venue and their effects on the visitors. Concretely, I describe the overall atmosphere of the club, as the physical characteristics of Cross club are essential for its creation. Moreover, I examine the multifaceted nature of the architecture of the place and its ability to "erase time."

Theoretical framework

Throughout this chapter, I rely on theoretical considerations of several scholars. First, regarding the multifaceted nature of Cross club's physical place, Ben Malbon similarly observes various areas of the nightclubs, so-called "territories," that shape the movement and crowding of the visitors there (1999). Moreover, Sarah Thornton examines how the physical characteristic of nightclubs, for example, design or architecture, demarcate the venues from an outside world, and how they manipulate the normal time and space continuum of clubbers there (1995). Furthermore, Jonathan Sterne, in his study of shopping malls in the US, maps out how various characteristics of physical place, which can be consciously manipulated by the management of the mall, influence the people inside of it, and how they make them prolong their shopping experience in these places (1997). His observations also apply to music venues in the case of Cross club and on the clubbing experience of people gathering there.

Moreover, regarding the overall architecture and the creation of atmosphere, Sterne examines particular properties of music, which can 'create' physical places similarly to, for example, walls (1997). In addition, Thornton and Malbon describe various vital aspects of nightclub culture, closely tied to the physical place of the venue, and which also emerge in Cross club. Concretely, I consult their studies with the importance of light and smoke effects on the atmosphere of the venue, and on the consciousness of visitors inhabiting its space (Thornton 1995, Malbon 1999).

I now turn to explore the various effects of Cross club's physical place on the clubbers. I start with the description of a multifaceted architecture and its possibilities to 'erase time' of the Cross club visitors. Moreover, I observe the creation of the overall atmosphere of the venue by its physical place.

The multifaceted space

As I describe in Chapter One, the physical place of Cross club consists of many different, labyrinth-shaped floors and rooms. They are divided by multiple entrances, stairways, and hallways. In this regard, Thornton examines how these kinds of architectural elements create transitions between different spaces for clubbers (1995). Furthermore, regarding these different spaces, Malbon observes the notion of different “territories” inside of the club, where each area has an appropriate activity associated with it. For example, dancing is perfectly normal on the dance floor, however, dancing in the bar area suggests a dancer’s poor understanding of the club’s spacing and culture (1999).

Similarly, each room of the Cross club has a different purpose, and the doors or stairs serve as connections or boundaries between different areas of the club. There are, for instance, stage areas for dancing or listening to music, bar and sitting areas for socializing and drinking, restaurant or fast food kiosk for eating, or spaces with table football and other gaming devices for activities associated with them. However, the described spaces generally do not have only one specific purpose. In this regard, visitors often socialize and drink in the restaurant or gaming rooms, or they listen to music from the sitting areas. Nevertheless, there are activities or behavior that is appropriate only in a specific space, as is possible to see on the Malbon’s dancing in the bar area example. Physical features in the form of entrances, hallways, and other properties of physical place, then separate these spaces. This multifaceted nature of the venue can then have various types of impact on visitors inhabiting the space. In this regard, I focus on the feelings and perceptions of clubbers emerging through their interaction with the maze-like club’s interior layout. Moreover, I examine, in this way, a diverse clubbing experience that visitors often have in the multifarious physical place of Cross club.

First, the layout of the Cross club’s physical place can seem like a maze. People often feel confused, lost, or even scared there. Such feelings emerge especially between the newcomers in the Cross club scene, however, I encountered even seasoned regulars being surprised at finding toilets in one of the hallways (Adéla, personal communication, September 27, 2018). Moreover, intoxication with alcohol or drugs, or temporary changes in the layout by the management described in Chapter One, can further enhance these experiences. This notion is also part of the overall atmosphere of the venue that I focus on below.

Second, according to the club's visitors, slight changes in the space, for example, music genre they do not like, or special effects that can become overwhelming (but also changes related to their personal moods) may make them want to leave the space they are currently in (Monika, interview with author, September 28, 2018).

Unfortunately, when people do no longer feel pleasant in the club environment, there is usually only the option to go outside in other venues:

It is really limiting [that] you can [only] be outside or inside. That's it. And now it depends on the weather outside.¹³

(Monika, interview with author, September 28, 2018)

However, the multifaceted space of Cross club prevents this limitation to some degree. The visitors have an option to change the location within the building, where they can move between different club areas with different purposes, or they can go to the cafe or the metallic scaffolding area (which visitors often consider as part of the venue, rather than 'outside' space). Hence there is no need to interrupt the 'flow of enjoyment' that would make some of them go home or leave the place:

Even when the music is no longer attractive, I just change the place, and I am still in the flow of enjoyment, and I don't have to go outside.¹⁴

(Monika, interview with author, September 28, 2018)

Cross is just interesting because there are more stages, and there are more spaces, where something is happening...so one can course not only through the club, from one bar to another, but also through the different spaces, where somebody is playing something or performing something [...], it creates a nice atmosphere of the whole evening, when if you stop enjoying one thing, or if you want to take a break, you just freely relocate yourself [to another area] either to relax, [or to get] a beer, or you can peacefully get a coffee, take a break, and then you just go on.¹⁵

(Lucy, interview with author, August 20, 2018)

These quotes show that the multifarious space of the club itself offers a multitude of enjoyment possibilities, from which clubbers can choose what they want to do in the venue. Moreover, when they get tired, or when they do not enjoy their current activity

13 Je to fakt limitující. Můžeš být venku nebo vevnitř. Tečka. A teď záleží na počasí.

14 I když mě ta hudba už nepřitahuje, jen změním místo, a jsem pořád v proudu bavení, a nemusím, nic mě nenutí, jít ven.

15 Na Crossu je právě zajímavý, že je tam víc stage, a je tam víc prostorů, kde se něco odehrává...takže člověk může korzovat nejen po tom klubu, od jednoho baru k druhému, ale taky skrz různé prostory, kde někdo něco pouští nebo něco hraje [...], z toho je prima atmosféra celého večera, když tě přestane táhnout jedna věc, nebo si chceš dát pauzu, tak se jen volně přemístíš na odpočinek, pro pivo, nebo si můžeš dát v kavárně kávičku, dát si pauzu, a potom razíš dál.

anymore, they can freely relocate to different space of the club to pursue new possibilities. According to the visitors, this relates to their momentary mood. When one space becomes too “suffocating” and overcrowded, or when the music gets “too stereotypical and boring,” they just simply go to another space of the venue, for example for smoke outside or for drinks to the bar (Lucy, e-mail communication, April 18, 2020). It is important to note here that the physical place of Cross club itself is one of the essential factors for the variety of clubbing experiences in the venue.

Personal preferences

However, different visitors move through the space of Cross club differently according to their personal preferences. I present this issue in relation to table football devices in the venue. I interviewed two female friends in this relation. One of them, Lucie, is a regular at Cross club, while the other one, Nadine, visits it only from time to time. Lucie, even though she visits the venue often, did not know that there is a table football there in the club, while there are several of them both on the ground and underground floor. Nadine, on the other hand, knew about it from her first visit, because she usually likes to play it in various clubs and pubs (Lucie and Nadine, interview with author, September 25, 2018).

