Exploring the political and social role of *illegal* rave parties in Italy

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the social and political role of rave parties in contemporary Italy, a need that arises especially in the wake of the new Italian government's decision to make such gatherings illegal and punishable under criminal law.

To examine how these parties carve out a social and political role for themselves within this context, this thesis addresses the question: *How and to what extent are rave parties to be considered as social rituals which promote social community and produce political energy? Following on from that, what indeed is their political and social role in contemporary Italy?* This research was conducted using an in-depth qualitative, semi-structured interview-based approach. Four experts were interviewed, meaning journalists, writers and artists who have had an interest in the sociologically related fields of rave culture, as well as six self-identified and active 'ravers', i.e. those who assiduously attend rave parties, both in Italy and abroad. These data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, and with the help of the ATLAS.TI software.

My analysis and findings reveal a new social and political trend among young ravers, driven by a new vision of community and solidarity and in step with new issues important to generations X and Z, such as sexual and gender fluidity, sustainability and renewability. I argue that this renewed interest in rave culture shows how the latter continues to offer a site of social ritual, of community, and indeed of political critique in Italy today.

KEYWORDS: Rave, solidarity, collective effervescence, politics, Queer community

1. Table of contents

1. Introduction

The aim of this thesis research is to identity and highlight the social and political role of rave parties in a contemporary Italian context. To examine this, the main research questions asked are, firstly *How and to what extent are rave parties to be considered as social rituals which promote social community and produce political energy? And, secondly, what is their political and social role in Italy today?* Before exploring these concerns through an interview-based study, a more general reflection on rave parties and their social role will be presented. How has rave evolved from its rise in the late Nineties and what is its social and political significance for new generations of young Italians? In order to answer these questions, it is crucial to first draw a detailed picture of the present political situation in Italy and of the steps the current government have taken which make rave parties such a disputed topic.

Rave parties have been present in the Italian political and public debate for the last 20 years at least, but in the post-industrial era they haven't found a central role in sociological and more theoretical debate, creating a gap in the academic literature. In the last year they have arisen as a central political issue, from the moment the newly elected government identified raves as a danger to public safety and an enemy of the State, mobilizing the debate again, not only as concerns rave parties per se, but also for what they represent symbolically: freedom. I personally do not feel part of the raver community, nor do I have any particular points of interest in common, but I do feel very involved as a citizen and supporter of freedom of expression in all its forms. I think it is important to bring attention to this issue. We often think that some battles don't affect us directly, and can remain indifferent because of this distance. But one needs to broaden one's perspective and understand that the freedom of the individual, or of a small group of individuals affects us all as members of the same community. We should never forget that as members of a community we are all bound to one another, by bonds of solidarity and interdependence. (Durkheim, 1912).
This thesis then aims to explore a broader perspective about rave culture, and seeks to shed light on and give voice to the political and social debate that pits not only the supporters and opponents of these festivals against each other, but shows also how they tie in with other issues that currently divide Italy, in addition to the freedom to dance, that of expressing oneself, loving and the self-determination of one's body in all its forms.

More specifically, in the second chapter this thesis will explore the social and political context in which rave parties have arisen, in Europe and then in Italy, to give the reader a better understanding of the long-standing (and often harsh) relationships between rave cultures and politics.

In the third chapter I will go deeper into the debate and controversy that have accompanied this type of event since its origins, in order to give a complete picture both of the positive and disputable aspects of rave parties. Then, in Chapter 4 I will trace certain sociological concepts that help me examine the role and meaning of rave culture in the context of contemporary Italy. In particular, I will explore theories which help me assess in which ways rave might function as a form of youth culture, social ritual and means of solidarity-building. Here, I will deepen Durkheim's (1912) and Collins' (2006) theories about the collective effervescence (Durkheim, 1912) and political solidarity (Collins, 2008). I will also elaborate and enrich my theoretical framework with two related theoretical fields, about the crucial role of rave parties for queer communities (and vice versa) and the implications for urban disused venues, that, thanks to rave parties, see the light again for younger generations. In conclusion, I will outline four main themes drawn from interviews conducted with the 10 participants in this study, answering the questions *"how and to what extend are rave parties to be considered as social rituals which promote social community and produce political energy? And what is their political and social role today in Italy?"*. I will finally conclude that this kind of event is a crucial, freestanding opportunity for creative expression and sexual freedom, in a political and social context that is much more oppressive and conservative.

2. The context

On 30 December 2022 the Italian Parliament, with 183 votes in favor, 116 against, and one abstention, voted in favor of the introduction of the so-called "Rave Decree". The new penal code 434 bis states that *"the invasion of land or buildings for gatherings that are dangerous for public order or public safety or public health should qualify as a crime. The crime also includes the arbitrary invasion of other people's lands or buildings, public or private committed by a number of people greater than 50 to organize a potentially dangerous rally (or event)"* (D.L. c.p. 434 bis, 30 dicembre 2022).

But let's take a step back: on 22 October 2022, the first Meloni government took office. Of a purely conservative matrix and tending towards the extreme right, in the first six months of activity this new government carried out a series of measures in not only civil but also criminal matters, with the overall aim of restricting everything that it considered non-compliant with the values and ideals of the conservative right. The latter not only hold a conservative view of Catholicism, but are furthermore arguably homophobic, racist and extreme in their conservatism. These new measures include the rejection of the European Filiation Certificate, basically meaning a stop to the state's recognition of the children of homogenous couples, or the proposed law (still unpassed) for the legal recognition of the rights of the conceived (in short, a cunning measure to limit the 194 Law of the Italian civil code that guarantees women the right to abortion).

It is not an unusual tactic for the far right to use fear and uncertainty as instruments of manipulation of the voting body: the government labels something as a 'threat' and sets itself up as an instrument of defense for the citizens. This mechanism has been employed for many years, especially regarding groups that represent either minorities or are not part of the ruling elite, i.e., mostly men, over 50 and straight (Gentile, 2019). Whoever is not part of this leadership class tends to be excluded, marginalized and instrumentalized for political ends. Unfortunately, young people are also a minority within the Italian population, both with regards to demographics and with regards to political power.

Italy is one of the countries with the most pronounced aging population in the world: the birth rate drops every year, and young people (especially the better educated) are migrating (Falcini, 2019). According to Istat (National Institute of Statistics) data, today we have a very high average population age, around 45.2 years. This is confirmed by numbers released by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development: among the organization's countries, Italy has the lowest share of young people between 15 and 29 years of age, 15% compared to the average of 19%. (OECD, 2019; Falcini, 2023).

Youth subcultures (from street artists and the queer community and culture, to skaters) have a long tradition of being suppressed by governments: the more powerful are often scared of their critical energy and therefore present them as social threats. In this case, an obsession with security is the focal point, as well as the pretext, for the Rave Decree. "Italy – after years of governments that have bowed their heads in the face of illegality – will no longer be the black jersey in terms of security," writes Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni on her Facebook page, "We have shown that if the State is there, it can guarantee citizens can live in a safer nation and that even in the past similar episodes could have been curbed". The act is officially against "the invasion of land or buildings for gatherings dangerous to public order or public safety or public health." Article 434-bis, made explicit in Article 5 of Decree Law 162 of Oct. 31. For many analysts, however, the specifics of the measure are much broader and could restrict and criminalize the protest practices of social and opposition movements. The definitions are vague and there are no specific references to raves in the published text. According to several student associations (the "Rete degli studenti" – students' network and the "Unione degli Universitari" –university students union), the decree is "a liberticidal and dangerous measure." In particular, the organizations let it be known, "the risk for male and female students is the application of highly repressive measures that affect not only raves but also protests, school and university occupations, and potentially any form of demonstration." The rule is considered legally dangerous because it is not only anti-rave specifically but anti-meeting as such. In this way, rave becomes this canary in the coal mine case for a wider governmental regulation of social and public life and alternative community politics. What is worrisome is that the space involved can be private or public, thus even the town square, a space dedicated to giving voice to the people from the ancient Greek polis onward.

Raves become places of free expression and gathering, on a par with a town square, and thus constitute a threat to the preservation of an oppressive power that wants to restrict the self-determination of citizens' bodies and choices. As French anthropologist Emmanuelle Lallement noted in an interview with "Le Monde", parties have "once more become political tools. Party-goers are using them in a political manner as a form of resistance, even rebellion, whereas authorities are using them as a way of exercising their power" (Lallement, 2021). The decree is implicitly aimed at instrumentalizing rave parties to suppress dissent.

Moreover, due to being synonymous with hedonism and sexual freedom, rave culture has always been connected to the queer community as a safe space for expression and exploration. A huge role in founding the clubbing culture and dance/electronic music scene as we know them has been played by the LGBTQ+ community (Dreisenstock, 2022). The Italian political situation concerning LGBTQ+ community rights had already caused concern in 2020 when the Senate stalled the

proposal of the Zan Law (named after the parliamentarian who initiated it) which proposed measures to prevent and combat discrimination and violence on the grounds of sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability. Moreover, the Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of LGBTQ+ People in Europe and Central Asia by ILGA-Europe (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association) for the European Parliament pointed out that 2022 was "the worst year for the LGBTQ+ community, and on the homo-transphobia front, in the past decade". The LGBTQ+ community has had "very real fears" since the conservative bloc dominated by the far-right won Italy's general election, a leading gay rights campaigner told Reuters Magazine (Armellini, Rodirguez, 2022).

