

Beats Beyond the Metropolis

Electronic Dance Music's Role in Shaping Urban Spaces and Identity in Nijmegen

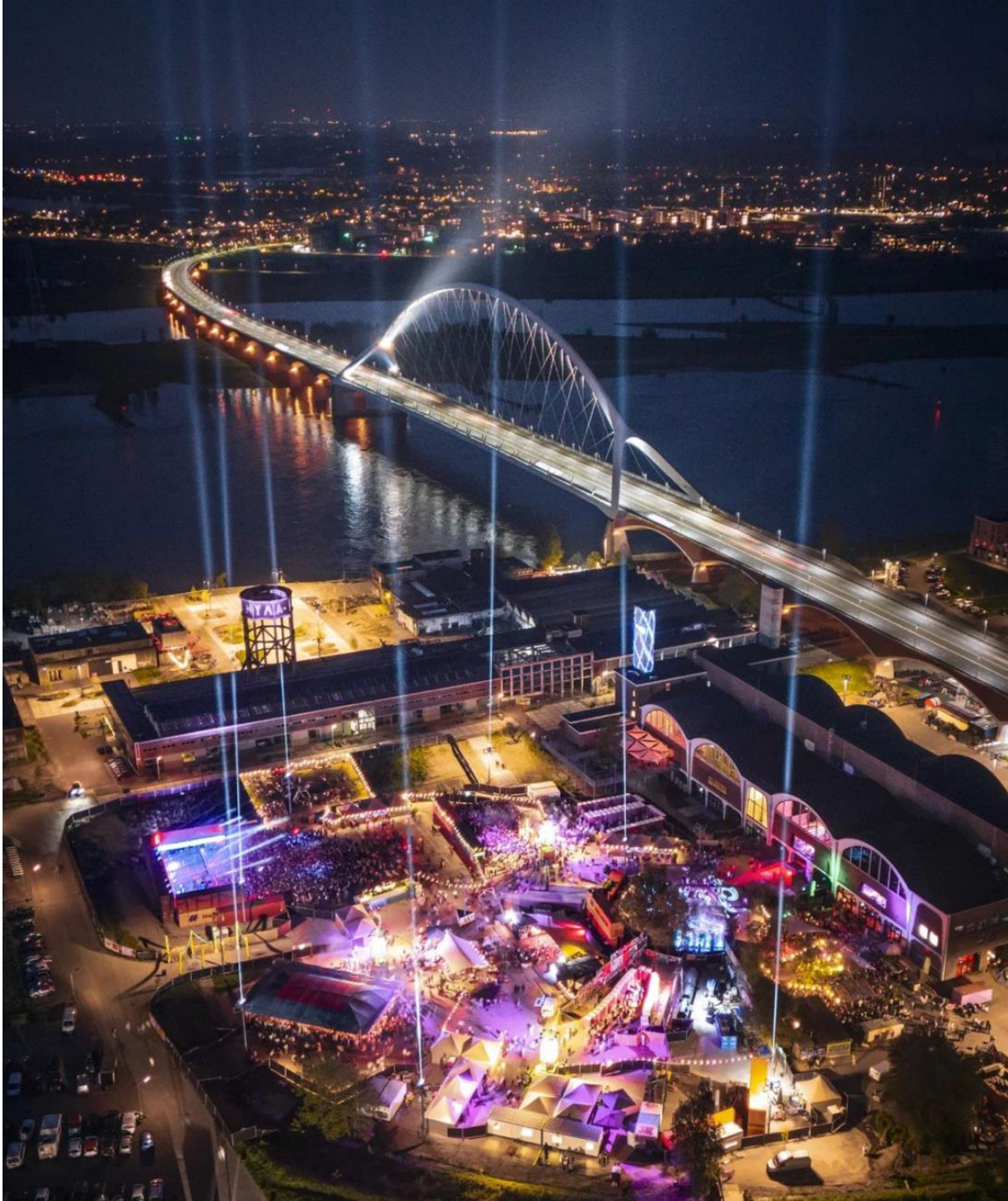


Figure 1: Aerial photo of the Vasim site during Subcultuur Hemelvaart festival (Russ, 2024)

Written by Sven Lamper
MA Creative Industries, Radboud University

Summary

This thesis investigates the impact of Electronic Dance Music (EDM) on the formation of urban spaces and identities in non-metropolitan cities, focusing on the Vasim, a former industrial site in Nijmegen. Utilising Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad theory, which categorises space into conceived, perceived and lived dimensions, this research explores how EDM shapes urban identity. By updating Lefebvre's framework to modern contexts, this study incorporates themes of urban regeneration and community engagement. Through the analysis of policy documents and social media, the research underscores the interaction between the physical

There remains a notable gap in the academic literature concerning the specific contributions of EDM to urban identity, especially in non-metropolitan cities. Bridging this gap is essential to understand the transformative potential of the EDM genre in shaping and redefining urban identities in smaller urban centres. The Vasim case enriches the debate on how non-metropolitan cities leverage unconventional spaces to create vibrant cultural ecosystems, demonstrating how EDM transforms perceptions of urban space. and social aspects of urban environments.

The findings reveal that EDM activities at the Vasim serve as powerful tools for placemaking, transforming the venue into a cultural landmark and reinforcing the broader urban identity of Nijmegen. This aligns with the municipality's vision of 'Old City, Young Vibe', illustrating how the city leverages its historical and cultural contexts to foster a unique identity. The Vasim emerges as a manifestation of the urban identity that the municipality of Nijmegen aspires to promote.

This research contributes to the fields of urban studies and cultural geography by showing that festivals not only reflect but also reinforce social values, thereby shaping and enhancing urban identity. These insights are valuable for other non-metropolitan cities seeking to enrich their urban spaces through music-based creative industries, offering a model for integrating cultural activities into urban development strategies. This study enriches the broader discourse on urban identity formation and the role of cultural events in urban regeneration.

Keywords: Urban identity – Electronic Dance Music – Spatial triad – Placemaking – Festivals

Colophon

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Personal Information

Author: S.E.D. Lamper (Sven)
Student number: S1019758
Study Programme: Master Arts and Culture
Specialisation: Creative Industries
Contact: svenlamper@gmail.com

Educational Institution

Institution: Radboud University (RU)
Address: Heyendaalseweg 141, 6525 AJ Nijmegen
Supervisor: Prof. dr. M.M. Schiller (Melanie)
Contact: Melanie.schiller@ru.nl

Radboud Universiteit



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1. Introduction

The creative industries can be seen as one of the key elements of prosperity in urban areas (Scott, 2000). This phenomenon of the creative industries, ranging from art and design to fashion and music, not only contributes to economic growth, but also strengthens the social cohesion and cultural dynamics of cities (Scott, 1999). Musicologist Sara Cohen (1991, p. 288) asserts that the dynamic interplay between music and place indicates that music has a distinct role in the process of placemaking (cited in Hudson, 2006, p. 627). Specifically, scholars have linked Electronic Dance Music (EDM) to urban identity, demonstrating how local EDM scenes can shape the social, cultural, and economic dynamics of a city (Dorst, 2015; Van Bergen, 2018). This intricate relationship between music and urban identity underscores the importance of examining music's role within the wider context of creative industries. By focusing on EDM, we can gain valuable insights into how this genre contributes to urban regeneration, community cohesion, and the reimagining of non-metropolitan cities.

This thesis demonstrates that examining EDM in an urban context provides an excellent lens to explore the impact of music on urban identity. I will reveal how a network of various elements collaboratively shape the city's identity. Within this network, EDM actors, spatial planners, the spatial context itself and social media can be distinguished. This multifaceted perspective highlights the role of different stakeholders in the urban development process and demonstrates how EDM serves as a catalyst for cultural expression, ultimately *transforming* and *enriching* the urban identity.

Existing research on EDM scenes and urban environments predominantly focuses on metropolitan hubs such as Amsterdam, Berlin and London (Allington, Dueck, & Jordanous 2015; Dorst, 2015; Howard, 2016; Van Bergen, 2018; Watson, 2012). As a result, Yosha Wijngaarden, Erik Hitters and Pawan Bhansing emphasise the need to explore creative places beyond these metropolitan cities. They point out that significantly less is known about the creative reputations of 'ordinary' second and third-tier cities (2019, p. 86). According to geographers Escalona-Orcao, García, Navarro-Pérez, Pinillos-García, and Conejos-Sevillano, non-metropolitan cities often lack extensive cultural infrastructure. This lack of infrastructure provides a valuable contrast to the more resource-rich and globally connected metropolitan areas, highlighting the unique nuances present in local cultural scenes (2021).

Nijmegen, a mid-sized city in the eastern part of the Netherlands with 182,500 inhabitants (CBS, 2023), exemplifies how non-metropolitan cities can effectively leverage their unique historical and cultural contexts to foster a vibrant EDM scene (Van Bergen, 2018). Promoting itself with the slogan 'Old City, Young Vibe', Nijmegen showcases the transformative potential of music-based creative industries. A prime example is the Vasim, a former industrial site transformed into a modern creative hub, which serves as a manifestation of the city's ethos by blending old industrial infrastructure with contemporary cultural expression. By now, the Vasim serves as a focal point for EDM events and cultural activities (Area Vision, 2017). This transformation illustrates how the creative industries can contribute to urban regeneration (Boswinkel & Van Meerkerk, 2022; Hwang, 2014). Examining Nijmegen's use of EDM reveals broader implications for strategic urban planning and cultural policy, offering valuable lessons for other non-metropolitan cities seeking to enhance their urban identity through music-based creative industries.

EDM activities offer a platform for cities to engage in placemaking activities that foster a strong sense of place and community (Cianga, 2020; Zaharia, 2022). Moreover, both scholars have demonstrated that festivals serve as effective placemaking activities, thereby significantly contributing to urban identity. Through the organisation of EDM festivals and events, urban spaces are animated and reimagined as sites of cultural expression. Focusing on festivals is particularly interesting because these EDM gatherings become more than mere events; they are acts of placemaking that imbue spaces with new meaning, transforming them into iconic landmarks of urban identity (Cohen, 1991).

As geographer Peter Nientied (2018) argues, the urban identity of cities is a multifaceted phenomenon. He notes that while some people connect urban identity to the social fabric of a city, others view it as the sum of physical attributes within a city (2018, p. 154). Urban identity is not a singular, static essence but a complex and evolving construct that varies depending on location, background and experiences. Scholars argued that rather than a fixed essence, urban identity is shaped by a unique combination of physical attributes and socio-cultural interactions, reflecting both tangible and intangible aspects of urban life (Cheshmehzangi, 2015, p. 396; Cheshmehzangi & Heath, 2012; Richards, 2015). Throughout this thesis, I will address the complexity of urban identity, acknowledging it as a multifaceted and evolving construct influenced by the interplay between physical attributes and socio-cultural interactions.

The way EDM practices shape urban identity can be understood through French sociologist Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad (1991), which divides space into perceived, conceived and lived dimensions. This framework provides valuable insights into how space and social practices interact to shape urban identity. However, Lefebvre developed his trialectics in a different socio-historical context, and to effectively apply his theory, it is necessary to update his original framework. He developed his spatial theory within the context of metropolitan French cities, like Paris in the 20th century, critically addressing urban changes driven by capitalist dynamics. In the context of this thesis, the role EDM has in shaping the urban identity involves new social practices and cultural expressions that are not accounted for in Lefebvre's original formulation. Therefore, adapting Lefebvre's trialectics to the contemporary EDM context of non-metropolitan cities such as Nijmegen is crucial. This distinction allows me to understand how EDM not only *uses* but *transforms* perceptions of urban space.

