

Rough City: Hijacked

MYLES SYNGER

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Introduction

This writing journal explores the importance of storytelling for different groups and individuals. It emphasizes how communities come together to create social spaces that cater to their needs and address the challenges they face. These communities develop unique systems that may be unfamiliar to those who have yet to be exposed. However, in vibrant cities like London, Kowloon, Rio de Janeiro, and Berlin, the cultural identities cultivated over time are being eroded through a process of city smoothing. "A closer look does not reveal any aberrations or abnormalities. There don't seem to be any abandoned properties, undefined elements or forgotten corners. No alternative narratives, ideas or (sub)cultures have been allowed to make a claim on, intervene in or transform urban spaces, unless they have been neatly encapsulated and made servient to the dominant script. While tensions and confrontations are only allowed to surface beyond its immediate boundaries, it is represented to the outside world as a wealthy, successful, consumable and predominantly white environment."1 Gentrification, a specific phenomenon, has had detrimental effects on the urban landscape. It not only displaces long-standing residents but also alters the fabric of neighbourhoods. The introduction of upscale establishments and an influx of wealthier individuals often leads to the loss of affordable housing and the displacement of small businesses. To shed light on these pressing issues, we will examine a specific case study - Kings Cross Central, with a particular focus on Coal Drops Yard. Through a thorough analysis, we will assess how this area provides a platform for storytelling within the community. We will also identify areas where storytelling falls short, allowing us to pinpoint opportunities for improvement. These valuable insights will inform the development of designed interventions in my current project and, ultimately, my final major project. By addressing the issue of city smoothing and seeking solutions to preserve and promote cultural diversity, we can work towards creating inclusive spaces that celebrate the

unique narratives of communities.

¹ Boer, R. (2018). Smooth City Is the New Urban. [online] Archis

Site Introduction

Kings Cross Central

Transitioning into its Future

"visual detection picking apart these new interjections settled against theses old remnants"

"this momentary highlight and spot light on me where i feel more significant"

"not being very intrusive to affect the

During the site investigation, the impact of scale and the perceived importance of individuals at each location became apparent, affecting the transition from place to place. "The three key components of place - location, locale, and a sense of place"¹ - were discussed. The initial sense of insignificance was attributed to the volume of people and the visually dominant buildings on the other side of the bridge towards King's Cross Station. The Granary Square, with its modern design and unique features, stood out in contrast to the dated UAL Central Saint Martins building. The transition from the bustling area near Kings Cross station to the preserved Granary Square required mental adjustment and directed focus on intended destinations. The emotional impact of the space was crucial, as it accommodated both students and passersby.

Central Saint Martins, with its purposeful renovation, evoked a sense of excitement. The mix of historic and modern architectural elements, coupled with ample lighting, created a distinct atmosphere. The arches provided a significant individual experience, contrasting with the cosmopolitan environment of Coal Drops Yard on one side and the serene canal on the other. The arches, with their low ceilings and warm lights, offered a sense of comfort and freedom. While they no longer served as transition spaces, their architectural qualities made them suitable for settled stores. The history of the arches, from coal storage to an illegal rave scene, added to their significance.

The area's history and functional transitions created a layered and meaningful sense of place. Preserved architecture alongside modern interjections and selfcontained atmospheres contributed to the overall experience. It was suggested that creating a focal point, such as a museum, would enhance the communal intention and serve as a reminder of the community's significance in

existing structure"

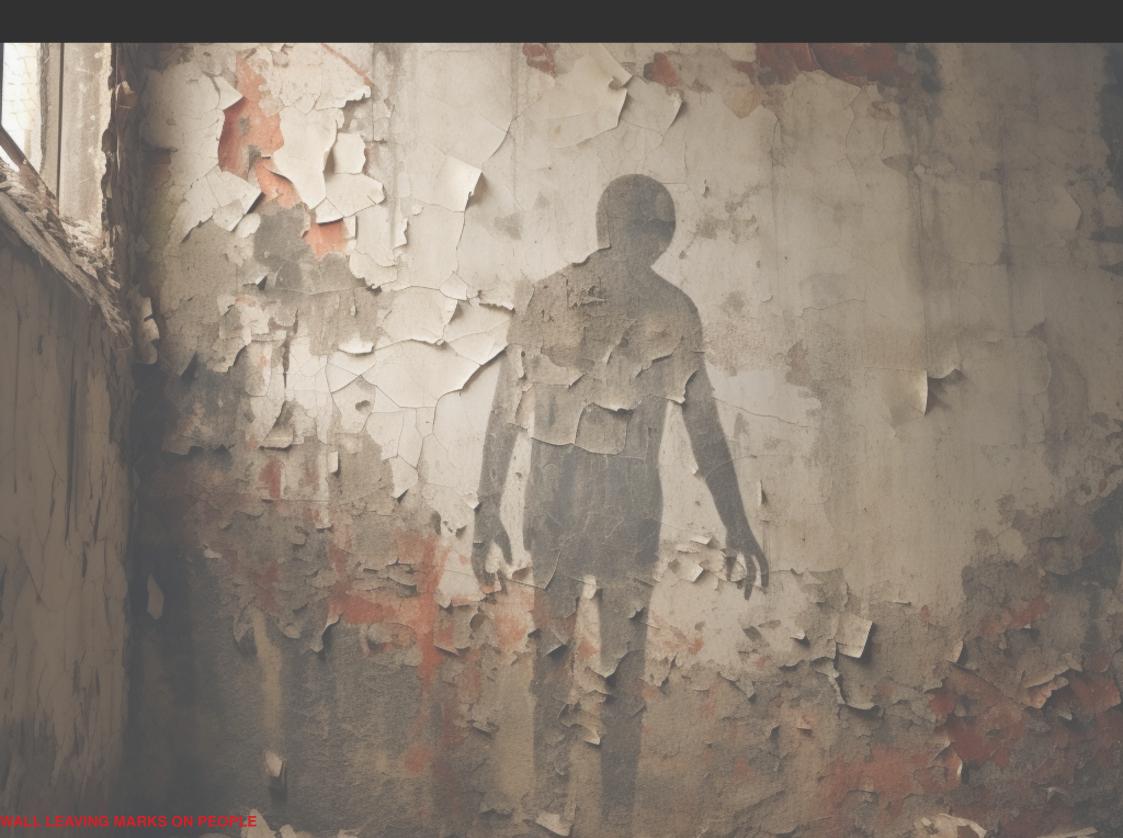
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[3] Allan, A. (2020). MEET MR. COAL DROPS. [online] King's Cross Quarterly Magazine.