The latest example of "government's attacks on same-sex parental rights came when the Senate voted against a European Commission regulation for cross-border recognition of same-sex parents. Italy thus joined the Visegard group – composed of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia – in refusing to transpose the regulation. The news has outraged the country's LGTBQ+ community, which has repeatedly called out Meloni's government for discrimination, pointing to a strategy of homophobic propaganda and tightening of regulations against same-sex parenting" (Di Donfrancesco, 2023). Targeting rave parties would also mean eliminating yet another space considered safe for the Queer community. This kind of policy brings to the fore the political role of social gatherings like raves. Partying is a social marker and it is a necessity for social ties, especially, during youth (Lallement, 2021). The party is often considered as an activity that is not only trivial, but futile, therefore non-essential, but anthropologists have shown that the party is an essential element of foundation and strengthening of links in human societies. (Takahashi, M., & Olaveson, T. 2003; Hutson, S. R. 2000; Lynch 2018). Partying is a central dimension not only of bond creation, but also of bond strengthening. The festive moments are certainly parentheses of effervescence (Durkheim, 1912), of relationships that are often more relaxed. And it is as such that they serve to maintain social order. Festive moments, the parties, are also organized devices, constrained in norms and rules, and there is no question of "anything goes". The body-to-body movement, the collective dancing, the energy that emerges in this community that is the party is a necessity, for the individual but also for social bonding in general. And it is therefore even more so when this social bond is in the process of being initiated, when you live the most important moments of your socialization, during your youth. (Lallement, 2021, Tronca 2017, Bravo 1983). Against this broader background, this study is important, as it highlights how partying follows the forms of society, its rules as much as its need to break free from them. This is all the more pertinent in current years following the pandemic restrictions, where festive gatherings were dangerous, therefore prohibited, and social ties were interrupted. After years when the party was set up as a

symbol of prohibitions and all social restrictions, the desire for celebration and for collective emotion is necessarily exacerbated, and clearly that of occupying public spaces as well. Just like its counterpart: repression, which seems to be systematically the answer given. This is why it is important to understand how parties like raves work as a site of community building and how they constitute a safe space for free expression in today's increasingly rightwing Italy.

This thesis aims to do that, and to also enquire how rave communities claim these spaces, - political, socially and spatially - for their own freedom. This study will be done through interviewing members of the past and present rave community, collecting their memories, their claims and thoughts about how the rave situation is currently evolving in Italy.

3. A brief history and some definitions about rave culture

For this research project, it is crucial to understand the long-standing relationships between rave cultures and politics. The following section will therefore map and unpack how rave has served as a form of political battleground in different historical and cultural contexts. Overall, I will make clear that rave is partly a generational phenomenon: in its primal nature it has risen from certain social and political demands and urgencies, that have gradually changed in favor of new ones.

The emergence of the ravers is closely associated with the 1980s, a decade often remembered for its materialism and consumerism, Reaganomics and an explosion of blockbuster movies and the emergence of cable networks like MTV, which introduced the music video and launched the careers of many iconic artists and is also where electronic music first became widely popular. The emergence of the rave subculture is often viewed as a countercultural response to these dominant cultural trends of the 1980s (Thornton, 1995). As Thornton (1995) argues, rave subculture provided an alternative space for young people to explore their identities and express themselves in ways that were otherwise not possible or valued in '80s mainstream society.

In cities like Chicago and Detroit (Brewster e Broughton, 2012) musicians experimented with new house and techno music and created new versions of old soul and funk songs, increasing the bass level and tempo. Initially, raves were held in abandoned factories in major US cities before migrating to Europe. They evolved from dance parties in the 1980s and were driven by the emergence of European techno music and American house music. However, during the 1980s, European clubs that funded raves aimed to limit the exposure of attendees to the public and law enforcement. As a result, these raves were held in after-hours private parties in gay clubs, which

were kept secret and restricted to invitees or friends. The limited access and the secrecy surrounding the locations led to raves becoming an "underground" movement (Anderson, 2007).

By the mid-1980s, rave parties overseas had become so popular among youths and young adults that London raves outgrew most dance clubs. Large, open fields on the outskirts of the city became the preferred location for all-night raves, which attracted thousands of people. During the late 1980s, the rave movement continued to gain popularity, and the first rave parties emerged in American cities like San Francisco and Los Angeles. In the early 1990s, rave parties and clubs began to appear in most metropolitan areas across the United States. As the movement expanded, it became highly promoted, commercialized, and less secretive, with many new promoters recognizing the profitability of organizing events tailored to teens. This new rave culture attracted younger ravers, and specialized industries were developed to market clothes, toys, music, and drugs. Stadium venues with off-duty police security replaced private clubs and secret locations.

On 3rd of November 1994, the "Criminal Justice and Public Order Act" became law in England, "giving police the power to shut down events featuring music that was *"characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats"*. This clause was aimed unequivocally at one particular glass-eyed, cheek-chewing threat to the nation's youth: the UK's illegal rave scene" (Mullin and Smith, 2014). Two years prior to this, the largest free party in history had taken place at Castlemorton Common, May 1992, where some 50,000 people danced under the influence of psychotropic substances in complete harmony and cohesion. The British authorities prosecuted 13 members of the Spiral Tribe sound system and, most likely, it was from this trial that the roots were put down to enact, a few years later, the law which would give special powers to the police against the entire antagonistic area. In 1993, after being acquitted, given this unpleasant climate in England, Spiral decided it was time to take their music and their "way of life" to the rest of Europe as well. In this way, over a rather short time period, a solid and prolific underground movement developed and several sound systems began to form in all the countries of Europe. And so the Teknival came into being; free festivals open to everyone, where performers and travelers could dance non-stop under new huge sound-systems. The first ones were in France, on July 23, 1993 in Beauvais (northern France), then in Montpellier, Paris and Rouen. They continued in Germany and the Czech Republic before arriving in Italy in 1995.

A rave was defined as a nighttime gathering of at least a hundred people, it was enough that the music had "sounds characterized by the emission of a succession of continuous beats"-quote- to authorize the seizure of all amplification. The first tribes to tour with trucks and vans on the old continent were, in addition to the infamous Spiral, the Bedlam Sound System, formed by Steve Bedlam, who were also present at the "Castlemorton Common." As the movement grew, repression

by the established order increased in parallel. After Britain, France also adopted an ad hoc law on rave parties. The Mariani Decree, was implemented during a free party held in the countryside of Bourg Saint-Andeol, Southern France, in August 2001. There was massive deployment of special units that used a lot of tear gas fired directly under the speakers designed to disperse the crowd, as well as the seizure of all equipment on site. The teknival known as the CEK-TEK –has become a real landmark of the scene over the years, however in the 2005 edition, unfortunately there was a death following very violent police charges and harsh clashes that lasted for several hours.

The primary cultural output of the rave culture, electronic dance music, has broken free from its origins and can now be heard in a variety of leisure settings, as a part of popular culture, and everyday life. For instance, one can often listen to dance music in high-end city restaurants, spin and aerobic classes, or as background music in video games.

The nature and style of these events and parties have transformed significantly over time, diverging notably from their original form. Modern commercialization of raves has been documented by Malbon (1999) and Thornton (1996), while Anderson (2007) has illustrated the variability of raves between authentic parties and highly commercial, branded events today.

Here below I have decided to provide some definitions in order to clarify some of the terms used in the writing of this research for readers, but also for the purpose of delving into rave culture in all its facets, which are often homogenized and flattened by external interpretation.

Teknival: Teknivals (the word is a portmanteau of the words tekno and festival) are large free events that are held around the world. They usually take place in Europe. The peculiarity of teknivals is that they are illegal in most countries. The scale of events varies from tens to thousands of visitors and depends on the organizational feasibility, weather, reputation and, of course, on the attention of the authorities. Often parties are held far from residential areas: in abandoned warehouses, empty military bases, in fields and forests. The phenomenon of teknivals is that this spontaneous movement, which grew out of raves, UK Traveller and Burning Man, has become an independent subculture (Durov, 2016)

Tribe: Tribes are groups of ravers who have decided to devote their lives to the spread of techno disorder. A common conception shines through to those who know the phenomenon, namely, a definite awareness of complete equality at the core of participants in the rave. The tribes are not composed of techno gurus or spiritual masters but simply enterprising ravers. Raver and DJ are both protagonists of the scene. Ravers would have no sense of existence if there were not these groups of

DJs to foment techno disorder, to propagate the techno virus. Techno-tribes, likewise, would not exist if there were no users to make the scene alive. (Xsephone, 2001).

