

Rave in the Streets:

Post-Subcultural Identity and Recognition of Techno Music in France Through the Techno Parade's Role and Evolution (1998 – 2023)

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Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Cultural Studies

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Academic year 2023-2024

26732 words

Abstract

Originating in Detroit in the 1980s, techno music quickly spread globally and became a symbol of youth's rave culture and club culture. Still, the heavy repression against techno music and its associated partying models, especially illegal activities, significantly stifled the scene and its authenticity. Parades became platforms for members of these subcultures to resist, express themselves and challenge repression in the public space. In France, the Techno Parade was launched in 1998 as a response to the repressive environment surrounding raves and free parties. Initially, it served as a form of protest and advocacy for the recognition of techno music, but gradually transformed into a major cultural event, drawing thousands of participants each year. The Techno Parade exemplifies the balance between maintaining the authentic, rebellious spirit of techno culture and achieving broader societal acceptance. By examining discourses and narratives surrounding the parade during its first year 1998 and the latest edition in 2023, this thesis shows how the Parade has crossed both terrains of cultural recognition and subversion. It reflects the broader acceptance and recognition of techno music within mainstream culture, demonstrating how techno music in France has grown from an underground movement into a recognised cultural phenomenon, focusing on the role of the yearly event of the Techno Parade in Paris. Supported by political figures such as Jack Lang, the event has helped to shift public opinion, presenting techno music cultures not as a deviant subculture but as an important part of French culture. Although the parade has influenced the perception and acceptance of techno music in French culture since its creation in 1998, recent editions have seen organisers use the event's public visibility for commercial purposes and to advocate for other causes related to the music industry or not. The parade has thus played a dual role in promoting techno music as a legitimate cultural expression, while trying to maintain the ethos of rave and club culture in the public space.

Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge my appreciation to my supervisors Jonas Rutgeerts and Ewout Decraene for their support and constant feedback on this thesis.

Special recognition for my parents, for their unwavering support from afar. To my kind-hearted Ludiwyne for her caring encouragement and Nathan for his boundless inspiration – without whom I would never have written these words on this subject.

Endless thank to Quentin, the beat to my rhythm. Your love and support have been the melody through every high and low, making the soundtrack of this journey so much pleasant.

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Introduction

Techno music emerged in the 1980s, primarily in Detroit in the United States, as a fusion of various electronic music styles, including house, disco, and electro. Originating in underground clubs and parties called raves, techno quickly gained popularity among youth subcultures seeking alternative forms of expression and liberation through music and dance. As techno music spread globally, it became closely intertwined with club and rave cultures, providing the soundtrack for underground parties and raves worldwide. Club and rave cultures emerged as subcultures characterised by their inclusivity, hedonism, and the embrace of electronic music and dance as forms of authenticity, resistance and community-building. Throughout its evolution, techno cultures have remained deeply rooted in underground scenes, serving as spaces for marginalised communities to come together, challenge societal norms, and celebrate their identities. However, in recent decades, techno music has gradually shifted towards mainstream acceptance. Events like technoparades exemplify this cultural transformation, manifesting the increasing visibility and recognition of these once-underground movements. They were and still are the public and legal forms of raves, often supported by authorities, municipalities or politicians. That is the case for the French Techno Parade, which was, at its creation in 1998, embedded in the repressive context of raves and free parties. However, since this year, the Techno Parade has become a significant cultural event, attracting thousands of participants and gaining widespread media attention, contradicting the original ethos of techno subcultures. Now, the Techno Parade has merged the boundaries between subcultural movements and mainstream acceptance of techno music, as well as all the EDM cultures. The transition of the Techno Parade from an underground movement to a mainstream cultural phenomenon makes it a compelling case study for two reasons: it illustrates the dynamics of the cultural transformation and the negotiation between subcultural authenticity and mainstream appeal; it serves as a microcosm for analysing the impact of the presence of cultural expressions in the public space, reflecting shifts in societal attitudes toward electronic music and youth culture.

By definition, technoparades emerge from the subcultural ethos of techno music, exemplified by its communal aspect, its resistance against mainstream, and its authenticity expressed with the music. However, they confront the public space and often play a crucial role in representing and expressing the needs of a community or culture to a broader audience. This study will be guided by the following main research question:

- How does the Techno Parade in France exemplify the negotiation of cultural recognition and subversion within post-subcultural contexts, particularly concerning the evolution of electronic music as a cultural phenomenon and its intersection with mainstream acceptance and regulatory frameworks?

To further explore this, the following secondary questions will be addressed:

- What role has the Techno Parade played in the recognition and legitimisation of techno music and culture in France
- How have discursive strategies employed within the event maintained its authenticity and influenced public perception?

This study aims to analyse the discursive strategies and narratives employed in the context of the Techno Parade, specifically focusing on how discourse reflects the evolving representation of the techno subculture. It also examines the strategies used within the Techno Parade to maintain its authenticity while influencing public perception.

Existing literature on techno culture primarily focuses on its origins, musical evolution, and socio-political implications. However, there is a scarcity of resources addressing technoparades in general and specifically the Techno Parade in France. Despite the Techno Parade's cultural significance and its importance within techno music subcultures, there remains a gap in scholarly research exploring its impact on the recognition and legitimisation of techno music within France. This study seeks to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the event's historical context, media portrayal, and cultural significance, drawing upon theories of subculture and post-subculture. Specifically, there is a need to understand how the Techno Parade navigates the dynamics of cultural recognition, subversion, and mainstream acceptance, particularly within the framework of post-subcultural theories and the French society context.

This research is significant as it contributes to a deeper understanding on how cultural events like the Techno Parade can influence the broader acceptance and recognition of subcultural movements. By analysing the Techno Parade's evolution and impact, this study provides insights into the mechanisms through which subcultures, especially music subcultures negotiate their place within mainstream culture and society, thereby enriching the discourse on cultural studies, sociology, and even ethnomusicology.

After completing a methodological overview, this thesis is divided in two main parts. The first part acts as a theoretical foundation of techno and EDM music, and of subcultural theories. Drawing upon historical bases, it will study techno music subcultures and its evolution, including rave culture and club culture, building a frame of reference that will help the analysis of technoparades, and specifically of the Paris Techno Parade. The second part will be dedicated to the discourse analysis surrounding the Techno Parade and will answer the research questions by attempting to understand, through the studies of two editions of the parade – 1998 and 2023, the evolution of the discourse as well as the perception and the authenticity of techno and EDM music cultures, employing post-subcultural theories considering the post-modern context in which such events are happening.

Methodology

Method

Discourse analysis serves as the methodological backbone of this study, offering a lens through which to examine the multifaceted evolution of the Techno Parade and electronic music culture in France. By analysing the various discourses present in media coverage and statements by organisers, public and artists, this approach enables a nuanced understanding of how perceptions, attitudes, and policies have shaped the trajectory of techno culture. Through close examination of language, rhetoric, and narratives surrounding the Techno Parade, discourse analysis brings to light the complexities of societal reactions, institutional responses, and cultural shifts over time. This method facilitates the identification of dominant discourses, marginalised voices, and points of contention within the discourse landscape surrounding the Techno Parade. Thus, discourse analysis provides a framework for demonstrating the diverse array of perspectives, interests, and power dynamics embedded within the Techno cultural phenomenon in France. The analysis focuses on two key editions of the event: the inaugural

one in 1998 and the most recent one, in 2023. These editions were selected due to their relevance; the 1998 event was the first legal and public techno gathering, while the 2023 edition marked the 25th anniversary, providing an opportunity to reflect and drawing conclusions on its impact over the years.

Also, both editions – due to their significance – are particularly rich in resources. Those resources, used for the analysis of the parades included live retransmission of the parade (only for the 1998 edition), television and paper interviews from the main actors of the parades: politicians, instigators, organisers, participants or observers, artists. Those interviews were collected through the French National Television Archives (Institut National de l’Audiovisuel), as well as press articles from the Internet and Internet Archive. This collection was not without struggles: some resources were protected and requests to obtain them were refused or unanswered. Moreover, only few archived videos were publicly accessible for the year 1998. Still, the latest edition of the Techno Parade offered the possibility to analyse the discourse in social media, exclusively on Instagram. The analysis of media interviews incorporates all available resources, without distinguishing the types of media used. For example, the live stream of the parade was broadcast by the private, commercial, and nonpolitical channel M6. In contrast, television interviews of organisers, politicians and participants from the 1998 and 2023 editions were provided by public and ostensibly nonpolitical channels, France 2, France 3 and France Info. Regarding press articles’ interviews, both public press (France Info) and private press (Le Parisien, La Voix du Nord) were utilised. The last two are recognised as a regional and factual source of information (Awad, 1995), although it now follows a centrist/mainstream editorial line (Lacarrière, 2024). Finally, official communications from organisers (Technopol and Techno Parade website) and professional association’s (SACEM¹) interviews of artists were analysed. The analysis began with transcribing interviews and conducting open coding and sorting them into recurring themes like cultural recognition, authenticity, public perception, and institutional responses.

Scope

Post-subcultural theories provide a lens through which to understand how techno culture has evolved beyond traditional subcultural boundaries while still maintaining its core authenticity. Those theories are especially chosen because of their imbrication with techno culture, both happening in a pivotal period where scholars criticising subculture emerged and rave and EDM became prominent culture of the youth.

1 Theoretical Foundations and Reviews

Before applying theories to the case study of the Techno Parade it is necessary to establish the framework within which this event occurs. It is crucial to delimit the borders of the object of study considering the porous nature of techno music and cultures that revolve around it. The main objective of this chapter is to review the existing academic literature, give some historical contextualisation and propose a theoretical demarcation, the latter will serve as a guide for the analysis of this study. We will delineate the distinctions among various subcultures within

¹ Société des auteurs, compositeurs et éditeurs de musique. In English: Society of Authors, Composers and Publishers of Music

techno music and its branches. However, considering the musical and cultural context as well as the nature of the Techno Parade, which aligns predominantly with rave, dance, and club cultures, it is relevant to first delve into the history of the genre. This exploration encompasses a cultural and sociological evolution, which contribute to the differentiation between distinct cultures and their values. Nonetheless, this concise explanation is helpful for the comprehension of the theoretical implications of the research. Primarily, these theoretical foundations will examine the evolution of electronic music and the context in which it evolved (1.1), then it explores how techno music functions as a youth subculture through an in-depth theoretical delimitation (1.2). Finally, it provides an overview of technoparades' role and significance.

1.1 Tracing the Roots

Reflecting on the multifaceted empire of electronic music, Kosmicki remarks: "What do we call electronic music? [...] The music under this heading is all different from the social, aesthetic, or functional point of view. They have their own autonomy" (Kosmicki 2016, 8). This observation serves as a reminder of the inherent diversity within electronic music genres, going to its intertwined links, and highlighting their unique sociocultural and aesthetic dimensions. While we may not dwell extensively on the genesis of electronic music, Kosmicki's assertion underscores the significance of tracing its roots to comprehend the emergence of its various subgenres, namely regarding techno music subcultures and their evolution.

From the beginning of the 20th century and thanks to technological innovations, electronic music was born out of experiments on recording noises and synthesising sounds (Kosmicki 2016, 15), called *musique concrète*, which in 1948 paved the way for the "purely synthetic *Elektronische Musik*" (Holmes 2002, 5). Indeed, techno music starts with electronic music and for Holmes, "most of the so-called genres exist as points on a single continuous spectrum of music that would not be possible without electronics" (Holmes 2002, 5). However, it was only in the 1970s that electronic music became more accessible, such as with Moog synthesizers, and later in the 1980s, the MIDI – Musical Instrument Digital Interface was created by musicians, which would allow the performer to controller different 'instruments' or devices (Holmes 2002, 20). By becoming more accessible, technology allowed performers to develop the concept of Do It Yourself (DIY) music within their home studios and computers, which would give birth to Electronic Dance Music (EDM) and all its subgenres, including Techno music.

Electronic Dance Music

McLeod sums up EDM as "an umbrella term used to label a hetero-generous group of musics made with computers and electronic instruments - often for the purpose of dancing" (McLeod 2001, 60) and made on a four-on-the-floor basis – the bass drum playing quarter notes in 4/4 time. It is "the most common aspect of the genres derived from house and techno", examines Webber (2007, 253). The roots of EDM stretch back to the early 1980s, evolving alongside another genre known as house, which originated in Chicago. From house music's inception, came the emergence of acid house, a genre that saw further development with the integration

of samplers. This evolution, characterised by the utilisation of technology like the Roland TB-303 electronic bass synthesizer-sequencer, laid the groundwork for techno. This instrument introduced a distinctive, hypnotic sound marked by deep basslines and repetitive rhythms. These features would be embraced by techno music but will be transformed into machine-like beats, often on a fast tempo of minimum 130 beats per minute (Reynolds 1999).

Dance music not only laid the groundwork for what would become known as house and later then techno music but also established the venue for its dissemination—the discotheque or club—whose spatial and social dynamics would be repurposed within the techno milieu. For Fiona Buckland (2002), club culture helped the formation of queer world-making and “the development of queer-identified dance spaces is synonymous with dance music” (105). One genre particularly paved the way for this: disco. Disco clubs and later EDM clubs served as sanctuaries for marginalised communities, particularly queer and black people, as being the core audience of dance music (Buckland 2002, 68). These spaces provided a refuge from the prevailing societal discrimination and hostility, allowing individuals to express themselves freely without fear of persecution, as well as a space for building up a community. However, despite the inclusivity fostered within these clubs, they underscored the enduring effects of racial and sexual segregation within broader society (Rietveld 1998, 21). This was also the place for new drugs to pop out, like ecstasy, and be used to ‘escape’ society and reach a new kind of hedonism while at the same time forging a sense of community and belonging (Goulding et al. 2002, 265).

Both acid house and techno were born out of a desire to push the boundaries of conventional music and create immersive, dance-driven and communal experiences, namely through raves. Their shared origins in the club culture of cities like Chicago and Detroit fostered a symbiotic relationship, leading to cross-pollination, and globalisation of ideas, sounds, and techniques, ultimately shaping the electronic music landscape as we know it today.

Techno

Detroit is frequently mentioned as a major place for techno and is often associated with The Belleville Three – creators of the Detroit Techno genre, “also frequently seen as a music which not only came from a particular place but captured the spirit of this place: during the period of a brutal shift from Fordism to post-Fordism, before becoming global and placeless” (Mazierska 2021, 7). This transition from Fordism to post-Fordism in the 1980s had significant consequences for Detroit, particularly as it was a major hub of Fordist manufacturing. Post-Fordism in Detroit was characterised by a shift from mass production to flexible production methods, including subcontracting and temporary employment, as traditional (Fordist) manufacturing industries declined. This restructuring exacerbated economic disparities and urban decay, particularly affecting Black communities who comprised most of the city's population. They were attracted by the employment offered by the *Motor City* and at the same time the phenomenon of *white flight*, that led white people moving out in the periphery of the city occurred (Benabdellah 2017, 71, Che 2009). This economic, racial and social transformation provided the backdrop for the city's de-industrialisation and the emergence of techno music. With its futuristic and industrial sound, it reflected the city's changing landscape and the experiences of its inhabitants, carried out by both the city's industrial heritage and its aspirations for renewal and transformation (Benabdellah 2017, Che 2009, Reynolds 1999). As Detroit's economy declined, techno carried out by artists like Franckie Knuckles and the Belleville Three (Reynolds 1999) provided a creative outlet and a form of resistance for

marginalised communities, contributing to its emergence and cultural significance in the city, while also reaching overseas.

In the US like in Europe, techno was, indeed, the sound of industry, of machines – carried by Kraftwerk (with their albums *ComputerWelt* and *The Man-Machine*), but also of de-industrialisation and wind of change, as Mazierska (2021, 9) remarks when techno, brought by Detroit DJs, reached Germany in its reunification phase: it was the sound of peace. This will be particularly sealed through the Berlin Love Parade in 1989, making techno music the sound of the city, as well as popularising the genre. Berlin was indeed an important city in Europe regarding techno. Prior to the reunification, in 1988, acid house established itself in West Germany, reuniting both West and East Germans in underground parties (Arte 2014). Then, the city's abandoned buildings and warehouses provided the perfect settings for the emergence of techno parties (Arte 2014, DeutscheWelle 2023), with clubs like Tresor sprouting up and starting hosting Detroit DJs (DW 2023) - helping them getting known to the European public, alongside German DJs. With this, techno “began to create its second logical centre in Berlin” (Sicko 2010, 181) and it inevitably shows the techno’s decentralisation out of Detroit to Europe, with Berlin as an entry point.

Meanwhile in the UK, Thornton (1995, 74) suggests 1988 as the birth year of techno with the launch of the compilation *Techno: The Dance Sound of Detroit* by Virgin Records, reifying Detroit as the ‘Techno City’ in the common culture. The simultaneous ramifications and appropriations of techno across the world and especially from the US to Europe, not only shows the globalisation context by the end of the 1980s and through all the 1990s, but also the desire for techno music and its performers to become popular and adapt its geographical and cultural contexts. Thornton (1995) explains by this mean the desire of musical reappropriation – as in making *Technologic* music, and the end of the drug connotation acid house had on the genre – with its explicit reference to LSD and ecstasy. McLeod (2001) tries to summarise techno’s acid house roots and its role in shaping rave culture:

The exact origins of the genre label "acid house" are unclear (although there are a few different theories), but the name became associated with a British co-optation and transformation of Chicago house music. Acid house music and the scenes that surrounded it helped give birth to rave culture in Great Britain. (McLeod, 63)

As previously outlined, techno music represents a significant component of a broader cultural movement that culminated in prominence by the end of the 1990s: *raves*. Originating as a form of revelry within rock culture, the phenomenon of raving underwent a transformative evolution, particularly in its association with techno music.