Furthermore, a similar issue emerged when I encountered two of my high school acquaintances during one of the observations in Cross club, Jakub and Tony. We interacted a lot throughout a span of three hours during our visit to the venue, mainly dancing in the underground club and socializing in the area of metallic scaffolding. Interestingly, these two never used the toilets on the premises of the venue, but instead, each time, they went to relieve themselves into the dark alley on the side of the Cross Square summer stage. There are several trees there, a fence dividing this alley from a parking spot located behind the Cross club’s premises, and a few straws of grass growing alongside the fence. There are also no lights around, and there is only a sparse illumination by the lightning coming from the venue. When I asked them why they use that area for relieving themselves, instead of using the toilets inside, they replied that it is “more adventurous and fun” and that they can “avoid crowds inside of the venue” (Jakub and Tony, personal communication, August 30, 2018).

These short examples illustrate that each visitor has different reasons for attending the events and how they perceive the space around them accordingly. Each person comes to Cross club for a different purpose, for example music, dancing, or drinking, and

perceives their surroundings based on this purpose. Hence why Nadine knew about the football because it was one of the reasons she goes to clubs, while Lucie did not. These different preferences then probably also influence the differences in their movement through the club, as related to the issue of multifaceted space. In this regard, visitors change their actual position in the venue according to their actual mood (e.g., music becomes boring, so they go out for a smoke), but also according to their spatial and entertainment preferences presented in the case of the toilets or with the table football. They occupy mostly the spaces that match their preferences. Similarly, Malbon, in his study of clubbing culture observes, how certain clubbers inhabit certain areas of the venue, which they consider as ‘their territory,’ where they spend most of their clubbing time. These areas fit their particular clubbing needs and desires, and the clubbers feel good there (Malbon 1999: 95, 96).

This multifaceted aspect of the Cross club’s space is also closely connected to another impact of the club’s physical place, which I further examine in the next section.

A blending of time and space in the Cross club’s physical place

In my conversation with Cross club’s visitors, several of them mentioned how they tend to forget about the time during their stay in the venue. One of the regulars, Monika, described how the layout of the Cross club makes her feel as if it can erase time:

They [owners and organizers of the club] erased the importance of the time and replaced it with space. And that is why I think people go there and stay there for longer periods. Overall the play between the space and time, it is blending together, it enables you to stay there for longer periods of time without wanting to go outside. The place is really well made, it erases the time to a certain degree.¹⁶

(Monika, interview with author, September 28, 2018)

Here, Monika feels as if the presence of the Cross club’s space replaces the notion of passing time. This idea relates to the issue from the previous section, where the multifaceted space of the Cross club provides the clubbers with a continuous stream of various possibilities of enjoyment, for example listening to music, dancing, socializing, relaxing, smoking, playing games, drinking or getting some air outside. Hence why, as I observe above, if the visitors get bored or are tired, they can rather easily change the actual

16 Oni tam setřeli důležitost času a nahradili ji tím prostorem. A proto si myslím, že tam lidí chodí a zůstávají tam delší dobu. Celkově ta hra mezi časem a prostorem, stírá se to dohromady, ti umožňuje tam zůstat delší čas, bez toho abys chtěl jít ven. To místo je fakt dobře udělaný, do určitý míry smazává čas.

space they are in, without leaving the overall space of the Cross club. The different spaces with different purposes then have their distinctive atmosphere, slightly different from others. For example, loud music fills the dance floor areas, or the metallic scaffolding area is calmer than the rest of the venue, and the visitors can relax or socialize there. The movement of visitors through these individual spaces with their corresponding atmosphere can then facilitate the feelings of time erasure:

It is like an illusion of a different world and a different dimension because there are different spaces with different purposes there. The club is like a world in itself. The design of the venue also [facilitates] this [notion]. The decorations that move and... it is not a standard design, it naturally makes you leave the daily reality and you are transported to space, where you are not just a dumb consumer, but because you can creatively move between different spaces... it is fun. Because you yourself choose the spaces...[and because of this], the time is gone. You are having fun and suddenly you realize that the event is over... because you are not bored, so you do not pay attention to the time, right.¹⁷

(Lucy, interview with author, August 20, 2018)

In this quote, Lucy explains that in Cross club, she can actively select her entertainment and space that she inhabits, which makes the clubbing “fun” for her, and that she is not a passive receptor (or “dumb consumer”) of things that are presented to her by the venue. This interaction with the space of the venue then causes her to lose attention about the passing of time.

Sterne examined similar experiences in his study of music programming in shopping malls in the US (1997). In this regard, he distinguishes between two different types of music: “foreground” and “background” music. The former, often featuring songs of famous performers, is played inside of the individual shops in the mall, and is chosen carefully to support the specific image of the shop’s product. Furthermore, the choice of “foreground” music then attracts the desired types of visitors based on their age or class. In contrast, “background” music is stripped of all distinctive elements, for example vocals, percussion or brass music instruments, that would attract the attention of the visitors because the purpose of this music is anonymity. “Background” music is played in the hallways of the mall to provide this space with a feeling of continuity (as a place for movement between destinations – shops) that encourages the shoppers to forget about time and stay longer in the mall (ibid.).

17 Je to jako iluze odlišného světa a prostoru, protože tam jsou různé prostory s různým zaměřením. Ten klub je vlastně jako svět sám pro sebe. A ten design tomu pomáhá. Dekorace co se hejbou a...není to standardní design, přirozeně tě to nutí opustit každodenní realitu a přeneseš se do prostoru, kde nejsi jen nějaký tupý konzument něčeho, ale protože se můžeš kreativně přesouvat mezi různými prostory...je to zábava. Protože ty sám si vybíráš ty prostory...tak čas zmizí. Bavíš se a najednou si uvědomíš, že je konec akce...protože když se nenudíš, tak se nekoukáš na hodinky, že jo.

I noticed similar phenomena taking place in Cross club. In the venue, each of its specific spaces and areas provides its visitors with various musical and non-musical stimuli, for instance, eye-catching design, the interactive board in the ground floor club and the fruit juicers in the underground hallways, or different kinds of music in each space during one night. The music in performance areas is then similar to “foreground” music in Sterne’s study. However, when visitors leave the main performance area and move to the hallways, outside or to the cafe, hard basslines and beats, which also permeate the areas outside of the dance floors, provide a certain continuity to the space of Cross club, similarly to what the “background” music in the malls does. In this regard, several visitors mention how the cafe feels like a part of the Cross club to them, because of the muffled beats coming from performance areas downstairs. In this way, music can demarcate the space of Cross club from the outside world. The architecture and music of Cross club provide the space of the whole venue with continuity, which helps the clubbers to forget about time. Moreover, Malbon argues that there is a non-linear time passing while music is playing, hence why the visitors feel “eternally present” in the club’s space (1999, 102).

Furthermore, the particular design of the Cross club can facilitate the feelings of time erasure as well. In this regard, Thornton argues, that the “otherworldly” design of the night clubs can dissolve the perception of standard time and space of daily responsibilities outside the venues and provide an escape into a parallel time and space of a nightclub experience (1995).

All in all, the effects of the physical place of Cross club, the design and the continuity of music, together with the various enjoyment possibilities in individual spaces with different purposes, described in the previous section, can facilitate the erasure of time in the space of the club for the people inhabiting it.