Adapting Lefebvre's framework to this new context involves a reinterpretation of the spatial dimensions to reflect the unique cultural and social dynamics introduced by EDM. However, I argue that the conceived space, which Lefebvre (1991) described as the space that is being planned by authorities, is directly applicable to the context of this thesis. Given the capitalist agenda present in municipal efforts to develop spaces like the Vasim (Area vision, 2017; Development plan, 2019), I argue that these planned aspects are instrumental in understanding how urban environments are intentionally designed to foster cultural and economic activities. Relevant municipal policy documents, including spatial visions and development plans, will be analysed to examine how planning professionals have enabled EDM activities. This analysis will shed light on how planned spatial aspects have contributed to the construction of the urban identity of Nijmegen.

Perceived space, according to Lefebvre, is the physical dimension of space that emerges from the daily routines and realities of a society (1991, p. 38). He argued that the interaction of individuals with space is primarily defined by commercial interests and capitalist ideologies (1991). To effectively analyse the perceived space, this framework needs to be adjusted to contemporary contexts. In this thesis, perceived space is explored by how visitor practices are shaped through social norms and the physical layout at EDM festivals. This involves analysing the social and physical presentation of festivals through their social media and websites. I argue that these aspects collectively influence the practices and experiences of visitors. Moreover, I expand on Quinn's argument that festivals reflect a city's social and cultural norms by suggesting that EDM festivals do more than just mirror these norms—they actively reinforce them. The perceived space generated by these festivals is instrumental in shaping and strengthening the city's identity.

Finally, Lefebvre originally observed lived space in dense and complex urban settings of large cities. This dimension is concerned with how spaces are lived emotionally and symbolically by people. It encompasses the meanings, memories and symbolic values that individuals attach to a place, making it the most subjective dimension of Lefebvre's spatial triad (1991). To better understand how lived space is formed and perceived in the context of EDM festivals, social media, particularly Instagram, will be used as a key tool in this research. EDM festival organisers primarily use Instagram for marketing and community engagement, providing rich visual and textual data. Analysing these digital narratives reveals how organisers shape the collective memory of the festival community by implying certain symbolic and emotional values. According to Alderman and Hoelscher's (2004), the collective memory of festivals is deeply intertwined with urban identity. These posts therefore not only portray the physical aesthetics of the Vasim but also imbue it with specific meanings and emotions, extending the venue's significance beyond its physical boundaries.

The following chapters provide a comprehensive exploration of how EDM shapes urban identity, using Nijmegen, in particular the Vasim, as a case study to illustrate this phenomenon. Chapter 2 reviews core concepts such as creative industries, urban identity, community engagement and placemaking. Additionally, Lefebvre's spatial triad theory is updated and contextualised to reflect the contemporary setting of EDM culture within non-metropolitan cities. Chapter 3 is divided into three subchapters, each focusing on a different dimension of Lefebvre's spatial triad: 3.1 analyses urban planning documents to understand the conceived space, revealing how EDM is planned into Nijmegen's urban identity; 3.2 examines the perceived space, exploring how festivals influence visitors' practices that ultimately shape the perception of urban identity; and 3.3 investigates the lived space through digital narratives on social media, highlighting how emotional and symbolic memories contribute to the transformation of the Vasim into a cultural landmark. Chapter 4 provides the conclusion and discussion, summarising this thesis's key findings and placing them within broader academic discussions.

2. Literature review

The debate on the role of the creative industries in shaping urban identity has been widely discussed in academic literature (Florida, 2003; Florida, 2017; Jones, Lorenzen, & Sapsed, 2015; Scott, 2000). This field of study investigates the complex relationship between culture, economy and geography. Within the creative industries, electronic dance music (EDM) occupies a unique position, with scholars connecting this music genre to urban culture and identity (Dorst, 2015; Van Bergen, 2018). This thesis explores how EDM shapes the urban identity of non-metropolitan cities, using Nijmegen and its transformation of the Vasim as a case study. Key concepts such as urban identity, festivals, placemaking and spatial development will be explored, laying the foundation for applying Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad theory. By integrating existing scholarship with Lefebvre's concepts of conceived, perceived and lived spaces, this study argues that updating and applying his framework can provide valuable insights into understanding the complex role of EDM in urban identity formation.

Before delving deeper into the relationship between EDM and urban environments, it is crucial to establish a clear understanding of the term Electronic Dance Music. Cultural researcher Alistair Fraser (2012) argues that the essence of the EDM genre is primarily defined by its production method, which is electronic. On top of that, he argues that the genre has a compelling effect on listeners that leads them to dance (2012, p. 500). However, Anita Jóri reconstructed the evolution of electronic dance music and problematises the use of the term EDM (in Mazierska, Rigg & Gillon, 2021, p. 25). She argues that many practitioners see EDM as a mainstream and business-oriented music genre (p. 32). Instead, Dan Sicko (1999, p. 9) states that techno is an alternative term for electronic dance music, covering the underground genres instead of mainstream. Furthermore, Jóri argued that not all electronic music is danceable, resulting in confusion in using the term EDM (in Mazierka, Rigg & Gillon, 2021, p. 36). Given these perspectives on the term EDM, I will keep on using the term EDM since defining the boundaries between mainstream and underground is out of thesis' scope. In this thesis, I will conceptualise EDM as a practical and inclusive term that allows for a holistic discussion encompassing the entire spectrum of electronic music. Ultimately, my analysis will concentrate on contexts in which EDM serves as a catalyst for dancing among attendees, for instance at festivals and clubs.

2.1 Urban identity

The creative industries are a contested phenomenon. Boundaries of the creative industries are constantly changing since new forms of creativity are emerging due to technological advancements and cultural shifts. In their work, Candace Jones, Mark Lorenzen and Jonathan Sapsed (2015) describe the creative industries as a sector where creativity is used as a primary input to derive value (p. 5). According to Allen Scott (1999), these industries are crucial for the prosperity of urban areas as they not only contribute to economic development, but also strengthen the social cohesion and cultural dynamism of cities. As I will show throughout my thesis, the Vasim in Nijmegen exemplifies an area where the creative industries are coming together, resulting in a creative hub that regenerates the old industrial area. Koen Boswinkel and Edwin van Meerkerk define creative hubs as entities that are often the result of bottom-up initiatives by artists and other creatives, as well as the focus of policymakers who recognise in these hubs opportunities for urban regeneration and a stimulus to the local economy (2022, p. 1; Waitt, 2008).

A key aspect of the Vasim's role as a creative hub is its function as a vibrant venue for various urban festivals (De Vasim Nijmegen, n.d.). The evolution of urban festivals reflects broader shifts in urban politics and economic strategies. The contemporary growth of urban festivals is occurring in line with changes in the logic of capitalism (Waite, 2008, p. 516). According to Hall and Hubbard, urban politics are heavily influenced by neoliberalism (1996). This indicates that modern urban festivals are not merely cultural events, but they are strategically used to enhance the city's image and economic development. Looking from this perspective, festivals not only serve as cultural expressions but also as key elements in the city's neoliberal urban planning and marketing strategies. By promoting the city's unique features and cultural events, authorities create a sense of pride and belonging among residents (Hwang, 2014; Waite, 2008, p. 520). On top of that, urban festivals play a crucial role in maintaining a sense of unique 'local' urban identity in a globalised context (Waite, 2008).

When looking at what relationship people have with their environments, a distinction is made between place identity and urban identity. Place identity, as defined by Proshansky, Fabian and Kaminoff (1983, p. 77) encompasses the cognitive bonds that individuals have with their physical surroundings. However urban identity, as defined by various scholars (Cheshmehzangi, 2015; Cheshmehzangi & Heath, 2012; Hwang, 2014), refers to the relationship people have with urban environments. Since this research takes place in an urban context, the concept of urban identity will therefore be used.

Looking closer at this concept of urban identity, scholars argue that urban identities are not solely defined by their physical characteristics (Cheshmehzangi & Heath, 2012); they are also expressed through their socio-environmental characteristics (Cheshmehzangi, 2015, p. 396). Urban identity is therefore not only about the physical infrastructure, but also about the way spaces are thought about and used (Richards, 2015, p. 2). Geographer Alexander Töffe (2010) further elaborates that urban identity is shaped by collective interpretation and narrative construction, highlighting the dynamic nature of how urban spaces are perceived and experienced.

Both the physical and social components of urban identity can be encompassed under the broader concept of distinctiveness. Distinctiveness captures the unique combination of physical attributes and socio-cultural dynamics that give a city its identity (Cheshmehzangi, 2015). Building on this foundation, urban identity will be interpreted as the ongoing interplay between social and physical characteristics of urban environments that create a distinctive sense of place.

Geographers Alderman and Hoelscher (2004) argue that memories also play a vital role in shaping urban identity. They highlight that cities function as powerful symbols and storage spaces for memories. Physical spaces within cities become landmarks around which collective memory is formed (2004, p. 361). This collective memory is shaped by social activities, performances and festivals that help communities create shared experiences and identities (Connerton, 1989). As such, cities not only provide the backdrop for these memories but also actively participate in the creation of a shared cultural narrative (Alderman & Hoelscher, 2004, p. 259). Throughout my thesis, I argue that urban identity is therefore deeply intertwined with these collective memories.

By examining the various elements that constitute urban identity and acknowledging its inherent complexity, this research delves into the specific components that are significant from an EDM perspective. This comprehensive approach provides a deeper understanding of how different factors collectively shape the perception of urban life. Additionally, it lays the foundation for examining how the EDM scene contributes to the cultivation of distinct urban identities in non-metropolitan cities.

2.2 EDM in Placemaking

Leisure studies scholar Greg Richards (2015, p. 2) highlights the need for cities to maintain their urban identity in order to be distinctive. According to Richards, creating an eventful city can be strategically used to be distinctive and to support long-term policy agendas regarding liveability in urban environments. Historically, events have been used as a form of place marketing, primarily to attract attention and gain broader recognition (Hall, 1989). However, while these events are effective in drawing attention, Ashworth (2009) notes that events alone are unlikely to have a lasting impact on a place, unless they are part of a broader branding strategy that aligns with authentic characteristics of a location. On top of that, human geographer Bernadette Quinn stresses that city authorities seem to misunderstand the broader social value of festivals, construing them as vehicles for economic generation or as 'quick fix' solutions to city image problems, instead of recognising their potential to foster community engagement and cultural identity (2005, p. 27).

Nevertheless, Richards argues that cultural events play a crucial role in maintaining and reinforcing urban identity (2015, p. 5). By leveraging events, cities can create a unique atmosphere that differentiates them from other urban areas. This aligns with observations from geographer Iulia Cianga, arguing that municipalities use music festivals as placemaking tools (2020). Placemaking is understood as the art of enhancing places to enrich the experiences of the people who use them (De Brito & Richards, 2017, p. 2). Cianga states that festivals are able to generate a positive image boost for a city and that they can influence the previous perceptions people have of its host city (2020). Therefore, festivals are not just temporary events, they are powerful instruments that can shape and transform the perception of a city (Zaharia, 2022). This implies that the transformative power of music festivals extends beyond solely revitalising spaces. Cianga argues that this (re)creation of a place identity is made possible because of the physical, social, economic, psychological and environmental dimensions of music festivals (2020, p. 508).

Festival initiatives have shown to be highly reflective, as well as constitutive, of the resources, circumstances and people existing in particular places (Quinn, 2005, p. 8). By acknowledging this latter observation of Quinn, festivals could be seen as miniature versions of cities. This reflective nature is significant as festivals encapsulate and mirror the unique social dynamics, cultural values and collective identity of their host cities (Quinn, 2005). Recognising this reflective nature of festivals underscores their importance in urban development. They are not temporary celebrations of culture but can be strategically used to enhance urban regeneration, foster community engagement and promote social cohesion (Hwang, 2014; Quinn, 2005; Waitt, 2008).