An event played a substantial role in the emergence of raves in Europe, beginning in the UK. The *Second Summer of Love* in 1988-9 was a response to the early closing hours – 2am – of British clubs (Kosmicki 2016, 291). The term *Second Summer of Love* was coined to draw parallels with the countercultural movements of the 1960s, emphasising the sense of liberation, hedonism, and communal unity experienced by *ravers*. It was characterised by a surge in the popularity of EDM particularly acid house, as described above. This period of the summers 1988 and 1989 saw a proliferation of outdoor parties, warehouse raves, and illegal gatherings where thousands of young people gathered to dance on hardcore techno, house, and acid house music (Brewster 2018).

The UK plays a prominent role for techno music and raving (Kosmicki 2016, McLeod 2001, Thornton 1995), and for being the place of the underground rave scene - free parties and teknivals, made notorious for being repressed by Margaret Thatcher, notably during the Second Summer of Love mentioned above. To sum up briefly how rave community was built in the UK and how it transformed the whole rave culture scene, one has to dive into the Thatcherite hegemony and her liberalist statement: “There is no such thing as society, there are individual men and women” (Thatcher 1987). This paved the way for rave culture, leading John (2015) to argue that its community-driven, sharing-oriented, anti-racist, permissive, and liberated characteristics reflected the youth's desire to resist Thatcherite ideology and moral regulations. Thus, clampdown was a way to control this deviant youth culture. Consequently, illegal free parties and sound-systems collectives such as Spiral Tribe sprout up and their counterculture too. Castlemorton in 1992 was one of the first and most repressed *tekno* event: police using database, campaign of surveillance, arrestations, materials seizing (Reynolds 1999, 167), only to be the beginning of what the Conservative government will hatch two year later, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. The latter “targeted illegal raves and free festivals, and defined rave as a mere one hundred people playing amplified music [...] successive repetitive beats” and authorising local police to harass gatherings as small as ten” (Reynolds 1999, 173). In order to break free from the oppressive regulation and to emphasise the ethos of communal sharing within the free party culture, Spiral Tribe and their community of ‘travellers’ moved to Europe, eventually establishing themselves in France and introducing teknivals as of 1993.

In France, techno music culture was admittedly influenced by free parties but over and above by pioneers who saw in techno an *avant-garde*: “Manu Casanas who founded the first independent techno label, or Laurent Garnier, resident DJ of the first house music parties in clubs - les *Jungle* at Rex and the *Pyramid* at Palace” (Vix 2004, 30). Nevertheless, a radio became the first to emit house and techno music in 1990 – Radio Fréquence Gay (Radio FG), against a backdrop of support for gay communities and “followers of youth and their movements, with the youth and for the youth” describe Henry Maurel, its founder (Maurel, 1994). Still, in France, techno music is demonised, either through the media or by the government who do not hesitate to rely on laws to forbid raves under the pretext of security. Vix, former president of Technopol describes the atmosphere of the first French raves (2004):

However, even if they do not fully respect this legal framework, most raves in the early 1990s were registered. Unfortunately, however some of them were completely out of control by their organisers, and the tension between technoids ²and the police gradually escalated between 1992 and 1995. (Vix, 30)

This shows the similitude with the British repression along with the intricacy between the legal framework and raves in France. The first teknival was organised in 1993, after the cancelling of a techno festival in Amiens on the grounds that not enough police forces were available (Vix 2004, 31). This first illegal and free (as in without cost and liberated) event allowed other teknivals to develop in the following years. The French repression followed the British model and in 1995, a memorandum on *Les Raves, des Soirées à Haut Risques* was emitted by the

² Ravers

Direction Générale de la Police National³ and led by Anti-Drugs Mission. It not only curtailed these high-decibel parties held illegally in the countryside but also targeted the drug circulation associated with them. On the contrary, nightclubs and official rave organisers were exacerbating these tensions by advocating for the cancellation of illegal free parties thereby implicitly acknowledging the significance of their own commercially driven events (Vix 2004, 31, Pourteau 2005, 134).

Technopol, the association managing the Techno Parade, was created at that time, in the name of “denouncing and combating such arbitrary and violent behaviour” (Vix 2004, 31), as well as defending the interests of a cultural sector, not necessarily of free parties but of a whole music and cultural movement gravitating around techno music. Little by little, techno music was eventually integrated and started to be recognised into the music culture in France, as shown in 1998 by the legal inquiry⁴ on organising techno events, while reinforcing police controls for free parties and teknivals. This still demonstrates the control over the rave scene, for evident legal reasons but also for the culture that might be associated with it, often considered counter cultural due to its libertarian ideology.

In 2001, an amendment made on the *Loi de Sécurité Quotidienne*⁵ proposed by Thierry Mariani, aimed at authorising the seizing of sound system equipment. The debate has reached a point where even the president Jacques Chirac had to make a declaration on the issue:

*Les rave-parties en soi ne posent pas vraiment problème. Ce qui pose problème, c'est ce qu'on appelle aujourd'hui les free-parties, c'est-à-dire les rassemblements de plusieurs centaines voire de plusieurs milliers de gens dans le secret le plus total avec plusieurs conséquences, aucune sécurité -et on a vu les accidents qui sont intervenus-, avec souvent la dégradation de biens personnels, sans qu'il y ait le moindre responsable.*⁶ (Chirac 2001).

The political turmoil in which the government was embedded reflects the power and cultural importance rave and techno music had in the French society at that time but also the difficulty for the majority party to find a balance. While the Socialist Party was the leader of the recognition of techno music - with Jack Lang sponsoring the Techno Parade; the right-wing parties⁷ repression pushed raves into more clandestinity, while in 2003 eventually authorised and organised the holding of a legal teknival in the Marne department. This “Sarkoval”, named after the Minister of the Interior Nicolas Sarkozy, was proved to be “a laudable intention to provide a secure framework for a social and cultural movement” (Vix 2004, 33): on the one hand for its dialogue between organisers and authorities but on the other hand, for its high presence of police forces and regulations, going against the very essence of the free party, only

³ Raves, High Risks Nighttime Gatherings, by the Directorate General of the National Police

⁴ Directive of Decembre 29th 1998 on rave and techno manifestations. It planned the organisation of rave and techno parties/events by ensuring security and risk mitigations while accentuating the repression of undeclared parties.

⁵ Daily Security Law

⁶ Rave parties in themselves are not really a problem. What does pose a problem is what we now call free-parties, i.e. gatherings of several hundred or even several thousand people in total secrecy, with several consequences, no safety - and we have seen the accidents that have occurred - often with damage to personal property, with no one to blame in the slightest. (my translation)

⁷ RPR(Rassemblement Pour la République) and UMP (Union pour le Mouvement Populaire) : both are right-wing parties

to respond to a logic of risk mitigation. However, in response to various forms of opposition, the free party movement forged its distinct lifestyle, even though its discourse is linked with raves.

The dynamic between the state and the rave movement facilitated a process of recognition, exemplified by the Techno Parade, which is the focal point of this study. Even if French rave culture is a subject little studied – or at least less than the British one, probably due to its less influential aspect, this historical perspective allowed us to understand its relations within the French society. This framework gave us the context to analyse in more depth the cultural significance of rave culture in France but also the context in which the Techno Parade was born.

Rendering the entirety of techno music's history, from its genesis to the emergence of today's new genres would inevitably lead to complexity and confusion due to the multitude of cultural reappropriations and evolutions. However, in this brief introduction on techno music history, we have touched on some important moments that have contributed to what can be considered as part of rave culture, which gave some context to the study.

From the emergence of electronic music to the birth of house and acid house in the 1980s, and the subsequent rise of techno music, each phase has left its mark on the evolution of electronic dance music. Whether in the UK, in France or elsewhere in Europe or the world, some moment emerged as pivotal for symbolising a collective desire for liberation, hedonism, and communal unity within the rave scene. These historical milestones not only underscore the transformative influence of music but also crystallise the evolving dynamics of youth subcultures and their interconnectedness within broader societal influences and through an international flow of communication, for which techno music is a safety valve for society's problem (Maurel 1994, Rietveld 1998, 16).

Understanding the historical context of electronic music is crucial for grasping the subcultural dynamics that techno music its affiliated genres has fostered. It became more an *art de vivre*, rather than a music genre, with its own ethos and modes of expression. Therefore, in the next subchapter we will focus on its characteristics, as expressed within rave and club cultures.

1.2 Subcultural Dynamics of Techno Music Youth Subcultures

In this chapter, we will look into techno music subcultures, with a particular emphasis on rave culture, given its prevalence. However, our primary aim is to discuss techno music subcultures comprehensively, drawing upon subcultural theories to capture a broad spectrum of insights. Our objective is to dissect the layers of identity, belonging, and resistance within the context of these youth subcultures. By drawing upon works by Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) theorists, we aim to elucidate how electronic and techno music genres serve as sites of subcultural expression, challenging dominant norms and ideologies.

Ultimately, this chapter seeks to uncover the stakes inherent in the study of electronic music from a subcultural perspective, shedding light on the tensions between cultural innovation and co-optation, as well as the enduring significance of subcultural resistance in an ever-changing globalised landscape and moral panic.

Then, through examination of themes such as authenticity, commodification, resistance and moral panic, we try to unfold the complex dynamics of power and agency within these subcultural spaces. The next subsection will further dissect these dynamics by examining

subcultural theories and their application to youth cultures (rave and club), providing a theoretical lens for our analysis.

1.2.1 Subcultural Theory: Understanding Youth Cultures

In order to fully grasp all the different concepts revolving around subculture theories, we need to address different terms formulated by CCCS thinkers. Subcultures, as defined by Hall and Jefferson (1976, 13), are smaller cultural groups within larger cultural networks, characterised by their own distinct values, norms, and practices, often emerging from shared interests or identities. They exist within the framework of the dominant culture and are associated with specific social classes, representing variations within the broader cultural landscape. Namely, they are to be associated with the “parent culture”, often understood as the main culture of which subculture are part of and responding to it through the creation of a youth subculture.

In contrast, countercultural movements, such as those described as "alternative societies" or "overly ideological or political" by Hall and Jefferson (1976, 60-61), actively oppose mainstream norms and institutions, viewing them as oppressive or outdated.

Still, both are actually opposing a dominant culture and are manifestations of broader societal tensions and transformations, representing alternative modes of cultural expression and youth identity formation. They are to be understood as a cultural classification of youth. Youth culture encompasses the norms, behaviours, and interests specific to young people, shaped by factors like technology and media, and often manifesting in the post-war era through the expansion of leisure and fashion industries, also called “teenage market” (Hall and Jefferson 1976, 15). Youth cultures, as well as other subcultures, act as “maps of meaning which make the world intangible for its members” (Hall and Jefferson 1976, 10). Youth is thus seen, not only as a broad group with its own identity and ethos but also as a consumerist group that need to distinguish themselves from either the dominant ‘parent-culture’ or other groups or social classes within the youth.

Post-subculture

However, these terms and concepts were developed in post-war era. Some scholars developed as from the 1990s, a new way of theorising youth through a post-subcultural perspective (Bennett 2004, 2010, Thornton 1995, Redhead 1990). For Thornton (1995), who describes her approach as post-CCCS, there are no more dichotomies anymore between dominant or subordinate, and mainstream and subculture, the media also plays a proactive role in forming youth culture, which are now fragmented. She acknowledges the evolution of cultural dynamics beyond mere resistance, emphasising hybridity, fluidity, and the interplay of multiple cultural influences. As explained further in the chapter, contemporary youth subcultures are playing within the media and not in resistance against it or any other form of dominant mass culture. Regarding authenticity, it is performative and relational, shaped by the interactions between individuals, subcultural scenes, and broader socio-cultural forces. Some scholars directly apply club culture to this framework (Bennett 2011, Thornton 1995). This term typically refers to the culture surrounding nightlife and clubbing, particularly in urban areas. Club culture often involves EDM, DJ performances, dance styles like rave dancing, and the creation of social spaces, like clubs. Thornton (1995) highlights the performative and negotiated nature of authenticity within these contexts, while Bennett (2004) underscores the interconnectedness of club cultures with broader socio-cultural contexts. Club culture (and by

extension rave culture), thus, evolves within a post-subcultural framework that take the concepts of subculture such as authenticity, through a contemporary and even post-modernist perspective. Ultimately, authenticity is associated with other subcultural concepts such as resistance, globalisation and moral panic, shaping (post)-subcultural identities.

Authenticity

For most scholars theorising on rave and club cultures, these last are modes of expression for the youth (Huq 2002, Martin 1999, McLeod 2001, McRobbie 1993, Redhead 1993, Reynolds 1998, Thornton 1995), grounding their work on initial cultural studies theorists analysing youth subcultures (Hall and Jefferson 1976, Hebdige 1979, Willis 1978). This cultural distinction of a youth, of a 'sub' culture, from a mainstream culture enhance the notion of authenticity. The subculture is seen as authentic by the members of its groups, regarding the unauthenticity of the dominant or mass-produced culture. Thornton (1995, 5) stresses the consciousness of otherness, saying that "the mainstream is the entity against which the majority of clubbers define themselves". Therefore, the authenticity claims come from a hierarchical relation between unauthentic and authentic cultures, alike distinction in taste or even cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984, Thornton 1995).

Certainly, when viewed from within the community, there exists a clear division with mainstream culture: there's 'us', the ravers and clubbers, aligned with what is considered high culture, and then there is 'the other', which represents mass and commercial culture, often referred to as low brow. These distinctions from the mainstream are expressed through the fashion, dances, places attended, as seen as a mark of subcultural capital (Thornton 1995). For techno music subcultures, this could be identified in its symbols – the smiley face – in its venues such as warehouses and clubs, or in its dance and music, characterised by a very fast tempo, as well as its use of records and interaction of the audience with the DJ (Thornton 1995, 29) or the ecstasy heavily associated with acid house and then rave. These elements bring an identity formation via the creation of meanings for subcultures. Nevertheless, Huq (2002) describes electronic music cultures as fluid boundaries, [...] without long term identities and [...] a rapid generic turnover" (97), questioning the essence of authenticity within those cultures and even implying an intra-community distinction, either in the music style, but also expressed for instance in its definition – from acid house, to EDM, by way of techno and even free party detachment from the initial subculture. The distinctions are thus dynamic and constantly moving, not only between levels of cultures but also within subcultures.

The fluidity and diversity observed within a single culture are essentially manifestations of postmodernism. This involves the fragmentation of the idea of a singular culture, as highlighted by Jameson (1997), through processes like deconstructing language terminology or genres and identities reappropriations. Baudrillard (1995) identifies this as an "hyperreality", where boundaries between reality and fiction dissolve within a "spectacle" of the reality, as a mode of escapism through physical or chemical means (in our case, drugs). For our studied subcultures, authenticity becomes a fluid and contested concept, as individuals navigate between different modes of expression and representation, as well as commodification compromising the authenticity of the experience as commercial interests may prioritise marketability, giving a false image of authentic rave culture. Thus, authenticity within techno music subcultures have been commodified and co-opted, with some arguing that its legalisation has generated money, through certain venues – mainly clubs – that would make the DJ a star (Ludewig 2020, Ott and Herman 2003), leading to a certain questioning of the authenticity.

McLeod (2001) even implied that subgenres naming within EDM are forms of cultural reappropriations and express the commodification of the culture. This process of mainstreaming and commercialisation led to a dilution of the subculture's original ethos and values, prompting a backlash from participants who sought to preserve its authenticity and integrity.

In that sense, we might want to compare the authenticity of techno music subcultures to the underground, for whom, according to Thornton (1995), members are more loyal and selective to sounds, to the “hip music” (15). Therefore, what would differ the underground techno music to the mainstream in terms of authenticity would be the relation to the music in its creation of meaning, subversion and identity formation. However, for Reynolds (1998, 23), the underground rave is characterised by “the crimes against the State through pirate radio or illegal raves by renegades sound-systems”. Accordingly, the underground represents an ethos thriving on its rejection of mainstream norms, promoting an aura of authenticity through its resistance to commercialisation and adherence to “Do It Yourself” (DIY) principles rather than just musical taste and knowledge.

Resistance

To further explore the concept of authenticity within subcultures, it is necessary to focus on resistance, as a mode to express and value a subculture in contrast to a mainstream culture. Initially, it revolves around bricolage (Hall and Jefferson, 1976), which is viewed as a tool for reusing common objects to imbue them with new meaning. For a youth subculture it is often serving as means of differentiation from the hegemonic culture and parents' working-class norms, fostering the creation of a countercultural style. It allows youth to express their resistance to mainstream values and create their own cultural narratives. Dick Hebdige (1979) states on style as a signifier for resistance and even power against the mainstream:

Subcultures represent ‘noise’ (as opposed to sound): interference in the orderly sequence which leads from real events and phenomena to their representation in the media. We should therefore not underestimate the signifying power of the spectacular subculture not only as a metaphor for potential anarchy ‘out there’ but as an actual mechanism of semantic disorder: a kind of temporary blockage in the system of representation. (Hebdige, 90)

On the other hand, reducing subcultural resistance to mere style, carries significant political and social implications, particularly concerning issues of gender and class as Cohen (1980) suggests. By narrowing the concept of resistance to stylistic expressions alone, there is a risk of overlooking the deeper socio-cultural dynamics at play within subcultures. Furthermore, embracing the perspectives of post-modernists and post-subculturalists like Muggleton (1997) and Redhead (1995) challenge the traditional notion of resistance tied to fixed identities or stylistic codes. Instead, they highlight the fluidity inherent in contemporary subcultures, where meanings and expressions constantly evolve, blurring the lines between resistance and conformity.