1 National Geographic Society (2023). Concept of Place. [online] education.nationalgeographic.org.



Outsider Spaces: The Impact of Gentrification



Gentrification – noun: "the buying and renovation of houses and stores in deteriorated urban neighborhoods by upper- or middle-income families or individuals, thus improving property values but often displacing low-income families and small businesses."¹

Breslin, G., Mckeown, C. and Groves, R. (2012). Collins dictionary. Glasgow: Harpercollins

Public spaces used and built collectively by small and large communities without a planned and detailed design destination exist worldwide, best serving an agreed-upon group function rather than fitting in a curated city aesthetic. These spaces have a habit of housing people and activities that fall out of the social norms, creating their own selfcontained culture and traditions upheld by their inhabitants and passed on as time passes. Its users identify as outsiders¹ due to their connection to space, whether temporarily while there or always as part of their identity, making it a convergent meeting point for them, thus making them outsider spaces. These spaces have unique charm; they tend to stand out or even go against the orchestrated layout of their surrounding environment. This roughness does not follow the protocol of a larger-scale borough, city, government or institution's plan to be economically maximising or socially complicit to changes; this is one of the points where gentrification has such a significant impact. Gentrification is a modern term that only started to be used in the 1960s but much more prominent use since the start of the 21st century. It has a significant impact on communities, displacing its members and long term formed area specific organisations while creating a loss of cultural identity; for the goal of economic investment to attract affluent and wealthy residents and investors it is led by the construction of new buildings, houses and infrastructure, pushing out existing residents. Actively changing the area's taste², causing local shops to turn to chain stores, public space into coffee shops and a new demographic taking the majority stake in the area, causing those who were local to be now spread thin among surrounding locations, reducing the group and community power they had to be able to rally together and argue for their rights. Having identified three different outcomes from the impact of gentrification being clearance, erasure and fragility, that coincide with case studies. Clearance with Kowloon city, being where the space is sanitised and removed due its perceived roughness and is stated as being dangerous to its inhabitants, but its removal proves to be more economically beneficial to governments and does not ultimately help said inhabitants. Erasure with Bagleys nightclub, similar to clearance involves the removal of spaces but has the secondary impact of loss of historical preservation, where culturally significant movements and social spaces are replaced with redevelopments re writing history as if they never existed. Lastly fragility with The Undercroft that is an ongoing affect where the spaces permeance is being put into a state of uncertainty, that despite its cultural impact and justification in being there redevelopment propositions question their lasting future. These various case studies are at different scales, going from city wide examples to smaller local destinations. Firstly, providing a much-needed historical account and context of these spaces and then an analysis criticising the role that gentrification played in each scenario while, identifying them as outsider spaces due to each of them having a strong culture that sits outside society's norms, an existence causes tension and debate, and a purpose not being economic/profit maximising. Approaching from a stance that wants to show how gentrification is a global issue that has been recurrent over time happening at various scales, and unequally has limited to non-effective counter measures against it that occur nowhere near as often.

1 a person who does not belong to a particular group - https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/outsider
2 This can be seen similar to are that I grew up in being Walthamstow where over the past ten years has been going through redevelopment but seen so rapidly in the last three. While the Mall was being rebuilt due to a fire, the taste of surrounding area significantly changed, slowly starting with the standardisation of all shop fronts from the bottom of the market then the emergence of a pret a manger and costa coffee being the tell-tale signs that bigger change is coming. Since then, the rapid high rise housing construction built right in Walthamstow central can always be seen from surrounding vicinity, the new "CRATE" addition (a box park imitation) is the new identity of the mall, expensive niche shops and restaurants targeted at a new demographic (e.g 3 art dealers, 3 Japanese restaurants, a dog groomers and botanical shop), all have successfully begun to change the cultural identify of Walthamstow. This is further encourage by the pricing out of local residents and the ever rising housing prices.

Kowloon Walled City

Clearance: an act or process of clearing: such as the removal of buildings from an area (such as a city slum)¹

Merriam-Webster (n.d.). Definition of CLEARANCE. [online] www.merriam-webster.com.

A NOMADS CONSTRUCTION

Kowloon Walled City was the most densely populated place to exist. "A thorough government survey in 1987 gave a clearer picture: an estimated 33,000 people resided within the walled city. Based on this survey, the walled city had a population density of approximately 1,255,000 inhabitants per square kilometre (3,250,000/sq mi) in 1987." Starting as a Chinese walled military outpost in the newly claimed territories of British Hong Kong after the second opium war of 1860, Kowloon City was left desolate over time due to the lack of interest from both sides, having squatters living inside. Then, in 1942, during Japan's invasion of China, the bricks from the city walls were taken and repurposed for military resources for the Japanese base in Hong Kong taking away the standing wall borders, until after the Second World War when Hong Kong was back under the British Regime. In 1949, the People's Republic of China claimed the city of Kowloon, but neither the British nor the Chinese took control of the city. "A massive wave of refugees in the wake of the Chinese civil the need for cheap living space in Hong Kong was immense."². This led to the mass hijacking³ of the space where buildings were being built rapidly on top of each other, making story blocks and others in between these buildings' construction being ungoverned; buildings did not follow any regulation⁴ leading to having some extremely harsh living conditions where only the apartments faced outside of the city and into the courtyard around the Historic Yamen (the cultural centre point of the city) where the only ones to receive sunlight and the rest of the building city heavily relying on artificial light with many apartments having no windows. There was no waste management, meaning refuse being dumped on rooftops or shafts between buildings. However, despite the mess the rooftops were still a communal meeting space due to the bad air quality below that was constantly polluted by many factories within the city. Within this dense city, examples of the difficultly of ordinary living would be limited access to clean water, with only six water stations making inhabitants take long journeys through the buildings, while only a few residents paying for electricity, with the majority stealing or sharing because they were that close. It was a place that attracted many opportunistic people⁵, looking to take advantage of the seemingly lawless supervision of business. Notably becoming a food production point

Girard, G. (1993). City of Darkness Life in Kowloon Walled City. Berlin Ernst Und Sohn. P208-11 Compared to London, with a population density of 5,596, according to the 2021 census Neo (2023). The Densest City on Earth. [online] www. 2 youtube.com to take or take control of (something) as if by hijacking often, specifically: to change the topic or focus of (something, such as a conversation) - https://www.merriam-webster.com/ dictionary/hijack apart from a 14-story height limit due to the airport in proximity especially people who were dentists that had to 5 move from the new Peoples Republic of China and whose qualifications did not apply in Hong Kong



exporting a lot of food for cheap from unsanitary conditions then served inside Hong Kong, providing people with access to illegal produce such as dog meat. Due to its lack of regulation, the triad gangs were prevalent there, controlling the city's illegal activities such as prostitution and mass opium distribution. This started picking up concerns the government in the mid-1970s, and numerous raids were undergone to try to manage the addiction problem. In 1984, Great Britain agreed upon a handover of all of Hong Kong to China, set to happen in 1997 and resolved the dispute of Kowloon City, "despite massive resistance from the city's residents, the two governments jointly decided that the social situation, the risk of fire breaking out as well as the fear of any of the buildings collapsing justified the complete evacuation and demolition of the city."6. In 1993, the demolition of Kowloon walled city began evicting 33,000 residents over the next five years. Monetary compensation was offered, but many protested that it was not enough. What still stands as a memory of the city and was not demolished was the Yamen that sat at the city's centre.