Given the reflective and constitutive nature of festivals in urban development, it becomes crucial to explore how specific spatial environments, like those utilised by EDM events, further influence and embed cultural identities within cities. Urban geographer Hade Dorst (2015, p. 59) highlights that music scenes are inseparable from their spatial environment and therefore thrive under certain spatial conditions. EDM actors select distinctive locations for EDM gatherings, considering factors such as industrial and abandoned spaces to be important. She adds that there is a desire for a location where the feeling of disengagement with normal life should be present (Dorst, 2015, p. 66; Morgan, 2008). This active choice and use of space significantly influences the experience of attendees, as these spaces serve not merely as passive backdrops but as integral elements of the events (Lefebvre, 1991). Such locations become celebrated within the EDM community for their unique contributions to the experience (Dorst, 2015). As these EDM events become regular features of the urban landscape, they help to embed EDM in the city's identity by branding these areas as contemporary cultural landmarks. However, literature indicates that such places emerge in both non-metropolitan as in metropolitan cities (Dorst, 2015, p. 59; Sellars, 1998). While metropolitan cities have an abundance of these types of spaces, non-metropolitan cities do not. Therefore, it becomes particularly interesting to examine how non-metropolitan cities cultivate such spaces to foster a vibrant EDM scene, ultimately integrating it into their urban identity.

2.3 Festival practice

This chapter examines the various dimensions that shape festival practices and analyses how these elements collectively contribute to urban identity from an EDM perspective. By examining both social and physical aspects, this thesis demonstrates how non-metropolitan cities effectively leverage their unique historical and cultural contexts to foster a vibrant EDM scene. I will show how festival organisers navigate symbolic and social boundaries to create inclusive environments that promote community engagement. First, I will examine the social aspects of EDM spaces to understand how they foster community engagement and social interactions. Additionally, I will illustrate how intentional structuring of space shapes social interactions and directs movement within the festival grounds.

Looking at social aspects from EDM festivals, then scholars emphasise the potential to enhance social dynamics through developments similar to the Vasim (Hwang, 2014; Laing & Mair, 2015; Richards, 2015; Quinn, 2005). Geographer Kyu-Hong Hwang (2014) highlights that culture-led urban regeneration not only restores social pride among residents but also boosts the quality of life by improving public spaces and fostering community engagement. This perspective aligns with Bernadette Quinn's (2005) assertion that festivals can transform residents' perceptions, improving communication and mutual understanding among diverse social, ethnic, age and cultural groups. Richards (2015) further emphasises that events can act as social catalysts, creating opportunities for community interaction and engagement.

Recent research underscores that community engagement significantly contributes to the perception of urban identity by fostering stronger emotional connections and a sense of belonging among residents. The study by geographers Daniel Belanche, Luis Casaló and María Ángeles Rubio (2021) demonstrates that active involvement in community activities and decision-making processes leads to higher affective and evaluative place identity. This means that residents develop a stronger emotional attachment to their community and experience

greater value and pride in their membership, ultimately strengthening urban identity through deeper emotional connections. A practical example presented by Laing and Mair (2015) shows that the inclusion of local actors, such as food vendors or local artists, contributes significantly to fostering community spirit and nurturing local pride.

In short, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the social mechanisms through which community engagement in cultural events can shape and strengthen urban identity, offering practical recommendations for urban planners and policymakers to leverage EDM festivals for social and cultural development.

Leisure scholars Britt Swartjes and Pauwke Berkers (2022) provides a comprehensive examination of how spatial design influences behaviour at festivals. They argue that organisers leverage their understanding of symbolic and social boundaries to shape festival spaces that encourage these interactions. The symbolic and social boundaries described by Swartjes and Berkers include differences in musical taste, as well as variations in age, ethnicity and gender (2022, p.3).

Festivals are deliberately designed to encourage people to connect and socialise with one another (Cudny, 2016), with a strong emphasis on conviviality (Fincher & Iveson, 2008). Ganji and Rishbeth (2020) state that a diversity of functions and spatial movement is crucial for fostering conviviality within spaces. According to Swartjes and Berkers, organisers employ four strategies to provoke these spatial movements at festivals: 1) spatial design, 2) timetable design, 3) program design, and 4) visual design (2022, p. 11). These strategies are integral to the concept of designed conviviality, which refers to the intentional planning and structuring of festival spaces to enhance encounters leading to community engagement (p. 4). However, given the focus on the EDM genre in this research, I find that timetable design and program design have significant overlap. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I will consider program design as encompassing the elements of timetable design. Similarly, I argue that spatial design and visual design have considerable overlap. Both strategies are centred around aesthetics and the creation of appealing environments (Berkers & Swartjes, 2022, p. 12). The temporary nature of festivals means that the visual and spatial elements must work together seamlessly to produce an immediate impact, contributing to the overall experience of the festival. Consequently, for this study, I will treat spatial design as encompassing visual design, recognising that both aim to enhance the aesthetic and experiential quality of the urban festival space.

A detailed analysis of the two strategies presented in the article by Swartjes and Berkers (2022) reveals that spatial design involves the use of distinct spaces within a larger festival area to create intimate, approachable settings where people are more likely to engage with each other (Gehl, 2010; Stevens & Shin, 2014 in Swartjes & Berkers, 2022, p. 5). This design strategy aims to promote spontaneous interactions and build a sense of community among visitors. Second, timetable design is crucial, as it involves strategically scheduling performances throughout the festival to guide the flow of attendees across various areas (Swartjes & Berkers, 2022, p. 11). By carefully planning the timing of different acts, organisers can ensure that crowds move throughout the festival grounds rather than congregating in one place, thereby promoting continuous movement and diverse interactions among visitors.

By integrating these insights, it becomes clear what elements constitute a festival practice and how this can help understand how the urban identity is shaped through EDM festivals. It has become clear that organisers exert agency over their visitors by dictating behaviour in the way they design their social and physical context. Throughout my thesis, I argue that those contexts are carefully crafted to preserve an optimal community engagement. As attendees interact and engage within these thoughtfully designed spaces, they contribute to the collective experience and cultural narrative of the city, ultimately reinforcing the urban identity.

2.4 Spatial triad theory

To analyse how EDM shapes urban identity, this thesis utilises Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad as a theoretical framework. Drawing on this theoretical approach allows for a detailed examination of how EDM focused festivals actively participate in the production and reshaping of urban environments. The spatial triad examines the interconnectedness between physical changes, cultural activities and social interactions, revealing how these elements collectively shape the perception of urban identity (Lefebvre, 1991).

Lefebvre developed a theory asserting that space is dynamically produced through social processes, making the physical space an integral part of these processes (1991). Human geographers Phil Hubbard and Rob Kitchin enrich this debate with the notion that space is a 'product' that is constantly created, transformed and experienced through people's interactions, relationships and practices (2010, p. 182). Building on this latter definition, then Lefebvre's theory connects the physical element of the concept space to a social meaning. In Lefebvre's view, space is not just a backdrop in a social setting but an active force in shaping social relations and identities (1991).

To make this more concrete, I look at the operationalisation of space by Lefebvre (1991). He distinguishes three types of space, which are collectively known as the spatial triad: conceived space, perceived space and lived space. First, I explore the concept of conceived space (*espace conçu*). The conceived space represents the blueprint of our physical and social environments. Kanishka Goonewardena, Stefan Kipfer, Richard Milgrom and Christian Schmid (2008) summarise this concept by referring to 'representations of space' created by planners, architects and other specialists, who divide space into separate elements that can be recombined at will (2008, p. 137). Based on their definition, I understand conceived space as a professionally planned environment that prioritises functional and strategic objectives. In earlier research, conceived space is used to examine policies, regulatory frameworks and planning strategies (Leary, 2009; Del Río, 2022; Prey, 2015). Therefore, it is not necessary to adapt Lefebvre's framework for this aspect. The conceived space as defined by Lefebvre aligns well with my intended use and is consistent with how it has been employed in previous scholarly research.

Where conceived space embraced the planning side of spaces, perceived space deals with the experience of certain places. Goonewardena et al. summarise Lefebvre's concept of perceived space as the collective production of urban reality, the rhythms of work, residential and leisure activities through which society develops and reproduces its spatiality (2008, p. 137). From their definition, I understand perceived space as the practice through which people engage with and experience their physical environment, shaped by physical design and social norms.

While physical design and implied social norms are part of the planning phase of an event, I argue that these elements belong to the perceived space since they directly influence how visitors behave. Unlike urban planning in the conceived space, where the focus is on long-term development, festival planning affects the immediate experiences of attendees.

In previous studies, perceived space has been used to analyse the material and sensory aspects of both urban and digital environments. For example, geographer Michael Leary (2009) defines perceived space as the tangible and habitual use of space, emphasising how urban redevelopment projects impact social and economic dynamics. This highlights the importance of understanding the everyday practices that shape how spaces are perceived. Furthermore, Media scholar Robert Prey conducted his analysis in an online environment, emphasising the fact that digital spaces are not isolated but deeply intertwined with physical contexts (2015). This suggests that the perceived space of a festival can be influenced by both its physical and digital presence. In my research, I incorporate the perspectives of Leary and Prey by examining how both the physical and digital layouts of festivals influence the visitors' practice and therefore the perceived space. Applying this to EDM events hosted at the Vasim, then the perceived space sheds light on how the site's spatial and online configuration creates an atmosphere that influence the perception of the identity of Nijmegen.

The last and most subjective layer of Lefebvre's spatial triad is the lived space. Goonewardena et al. describe lived space as the space that is experienced every day and lived emotionally, mediated through images and symbols (2008, p. 137). For this, I interpret lived space as the emotional experiences people associate with a place, highlighting its symbolic value. Prey argues that the lived space provides an emotional counterbalance against the technocrat perspective within the conceived space (2015). Therefore, the lived space highlights the importance of the subjective meanings that people attach to spaces, as opposed to the purely functional and organisational aspects determined by professionals.

Lived space has been used by scholars to analyse the symbolic dimensions of environments. For example, I will utilise Santiago Leyva del Río's (2022) examination of lived space in the context of community interactions and cultural practices to highlight how these elements contribute to the emotional significance of spaces. I will apply Prey's (2015) focus on digital narratives to explore how digital representations mediate and shape the emotional and symbolic engagements individuals have with spaces. This approach allows me to capture the nuanced ways in which both physical and digital experiences contribute to the collective identity of spaces like the Vasim.

To deepen this analysis, I draw on the work of Hubert Knoblauch, Alejandro Baer, Eric Laurier, Sabine Petschke and Bernt Schnettler (2008), who explore various approaches to visual analysis. They argue that visual analysis provides a unique framework to investigate the subjective and emotional experiences individuals have with a particular space (2008, p. 4). This framework is crucial for my research as it allows for a deeper understanding of how attendees perceive and emotionally engage with EDM festivals.

Especially relevant is Gabriela Christmann's analytical approach to visual data, exemplified through her study of the city of Dresden (2008, p. 6). Christmann's analysis of the historical image of old Dresden and its role in collective memory, despite its physical destruction, offers

a compelling parallel to my study. Her work shows how visual representations of historic buildings have anchored the memory of old Dresden and influenced its present restoration (p. 6). Similarly, the curated digital narratives of EDM festivals can shape the collective memory and urban identity of a place by embedding specific meanings and emotions in the minds of attendees.

To effectively implement visual analysis in my research, I use the worksheet by Nicole Brown, Kaila Bussert, Denise Hattwig and Ann Medaille (2016, p. 20), which is detailed in Appendix 1. This worksheet is essential because it ensures that all relevant aspects of visual data are systematically covered. It guides the analysis by providing a structured approach to examining how visual elements of festival promotion and documentation (both physical and online) influence visitors' perceptions and practices. By following this worksheet, I can consistently capture the nuances of how EDM festivals are visually represented and how these representations contribute to the shaping of urban identity and collective memory.

It is important to remember that the elements of this spatial triad do not merely coexist; they continuously influence and shape one another. Spaces are produced and reproduced because of ever-changing social and cultural norms (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 52). While the theory provides a clear framework for understanding the complexity of spatial dynamics, its generality and theoretical depth can complicate operationalisation in specific contexts. However, I argue that with incorporating and updating Lefebvre's theory, we enrich the understanding of the influence EDM has on the urban identity of Nijmegen. Specifically, analysing EDM contexts at the Vasim allows me to explore the dynamic interplay between the spatial triad, demonstrating that space is not only a coexisting entity but is actively shaped and reshaped by evolving social and cultural norms, which in turn shape the perception of urban identity of non-metropolitan cities.

