Forces of Valorisation

Understanding the post-pandemic rise of raving in Singapore

Student name: Wan Jie Che

Student number: 649472

Supervisor: Dr. Blaž Remic

Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication

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Abstract & keywords

Forces of Valorisation: Understanding the post-pandemic rise of raving in Singapore

In the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, raving experienced a sudden proliferation in Singapore. This thesis investigates the values associated with raving that drove this phenomenon, examining how and why it became a meaningful artistic practice in the post-pandemic era. The central research question is: why did raving experience a post-pandemic surge in Singapore?

Guided by Dekker and Morea's (2023) value realisation framework that looks at the social process in which artistic and cultural practices become valued, this study positions raving as a site where artistic, social and symbolic values are co-created and realised by diverse actors. Therefore, the sub-research question is: how do the non-economic values realised through raving shape participation, coordination, and sustainability of the scene?

Drawing on 20 semi-structured interviews with actors across various sub-electronic dance music genres, this research adopts a non-extractive care-driven approach to examine how values are manifested, realised, negotiated and sustained. While existing theory suggests that tension is the main force that drives valorisation—the social process of value negotiation and establishment—and can occur infinitely, this study offers two theoretical contributions.

Firstly, it argues that synergy, alongside tension, fuels the valorisation process although through different mechanisms. The synergistic interplay of values realised through participation reinforced value regimes and imbued raving with greater significance, catalysing the surge in raving. Tensions caused by structural challenges and external pressures, on the other hand, became an impetus for actors to reevaluate and negotiate their positions, resulting in the scene's adaptation for its sustainability. These forces of valorisation are conceptualised as the *synergy-tension continuum*. Secondly, the scene's current stagnation suggests the existence of a threshold beyond which, these forces breakdown.

More broadly, this study demonstrates how cultural scenes can organically form in localised settings and sustain value outside of institutional frameworks, offering insights into how artistic practices take root, build legitimacy and create meaning in contemporary urban life.

KEYWORDS: valuation approach, value realisation, valorisation, electronic dance music, rave

Word count: 18,290

Table of Contents

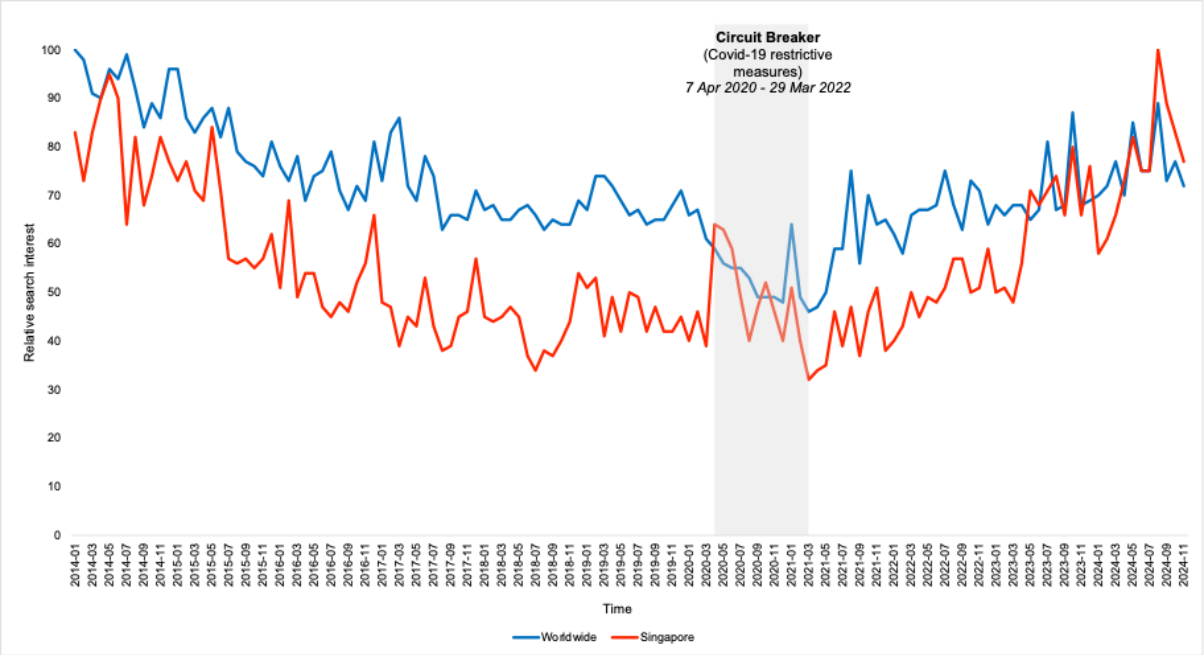
1 Introduction

Singapore has consistently touted itself as a city that never sleeps. As recent as 2024, the Singapore Tourism Board boasts that nightlife in the city “has become vibrant and exciting in recent years, with a gamut of offerings ranging from world-class brands and award-winning home-grown clubs to hidden gems of cocktail bars and live music pubs with local flavours” (Singapore Tourism Board, 2024). In the same year, Singapore was ranked third in Asia’s best cities for nightlife (Yohannan, 2024).

Beyond the skyscrapers that dot Singapore’s iconic skyline and its reputation as one of Asia’s financial strongholds, a burgeoning rave scene began to take root in the city’s underbelly in the immediate post-Covid-19 era, emerging within the tight legal boundaries that the country is widely known for. Following a seeming decline leading up to the pandemic, interest in raving quickly picked up upon the cessation of pandemic restrictive measures and overtook growth in interest worldwide (Figure 1). Growth in interest in raving post-pandemic outpaced other live music events and cultural events (Appendix A) even as official statistics revealed a sluggish recovery in attendance for performing arts and cultural events (Appendix B). This suggests that the flourishing of Singapore’s independent electronic dance music scene was not simply a standard post-pandemic recovery, but rather, a bubbling subcultural phenomenon that is worthy of deeper scrutiny. It raises the question that guides this research: why did raving experience a post-pandemic surge in Singapore?

Figure 1

Comparison of relative interest in raves/raving in Singapore versus worldwide over 10 years based on Google Trends (normalised)



Note. Numbers represent search interest relative to the highest point on the chart for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the peak popularity for the term. A value of 50 means that the term is half as popular. A score of 0 means there was not enough data for this term. Data was extracted in December 2024.

To understand this phenomenon, this study adopts Dekker and Morea's (2023) *values realisation process* that looks at the underlying valuation mechanism of cultural goods. Departing from earlier approaches rooted in axiomatic economic analysis, this framework sits within the emerging valuation approach in the cultural economics field, which recognises that the value of cultural goods cannot be essentialised into market prices and focuses on the social process through which

value becomes associated (Dekker, 2014). This approach is a well-suited lens to examine raving as it captures how value emerges from participation and collective meaning-making, away from state endorsement or market intervention. As such, the sub-research question of this study is: How do the non-economic values realised through raving shape participation, coordination, and sustainability of the scene? Chapter 2, which sets up the theoretical framework of this study, delves deeper into these discussions. Through this framework, this thesis unpacks how the process of value realisation enabled raving to gain traction in post-pandemic Singapore.

Specifically, the valuation approach calls for the use of interdisciplinary methodologies to overcome the limitations of existing economic analysis. Chapter 3 details the non-extractive, care-based methodology that centres around the participants' lived experiences. It justifies the use of semi-structured interviews and snowball sampling to allow participants to define raving and delineate the boundaries of the scene. These methods can overcome the challenges of studying an emerging scene (Taylor, 2023) and resists the imposition of a singular epistemology (Law, 2004; Smith, 2008).

This study offers two contributions to the valuation approach. First, while existing literature has placed much emphasis on the role of tensions in the establishment of values (Dekker & Morea, 2023; Klamer, 2004), this research shows that synergy acts as another force in the same process. In the case of Singapore's rave scene, synergy fuelled the rapid emergence of raving as an artistic practice. Tensions, on the other hand, facilitated the clarification and establishment of values associated with raving, resulting in the scene's adaptation for its sustainability. In other words, synergy and tension are interrelated forces in the valorisation process that can help to affirm the associated values or render it untenable, albeit in different ways—I

propose to call this the *synergy-tension continuum*. Second, the study also suggests the existence of a threshold, beyond which it could lead to a destabilisation of the valorisation process. These ideas will be elaborated on in Chapter 4 (Results).

In the pursuit of unravelling this empirical puzzle, we come to understand how informal and ground-up artistic practices take root, evolve over time and gain cultural legitimacy. This study does not take artistic practices as a given. Instead, it examines the process in which they become meaningful and eventually formalised as part of the local youth and (sub)cultural identity. It highlights the emergence of artistic plurality and raises critical questions about how it can be sustained for a more vibrant and inclusive cultural landscape. Additionally, this thesis contributes and provides greater nuance to broader debates about how value is collectively produced, realised and negotiated—particularly within underground scenes outside of extensive government oversight and in post-crisis settings. These perspectives remain underexplored in existing literature on cultural valuation.

2 Theoretical framework

The objective of this section is to provide an overview of the existing literature in the field of economics and sociology with regards to values, the limited application of value as a concept to cultural goods, and the various approaches suggested by cultural economists to gain a fuller understanding of the value of such goods. This discussion is further contextualised within (live) music, nightlife, (sub)cultures and specifically raving to structure the analysis and methodological approach. The framework aims to weave these seemingly disparate discussions across different fields to present a case for the non-economic values realised through raving.

2.1 Understanding cultural value

2.1.1 How is value understood in cultural economics?

Most economics courses begin with an introduction to the notion of value, a foundational concept that facilitates the allocation of scarce resources and drives humans to behave in a rational and self-interested manner. Early conceptualisations can be traced to the labour theory of value (LTV) that derives value from the amount of labour effort that is put into its production. The marginalist revolution later challenged this notion by arguing that the value of a good lies in the additional pleasure derived from the good or in economic terms, its marginal utility. The subsequent rise of neo-classical economics introduced mathematical models, including the concept of supply and demand, and leaned on “axiomatic rigour,” equating value with price (Hutter & Throsby, 2008).

The application of these economic approaches to study arts and culture, however, revealed limitations in capturing its value. Cultural economists point out the failure of standard economic assumptions and how the market for cultural goods is further distorted by the presence of significant externalities, leading them to assert that artistic and economic value are not synonymous (Hutter & Throsby, 2008). For example, cultural goods possess experience goods characteristics (Nelson, 1970)—its quality can only be determined after consumption—resulting in imperfect information for consumers (Akerlof, 1970). Demand for cultural goods is also believed to be cumulative (Houthakker & Taylor, 1966; Lévy-Garboua & Montmarquette, 1996; Stigler & Becker, 1977; Throsby, 2001). On the other hand, supply for cultural goods is plagued by uncertainty about demand for their products (McKenzie & Shin, 2020) while artists are believed to be intrinsically motivated and typically hold multiple jobs (Throsby, 1994). The failure of standard economic assumptions in the cultural sector has led cultural economists to point out that a theory of price is not equivalent to a theory of value, suggesting that “at best prices are an indicator of value but not necessarily a direct measure of value” (Throsby, 2001).

In response, cultural economists have taken on a broader conceptualisation of value, particularly cultural value. Throsby (2001, pp. 28-29) emphasises that economic and cultural values are distinct—they may overlap but they do not always correlate—and proposes to decompose cultural value into constituent elements such as

- *Aesthetic value* that refers to the “properties of beauty, harmony, form and other aesthetic characteristics” of cultural goods.

- *Spiritual value* that refers to the significance of cultural goods to groups of people and conveys “understanding, enlightenment and insight.”
- *Social value* that refers to the creation of a “sense of connection with others” by cultural goods, allowing them to make sense of society and can contribute to identity formation.
- *Historical value* that refers to how cultural goods can “[provide] a sense of continuity with the past” to understand the present.
- *Symbolic value* that refers to how cultural goods can embody deeper meanings for individuals.
- *Authenticity value* that refers to the originality of cultural goods.

Throsby’s interpretation of cultural value has been widely accepted in the field and has been reinterpreted and expanded in various ways to include, for example, *educational value* and *experiential value* (Angelini & Castellani, 2019). The following paragraphs explore alternative conceptualisations of cultural value, which can be seen as extensions of Throsby’s interpretation. This research adopts Throsby’s perspective given its theoretical relevance—in other words, cultural value is used as an all-encompassing term that encapsulates the various non-economic values that are associated with cultural goods.

Klamer (2004, pp. 147-150) echoes Throsby’s perspective on the multi-faceted nature of cultural goods. However, they suggest that social value should not be treated as a subset of cultural value to avoid important nuances within anthropological debates. Instead, Klamer offers three types of values to evaluate artistic goods: *economic value*, which refers to “the price of things, or their exchange value”; *social value*, which operates “in the context of interpersonal relationships, groups, communities, and societies”; and *cultural value*, which “transcends social,

relational, or […] economic values." The latter encompasses all other values Throsby identifies, including aesthetic, spiritual, historical, symbolic and authenticity values.

Using the shifting dynamics of Aboriginal art in Australia as a case study where issues of sacred imagery, authorship and authenticity are challenged by Western valuation systems and commercial pressures, Smith (2008, pp. 35-38) presents a framework of values that focuses on the "observable properties or the demonstrable effects of artworks." These values are *existent value*, which is derived from the way the artwork physically manifests, shapes how it is perceived, experienced and relates to the viewer; *representation value*, which pertains to how artworks can embody deeper meanings; *formative value*, which arises through the creative process of putting ideas into form thereby conveying sacred, symbolic and cultural knowledge; *insight value*, which relates the "content of a work of art, what it is about, the idea in it, the way it shows the world to is, the perceptiveness of it"; and *transformative value*, which reflects the exceptional quality of the work to build upon a confluence of artistic, cultural and historical references, synthesising them within a singular piece while redefining its future trajectory.

Hernando and Campo (2017) present another perspective of artistic value through their examination of the perceived value of artists and how it affects their valuation in the art market. They identified five types of perceived value of artists: *aesthetic value*; *cognitive value*, related to the intellectual understanding and appreciation of the artist's work; *influencer-brand value*, which refers to the "[p]restige and assessment" by key stakeholders in the art world such as galleries, critics, museum directors and certain collectors; *social value*, or the networks formed through "collective interaction between art consumers and professionals"; and *legacy value*, the recognition of the artist's "contribution to universal or artistic heritage."

They subsequently crafted a scale of value and empirically tested it using qualitative and quantitative approaches. Angelini and Castellani (2019) note that Hernando and Campo's scale of value stems from an individual subjective evaluation of artistic value, compared to the valuation frameworks proposed by Throsby and Klamer.

2.1.2 How can we study cultural value?

Now that we have introduced how cultural value can be conceptualised—that prices do not reflect cultural value, economic value and cultural value are distinct, and cultural value can be decomposed into constituent values—a natural follow-up would be to understand how these values can be studied. Dekker (2014) argues the emergence of a third approach, the valuation approach, that focuses on the process of valuation of cultural goods and builds upon two early approaches—the art and commerce approach and the economics of the arts approach.

The emerging valuation approach, which we will be adopting to study the values tied to raving, is described by Dekker (2014) as a synthesis of the earlier approaches but still fundamentally distinct from them. Unlike earlier perspectives, this approach calls for the need to understand the process of valuation itself. This shift stems from the recognition that prices are not the sole outcome of the valuation process of cultural goods. Instead, contributors to this perspective argue that value emerges through coordination in market and non-market settings i.e. value is neither prescribed nor static. It acknowledges the subjectivity of values and thus, the "coexistence of a variety of valuation regimes" (Dekker, 2014, p. 311). This value plurality results in a clash of these values, but it is through this process that they are actively deliberated and negotiated, allowing individuals to further clarify and

establish them—a process Klamer (2004) refers to as *valorisation*. Mediators, such as institutions and communities, play a central role in the negotiation process and their coordination contributes to the realising of cultural values, emphasising the social process of valuation. Therefore, the valuation approach focuses on the "interpersonal and the intersubjective: the relationships between individuals and cultural goods, the coordination through market processes and other social settings, and the norms, conventions and institutions that shape these" (Dekker, 2014, p. 321).