6 Neo (2023). The Densest City on Earth. [online] www. youtube.com



Fig 3: Facade of Kowloon walled city



"The regulation and securitization of space often lead to processes like touristification, resulting in the sanitization of space to attract

Futures. [online] www.youtube.com



Kowloon building structure from the start would be an eventual target for external intervention from the government to fundamentally clean it, modern times known as gentrification. Like many, was built out of the need for the people who, at the time, were refugees that had been cast away and forced to find accommodation, not for economic surplus. Its given structure did not fit any long-term developmental plan with its neighbouring vicinity. Being ungoverned, unmappable ¹and having a high appearance of illegalities, it ran utterly foreign with inhabitant outsiders² cumulatively making their own culture. Firmly rubbing against ³what could be seen as usual by the surrounding society standards, organised city blocks and parks. It has a similar outcome to a more recent Vila Autódromo favela in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, that in 2016 also went through slum gentrification. Both were cleared by government intervention for a more significant Economic push, in the case of Kowloon, a park in its remembrance before being handed over to the British and for Vila Autódromo, new housing next to an Olympic Park. "The regulation and securitization of space and often this is a sanitisation of space in order to attract tourists and often leads to processes like touristification."⁴. This impacted the lives of many, where the lesser income affordable lives they had were taken away for a developmental ulterior motive, displacing many. This has the continued knock-on effect where a community is broken up and spread apart; people lose their jobs, children are forced out of education and support systems are non-existent, harshly affecting people's mental health. This is not without resistance being present, showing this clearance is not in favour of the first people immediately affected, the governments self-justified criticism against these cities and many similar situations was the lack of quality of life for those living there. "The politically effective middle classes have been more willing

in recent years to villainize renters, the poor, the homeless, and any other individuals whose presence might possibly undermine property values. And improvements in the quality of life for a community's residents simply cannot be enjoyed by those who lose out on the right to be *community residents.*⁷⁵ The people living there were an afterthought; none of these improved interventions were for the betterment of their lives but for the more affluent than taking over the space, the displaced would be forced to move to equal or worse living conditions due to being priced out of their current living situation, even though monetary compensation would be provided it would not anywhere cover what the new prices would be. As seen similarly with residents of Vila Autódromo, many moved to Asa Branca Favela, which is notoriously drug-ridden, making that justification for better quality of living for the inhabitants a lie. Even an alternative argued intervention to gradually change Kowloon city would not protect it from the clearance of gentrification, demonstrated by the police raids to "clean up the city" were non more than to start its removal of the city. Alternatively, that if the city were not eventually removed, it would have eventually been redeveloped and used to boost property prices in the surrounding area similar to Rio de Janeiro in 2011 where police began to seize control from drug gangs and have increased presence in favelas. "SercviRio organisation reperesenting Rios realestate Professionals estimated in the 72 hours after police 'took' the first three favelas, property prices there jumped by 50 percent"⁶. Ultimately, the case of Kowloon Walled City serves as a reminder of the challenges marginalised communities face in the face of urban development. The governments incorrect intervention disregards their needs and focused on economic gain, this led to perpetuate social inequalities and disrupt the fabric of these communities. The city's clearance did nothing more than displace the people who built a self-governing way of life for themselves and their children out of necessary survival.

¹ A lot of residents claim the only way to navigate the city was through having distinct memories of different spots within the building, intertwining a lot of their fundamental memories with the building.

² Reiterating the term outsiders by identifying the inhabitants there as outsiders

³ as Kowloon City was only built within the perimeter of the previous military base

⁴ Lees, L. (2022). Planetary Gentrification: Impacts and Futures. [online] www.youtube.com

<sup>Lees, L., Slater, T. and Wyly, E.K. (2008).
Gentrification. New York ; London: Routledge p84
Lees, L. (2022). Planetary Gentrification: Impacts and Futures. [online] www.youtube.com</sup>