The atmosphere of Cross club facilitated by the physical place

Another important issue regarding the physical place and clubbing experience of visitors inhabiting it is the creation of the overall atmosphere of the venue. When talking about the atmosphere, I mean a set of feelings and sensory experiences that are evoked in individuals, while they are present in the venue or come into contact with the place. These feelings can be pleasant, ecstatic, unpleasant, or even intimidating. The atmosphere of the venue is something that is felt by all people present in the space, and it more or less strongly affects their experiences and interactions in the club. Furthermore, while it can

have different effects on different people, it is influenced by a variety of factors. The most influential factor for the creation of the atmosphere is the physical place. In addition to architecture, design, and layout of the space, that I describe in Chapter One and the section about multifaceted space in this chapter, I also consider music and special effects (light or smoke) as parts of physical place for the purpose of this thesis.

Other factors facilitating the creation of the overall atmosphere are spatial policies of the club and visitors themselves (see Chapter Three for more information). All these different factors, from music to spatial management strategies, influence the particular characteristics of the Cross club's atmosphere that fills its physical place, which I turn to explore now.

Characteristics of the Cross club's atmosphere

The most interesting property of the atmosphere is its ability to change. According to the Cross club visitors, the club's atmosphere is never the same. It can depend on the time of the day, week and year, weather, type of event, genre of music, kind of people attending the event, special effects, or decorations. I further examine the aspects of music, design, and special effects to describe the changes in the atmosphere.

Music

Music fills the space very tangibly and is always present in the background of the consciousness of the visitors of the club, even if it is music that they might not find pleasant. According to Sterne, music is not filling an empty space, but it is a part of the space's consistency, and, similar to walls, it can divide, as well as connect spaces (1997). This notion is especially true for Cross club, where the music can be heard and physically felt in any part of the venue, and sometimes it also seeps outside. A great example of this creation of space by music is the divide between the dance floor and the bar area in the ground floor club. While in the bar area, one can still hear the music from the performance area, it is more of background music, as it is muffled by constant sounds of people drinking and socializing in the space (note that the bar and the sitting area are part of one space in the ground floor club). However, as soon as one steps into the dance floor area, separated only by a large open entrance in the wall leading to another room, most of the sounds from the bar area disappear, and one can hear only the music coming from the stage and the speakers around the room. This phenomenon is a result of both architecture and

technology, as the speakers, mainly positioned in the front of the dance floor area¹⁸, are facing the back of the room, so the music is directed along the physical wall, separating the stage area from the bar area. Therefore, loud music fills this whole space. The visitors are immersed in it and can physically feel the music as a dividing barrier between bar and dance floor areas.

Music is also one of the essential factors affecting how people 'feel' in a certain space. This comment from one of the visitors of the club shows how music impacts her mood:

Often the music really brightens my mood. Sometimes, when I was tired or feeling unwell, and the music really clicked with me [in Cross club], then all of a sudden, I was feeling good.¹⁹

(Lucie, interview with author, September 28, 2018)

Similarly to Lucie, many visitors of the Cross club mentioned how they feel better or worse in a specific space, depending on whether the music in that space is pleasurable to them or not. This matter is especially important in this particular music venue, as there tend to be at least two different musical genres featured every night. However, that does not necessarily mean that music is always the central element in the creation of the space's atmosphere for all clubbers, at least not in Cross club:

In Cross [club], I think the music and the performers just add to the overall atmosphere. [The music] helps to create the environment, and maybe when there is some really good band or a DJ, it might be something more [than just an addition to the atmosphere], but still [the music] is only somehow [one] part of the club.²⁰

(Monika, interview with author, September 28, 2018)

In the quote, Monika considers music as one of several individual aspects of the venue, rather than the main factor in how the space feels to her. This issue is also a part of the notion of individual preferences of Cross club visitors, and of different reasons they have for attending the events in the venue that I describe above.

18 There are also several smaller speakers, as well as sound engineer cabin, in the back of this room. However, the majority of the sound in this area comes from the stage in the front.

19 Často mi hudba úplně zvedne náladu. Někdy, když jsem byla unavená, nebo jsem se necítila dobře, a ta hudba mi prostě sedla, tak najednou jsem se cítila dobře.

20 Myslím, že v Crossu ta hudba a hudebníci jen vytváří to prostředí. A možná, když je tam nějaká fakt dobrá skupina nebo DJ, tak je to něco navíc, ale i tak je to jen nějak součást klubu.

Special effects

Next, the special effects, for instance smoke, lights, lasers, or temporary decorations set up for the particular events, create a complete sensory experience for the visitors along with the music (Thornton 1995).

Subsequently, the overall design, the decorations in the club, and the special effects that accompany musical performances are all important aspects of the creation of the venue's atmosphere. According to the clubbers, some kind of special effects is nowadays considered mandatory for any commercial club (Dominik, Michal, personal communication, September 24, 2018). These effects then often facilitate feelings of changes to one's consciousness (Malbon 1999, 108). In my research of Cross club, this includes mainly the feelings of anonymity on the dance floor. This particular area is darker than the other parts of the venue, and visitors' senses are distracted by the overwhelming sensory experience of flashing lights and mist filling the whole space. In this situation, clubbers feel as if other people do not see them as much as they would in a space without music or special effects, which facilitates the particular feelings of anonymity. Margaret Laski, in this regard, observes a "loss of self and self-reflection in crowds" (Laski 1961 in Malbon 1999, 110). Similarly, one of the Cross club visitors, Dominik, explains this issue in relation to the special effects of the venue:

[When asked about the importance of special effects]

Dominik- I think it is cool. I think, when you go to the club, and elements like this [smoke, lights] are missing, then it feels like a "dry party." [It is better if] you have a lot of people and the lights [there], and it gives you the [feelings of] anonymity, when everything is blinking, gleaming, fires are going, it also makes you move. So if I imagine a place with only music [there] without any [special] effects, then you have to have a real specific personality, or you have to be brave, or [you need to] be quite a bit drunk or supported by LSD, because naturally, you don't want to really party in front of people, when there is nobody there.

Author- So you think that the [special] effects are important for the sense of anonymity?

Dominik- Yeah, for the anonymity. It gives you the feeling that others [around you] can not see you, and then [you] do not care that much about them... like, "Yeah, others are here, so what?". And then you switch, and you are with the people, you go party[ing], and you do not care about the people themselves that much [who they are] because there is some kind of party atmosphere created [through the effects].²¹

(Dominik, personal communication with author, September 24, 2018)

21 D- Myslím, že je to hustý. Myslím, že když jdeš do klubu, a tyhle prvky chybí, tak to je taková párty na sucho... Když máš haldu lidí a světla a dává to tomu takovou anonymitu, když všechno bliká, svítí, jednou ohně, tak tě to taky rozhejbává. Takže když si představím jen místo s hudbou, tak musíš mít hodně specifickou osobnost, nebo musíš být odvážnější člověk, nebo hodně nalitej, nebo podpořenej Lkem, protože přirozeně nechceš úplně kalit mezi lidma, když tam nikdo není.

A- Takže si myslíš, že efekty jsou důležitý pro pocit anonymity?