Within techno music, this feature is to be understood as a resistance against the mainstream, and against the commodification of rave and club cultures. Raves can be seen as a mode of resistance regarding their initial illegality and musical transgression from the mass-produce music at that time. For St John (2009, 107), “raves become fashionable modes of resistance at the moment of its repression”. This not only underscores the restraint from authorities, but also

expresses the initial objectives of rave culture, emerging as a response to the social and economic challenges of the time, including youth unemployment, urban decay, and the marginalisation of communities, with rave providing a space for individuals to escape the constraints of mainstream society. Thus, techno music cultures are no more, no less than an expression of youth resistance towards society's gloomy perspectives.

Indeed, these subcultures are resisting a form of dominance inside society: class, gender or race related. It is particularly the case for the birth of house and techno music: Black men from a now run-down industrial city. However, we experience a shift in this resistance and representation in society when techno arrived in Europe. Even if clubs have long been space to escape prejudices for the LGBTQ+ communities (Ott and Herman 2003, 252), Thornton (1995, 25) describes raves' demographics as being "white, working-class, heterosexual and dominated by the lads". Nevertheless, for rave, the venue itself plays the game of resistance, while Ott and Herman (2003, 254) describe them as "renegade alternative venue [where] dancers were challenging social norms". They emphasise, citing Brewster and Broughton (2000), on the spatial (re)appropriation that permit new forms of subcultural identities to evolve, confirming the place used by the youth to demonstrate their subcultures resistance:

The co-optation of space and temporary liberation of it from the social structure, then, was absolutely central to the transgressive character of early rave culture. 'A rave,' Brewster and Broughton (2000) note, "was an idealized version of clubbing. It wasn't about visiting some purpose-built venue, it was about creating something new; it was about building a city for a night. A club had a place . . . but a rave was made of possibilities'. (Brewster and Broughton quoted in Ott and Herman 2003, 254)

Globalisation

Resistance in youth subculture is often against a form of commodification, the latter being, in our post-subculturalist and post-modernist context, tightly embedded in the globalisation of culture. Within this framework, the mainstreaming of rave and club subcultures serves as a compelling case study. Techno, originating as an underground movement in urban centres like Detroit and Chicago, has rapidly transcended geographic and cultural boundaries to become a global phenomenon. As techno music permeates mainstream spaces, its values, aesthetics, and narratives are both embraced and adapted by diverse communities worldwide. By examining how techno subcultures negotiate their position within broader cultural landscapes, we gain insights into the mechanisms of cultural globalisation and the ways in which hybridisation, homogenisation, and commodification shape the evolution of subcultural movements in the era of globalisation.

Techno music subcultures can be assimilated to a form of globalisation and hybridisation of youth subcultures. Theorists like Pieterse (1995) argue that the blurriness of material or immaterial boundaries is expressed through a form of cultural hybridisation. Indeed, the spread of techno music from America to Europe happened in the age of an accelerated and worldwide interconnectedness – the 1990s and its technological advancements, such as Internet. They have evolved in a context of hyper culture in which authenticity has been dissolved into more culture (Han 2022, 9) – by adding more cultural specificities and richness to the place in which it is implemented. Since its appearance at the end of the 80s, techno music, alongside rave culture, has travelled through Europe and adapted to national cultures and social context. Graham St John in *Technomad: Global Raving Countercultures* (2009) perfectly expresses this

worldwide expansion through different adaptation to local societies and environment: the mention of the Spiral Tribes movement in the UK and France within the context of authorities' repression implies a link between raves and the socio-political environment of these countries, where repression may be more pronounced. This connection suggests these subcultures often emerged as responses to restrictive social and political conditions, providing space for expression, resistance, and community-building in the face of repression. Apart from the socio-political conditions, way of life and habits can also be a factor for the hybridisation of rave culture, as evidenced by Champion (1997, 114) about the appropriation in American Midwest: “dance culture is a virus which mutates as it spreads, and in the Midwest, they have taken rave and made it their own” – on ski slopes for instance. This would particularly shows the process of cultural hybridisation, leading to the emergence of distinct local scenes and new cultural identities with broader and global influences.

On the other hand, one could say that rave culture has spread throughout the world and acts as a form of homogenisation of this subculture within the youth. As rave culture transcends geographical and cultural boundaries, it also creates a shared experience and identity among young people regardless of their background. This phenomenon aligns with the concept of cultural homogenisation, wherein diverse cultural expressions become standardised and commodified on a global scale. For techno music and rave culture, social media and especially Tik Tok and YouTube have contributed to its expansions via the trend #TechnoTikTok or videos channels such as HÖR DJ set livestreams dedicated to techno music, its lifestyle, dances, and fashion - black outfits for example (Arte 2024a). It emphasising the widespread influence of rave culture among young people globally. This suggests that while rave culture provides a sense of belonging and unity across borders, it also contributes to the erosion of cultural distinctiveness and the emergence of a globalised youth identity rooted in common experiences and aesthetics.

The main factor for both the hybridisation and homogenisation of a subculture relies in the commodification of the latter. Indeed, it is the process of commodification of a subculture in line with capitalism, rending objects into commodities through a marketisation of the said object. For Willis (1990), consumerism is an active process in which youth subcultures draw creative inspiration and meaning. Thus, subcultures are totally embedded into capitalism, either as consumer, or producer. The commodification of EDM-oriented subcultures not only facilitates their spread across different regions and demographics but also transforms them into marketable commodities that can be easily consumed and appropriated. As *i-D* and *Mixmag* magazines showcase the latest musical trends in EDM, smiley face tee-shirts became emblematic symbols of rave culture, and flyers advertised mass-produced events, so the original ethos of rave culture is often diluted or distorted. Ott and Herman (2003) wrote that raves have become popular concerts, as an idea of commodifying this music industry. This process of commodification reflects the broader phenomenon of globalisation, wherein cultural expressions are packaged and sold as part of a homogenised global market, eroding the authenticity and communal practice of subcultures in the process. Thus, while raving may initially emerge as a form of resistance and alternative identity, its commodification ultimately reinforces the hegemony of capitalist values and norms on a global scale. Huq (2002, 96) concludes that the circulation of such cultural goods is facilitated, complicating “the traditional producer-consumer dichotomy”. In parallel, media play a role on these subcultures, demonising them as well as commodifying them.

Moral Panic

Since its beginning, clubs but principally raves and techno music have found themselves embroiled in a moral panic, grappling with mainstream's perceptions of the subculture's values, behaviours and impacts. This moral panic reflects broader anxieties surrounding youth culture, nightlife, and the role of electronic music in shaping social norms. From concerns over drug use to fears of social deviance and moral decay, such subcultures have become a focal point for societal anxieties about the changing landscape of urban life and the blurring boundaries between subculture and mainstream. By examining the dynamics of this moral panic, we gain deeper insights into the power dynamics at play between dominant cultural norms and subcultural expressions, as well as the ways in which moral panics shape public discourse and policy responses to emerging cultural phenomena.

The concept of moral panics was theorised by Cohen (1972), and it attributes an important role of mass-media in the making of subcultures, especially in demonising their behaviours or lifestyle, which by extension will create a form of hysteria amongst the public.

Media coverage frequently serves as the catalyst for moral panic surrounding youth subcultures. This coverage tends to exaggerate the perceived dangers associated with young people asserting their autonomy and expressing their identities. Hebdige (1979, 93) articulates that "either deviant behaviour or the identification of a distinctive uniform (or more typically a combination of the two) can provide the catalyst for a moral panic". Therefore, concerns about rebellion or delinquency are often magnified, fuelling anxieties about the potential threats of these subcultures. Sensational headlines or articles from tabloids focusing, for example, on death or drugs uses are often the main drivers of moral panic amongst the population, explains Martin (1999, 79). Rave culture and its historical, cultural and musical link to drugs was thus under the yoke of media, either positive – providing an invitation to acid house culture or negative, exacerbating the "Evil of Ecstasy" and possible downsides of drug consumption (Reynolds 1999, 66), in an attempt to demonise and create a moral panic among the public. Apart from emphasising the stigmatisation of a youth culture, shaping its perception and reception, this shows the complex and dichotomic relation between subcultures and mass media.

However, Thornton (1995), in a critical perspective on moral panic and the stigmatisation associated with youth subcultures, proposes that they shape their perceptions with a view to attract attention and profit from this:

Cultural studies and sociologies of 'moral panic' tend to position youth cultures as innocent victims of negative stigmatization. But mass media 'misunderstanding' is often an objective of certain subcultural industries, rather than an accident of youth's cultural pursuits. 'Moral panic' can therefore be seen as a form of hype orchestrated by culture industries that target the youth market. (Thornton, 136)

This raises questions about who benefits from creating moral panic and media portrayals of youth, and what role the media plays in this process. Mass media are thus involved in the production of meaning of music subcultures. They are playing the role of, not only demonising them but also promoting them in view of their global implications. Again, Thornton (1995, 120) extensively argues on media's role to marketise music to youth, making it more accessible, more common. In that case, it provides valuable exposure and legitimacy to techno music scenes and reach for a wider audience. In view of the fact that subcultures are reaching a mass audience through media, they, according to Hebdige (1979, 94), are in a process of recuperation,

and thus ceased to be seen as a subculture but become mass-produced objects and their “deviant behaviour” re-labelled. This recuperation occurs when subcultures, originally formed as resistance movements or expressions of youth identity, are co-opted, and commodified by mainstream media and consumer culture, losing their resistance and authenticity inherent to their meaning. Thus, it shows the transition of subcultures, from underground to mainstream entertainment. EDM cultures are nowadays shown on television – without any judgemental discourse but more with an observatory stance or desire to share their existence – for example ARTE channel broadcasting live DJ sets (ARTE Rave It Up), and videos or podcasts (Arte Technopolis) on electronic music history and culture. Moreover, the world’s intangible heritage listing of Berlin techno music can be considered a further step into, not only protecting this culture, but also pressing on its global and mainstream implications. Finally, mass-media serve as medium for subcultures to receive acknowledgement – or not – from society.

This chapter aimed at giving a theoretical framework drawn from subcultural scholars, in which techno music subcultures are developing. It underscored the importance of subculture’s concepts such as authenticity, resistance, or globalisation as well as interactions with the media in forging these subcultures and their identity. Therefore, some scholars of the end of the 1990s/beginning of the 2000s questioned traditional subcultures in a post-subcultural framework. This scheme would argue that those ‘new’ youth cultures evolve in a completely different context than their former counterpart (e.g.: punk, mods); technological advancements, globalisation, and consumer capitalism have transformed the ways individuals engage with culture, leading to the blurring of boundaries between subcultures and mainstream culture. Inasmuch techno music, rave and clubs are the core of the end-of-the-century/start-of-the-millennium youth subcultures, and as “the largest youth/sub/counterculture of the postwar era” (Martin, 1999), they are to be studied within a post-subcultural understanding. But what are precisely those distinctive cultural forms and their dynamics?

1.2.2 Rave Culture vs. Club Culture: Exploring Spatial and Cultural Dynamics

This chapter explores the relationship between club culture and rave culture within EDM, focusing on techno. Originating in the 1990s, the distinction between clubbing and raving extends beyond music tastes, encompassing cultural contexts and physical spaces. The goal is to understand how these cultures shape and are shaped by their environments, identities, and ethos. It ultimately seeks to explore how cultural identities and practices associated with rave and club cultures shape the Techno Parade experience, contributing to our understanding of the event's socio-cultural significance and its role within the broader landscape of EDM festivals and gatherings. In this subchapter, we will analyse spatial dynamics, linguistic nuances, and symbolic representations within techno subcultures.

Space

From the 1990s onwards, the distinction between clubbing and raving encompasses not only the cultural contexts and social dynamics but also the physical spaces in which these experiences unfold. Often, going to a club, or clubbing, is associated with raving, as similar music genres such as techno, or (acid) house, are played, and communities are formed, sometimes facilitated by the consumption of recreational drugs like ecstasy or MDMA.

However, as Sarah Thornton notes in *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (1995), clubbing represents the commercial, public, and licensed side of dance culture, whereas raving constitutes the non-commercial, spontaneous, and underground side of dance culture. She suggests that clubbing has been ingrained within established commercial ventures, often regulated by licensing laws and catering to mainstream audiences. This distinction extends to spaces in which these events occur, with clubs typically housed in established nightlife venues moving out to raves, often taking place in unconventional or illegal settings such as warehouses or outdoor areas like open-air fields to “pursuit a forbidden and unpredictable sense of place” (Thornton, 1995, 22). She emphasises the importance of linking the place to the name of attendees: “the sense of place afforded by these events is such that regular attenders take on the name of the spaces they frequent, becoming ‘clubbers or ‘ravers’” (Thornton 1995, 3).

Thornton explains that in the context of dance music culture, contemporary British youth more accurately refer to it as discotheque or club music. Instead of being limited to a single style, many genres and subgenres are grouped under this label because they share a common setting: the club or discotheque (Thornton 1995, 71). Thornton’s assertion that all electronic music genres share the same space in the club or discotheque environment might be overly reductive. While clubs have historically played a significant role in fostering electronic and techno music, the genres have also thrived in various other contexts, mostly underground, such as warehouses or abandoned buildings. It is also important to mention that this statement is only suitable for Great Britain’s club culture, while in France, even if techno music have originally been localised in clubs, it is also deeply rooted in what we call ‘rave underground’. This distinction between UK youth cultures and France’s, is not only due to historical implications but also culturally shaped place of music listening and partying or dancing.

In France, when one speaks about clubs, it is either referring to *discothèque* – literally a place where we play discs – with disparities whether such clubs were localised in the countryside or in the city. Regarding dance music and its techno music affiliation, Warne (2006, 56) noted that despite their initial discovery, dance musics, particularly forms of club and house music, continued to thrive in their original sites, notably within the burgeoning network of gay clubs, shops, and bars that became a staple of Parisian nightlife by the mid-1990s. This not only shows the very centralised nature of dance music in France, but also its connections to LGBTQ+ communities, as it was initially the case with disco and house music in the US. On the other hand, such commercial and *bourgeois* venues paved the way for a more underground, more alternative, and more marginalised and young audience, rejecting Parisian mainstream clubs values of consumption – often seen as show-off. Indeed, free parties and raves are usually located on a squatted open-air field, in opposition to the Parisian overcrowded clubs and its bouncers. The principle surrounding free party relies of Temporary Autonomous Zone (Bey, 2003), which provides a place for not only transgressive radicalism (O’Grady 2012, 89) but also expresses all its characteristics, from its name which can be shortened by TAZ⁸, its temporality, often as long as a festival, or its freedom and autonomy. Moreover, Thornton (1995) describes the difference between clubs and raves, not only in the targeted space but in the route, almost adventurous:

Club worlds’ are markedly divorced from the work world outside. Door restrictions sharply divide inside from outside, while long corridors, inner doors and stairways create transitional labyrinths.

⁸ Other name for Ecstasy, drug of the acid house music

Raves add the pilgrimage, the quest for the location, to extend the ritualistic passage. Like Alice's rabbit hole, both convey the participant from the mundane world to Wonderland. (Thornton, 57)

For Rupa Huq, “dance has its roots in town and country... far from a homogenous entity” (2002, 99), qualifying dance music as both urban and rural, challenging claims on a mainly city-centred culture. By expending dance culture to the countryside, it expresses the transformative aspect of dance music into rave culture, expressing its fluidity and multiple formations without any possibility of localising them (Gilbert and Pearson, 1999). By fostering ambiguity on specific geographical centre, rave culture eludes traditional forms of surveillance and control, allowing for greater freedom of expression and experimentation. This decentralisation fosters a sense of autonomy and empowerment among participants, contributing to the ethos of rave culture as a space of liberation and resistance.

The difference between club culture and rave culture is partly based on their respective spaces, while “rave explore new territory and clubs are the same old predictable places” (Thornton 1995, 22); raves are then just unconventional clubs. In France, club culture typically does not integrate into rave culture, which the latter is often associated with the free party movement. However, it also encompasses a broader set of characteristics and social dynamics, reflecting the culture, community, and experiences associated with these music scenes.

People and Ethos

According to Bourdieu, "nothing classifies somebody more than the way he or she classifies" (Bourdieu 1990, 132), leading ravers and clubbers to adopt the names of their spaces as well as socially differentiate themselves from one another. Thus, raves and clubs serve as dynamic spaces that facilitate the expression of individual and collective identities within electronic music cultures. O'Grady (2012) characterises these spaces as "performative" or "playground" environments, where not only music but also socio-cultural attitudes and ethos are enacted. This suggests that participants experience a sense of behavioural freedom, often diverging from societal norms. For instance, drug use, particularly ecstasy consumption, is prevalent in these environments, challenging conventional legal and social boundaries. Additionally, activities like trespassing on property for illegal raves and free parties, as well as dress codes, further illustrate the subversive and expressive nature of these spaces.