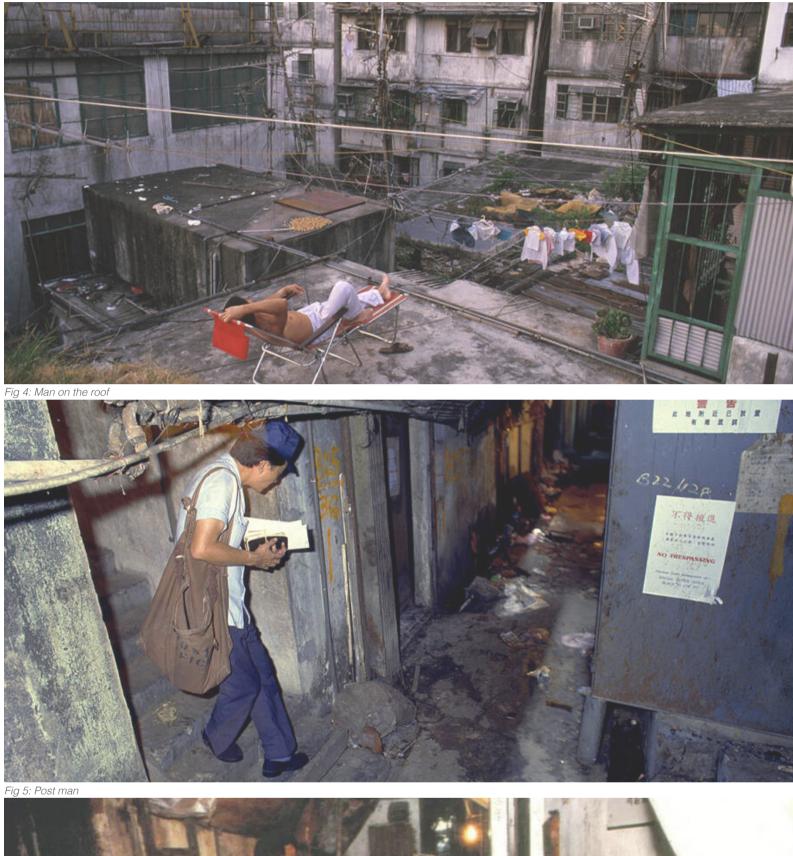




Fig 6: Women preparing food

Night club Bagleys

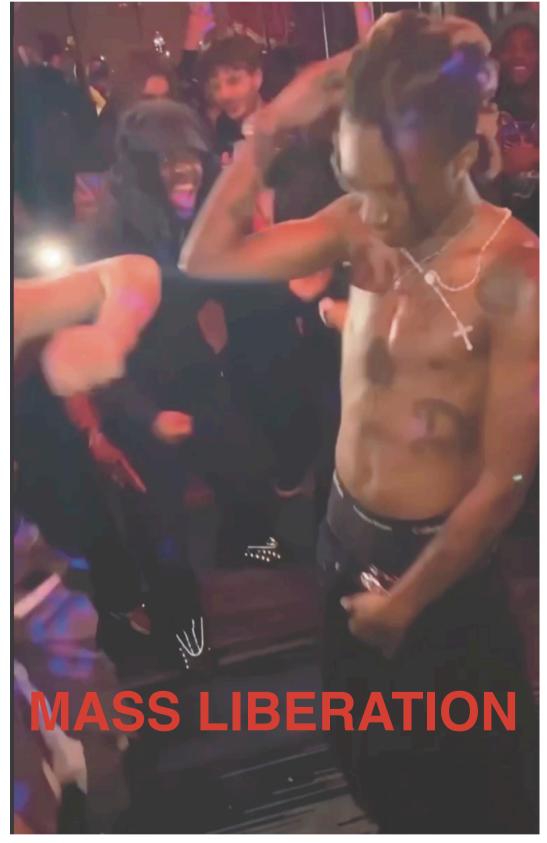
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Erasure: an act or instance of erasing, Erase: to remove from existence or memory as if by erasing¹

1 Merriam-Webster (n.d.). Definition of ERASURE. [online] www.merriam-webster.com.

club culture is more than a bunch of kids partying and taking drugs," with Leichsenring pointing out that club culture "is developing our cities, [and] building communities for minority groups."¹

Wilson, S. (2019). Berlin Protects Clubs and Nightlife—Why Doesn't London? Bloomberg.com [online]



Prominent in the late 90s, London's rave and nightclub scene was booming and vibrant, encapsulating memories of freedom and liberation. Harbouring a sentiment of being wild, hedonistic and exhilarating by its attendees. but unruly and a catalyst for drugs (ecstasy) and immoral behaviour by outsiders. After a transgression of music cultures with jazz clubs in the 1950s and disco in the 1970s, clubbing and raving became the contemporary culture of the 1980s and 1990s. It serves as the platform for youth culture to gather and be as wild and expressive as can be, rubbing against the agendas of the government at the time. "In the UK rave came a time of political unrest under the-then Conservative government, who turned against ravers, as well as activists and travellers. In 1994 the British government passed the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, which outlawed gatherings of a hundred of more people with loud music "characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats"." Iconically standing out, Bagleys nightclub in the 1990s later (renamed to Canvas after having new management) was one of the frequently visited sites for clubbing residing in the Kings Cross central area, being a commercialised venue evolving from the recurrent illegal rave scene in the 1980s that were advertised as being inside the previous Bagley's film studios. Taking refuge in that empty warehouse, it was notorious for holding some of the largest capacity nights in London of 2,500 people that were often exceeded. It had various themed rave nights with multiple hours-long sets by DJs that ran late until the morning-having this pseudo-festival feel due to the size and mass of noise and sweat produced, along with being one of the venues that allowed people to be outside and congregate. Then, holding its last rave in 2007, it pushed due to the regeneration plan for Kings Cross Central. "Dance venues Canvas, The Cross, and The Key, located in a former freight yard behind the mainline railway station, will shut this December as the £2billion regeneration plan to create 2,000 homes, offices, shops and the Channel Tunnel development gets under way."2

Fig 7: Picture taken by me at a nightclub even

 Rossi, C. (2019). Club Culture - Museum of Youth Culture. [online] Museum of Youth Culture
 Razaq, R. (2012). End of an Era for Clubbers. [online] Evening Standard



The erasure and lack of historical permeance is surprising since the clubbing scene is a prominent part of not just London culture but especially the Kings Cross central area. Being one of multiple paradigms that cultivated a mass amount of energy-initially with the coal distribution providing energy for the capital, then turning into this youth culture hotspot where it works as the catalyst for amalgamating masses of people to all partake in this liberating activity of expression. Bagleys sat as an outsider space due to harbouring, London's rave and nightclub culture, that it is inherently liberation from social norms. It is spaces like these that play very significant roles in the life of people who do not fit in allowing them to create their communities, coming together as minorities who can stand together. "club culture is more than a bunch of kids partying and taking drugs," with Leichsenring pointing out that club culture "is developing our cities, [and] building communities for minority groups." It is to the effect of the gentrification of the city where the communal ground for these outsiders is erased, having to battle against new affluent groups of people moving into the area with a different taste for what they want their surroundings to be, complaining about noise or anti-social behaviour without the understanding of the needs for these space or the respect that these spaces where here before them.

Facing similar issues that are now appearing in the current day Berlin's notorious nightlife scene, its city's economic rise and urbanisation created a discourse with its new inhabitants. "And with that came young renters who turned into middle-aged homeowners with children. And as housing prices have risen, Berlin's transformed, gentrified neighborhoods have become less comfortable with the city's clubs and their subculture."² This can further be seen by what has replaced Bagleys and the surrounding area, being shops that price point cater to these more wealthy residents. The space erves a cosmopolitan agenda filled with shops, respecting the historic architecture of the coal days but not being cleared away with some symbolism of its memory. However, the nightlife aspect has been erased without a trace. "They are symptoms of the fundamental inequalities of capitalist property markets, which favour

the creation of urban environments to serve the needs of capital accumulation, often at the expense of the needs of home, community, family, and everyday social life." ³ As if it was scrubbed away from history, the current site holds no reminiscent qualities, only being told through collective memories and video recordings. It can be argued that the reason for this is that the rave and nightclub scene made no structural impact on the area to be remembered by. "the architecture of hedonism is actually shabby four walls, ... the architecture of hedonism is largely inside the *hedonist's brain.*⁴ It could also be that the memory of this wild culture with solid associations with drug usage and hints of surrounding prostitution⁵ are not advantageous to regeneration and redevelopment of the area, that it is not socially or economically beneficial to carry such a strong connection with past even if it is linked with points that formed many peoples social lives. However, the argument does not justify the removal of a subculture that helps to hold up one of the outlets of its city. "A city without clubs is a colourless place, and allowing them to disappear means marginalized communities vanish; young people flee the city, and arts and creativity suffer. With London fast becoming a playground for developers and a city that only the rich can afford⁷⁶. Historic remembrances that carry on the on the social memory are needed so more clubs like Bagleys are not erased due to regeneration projects. Similar intervention and protection of night clubs like in Berlin, where the nightclubs have a cultural significance and are justified and argued for their continuation,⁷ this would actively battle against this continued effect that gentrification has.