3. Findings

3.1 Case introduction

The Vasim building, originally constructed in 1928 for the NYMA artificial silk factory, has been a significant part of Nijmegen's industrial history. NYMA was a key employer in the city for many years. However, with the shift of the textile industry to Asia, the building was repurposed for industrial processing in 1985 (De Vasim Nijmegen, n.d.). In 2002, the municipality temporarily allocated the building to various cultural and artistic enterprises, marking the start of one of Nijmegen's first cultural incubators. This transformation turned the Vasim into a creative hotspot. Following renovations in 2021, the building was restored to highlight its original architectural features and made more accessible to the public. Plans from entrepreneurs and cultural institutions were incorporated, ensuring a variety of spaces within the building to support a mix of functions (De Vasim Nijmegen, n.d.).



Figure 2: Layout of NYMA site (Zoning Plan, 2021)

The venue is not an isolated entity but finds itself situated within the broader NYMA area. The name NYMA is used to cover the whole industrial site, where the Vasim is only one building on this terrain (Zoning plan, 2021). Figure 2 gives an overview of the NYMA terrain, showing that the Vasim is the most prominent building on the site. The Vasim draws the most attention and activity since this building functions as a central point having permanent infrastructure. While the NYMA site as a whole presents a compelling case for urban and cultural development, the scope of this analysis is deliberately specified to the Vasim building.

The Vasim's transformation from an industrial site to a cultural and creative hub makes it an interesting case for examining the impact of music, specifically EDM events, on urban identity. These events attract thousands of visitors per event, and the shared experience of the venue's layout and atmosphere for such large crowds can significantly influence the urban identity of Nijmegen. The consistent use of the Vasim for EDM events allows for an in-depth analysis of how spatial planning and cultural policy have deliberately created a cultural landscape that preserves industrial heritage while fostering contemporary cultural activities.

Several key EDM events hosted at the Vasim will be discussed. **Drift om te Dansen** is an EDM organisation that hosts multiple events in and around the Vasim. **Subcultuur** hosts one EDM festival a year at the Vasim. Similarly, **Zusje van Debbie** hosts one EDM festival a year. These festivals are selected because they attract the most visitors, highlighting their significance in the non-metropolitan EDM scene. In addition to these festivals, permanent EDM venues are discussed to provide a broader perspective beyond the temporary nature of festivals. **Club MESH** transforms from a restaurant into an EDM club at night, providing a consistent, year-round presence in the local EDM scene. **De Achtertuin** is another venue with a permanent infrastructure that supports both indoor and outdoor EDM events.

3.2 Conceived space

Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad provides the theoretical framework for this analysis, where conceived space is understood as the space conceptualised by professionals. In each context, these professionals vary. Robert Prey conducted his research in the digital realm, where the professionals are coders, programmers and engineers (2015, p. 9). For this research, the professionals shaping the conceived space are spatial planners, municipalities and event organisers. This aligns with Lefebvre's original intention for the latter space; it is controlled by those with the authority and expertise to design and structure environments (1991), whether digital or physical.

The conceptualisation of the conceived space is manifested in spatial plans, area visions and policy documents, which collectively form the fundament of the physical and social structure of urban spaces. An in-depth document analysis will show how the intended developments and spatial strategies reflect on and contribute to the formation of Nijmegen's urban identity, with specific attention to the role of EDM. By examining how the Vasim is presented and conceptualised within urban development plans, this chapter demonstrates how the strategic intentions of spatial planners and urban policymakers facilitate the integration of EDM culture into the city's identity through the Vasim.

Table 1 presents the primary documents that serve as the basis for this analysis chapter on conceived space. The conceived space is manifested through municipal documents such as strategic frameworks, long-term visions and zoning plans developed by the Municipality of Nijmegen. These documents outline aspects of the city's development and identity formation, from local development plans around the Vasim to overarching marketing plans for the city as a whole. These documents will be analysed to explore how conceived space is defined and to see what influence this ultimately has on the perception of the urban identity of Nijmegen.

Document	Translation	Publishment	Content
NYMA Ontwikkelplan	Development Plan	2019	Framework that outlines strategic approaches and detailed planning for the area's renovation and future development
Omgevingsvisie 2020-2040	Environmental Vision	2019	Outline of the city's long-term development and future appearance
Gebiedsvisie NYMA	Area Vision	2017	The steps the municipality of Nijmegen will take to give the area a new function and to transform the area into a vibrant place
Uitvoeringsagenda citymarketing 2030	Citymarketing Agenda	2020	Outline of long-term goals and strategies to promote the city's identity
Bestemmingsplan NYMA	Zoning Plan	2021	This zoning plan determines which use and building options of the land are permitted

Table 1: Overview of data material for conceived space analysis

3.2.1 The urban identity of Nijmegen

The urban identity is a complex and evolving concept shaped by various physical and social factors (Cheshmehzangi, 2015; Nientied, 2018). Policy documents form the foundation of the physical and social structure of urban spaces and contain plans where professionals envision how the urban identity of Nijmegen should be shaped. I acknowledge that urban identity is multifaceted and inherently complex, but this research cannot fully capture all its dimensions. The urban identity I retrieve from the municipal documents may therefore not be entirely objective since I only look from an EDM perspective. Additionally, this perspective is influenced by the urban identity that the municipality imposes on itself. This limitation creates opportunities for further research to explore the diverse aspects of Nijmegen's urban identity. However, it provides a structured and authoritative perspective on how the city envisions its own identity. Additionally, these documents reflect the aspirations that guide urban development, making them a valuable resource from a professionals perspective to understand the conceived space.

The Environmental Vision of Nijmegen underscores that the city's identity is profoundly shaped by its landscape and built heritage. These elements will continue to define Nijmegen's identity in the future, just as they do now (2019, p.5). This implies that the municipality emphasises the preservation of historical and industrial preservation. According to Dorst (2014), these distinctive settings create a unique atmosphere for EDM events, adding a sense of history and place that enhances the overall experience.

The strategic vision outlined in the Environmental Vision demonstrates Nijmegen's commitment to integrating its rich historical and cultural heritage with contemporary cultural activities. The municipality states: 'We do not only want to protect and maintain our cultural heritage, but also to strengthen, develop and utilise it. We believe it is important for monuments to have a sustainable, future-proof function' (2019, p. 28). This approach not only preserves the unique identity of Nijmegen but also positions the city as a dynamic and culturally vibrant environment where EDM events can thrive.

By understanding these core aspects of Nijmegen's urban identity, a clear perspective is gained on how EDM festivals contribute to and shape the city's character. This is supported by Richards (2015), who argues that events play a crucial role in the creation of a city's urban identity. EDM events, therefore, are not just musical gatherings but are instrumental in reinforcing and promoting the distinctive blend of historical preservation and modern cultural vibrancy that defines Nijmegen.

Nijmegen, as a non-metropolitan city, is essentially implementing the same strategies observed in similar locations within metropolitan cities (Allington et al., 2015; Dorst, 2015; Howard, 2016; Van Bergen, 2018; Watson, 2012). However, while such approaches are common in metropolitan areas, Nijmegen aims to be truly distinctive by making this vision a fundamental and integral part of its urban identity. This approach aligns with Cheshmehzangi's concept of distinctiveness as a fundamental aspect of urban identity (2015).

The Citymarketing Agenda (2020) reveals that Nijmegen is heavily investing in the concept of "Old city, Young vibe." This strategic vision is a deliberate attempt to create a unique urban identity that the city can actively cultivate and promote. This vision leverages the city's

historical heritage while fostering a modern, vibrant atmosphere, aiming to attract younger demographics (Citymarketing Agenda, 2020). The combination of the physical old city structures and the social aspect of young vibe, highlights Nientied's argument that an urban identity is shaped by both physical and social attributes (2018, p. 154). Nijmegen's strategy capitalises on its historical landmarks, creating a physical backdrop that reflects its cultural roots, while simultaneously injecting youthful energy through contemporary events and festivals, particularly in the EDM scene (Area vision, 2017, p. 11).

The Citymarketing Agenda makes it clear that Nijmegen's strategic vision is not just an initiative but an integral part of the city's urban identity. By deeply embedding the 'Old city, Young vibe' concept into its policies and planning, Nijmegen demonstrates a commitment to creating a unique urban narrative that resonates with the city authentic characteristics. According to Ashworth (2009), this is an effective strategy that can significantly enhance the city's appeal and identity.

3.2.2 The Vasim as a manifest

The Citymarketing Agenda highlights that the young vibe aspect of its marketing plan is manifested through EDM events. These EDM events, as highlighted by scholars such as Dorst (2015) and Van Bergen (2018), are not just musical gatherings but significant cultural expressions that interact with and transform urban spaces. This conscious effort of integrating EDM culture along with the Vasim's industrial infrastructures could therefore be seen as a manifest of the urban identity of Nijmegen. The deliberate creation of such spaces highlights the proactive role of urban planners and policymakers in shaping urban identity.

The area vision highlights that the Vasim lends itself as an ideal location to become a cultural hotspot, characterised as a central place where multiple disciplines, or multiple layers within one discipline, can meet (2017, p. 24). Boswinkel & Van Meerkerk highlighted that such cultural hotspots are often the result of bottom-up initiatives driven by artist and entrepreneurs (2022). While urban planners and policymakers set the framework for the Vasim's development, artists and entrepreneurs are given significant agency in how they develop the space (Bestemmingsplan, 2021). However, although this approach at the Vasim seems to be bottom-up, it is ultimately driven by a capitalist agenda, as the municipality recognises that the development of this site will have a positive impact on the city (Area vision, 2017; Development plan, 2019). Therefore, it is essentially a top-down initiative.

Nevertheless, by combining strategic top-down urban planning with creativity from local stakeholders, the Vasim development not only revitalises the area but also promotes a dynamic and inclusive cultural landscape (Scott, 1999; Waitt, 2008). This approach reflects the broader theoretical perspective of Jones et al. (2015), who argue that creative industries serve as catalysts for urban regeneration. By envisioning the Vasim as a creative hub that integrates EDM culture, the planners aim to create a space that not only preserves historical elements but also facilitates contemporary cultural expressions (Area vision, 2017, p. 12). This dual focus on preservation and contemporary cultural activities exemplifies how creative industries can transform urban spaces by enhancing their cultural and economic vitality. This aligns with Scott's (2000) argument, that creative industries have transformative potential in urban development.

Using the Vasim as a case study, I argue that EDM events hosted at the old industrial venue are not used as a 'quick fix' as a solution to city image problems, as stated by Quinn (2005), but they are strategically used to promote the city of Nijmegen. By incorporating events in a broader branding strategy, Ashworth stated that events have more impact on places (2009). Richards adds to this that by creating an eventful city, long-term policy agendas regarding liveability in urban environments are supported (2015).

In short, Nijmegen's approach to integrating EDM culture into its urban development strategy demonstrates how non-metropolitan cities can leverage cultural activities to create a distinctive urban identity. By deliberately designing spaces like the Vasim to host EDM events, Nijmegen not only revitalises its urban landscape but also fosters a unique identity that resonates with both its historical heritage and contemporary cultural dynamics. This model offers valuable insights for other cities looking to enhance their urban identity through creative industries through spatial planning and cultural policies.

3.3 Perceived space

The aim of this chapter is to analyse how festivals influence visitor practices through the imposition of social norms and the design of physical space. I aim to understand how the perceived space at EDM festivals, through both social and physical dimensions, shapes the perception of urban identity. This analysis will focus on the physical and social aspects of the aforementioned EDM events, using data from their websites and Instagram posts. This approach highlights Nientied's argument that an urban identity is shaped by both physical and social attributes (2018, p. 154).

