ARCHIVING DUTCH NIGHT AND CLUB CULTURE

About Podiumkunst.net

Podiumkunst.net[1] connects the treasures of the Dutch performing arts from archival institutions and organisations and individuals across the performing arts in the broadest sense possible, and allows culture makers, researchers, and enthusiasts to access them. The goal is to create a complete and accessible digital overview of Dutch performing arts heritage: one that brings new life to the history of the performing arts in the Netherlands and serves as a rich source of inspiration, for now, and in the future. Podiumkunst.net also operates as a network of and for institutions and collectives in the sector. This network provides support, inspiration and awareness about the preservation and digitisation of the Netherlands' performing arts' heritage.

About VibeLab

VibeLab[2] is a data-driven research, consultancy and advocacy agency dedicated to supporting creatives and preserving nighttime culture. With over ten years of experience, VibeLab works with local institutions and governments to develop strategies to effectively navigate and support the nightlife industry. We specialise in making complex data clear. VibeLab's research and consultancy helps identify growth opportunities and connects individuals, businesses, governments and institutions, to boost creativity and local economies. We are passionate about the transformative power that nightlife culture and creative communities have on urban areas. Our strength lies in our connections: we bridge the gap between government authorities, nightlife creatives and local communities. VibeLab creates change with sustainable solutions, backed by data to make cities thrive at night.

Documenting is the act of capturing information, whilst archiving is about preserving and organising that information for the future. Documentation is the starting point; archiving ensures the longevity and accessibility of what has been documented. We ask: how is club culture being archived at present, and how do the various stakeholders engaged in this emerging field want to shape it in the future?

"Our parties weren't born out of glitz; they were gatherings of people who just needed a space to express themselves. The soul of our parties started in warehouses squats, and hidden basements."

- Shinedoe, DJ, producer, label owner

"Archiving nightlife history is not just preservation but recognition of its cultural and artistic significance. We're proud to contribute and hope this movement continues to evolve in underground– and subculture everywhere"

- Celia Okoro, Night Mayor of Nijmegen

"Just because it's not archived by a council or a government doesn't mean there's no archive."

- Hillegonda Rietveld, professor emeritus, Arts & Media, Sonic Culture at London South Bank University

OPENING ADDRESS

For decades, night and club culture has profoundly shaped global art and music, yet its contributions remain undervalued and frequently misunderstood. Often dismissed as mere hedonism, its rich history has been marginalised within traditional cultural canons. Dance music, a driving force of this culture, is more than a genre—it is a performative phenomenon encompassing music, visual art, and embodied expression on the dance floor. However, nightlife's ephemeral nature makes preservation difficult. Even when archived, existing collections are often fragmented, overlooking regional diversity and minoritised voices, including those of people of colour, women, and the queer community. The reduction of this culture to commercialised narratives has further led to economic priorities overshadowing the pioneering contributions of the Netherlands' grassroots movements, erasing vital histories such as Rotterdam's bubbling scene,[3] shaped by Dutch Antillean immigrants, and Groningen's acid house movement of the late 1980s.[4]

In recent years, night and club culture has gained greater recognition for its artistic and cultural value, even within elite Dutch institutions. Events such as the Holland Festival's nighttime programmes[5]— where choral music, Techno, and theatre converge— exhibitions on dance music at the Design Museum Den Bosch,[6] and performances by Detroit Techno pioneers like Jeff Mills at the Concertgebouw,[7] highlight a growing intersection between the underground and so-called high culture. Cities across the Netherlands are also developing policies to support nightlife, signalling a broader institutional shift. However, critical questions remain: How do we prevent grassroots origins from being overshadowed by commercial narratives? How can archives capture not just tangible artefacts—records, flyers, and videos—but also nightlife's ephemeral magic? Most importantly, how do we ensure that marginalised voices are centred, avoiding tokenisation and preserving their vital contributions?

Nightlife has long been a space for experimentation, connection, and resistance. To paraphrase Dutch-Surinamese innovator DJ Chuckie, Dutch club culture extends far beyond Amsterdam's big clubs—it lives in every house party, record shop, and regional rave that shaped it. As Emma Warren, author of *Document Your Culture*,[8] notes, "Documenting is the act of capturing information, while archiving is about preserving and organising that information for the future." This distinction highlights the urgency of building sustainable frameworks to protect night culture and promote real-time documentation—not just of tangible artefacts but also of intangible cultural practices.

Organisations like Podiumkunst.net are responding to the call to action. Following the Dutch Council for Culture's[9] recommendations to include non-canonised genres and minoritised voices, Podiumkunst.net is developing a centralised, accessible network of digitised collections. This effort connects makers, researchers, and enthusiasts with historical resources, amplifying overlooked narratives and reshaping cultural heritage.

At this pivotal moment, this report contributes to Podiumkunst.net's efforts by taking a modest first step in uncovering and amplifying untold stories within Dutch night and club culture. Drawing on case studies from Groningen and Amsterdam, as well as international examples from the UK and US, it seeks to answer urgent questions: How do we prevent the erasure and whitewashing of its roots? How can we support grassroots efforts to document underground stories that resist commercial pressures? And how do we ensure today's vibrant nightlife culture is preserved for future generations?

Miles Niemeijer, domain coordinator for music at Podiumkunst.net

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VRIESHUIS AMERIKA

presents

the jungle sound of Bristol England

Roni Size
DJ Krust
MC Dynamite

& support

Thursday the 27th of June

22.00 hours · admission hfl 12.50

oostelijke handelskade 25
a m s t e r d a m

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FACTS ABOUT THE REPORT

900
Minutes of recorded stakeholder conversations

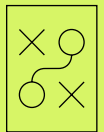**4**
In depth case studies

6
Recommendations

40
Further actions

1
Checklist to inspire grassroots nightlife communities to document their culture
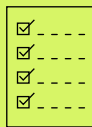
20
Recommended readings on approaches to archiving

22
Potential case studies related to archiving night and club culture

44
Quotes throughout the report to emphasise stakeholder voices
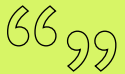
45
Research participants

Format spread of which:	Geographic spread of which:		Gender spread of which:
	90% from the Kingdom of the Netherlands, 10% international		
	Within the Netherlands:		
10 Personalised interviews	Amsterdam	19	Male
	Groningen	3	
	Nijmegen	3	
	Rotterdam	3	
	Utrecht	2	Female
2 Panels, 10 Participants	Breda	1	
	Curaçao	1	
	Den Haag	1	
2 Focus Groups, 17 Participants	Deventer	1	Diverse
	Eindhoven	1	
	Haarlem	1	
	Hengelo	1	
	Leeuwarden	1	
8 Additional stakeholders who submitted feedback via an online form	Schiedam	1	
	Zandvoort	1	
	Zwolle	1	

Count
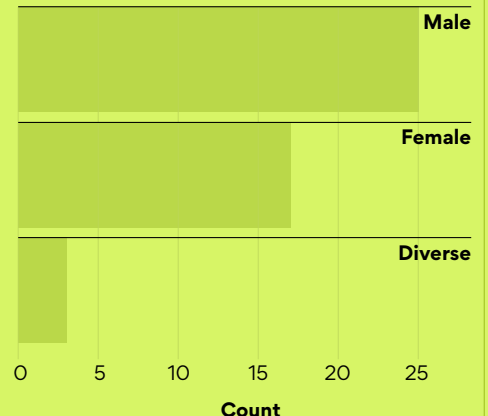
WHAT THE REPORT CONTAINS

The report integrates insights from an extensive literature review and conversations with a diverse pool of stakeholders to examine the challenges and opportunities in archiving night and club culture in the Netherlands. Research participants—community leaders, DJs, venue operators, dancers, archivists, and academics—offer perspectives shaped by their roles in grassroots spaces, public institutions, and creative industries. Together, their experiences illuminate the complexities of preserving club culture as public heritage, from capturing the ephemeral nature of nightlife to forging meaningful relationships between grassroots actors and institutions.

At the core of the report is a brief overview of the status quo of night and club culture archiving in the Netherlands, identifying gaps and barriers to develop targeted action. Complementing this overview is a literature review of different approaches to archiving including unsystematic methods which are more adaptable and accessible for communities with limited resources and technical expertise. This analysis is followed by four case studies—drawn from projects in the Netherlands, the UK, and the US—which illustrate how varying approaches, scopes, and partnerships with institutions continue to develop the field of archiving. These research findings demonstrate tangible pathways and principles that inform the report's recommendations.

Having presented challenges and considerations in archiving night and club culture—such as the recognition of intangible cultural heritage, achieving diverse representation, and navigating partnerships between institutions and nightlife communities— the report concludes with recommendations, and direct actions tailored to institutional stakeholders. Club cultural practitioners, on the other hand, are offered guiding questions to enhance their current documentation and preservation practices. In the annex, additional resources, such as an extended list of case studies, and recommended readings broaden the discussion and offer practical guidance for stakeholders wishing to dig deeper.

Throughout this report a distinct focus is placed on amplifying stakeholder voices. Direct quotes underscore the expertise and lived experiences of participants, reinforcing the pertinence of the topic and increasing accessibility for readers from both academia and those working in nightlife. This approach aims to inspire night and club cultural communities to preserve their histories, enhance public recognition, and advocate for stronger structural support.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research reveals that archiving Dutch nightlife culture is at a crossroads. While there is a growing recognition of its importance, systemic exclusion and lack of access to resources and funding continue to hinder effective preservation. This report identifies key challenges and opportunities to pave a way toward a more inclusive and sustainable archival landscape.

➔ **Marginalised Voices:** Existing archives often exclude minoritised communities, non-commercial successes, and lesser-known regions, reinforcing a narrow perspective on the origins, evolution, and pioneers of night culture.

➔ **Material and Immaterial Culture:** The ephemeral nature of nightlife requires innovative archiving methods to better capture its intangible qualities and move beyond a mere collection of material artefacts and memorabilia.

➔ **Community Ownership:** Where possible, nightlife communities should own and manage their own archives. If institutional involvement is necessary, it should be guided by post-custodial approaches that maximise community ownership.

➔ **Institutional Dynamics:** Recognising the inherent power imbalance and the risk of exploitation, collaborations between institutions and nightlife communities must prioritise equity, flexibility, and trust-building, which may require long-term engagement.

➔ **Capacity Gaps:** Community-led archives often lack resources, access to technology, and expertise for effective long-term preservation in order to reach their full potential.

To address these challenges, the report offers targeted recommendations:

➔ **Recognise Nightlife's Cultural Value:** Acknowledge night and club culture as integral to Dutch heritage at institutional and governmental levels, and in doing so, adapt existing frameworks to embrace its ephemeral, and unconventional nature.

➔ **Embrace Diversity:** Actively seek out and engage with diverse communities, not just those that are easy to identify due to commercial success, to achieve a more comprehensive and representative spectrum of nightlife culture.

➔ **Foster Collaboration:** Build equitable partnerships between nightlife communities and cultural institutions based on co-creation and mutual respect.

➔ **Empower Community Archiving:** Empower communities to document their own narratives and build their own archives, while offering assistance through capacity-building initiatives such as training, funding, resources, and expert guidance, without prioritising commercial interests.

➔ **Develop Ethical Guidelines:** In partnership with nightlife communities, establish clear ethical guidelines for archiving nightlife culture, and address privacy and copyright concerns.

1. INTRO- DUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Night and club culture, like other popular and vernacular practices, have long been overlooked in the traditional canon of arts and culture. The Netherlands is no exception, despite electronic music's prominence as a cultural export. The Covid-19 pandemic, which resulted in widespread lockdowns and social distancing mandates from 2020 to 2022, severely impacted the nightlife and hospitality sectors. This disruption highlighted the fragility of the nightlife economy and the irreplaceable role of night and club culture in fostering community, creativity, and cultural identity. Advocacy campaigns such as United We Stream[10] and #SaveOurVenues[11] emerged to support artists and cultural actors, as well as protect beloved venues from closure under economic pressure.

The discourse and actions needed to safeguard the heritage of night and club culture still have a long way to go, although recent years have seen dedicated exhibitions and museum showcases, particularly in the USA and Europe. As night and club culture continue to become more visible, it becomes increasingly important to ensure that narratives reflect its diversity. Currently, dominant accounts of Dutch night and club culture often overlook the contributions of lesser-known cities, niche genres, women, and communities minoritised[12] because of sexual orientation, gender identity,[13] race, and ethnicity.