D- Jo, pro anonymitu. Máš pocit, že tě ostatní nevidí, a pak tolik neřešíš ty lidi... jako - „Jo, jsou tu další, a co?“ - a potom se přepneš a jsi s lidma, a jsi... „párty párty“, a je ti jedno jaký jsou, protože je tam nějaká pařící atmosféra.

In this conversation, Dominik explains how a particular “party atmosphere” is created with the use of special effects. Furthermore, he mentions that he does not feel good “partying” alone, or in very few people, on the dance floor. It seems that “partying” here means especially dancing and interacting with others on the dance floor, as well as drinking while doing so. In this regard, the party atmosphere created through special effects of the performance provides him with a feeling of anonymity, when he no longer feels reluctant to “party” in front of other people. The special effects help him to get in a mood, where he no longer cares about others around him and can enjoy the “party.”

Furthermore, another visitor, Adéla, mentions similar notions regarding anonymity as enabled by special effects:

Overall, it is dark there, the lights are shining...It is so calm there, you are quite anonymous [because of the special effects]. And the people, because there tend to be lots of them, they are never going to see you again in case you embarrass yourself, [so] you just go there to enjoy it, to go crazy, to vent out yourself with the music, because that seduces towards [acting crazy] as well. I’m waving my head, but nobody cares because they are all drunk anyway, right? ²²

(Adéla, interview with author, September 27, 2018)

This comment shows that she feels “anonymous” in this particular club’s space created with special effects (“it is dark there, the lights are shining”). Moreover, she can “act crazy” because the people that are with her are never going to see her again.

As was illustrated by their quotes, during clubbing, both Dominik and Adéla encounter particular feelings of anonymity on the dance floor, which are facilitated by the special effects of the music performance. In this regard, Malbon argues that dance crowds, whose creation is facilitated by the specific characteristics of a dance floor, for example, the special effects, can ‘anonymize,’ but also ‘individualize’ people that are part of the crowd (1999, 73), and “heighten or mute their awareness of self” (ibid., 115). In the examples of Dominik’s and Adéla’s clubbing experience then, Dominik has his awareness of self muted, so he does not feel reluctant to dance with others. Adéla, on the other hand, has her awareness of self heightened, and she lets herself go and acts crazy regardless of others. However, both of these changes to their consciousness are facilitated by the anonymity provided by the special effects.

22 Celkově je tam tma, svítí tam ty světýlka...je to takový klidný, seš tam anonymní...ti lidi, protože jich tam bývá hodně, tě už nikdy neviděj když se ztrapníš, jdeš si to tam prostě užít, zablbnout si, vydovádět se na hudbě, protože to k tomu taky svádí. Máchám si hlavou, ale všem je to jedno, protože jsou stejně nalitý, že jo.

All in all, the effects of the Cross club's physical place facilitate the creation of the club's overall atmosphere. The place itself, its architecture and design, described in Chapter One, is filled with music, special effects, and people, which can then create the ultimate social and sensorial space of the venue.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examine how particular characteristics and effects of the physical place of Cross club, its overall atmosphere and multifaceted space, influence the visitors gathering inside of the venue, providing them, for example, with feelings of anonymity and time erasure.

Nonetheless, the physical place is not the only factor for the creation of Cross club's scene. Just as important is the social space of the venue, regulated by its management and co-established by its visitors. I explore this different aspect of space, along with management's spatial strategies further in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three – Social space as regulated by the Cross club management

The program is really good there, which enabled to create the place as it is, the mixing atmosphere, it is not like eighty percent of people come for a concert and then leave. It is more mixing, so you don't see any drastic transitions of people [through the evening].²³
(Monika, personal communication, September 28, 2018).

[When talking about admission fee policies]

Nadine- I like that they don't give you those dumb bracelets that get in the way all the time, they are unpleasant and so on, but they give you some kind of stamp that's invisible...

Lucie- Oh yeah, the stamp is cool.

Nadine- It is visible only under ultraviolet light, I think.

Lucie- Yeah, it's really cool. It's sexy.²⁴

(Lucie and Nadine, interview with author, September 25, 2018)

These opinions of different Cross club visitors, chosen from many similar remarks and conversations, briefly illustrate how the clubbers view the venue from the perspective of various management social strategies. Be it about the inclusive programming policy of the venue, seen from Monika's comment, or about the concrete admission strategy regarding door policy from the conversation of Lucie and Nadine.

As is implicated in the quotes, the main focus of this chapter is the Cross club's social space, by which I mean a set of its non-physical spatial characteristics that are directly influenced by its management and co-constituted by the visitors. Concretely, I focus on the Cross club's ideology and how is this ideology reflected in the club's spatial policies, namely door policy and programming. These two policies directly shape what kind of people will be present in the venue, and through this also the social space and overall club scene. In this regard, I observe how are different events in the Cross club

23 Ten program je tam fakt dobrej, což umožnilo vytvoření toho místo takovýho jaký je, tak nějak to proplyvá...není to že osmdesát procent lidí přijde na koncert a pak odejde. Víc to tam proplyvá, takže nevidíš žádný drastický změny lidí.

24 N- Líbí se mi, že ti nedávají ty blbý náramky, který furt překáží, jsou nepříjemný a tak, ale že ti jenom daj takový razítko, který není vidět

L- Oh jo. To razítko je cool.

N- A je vidět jen pod ultrafialovým světlem myslím.

L- Jo to je fakt cool. Je to sexy.

organized, how is the community involved in this process, and certain tension between ideals and practice in the organization of the venue. Furthermore, I also examine the influence of the club's strategies on the audience.

Similarly to the physical place, the characteristics of social space are important for understanding the Cross club scene, how is it created and maintained, and what effects does the space of the venue have on the people inhabiting it. However, compared to the physical characteristics, the social space described in this chapter is much more susceptible to the organizational practices, as well as to the visitor tactics through which clubbers co-constitute the social space of the venue. Furthermore, while sometimes the social space can be shaped by unexpected occurrences or situations, it is always consciously created and enforced by the management and negotiated by the visitors.

For this chapter, I use the theoretical considerations of Fabian Holt about ideology and economy of musical venues in New York, Copenhagen and Berlin (2013). His research in gentrified neighborhoods also applies to the Cross club and its operation.

Moreover, I turn to Gill Valentine and her study about lesbian singer k.d. lang and her fans, concretely regarding feelings of temporary community emerging in places of musical performance (1995), to understand a certain feeling of "togetherness" present between regulars of Cross club scene.

Ideology

The club's ideology influences both its physical and social space, its social policies and business practices, as well as their goals and daily operation. Some musical clubs are driven by commercial purposes, while others have the basis of their operation further rooted in alternative ideas or values. In this regard, Holt identifies these different types in his study of musical venues in gentrified neighborhoods. There are professional mid-sized concert venues featuring headliners and catering to white middle-class customers on the one hand and small underground community based DIY venues for more specialized audiences on the other (Holt 2013). While these categories may seem exclusive, some clubs incorporate both kinds of goals. The Cross club seems to be one of them, as is illustrated by these comments from its general director, Tomáš Zdeněk:

I think we are succeeding in what we wanted, that the Cross would be a place for various people to meet here.²⁵

25 Myslím, že se nám daří to, co jsme chtěli, že by Cross byl místo, kde by se potkávali různí lidi.

(Zdeněk, interview with author, January 15, 2019)

From the very start, we had a vision [to] rent the whole building and make a cultural center inside, and it [the vision] somehow succeeded, so we try to make all kinds of cultural disciplines. Like we have a theater in the attic, there are rehearsal rooms through the building, we somehow make music, some artwork, some lectures, so in this regard, it is meant to be a cultural center. That one does not find only music here, but that the program is much broader.²⁶

(Zdeněk, interview with author, January 15, 2019)

These quotes imply that the Cross club is not only a musical club, but its management also tries to create a multicultural center for various types of people and cultural activities. The venue's door policy and programming then reflect this goal.

