



LGBTQI Nightlife in London from 1986 to the present

Interim findings

Research designed in collaboration with
Raze Collective & Queer Spaces Network



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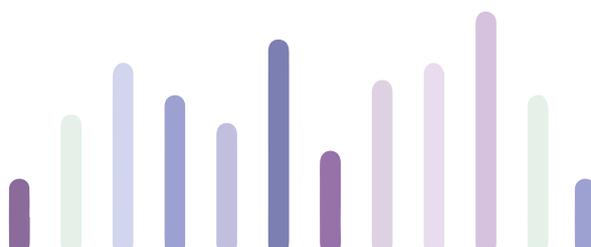
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1. Executive summary

London's LGBTQI nightlife in the period since 1986 has catered to a **great diversity** of people. The provision has **varied in quantity and types of space** available for different groups within the LGBTQI community. It has been located in a wide variety of spaces, including community centres, cinemas, shopping malls, theatres, bookshops, as well as bars, pubs, nightclubs; and **widely dispersed across London**, with larger concentrations in some specific areas.

This is the first research to show that, in the overall context of the past three decades, there has been a **recent intensity of closures** of longstanding LGBTQI nightlife venues; that **those catering to women and black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) LGBTQI** people have been **disproportionately** vulnerable to closure; and that more venues remain at risk thus including the spaces LGBTQI community members deem to be of most value in terms of heritage, social and cultural functions.

In the period of study, LGBTQI nightlife spaces have accommodated a range of **important welfare, wellbeing and community** functions in the period. At a time of **rising inequality and intense competition for space**, closures of venues and other spaces present a challenge for already vulnerable minorities, for the neighbourhoods in which they form part of the **social, cultural** and **economic fabric**, and for **social integration** in the capital more widely.

In the period of investigation, London's LGBTQI nightlife has been **distinctive** through its **variety**. Case studies reveal **imaginative appropriations** and re-uses of space, and a range of dynamic and **adaptive organisational** forms – including entrepreneurial and not-for-profit models and close links to the creative industries providing important space for cultural production.

There is a strong appetite **amongst community members**, venue owners, performers and promoters, not only to protect sites of **LGBTQI heritage**, but also to shape new forms of nightlife, responding to sexual, gender and ethnic diversity in the capital, and **nurturing successful** and **inclusive LGBTQI** night spaces which could potentially be showcased internationally. Performers and community members, in particular, called for **new community-oriented spaces**.



The Mayor, Greater London Authority, London Assembly members, and local government can positively respond to closures and pressures on venues and other spaces through **practical measures proposed** and/or supported by venue owners, managers, performers, promoters and community members, such as: **building the protection and promotion of LGBTQI spaces into the Mayor's London Plan** and local borough plans; promotion of the value of LGBTQI culture and community including making it a priority for the Night Czar; **creating a more favourable culture to support new and existing LGBTQI venues and events** through recommending and enforcing improvements to licensing, policing, business regulation, rent conditions, statutory protections for buildings and businesses, subsidies e.g. for accessibility; and through promoting networking among LGBTQI venue owners and managers, night-time entrepreneurs and civil society organisations in order to promote the use of venues for a mix of uses including day-time uses of benefit to LGBTQI and local communities.



2. Introduction

In this project we have been gathering information on nightlife spaces (e.g. bars, clubs, performance, cultural or other venues) understood to be important to London's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI) communities.

Our research focuses on the period **1986 to the present**. It begins in 1986 as the year that the Greater London Council was disbanded, marking a shift in urban regeneration policy, and the closure of the Greater London Council-funded London Lesbian and Gay Centre. It ends in the present, 2016, at a time of **wide reporting and activism around the closure of commercial LGBTQI spaces**, with a number of ongoing high-profile cases in the media, a spate of recent closures of long-standing venues of high community esteem; and after some recent successful architectural and community asset value listings (*see bibliography p.35*). Some spaces and events have also launched recently, and we have been keen to document **emergent forms of LGBTQI nightlife**. In the present moment, following the election of the new Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, and London Assembly members, there are also renewed discussions of policy change to support culture, social integration and the night-time economy (e.g. the *Cultural Infrastructure Plan* and *Culture Supplementary Planning Guide* – strategic documents that will inform the *London Plan*). A process is underway to recruit a Night Czar, and there are heated debates about licensing and the forced closure of iconic venues – debates which are by no means contained to LGBTQI venues. **Our research, conducted independently, is intended to positively inform these discussions, and wider public, media and LGBTQI community debates.**

The topic of LGBTQI nightlife is of importance to LGBTQI communities not only in terms of cultural production, leisure and consumer practices, important as they might be. It is clear that London's LGBTQI night scenes make a huge contribution to the cultural and economic life of the capital. But in the period of our investigation, civic life and welfare space for those communities have been inextricably bound with nightlife. Furthermore, going beyond the interests of LGBTQI groups and individuals, **what is happening to LGBTQI venues and night scenes is of wider relevance to society, and indeed the activities of LGBTQI nightlife are integrated into London's neighborhoods** and cultural scenes. Venue closures must be seen alongside other contemporary public conversations on gentrification and regeneration; on social inclusion, diversity, safe space, and the assimilation of minorities or their assertion of difference; as well as the culture and heritage, particularly of minority groups.



3. Methodology

This pilot project was conceived and designed in conversation with the **Raze Collective**, a charitable organisation that supports and develops queer performance in the UK, and **Queer Spaces Network**, which facilitates discussions across queer venues, and the campaigns to support them. In alignment with these groups our aim has been to begin to build an evidence base to document the presence of **existing and past LGBTQI nightlife spaces** in order to understand the **value of these spaces for LGBTQI and wider communities**, and to London's culture and heritage more broadly.

The research was conducted with the intention of providing evidence to better understand the **value of a diversity** of LGBTQI nightlife spaces. It has focused on a wide range of examples, including those deemed to provide safe social and/or work environments for people with **minority gender or sexual identities**; those considered important to such groups because a significant proportion of the clientele identify as LGBTQI; and those associated with LGBTQI people through the ways that the space has been designated or marketed. Our data gathering has included spaces that have already closed and those that are currently at risk, but it also documents spaces that are still open and operating successfully, commercially or otherwise, those protected by community action, and those that have recently opened.

In line with other **Urban Laboratory** work on citizenship, cosmopolitanism and minority heritage within regeneration, we have been keen to represent spaces of importance to a diverse range of distinctive LGBTQI communities, even while we recognise shared challenges and interests across those groups.

4. Methods and activities

In order to capture of the complexity of London's LGBTQI night scenes we used **mixed methods** combining the **quantitative** and **qualitative** methods. This aligns with the Urban Laboratory's '**engaged urbanism**' approach, which is underpinned by an understanding of urban sites as diverse, specific and changeable. This requires **methodological flexibility** and attention to the variety of experiences across time and space; and research that is both sensitive to empirical complexity and anchored in concrete places at specific points in time. Engaged urbanism seeks to establish research methodologies that provide **opportunities for city dwellers** who may otherwise suffer **adverse effects of urban development** processes to express their experiences, views and knowledge, and work towards improving their quality of life and to contribute to eliciting improved participation and, ultimately, quality of life, for them.

The main elements have included the **construction of a database** of venues and events, a survey and interviews, two documented workshops with panels and small group discussions and charettes, and a review of relevant literature.

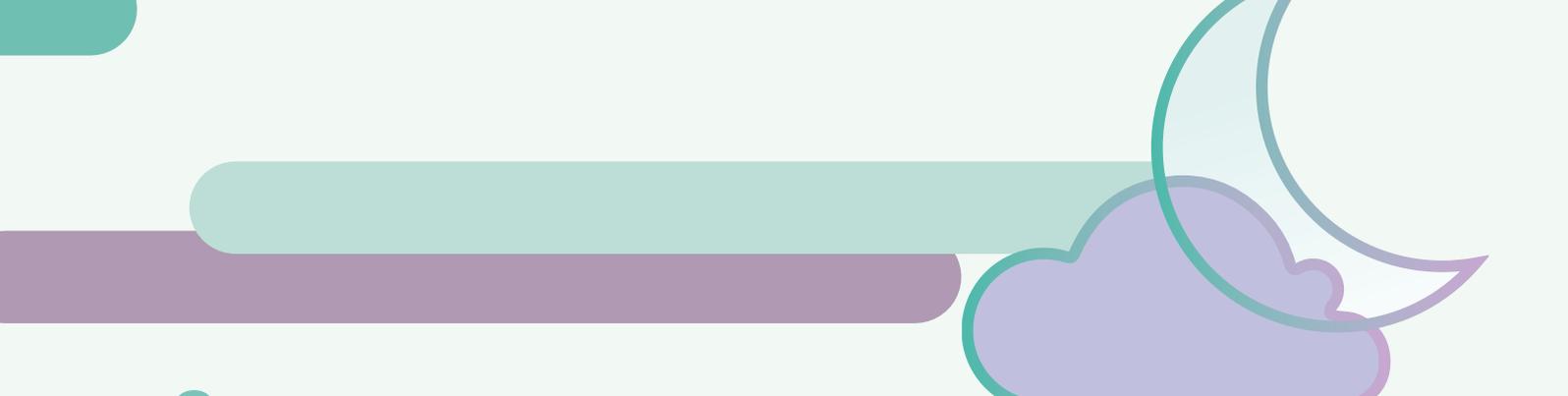
Database and Archival Work

As part of our work we have designed and constructed a matrix of LGBTQI venues, spaces and events from 1986 to the present. Our intention has been to chart changes to the profile of London's scenes over time and space. We began with 1986 at the time of the disbanding of the Greater London Council and have brought things right up to the present, with the hope that this 30-year view will enable specific shifts to be seen alongside policy changes. The database we have created intentionally captures one-off events and nights as well as venues, and goes beyond just those venues that have recently closed, or are threatened with closure, in order to chart ongoing successes and new ventures.

In order to construct this database we have visited archives to sample LGBTQI scene listings taken from publications such as *City X Pink Pages*, *Fluid*, *Time Out*, *TV/TS London News*, *QX* and in more recent years online sources. Specific listings are biased towards particular constituent groups within LGBTQI communities, and particular geographical territories, and so we have addressed this, as far as possible, by using a range of publications. In sampling these publications we are aware of how listings reflect changes in night scenes seasonally, as well as periodic shifts, just as their production and circulation also change in relation to technology and social behaviour.