VibeLab, in collaboration with the Dutch performing arts consortium Podiumkunst.net, seeks to advance and enrich the discourse by gathering insights from Dutch heritage creators such as dancers and DJs, as well as archivists, academics, and nightlife enthusiasts. By examining the role of public resources and institutions in preserving its rich legacy, this initiative advocates for the recognition of Dutch night and club culture as a legitimate cultural sector in the broader Dutch cultural canon.

"Focusing on symbolic places and stories can help anchor and understand Dutch dance culture as heritage."

- Britt-Marie van der Drift, educator on slavery history, lecturer at Reinwardt Academie

1.2 METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION

This study employed a qualitative research methodology that prioritised direct engagement with stakeholders to examine the current state of Dutch night and club culture archiving, while uncovering underrepresented perspectives. The methodology included a literature review, interviews, focus groups, panel discussions, and supplementary tools to ensure inclusivity and broad representation.

Literature Review

A foundational literature review conducted by Podiumkunst.net provided critical background for the study. This review summarised insights and overlooked areas in initiatives to archive club cultures. Addressing these gaps, the research emphasised engaging directly with underrepresented voices in terms of genres, geographies and demographics. Furthermore, the review served as a useful resource for preparing interviews, focus groups, and panels, equipping researchers with a deeper understanding of stakeholder contexts and aiding the analysis of case studies.

Stakeholder Database Development

Initial desk research identified stakeholders based on mentions in existing literature, while network sampling leveraged community leaders in Dutch nightlife—DJs, promoters, dancers, venue operators, collectors, and researchers—as entry points for recruiting additional participants. The database captured a wide range of details, including professional roles, geographic location, and demographic information to facilitate a diverse representation of voices.

From the database, 126 individuals were identified, with 59 formally invited to participate. Of these, 37 engaged in interviews, focus groups, and panel discussions, with others contributing informally through personal interactions and knowledge sharing.

Interviews

Online one-on-one interviews were conducted in English between September and November 2024. These interviews followed a semi-structured script, enabling flexibility while focusing on key themes relevant to the archiving of club culture. Data collection methods included video and audio recordings, and transcripts to ensure comprehensive documentation.

Focus Groups

Two focus groups were organised. The first, held in Dutch during the in-person Congress Podia Festivals Events (CPFE)[14] conference at TivoliVredenburg, Utrecht (September 2024), was a broad discussion open to all conference delegates and supported by active outreach to targeted stakeholders. The second, conducted online in English with targeted invites in November 2024, focused more sharply on inclusive archiving practices and principles of good partnership between nightlife communities and external institutions. Both sessions were 90 minutes long, with discussions documented by note takers and audio recordings.

Panel Discussions

The project organised two panel discussions; the first conducted in Dutch at CPFE in Utrecht (September 2024) and the second one in English at the event Echoes of the Underground, hosted by VibeLab at Sexyland during Amsterdam Dance Event (October 2024). These discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed to capture key insights.

Supplementary Data Collection

To ensure inclusivity, stakeholders unable to attend interviews, focus groups, or panels were invited to submit their perspectives via an online form. These contributions were integrated into the dataset along with all other transcripts, ensuring equal representation of all voices.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy

In line with VibeLab's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategy, the following principles were embedded into the research process to ensure equitable access for a broad range of participants:

→ **Financial Equity:** Stipends were provided to equity-seeking participants, including freelancers, to eliminate financial barriers. Access to stipends was based on participants' self-assessments.
→ **Diverse Representation:** The research employed active outreach to amplify perspectives from culturally, geographically and demographically underrepresented groups, such as queer nightlife, the Caribbean diaspora, or club organisers in Friesland, addressing gaps in existing club cultural archiving and storytelling.
→ **Collaborative Practices:** The study emphasises respectful, non-extractive engagement, ensuring that stakeholders' contributions are duly highlighted and credited. This takes place, for example, by a high number of stakeholder quotes 'commenting' the various chapters of this report.

DATA ANALYSIS

All transcribed material—from interviews, focus groups, panels, and supplementary contributions—was analysed with the software, Dovetail. Through manually highlighting portions of text, individual searchable clips are created. Custom tags can be added to these to denote a theme or idea. The customised tags allowed for common themes which emerged from stakeholder conversations to be grouped together, such as challenges, methodologies, specific mentions of communities, regions, and venues, as well as proposals and needs shared by the interviewees.

To complement this, Dovetail's AI clustering feature allowed any combination of tags to be selected for cluster analysis in order to uncover broader patterns and relationships. The patterns that emerged from the AI clustering and manual analysis were then synthesised into structured insights through Dovetail's tools for summarising and presenting findings. This streamlined the process of translating raw data into actionable conclusions. Together, these tools allowed for a balanced approach, combining human expertise and machine intelligence to generate a well-rounded understanding of the data.

The resulting recommendations were reviewed and commented on by a sample of five research participants with different backgrounds, these members of heritage institutions and nightlife communities adding a layer of quality control.

1.3 RELEVANT ACTORS IN THE DUTCH HERITAGE SECTOR

In the Netherlands, archival institutions have traditionally focused on preserving government records as required by law. Their primary role was administrative, ensuring that documents such as building permits and event licences were properly maintained. Over time, this focus has expanded to include broader heritage preservation. Museums have long played a key role in this process, using exhibitions to add cultural value to materials and artefacts through storytelling. City archives, in particular, have followed suit, increasingly engaging with contemporary societal trends to diversify their collections and connect with the public.

This evolving archival landscape presents a vital opportunity for the nightlife community to collaborate with institutions and ensure its cultural contributions are documented as part of Dutch social history. From influential countercultural movements to individual experiences, archives are now more open than ever to capturing diverse voices and preserving the stories that shape society.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Archival Institutions

➔ National archives are responsible for safeguarding cultural and historical records, while city archives focus on documenting local heritage, including nightlife and community stories. Specialised archives, like those for music or the performing arts, often house niche collections such as club flyers, DJ sets, and event recordings.

Museums

➔ Cultural history museums document broader cultural movements, including youth cultures. Music and performing arts museums focus on showcasing the history and evolution of performing arts, including electronic music and dance. Community and regional museums highlight the unique heritage of local nightlife scenes, preserving stories and artifacts from these vibrant cultural spaces.

Heritage Organisations and Networks

➔ National heritage networks, such as the Netwerk Digitaal Erfgoed (NDE)[15] in the Netherlands, offer digital infrastructure and expertise for heritage projects. Platforms like Podiumkunst.net support the performing arts sector with archival and technical resources, while international heritage networks such as Europeana,[16] International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts (IETM),[17] International Heritage Cooperation,[18] and International Council on Archives (ICA),[19] promote cross-border collaboration to preserve global nightlife culture.

Schools and Universities

➔ Universities and art schools explore nightlife culture through studies, oral histories, and artistic projects, while public schools and youth programmes engage young people in heritage projects to connect them with their cultural roots.

Governmental Bodies

➔ The Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture (OCW) is a key stakeholder, running programmes which acknowledge dance and nightlife culture as integral to youth empowerment and cultural engagement. Policymakers in this sector develop frameworks and funding to promote widespread and diverse heritage preservation.

➔ Local governments also play an important role in preservation efforts. Cultural departments support local nightlife preservation initiatives and events. Urban planning departments collaborate to preserve physical spaces historically tied to nightlife culture, and community engagement programmes connect local communities with heritage projects.

IMPORTANT HERITAGE INSTITUTIONS IN THE NETHERLANDS

1. The Netherlands Institute for Sound & Vision (Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld & Geluid)
2. National Archives (Nationaal Archief)
3. Allard Pierson - The Collections of the University of Amsterdam
4. Music Center the Netherlands (Muziekcentrum Nederland via Nederlands Muziek Instituut)
5. Meertens Instituut
6. Eye Filmmuseum
7. The Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis)
8. Groningen Archives (Groninger Archieven)
9. Royal Library (Koninklijke Bibliotheek)
10. National Museum of World Cultures (Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen)
11. The Netherlands Open Air Museum (Nederlands Openluchtmuseum)
12. Amsterdam City Archives (Stadsarchief Amsterdam)
13. Provincial and Municipal Archives (Provinciale en Gemeentelijke Archieven)
14. Podiumkunst.net
15. Dutch Digital Heritage Network (NDE)

1

The Netherlands Institute for Sound & Vision (Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld & Geluid)

Location: Hilversum

Focus: Media, television, radio, film, and digital heritage.

Audiovisual recordings of music and other types of performances, interviews with artists and documentaries about performing arts.

→ beeldengeluid.nl

2

National Archives (Nationaal Archief)

Location: Den Haag

Focus: National historical and cultural heritage.

May contain policy documents, subsidy files and archives of national music institutions. Also relevant to the history of opera and other musical theatre activities.

→ nationaalarchief.nl

3

Allard Pierson - The Collections of the University of Amsterdam

Location: Amsterdam

Focus: Special collections in the field of culture, history and performing arts.

It houses the former collections of the Dutch Theater Institute, with archives, posters, costumes, scripts and documentation of music-related performing arts and also the collection of the Dutch Jazz Archives, the former Music Center Netherlands' Donemus collection, and various private collections.

→ allardpierson.nl

4

Music Center the Netherlands (Muziekcentrum Nederland via Nederlands Muziek Instituut)

Location: Den Haag

Focus: Music archives and sheet music.

Manages archives of composers, musicians, orchestras and musical theatre companies. Includes scores, correspondences, and historical documents of musical performances.

→ nederlandsmuziekinstituut.nl

5

Meertens Instituut

Location: Amsterdam

Focus: Folk culture, language, and intangible heritage.

Documentation of folk music and folk dance, historical music traditions, and performing arts as part of cultural heritage.

→ meertens.knaw.nl

6

Eye Filmmuseum

Location: Amsterdam

Focus: Film and moving image.

Film registrations of musical theatre productions, concerts and documentaries about performing arts.

→ eyefilm.nl

7

The Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD – Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis)

Location: Den Haag

Focus: Visual arts and heritage.

Includes information on set designers, costume artists, and other visually-orientated contributions to musical theatre.

→ rkd.nl

8

Groningen Archives (Groninger Archieven)

Location: Groningen

Focus: Regional history, including local art and music companies.

Contains archives of the North Netherlands Theatre and other northern cultural organisations.

→ groningerarchieven.nl

9

Royal Library (Koninklijke Bibliotheek)

Location: Den Haag

Focus: National heritage in the form of books, magazines, and digital publications.

Manages, among other things, theatre texts, music books and historical programme booklets.

→ kb.nl

10

National Museum of World Cultures (Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen)

Location: Leiden, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, en Berg en Dal

Focus: Cultural heritage and performing arts in non-Western contexts, such as music, dance and rituals.

→ wereldculturen.nl

11

The Netherlands Open Air Museum (Nederlands Openluchtmuseum)

Location: Arnhem

Focus: Immaterial cultural heritage, including folk dances, music traditions, and festivals.

Documentation of primarily Dutch historical performances and folk art.

→ openluchtmuseum.nl

12

Amsterdam City Archives (Stadsarchief Amsterdam)

Location: Amsterdam

Focus: Archives of Amsterdam cultural institutions and companies.

Documentation of musical theatre companies, concert halls such as the Concertgebouw, and art initiatives in Amsterdam.

→ stadsarchief.amsterdam.nl

13

Provincial and Municipal Archives (Provinciale en Gemeentelijke Archieven)

Location: Spread regionally throughout the Netherlands

Focus: Local culture and history.

Regional musical theatre companies, amateur music societies, and local opera or musical productions are documented.

→ archieven.nl

14

Podiumkunst.net

Location: Nationwide partnership

Focus: Heritage of the performing arts, centering on archives, accessibility, and knowledge sharing

Brings together eight organizations – including Allard Pierson, Sound & Vision, Theaterkrant, The Need for Legacy, and TivoliVredenburg – that collaborate to sustainably preserve and promote performing arts heritage. Podiumkunst.net also focuses on strengthening underrepresented domains such as nightlife culture.

