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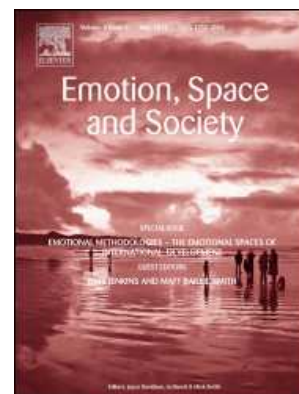
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# Embodied techno-space: An auto-ethnography on affective citizenship in the techno electronic dance music scene

**Martin Zebracki**

School of Geography, University of Leeds, UK

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## **Abstract**

This study examines auto-ethnographical experience with bodily participation in spaces of techno electronic dance music (EDM). The article engages with how inner- and inter-corporeal lived experience in techno-space constructs affective citizenship on the very personal level of the participant-researcher. In this context, the article attends to the underexplored field of how affective citizenship is attained and valued along embodied knowledge of subcultural capital in the EDM scene. It particularly addresses its overlooked gendered/sexual and technologically mediated (e)motional body. Drawing on a feminist scholar-artist method, the article renders embodied encounters with techno-space through evocative vignettes that include affective writing, a drawing and introspective poetic revelation. This method aims to convey embodied knowledge of techno-space as creative transformative experience beyond conventional modes of retrospective narration. The article concludes with two key lived experiences of affective citizenship: first, at times the gendered/sexual and cyborgian body was mobilised into a state of emotionally shared publicness that co-produced techno-space. Second, (inter)actions in techno-space incited subcultural capital as a set of tacit knowledge assets (including affective, empathic

and therapeutic qualities) to be accumulated over techno events and to be occasionally transferred to inclusive participation in the everyday life.

### Keywords

techno, affective citizenship, subcultural capital, gender, embodiment, auto-ethnography

## 1. Introduction

Scholarship has still to expand conceptual and empirical engagement with *personal* affective dimensions of participation in socio-sonic dance space (cf. Thomas, 2003; Duffy et al., 2011). This article presents an auto-ethnographical examination of participation in the electronic dance music (EDM) scene of techno, a type of music for which I have a long-standing passion. The EDM scene has been particularly discussed with regard to the cultural and political economy (cf. Fraser, 2012) as well as the formation of subcultural capital (i.e. skills and values) at the communal level of 'citizenship': ascribed or self-appropriated set of rights, acts and responsabilisations (Thornton, 1995). However, the *lived* sense of citizenship through personal, embodied knowledge (via e.g. dance/movement and acts of free expression) at the very grounded level of technospace remains less clear in the articulation of EDM subcultural capital (cf. Garcia, 2013; see also Cohen, 2007). The article, as such, attends to multi-sensorial experience of techno-space along my bodily (co-)presence and interactive (e)motions, where affect is taken as the "motion of emotion" (Thien, 2005, 451; cf. Barbour and Hitchmough, 2014). Such affective experience with nonrepresentational aspects of everyday life practices has become particularly significant to social sciences since the corporeal turn in the 2000s (Davidson and Bondi, 2004; Thien, 2005).

I argue that nuanced insights into affective citizenship in the techno EDM scene may be appropriately gained from adopting the feminist tenet of embodied, situated knowledges (Haraway, 1991). That is to say, all embodied knowledge rendered in this article is derived from my own bodily locus at the very micro-level of techno events. I make no attempt to represent and, hence, disembody experiences of other bodies, to essentialise my perspective and to produce claims about 'the scene' (despite the circulation of myriads of stereotypes in some 'outsider' narratives; cf. Thornton, 1995; Sicko, 1999). Having said that, I still recognise the partiality of my embodied knowledge as it is constructed through my

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positionality as a self-identified outed gay, cis-gendered, urban middle-class, Western European, young, white male person, who is moreover high-educated, socio-economically privileged, able-bodied/'fit' and highly digitally literate. This article, hence, examines how techno-space is lived in the personal body and provides particular attention to the gendered/sexual dimensions of corporeal participation in techno-space. As the techno EDM scene, specifically the creation of *digital* musical content and the *electronic* transmission of sound, intrinsically holds a specific, innate relationship to the (still underexamined) role of technology in live embodied performance (Bougaïeff, 2013), I also call attention to this particular dimension. I contemplate a full auto-ethnographical approach as powerful in explaining the operation of affective citizenship at techno-space's grounded gendered/sexual and technologically mediated level.

This article proceeds as follows. Section 2 elaborates affective citizenship of the techno EDM scene/techno-space with an explicit concern with how subcultural capital is lived in corporeal relation to gender/sexuality and technology. Section 3 discusses my autoethnographical methodology. I present my first-hand experience on the basis of evocative vignettes in Sections 4 and 5. Section 6 concludes the article with a set of synthesising reflections and meanings of affective citizenship to the everyday life.