Table: Database fields

Database fields
Venue
Event
Venue name
Host venue name
Events hosted
Years (1986–2016)
Date opened
Date closed (<i>known</i>)
Date closed (<i>estimated</i>)
No. of documented years open (<i>in research period</i>)
Other names
Location
Listing description of venue
Type of venue (<i>unspecified, community/ social centre, nightclub, bar, pub, cafe, performance/ cabaret space</i>)
Clientele (<i>unspecified clientele, L, G, B, T, Q, TV, QTIPOC, Leather/fetish/BDSM/Kink, Men only, Women only, Members only</i>)
Address
Notes
Contact Name
Email
Website
Twitter



Survey

The survey compiles responses from 296 people who have answered questions tailored to specific groups (229 community members, 27 performers, 20 promoters, 5 managers/venue owners and 10 workshop participants). The intention of these surveys has been to elicit a range of narratives and data to profile the capital's nightlife and to understand what has been valued about different kinds of space, as well as the hopes and concerns of those who use and operate them.

Survey responses have mostly been collected online, through four questionnaires, drafts of which were discussed with members of the **Raze Collective** and **Queer Spaces Network**, and which were uploaded to the questionnaire website, Typeform, selected for the clarity and accessibility of its interface. The call to participate was widely distributed using a project website, Facebook page and Twitter feed, Urban Lab's networks, and those of Raze Collective and Queer Spaces Network. We were proactive in strategically disseminating the call to people who organise and attend nights and spaces **oriented towards people of colour, women, trans and non-binary people, older members of LGBTQI communities, and organisations representing intersex people**, with the aim of eliciting wide representation of different constituents within the LGBTQI community, documenting and making diversity in LGBTQI communities more visible. The community questionnaires were **designed to allow respondents to self-identify** with regard to their gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and other identity characteristics which they determined to be important, and to remain anonymous. The respondents to the **performer, promoter and manager/owner** questionnaires could identify themselves if they so wished.

We have also, where possible, interviewed venue owners in person, and in venues, in situ. We have undertaken an initial analysis of this data using *NVivo* qualitative data analysis software.

Workshops, panels and charrettes

We expanded the range of participants in our research through designing two workshops, one at UCL involving 50 people, mostly with specific expertise in contemporary and past LGBTQI nightlife spaces and/or built environment expertise; and one at **Peckham Festival** in a transportable queer community venue, **the Camp-er-Van**, with a public audience comprising general attendees of the festival and those who had specifically come for the workshop and performances located in the Camp-er-Van.

Workshop 1 included talks and small group charrettes and **Workshop 2** was designed as an interactive event, opening possibilities for the audience to engage with the research data

and findings to date and contribute to them. It also involved **on-stage interviews** with four people with expertise in specific night scenes. In inviting speakers and attracting participants to these events we have **invested in ensuring diversity** through, for example, specifically contacting individuals and organisations that represent and campaign for a range of distinct LGBTQI communities.

We have **actively sought and successfully included participation from trans, women's, BAME and older LGBTQI peoples' organisations, venues and events**. Although we reached out to intersex community organisations, we were less successful in this, and in future work would be keen to redress this imbalance



Vogue Fabrics Dalston, image reproduced courtesy of Lyall Hakaraia.

Literature review

Our work has been underpinned by a literature review (covering recent news media on LGBTQI venue closures; academic literature on queer nightlife spaces across a range of spatial disciplines; and select policy documents). We have collated a bibliography of available material on our website as the project has progressed (see *select bibliography*, p.35).

5. Emerging findings: pilot database

Between 1986 and the present, we have recorded the presence of 233 venues, 80 nights/events. This is, of course, just a snapshot, based on the particular listings we have identified and recorded so far. Nonetheless, we have attempted to use a cross-section of publications and other sources to construct our data, so that a spectrum of spaces and activities are represented. This pilot data collection is still being constructed and analysed, but some of the key points that are emerging, which help to understand the distinctiveness of LGBTQI nightlife in London in this period, are as follows.

- London's LGBTQI nightlife in this period has catered to a great diversity of LGBTQI people, but the provision has varied in quantity and types of space available for different groups.
- LGBTQI nightlife has been located in a wide variety of spaces, including community centres, cinemas, shopping malls, theatres, bookshops, as well as bars, pubs, nightclubs.
- London's LGBTQI nightlife has been widely dispersed across London, with larger concentrations in some specific areas. There are distinctive clusters associated with Earls Court/Shepherd's Bush in the 1970s and 1980s and King's Cross in the 1980s/1990s; and, continuing into the present, Soho from the 1990s; Vauxhall from the late 1990s and early 2000s, Shoreditch/Dalston/Bethnal Green/Haggerston from the 2000s, and both closures and openings in Bermondsey/Lewisham/Peckham/Deptford from the 2010s. Numerous smaller clusters are also evident.
- In this pilot study we have so far documented 233 individual venues and 80 nights/events (including both regular and one-off). Given that this is a time-limited pilot study, in which only a sample of sources have been documented, these figures represent only a partial picture. In the next phase of research we anticipate that the actual total numbers of venues recorded in the period will be higher, and the total number of nights will be substantively higher.

- Approximately 3% of venues have existed continuously for the entire period, from 1986 to the present (Admiral Duncan, The Back Street, City of Quebec, Comptons of Soho, Heaven, Royal Vauxhall Tavern, The White Swan). 14% existed for over 20 years; 35% existed for over 10 years. In the overall context of the past three decades these figures, which will change as more data is added, highlight a recent drop in LGBTQI nightlife spaces from a peak in 2004. A notable intensity of closures of long-standing venues (e.g. The Black Cap, 1965–2015; Bromptons, 1984–2008; The Colherne, 1930s–2008; Club Colosseum, 1974–2014; The Fridge, 1981–2010; The George and Dragon, 1997–2016; Joiner’s Arms, 1997–2015; King Edward IV, 1966–2011; Madam Jojo’s, 1966–2014; The Queen’s Head, c. 1950–2016) evident in the data tallies with reports in our survey responses.
- There are ongoing threats of closure to some of the venues most frequently cited in our survey as of

importance to the capital’s LGBTQI communities (e.g. The Royal Vauxhall Tavern, 1880s–present; The Yard, 1994–present).

- The recent closure of long-established central London venues that have specifically catered to BAME LGBTQI communities and/or have been important women’s spaces is notable (e.g. Busbys, 1986–2008; Drill Hall, 1977–2012; First Out, 1986–2011; The Glass Bar, 1995–2008).
- Women’s and BAME-specific spaces have more often been events hosted in venues, rather than venues themselves.

With further expansion of the pilot database we will be able to better understand how the character of the capital’s LGBTQI nightlife spaces and scenes have shifted over time in terms of types of venue and space, frequency of openings/closures, target clientele, and how specific communities within the LGBTQI umbrella have been served.

Map showing approximate locations of some of the distinctive LGBTQI nightlife clusters in London in the period of investigation.

A: Angel, EC: Earls Court, EL: East London, KX: Kings Cross, S: Soho, V: Vauxhall, SE: South East





Performers survey

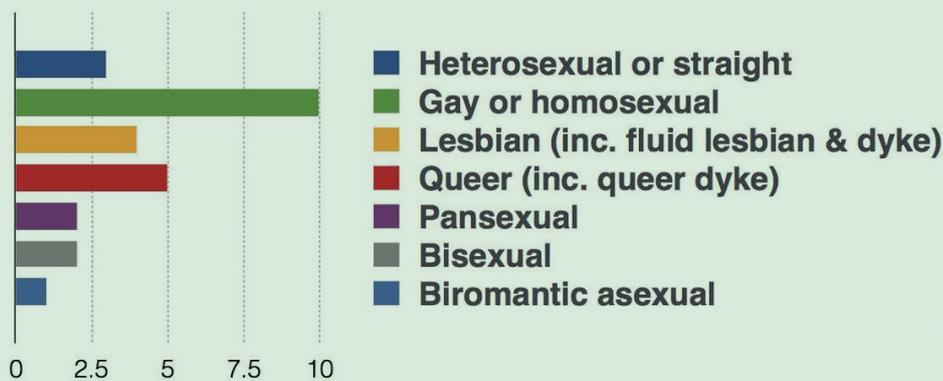
- The practices of the performers we surveyed are wide-ranging emphasising the diversity of London's LGBTQI performance scenes. These included, for example, **acrobatics, acting, bingo, burlesque, cabaret, comedy, curating, dance, drag, live art, music, parody, pop, queer theatre, satire, singing, striptease, tap, and writing.**
- The range of LGBTQI venues/events that performers considered significant to their performance careers was wide, from specific cabaret venues, commercial and community-oriented bars and clubs, to theatres and hotels. **Some of the most often mentioned venues were those that have recently been closed or threatened with closure** (Madam Jojo's, The Black Cap, Royal Vauxhall Tavern including its Duckie and Bar Wotever nights) as well as recently opened spaces (The Glory, Muse Soho).
- Amongst the impacts of venue closures, performers commented on the loss of: safe space, community contact and visibility; employment/business, funding, pay; **risk-taking venues to experiment and nurture new talent;** as well as increased competition over fewer venues.
- Some of the ideas and emphases in this group's recommendations were that the **Mayor should support LGBTQI communities** through **structured dialogue** with them; through recognising and celebrating the value of LGBTQI nightlife to culture, community cohesion and individual wellbeing. Performers also **suggested protection orders for iconic venues;** and that the Mayor could have a role in **enabling community purchase; incentivising flexible licensing** and **rent control** or other **financial subsidies.** Performers were also keen to see the Mayor actively encourage London's performance culture through, for example, financial subsidies and grants to artists and through support for new rehearsal spaces and other cultural infrastructure that would enable artists to transition from smaller to larger audiences. As with other groups we surveyed, performers were **strongly supportive** of the idea of **a Night Czar and the night tube.**

Performers Survey Results



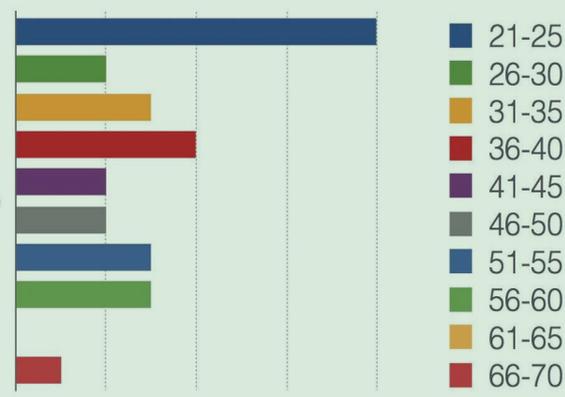
Cis female (1) | Female (9) | Femme (1) | Genderqueer (2)
Lesbian (1) | Gay Male (12) | Other, Trans*, Genderqueer (1)