¹ Wilson, S. (2019). Berlin Protects Clubs and Nightlife— Why Doesn't London? Bloomberg.com [online]

² Schmitz, R. (2023). Berlin's Famed nightclubs, Losing customers, Face an Uncertain Future. [online] NPR

³ Lees, L., Slater, T. and Wyly, E.K. (2008). Gentrification. New York ; London: Routledge p73

<sup>Schiller, J. (2010). Graham Hudson 2/6: Bagleys Abandoned King's Cross nightclub. [online] www.youtube.com
Quoted from Diane Foster who is the founder of the
Peoples Museum in Sommers Town that is nearby Coal Drops
Yard "very dangerous area to go into at night, everywhere you
looked there was prostitutes and people hanging about".
ibid</sup>

^{7 &}quot;The club's lawyers argued that the pleasure derived from listening to Berghain's world-class techno isn't inherently different from enjoying the music of an opera, and the court agreed." - Wilson, S. (2019). Berlin Protects Clubs and Nightlife—Why Doesn't London? Bloomberg.com [online]



Fig 9: Al image prompt - a crowd of music and bodies in synchronised motion



Fig 10: Al image prompt - UK 90s nightclub rave



Fig 11: Al image prompt - UK rave culture in a small space

Undercroft Fragility: easily broken or destroyed¹

1 Merriam-Webster (n.d.). Definition of FRAGILITY. [online] www.merriam-webster.com

BY ACTION BEING PASSED ON \succ

"One of the most commonly noted trends in the process of gentrification is that places and people once deemed hip, authentic, trendy, and subversive quickly become appropriated, manufactured, and mass-produced kitsch for higher-earning groups. Thus, if we speak of a gentrification aesthetic, we must remember that this aesthetic is far from frozen, and leads to enormous profits as cultural capital becomes economic capital." ¹

Lees, L., Slater, T. and Wyly, E.K. (2008). Gentrification. New York ; London: Routledge p118

Claiming to be the world's longest continually used skate spot, the Undercroft sits underneath Queen Elizabeth Hall on the south bank in London. Initially, it was an unvalued open space to the public left by the architects when the hall was built in the 1960s; soon after, in the 1970s, it was discovered by skaters and began to be home to this ongoing artist culture. It had the same brutalist architecture as the hall, initially starting with concrete ledges, pillars and stairs. "Watch interviews with people who've skated the 'little banks' most of their life, and they talk fondly about the particular rhythm of wheels over concrete slabs, the physical scrapes on the surface that tell stories of a million tricks. There's a palpable and invaluable connection between this public space and those who use it. And it's that rare and vital thing, a historical site which continues to be used." This space became a cultural home for people to come and meet others who were liked-minded, ordained with sprays of artistic influence everywhere, be It the vibrant pop of graffiti or the constant flow of skaters through the space. Despite being so historically rich with skateboarding culture, the space has been a back-and-forth point of contention for the community; with developers wanting to propose redeveloping the area, the skate space could have seen closure in 2013. Leading to the emergence of Long Live Southbank, "an organization born out of this threat of expulsion, gave the diverse community who call the space home a voice. After 17 months of campaigning, they were successful in ensuring the Undercroft was legally protected and fully recognized as an asset of community value."2 That led to a crowdfunding campaign to raise £790,000 for the restoration, aiming to increase the accessibility to free

public creative spaces. Led by Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios, the restoration started in 2018. It was completed in 2019, aiming to stay as close to the 1960s design as possible while expanding the area, giving more points of access and journey while also opening a section of the space that has been closed off since 2004. "The use of reclaimed 1960s paving slabs was important to the skateboarding character of the space. A new wall was constructed using the principles of the board-marked concrete upstands of the original building, but with sacrificial ply layers finding a balance between the craft of the original building and providing a robust skate-able surface tolerant to the daily use of the Undercroft community."³

1 Lewis, T. (2023). Skating History: The Story of the Undercroft Skate Space | Southbank Centre. [online] www. southbankcentre.co.uk

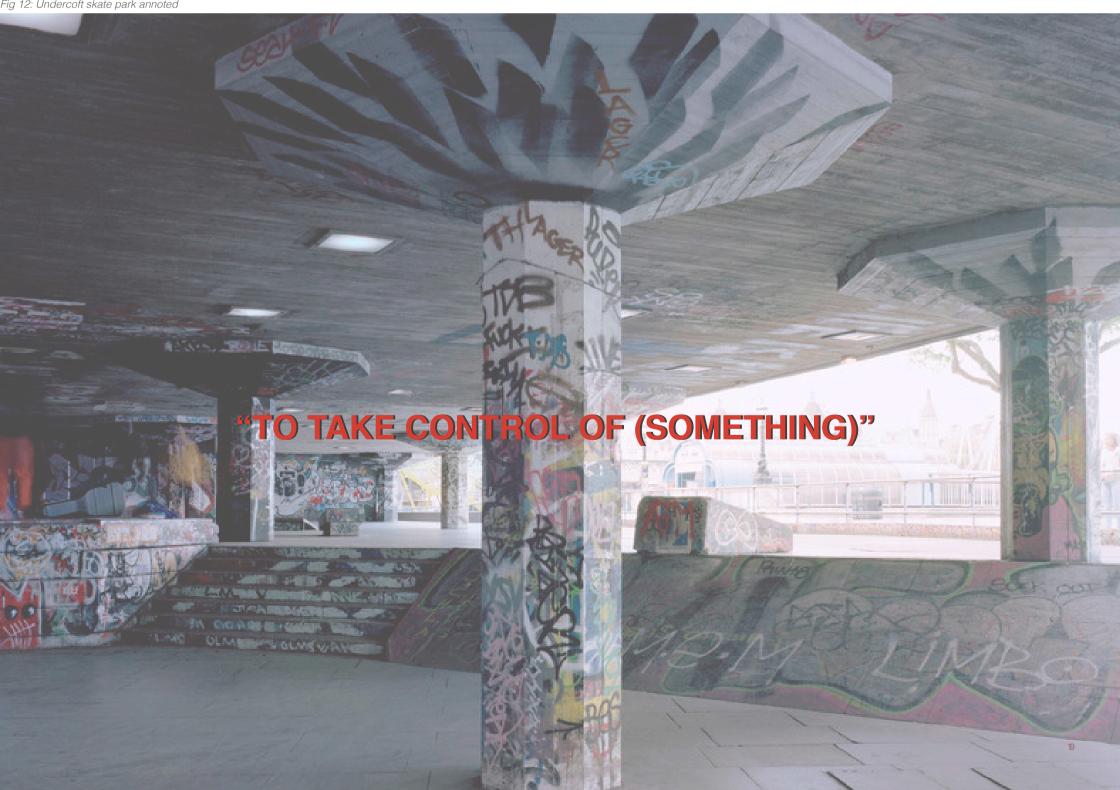
2 Maclure, S. (2017). Why the Restoration of the Southbank Undercroft Is a Landmark for Both Architecture and Skateboarding. [online] ArchDaily 3 fcbstudios (2019). Project | Southbank Skatespace | Reinstating the Iconic Undercroft with and for the Skate Community. [online] FeildenCleggBradley Studios