"[They] abandon family, national, geographical, political group affiliations, identities strictly understood as exclusive belonging in an ideological sense, in search of new possibilities in the construction of human relations and vis-à-vis power" (Bey, 1993, p.5). Tribe members are the new gypsies who prefer community life and wandering to accepting the common way of life. Vans become homes and schools, "restaurants," stores, offices or merely containers of musical instruments. Festivals become gatherings in which the community reconstitutes itself. In postmodern society, it is thought that work should make people free and not slaves.

Sound system: A sound system is about much more than just the speakers themselves. Any sound system is made up a variety of electronic equipment and of "a whole team of people in different specialist roles. This often includes DJs, MCs, sound technicians, and audio engineers, along with many other possible roles. This combination leaves us with a collective of people and hardware that in many ways functions as an artist in its own right. Even in the music industry of today, it is not uncommon to see sound systems listed on lineups alongside DJs, MCs, and live artists, showing how crucial they are to the event" (Virtuoso, 2021).
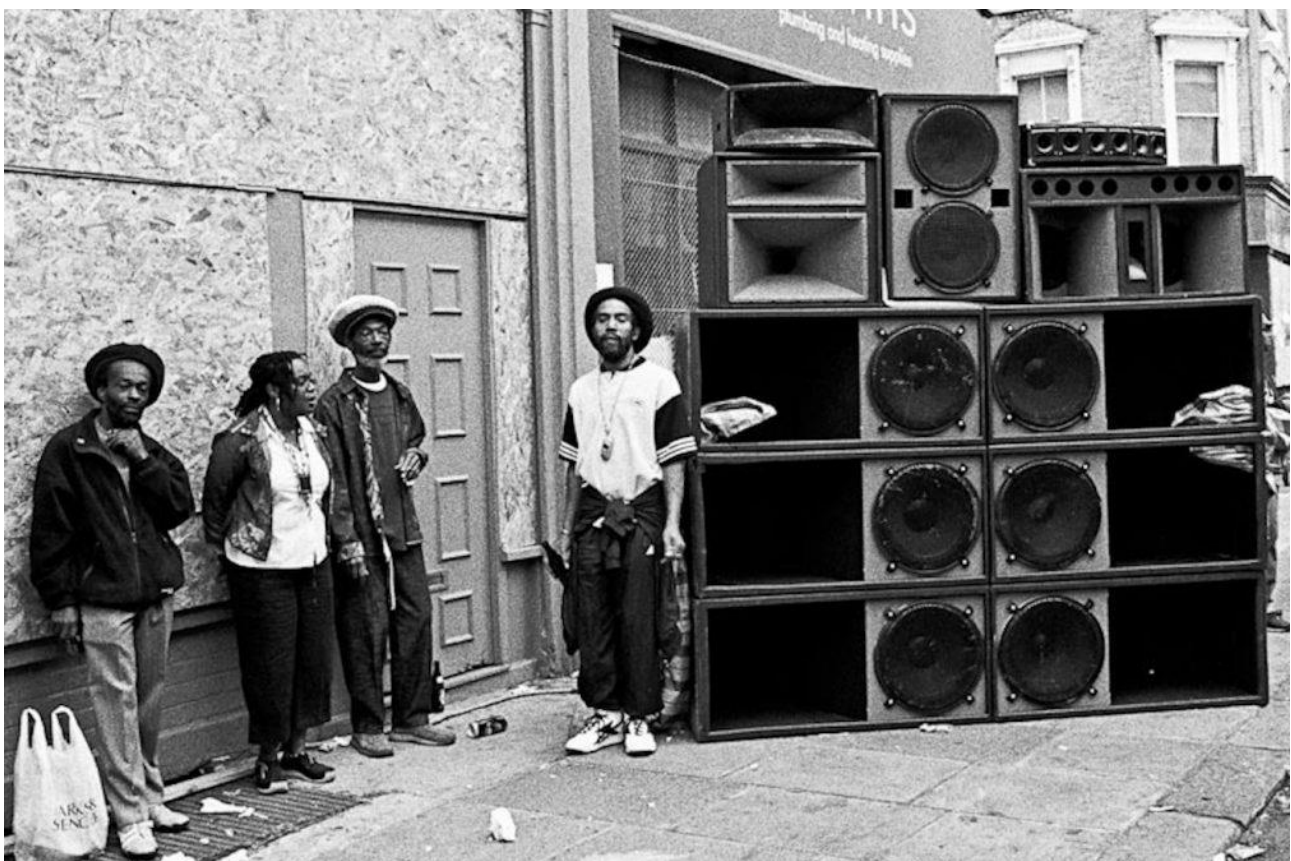
Jamaican sound system, Copyright: (c) Adrian Boot / urbanimage.tv

3.1 In Italy

In contrast to most European countries, rave parties in Italy follow a different path. First of all on a temporal level, they arrived and spread later than in England or France, which, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, saw their rise as early as the 1980s. It is not easy to trace a clear historical and sociological picture regarding rave parties in Italy. The work of Pablito El Drito, author of the book "Rave in Italy" (2018) has contributed substantially to outlining for this thesis the socio-cultural and political roots from the early Free Party movements to the present day. This book is a collection of interviews that reconstruct the beginnings and development of the scene in Italy since the early 1990s. This study has been extremely helpful to fill a major gap in my research, specifically, tracing the viewpoints of the real protagonists of this Italian counterculture, not just ravers, but DJs, technicians, event organizers, who for years have spent their lives traveling and attending dozens of parties like these. Rave movements are principally centered around the four major industrial and urban hubs of the Italian peninsula: Milan, Rome, Turin and Bologna. (El Drito, 2016).

A clear turning point was the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, passed in England in 1994. Primary motivation for the act was to curb illegal rave and free parties, especially the traveller festival circuit, which was steadily growing in the early 1990s, culminating in the 1992 Castlemorton Common Festival, a week-long free festival where circa 20,000–40,000 people gathered (Mullin and Smith, 2014). In response to this repression, demonstrations of a hundred thousand people strong began to form, accompanied by sound systems to allow the crowd to dance during the procession, as a form of protest against the government. Thus exploded the "Reclaim the Streets" movement, a mixture of rave, street parade and traveling festival, where street theater street and political action became one (D'Onofrio T., 2018). Following the major restrictions introduced for the purpose of limiting free and rave parties, English and French tribes began to migrate, arriving mainly in Italy, Spain and Eastern Europe. This gave a major boost to the Italian rave movement, which in those years was experiencing its embryonic forms and experimentations. The first collectives began to form, largely linked to social centers and so-called TAZ - Temporarily Autonomous Zones. The latter concept is introduced by Hakim Bey, philosopher, anarchist, essayist and writer from the United States. Bey uses this term to delineate dissenting radical politics in certain spatial locations, niches, enclaves (Gibson, 1999). The rave in this sense is precisely a "non-place," a utopia created outside the rhythms of institutionalized time and outside the places of everyday life. Ignoring legality and market dynamics, creating a new way of opposing a society that, according to those who participate in it, gives them no way to express themselves, According to Bey, these zones are particularly important in that they allow people to experience freedom and autonomy in a world where the majority of people live under the control of coercive power

structures, such as precisely the market and the state, by opposing these systems of control by offering an alternative that allows people to imagine and build alternative ways of life (Bey, 1993). There is a general willingness to take forgotten urban spaces and turn them into gathering places, make abandoned places in the suburbs pulsate with life (El Drito, 2016). Autonomous spaces become a political-social-cultural experiment, where politics need to be understood as reappropriation of spaces.Each scene had its own components, from the more nihilistic to the more militant, and the first movement manifestos began to appear, such as that of the Roman Hard Raptus collective with ten points. The rave subculture in Italy developed within a specific political and cultural context; in particular, Italy in the 1990s was characterized by a climate of strong political and social tension, a deep economic crisis and the spread of youth unemployment.

In his introduction to the book "Rave new world" (D'Onofrio, 2018), Vanni Santoni, author of the novel "Wall of Crates" (Santoni, 2004) describes the situation European youth at that time:

" A Europe in which young people, were beginning to be told that, no, they could no longer define their identity by work, which was bound to become precarious and parceled out, but that they had to find it in loisir, that is, in what they did and were in their leisure time - while, that leisure time was commodified, debased, closed within rules of "decorum" designed to ensure that the encounter was always and only consumption - was ready for the liberating experience of free parties." (International Labour Organization 2018).

The free party represented, and still represents, a form of protest against the established system, against capitalism and mainstream culture. The participants, namely young people in particular, wanted to create a collective experience that was outside the boundaries imposed by society, where music and community energy were at the center of the experience.

The first free parties in Italy date back to 1991, when the first Italian collectives began to form, organising the first illegal parties in abandoned or open spaces, such as beaches. The events were organized completely autonomously and self-managed. Participants brought food, water and a means of shelter for the night, and music was provided by an improvised Sound System.

"But the perception of this British rave movement [...] will come to Italy only through British tribes, exactly like Spiral Tribe and Mutoid, in the mid-1990s. Then new values will emerge within the free parties and finally the essence of the rave will manifest itself as a neo-primitive ritual that creeps into the metropolitan psycho-geographies to form a network invisible to the system. It will present

itself for the first time as the disruptive force of techno and free parties, understood as a movement
capable of radically transforming the social fabric as well." (D'Onofrio, 2018).