The underlying mechanism of how cultural goods come to be valued and subsequently recognised is developed in Dekker and Morea's (2023) *Realising the Values of Art*. They put forth the argument that the realisation of values is an iterative, socially situated process that unfolds through four phases: *value orientation, imagination, realisation* and *evaluation*.

In the orientation phase, values are learnt and discovered through social practices guided by personal background, lived experience, societal norms, institutional structures and the broader context in which it occurs. Individuals and communities, then, envision the possibilities and potential values that might emerge through their participation in these social practices and their associated cultural goods in the imagination phase.

Value realisation occurs through participation and active engagement in the artistic practice. Dekker and Morea (2023) describe this phase as an ongoing process of co-creation that is continuously shaped by artists and audiences who "challenge and alter the intended meaning and use of an artwork" (p. 80). Their

participation and constant negotiation fosters *collective effervescence*, bringing individuals together in a shared, unifying experience.

The evaluation phase involves critical reflection of the values being realised. It is in this phase where values are validated, challenged and adapted based on public and societal discourse, which may lead to some practices gaining legitimacy while others becoming diminished, subsumed or absorbed into others. As such, Dekker and Morea argue for the importance of value plurality and advocate for cultural policy that allows the co-existence of diverse social practices for contestation to occur. The realisation of values, however, does not end here. It is continually reassessed with the changing societal, political and economic context or with new participants engaged within these social practices, restarting the valuation process. In other words, this process is not sequential or linear—it is a living practice where phases "interpenetrate" (p. 17) and values become embodied. Most importantly, Dekker and Morea's framework hints that this process can continue in perpetuity.

The authors consistently return to the idea of the *clash of values*. They argue that the idiosyncratic nature of values allows for diverse valuation regimes to emerge. Furthermore, the realisation process is deeply embedded in "circles, communities, and the rich associational life around the arts" (Dekker & Morea, 2023, p. viii) outside of formal institutions. This inevitably gives rise to ideological—and sometimes overt—contestation. However, it is through this critical engagement with other value regimes that forces participants to reassess their positions, negotiate meaning, and crystallise the values associated with the cultural good or practice. Therefore, according to Dekker and Morea, conflict is intrinsic to the clarification and refinement of values, and tension acts as the primary generative force that drives the valorisation process.

Applying this framework to the emergence of raving in post-pandemic Singapore reveals a more nuanced picture. While Dekker and Morea emphasise tension as the primary force of valorisation, this study suggests that valuation regimes can be co-constitutive, interacting in ways that reinforce each other, rather than oppose one another. Additionally, the analysis of Singapore's rave scene points towards a tipping point beyond which valorisation can break down. These dynamics will be further explored in the Results chapter.

2.2 Value realisation in live music settings

2.2.1 How is value realised in live music settings?

To ground the process of value realisation in the context of live music experiences, specifically raving, it is important to examine how different stakeholders come together in the artistic production and consumption of cultural goods. Dekker and Morea's (2023) conceptualisation of value as co-creative through participation draws heavily on Becker's (1982/2008) *Art Worlds*, which emphasises the collaborative nature of cultural production. Building on this, Becker's framework is elaborated here as a foundation to frame how actors within the rave scene collectively participate, engage and realise its values.

Becker's (1982/2008) central argument is that artistic production is a collective activity where artists are at "the [centre] of a network of cooperating people, all of whose work is essential to the final outcome" (p. 25). Becker rejects the notion that an artist is a lone creator but instead, they rely on an interconnected network of individuals, what Becker refers to as "art worlds." It includes critics, curators,

audiences, technicians, suppliers whose cooperation enable artistic production. These different stakeholders are held together by a set of shared conventions that simplifies coordination and facilitates artistic production. These conventions are built on successful past solutions that function as a common reference point, making them the path of least resistance and over time and becoming the prevailing convention.

In Becker's (1982/2008) framework, audiences play a role in artistic production through learning and engaging with conventions by directly interacting with artworks. Social interactions help audiences to develop a shared discourse surrounding the interpretation of artworks, reinforcing their meaning and influencing the production of knowledge surrounding these works. This collective process helps to legitimise these conventions, paving the way for it to become a recognised standard. Becker (1982/2008) sees audiences as essential to the upholding of these standards, transmitting them beyond the "art world" and helping to shape broader cultural understanding surrounding art.

Small's (1998) theory of *musicking* offers a powerful extension of Becker's (1982/2008) *Art Worlds* by centring the act of participation in live music experiences. Small reveals how meaning, and thus value, is derived through the shared experience of performing, listening and active engagement. Therefore, musicking provides a crucial participatory framework to understand how values are co-created and collectively realised in musical settings.

Small challenges the notion of music as an object (noun) and proposes to view music as an activity (verb). Using a sociological lens to understand the significance and function of music in everyday human life, Small asserts that the fundamental

meaning of music is inextricably linked to what people do, how they partake in the music activity and the relationships that form during a musical event, stating “music’s primary meanings are not individual at all but social” (p. 8). Their involvement in the music event, which Small describes as a ritual, affirms their place in the community and shapes their identity and social relationships.

Artists are not revered in Small’s perspective, highlighting that the distinction between performer and audience is an artificial construct and subsequently deconstructs the hierarchical structures prevalent in Western music traditions where audiences are expected to be passive spectators rather than active participants. Small contends that the convergence of different actors creates the musical experience where “everyone bears some responsibility” (Small, 1982/2008, p. 10). To put it in Dekker and Morea’s (2023) terms, musicking is a co-creation process where everyone involved has a pivotal role in the creation of the music experience and the realisation of its values, echoing Becker’s (1982/2008) proposition laid out in *Art Worlds*.

Musicking, as Smalls (1982/2008) argues, is an activity that enables individuals partaking in it to construct their self-definition and understand the world. Small highlights that despite often being strangers, audiences act within pre-established behavioural norms, suggesting that it creates an in-group identity or “underlying kinship between the members of the audience” (p. 41). These shared conventions facilitate participation and shape how participants experience and interpret the musical event. By acting out these conventions and experiencing the emotions and social relationships that emerge, participants reinforce a framework for collective sense making. The musical event is, thus, transformed into a microcosm of their world—a metaphorical representation of the participant’s reality, closely aligning

with Dekker and Morea's (2023) imagination phase. Small (1982/2008, pp. 141-142) states:

> When we take part in a musical performance […] we engage in a process of exploring the nature of the pattern which connects, we are affirming the validity of its nature as we perceive it to be, and we are celebrating our relation to it. Through the relationships that are established in the course of the performance we are empowered not only to learn about the pattern and our relation to it but actually experience it in all its complexities, in a way that words never allow us to do, for as long as the performance lasts.
>
> Our relationships specify us; they change as we change, and we change as they change. Who we are is how we relate. So it is that to affirm and celebrate our relationships through musicking, especially in company with like-feeling people, is to explore and celebrate our sense of who we are, to make us feel more fully ourselves. In a word, we feel good. We feel that this is how the world really is when all the dross is stripped away, and this is where we really belong in it.

Therefore, through musicking, participants not only envision and explore their values, but also embody and enact them, allowing these values to be realised.

Bridging theory on the valuation process with empirical research, van der Hoeven and Hitters (2019) explore the social and cultural values associated with live music. They employed qualitative content analysis of music reports and strategies to understand the social and cultural values that different actors such as policy makers, consultancy firms and music industry support organisations ascribe to urban live music ecologies. The dimensions of social values are social bonding and bridging,

public engagement and identity, while the dimensions of cultural values are musical creativity, cultural vibrancy and talent development. To further concretise these dimensions, van der Hoeven and Hitters propose a set of indicators for each dimension as seen below.

- **Social bonding and bridging**: spaces to develop social networks, supporting live music participation for all ages and communities, policies against sexual harassment, musical activities for minority communities, access for disabled people, number of female performers
- **Public engagement**: activities beyond live music activities for the neighbourhood, charity and fundraising activities, policies for sustainability, providing opportunities for citizen participation (e.g. volunteering)
- **Identity**: identification with local music ecologies, iconic venues with a long history, national and international recognition (e.g. media attention), local music heroes representing the city, a local live music heritage, local musical styles
- **Musical creativity**: a diversity of genres and styles, spaces for musical experimentation, booking upcoming artists; booking original music (instead of cover bands), spaces for audiences to discover new music
- **Cultural vibrancy**: the number of performances, the number of venues, festivals and spaces for music-making (a diversity of cultural offerings), cultural clusters, a street performance and busking programme, collaboration with other cultural organisations
- **Talent development**: rehearsal spaces, spaces for emerging talent, booking amateur musicians, performance opportunities for less established performers (small size venues), providing opportunities for networking between

musicians, fair remuneration for musicians, involving local talent in city activities, career development scholarships and grants; training and coaching of musicians; collaborations with local educational institutions

van der Hoeven and Hitters' research offers a useful starting point for studying the values realised through live music experiences. It is crucial to note that while they adopt Klamer's distinction between social and cultural value as "[they] find it important to analyse the artistic qualities of a cultural good as separate from its social and economic merits" (van der Hoeven & Hitters, 2019, p. 264) This study, however, draws on Throsby's (2001) framework that views social value as a core constituent of cultural value. Nonetheless, their work provides empirical illustrations of how social and cultural values are articulated within the live music ecology, offering clear reference points to identify tangible manifestations of these values in Singapore's rave scene. For instance, the diversity of electronic dance music genres and styles can be interpreted as a form of artistic, and hence, cultural value in this study.

However, their approach reflects a top-down perspective of the values associated with live music ecologies. The values they identify largely pertains to sustaining ecologies, rather than values that arise from a sudden ground-up growth. The research also implicitly assumes that all music scenes within the urban live music ecology have similar values. For example, it is unlikely that a traditional music performance will realise the same values as a rave. Similarly, traditional music practices or a more mainstream music scene may realise different values compared to an underground music scene. Despite aiming for geographical diversity and various music industry sizes, the purposive sampling strategy of the dataset—the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, South Africa, Australia

and Scotland—excludes major alternative markets in the periphery such as Asia and Latin America, where specific socio-political or cultural nuances may result in the realisation of values not being captured by van der Hoeven and Hitters (2019). Therefore, a case study approach, which we will be undertaking here, hinted at by Dekker (2014), may further provide additional insights into the values associated with live music ecologies.

2.3 Conceptualising raving within Singapore

2.3.1 How do we approach studying a music scene?

The intuitive and colloquial use of the term *music scene*—or simply *scene*—to describe a group of individuals with a common interest bound together by a collective experience often overshadows its rich academic discourse. This section provides a broad overview of key debates surrounding popular music and youth culture and situates them in relation to the post-pandemic rave phenomenon in Singapore to ground the theoretical and methodological perspectives adopted in this study.

The concept of scene as developed by Straw (1991, 2001) emerged in response to the limitations of subcultural theory to describe the emergence of post-war British youth culture in which music is seen as an affirmation of their collective identity and fosters a sense of community (Bennett, 2004). The use of subculture as an analytical tool has been heavily critiqued for its overgeneralisation of the working-class background of its members that fails to account for their diverse social backgrounds and motivations (Bennett, 2004; Bennett & Rogers, 2016; Thornton,

1995), leading to the call and development of alternative models to understand the relationship between music and everyday life.

In contrast, scenes “coalesce around specific coalitions of musical style” (Straw, 1991, p. 379) and functions as a “cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross fertilisation” (Straw, 1991, p. 373). Instead of being bounded by fixed identities, scenes are characterised by loose networks of participants who are connected by shared practices and tastes, resulting in a constant exchange of people and ideas. As such, this perspective presents a shift from music being seen as an expression of identity towards music as the core in which networks, interactions and social relations are built around.

Straw further argues that music scenes are not confined to a single geographic location but can take shape across multiple scales, which Bennett and Peterson (2004) further develop. They distinguish between three types of scenes: *local*, *translocal* and *virtual scene*. The local scene is defined as “clustered around a specific geographic focus”; the translocal scene refers to “widely scattered local scenes drawn into regular communication around a distinctive form of music and lifestyle”; and the virtual scene is “a newly emergent formation in which people scattered across great physical spaces create the sense of scene via fanzines and increasingly, through the Internet” (Bennett & Peterson, 2004, pp. 6-7). The concept of scene and its theoretical developments offer a flexible, scalable framework for

analysing popular music and youth culture, and as such, continues to be extensively used today.[1]

So how can we interpret and study the musical practice surrounding raves in Singapore? I defer to two recent papers that can provide some insight. Woo et al. (2015) acknowledges the flexibility and the richness of the concept of scene that can "provide systems of identification and connection" and is "supple enough to capture both the continuity and the constant transformation that characterise the social worlds formed around culture" (p. 288). More importantly, they do not view the concept of a scene as a "restrictive model" that ends once it has been identified; it suggests a starting point for further investigation. Noting Hesmondhalgh's (2005) critique of the concept, Woo et al. (2015) take the essence—not the definition—of what constitutes a scene and translates it into an approach, proposing *scene thinking* as an analytical framework to identify "larger structures of power, temporality, and hope that gird our lives" (p. 289). They explain that

> *scene perspective* is literally a point of view, a way of seeing the world, and scene thinking represents a decision to treat a set of individuals, institutions and practices as if they constitute a scene. Arguably, this is what members themselves do, sweeping discrete people, places, events and artefacts up into what comes to be called a scene. (p. 292)

Similarly, Taylor (2023) reflects on the methodological challenges of researching an emerging scene. Taylor initially approached the study by using the

[1] Other notable interpretations include Bennett's (1999) concept of neo-tribes. While influential, scenes and neo-tribes have drawn critiques from Hesmondhalgh (2005) for its vagueness and theoretical looseness. Nevertheless, these debates underscore the challenges of describing fluid and continuously evolving forms of musical practices.

concept of a scene to identify and understand the process of the experimental, DIY musical practice that was starting to materialise around The White Hotel in Manchester, United Kingdom. However, “the musicians, promoters, label owners, venue programmers, producers, DJs and others [that Taylor] spoke to in the city, almost unanimously rejected the term [scene] as a description of what they were involved in, […] explicitly referring to previous Manchester music scenes from which they wished to register a definitive refusal, rejection or rupture” (p. 140). Taylor concludes that it would be “presumptuous” for a researcher to impose the scene concept onto a musical phenomenon and should instead “defer to the musicians’ organic understanding of what they are up to” (p. 148), suggesting that perhaps, *underground* might be a more suitable term.

These theoretical debates surrounding popular music, youth culture and everyday life have significant implications for this study. Singapore media describes this rapid emergence of a localised musical practice with independent smaller scale parties happening outside of commercial clubs as a *rave* or *rave scene*. However, it is essential to consider whether participants themselves identify with this term or if they prefer to define their practice differently. For clarity—and to overcome these theoretical pitfalls—*raving* and *scene* will be used here as a general descriptor of this phenomenon, reflecting its frequent usage in media that provides a common understanding for all participants. However, what constitutes raving as a localised musical practice and conversely, the rave scene, must ultimately be defined by interviewees themselves.

These theories offer a kaleidoscope of perspectives to give shape to this musical practice. Rather than imposing a rigid theoretical label and perspective, this study adopts scene thinking (Woo et al., 2015), giving way to a participant-led

approach that allows interviewees to define their own practice and lived experiences. Far from avoiding a theoretical stance, the participant-led approach is a deliberate methodological choice that reflects the complexity of the phenomenon and embraces uncertainty and complexity as a source of insight. As such, it approaches the phenomenon in a piecemeal manner to understand why this practice surged in the immediate post-pandemic period and will be elaborated on in the following Method chapter.