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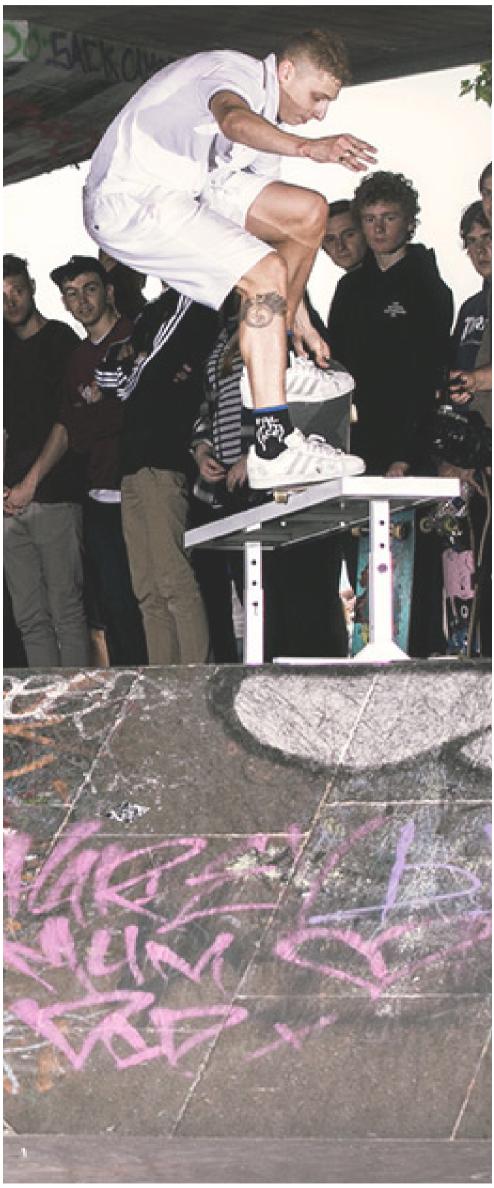
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THE REAL OF LOT AND

Fig 12: Undercoft skate park annoted



Despite the fragile and uncertain state developmental had once created the Undercroft symbolises what it means to be an outsider space and go against the agenda of smoothening cities. Having a great presence to stand out and stand for a culture that has no intention of assimilation to its surrounding environment. It is a spot that, by its inhabitants, is made for free public use without mass individual monetary gain or the goal of being massively economically beneficial to the area. It is a place to cultivate this social experience and bring the community together. The impact of gentrification has forced this space and many alike into a state of fragility; due to its location in such a trendy area and the popularity it gained through its authentic display, it puts it on constant watch for urban development, waiting to take advantage at any given opportunity. "One of the most commonly noted trends in the process of gentrification is that places and people once deemed hip, authentic, trendy, and subversive quickly become appropriated, manufactured, and mass-produced kitsch for higher-earning groups. Thus, if we speak of a gentrification aesthetic, we must remember that this aesthetic is far from frozen, and leads to enormous profits as cultural capital becomes economic capital." 1 The problem will keep its future in limbo, posing how long until the space gets taken over. There are similar situations of iconic skate spots in public spaces, such as LOVE Park in Philadelphia that have been removed for economic rejuvenation due to unfavourable circumstances and lack of prominent leaders to create a collective push. The battle with gentrification was lost. "The only organised skate 'activists' we have here are more concerned with building small concrete parks, and do not want to go against the city's decisions, in fear it could jeopardise their future relationship with them."2 This culture that has been there for decades and holds importance to so many is always in a constant state of resistance and ready to be transformed into coffee shops or newly built high-priced apartments. Nevertheless, its perseverance in staying as long as it has cannot be understated. It is an exemplar of a space that used to effectively serve the public, with its daily inhabitants having passed down the culture and tradition of the space through functionality. Not by a gimmick or an exploitive tactic to keep this space skated on but through a now intertwined connection between the historic architecture and found purpose that brings users to space and what makes them care for it. This deep-rooted cultural link is what will aid the Undercroft longevity into the future "and also for the communities living with the threat of demolition, there remains a persistence of hope, and that pushes along resistance and activism as a 'dynamic imperative to action"3. An exemplar showcase of the heartlessness of gentrification, that a place with outwardly visible significant connection and benefits to the community can always be under constant threat. Fighting battles of preservation to combat its fragility, always having to prove its usefulness to people that are not from the surrounding community.