The first Sound System to hold a free party in Italy was in fact the group Spiral Tribe, in June 1993, with the event "Alien City." This event was a turning point for the spread of the rave subculture in Italy, and kicked off a series of parties that involved thousands of people all over Italy. Italian institutions began to take some measures to curb rave parties. One of the first was the introduction of stricter regulations on loud music and on nighttime activities, particularly through Law No. 494 /1994 on the protection of the environment, which establishes decibel limits for the spreading of noise and the production of loud sounds, with penalties for those who exceed these limits. However, as Thornton (1998) explains, the main enemy of the underground is not so much the law that represses it, but rather the defining of itself in opposition to the mass media, provoking threats to disseminate and make public its cultural heritage in opposition to other social groups. Oddly enough, however, in the 1990s raves did not attract particular attention from the media as media coverage focused on the so-called "Saturday night massacres" (media gimmick to indicate the numerous deaths due to drunk driving accidents, precisely on Saturday nights when most young people were driving after dancing and drinking in discotheques in northern Italy), with weekly updates on the number of deaths. Almost no one in those years in fact managed to really understand the rave movement, apart from a few researchers including Georges Lapassade and Sara Thornton.

Subsequently, Law No. 152/2005 on public health was also passed, which established safety measures for public events, including raves, in order to prevent accidents and dangerous situations for participants and the community. Specifically, this law requires organizers to submit a safety and prevention plan that must be evaluated and approved by the competent authorities before the event. Over the years, the rave subculture has tried to adapt to these restrictions, continuing to resist and evolve, adapting to new social and technological realities, and promoting its own philosophy of freedom and artistic expression. For example, practices were adopted to reduce the risks associated with drug use and to ensure the safety of participants at events, such as informative brochures, free drug analysis and many more. In addition, this subculture has developed a strong autonomous organization, creating its own system of regulation and management of events, careful selection of venues and cooperation with the authorities. This creation of a self-regulatory system at that time gave rise to a ten point manifesto in response to the negative perception that some members of society had toward rave culture. The so-called "Tekalogo del bravo raver" (literally: "Techalogue

[decalogue] of the good raver) published on SkyTg24 on September 23, 2009, and consisting of ten articles:

1) Respect nature

2) Respect yourself

3) Respect others

4) If you don't want to leave your dog at home, take it with you.

5) Park smartly

6) Be careful about rave party information: keep it to yourself and your friends

7) You are responsible for your own safety and the safety of others: if you see anything wrong, violence, aggression or anything, don't hesitate to intervene

8) Do not damage or steal sound system equipment

9) Expand your empathy

10) Always smile, transmit positive energy and assume the best

Despite these efforts, Italian institutions have often adopted a negative view of the rave subculture, considering it as posing a challenge to them and so adopting a repressive policy restricting the freedom of expression of youth groups, continuing to regard this subculture as a phenomenon of illegality and youth deviance. This is what brings us to the initial questions, on how these collective gatherings around rave pose themselves as social and political objects, especially in this institutionally hostile context.

It has therefore represented, and continues to represent, a form of cultural resistance, capable of expressing the desire for freedom and democratic participation of young Italians (Tacchetto, 2023).

4. The debate

In Italy controversy about this type of event had already flared up in August 2021, when the Teknival Space Travel vol 2, was held in Valentano (on the border between Umbria and Lazio, in central Italy). In this case, newspaper wrote about rapes, two people losing their lives, animals being killed, a Covid-19 cluster and even a birth taking place in the dust. The party involved about 8000 participants in 30 hectares of land and lasted almost 5 days before it was broken up by law enforcement. And before that because of the 2007 Teknival in Pinerolo, probably the most famous one, newspapers had reported nearly 30,000 attendees, making the gathering one of the largest ever. Rereading the articles of the time, there are many markedly polemical phrases: they talk about "dope stuff", "Metropolitan Indians with dogs in tow, post-punks, the vagabonds of a summer and the misplaced of a lifetime," "The impact of the sound waves on the chest, the skull box, would be enough to stun a healthy bison," "The result is wobbly walks, incoherent speech, lost eyes, trembling hands, dry mouths. Hard to imagine that they will be the ruling class of tomorrow." (Nicarstro, 2007). As professor Michael Scott notes in his publication for the Arizona State University Press "rave party problems are but the latest variation in an ongoing history of problems associated with youth entertainment, experimentation, rebellion, and self-discovery" (Scott, 2002). The free party remains the physical and imaginary place of scandal, outlaws, obscenities, irreducible to economic valorization and the serial entertainment industry. One of the interviewees of this thesis stated "Free parties are always frowned upon because they are a pocket of freedom that cannot be controlled or understood". One of the few forms of aggregation that comes out of capitalist ideology and is therefore an anomaly in a world where everything is commercialized and marketable. Much of this persecution can be traced to societal moralism: "The fact that the raver does things more openly is a fault. The Catholic is told, commit the sin, but hide, then in private, repent. The ravers go and break an established perception" (Santoni, 2021), arguably in a country with a strong religious background like Italy, this is truly more traceable than in other Protestant-minded European countries.

The debate touches on many points: Catholic morality versus the freedoms to express one's body, one's sexuality, capitalist logic versus anarchist and eschewed market logic, prohibition versus drug liberalization. The pursuit of transcendence outside the prevailing social norms, the use of substances other than those sold at the pub or tobacco shop, immoderate dancing, the destruction of barriers of race, gender, age and class, celebration outside set dates, instigated without there being anything specific to celebrate but the celebration itself, the system of symbolic references completely alien to the uninitiated, the unusual and extreme music (Santoni, 2021).

Rave culture functions as a sort of release and therapy for contemporary youth who are alienated from modern society (Tomlinson 1998; Anderson and Kavanaugh, 2007).

Generally, the most diffuse attitude, both among academics and the public is the 'deviant subculture' approach (Anderson, Kavanaugh, 2007) meaning a postmodern notion of raves as places of leisure and hedonism. Instead of political or social resistance, this notion implies that the main purpose of rave culture is simply drug consumption and individual abandonment (Melechi 1993; Rietveld 1993; Redhead 1993, 1995; Anderson and Kavanaugh, 2007). Rave subcultures is portrayed merely as novel forms of depoliticized play in a growing postmodern pleasure dome (Anderson, Kavanaugh, 2007). The most frequently used arguments, however, are the ones related to public health, such as drug-related risks and consequences, defining raves by problematic behavior. (Anderson, Kavanaugh, 2007). This is exactly what not only the ravers, but also all those who want to escape this logic, oppose: definition by society, by its morality, bourgeois and narrow, determined to frame everyone and everything within clearly-delineated boundaries and definitions. This is where the social battles of not only ravers but also those who do not recognize themselves in the binary and narrow logics of gender identity, "traditional family," and clear sexual identity, come together.

That is why some critics have suggested that the "anti-rave" decree can be seen as an example of "moral panic," a concept coined by British sociologist Stanley Cohen (1972) to describe a situation in which a particular activity or social group is demonized by society and considered a threat to security and morality. According to journalist Vincenzo Scalia:

"Society is far from being a compact and homogeneous entity. Social, cultural and political conflicts run through it. Fears are nothing but moral panic, that is, the perception and representation of specific individuals and social groups as a threat by the affluent society. To neutralize the danger, ideological and repressive apparatuses are mobilized, particularly when the tears in the social fabric appear even more pronounced. The result is almost always that of restrictions on civil and political liberties, starting with the stigmatization and presumption of guilt of the dangerous classes." (Scalia, 2022).

The anti-rave decree could be seen, then, as an example of moral panic, in that it occurred in response to public concern about the safety of young people attending music events, often based on exaggerated or distorted accounts by the media and institutions. In conclusion, it is always important to carefully consider the balance between protecting public safety and the preservation of freedom of expression and assembly, especially considering that rave music and subculture are an integral part of many people's youth and cultural experience. Therefore, this law must be constantly

and carefully monitored and evaluated in its impact towards the freedoms of expression and on the rights of people to assemble peacefully and without weapons.

ZOM21002 Mattia Zoppellaro, Dirty Dancing, Klasse Wrecks, Contrasto

5. Theoretical framework

Rave parties occur in a social and cultural context in which social structures and hierarchies are less rigid and do not follow a fixed, prescribed ritual structure, but rather rely on the creativity and spontaneity of the participants. They represent a kind of rebellion against the dominant norms and values of society, a transitional experience that allows those who take part in them to experiment with new forms of identity and expression, in a social and cultural context that encourages spontaneity and freedom. It is therefore fair to infer the importance they have gradually acquired in social and community life, as " freestanding" gathering places.

In order to highlight this, my thesis builds on a number of sociological concepts that help me examine the role and meaning of rave culture in the context of contemporary Italy. In particular, I seek to build on theories which help me assess the ways rave might function as a form of youth culture, social ritual and site of solidarity-building. Here, Durkheim (1912) and Collins (2006) have offered notable theoretical vantage points. These theories about the collective effervescence (Durkheim, 1912) and political solidarity (Collins, 2008) really help to address how rave parties function as social rituals with an intrinsic political frame, not only as dance gatherings.