2.3.2 How do rave theories help us understand Singapore's electronic dance music scene and nightlife culture?

This section presents an overview of raving as a musical practice in Singapore and will be discussed in relation to key theoretical perspectives, specifically Thornton's (1995) *Club Cultures* and St John's (2009) *Technomad*, offering insights into the values, identities and cultural dynamics associated with raving that lends it greater significance beyond its perceived hedonism.

Local club culture can be traced back to the disco scene in the 1960s with the opening of two clubs—Fireplace on Coronation Road and The Cosmic Club on Jervois Road—that sparked a wave of disco openings (Tan, 2019). The arrival of hippie culture in the late 1960s permeated the local music scene with its counterculture lifestyle, including drugs, and was seen by the government as a growing threat to Singapore's moral order and social fabric (Kee, 2024). In response, authorities intensified their efforts to tighten control over youth culture as part of the anti-yellow campaign (Lim, 2018; Seow, 2021). Nightlife became prime targets of sweeping crackdowns, leading to the closure of many discotheques (Tan, 2019).

However, the popularity of the American musical *Saturday Night Life* in the late 1970s paved the way for a disco resurgence (Tan, 2019).

To boost tourism as an economic driver, *Tourism 21* was approved by the government in July 1996. Under the plan, parts of the city would be designated as *The Night Zone* and would be marketed as the “city that never sleeps” (Kiang & Chan, 2000). This area encompasses Boat Quay, Clarke Quay and Robertson Quay and is now a renowned entertainment district lined with clubs, bars and restaurants. Commercial clubs such as Zouk, which is located in The Night Zone, began to sprout in the 1990s, following global trends and mainly featured international DJs while choosing to focus on more mainstream music (Povarich, 2009). This ignited a fast-paced growth of the local commercial club scene and was further shaped by the establishment of Singapore as MTV Asia 1992’s head office (Povarich, 2009).

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, rave culture in Singapore was small and operated in parallel to but outside of commercial clubs. Key collectives such as Darker Than Wax, Syndicate, Ice Cream Sundays, Play by Ear, Kampung Boogie, and Horizon99 drove the scene. Inspired by Berlin’s techno scene, these collectives sought to redefine the global Do-It-Yourself (DIY) club culture in their own terms (Telekom Electronic Beats, 2018). Less commercial, “purist” clubs like Headquarters, Kyo and Kilo also catered to a tight-knit community of electronic music fans, prioritising musical appreciation and intimate experiences (Keng, 2017). Rooted in a DIY ethos, the musical practice occupies a metaphorical space outside of commercial venues where community and a shared love for electronic dance music sits at the heart of their operations.

The duality between commercial clubs and raving in Singapore can be understood through the lens of Thornton's (1995) seminal text on club cultures. Drawing on Bordieu's concepts of cultural, economic and social capital, they introduce the idea of *subcultural capital*. It is embodied or objectified in the behaviours and knowledge of specific electronic music genres and physically manifests through visible markers, such as fashion and hairstyles. These markers of *hipness* grants status and legitimacy onto clubbers and ravers, acting as a form of social approval and recognition while differentiating themselves within the subcultures.

Thornton (1995) organises the ideological structure of club culture through three key binaries: *authentic* versus the *phoney*, the *hip* versus the *mainstream*, and the *underground* versus *the media*. These distinctions define how subcultural capital is accrued. With regards to the first binary, Thornton argues that the enculturation of technologies within club cultures through the use of records challenged the notion of authenticity that was commonly associated with live music. Authenticity in club culture is embodied in the interaction between records and the interaction between the DJ and the crowd in the creation of an "*atmosphere* or *vibe*" (p. 54), elevating its cultural importance "above the realm of mass culture, media and commerce" (pp. 55-56).

The second binary between ravers and the *mainstream* as the imagined *other* is crucial to the construction of subcultural identity. This axis is composed of hip, alternative and in-the-know clubbers on one end and the normie mainstream on the other end, allowing the former to "put themselves in the big picture, imagine their social world, assert their cultural worth, claim their subcultural capital" (p. 179).

The third binary describes the *underground* as an "expression by which clubbers refer to things subcultural" (Thornton, 1995, p. 181). To Thornton, the underground conveys a sense of authenticity as it is "pitted against the mass-produced and mass-consumed" (p. 181) and personified by mass media. It hints at a sense of exclusivity relating to the *in crowd*. At the crux of Thornton's argument, the media plays a crucial role, alongside ravers and clubgoers, in defining club culture through "their creation, classification and distribution of cultural knowledge" (pp. 243-246) that actively delineates the boundaries of the scene. However, the media simultaneously threatens its authenticity through overexposure and risk of "selling out."

In an interview with VICE in 2018, founders of the now-defunct Horizon99 shared that they began organising raves as they felt underrepresented by the commercial club scene (Lhooq, 2018). The language used in techno-socialist movements and political texts resonated with the founders who sought to weave this ideology into their events, stating that "[to] us they're like guidelines. You don't have to protest in the streets or Hong Lim Park[2] to get political. Why not do it while you're dancing?" The founders also drew inspiration from other politically nuanced subcultures, such as the local metal and punk music scene, in their commitment to authenticity and being a platform for local acts. To them, raving serves a deeper purpose "than just a nihilistic night out," emphasising that "[it] has to be a space where people can channel their frustrations."

The political undertone and sense of resistance present in this musical practice is extensively discussed in St John's (2009) *Technomad*. Through various

[2] Hong Lim Park is the only public space in Singapore where demonstrations are legal, although a permit is still required.

case studies, St John argues that raving is a global counterculture movement, acting as sites of resistance against mainstream norms, state repression and urban regulation. They draw heavily on Hakim Bey's *Temporary Autonomous Zones* (TAZ) and conceptualises raves as fleeting zones of freedom, existing outside of state control. St John identified nine interrelated ways of resistance that characterises electronic music dance culture:

> The *Dionysian* resists isolation and posits ekstasis; the *outlaw* finds identity in its own illicitness; the *exile* seeks liberty in exodus from prejudice and patriotism; the *avant* knows rebellion in pushing the boundaries of art; the *spiritualist* seeks the reenchantment and revitalization of self and society; *reclaimers* replace commercialism and the cult of the celebrity with the folk; *safety tribes* seek to minimize harm through education; *reactionaries* fight for the right to party; and *activists* mobilize around specific ultimate causes like ecology, anti-neo-liberalism, and peace. (2009, p. 257)

These nine dimensions reveal how raving is not solely rooted in hedonism and escapism—it is a dynamic cultural practice where participants are actively engaged in pushing back against the pervasive structures of modern society. It further demonstrates that while raving can be an individual experience, it is also a collective, politically charged act.

The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in clubs having to shut its doors for nearly two years (Cheng, 2022). During which, many nightlife operators pivoted their businesses towards offering food and beverage services while experiencing constant uncertainty as restrictions went back and forth between easing and tightening (Ganesan, 2021; Meah, 2021; Raguraman & Ang, 2021). As a result, Singapore's

nightlife was heavily battered by government restrictions, leaving veterans of the club scene with their careers and financial situations in disarray (Devaraj, 2022; Khalique, 2022). Despite the end of the pandemic, Sng (2025) reported on the mounting pressures faced by the nighttime economy, citing shifts in consumption behaviour, rising transport and everyday costs and more Singaporeans working from home, highlighting concerns of its potential impact on Singapore's tourism sector. These challenges and its implications have not gone unnoticed and have been raised in parliamentary debate as recent as March 2025 (Channel News Asia, 2025; Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2025).

Nevertheless, interest in raves surged post-pandemic and continues to be discussed in local youth culture. This burgeoning underground party scene is fuelled by the emergence of a new generation of independent party collectives pushing musical boundaries (Keng, 2024). For example, Subplot Systems, who hosted their first party in February 2023, offers "fresh and lesser-heard alternatives to mainstream house, techno, and hardcore sounds" while Hyperfocus is known for their "wildly diverse sounds and line-up." Challenging traditional raving norms of dancing into the wee hours of the night, 5210PM takes on a different approach of creating a "wholesome" party experience by hosting their events on Sundays from 5pm to 10pm. Therefore, the post-pandemic underground party scene is driven by a zest for artistic expression through cutting edge, genre-fluid sounds and innovative rave formats, marking a new era of alternative club culture.

Inclusion is a key tenet of the local post-pandemic rave scene and is closely tied to community building (Junaini, 2023; Vochelet, 2022). Various articles have shed light on raves and underground parties becoming a home for LGBTQ+ communities with the formation of queer party collectives (Bussy Temple, 2024;

Keng, 2023; Lee, 2023; Life in Arpeggio, 2022). One such collective, Bussy Temple, shared in an article for MixMag Asia that its formation “emerged out of frustration over the lack of gender-diverse queer spaces in hyper-commercial Singapore.” They feature “[h]ard, fast, and unapologetic genres” in retaliation to the “angst and frustration” from minimising themselves in Singapore’s queer-unfriendly society, through which they “found a growing community that resonated with [their] form of solidarity and release (Bussy Temple, 2024). These collectives signify an evolution of its earlier practices while still retaining its core ethos of community and resistance. This theme will be revisited in the Results chapter for a more in-depth analysis to explore how these symbolic values are articulated and realised by participants.

The vibrancy of the post-pandemic rave scene is characterised by a ground up movement of independent party collectives, each with their own unique identity, culture and sound that evolved from its pre-pandemic heyday. Rejecting the notion of commercial club culture, these collectives symbolically operate outside formal institutions, carving out a space that emphatically embodies their shared vision of artistic experimentation, inclusion and community building. The Results chapter unpacks the underlying forces shaping this post-pandemic phenomenon by examining the values being realised through raving and how it drove the scene’s rapid expansion.

3 Method

This chapter serves as a critical reflection on the methodological approach of this study that is guided by a non-extractive, care-based framework. This approach is designed to balance my multiple, intersecting identities and roles while addressing the two central research questions: (1) Why did raving experience a post-pandemic surge in Singapore? and (2) How do the non-economic values realised through raving shape participation, coordination, and sustainability of the scene?

The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section on the research philosophy outlines the theoretical and methodological foundations of this study that informs its implementation. It draws upon critiques of research methods in studies of music scenes, youth subcultures and indigenous communities to establish an ethical and reflexive approach that emphasises greater sensitivity to participants' lived experiences and captures the complex on-the-ground realities of conducting research on an underground music scene. The second section on research operationalisation translates the underlying research philosophy into practical aspects of the study such as data collection, sampling and analysis. It reflects the iterative nature of fieldwork and the ethical measures taken to ensure a non-extractive approach while remaining open to new insights.

3.1 Research philosophy

Cultural economists have been critical and acutely aware of the limitations of existing quantitative methods that form the bedrock of mainstream economics in studying the value of arts and culture. The emergence of the third value-based

approach to analyse the process of valuation necessitates drastically different methods to illuminate how values are derived, added or taken away—in other words, the valorisation process (Klamer, 2004). To study the multiple and shifting nature of cultural value, Throsby (2001) suggests that valuation methods used in social sciences and the humanities, such as thick description and content analysis, can be considered. These methods uncover the underlying mechanism of an environment, process or cultural object through deep interpretative work. Therefore, the interdisciplinary philosophy that underpins this research is a direct response to this call for more varied methods to shed light on the process of values realisation.

Underground subculture scenes, including rave culture, in Singapore often rely heavily on informal networks and transactions as it typically seen as a creative side project, which has also been corroborated by interview participants. These scenes are tinged with a sense of transgression or even illegality that can put participants at risk should there be any traceable information. As a result, quantitative data is comparatively harder to obtain, is missing or incomplete, making it unsuitable for thorough quantitative analysis due to the lack of quality data. Merging an economic perspective with a qualitative sociological approach is especially useful for studying the values associated with subcultural scenes such as raving. This combination allows for greater sensitivity to the participants' lived experiences while enabling a more calibrated, context-aware approach that is attuned to the practical complexities of implementing the research. These critiques form the basis of this study.

Most crucially, I am cognisant that conducting research on a subcultural scene that serves as a safe haven for marginalised communities carries the risk of being extractivist. Extractivism within academia "refers to the practices and dynamics of exploiting knowledge and resources from marginalised or less powerful communities,

often without adequate reciprocity or benefit to those communities" (University of Antwerp, 2023). This concern has gained increasing attention alongside the call to decolonise universities and institutions of higher learning. This care-based approach recognises the structural inequalities of knowledge production and dissemination that systematically exploits participants for the researcher's gain and suppresses local indigenous knowledge, perpetuating a singular understanding of the world through a "white gaze" (Bhambra et al., 2018; Kolinjivadi et al., 2020).

It would be presumptuous of me to claim that I have entirely circumvented the instrumentalisation of rave communities as dismantling these systems of oppression is an ongoing, Herculean process. Nevertheless, a non-extractive approach remains a guiding principle of this study—and a starting point for future studies—that informs both the research design and interactions with participants.

3.2 Research operationalisation

This section translates the research philosophy into operationalisation. It details how the study was designed, how participants were recruited and how data was collected and analysed. It also demonstrates how the ethical considerations highlighted in the research philosophy manifested in concrete research practices. By bridging philosophy and practice, this study aims to maintain a critical and context-sensitive approach to understanding the surge in raving in post-pandemic Singapore.

3.2.1 Data collection

To unravel the underlying mechanism of the values realisation process, 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted over MS Teams between 21 March 2025 and 24 April 2025. The duration of these interviews ranged from 21 to 111 minutes, with a median of 59 minutes and mean of 63 minutes. All but one interview exceeded 40 minutes; this exception was due to the interviewee's limited availability and poor internet connection.

Semi-structured interviews were selected as it provides a "relatively open, flexible, and interactive approach to […] generate interviewees' accounts of their own perspectives, perceptions, experiences, understandings, interpretations and interactions" (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004, p. 1021). This method was favoured over structured interviews as it risks imposing the researcher's views onto interviewees. Instead, semi-structured interviews allow for a balance between maintaining a focus on key research themes while accommodating the emergence of new insights (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004). Given that reality can be "messy," "multiple" and "fluid," (Law, 2004), this approach embraces the fluid, dynamic nature of the rave scene. It emphasises openness to avoid the imposition of a singular perspective in recognition that realities are co-created and actively (re)produced during the research process.

Having previously taken on the roles as an attendee, organiser and performer, conducting the research remotely provided ample opportunity for critical reflection. It enabled me to distinguish my role as a researcher from that of an engaged participant of the scene to maintain an objective, reflexive stance (Bennett, 2002; O'Grady, 2013).

Dekker and Morea's (2023) value realisation process served as the foundational framework for the interview guide (Appendix C) with the key objective of understanding motivations for participating in the rave scene and how it shapes their coordination. For example, organisers were asked what they hoped to achieve through their raves. Responses such as introducing diverse electronic dance music genres to local audiences and creating a community of music lovers could be mapped to artistic value and social value respectively. Follow up questions then probed how these objectives were reflected in their events and the audience response to understand how values were realised.

Questions were tailored to specific roles within the rave scene such as rave attendees, organisers, DJs, venue owners, journalists. The pilot test and initial interviews revealed that organisers and DJs often held multiple roles. In response, questions were adjusted to align with the roles that participants strongly identified with, while also accommodating for multiple role-based questions whenever possible. At the end of the interview, participants were invited to reflect on the broader significance and future of the scene. Additionally, 8 out of 20 interviewees who were involved in the scene pre-pandemic were asked supplementary questions regarding the evolution of the rave scene and their perspectives on its shift.

The interview guide served as a jumping board for conversation but did not strictly determine its direction. Flexibility was afforded to allow new themes to emerge that may have been overlooked or have not yet been addressed by existing theories. To exemplify, the interview guide mainly focused on understanding the post-pandemic surge in raving. However, several participants had naturally brought up the challenges currently plaguing the scene that is contributing to its current stagnation, which signalled that it deserved greater attention. The remaining time of those

interviews shifted towards allowing participants to elaborate on these themes. Smith (2008) underscored the need for research methodologies to be sensitive to the cultural, social and political nuances to give weight to the participants' lived experiences. Therefore, this flexible approach highlights the importance of maintaining a critical stance that enables a thorough exploration of points of contention, rather than avoiding them. It is in these moments of critical engagement where knowledge can be further enriched.