→ podiumkunst.net

15

Dutch Digital Heritage Network (NDE)

Location: Nationwide network

Focus: Connecting digital heritage across sectors and collections

Brings together museums, archives, libraries, researchers, and heritage communities to work on long-term access to digital heritage. Core institutions include the National Library of the Netherlands, the National Archives, Sound & Vision, the Nieuwe Instituut, and the Cultural Heritage Agency (RCE). NDE supports knowledge sharing, network collaboration, and implementation of the National Digital Heritage Strategy.

→ netwerkdigitaalerfgoed.nl

Photo credit: Francoise Bolechowski, October 2024.
The Mobile Archive Unit 'Silverfish' by Archival Consciousness scanning
flyers brought by clubgoers at VibeLab's Echoes of the Underground at
Sexyland during Amsterdam Dance Event.

2.
RESEARCH
FINDINGS

2.1 WHY (NOT) PRESERVE NIGHT AND CLUB CULTURE THROUGH ARCHIVING?

Including night and club culture in the canon of cultural archives is crucial for developing a more inclusive and dynamic understanding of Dutch cultural history. Defined by its transient nature, this culture thrives on unique moments shaped by people and their activities. While documentation captures these fleeting moments for short term use, archiving ensures long term preservation, systematises information, provides context, and enables future access. For example, archiving a DJ set involves cataloguing details about the artist, venue, and its significance within the broader narrative of night and club culture.

Study participants strongly supported archiving night and club culture, recognising its power to preserve inspiring and challenging stories of the past, validate cultural importance in the present, and pave the way for future generations. Reflecting critically on how past legacies have been documented provides valuable social commentary, highlighting the need to uncover overlooked and marginalised narratives.

In the present, archives play a vital role in affirming cultural significance, bridging generational divides, and encouraging policymakers to safeguard critical spaces and invest in creative endeavours. Within the scene, encouraging an appreciation for cultural value and preservation dissuades short term thinking—such as event posters lacking critical information such as dates (including year) or design credits—and ensures that future archives capture the self-expression, resilience, collective identity, and sometimes political ethos that night and club culture is celebrated for. Despite broad support, challenges persist.

Community-led archives provide the most authentic narratives, yet institutional involvement may be necessary to address funding and technological gaps. For institutions to engage responsibly, they must prioritise relationships with communities, amplify underrepresented voices, and ensure archival efforts preserve authentic stories that bridge past, present, and future generations.

"I think [archiving] is very important because of the fact that music and nightlife were not really seen as an art form or at least not taken as seriously as others...it is perceived as this thing that people do at night, they just go clubbing, they go party, they drink a lot, take drugs, whatever."

- Melisa Cenik, creative strategist in music, arts, culture, project initiator and lead at Het Archief

Opportunities	Risks
Greater recognition for previously underrepresented contributors.	Potential commodification of marginalised subcultures, leading to community exploitation.
Increased legitimacy for decision makers, funding bodies, and policy makers.	Institutional funding may impose rigid structures, limiting creative freedom.
Exposure to a wider audience, facilitating cross-cultural appreciation. Helps bridge intergenerational gaps within club culture communities.	Increased visibility may threaten vulnerable groups and erode nightlife's role as a safe space.
Educational resource for researchers, artists, and future generations.	Archival decisions may reinforce power imbalances, privileging certain mainstream voices over others.
Strengthens cultural heritage by preserving ephemeral experiences.	Over-documentation may disrupt the organic, ephemeral nature of underground scenes.
Supports night and club culture advocacy efforts by documenting the economic and socio-political significance.	Nostalgia-driven recollections may sanitise history, erasing conflicts and struggles.

"We linger around the past that was nice, but [nostalgia] also erases some negative aspects...As a researcher collecting data, one often has to remind people of those negative things."

- Anita Jóri, researcher at Leuphana University of Lüneburg, curator at CTM Festival and editor at Dancecult

"If you're from a minority group you wanna see the history of your people...and for me, being a trans woman, I always go back to the archives of what the community went through."

- DIORA, multidisciplinary artist and DJ

Photo credit: Francoise Bolechowski, October 2024.
Panel discussion at the Echoes of the Underground event, hosted by VibeLab at Sexyland during Amsterdam Dance Event. Left to right: Savannah Stapel, Faustin, DIORA, and Zoë Horsten

2.2 ARCHIVING DUTCH NIGHT AND CLUB CULTURE: STATUS QUO

Efforts to archive Dutch night and club culture can be traced back to documentation practices of the 1980s and 1990s. Fanzines like Wicked Hardcore from Delft were central to underground scenes. At that time, they recorded the growth and reach of the scene. Now, they are a valuable source of authentic, first-hand accounts that captured local contexts and details which would otherwise be overlooked by those not there, or romanticised through nostalgia. The DIY art, event flyers, and album covers created during this time also preserved creative and cultural essences, with artist Daniel Rozenberg, known as Dadara, credited among those who shaped the visual aesthetic of 1990s Dutch dance music. Compilation CDs like the Thunderdome series (1993)[20] documented the sonic evolution of hardcore music, in particular the uniquely Dutch genre of Gabber.

The rise of social media in the early 2000s transformed documentation practices, providing an accessible online platform to record experiences. Record producer and DJ Rob Manga reflects:

"You go to Facebook and you go to my party 'Legends', and you see all the pictures...I'm talking about a party from 10 years ago."

Simultaneously, this era marked the commercialisation of dance music, with Dutch DJs like Hardwell and Tiësto achieving global fame, contributing to the Netherlands' cultural and economic influence on electronic music.

Today, a generation after its emergence, Dutch club culture's impact is being chronicled in works such as *Mary Go Wild: 25 Years of Dance Music in the Netherlands* (van Terphoven, 2013)[21] and *Dutch Dance: How the Netherlands Took the Lead in Electronic Music Culture* (van Bergen, 2018).[22] In 2021, several years before Germany's inclusion of Berlin's iconic Techno scene in its national list of intangible cultural heritage, the Dutch Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage recognised 'night culture'[23] and the 'culture of pirate music'[24] as national traditions. While illegal broadcasting was excluded, pirate stations like

Radio Stad Den Haag[25] played an undeniable role in shaping cultural identity at the local level. Exhibitions such as To Dance Is To Be Free (*Wie danst is vrij*)[26] at Amsterdam City Archives (Stadsarchief Amsterdam) in 2023 further highlight how archival institutions, traditionally focused on government records, are broadening the cultural heritage they encompass.

Despite these advancements, Dutch night and club culture remains dominated by a limited point of view that overlooks many minoritised voices, less commercially successful genres, and regions outside of the capital city. This study includes insights from Rens Wilderom, who, in his recent publication (2025),[27] contrasts the Netherlands with the United States, where dance music emerged from minoritised queer Black and Brown communities. In the Dutch context, there were prominent figures in dance music with societal connections and funding that provided better media exposure for their contributions. For example, ID&T, a leading Dutch entertainment company, commissioned *Mary Go Wild...* (van Terphoven, 2013). DJ and label owner at Four Framed Music, Ruben Planting notes the lack of regional representation, saying:

"It's very focused on always the biggest cities...it's like in the other cities nothing happened."

Community-led initiatives like Pulse of the North (2018),[28] which explores Groningen's underground scene, and Bubbling Bandje64 (2016),[29] documenting a genre pioneered by Dutch Antillean immigrants, challenge the dominant narrative and assert the importance of their stories.

While the scope of this study is limited and cannot fully address the complexity of Dutch night and club culture, it explores archiving methodologies that can enrich current understanding, highlighting opportunities to uncover untold stories and amplify overlooked voices. The inclusion of these narratives are essential to creating a more comprehensive and dynamic appreciation of Dutch cultural history.

"The history of Dutch club culture doesn't just sit in Amsterdam's big clubs—it's in every house party, record shop, and regional rave that fed it."

- DJ Chuckie, DJ, producer, cultural entrepreneur

"In the eighties, we were having fun and we were not really aware of what we were creating at that moment. That was really special and what we create right now is also special."

- Rob Manga, entrepreneur, record collector, record producer, club DJ

2.3 KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Politics of Archiving

Archiving is inherently political, as decisions about what to include, prioritise, and emphasise, shape the narratives that emerge. Without deliberate efforts to counter biases, the selection process may reflect colonial and geopolitical assumptions, undermining or excluding the contributions of racially and ethnically minoritised communities. In night and club culture, less commercially successful music genres and regions are often underrepresented. For instance, *Provincial Headz: British Hip Hop and Critical Regionalism* (De Paor, 2021) dispels the notion that Hip Hop developed exclusively in metropolitan contexts.[30] Revisions can be made to rectify omissions, as was seen with the increased representation of women in *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life* (Brewster and Broughton, 1999),[31] 23 years after its publication. While no archive is perfect, efforts are being made to pluralise narratives and ensure community inclusion in decision-making, to create inclusive, representative historical records.

Capturing the Tangible and Intangible

An holistic approach to archiving night and club culture must encompass both tangible ephemera and intangible ephemeral value. Traditional archives often struggle to preserve ephemeral value, such as the emotional resonance of shared experiences on the dance floor. UNESCO's Programme for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage[32] underscores the value of intangible cultural expressions. Social media platforms also play a unique role in enabling users to document fleeting nightlife moments in real time, but their use raises concerns around privacy and consent, leading some venues to adopt no-photo policies. Engaging communities in deciding how best to preserve these intangible elements is essential. By combining structured archival methods with informal, community-led efforts, archives can authentically reflect the cultural identity of nightlife.

"Who's deciding what genres are gonna be represented? It's all in the end going to boil down to who's curating."

- Thys Boer, founder, chairman, and spokesperson of N8W8 Rotterdam

"When a good dance floor is aligned, everyone feels that at that moment their heart rate starts to run the same. You can't explain that in words."

- Darko Esser, DJ, producer, programmer, advocate at Stichting Nachtburgemeester Nijmegen

Relationship between Grassroots and Institutions

Public institutions, whether academic, archival, or heritage-based, have historically been seen as extensions of state interests or the dominant societal groups, often reinforcing colonial, imperial, and patriarchal structures. This legacy has harboured tension and mistrust between these institutions and minoritised communities. While recent efforts aim to reassess historical narratives and include diverse voices, the power imbalance is inherent, with institutions sometimes extracting knowledge and artefacts without addressing community needs. Institutionalisation may provide formal recognition and funding for night and club culture, but this process risks tokenism, diluting political values central to some spaces, and exposing once safe refuges for queer and racialised groups to those who do not align with their values. To cultivate a relationship of mutual respect, institutions must build and sustain trust, involve communities in decision making, and adopt flexible, co-creative approaches that empower communities to retain ownership of their cultural artefacts.

Capacity Barriers: Funding, Resources, Technology and Copyright

Community-led archives face significant challenges in securing resources such as funding, staff, and technological support for digitisation and metadata management. Metadata can be understood as the information about data that allows it to be categorised, discovered, understood, and (re)used.[33] Community-led archives are uniquely positioned to gather authentic accounts and vital contexts that institutions may lack, enriching the overall knowledge pool. However, awareness of funding opportunities is limited within night and club culture, especially among emerging cultural producers, and traditional funding frameworks often fail to evaluate non-traditional archival practices. While digital archiving offers innovative solutions, it also presents challenges like navigating copyright laws and addressing privacy concerns in publicly available online content. By enhancing funding accessibility and applicability, nurturing supportive partnerships, and offering expertise on copyright and privacy, institutions can help community-led archives strengthen their capacity to preserve cultural heritage responsibly.

"You need a lot of flexibility and imagination because in collaborating with underrepresented groups, [and] grassroots organisations, you cannot come with a fixed mould."

- Migiza Victoriashoop, head of collections at Amsterdam City Archives

"I think the funding environment currently is quite traditional. The way I express my findings and my process, there is no way for funding, especially in the Caribbean."

- Rozaly, DJ, curator, archivist and club manager at Kanaal40

2.4 ARCHIVING IN ACTION

METHODOLOGIES

Examining Dutch archival practices for night and club culture within the context of marginalised cultural phenomena offers valuable insights into evolving archival methodologies. Drawing primarily from examples in the UK and USA, this section explores formal methods, such as systematic multimedia collections, alongside informal, community-driven approaches that challenge and expand traditional definitions of an archive. Key considerations, opportunities, and critiques are also presented to highlight the need for dynamic and contemporary approaches to archiving night and club culture.