According to Lefebvre, perceived space encompasses the physical dimension of space that emerges from the daily routines and realities of a society (1991, p. 38). To make his definition more applicable in the context of this research, I will update his definition slightly. Therefore, I understand perceived space as the practice through which people engage with and experience their physical environment, shaped by physical design and social norms. This updated definition allows for a more concrete examination of how EDM festivals shape the visitors' practice and how this ultimately influences the urban identity, looking from both a physical and social perspective. In this thesis, I interpret social norms as dictating acceptable behaviour. For the physical space, I argue that the physical layout of a festival provides the context in which interactions occur. Together, they shape the overall atmosphere and visitors' practice at festivals, therefore contributing to the urban identity by defining how spaces are perceived.

For the data collection, a mix of methods has been used to retrieve relevant insights to measure the implied visitor practices by festival organisations. Festival organisers share their information through various mediums rather than relying on a single platform. They use a combination of websites and social media interfaces to clearly convey the expected practices of visitors. Therefore, a schematic overview is made of which elements are examined from different EDM actors.

EDM actor	Social norms		Physical layout	
	Policies	Source	Festival map	Source
De Achtertuin	x	Website		
Drift om te Dansen	x	Website/Instagram	x	Instagram
Club Mesh	x	Website		
Zusje van Debbie	X	Instagram	x	Instagram
Subcultuur Festival	x	Instagram	x	Instagram

Table 2: Overview of data material for perceived space analysis

3.3.1 Social norms

First, the dimension of social norms is discussed. I argue that festival organisers play a critical role in shaping visitor behaviour through social standards during the festivals. In this thesis, these social standards are embodied in house rules, sustainability practices and safety guidelines. I argue that these social standards, which are implied by festival organisers, dictate behaviour and are designed to create a safe and inclusive environment. By setting these social norms, organisers ensure that all attendees can enjoy the festival experience while promoting values such as respect, sustainability and safety. These social standards not only influence the immediate environment of the festival but also have broader implications for the city's social and cultural fabric. Through my analysis, I will show that events reflect social and cultural norms of a city, as Quinn suggested (2005). However, I argue that such events also *reinforce* the social and cultural values of a city.

House rules are crucial in setting the tone for social interactions at events. These rules directly influence the practices of visitors by delineating what is considered acceptable and expected behaviour within the festival environment. House rules made by EDM actors are therefore instrumental for the perception of the perceived space by defining acceptable social interactions. Club Mesh exemplifies this principle by positioning itself as a space for everyone who wants to dance, where freedom of expression can take place on the dance floor (Mesh, n.d.). This aligns with the social norms aimed at creating an environment where all forms of identity can be explored and expressed (Environmental vision, 2019, p. 7). By encouraging diverse expressions, Club Mesh fosters a sense of community and inclusivity, which is essential for a positive social atmosphere (Scott, 1999; Waitt, 2008). By creating spaces where diverse expressions are celebrated, such venues reinforce the city's reputation as a vibrant and open community. This, in turn, helps to shape the urban identity by embedding these values into the cultural fabric of the city.

Looking at other EDM actors, then de Achtertuint and Drift om te Dansen have clearly stated house rules for their EDM events. Both actors are promoting a safe and inclusive environment by establishing clear behavioural expectations. On top of that, both de Achtertuint as Drift om te Dansen emphasise the importance of treating each other with respect. For example, de Achtertuint states: 'Be kind to each other, the location and your surroundings (De Achtertuint, n.d.)'. Similarly, Drift om te Dansen highlights: 'Treat each other, the location and the environment with respect (Drift om te Dansen, n.d.)'. These statements clearly illustrate the commitment to create a positive and inclusive atmosphere. By promoting this positive atmosphere beforehand, EDM actors try to stimulate community engagement (Hwang, 2014; Richards, 2015), which, according to Belanche, Casaló and Rubio (2021), leads to the strengthening of the local urban identity.

Festival organisers exert significant influence over how visitors behave, particularly through the implementation of sustainability policies. By setting specific guidelines on acceptable behaviour, organisers dictate how attendees should act to align with the festival's sustainability goals. EDM actors Drift om te Dansen, Subcultuur and Zusje van Debbie all emphasise the presence of vegetarian and local food. These EDM actors host the biggest festivals located at the Vasim and clearly demonstrate a commitment to sustainable and local food consumption (Drift om te Dansen, n.d.; Subcultuur, n.d.; Zusje van Debbie, n.d.). By sourcing food from local vendors and producers, these festivals support the local economy

and foster relationships between various stakeholders (Boswinkel & Van Meerkerk, 2022; Laing & Mair, 2015; Waitt, 2008). This creates a sense of community pride as visitors recognise and appreciate the contributions of local producers (Hwang, 2014). Additionally, featuring local food highlights the culinary culture of Nijmegen, which further embeds the festival within the local context and enhancing its connection to the urban identity (Laing & Mair, 2015). This perspective reinforces the idea that festivals not only provide entertainment but also reflect the social and cultural dynamics of their urban settings (Quinn, 2005).

Next to sustainability decisions regarding food, various EDM actors are actively incorporating sustainability in the visitors' festival practice. The actors Drift om te Dansen, Subcultuur and Zusje van Debbie are all implementing additional regulations to promote more sustainable practices. These festivals require attendees to use reusable cups, which involves an initial cost for the cup itself (Drift om te Dansen, n.d.; Subcultuur, n.d.; Zusje van Debbie, n.d.). This policy reflects the broader cultural values of Nijmegen, emphasising the city's goal to become an environmentally friendly city, as outlined in the city's environmental vision (2019, p. 30).

The implementation of sustainable practices at festivals highlights the city's commitment to environmental responsibility (Environmental vision, 2019, p. 30). The large number of visitors attending these festivals amplifies the impact of these policies. By embedding sustainability into the festival practice, these festivals not only reflect the social and cultural values of Nijmegen (Quinn, 2005), they also reinforce such values among attendees. Given the urban character of these events, these values become associated with the city itself, thus strengthening the local urban identity as many people begin to identify these practices with the city. As a result, the festival experience reinforces the idea that sustainability is an integral part of the city's identity.

In conclusion, social norms significantly influence festival practices, shaping the behaviours, interactions and experiences of attendees. By promoting and visibly enacting sustainable practices, festivals help solidify the perception of Nijmegen as an environmentally conscious city. This reflection and reinforcement of social and cultural values through festival practices not only enhance the visitor experience but also contribute to the broader narrative of urban identity, demonstrating how festivals can serve as powerful platforms for expressing and strengthening the values of a city (Quinn, 2005). This dynamic process highlights the complex interplay between social norms and urban identity, demonstrating that festivals are powerful tools for reinforcing community values. This insight adds to the existing literature by emphasising the dual role of festivals in both reflecting and shaping the social and cultural fabric of cities.

In essence, the use of the Vasim as a festival venue aligns with Dorst's (2015) observations on the importance of spatial environment in music scenes. It highlights how carefully chosen locations can enhance the experience at EDM festivals, contributing significantly to the urban identity of the host city. By repurposing industrial spaces like the Vasim, Nijmegen not only preserves its historical heritage but also demonstrates a progressive approach to urban development, merging the old with the new in ways that enrich the cultural narrative of the city. This setting not only facilitates a distinct festival atmosphere but also strengthens the connection between the event and the city's urban identity. The physical space of the Vasim, with its industrial elements, becomes an active participant in the festival, influencing how social interactions unfold and how the urban identity of Nijmegen is perceived and celebrated. This approach manifests the city's marketing theme of 'Old City Young Vibe' (2020), displaying how the conceived and perceived space overlap.

Second, by curating a diverse range of musical acts across different stages, festival organisers encourage attendees to move throughout the festival grounds. This intentional structuring of space and programming creates opportunities for spontaneous interactions and social mixing, breaking down barriers related to musical taste, age, ethnicity and gender (Berkers & Swartjes, 2022). This movement among visitors has significant spatial consequences. As attendees navigate from one stage to another, they engage with different environments and social groups, fostering a sense of community and collective experience. The communal experiences and shared memories created at these events contribute to a collective urban identity (Alderman & Hoelscher, 2004).

On top of that, both *Drift om te Dansen* (n.d.) and *Subcultuur* (n.d.) are emphasising the importance of local artists on their festival. This focus on local talent not only bolsters the local music industry but also strengthens community bonds (Boswinkel & Van Meerkerk, 2022; Laing & Mair, 2015; Waitt, 2008). Promoting local artists provides a platform for emerging artists to showcase their skills, enriching the local music scene. Additionally, it ensures a sense of pride and belonging among residents (Hwang, 2014; Waitt, 2008), as they see their local talents celebrated on a larger stage.

This analysis has made clear that the interrelated dimensions of social norms and physical layouts at EDM festivals significantly influence visitor practices and therefore contribute to shaping the urban identity of Nijmegen. By examining these elements, we gain a deeper understanding of how festivals can serve as mini versions of Nijmegen, reflecting and reinforcing the social and cultural dynamics of the city. This analysis underscores the importance of thoughtful festival design and policymaking in creating spaces that not only entertain but also foster community engagement. The perceived space that I have analysed builds upon the conceived space. As visitors engage with the festival environment, the conceived space comes to life, transforming into perceived space. Ultimately, the perceived space at these festivals becomes a powerful tool for urban storytelling. It allows for the creation of meaningful experiences that resonate with the identity of Nijmegen, illustrating how well-designed festival environments can reflect and shape the broader urban narrative.

3.4 Lived space

In the last analysis chapter of this research, lived space is examined. Lived space refers to the personal and emotional experiences that people have with a space (Goonewardena et al., 2008, p. 138). It represents meanings, memories and symbolic values that individuals attach to a place, being the most subjective dimension of Lefebvre's spatial triad (1991). Social media, in particular Instagram, emerges as a key analytical tool for exploring lived space in the context of EDM and urban identity. By using this medium, it is possible to continue the EDM discourse digitally and extend the festivals' narrative beyond the Vasim's physical boundaries. On top of that, post-festival digital narratives imply certain meanings and emotional undertones that the organisers want to project, emphasising the emotional counterbalance as discussed by Prey (2015). The worksheet for visual analysis, along with the visual analyses themselves, are attached in the appendices. The most relevant insights from those analyses are incorporated in this lived space analysis chapter.

In this study, three photos (figure 6, 7 and 8) from social media posts of EDM festival were selected to analyse the lived space and digital narratives of EDM festivals at the Vasim. All photos were posted within days after the festivals, providing a recap of the cultural event. The first photo is taken at the Drift om te Dansen festival. The image (figure 6) captures the dynamic and immersive environment of the festival, emphasising the vibrant interaction between the crowd and the urban setting of the Vasim. The second photo (figure 7) was taken at the Subcultuur festival. In this photo, the interplay between community engagement and the cultural landmark of the Vasim provides profound meaning. At last, a photo was chosen from the Zusje van Debbie Festival (figure 8). The more diverse line-up and audience emphasise creativity and experience, rather than just music that leads to dancing, as seen in the first two festival photos. This creativity is underscored by an innovative stage design, featuring a boat as a stage.

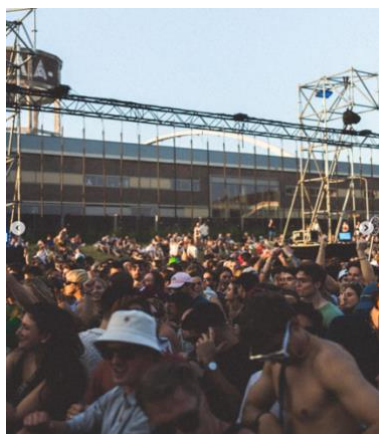


Figure 8: Drift om te Dansen post-festival Instagram post (Van de Ven, 2023)



Figure 8: Subcultuur post-festival Instagram post (Van de Ven, 2024)



Figure 8: Zusje van Debbie post-festival Instagram post (Zusje van Debbie, 2024)

Drawing parallels with Christmann's analysis of Dresden (in Knoblauch et al., 2008), this study shows how visual representations of EDM festivals function similarly. By carefully curating these digital narratives, the organisers exert agency in creating a collective memory about how the festival is remembered and the emotional meanings attached to it (Alderman & Hoelscher, 2004). Therefore, this chapter shows that digital narratives not only portray the physical aesthetics of the venue but also charge it with symbolic meanings and emotions, thereby contributing to the perception of urban identity.