Fundamentally, the interviews were approached with a "beginner's mind," *shoshin* in Zen Buddhism, which emphasises maintaining an open, unbiased perspective, even as an insider to the scene. This reflexive approach is essential to minimise the influence of preconceived notions. Several interviewees remarked off record that the interview provided them with an opportunity to reminisce their journey within the rave scene, underscoring the relational, care-driven approach used in this study.

At the same time, this process was not without its challenges. For instance, some questions in initial interviews were inadvertently phrased in a manner that assumed the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the rave scene. Such instances were more frequent in the early stages of fieldwork but were gradually refined using field notes with greater caution put into phrasing questions in a neutral and open-ended manner over the course of fieldwork.

3.2.2 Sampling

The sampling approach used in this study begins with multiple initial points of entry into the rave scene across different electronic dance music sub-genres but

allows participants to determine the boundaries of what they constitute as the rave scene (Taylor, 2023; Woo et al., 2015), further giving it shape as the sample expands (Figure 2). Participants were recruited using a combination of convenience, snowball and purposive sampling. Given that raving in Singapore has been described as “niche” and “underground,” these non-probabilistic sampling methods are best suited as they are typically used to study hard-to-reach populations (Raifman et al., 2022).

The various roles that I have previous assumed granted me in-depth knowledge of the scene’s dynamics and facilitated access to key figures, including other ravers that I have shared the dance floor with. Therefore, convenience sampling was first employed to identify and contact participants within the rave scene across different roles and sub-electronic dance music genres. This first phase includes individuals with whom I have connections with, as well as others whom I was aware of but did not know personally to minimise the over-representation of my immediate social circles.

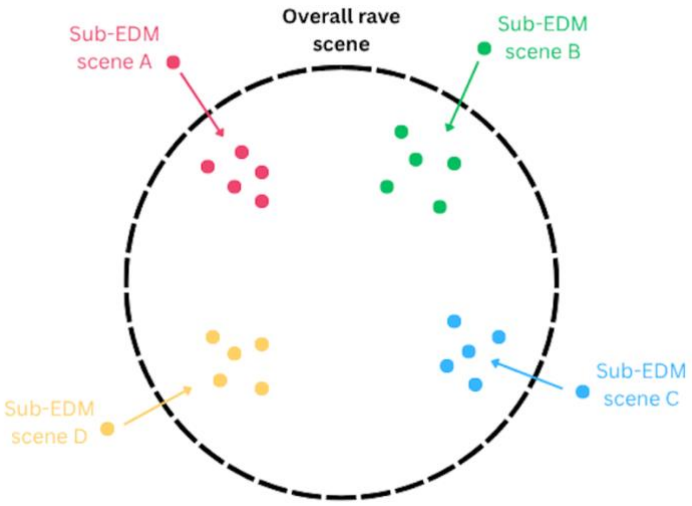
Reflecting on the personal and emotional challenges of conducting fieldwork in dance settings as a lone, Asian, female researcher, Bhardwa (2013) highlights the value of reflexivity by discussing how their intersecting identities influenced their research and data collection process. Likewise, I remain critically aware of how my intersecting identities—as a heterosexual, cisgender, female of the dominant local ethnicity from an upper-middle class background—may have influenced both my rave experiences within queer rave spaces and the social circles that I navigate, thus biasing the convenience sampling approach.

To mitigate sampling bias introduced by my own gender, sexual, ethnic and class identities, snowball sampling was used in the second phase. It also allowed me

to map the internal structure and network of the local rave scene (Taylor, 2023; Woo et al., 2015). Initial interviewees were encouraged to suggest potential participants based on their relevance to the research or their role(s) within the rave scene, capturing a variety of backgrounds in terms of residence status, ethnicity and gender. This sampling method is particularly useful to identify cases who have similar characteristics who, in turn, can refer others with similar characteristics and experiences (Palinkas et al., 2015), leveraging the close-knit, interconnected networks of rave culture (Thornton, 1995).

Figure 2

Visual representation of sampling approach



Note. This schematic design represents how convenience and snowball sampling were used to recruit interview participants from different sub-electronic dance music (EDM) scenes that collectively form the broader rave scene. Each coloured cluster reflects a distinct sub-scene (e.g., techno, house, experimental), with coloured dots

representing participants from that sub-scene. Dots outside the dashed circle indicate participants recruited through convenience sampling, reflecting multiple entry points into the broader scene. The arrows illustrate snowball sampling into each sub-scene, mapping its internal structure. While sub-scenes in reality may overlap and interconnect, this diagram reflects the simplified structure of the sampling design, rather than the social topology of the scene.

To further ensure a holistic perspective, additional efforts were made during the iterative fieldwork process through purposive sampling to capture a diversity of roles across different sub-electronic music genre scenes. This is consistent with existing literature on music scenes, which highlights the rich network and contribution of various actors in scene formation, growth and maintenance (Crossley, 2008; Crossley, 2009; Spring, 2004). It also aligns with Becker's (1982/2008) and Dekker and Morea's (2023) argument that artistic production is a collective activity bound by an interconnected network of individuals. The diversity of roles is, thus, critical to understanding their unique motivations that shape value creation and coordination.

Sampling continued until thematic saturation was reached within the fieldwork time frame. Thematic saturation refers to when no new themes or codes emerge during the data analysis process and is judged by the researcher based on the repetition or frequency of data, codes or themes (Rahimi & Khatooni, 2024), ensuring that data is sufficiently rich to capture the complexity of the values realisation process during raving. Thematic saturation implies that data collection and analysis have to be done concurrently for the researcher to determine the

accuracy of the saturation point, which was the case for this study and occurred at approximately the 14th interviewee. After this point, no new interviews were scheduled, but previously arranged interviews were still conducted to validate the point of saturation.

A total of 20 participants were interviewed. They ranged between 23 to 41 years old with a median age of 30. Two participants chose not to disclose their age, and 70% participants preferred not to mention their gender. Appendix D provides a detailed mapping of their demographics. Participants were given the option not to disclose their gender or pronouns to ensure that their privacy is respected, carefully addressing the extractive nature of the research process. It was further determined that this information would not affect the results. Based on their primary role (as not all participants had multiple roles), the sample consists of 45% organisers, 35% rave attendees, 10% DJs, 5% journalists and 5% venue owners. Participants were involved across various sub-electronic music genres including Techno, House, Breakcore and Experimental Club, ensuring a broad representation of the local scene. For confidentiality, Appendix D does not specify the sub-music scene each interviewee is associated with as they would be easily identifiable given the small size of the scene.

3.2.3 Data analysis

The data analysis process for this study involved three key phases, supported by various software tools to ensure accuracy and in-depth analysis of interview transcripts.

All interviews were conducted online over MS Teams, which provided an easily available, automatic speech-to-text transcription. Transcripts were carefully cleaned using original video recordings as reference as the software is not optimised for localised accents, resulting in significant transcription inaccuracies. Edits of early transcripts focused on correcting transcription errors, grammar, punctuation and removing filler words such as “like” and “you know.” However, it became evident during the initial analysis phase that the default structure of MS Teams transcript—short, fragmented phrases broken up into multiple lines—made it difficult to trace coherent themes and ideas. Therefore, subsequent transcripts were edited to combine these fragmented lines into longer, coherent sentences, ensuring a more accurate representation of interviewees’ perspectives and improving the depth and reliability of the analysis.

During the initial familiarisation phase, recurring themes that emerged during interviews and the transcript editing process were documented separately as part of my field notes. A table was constructed as part of these notes to summarise key takeaways from each interview, along with specific quotes reflecting emerging themes. This provided a macro perspective of the data, facilitating a quick comparison of how themes surfaced across interviewees. Dynamics that were noteworthy and strong quotes were also noted in the table.

The second phase of data analysis involved a systematic approach using Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software, to conduct thematic analysis. Thematic analysis refers to the identification of common and recurring patterns to construct central themes or sub-themes surrounding the data and is particularly useful to “reflect reality and to unpick or unravel the surface of ‘reality’” (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Bryman, 2012). In this instance, thematic analysis was most appropriate as it

provides a fluid yet rigorous approach to explore common values realised across different interviewees and similarities or differences in terms of the process of value realisation, allowing us to draw broad conclusions about the raving phenomenon in Singapore. The interaction across these themes provide further insights into the subtle dynamics of how the rave scene is shaped by the multi-layered values, capturing not only the explicit meanings associated with raving but also the contested and continuously evolving nature of these values.

Themes were first identified using codes that were developed based on theoretical concepts drawn from Throsby's (2001) interpretation of cultural value (e.g. artistic, social, symbolic) and Dekker and Morea's (2023) value realisation process (e.g. values orientation, values imagination, values negotiation). This deductive approach allowed for a theoretically grounded analysis, ensuring that the data was closely examined in relation to the study's conceptual framework and intended objectives.

In addition to the deductive analysis, an inductive thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was then applied to identify additional themes that may not be directly related to the research questions but can provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. For example, codes related to the definition of raving (e.g. clubbing vs raving, raves vs other cultural activities) and the evolution of the scene (e.g. impact of the Covid-19 pandemic) emerged during this phase. The combination of inductive and deductive coding ensured that the analysis remained open to participant insights while capturing contextual nuances beyond existing theories.

Three main themes were identified during the data analysis process (Appendix E for codes and code definition):

- **Definition of raving**: explores how participants conceptualised raving within the context of Singapore, including distinctions between raving, clubbing, raving and other cultural activities.
- **Value realisation**: examines what values were associated with raving and how these values were realised through participation, coordination and negotiation. This theme also highlights points of contention where values can be further clarified and established.
- **Evolution of the scene**: traces the development of the rave scene over time, specifically on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and catches up to the scene in its current state.

Collectively, these themes provide a clear, chronological overview of the surge in raving in Singapore in the post-pandemic era, directly addressing the research questions. The first theme explores how raving as a global subculture was oriented and reimagined within the local context during the pandemic, setting the stage for a focused examination of the values associated with raving in the second theme on value realisation. This theme captures the layered interactions between values, including their tensions and alignments both within and beyond the rave scene. It is through this intricate interplay where raving derives its meaning and continuously evolves in response to the shifting cultural and societal forces, culminating in the scene at its present moment in the third theme.

4 Results

This chapter presents results from 20 interviews to examine the post-pandemic surge of raving in Singapore through the lens of Dekker and Morea's (2023) value realisation framework.

The chapter is structured into two main sections. It first unpacks the continuously evolving definition of raving through Throsby's (2001) interpretation of cultural value that foregrounds raving as a rich site of values negotiation. The second section examines the Singapore rave phenomenon through the lens of Dekker and Morea's (2023) framework. It first explains how the pandemic became a period of gestation for value orientation and imagination, laying the groundwork for raving to enter popular consciousness. It then introduces two forces that drive the valorisation process: synergy and tension. Through the discussion of these forces of valorisation, it illuminates how artistic, social and symbolic values are realised and negotiated. Synergy is explored first to account for the rapid emergence of raving in the immediate post-pandemic period, followed by a discussion of how tension enabled adaptation to sustain this momentum. Crucially, this section also examines the thresholds of these forces where their generative capacity erodes, resulting in the current stagnation of the scene.

These insights extend Dekker and Morea's (2023) work by proposing a synergy-tension continuum as a dynamic framework through which valorisation unfolds and at times, unravels.

4.1 Definition of raving

4.1.1 The rave scene as a rich site of value realisation and negotiation

To frame this analysis, we first unpack how participants define raving. Interviews reveal that its definition is not fixed, but rather continuously negotiated as it gradually matures from the immediate post-pandemic era. This definition is derived from its juxtaposition against clubbing and its parallels with the local gig scene.

When asked to define raving, participants offered a range of interpretations that contextualises it within Singapore while acknowledging its international roots. Some suggested that it was a “vibe,” evoking a spectrum of terms such as intimate, transcendental, ethereal, ephemeral, esoteric, catharsis and wild to give shape to this feeling. Others framed it more as a descriptor: "Rave is more of a descriptor, whereas a club night is a thing, right? You could be raving on a club night” (Participant 12).

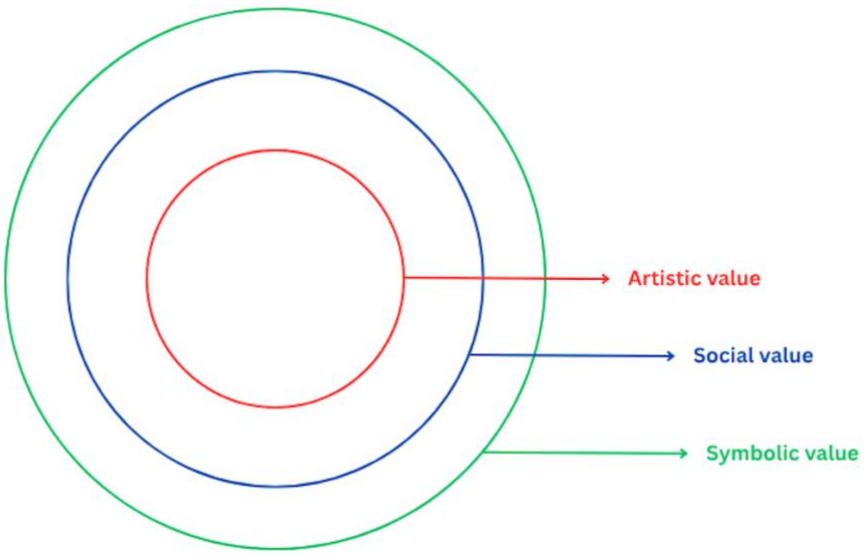
Most participants frame raving as diametrically opposed to clubbing in Singapore’s context except Participant 4 who sees them as two sides of the same coin, acting “in conversation with each other.” Clubbing is primarily associated with socialising and the status symbol that comes with dressing to impress, buying tables and bottle service, which constructs social hierarchies within the club space. According to interviewees, clubbing caters to the general population through palatable, “mainstream,” “Top 40s” or “Top 100 trending EDM” music. Raving, in contrast, appeals to the “underground” or the “niche” and is defined by a “rebellious,” “DIY” (Do-It-Yourself) and “independent” ethos with several participants drawing comparisons with the local punk and gig scene. To exemplify this DIY spirit,

Participant 19 shared an incident where a venue had pulled the plug at the last minute, prompting the organisers to scramble for an alternative venue that turned out to be a space typically used for punk gigs. Other organisers who were there as attendees voluntarily stepped in to help set up the venue. In this sense, it aligns with Thornton's (1995) construction of the subcultural identity in opposition to the overground, mainstream other.

Concretely, raving, as described by all participants, is an experience driven by intentionality, with music at its core (artistic value). It is grounded in a shared experience held together by communal values—echoing the global PLUR ethos (peace, love, unity and respect)—that enables collective catharsis and embodies resistance within the tight structures of Singapore's society (symbolic value).

Figure 3

Definition of raving and the artistic, social and symbolic values realised through participation



The significance of this conceptual definition is twofold. First, by comparing raving to clubbing and the gig scene, it reveals the underlying valorisation process (Dekker & Morea, 2023; Klamer, 2004), through which actors within the scene clarify and establish aspects—and hence, values—that they associate with raving. This continuously evolving (re)definition of rave culture resists essentialisation into a fixed music genre or aesthetic and reflects the ongoing negotiation over its meaning.

Second, this conceptual definition suggests that the values associated with raving is not realised in isolation nor are they mutually exclusive. Rather, their significance emerges through their synergy. In other words, it is through the interplay of artistic, social and symbolic values where raving becomes meaningful. These layers are not prescriptive or hierarchical, but they offer an interpretation of how the cultural value associated with raving can be decomposed into various layers (Throsby, 2001) that coexist and reinforce each other. This dynamic will be further elaborated in subsequent sections to address the rate at which raving saw growing appeal in the immediate post-pandemic era.