Door policy

From the beginning, we try for Cross [club] to be open to everyone, maybe except neo-Nazis and fascists. [...] I think we are more working-class club than intellectual, so socially, the people are categorized lower, but at the same time, it is not a rule. But in general, if I were to compare [Cross club with other] Prague clubs, I would say we are more social than somewhere else.²⁷

(Zdeněk, interview with author, January 15, 2019)

This quote shows a class-inclusive door policy when often people from all over the class spectrum are present together in the venue. By “being social,” Zdeněk means that there are more worker-class and lower-middle-class visitors than upper-class ones.

Moreover, the Cross club's effort to be affordable further facilitates the notion of being “socially lower,” and class-inclusive. Most of the venue-organized events are entirely free or with low-cost entrance fees (up to 100 crowns), and even nights with more famous and costly performers are generally rather cheap for the amount of content they provide (up to 250 crowns). Sunday to Thursday performances and most of the non-musical events (theater, movies, or festivals) are in general with free entry. Friday and Saturday events then often have a particular door policy, where the fee admission is lower if one arrives before a certain hour, and higher after this time frame. The price range for

26 Od úplného začátku jsme měli vizi, že by bylo krásný celej ten barák pronajmout a udělat v něm kulturní centrum, a nějak se to povedlo, takže se snažíme dělat všechny možný kulturní disciplíny. Jako, že máme na půdě divadlo, jsou tady zkušebny v baráku, nějakým způsobem děláme hudbu, nějaký výtvarný umění, nějaký přednášky, takže v tomhle ohledu, je to myšleno jako kulturní centrum. Že tu člověk nenajde jen hudbu, ale ten program je mnohem širší.

27 Od začátku se snažíme, aby byl Cross otevřenější komukoliv, možná kromě neo-Nacistů a fašistů. [...] Myslím, že jsme víc dělnický klub než intelektuální, takže lidi jsou sociálně zařazení níž, ale zároveň to není pravidlo. Ale celkově, kdybych nás měl srovnávat v pražských klubech, řekl bych, že jsme sociálněji než jinde.

admission fee is then in general from 50 to 150 crowns before 9 or 10 p.m. and from 150 to 250 crowns afterward. It is important to note that these are only very general price ranges. The concrete price and hour depend on a variety of factors, for example, budget for the event, line-up, or target audience (e.g., lower fee for students – usually 50 crowns). In general, the most expensive entrance is around the time frame, when the most famous artists from the particular event's line-up are performing. Therefore, some events have higher or, in the opposite, free admission after midnight, depending on the position of the headliners in the schedule. My guess is, this is advantageous for both organizers and visitors, as it encourages people to come earlier and stay longer in the club, therefore also spending more money on drinks or food, while visitors can enter their desired event for a lower price. Furthermore, this policy can potentially attract more visitors. Alternatively, it can keep longer in the venue the people, who came earlier for a different purpose, for example, dinner in the restaurant.

Programming

Furthermore, the venue's programming policy reflects the goal of Cross club to be a multicultural center. The program is very diverse, encompassing a wide spectrum of musical genres. There are mainly electronic dance music (EDM) genres presented in the venue, for instance, d'n'b, techno, tekno, bassline²⁸, jungle²⁹, or house³⁰. While EDM is the main focus of the venue, the program features also live music genres: rock, punk, blues, jazz, or country. The management presents the latter three genres (and many more) only rarely, depending on the actual schedule possibilities of the venue. This presence of various diverse music genres in the club, often even together during one evening, is probably the most important multicultural aspect of the venue. Interestingly, this does not create explicit conflicts between subcultures, nor does the management put much thought into it when making the program schedule. In this regard, Zdeněk remarks:

I think that in the past, there was a lot of live music versus electronic music, and then, of course, there are some things, like people that listen to minimal house or intellectual techno, then they distance themselves from people listening to d'n'b, that it's kind of dumb and old, but I think it is not anything really essential.³¹

(Zdeněk, interview with author, January 15, 2019)

28 Particular style of electronic music with emphasized bass lines. This style is closely related to the UK garage.

29 Genre developed in the UK in the early 1990s as part of rave culture. The style is characterized by rapid breakbeats and heavy use of samples and synthesized effects. A predecessor of drum and bass.

30 Genre of electronic dance music characterized by repetitive beat, where a bass drum is hit on every beat in 4/4 time.

In this quote, he talks about the distinction between live and electronic music, as well as about different opinions within the electronic music subcultures. However, the main point of this quote, which is an integral part of the club's ideology, is that these distinctions are not crucial for the venue.

Moreover, Cross club also organizes non-musical events – theater performances, slam poetry³², stand-up comedy, film projections, workshops, storytelling events, art exhibitions, and food festivals. Furthermore, as is possible to see in the quotes above, this is, in the opinion of the management, what makes Cross club the multicultural center.

Besides, Cross club sometimes scouts or 'discover' new promising artists in their effort to create a multicultural center. An excellent example of this is performer Ventolin, who performed for only several people in Cross club at the start of his career (Zdeněk, interview with author, January 15, 2019), or Adam "Cocoman" Lanči, frontman of retired *Vokokos* band (he now performs with a band *Mr.Cocoman and Solid Vibes*).

Furthermore, when asked about an involvement of the club's visitors in the organization of the venue, Zdeněk said:

I try to talk to young people and to learn what they listen to, but otherwise, I think we are pretty much saturated with ideas [plans], and then it is important to know what is realistic and what is not, because the visitors have the idea, that they know somebody from Youtube, who is really good, and they cannot see, that financially, it is somewhere else, total mainstream, unpayable for. But if somebody mentions something that is realistic and popular, then there is no problem in asking about it. But in general, we are too overwhelmed with work to deal too much with what visitors suggest. Because there are thousands of them.

³³

(Zdeněk, interview with author, January 15, 2019)

Here, he notes that while the Cross club tries to keep an overview of the most popular musical streams, which is also a necessary business move, and attempts to go through suggestions from people, it is impossible to answer and satisfy everybody. The program schedule of the club is tightly packed. It depends on the cooperation of many people, hence

31 Myslím, že dřív tu bylo hodně živý hudby proti elektronický hudbě, a potom jsou nějaký věci, že lidi, kteří poslouchají minimal house nebo intelektual techno, tak se vyhraňují od lidí co poslouchají drum'n'bass, že je to celkem blbý a starý, ale já si myslím, že to není nic důležitýho.