Just as the photographic visualisation of historic buildings in Dresden has anchored its memory and influenced urban development (Knoblauch et al., 2008, p. 6), the digital narratives of EDM festivals embed specific meanings and emotions in the collective memory of the online target audience. The design choices made by festival organisers for curating their digital narratives, such as colours, composition, highlighting certain elements et cetera, are serving to anchor these memories. These curated visual representations shape how the festivals are emotionally remembered and how the spaces were lived.

For example, the vibrant colours and dynamic composition in figure 8 from the Zusje van Debbie festival, where a boat is used as a stage, creates an engaging atmosphere. The boat stage, set against the blue sky and high landmarks, creates an immersive experience that metaphorically suggests an escape from reality (Dorst, 2015, p. 66; Morgan, 2008). Following Dorst's argumentation (2015), this setup emphasises how festival organisers can transform ordinary places into extraordinary experiences by making them venues of cultural celebrations.

By using this boat stage as an example, it is shown that the transformative power of music festivals extends beyond solely revitalising spaces (Cianga, 2020, p. 208). Such design choices inject spaces with cultural and emotional significance, thereby enriching the emotional encounter and ultimately the urban identity. Enhancing urban spaces by embedding them with cultural and social significance, as noted by Iulia Cianga (2020), is an illustration of how EDM events can leverage visual elements as placemaking tools.

Figure 7 shows a black and white photo from the Subcultuur festival. The strategic use of black and white photography significantly enhances the perception and memory of urban spaces. This design choice evokes a sense of nostalgia, reminding visitors that the festival is rooted in the past. Additionally, the absence of colour in this photo eliminates visual distractions, allowing viewers to focus on essential elements such as textures, shapes, and contrasts. This focus directs attention to the large crowd and the Vasim tower. According to Alderman and Hoelscher (2004), physical spaces within cities become landmarks around which collective memory is formed. With the design choices made in the Subcultuur festival photo, the collective memory is centred around the two main features of the photo: the crowd and Vasim tower.

When the line of reasoning of Cianga (2020) is followed, then the photo from the Subcultuur festival (figure 7) can also be seen as an act of placemaking. This photo becomes instrumental for the perception of the urban identity. Such imagery communicates to the audience that the Vasim is a vibrant venue for dancing and cultural celebration. Additionally, the tower of the Vasim is highlighted with visual effects, which further accentuates the urban character of the festival. These visual effects not only draw attention to the architectural features of the Vasim but also transforms it into a dynamic focal point within the urban landscape. Through these visual narratives, the Vasim is made into a cultural landmark, clearly conveying its role as a key site for cultural expression. This in turn aligns with Musicologist Sara Cohen (1991) and Cianga (2020), suggesting that music festivals play a crucial role in placemaking, generating a positive image for the city and reshaping perceptions of urban spaces.

Figure 6 from the Drift om te Dansen festival encapsulates the symbolic interplay between Nijmegen's historical and modern identities. This image prominently features a crowd of young people, effectively embodying the 'Old City, Young Vibe' theme that is central to Nijmegen's urban identity (Environmental Vision, 2019). This image highlights how EDM festivals utilise historical spaces, turning them into vibrant cultural landmarks that foster community engagement. These insights indicate that Nijmegen's urban identity thrives on its capacity to merge its historical legacy with dynamic cultural activities.

In conclusion, this analysis demonstrates the powerful role that EDM festivals play in shaping urban identity through both physical and digital narratives. By carefully curating visual representations and embedding cultural and emotional significance into festival spaces, organisers transform ordinary venues into extraordinary cultural landmarks. Expanding on Richards' (2015, p. 2) assertion that urban identity is not only about the physical infrastructure but also about the way spaces are thought about and used, I argue that digital narratives curated by festival organisers play a crucial role in shaping the perception of urban identity. The strategic use of design elements not only enhances the festival experience but also reinforces the collective memory and urban character of locations like the Vasim. Agreeing with Cianga (2020), festivals serve as crucial tools for placemaking, generating positive images for the city and reshaping perceptions of urban spaces.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

In this thesis, I have explored how EDM shapes the perception of Nijmegen's urban identity through a case study at the Vasim. By integrating Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad, I have analysed the conceived, perceived and lived spaces from an EDM perspective. Recognising the different circumstances in which Lefebvre created the spatial triad, I have updated his theory to make it applicable to this context. This framework provided a comprehensive approach to understand the multifaceted impact of EDM on urban environments.

Previous research on the influence of EDM on urban identity has mainly focused on metropolitan cities, which benefit from a resource-rich array of cultural locations and a globally connected cultural sector (Allington et al., 2015; Howard, 2016; Watson, 2012). Consequently, Wijngaarden, Hitters and Bhansing (2019) highlighted the need to explore creative places beyond metropolitan cities. Non-metropolitan cities, characterised by nuanced local scenes and limited cultural infrastructure, have been underrepresented in scholarly work (Dorst, 2015; Van Bergen, 2018). This thesis has attempted to address this gap by examining how EDM events in non-metropolitan cities like Nijmegen leverage their authentic characteristics to foster a vibrant cultural scene in order to create a distinct urban identity. This multifaceted perspective highlights the role of different stakeholders in the urban development process and demonstrates how EDM serves as a catalyst for cultural expression, ultimately *transforming* and *enriching* the urban identity.

Drawing on scholars such as Cheshmehzangi (2015), Cheshmehzangi & Heath (2012), Hwang (2014) and Richards (2015), this thesis understands urban identity not merely as the sum of a city's physical infrastructure, but as a broader construct that includes how spaces are conceived, perceived and lived by its users. This interpretation emphasises that urban identity is shaped by a unique combination of physical attributes and socio-cultural interactions, creating a distinctive sense of place reflecting both tangible and intangible aspects of urban life.

Through a detailed examination of the Vasim, this research has shed light on how cultural activities can foster urban regeneration. The Vasim has been transformed into a prominent cultural hub for Nijmegen, where old industrial structures blend harmoniously with modern cultural practices. Beyond improving liveability and stimulating the local economy (Boswinkel & Van Meerkerk, 2022), the site has become a showcase of urban pride.

What distinguishes a non-metropolitan city like Nijmegen from metropolitan cities is its strategic embrace of urban festivals despite having relatively few old industrial spaces suitable for cultural purposes. Nijmegen recognises the significant benefits these events offer, as numerous scholars have noted (Hwang, 2014; Richards, 2015; Quinn, 2005; Waitt, 2008). By integrating EDM into their urban development plans, Nijmegen has enabled a vibrant EDM scene, showcasing how innovative cultural policies can drive urban regeneration and enhance the city's unique identity.

Scholars like Quinn (2005) argued that EDM festivals reflect the norms and values of a city. This thesis posits that festivals not only reflect but reinforce the character of a city, as argued by Hwang (2014) and Richards (2015). This thesis posits that festivals serve as both a mirror

and a catalyst for cultural expression within urban spaces. EDM festivals at the Vasim exemplify this reciprocal influence. They not only shape the city's identity by providing a platform for cultural expression but are also shaped by reflecting the city's spirit. This reciprocal influence has not been extensively discussed in the literature, making this thesis a significant contribution to relevant insights. However, since the primary focus of this thesis was not entirely on this aspect, it presents an interesting area for further research.

Scholars such as Cheshmehzangi (2015) and Richards (2015) have explored how events contribute to urban identity, but this study adds to their work by demonstrating the enduring impact of festivals through their significant online presence. Festivals symbolically highlight certain urban aspects, which in turn shape the urban identity since these festivals attract thousands of visitors. Digital narratives of festival organisers act as placemaking tools, transforming urban landmarks into cultural landmarks. Building on Scott's (2000) assertion that festivals are transformative, these findings expand the understanding of how festivals are not only temporary events but have a lasting impact on a city's identity, aligning with Ashworth's (2009) observations. This thesis has extended Ashworth's observations by examining the impact from an online perspective, showing how digital narratives enhance the influence of festivals and interact with physical spaces to shape urban identity.

The interplay between these three spaces is dynamic due to ever-changing social and cultural norms. The conceived space shapes the perceived space by laying the spatial foundation for the physical design of festivals. In turn, the perceived space impacts lived experiences by providing the tangible environment that attendees emotionally interact with. Lived space feeds back into the conceived space by informing future urban planning and cultural strategies, as the emotional and symbolic significance of spaces like the Vasim are recognised and leveraged in citymarketing and development plans.

Ultimately, I argue that this interplay between conceived, perceived and lived space *shapes* and *reinforces* Nijmegen's urban identity. The strategic incorporation of EDM festivals into the city's cultural landscape, the tangible interactions within the festival space and the emotional and symbolic meanings attached to these events collectively contribute to a distinct sense of place. This multifaceted process highlights how urban identity is not static but continuously constructed through the interactions between planned, physical and emotional dimensions of space.

5. Limitations

Acknowledging the limitations of a study is essential as it provides context for the findings, highlights potential biases and suggests directions for future research. By addressing these limitations, we can offer a clearer understanding of the results and propose areas for further investigation.

While Lefebvre's spatial triad framework was originally developed in a different socio-historical context, I found it generally fitting for this study. However, there were challenges in distinguishing between the different spaces due to their overlapping nature. This theoretical limitation suggests the need for a more detailed adaptation of the framework to better suit modern contexts in future studies.

Throughout my thesis, I have heavily relied on data that potentially carries biases. By building my argument upon a digital space, individuals who are not active online are excluded from consideration. Additionally, the selected events were chosen due to their high attendance rates, which may lead to an overemphasis on their role in shaping urban identity. Smaller, less well-known events might also significantly contribute to the urban cultural landscape.

Similarly, the urban identity of Nijmegen, as retrieved from municipal policy documents, might not fully capture the complexity of the concept. However, given the complexity of urban identity and the scope of this research, these sources provided the closest approximation of the city's identity. Despite their limitations, these documents offer structured and authoritative perspectives that are essential for understanding the urban identity of Nijmegen.

While my data sources offered valuable insights into the public representation and institutional planning of EDM events, they might not capture the full spectrum of personal experiences and informal interactions within the EDM scene. Ethnographic methods, such as participant observation and in-depth interviews, could have complemented the existing data and provided a more comprehensive understanding of how EDM shapes urban identity on a personal level.

Recognising these constraints helps to contextualise the study and underscores the need for further research to address these gaps. By acknowledging these limitations, future studies could provide a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the dynamic relationship between EDM and urban identity.

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Appendix 1: Worksheet visual analysis

WORKSHEET

Interpreting and Analyzing Images

Here are five steps for interpreting and analyzing images. The approach is iterative and fluid—you may not need to (or be able to) complete each step, or you may repeat some of the steps. Ask and answer as many critical and relevant questions as you can.

Step 1: Look.

What do I see? Look at the image and articulate what is going on.

1. What do you see in this image?
2. Are there people in the image? What are they doing? How are they presented?
3. What do you notice about the setting, place, or context?
4. What objects or components do you see?
5. How is the image composed? How are elements in the image arranged?
6. What colors are used in the image? What effects are created by the use of color?

Step 2: Read.

What does the text tell me? Read any textual information that accompanies the image and consider what else it tells you.

1. What text accompanies the image?
2. What is the purpose of the textual information?
3. What kind of context does the textual information provide?
4. Can you determine *where, how, why, and for whom* the image was made?

Step 3: Examine.

What do I see now? Now that you know more, examine the image again.