4.2 Value realisation process in Singapore's rave scene

4.2.1 The pandemic as a period of value orientation and imagination

Singapore entered a lockdown on 7 April 2020 in response to the escalating Covid-19 pandemic, sending residents into physical isolation. It also marked the beginning of an arduous two-year period for the nightlife sector as clubs were not allowed to operate at its full capacity. With the entire industry at a standstill,

Participant 17 described that this moment had “reset the slate” and “levelled off the scene.” This section explores how orientation towards raving took shape during this liminal period and how imagination laid the foundation for its later surge.

During this period, constant exposure to social media enabled increased cultural communication (Participant 5) and informed people of global social justice movements—such as the killing of George Floyd that sparked an international Black Lives Matter movement—allowing deeper reflection on “translating those issues to what it means in Singapore” (Participant 17). The passing of a bill by the Parliament of Singapore to repeal Section 377A in November 2022 to decriminalise gay sex gave a sense of queer liberation that shaped the queer-centric and “trans-forward” nature of the post-pandemic rave scene (Participant 9, 17). At the same time, being “chronically online” during this period had led to the discovery of new and different music genres and subcultures, including rave culture, as they were generally “exposing [themselves] to cooler shit” (Participant 7). The paradox of being physically isolated while voraciously absorbing online content led to a vivid reimagining of what local nightlife could be and created a deep-seated desire to fill those cultural voids, which would later be realised on the dancefloor.

Value orientation and imagination that occurred during this period was also driven by the expansion of mental and emotional capacity. For some, it allowed them to turn inwards and reflect. Participant 8 described that this period of isolation resulted in “a lot more time to really explore yourself and your tastes and your identity a lot more,” comparing it to shadow work—a process of connecting with parts of their personality and mind that have been unconsciously suppressed. The lockdown gave Participant 4 the time to process major life events and allowed them to reevaluate their priorities. For others, the increased capacity manifested in the

learning of new skills and hobbies, specifically DJing. Four DJs in the dataset explicitly mentioned that they picked it up or became more serious about it during this time. Thus, the pandemic provided an opportunity to reflect, reconnect and realign with themselves, resulting in a recalibration of values that prioritised developing aspects of themselves beyond their work or school lives that typically form a major part of the local identity (Participant 1). This would lay the foundation for how raves would be seen as a place to seek release from the pressures of daily life in a regimental country.

The two years of social distancing restrictions and limits on group sizes stirred an innate need for human connection and generated pent-up energy. Participants described that this period was marked by a sense of loneliness (Participant 13, 18). Participant 2 further explained that after “two years [of] being stuck in your own shell, [there was] this innate feel of “oh, I need to get out. I need to get out. I need to be out with people. I want to socialise. I wanna have fun. I wanna listen to music” (Participant 2), reflecting the need for communal experiences. It became an itch that they needed to scratch (Participant 2), resulting in a thirst for visceral experiences (Participant 10), which included raving. Participant 8 explains:

> I don't know how come or why but after COVID I think you’re just like, “Oh my God, I need to do something” or something like that. I think it was just this burning desire to really connect with people who are your vibe that you don't wanna just go to a normal club and see people that you don't really vibe with. I think the two years of isolation just really got to us and to me, I just wanted to be in a space where people like you are also enjoying.

This longing was particularly acute for those who came of age during the pandemic and felt that their “prime years” and experiences had been “robbed” from them that translated into a profound hunger for external stimulation and exploration (Participant 2, 14, 20). Participant 3 described feelings of being entrapped, which was intensified by family pressures, and wanted to channel those frustrations into a desire to “really do something that [they] really want[ed] to do.” The resentment from being enclosed created a buildup of latent tension that culminated into the raw energy of the immediate post-Covid era. This intensity translated into a proliferation of collectives, events, alternative sounds that served not just as entertainment, but a form of self-assertion and recovery.

The two years of pandemic restrictions became a fertile period for value orientation and imagination to unfold. Being “chronically online” had oriented individuals to alternative sounds and global trends, including rave culture, and enabled them to reimagine the possibilities of nightlife. With more time available, many began to nurture a more balanced approach to life beyond work or school with raving subsequently becoming an activity to realise these new priorities in the post-pandemic era. The hunger for human connection and visceral experiences, especially among those who came of age, contributed to the swift pace in which interest grew. In the following section, we further expand on this by exploring how the interplay of values realised through participation in raving had contributed to its significance and surge. At the same time, developments within the scene also allowed tensions to emerge, facilitating adaptation for its sustainability.

4.2.2 Forces of valorisation: synergy

Here, we illuminate the mechanism in which participation in raving allowed the simultaneous realisation of artistic, social and symbolic values and how their interaction lends raving greater significance within the context of Singapore, driving the surge in interest. It reveals that values are not just clarified and established when they clash (Dekker & Morea, 2023; Klamer, 2004), but also when they complement and reinforce each other. At a certain point, however, these synergistic forces expend, dampening the scene's rapid growth.

4.2.2.1 Synergy of values fuelled the surge in raving

This first example of synergistic forces reflects how artistic, social and symbolic values of raving are intricately tied together, mutually reinforcing each other and contributing to its swift growth. Specifically, the introduction of new sounds and sonic textures (artistic value) drew together like-minded individuals who share unique music tastes and experiences, transforming the rave space into a site of "communal enjoyment" (Participant 16). This voluntary choice of being in a community takes on greater meaning in Singapore as social identities are often prescribed.

Independent collectives that sprouted during the immediate post-pandemic era sought to fill in the gaps within the scene by introducing new sounds that existing clubs were not offering—moving beyond the EDM and "Top 40s" music at commercial clubs and popular electronic dance music genres, such as Techno and House music, at underground clubs. Organisers within the dataset shared that their "responsibility as an organiser [is] to put on as much different genres and different experiences for [audiences] to explore and to make it accessible for them as well"

(Participant 2). Similarly, ravers are drawn to the range of musicality featured in raves from experimental and deconstructed club music (Participant 9, 11) to left field bass, UK garage and jungle music (Participant 5, 10).

Through the intentional curation of diverse sounds, organisers not only allow artistic value to be realised but they also create a space where individuals can discover, connect and bond over shared tastes, allowing social value to come into being. The setting enabled people to "revel in […] a shared taste that they might not be able to do in daily life [where one would] just listen to the music in the car or just on your phone speaker. But within a rave space, [attendees] can actually enjoy these types of music with other people" (Participant 16). Participant 20 further explains that those who appreciate the same music "tend to [become] friends faster and they become deeper friends."

DJs, as "vibe curators" (Participant 2), further cultivate the synergy between artistic and social value by shaping the musical journey (Participant 6, 12). DJs act as intermediaries between organisers and attendees, translating their curatorial vision into a driving undercurrent that forms the heartbeat of the rave. As Participant 6 describes, DJs create "movement and flow into the crowd," facilitating the formation of affective social bonds between organisers, ravers, DJs, and even other performers such as movement artists (Participant 2, 6). Music, Participant 6 elaborates, can evoke specific memories or "mind altering" conversations that occur on the dancefloor. Therefore, dance becomes a form of bodily expression—a non-verbal communication— that allows you to "see how free the other person is or how open that other person is to [sharing] that expression with you," enabling deeper, more spiritual connections (Participant 11).

These bonds act as centripetal forces that draw people together, transforming raves into an active, shared experience. Participant 1 shared that raves can feel especially “wholesome” when they “look around and [their] friends are around [them] and [they] see that [they are] all enjoying this moment together.” These invisible affective bonds facilitate the formation of an imagined community (Participant 5, 9):

> Even though I see them [regulars within the rave scene], I don’t really talk to them but there’s this second home feeling or a comforting feeling [where if I go] and they’re there, then I know I’m gonna have a good time because I know these people know how to respect the scene, respect the space, and they also know how to have the good time. They know how to enjoy the music and so it just brings me comfort and makes me feel safe.

This sense of community is particularly significant in Singapore as it represents a self-directed choice. Participant 1 explains that social identities are often defined by institutions such as school or work in Singapore: "You're defined by your work [and] you're defined by the school you go to and those aren't really a community because there's only a certain amount of willingness to be in that space in the first place.” The act of creating and inserting themselves in a community outside of these spaces is, thus, an exercise of volition—a forceful act of agency.

Participant 13’s comparison between raving and local punk gigs further exemplifies the significance of this synergy between artistic and social values. While both are “high energy” and “you can kind of just dance however crazy you want,” Participant 13 notes that the crucial difference is the community: “Raving has the sole purpose of enjoying music and trying to make it most enjoyable for everyone, whereas because of the way [punk gigs] are set up and because of the communities,

they have less intention of making sure that everybody enjoys it and it's a bit more aggressive." This distinction underscores the capacity for raves as a site for these values to converge, creating a space for mutual appreciation and collective enjoyment that fuelled the post-pandemic surge. Therefore, the artistic, social and symbolic values being realised are co-constitutive. Music becomes a shared language that pulls people together in the creation of a community while the collective experience is imbued with meaning as it reflects a deliberate choice to participate—the culmination of these values drove the surge in raving.

The second example points towards the interplay between artistic and symbolic value where immersive environments enable a sense of escape from and a collective rejection of the humdrum and rigidities of everyday life. Organisers curate a multi-sensory experience through fog machines, strobe lights and world-building narratives to "immerse the audience within the moment" (Participant 4, 13, 19). The foggy and dimly lit environment with lights directed towards the performers cast audiences into the background, "melding the audience and allowing them to join, temporarily, the noosphere [where] everyone is sharing the same consciousness at that moment" (Participant 10). This setup blurs the boundaries between the individual and the collective, teetering between reality and their subconscious, transforming raves into a gateway towards collective transcendence.

This sense of transcendence that is closely tied to catharsis takes on added meaning in Singapore where everyday life is defined by strict, rigid norms driven by intense productivity. Rave spaces are transfigured into a psychological space—a temporary oasis—where "all of the pressures in daily life are suspended for a while" (Participant 16). Participant 13 explains that "the sounds, the space and the visuals, everything was just this world that [they] could step into and it's a nice respite from

the aggressively normcore world and also very aggressively conservative country." To further illustrate the pervasive norms that govern Singapore's society, Participant 11 recounted an instance when they attended a performance at the Esplanade's (a major performing arts centre in Singapore) auditorium:

> It was so beautiful, there was Sufi music was being played and I stood up. I went a little [to the] back so that I do not disturb people and I started dancing just in the back row. But the guard was there and she was like, "please don't dance, you can sit down." So even dancing has become something not to do. Just because there [is the] presence of seats in auditorium doesn't mean that you need to sit.

By engaging in this act of release, rave goers collectively push back against the "terrifically well-engineered" system that coddles them with material comforts and encroaches upon their agency, allowing them to reclaim their individuality (Participant 4) amidst relentless currents of hyper-productivity and conformity.

To better illustrate the synergy between artistic and symbolic value, it is useful to contrast raves with other cultural activities, such as art exhibitions and writer's festivals, that also possess intrinsic artistic value, but do not evoke the same symbolic significance. Local cultural events are typically state funded, often resulting in self-censorship, restraint and "a tendency of […] being in the space of social politeness more than the wilderness" (Participant 1, 5, 11). In contrast, the "uncompromising" and unbridled nature of raves is seen as a "genuine artistic expression," lending it greater authenticity and creating the setting for attendees to seek release (Participant 1). This difference in terms of the synergy between artistic and symbolic values in raving versus other cultural activities could explain the

divergence in post-pandemic trends (Appendix A). It further demonstrates that artistic value alone is insufficient to account for its rapid emergence. Instead, the interplay of artistic value from sensory immersion that gives way to collective transcendence and catharsis within an extensively structured society (symbolic value) that drove its pertinence and propelled its rapid emergence in the immediate post-pandemic era.

4.2.2.2 Threshold of synergy and the current stagnation of the scene

The initial post-pandemic surge in raving was driven by a synergy between various values. New collectives and events introduced new sounds (artistic value) that attracted a range of attendees with a similar appreciation for music, fostering a sense of community (social value). However, as the scene matured, it reveals a critical threshold that is contributing to the current lull in the scene.

The first example of this threshold is reflected as “option fatigue” (Participant 17). Prior to the pandemic, the rarity of raves gave it an added sense of novelty (Participant 8), which has now been diluted with the plethora of events within a single weekend. While some attendees have embraced this abundance by “party hop[ping] [to] three or four different parties in a night” (Participant 20), others have reached a point of saturation. Participant 9 noted that they are becoming increasingly picky with the events that they attend, citing repetition of acts across different events and declining interest:

> I'm becoming more selective of what kind of raves I want to go because the scene is so small, even though there are many different collectives. [T]hey usually just invite each other over to their own event. So to me it's like, I just saw [this DJ] last week. I don't need to see [the same DJ] this week again. […]

> I feel I wouldn't gain a lot of interesting insight or learning thing new if I go for [the] event.

This sentiment is shared by others in Participant 9's social circle. When asked what would draw them back, Participant 9 admitted that they first need a break and would only attend when the lineup genuinely excites them. Their response reveals that the interplay of values, which drove the initial boom of the rave scene, has begun to fray. The oversaturation and repetition of acts have led to an erosion of artistic value, upending its synergy with social value. This dissonance destabilised the valorisation process and is reflected in the scene's inability to sustain participation, contributing to its current slowdown.

Conversely, this second example suggests a loss of social value for older members of the rave scene. The rapid expansion of the scene introduced new members who may not share the same ethos as older members. Participant 6 and 15, frequent ravers in the pre-pandemic era, emphasised how the growth of the scene drew new crowds with "different intentions" who do not uphold a similar respect for such spaces, threatening the safety it provides:

> A couple of my friends have been in eerie situations where they have been spiked or just getting hit on by men who go to these raves for completely different intentions, and it makes the place unsafe because you don't feel comfortable. I feel like everyone needs to understand just basic partying etiquette, which some people might not be even be able to grasp, I don't know. Because that's the whole idea of a rave, right? You just wanna feel safe to do whatever and you wanna be in a place where you can party comfortably without being harassed. (Participant 6)

Participant 15, who continues to appreciate electronic dance music, shared that the scene's growth resulted in unfamiliarity and exclusion, making it hard for them to integrate with the newer crowd. They explained that while rave collectives have become increasingly synonymous with queer collectives "and that's obviously fine" but "they typecast you because you don't behave a certain way or you don't look a certain way." Participant 15 experienced "very strange [and] bad customer service" by a door host and attributed it to not dressing in accordance with popular fashion within the community: "I think a lot of my other friends are queer but because they're older, they don't necessarily dress a certain way. They've also faced a lot of these kinds of things where they don't even feel included in their own community." Unlike Participant 6, a DJ whose livelihood depends on the scene, Participant 15 and their friends have gradually phased out of actively raving whereas Participant 6 is resigned to accept these "different intentions" by "try[ing] not to grapple with that idea."

These two examples demonstrate two critical insights into the dynamic nature of synergistic forces. Firstly, they confirm that the mutual reinforcement of values drove the initial surge. In the first example, the diminishing of artistic value from oversaturation destabilised the synergy that once fuelled the scene. Even though social value from community persisted, it can no longer sustain the interest without the excitement of new sounds. Whereas in the second example, artistic value alone is insufficient for older members as the social value of raving has been eroded by the "different intentions" of newer members. Thus, the undermining of one value or the other within this synergy manifested into the current slowdown of the once burgeoning scene.

Secondly, these two examples indicate that the synergistic forces are not infinite—there exists a threshold beyond which, the synergy becomes strained, potentially leading to stagnation or decline. What this further suggests is that the synergistic forces may be subject to diminishing returns.