## 2. Techno-space and affective citizenship

Techno, sometimes associated with 'minimal' considering its repetitive compositional structure, originated in Detroit's underground scene in the mid-1980s. It is often classified as 'underground' and part of the subcultural rave movement (Sicko, 1999), whilst it is also associated with the desire to create an 'urban cosmopolitan sound' (Cohen, 2007). I use the term techno-space interchangeably with techno EDM scene to emphasise EDM venues as 'assemblage' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) of sound, matter and people along kinaesthetics: (the study on) (self-)experience of bodily movements. This scene usually involves young and gender-mixed crowds, which are yet more balanced towards males (Lysloff and Leslie, 2003). The techno EDM scene is mostly associated with indoor clubbing (albeit beyond the 'conventional' club) within the night-time economy. It has become a widespread and some might even argue 'mainstream' phenomenon in 'cosmopolitan' cities such as Berlin, Paris and Chicago (Rapp, 2010). Techno venues typically consist of one or multiple stages where

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artists produce live and/or recorded (i.e. disk-jockeyed) music, a floor for audience members to dance and have interpersonal encounters, and any other facilities characteristic of clubs (drink bars, lavatories, potentially sitting or chill zones, etc.). But there is large variety in the socio-spatial entourage of techno events, e.g. they can also be hosted in temporary spaces such as in party tents during festivals' daytime or night programmes (cf. St. John, 2009; Garcia, 2011).

As demonstrated by Fraser (2012), considerable literature exists on *what* EDM/techno-space spatio-politically implies in terms of matters such as cultural economic management and the production of 'hedonistic' crowds. However, there is still considerably little known about *how* techno-space is experienced and lived through at the very personal level and what this imports to the individual's affective sense of citizenship. This type of music has its origin in tribal traditions, e.g. West African drumming. It is characteristic of intensive common-time central rhythmic components that may have the capacity to affectively send dancing, high-intensity moving human bodies into an ecstatic state (St. John, 2009; Sylvan, 2013). Affect of techno music is "associated with a significant increase in heart rate, systolic blood pressure and significant changes in self-rated emotional states" (Gerra et al., 1998, 99). Such context of 'heightened emotion' (Barbour and Hitchmough, 2014), which can even be hyper-enhanced by the use of stimulants (Moore, 2012), makes techno-space a compelling site to conduct affective research on how this space is bodily acted out through intense selfparticipation. It is the sensorial 'altogetherness' of music, matter, bodies, movement and inter-corporeal interactions that is at stake in this auto-ethnographical study on affective citizenship: how does it *feel* to be a citizen of techno-space?

Affective citizenship has been used in various contexts to describe inter-citizen emotional relationships (Johnson, 2010), global, 'post-human' intimacies produced by scientific, industrial and technological forces (Brydon, 2007), and sensible engagements with cultural difference and transformation (Mookherjee, 2005). Garcia (2015) reads these multi-dimensional levels of affective citizenship in reference to the 'techno-migrant' who negotiates a sense of belonging along encountered difference in the host city. Nevertheless, in this article, I scale affective citizenship down: literally to the ground of techno-space, while reckoning the broader contexts of subculturalism. Hereinafter, I explain how affective citizenship in techno-space is constructed/deconstructed through 'lived experience'

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(Anderson and Harrison, 2010) of subcultural capital and perspectives of gender/sexuality and technological mediation.

### **2.1. Lived subcultural capital**

Techno-space is a practised place where participants accumulate and exchange 'subcultural capital' (Thornton, 1995 in Fitzgerald, 2015, 57): skills and values that are coupled with "the concrete practices of production and consumption". They import embodied aesthetics and codes as expressed by music, fashion, language, etc. in interplay with various social identity markers such as class, age, gender and sexuality (Bennett, 2001; Sicko, 1999). Techno-space, hence, does not just imply a singular and coherent 'crowd togetherness' (Bougaïeff, 2013). Sensorial multiplicities of belonging/alienation, self/community and inclusion/(self-)exclusion, etc. are negotiated alongside (contra)identifications (Shank, 1994; Reynolds, 1998). This particular view is propagated by postsubcultural discourse (e.g. Thornton, 1995; Redhead, 1997; Muggleton and Weinzierl, 2003). Although such discourse is fragmented over political, economic and cultural facets (ibid.), it overall eschews the classic Bourdieuan distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture (Thornton, 1995). Instead, post-subculturalism fosters an immersive experience of cultural 'non-differentiation' (Hutson, 1999) and unveils the fluidity of class along what MacCannell (1976) described as the universal desire for cultural expression that is 'authentic' in and of itself.

However, (post-)subcultural discourse has still to more firmly address personal affective dimensions beyond production and consumption schemes of economic commodification (Fitzgerald, 2015). I embark on an affective participatory perspective that reflects on micro-local sensorial multiplicities of, e.g., kinaesthetics (movement/dance), hearing, sight, touch, smell and proprioception (sensed relations of somatic parts of the self and other) (Potter, 2008). Such corporeal affective citizenship is, nevertheless, situated in a wider context of subculturalism; that is to say, practised techno-spaces are co-constitutive of broader, 'glocal' cultural trends (Thornton, 1995; Collin, 2009).

Bennett (2001) indicated that participation in dance music spaces is likely to be attended with 'felt' understandings of cultural difference based on encounters with different people in the course of the event. This might be helpful in acquiring more diversified skills and values. However, as expressed by Rapp (2010), there are limits to the heterogeneity of subcultural

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scenes, which depend on dynamics in matters such as local demographics, local cultural participation and shared interests, club door policies and visitors' streams. On the latter, Rapp (2010) used the term 'techno tourism' to describe a somewhat homogenous, overly young and yuppified elite: the 'Easyjet set', travelling through places often just for a few days of clubbing. Techno-spaces are therefore not void of corporeal transversalities of class and privilege.