1. What do you see now that you didn't see before?
2. Did reading the text change how you see the image? How?
3. What are the most important visual elements in the image? How can you tell?
4. Can you interpret the image in different ways?

Step 4: Describe.

What does this mean? Describe the image and its subject.

1. What meanings are conveyed by the information, people, things, or actions in the image?
2. How do design choices contribute to the meaning of the image?
3. Why might the image have been created, and who might have been the intended audience?
4. How does this image function? Does it illustrate, document, entertain, persuade, and so on?
5. How was the image made?
6. If you were asked what the image is "about," what subjects would you describe?

Step 5: Check understanding.

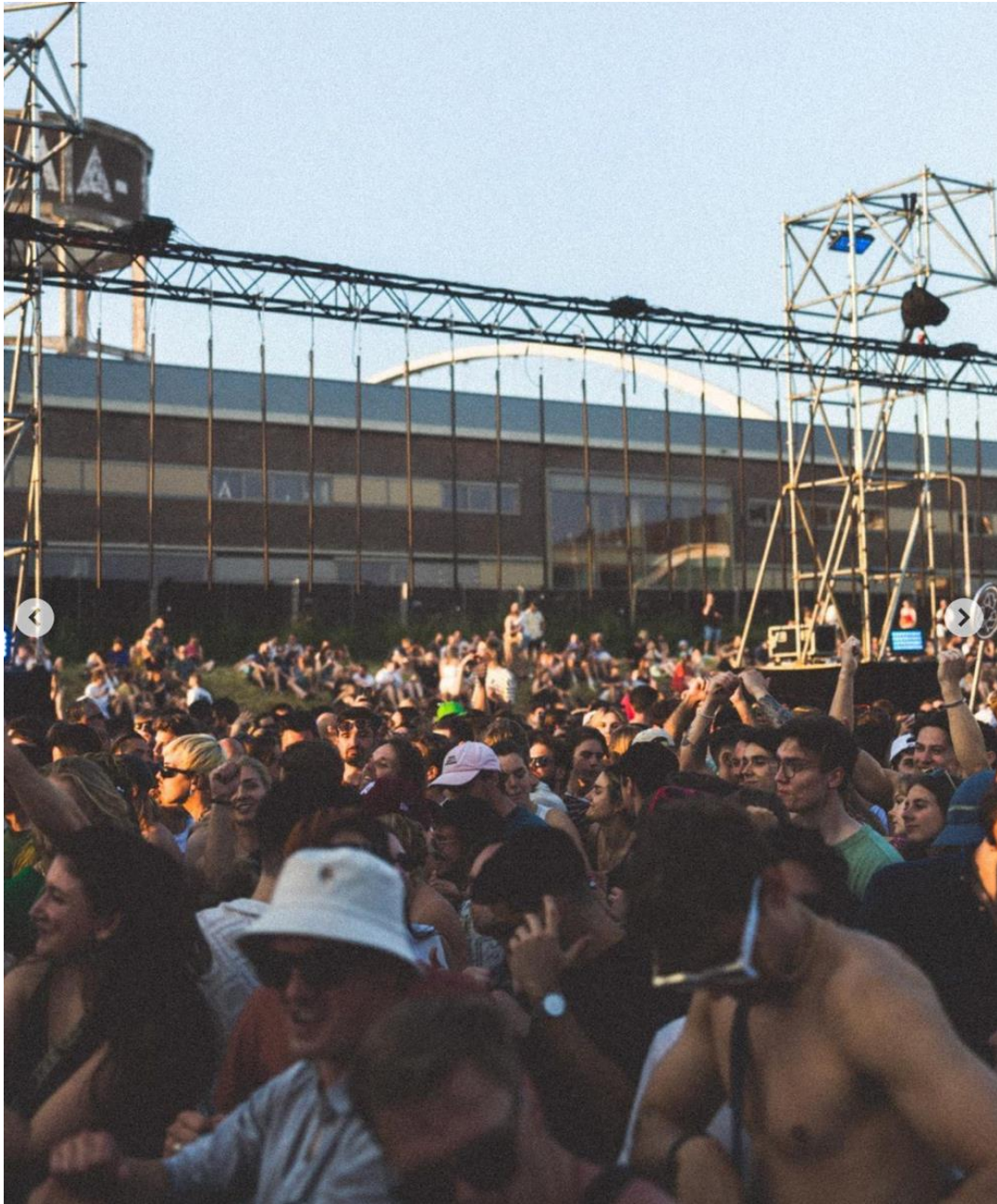
What else do I need to know? Generate new questions based on your findings.

1. What do you need to find out more about?
2. How does the image fit with or disrupt what you already know?
3. How does your interpretation align with or differ from that of others?
4. How might discipline-specific or interdisciplinary perspectives or approaches further inform your analysis?

Reflect.

Scan your answers to the preceding questions. What will your next step be?

Appendix 2: Photo 1- Drift om te Dansen



Step 1: Look

1. **What do you see in this image?** The image depicts a large crowd facing towards the same side. It is at an outdoor location looking industrial. Stage equipment is visible.
2. **Are there people in the image? What are they doing? How are they presented?** People are looking happy and they are dancing. They are dressed in very different ways. There is a difference between people in the fore- and background. People in the background are sitting down.
3. **What do you notice about the setting, place or context?** Because of the stage equipment and the focus people have towards one side, you can argue that it is a festival setting at an industrial site.
4. **What objects or components do you see?** Scaffolding, stage equipment, the industrial building, a bridge, a big tower. Furthermore, elements like hats, sunglasses to protect themselves against the sun.
5. **How is the image composed? How are elements in the image arranged?** The composition centres on the crowd, with the background featuring the industrial building and stage structures. The crowd occupies the lower half of the image, with the upper half showing the setting and clear sky.
6. **What colours are used in the image? What effects are created by the use of colour?** The image uses a mix of natural and vibrant colours. The blue sky and industrial backdrop provide a muted contrast to the colourful crowd. The lighting suggests a warm, possibly late afternoon or early evening setting, creating a lively and warm atmosphere.

Step 2: Read

1. **What text accompanies the image?** Sun. Heat. Love. Time stood still for a moment last weekend. In a month we will do it again during Drift op de Boot. Stay tuned, we'll tell you what we plan to do soon enough.
2. **What is the purpose of the textual information?** The purpose is to reflect on the past weekend's event with fondness and to promote an upcoming event: Drift op de Boot.
3. **What kind of context does the textual information provide?** The text provides context about the event, indicating it was a warm, loving, and memorable experience. It also serves to build anticipation for a future event.
4. **Can you determine where, how, why, and for whom the image was made?** It aims to capture the atmosphere and energy of the gathering and is intended for people who attended or might attend future events.

Step 3: Examine

1. **What do you see now that you didn't see before?** The division in space, how people use space differently at such a short distance.
2. **Did reading the text change how you see the image? How?** Yes, the text makes me see the image as a piece of collective memory rather than just an event promotion. The phrase about time standing still is symbolically reflected in the photograph.
3. **What are the most important visual elements in the image? How can you tell?** The dancing people, the industrial landmarks, and the modern stage equipment. They intersect strongly, creating a powerful visual contrast between the past and present.

4. **Can you interpret the image in different ways?** I could interpret it as a celebration of community or as an urban space transformation

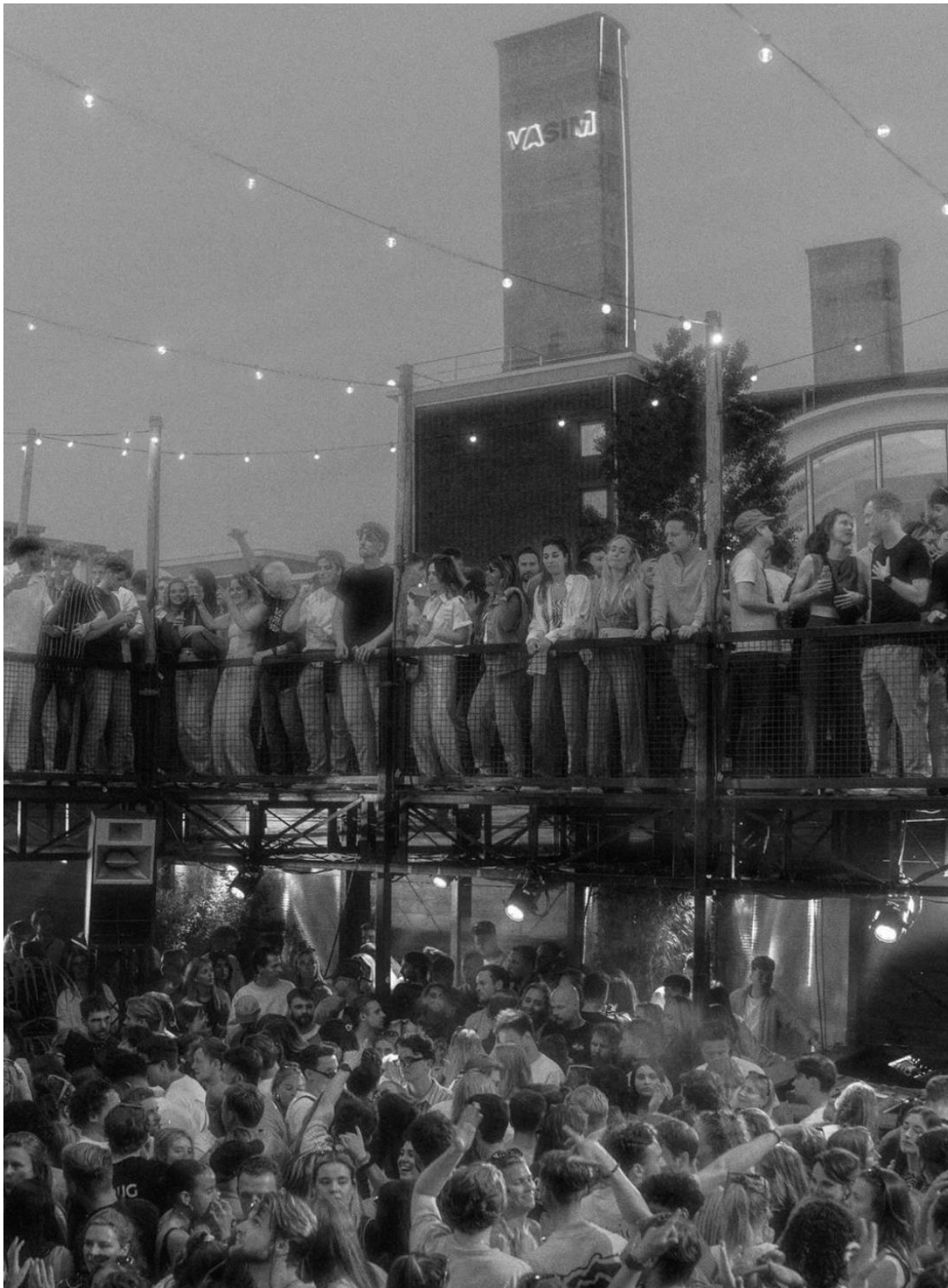
Step 4: Describe

1. **What meaning are conveyed by the information, people, things or actions in the image?** The image captures a feeling social gathering and enjoyment. The industrial background contrasts with the leisure activities, potentially highlighting the transformation of urban areas into spaces for recreation.
2. **How do design choices contribute to the meaning of the image?** The warm lighting and composition focusing on the crowd emphasize the lively and engaging nature of the event. The industrial setting adds a layer of context about the location. The text reinforces the positive emotions and excitement surrounding the event.
3. **Why might the image have been created, and who might have been the intended audience?** The image might have been created to promote the event or document its success. The intended audience could be potential attendees, sponsors or participants in similar events. The text indicates it is for people who enjoyed the last event and are looking forward to the next one
4. **How does this image function? Does it illustrate, document, entertain, persuade, and so on?** The image functions to document and entertain. It captures a moment in time that showcases the event's atmosphere. The text also serves a persuasive function, promoting the upcoming event
5. **How was the image made?** By a photographer from the Drift festival, therefore, the festival organiser has the full agency about this photo since they influence the photographer what to do and where/how to shoot.
6. **If you were asked what the image is 'about', what subjects would you describe?** Celebration, use of urban spaces, industrial in combination with modern practices

Step 5: Check understanding

1. **What do you need to find out more about?**
2. **How does the image fit with or disrupt what you already know?** The image fits the typical portrayal of outdoor festivals and concerts, but the industrial setting adds a unique twist. The text adds a personal and promotional element, highlighting how an EDM event exerts influence over its audience. This expression showcases Nijmegen's urban festivals, contributing to the city's identity and emphasising the integration of urban spaces into cultural activities.
3. **How does your interpretation align with or differ from that of others?** Personal interpretations might vary, but generally, the image would be seen as a depiction of a festive gathering. Therefore, the agency is interesting since it demonstrates how the organisers shape the experience and perception of urban spaces in Nijmegen, reinforcing the city's identity through such cultural events.
4. **How might discipline-specific or interdisciplinary perspectives or approaches further inform your analysis?** Perspectives from urban studies could provide insight into the use of industrial spaces for public events. Cultural studies might explore the significance of such gatherings in contemporary society. Marketing perspectives could analyse the effectiveness of the promotional text.