4.2.3 Forces of valorisation: tension

In line with existing literature, tension acts as a formidable force for values negotiation and valorisation. Unlike synergy, which reinforces and amplifies the values, tension forces participants to confront conflicting values, compelling them to clarify, negotiate and adapt their positions (Dekker & Morea, 2023; Klamer, 2004). In the case of raving in Singapore, habitual music tastes, structural constraints, and economic challenges pose as points of contention that set off this evaluative process. These tensions resulted in the scene's adaptation to ensure its sustainability. However, it has also placed significant pressure on the scene such that it is now threatening its existence.

4.2.3.1 Tension between values resulted in adaptation to sustain the scene

Raves are fertile sites for artistic experimentation. Participant 4 consciously experiments with different genres and "awkward mixing" within one set but maintains a cohesive upbeat "dancey" energy (Participant 2, 4). Organisers have also combined music with other art forms into their raves, such as tattooing, visual art exhibitions and Butoh, a Japanese avant-garde dance form (Participant 9, 14). Participant 14 shared that they wanted to "create a space for art, a space for different things, not just about people coming and getting smashed, but actually

creating spaces for people to express themselves." Such creative risks reflect the artistic value of raving as a site of cultural exploration and experimentation.

Nonetheless, there have been moments where audiences have been less receptive to artistic experimentation. Participant 2 recounted bringing in an international act, only to find that most of the attendees were outside smoking instead of watching them perform. Similarly, Participant 4 described some mixed reactions from audiences to their use of a variety of genres and "awkward mixing" in their sets. Both participants attribute these responses to the local audiences' relative lack of exposure to different approaches to music. However, they take such challenges in their stride. Participant 4 acknowledges that music is subjective, while Participant 2 sees it as an opportunity to continue refining the articulation of their vision by making experimental music genres "[easier] to get into." This supports the valorisation process wherein audiences and organisers have different intentions towards rave events and how the clash of these value regimes have led organisers to sharpen their approach. Here, tension acts as a force of valorisation, prompting organisers to refine their vision and clearly articulate their creative identity, finding ways to adapt to audience expectations without losing their artistic integrity.

The lack of venue spaces in land scarce—and hence, high land prices—Singapore is a significant point of contention for the rave scene that has shaped how raves are organised. Participant 14, who has been organising pop-up parties since the pandemic, mentioned the gradual decline in availability of spaces over the years. This is partly a consequence of the scene's own expansion as the growing number of events led to the closure of some popular venues following noise complaints (Participant 14). Participant 20, who used to run a small studio venue, is pivoting

towards other business models as the high space rental cost exposed them to greater financial and operational risk.

The high venue rental is further exacerbated by licensing challenges that shape the conditions under which raves are organised. Participant 14 shared that their collective had intended to return to a venue where they previously used successfully but later discovered that it was registered under a different building usage category and thus, could not obtain the necessary licenses for the event. The building has since been sold for residential use. The licensing application process requires organisers to make themselves visible to law enforcement, which places overt pressure on them—especially queer collectives—as it “puts [them] on a radar” (Participant 19). Participant 14 corroborated this statement, adding on that unlike in other countries, local police are more willing to “put you in jail or take people’s names or card you” for organising illegal raves, adding another layer of fear within the “authoritative state” (Participant 19).

The lack of independent venues and legal risk associated with organising that is aggravated by the inconsistencies in the way regulation is enacted have pushed organisers towards temporary takeovers of bars, restaurants and clubs (Participant 14, 16, 18, 19, 20). Participant 18 shared that this creates a mutually beneficial engagement for local food and beverage establishments who have been struggling after the pandemic. They elaborate:

> What we were doing a lot is that we're doing like these pop-up events so not really doing artisan, established night clubs, but more like just restaurants or whatever and then temporary convert them into a little rave space that creates additional revenue for them because then [they] get bar sales etcetera, so you

> know that's good for them as well. It's kind of nice to be able to have these kind of sustainable partnerships with people and businesses and then you feel like you're contributing in that way as well.

Despite raves being seen as existing in parallel to but outside of commercial clubs, Participant 19's collective and other collectives have turned towards clubs, including commercial clubs, as tenable rave spaces as they possess the required licenses. Participant 19 emphasised (unprompted, might I add) that they would still consider club takeovers by collectives as raves "because that is still having the shared space for release and release with people that you share some music experience with or you enjoy the same music." Spatial constraints act as a motivating force for organisers to explore different options to sustain the scene. In doing so, it pushes them to evaluate the values at the heart of rave culture, highlighting how the rave scene is a rich site of continuous adaptation through values negotiation.

Rising costs have also taken a toll on demand as rave goers are becoming increasingly cost conscious. Participant 14 recalled that going out in the past would remain fairly affordable as they would be able to get some free drinks, drink outside the club and take the night bus home if they were not able to afford a cab, making nightlife activities accessible even to those with limited financial means. Today, however, the cost of participation has risen dramatically with local ride hailing service, Grab, becoming a major limiting factor by being "so expensive even as a working adult" while drinks average at SGD20 per glass (Participant 14). Ticket prices to raves previously ranged from SGD20-30 have soared to SGD60 straight out of the pandemic and have become the standard (Participant 6). Escalating prices have shaped participation towards those with greater income power, straying further away from its DIY and inclusive ethos and drawing "not the kind of people that you

want in a club” (Participant 6). This points towards an emerging tension between economic sustainability of the scene and preserving its social and symbolic values.

To navigate these economic challenges, parts of the rave scene have begun experimenting with alternative models to sustain participation. One approach involves offering sliding scale donations to reduce the barriers to entry, particularly for members within the queer community, for whom raves function as crucial spaces of sanctuary and expression (Participant 7). Other organisers also offer opportunities for those who are unable to contribute by volunteering at their events instead (Participant 6). These efforts at inclusion respond to the economic pressures and embodies the rave ethos of inclusivity. By recognising the daily struggles of attendees who fall between the cracks, organisers resist commodifying participants and humanises them, encouraging greater empathy and deeper forms of participation within the community.

Another approach adopted by organisers involves channelling profits from previous events into future events while extracting minimal gains for themselves. Participant 3 redirects earnings from commercial “cash grab” events into subsequent more artistically driven events that may not guarantee profits. This reduces financial pressure and while maintaining some artistic integrity, stating that “[they] feel more secure with losing a bit of money or making lesser money because [they already made] money from the events before.” For Participants 16 and 18, their motivation to organise lies in not viewing their raves as a profit driven enterprise, but in bringing their community together and curating shared experiences.

Specifically, Participant 7 has been actively exploring longer-term strategies to sustain the local scene and strengthen the regional scene amid its current

stagnation. They shared their intention to organise smaller events that prioritise homegrown acts to develop a distinct local sonic identity that concurrently reduces the high costs associated with bringing in international acts. They also started collaborating with scenes in neighbouring countries, such as in Malaysia, by co-hosting international acts to share financial risks. These efforts aim to put Singapore and the region “on the map for alternative sounds” and expanding participation beyond state borders. Undeterred by the challenges, Participant 7’s optimism is palpable as they emphasise:

> We can do something smaller. There’re always ways to work around it. We already did it this far. If you don’t do it, who else is gonna do it? Sure, we have all these other collectives also, but everyone needs each other to keep the scene alive like everyone is doing their own little effort to make the scene alive to make it more vibrant. I think everyone has this common consensus of not wanting it to be as dull as before. […] Even if it doesn't do well from a business standpoint, at least we put Singapore on the map somehow.

These examples illustrate how tension serves as a catalyst for value negotiation, pushing actors within the scene to re-evaluate, adapt and clarify the values that define it. Tension acts as a crucible where values are tested, refined and rearticulated. By responding positively to tension, organisers and participants continuously shape the values associated with the rave scene, actively fighting for its sustainability and relevance in the face of these challenges.

4.2.3.2 Threshold of tension and the current stagnation of the scene

The earlier section describes how organisers have turned towards temporary takeover of bars, restaurants and clubs as tenable rave spaces. However, that may not always be an option. Smaller collectives with less track record or collectives that feature more alternative sounds experience difficulty collaborating with clubs who typically pursue a specific sonic palette. Such organisers are forced to buy out the club for the night, which typically costs between SGD6,000-8,000 per night—an impossible amount for newer collectives, unless they have insider connections to club owners (Participant 6, 7). Navigating the economics of organising has led to financial losses for some organisers, resulting in burnout (Participant 3, 8). Participant 8 points out that the economic model of raves is only possible for organisers with financial security from separate day jobs whereas full-time freelance organisers face greater economic precarity, placing serious mental and emotional constraints on their ability to fulfil their creative vision or even participate. They express:

> Yeah, being freelancer is not sustainable like I need to get a job outside to complement or help with it. I do think this is a big issue that makes it hard for me specifically or for [my collective] to continue. I just feel like even as a freelancer, I had to take a break because I felt like I was creating or doing things in a lack mindset and I wanted to take a break because I don't think this is very healthy. I burnt myself out so hard because I was doing gigs and gigs and gigs and I was just physically and mentally- everything. And then, I was like this is not good. Instead of creating from a lack mindset, I wanna be doing stuff where I actually enjoy it and not because I need to do it to pay my bills.

> That's also a big part where I think burnout is very real for like organizers too. […] I just don't think it's very sustainable to be in this scene full time.

Participant 19 further expressed the “controversial opinion” that “the rave scene has to die and be reborn,” citing a widespread burnout.

On one level, their experiences reveal how structural and economic constraints disproportionately affects newer and less established organisers, discouraging participation of those who lack institutional or financial support. As a result, these non-neutral forces shape whose values and visions get sustained in the scene, threatening the plurality that allows for values negotiation (Dekker and Morea, 2023).

On a deeper level, these experiences indicate a threshold in the forces of tension: it marks the existence of a point where sustained pressure no longer spurs innovation and adaptation and instead, pushes organisers to the brink of burnout. Participant 8’s account illustrates how these dynamics exhaust not only the feasibility of organising, but also the mental, emotional and creative capacity that it hinges on. At this threshold, the valorisation process breaks down as actors no longer can negotiate, drawing a fine line between *good stress* and *bad stress*. This suggests that, like synergistic forces, the forces of tension may also be subject to diminishing returns.

While all organisers acknowledged a slowdown in the momentum of the scene, these negative undertones were expressed by approximately one third of organisers. Majority of organisers are still generally positive about the possibility of a future scene, hinting that the scene may just be beginning to cross into the threshold of tension. Whether the rave scene evolves towards a more locally defined identity or

declines for a future rebirth under a new generation, this moment marks a critical juncture with divergent paths ahead.

4.3 So where does this leave us?

This chapter has traced the post-pandemic surge of raving as a complex and ongoing values realisation process. It showed how the pandemic laid the foundation by enabling a period of values orientation and imagination, during which raving entered popular consciousness.

In particular, the chapter introduced the concept of synergy as another force of valorisation where values are mutually reinforced and hence, established. This synergy was central to the initial explosion of interest in raving. Conversely, tensions that arose from differences in artistic vision, structural constraints and economic challenges became a catalyst for adaptation through the clarification and establishment of values to sustain the scene (Dekker & Morea, 2023; Klamer, 2004).

As the scene inches into its current stagnation, it reveals that these forces of synergy and tension experience diminishing returns where past a certain point, it threatens to collapse and its ability to support the valorisation process is undermined. The synergy-tension continuum suggested in this chapter provides greater nuance to Dekker and Morea's (2023) values realisation process. Figure 4 illustrates the synergy-tension continuum (i.e. forces that drive the valorisation process), while Figure 5 depicts the effect of these forces on Singapore's rave scene. As the scene stands at the thresholds of this continuum, its future trajectory hinges on the choices made by its key actors either towards becoming a distinct local subcultural movement or entering a period of retreat and hibernation.

Figure 4

Forces of valorisation (synergy-tension continuum)

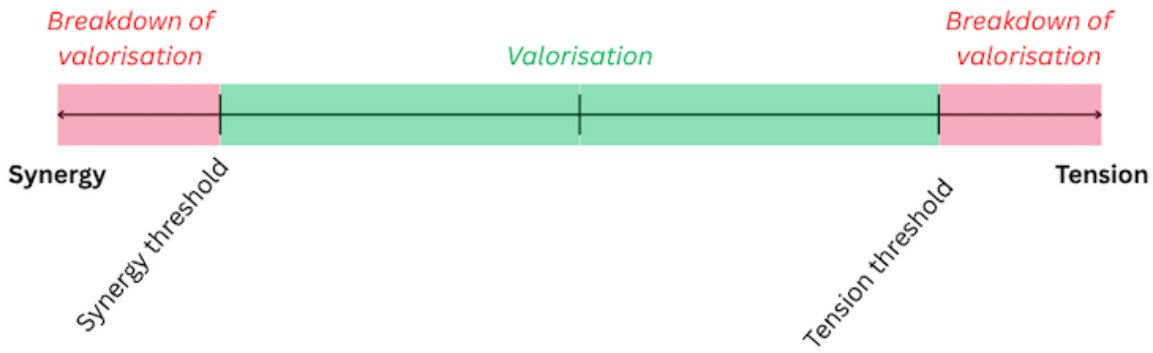
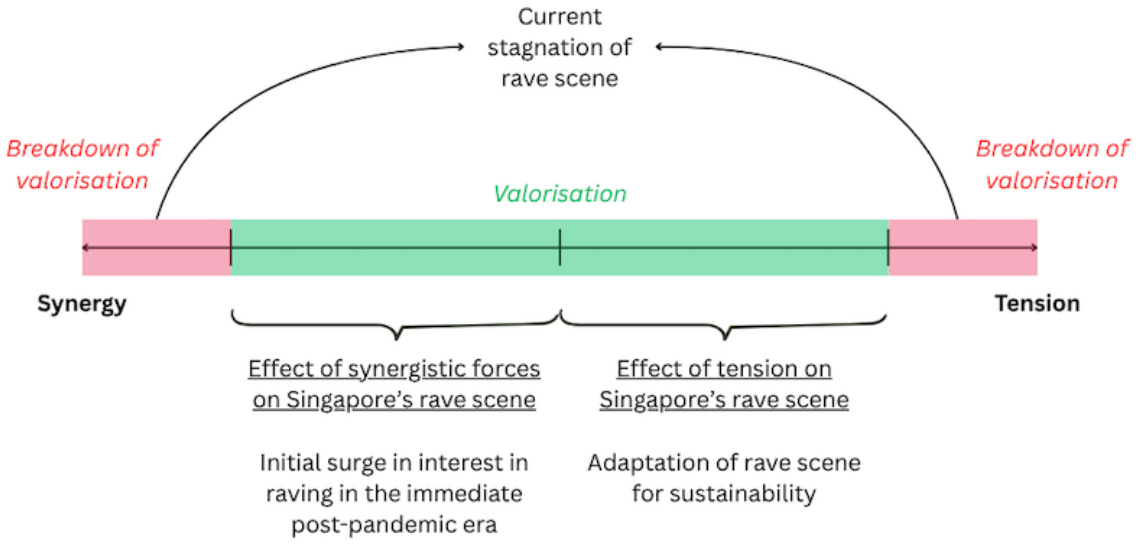


Figure 5

Forces of valorisation (synergy-tension continuum) in Singapore's rave scene



These insights remain preliminary, but they raise important questions for further research. Firstly, could the synergistic forces be a characteristic of subcultures or can it be applied more broadly across the cultural field? It is possible that the synergy observed here reflects a collective response to the constraints of

Singapore’s tightly regulated city, confirming that context plays a crucial role in shaping the valorisation process. Additionally, the synergy-tension continuum implies an arbitrary divide between these forces. The possibility of the distinctness of each force cannot be ruled out. Finally, where do the thresholds occur, and can valorisation be reestablished once it has broken down? As Klamer (2004) notes, the valorisation process is context-dependent—so, too, perhaps is the point at which it becomes unsustainable. These questions point toward the need for further research into how the value realisation process unfolds in reality and in other settings.