Formal Archiving	Informal Archiving
Follows established archival standards and best practices.	Prioritises lived experiences, oral histories, and personal narratives.
More rigid in structure, which may limit inclusion of minoritised voices and countercultural movements.	More adaptable, immediate, and responsive to emerging cultural shifts.
Ensures long-term accessibility and preservation through institutional backing and legal frameworks.	Risks data loss due to lack of systematic backup and preservation strategies.
Typically involves legal agreements for ownership, usage rights, and intellectual property.	Ownership often remains with the creators or communities.
Requires adherence to ethical guidelines and data protection laws.	May not comply with copyright regulations or data protection laws if for personal use.
Engages in active knowledge exchange with researchers, policymakers, and educators.	Knowledge exchange and dissemination primarily through social networks and word-of-mouth.
Typically has better access to resources such as technology for digitisation.	Relies on easily available tools and online resources.
Typically better funded whether privately or publicly.	Typically has to rely on grants, volunteers, donations and other avenues to garner resources.

Promoting community-led documentation in the present is essential to authentically preserving the evolution of night and club culture. Contemporary documentation offers a more balanced and authentic account, capturing both the positive and challenging aspects of the present and is reflective of its ongoing evolution. Works such as *Preserving Popular Music Heritage: Do-it-Yourself, Do-it-Together* (Baker, 2015)[34] and *Document Your Culture* (Warren, 2020)[35] emphasise the urgency of valuing cultural heritage now. Retrospective accounts can never fully reconstitute the past in a state akin to a living context, and narrative elements can be often lost or distorted through nostalgia. Inspiring a mindset of preservation within night and club culture communities can prompt them to take ownership of their stories and ensure that future archives reflect their true vibrancy and diversity for future generations.

Community-led archives have the potential to challenge dominant narratives and add crucial local context, often unavailable to or overlooked by institutions. When communities take charge of documenting their histories, the notion of a singular "truth" in night and club culture is rejected in favour of multiple realities and underrepresented voices that resonate with those who were there. Examples such as the Chicago Hip Hop Heritage Museum[36] and Detroit's Techno Exhibit 3000[37] illustrate how grassroots efforts can assert local legacies in genre origin stories, even when faced with resource and funding limitations. Furthermore, when these previously underrepresented voices reach a wider audience, crucial context is inevitably lost. *God Said Give 'Em Drum Machines* (Hill, 2022),[38] is the first locally produced documentary on Detroit Techno, and its positionality seeks to reconnect Detroit's Black youth to the genre, instilling local pride and empowering future generations. Similarly, *A Quick Ting On: Afrobeats* (Adofo, 2022) critiques the genre's commodification, underscoring the necessity of preserving its cultural origins through community-driven narratives.[39]
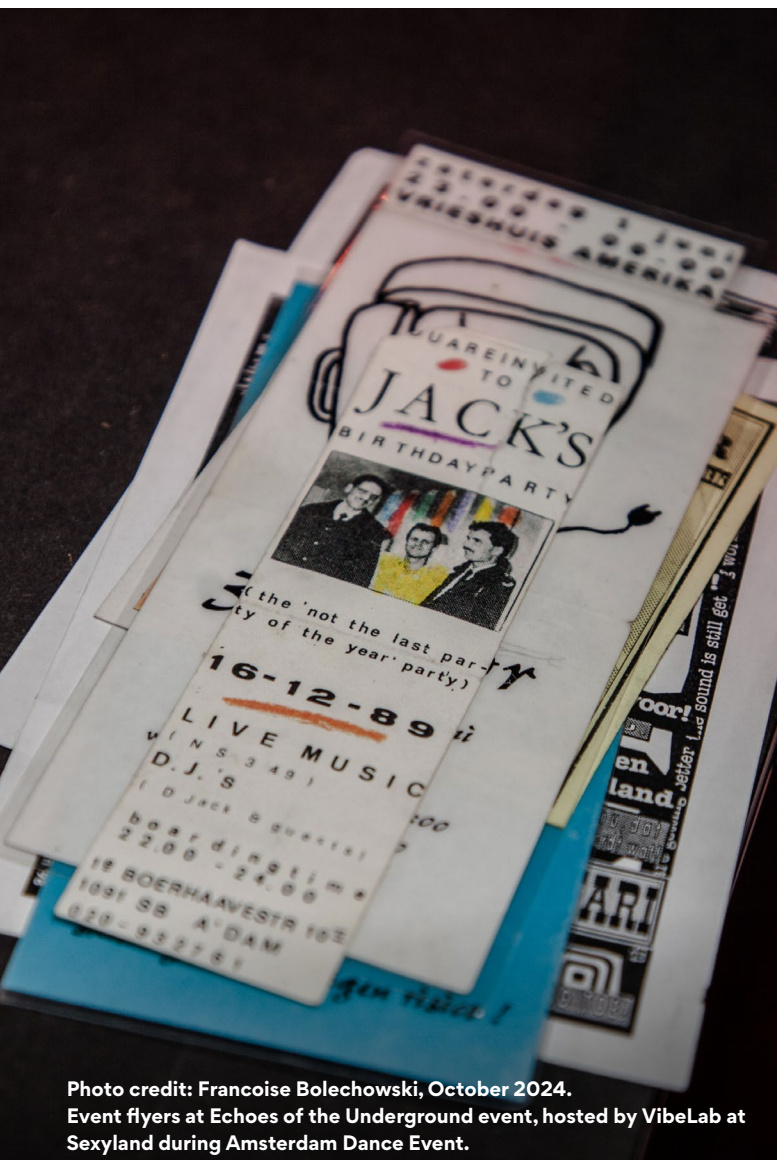
Photo credit: Francoise Bolechowski, October 2024.
Event flyers at Echoes of the Underground event, hosted by VibeLab at Sexyland during Amsterdam Dance Event.

"Advocate for people collecting the material that allows the story to be told correctly now, so that the people who are important, who are minoritised, are less likely to be forgotten because they're central in the material that's been kept."

- Emma Warren, writer and broadcaster, author of Document Your Culture

"There are many communities in Nijmegen that have contributed greatly to the cultural development of our city, but have never really received the credits."

- Celia Okoro, Night Mayor of Nijmegen

The loss of nightlife spaces and music venues underscores the fragility of what were once thought to be enduring cultural landmarks. Even physical spaces, such as clubs, are increasingly threatened by urban development, so much so they can be considered transient. These venues, central to night and club culture, hold traces of ephemeral experiences, preserving memories tied to the events that occurred within them. In *Temporary Pleasure* (Gillen, 2023),[40] the evolution of nightclub architecture since the 1960s reveals how these spaces constantly shift in design and function. On the other hand, Queering the Map,[41] a digital archive mapping LGBTQ2IA+ experiences, demonstrates an innovative way to visually capture the ephemeral value of spaces, while functioning as a living, community-generated archive. In this context, 'live' refers to the evolving nature of the archive. Additionally, 'live' can be interpreted as a commentary on the life expectancy of club venues, particularly in light of the ongoing decline of such spaces across global cities.

"**Lost clubs are a tangible loss; the buildings remain, but the culture disappears.**"

- Arno van der Hoeven, project manager and researcher at Platform31

All contributors to night and club culture deserve to be represented within the archive. The dominant narrative often focuses on DJs and venues, while dancers, VJs, and other roles lack recognition. Furthermore, traditional archiving methodologies have a preference for the physical over the performative. The community-led documentary, *Check Your Body At The Door* (2011),[42] uses interviews and rare dance footage to centre dancers in a retelling of 1990s House dance history, exploring both performance as an archive of its own history and the archiving of performance in the digital age.

"**Video recordings of DJ sets on Veronica TV offered a glimpse into the atmosphere and the creative visions of VJs.**"

- Eelko Anceaux, club and event organiser and promoter, owner of De Marktkantine, founder of Chemistry house night.

"**People always forget the importance of dancers in the spaces, because in a lot of sets, the dancers were the souls of the work.**"

- John Agesilas, dancer, cultural entrepreneur, founder of Summer Dance Forever and Foundation Amsterdam Hip Hop Center

Photo credit: Salih Kilic, Theater Oostpool

Preserving the performative dimensions of cultural memory is crucial for night and club culture. In *The Archive and the Repertoire* (Taylor, 2003),[43] where the concepts of the 'repertoire' (performative memory) and the 'archive' (physical records) are explored. Taylor defines the repertoire as a system of ephemeral, embodied practices transmitted through performance and other forms of live expression. These practices are remembered through bodily participation and social interaction, and, unlike the static archive, the repertoire is dynamic and ever-evolving, shaped by context and performers with each iteration. Taylor argues that the repertoire is essential for understanding how cultures remember, offering a means to preserve and transmit knowledge, histories, and identities that cannot be fully captured by archival materials.[44] As such, the repertoire serves as a complementary and equally vital form of memory to the traditional archive.

Photo credit: Raymond van Mil, Sexyland

"A lot of the people around me are doing the work of taking street dance and club culture into the theatre, into an institution where it's not a mainstream thing, for their art to be recognised."

- Kim Tawjoeram, dancer, teacher, event organiser and founder of Dynamic Arts

"There should always be a live component in which you can really feel and experience how the magic works on the dance floor...it is something immaterial in the end, and you try to give that materially."

- Mark van Bergen, writer, lecturer, researcher on EDM culture at Fontys ACE

"I'm trying to use every medium there is, every format that we can find, to express the exact same message. Nightlife has to be here. It has to be lively, diverse, inclusive and accessible."

- Thys Boer, founder, chairman, and spokesperson of N8W8 Rotterdam

Online community radio has become a vital platform for cultural ownership and preservation, particularly in the digital age. With the rise of online streaming driven by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the removal of costly FM licensing, more broadcasters have embraced these platforms. Many online stations archive their live shows, offering on-demand access to both historical broadcasts and live sessions. These stations serve as cultural hubs, documenting music trends, social movements, and voices from minoritised communities often overlooked in mainstream media. Drive Duru,[45] which is said to mean 'Hard Drive' in the Papiamentu language,[46] highlights lesser-known sounds from the Caribbean, including the former Dutch Antilles, and puts a strong emphasis on post-2000 music. On Rotterdam's Operator Radio,[47] the show Rhythmic Visions[48] features soundscapes that evoke African diaspora experiences, while Cccriojo[49] provides a platform for cultural practitioners and creatives to discuss the different ways they examine, dismantle, and remix notions around Afro-cultural heritage through sound and visual expressions.

"I started exploring at Operator Radio to make space for, curate and retrieve the Black narrative within the electronic music I play."

- Faustin, artist, designer and cultural researcher

Online platforms create collaborative, accessible spaces where anyone can document and preserve cultural records, albeit for an uncertain amount of time. YouTube, regarded by some as a 'democratic digital archive,'[50] enables public interaction through video uploads, comments, and sharing, employing a participatory approach seldom found in traditional institutional models. Digital community archives, including fan fiction, forums, and social media, prioritise inclusivity, challenge traditional hierarchies, and empower minoritised communities to take ownership of their narratives. Online forums, particularly Reddit, Discord, and Facebook groups, provide minoritised communities— such as neurodivergent individuals and those with accessibility needs, who may require more accommodations than a typical club night offers—

with a space to find their community, document their experiences, and push for more inclusive club environments. Yet, if these records are not preserved, the hardships these communities faced may be overshadowed by overly idealised accounts of the past, evoking a utopia that never existed. The lack of input from nightlife community members with accessibility needs among this study's participants highlights an opportunity for improvement. Anita Jóri, researcher, curator, and editor, notes:

"The anecdotal, nostalgic way of storytelling sometimes causes problems… Marginalised communities who suffered very much within the Techno scene in the 90s were never asked to tell their stories."

These online spaces allow communities to shape, reinterpret, and continually add new layers and dimensions to their cultural stories, rather than relying solely on institutional gatekeepers. The empowering potential of informal and unsystematic archiving is further explored in *Hip-Hop Archives: The Politics and Poetics of Knowledge Production* (Campbell and Forman, 2023)[51] and *Rogue Archives* (De Kosnik, 2016).[52]

Ethical archiving of online content requires methodologies that prioritise privacy, consent, and cultural significance. The study, *Archiving "Sensitive" Social Media Data: 'In Her Shoes,'* (Grimes et al., 2023) underscores the importance of balancing ethical responsibility with the preservation of culturally significant, yet sensitive, material.[53] The study proposes establishing a Stakeholder Advisory Forum to facilitate collaboration between archivists and communities in co-creating guidelines on informed consent, ethical cataloguing, and proactive strategies for protecting sensitive data. This approach is particularly relevant for Dutch night and club culture, where highly personal and fleeting moments are often captured on social media. By handling visual and textual data with sensitivity, archives can remain inclusive and respectful of the lived experiences within this vibrant cultural space while preserving the safe refuge that many find on the dancefloor.