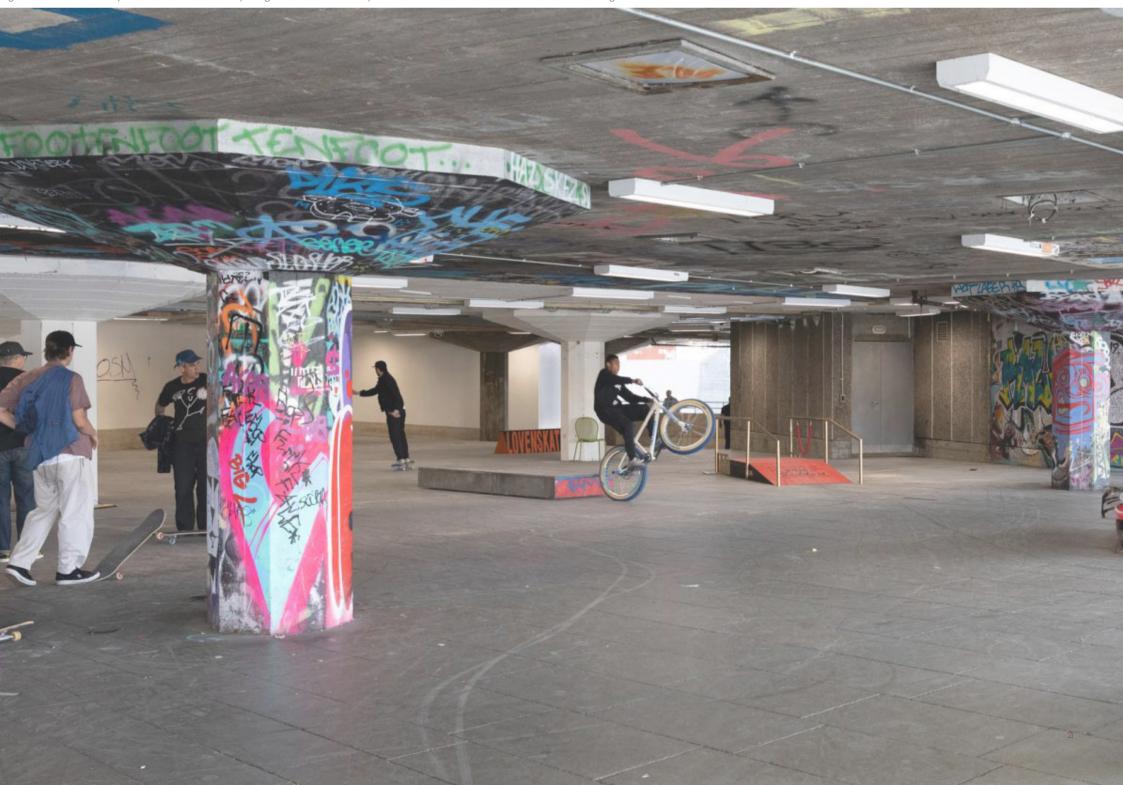
 Lees, L., Slater, T. and Wyly, E.K. (2008).
 Gentrification. New York ; London: Routledge p118
 Burbano, C. (2017). How Gentrification Destroyed Philadelphia's Best Skate Spot. [online] Hero

3 Adey, P. (2020). The handbook of displacement. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, Springer Nature p105

Fig 13: Skater doing a trick in Undercroft skate park in front of crowd



Fig 14: Undercroft skate park after renovation comparing when it was first reopened and after in had been used and covered in graffiti



In conclusion, the examples of outsider spaces, such as Kowloon City, Bagleys nightclub, and the Undercroft skate spot, vividly demonstrate the profound impact of urban development and gentrification on marginalised communities and cultural spaces. Despite the scale and impact, they have been a city, a nation-wide subculture and historic site, these remarkable spaces, known for their distinctiveness, authenticity, and strong sense of community, have faced significant challenges due to the relentless pursuit of economic prosperity and the pressure to conform to societal norms. Governments and urban developers are to blame for the unfortunate clearance of Kowloon City which resulted in the displacement of thousands of residents who had meticulously built a selfgoverning and harmonious way of life. Similarly, Bagleys nightclub tragically succumbed to the redevelopment plans that prioritised commercial interests at the expense of the erasure of a vibrant subculture it had fostered for years. However, amidst these disheartening trends, the Undercroft skate spot emerged as a beacon of hope. Even in its fragile nature through collective action, the passionate community successfully resisted its closure, preserving a valuable and cherished asset for the entire community to enjoy and appreciate.



Fig 15: The Long Live South Bank team

Reflection

Wrapping up my journal and taking in my analysis of Kings Cross Central to persevere the lost aspects of its history I believe the best intervention would be to have a form of night club functioning there. It would actively bring back that lost aspect of Coal Drops Yard history to present day telling its story again in real time, it will serve as social spot for the community that would be very effective especially as CSM is less than a 5 minute walk away from the arches area. This would infuse the younger population with the history. It can be a hybrids function where it works as a study space during the day giving it a 24hr functionality further engaging the community. This would work in opposition to the smooth cosmopolitan aesthetic of Coal Drop Yard, it would roughen up the area by hosting this unruly and wild rave environment giving the area a greater sense of authenticity . By serving a purpose for more people, it encourages the chance for more people to make a connection between them and the space. Learning from the case studies it's clear that community support is vital to the survival for of spaces like these especially when protecting them form future development propositions. An aspect to be remembered is that it's important for the community to be able to choose and give purpose to a space, so it's needs to be a fine places of designing for the community but not making these artificial implementations that doesn't serve an actual purpose for the community.

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Figure 1 Synger, M. (2024) Site Map Figure 2 Synger, M. (2024) AI image Figure 3 Lambot, I. (2015) "Much more" than a slum. Available at: https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/kowloon-walled-city/index.html Figure 4 Girard, G. (2023) A man lies on a roof in Kowloon Walled City.. Available at: https://allthatsinteresting.com/kowloon-walled-city#5 Figure 5 Girard, G. (2014) A postman navigates the dark passageways of Kowloon Walled City. Available at: https://allthatsinteresting.com/kowloon-walled-city#2 Figure 6 Forgemind ArchiMedia/Flickr. (2023) Women making food in Kowloon Walled City. Available at: https://allthatsinteresting.com/kowloon-walled-city#11 Figure 7 Synger, M. (2024) Nightclub Photography Figure 8 Synger, M. (2024) Nightclub Photography illustration Figure 9 Synger, M. (2024) AI image Figure 10 Synger, M. (2024) AI image Figure 11 Synger, M. (2024) AI image Figure 12 Constant, N. (2017) Undercroft. Available at: https://www.archdaily.com/883405/why-the-restoration-of-the-southbank-undercroft-is-a-landmark-for-both-architecture-and-skateboarding Figure 13 HORSE. (2019) SLAM TEAM RIDER BLONDEY MCCOY. NOSEGRIND TAIL GRAB FOR THE PEOPLE. Available at: https://blog.slamcity.com/ long-live-southbank-interview/ Figure 14 Carstairs, P. (2019) Arup. Available at: https://www.dezeen.com/2019/08/08/undercroft-skatepark-southbank-centre-london-feilden-clegg-bradley-studios/

Figure 15. Kigongo, P. (2019) saving southbank. Available at: https://www.jenkemmag.com/home/2019/11/15/things-can-make-city-skate-friendly/

SCRIPT

Introducing my design proposal and research exploration for the theme "Hijacked," where I aim to bring the idea of storytelling through the live experience. The focus is on the UK night-life scene in the early late 90s.