Techno affective citizenship is not only related to 'microlocal' participation in actual dance venues, but it is also lived through the prior thrill (but also stress) that might come from anticipation and all kinds of practical and social preparations (Collin, 2009; Lysloff and Leslie, 2003). Affective citizenship, thus, dovetails lived experience of moving to and moving in techno-space e I centre my argument on embodied knowledge of the latter. Different participants in techno EDM scenes corporeally engage with assemblages of sound and matter in different manners (cf. Collin, 2009; Bennett and Peterson, 2004), where an alliance between time and space is embodied through sound (Endensor, 2010; Boyd and Duffy, 2012). Affective citizenship is therefore a fluid practice of the body-in-(e) motion (Lorimer, 2005; Tan, 2013; Jayne and Leung, 2014). Subcultural capital is *done* via the self and transpersonal. Such performativity perspective of socio-sonic dance space suggests that every moving body performs unique aesthetic, expressive and social qualities. These are situated and mobilised in likewise unique site-specific affective practice and social relations (Barbour and Hitchmough, 2014). Affective citizenship, in so doing, carries 'non-generalisable' embodied knowledges (Haraway, 1991).

The dancing body intrinsically exposes a do-it-yourself ethos (Thomas, 2003). Yet, there are limitations to the body's 'own' agency, as it is connected to previous experience, current encounter and future rumination (ibid.). Embodied knowledge of affective citizenship in dance spaces is tacitly acted out through apparel, gestures, facial expressions, movements, touch and any other aesthetic-bodily expressions in a social relational context (cf. Thien, 2005). This context is inflicted by emotions that are quintessential to how bodies negotiate their place in a space (ibid.). Consequently, bodies-in-(e)motion may, ambiguously, sense emotional common grounds and experiential patterns but also emotions and instantaneous experiences that are *not* mutually shared (Thien, 2005; Wetherell, 2012). Subcultural 'authenticities' of affective citizenship can, therefore, be contrived due to communal

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conditioning or any normativities and expectations of expression (cf. Muggleton and Weinzierl, 2003; Morgan et al., 2010).

Thus, the development of subcultural capital through participation in dance space would not only be lived through selfexistential awareness and experience of inner qualities (Barbour and Hitchmough, 2014). Namely, inside embodied knowledge of techno-space is collected, exchanged and negotiated through affective experience of the 'other' (Thornton, 1995). This 'other' is particularly important to Boyd and Duffy (2012, NP), who argued that "sound alters our perception of places and of others because it demonstrates the continuity and discontinuity of our subjectivity". Socio-sonic dance space can, hence, have (inter-)subjective transformative affects that navigate between motility, incorporeal intensity and visceral perception (ibid.). In this trialectic context, Becker and Woebs (1999, 59) regard the techno scene even as "a pseudo-religious pilgrimage site for communication and interaction", a social structure with qualities of spiritual healing (see also Hutson, 1999; Sylvan, 2013). However, lived subcultural capital of techno-space does not hold (e)motions of enlightenment and 'selfreformations' for everyone, as some techno-dancers might pursue a more trivial emotive 'collective body-for-fun' (Stevens, 2007).

## **2.2. Living through the gendered/sexualised body**

Affective citizenship in socio-sonic dance space inherently depends on power geometries that are gendered and sexualised (Tan, 2013). However, the gendered/sexual dimensions remain specifically overlooked areas in the techno EDM scene. Stevens (2007) indicated that play as a form of dance can carry a symbolic transformative power to elude normativities and regulations of the everyday life (see also Jayne and Leung, 2014). This finds resonance in Thrift (1997) who argues that the uncommanded nature of dance offers alternatives to 'being in the world'. Monro (2005) conveyed that corporeal participation in subcultural scenes is particularly linked to embodied gender activism: expectations surrounding gender can be challenged and potentially transgressed to promote full(er) sexual diversity. In socio-sonic dance space, gender/sexual comfort zones can be negotiated and alternative autonomies (along, e.g., language, somatic conduct and visual appearance such as attire) can be acted out by performing one's very own (McNay, 2000; Friedman, 2003). Yet, following the argument of Foucault (1982) on corporeal self-formation, this is not a univocal process as it is

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saturated with ambiguities: gendered/sexual autonomy can be self-consciously 'upsized' while being insensibly 'downsized' by norms, habits and powers of the everyday life (see also Butler, 1990).

For example, Young (2005) indicates that the (e)motional body can be a contradictory gendered/sexed site of belonging as well as alienation. Corporeal micro-transgressions of the perceived 'self' and 'other', and hence limitations to and possibilities for gendered/sexualised affect, depend on the powers of looking at or being looked at as well as the power of acting upon (ibid.). So, bodily politics can challenge gender comfort zones but to a certain limit. The body might be experienced as, on the one hand, an autonomous agent creating authentic interactions with the other or, on the other hand, a dependent entity that is objectified by the other (ibid.; see also Longhurst et al., 2008). This implies a play of the extent to which the body can be dissociated from itself, making transcending movements in 'threshold spaces' (Boyd and Duffy, 2012) that are orchestrated by dancer-audience power relationships (Young, 2005).

