

08: Classism and club culture

Hannah:

Hello! Nice of you to take the time. Would you like to introduce yourself briefly and also understand your work a bit?

Katharin Ahrend:

Hello, I am Katharin, or Katharin Arend. I'm part of the Berlin Club Commission. I'm responsible for management. But above all I am also responsible for our awareness and anti-discrimination area. Explicitly with a project called the Awareness Academy. And with the Awareness Academy, we have been working for almost four years to make clubs more discrimination-sensitive and to help events and collectives to take discrimination-sensitive measures, to take awareness measures and to make their events more inclusive and open to all. And how do we do that? We have different formats. First and foremost, we have a recurring format, our round table: the Diversity Roundtable, where we meet every two months to discuss a very topical issue - all about awareness and diversity in Berlin club culture. And we do that very regularly. Mainly because we want to build up a network, but also because we want to bring different experts' knowledge into the scene and also collect it and facilitate an exchange. And in addition to these round tables, we have a very, very extensive workshop programme. We always have about four blocks a year, workshop blocks on various topics in the awareness area for club culture. And there is a very, very good demand for them. That's why we're constantly expanding it, and we also focus on the needs of the Berlin clubs and collectives, on what's needed at the moment. What are the burning issues? And beyond that, we also do research. Last year we carried out a large study, the Berlin Club Survey, which was actually about collecting numbers, data and facts for the first time ever when it comes to making experiences of discrimination in Berlin clubs visible, making them discussable and also illuminating them. To what extent are there already anti-discrimination and awareness measures in Berlin clubs? How are they perceived or not perceived? And we are currently in the process of the last evaluation and are working on a large publication on the topic. So we are also doing something like that. Apart from that, we give a lot of interviews and expert inputs and talk to people and somehow try to impart knowledge and continuously learn more.

Hannah:

What came out of the study or where do you feel there is a need for more?

Katharin Ahrend:

The results of the study are very, very complex. That's why I can only say very briefly now. But what came out above all is that there is a very, very great lack of knowledge when it comes to discrimination in general. But also when it comes to knowing where I can turn when I need support. But also in the clubs themselves, people who work there often have a lack of knowledge. To what extent are measures being taken here in my club? And also simply in terms of further training, there is still a big gap. That is to say, I would say that the issue of knowledge gaps at all levels is the biggest issue that needs to be addressed and that can also be addressed in a great way by simply creating opportunities to impart knowledge and create visibility. And exactly, I think that is the biggest learning. And maybe beyond that, the combination of gender identity and sexual orientation is definitely one of the biggest issues that lead to experiences of discrimination in Berlin clubs.

Hannah:

I also wanted to say something about the fact that prices are currently rising so sharply. And if you ask yourself who will get access to the clubs, the question is, will it become more elitist? Who can afford access at all?

Katharin Ahrend:

Yes, that is also a very, very big question. Because prices are rising, of course, has to do with very many different things. On the one hand, with all the crises that we have gone through and are going through. So the pandemic has left a very, very big mark on what clubs and places have to deal with. We have a huge shortage of staff, which means that there are either too few staff or very, very high staff costs. So that means very high staff costs. But above all, compared to what was before the pandemic, this change also in the minimum wage, which exists, is just due to the two-year absence of going out, so to speak, a very big jump, which is reflected in rising costs. But also the energy crisis, rising energy costs, everything is getting more expensive and the rents for clubs are getting more expensive are very horrendous. That means that it's a combination of many things that lead to prices inevitably rising, we have DJ fees - also a big issue. And at the same time everything is getting more expensive for everyone and people have less money. And that's a social state of affairs that is fatal and that's the way it is. And at the same time, there is no one big solution, because there is no one lever to say that we can reduce costs here. What we can do is raise awareness and develop solidarity systems. And that is what we see with many collectives, especially those that have this offer more and more. If you can't afford the entrance fee today, please contact us directly. We will discuss how we can do that. We will give you a lower entrance fee. In other words, these are things that we also see. But the fundamental issue is really the rising cost structure and also the classism, the classical structures that go hand in hand with it. I would say that the topic of the hour, where we have just set out, is to enter into a very strong exchange with the various actors in the Berlin scene. We also had our round table on this last month. It was about classism in Berlin club culture. An extremely large number of people came. We also realised that the topic is so big. We have to hold several events on it, because the dimension of classism as a discrimination dimension, i.e. social status, "What kind of income do I have?", "How is that connected to my educational status?", all these different things, also resonate. That's an issue that is not so clear to people and it's not so visible. That actually always kind of resonates with all the other forms of discrimination and issues. Everything that is bothering us right now, but no one can really name it or wants to name it, because of lack of knowledge, but also because of shame. And that's why I think we have to talk about it a lot, create a lot of transparency and also dare to talk about money and social status, social background and discuss it openly. And I think that is a big key and what we have to dare to do and what we are trying to do now is to lift this taboo subject and so maybe we can talk a bit more about redistribution and equality. And what is of course also a big issue are the working conditions that go hand in hand with this, which have of course always been more precarious in nightlife and club culture, perhaps than other working conditions, and are now becoming even more difficult. And that is also something we have to discuss.