The ethos of club culture and rave culture encompasses distinct yet interconnected principles, shaped by their respective socio-cultural contexts and practices. Club culture tends to have more structured social norms and organisational rules, with the figure of the bouncer who chose the people going in for example. It can also be criticised for its commodification where the pursuit of profit sometimes overshadows its original ethos of cultural exchange and artistic expression, and emphasising its mainstream aspect (Thornton, 1995), alongside the importance of social hierarchy.

In contrast, rave culture is characterised by its emphasis on autonomy, liberation, and anti-establishment values. As Collin (2018, 231) observes, raves are often viewed as “temporary autonomous zones” where participants can temporarily escape the constraints of mainstream society and immerse themselves in a collective experience of freedom and self-expression. Rave culture's ethos of resistance and subversion is evident in its rejection of mainstream norms and its embrace of alternative forms of social organisation. This can also be connected to the illusions of classlessness and equality that this culture promotes (Thornton 1995). Still, social class distinctions are evident both between club culture and rave culture, and within them.

These distinctions arise from factors like exclusive door policies at clubs or the secretive, almost whispered locations of raves.

However, both cultures embed the communal aspect of partying. Robin Sylvan observes in *Traces of the Spirit: The Religious Dimensions of Popular Music* (2002), raves offer participants a chance to experience the transcendence of community on the dance floor, emphasising the communal and often transcendent nature of the rave. For Reynolds (1999), this is asserted by ecstasy whereas Thornton (1995, 65) underscores the live DJ performances that bring such physical and mind states.

Therefore, clubbers and ravers have their own ‘vibe’ when it comes to partying. They show this through the language they use and the symbols they identify with, often connected to techno music and EDM, that define rave and club scenes.

Terminology and Symbols

Alongside names’ spellings and language used to speak about techno, symbols usually convey messages or are expression of a certain subculture. Today, ‘rave’ is known as a noun, referring to a certain type of warehouse or open-air, techno music party. It was a verb until 1989 characterising Black British dance culture (Reynolds 1999, 76-77), which could explain the evolution of the rave scene and culture in Great Britain through its language. This linguistic shift may parallel the development of rave culture from grassroots, underground and Black movement to a more mainstream phenomenon, marked by the establishment of identifiable venues and norms.

When speaking about rave and club, we refer to the music played in such venues and the culture with which it is associated. For the purpose of the study, we will focus on techno music only, examining the difference connotation its spellings induce and language-related differences in meaning. Jori suggests that the German term *Techno* should be used as an umbrella term for underground electronic music as opposed to EDM, which refers to mainstream and business-oriented music (Jori 2020, 2). Still, the latter term has no standardisation nor updates, either within the cultural community, or between the language differences which ultimately brings to confusion, especially in the media (Mazierska, Gillon, Rigg 2021, 36-37).

In France, the terminology of “‘la techno’ has the virtue of concision [...] and of emphasising the sense of strangeness that the various forms of dance music had in this national setting, accentuating their machine-like and alienating qualities” (Warne 2006). This allows for a clearer and broader definition of the genre but also a streamlining of it, without clear distinctions between subgenres and specificities. It also emphasises a form of otherness within the music culture in France, in the best case an *exception* (such as French Touch), in the worst case, ungainly.

Another important term when it comes to techno music, is the spelling *tekno*, often referring to the free party scene. Nevertheless, in France this term was employed for an exhibition and a radio programme, dedicated to techno music and culture in 1995 (Vix, 2004, 31). Later, it was

reused to speak about teknival and free party-type of music – often hardcore⁹, to highlight on its hardness and differentiate the countercultural spirit of the movement.

The most notable symbol of techno music and its affiliated raves and clubs is beyond any doubt the Smiley face. During the first years of acid house raves, this symbol was related to ecstasy pills or stamps taken by the ravers. No corner of the rave culture was spared - from music magazines and fanzines to tee-shirts and flyers (Thornton 1996). Everything that were used to marketise and communicate on rave parties and techno music had their smiley on, which would help commodify and commercialise them, as well as create a defining symbol for the community and subculture.

The boundary separating club culture from rave culture is thus fluid. Consequently, we may refer to techno music (sub)cultures as our focal point. Techno, not only transcends conventional boundaries, manifesting in both rave and club environments but also, stands out as the music genre most closely associated by these communities.

In conclusion, the distinction between rave culture and club culture within techno music subcultures reflects not only historical contexts but also symbolical interpretations and representations. One of these (public) representations – technoparades – are symbols of this subculture and the next chapter will delve into their evolution and overall characteristics.

1.3 Technoparades

Now that we have screened the foundational theories surrounding EDM subcultures, we ought to turn our attention to the focal point of this master's thesis: technoparades. These events, usually held annually and lasting a single day, have become a staple in major cities across Europe and beyond since the 1990s: the Love Parade since 1989 (Berlin), the Street Parade since 1992 (Zurich), the City Parade since 2001 (Belgium) or the Love Parade edition in Mexico City (since 2002), Tel Aviv (since 1998) and Cape Town (2000). They gather not only people but also trucks, called floats, upon which DJs, brands, or associations parade while playing electronic music. Despite their prevalence, academic literature addressing technoparades is surprisingly scarce. Most studies tend to gravitate towards the inaugural and renowned Love Parade in Berlin, while other notable parades, such as the Paris Techno Parade, receive scant attention, often merely mentioned in passing within papers exploring Techno music in France and its societal reception and repression. This absence of scholarly discussion surrounding technoparades can be attributed to their relatively recent emergence or different discontinuity, as well as their ephemeral aspect. Their supposedly limited implications into youth subcultures could also be the reason for this lack in resources.

To truly grasp the significance of the Techno Parade, it is imperative to study its primary history and cultural implications. Whether viewed as cultural phenomena integral to techno music subcultures or as platforms facilitating the expression of said subcultures, understanding their evolution and impact is paramount for analysing their content and relevance within the context of French youth subcultures.

⁹ Hardcore Techno is characterised by a 150 to 200 bpm and a bass drum distortion.

1.3.1 From Berlin's Love Parade to a Global Phenomenon

Germany

In 1988, Berlin hosted the world's first-ever technoparade. Organised by the German DJ Matthias Roeingh alias Dr. Motte, it only gathered 150 people in the streets near the Kurfürstendamm, following this motto “Friede, Freude, Eierkuchen - Peace, Joy and Pancakes” (Borneman and Senders 2000, 295). This first statement will be then re-shaped for the following editions of the Love Parade: “We Are One Family” (1996), “Peace on Earth” (1995), “One Love, One World”, “Planet Love”, and even the name of the recent edition of its successor “Rave the Planet” has this “empty yet universalist ring” (Borneman and Senders 2000, 295). These events attract large crowds and emphasize a sense of community, but their true meaning is questionable, especially considering the litter left on the streets afterward. In Germany, editions of the event drew increasing numbers of attendees each year, peaking at 1.4 million people until the 2010 Duisburg disaster. Described as a “demonstration of peace” by Verena Faigle (1996 – DW documentary) and officially recognised as a political demonstration by the courts and the city of Berlin in 1997 (Borneman and Senders 2000, 299), the city was responsible for cleanup after the events. This led to conflicts with organisers, who were eventually pressured to revoke the event's 'demonstrational' status in 2001. Due to funding issues, some editions were discontinued, while others were moved to different cities in Germany, such as Dortmund and Essen (Deutsche Welle, 2022). In 2010, the last Love Parade was held in Duisburg in a closed-field area leading to a crowd movement of nearly 1,4 million people and causing 21 deaths among the attendees. This disaster would lead to the end of the Love Parade yearly organisation. It was not until 2022 that its successor, Rave The Planet, was held in Berlin, promoting themes such as “solidarity, diversity, respect, music, sustainability, and community, highlighting Berlin's clubbing culture, which Dr. Motte aims to have recognized as UNESCO World Heritage (Braun 2022). While these parades contributed to UNESCO's recognition of the city as a techno music city and emphasised the importance of preserving the city's nightlife, this recognition did not fully acknowledge the origins of techno in Detroit and its roots in Black American culture.

Zurich

In Switzerland, Zurich also has its Street Parade since 1992. Rooted in the traditions of the Love Parade in Berlin, the Zurich Street Parade was founded by Marek Krynski, aiming to celebrate electronic music and promoting unity. From 1000 attendees dancing around 7 ‘love mobiles’ during the first edition to almost 1 million and 29 trucks. This parade follows the cultural scheme of the Berlin Love Parade: a demonstration with a yearly motto, organisers held in association, and non-profit concept can be read on the official website. The motto revolves around references to “love, peace, freedom, generosity and tolerance” (Streetparade, n.d.) which can be associated with the empty meaning mentioned above by Borneman and Senders. Considered as a demonstration for its public space usage, the Street Parade can even be political, as evidenced by the presence of Alain Berset, President of the Swiss Confederation. Also, its non-profit character can be criticised as “the value created for the city and the canton runs into millions and the municipal costs are more than covered by the tax income generated” (Streetparade, n.d.), expressing the highly commercial and financial aspect of this parade. The parade was not without conflict, especially with the police in 1996 on the grounds that the parade was too big, too loud, littered the streets of the city, and only of interest to an insignificant section of the population (Streetparade, n.d.) alongside pollution from the trucks.

Nevertheless, Zurich's Street Parade remains one of Europe's largest in term of attendees and the oldest still in operation, without discontinuities.

France

Although we already have briefly discussed the context in which the Techno Parade was created, we did not yet explain its history and characteristics. Alongside its German counterpart, the very first parade was a rather small gathering: 400 people and 4 trucks (Kardec 2013). Organised by ravers and Radio Fréquence Gaie in 1997, it aims to be a peaceful parade, trying to de-demonise techno music by playing it in the streets. One has to mention the starting point of this parade: the Gay and Lesbian centre, particularly due to the involvement of the radio station in LGBTQ+ communities and house music. Radio FG is the first radio to emit house and techno music in France (Chaman, 1994), along with openly advocating for queer communities.

A year later, in 1998, the Techno Parade was officially organised under the supervision of Technopol – association advocating for electronic music and artists in France. Created in 1996 after the backlash against raves and its repression, its mission is to “promote electronic music and culture to public authorities, professional bodies and the media” (Technopol, n.d.). Former Minister of Culture Jack Lang (1981-1992), initiated the Techno Parade after saying while attending the Love Parade, that “it would be good if Paris could have this similar event” (Brun-Lambert et Garnier 2013, 242-243). Jack Lang was not a minister at that time but thanks to his influence in politics and his willingness to recognise electronic music, he became the sponsor of the Techno Parade. With the help of Technopol, discussions were organised with the ministry of the Interior and the ministry of Culture, prefects, police officers and drug squad in order to “to enlighten the various administrations on the realities of techno culture, on the notion of reassembling, the state of mind that presided over raves” (Brun-Lambert et Garnier 2013, 243). The first official Techno Parade finally attracted 200 000 people in the streets, plus 1,300 million watching the live stream on television. On the technical side, 30 *chars* (floats) were chartered and drove on 5 kilometres, on which renowned DJs played their music among which Carl Cox, Laurent Garnier and Jeff Mills.

Eventually, the Techno Parade in Berlin, Zurich's Street Parade, and Paris Techno Parade each hold historical significance and characteristics within electronic and techno music. The Berlin Love Parade, despite its tragic end in 2010, paved the way for the global recognition of techno music and its cultural impact. Zurich's Street Parade, inspired by Berlin's event, continues to attract massive crowds. Meanwhile, Paris's Techno Parade emerged from grassroots efforts to promote electronic music, eventually gaining official recognition and support. Despite their differences, these parades have played important roles in shaping the perception and appreciation of techno music and their cultures, highlighting both its celebratory and contentious aspects within contemporary society. As the legacy of these events continues to evolve, their consistency shows the appeal for techno music and its importance and recognition for culture today. To fully appreciate their impact, it is necessary to explore the role they play in public space through their cultural expression and engagement.

1.3.2 The Role of Technoparades: Public Space, Cultural Expression and Political Engagement

Technoparades have emerged as celebrations of EDM, providing a space for expression, unity, and political engagement. Rooted in the rave and club cultures of the late 20th century, these

parades transcend mere entertainment, serving as platforms for the dissemination of techno music. Dance in public spaces, once confined to underground clubs, finds liberation amidst the pulsating beats and carnival-like atmosphere of technoparades. These events not only showcase renowned DJs and performers but also foster a sense of community, specific to techno music subcultures. Characterised by their procession of floats transform public spaces into mobile dance floors, they echo the ethos of rave and club cultures. Yet, beyond the surface partying lies a deeper significance – technoparades serve as platforms for political engagement and social advocacy. They carry the legacy of rave culture's spirit of inclusivity and freedom, while also advocating for causes. Thus, one should understand the overall characteristics of technoparades present in the current literature in order to fully apply it to the Paris Techno Parade.

A carnival?

Graham St John (2009, 136) has been one of the only scholars mentioning extensively technoparades, describing them as “EDM street carnivals”. Parades appear then as a temporal event similar to carnivals and using the same functional approach: floats wandering in the streets and people following it, with the exception of the music to be at the core of the parade. Their floats are often decorated, costumes are frequently worn by participants and the euphoria meaning from those demonstrations are being compared with carnivals. Describing technoparades merely as carnivals can imply that these events are trivial or disconnected from the techno music subcultures, reducing them to a pagan celebrations. This perspective overlooks the significant role technoparades play as spaces of resistance and cultural activism, where participants engage in social critique and assert cultural identities.

Nevertheless, it highlights the communal and almost ceremonial significance that technoparades hold for their members. This carnivalesque atmosphere, reminiscent of Bakhtin's concept of carnival (1984) as a temporary suspension of hierarchical structures and social norms, encourages participants to experiment with new identities and modes of expression, such as communal identities (revolving around music and the use of drugs) and freedom. Or as St John (2009, 121) describes, “joyous intermingling, bodily expression, eccentric behaviour and dress of the techno-carnival, [...] permitting the experimentation of novel forms of subjectivity” (121). He justifies the “carnivalization of everyday life” as being “strikingly apparent in disc-oriented dance culture” (21). For him, technoparades would be a way to “carnivalize” the protests and be a mode for the expression of youth subcultures and countercultures. Indeed, the main objective of these parades have been to raise awareness in the street about the recognition of techno music and subcultures as well as their place in society, being an authentic music genre. It is also a way for members of this subculture to demonstrate their identities, through a public event.

Political character

These gatherings embody a collective philosophy of empowerment and cultural rebellion, wherein the act of dancing becomes a form of protest and sonic communion serves as a catalyst for social change and revendication. These aspects can highly be associated with the overall rave culture and its primary counter cultural dimensions. Borneman and Senders (2000, 297) argues that in view of its unfitness into standard genres of mass events and definition struggles, technoparades would not be appropriated by politicians for their causes. This would mean that such demonstrations often embody their own alternative values and serve as spaces of resistance, thus remaining outside mainstream political manipulation. Since technoparades

serve as a form of expression for rave culture, resistance within this subculture can be expressed through them. Ott and Herman (2003)'s definition of resistance is as follows:

We define resistance as those symbolic and material practices that challenge, subvert, or suspend the cultural codes, rules, or norms, which through their everyday operation create, sustain, and naturalize the prevailing social structure in a particular space and time. (Ott and Herman, 251)

Applied to technoparades, this mode of resistance is not only seen through the used street space but can be interpreted through the autonomous and often spontaneous way those events have been initially created. Like the Love Parade or the Techno Parade, they have been an initiative coming from members of techno music subcultures in a desire to take their ideals into the streets, whether it is for the recognition of techno music, or the promotion for peace, love and tolerance. However, organising a technoparade can be seen as a way to bring niche subcultures into the public eye, aligning with mainstream values and space. The very act of participating in a technoparade can sometimes reinforce the prevailing social structures rather than truly challenging them, as participants engage in behaviours that are still within the boundaries of acceptability within society. Moreover, while technoparades may appear to resist mainstream culture, they also run the risk of becoming co-opted by commercial interests or losing their radical edge as they gain popularity (Borneman and Senders 2000, 298).

Dancing in the public space

The space is also significant for technoparades. Streets provide the place where the music is played but they act as a common ground for the mainstream and the subcultural to happen. Indeed, they provide a social space, working as spatial appropriation and recognition. Having this ambiguity of a subculture into a public space can be affiliated to Deleuze and Guattari's deterritorialisation (1980). In the case of technoparades, the streets become a new place of expression for ravers or clubbers, there is an appropriation: the streets belong to them during the parade, as a temporal space of expression. This temporal aspect adds to the idea of deterritorialisation by highlighting the fluidity and momentary nature of spatial boundaries. Also, this shift represents a breaking away from established spatial norms and boundaries: raves, techno music, techno amateurs are no more happening in their former dedicated spaces but in open streets leading to a geographical shift, or delocalisation, of those subcultures. This reterritorialisation in the streets would allow them to become mainstream, or even to globalise in view of the influential and attractive characteristics technoparades have. In contradiction with discotheques, where the owners or sorters exert a power over the customer (Ott and Herman 2003, 253), the parades in the public streets totally elude: first this customer aspect; secondary, the power relationship. Thus, it gives to the 'consumer' or the crowd of technoparades, power to take to the streets and to take over its own behaviour. Moreover, dancing in the streets has the same effect as raves or clubs: there is a communal binding reinforcing the essence of the subculture. Indeed, Borneman and Senders (2000, 304) mention that parades' slogans – "Planet Love, One World...;" are meant to be universalistic and conferring a communal aspect by emphasising on humankind. Additionally, one could effectively compare technoparades to the concept of Temporary Autonomous Zone (Bey 2003), due to their temporally disruption of normal urban life. However, they are more about celebration and entertainment within the framework of established society, often in accordance with the authorities, rather than against it. Therefore, the countercultural and autonomist approaches of Bey cannot be fully applied in that context.