Tan (2013) conveyed that the dancing body in club atmospheres is the site at which the kinaesthetic, tactile and erotic might coalesce in continuous inter-corporeal spatial calibration, revealing *multiplicities* of sexual intimacies (e.g. close touching or even sexual activity). Subcultural progressive environments such as the techno EDM scene can particularly help to destabilise conventional binary understandings of the perceived dominating male and subordinating female (McNay, 2000). Such affective environments might not merely offer a spiritual platform for close corporeal articulations of difference between persons associated with women/men, femininity/masculinity, homosexuality/heterosexuality, etc. but also for liquid (re)constructions from 'within' these gendered/sexual spectra (Hodkinson and Deicke, 2007).

Tan (2013) indicated that such close corporeal intimacies are *built up* through movements and encounters, as if more intimate trust is developed over the course of dance events: "to touch, to feel, is to be moved to motion e the rhythmic e(motion) of dancing bodies aid in the production of haptic sensual relations that may be a prelude to more sexualised (inter)actions" (Tan, 2013, 721). Thus, this is to suggest that affective relations in socio-sonic space have impacts on the gendered and sexualised constitution of place, which, layer by layer, is acted out through the body.

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### 2.3. Cyborgian citizenship

Haraway (1991) strongly mused on humans as cyborgian beings on the threshold of the exponential rise of technology. Technology has not only intensified the everyday life but particularly the techno EDM scene that is concentrated around electronically induced bodily experience. As conveyed by Bougaïeff (2013, 154), “musical structures such as those found in minimal techno allow us to explore deeper, more significant relationships with technology, to let machines further into our psyche, and to reduce fear and mistrust associated with the inorganic”. Nevertheless, understandings of intimacies within socio-sonic dance space should be expanded to include more firmly the proliferating role of technological mediations.

Affective citizenship in techno dance space is, therefore, more-than- human: bodies-in-(e)motion sense the space in interplay with digital content that is electronically transmitted as sonic waves. Such ‘digital affect’ (Moore, 2012) elicited within the techno EDM scene can be interpreted as “a dance between artist and machine, as much as a dance between artist and audience, [among audience members], and audience and machine” (Bougaïeff, 2013, 154–155). Such hybrid embodiment of techno-space, building on Young (2005), surmounts the gender/sexuality condition into an intimate state of supra-human ‘liquidity’ (Garcia, 2011).

Technology reconfigures semiotics of social interaction within dance music spaces (Bakker and Bakker, 2006). It enables bodies in techno-space to be simultaneously objectified matter and acting agents. Techno sound is not merely aurally transmitted and auditively sensed, but it is also corporeally incarnated and performed upon by bodily (e)motion (cf. Potter, 2008). For example, the use of carry-on technology, most saliently the smartphone, could be used by participants in techno events, if permitted at all, to stir an ‘extended body’ experience (cf. Bougaïeff, 2013; see also Büscher et al., 2011). Elaborating on Farrugia (2012) and Tan (2013), participants’ live mobile phone behaviours (e.g. videotaping, phototaking, messaging) might (un)intentionally trigger gendered/sexualised inter-corporeal (e)motions on the spot, which can be frank or contrived and hence potentially detract from an ‘authentic’ clubbing experience.

As another example, cyborgian techno citizenship could be ‘stretched’ over social media in real time or after the event (through, e.g., online text-, image-, audio- and/or video-based curational practices, dialogues and ‘status’ updates). Through virtually networked relations,

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various hegemonic social identities, including performed masculinities and femininities on the dance floor and gender/sexual divisions in producing and consuming techno EDM, might be represented and paradoxically stabilised and subverted (cf. Farrugia, 2012). Beyond the dance floor, moreover, digitally recorded and published contents can reproduce and memorialise techno-space in hybrid, offline-online spaces and communities, allowing to (re-)experience events through the cyborgian lens of the creator of those contents. The bottom-line is that technology has (un)consciously integrated into affective relations within techno-space (Bougaïeff, 2013), to such an extent that technological interfaces of the (gendered/sexualised) cyborgian body have nearly become invisible in techno(logy)-space (Taylor, 2001).

### 3. My methodology

This practice-based research pursued auto-ethnography. Ellis and Bochner (2000, 793) described this method as “an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural”, where the aim is to achieve a sense of ‘believability’ of the results. I took my own body as the most grounded research instrument (cf. Longhurst et al., 2008; Barbour and Hitchmough, 2014) to engage with affective citizenship in this self-subject-sensitive research. The vignettes in Sections 4 and 5 present auto-ethnographical insights into embodied knowledges gained at Berghain (Berlin, Germany) and Time Warp (Jaarbeurs, Utrecht, the Netherlands), respectively, where I conducted a ‘deep hanging out’ (Geertz, 2000; cf. Garcia, 2013).

I employed a scholar-artist methodology resulting in evocative vignettes that illustrate embodied knowledge of techno-space. I present retrospective affective writing (initial experiences in the style of the current body text; afterthoughts between square brackets), a drawing and an introspective poetic revelation. On the basis of the preceding conceptual background and inspired by the spatial-poetic rhythm analysis of Boyd and Duffy (2012; after Lefebvre, 2004), I use superscript to indicate qualities of lived subcultural capital and subscript to designate qualities of (transgression along) gender/sexuality and/or technological/cyborgian mediation. These presentation forms challenge traditional ways of ‘factual’ writing and textual narration in social science work and endeavour to make

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knowledge of wordless encounters accessible as transformative creative experience (cf. Richardson, 2000) as well as 'lived temporality' (Lefebvre, 2004).