Gender identities: Performers



Queer dyke (1) | Queer (4) | Pansexual (2) | Lesbian (2) |
Homosexual (4) | "Homosexual" (1) | Gay (7) | Fluid Lesbian (1) |
Dyke (1) | Bisexual (2) | Biromantic asexual (1)

Sexualities: Performers



Performance Practices

comedy tap | actor | musician | singer
 dancer | writer | strip tease | queer
 theatre | queer performance | live art |
 cabaret | politicised pop culture
 parody | queer performance | drag |
 drag king | drag queen | bingo caller |
 curating | acrobatic performer |
 burlesque | political satire

Age: Performers

Promoters survey

- The promoters we surveyed reported **similar concerns** about the negative impacts of venue closures. In response they felt that a more **sympathetic licensing policy framework** was needed – one that actively encouraged new venues and **temporary/one-off nightlife events**; along with the protection of certain venues, financial concessions to support a range of for- and not-for-profit models; as well as **investment by local authorities in night-time environments and educated policing**, sensitive to LGBTQI lifeworlds. This group emphasised the importance of the **development of welfare and social services** for LGBTQI communities alongside nightlife, and were supportive of a Night Czar with a good understanding of LGBTQI nightlife.
- In addition, promoters were worried about nightlife leaving London for other cities internationally. Some members of this group also raised challenges within LGBTQI night scenes which they felt need to be addressed, such as a perceived monopoly of gay men over venues; and a **lack of accessible venues**. Promoters noted that a decline in LGBTQI nightlife **connects with a loss of stable welfare structures for community members**. They were also hopeful, however, about the potential of a younger generation to reinvent nightlife, and about the increase in genderfluid and non-binary nightlife in London's contemporary mix.

What makes you concerned or hopeful about the future of London's LGBTQI nightlife?

Concerns

Licensing regulations tightening and venue closures.

Property prices are definitely the biggest concern.

Gay men have the monopoly on venues and that's got worse.

Lack of accessible venues – the events are meant to be inclusive – it sucks leaving out people with mobility problems.

Issues with gendered toilets and need for trans awareness training for venue staff.

Hopes

The ridiculous amount of talent in an ever-changing landscape of young artists coming through, who look to challenge gender stereotypes and how this fits with wider society. There is fire within their bellies.

New parties are showing up in non-traditional venues.

Queering spaces is more exciting to me than queer spaces.

Venue owners and managers survey

- The venue owners and managers who responded in most detail to our survey and/or were interviewed, represented a range of business types with annual turnovers of between £40,000 and £1.1m and employing between 1 and 30 staff, as well as 6–15 paid/unpaid artists/performers per week. They all happened to be housed in Victorian buildings, of between 50 and 190m² and these were leased and run by a range of individuals and businesses (pub companies).
- Their target clientele included LGBTQI communities with a **mix of genders and sexualities**, as well as groups such as **music fans**, **students** and specifically **art students** from local universities.

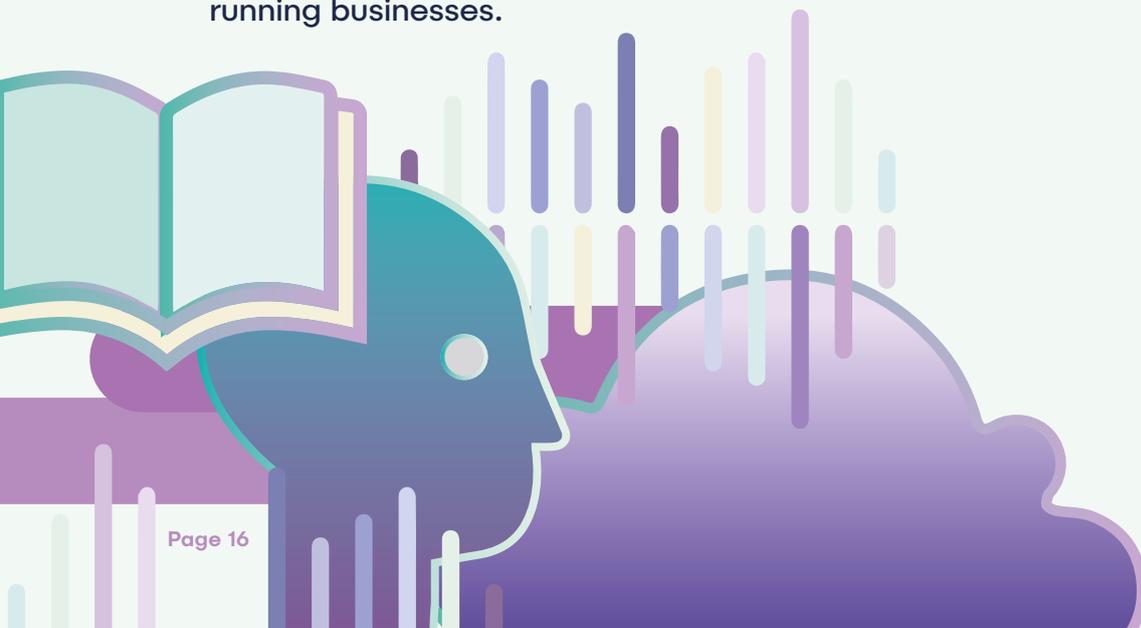


**LGBTQI
nightlife
can reclaim,
reuse and
re-fabulous
any
space
you like**

• They placed emphasis on creating spaces and events that were **welcoming and 'safe'** to the LGBTQI individuals they were hosting/ attempting to attract. Strategies to make this possible included e.g. having an **all female staff**; and marketing on platforms such as established fashion and **LGBTQI scene magazines** as well as **social media**, especially for bespoke nights.

• As well as commercial considerations, they emphasised the **importance of community activities** taking place in venues (fundraising, sexual health awareness, HIV testing, yoga), as well as direct ways that they are **supporting local creative industries**, beyond e.g. hosting performers, promoters and DJs, such as through accommodating other forms of art production and exhibition, and educational events.

• Those surveyed noted that the **use of space by LGBTQI nightlife businesses is inventive, diverse and responds creatively to challenges and change**. The adaptability of venues to such different uses of space, and in some cases the amenability to a **DIY ethos of adaptation** by users from the **creative industries**, was seen to be an important and distinctive feature for queer nightlife space. Some owners/managers also reported having taken over run-down/disused and/or stigmatised spaces and converting them into nightlife uses. **Support from local communities including neighbouring businesses** was identified as an important factor in starting and running businesses.



Heritage Values

Respondents understood the LGBTQI venues to be of heritage values through a mix of social, architectural and cultural definitions of heritage.

Social Heritage	Cultural Heritage	Architectural Heritage
Through being inclusive, supportive and nurturing spaces for communities, employees, artists and customers.	Through being different, unique and representing freedom of expression.	Through being continuously in use as a LGBTQI space for a long period.
As initiatives led/managed by minorities (e.g. gay women).	Through hosting cultural activities and art.	Through being located in architecturally significant and/or historic (e.g. Victorian) buildings.
Through contributing to local communities and events.	Through being exported to different venues nationally and internationally.	Through converting disused, run-down and/or stigmatised spaces.

Venue owners and managers survey

Special factors that enabled venues to open	Challenges to venues opening
Skills to adapt a building in poor condition	Finding the right site
Low Rent Sponsorship from some suppliers	Raising money
Supportive community / neighbourhood relations (e.g. shop owners)	Neighbours' objections
Supportive landlords, allowing freedom to be creative	Licensing Need for sensitive policing and security
Hard work, luck , tenacity, determination	Time taken for space to take-off / word to spread

Venue owners' and managers' suggestions for how the Mayor can support LGBTQI nightlife

Venue owners and managers felt that there were **concrete ways the Mayor could support LGBTQI nightlife** businesses such as through: **protection against redevelopment** for alternative uses; **protection from unethical landlords**, including **sudden evictions** and rent hikes; **nurturing of networking across LGBTQI businesses**; assistance with **making venues more accessible**, or **incentivisation of local boroughs** to assist with this; **developing licensing regimes** that support independent businesses and the cultural events constituting the **night-time economy**.

“The landlady leaves us alone. They wanted an artist with a family to live here. The estate agent who I pay my fee to is lovely and just comes to check if the building's still standing and checks for structural issues which we address. There were no working toilets to start with and every window was smashed. The back of the house was subsiding with water leaking in so we addressed that, and now we're keeping the building well.

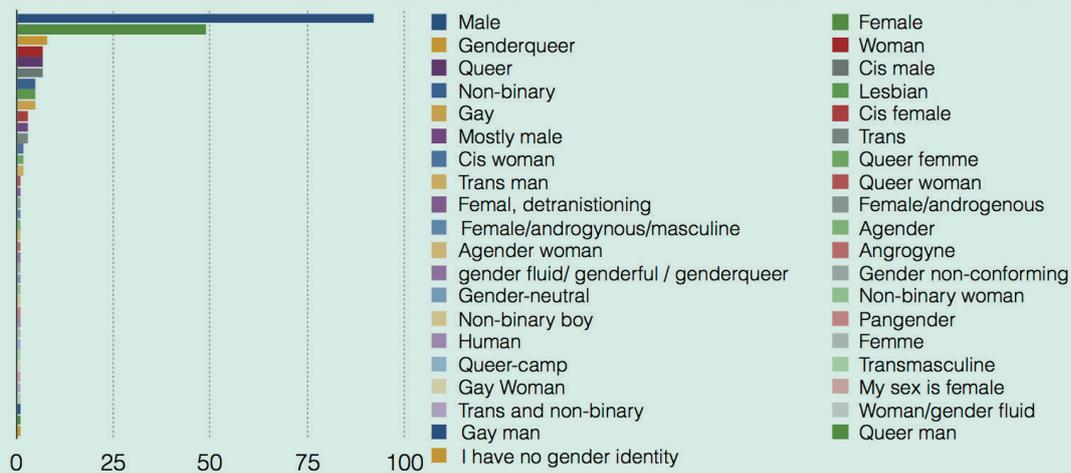
The fact that they overlooked the rent to start with, when we couldn't afford to pay, meant we had freedom to start something. The council were supportive when it became legal.