32 Slam poetry is specific elocution, a mix of poetry and singing.

33 Snažím se bavit s mladejma lidma, a zjišťuju co poslouchaj, ale jinak si myslím, že jsme celkem nasycený nápadama, a potom je taky důležitý si říct, co je reálný a co ne, protože návštěvníci mají představu, že znají někoho z Youtube, co je strašně dobrej, ale už nevidí, že cenově je to někde úplně jinde, totální mainstream, nezaplátitelný. Ale když někdo zmíní něco, co je realistický a líbí se, pak není problém se na to zeptat. Ale celkově jsme celkem pracovně zahlcení, abysme řešili to, co návštěvníci říkaj. Protože jich jsou tisíce.

why the club is unable to examine and answer every suggestion coming from the e-mail, website forum, social sites, and personal communication of employees with visitors. Furthermore, as Zdeněk mentions, some suggestions are completely outside the budget possibilities of the venue. He also claims it is necessary to avoid “total populism, with trying to satisfy every single voice or with doing surveys about program opinions of different visitors, because, at the same time, it undermines the authority and structure of the venue” (Zdeněk, interview with author, January 15, 2019). This sentence is an important point regarding the overall ideology of the venue, as it shows, that while there are many different individuals and social groups gathered in the club, it is essential to have a certain level of management “authority,” for the successful and continuous operation of the venue. This “authority” is necessary for ensuring order and preventing issues that could be harmful to the club’s operation, for example, inviting too expensive artists that would lead the venue to bankruptcy.

All in all, the Cross club’s door and programming policies suggest the overall ideology of the venue based on the inclusiveness of people from different genres and cultural backgrounds, which Zdeněk also mentions in his comments.

Community opinion

Furthermore, almost every single person I encountered during my research mentioned how Cross club attracts a wide variety of people and different social groups. They had different opinions about the reasons for this phenomenon. For instance, that the club is searching for its own ‘identity’³⁴, that it attracts as many people as possible for commercial purposes, that it is an unintended side-effect of the operation of the club and its ideology, or that the management wants to create a meeting place and cultural hub. However, they all agree that a wide spectrum of people gathers in the club. I choose the comments from visitors Dominik and Adéla to illustrate this notion:

It seems to me, that if [the owner] is a ‘steampunker,’ or somebody with really free-spirited attitude, with some kind of vision, then I think he wanted to create a community, or rather...that he himself, or his place will serve as an institution, which will be convening, or

34 My informant Lucie thought that the club is attracting all possible kinds of people, so it can later choose from them the one group they want the most in the venue.

support the creation of, new communities. That there are all the possible communities, genre communities... I think that he wanted to create a genre-based multicultural place.³⁵

(Dominik, interview with author, September 24, 2018)

Well, it is, for sure, a unique scene. Also in the way how they do not specialize in one set thing. Yeah, the electronic music is the [main] point of the club, but they also have other events there, they try to multi-culture it.³⁶

(Adéla, personal communication, September 27, 2018)

These quotes well summarize the overall opinion of visitors of Cross club on the venue's ideology that I encountered during my research.

Economy

It is important to note that the inclusive or multicultural goals presented in this section do not mean that the management is ignoring the economic aspect of the club's operation. It can be seen from the history and beginnings of the club, described in Chapter One, that the venue did not start with a pure economic goal. Rather, at first, it was a meeting place for the people around František Chmelík's friends, and the club transformed towards a more profit-based business later on to sustain the daily operation. Furthermore, according to Zdeněk, it is impossible to do "big music business" in the Cross club, because the actual capacity is too small to make any significant amount of money on selling tickets (interview with author, January 15, 2019). However, there are other important aspects of the club's economy to consider. Another big part is selling drinks and food. In this sense, some of the policies, for example, occasional free entry or diverse programming, can also be aimed at attracting more visitors and bringing more profit for the daily operation of the venue or enhancing the gains from selling refreshments. In this regard, there are also other economic strategies to ensure the continuous, financially stable operation of the club. For example, a cloakroom fee, or a deposit for refundable plastic cups, in which drinks are served³⁷. Cloakroom fee is generally 20 crowns, while deposit for cups is 50 crowns. These

35 Přijde mi, že jestli je to steampunker, nebo člověk, co hodně volnomyšlenkářsky uvažuje, a je nějak vizionářsky založený, tak chtěl vytvořit komunitu, nebo spíš...že on sám, nebo to místo, by sloužili jako instituce, která by svolávala, nebo podporovala, vytváření nových komunit. Že tam jsou všechny ty možný komunity, žánrový...myslím, že chtěl vytvořit žánrově multikulturní místo.

36 No rozhodně je to unikátní scéna. Už i tím, jak se nesespecializují na jednu věc vyloženě. Jo, elektronická hudba je hlavní point klubu, ale dělají tam taky další akce, snaží se to multikulturalizovat.

37 The cups are rather popular among the Cross club's visitors. The clubbers appreciate that they do not break and spread sharp glass pieces everywhere (Adéla, interview with author, September 27, 2018). Furthermore, the cups are adorned with the club's logo, and their design changes over time, so many visitors keep them as memory or even collect them.

strategies suggest that ideally, the club tries to be as affordable for a wide spectrum of people as possible, while at the same time, it protects its financial stability. Furthermore, advertisement, that I examine in Chapter One, or municipality funding when Cross club received a grant of two million crowns from the city of Prague in 2015 (Crossclub 2019), are other important profit sources of the venue.

Overall, most of the management's policies and strategies aim to create a meeting place for different types of people, and cultural center, as well as to support the operation of the club financially. Neither of these notions seems to be the sole driving reason behind the Cross club, but rather both are important aspects of the management.

The disparity between ideology and practice

However, ideology and practice do not always match. I illustrate this issue mainly in relation to the Cross club's door policies:

When we were starting, we had kind of a motto that we sort out trash, not people, which in time proved to be quite a utopian idea.³⁸

(Zdeněk, interview with author, January 15, 2019)

Furthermore, considering the history of the club, nobody in the organization had any real experience with management, and most practices developed over time and are self-taught. These are the reasons for one of the most notable aspects of Cross club, its poor reputation in some segments of society. As is implied by the quote above, in the beginning, Cross club did not employ security guards, and any people were welcome to come. This policy, or rather lack of it, attracted even people that Zdeněk calls "parasites," i.e., a people that negatively affected the operation of the venue. These were individuals who were not paying for drinks and food, 'lived off of the club' or stole from the visitors (Zdeněk, interview with author, January 15, 2019). This group possibly includes homeless or poor people. However, the club owner mostly refers to drug users and dealers, who used to take and sell drugs on the venue's premises (ibid.), hence why the Cross club gained a reputation as a place for these kinds of activities. And while later, the club changed its policy in this regard, the reputation is still alive among many people.

38 Když jsme začínali, tak jsme měli takový heslo, že třídíme odpad a ne lidi, což se časem ukázalo jako dost utopická myšlenka.