Technoparades, often likened to carnivals, redefine public spaces as arenas for subcultural expression and resistance. They challenge conventional spatial norms, fostering communal bonds and contesting societal expectations. Despite the risk of mainstream recuperation, these events retain their vibrancy as sites of collective celebration and defiance, embodying the transformative potential of communal expression.

In conclusion, this theoretical framework delineates the historical trajectory of Electronic Dance Music (EDM) and its symbiotic relationship with techno music, explaining their profound cultural ramifications and societal implications. By studying various historical events and repressions movements, the study has elucidated the evolution of youth subcultures within a post-modern context spanning the past three decades.

The transition from conventional club culture to the more underground rave culture, underpinned by the techno music genre, serves to underscore the substantive role of these subcultures within contemporary society. This metamorphosis resonates with established subcultural paradigms encompassing notions of resistance, globalisation, authenticity, and moral panic. However, as these subcultures continue to evolve, it becomes evident that a post-subcultural perspective offers a more nuanced understanding, given their inherent fluidity and adaptive responses to the prevailing globalised and capitalist milieu.

Within these subcultures, Technoparades emerge as *novel loci*, reconfiguring their dynamics and their associated spheres of influence, namely, raves and clubs. Despite techno music's ubiquity within both rave and club scenes, it is imperative to acknowledge the divergent ethos, spaces, and jargons respectively characterising them and their community. Accordingly, the term 'techno music (sub)cultures' is adopted to encompass the broader socio-cultural spectrum for the purpose of Techno Parade analysis. In the next chapter, we will discern the potential roles and impacts of technoparades and delineate their implications, through a focus on the Paris Techno Parade.

2 The Case of the Techno Parade as a (Post)-Subcultural Phenomenon of Techno Music

The Techno Parade has played a crucial role in recognising and legitimising techno music and culture in France. It was initiated by Technopol, an association founded in 1996 after the 'Polaris' rave was cancelled due to pressure from Lyon's nightclubs, which opposed clandestine parties that could threaten their businesses. Initially associated with sound systems and free parties, Technopol brought momentum and hope to those involved in the 'alternative' rave economy (Milliard 2009). The association defended independent media, record labels, and artists, promoting the values of the techno scene and upholding the PLUR motto: Peace, Love, Unity, and Respect (Conner, 2020).

Initially associated with drug use and underground scenes, techno culture struggled for acceptance in the mainstream. Key figures like the left-wing politician Jack Lang¹⁰ and organisations such as Technopol worked to shift public perception, portraying techno as a legitimate cultural movement. Thus, this chapter will analyse the discourse surrounding the recognition of techno culture in France through the Techno Parade, which involved significant advocacy from its supporters. It will also examine how they used the event to change public and media perceptions of techno music and culture and extend the advocacy to other related electronic music manifestations.

This framework aims to analyse the significance and evolution of the Techno Parade and the recognition of electronic music culture in France, particularly through this event. The analytical framework for this thesis centres on utilising discourse to examine how the Techno Parade maintains the authenticity of a subculture – techno culture – in the public space. Drawing upon post-subcultural theories, this framework aims to elucidate the discursive strategies employed within the Techno Parade to perpetuate techno culture's authenticity and resistance amidst its evolution and interaction with the public sphere. After analysing how the socio-cultural context of techno music influenced the creation of the first parade (2.1), we will dive into the discourse surrounding the 1998 edition (2.2) and how it impacted the cultural recognition and evolution over 25 years later (2.3). Finally, we will examine the societal and cultural influence it had on French society and culture (2.4).

2.1 Historical Context and Initial Challenges Background

In order to understand how the Paris Techno Parade took a major place in EDM culture and to analyse how it shaped techno culture in France by recognising it through a major public event, one has to dive into the initial background and discourses surrounding techno music in the 1990s. Even if we already explained it earlier, this recap would focus on the specific discourse employed by supporters as well as critics to convey thoughts and prejudices on EDM and, mainly techno.

During this analysis, our focus will remain on techno culture as it is the primary term used by media, organisers, and public when discussing raves and EDM. Both Jack Lang and Josselin Hirsch, Technopol's director in 1998, referred to "techno culture" to encompass all forms of EDM and ways of "partying," whether in raves or clubs, framing it as a cultural phenomenon rather than a mere musical genre (Lang, Hirsch, France2, M6, 1998a). The use of the term "techno culture" instead of "rave culture," "club culture," or "EDM culture" highlights the absence of a French equivalent for such cultures, unlike in Great Britain (Thornton 1995). Despite some aspects of electronic music heritage being French (Kosmicki 2016), there is a lack of application and recognition of EDM, particularly techno, in France due to its "lack of tradition that would make the genre readily acceptable" (Birgy 2003, 225). Moreover, the Techno Parade's inception was influenced by Berlin's Love Parade rather than being a French invention. Jack Lang, a key supporter, called from Berlin during the 1998 Love Parade for a "techno world" and for this type of event to "succeed in Paris and other cities in France" (France2 1998c). By advocating for a techno event in Paris and promoting a worldwide Techno culture, Lang envisioned Paris as a central hub for the genre, capable of influencing global

¹⁰ Jack Lang is member of the French Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste). He was appointed several times Minister of Culture and Education. He is also notably known for being the creator of La Fête de la Musique.

cultures. Indeed, a world and influential capital can help bring techno culture to the forefront with its own Techno Parade.

2.1.1 Moral panic and a demonising rhetoric

Still, prior to its creation and one of the reasons for it, was the desire to face challenges encountered by the EDM, and most precisely rave culture. Indeed, electronic music faced stigma and was often associated with drug use and rebellion, leading to societal and institutional rejection. These prejudices were addressed by critics of the genre in a perspective of risk mitigation, especially with the memorandum on rave parties published by the Home Office and the Anti-Drug Mission in 1995, mentioning them as “high risks gathering”, as well as “reports in the general-purpose and sensational press expressing moral panic” (Birgy 2003, 229). Thus, drugs and preconceptions surrounding techno culture, often portrayed in the media via co-optation or sensationalism could have been the reason why techno culture was demonised. Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) identify five key elements of moral panic within post-subculture: concern, consensus, disproportionality, hostility, and volatility. These elements are evident in the portrayal of techno culture.

Drugs and misconceptions surrounding techno culture, often portrayed in the media contributed to its demonisation. This led to widespread misunderstanding, rejection, and marginalisation of the culture. The perceived threat to public order and health due to drug use at raves raised significant concern. Techno was not seen as a legitimate cultural expression but as a subversive movement, warranting regulation and oversight in order to prevent those issues. Jack Lang, one of the first public figures to defend techno music, acknowledged the role of drugs within raves, stating, “Without being hypocritical either, drugs at raves are a major concern” (France 2 1998a). This statement underscores the dual perspective of recognising the risks while also acknowledging the integral role of drugs in raves and techno culture.

A consensus emerged among the media, authorities, and the public agreeing that action was necessary, leading to policies aimed at suppressing rave events. Victimized by regulation (as mentioned above with the memorandum regarding rave parties) from authorities, media portrayals emphasised negative aspects, such as drug use and illegal activities (trespassing) associated with raves, which were “interpreted primarily as a problem for social order, and as a carrier of a health threat to the young” (Warn 2009, 58). Moreover, those reactions were often disproportionate to the actual threat, marked by heavy regulation and media coverage that focused on the downsides of raves instead of showing the positives aspects. The population thus echoes the media's negative discourse and the measures taken by the authorities. This negative outlook was subsequently adopted by techno music advocates to highlight the need for recognition and a change in perspective towards their culture.

Hostility towards techno culture was then also witnessed, as Lang (France 2 1998a) expressed in a televised interview: “Longtemps la culture techno avait été mal comprise, rejetée, écarté”.¹¹ (Lang, 00:34). Through the use of gradation, Lang wanted to accentuate the negativity to which techno culture had been subjected to. At that time, in the surrounding discourse, techno culture was under the yoke of misunderstanding, but also rejected and not considered a culture in itself.

¹¹ For a long time, techno culture was misunderstood, rejected and dismissed. (my translation)

Furthermore, the term "rejetée" (rejected) signifies a broader societal and institutional rejection of techno culture: it often led to a social stigmatisation and institutional regulations of techno culture and its members. Rave participants were often portrayed as dangerous or deviant. This affected the ability of techno events to secure venues and public support, as communities and local authorities were reluctant to endorse or facilitate such gatherings, which inevitably led to illegal events often held in the countryside, as if to signify society's rejection. Regulatory measures were justified on the grounds of public safety and order but effectively marginalised techno culture. This marginalisation, as expressed through the word "écarté", meant that techno culture was removed and isolated from society, facing hostility from the rest of the population. Techno culture was marginalised not only physically, through the suppression of events, but also culturally. It was not afforded the same recognition and respect as more established cultural forms, such as Rock'n Roll, and was even regulated by the State (cultural) policy (Warn 2009, 60).

Viewed through the lens of post-subcultural theories, particularly Thornton's concept of moral panic (1995), this portrayal aligns with her idea that the media amplifies certain traits to create a moral panic.

The broader discourse often failed to recognise techno as a culture in itself. Instead, it was viewed as a fleeting youth trend or a disruptive subculture. The organisers reflected on this moment in 2013 on their website, describing the tensions surrounding the consideration of techno music back in the 1990s:

La Techno Parade avait pour fondement de dé-diaboliser la musique Techno, longtemps considérée comme celle du diable. Effusions de joie, cracheurs de feu, charmeur de serpent, Fakir neurasthénique et autres tapis rouge sataniques devaient participer à la claque musicale annoncée.¹² (Techno Parade 2013b)

Là c'est un peu la consécration pour nous, pour la techno, parce qu'on a beaucoup été rejeté, victime de chasse aux sorcières mais nous ne sommes pas des sorcières.¹³(Participant from m-report, 1998d)

Even participants noted during a televised report that techno fans were "victims of witch-hunt" emphasising the rejection felt within the community by drawing a parallel with them and society's historical pariahs. This metaphor underscores several key aspects of the discourse surrounding techno culture. The persecution and the scapegoating were characterised by legal and police actions, alongside negative portrayals in the media and public discourse that painted techno culture members as dangerous or deviant. This coverage created a climate of moral panic, where techno culture was seen as a societal threat. The media tended to selectively report on negative incidents, neglecting the positive aspects of techno culture. This selective reporting reinforced stereotypes and contributed to the perception of techno enthusiasts as inherently problematic. However, regarding the Techno Parade, media discourse fluctuated, they tended

¹² The aim of the Techno Parade was to demonise techno music, which had long been considered the devil's music. Effusions of joy, fire-eaters, snake charmers, neurasthenic Fakir and other satanic red carpets were to be part of the musical slap in the face. (my translation)

¹³ This is a bit of a consecration for us, for techno, because we've been rejected a lot, victims of witch-hunts, but we're not witches. (my translation)

be less negative when it concerned the parade, rather than for other raves, for which they emphasised on the miscellaneous. The Techno Parade is thus seen as an event meant to counter this ‘persecution’ and change the perspective on techno music and culture. The participant acknowledged that this parade was a form of recognition for the community of techno fans and for the techno culture itself. The goal of the parade is to demonstrate to the public that this youth culture is legitimate, and that its members are not deviant.

However, coming from detractors, criticism plays on the musical aspect as evidenced by this street interview given to an old woman at the Techno Parade: “Je suis contre la techno, contre la musique, parce que ça fait du bruit. C’est de la danse punitive.”¹⁴ (France 2, 1998b). This comment exemplifies broader attitudes of misunderstanding and rejection from certain segments of society, particularly older and more conservative demographics. It encapsulates several layers of cultural and generational conflicts regarding the perception of techno. The term “noisy” is used pejoratively, implying a lack of musicality and aesthetic value. This reflects a subjective judgment that views techno music not as a legitimate form of artistic expression but as an unwanted disruption. This perception is influenced by generational differences in musical taste, where older individuals may have different criteria for what constitutes ‘good’ music. Moreover, the lack of broadcasting of techno music on mainstream music channels or radios means that people are not accustomed to hearing it, which further contributes to its negative reputation. This also represents the cultural clash within society: the rejection of techno as “noisy” highlights a broader cultural distinction between traditional values and contemporary youth culture. For older generations, techno may represent a departure from familiar musical forms and social norms and thus be interpreted as a form of distinction from the members of the techno music subculture. Following Thorton (1995), this form of distinction expresses the authenticity of the youth culture in itself.

Nevertheless, the clash is not just about sound but also about the social contexts in which techno is consumed—late-night raves, unconventional or illegal venues, and a youth-dominated scene that challenges established social orders (with drug consumption for example). Furthermore, the idea of a “punitive dance” conveys a moral and aesthetic disapproval of techno culture. The term “punitive” implies a sense of punishment or discomfort, indicating that the speaker finds techno music physically or emotionally taxing. Thus, describing techno as “punitive” suggests that it is harsh, aggressive, and lacking in pleasure. This reflects a value judgment that contrasts techno's rhythmic intensity and repetitive beats with more traditional forms of dance and music. These statements reflect broader societal trends in the reception of techno culture, especially at its beginning. The opposition from older individuals highlights a generational divide in the acceptance of new cultural forms. Techno, as a product of youth culture, challenges the tastes and sensibilities of older generations. This divide is not unique to techno; it is a recurring theme in the history of popular music, where each new genre often faces resistance from established cultural norms (Warn 2009, 58).

With these statements, we can see how techno culture is framed as a disruptive and deviant phenomenon, reflecting broader societal tensions around youth culture and new forms of artistic expression. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for recognising challenges and negotiations involved in the cultural acceptance of techno, and the cultural context surrounding Techno Parade.

¹⁴ I am against techno, because it is noisy. It is a punitive dance. (my translation)

However, this marginalisation coupled with stigmatisation, also fuelled a form of cultural subversion. The very aspects that led to the rejection of techno culture—its association with rebellion, drug use, and non-conformity—became points of identity and resistance for its proponents. The Techno Parade, therefore, emerged not just as a celebration of music but as a form of cultural resistance and assertion. It represented a reclaiming of space and cultural recognition, challenging the negative perceptions and regulatory constraints imposed on techno culture. The first Techno Parade in 1998 arrived at just the right time to face these above-mentioned challenges and change society's perspective on techno culture. Thus, in the next chapter, we will see how the first edition of the Techno Parade was a pivotal turn for techno music and related culture in France.

2.2 The First Techno Parade's Role (1998)

The first year of the Techno Parade was a groundbreaking public demonstration of techno culture, drawing over 200,000 participants to the streets of Paris. It also attracted 1.3 million live TV viewers and 600,000 viewers for the final DJ set at night, accounting for 22% of the TV audience share (Techno Parade 2013b). These numbers highlight the high anticipation and acclaim for this inaugural techno event. The event's lineup featured star DJs like Carl Cox, Jeff Mills, and Laurent Garnier (Techno Parade 2013b), helping to bring EDM to the streets. The organisers aimed to change perspectives on electronic music by making it accessible through television and featuring globally renowned DJs. Beyond the impressive numbers and lineup, the Techno Parade carried a message of protest. Organisers often linked the event's impact and role to the future of techno culture. The parade sought to raise awareness among the broadest audience possible, evident in the live TV broadcast and the speeches of organisers and participants.

2.2.1 First, A Protest

The militant aspect was aimed at countering negative perceptions, as mentioned earlier, and gain recognition for the techno music sector – artists and cultural ethos included. In the general discourse – organisers and participants – the 1998 Techno Parade's goal was protesting. The first parade was designed as a protest not only against the prejudices faced by techno music fans and the desire for artist recognition but also as a form of advocacy for techno culture itself. By doing so, they aimed to elevate the status of techno culture from a marginalised subculture to a recognised and respected component of mainstream culture. The first Techno Parade was thus positioned as a protestation—a deliberate and organised effort to make the voices of the techno community heard publicly. The participants were seen as protesters, advocating for the space and role of techno music within the popular and mainstream cultural landscape. By marching through the streets of Paris, they physically and symbolically claimed their place within the cultural milieu, challenging the boundaries that had previously marginalised them.

Militancy is a recurring theme, coupled with the word 'manifestation', which in French can be understood either as a special event, or a protest march, as evidenced on the official website or during a televised interview (France 2 1998a) for a public channel:

Un objectif gorgé d'ambition et lubrifié à la passion des ses instigateurs, celui de soutenir l'expression de la culture techno en France. Une portée militante voulu à travers la mobilisation et la démocratisation¹⁵. (Techno Parade 2013b)

Cette manifestation est une manifestation de fondation, l'acte de fondation de la culture techno. Après le succès de la manifestation, la circulaire est de faite abrogée dans les têtes et à l'avenir on accordera à cette culture comme aux autres cultures de France, une vraie liberté¹⁶. (Lang, 01:42)

The Techno Parade is inherently a form of protest and a call for recognition. The organisers of the parade use the language and strategies of social and political movements to mobilise participants, framing the event as a way to assert their presence and rights. In parallel, the Parade is deeply connected to rave culture and free parties, which have long been associated with notions of resistance and countercultural protest. This connection underscores the parade's role not just as a music event but as part of a broader movement advocating for cultural and social change. Scholars such as Alwakeel (2010), Sevin (2012), and St John (2009) have explored the political dimensions of free parties, highlighting how these events serve as acts of resistance against mainstream cultural norms and societal restrictions. By comparing the Techno Parade to free parties, we can better understand its political significance and its role within the larger context of electronic music culture. Unlike the often-clandestine nature of free parties, which resist mainstream visibility and regulation, the Techno Parade is a public, highly visible event. Its organisers aim to bring electronic music and its associated culture into the public eye, seeking broader acceptance and recognition rather than maintaining an underground status. Using Sarah Thornton's post-subcultural theory (1995), we can interpret the Techno Parade not as a rejection of mainstream culture but as a demand for inclusion within it. Thornton's perspective suggests that contemporary youth cultures often seek to negotiate their place within the broader societal framework rather than wholly opposing it. The Techno Parade exemplifies this by advocating for the visibility and legitimisation of techno culture within mainstream society.