As conveyed in the Introduction, this article presents an impressionistic palette of my embodied knowledge without making any attempt to produce generalisations. Self-reflexivity (Haraway, 1991; Ellis and Bochner, 2000) is an important principle in this study. It takes my affective experience as immanently lived in my body and, thus, situated within my intersecting roles of researcher, observer, participant and insider which cross the self, the other, the human and non-human. Above all things, I should stress that I harbour a deep personal, emotional relationship with techno music and consider myself a seasoned 'techno-goer'. Whilst reflecting on my in-vivo experiences with techno-space during the process of writing, I repeatedly listened to techno music to retrospectively sense initial experiences and, hence, transport myself vicariously to encountered moments.

Ethically, I respected trust during my participation in techno events by not engaging in activities such as audio and video recording (this practice was banned altogether at Berghain), which could have potentially estranged others in situ. Moreover, I maintain confidentiality by not revealing any identifying information of any friends whom I accompanied (also not in this article's acknowledgements), other audience members as well as performers. Garcia (2011) argued that complete anonymity is especially important in research on the EDM scene considering its oft-associated transgressive and sometimes compromising activities. I offer my auto-ethnographical experience as it was lived within a *non-judgemental* mindset and without making any misrepresentations of people who were co-present.

## 4. Vignette I: Berghain, Berlin<sup>1,2</sup>

### 4.1. Entering Berlin's techno sound

After a very long wait, my friends and I are standing in front of Berghain's entrance. The notorious face-tattooed bouncer refuses some girls ahead of us to enter the club. They wear high heels. I feel

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<sup>1</sup> Berghain's homepage with further club details: <http://www.berghain.de>.

<sup>2</sup> The vignette's notation style is explained in Section 3.

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they do not fit the sort of black and industrial code of this club [it remains a big mystery how Berghain's door policy operates; at least, it appears to be very discriminatory]. I have noticed that apparently some gay couples in front of us were all admitted. Being gay but single [at that time], I decide to hold the hand of my male gay friend. Although I feel 'properly' dressed for this place, I feel slightly dumbfounded that I really think that I make a better chance of getting in by playing out my 'gayness'. The bouncer lets us through. It is such a good feeling already to be part of this crowd [a happy few?].

This place was a combined heat and power plant in the communist era. It had been redubbed as iconic, top-notch techno Walhalla ... The darkness of Berghain's industrial entourage, including the metal structures, the concrete, the endless corners and interstices and the very high ceilings in the main hall and the Panorama Bar upstairs resonate for me the darkness and deepness of the 'genius loci' of techno ... At the Panorama Bar I enjoy a colourful night view of East Berlin in the fresh air: so this is what this city's techno sound 'looks' like. It's surreal.

#### **4.2. 'Doing' yourself and 'we-less-I' spell**

**(visually rendered through Fig. 1)**

This hall, the main room, is particularly crowded ... It is a quite gender-mixed audience. Well, I notice more guys ... Quite some men wear leather dresses ... People are doing so many different things; it's hard to track this dynamic interwovenness of bodies. People dance to the music, look around, talk...Some hold hands, stroke each other, kiss each other deeply ... This music, this atmosphere and the people: they feel so right, as if there are no barriers to be yourself, to 'do' yourself, to make

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what you want to become, and, then, fall in love with yourself, as if I myself am  
an epitome of Pygmalion.



Fig. 1. Techno-space. Drawing by the author.

This music is awe-inspiring ... I am dancing wildly ... It feels as  
the sound carries me through this cloud of people ... I am together with my  
friends...I have now left my friend and explore new grounds, new people  
...I come full circle: I meet one of my friends and tell her about the  
ace people that I have just met...[But generally I do little talk when  
I dance. I mostly converse with my body] ... I feel no diffidence about  
showing this crazy move: I am making circular movements with  
my hands while reaching to the sky. A girl copies my body language. She  
starts making jumping dance steps and now I imitate her. What a fun  
play ... She grabs my hands and hold them while we are both smiling.

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The deep bass lets my lips tremble and it sounds through my body. It is absolutely a blessed feeling to undergo this tenderness with a complete stranger

...

It feels like that we belong to this discovery of each other as it is made sensible through the deep, dark sound, our bodily connection and the moving crowd around us which fluidly dissipates ... We exchange phone numbers and names, but I feel that our encounter belongs here within this very felt moment ... [We never got in touch with each other after the event] ... This is not only a sensed play with this girl. It is something bigger. This is a deterritorialised, 'we-less-I' spell. I submerge in the landscape of dancing bodies. My body feels larger ... My movements flesh out the music, the contrasting lights beams, the others around me...I feel no fourth wall; this place breaks any imaginary theatrical distinction between artist and audience ... It feels like a dynamic 'Gesamtkunstwerk' between the electric beats, the lights, the bodies, the floor, and so on and so forth ... All is enhanced by this very long techno play set, making this a stunning timeless and universal experience.

The music is loud and I put earplugs in. The dull sound somehow gives me a deeper understanding of the music. I feel an 'inner-beat' when I make dance steps on the floor, as if I synchronically orchestrate my body with the sound ... I experience everyone/thing so intensively ... I dance on my own now but I remain feeling connected to the people by dancing through the sound waves. I am slightly feeling bewildered and a bit unbalanced ... I am re-orienting myself towards a group of fanatically moving guys and I join them ... I am not sure any longer where I am but I feel so perfectly confident within my shared body space.