5 Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the surge in interest in raving in Singapore. It sought to answer two research questions: (1) Why did raving experience a post-pandemic surge in Singapore? and (2) How do the non-economic values realised through raving shape participation, coordination, and sustainability of the scene? By applying Dekker and Morea's (2023) value realisation framework, this study has shown that the pandemic was a gestation period for value orientation and imagination that allowed raving to enter popular consciousness and laid the foundations for the scene's post-pandemic proliferation.

Interviews with 20 participants, including organisers, ravers, DJs, journalists and a venue owner, revealed that the rave scene is a rich site of value realisation and negotiation. Participation in raving as a musical practice enabled the simultaneous realisation of artistic, social and symbolic values. The synergy of these value regimes mutually reinforced each other, driving the expansion of the rave phenomenon. In Singapore's tightly regulated cultural landscape, these co-constitutive dynamics imbued raving with greater significance, fuelling the growth of the burgeoning scene. At the same time, structural constraints and economic challenges posed as tension that acted as a catalyst for the rave scene to clarify and evaluate their positions, resulting in adaptation and became pivotal to the sustainability of the scene. However, the overabundance of events with limited innovation and a wave of new members to the rave scene, exacerbated by the structural and economic challenges, has pushed it towards a critical juncture today where it may either evolve into a distinct local subculture or enter a period of retreat and hibernation.

The main contribution of this thesis is the theorisation of the *forces of valorisation*. These forces can be represented through what I term as the *synergy-tension continuum* that illustrates the different underlying mechanism in which cultural values are established. Dekker and Morea (2023) emphasise value negotiation through a clash of values, a process that Klamer (2004) refers to as valorisation. This study extends their framework by showing that the synergistic interplay of values can mutually reinforce each other, enabling these value regimes to be further established. Tension, by contrast, allows values to be established by forcing participants to confront and clarify their positions. Together, these forces operate on a continuum that drove the post-pandemic scene growth and adaptation. Therefore, synergy and tension are two sides of the same coin—each establishing value, although through different means.

Dekker and Morea's (2023) framework suggests that value negotiation can occur infinitely. However, the analysis of Singapore's rave phenomenon reveals a threshold effect where synergy and tension can be exhaustive, leading to a breakdown of the valorisation process. This is evident in the scene's current stagnation, an outcome of oversaturation and the crippling effect of structural and economic challenges. This introduces a temporal dimension to the valorisation process where the establishment of values is not endlessly sustainable. Instead, there is the presence of an arbitrary, context-dependent threshold beyond which valorisation may collapse. As such, these forces are subject to diminishing returns. This deepens existing theory through the identification of the generative and destructive capacity of these forces.

More broadly, this study demonstrates how global artistic practices, such as raving, can take root in a localised setting and organically become a part of local youth and music culture, outside the bounds of government intervention. The scene's

current stagnation reflects not failure, but the need for renewed imaginaries. Echoing Dekker and Morea (2023), this study underscores the importance of cultural policy to provide scaffolding that supports artistic plurality, especially from the ground up. It points towards the potential of informal, self-organised scenes as fertile ground to cultivate a local artistic identity. In doing so, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how artistic practices emerge, evolve and sustain themselves in contemporary urban contexts.

While this single case study suggests that this threshold is contingent on context, further research is needed to explore whether this theorisation holds across different cultural forms. Applying the emerging valuation approach to different cultural contexts may clarify whether this framework is unique to subcultures or if it can be more broadly generalisable. Future studies can also examine the factors that determine the threshold. Taylor (2023) points out that researchers can be late to arrive on the scene, allowing them to study it as “an object fixed in space and time and ripe for investigation.” This study, however, is conducted alongside the scene’s ongoing evolution. Thus, the insights here remain preliminary. A longer term or retrospective study can help assess whether these forces of valorisation can be re-stabilised after it has been undermined.

This research is guided by a non-extractive, care-driven approach that rejects the (colonial) notion of a singular epistemology and embraces diverse modes of knowledge production. In the spirit of reciprocity and recognising that research can mould social realities (Law, 2004), I intend to share these findings with the local scene and potentially with broader institutions. These insights can serve as a springboard for deeper conversations about how the scene can collectively respond to its challenges and improve supporting structures for artistic and cultural plurality

for long-term sustainability. The format of this sharing will be further explored to ensure these insights remain alive, accessible and relevant.

This study has given me the opportunity to actively reflect on what draws me to the underground. During my travels, I often try to seek out these scenes as I have always found them to be an authentic expression of the everyday joys and struggles of ordinary people. The underground is a palpable force that humanises a city and forms its heartbeat. It represents the collective capacity of its people to carve out a space for themselves and resist the superstructures that strip them of their individuality.

In documenting the post-pandemic rave scene in Singapore—a place that I have gradually learned to love and accept with all its shortcomings and merits—I am reminded that spaces born from the ground up are actively fought for, nurtured and sustained through the values that we choose to embody and uphold. This thesis is not just an academic exercise, but a gesture of care and solidarity with those who continue to dream, gather, and move together. It is my hope that these pages contribute, however modestly, to the rhythms of a scene still in motion. As Participant 7 puts it, “We already did it this far. If you don’t do it, who else is gonna do it?”

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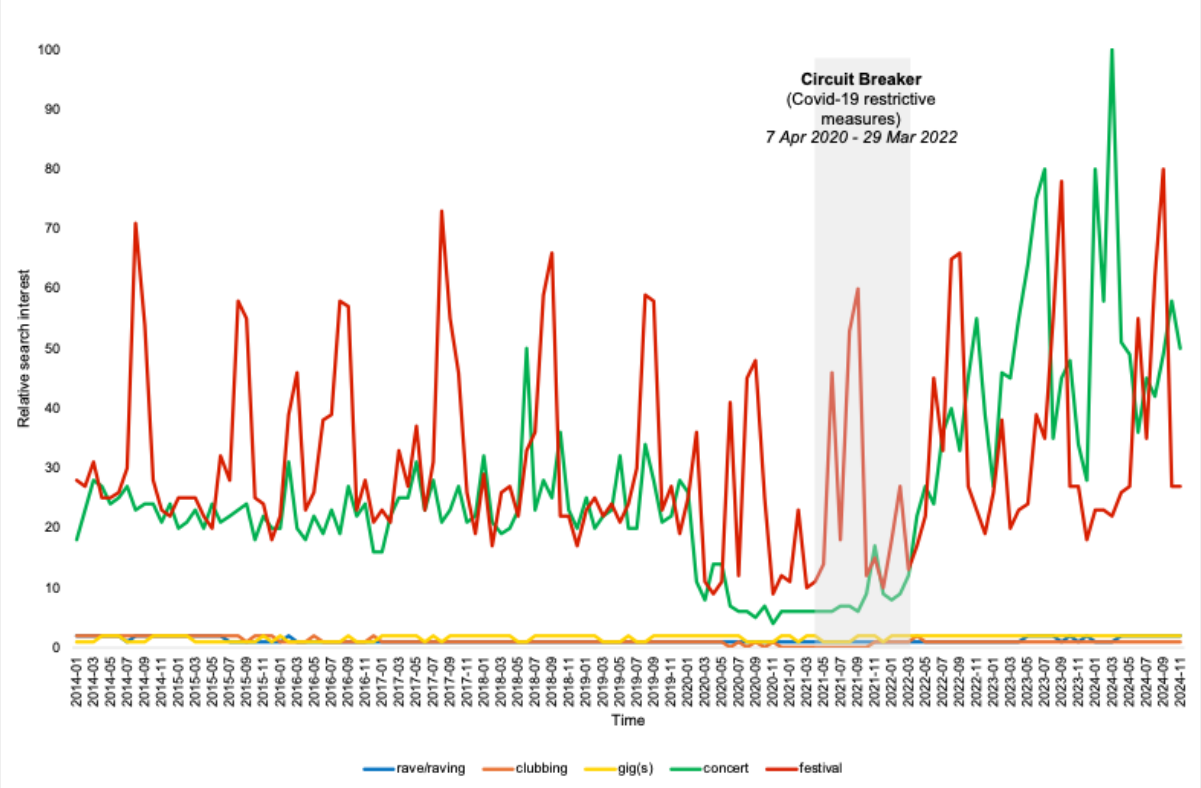
Appendix A

Comparison of interest between rave/raving and other live music events and cultural events

To rule out that the surge in interest in raving post-pandemic was not a standard pandemic recovery phenomenon, several comparisons were made between raving and other cultural activities.

Figure A1

Comparison of relative interest in raves/raving versus other live music events in Singapore over 10 years based on Google Trends (normalised)

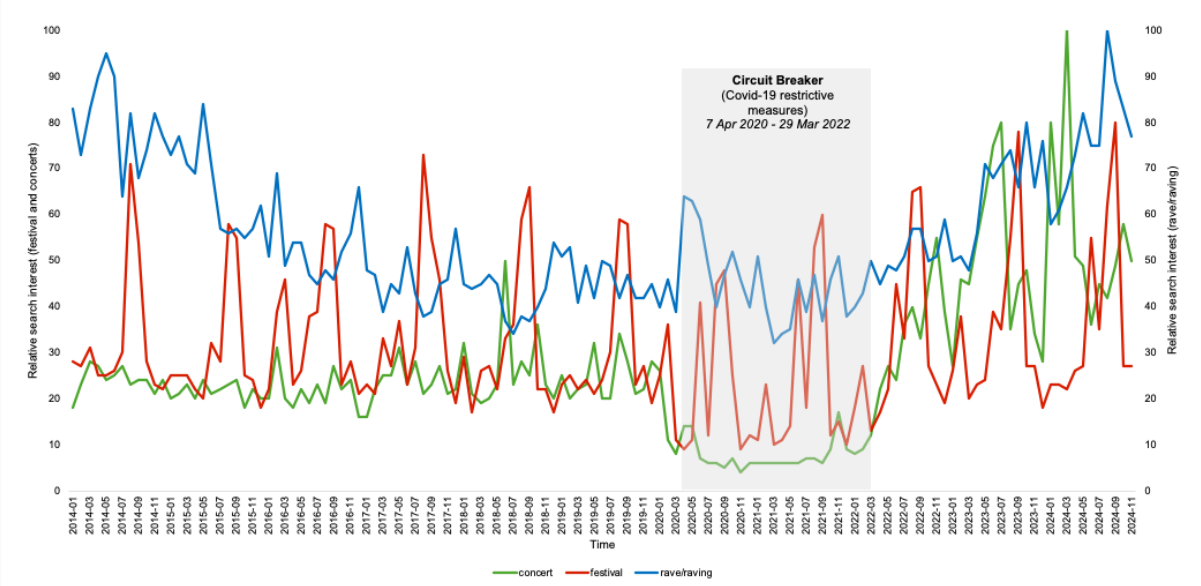


Note. Numbers represent search interest relative to the highest point on the chart for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the peak popularity for the term. A value of 50 means that the term is half as popular. A score of 0 means there was not enough data for this term. Data was extracted in December 2024.

Relative search interest of several types of live music events were compared. Due to the limitation of the number of search terms that can be compared at a single time on Google Trends, these were selected as a representation of popular activities related to live music and is not meant to be exhaustive in nature.

Figure A2

Comparison of relative interest in raves/raving versus the top two live music events (concert and festivals) in Singapore over 10 years based on Google Trends (normalised)

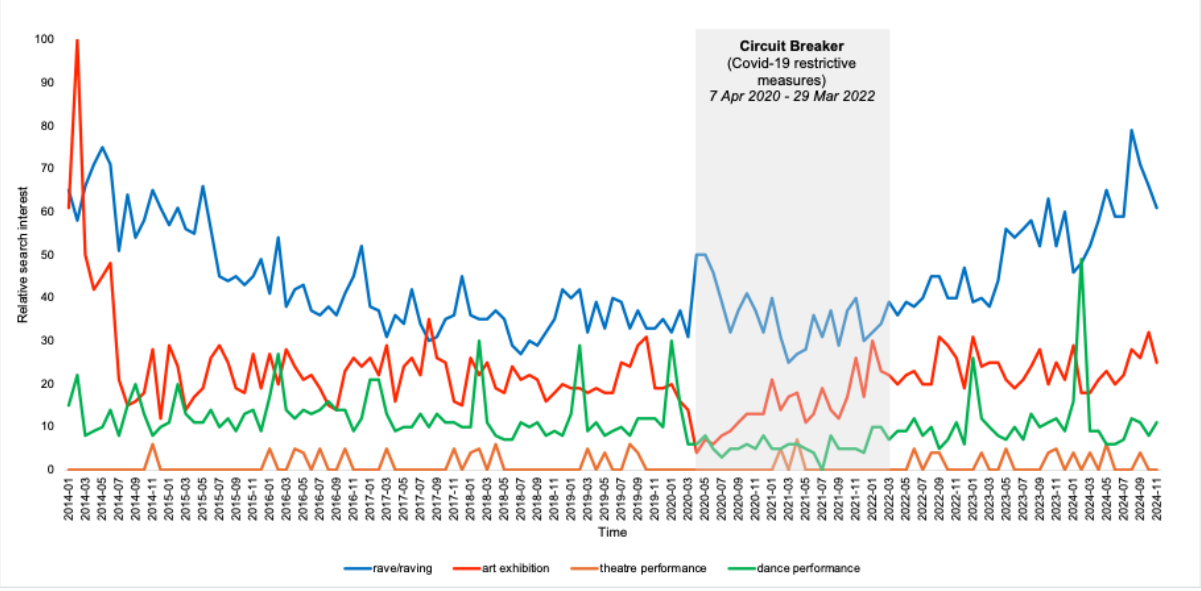


Note. Numbers represent search interest relative to the highest point on the chart for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the peak popularity for the term. A value of 50 means that the term is half as popular. A score of 0 means there was not enough data for this term. Data was extracted in December 2024.

To understand if the surge in interest in raving was unique and not a normal post-pandemic recovery trend, the relative search interest of raving was compared with the top two live music events, festivals and concerts. As seen in Figure A2, the rate of increase in interest in raving exceeded festivals and concerts.

Figure A3

Comparison of relative interest in raves/raving versus other cultural events in Singapore over 10 years based on Google Trends (normalised)



Note. Numbers represent search interest relative to the highest point on the chart for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the peak popularity for the term. A value

of 50 means that the term is half as popular. A score of 0 means there was not enough data for this term. Data was extracted in December 2024.

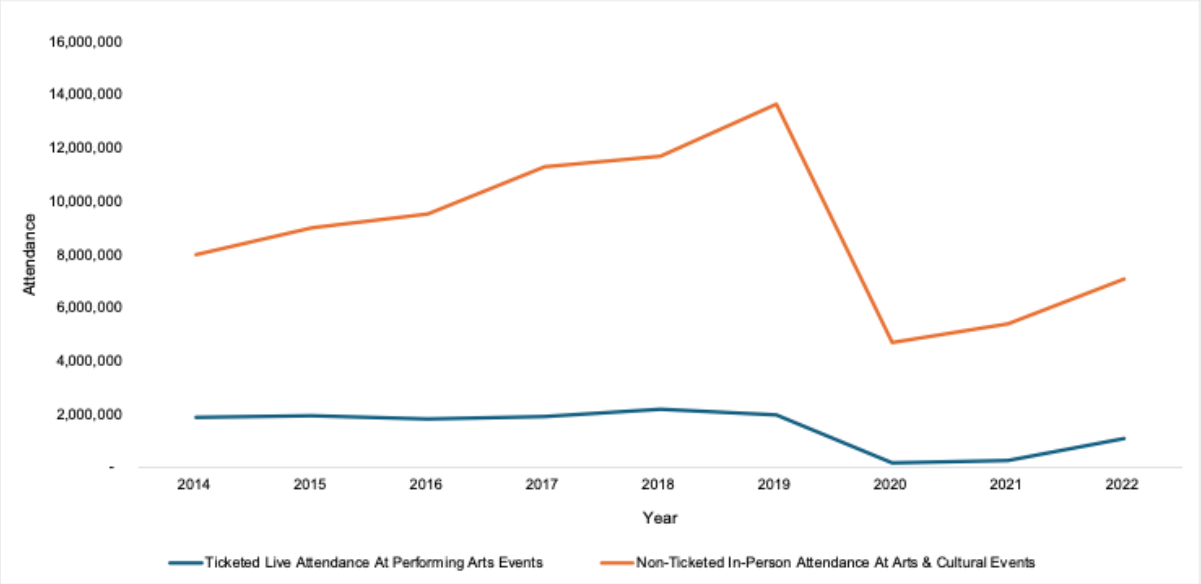
Interest in raving was also compared with interest in other types of cultural activities to identify its uniqueness. Similarly, due to the limitation of the number of search terms that can be compared at a single time on Google Trends, these were selected as a representation of popular activities related to live music and is not meant to be exhaustive in nature. Figure A3 shows that interest in raving exceeded other types of cultural activities and was growing at a much faster rate, confirming that it is not a standard pandemic recovery phenomenon.