One encounter I once had in a night tram shows the reputation well. The tram was coming from Lazarská (downtown) to Holešovice with a group of young people, four boys and two girls, who were loudly discussing their plans for the night. One of the girls was very adamant about going to Cross club, while two of the boys were against it and labeled the venue as “junkie den” or “trash” (“fetácký doupě“ and „odpad“). Moreover, I often encountered negative remarks and opinions when talking about Cross club with various people both during and outside of the research. I did not notice any clear pattern about the social standing, age, class, or gender of people with negative attitudes towards the venue. However, generally, fewer people are familiar with the current situation in the Cross club, the more negative opinion they have about it. One of the club’s visitors, Dominik, encountered a similar notion:

I was chatting with a friend, telling him to come to Cross [club] and he was like “No way, I’m not going to Cross [club].” and he was making excuses because he said that he knows what Cross [club] is, but I told him: “But you know Cross [club] isn’t like that anymore.” Just like this. And he wrote because I’m from Prague, but I hadn’t lived here the whole time, right, he wrote: “Like sorry man, but I love people that aren’t from Prague and tell me that Cross [club] isn’t what it used to be.” And now I really led an argument with him, that there are more events now and that it looks good there, and in the end, he admitted that maybe it changed after all.³⁹

(Dominik, interview with author, September 24, 2018)

Similarly to the conversation Dominik had, I generally encountered positive testimonials from people going to the venue or familiar with it, and negative from people that have never been to Cross club before. Moreover, the venue does not evoke only negative feelings in people. During my observations in Cross club, several of the visitors mentioned a specific notion of “togetherness” (*pospolitost*) emerging between them. This togetherness stems from their mutual presence in the venue, and they tend to identify themselves with the fact that they frequent the place. This is, for example, how Dominik explains it:

Dominik – I believe that if somebody, for example, Ád’a [our mutual acquaintance], would say “I often go to Cross!” then I think somebody else would say “Yeah, me too!”. The people really create a community by just appearing there from time to time. They do not create a community [because] they know each other, or that it [the community] would have some

39 Psal jsem si s kámošem, říkal jsem mu a’ přijde do Crossu, a on byl jako „Ani náhodou, nepůjdu do Crossu.“ a teď se vymlouval, protože říkal, že ví, co Cross je, ale já mu řekl: „Ale hele, Cross už takovej není jako.“ Přímo tak. A on napsal, protože jsem z Prahy, ale nežil jsem tu celou dobu, že jo, tak napsal: „Jako sorry, ale miluju když mi lidi, co nejsou z Prahy, říkají že Cross není to, co býval.“ A teď jsem s ním fakt vedl dialektiku, že tam je teď víc akcí, a že to tam vypadá slušně, a nakonec on uznal, že se to možná fakt změnilo.

explicit manifestation. Most people wouldn't even say "Hey I'm from Cross!" or "I go to Cross every Friday!", but if they are there or they find out about it, then we feel like we are from some kind of group, that we have some kind of common community.

Author – So the Cross [club] somehow connects people?

Dominik – Yeah. Like, I think, that if people wore Cross T-shirts, then they would wave at each other on the street. [...] I wouldn't really consider myself to be that much of a part of some community, but if somebody came with something like this, then I would join it as well.⁴⁰

(Dominik, interview with author, September 18, 2018)

This conversation shows how Cross club can become a connecting factor between people that visit the venue regularly and who might not even know each other. The simple fact that they come to and interact in the same space evokes in them the feelings of mutual belonging to the same group.

In this regard, Valentine, in her study, observes a similar notion. She examines how fans of lesbian singer *k.d. lang* at her live performances feel a sense of solidarity that facilitates the creation of a temporary homosexual ("lesbian") community in a particular heterosexual place (1995). However, in her case, the solidarity emerges from a community of fans of this particular singer, existing also outside of the venue, while in Cross club, the place itself is the connecting factor.

Furthermore, the fact that this "togetherness" is based on a concrete place of Cross club is also illustrated in the way the visitors refer to such people. Dominik uses the term "friends of Cross" (*přátelé Crossu*) and several others refer to either themselves or other people as "Cross-people" (*Crossáci*). Moreover, they also often agreed that this togetherness they feel in Cross club is unique and exclusive to this place:

Author – And this connection of people, how they recognize each other, do you think it is the same in every club?

Dominik – No, I don't think so. I think the Cross is special in this.⁴¹

(Dominik, interview with author, September 18, 2018)

40 D- Já věřím tomu, že kdyby někdo, třeba Ád'a, přišla s tím, že chodí do Crossu, tak někdo další by řekl: „Hej, já taky!“. Lidi tam fakt vytváří komunitu, jen tím, že se tam čas od času ocitnou. Nevytváří komunitu, která se zná, nebo že by to mělo nějakou explicitní manifestaci. Většina lidí by ani neřekla „Hey, já jsem z Crossu!“ nebo „Já chodím do Crossu každé pátek!“, ale když tam jsou, nebo to zjistí, tak máme pocit, že jsme z nějaké skupiny, že máme nějakou společnou komunitu.

A-Takže Cross nějak spojuje lidi?

D- Jo. Jako, já myslím, že kdyby lidi chodili v tričkách Cross, tak na sebe budou mávat na ulici. [...] Já bych se úplně moc nepovažoval za součást nějaký komunity, ale kdyby někdo s něčím takovým přišel, tak bych se taky přidal.

41 A- A tohle spojení lidí, jak se poznávají, myslíš, že je to stejný v každém klubu?

D- Ne, to si nemyslím. Já myslím, že Cross je v tomhle speciální.

Author – I see. And do you think, about the solidarity of the people, and the feeling of belonging to the club [she mentioned it earlier]... Do you think it is only in Cross or somewhere else as well?

Lucy – I actually think it is only or mostly in Cross [club]. Or at least, I, personally, did not experience it anywhere else. They are the Cross-people.⁴²

(Lucy, personal communication, January 28, 2019)

These quotes show that the feelings of mutual coherence that some visitors feel in the venue are something that they only perceive in Cross club, which makes this place somehow different from other clubs they have visited. The fact that they visit the venue regularly can, of course, influence this opinion. I would guess that other reasons can be the physical place and social policies of Cross club, or even the poor reputation itself. If people enjoy going to Cross club but often meet with negative responses towards the venue among their social network, they may interact more with people who share the same passion and form a mutual identity with them.

Moreover, it is interesting to note that Lucy, in her quote, refers to others as “Cross-people” instead of herself. This fact implies that the mutual identity of Cross club visitors can be observed by people who are not part of it, as well as that this phenomenon does not unconditionally apply to all visitors gathering in the venue.

In this regard, Dominik notes, while discussing whether these feelings of belonging to a mutual group also emerge between people attending the food festivals held in the venue, that this notion appears mostly between regulars in the Cross club scene:

Of course you can say: “Well, I’ve been there just for the burger, and I don’t really know what Cross is.” But if somebody really goes there, goes downstairs [into the clubs] and isn’t afraid of the place, then I think, at least between the people that are there [in Cross club] a bit more often, then there really is this kind of togetherness.⁴³

(Dominik, interview with author, September 18, 2018)

In this quote, he makes a distinction between regular visitors and newcomers, or people, who avoid the musical part of the programming. According to him, the coherence of “Cross-people” then emerges mostly between the regulars.

All in all, several of the clubbers I interviewed, mention that there is a certain kind of mutual identity present between the regulars of Cross club scene. Subsequently, in this

42 A- Aha. A myslíš, že ta solidarita lidí, a ten pocit, že patří ke klubu... Myslíš, že je to jen v Crossu, nebo taky někde jinde?