Appendix 3: Photo 2- Subcultuur Festival



Step 1: Look

1. What do you see in this image?

The black and white image shows a large crowd both on the ground and on a raised platform. It is an outdoor setting with industrial elements, the Vasim building is prominently visible, particularly the two towers.

2. Are there people in the image? What are they doing? How are they presented?

Yes, there are many people in the image. The people on the platform are observing the scene, while those on the ground appear to be dancing and socialising. The crowd is really lively.

3. What do you notice about the setting, place or context?

The setting appears to be an industrial site, indicated by the Vasim building and the scaffold-like platform. The presence of string lights and speakers suggests that it is a festival, likely taking place in the evening.

4. What objects or components do you see?

Scaffolding, string lights, the Vasim building, speakers, casual clothing, drinks

5. How is the image composed? How are elements in the image arranged?

The composition focuses on the crowd, divided into two levels – the platform and the ground. The Vasim building provides a strong vertical element in the background.

6. What colours are used in the image? What effects are created by the use of colour?

The image is in black and white, which emphasises contrasts and textures rather than individual colours. This choice highlights the crowd and the industrial backdrop, creating a timeless and somewhat nostalgic effect.

Step 2: Read

1. What text accompanies the image?

Als de kater weer weg is en de stofwolken langzaam weer optrekken, zie dan daar de overblijfselen van een dag vol goud omlijste herinneringen.

Het beeld liegt er niet om, waarvoor credits:

@xsanjay

Belangrijk! Aanstaaende dinsdag de earlys van de earlys van Subcultuur Hemelvaart festival '25. Geniet na en tot snel.

(Translation to english)

When the hangover is gone and the dust clouds slowly clear again, see the invisible ones of a day full of golden-framed memories.

The image doesn't lie, for which credits:

@xsanjay

Important! Next Tuesday the earlys of the earlys of Subculture Ascension festival '25. Enjoy one see you soon.

2. What is the purpose of the textual information?

The purpose is to reflect on the past event with nostalgia and to promote the upcoming ticket sales for the next event.

3. What kind of context does the textual information provide?

The text provides a reflective context, emphasising the memorable nature of the past event and the anticipation for future events.

4. Can you determine where, how, why, and for whom the image was made?

The image was made to capture and promote the atmosphere of the event. It is intended for attendees, potential visitors and those interested in the urban and cultural activities of Nijmegen.

Step 3: Examine

1. What do you see now that you didn't see before?

The contrast between the dynamic activity on the ground and the more static, observant behaviour on the platform. Furthermore, the laser that highlights the Vasim tower is really coming forward.

2. Did reading the text change how you see the image? How?

Yes, the text adds a layer of nostalgia. It frames the image as a memory of a cherished event and a reminder of upcoming opportunities to create new memories. On top of that, the sentence '*the image doesn't lie*' got my attention. Because photographs capture moments in time, they can sometimes present a different reality than what actually exists.

3. What are the most important visual elements in the image? How can you tell?

The crowd on two levels and the Vasim building highlighted with the laser. They dominate the frame and guide the viewer's eye through the composition.

4. Can you interpret the image in different ways?

I could interpret it as a celebration of community or as an urban space transformation.

Step 4: Describe

1. What meaning are conveyed by the information, people, things or actions in the image?

The image conveys a sense of community, festivity and the adaptive reuse of industrial spaces for modern cultural events. It shows how such spaces can be reimagined as places of cultural expression.

2. How do design choices contribute to the meaning of the image?

The black and white choice adds meaning to the image by making it nostalgic. The vertical composition of the Vasim ensures that the tower is clearly visible and it draws the attention, especially with the laser focused on it. The string lights add a festive mood to the picture.

3. Why might the image have been created, and who might have been the intended audience?

The image might have been created to document the event and promote future gatherings. The intended audience could be future visitors, the local community and those interested in urban cultural events.

4. How does this image function? Does it illustrate, document, entertain, persuade, and so on?

The image functions to document and entertain. It captures the essence of the event and the interaction between people and their environment. It also persuades by showcasing the successful transformation of an industrial site into a vibrant cultural space.

5. How was the image made?

By a photographer from the Subcultuur festival, therefore, the festival organiser has the full agency about this photo since they influence the photographer what to do and where/how to shoot.

6. If you were asked what the image is 'about', what subjects would you describe?

Community, industrial heritage, festival, transformation of urban spaces

Step 5: Check understanding

1. What do you need to find out more about?

2. How does the image fit with or disrupt what you already know?

It fits the idea of using industrial spaces for modern cultural events but adds a unique visual representation through the design choices. Especially the black-and-white aesthetic and vertical composition are meaningful choices.

3. How does your interpretation align with or differ from that of others?

Personal interpretations might vary, but generally, the image would be seen as a depiction of a festive gathering. Therefore, the agency is interesting since it demonstrates how the organisers shape the experience and perception of urban spaces in Nijmegen, reinforcing the city's identity through such cultural events.

4. How might discipline-specific or interdisciplinary perspectives or approaches further inform your analysis?

Perspectives from urban studies could provide insight into the use of industrial spaces for public events. Cultural studies might explore the significance of such gatherings in contemporary society. Marketing perspectives could analyse the effectiveness of the promotional text.

Appendix 4: Photo 3- Zusje van Debbie



Step 1: Look

1. What do you see in this image?

The image depicts a lively crowd at an outdoor event. The focus is on a group of people standing on a boat, which is used as a stage, with high industrial landmarks in the background, giving the illusion of being on a boat in a distant landscape. There are people dancing, hugging and socialising with each other.

2. Are there people in the image? What are they doing? How are they presented?

Yes. The individuals on the boat are enthusiastically engaging with the crowd, while the crowd below is actively participating, with many people raising their hands in excitement. The image radiates energy and engagement.

3. What do you notice about the setting, place or context?

The event takes place in an industrial area, as indicated by the tall structures, power lines and the water tower in the background. The proximity of a harbour to this industrial site might be subtly referenced by using a boat as a stage.

4. What objects or components do you see?

A boat serving as a stage with people dressed up as boatpeople, high industrial landmarks, a disco ball and elements associated with a festival crowd. The crowd's enthusiasm and the boat stage are central components.

5. How is the image composed? How are elements in the image arranged?

The composition highlights the interaction between the boat stage and the crowd, with the tall landmarks providing a dramatic backdrop. The vibrant colours and raised hands emphasise the collective energy of this visual representation.

6. What colours are used in the image? What effects are created by the use of colour?

Vibrant colours are used, contrasting with the previous black-and-white festival photos. This choice highlights the diversity and liveliness of this particular festival, which features a different and more diverse EDM line-up, and therefore audience.

Step 2: Read

1. What text accompanies the image?

Dit was Debbie in een flessendop. Hierbij nog 10 highlights, dat hadden er makkelijk 100 kunnen zijn. Bedankt voor deze waanzinnige editie. 📷❤️

We gaan er even tussenuit en zien jullie tijdens de mooiste week van juli. Op Roze woensdag in het Kronenburgpark én die nacht in de Lindenberg (📷). Op zaterdag met de voeten in het zand bij stadseiland Stek. We komen binnenkort bij jullie terug voor alle info & tickets.

X Debbie

(Translation to english)

This was Debbie in a bottle cap. Here are 10 more highlights, which could easily have been 100. Thank you for this amazing edition. 📷❤️

We're going to take a break and see you during the most beautiful week of July. On Pink Wednesday in the Kronenburgpark and that night in the Lindenberg (📷). On Saturday with your feet in the sand at the city island of Stek. We will come back to you soon for all information & tickets.

X Debbie

2. What is the purpose of the textual information?

The purpose is to reflect on the past event and to inform the audience about upcoming events, maintaining engagement and building anticipation. Furthermore, they announce that they are taking the time of.

3. What kind of context does the textual information provide?

The text provides a celebratory context, highlighting memorable moments from the event and teasing future gatherings.

4. Can you determine where, how, why, and for whom the image was made?

The image was made to capture and promote the atmosphere of the event. It is intended for attendees, potential visitors and those interested in the urban and cultural activities of Nijmegen.

Step 3: Examine

1. What do you see now that you didn't see before?

The use of a boat as a stage might cleverly integrates the nearby harbour's theme. If you look at this boat, it looks like it is floating on the water since the blue sky is a backdrop. The iconic landmarks of the Vasim become landmarks that boatpeople see when on a ship. I find this really symbolic, the festival is a metaphor for escaping reality, manifested by this stage design.

2. Did reading the text change how you see the image? How?

No

3. What are the most important visual elements in the image? How can you tell?

The boat stage, the enthusiastic crowd and the high industrial landmarks. These elements draw attention and create a dynamic atmosphere.

4. Can you interpret the image in different ways?

You might interpret it different if you regard the blue sky as a backdrop, coming back to the metaphor.

Step 4: Describe

1. What meaning are conveyed by the information, people, things or actions in the image?

The image conveys a sense of creativity and celebration. The use of the boat as a stage in combination with the vibrant colours provides this engaging image.

2. How do design choices contribute to the meaning of the image?

The vibrant colours and the unique boat stage design emphasise the festive and diverse nature of the event. The high landmarks in the background add depth to the picture.

3. Why might the image have been created, and who might have been the intended audience?

The image might have been created to document the event and promote future gatherings. The intended audience could be future visitors, the local community and those interested in urban cultural events.

4. How does this image function? Does it illustrate, document, entertain, persuade, and so on?

The image functions to document and entertain. It captures the essence of the event and the interaction between people and their environment. It also persuades by showcasing the successful transformation of an industrial site into a vibrant cultural space.

5. How was the image made?

By a photographer from the Zusje van Debbie festival, therefore, the festival organiser has the full agency about this photo since they influence the photographer what to do and where/how to shoot.

6. If you were asked what the image is 'about', what subjects would you describe?

Creativity, community engagement, transformation of urban spaces, symbolism

Step 5: Check understanding

1. What do you need to find out more about?

2. How does the image fit with or disrupt what you already know?

It fits the idea of using urban and industrial spaces creatively for cultural events but adds a unique visual element with the boat as a stage.

3. How does your interpretation align with or differ from that of others?

Personal interpretations might vary, but generally, the image would be seen as a depiction of a festive gathering. Therefore, the agency is interesting since it demonstrates how the organisers shape the experience and perception of urban spaces in Nijmegen, reinforcing the city's identity through such cultural events.

4. How might discipline-specific or interdisciplinary perspectives or approaches further inform your analysis?

Perspectives from urban studies could provide insight into the use of industrial spaces for public events. Cultural studies might explore the significance of such gatherings in contemporary society. Marketing perspectives could analyse the effectiveness of the promotional text.