Appendix B

Official government statistics on visitor attendance

Figure B1

Trends in ticketed and non-ticketed attendance at live events over time



Note. Performing arts refer to folk, traditional, classical and contemporary forms of dance, music (pop/rock concerts included) and theatre. Events such as book launches, competitions, conferences, masterclasses, workshops etc are excluded. Refers to attendance at performing arts events that require a ticket for entry. It includes tickets sold and complimentary tickets issued.

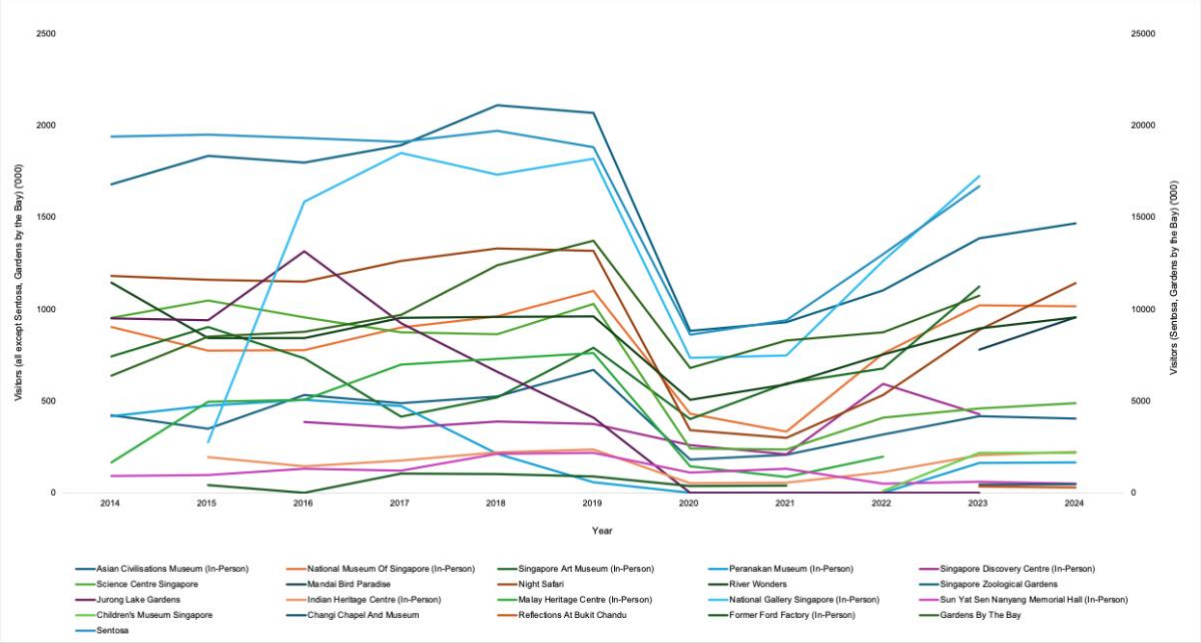
Non-ticketed attendance at arts and cultural events refers to attendance at performing arts events organised and supported by the National Arts Council, The Esplanade Company Ltd and People's Association.

Data source: Singstat. Data was extracted in February 2025.

Figure B1 indicates a slow return to in-person attendance at performing arts events and cultural events. While official data also tracks digital attendance, it has been removed to make reasonable comparisons with raving, which is predominantly an in-person experience in the post-pandemic era.

Figure B2

Comparison of visitor attendance to places of interest in Singapore over time



Note. Data source: Singstat. Data was extracted in February 2025.

While key tourist locations such as Sentosa, National Gallery Singapore, Night Safari, and the Singapore Zoo saw strong post-pandemic recovery—likely driven by tourism recovery—many museums and other cultural institutions did not

experience a rapid rebound in visitor numbers. This further confirms that the surge in interest in raving post-pandemic stands out as anomaly.

Appendix C

Interview guide

Demographic

Tell me about yourself

- Age (option to not disclose)
- Gender/ pronouns (option to not disclose)
- Occupation (option to not disclose)

General questions

Can you introduce yourself and your involvement with the rave scene?

- *Further prompt: when and how did you get into the rave scene?*

How would you define Singapore's rave scene?

- *Vs independent electronic dance music*

How would you describe Singapore's rave scene?

- *Further prompt: within the context of Singapore?*
- *Further prompt: in relation to nightlife/clubbing in Singapore?*

Organisers

How did you get into organising raves? / What motivated you to start organising raves?

- [If organiser started pre-Covid] What has been the biggest difference in organising raves pre-Covid versus post-Covid (e.g. people are more interested in building a community)? What is driving this difference? How does this difference affect/ influence you?
    - *Further prompt (if necessary):*
        - *Do you think raves meant something different/served a different purpose post-Covid compared to pre-Covid?*
- [If organiser started post-Covid] Was there anything in particular about Covid or post-Covid that made you decide to start organising raves? (i.e. why not before Covid? Why now?)

Have you noticed a change in the number of independent party collectives post-Covid? If so, what do you think contributed to this shift?

- Do you think Covid had any role in shaping how new collectives formed or operated?

What do you hope to achieve through your raves?

- *Further prompt (if necessary):*
    - *Exploring musical genres/boundaries (aesthetic/transformative value)*
    - *Creating a community (social value)*
    - *Pushing against the mainstream (symbolic/insight/idea value)*

    - *Generating income for electronic artists (economic value)*

How does that (i.e. what they hope to achieve) tangibly translate through your raves?

- *Further prompt (if necessary):*
    - *Nightlife safety policies*
    - *Venue selection*
    - *DJ selection/ lineup*
    - *Financial sustainability → challenges in balancing artistic vision with financial viability*

Do you feel like you have achieved what you set out to do with your raves?

- If yes, what contributed you achieving it?
- If not, what is hindering you from achieving it? → *lead into challenges?*

What is your most memorable/ significant/ transformative rave experience? What made it significant?

DJs/ live electronic music producers

When and how did you get into DJing/live electronic music production? / What draws you to the local rave scene?

What do you enjoy the most about DJing/performing? / What kind of feelings does DJing/performing evoke for you?

What do you think is the importance of a DJ/live act to a rave? / What is the role of a DJ/performer in a rave?

- *Further prompt (if necessary):*
    - *Exploring musical genres/boundaries (aesthetic/transformative value)*
    - *Expose the crowd to new genres (aesthetic value)*
    - *Creating a sense of community on the dance floor (social value)*
    - *Creating "a sacred space of emotional release, rebellion, or transcendence" (symbolic value)*
    - *Challenging social norms e.g. decolonising club culture, promoting gender diversity in music (symbolic value)*
    - *A form of resistance (symbolic value)*
- [If DJ was involved in the rave scene pre-Covid] Do you feel that the role of a DJ/ performer has shifted post-Covid? If yes, what is so specific about the pandemic drove this shift?
- [If DJ only started post-Covid] Was there anything in particular about Covid or post-Covid that made you decide to start DJing/performing? (i.e. why not before Covid? Why now?)

In general, do you feel like you have fulfilled this role of a DJ/performer in a rave?

- If yes, what has allowed you to fulfil this role?
- If not, what are the barriers to you achieving this role? → *lead into challenges?*

What is your most memorable/ significant/ transformative rave experience? What made it significant?

Rave-goers

What draws you to the rave scene?

- [If raver-goer was involved in the rave scene pre-Covid] Has there been a shift **in the way people approach raving** post-Covid (e.g. people want to be more intentional, go out less)? If yes, what drove this shift?
- [If raver only started going post-Covid] Was there anything in particular about Covid or post-Covid that made you decide to start going to raves?

What do you enjoy most about raving? / What kind of feelings does being on the dance floor evoke for you?

- *Further prompt (if necessary):*
    - *Enjoying electronic music (aesthetic value)*
    - *Sense of belonging in a community (social value)*
    - *Feeling connected to others on the dance floor through music (social value)*
    - *Escape from daily pressures (symbolic value)*
    - *Sense of freedom/ rebellion from rigidity/ structures of Singapore life (symbolic value)*

What specific aspects of rave events evoke these feelings for you?

- *Further prompt (if necessary):*
    - *Party collective that aligns with your values and you can trust to make you feel safe/ have a good time*

- *Venue that makes you feel safe*
- *Intense/hard/fast/aggressive/chill/good vibes music*
- *Attending with close friends*
- *Having a pre-/post-event ritual e.g. going to dinner or supper before/after raving*

There are numerous articles on the vibrant post-Covid rave/independent party scene in Singapore. In your opinion, why do you think there is such a growth in interest?

- Do you think this flurry of activity unique to Singapore's rave scene? Why?

Do you usually attend other cultural activities/events (e.g. going to museums, visiting plays, going to a concert)?

- If yes, how do raves compare to these other events?
- If no, why do you not attend these other events?

What is your most memorable/ significant/ transformative rave experience? What made it stand out?

Venue owners

When did you set up your venue and what made you decide to do so?

Did you intend for it to be held specifically for raves?

- If yes, why did you think it was necessary for you to set it up specifically for raves?
- If not, what led to it becoming a spot for raves to be held?
- [If venue opened pre-Covid] How did Covid impact you?
- [If venue opened pre-Covid] Has there been a shift in the rave scene post-Covid **with regards to venues** (e.g. less venues)? If yes, what drove this shift?
- [If venue opened post-Covid] Was there anything in particular about Covid or post-Covid that made you decide to set up your venue?

How do you see your space contributing to the rave scene?

- *Further prompt (if necessary):*
    - *A place for music exploration and discovery (aesthetic value)*
    - *Pushing the boundaries of music genres (aesthetic value)*
    - *Exposing Singaporeans to different kinds of electronic music (aesthetic value)*
    - *A place to bring music lovers together (social value)*
    - *Building community (social value)*
    - *A place that shapes scene identity (symbolic value)*

How does that tangibly translate into your operations?

- *Further prompt (if necessary):*
    - *Nightlife safety policies*
    - *Open layout*
    - *Choosing specific organisers to work with*

How do you decide which events/ raves to hold at your venue?

- *Further prompt (if necessary):*
    - *Opportunity cost of holding a rave at their venue instead of another event*
    - *Financial challenges → art vs economic logics?*
    - *Licensing*
    - *Rental pressures*

There are numerous articles on the vibrant post-Covid rave/independent party scene in Singapore. In your opinion, why do you think there is such a growth in interest?

- Do you think this flurry of activity unique to Singapore's rave scene? Why?

Documenters (Music Journalists, Photographers, Videographers, Archivists, etc.)

When and what made you decide to start documenting the scene?

- *Further prompt (if necessary):*
    - *What is so unique about Singapore's rave scene that made you decide to start documenting it?*
- [If started documenting pre-Covid] Has there been a shift in how the rave scene is being **documented** post-Covid? (e.g. more people documenting)? If yes, what drove this shift?
- [If started documenting post-Covid] Was there anything in particular about Covid or post-Covid that made you decide to start documenting?

In your opinion, why is it necessary to document Singapore's rave scene? / Is there anything specific about the rave scene that makes you think that it is necessary to document?

- *Further prompt (if necessary):*
    - *Contribute to historical documentation of Singapore's underground/ subculture → permanence of the ephemeral nature of raves (historical value)*
    - *Legitimise the underground scene (symbolic value)*
    - *Making people feel "seen" / highlight underrepresented voices (symbolic value)*
    - *Create shared narratives (symbolic value)*

- What is the significance or role of documentation for Singapore's rave scene?
    - Has the significance of the documentation of rave scenes changed post-pandemic?

What are some broad narratives about Singapore's rave scene?

- How do you think your documentation contribute to/ subvert those narratives about the rave scene?

How does documenting raves compare to documenting other underground or cultural activities in Singapore?

Closing questions

What do you think makes the post-pandemic rave scene in Singapore (at its current juncture) (culturally) significant/important?

Where do you see the rave scene going from here?

- *Further prompt (if necessary): Optimistic? Opportunities? Challenges? Threats?*

What hopes do you have for the local rave scene?

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Appendix D

Overview of interview participants

Table 1

Demographic information of interview participants

Participant no.	Age	Gender	Pronouns	Primary role
1	25	Male	He/him	Participant
2	26	Male	He/him	Organiser
3	23	Prefer not to say	They/them/she/her	Organiser
4	Prefer not to say	Prefer not to say	Prefer not to say	Organiser
5	25	Prefer not to say	He/they	Participant
6	26	Prefer not to say	Prefer not to say	DJ
7	29	Prefer not to say	He/they	Organiser
8	Prefer not to say	Prefer not to say	They/them	DJ
9	32	Prefer not to say	She/her	Participant

10	30	Prefer not to say	He/him	Participant
11	30	Prefer not to say	Prefer not to say	Participant
12	41	Female	She/her	Organiser
13	26	Non-binary	She/they	Participant
14	37	Prefer not to say	She/her	Organiser
15	27	Female	She/her	Participant
16	27	Prefer not to say	They/them	Organiser
17	36	Prefer not to say	She/her	Journalist
18	37	Male	He/him	Organiser
19	30	Prefer not to say	They/them	Organiser
20	40	Prefer not to say	He/him	Venue owner

Appendix E

Codes and code definition

The following table presents the codes and code definitions in alphabetical order that were used to eventually derive the three main themes: definition of raving, values realisation and evolution of the scene.

Table 2

Overview of codes and code definitions

Code	**Code definition/ comments**
Artistic value	AKA aesthetic value = “properties of beauty, harmony, form and other aesthetic characteristics” of cultural goods.
Clubbing vs raving	Sometimes people find it difficult to describe what raving is but they describe it in comparison to other popular forms of nightlife activity i.e. clubbing.
Definition of raves/raving	Direct definition of raves/raving.
Economic value	Refers to monetary value of raving. Sometimes interviewees describe raving as non-profit oriented—these quotes were coded into economic value.
External pressures	Refers to existing conditions or threats to values of raving. This focuses on the **what** (vs values negotiation, which refers to the how these external pressures are worked out).

Impact/significance of Covid-19	Refers to how Covid impacted the scene.
Raves vs other cultural activities	Similar to “clubbing vs raving” code, some interviewees find it hard to explain what raving is, so they compare it to other forms of cultural activities.
Scene evolution	Refers to how the scene has evolved. Focuses on the characteristics that have changed over time (and not the why).
Significance of SG’s rave scene	Refers to what makes the SG rave scene so unique/significant.
Social value	Refers to the creation of a “sense of connection with others” by cultural goods, allowing them to make sense of society and can contribute to identity formation.
Symbolic value	Refers to how cultural goods can embody deeper meanings for individuals.
Values imagination	Refers to the process of values realisation as proposed by Dekker and Morea (2023). *Values imagination* refers to when individuals and communities envision the possibilities and potential values that might emerge through their participation in these social practices tied cultural goods.
Values negotiation	Refers to the process of values realisation as proposed by Dekker and Morea (2023).

	Values negotiation to how when these values are being threatened, it provides an opportunity for those realising these values to clarify their position and evaluate what those values mean i.e. valorisation (Klamer, 2004)