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### 4.3. Sex(y)ness and liberation

While bouncing my body to the deep beats my friend and I approach a fenced area in the main room. We are holding hands. I see three older leather men pounding away. Next to them are a young man and woman, who are on the job, too ... I have an exhibitionist feeling about these acts, but it is such a revelation to me that I witness this in an uninhibited and calm state of mind

... Being part of this techno fabric is so liberating; I lose all pre-empting notions about what is ought to be 'normal' and what belongs and does not belong here and there ... This aura of sound and people speaks 'never-mindedness'; well, I should rather say 'lose-your-mindedness' ... This place is more than just about frisky sexual play; it yearns after a celebration of life to be danced to.

It has become so hot in this room. My body feels warm and somewhat leaden ... A guy around me takes off his tank top and I follow: I hook my top to my belt ... It feels as if this minimalist music lays bare its inner nature, prompting this unravelled, nude response on my part. I realise that there is a sense of showing off our fit masculine bodies; it feels like I am extending my work-out regime to the dance floor on the compelling rhythm of this music...I dance in my half-naked body. It feels so cathartic as if all muscular tension escapes from my body ... I feel, sans g<sup>^</sup>ene, that I put myself in a more powerful bodyconscious position for other people to approach me.

A guy and girl gather around me and we start dancing together ... We look into the eyes of each other...He strokes my upper arm; it feels like he carves out the beat on my body...What a confounding bodily touching dialogue. I hug him forcefully while making oscillating steps. I

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whisper to his ear: 'this is wonderland' ... This party is such a pure sensual pleasure enhanced by these beautiful beats and beings ... Atoms are flowing through my bloodstream. They give a tremendous sensation once they rhythmically collide.

Our bodies are sweating and carry a distinctive smell. But this doesn't bother me; it is odoriferous in a good way... I open the door of the lavatory. Three guys step out. I smell sex ... I enter the dance space upstairs where the minimalness of the sound reverberates the naturalness of all these bodies dressed in nudity. Their instinctive desires and the bodily fluids are 'publicised' over this place ... I am the fascinated onlooker. I carry no feelings of disgust. I feel the sexualised experience of this sound 'as is'.

## 5. Vignette II: Time Warp, Utrecht<sup>3,4</sup>

### 5.1. Embodied architecture

This event is taking place in my hometown [at that time]; it is literally around the corner. It feels like an annex to my apartment [in which I frequently listened to techno] ... This venue [Jaarbeurs, Utrecht] is so stretched and there are so many people out here ... The main room is magisterially decorated. The ceiling is covered with a white cloth in the shape of icicles. It is so serene yet excitable; this decor sinks into me by the deep sound, the sporadic fog and spectacle of colourful laser beams that fan out into all directions ... My eyes are absorbing the glaring light beams. I put my sunglasses on, propelling me towards a filtered, darker dimension... The intense beats come down on me. I try

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<sup>3</sup> Homepage of the 2012 Time Warp edition in Utrecht: [http://www.time-warp.de/history/2012-holland/index\\_eng.html](http://www.time-warp.de/history/2012-holland/index_eng.html) (official videos and image capture included).

<sup>4</sup> The vignette's notation style is explained in Section 3.

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to catch the laser beams while moving to and fro rapidly ... My heartbeat goes up...It is such a joy to dance through the whirlwind of bodies and I shift ever further into the crowd...This is the deep depth of the night. In the past I was used to get up early for church on Sunday mornings. Look at me, now I am here. This feels like a spiritual, ecclesiastical congregation, a microcosm of peace and respect. Why can't we just stick to this feeling forever?...This is a dynamic embodied architecture of an alternative life that has been made real for me, just for now.

## **5.2. Introspects and foresights**

A guy crouches down in the corner and I approach him. I bend to ask him if everything is all right. He tells me that this music and people are so overwhelming that he just wants to sit down...I also put myself into a squat, close my eyes and open them again. It feels like a dark still life turns into a dynamic enthrallment, a 'canvas' painted by moving, flowing bodies through sound and light ... The relative paucity of this sound triggers me to pause, literally: to stand still and absorb all the things that are going on...Simultaneously, the guy and I nod our heads as if we mutually understand what we feel at this very moment ...I stand up and want to enter this 'canvas' again...I am in a state of ecstasy after my unremitting motion through the music space...  
I feel confident about myself.

[A considerable time later:] I am vacillating about what this all, this life, is for. I feel insecure. I attune to the magnificent sound flow but what is yet to come? It feels like I am dancing here to fill this gap of not knowing...A friend of mine whispers in my ear: 'Duracell rabbit'. I laugh as I realise that he probably comments on my 'frenetic' dance

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moves. I am down to earth again. Yes, perhaps I am trying to find my rabbit hole right here on the dance floor, ha! But, well, I belong in this very movement, knowing that I am not going to locate that hole and oust myself from this reality ... The music feels dark and I start feeling a bit gloomy [realising that death is Our shared final destination] and I thread my way through idle time. I cast a penetrating gaze at my friend's face; he speaks out a rhythmic energy that brightens me up [I recall 'last night a DJ saved my life' (cf. Brewster and Broughton, 2000)].