Digital content requires long-term preservation that social media platforms alone cannot guarantee. Without professional curation, systematic preservation, or legal safeguards, content remains vulnerable to deletion—whether by users or unpredictable platform policies.[54][55] A Pew Research Center study found that 25% of web pages posted between 2013 and 2023 have vanished, underscoring this instability.[56] In 2015, The Netherlands Institute for Sound & Vision launched a project to archive Dutch YouTube videos, securing licences and metadata to ensure sustainability and accuracy. Similarly, the non-profit Internet Archive[57] preserves entire online platforms, offering reliable long-term storage. These structured initiatives complement platforms like YouTube, creating a stable and comprehensive cultural record for digital content.

"I think it is good that the history and archive is kept in a place that is not temporary like Facebook or other social media. At one point that's going to fall over...It's a waste to leave [people's data] to big tech."

- Daniël Lugtmeier, marketing coordinator at Hedon

FROM GRASSROOTS TO INSTITUTIONALISATION

Strengthening Collaborations Between Grassroots Archivists and Institutions

Recent years have seen collaborations between club culture archivists, museums, and universities gain momentum, exploring new ways to document and preserve nightlife heritage. Growing publications and platforms like Dancecult,[58] a scientific journal of electronic dance music culture, increasingly solidifies night and club culture as a dedicated field of research. The Covid-19 lockdowns also prompted innovative approaches such as pop-up exhibitions, exemplified by Echoing Through Eternity, at Fuse nightclub in Brussels.[59] The UK has been a leader in institutional partnerships, with communities working alongside institutions like the British Library Sound Archive, the largest archives of recorded sound in the world,[60] which is home to ROAR: The '90s Rave Podcast.[61] Wild Life Archive tours its exhibitions in world-class museums across the globe to highlight the cultural significance of electronic music.[62] These collaborations not only strengthen preservation efforts but also help institutions remain engaged with evolving subcultures, ensuring club culture is recognised as an integral part of cultural history.

"People from the cultural scene & institutions who are willing to work together and create bridges, must stand up as a united front, together with a group of facilitators who have a hand in both worlds."

- Matteo Franklin van der Sluijs, creative writer and researcher in music, Mosaiko Magazine

Community Engagement Through Oral History and Crowdsourcing

Oral history and crowdsourcing are powerful tools for engaging communities in institutional archiving, allowing personal narratives and lived experiences to shape cultural preservation. Both methods decentralise archival efforts, encouraging public participation in documenting club culture's ephemeral nature. Oral history, long used to contextualise archival materials, has faced criticism regarding memory reliability and bias, as personal anecdotes cannot be verified through traditional scientific methods. However, updated policies from organisations like the Society of American Archivists help address these concerns. Giuseppe Pipitone, in *Oral History and the Accidental Archive* (2023),[63] argues that informal conversations capture unique insights and overlooked details, making them invaluable to cultural archives. Crowdsourcing initiatives, such as the Dance Music Archive,[64] and the Rave Reservation Project[65] enable communities to contribute flyers, posters, clothing, equipment, and personal stories, providing essential context for archival materials. Projects like the Museum of Youth Culture's Grown Up in Britain[66] provide practical resources on crowdsourcing and oral history collection, to raise awareness of archival practices and empower its visitors to document their histories.

"There's this danger of institutionalising and sort of losing your political edge or that mainstreaming can also work to erode some of the key aspects of a culture."

- Dr. Timo Koren, assistant professor of Cultural Economy at University of Amsterdam

"We need to redefine what 'impact' means. People often associate it with a big reach or sold out event but I think you can also make an impact in a room with just 15 people, when those 15 people walk away feeling seen and inspired that their community is on stage."

- Savannah Stapel, cultural programmer and curator at Felix Meritis

Equitable and Inclusive Approaches to Institutional Archiving

Institutional archiving efforts must prioritise equity, ensuring that collaborations with community-led archives remain flexible, inclusive, and mutually beneficial. Meaningful engagement requires institutions to recognise communities as active participants rather than passive subjects. Jimmy Zavala et al.'s journal article *A Process Where We're All at the Table* (2017)[67] explores various cases of archival practices that promote empowerment and social transformation. The Southern California Library, for example, involves users in appraisal and description processes, affirming community ownership of the archive.[68] Similarly, the University of Southern California's Korean American Digital Archive employs a post-custodial digitisation strategy, allowing materials to be digitised and returned to donors, garnering trust.[69] The Digital Craft Archive follows a different model, simply providing digital platforms for communities to publicise their materials without transferring ownership.[70] Although these examples are not specific to night and club culture, they highlight how equitable, community-centred approaches can redefine traditional archiving, ensuring that grassroots histories are preserved with integrity and agency.

"It would be amazing if institutions could facilitate people to do their own documentation and archiving on a small scale. Then if the institutions want to build on that…maybe their role is in the preservation."

- Emma Warren, writer and broadcaster, author of Document Your Culture

In the digital age, the boundaries between formal and informal archiving are increasingly fluid, with grassroots and institutional efforts influencing one another in preserving cultural heritage. Community-led archives, often informal in nature, play a crucial role in safeguarding nightlife histories, yet challenges such as funding, digital infrastructure, and legal complexities often necessitate collaboration with institutions. These partnerships should be rooted in equity and not only help formalise preservation efforts but facilitate a living exchange of knowledge, ensuring that institutional archives remain dynamic and inclusive, while community-driven initiatives gain greater visibility and support.

"As an archival institution, we should really make an effort in going in search of [underrepresented] perspectives because at the end of the day, we are the place where the history of the city is preserved, we have that stature. So we should really try and make it a very diverse history."

- Migiza Victoriashoop, head of collections, Amsterdam City Archives

Photo credit: Miles Niemeijer, September 2024
Focus group at TivoliVredenburg, Utrecht, during CPFE.

2.5 CASE STUDIES

The following case studies highlight the innovative approaches shaping the future of archiving night and club culture, starting with an archive born from the community's desire to immortalise a central venue and the sounds it nurtured, and ending with an institution's efforts to honour its local roots and highlight its global reach. Each initiative reflects the dynamic interplay between grassroots efforts and institutional collaboration, demonstrating how partnerships can safeguard cultural heritage while making it more accessible.

2.5.1 HET ARCHIEF (AMSTERDAM)[71]

From 2016 to 2024, De School, a former technical school turned interdisciplinary, multi-use space with a club at its heart, stood as a cultural hub that redefined Amsterdam's nightlife. Its impressive 66-hour closing event marked the end of an era, but the community it nurtured refused to let its legacy fade. This spirit of preservation gave rise to Het Archief, a digital sound archive that serves not only as a tribute to De School and its vibrant community but also supports the wider cause of archiving night and club culture.

Het Archief documents eight years of De School's music programming, reflecting local and global influences, intercultural connections, and curatorial innovation. It features approximately 900 DJ sets, live shows, and concerts from nearly 500 artists. These recordings, sourced from De School's pre-existing sound files and uploaded with the artists' permission, are hosted on the archive's dedicated website through MixCloud,[72] a streaming platform.

"We had this amazing goldmine of audio… the most logical [step] was to build a digital sound archive that made visible how the years evolved… people can make their own stories, have their own memories, have their own agency…without us narrating our own story."

- Melisa Cenik, creative strategist in music, arts, culture, project initiator and lead at Het Archief

By focusing exclusively on audio, Het Archief aligns with De School's no-photo policy, offering an immersive auditory experience to relive the ephemeral magic of the dancefloor. Working with a single format, the archive provides a comprehensive, streamlined, and user-friendly interface where performances can be searched by year, event, or even the specific room

where they were recorded. This simplicity sets Het Archief apart from broader archives like Poparchief Groningen and The Hip Hop Museum, which rely heavily on crowdsourced and multi-format artefacts.

Het Archief also shares an open manual[73] on its website, which provides practical steps for creating sound-based archives, demystifying the process of archiving, and inspiring others to recognise the importance of preserving the artefacts of their nightlife scenes.

"We are not the gatekeepers of this information or experience… even if we inspire one organisation, that's something."

- Melisa Cenik

The team behind Het Archief overcame challenges such as securing permissions, addressing copyright issues, obtaining funding, and ensuring safe and adequate storage. Key institutional and financial support came from Podiumkunst.net and the Amsterdam City Archives. Notably, the Het Archief hard drive is safeguarded within the physical and electronic repositories of the City Archives as well as the Netherlands Institute for Sound & Vision, with plans for the website itself to be added. This partnership with institutions guarantees the long-term preservation of the archive, insulating it from the uncertainties and instabilities of web-hosted platforms. It also underscores the democratisation of history by integrating the cultural legacy of nightculture within traditional archival institutions—a strategy echoed by Rendezvous Projects' approach to permanently house their archives within the local city archive.

While Het Archief benefitted from pre-existing connections through De School's highly distinguished reputation, there is recognition of the need for institutions to actively engage smaller initiatives that also make important contributions to the city's cultural identity.

In addition to inspiring others to archive their own histories, Het Archief is a testament to the successful collaboration that is possible with institutions when there is a shared vision and a common appreciation that night culture should be valued, archived, and funded.
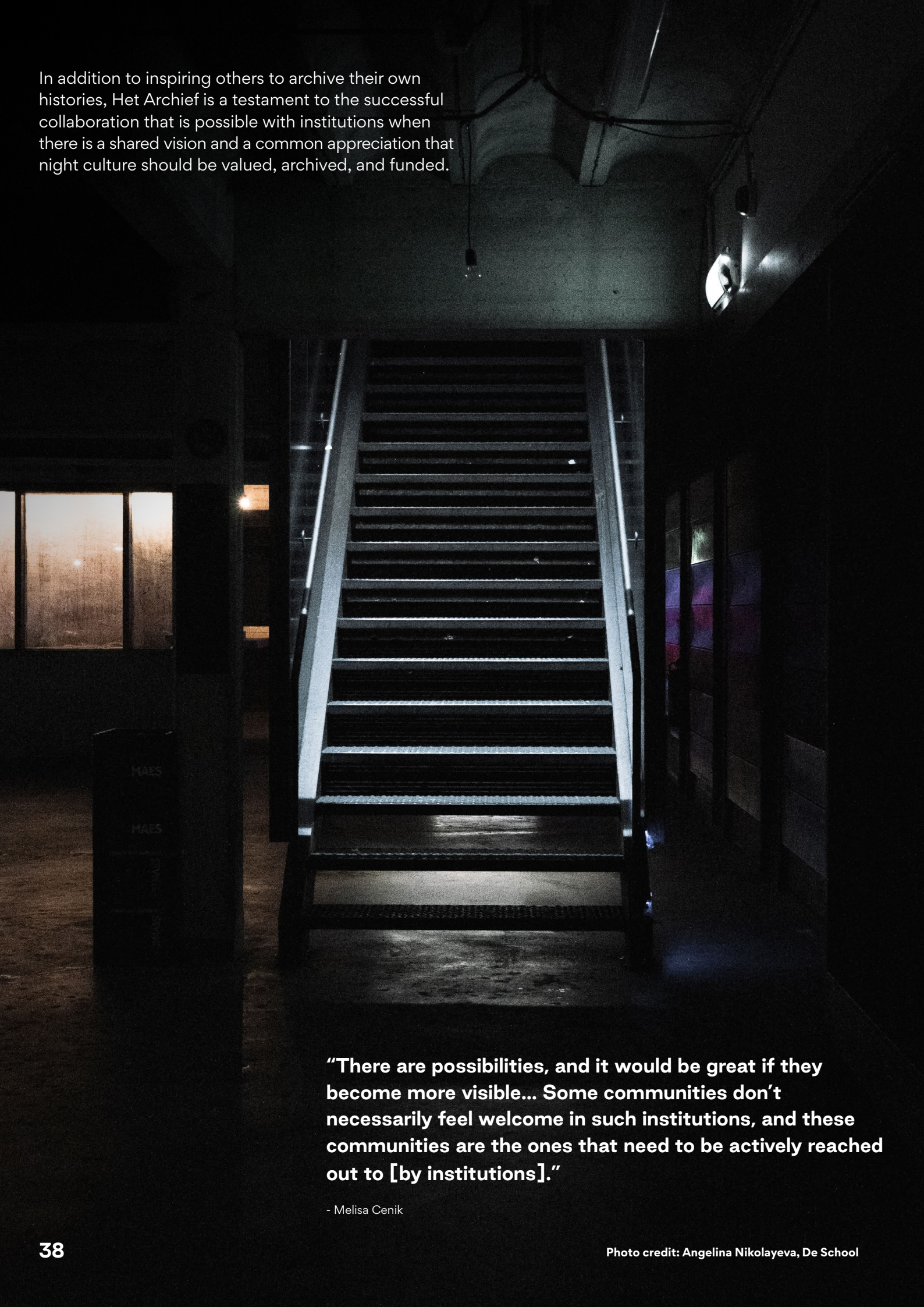
"There are possibilities, and it would be great if they become more visible... Some communities don't necessarily feel welcome in such institutions, and these communities are the ones that need to be actively reached out to [by institutions]."