2.2.2 Mobilisation and Public Participation Through Celebration

The Techno Parade mobilised a diverse group of participants, as evidenced by the variety of voices and perspectives captured in the event's documentation. Arnaud Frisch, one of the organisers of the first parade, highlighted the extensive mobilisation of both the public and the techno community in an interview for the public channel (France 3 1998b), noting the significant turnout and engagement: “Le public et la fête Techno sont énormément mobilisés”.¹⁷ (Frisch, 00:31)

¹⁵ The aim is to support the expression of techno culture in France. A militant scope intended through mobilisation and democratisation. (my translation)

¹⁶ This event is a foundation event, the founding act of techno culture. Following the success of the event, the circular has now been repealed in people's minds, and in the future this culture, like all other cultures in France, will be given a real chance to express itself. (my translation)

¹⁷ The public and Techno are heavily mobilised. (my translation)



Figure 1: 1998 Techno Parade visual communication. Translation: Everyone at the Parade!

Behind this statement, there is the idea of democratising techno music by welcoming everyone to join the Parade.

Additionally, the discourse emphasised the positive aspects of techno culture, focusing on fun and social unity rather than the stereotypical associations with drug use. One participant remarked (France 2 1998b):

*Jack Lang a permis à tout les jeunes de dédramatiser un peu ce mouvement techno, pour dire que la Techno c'est pas seulement de la drogue, c'est des jeunes qui s'amuse.*¹⁸ (France2, 00:12)

This encapsulates the parade's intent to redefine public perception. Lang (France 2 1998a) explicitly mentions both the joyful atmosphere and the event's attraction to the public at large, accentuating the strong rallying effect the parade had:

*On ressent un sentiment de joie, pas seulement parmi les praticiens de la techno mais aussi parmi le grand public.*¹⁹ (Lang, 00:41)

Indeed, the initial message conveyed through communications at that time and especially with the poster that says “Tous à la Parade!” (figure 1), was a broad mobilisation of people, claiming an intergenerational blend, allowing everyone, and especially those who are not familiar with the culture to access to it and even appreciate it. Implicitly, it expresses the desire to make techno culture accessible and show its community and inclusive characteristics, inviting everyone no matter their musical taste, age or social class to listen to techno music and be part of its ethos, which is by essence an open-minded culture.

¹⁸ Jack Lang has allowed all young people to destigmatise this techno movement, to say that techno is not just about drugs, it's young people having fun. (my translation)

¹⁹ There is a feeling of joy, not only among techno practitioners but also among the general public. (my translation)

2.2.3 Communal and Symbolic Narratives

In some archives, the discourse used echoes the religious lexical field used by detractors of techno music:

Pour la Techno Parade, le 19 septembre est ce jour sacro-saint qui déboule à grand coups de basses dans les rues de Paris. Sous une forme festive, cette manifestation revendicative a permis, en complément des actions de l'association Technopol, de mieux faire accepter et comprendre les musiques électroniques auprès des médias, du grand public, et des institutions qui ont salué cette première édition, comme l'arrivée d'un pacha électronique dans la planète Techno. Gratuite, revendicative. La réussite bien huilée de cette manifestation œcuménique hétéroclite a facilité le dialogue avec le pouvoir public et des institutions parfois trop frileuses.²⁰ (Techno Parade 2013b)

Indeed, the use of religious words fits in with the communal and almost religious characteristics of techno culture and practices as a post-subculture, namely through “neo-tribes” (Maffesoli 1996). This idea of neo-tribes characterises the communal and temporary participation present in rave or club culture, as well as in the parade. Moreover, the terms “sacro-saint” and “ecumenical manifestation” endow the parade with a quasi-religious significance, suggesting that it is a ritualistic celebration that goes beyond mere entertainment, akin to a carnival. It aims to unite everyone, regardless of culture, musical taste, generation, or class. This framing positions the Techno Parade as a crucial cultural event, almost sacred in its role and meaning, underscoring its importance in the collective identity of techno fans and techno music culture. By framing the parade as a religious or tribal event, the discourse elevates its cultural importance, legitimising techno culture within both the subcultural and mainstream contexts, bringing everyone together for a ‘Techno mass’, celebrating music and culture. It also parallels the demonising lexical field used to criticise techno music. As explained earlier, this music genre and its fans were considered deviant, following a kind of “demonised” cult, which can be associated with the very communal essence of techno culture. However, this narrative began to shift significantly with the impact the parade had.

2.2.4 The Turning Point

This very first French Techno Parade was a pivotal event in changing perception on techno and act as a form of speculation on the future of this culture. The event symbolised a turning point where techno music was no longer confined to the margins but was stepping into mainstream cultural consciousness. It opened discussions about the potential evolution of the genre and its integration into broader cultural and artistic landscapes. Participants and organisers openly considered this first year as the beginning of the recognition of the techno culture. The extensive media coverage of the first Techno Parade was instrumental in amplifying its impact. Major media outlet (M6) covered the event extensively, providing a platform for the genre to

²⁰ For the Techno Parade, 19 September is that sacrosanct day when the streets of Paris erupt with the pounding of the bass. In addition to the activities of the Technopol association, the festive nature of this protest event has helped to increase acceptance and understanding of electronic music among the media, the general public and institutions, who have hailed this first edition as the arrival of an electronic pacha on the Techno planet. Free of charge. The well-oiled success of this eclectic, ecumenical event has facilitated dialogue with public authorities and institutions that are sometimes too cautious. (my translation)

reach a broader audience. This coverage not only informed the public about the event but also helped to demystify the culture and the participants.

Josselin Hirsch, one of the first organisers, emphasises the parade's success in gaining recognition for the techno culture in this interview during the live broadcast of the parade (M6 1998a):

C'est un moyen de gagner la reconnaissance de la culture techno en s'affichant au grand jour et en montrant qu'on est pas un bande d'allumé déconnectés des réalités mais des gens qui avons envie de faire la fête et une grande fête populaire et gratuite et de montrer notre joie de vivre.²¹ (Hirsch, 02:41)

He highlighted the parade's role in demonstrating that techno enthusiasts were not what detractors and the moral panic said about them. This reflects the broader aim of the parade to integrate techno culture into mainstream acceptance while retaining its unique identity and values. The sentence "getting out in the open" underscores the parade's role in making techno culture visible and transparent to the public. This visibility is a strategic move to counteract the negative stereotypes and secretive connotations often associated with electronic music events. By bringing the culture into the public eye, the parade seeks to demystify and legitimise it. The explicit rejection of negative stereotypes (e.g., being "disconnected from reality") and the emphasis on normalcy and festivity serve to subvert the deviant image of techno culture. This subversion is essential for transforming public perception and fostering a more positive judgement, as evidenced by the participants discourse:

Ca va libérer les mœurs, ça va faire comprendre aux gens que c'est pas nocifs, c'est les jeunes qui s'expriment.²² (France 3 1998b, 01:43)

Participants also have in mind to contribute to changing perspectives within the public, about techno culture. The sentence "it's going to liberate traditions" suggests a transformative impact on societal attitudes. The use of "liberate", apart from echoing the ethos of free parties, implies a release from restrictive or conservative norms, indicating that the parade challenges existing moral frameworks. This liberation is positioned as a positive and necessary evolution, aligning with the broader goals of the techno movement to foster openness and acceptance. It highlights the parade's role in educating the public. This educational function aims to dispel myths and misconceptions about techno culture, particularly those linking it to harmful behaviours such as drug use. By emphasising the non-harmful nature of the culture, participants seek to shift public perception towards a more informed and positive view. This also emphasises the role of the Techno Parade in reclaiming the public space to the youth. This act of reclaiming cultural space is central to the subversion of mainstream cultural norms, especially coming from a youth subculture, asserting the legitimacy and value of techno culture within the broader societal

²¹ It's a way of gaining recognition for techno culture by getting out in the open and showing that we're not just a bunch of disconnected freaks, but people who want to have a party, a free, popular party and show our joie de vivre. (my translation)

²² It's going to liberate traditions, it's going to make people understand that it's not harmful, it's young people expressing themselves. (my translation)

landscape. The parade thus becomes a symbol of resistance against cultural marginalisation and a declaration of the right to cultural recognition.

Moreover, the political support for the Techno Parade was unprecedented and crucial for its success. Key political figures, including the then Minister of Culture, Catherine Trautmann²³, endorsed the event (M6 1998d):

*Je pense que c'est simplement la reconnaissance qu'il y aujourd'hui un forme d'expression et de création forte, qu'elle existe, qu'elle s'exporte.*²⁴ (Trautman, 02:07)

This endorsement was significant because it represented an official recognition and validation of techno music as a cultural phenomenon. By acknowledging electronic music as an “existing” and “strong form of expression and creation”, she affirmed its legitimacy and artistic value. This recognition from a governmental figure is crucial in validating the cultural significance of techno music and supporting its integration into mainstream cultural narratives. It helps bridge the gap between the techno community and public institutions. The government's support helped to dispel the negative connotations associated with the genre and provided a framework for future events, ensuring they were conducted safely and responsibly. Trautman also mentioned the exportation of French electronic music, in a context of globalisation of French Touch²⁵, pointing to the international reach and influence of French electronic music. This exportability signifies the global cultural exchange facilitated by the techno movement, suggesting that it transcends national boundaries and contributes to a broader cultural dialogue. This aspect of the discourse underscores the role and impact of the Techno Parade in promoting cultural exchange and echoing Jack Lang’s mention of a “techno world”.

The protesting aspect of the Techno Parade had broader implications for how subcultures can assert their place within mainstream culture. It demonstrated that subcultures, through organised and peaceful demonstrations, could demand recognition and challenge the dominant cultural narratives that often exclude them. Through a post-subcultural perspective, this would be seen as what Bennett argues about dance music expressing a fluid and shifting process. For him, "clubbing appears to be regarded less as a singularly definable activity and more as a series of fragmented, temporal experiences," engaging with different crowds (Bennett 1999, 611). Thus, the parade sets a precedent for how cultural movements could leverage public demonstrations to achieve visibility and legitimacy, playing on the diversity of crowds and roles. By framing the techno community as a legitimate and valuable part of the cultural landscape, the 1998 Techno Parade paved the way for future events and initiatives aimed at integrating subcultures into the mainstream. To understand its long-term effects, the next section will examine the recognition and perception during the 2023 edition.

²³ Socialist Party

²⁴ I think it's simply recognition that today there is a strong form of expression and creation, that it exists, that it's being exported. (my translation)

²⁵ In 1997, Daft Punk had sold 1.5 million albums globally and French DJs such as Cassius or Mr Oizo reached the top of European charts (Birgy 2003, 230)

2.3 Ambiguities in Cultural Recognition and Evolution in Perception: The Legacy 25 Years After (2023)

This chapter analyses the impacts observed in the first year of the Techno Parade and applies them to the event's evolution, highlighting the growing acceptance and integration of electronic music into mainstream culture. By 2023, the event has become a significant success, attracting over 400,000 attendees and featuring 15 floats (Blandin 2023) in the streets of Paris, illustrating its increased importance and popularity since 1998, when only 200,000 attendees were present. Organisers and participants alike agree that the goal of recognising techno music as a legitimate genre has been achieved. However, challenges remain concerning the recognition of other genres within electronic music and industry-related issues. While the discourse surrounding both the first and latest editions expresses success regarding the recognition and perception of techno culture in France, the latest Parade, enjoying greater visibility and a different social context, also advocates for broader causes. Finally, all stakeholders agree that continuous efforts are needed to support the electronic music industry and address its challenges.

2.3.1 Goal Achieved: Bringing Techno Music in the Public Space

As a consequence of the success of the first edition, the Techno Parade became a yearly event, which allowed for the achievement of the initial goals intended by organisers in 1998, namely the representation of electronic music and techno culture in the public space, embodying the liberation of the techno movement and its full recognition. The first edition is still considered an important milestone, as evidenced by two interviews from Lang, 25 years apart:

*Après le succès de la manifestation, la circulaire est de faite abrogée dans les têtes et à l'avenir on accordera à cette culture comme aux autres cultures de France, une vraie liberté.*²⁶ (France 2 1998a, 03:16))

*Il y a 25 ans, la techno était montrée du doigt. Aujourd'hui, elle a droit de cite.*²⁷ (Lang in La Voix du Nord 2023)

Organisers, participants and artists, such as DJ Warum for the SACEM, respectively acknowledge that Techno Parade has allowed to make techno music public and became a showcase to the public:

*La Techno Parade, plus grande fête populaire et électro de France, revient défilé dans les rues de la capitale pour célébrer son 25ème anniversaire. Elle constitue un moment unique annuel de fête, de liberté, de danse et de proximité où près de 200 DJs venu-e-s du monde entier se retrouvent.*²⁸ (Techno Parade 2023)

²⁶ Following the success of the demonstration, the circular has now been repealed in people's minds, and in the future this culture, like other cultures in France, will be given real freedom. (my translation)

²⁷ 25 years ago, techno was singled out. Today, it has the right to exist. (my translation)

²⁸ The Techno Parade, France's biggest popular electro festival, returns to the streets of the capital to celebrate its 25th anniversary. It's a unique annual celebration of freedom, dance and community, featuring nearly 200 DJs from all over the world. (my translation)

*La Techno Parade a permis de montrer qu'on n'était pas des sauvages. Ça permet d'exprimer l'art de la techno dans la rue.*²⁹ (Darvey 2023)

*Ce genre de manifestation permet à nos musiques d'exister dans l'espace public, parmi les commerces, les habitations, auprès de toutes les générations.*³⁰ (SACEM 2023)

Indeed, the annual celebration of music, freedom, dance, and community represents the core values of the Techno Parade, linking it directly to rave culture's ethos. Joy, regularly associated with dance, is often considered a characteristic of the Techno Parade, and embodied within techno culture and the idea of partying. The notion emerging from these quotes mainly refers to having the right to exist within the public space and to be free to express oneself publicly. This not only refers to the laws that banned this kind of music, often pushing it to abandoned places or the countryside, but also to the effort to introduce the music to people who are unfamiliar with it. The only way to achieve this is by playing it on the streets, as a form of 'deterritorialization' of both the music and its culture. This highlights the importance of the Techno Parade in integrating electronic music into everyday public life. By allowing techno to be expressed in the streets and other public spaces, the Parade reclaims public spaces for cultural expression. This public visibility is crucial for challenging the marginalisation of electronic music and asserting its place within the broader cultural landscape. These statements underscore the Parade's function as a platform for showcasing the artistic and cultural value of techno music.

Moreover, freedom of partying and playing techno music is often present in the discourse surrounding the achievements and impacts of the Techno Parade. It is seen as the event that allowed for the right to electronic music to be played within the public space. First, the Parade is seen as a symbolic event to cancel all the forbidding laws encompassing electronic music events, as it was the case for the memorandum in 1997, it symbolises the mental and societal shift towards acceptance. It implies that the restrictive attitudes and policies are no longer applicable or relevant in contemporary society because techno was able to parade in the streets. Jack Lang mentions the promise of "a real freedom" being accorded to techno culture paralleling the broader theme of cultural recognition. It signifies not just tolerance but an active embrace of techno as a valid and valued cultural expression, free to express itself publicly and without being hindered by laws or by misconceptions. Implicitly, such an event would familiarise a new audience with this music genre. The discourse illustrates how public events such as the Techno Parade can change public perception.

Simultaneously, the organisers and artists have broadened their discourse to include not only techno music but also all other genres under the umbrella term "électro." This aims to legitimise various artistic forms and advocate for their recognition and popularity through the visibility of the parade. This shift is evident in the 2023 edition, although no specific data pinpoints when it occurred. Nevertheless, the recognition of techno music and culture has embraced the idea that techno is already a subgenre of EDM. This inclusion demonstrates a desire for other subgenres to demand rights as well, which explains why the term 'électro' is now more commonly used.