”

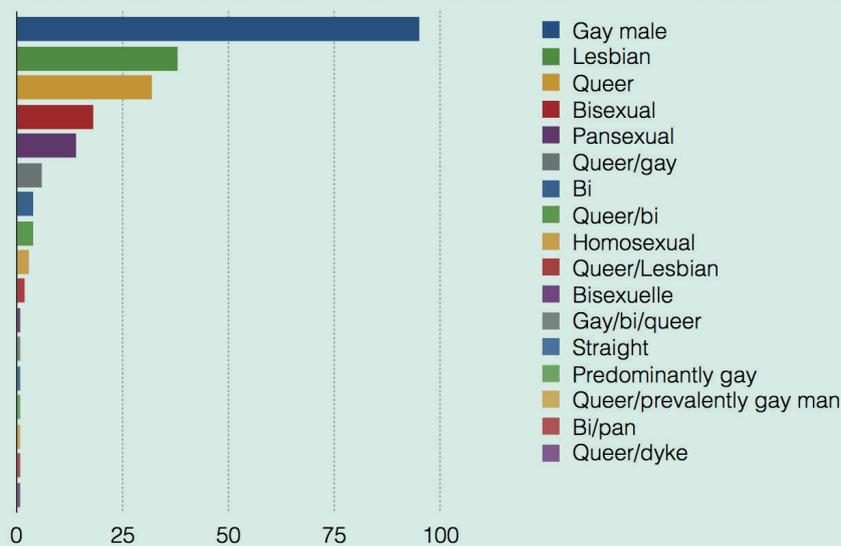
Community survey

Given that we asked respondents to self-identify, rather than assigning categories for them to identify with, the returned questionnaires strikingly emphasise the **distinctive diversity** of London's LGBTQI communities in terms of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age and other identity characteristics people deemed important. However, although the respondents were notably diverse, the data also **emphasised a bias towards white and gay-identifying men.**

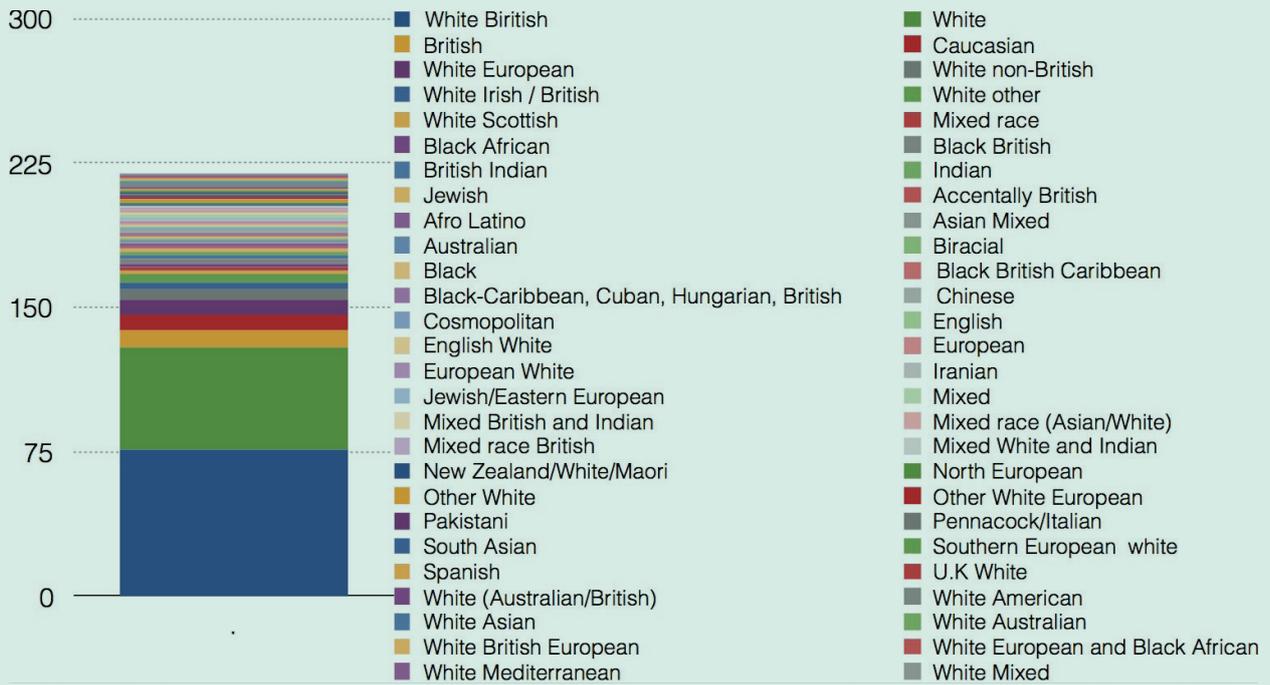
Community Survey Results



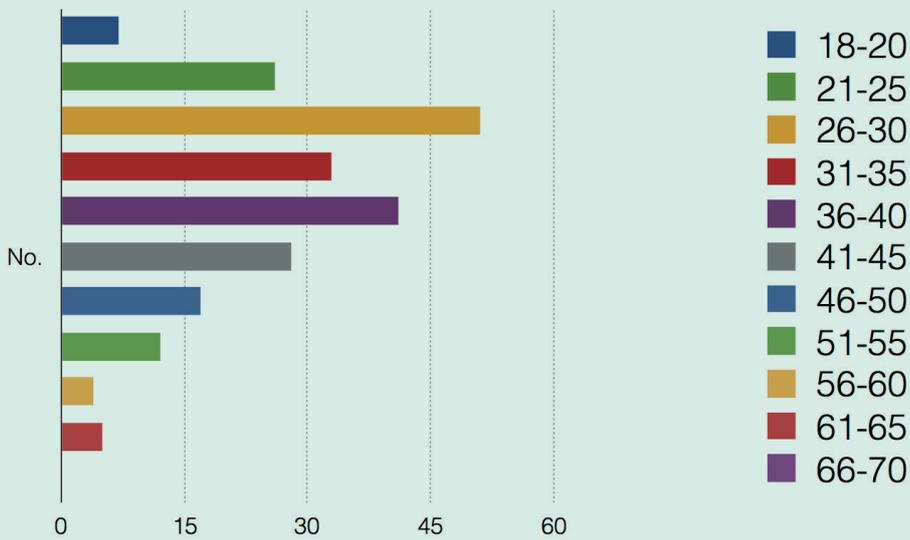
Gender identities: Community



Sexualities: Community



Ethnicities: Community

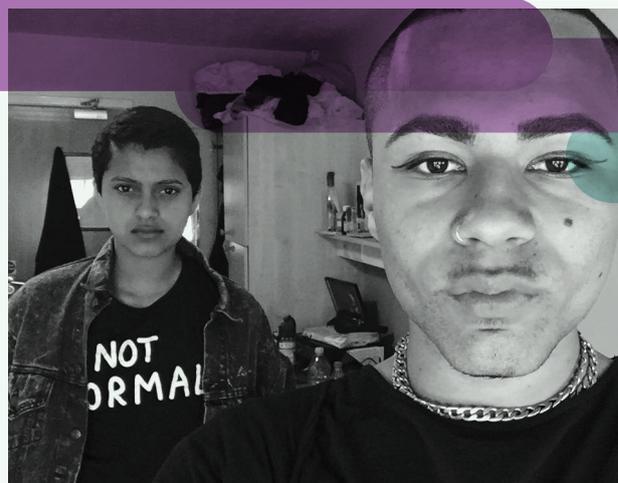


Age: Community

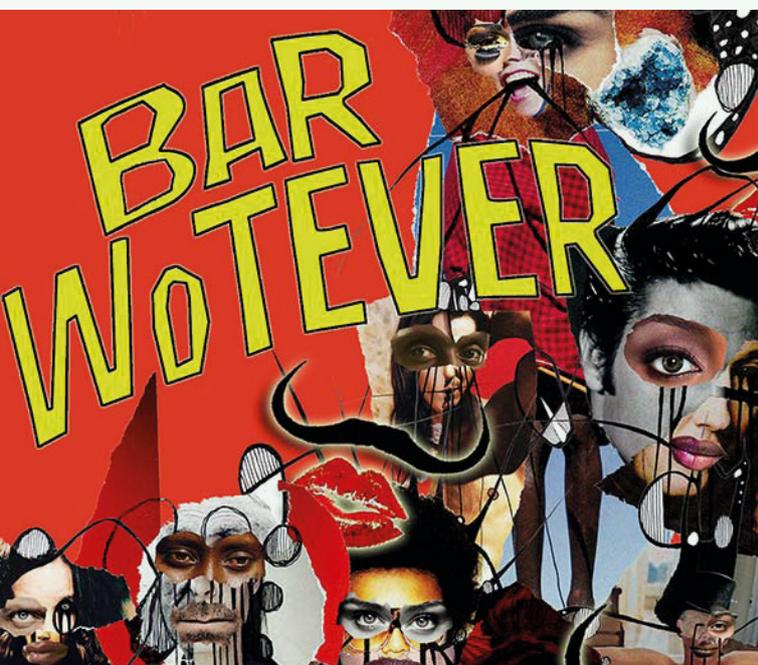
There were a significant number of survey respondents of **non-binary genders**, identifying as **genderqueer** and **a-gender**, for example. Recognition of gender diversity was evident in a number of respondents identifying themselves as cisgender, so it was not only trans and non-binary respondents who, **when given the space to define their own gender**, did so in ways that **exceeded the usual 'male' and 'female'** tick boxes you find in surveys. This indicates recognition and acceptance of non-binary identities amongst some members of LGBTQI communities, although this is not uniformly the case.

Asked *'Have LGBTQI nightlife spaces been important to you? If so, why? If not, why not?'* The overwhelming majority of survey respondents said **yes** and the quotes we have selected in this report, while they do not capture the full complexity of commentaries provided, suggest some of the common themes raised by respondents.

For most LGBTQI people nightlife is or



Performers Krishna Isthia and Travis Alabanza.



Bar Wotever, Royal Vauxhall Tavern, woteverworld.com

has been hugely valuable in **providing spaces of belonging and community**, places to perform, experiment and find friendships and relationships. However, nightlife spaces **are not accessible to everyone**, for a variety of reasons, including (but not limited to) gender identity, sexuality, ethnicity, age, mental and physical health and mobility. It's important to recognise that **not everywhere is experienced as inclusive by virtue of being an LGBTQI space**. Trans and non-binary respondents tended to create, perform at and attend nightlife spaces that are more oriented towards queer and trans communities. Examples include well-established nights like **Bar Wotever**, newer nights such as **Bbz**, and performers like **Travis Alabanza, Krishna Isthia** and **CN Lester**.