- Melisa Cenik

2.5.2 POPARCHIEF GRONINGEN[74]

Groningen, a mid-sized city distant from other major urban centres in the Netherlands, has long been an incubator for diverse music communities within Dutch night and club culture. Fuelled by its ever-changing student population, it has long cultivated a dynamic music scene. Festivals like Paradigm and venues such as Vera,[75] Oost,[76] and Simplon—particularly influential in the punk scenes—[77]have shaped grassroots music movements, from New Wave to EDM and Hip Hop.

Established in 2006, Poparchief Groningen originated from the personal collection of Koen van Krimpen, author of *Nothing Going On in the City* (2003).[78] Initially a volunteer at Groninger Archieven, he donated select duplicates from his collection, which was formally integrated into the municipal archive in 2018—one of the few instances in the Netherlands where an independent pop culture archive merged with an institution. Groninger Archieven supports the Poparchief without commercial objectives, ensuring the preservation of Groningen's vibrant music history. This model is comparable to Rendezvous Projects, which house their collections within their local city archive rather than maintaining a permanent space of their own.

"On some levels, [popular culture] is being recognised as important, but that's definitely not mainstream. At the moment, we're the only pop archive [in the Netherlands] that's part of a real local archive."

— Gert Plas, coordinator for Poparchief Groningen at Groninger Archieven

Poparchief Groningen documents over 100 years of pop culture, comprising both a physical music archive—housing records, posters, and apparel—and an online database enriched with metadata for contextual information. While the Hip Hop Museum demonstrates large-scale archival capacity and global reach, Poparchief's ambition to cover such a long period across multiple music scenes and communities is particularly impressive given the small size of the city and archive. Poparchief Groningen also relies heavily on crowdsourcing, with hundreds of contributors providing artefacts, submitting corrections, and adding information, reinforcing its grassroots origins. Even VERA, one of the city's most iconic venues, has contributed posters dating back to 1973.

"We try to compile all this information, not just the object itself, but also the [story] behind it. Who made it? Who were the bands playing at this concert? What are the anecdotes concerning the concert?"

— Gert Plas

A small team of staff and volunteers—many active in Groningen's night culture—curate and maintain the archive, with the website updated daily. Crowdsourcing has enabled an extensive collection, yet public access to the physical archive remains limited outside exhibitions and research initiatives. Efforts are underway to enhance digital accessibility, with plans to make over 10,000 posters available online in 2025. Digitising music remains a challenge, as it requires both technical and human resources, with Gert Plas, the Editor-in-Chief, as the only full-time paid staff member.

"The world has changed for these copyright organisations as well. They're looking at new possibilities, so it's easier for us to connect with them and explain our needs—and, of course, their needs as well."

— Gert Plas

The archive has also partnered with the Buma/
Stemra,[79] a private music rights organisation, allowing
them to stream audio and video of affiliated artists.
For non-affiliated artists, the team seeks mutual
agreements to ensure respectful and legal online
representation. Rights holders can engage with the
archive using a response form, ensuring continued
ethical stewardship of cultural materials.

Despite its small volunteer team, institutional support
ensures Poparchief Groningen's long-term preservation.
By balancing community values and contributions
with structured archival practices and systematic
cataloguing, it provides a model for preserving an
expansive cultural history with minimal resources.

2.5.3 RENDEZVOUS PROJECTS (EAST LONDON)[80]

East London has long been a hub for groundbreaking underground music genres like Jungle, Garage, and Grime. Yet, the unique contributions of boroughs such as Newham and Waltham Forest often go unnoticed. Rendezvous Projects, a Newham-based, artist-led community interest company, plays a vital role in preserving these histories. By collaborating with local authorities and initiatives like Newham Heritage Month,[81] they ensure these stories are contextualised within broader local heritage, strengthening community networks and instilling a deeper sense of cultural identity.

"By working with schools, community groups, and residents, we uncover shared histories and amplify underrepresented voices, fostering connections and a shared pride in an area's rich and diverse heritage."

– Katherine Green, director of Rendezvous Projects

Funded on a project-by-project basis, Rendezvous Projects supplements its resources through donations and shop sales. Unlike the other three case studies analysed, and due to their project-based operations, their research materials are housed across local borough archives rather than in a centralised collection. This not only supports preservation but democratises history within each local context. Free exhibitions, Q&As, workshops, and performances further broaden public engagement.

Volunteers, upon whom the organisation heavily relies, receive training in historical documentation and storytelling. Local residents, including young people, are also encouraged to partake in interviews, research, social media, and events. This approach goes beyond conventional crowdsourcing, cementing connections between present-day residents and the past which is particularly important in rapidly changing areas, where the histories of long-standing communities are being lost.

"Bringing underrepresented social histories to light ensures that diverse experiences are part of the narrative. Without this work, many voices would be lost, leaving history to the privileged. By amplifying these stories in people's own words, we diversify and enrich our understanding of an area's cultural and social legacy."

– Katherine Green

Through oral histories, publications, and educational initiatives, Rendezvous Projects amplifies underrepresented social narratives. One key example is the *All Roads Lead to Bentley's* project,[82] which documents the history of Bentley's, a club regularly spinning Soul, Hip Hop, and Reggae, serving as a vital cultural space for the local Black community. Situated in a predominantly white area infamous for racial hostility during the turbulent 1980s, it also provided a crucial refuge. Bentley's had largely faded from the historical record, whereas its predecessor, The Bridge House—a rock venue that primarily attracted white audiences—was well-documented. Thanks to Rendezvous Projects, its legacy is now visible including through multiple online resources. Like The Hip Hop Museum, Rendezvous Projects highlights the lived experiences of Black and Brown communities within their broader socio-political realities.

Rendezvous Projects also experiments with technology to preserve night culture heritage. Their project on The Dungeons,[83] a former Waltham Forest venue, used augmented and virtual reality to digitally reconstruct the space. In collaboration with a dancer, they developed an immersive augmented reality (AR) installation accessed via quick response (QR) codes. However, property developers refused to allow QR code installations, underscoring the fragility of public history when faced with urban development.

While the project-based model presents challenges, such as reliance on temporary funding, Rendezvous Projects' commitment to championing underrepresented histories, experimenting with technology, and generating deep community involvement offers a compelling approach to preserving local heritage.

"While tools like AR/VR can recreate interiors and atmospheres, they cannot yet replicate the communal connections these spaces fostered – a challenge we will continue to explore."

– Katherine Green

2.5.4 THE HIP HOP MUSEUM (BRONX, NYC)[84]

The Hip Hop Museum (THHM) in the Bronx is one of the most ambitious efforts to institutionalise Hip Hop's legacy. Founded in 2012 by Rocky Bucano with the support of legendary figures such as Kurtis Blow, Grandmaster Melle Mel, and Joe Conzo Jr., THHM differs from the grassroots archives featured in previous case studies. It operates with curatorial oversight, a structured institutional framework, and capital funding from the Bronx and New York City. Set to open in 2025 as part of the Bronx Point development, the museum represents a major investment in preserving Hip Hop's history.

While awaiting its permanent location, THHM has engaged the public through pop-up exhibitions, workshops, and community events. *[R]Evolution of Hip Hop*,[85] hosted at the Bronx Terminal Market, featured interactive elements such as virtual reality (VR), avatars, and holograms—methods reminiscent of Rendezvous Projects' use of digital tools to capture nightlife's ephemeral essence. In 2021, THHM partnered with Microsoft as its 'Official Technology Partner,' securing long-term digital infrastructure to support its archiving efforts.[86]

"I sincerely hope that Hip Hop archive initiatives worldwide will actively include the voices and stories of women and queer people, as their contributions remain underrepresented."

– Kim Dankoor, Hip Hop researcher at Utrecht University, media expert, and interviewer

More than a repository of objects, THHM actively centres community narratives. Oral histories and lived experiences ensure Hip Hop's story is told by those who shaped it. The museum collaborates with local organisations and advisors to maintain cultural authenticity. Similar to Poparchief Groningen, which archives a diverse range of pop culture materials regardless of mainstream recognition, THHM collects DJ equipment, magazines, apparel, and audiovisual materials donated by pioneers, artists, and fans worldwide, including Canadian rapper Classified and Colombian Hip Hop group, La Etnnia.

"An archive can be very beneficial for entities such as the media, as it enables them to dig into the history of the culture and search for appropriate pictures and information. Sometimes, when the media tries to tell stories about dance culture, nightlife culture, or Hip Hop culture, they fail to convey the stories accurately."

– Kim Dankoor

Education is central to THHM's mission. Through the programme My Camera Is My Weapon,[87] THHM mentors at-risk youth in photography and filmmaking, offering alternatives to gang culture and reinforcing Hip Hop's role in self-expression and empowerment. These efforts align with Rendezvous Projects, which engages young people in cultural storytelling and heritage preservation. Similarly, Het Archief's open manual encourages the current generation to take up archiving.

"Hopefully, the communities that actually created the culture will benefit also financially from it, not only in terms of honour and reputation but to say, 'We built it.'"

– Kim Dankoor

In Rotterdam, HipHopHuis[88] has upheld Hip Hop's universal values since 2002, spreading cultural knowledge, providing mentorship, and creating opportunities for underrepresented youth. Its work is especially vital in a 'super diverse' city shaped by complex migration patterns, where many voices remain excluded from the cultural sector. Founder Aruna Vermeulen has described their mission: "We use Hip Hop as an engine for positive change. For individuals, for our community, for the city."[89]

While institutionalisation provides stability and visibility, THHM's pursuit of maintaining authenticity for future cultural preservation projects takes centre stage. The museum highlights how institutional support, when paired with deep community engagement, can create a more sustainable and representative archive of Hip Hop's legacy.

3.
RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 CONCLUSION

This study underscores the critical need to integrate night and club culture into the 'new canon' of Dutch cultural archives, aligning with Podiumkunst.net's mission to establish a centralised, accessible digital platform for safeguarding performing arts legacies— an initiative particularly vital for fragmented histories like Dutch nightlife.

By amplifying underrepresented voices and non-canonised genres, VibeLab and Podiumkunst.net aim to uncover untold stories and reshape the broader cultural narrative within Dutch archival and heritage institutions. Stakeholder engagement, involving nightlife enthusiasts across diverse roles such as academics, authors, DJs, and dancers, provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities in this endeavour. Despite limitations in time and resources, prioritising a broad range of perspectives remained central to the study's approach.

Drawing on innovative case studies and stakeholder proposals, the report offers recommendations to enhance Dutch archival practices, which remain exclusionary in retelling nightlife's history. Cultural institutions should launch nationwide awareness campaigns to promote proactive documentation, targeting underrepresented communities. Institutions must acknowledge the inherently political nature of archiving, as decisions shape dominant narratives around who and what are worthy of inclusion and exclusion. To foster mutual respect and co-creation, institutions should adopt a post-custodial model, recognising communities as custodians of their artefacts. Additionally, institutions can support grassroots efforts by offering access, funding, digital infrastructure, and expertise to address ethical concerns and privacy issues, creating sustainable frameworks that align with the evolving needs of the nightlife community.