In this thesis, it is crucial to consider these events as a complex part of a subculture in a specific society: doing so, it is possible to grasp its essence in its entirety.

I will next draw a more complete picture of how Durkheim and Collin's approaches help me address rave parties as social gathering places that create social and political solidarity and draw the theoretical framework that I chose for this analysis. Then I will illustrate the methodology and use of qualitative interviews and qualitative thematic analysis. I will then present the findings of my research and link Dukheim's and Collins' theories to four main themes.. Finally, I will retrace the main points of my study and reflect on my initial research questions and make suggestions for future research.

5.1 Collective effervescence and political solidarity

Durkheim's theory explores social rituals that serve an important social function by creating a sense of unity and shared identity among members of a community. Through these rituals, individuals are brought together and made to feel a sense of belonging to something larger than themselves. He calls this the "collective effervescence" (Durkheim, 1912) that is created by the rituals, where social energy is released to forge and reinforce bonds between the group's members. This concept helps me address how raves work in a similar way for social collectivity. In this work Durkheim gives various examples of how these social interactions follow a common structure: a select group of people (usually excluding women and children) goes to a special (sometimes secret) place, to

perform a defined set of actions in relation to a sacred object (Lynch, 2012). Excluding the gender selection of the participants, I traced this same path and combination of elements in the Teknivals and Free Party tradition: a select group of people (the ravers community affiliates), goes to a special and secret location (the illicit nature is a structural trait of rave parties, due to their illegality in Italy; in general, secrecy due to the choice of so-called "liberated" or more properly, occupied, places), to perform a defined set of actions: the dance. According to Durkheim, the sacred is everything that is contrasted with the profane: the sacred founds sociality, and celebration is its constitutive dimension, as well as the means of strengthening and consolidating social solidarity (Durkheim, 1912). From this definition, therefore, one can consider the rave ritual as a sacred ritual, as its effectiveness depends on its ability to create a contrast with the secular order. Indeed, many ravers see their association with electronic music as a spiritual and sacred aspect of their lives, a view that can be influenced by a number of factors such as the search for a sense of community, an escape from everyday reality, and a sense of belonging.Regarding the sacred object, Durkheim's theories have long made me think about how this sacred and spiritual side fits into the party culture. It's plausible that the DJ or the speaker stack might act as a kind of totem for the dancer, but on this I got discordant answers from the ravers I interviewed.

Durkheim's work does not really give an insight into the political and community aspects or other implications of this sort of social ritual, on which this thesis wants also to focus.
That's where Collins' work came in, to see to what extent there is a social, ritualistic and political role that rave parties have in Italy in this historic moment and to assess the value this subculture has in the current Italian climate.Rituals are in this way the primary medium of interaction and the production of solidarity (Henry, 2001). In Collins' theory the goal of every interaction is the production of social solidarity. This point is crucial because it helps me address rave parties not only as place of hedonism and escapism, but as real places of social gathering, where social solidarity is built between the participants, together with a sense of mutual affection, happiness and excitement (also influenced by drugs), especially related to the knowledge that they have found a place of common freedom, where they can openly express their personality and creativity. This is a key aspect that came up many times during the interviews I carried out. In an often-provincial reality and in a non-inclusive society, quite the contrary, an often hostile one, which often ostracizes minorities and marginalizes them, the rave community constitutes for many a safe place. It also provides an important alternative to what is offered to most young people: the village reality or the commercial clubs which are slaves to capitalist, sexist market logics and not aimed at solidarity and community so much as monetary gain. Solidarity is the symbolically mediate emotional energy that

generates social membership and group structure. Intellectual creativity is a specific form of this emotional energy generated by interaction rituals, and not just an individual phenomenon and it depends upon a person's location in the networks and the local social structure (Henry, 2001). The distinction elaborated by Tiqqun (2001, p. 206) between the politics of gesture and the politics of speech (or political discourse) comes in handy again, with "the body of those excluded from discourse" as a tool to be listened to in order to elaborate strategies of resistance and enact practices of (counter)subjectification. Through a similar perspective Fiona Buckland (2002, p. 3) takes up Habermas's conceptualization of the public sphere as a space dominated by the "medium of speech" and discursive action, to characterize at the opposite end the dancing sociality in queer clubs as dominated by the "medium of movement": clubbers do not express their (micro)political demands verbally, but through the creation of a momentary space of creativity and entertainment, they incorporate their attitudes and shape a world based on the principles of "solidarity, individuality, pleasure and movement." Queer parties responded after a few hundred years, under the banner of tolerance for individual differences and openness, to all forms of non-hegemonic subjectivity. The above-mentioned works allow me to study how the Queer community has created a dance space for itself from a sociological perspective and bring to the fore how, over time, each time this community creates its own space for expression and liberation, it is taken away from them and they are eliminated from the historical narrative.

5.2 Rave culture and the Queer community

As Dreisenstock narrate in his elaborate article for The Playground Magazine, "The Forgotten LGBT & Racial Roots of Clubbing Culture": It was "in the midst of the horrors of the 80's and early 90's AIDS crisis, that the queer communities found themselves yet again under police pressure and threat of brutality. In response, those involved in the scene began to hold events in places that were as far out of reach from harm as possible – underground events in which clubbing would go on all night in abandoned warehouses, or events in secret venues 'outside of town'" (Dreisenstock, 2014). As Dreisenstock clearly notes, organizing underground parties has always been a site of world-making and political contestation for queer communities. In this historic context, rave culture has become a safe space for the queer community to express itself and for people to explore their sexuality, as it is synonymous with hedonism and sexual freedom. Ravers have always found a welcoming community and sense of belonging within the culture, leading many to fully express themselves when immersed in rave culture. The inherent liberalism of raving provides an escape, especially during times of political strife, and attracts society's outcasts and marginalized groups seeking refuge from judgment, to revel instead in the euphoria of electronic

dance music.Rave culture is multi-faceted and not just about the music, as it also encompasses drug experimentation, sexual promiscuity and hedonism, creating a larger-than-life and almost surreal experience. This provides a safe haven for queer individuals to indulge in their desires without the scrutiny of society. From its origins until today, the rave culture has embraced the queer community, offering a source of liberation and solace for those in search of ecstasy-fueled experiences accompanied by the world's greatest EDM sounds. The house and techno scenes from both their origins encompass individuals on the fringes of affluent and middle-class culture: members of the LGBTQ+ community, unsuccessful and musicians and music lovers, Italian-, Latino-, and African-Americans artists on the slab, and hedonists of various kinds. Tim Lawrence (2003) christens them party pariahs, a small group of sexually and ethnically differentiated people who play and entertain themselves by experimenting with psychedelic substances and dancing to music no longer played live, but exclusively recorded on analog media. (Pertilli, 2020). In its origins, then, electronic dance music is the sound of a marginal population of party pariahs danced to only in those "black and gay clubs" described by Collin (2009, p. 7) as "social laboratories, where music, drugs, and sex intertwined to create stylistic innovations that slowly filtered down to white and straight society." (Collin, 2009). In a very interesting article for E-flux magazine, Francis Whorrall-Campbell argues that "queer and trans communities' relationships to culture are often described with spatial metaphors that mark our production and consumption as outside of the mainstream. Prefaces like 'sub', 'marginal', even 'night' speak not only to the removal of queer practices, but also contain a moral and aesthetic judgement which places queerness as inferior, irrelevant, or dangerous to conventional culture" (Whorral-Campbell, 2023).

This perspective really helped to give me an insight into how the systematic marginalization of the Queer community is happening, not only in political policies but in starting to be part of the common narrative. This is particularly true in Italy today, where protection of the rights of the LGBTQ+ community is lacking from the very institutions that are supposed to protect them. The Italian Senate's rejection of the Zan bill that would have provided specific aggravating factors for hate crimes and discrimination against homosexuals, transgender people, women and the disabled is a clear example. (Scoccimarro, 2022).