Have LGBTQI nightlife spaces been important to you?



They have enriched my life and made me a more politically-aware and engaged person.

LGBTQI spaces are absolutely essential to me. They are some of the only spaces I feel safe and alive and happy. It's more than a generalised feeling of 'community' or about buying things - it's about being in groups and spaces where I don't need to feel the pressure of being seen as different. Or where I can see other people being safe and happy in their own queerness.

Yes, particularly when mainstream spaces were more homophobic.

No, I don't like very loud places with many people and drinking so I have difficulty finding interesting nightlife spaces. The underground queer scene is all I can afford.

Coming out in London in the noughties they were my first experiences of any sense of community, they gave me a sense of belonging when I felt isolated.

Not a lot. There are no events that are geared towards bisexual women as such. This makes it very hard to feel integrated. There is also a 'norm' on 'the scene' that some people do not adhere to which puts us off... It's still hard to find events where you are not judged in 2 secs, but I guess that's 'nightlife' for you...

When I was coming to terms with my gender identity it was great to be in trans-friendly spaces where gender was being explored.



Night Scenes at UCL

Workshop 1, at UCL, included participation from a diverse audience of those **with specific interests or expertise** in LGBTQI nightlife. The range of participants included, for example, venue managers, DJs, performers, bar staff, academics, diversity and inclusion professionals, planners, architects, communications professionals, activists, performance union members, archivists, charity workers, health care professionals.

The event was structured by using **opening provocations** from the initial survey results and from three individuals who – as venue owners, managers and DJs – had substantive expertise, and narrated their experiences as autobiographical stories experiences. Following this, **informal charettes in mixed groups** were organised using prompts to understand different perspectives on LGBTQI night scenes.



Lyall Hakaraia, Vogue Fabrics Dalston, presents at Night Scenes, UCL, 2016. Photo: Laura Marshall.



Night Scenes

A UCL Urban Laboratory workshop on the past, present and future of LGBTQI London nightlife.

Discuss evidence from our research on LGBTQI Nightlife Spaces in London.

19th July 2016
6.30pm

IAS Common Ground,
South Wing, Wilkins Building,
UCL, Gower Street,
London WC1E 6BT

RSVP to nightscenes.eventbrite.co.uk

Hear stories about the queering of London nightlife from:

Bird la Bird
Dan Beaumont (Dalston Superstore)
DJ Ritu (Club Kati)
Lyall Hakaraia (Vogue Fabrics)

Participate in a conversation towards a utopian vision for the city's LGBTQI nightlife scenes and spaces. Organised by Ben Campkin and Laura Marshall for UCL Urban Laboratory. In association with Raze Collective and Queer Spaces Network.

Night Scenes, UCL, poster, designed by Soofiya Andry, 2016.

In the second part of the workshop participants were divided into groups (mixed in terms of profession and known identity characteristics) to undertake a two-part charette.

In part 1, 'Perspectives on LGBTQI Night Scenes', each group was assigned to represent a different set of interested people: community members and community leaders representing LGBTQI communities; local government representatives, politicians, policy makers and licensors; business and venue owners, leaseholders and managers; event promoters, DJs, performers; developers. They were then asked to discuss and document on a worksheet how this group of people connect with LGBTQI nightlife spaces, and institutions that that shape them, and to address the questions:

- **What have been the impacts of venue closures, or related challenges, on this group, and how have they responded?**
- **From the perspective of this group, and the institutions and organisations they connect with, what lessons should be learned, and what positive changes could they work towards?**

In part 2, 'Utopic Planning', the groups were asked to consider, since LGBTQI nightlife has provided important social welfare and civic functions in the past and present:

- **How could this be enhanced now and in the medium-term future?**
- **Beyond nightlife, how could new structures for welfare and collaboration across LGBTQI groups take shape and/or be supported?**



Ben Campkin presenting at Night Scenes, UCL, 2016.
Photo: Laura Marshall.

The following are summaries of each charrette's discussion.

The **performers** group, facilitated by artist and venue manager **Lyall Hakaraia** discussed a wide range of issues relating to venues, audiences and performers' experiences. This included a focus on the differences between the needs of new, emerging or established artists; the impacts of digital technology on venue/event attendance and performers' practices; differing understandings of what queer space is and is not and how scenes evolve and re-invent themselves; the importance of 'safe space' for performers and artists, and also because of prejudices within LGBTQI communities; experimental spaces as launch pads for performance careers; the increasing importance of non-traditional spaces such as street performance and festivals; and the way in which incubator spaces/programmes could provide useful support for LGBTQI performers.





In the **local authorities** group, facilitated by DJ **Ritu**, the conversation was similarly wide-ranging. This group noted how LGBTQI nightlife is subject to broader cultural changes over time (e.g. recession, communication technology, social movements, availability of physical venues/spaces). Other topics included aspects such as the inconsistency between different boroughs' attitudes and policies towards nightlife (e.g. Soho 'Vice and

night-time' vs. Camden 'Entertainment and night-time') and a suggestion that this should be monitored. They observed that venue users impact or are impacted by a range of factors influenced by boroughs such as opening hours; availability of nightlife in specific locations/boroughs; local government intentions (personalities or party political); the way that local authorities policies and actions are influenced by or operate within markets. They suggested that there was a need for the public value of LGBTQI spaces to be better communicated and for this to reach existing and new audiences; as well as a need for an LGBTQI Centre which as a non-commercial entity would serve a diversity of people across LGBTQI communities; and support and recognition of the importance of community spaces and services, such as LGBTQI-specific public health spaces, e.g. 56 Dean Street; the potential value of engagement/support from Higher Education Institutions to create accessible spaces for education for LGBTQI communities.

For the **developers** group, facilitated by activist and academic **Chryssy Hunter**, the recommendations included financial incentives for supporting LGBTQI nightlife spaces; funding case studies of minority cultural venues who have succeeded to aid learning across difference spaces and contexts; preventative measures to help resist re-development and closure; financial subsidies for venues; and the facilitation of networking as well as genuine community engagement.

The **venues** group, facilitated by entrepreneur and DJ **Dan Beaumont**, noted the different models of nightlife, naming these hedonistic, DIY, and radical. They also observed that queer spaces had 'non-commodifiable' values; and that queer identities overlap, and shape, or are shaped by, queer spaces. They had a concern that a new generation of performers had a decreasing range of options of places to perform.

Finally, the **communities** group, facilitated by **Juan Miguel Kanai**, an urban geographer, echoed some of the concerns and interests present in the other discussions. This group also raised issues such as how new digital/virtual LGBTQI nightlife spaces might emerge through queer augmented reality; how group-specific spaces, as well as those used by/for everybody (e.g. libraries) are important – because of a significant decline in venues, as opposed to dedicated nights, for women (queer, bi, lesbian, trans, cis etc.) in London, Manchester and Bristol. They also noted issues around how venues, nights and networks can be difficult to find; how gay men often outnumber people of other genders and sexualities; and how there is a lack of LGBTQI BAME/queer, trans, intersex, People of Colourspaces and venues. This group discussed a need to recognise a shift to more fluid identities, especially

amongst younger folks within communities, and understand relationships between this phenomena and LGBTQI spaces. For LGBTQI nightlife, the group commented on a need to both 'avoid normalising' and 'avoid ghettoising' and to create shared spaces; for multi-use approaches to space to ensure commercial viability and a 24 hour combination of activities. They named some of the important spaces to the group as the **London Lesbian and Gay Centre in the 1980s** [London Lesbian and Gay Centre, 1985-1990, a mixed space, set up with Greater London Council Funding, that accommodated a diversity of functions], and **Dalston Superstore**, **The Glory** and **London LGBT Film Festival** now, as well as more anonymous venues such as warehouse parties in Manor House. Also, in terms of diversity, it was observed that nightlife spaces can be age specific/segmented, and often are **not inclusive for older people who lack spaces**. It was noted both how LGBTQI nightlife was frequented by students and also how clubs themselves are sources of information/education. The group additionally noted that **land value and rent increases** with high costs leading to **declining profitability of venues** and projects were important factors to be addressed.

small anti-gay sideline protest by the Parents Rights page).
 out by shouts of "Stop the bigots". Demonstrators

and newspapers at £3.95 or is available
 direct at no extra cost from Springboard
 Publishing Ltd, PO Box 741, London
 NW6 4YP.

London Lesbian & Gay Centre

Sunday 17th May at 9pm
Star Cabaret Presents
LINDA McMURRAY in Concert
 £2/£1 on stage at 10pm

Thursday 21st May
Underground Club presents the acclaimed
American comedienne
JANICE PERRY
 at 9pm (women only) £2.50/£1.50

24th May
Jazz Poetry with
LINDA KING
 special guest performance by
ANNA PALM—violin and voice
 £2.50/£1.50—8.30pm

31st May
DAVID DALE
Disco by Double Trouble
 £2.00/£1.00—9pm

5th June
LUNDUN
Caroline Fields & Jonathon Hartnell
 9pm for 10pm followed by Disco—£2/£1

FARRINGTON ROAD
 FARRINGTON
 DARTFORD

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS VIA A SHALLOW
 RAMP AT REAR. ASSISTANCE ALWAYS
 AVAILABLE. OPEN TIMES: WEDS 00-12.00
 THURS-SUN 12.00-11.00, FRI-SAT 12.00-2.00
 MONDAY CLOSED. ENTRANCE TO LURGE BY
 MEMBERSHIP ONLY. DAY MEMBERSHIP
 50p/10p. ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP £15/£7.50
 67-69 COWCROSS ST. EC1M 6BP. 608 1471

gospel singer Hope Augustus is appearing in cabaret at the
 club Martina's in South London's Market Tavern on May
 and soulful voice is an excellent vehicle for emotional rendi-
 diverse as *16 Tons* and *Bridge Over Troubled Water*. Before
 ce dance discs will be spinning courtesy of leading DJ Mandy
 or £1 for concessions. The Market Tavern is in Nine Elms
 s walk from Vauxhall tube. Hope Augustus will also be per-
 on London's South Bank on June 27th in this year's Les-
 nival.

7

London Lesbian & Gay Centre flyer, Hall-Carpenter Archives, LSE.