Through these efforts, the report envisions a more inclusive and equitable preservation of Dutch cultural heritage. Furthermore, it concludes with a checklist for the nightlife community, emphasising how documenting the present directly influences how this vibrant and dynamic era will be remembered by future generations.

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

1.
CULTURAL RECOGNITION

Enhance public recognition of night and club culture as heritage through concerted effort and budgetary allocations, that also support targeted outreach to underrepresented voices in the current cultural canon.

cultural institutions | municipalities

2.
REPRESENTATION

Spotlight a diverse array of community-sourced artefacts and counter-narratives, ensuring they reflect the full spectrum of nightlife culture and the actors who played a role. This includes documenting lesser-known regions such as smaller cities and the Caribbean part of the Kingdom, overlooked genres and the contributions of communities historically marginalised due to race, ethnicity, sexuality and socioeconomic status. It also involves exploring unconventional archival methods and highlighting often-overlooked roles such as dancers, VJs, and club workers alongside the more commonly documented perspectives of DJs, venue owners, and promoters.

archival institutions | cultural organisations

3.
OWNERSHIP AND CUSTODIANSHIP

Redefine the traditional relationship between institutions and communities by adopting post-custodial models where the community is recognised as the owners of the artefacts. By digitising a community's physical contributions and returning them, institutions can promote such models. Additionally, challenge the assumption that all communities prioritise the preservation of physical materials equally. For some, their most valued aspects may not be tangible items, but rather the sentiments, relationships and oral storytelling that reflect the cultural essence.

archival institutions | cultural organisations

municipalities

4.
ACCESS AND INCLUSION

Prioritise accessibility and inclusion by reducing barriers to participation, building trust, and forging lasting relationships with historically marginalised communities. Efforts should include creating user-friendly, multilingual, and open-source platforms, while ensuring physical and digital infrastructure accommodates diverse needs, including mobility, visual, and auditory challenges.

| archival institutions | cultural organisations |

5.
FUNDING, CAPACITY-BUILDING, RESOURCES

Develop initiatives to strengthen community-led archives by offering tailored funding, technical and legal expertise, and resources such as physical space and digital infrastructure. Additionally, hosting training programmes on metadata, digitisation, and archiving practices to further support community agency over their archives.

| archival institutions | cultural organisations |

| funding bodies |

6.
LEGAL AND ETHICAL FRAMEWORKS

Collaborate with community leaders and other experts to revise legal frameworks and develop ethical best practices to address privacy and copyright concerns specific to archiving night and club culture, as well as adopting DEI and fair pay standards.

| archival institutions | cultural organisations |

3.3 IMPLEMENTATION

This guideline for implementation is designed to directly address the recommendations presented in the report, focusing on the key areas which emerged during the research.

CULTURAL RECOGNITION

➜ Formally acknowledge the cultural contributions of night and club cultures by **establishing recognition systems** at the federal level. For example The French Ministry of Culture established the Club Culture – Venues of Artistic Expression and Celebration[90] recognition system and the German federal parliament reclassified its clubs and live events venues in building laws as 'cultural institutions.'[91]

➜ Enhance the public's recognition of the cultural contributions of night and club cultures by establishing and funding public-facing events organised in partnership with nightlife communities such as podcasts, documentary screenings or panel discussions. For example, Club Culture Day[92] in Berlin, which is funded by the municipality.

➜ Publicise and financially **support nightlife events with programming focused on culture and heritage.**

➜ Integrate night and club culture as part of permanent exhibitions in museums and cultural institutions, signifying it as a mainstay of the local cultural profile. For example, the door of Berlin Techno club Tresor is on permanent display in The Humboldt Forum museum.[93]

➜ Carry out awareness-building initiatives, such as open houses and information sessions, to engage the public and showcase the mandate of heritage institutions in serving diverse communities.

➜ Create **targeted awareness campaigns** about the importance of archiving, equipped with sufficient budget, to reach the youth and communities that are underrepresented in the cultural canon on the basis of ethnicity, geographic residency, and cultural practice, among others. Pamphlets such as Emma Warren's *Document Your Culture* can serve as inspiration.

➜ Establish a mobile consulting team to provide proactive outreach, including site visits and hands-on archiving advice to communities and their events. Consider **integrating heritage institutions into nightlife** in the same sense that nightlife is integrating into the heritage sector.

➜ Collaborate with academic institutions to ensure the curriculum for heritage reflects the formal recognition of night and club culture.

Photo credit: Ben Houdijk, September 2024.
Panel discussion on archiving Dutch night and club culture at CPFE.
Left to right: Darko Esser and Margriet van Kraats.

REPRESENTATION

→ Explore innovative, participatory, and multidisciplinary approaches to documentation that capture both the tangible and intangible aspects of nightlife. This includes **incorporating unconventional methods** such as immersive workshops that allow visitors to embody experiential sentiments and performative elements described in the archive.

→ Expand archival efforts to include electronic dance music genres beyond the commercially successful EDM and Techno to incorporate lesser-documented yet influential trends such as the Bubbling genre.

→ Recognise the impact of community-driven and Do-it-Yourself underground **nightlife subcultures** within exhibitions on countercultural and youth movements. For example, the Museum of Youth Culture in Britain includes exhibitions that spotlight various subcultures connected to underground nightlife.

→ Establish a **Stakeholder Advisory Forum** with representatives from archival and heritage institutions as well as the diverse perspectives within the nightlife community.

→ Ensure collaborations with racial and ethnic minoritised communities that include the voices of the most underrepresented, under the **framework of intersectionality**.

→ Expand **geographic representation** beyond major cities to more accurately document the decentralised development of night and club culture, including contributions from the Caribbean islands of the Kingdom and former Dutch colonies.

→ Ensure archivists are adequately equipped with the background knowledge and training on cultural sensitivities needed for the exhibits they manage.

→ Explore measures that allow for the improved representation of **ephemeral value** attributed to spaces in night and club culture. Inspiration can be taken from Clubkataster,[94] a geoinformation system of the Berlin Club Commission and Queering the Map,[95] a platform where users map the memories they have formed at specific locations.

→ Develop a **knowledge-sharing** initiative whereby innovative methods of archiving, and lessons learned, can be shared across the Netherland's heritage landscape to improve and diversify archiving methods. For example, Het Archief has a publicly accessible manual on how the digital archive of De School was created.

→ Seek collaborations with online platforms that host broad historical event data, such as Partyflock[96] or Facebook, in order to widen the representative scope of data and ensure its preservation and accessibility for future research.

OWNERSHIP AND CUSTODIANSHIP

→ Adopt **post-custodial models** which dictate that the community, not the institution, should be seen as the owners of the material held in archives.

→ Support co-creation with community-led archives by offering technical expertise to improve preservation and digitisation efforts of flyers, posters, videos, DJ sets, and more.

→ Establish partnership frameworks with community-led archives that recognise the **value of informal and unsystematic approaches,** as well as empower grassroots groups to control their narratives.

→ Mandate that decision-making bodies of heritage institutions have a **duty to consult**, ensuring the needs of the community are represented throughout the process.

ACCESS AND INCLUSION

➔ Collaborate with international digital platforms such as Boiler Room's 4:3[97] and touring exhibits such as Techno Worlds,[98] to platform the diverse and lesser-known stories of Dutch Club Culture to wider audiences.

➔ Partner with IT agencies to establish user-friendly, multilingual platforms for digital collections, ensuring they are **open-source and compatible with accessibility technologies** such as screen reader software programs for the visually impaired.

➔ Research best practices for standardising metadata to enhance discoverability and comparability. For example, by collaborating with platforms like Discogs[99] or developing in-house systems.

➔ Ensure alignment with the Dutch Digital Heritage Network (*Netwerk Digitaal Erfgoed - NDE*) a 3-layer model of sustainability, usability and visibility.[100]

➔ Seek opportunities to facilitate tactile interaction with the archives where possible and relevant.

➔ Structure **archives to be reusable,** so members of the community can borrow, rebuild and reimagine them into something of their own. For example, the artist residency organised by Electrosteen[101] used source material from the folkloric sound archives at the Popular Art Centre[102] in Al-Bireh, Palestine, to produce original tracks.

➔ Ensure archives have a framework for feedback to monitor that concerns are addressed, and that the community's needs are being met.

➔ Host **community discussions with archivists and community leaders** to identify and document regional nightlife in collaboration with heritage policymakers, recognising shared responsibility. For example, the heritage conversations hosted by Imagine IC about themes that are relevant to the local neighbourhood.[103]

➔ Develop **accessible and educational resources** tailored for specific groups, such as youth, families, the elderly or new immigrants. For inspiration, consider initiatives like the Museum of Youth Culture's Grown Up in Britain campaign, which provides free learning resources on their website.

FUNDING AND CAPACITY–BUILDING

➔ Develop funding programmes that explicitly include nightlife and are equipped to **accommodate the flexibility and experimentation** required for archiving night and club culture.

➔ Improve the awareness of funding opportunities for nightlife creatives through targeted open calls and information sessions.

➔ Include **human resources and training** as part of grants for community-led archives, recognising that they rely on volunteers to function.

➔ Reduce barriers to funding for grassroots organisations and youth, for example by including micro-grants (up to €1500) in the funding portfolio which **minimise administrative requirements** for grant recipients and encourage first time applicants to access public funding.

➔ At the other end of the scale, consider **multi-year funding** for cultural practitioners whose projects are prototypes and could benefit from longer loops of testing, evaluating and improving. For example, a project which is investigating archival methodologies that spans the Caribbean islands of the Kingdom and former Dutch colonies.

➔ Create a plain-language guidance document like Emma Warren's *Document Your Culture* pamphlet, on how to start a community archive, covering practical topics like metadata, digitisation and copyright.

LEGAL AND ETHICAL FRAMEWORKS

➔ Ensure financial compensation is provided to communities that institutions engage and partner with, as explained in VibeLab's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) principles applied in this study.

➔ Offer the support of **legal consultation** to community-led archives.

➔ Establish a Stakeholder Advisory Forum with community leaders to address challenges in navigating ethics and privacy when archiving night and club culture. For example, this includes **co-creating ethical guidelines** to ensure archives held in institutions respect the sensitivities inherent in archiving nightlife culture, such as provocative images and the use of uncontrolled substances.

CLUB CULTURAL PRACTITIONERS

CHECKLIST

☐ Has at least one person been made responsible for documenting and preserving the work of the collective?

☐ What do you consider worth preserving and does it capture the experience of only the organisers?

☐ How would you try to capture and preserve the different perspectives of everyone involved in your parties?

☐ How can you tell the stories of the places/venues you've organised within?

☐ What defines this period in time for you, and how would you want it preserved for generations to come?

☐ What information is listed on your event flyers that would help archivists of the future re-tell your history and better understand what the scene was like? For example: lineup, dresscode, the date and year, codes of conduct.

☐ Where do you store digital materials such as flyer designs, photographs, etc.? 1.) on social media only 2.) hard drive on laptop 3.) external hard drive 4.) cloud

☐ Do you aim to foster an appreciation for the history of club culture, especially for newcomers to the scene? If yes, how do you put this into action? If not, what are barriers?

☐ Did you use any of these resources to learn about the history of night and club culture (e.g. books, films, websites, podcasts, exhibitions, personal conversations)? Which ones were your favourites?

☐ Do you promote resources about the history of night and club culture among your community?

☐ Do you mobilise your community to attend exhibitions on night and club culture and provide feedback?

☐ Would your collective find it valuable to have at least one person be a potential point-of-contact for heritage institutions?

"Every single crew needs their DJs, they need their dancers, they need their promoters, they need all those things, but they also need someone who's prepared to collect things, keep things, document things."

- Emma Warren

processing scan
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12.38/12.38MB

"It is important that people can deliver things themselves and have their say. After all, [an archive] can never be complete."

- Lieve Goedhart, programmer at Melkweg, Kanaal40, La Cassette

Photo credit: Francoise Bolechowski, October 2024.
Digital processing of flyers scanned by Archival Consciousness at the
Echoes of the Underground event, hosted by VibeLab at Sexyland during
Amsterdam Dance Event.

