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## **Renate Preservation Group - Work documentation**

This project was conducted as part of the Berlin Techno Archive seminar and focused on the club *Renate* as a case study to explore the history and development of Berlin's techno culture. In August 2024, it was announced that the club would have to vacate its current location by the end of 2025 due to an expiring lease, making its documentation particularly relevant within the context of cultural preservation. Especially in light of technoculture in Berlin being declared UNESCO World heritage and, at the same time, a lot of clubs having to close, the question has to be asked if and how Berlin clubs can be archived and preserved for future generations.

Over the course of one semester, our group systematically researched, collected, and analyzed a wide range of materials related to the *Renate*. The central aim was to reconstruct the "club biography" by tracing its trajectory from its founding to its potential closure. This approach was based on the idea of understanding clubs as dynamic processes, structured in phases such as founding, institutionalization, commercialization, and transformation. Within each phase, we examined both internal characteristics (e.g., spatial structure, club identity, actors and management) and external influences (e.g., socio-political context, urban development and economic conditions).

Our research relied on a diverse set of primary and secondary sources. These included social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, online magazines such as Resident Advisor and Groove, as well as official club statements and website content. In addition, interviews with contemporary witnesses played a key role in our research process. We conducted interviews with Ingo, one of the co-founders of *Renate*, Moses, a former bar worker and resident DJ and Michael, an early club visitor of the club. These conversations provided valuable insight into both the structural development of the club and its artistic identity, including changes during the COVID-19 pandemic and shifting audience dynamics. A site visit further supported our understanding of the spatial organization and atmosphere of the club.

At the same time, our research process was shaped by several challenges. One major difficulty was the limited availability of early archival material, particularly for the period before 2013. Material was mostly found online and physical artifacts were rare. Additionally, despite our intention to include diverse perspectives, we struggled to access FLINTA\* voices for interviews, which limited the representational breadth of our findings. This highlighted structural issues within archival research, where certain perspectives are often harder to access or are underrepresented. Furthermore, questions of licensing and the use of visual materials required ongoing clarification and negotiation.

Our workflow evolved iteratively throughout the semester. Initially, we focused on collecting and archiving materials, followed by phases of analysis and structuring. A central step was the organization of all collected data on a [Miro board](#), where we collaboratively developed the narrative structure of the timeline and defined which aspects of *Renate's* history we wanted to emphasize. Through color-coding and categorization, we were able to balance different perspectives and identify key events that shaped the club. This process was not

linear but involved continuous discussion, re-evaluation, and adjustment of our approach. The final step consisted of translating this material into a coherent and visually structured timeline.

Reflecting on our working process, the project required a high level of collaboration and self-organization beyond the seminar sessions. Communication within the group and across teams (e.g., with the reconstruction group) was essential, as was the ability to adapt to changing research conditions. The combination of theoretical input, expert workshops, and hands-on research allowed us to develop both methodological and practical skills, particularly in archival work and qualitative interviewing.

From a personal and collective perspective, the project significantly deepened our understanding of Berlin's techno culture. It made visible how clubs like *Renate* function not only as nightlife spaces but as cultural institutions embedded in broader social, political, and economic contexts. The process of reconstructing a club's history also revealed how fragile and ephemeral these spaces are, especially in the face of urban transformation and economic pressure.

Looking ahead, this project contributes to the preservation of *Renate's* cultural legacy at a critical moment in its history. By documenting its development and collecting diverse materials, the archive can serve as a resource for future research, exhibitions, or digital reconstructions. More broadly, the project highlights the importance of systematically archiving Berlin's techno culture, which has often been under-documented despite its global significance. It demonstrates how interdisciplinary approaches, combining historical research, archival practices, and digital tools, can help preserve not only physical spaces but also the cultural practices and communities associated with them.

Overall, the project was both challenging and highly valuable. It not only strengthened our research and analytical skills but also provided a deeper appreciation for the cultural importance of clubs like the *Renate* and the urgency of preserving their histories.