5.3 Urban spaces

The political reclamation of rave culture comes not only through inclusiveness and freedom but also through the redefinition and reappropriation of spaces. It is not only crucial to have the right to express oneself but also to have a safe and free place in which to do so, where one can find oneself, recognize oneself and be respected even by non-members of the Queer community. That is why the

occupation of neutral spaces, such as abandoned warehouses or disused factories has marked a fundamental turning point for this youth counterculture since its inception. It is within the factory indeed, where a true playful revolution could take place: ravers transform the sense of degradation that many workers experience in the workplace into "celebration," into creativity, into conviviality. It is in this overturning of the hierarchy of roles that rave culture expresses its critical and subversive potential (Del Ferraro, 2001). Sociologist and theorist Hakim Bey (1991) coined the term Temporary Autonomous Zone to "delineate dissenting radical politics in certain spatial locations, niches, enclaves: vacancies in Western social fabric that hold the potential for escape from the panoptic controlling gaze of the State, and temporarily play host to alternative social formations and bands of radical activists" (Herbert, 1996, pg. 54). Bey's vision of the TAZ has a strong emphasis on festival and play as political acts: according to Bey, these areas are particularly important, since they allow people to experience freedom and autonomy in a world in which the majority of people live under the control of coercive power structures such as capitalism and State power, contrasting these control systems by offering an alternative that allows people to imagine and construct alternative ways of life. (Bey, 1993). In these temporary spaces, social rules and conventional laws are abandoned or challenged, and participants organize themselves independently to satisfy their own needs and desires, allowing them to develop a strong sense of community and connectedness. In addition, a space is created for artistic expression and creativity, as well as for the exploration of new ways of living and organizing oneself. So, another aspect emerges: places that were created, conceived and designed to play a completely different role, find themselves expanding the potential of their mode of use, to find themselves under new guises. Old models of reference have become obsolete and labels have become inadequate to represent the current great fluidity and intersection of cultural trends. Forgotten structures welcome a new way of life, open up to unprecedented events, welcome individual and collective desires, become alive and inclined to a new logic: one that makes the space react between the outer covering and the potential underlying in it. All goods (and buildings) are bearers of meaning, but no item has its own independent meaning: the meaning of goods lies in their intended use; and through raves, spaces considered junk of the times redeem themselves in the only possible way: that of being "used" (Del Ferraro, 2001). In conclusion, it is interesting to discover how rave parties do indeed play a role in regenerating once-dead urban spaces, which, for the duration of the party, come back to life with young, dancing energy. This supports what has been said above about how rave parties produce different kinds of energy – social, sexual, creative, political etc., and how they are responsible for the transition of urban spaces, from places of alienation and abandonment to sources of new life.

6. Research methodology

This research has been based on a qualitative strategy, mostly due to its aim: "the understanding of a whole youth culture, a qualitative strategy presents the most constructive form of research" (Flick et al., 2004, p. 120), since the most important elements are the participants perceptions and opinions. Consequently, qualitative research allows the objects of the study to present their experience with and views on the questioned topic, which can also provide support for change in the current restrictive policies and as a recommendation for further research.

6.1 Methods

Understanding how ravers within the rave scene narrate and define who they are and what drives them, is at the start and at the core of this study. This, however, can only be properly studied through an in-depth qualitative and interview-based approach, given that these definitions are subjective, socially influenced and sometimes contradictory.Each raver experience is unique, it depends on the specific age group, sex and personal journey into the party experience. Moreover, only "insiders" are deemed worthy and trustworthy of collecting insights from within the subculture. Hence, "given the sociological nature of the study, and the absence of a detailed ethnographic study, the choice of interviewees was inevitable, due to their flexibility, richness of details and ability to substitute ethnography" (Bryman, 2012, pg.25). All 10 interviews with the experts and the rave participants were conducted between the months of February and May 2023. The majority through video call, although some, due to the unavailability of the interviewees or the unstable internet connection conditions, were carried out by phone call. Interviews were conducted in Italian. Afterwards, I translated some quotes for the purposes of the analysis section of this thesis. The sample being of Italian origin in its vast majority and the case study aimed at Italy, it was the best choice in order not to limit the freedom of expression of those participants with not proficient English skills. The interviews were conducted "in a semi-structured manner, to explore participant thoughts" (DeJonckheere and Vaughn, 2022, Pg.34) and to preserve as much as possible the freedom of expression and conversation between me and the interviewees.

6.2 Data and field site

Preliminary research was conducted to carefully select respondents whose experiences would offer the widest overview of the Italian rave scene. In this case, the sample should include some "experts", meaning personalities that have dedicated part of their research or artistic work to the rave culture. The sampling logic I have employed is on two groups, for a total of 10 interviews of ± 45-60 min: a first group of "experts", meaning journalists, writers and artists who have had an interest in the rave culture sociological related fields. It has been chosen to keep this first group of respondents with their real names, giving their important works and contributions to this topic.

1- Marco Mancassola (Italian writer, author of "Last Love Parade", 2005, narrates the birth and evolution of techno and traces through his memory as a teenager and 20-year-old the personal experiences, and otherwise, that marked those decades; also author of the podcast "Rave: una storia proibita")

2- Chiara Fossati (photographer, her exhibition in Milan "Whatever" narrates the rave aesthetic during the '90s)

3- Vanni Santoni (sociologist and writer, author of "Muro di casse", a mix between a novel and essay on the rave parties experiences, as viewed by nostalgic former ravers)

4- Pablito El Drito (author of "Rave in Italy", 2018, on how drugs and techno music had influenced Italian politics in the previous years).

The second group of respondents consists of those identified for this thesis as 'ravers', i.e. those who assiduously attend rave parties, both in Italy and abroad, following a typical case sampling logic. I have found them by word of mouth, spreading the word among my acquaintances and on social media that I was looking for ravers to interview for a thesis project on the sacred dimension of these parties. This obviously brought me to a sort of convenience sampling, since "the participants were also selected based on convenience or availability, leading to a non-random and potentially biased sample" (Trochim, & Donnelly, 2008, pg.126). I decided to focus only on Italian participants firstly because of the singularity of the Italian rave scene: Italy is indeed the only European country at this moment with a prison sentence for rave organizers and participants. In France, the phenomenon of rave parties is regulated by a 2001 law, the so-called Mariani law. The law prohibits the organization of gatherings of more than 250 people without the authorization of local prefects, provides for the seizure of the facilities, fines to the organizers and the possibility of intervention by the police to disperse the participants. However, there is no provision for imprisonment for organizers and rave participants. Secondly, as I am of Italian origin and Italian is my mother tongue, I felt it was optimal to interview people from the same geographical and cultural background as

myself in order to achieve a greater identification with the participants, and a better linguistic understanding.

6.3 Participants

This study examines the experience of raver and raver-identifying young Italians. The target population for my research are participants who identify themselves as active ravers. The criteria included (a) being raver-identifying and (b) having experience as a raver in Italy. I did not limit the sampling criteria to age (but I tended to contact people from my age group, meaning 22 to 27 years old), years of rave experience, or any specific geographic location in Italy, because I wanted a broad range of experiences. I initially reached out to ravers that I know from mutual friends and invited them to participate. I introduced my research inquiry into the social and political role of rave culture in Italy. Five ravers agreed to participate to my research, throw video-call, in-depth interview of approximately 50 minutes. I had participants sign consent forms online and I noted an opening interview guide to start each interview with the same main questions and to be sure that the main categories of questions (see Appendix A [interview guide], B [interview transcriptions] were answered. The interview questions were developed using Durkheim's and Collins' theoretical framework and my reflections and insights from the numerous articles, books and papers I had been reading. Table 1 shows the interview participants, their age group, their professional status and how they have been recruited.. All names of this second group of participants are pseudonyms.

Name	Location	Age	Current profession	How recruited
Fra	Italy	20s	Student	Third party connection
Andre	Italy	20s	Graphic designer	Mutual friend connection
Bea	Italy	20s	Law student	Mutual friend connection
Cate	Italy	20s	Student	University connection
Lollo	Italy	20s	Student	High school connection

Table 1

6.4 Analytical strategy

For this research a thematic analysis was the most suitable approach: this method of qualitative research involves identifying and analyzing patterns of meaning, or "themes," in qualitative data such as interviews (Braun, 2006), like in this case. Overall, thematic analysis is a suitable method for thesis research that involves exploring complex qualitative data and seeking to understand the subjective experiences and meanings of participants (Braun, 2006).

The aim of the analysis with ATLAS.TI is to identify key themes, phrases, or concepts that are relevant to the thesis research questions, meaning everything that is semantically linked to raves' political and social role, and everything that corresponds to what is described in the relevant literature. I identified mainly four themes, the first two focusing on the social role of rave parties and the last two on their political role.

The main themes that emerged from my analysis are;: firstly, witnesses to the new <u>diversity</u>, both in terms of the emergence of a different music , of a new/different way of creating and enjoying entertainment, also of a sense of diversity perceived with respect to the Italian bourgeois capitalist society; of <u>expression</u>, not only of freedom of partying and dancing, but also of sexual freedom, aggregation and free political opposition. A <u>rupture</u>, interpreted by the early ravers in the broadest possible sense, from everything and everyone. However, the younger ones interpret the rupture in a strictly social sense, from conventions and norms that do not satisfy them, and in a political sense from a ruling class that does not represent them and oppresses them; finally, a general sense of <u>nostalgia</u>, a reminiscence of how the state of youth used to be, mostly for the older participants, but also in the younger ones interviewed, in whose statements we can perceive an idealization for everything about the past experienced by the preceding generations. These earlier generations were seen as truly free and spectators the "true" parties during a golden age. This last theme could be interpreted as an important political tool, filling a generational gap that could often bring to a conflictual relation but that in this case produce a social and political solidarity.