### **5.3. Sexual 'queerying'**

I am dancing on my own and going into raptures ... A girl is approaching me closer and closer. She repeatedly looks into my eyes, intoxicating my sonic whirl of excitement. There is no talk, no touching. Yet, somehow, I feel a sexual tension towards this girl's body, smoothly dancing to the rhythm of our role-play. I eroticise this spatialised harmony between dance, music and our bodies. This animated musical joy transpired by bodily motions and miens. I find her very attractive. I feel sexually redefined in-betweenness.

#### **5.3.1. Poetic revelation, a written mouthpiece**

My sonic-kinaesthetically embodied 'extraordinaries' reenchant my mundane 'male gay' sexuality. It drove me to write my short poetic revelation below. Ambivalently, this revelation is both a struggle with and consolidation of my techno-(e)motional body. It is a creative and 'queerying' play with my everyday sexual 'staged persona' vis\_à-vis my fluid sexual individuation as experienced through techno-space. My poem, therefore, wants to deconstruct sexualised binaries. It even betokens a sense of

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'pomosexuality' (cf. Ailles, 2004), that is to say that it refuses any labelling and enacting fixation of gender/sexual identity.

My poem question my sexual (pre-)existence: does my transsexualised experience in techno-space divulge escapism? Were the happenstances (un)meaningful tome and others? How should I render my sonic-kinaesthetically induced sexual experience? It all remains a quest, signified by the 'unknown', indicated with the capital letter X in my poem. The poem crystallises out my in-vivo encounters with techno-space within a cyborgian atmosphere of multiple gendered and sexual energies. These energies are relational and endemic in as well as mediated along incoherent geometries of bodies, matter and technology. Although I am keen on thinking this through, my poem ends by suggesting that the way to go is to let words go: the techno dance floor is the place to feel this genuinely through.

I've been told I'm MALE  
 before the event of my  
 PHALLIC stage  
 I am a techno lover  
 I don't believe in  
 dualism  
 I do believe in  
 ONE with the universe  
 There's neither one truth  
 in this eXpression  
 nor the saying  
 that it's easy to be  
 WISE after the EVENT

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#### 5.4. Coda/rendezvous

I am here and live up to the techno-sound ... I manoeuvre my corpus through the packed mass of dancing bodies. Finding my pathway and claiming a space to dance with full abandon cherishes a great elation for me...The sound and lights are so concentrated. The temperature is elevated. A friend sprinkles my naked upper body with some water e what a deep sensation whilst I am engrossing myself in the pouring electric beats.

/

[Leaving Time Warp did not close the rite for me. I reappropriated this particular 'water sensation' in light rain while I was concurrently running and listening to one of my favourite techno tracks on my portable media player. In this flashback I felt appreciation for the raindrops, which is something that I would usually not feel. I encountered more of these technologically mediated vicarious (self-)realisations. When I cycled through the city of Utrecht some time later while playing back music that was originally recorded at TimeWarp, I imagined the urban skyline as moving flashing 'Tetris' light blocks and the traffic lights appeared as light beams. I sensed the driving cars and moving people as if I was transmobilised into them. They were all interconnected entities of my imagined technospace. I realised what a small part of the city I am, but seemingly significant enough to dream up this urban fabric and to believe in a positive atmosphere instigated by passionately feeling through techno-space. Similar 'hyper-imaginings' of techno-space repeatedly conjure up in my techno-music-assisted workout regime. Techno music's sonicelectric infusion pronounced the transgressive nature of my body. I looked at myself as a more-than-human when I looked back at a photo of mine, which a friend took of me during a techno event. This

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photograph captured a moment of me dancing in my naked upper  
 body while I was wearing fluorescent-green-rimmed sunglasses  
 and holding pink glow sticks in my hand, which drew streaks in the  
 sound cloud. This encircled the energetic outcomes and interconnectedness  
 between people, movement and matter. There is an intimate  
 (p)leasure that I distil once this music (e)motionally lives and exchanges  
 through my body.]

[Impromptu empathic encounters such as the one with the guy  
 in the corner during TimeWarp have seeped into me in my run-of-the mill  
 life. The other day, I greeted a homeless man in the city and  
 candidly asked: 'how are you'? I would not 'normally' espouse to do  
 this. I reckon that living through techno-space assists me in releasing  
 experienced burdens of communication and representations in the  
 everydayness.]

## 6. Concluding reflections: affective citizenship as 'belonging in movement'

This study, in line with calls by, e.g., Cohen (2007) and Garcia (2013), has returned to the very ordinary individual within sociosonic dance space. My auto-ethnographical inquiry allowed me to engage with affective citizenship in gendered and technologically mediated contexts of techno EDM. Based on the tenet of embodied, situated knowledges (Haraway, 1991), I used my own lived experiences as research material without aspiring to represent/disembody those of others. I illustrated my in-vivo encounters on the basis of evocative vignettes on two case-study events/localities: Berghain (Berlin, Germany) and TimeWarp (Jaarbeurs, Utrecht, the Netherlands). My affective citizenship of these sensed places was communicated by a scholar-artist methodology that incorporated affective writing, a drawing and an introspective poetic revelation. My exploration of embodied knowledge of rhythmical techno dance music space unravelled in-the-moment sensuous, meaningful engagements, which revealed two take-home messages. First, the gendered and technologically mediated, cyborgian body was transcended into a state of emotionally

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shared publicness that co-produced techno-space. Second, (inter)actions in techno-space incited subcultural capital as a set of tacit knowledge assets (including affective, empathic and restorative qualities) to be accumulated over techno events and to be occasionally transferred to inclusive participation in the everyday life.