This line of thought begins with the site location, Kings Cross Central. The three main locations we are looking at are Coal Drops Yard, particularly the arches, alongside the Wolf and Badger Store, and York Road, specifically the Kings Cross Construction Skills Centre.

As I first experienced the site, walking from Granary Square into the Central Saint Martins building, to Coal Drops Yard and up to York Road, I picked up on my first impressions and observed how the attributes of the place impact people. I noticed a flow and busyness of people, including students and passers-by. Being in the different buildings, the architecture heavily influenced my experience. In the CSM building, I felt out of place due to the lack of direction compared to everyone else, while being in the illuminated atrium intensified my experience. The arches, on the other hand, had a cozy atmosphere due to the reduction of space and intimate lighting.

To further develop my initial findings, I conducted analysis and elaborated on my feelings about the site. I recognized that the act of transitioning from place to place played a significant role in shaping my personal sense of importance there. I also delved into researching the site's history, discovering that it originated as a coal and stone basin in 1850. It later became a space occupied by tradespeople until the 1980s when it gained recognition for hosting illegal raves and a prominent nightclub scene. The site's history is respected in the original architecture, functioning as a working palimpsest. However, the nightlife aspect of its history has been largely forgotten and not memorialized, despite the significant impact of UK nightlife and club culture.

"There's no greater ability than the gift of another human being giving you that feeling - to hold them still for a brief moment in their day and have to surrender to wonder. When it's tapped, the affirmation of being alive reaches you on almost a cellular level. And when an artist does that to another artist, you're compelled to pass it on."

This quote inspired me to pursue the concept of a storytelling museum and explore what it means to tell stories that represent the people who lived them in an honest way.

I delved into the significance of storytelling and its role in shaping ideas and thinking. I pondered questions such as: What non-written stories have been passed down? Who dictates which stories get told? How can stories continue to bring a sense of wonder?

These inquiries led me to reflect on the impact of gentrification on outsider spaces. An outsider space stands outside of societal and cultural norms, devoid of economic profit-maximizing purposes. Its existence often causes tension and debate. Gentrification, defined as the buying and renovation of deteriorated urban neighborhoods, often displaces low-income families and small businesses. It is a direct opposition to these outsider spaces, threatening their existence and changing cultural history.

I looked into Kowloon Walled City was a densely populated area with a population density of approximately 1,255,000 inhabitants per square kilometer in 1987. It was a result of the mass hijacking of space, leading to the rapid construction of buildings on top of each other. The city had harsh living conditions, limited access to clean water, and no waste management. It attracted opportunistic individuals, illegal activities, and triad gangs. The city was demolished in 1993, evicting 33,000 residents over five years.

I drew parallels between Kowloon Walled City and the Vila Autódromo favela in Rio de Janeiro. Both spaces were

marginalized and eventually displaced due to socioeconomic reasons, prioritizing economic gain over the wellbeing of the residents. These instances serve as reminders of the challenges faced by marginalized communities in the face of urban development and the perpetuation of social inequalities.

"The regulation and securitization of space often lead to processes like touristification, resulting in the sanitization of space to attract tourists."

I reflected on London's rave and nightclub scene in the late '90s, a culture that represented freedom and liberation but also faced negative scrutiny due to associations with drugs and immoral behavior. The government's response to this youth culture was negative, leading to the passing of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act in 1994. Prominent venues like Bagleys nightclub in Kings Cross closed in 2007 due to regeneration plans for the area. The clubbing scene, particularly in Kings Cross, served as a catalyst for expression and community-building. However, gentrification threatens these spaces, leading to their disappearance and the displacement of marginalized communities. **Similar issues have emerged in Berlin's nightlife scene**. The removal of these subcultures has negative social and economic consequences, as cities without clubs become dull and creativity suffers. **It is crucial to recognize the cultural significance of nightclubs and advocate for their preservation.**

"Club culture is more than a bunch of kids partying and taking drugs. It is developing our cities, building communities for minority groups."

The Undercroft, located beneath Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, is claimed to be the world's longest continually used skate spot. Initially, an open space left by architects in the 1960s, it became a cultural home for skaters in the 1970s. Despite facing closure in 2013, the space was legally protected and restored in 2019, aiming to preserve its historical design while expanding accessibility and skateable surfaces.

The Undercroft is an outsider space that stands against the agenda of urban development and gentrification. It serves as a free public space for community engagement and cultural preservation. However, it constantly faces the threat of being taken over for economic gain.

"One of the most commonly noted trends in the process of gentrification is that places and people once deemed hip, authentic, trendy, and subversive quickly become appropriated, manufactured, and mass-produced kitsch for higherearning groups. Thus, if we speak of a gentrification aesthetic, we must remember that this aesthetic is far from frozen and leads to enormous profits as cultural capital becomes economic capital."

While creating an intervention that is transformative, I propose a place that pays homage to the past of Kings Cross Central and facilitates the freedom needed by the community. It is essential to ensure that buildings do not completely lose their old associations, as highlighted in "Undoing Building: Adaptive Reuse and Cultural Memory." The arches and Coal Drops Yard have lost their nightlife associations, apart from people's memories and recorded footage. To better serve the community, it is crucial that they can see and access the social and architectural past, allowing for adaptations that further assist them.

"If urban forms lose their old associations... the built environment is in danger of becoming little more than a cultural curiosity, a scarified object for tourist consumption and architectural contemplation."

Furthermore, it is important to involve the community in the outcomes produced. **Design from an outsider's perspective** only tells half the story. By providing a platform for people to tell their stories, we can capture authentic nuances that would otherwise be missed. As quoted, "Our revised aim of the project was that the stories would give us the opportunity to tell stories not previously told, that others can relate to, and that would help us relate to each other."

As a reference, I looked at the Babyn Yar Synagogue, constructed by the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Foundation. The synagogue combines elements of Ukrainian synagogues and pop-up books. Opening the structure reveals symbols referencing destroyed synagogues and recreates the star constellation from the night of the Babyn Yar massacre. The synagogue aims to provide a collective and collaborative experience, honoring history in a meaningful way. This example demonstrates how group collaboration and performance can bring people together to actively tell a story that they all care about.

In line with these inspirations, I propose a study space that gradually transforms into a nightclub throughout the night while displaying traces of the atmosphere throughout the day. Being able to capture this culture and any inspiration of new reverse and above why this liberation experience is an important.

environment of non ravers and club goers and show why this liberating experience is so important.