Part One Perspectives on LGBTQI Night Scenes

Each group will be assigned to represent a different set of interested people:

- a) community members and community leaders representing LGBTQI communities;
- b) local government representatives, politicians, policy makers and legislators;
- c) business and venue owners, leaseholders and managers;
- d) event promoters, DJs, performers;
- e) developers.

Prompt 1
Discuss and document on your worksheet how this group of people connect with the LGBTQI nightlife spaces and institutions that that shape it.
What have been the impacts of venue closures, or related challenges, on this group, and how have they responded?
From the perspective of this group, and the institutions and organisations they connect with, what lessons should be learned, and what positive changes could they work towards?



venues

- ① Experience differs by artist's level of experiences
New, emerging + established all differ.
- infrastructure
- existing audiences
- incubator
- audience feedback is different.
- ② Impact of digital tech
→ Online, mobile, etc. mediums.
→ Different age groups/skills
- ③ Different motivations for audiences/performers
- Apps, online dating
- expanding beyond just queer spaces
- artists + audiences want to retain 'Queer'.
- understandings of what a queer space is/isn't.
- Evolving scene, reinventing itself.
- ④ Reaching new audiences both in + outside current scene.
- ⑤ Safe space
- For performer + audience.
- prejudices within community
"Not in soho".
@ Bar Wotever + Duckie
→ launch pad for wider career outside
@ Soho Theatre.
- ⑥ Non-traditional spaces
- Street performance
- Future growth/trend
- Festivals
- ⑦ Incubators

*Impact. Lessons
Future - position.*

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LOCAL GOV. **PRINCIPLES OF GLE - 1986 (IS+1)** **PUNTERS**

- ① HAVE CONTROL
- ② MONITOR CONSISTENCY.

EDUCATION CENTRES. **BOROUGH**

SOHO "VICE & NIGHTTIME" VS GARDEN "EVENTS & NIGHTTIME"

NO DISCUSSION BETWEEN BOROUGHS/DEPT

DEFINE PUBLIC INTEREST

MUSIC VENUES PERCEIVED AS COMMERCIAL NOT ARTS/CREATIVE

REACHING AUDIENCES

DEMAND ~~HE.I.'S~~ **H.E.I.'S**

LGBTQI CENTRE **NON-COMMERCIAL INTEREST**

AGE - WIDER ENABLING/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT. **EDUCATION**

SEEK CREATIVE STATUS

COMMUNICATION

CULTURE CHANGE

RECESSION COMMUNICATION TECH. / SOCIAL MOVEMENT. **PHYSICAL VENUES**

LOCAL COUNCIL ON MARKET. PUBLIC HEALTH. (DEAN ST.)

INTEREST: MOST IMPORTANT CLIENT GROUP.

OPENING HOURS

LOCATION (BOROUGH)

LOCAL GOV. INTENTION (PERSONALITY OR PARTY POLITICS)

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From the perspective of the institutions and organisations they connect with, what lessons should be learned, and what positive changes could they work towards?

Developes engaged through personal contact

High powered networking

Case studies where ~~these~~ creative approaches have succeeded as developers - we want to engage community

Financial Incentive

Minority cultural venues make less money

The yard

Representative

Facilitative - subsidies



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+ -

Queer Space East
DIY events

Such small places for so ~~the~~ few people!

hedonistic models
diverse, less bond diversity

*
House of Bragg = Queer Identity
heteronormativity
overlapping identities

Content
⇒ non commodifiable

New generation of performers
only bars available

Wunderlust



Part One Perspectives on LGBTQI Night Scenes

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Part Two Utopic Planning

Prompt 2

LGBTQI nightlife has provided important social, creative and civic functions in the past and present.

How could this be enhanced now and in the medium-term future?

Beyond nightlife, how could new structures for welfare and collaboration across LGBTQI groups take shape and/or be supported?

- MSM
- GAY MEN
- SCIENTISTS
- ACADEMICS
- BI - CIS - WOMEN
- QUEER WOMEN

- NOT AS MANY WOMEN ONLY SPACES IN LONDON (ONLY DEDICATED NIGHTS W/ GAY MEN OUTNUMBERING WOMEN)

- VENUES AND NETWORK NOT ALWAYS EASY TO FIND

LGBT FILM FESTIVAL AS ~~BEYOND~~ CLUB SPACE

HIGH COSTS
↓
PROFITABILITY OF VENUES AND PROJECTS
CLUBS AS INFO SOURCES
BOOKSHOPS AND ~~COOP~~ DOWN

- BAME, LOCAL SHIPMENT (LAT. AM.) LAND VALUES AND RENTS

- STUDENTS
- NON-COMMERCIAL SPACES
- ROLE OF STUDENT UNIONS OUTSIDE CAPITAL
- AGE SEGMENTATION

→ OLDER TIMERS → PLACES THAT ARE MORE FAMILIAR

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- MOVE FROM PHYSICAL TO DIGITAL SPACES
VIRTUAL
- HOW WOULD QUEER AUGMENTATIONS OF REALITY LOOK?

USING NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN INTERESTING WAYS

- GROUP-SPECIFIC AS WELL AS FACILITIES USED BY EVERYBODY E.G. LIBRARIES

- UNDERSTANDING SHIFT TO MORE FLUID IDENTITIES

- AVOID NORMALISING / AVOID GATED SPACES

MULTI-USE APPROACHES TO SPACE TO ENSURE COMMERCIAL VIABILITY 24 HR COMBINATION OF ACTIVITIES

- GLCC IN FARRINGTON WARE HOUSES
- DSS / GURU
- WAREHOUSES IN MANOR HOUSE - YOUTH W/ MORE FLUID IDENTITIES

Night Scenes at Peckham Festival

Following the first Night Scenes event in July 2016, on 10 September 2016, UCL Urban Laboratory took Night Scenes to the Camp-er-Van at Peckham Festival. The Camp-er-Van is the creation of architectural designer and filmmaker Samuel Doeuk. In response to the increasing number of London's **queer spaces that have closed or whose futures are uncertain**, Samuel sought to **design and operate a 'queer space' that is immune from the threat of gentrification** and oriented toward performance and community. At Peckham Festival, the Night Scenes workshop joined a line-up of performances – from burlesque to spoken word – film screenings and audience participation events. It was accompanied by an exhibition of some of the key findings to date.

Following a report on emerging findings from our archival and survey-based research, attention turned to a knowledgeable panel of creators of LGBTQI nightlife: **Jeffrey Hinton**, **Mzz Kimberley**, and **Tia Simon-Campbell** and **Olivia Mastin** from **Bbz London**. Jeffrey is a legendary DJ, producer and visual artist who has been a key figure in London's gay and queer nightlife since the 1980s and continues to play at clubs such as *Heaven* and nights including *Bootylicious*. Kimberley has been a highlight of gay and queer culture and cabaret scenes in London and beyond since the 1990s and has performed in seminal venues including *Madam Jojos*, *Heaven*, *The Royal Vauxhall Tavern*, *The Glory* and *the Arcola Theatre* (to name a few). Part art



Night Scenes, Camp-er-Van, Peckham Festival, 2016. Photo: Laura Marshall.



Left to right, Ben Campkin, Jeffrey Hinton, Mzz Kimberley, Olivia Mastin, Tia Simon-Campbell, panel discussion, Night Scenes, Camp-er-Van, Peckham Festival, 2016. Photo: Laura Marshall.

exhibition, part club night, *Bbz* are a relative newcomer to London's LGBTQI scenes and were represented by founder, curator and photographer Tia Simon-Campbell and resident DJ Olivia Mastin. They are based in **South London** and their events are run by and predominantly for **queer women and genderqueer people of colour**. Along with nights and collectives such as **The Batty Mama, Goldsnap** and **UNITI**, *Bbz* form part of an emerging scene of more **political and inclusive queer nightlife** oriented towards communities who have all too often found themselves sidelined within London's LGBTQI scenes.



The wealth of experience of London's LGBTQI nightlife brought to the discussion by Jeffrey and Kimberley was invaluable. Both contributed poignant insights regarding recent closures of key venues and related the need for venues to keep up with and invest in supporting shifting cultures within LGBTQI scenes. This point was supported by members of the audience during the Q&A. Kimberley and Jeffrey also reflected upon changes over time. Notably, Mzz Kimberley discussed her pioneering role in fighting for hitherto male only gay clubs to be accessible to people of all genders, and being the first trans woman of colour to perform in many LGBTQI nightlife spaces.

The panel agreed that the most exciting spaces on London's nightlife scenes were those that are most **inclusive and embraced a queer ethos** and community focus. *Bbz* is an excellent example of this



Heaven flyer, 1996, advertising 'Fruit Machine' with Jeffrey Hinton and Mzz Kimberley. Bishopsgate Institute, Lesbian and Gay Newsmedia Archive.

approach, as was clear from Tia and Olivia's comments, which emphasized the need to more community-oriented spaces for socialising. A vital point raised by Olivia, and supported by the panel, highlighted the need to more opportunities for **inclusive daytime and nighttime spaces** across London that are created, owned, run by and for women, trans and non-binary folks, LGBTQI people of colour and others for whom the intersectional dimension of their identities often result in experiencing relatively **fewer socio-economic privileges than white, cis, middle-class men**.

Overall, a clear message that emerged from the panel and audience at the Camp-er-Van is that, while it is important to support and protect LGBTQI heritage and spaces threatened with closure, in the current political and socioeconomic climate venues and communities **cannot afford to be complacent**. While discussion and action around venue closures are vital, longstanding club nights and venues, as well as new spaces that are emerging, require support and demand recognition - especially those playing a vital role by addressing prevailing absences within London's LGBTQI night scenes.

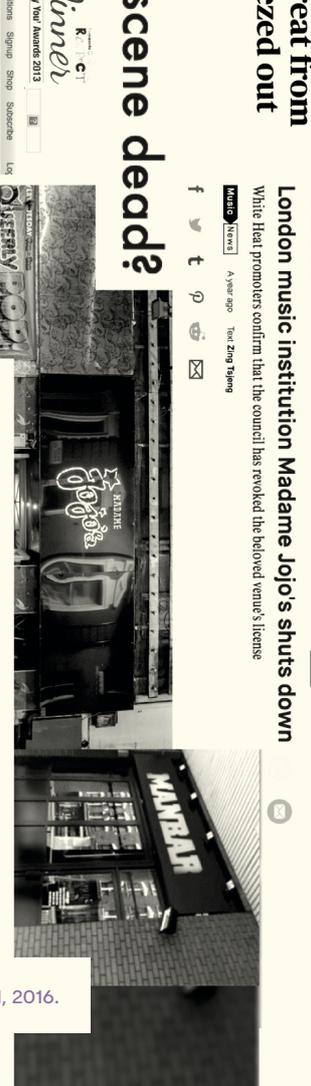
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ZDFP Venues are being lost and with them gay and lesbian heritage, but do cultural sites also play a part in this trend?