4. APPENDIX

4.1 RECOMMENDED READING

Archiving is a fluid and ever-evolving practice, and this list of resources reflects and examines both structured methodologies and more intuitive informal processes—each essential for preserving night and club culture. Rather than prescribing a single way forward, this list presents some materials which challenge conventions and invite readers to develop archival practices that suit their own endeavours, whether institutional, academic, community-driven, or creative in nature.

Title	Author(s)	Year	Format
Open Manual A guide to creating a digital audio archive	Het Archief	2024	Online Resource[104]
Document Your Culture: A Manual	Emma Warren	2023	Pamphlet & Audiobook[105]
Queering the Map: On Designing Digital Queer Space	Lucas LaRochelle	Streamed in 2021	Youtube Interview[106]
Preserving Popular Music Heritage Do-it-Yourself, Do-it-Together	Sarah Baker	2015	Book
Records as Records: Excavating the DJ's Sonic Archive	Liam Maloney	2021	Published Research
Repeating beats: The Return of Rave, Memories of Joy and Nostalgia Between the Afterglow and the Hangover	Joe P.L. Davidson	2022	Published Research
Rogue Archives: Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom	Abigail De Kosnik	2016	Book
The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas	Diana Taylor	2003	Book

Title	Author(s)	Year	Format
YouTube and the Social Archiving of Intangible Heritage	Sheenagh Pietrobruno	2013	Published Research
Finding Traces in YouTube's Living Archive: Exploring Informal Archival Practices	Susan Aasman	2019	Published Research
Hip Hop Archives: The Politics and Poetics of Knowledge Production	Edited by Mark V. Campbell, Murray Forman	2023	Book
Music and heritage: New Perspectives on Place-Making and Sonic Identity	Liam Maloney, John Schofield	2021	Book
Music, Dance and the Archive	Edited by Amanda Harris, Linda Barwick, and Jakelin	2022	Book
Music Preservation and Archiving Today	Edited by Norie Guthrie and Scott Carlson	2018	Book
Memory and the Management of Change: Repossessing the Past	Emily Keightley, Michael Pickering	2017	Book
Archives, Recordkeeping and Social Justice	Edited By David A. Wallace, Wendy M. Duff, Renée Saucier, Andrew Flinn	2020	Book
Music Collection Development and Management in the Digital Age	Kirstin Dougan Johnson	2023	Book
Archives and Recordkeeping: Theory into Practice	Edited By Caroline Brown	2013	Book
Sounds of the Underground: A Cultural, Political and Aesthetic Mapping of Underground and Fringe Music	Stephen Graham	2016	Book
Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression	Jacques Derrida	1995	Book

4.2 POTENTIAL CASE STUDIES

The following table provides an extended list of
initiatives identified during the research process
as potential case studies. This (non-exhaustive)
compilation is intended as a set of additional starting
points for readers interested in further exploration.

Title	Location	Description	Weblink
Als Muren Konden Praten (If Walls Could Speak), Archival Consciousness	Amsterdam, Netherlands (online)	Podcast about the histories of legendary Dutch music venues. The Mobile Archive Unit (Silverfish) is a table with a phone/camera, lights, and software for on-site, community-sourced archiving—used in this project to digitize party flyers during a club event.	https://www.npo3fm.nl/podcasts/als-muren-konden-praten https://www.archivalconsciousness.org/#mobilearchive
Archiv der Jugendkulturen (Archive of Youth Cultures)	Berlin, Germany	Association running an information centre and library about Berlin's youth cultures containing a collection of 40,000 zines, and more.	https://www.jugendkulturen.de/
AudioCulture	New Zealand (online)	Online archive focused on the history of New Zealand's Popular music culture.	https://www.audioculture.co.nz/
Dance Music Archive	UK (online)	Website, weekly radio programme, and online community claiming to build 'the world's largest dance music archive'.	https://www.dancemusicarchive.com/
Dancecult	Global (online)	Academic, open access e-journal for the study of Electronic Dance Music culture, published annually.	https://dj.dancecult.net/index.php/dancecult
Electrosteen	Ramallah, Palestine	Music compilation project from 2022, remixing archival Palestinian folk music recordings by contemporary Palestinian music producers.	https://open.spotify.com/intl-de/album/7KcM3bF7ju1F-HuEAlvBmBH
Het Archief (The Archive)	Amsterdam, Netherlands (online)	Digital sound archive, featuring over 900 recorded DJ sets from 2016 to 2024 at Amsterdam club De School.	https://het-archief.deschool-amsterdam.nl/
Museum of Modern Electronic Music	Frankfurt, Germany	Museum about the history and cultural impact of electronic music.	https://momem.org/
Museum of Pop Culture (MoPOP)	Seattle, USA	Museum with a broad scope on Pop culture including fantasy and science fiction literature, horror movies and video games.	https://www.mopop.org/

Museum of Youth Culture	London, UK	Museum dedicated to the styles, sounds and social movements innovated by young people in the UK over the last 100 years, including the Acid House era of the 1980s.	https://www.museumofyouth-culture.com
Palestinian Sound Archive / Majazz Project	UK/Palestine (online)	Palestinian archival label and alternative research journal with monthly shows at online radio, NTS.	https://www.instagram.com/majazzproject
Poparchief Groningen (Poparchive Groningen)	Groningen, Netherlands	Hybrid physical and online archive of Pop-cultural artefacts and music from Groningen and Northern Holland.	https://poparchiefgro-ningen.nl/
Rave Preservation Project	USA/Global (online)	Privately run archive collecting, digitising and sharing Rave flyers and posters from around the world (with a large a large majority from California, USA).	https://www.ravepreservation-project.com/
Rendezvous Projects	London, UK	Community Interest Company exploring social and cultural histories of places and communities through creative projects.	https://www.ren-dezvousprojects.org.uk/
Sydney Rave History Archive	Sydney, Australia (online)	Website collecting materials about the Rave scene and dance music culture in Sydney in the 1990s.	https://sydneyra-vehistory.com/
Syrian Cassette Archives	Syria/UK/Germany (online)	Initiative to digitise, preserve, share and research sounds and stories from Syria's cassette era of the 1970s to 2000s.	https://syrian-cassettearchives.org/
The Hip Hop Museum	New York City, Bronx, USA	Museum at the birthplace of Hip Hop culture, the Bronx. To be opened in 2026.	https://thhm.org/
The Lomax Digital Archive	New York City, USA (online)	Open-access American Folk music culture collections of photos, tape recordings, and more, with origins between 1946 and 1962.	https://archive.culturalequity.org/
UCLA Ethno-musicology Archive	Los Angeles, USA	+150,000 audio, video, print, and photographic items documenting musical expressions throughout the world.	https://schoolofmusic.ucla.edu/fa-cilities/ethno-musicology-ar-chive/
Urban Artistry	Silver Spring, USA	Non-profit dedicated to the performance and preservation of urban dance and arts, serving as cultural ambassadors for communities that are often unsung.	https://www.urbanartistry.org
Wild Life Archive	USA/Global	Collection of ephemera, books, magazines, clothing & related artifacts documenting dance music culture. Exhibited at world-class museums around the world.	https://wildlifearchive.org
ZKM	Berlin, Germany	Collection and archives focused on electronic arts, containing works and documents from the 20th and 21st centuries.	https://zkm.de/en/research-production/collections-archives

4.3 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Alina Tomescu: cultural organiser, researcher at Amsterdance, University of Amsterdam

Anita Jóri: researcher at Leuphana University of Lüneburg, curator at CTM Festival and editor at Dancecult

Arno van der Hoeven: project manager and researcher at Platform31

Britt-Marie van der Drift: educator on slavery history, lecturer at Reinwardt Academie

Casper Storm: night programmer for Hip Hop and talent development

Celia Okoro: Night Mayor of Nijmegen

Chris Garrit: Night ambassador, promoter, venue owner, and cultural activist

Clarence Prince: night programmer at Metropool

Daan Knijnenburg: club nights programmer and council member at Nachtwacht Haarlem

Daniël Lugtmeier: marketing coordinator at Hedon

Danielle Kors-Pieket Weeserik: head of marketing at Burgerweeshuis

Darko Esser: DJ, producer, programmer, advocate at Stichting Nachtburgemeester Nijmegen

Derek van Winsen: creative producer, 'Als Muren Konden Praten' podcast

DIORA: multidisciplinary artist, DJ

DJ Chuckie: DJ, producer, cultural entrepreneur

Dr. Timo Koren: assistant professor of Cultural Economy at University of Amsterdam

Dr. Ton Nabben: researcher at Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, expert on recreational drug use and rave culture

Eelko Anceaux: club and event organiser and promoter, owner of De Marktkantine, founder of Chemistry house nights

Emma Warren: writer and broadcaster, author of *Document Your Culture*

Faustin: Artist, designer and cultural researcher

Gert Plas: coordinator for Poparchief Groningen at Groninger Archieven

Hillegonda Rietveld: professor emeritus, Arts & Media, Sonic Culture at London South Bank University

John Agesilas: dancer, cultural entrepreneur, founder of Summer Dance Forever and Foundation Amsterdam Hip Hop Center

Katherine Green: director of Rendezvous Projects CIC

Kim Dankoor: Hip Hop researcher at Utrecht University, media expert, and interviewer

Kim Tawjoeram: dancer, teacher, event organiser of Rooted in Culture, founder of Dynamic Arts

Lieve Goedhart: programmer at Melkweg, Kanaal40, La Cassette

Margriet van Kraats: programme director at TivoliVredenburg, board member at Podiumkunst.net

Mark van Bergen: writer, lecturer, researcher on EDM culture at Fontys ACE

Mathijs Reinen (Rozaly): DJ, curator, archivist and club manager at Kanaal40

Matteo Franklin van der Sluijs: creative writer and researcher in music, Mosaiko Magazine

Melisa Cenik: creative strategist in music, arts, culture, project initiator and lead at Het Archief

Merlijn Poolman: Night Mayor of Groningen

Migiza Victoriashoop: head of collections at Amsterdam City Archives

Mike Redman: documentary filmmaker, music producer, cover art designer, founder of Redrum Recordz

Rens Wilderom: cultural sociologist and lecturer on computational social sciences

Richard Foster: writer and artist, author of books on the history of Dutch Post-Punk, advisor on marketing and communications at WORM, Rotterdam

Rob Manga: entrepreneur, record collector, record producer, club deejay

Ruben Planting: DJ, label owner at Four Framed Music, chair at Music Declares Emergency and consultant for vinyl pressing plants

Savannah Stapel: cultural programmer and curator at Felix Meritis

Shinedoe / Chinedum Nwosu: DJ, producer, label owner

Souhayla Ou-Oumar: multidisciplinary artist, educator, moderator

Thijs Custers: cultural entrepreneur, artist and art lover

Thys Boer: founder, chairman, and spokesperson of N8W8 Rotterdam

Zoë Horsten: moderator, programme maker, and event producer

4.4 PROJECT TEAM

Thomas Scheele (he/him, they/them)
Project Manager and Editor, VibeLab

Thomas is Senior Project Manager at VibeLab and based in Berlin. He has been active in nightlife since 2009 as event organiser, venue manager, performer, and dancer. Thomas has more than ten years of experience working in nightlife research and advocacy.

Kerronia Thomas (she/her)
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Kerronia is a Jamaican-born and Montréal-based researcher with VibeLab. She has experience in policy research and programmatic support for parliamentary action on climate change and gender mainstreaming. Being a club head as well, Kerronia sees nightlife as a unique realm for pushing the boundaries of inclusivity and community care.

Maarten van Brederode (he/him)
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Maarten is a Seattle-born and Berlin-based researcher with VibeLab. Maarten has dual American/Dutch citizenship, having also lived in New York and studied in Amsterdam. He received a BA in Geography from the University of Washington and an MSc in Urban Geography from the University of Amsterdam.

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Mirik is a former nightlife promoter and, as Amsterdam's inaugural Nachtburgemeester in 2012, was one of the first night mayors in the world. In 2017, Mirik co-founded VibeLab to boost nighttime governance in cities around the world through research, building advocacy structures and consulting stakeholders.

Miles Niemeijer (he/him)
Project Lead, Podiumkunst.net

Miles Niemeijer is the Domain Coordinator for Music at Podiumkunst. net. He works on integrating various music cultures into the national archives and is committed to connecting and making diverse (digital) music collections accessible.

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