6.5 Positionality and limits

It is important to consider that "positionality is important in qualitative research, as it relies on interpretation, and my background and experiences inform ways that I understand and make sense of the data" (Jacobson & Mustafa, 2019, pg 82). It is important to acknowledge and understand the social, political, and historical context in which research takes place, and how this context shapes both the researcher and the research itself. (Haraway, 1988). I was particularly interested in this research topic for two main reasons. The first one was also the one that instigated all my questions, namely, the government decision to criminalize these parties. This decision ignited a debate in Italy

that inevitably ended up involving conversations with my friends and family. I quickly realized how very diverse the views were and how little we knew about the subject. This led me to want to delve deeper into the argument and take an interest in those directly concerned, namely the so-called ravers. Later, as I advanced in my bibliographical research, reading articles, books and interviews I realized a curious fact: all that could be found on the topic was written either by community insiders, thus inevitably not objective since they were directly and emotionally involved, or by members of the press more interested in sensationalizing the topic, writing about it in a way that was uninformed and generally degrading. There was a lack of a more robust and systematic scholarly exploration on this cultural phenomenon. Afterwards, talking with the various participants in my survey, it became clear how my cultural and social background influenced my research. I approach this investigation as a totally external element for a variety of reasons, which underline a marked disconnect between me and the people I spoke with and the subject matter I analyzed: I have never taken part in a rave party, I have never used drugs, and above all I've never been a "fan" of these kinds of events, nor have I ever considered them at all relative to my interests. This is clearly a limit as to what extent my vision could be completely objective and this has to be taken into consideration despite the maintenance of an open view throughout.

Moreover, it would be naïve not to take into consideration the prejudices associated with those who attend these kinds of events, which as someone who comes from a provincial town and from a family that can be considered "middle-class" economically and culturally, are certainly present in my mind. This is why also my social location is to be taken into considerations when it comes to limitations in my research approach (Harding, 1986).

The present research also has some limitations in how it is structured. Firstly because of the sampling strategy and the decision to pursue a qualitative research method. "Both these approaches are known to limit the replicability and generalizability of the findings and the ability to draw conclusions about the subculture as a whole, due to the subjectivity involved " (Bryman, 2012, pg 106). Moreover, "the risk for unintentional bias and/or lack of transparency are common plagues with all qualitative studies" (Bryman, 2012, of 117). However, besides the above-mentioned limitations, "the small sample size also comes with limitations. The sample composed of 10 interviewees is not sufficient to draw generalizable and/or definite conclusions. Although the sample was not randomly picked, but due to the priority given to richer insights and spectrum of statements" (Vasileiou, 2018, pg. 148) the sample difficultly represents the diversity of participants and opinions on the rave scene.

This type of research can pose ethical concerns, particularly since it involves studying illegal behavior, such as drug use and dealing and due to the illicit nature of rave parties themselves

(Moore & Miles, 2004). Moreover, because of the nature of rave culture, the participant selection also presents some limits. It has not been easy to identify and recruit participants for this study, since many ravers were hesitant to participate and were difficult to reach due to their involvement in the underground scene (Hammersley, 2006; Kruger, 2005). The current illegal status of rave parties in Italy must also be taken into consideration and even before, these types of events were accessible only through some kind of inside source. Many raves take place in underground or illegal venues, which makes it difficult for researchers to gain access and observe the event (Moore & Miles 2004; Redhead, 1993). I am also mindful of the challenges and limits that interviewing as a method entails Firstly, there is the interviewer bias, meaning the risk of the interviewer influencing the respondents' answers or behavior due to their personal characteristics, attitudes, or unintentional cues. (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Secondly, the recall bias (especially with this research that inquiries into events dating back over more than two decades), meaning the respondents may have difficulty accurately recalling past events, experiences, or details, leading to inaccuracies in their responses. (Sudman, Bradburn, & Schwarz, 1996).

The interviewing experience shaped significantly how my research proceeded and how I collected my data along the way: based on the thoughts and considerations expressed in an interview, I slightly changed what to ask and what to look for in the next interview. Reading the transcriptions, it can be noticed how the questions and the flow of the interviews become more specific and deeper from the first to the last one, In this way my research took shape throughout the whole process as it progressed, since every participant gave me unique insight and a new perspective on the rave culture.

7. Interview analysis

All interviews were recorded electronically on Word documents and transcribed to facilitate data analysis. To analyze interview data, I read through all the interviews for accuracy while listening to the audio recording. I imported the corrected transcriptions into ATLAS.TI and read through each document two times each, first to get a sense of the story, and then I begin the analysis. The data from in-depth interviews were initially analyzed through open coding procedures, this " refers to the process of assigning codes to meaningful portions of data" (Glesne, 2011; Koro-Ljunberg, 2016; Merriam, 1998). The first reading conducted produced initial codes and was followed by two additional close readings for coding, resulting in 120 total codes.

In the last phase of this process, I "identified common themes across all of the data sources to conduct thematic analysis" (Xu & Zammit, 2020, pg. 103).

To further ensure that the four themes emerged from the interviews were accurate representations of the data, I reviewed the data a third time and confirmed the themes.

8. Findings

In this section the recurring findings of the political and social role of rave parties in Italy are discussed. Here, I will highlight trough four main themes, emerged from the interviews conducted, how rave parties have taken on a uniquely special significance in the lives of many people, providing a safe and ritualistic place of social gathering, free from prejudice, political oppression, and racial and sexual discrimination. Moreover, I will show how the freedom of expression and creativity link with Durkheim's and Collins' theories about the power of social collectivity (Collins, 2006) and collective effervescence (Durkheim, 1912), giving rave parties a unique role in contemporary Italian scenario. In conclusion, I will illustrate the important function of rave parties as a generational glue, able to give voice across generations united by the same political fervor and desire for freedom.

1. Diversification and diversity

The theme of diversification emerged with multiple nuances and social implications. First from the musical point of view, the emergence of rave culture goes hand in hand with the musical experimentation of many young people who, united by their attraction to electronic music, come together to compare, create, and experiment with a new art form. From the sociological point of view, here Collins' theory that every interaction's goal is the production of social solidarity (Henry,

2001) comes into play. This is because ravers act not just as individual entities but rather as a community, an aspect that differentiates it substantially from other subcultures:

El Drito: *"Dancing, experimenting, being together, feeling like a tribe, sharing hypnotic, pulsating rhythms becomes a credo"; "In techno I always saw a philosophy, a way of life, perhaps more suited to me. I thought I was conveying sociality and empathy".*

With the Diversity theme, we refer more to the composition of the raver community: everyone is welcome (Lollo: *"It doesn't matter who you are, what you do, you just have to dance"*) and free to express themselves in their entirety. (Santoni: *"We are all part of something bigger").* Diversity becomes an added value, it is homologation that is rejected. In this respect, the social role of raves becomes even more important: it becomes a place, physical and metaphorical, of free expression of diversity, cultural, sexual identity:

Fossati: *"I felt free to be who I wanted and so there was really love* (for the rave*) because I had found a place where I could be what I wanted"*

Santoni*: "There is no longer black or white. it is a gray area in which barriers of all kinds, that society imposes, but which the rave melts away."*

Once again, the importance of raves as " freestanding" gathering places is highlighted, not only by those belonging to the queer community, but also by whoever struggles to fit into the mainstream "right" lifestyle:

El Drito: *"We were basically unemployed kids or college dropouts and we just wanted to make music, dance, be together, without anyone pointing at us as failures or nobodies."*

As Jordan Calvano notes in his article for MAGNETIC Magazine, *"An alternate history of sexuality in club culture":* "If sexual minorities were historically central to the emergence of dance music culture, where are they now? If you take a look at who is running the clubs, managing the labels, booking the artists, and playing the records, the demographics are starkly different from the crowds that got this music started. Considering how big a role the gay community played in the genesis of the music, it's strange to see that the majority of the stakeholders nowadays are of the straight male variety" (Calvano, 2015).

This is why, now, those who belongs to the Queer community find a new free space of creativity in the rave culture zone. Tony Renello, author of the blog "Rave Pride: My Experiences As a Gay Raver" really highlight this, describing his journey in the rave culture scene: *"To be Under the Electric Sky with the love of my life, letting the music flow through our hearts, is an experience that I have been waiting for my entire life; this is what freedom means to me."*

The celebration of diversity as an added value and the total absence of racial and sexual discrimination makes rave parties a unique place to unleash one's creativity and personality. A

society where homogenization and exclusion of the different prevail cannot grow and without diversity, creativity remains stagnant. This is why it is crucial to preserve this kind of places and give everyone give the space to grow, to be themselves, to exercise their diversity, in order to both give and receive such beautiful things as ideas, openness, dignity, joy, healing, and inclusion.

2. Expression

As stated before, freedom means not only freedom of partying and dancing, but also sexual freedom, aggregation and free political opposition. In this sense, the rave, the party, the dance become a very powerful instrument of political opposition:

El Drito*: "At the time we had no idea that we were doing something that made political sense: our political act was to be happy. It was a revolution, I am happy in spite of you"*

The new generations, too, have found in the freedom of dance, a way to escape the oppressive and framing policies of the Italian right, which traditionally has little tolerance for anything that is considered 'other' and 'different' from a westernized standard, white, straight and so on.