Techno-infused (e)motions fluctuated along bewilderment, euphoria, (com)passion and 'cross-sexuality' within a fluid harmony with sound, rhythm and bodies who co-constituted place through movement (cf. Endensor, 2010; Boyd and Duffy, 2012). I mainly captured my visceral being and 'corporeal exchange' with others in emotionally 'high' conditions of trance, but there were some emotionally 'lower' moments of purity. For instance, in my bodily rhythmic sequence I reached an over-contemplative momentum of clarity at which I felt dispirited and disillusioned and was bothered by 'nostalgia for the future': that is, I anxiously epitomised a 'what is next' feeling and lost myself. I felt myself dancing on a tightrope between regaining and losing bodily control, something which Jayne and Leung (2014) identified as diagnostic of social dancing.

My multi-sensorially-evoked embodied knowledge rendered my affective citizenship in cosmopolitan values of openly shared moralities. Inter-corporeal rhythm opened up feelings of empathy, respect and sensibilities towards other human bodies. Such harmonious openness, connectedness and 'wholeness' in a place, which was both corporeally and materially intensified and blurred by deep electronic sounds, were precisely an attenuate sort of lived subcultural capital that I valued most as 'techno cyborg'. Moreover, at moments of trance, I challenged my sexual disposition by engaging in openhearted, meaningful encounters beyond my self-identified 'gay male' identity in the everyday life. I occasionally eroticised the body-in-(e)motion: the kinaesthetic bodily responses and shared emotions 'queered' my gendered and sexual experience as non-differential and pansexual pur sang.

Participation in techno-space lowered my mundanely experienced thresholds for embarking on spontaneous social bonding. I simultaneously empowered and disempowered myself by pitching my (imagined) place, claiming it, sharing it, breaking it down and rebuilding it through 'danceful' (inter)actions (cf. Young, 2005). The essence of my affective citizenship was a feeling of 'belonging in movement' within the event's liminal time-space. Accordingly, I did not seek to performatively delineate and 'fix' identity at the inner as well as inter-corporeal level. I acted out my felt responsibility to invite other people to dance and

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feel through the sound, light, etc. together and to build up 'inter-esse' ('between-being') and map out an (e)motional grid in so doing. This felt as co-producing an immersive, more-than-human sensational work of public art, as if we were mutually architects and publics of our own embodied techno-spaces.

Such *inter-subjective* embodied constructions of techno-space carried over into some extraordinary inclusive, cyborgian and creative capacities in my everyday life. These opportunities pertained to living with the 'other', appreciating communal aesthetics of society as well as sensing the beauty and virtue of the nonorganic. The latter has become increasingly more part and parcel of the body owing to the ceaseless growth of technologies that mediate the hybrid relationships between humans and material and virtual worlds (cf. Bougaïeff, 2013). Affective citizenship has grown on me over the techno events: my subcultural capital of this scene has become multi-layered as lived in my body, a memorial archive. By listening (back) to techno music, lived memories of the past are 'rehearsed'. Once electric techno beats enter my hearing, I 'breathe' them in, they flow through my body and bring it in (e)motion.

I experienced techno-spaces as overly non-judgemental, nonpreferential environments, which let me judge less in the everyday life. Even so, social power asymmetries were not absent from my encountered crowds. That is to say, I strongly recognised some of my inscribed everyday identity markers (ethnic white, middleclass, high-educated, digitally literate, and gay) in the experienced social makeup of techno events. Critically, although I appreciated the level of 'like-mindedness', I should, resonating Rapp (2010), caution myself for perceiving my developed subcultural capital as based on fairly socially super-diverse and superinclusive entourages. I sensed my participation in techno-space as a 'natural' retreat from the everyday life. I discovered intense corporeal socialities and I engaged in fortuitous wordless encounters that I would implausibly be able to make to the same profound degree beyond the context of techno events. However, I should stress that I did not experience these events in total isolation from everyday life. As argued by Jayne and Leung (2014, 260, emphasis added), "social dancing involves sensory, physical and social experiences between bodies *and* the city itself". I particularly question the extent to which the recognisable social makeup of experienced techno events might have been precisely conducive to extrapolating, mirroring and re-enacting my quotidian social positionalities. Potentially, I

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might have not diversified them further. My techno journey, nevertheless, deepened my positionalities by (inter-) corporeal realisations as transmitted in (e)motions within particular spatial and temporal frameworks of the techno events.

I have now arrived at the 'so what' question. I recognise that multidisciplinary auto-ethnographical scholarship on the culturally transgressive context of techno EDM scenes can provide critical potential. Saliently, it may offer much ritual-spiritual and meditative space to think through affective citizenship of socio-sonic dance space along processes such as belonging/alienation, self/ community and inclusion/exclusion (cf. Nash, 2000; Cresswell, 2006). Although affective citizenship was performed in the micro-geographies of the dance floor in my journey, I descry that such embodied knowledge is related to and can potentially construe tangible or ethereal impacts on gendered/sexualised and technologically mediated geometries of the everyday life (cf. Tan, 2013). I felt that my study on socio-sonic dance space was a 'body opener' to grasping the (e)motional multi-dimensionality of affective citizenship. Similar auto-ethnographical work might be helpful in acquiring tactics for pursuing and advocating a positive vibe of 'living through together'.

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