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White Heat promoters confirm that the council has revoked the beloved venue's license
A year ago
Tori Zing Thelma
Dazed 100 News Video Fashion Music Art+Culture
London's Manbar closes for the last time
Community
London's Manbar closes for the last time



is London's gay scene dead?
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DIVA
CANDY BAR: THE END OF AN ERA AND A NEW BEGINNING
New bar for lesbian and bisexual women to replace Candy Bar



The 'decline' of LGBTQI nightlife, collage of news headlines, Ben Campkin and Laura Marshall, 2016.

London gay pub the Royal Vauxhall Tavern is given Grade II listing
Campaign succeeds in winning protected status for venue of huge significance to LGBT community

INDEPENDENT
News Voices Culture Lifestyle Tech Sport Olympics Daily Edition
London's historic gay pub The Black Cap in Camden closed by owners a week after being awarded 'asset of community value' status
The future of the venue is not clear, but owners have tried to gain permission to have the redeveloped three times since 2011
Louise-Mae Etherington-Smith Thursday 15
sky NEWS

DAZED
WATCH SECTIONS PHOTOS MAGAZINE TOPICS
The Future of London's Queer Scene
By Chris Godfrey
Fashionista Writer
November 20, 2015
From the column *Chemsex Week*
One of London's Most Anarchic LGBT Venues Is Closing
Lesbians mourn as Soho's Candy announces it will close
London's most famous lesbian bar is to shut next year, and the cosiness it offers gay women will be missed



New Statesman
11 MARCH 2011
Closing time: the loss of iconic gay venues is a nasty side-effect of London's sanitisation
From Soho to South London, our capital's most loved gay bars and clubs are being forced to shut down due to the sweeping sanitisation of London nightlife.

EveningStandard
News Football Going Out Lifestyle Showbiz Homes & Property
Royal Vauxhall Tavern: ANOTI London gay venue 'threatened developers'
Lesbians mourn as Soho's Candy announces it will close
London's most famous lesbian bar is to shut next year, and the cosiness it offers gay women will be missed



the guardian
Save Our Scene: The Heroic Fight To Rescue London's LBGT Venues
The Black Cap has closed, but the battle to keep it afloat and prevent scores of other gay pubs and clubs being sold to developers has taken off. BuzzFeed News investigates.

the guardian
The Yard: Soho gay bar saved after two-year battle with developers
London gay pub the Richmond Arms to close

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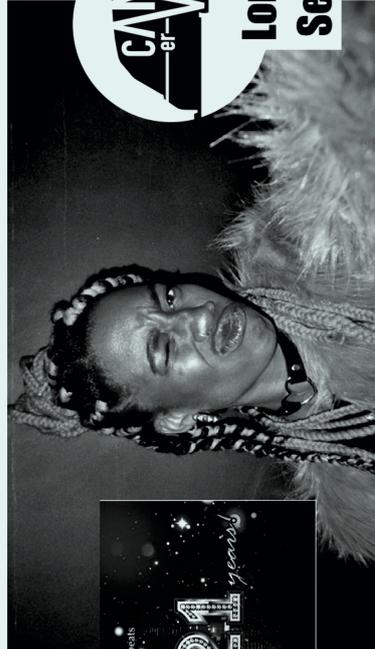
the guardian
The Yard: Soho gay bar saved after two-year battle with developers
London gay pub the Richmond Arms to close

Staff at Candy are determined to keep alive the bar's 'by girls, for girls' ethos.

Who's throwing SE London's most fun, inclusive raves?

In just six months, Bbz has set up all-inclusive collaborations, a soon-to-be radio show and a helluva lot of parties - and even the cis white male is welcome*

Arts+Culture [GoA](#) A month ago [Text](#) [Alien](#) [Nicobov](#)



meet the brilliant duo behind london night, bbz

Behind the UK club night BBZ, challenges gender identity, the drag scene, and the future of nightlife. An in-depth interview with the duo, featuring Ben Campkin and Laura Marshall.

The Glory, Haggerston

In deepest, darkest "Faggerston" lies the jewel of east London's late-night alt-drag-queer-party-performance-disco world. The Glory is co-owned and run by



London Crew Siren Defy Sexism in Dance Music

Is art political? That is: can you, as artists, promote change?

5 of Bbz



THE MZZ KIMBERLEY SHOW

Posted on March 28, 2012



Performing on a Sunday afternoon at the Cambria in Camberwell, Mzz Kimberley is a cabaret, guests and song in to the West End and is currently appearing in the heart of Soho.

Woo, the Fabulous Russella, A Man To Pet, Victoria Wilson James and this queer club night Batty Mama is a down and dirty, open and enticing dystopic space for queers from all constellations reclaiming booties of colour by QTIPOC for QTIPOC.

Batty Mama

Posted on July 21, 2016



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MUSE LONDON

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The DJ collectives making partying political

London party crew SIREN speak to six other collectives about how they're creating an inclusive environment for clubbing

172 Illegal Raves Planned In London This Weekend



Stav B opens pop-up liquor bar and art space in Hackney

Posted at 2:00 pm, July 22, 2011 in Food & Drink



Battling to Save London's Avant-Garde Culture

People waiting to enter the the Royal Vauxhall Tavern to see a show by David Hoyle last year in London. Holly Revel

Longstanding and new inclusive LGBTQI nightlife, collage of news headlines, Ben Campkin and Laura Marshall, 2016.



ADRI

ANK TOPE DADDY DADY ANY NAILS ANY NAILS ANY PEOPLE



4 Real Dec

Duckie Dredd

On Saturday, classic rock.



er two succes brought their any Wednesday

ek Vivid Ang 30s Weimar a



ounded by queer artists and programmers Ana Josephine Budge (HYSTERIA), Hakeem Kazz to see a show by David Hoyle last year in London. Holly Revel

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Muse Soho



The new face of London drag

London's drag scene is on fire right now. We meet the drag kings and queens g



564 SHARES



Have LGBTQI nightlife spaces been important to you?

Panelist Quotes



It is inclusive, anybody can roll through, but the main point is, we're trying not to say safe space now, cause I don't have control over everybody's space, so we're calling it a brave space. It's just important that everybody who does come is respectful that is created for and by these people [queer women and gender queer people of colour]

Tia Simon-Campbell, Bbz

It starts off as an exhibition – and everybody that is involved is a queer woman or gender queer person of colour – and then it progresses into a club night. It's all good and well when you can go out and rave and have a good laugh, but it's so much better and more enriching when you can go out, meet people, talk about artwork, actually connect with somebody on a much deeper level and then progress into a clubbing space and environment. It's uplifting, it's energising... it's just important to vibes with people on something that is far deeper and not superficial.

Tia Simon-Campbell, Bbz

What makes me hopeful is trying to send out a message to our community that we should stick together more. You know, we're not all gonna like each other but we should respect each other more. That would be my message.

Mzz Kimberley

When I was in Madam Jojos and Heaven, I think the scene was a lot smaller, there wasn't so many clubs as they have today. And it's kind of sad because we have the bears going off over here, and the twinks have gone over here and then, the lesbians you know, the butches over here.... When I was at Heaven, all of us were a bit more together and I think that's one of the reasons for what's happening [with LGBTQI nightlife spaces closing] now: it's kind of sad. It upsets me, but that's the reason why I really appreciate Bar Wotever because it's a space where anybody can come together and it can be a safe space...

Mzz Kimberley

Cost of space was always, it was prevalent in the '70s, '80s... That's why a place has to embrace it's moment. And obviously, yeah, we've got higher rent...and they have to pay more for drinks etc... but you should start with throwing your imagination at it. Nothing comes out of anything without you putting something in. You can't coast on a memory.

Jeffrey Hinton

The actual physical building is very important, because there will always be stories held within the physical structure...

Jeffrey Hinton



Have LGBTQI nightlife spaces been important to you? Participant Postcard Quotes



Yes, it was “out of the closets and into the streets”, but often it was “back into the bar-club ghetto closets”. But it gave me a space to BE me. First places, Yours & Mine, El Sombero, High St Ken, Bangs, Tottenham Court Road, Black Cap

As an older queen now, nightlife spaces are not as relevant but are needed so I can get out of isolation, where sound is not so loud in part of the venue. Mixed spaces for all!

Lavinia Fox



Samuel Douek setting up the Camp-er-Van, Peckham Festival, 2016. Photo: Laura Marshall.

8. Contesting the clichés

During the course of our research we've heard a number of repeated arguments about LGBTQI nightlife space which the evidence from this pilot project contests.

Cliché: LGBTQI nightlife spaces are closing rapidly – but that's because they're no longer necessary.

There is a causal argument often put that the closure of LGBTQI spaces is natural or inevitable – various reasons are given for this, ranging from greater legal equality and social acceptance, meaning that socially segregated spaces are unnecessary, to technological change and the way that apps now mediate different kinds of social experience, meaning

traditional bars and clubs are outmoded (the 'everyone is staying at home using Grindr' argument).

Our research problematises this in a number of ways. Our survey has emphasised the **value LGBTQI people place on nightlife**, whether for **in-person socialising, mutual support, or entertainment through performance or dancing**.

Our mapping exercise shows a rich variety of successful, established and new venues and events. We would point to the exciting **new spaces for queer, trans and non-binary communities and LGBTQI people of colour as evidence of new forms of nightlife that provide space for political and cultural engagement**, which need to be supported. Furthermore, the greater legal or social acceptance of homosexuality, and provision of nightlife, has not been equally distributed across LGBTQI society. This is something that has come up a number of times through our quantitative data, surveys and workshops. While technological change and the use of apps has impacted on how people form identities and communities and how they inhabit places, this argument is often put in a reductive way, and is not properly thought through in relation to the diversity of LGBTQI communities.

Another way in which the decline of nightlife is made to seem natural is as a result of gentrification. Scenes will inevitably come and go, this argument goes, because there

Cliché: Cities change and neighbourhoods gentrify, so bemoaning the loss of bars and clubs is just nostalgia.'

is a cycle in which pioneers make neighbourhoods trendy and then lift property prices and move on. Bars and clubs will fall victim to this, but there's nothing that can be done.