L- Já vlastně myslím, že je to jenom nebo hlavně v Crossu. Nebo aspoň, já osobně, jsem to nikdy nikde jinde nezažila. Jsou to prostě Crossáci.

43 Jasně, že můžeš říct: „No, já tam byl na burger, a vlastně ani nevím, co Cross je.“ Ale jestli tam někdo fakt jde, jde dolů a nebojí se toho místa, tak potom si myslím, že aspoň mezi lidma, co jsou tam trochu častěji, že tam fakt je tenhle druh pospolitosti.

section, I illustrate the polarizing reputation of Cross club among society. And to clarify the claim from the Introduction of this thesis, some people despise the venue and consider it a “junkie den,” while some people love it, and it becomes part of their identity and place, where they meet people that are close to them.

Conclusions

Overall, in this section of Chapter Three, I provide an overview and the context of various social policies and strategies of Cross club that I now turn to explore in further detail.

Spatial policies of Cross club

Door policy

One of the policies most closely tied to the inclusive ideology of the venue is door policy. Generally, the way the entry to Cross club works is not much different from any other nightclub. Visitors are not allowed to carry weapons or their food and drinks into the venue, and the security guards oversee that people do not cause problems for themselves, others, and the club. However, the exact entry conditions vary each evening. These variations depend mostly on the number of people present, and on the type of the event. The primary dichotomy seems to be the difference between weekends and weekdays. Generally, the weekend nights (Friday and Saturday), with more people attending, tend to have more security guards and stricter security. The necessity to leave bags and jackets in the cloakroom further reflects this strictness. On the other hand, on weeknights (Sunday to Thursday), the entrance into the club tends to be more liberal, with fewer guards mainly focused on overseeing the order and safety in the venue. The security staff also do not force visitors to go through security checks, and the clubbers are allowed to keep their luggage. Furthermore, if there is an admission fee for the particular event, visitors must prove that they have paid it, by showing a UV stamp on their hand (visible under ultraviolet light) or a bracelet, at the main entrance and sometimes further in hallways of the venue (see also Chapter One).

Programming

The very diverse program policy of the club, described in the ideology section of this chapter, makes it impossible for only one person to manage alone. Therefore, the club

employs internal organizers in charge of individual events, while the general director and head manager Zdeněk supervises everything. He then cooperates with the organizers in assembling the program schedule. Nevertheless, even with this structure, Zdeněk argues the club alone cannot take care of its diverse program. Moreover, he claims that it is not good for the program itself to have one closed team organizing everything (Zdeněk, interview with author, January 15, 2019).

Hence why the venue cooperates with so-called “sub-promoters” [*sub-promotéři*]. These are various outside crews and individuals active in the scene with different genre backgrounds, who have an agreement with the club to create line-ups with budget proposals for individual events and submit them to the club’s main program organizers for approval. Some regular “sub-promoters” active in Cross club are, for example, FUNK UP (EDM), Drum and Bass Crew (d’n’b), Smeg, or Big Boss (hip-hop, rock, surf punk). This agreement is apparently beneficial for both sides as Zdeněk notes: “[The sub-promoters] they do not carry any risks, and they have an option to realize their vision” (interview with author, January 15, 2019). In this regard, according to Stefan Motika from Bigg Boss label⁴⁴, the external organizers select the artist line-up together with Zdeněk, and the “sub-promoter” then takes care of booking (communication with bands, schedule), communications on social sites, PR and graphics of individual events. They also produce those events together with the venue. They get paid together with the bands (Motika, e-mail communication, April 21, 2020). In turn, the Cross club can feature artists outside of their network, and it is not necessary for the venue to actively manage program schedules for every day in the year themselves. Overall, “sub-promoters” are a rather broad category, which seems to include both regular cooperation with seasoned crews, some of which I mention above, and individual or one time deals with “young people from different genres, that make things differently from anybody else” (Zdeněk, interview with author, January 15, 2019).

The final program of Cross club is then created by the cooperation and alignment of different people and factors. Some of the events are planned and negotiated by the venue’s organizational team. These are especially events held on weekdays and are sought after by management or the community because they are ‘interesting’ or have some personal value to the club (Zdeněk, interview with author, January 15, 2019). Other events then, mainly weekend ones, are proposed by the “sub-promoters” and approved and sheltered by the

44 Bigg boss label organizes ‘Radical’ events in Cross club and Café V Lese. Concretely, ten of them in 2019 in Cross club.

venue's internal organizers. Moreover, according to Cross club management, some events are results of certain "opportunism" (ibid.). For example, when a band is passing through the Czech Republic and have a free night, they can agree with the Cross club on performing there.

All in all, Cross club creates the actual program schedule on a delicate balance between events organized by internal organizers, "sub-promoters" and events resulting from the "opportunism."

Conclusion

All these different strategies and policies of Cross club management that I examine through this chapter influence the social space regulated by the venue and the kind of people that inhabits the space of Cross club. However, it is important to note that the clubbers are not only passive actors in the creation of the scene. People always actively adjust to, shape, and manipulate their surroundings, which in turn influences them (Verbuč 2017).

Conclusions

When I decided to study the space of Cross club, I expected to encounter several closed social groups based on musical taste, coexisting, and interacting in one enclosed scene. However, during my research, I did not encounter explicitly closed communities or subcultures that would interact exclusively with each other. Instead, I found myself in vibrant and lively space, where very different individuals from very different backgrounds, who came to the venue for very different reasons, coexisted and socialized together in the space of Cross club, each pursuing their own entertainment or goals. Therefore, in this paper, I focus mainly on the physical place and the social space regulated by the management of Cross club, as they are necessary parts that facilitate the presence of visitors and the overall scene. These different aspects of space are closely connected and actively influence and mold each other, and the scene is not simply controlled by the management of the venue. The clubbers also actively shape the space surrounding them. Hence why, in this text, I attempt to provide a context, necessary for the understanding of what Cross club is or can be, and background of this polarizing and famous music venue and cultural hub. At the same time, I focus on some of the management strategies and visitor tactics that actors in Cross club scene use. These strategies and tactics then actively shape the scene, which, on the other hand, also constantly influences the actors inhabiting it.

To answer the main research question then, the Cross club, or rather the physical place and social space regulated by the management of the venue, utilize a wide variety of spatial strategies, traits, and policies, that consciously, and sometimes unconsciously, shape the constant and ever-changing creation and renegotiation of Cross club scene. This scene is a result of the particular combination and context of two different aspects of space that actively influence each other: the physical place of the venue, and its social space, regulated by the organizers and co-constituted by the visitors. And while the management uses the concrete spatial strategies to influence the venue towards their desired direction, the visitors are not simple receptors and continuously renegotiate the rules of the venue and their surroundings. Or to quote one of my informants: “The management provides the place for the visitors to do what they want in there...in some limits, of course” (Monika, personal communication, September 28, 2018).

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Figure 2. Pan Vegan website. Available on <https://panvegan.cz/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/cross-club-640x420.jpg>

Figure 3. _MG_9392.jpg. Cross club official website. Available on <https://www.crossclub.cz/cs/interier/851-dolni-stage/>