²⁹ The Techno Parade showed that we weren't savages,' says this 24-year-old maintenance worker. It allowed us to express the art of techno in the street. (my translation)

³⁰ This kind of event allows our music to exist in the public space, among shops and homes, and across all generations. (my translation)

2.3.2 A Political Demonstration?

Nous avons la marque de confiserie Haribo et la boisson Crazy Tiger qui sont présentes sur le défilé avec leurs chars sur lesquelles elles font une activation événementielle. De plus, elles bénéficient d'une visibilité média avec notre partenaire Fun Radio.³¹ (Vaudecranne 2023a)

De voir qu'après 25 ans la Techno Parade existe encore, ça me donne de la joie. Parce que ça montre que le combat qu'on a mené a porté ses fruits, que l'événement est aujourd'hui installé, identifié, et qu'il permet de donner de la visibilité aux acteurs et aux actrices des musiques électroniques. Il nous permet aussi de prendre la parole dans les médias pour évoquer différents sujets et porter nos revendications, qui ont forcément évolué depuis 1998 mais qui restent pour certaines d'actualité.³² (Vaudecranne 2023b)

Tommy Vaudecrane, the current director of the parade, highlighted in two interviews the successful outcomes of the Techno Parade's advocacy efforts, demonstrating tangible achievements and progress in gaining cultural recognition. The terms "established" and "identified" underscore the Parade's stable presence within France's cultural landscape, marking its transition from a subcultural event to a mainstream celebration. This shift underscores the Parade's significance in providing visibility for electronic music artists, showcasing their talents, and promoting the genre as a legitimate and valued art form. He acknowledges that, thanks to the parade, the techno music industry has gained greater legitimacy in the French cultural context. Indeed, since 1998, some progress have been made regarding raves and clubs: Sarkoval³³, increasing number of EDM festivals and spaces for reflection (Gaité Lyrique, Rendez-Vous Electroniques), international reputation of French Touch or blended concert mixing techno music and classical genres (Crétal 2024a). Still, it seems that, EDM and techno needs to be blended with other "valued institutions in order to be legitimate, as if it was only 'aesthetic' if it was extracted from its usual venues: the clubs" (Crétal 2024a).

He also notes the evolving demands and the context of the sector, which are summarised on the event's website. In 2023, the parade is able to use websites and social media communications to share and promote the event, leveraging more visibility, be it economic or social: branding or political messages. This indicates that the parade utilises this communication strategy on their website to promote their event and the philosophy of rave and club culture behind as it is historically militant:

Avec comme objectif culturel la mise en avant de talents émergents et la vitrine internationale de l'effervescence du genre. Derrière cet événement festif, la Techno Parade permet de revendiquer des problèmes majeurs. En 2018, il était question de contester la 'circulaire Collomb', soutenir

³¹ We have the Haribo confectionery brand and the Crazy Tiger drink, which are present on the parade with their floats on which they are carrying out an event activation. What's more, they have media exposure through our partner Fun Radio. (my translation)

³² I'm delighted to see that the Techno Parade is still going strong after 25 years. Because it shows that the fight we put up has paid off, that the event is now established and identified, and that it gives visibility to those involved in electronic music. It also gives us a chance to speak out in the media on a range of issues and put forward our demands, some of which have obviously changed since 1998 but some of which are still relevant today. (my translation)

³³ Conf. 1.1

économiquement le développement des musiques électroniques en Province, supprimer la répression et interdire les saisies de matériel pour les événements amateurs. En 2019, la parade était placée sous le signe de l'hommage. Celui du jeune nantais Steve Maia Caniço, décédé lors d'un événement tragique.³⁴ (Techno Parade 2023)

Between 1998 and 2023, the social context surrounding techno music in France has undergone significant changes, reflecting broader shifts in cultural and societal dynamics. Police crackdowns and legal challenges, particularly in the context of increased security measures following terrorist attacks³⁵, have posed barriers to the expression of this culture. The Techno Parade's primary objective in 1998 was to demand less police interference and to protect the rights for raves and techno festivals without fear of persecution. Vaudecrane, who is also the director of Technopol, highlights these issues as “major societal problems” underscoring the ongoing repression, notably faced by sound systems and free parties.

While advocacy against repression remains a core mission, the Techno Parade now also grapples with new and complex issues such as branding, commercialisation, and social media visibility. The increased prominence of the Internet and social media platforms has transformed how the parade is promoted and perceived. These platforms have broadened the parade's reach, making it more visible to a global audience, but they have also introduced challenges related to maintaining the parade's original militant ethos. The dual forces of commercialisation and institutional relationships have further complicated the parade's mission. On the one hand, the need for sponsorship and branding has introduced elements of commercialisation that were less abundant and necessary in the earlier years, leading to tensions with the parade's authenticity and its commitment to its original goals. On the other hand, the parade's growing relationship with institutions, including municipal, political, and cultural organisations, has required a careful balancing act to ensure that its advocacy efforts remain strong. Nevertheless, the use of ‘militant’ vocabulary: “fight”, “recognition”, “protest demonstration”, “defending interests” clearly shows the protesting and resisting aspect inherent to rave and club culture to which the parade is affiliated and its desire to sustain its ethos.

The Techno Parade has grown in popularity, evident from the high number of attendees and global programming, including international DJs. This has established the parade as a world-influential event. Vaudecrane explicitly mentions it as an “identified and established” event representing electronic music, its culture, and its artists. The parade’s image now supports broader societal causes and often conveys a political stance, such as paying tribute to a young man who drowned while fleeing police during La Fête de la Musique, or against legal regulations implemented by the government. This suggests that the parade creates opportunities for organisers and participants to discuss various issues and politically advocate for their causes through media engagement. The statement that “demands have necessarily evolved since 1998 but remain relevant” indicates the dynamic nature of these advocacy efforts, with the core mission of promoting and defending electronic music culture persisting over time. The Techno

³⁴ Its cultural objective is to showcase emerging talent and showcase the effervescence of the genre internationally. Behind this festive event, the Techno Parade is an opportunity to raise major issues. In 2018, it was a question of challenging the ‘Collomb memorandum, providing economic support for the development of electronic music in the provinces, abolishing repression and banning the seizure of equipment for amateur events. The theme of the 2019 parade was tribute. The tribute was paid to Steve Maia Caniço, a young man from Nantes who died in a tragic incident. (my translation)

³⁵ Collomb Memorandum (by the name of the Centrist Party Minister of Interior in 2018, under Macron presidency) on the pricing of police presence during events.

Parade is willing to address the problems gravitating around electronic music events, such as police repression and financial issues, as well as societal problems, directly taking a political stance against government decisions.

Moreover, Vaudecrane mentions the importance of branding the event to economically sustain the sector (“We have the Haribo confectionery brand and the Crazy Tiger drink [...] they are carrying out an event activation [...] they have media exposure through our partner Fun Radio”), especially in the context of high economic pressure faced by the cultural sector in France (Moisselin 2023). It implies that the event is big and popular enough to attract brands to use it as a showcase for their products, as well as a form of financial contribution for the event, in order to sustain it. Thus, it shows a form of commercialisation and commodification of the event and then of EDM culture. The event aligns with the post-subcultural idea that youth cultures are now not separated from consumer capitalism but part of this mass consumption (Best, 1998), leading to a redefinition of the resistance often expressed within rave and club culture, and through the parade.

In conclusion, the militant and political aspect in 2023 does not have the same implications as in 1998 because of the importance of promoting the Techno Parade on the Internet and social media, and the changing social, political and economic context. The Techno Parade's advocacy efforts have necessarily evolved since 1998 but remain relevant, reflecting the dynamic nature of the event's role in promoting and defending electronic music culture in France.

2.3.3 A Place for Better Recognition

The discourse 25 years after the first year of the Techno Parade shows the continuity in the commitment for recognition of techno music, but with an emphasis on electronic music, rather than just on techno.

Perpétuer son engagement en faveur d'une meilleure reconnaissance des musiques électroniques.³⁶ (Techno Parade 2023)

Faire comprendre qu'il y a encore une inégalité de traitement. Il ne faut plus avoir peur ! Le temps du doute et des craintes autour des musiques électronique est dépassé. Il est temps que les festivals de musiques électro soient considérés comme des festivals de musique comme les autres.³⁷ (SACEM 2023)

The official website and Vaudecrane's statements reflect a sustained commitment to achieving better recognition for electronic music. The use of "perpetuate" implies a continuous and enduring effort to advance the status and acknowledgment of electronic music within the broader cultural landscape. This aligns with the quest for recognition, highlighting that despite past achievements, there remains a persistent need to advocate for the genre's rightful place alongside other recognised forms of music. Vaudecrane brings attention to the ongoing disparities in how electronic music is treated compared to other genres. The quote "there is still unequal treatment" underscores the persistent challenges and prejudices that electronic music faces, notably regarding teknivals and amateur raves. In the 25 years between the first and last editions of the parade, free parties have never been recognised and events are almost always

³⁶ Perpetuate its commitment to better recognition of electronic music. (my translation)

³⁷ Make it clear that there is still unequal treatment. There's no need to be afraid! The time for doubts and fears about electronic music is over. It's time for electronic music festivals to be considered as music festivals like any others. (my translation)

banned or stopped by prefectures. It reflects the need for continuous advocacy and efforts to address these inequalities, aligning with a form of negotiation of cultural recognition. By declaring that "the time for doubt and fears is over", he underscores that electronic music should no longer be viewed with suspicion or negativity while advocating for the music genre. This reflects a shift in public perception that the Techno Parade aims to solidify, moving towards greater acceptance and understanding of the genre, as well as the recurring existing problems that the Techno Parade has supposedly solved. Nevertheless, it implicitly refers to free parties and teknivals, which are, at the moment, unrecognised and repressed events.

The 'militant' vocabulary is highly present in the discourse of the Techno Parade organisers in the social media (figure 2³⁸ and figure 3³⁹), attesting that the fight for a better recognition and inclusion within French culture is still needed:



Figure 2 – Techno Parade @Technoparade_paris.
"Exprime-toi"., September 23rd, 2023.
https://www.instagram.com/p/Cxh1wvpLE5Z/?img_index=5

³⁸ Express yourself. It is the moment to defend the interests of Electronic Music. The Techno Parade is, above all, a protest demonstration. (my translation)

³⁹ Paris is magical. You were almost 400, 000 people treading the Parisian cobblestones this Saturday to celebrate our 25th anniversary. This parade will go down in history! A big thanks to everyone for your energy and your goodwill. Thanks to all the collectives, the organisers, artists, technical staff, and to all the people working hard to keep the movement going and to make France one of the reference country in terms of Electronic music. It is time for us to have the recognition we deserve, the fight goes on. (my translation)



Figure 3 – Techno Parade @technoparade_paris. September 25th, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CxnluBSrOXj/>

The advocacy discourse remains prominent, aiming to uphold the original goals while also addressing the evolving nature of the genre, which could be at risk of stigmatisation:

*La Techno Parade reste et restera une manifestation revendicative pour porter les messages de défense, de reconnaissance et de promotion des cultures électroniques. Aujourd'hui, il y a une acceptation des musiques électroniques mais quand nous avons créé la première Techno Parade en 1998, elles subissaient une forte discrimination. Nous sommes la vitrine, le porte-drapeau, le porte-voix pour montrer, faire entendre, faire exister et faire reconnaître nos musiques. [...] Nous travaillons toujours à faire passer un certain nombre de messages auprès des institutions. [...] Aujourd'hui, on a passé cette étape mais on reste vigilants sur les questions d'acceptation.*⁴⁰ (Vaudecranne 2023a)

Here, Vaudecrane emphasises that the Parade "remains and will remain a protest event," highlighting its mission to defend, recognise, and promote electronic music cultures. This advocacy reflects the Parade's commitment to changing perceptions about electronic music, maintaining its original goals from 25 years ago, and addressing the repression of raves. He contrasts the current acceptance of electronic music with the discrimination it faced in 1998, showing the progress made and the persistent need for advocacy. He describes the Parade as a "showcase, the standard-bearer, the voice," emphasising its role in providing visibility and a

⁴⁰ The Techno Parade remains, and will continue to remain, a protest event that conveys messages of defence, recognition and promotion of electronic cultures. Today, electronic music is accepted, but when we created the first Techno Parade in 1998, there was a lot of discrimination against it. We're the showcase, the standard-bearer, the voice for showing off our music, making it heard, making it exist and getting it recognised. Our aim is to show their dynamism and the audiences they attract, as well as their importance in the French cultural landscape. We're still working on getting a number of messages across to the institutions. [...] We're past that stage now, but we're still vigilant about acceptance issues. (my translation)

platform for electronic music. This aligns with the quest for recognition, ensuring the genre is seen, heard, and acknowledged. Additionally, Vaudecrane mentions working with institutions, highlighting the importance of institutional engagement in achieving recognition and support for electronic music.

Even artists express their desire for better recognition within the society:

*Les musiques électroniques cherchent encore leur place, elles sont à cheval entre les musiques actuelles et le monde des discothèques, on a vu pendant le covid à quel point nous sommes encore stigmatisés. Ce genre de moment permet de se fédérer et de se sentir représentés.*⁴¹ (SACEM 2023)

DJ Warum's statement highlights the ongoing struggle for electronic music to find its rightful place within the broader music landscape. The sentence “still trying to find its place” indicates that, despite progress, electronic music is still navigating its identity and acceptance. Being “straddling between contemporary music and the nightclub world” suggests a liminal space where electronic music exists, not fully integrated into mainstream contemporary/popular music nor confined to the nightclub scene. This duality underscores the continuous negotiation for cultural recognition and legitimacy. The electronic music sector is still weak, and any societal issues affect it greatly: the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the heightened challenges and stigmatisation faced by the electronic music community during this period. This observation aligns with the ongoing quest for recognition, showing that despite previous gains, electronic music still faces significant societal and institutional hurdles. The parade “helps [artists] to come together and feel represented” highlights the collective empowerment and visibility that such events bring. This sense of unity and representation is crucial for recognition and validation, as it strengthens the community's voice and visibility within the broader cultural landscape as well as representing the values of the rave culture.

It is important to mention that social media communications of the Techno Parade mention this idea of recognition (“reconnaissance”) and claiming (“revendication”) too. By publicly stimulating the desire of a community to be better recognised and defend the issues of the electronic music sector is a way to perpetuate the fight started 25 years ago and to show that problems still exist within the sector. It can also be understood as a continuation of the idea of resistance inherent in such subcultures.

To conclude this chapter, the discourse surrounding the 2023 Techno Parade acts as a catalyst for a better recognition of the genres and issues felt by artists and participants. The event popularity is even a source of visibility for brands or other demands and participates to the commodification of the techno music subcultures. Moreover, discourses acknowledges that techno music and culture is part of the society but seem not accepted by institutions. Therefore, the Techno Parade's efforts to gain recognition for techno music have had a lasting impact. One question arises: what specific effects has this had on society, and how is it continuing to shape social dynamics?

⁴¹ Electronic music is still trying to find its place, straddling the line between contemporary music and the world of nightclubs, and we saw during covid just how stigmatised we still are. This kind of event helps us to come together and feel represented. (my translation)

2.4 Societal and Cultural Impact

Even if the Techno Parade is still in an ongoing search for better and deeper recognition, it has made a strong societal and cultural impact within French culture and the population. Now considered a popular event, it fosters an inclusive environment: both in terms of attracting all kinds of populations and addressing cultural landscape diversity. For the latter, it reinforces the mainstream aspect of electronic music and its place in society. Audience demographics are socially, racially and generationally mixed accentuating the attraction of the music genre by all kinds of populations. It is also remarked the inclusion of all electronic music sub-genres within the event and the esteemed place it has gained over the years as a popular celebration rather than just a demonstration. What about the discourse portraying this diversity? How is its mainstream integration addressed by organisers, participants and artists?

2.4.1 Bridging Generational and Cultural Gaps

Studies of the discourse show the success and impact the Techno Parade has had on the audience. It also showed the place of electronic music within the French cultural landscape, positioning it as a mainstream event, not only because of its high number of attendees, but also because of its role and influence on French culture's dissemination. Jack Lang witnessed this both in 1998 (France 2 1998a) and in 2023:

*On ressent un sentiment de joie, pas seulement parmi les praticiens de la Techno mais aussi parmi le grand public. Au-delà du message de reconnaissance de la culture Techno, c'est tout un message de vie qui est transmis, un message d'ouverture, un message de respect, un message d'amitié, et ça a été ressenti pas seulement par les jeunes mais par toutes les générations*⁴² (Lang, 00:41)

*Jeunes et moins jeunes, amateurs et professionnels, tous unis par un esprit de liberté, de création, de fête et de bienveillance.*⁴³ (Lang 2023)

It highlights the broad appeal and emotional impact of the Techno Parade. The “joy felt by both practitioners and the general public” demonstrates the event's ability to transcend its subcultural origins and resonate with a wider audience. This widespread joy signifies the Techno Parade's success in engaging diverse groups and creating a shared, positive experience. The event's ability to elicit such a response underscores its role in the mainstream acceptance of electronic music. Moreover, the parade also serves as an environment where people from different age groups and backgrounds can unite. This message of unity and shared values helps position electronic music not merely as an entertainment genre but as a significant cultural force. The unity described here, bridging generational and professional divides, highlights the inclusive nature of the Techno Parade. By bringing together “young and old, amateurs and professionals,” the Parade creates a space where diverse groups can connect through a shared

⁴² There's a feeling of joy, not just among techno practitioners but also among the general public. Beyond the message of recognition of techno culture, it's a whole message of life that's being conveyed, a message of openness, a message of respect, a message of friendship, and it's been felt not just by young people but by all generations. (my translation)

⁴³ Young and old, amateurs and professionals, all united in a spirit of freedom, creativity, celebration and goodwill. (my translation)

appreciation of electronic music. This inclusivity breaks down barriers and fosters a sense of community, reinforcing the mainstream integration of electronic music within French culture.