LGBTQI communities **have created clusters of nightlife and cultural venues in neighbourhoods** of London that have gentrified or are currently gentrifying, and this has often involved the retrofitting of derelict buildings in stigmatised locations; such venues, as with other forms of art production, may unintentionally have contributed to gentrification processes. But to focus on this rather than on how clusters of small, often community-focused and culturally productive businesses and other organisations, and individual bars and clubs, have themselves been subjected to these processes with detrimental effects, is a distraction. Take the case of the LGBTQI nightlife of 1980s King's Cross which has largely disappeared in the state-led redevelopment and gentrification of the area without a **wider debate about the erasure of LGBTQ heritage**.

The recent spate of closures of long-standing and flourishing LGBTQI venues emphasises how such venues, like other small businesses, arts venues and social housing, need to be supported in the face of the distinctive bias towards profit-led development by larger corporations, prohibitive rent increases and sudden evictions in favour of ill-conceived forms of socially regressive enterprise. As a sign of hope, in our research we have encountered, **effective and increasingly joined-up campaigns** to resist developer takeovers. Rather than accepting gentrification and the pressures of living in an unaffordable city where the financialisation of land and property excludes civic functions, these social movements are building momentum towards different models of urban change based in ethical responses to communities' needs.

Cliché: Soho is where London's LGBTQI nightlife takes place, in gay bars and nightclubs, and gay villages are the same the world over.

A strong misconception is that LGBTQI nightlife in London equates to 'gay bars', and more specifically, to Soho. This is a sign of the success of Soho as a branded 'gay village' or 'gaybourhood': an important super cluster of bars, clubs and other businesses. But it overlooks the way in which **LGBTQI nightlife, in its diverse forms, has been dispersed across the capital** and integrated into the fabric of many neighbourhoods and communities.

Our surveys and mapping of venues and events has emphasised that **London is distinctive because of the diversity** of its LGBTQI nightlife scenes: surely the most diverse in the world. **The range of spaces in which LGBTQI nightlife is accommodated – from shopping centres to theatres and art galleries – is remarkably wide.**

We would also point out that specific venues, such as bars and clubs and events, **all contribute to the wider night-time economy**, and these venues are often recognised for their importance, and direct economic benefits, by surrounding businesses, such as shops and restaurants. Although LGBTQI venues offer specific social value to their target communities, they are not solely used by LGBTQI clientele, and they should be thought about in context as part of the fabric of the city and the social infrastructure of their neighbourhoods. London's nightlife models have also been **exported nationally and internationally**, as

venues takeover festivals or are transported to Pride events in other cities.

Along with the assumption that all LGBTQI venues are synonymous with 'gay bars', another is that these bars are welcoming to all who identify with the LGBTQI community. Our research does emphasise **common needs** for nightlife space across these communities, but also that they are extremely diverse in terms of gender, sexuality, ethnicity and other expressions of their identities.

If it's important to consider the **full range of venues** for LGBTQI nightlife, it's equally vital to understand and challenge how 'gay bars' dominate

Cliché: Gay bars are inclusive and "safe" for all LGBTQI people by virtue of being gay bars.

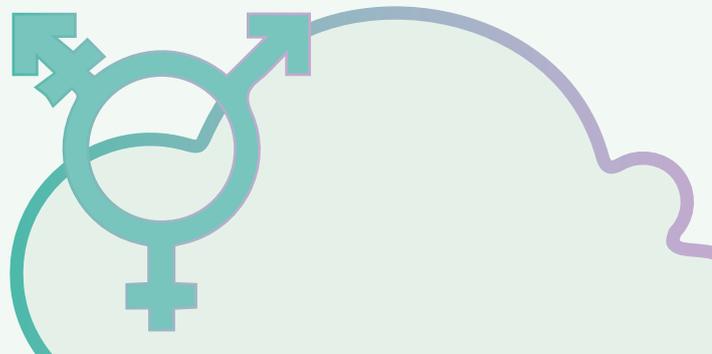
the media discussion about nightlife, but are not necessarily inclusive to LGBTQI people, or even all gay people. **Many venues are purposefully exclusive spaces, but not always because they want to create 'safe' space, sometimes just by virtue of the privilege needed to access them (money, youth, mobility, whiteness, maleness, a certain kind of body or image).** Others are genuinely attempting to create 'safe' environments for specific groups who have actively been

Cliché: LGBTQI nightlife is only about partying and hedonism

excluded from mainstream LGBTQI nightlife clusters, and this is enforced through marketing or door policies. The venues we collected data from reported how protecting their clientele's safety is an ongoing concern, with spaces having been subjected to homophobic or transphobic attacks or harassment.

There is a view of LGBTQI nightlife as dominated by a hedonistic party scene, of drinking, dancing, drug-taking and sex – this argument has often been made in a **moralising tone or as part of a homophobic discourse**, and often focuses attention on gay men over other LGBTQI people.

Complicating a more superficial view, our research highlights that historically, since the mid 1980s, and in the present, **important community and civic functions for LGBTQI communities have been wrapped into nightlife spaces. It also suggests how these communities** have valued parties as political spaces, in terms of visibility and providing space for mutual support or community-building. All of the venues we surveyed were also **places of cultural and artistic production**, through music, performance, fashion and other forms of practice.



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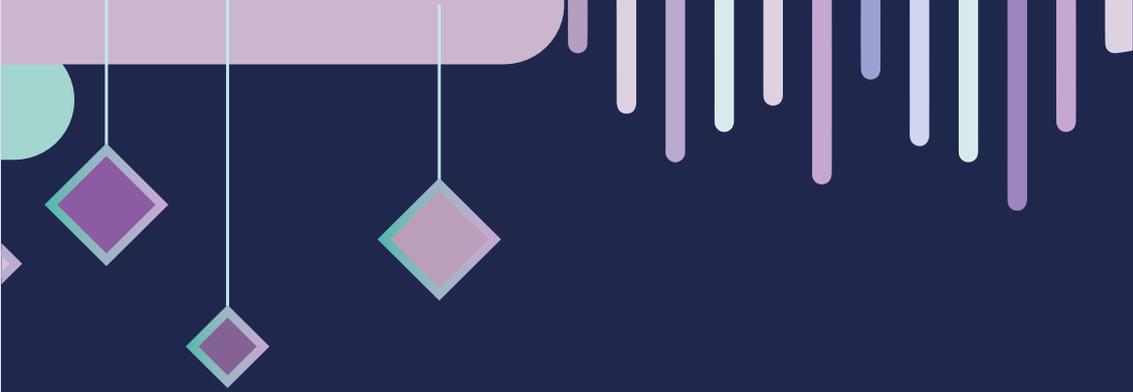
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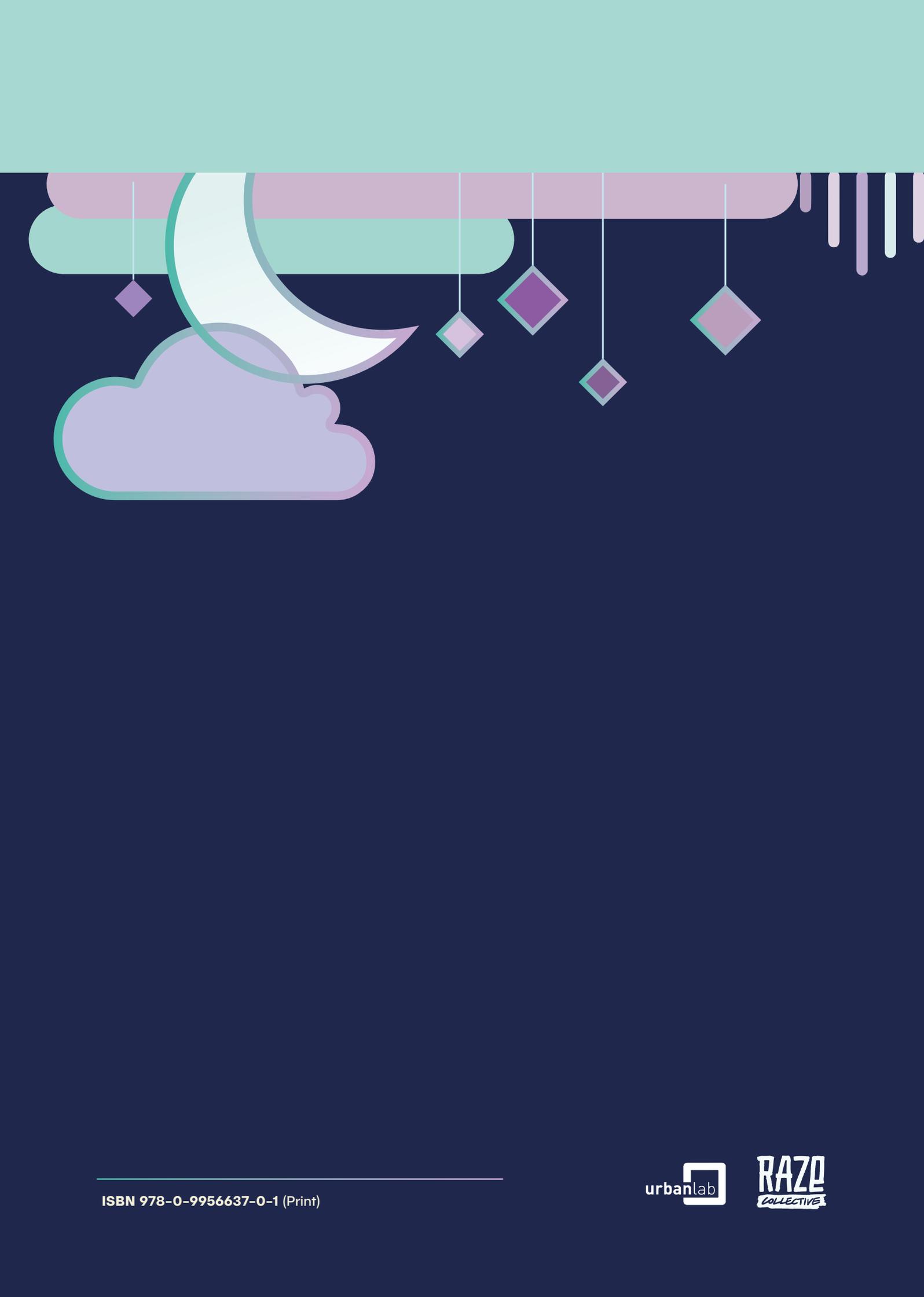
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