This discourse on generation is often emphasised when discussing the parade, suggesting that the Techno Parade is—and is portrayed as—a popular event in the sense that it brings people together, regardless of class or age, expressing an intergenerational and cross-class unity, from, respectively, the spectator and the artist (Maud Geffray) point of view:

*Il y a des moins jeunes comme nous mais aussi beaucoup de jeunes. Maintenant, la techno touche tout le monde. Avant, c'était plus marginal.*⁴⁴ (Darvey 2023)

*Le public était plutôt jeune et engagé dans la scène. C'est devenu un événement vraiment intergénérationnel, il y a des gens qui ont connu l'histoire du mouvement depuis ses débuts, d'autres qui l'ont découvert récemment, et même des bébés sous des casques.*⁴⁵ (SACEM 2023)

There is also the idea that such event allows techno to be confronted to the mainstream public, by requiring its attention and even its appreciation or validation. Whether it is in 1998 or 2023, the idea to please the public is present in order to give techno music a place in the mainstream or popular culture. For Josselin Hirsch (France 3 1998a), there was a desire that through the Techno Parade, the value of techno culture – seen by members as open-minded and respectful, but seen by the common public as deviant – could be accepted or at least understood by the majority of the population:

*On est tous très content et j'espère que l'image que le grand public se fait de la techno sera plus positive que ce qu'elle a été jusqu'à présent. On espère que les valeurs que nous vivons, que sont l'ouverture d'esprit et la tolérance auront pu transpirer auprès du grand public.*⁴⁶ (Hirsch, 00:40)

Artists, like Warum, also believes that such event allows for better existence within the public space and the population. By including not just the streets but also the surrounding public environment (“shops, residential areas”), the Parade normalises the genre within the broader urban and cultural landscape. This visibility helps to demystify electronic music, making it more accessible and relatable to people of all backgrounds and ages. It encourages interaction and appreciation from individuals who might not typically engage with this music because they are not familiar with traditional venues for EDM like nightclubs.

⁴⁴ There are older people like us, but also a lot of young people. Now, techno touches everyone. Before, it was more marginal. (my translation)

⁴⁵ The audience was quite young and involved in the scene. It has become a truly inter-generational event, with people who've known the history of the movement from its beginnings, others who've discovered it recently, and even babies in noise cancelling headphones. (my translation)

⁴⁶ We're all very happy and I hope that the general public's image of techno will be more positive than it has been up to now. We hope that the values we live by, such as open-mindedness and tolerance, will have shone through to the general public. (my translation)

Ce genre de manifestation permet à nos musiques d'exister dans l'espace public, parmi les commerces, les habitations, auprès de toutes les générations.⁴⁷ (SACEM 2023)

Moreover, one of the core values frequently associated with Rave culture, and by extension techno culture, is its communal aspect encapsulated by the motto 'PLUR' (Peace, Love, Unity, and Respect). In the discourse surrounding the Techno Parade, however, 'PLUR' is not explicitly mentioned; instead, the term "inclusivity" is used. This inclusivity extends not only to the audience but also to the artists, emphasising respect for the diversity of music genres within electronic music and the variety of individual personalities and the public, as mentioned by Vaudecrane:

C'est aussi ça la Techno Parade, offrir la possibilité à tous les artistes de se produire. Ils sont invités par les structures indépendantes qui déploient les chars. C'est un événement inclusif, ouvert à toutes et tous aussi bien pour le public que pour les artistes.⁴⁸ (Vaudecranne 2023a)

Finally, Vaudecrane comments on the goal behind reaching the broadest public possible is to show the importance it has on the "French cultural landscape":

Notre volonté est de montrer leur dynamisme et le public que ça attire mais également leur importance dans le paysage culturel français.⁴⁹ (Vaudecranne 2023a)

Nevertheless, it is important to mention that through both years, queer communities are never mentioned in the discourse, breaking away from the initial purpose of club culture (Buckland 2002). This omission can reflect both a lack of recognition and visibility for these groups within the contemporary techno scene and denying the contributions of queer communities to the evolution of the culture.

By engaging the most diverse audience possible, there is a clear intention to demonstrate the active presence of electronic music in contemporary French culture. This is evident not only through the Techno Parade but also through the influence of the 'French Touch' music genre, which contributes to the globalization and mainstream appeal of electronic music. Consequently, this integration into popular culture in France is a prominent theme in current discourse.

2.4.2 A French Popular Culture?

Since its creation, there was a desire for organisers and participants to integrate techno as a popular and even commodified culture, reclaimed by the mainstream. Under the expression "fête populaire"⁵⁰, often found in the discourse, there is an implicit meaning of making it mainstream. Indeed, the Techno Parade becomes popular, not only in terms of the number of attendees but also in terms of including it in the common culture and making it a 'rendezvous'.

⁴⁷ This kind of event gives our music a place in the public arena, in shops and homes, and across all generations. (my translation)

⁴⁸ That's what the Techno Parade is all about - giving all the artists the chance to perform. They are invited by the independent organisations that set up the floats. It's an inclusive event, open to everyone, both the public and the artists. (my translation)

⁴⁹ Our aim is to show their dynamism and the public it attracts, as well as their importance in the French cultural landscape. (my translation)

⁵⁰ Popular party (my translation)

Both Lang (France 2 1998a) and Frisch (M6 1998a) respectively agreed for including techno culture within French culture in 1998:

La culture Techno appartient à la culture d'aujourd'hui. Le Même jour il y a la fête des monuments historiques, cela veut dire que la culture d'un pays forme un tout, que ce soit l'histoire, le passée, la mémoire mais c'est aussi le présent et le futur.⁵¹ (Lang, 02:14)

La techno Parade c'est aussi l'émanation, la version un plus moderne des carnivals de Rio ou de Nice, donc c'est pour ça aussi que la scène française voulait aussi sa parade.⁵² (Frisch, 01:59)

The event is frequently compared to other major cultural and French events, such as European Heritage Days and the carnivals in Nice and Rio. According to Lang, incorporating techno culture into the broader cultural narrative of France aligns with his assertion that a country's culture encompasses "history, past, memory, but also present and future." This comparison elevates the status of the Techno Parade, positioning it alongside traditional cultural celebrations and highlighting its role in representing the dynamic and evolving cultural identity of the nation.

Similarly, Frisch emphasises the Techno Parade's role in mainstream cultural festivities, describing it as a "fête populaire" This term underscores the Parade's ability to attract diverse audiences, foster a sense of community and celebration, and solidify its status as a symbol of French culture. The comparison with globally celebrated carnivals reflects the French electronic music scene's aspiration to establish a prominent and widely recognized cultural event, thereby promoting the mainstream acceptance and global integration of (French) electronic music.

It is important to consider whether the growing public attendance each year might actually undermine the Parade's original objectives. As the event becomes more mainstream, it is worth questioning whether this shift dilutes its core mission of resistance and protest, particularly in a post-subcultural context where the line between cultural expression and commercialised spectacle becomes increasingly blurred.

2.4.3 Post-Subcultural Impact

This section aims to bridge the theoretical framework established in the earlier chapters with the empirical findings related to the Techno Parade. The comparative analysis juxtaposes the theoretical expectations derived from subcultural theories with the real-world outcomes observed during the evolution of the Techno Parade in Paris.

Theoretically, subcultural movements like techno music and rave culture are expected to operate as forms of resistance against mainstream cultural norms and societal expectations. As articulated by Hall and Jefferson (1976), subcultures emerge as distinct groups with their own values, often in opposition to the dominant culture. This resistance is manifested through

⁵¹ Techno culture belongs to today's culture. The same day is the festival of historical monuments, which means that a country's culture forms a whole, not only its history, past and memory, but also its present and future. (my translation)

⁵² The Techno Parade is also an expression, a more modern version, of the carnivals of Rio or Nice, so that's why the French scene also wanted its own parade. (my translation)

practices that challenge societal norms, foster communal bonds, and create spaces for alternative expressions of identity.

Additionally, post-subcultural theories suggest that these movements are not static but fluid, adapting to changing socio-economic contexts and technological advancements. Thornton (1995) emphasises the role of media in shaping youth cultures, transforming them from resistance movements into commodified mainstream entities. The evolution of techno music from underground rave scenes to mainstream acceptance exemplifies this transition.

Initially, the Techno Parade embodied subcultural resistance. It provided a platform for ravers to claim public space, challenging the stigmatisation of techno music associated with underground and illicit activities. The parade's success in attracting large crowds and media attention facilitated a shift in public perception, from viewing techno as a subversive element to recognising it as a legitimate cultural movement. This aligns with the theoretical expectation of subcultures seeking cultural recognition and legitimacy.

Over time, the Techno Parade has also demonstrated the fluidity and commodification anticipated by post-subcultural theories. The involvement of corporate sponsors and the collaboration with public figures have transformed the parade into a mainstream cultural event. While this shift has broadened the parade's appeal and ensured its sustainability, it also raises questions about the dilution of its original subcultural ethos. The incorporation of commercial elements reflects Thornton's (1995) assertion that media and market forces play a crucial role in the evolution and commodification of youth cultures.

The evolution of the Techno Parade highlights its dual role as both a subcultural and mainstream phenomenon. While it continues to celebrate and promote the values of techno culture—such as community, freedom of expression, and resistance against societal norms—it also exemplifies the transformative potential of post-subcultural movements within the public sphere. The parade's ability to adapt and thrive within a commercial and media-driven environment underscores the dynamic interplay between resistance and adaptation in contemporary youth cultures.

Conclusion and Final Thoughts

This study aimed to explore how the Techno Parade in France exemplifies the negotiation of cultural recognition and subversion within post-subcultural contexts, specifically regarding the evolution of electronic music as a cultural phenomenon and its intersection with mainstream acceptance and regulatory frameworks. Presented as an example of a post-subcultural event within EDM culture, the parade served as the case study for this analysis. It sought to address how the Paris Techno Parade, as a public manifestation of techno culture, demonstrates its ability to negotiate its space in the mainstream while also serving as a platform for the recognition of a subculture.

Additionally, the study investigated the role the Techno Parade has played in legitimising techno music and culture in France, and how the discursive strategies employed within the event have maintained its authenticity and influenced public perception throughout the years. The research question aimed to illustrate the balancing act of the Techno Parade between achieving cultural recognition and maintaining subversion—understood as resistance against mainstream culture in line with post-subcultural concepts.

The Paris Techno Parade was initially conceived to counteract the demonisation of techno music, serving as a material tool to shift public perspective. By bringing this subculture into the public eye through a highly visible and mainstream event, the Parade commodified and globalised techno culture, leveraging media to enhance its reach and appeal. This public spectacle not only popularised techno music but also integrated it into the broader cultural landscape, transforming a once marginalised genre into a celebrated public phenomenon, and even cultural symbol.

Moreover, the Techno Parade embodies a recurring theme of protest and advocacy, which can be seen as a distinctive French approach to gain public attention and support – from the public and institutions. This aspect of the Parade reflects a strategic use of popular methods to foster acceptance and legitimise the techno movement. By making techno music a part of popular culture, the Parade effectively advocates for its recognition and acceptance, ensuring widespread participation and support.

Throughout its evolution, the Techno Parade functions as an annual mass celebration of techno music, symbolising the genre's ongoing quest for cultural recognition. Over time, this advocacy has evolved to encompass not only the recognition of techno but also other forms of electronic dance music (EDM) and free parties. This broader advocacy now includes the professional and individual status of venues, artists, and parties, indicating a shift from purely cultural recognition to also advocating for the professional legitimacy and social support of those within the EDM community.

The Techno Parade has proven to be a critical platform for the recognition and legitimisation of electronic music in France, mirroring broader societal changes. The parade's ability to attract diverse audiences and foster a sense of community underscores its success in integrating electronic music into the mainstream cultural narrative. However, this integration has not come without ongoing challenges. The term *techno culture* often led and still leads to misconceptions, potentially provoking moral panic and prejudices. While the parade has popularised electronic music, the broader "electronic music" culture, including free parties, still struggles for full recognition. The evolution of the appellation from "techno" to "electronic" music highlights the music scene's progression and the desire to include diverse cultural elements. Despite this, the term remains significant, particularly in the context of the parade's name, and demonstrates how deeply integrated it is into popular culture.

The evolution of the Techno Parade reflects the tension between maintaining its subcultural roots and becoming a mainstream event. Originally a robust advocacy tool, the parade has become more commodified, showcasing artists and attracting larger audiences. This shift raises questions about whether the event can still be considered part of a subculture or if it has fully been reclaimed by the mainstream. The initial goal of presenting techno music to the masses aimed to detach the culture from its prejudices and change perceptions regarding electronic music. Even if officially representing a subculture, the Techno Parade understood the importance of breaking out of the subcultural shell and becoming 'popular' in order to thrive.

Furthermore, the parade's evolution has been significantly influenced by the globalisation of French electronic music, known as the French Touch, suggesting that the parade alone did not facilitate the recognition of techno culture. Public figures heavily influence the event, which usually works in conjunction with them, highlighting the complex and ambiguous relationship between the Techno Parade as a subcultural movement and a popular manifestation.

This analysis offers insights into the cultural and political factors shaping the trajectory of electronic music, underscoring the importance of ongoing advocacy for fair treatment and recognition of this cultural sector. It demonstrates that a public event, despite its subcultural roots, plays a crucial role in shifting perspectives and highlighting the significance of public engagement. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to cultural studies and subcultural theory by illustrating the interplay between cultural recognition and subversion, and highlighting how public events like the Techno Parade can serve as critical platforms for cultural advocacy and identity formation.

Still, one of the primary limitations of this study is the lack of in-depth quantitative analysis. The absence of detailed statistical data on attendance, economic impact, and demographic breakdowns of participants limits the ability to fully understand the scale and reach of the Techno Parade. The study does not provide an analysis of the musical genres and performances featured in the parade, which could offer further insights into the evolution of electronic music culture.

Another limitation is the potential bias in the discourse analysis. The subjective nature of cultural events means that the narratives and interpretations presented may reflect the perspectives of a limited group of stakeholders, potentially overlooking the diversity of experiences and opinions within the broader community. This bias can affect the perceived legitimacy and impact of the Techno Parade, as well as the broader EDM culture. While media representations and reliability are crucial aspects of the method, it is important to note that the study treated media sources neutrally concerning their interviewees. The focus was on the discourse of the interviewees themselves, rather than the intrinsic discourse of the media outlets.

Also, the study primarily focuses on the French context, which may not be entirely applicable to other countries with different cultural, social, and regulatory environments. The unique historical and cultural factors influencing the Techno Parade in France, such as the French Touch and the specific legal challenges faced by electronic music festivals, may differ significantly from those in other countries. Therefore, while the study offers valuable insights into the dynamics of cultural recognition and subversion, it should be complemented with comparative studies of similar events in different cultural contexts to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

Besides comparing with other European parades or analysing the potential impact of digital media on subcultural movements, it would be important for further analysis to explore the influence that free parties may have had on the Paris Techno Parade, considering its origins and the ongoing discourse. The integration and institutionalisation of the Techno Parade have brought electronic music into the cultural mainstream, yet the alternative free party scene remains a vital counterpart, as shown in the 2018 Techno Parade slogan, “Rien n’empêche un peuple de danser!”⁵³, echoing the free party movement's motto, “Rien n’arrête un peuple qui danse”⁵⁴. This parallel raises questions about the re-engagement of the broader techno scene with its underground and free party roots, for which it would be beneficial to further explore the relationship between these scenes and narratives in order to understand better the influences.

⁵³ Nothing can stop a people from dancing! (my translation)

⁵⁴ Nothing stops a dancing people! (my translation)

Lastly, free parties may have been triggering events for the Techno Parade and the formation of the techno culture in France. Still, the discourse is not providing sufficient proof to support this theory and the margins in which this subculture – or even counter-culture – operates may be off-track considering its status within electronic music in France. The recognition and integration of electronic music into mainstream culture are still evolving. The Techno Parade has played a significant role in this transformation, but the broader acceptance of free parties and underground events remains limited. The status of electronic music in France, while improved, continues to face challenges, particularly in gaining formal recognition and support, regarding teknivals. Moreover, the role of public authorities is crucial in this context. Despite the recent recognition of clubs as “cultural actors” (Crétal 2024b), there is a need for greater recognition of other venues as legitimate cultural spaces. Such recognitions and acknowledgements of the specificities of the music genre would not only validate the cultural significance of electronic music but also provide the necessary support and infrastructures for its growth and development. Public authorities have the power to shape the future of electronic music in France by acknowledging its cultural value and integrating it into the national cultural framework.

SWOT Analysis

Strength

This thesis draws upon historical and contextual resources and is built upon a strong theoretical foundation, providing a deep and comprehensive analysis of the Techno Parade. It facilitates a thorough study of the phenomenon and its perception. Moreover, the analysis spans multiple fields of study, including cultural studies, ethnomusicology, and sociology, offering an interdisciplinary approach to the topic.

Weakness

A significant weakness in the research approach is the reliance on discourse analysis, which is restrictive and biased. This method, combined with the limited use of quantitative data, makes it impossible to consider every word from stakeholders and analyse other implications, potentially affecting the reliability of the results. Additionally, the exclusive focus on the French context narrows the applicability of the research outcomes, potentially overlooking broader, cross-cultural insights and other contexts of parades' creation and role.

Opportunities

The thesis serves as a stepping stone for further studies on the Paris Techno Parade and other technoparades, especially regarding their role in the overall EDM subculture. Other research methods, such as participant observation, could be applied to enhance the understanding of technoparades at a more micro level.

Threats

The declining perception of technoparades as major events within the Techno scene poses a threat to the research. These events may be seen as anecdotal due to their frequency and discontinuities and might be overlooked within the EDM landscape and by stakeholders and researchers. Additionally, Techno Parade organisers – Technopol, might conduct more detailed analyses and have access to more comprehensive data, which could affect the impact of this research.

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