One example is Mathilde Caillard, the idol of the protests in France, called techno-activist, who has come to the headlines. The 25-year-old Parisian is also known as 'MC dance pour le climat', or 'Mathilde dances for the climate'. What is special about Mathilde is that she dances and marches in protest against the Macron government to the beat of techno music. Inspired by this, on 25 April, the national day of commemoration of Italy's liberation from nazi-fascism regime, a Street Rave Parade was organised in Bologna: about 10,000 people marched to the rhythm of music through the streets, with signs and banners against repression and the government (Notari, 2023). Several floats carried banners against the so called "41-bis" regime (a highly restrictive detention regime, which means near-total isolation and severe restrictions on family visits, The Local, 2023) and against the government as well as various appeals against repression and against the anti-rave decree.

Similarly, on 1 May (i.e. the international day for workers' rights) a travelling rave was organized in the streets of Milan.

In this aspect the old and new generation find themselves united, although with a very different concept of politics, but similar in their desire to rediscover themselves as dancing political bodies:

El Drito: *'Techno is the ultimate representation of a universal sound, without racial or gender barriers'.*

Participant Andre: *""Through the free parties I discovered through dance that I have an interactive and receptive body that is freer than one could have imagined".*

This mechanism for producing social solidarity is an indispensable element in defining group identities and behavior. It is thus that a new sense of social cohesion is created among the participants of rave parties, which are to all intents and purposes considered to be these collective rituals (Collins, 2006).

Moreover, Collins' theory explores how physical co-presence provides the concrete basis for the structuring of the ritual, which can be fully realized only when participants perceive that they have a shared focus of attention and when they are drawn into an experience of movement synchronization and emotional sharing (Bifulco, 2019):

Mancassola: *"The energy that is created by all dancing together is indescribable, it is a non-human force, coming from another spiritual dimension, transcending this world. The pounding music, the bodies moving to the pressing, repetitive, almost tribal and gypsy rhythm create an atmosphere that is beyond anything you know"*

Participant Andre: *"there are gatherings that are unbelievable: we all get together, without knowing each other, and we are reborn as brothers. By dancing we recreate relationships of human brotherhood that society requires us not to create, because of competition, private property and all that poisons the soul and heart. In dance there is something primitive that restores bonds as they should be, restores a dancing community, a tribe."*

El Drito: *"The rituality, the tribal aspect, the hours under the soundsystem had a value beyond hedonism, the need to let off steam. Music that makes you dance, express yourself with your body, even through the use of empathogens such as ecstasy, works very deeply into your interpretation of reality, drops a number of preconceived constructs. After a party maybe you would come home at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, make strong friendships, open your mind by coming into contact with people different from you. You were beginning to think with a different perspective about work, about the society you lived in. In a way you were able to imagine an alternative future, to escape alienation, after you had freely expressed yourself."*

In conclusion, It can be argued that there is a parallelism between rave culture and the art world, in that both criticize mainstream and mass culture for being considered superficial, appreciating instead innovative artists. And like art, the rave phenomenon seeks new ways to be heard, unconventional tools that tend to break down traditional languages, in the name of a utopian dream of sharing and expression free from conditioning.

3. Rupture

This theme is found to be very present but diverse in the participants I interviewed. What clearly emerges, however, is how in the rave logic there is an element of rupture with certain elements that constitute political elements in our society such as institutions, but also family, social obligations, moral conventions:

El Drito: *"I felt adolescent and was seduced by decadent post-industrial imagery. I wanted to fully experience my inner conflicts together with other people."*

Fossati*: "the feeling of not belonging to anything we were offered";" Surely, however, I am convinced that those who continue to go to parties, even young people, always have the same need for nothing that you feel is yours, that is offered to you."*

That is why in rave culture many find a point of rupture, of separation from their unsatisfactory everyday reality. This separation between the everyday and the other-worldliness of the party brings us back to what Durkheim theorized, namely the dichotomy between the sacred and the profane. The sociologist points out how there is a duplicity in each of us: our personality embedded in everyday society, in which we have a role and duties, and that which manifests itself during the magical, tribal ritual, in this case the party (Dei, 2002):

Santoni: *"Yeah I mean I really think it's a mystical experience... the rave itself and everything about it is also linked to a mystical, Dionysian, experiential dimension"*

El Drito: *"For me, music is a religious thing and respect for people and nature are two fundamental aspects."*

Raves occur in a social and cultural context in which the social structures and hierarchies are less rigid and do not follow a fixed and prescribed ritual structure, but rather rely on the creativity and spontaneity of the participants. In particular, raves often take place in unconventional places, such as warehouses and abandoned factories, and involve the use of lights, sounds and drugs to create an experience of trance and immersion. In contemporary society ritual can take many forms and have many meanings, it can be sacred, artistic, playful, Dionysian, yet its ritual dimension is no different from that of more remote cultures in that there is the same precise impulse human to create meaning, connection, and a sense of belonging that we can find underlying magical, esoteric and religious rituals. There is a kind of human need to seek meaning and connection through ritual practices, whether in religious or secular circumstances, such as participation in music festivals and celebrations in general, which can be seen as a modern form of celebration and sharing of experiences, in which individuals can feel part of a larger community and share common values and passions.

In this regard, Roger Caillois with the phrase "The party is held for the very realm of the sacred" (Caillois, 1988) refers to the fact that party constitutes a moment of rupture from everyday life, in which social norms and rules are temporarily suspended.

In this sense, the festival represents a privileged moment of access to the sacred, a moment in which the individual, according to Caillois, can experience an "other" dimension, detached from the ordinary one:

Bea: *"I really feel like I can let go everything that usually defines me: being a law student, being a good daughter for my parents (...) I can just be someone and something else, a sort of non-human entity that just dances the night away. It's not always easy being "you", conforming to the image your friends, your family etc., have of you and I think you need to find an outlet, mine is rave."*

Here, Durkhiem's concept of *homo duplex* comes in hand: *"The traditional antithesis of soul and body is thus not a vain mythological conception. Double we really are, we give body to an antinomy."* (Durkheim, E. 1912, pg 36). Human nature comes to be characterized by the presence of an internal split, which, presenting itself by means of different nuances and in multiple forms, then comes to determine human dualism properly understood. *"We are anything but simple, and our inner life has a double center of gravity."* (Durkheim, E. 1912, pg 57). Man thus comes to divide himself into two spheres: on the one hand there is his individuality, on the other hand his social being.

Rave thus represents a kind of rebellion against the dominant norms and values of society, a transitional experience that allows those who participate to experiment with new forms of identity and expression, in a social and cultural context that encourages spontaneity and freedom. The ritual of the rave is an invitation to new worlds, a ritualization that is "transgressive" but institutionalized in that it is delimited within recognizable and precise spaces.

It is also traceable to what Durkheim defines as the *totem* (Durkheim, 1912) *:* the flag of the clan, a concrete object on which the individual's allegiance was projected: ultimately, it is nothing other than a society's representation of itself to its members (Tikkanen, 2021).

In the case of the rave it is the wall of speakers, or sound-system under which the participants gather to dance. There is no stage and the only performer is the audience itself, dancing to the rhythm of music that penetrates under the skin in a continuous, repetitive stream. Here a significant difference to club culture is noticeable, where everything revolves around the figure of the DJ, whose status has gradually become the same as singers, musicians and celebrities:

El Drito: *"I really can't stand this DJ-thing, like who cares who's playing? I don't want to know, I don't want to think about it or be paying for it. Rave is about something else, is about detaching yourself from this market system, where you have to be "someone" to play at the party, to go in to the club. That is all bullshit."*

In conclusion, in whichever way this separation is interpreted, it then finds a way to mend itself, from separation with the outside world to communal union in the party. The closing out of the rapport with the world, relationships, external conventions and the creation of new ones within the rave time.

4. Nostalgia and Intergenerational Politics

In almost every interview I conducted for this research, an aura of nostalgia and longing was clearly present. This attitude of idealizing the past is certainly understandable, when the sense of dissatisfaction with the present is preponderant (Cotrozzi, 2015). For the older subjects interviewed, it regards mostly how youth (and all things related to this) used to be. Vanni Santoni stayed:

"There was this huge, amazing energy coming from electronic music. In that moment (the Nineties) it was really exploding in the young culture scenario, and it actually was the newest, refreshing, the most unifying of musical subcultures".

Also, with respect to how rave culture has evolved and the role it has today for young people I have not found extensive sympathy from those who participated in the first wave of raves in Italy: the role of social networks above all is perceived as a destructive element of the rave essence of secrecy, exclusivity for a few insiders:

El Drito: *"We ravers were and are like the early Christians who gathered for their religion in the catacombs."*

Participant Bea*: "I think one has to take into consideration how Telegram, Facebook and other less mainstream web channels have impacted how we rave. Like, I wasn't there when you could find out about parties through word of mouth and flyers, but I really think it was better as it was before."*

With the advent of the internet of course there has been a total revolution from a communication point of view, making rave parties not only public domain (El Drito : *"When you put the ad online yes more lovers of the genre come, but by doing so you open the door to organized crime, pushers, police"*) but also more vulnerable to possible "manipulation" away from what its true nature was:

Fossati: *"It's cool stuff and it's what we did twenty years ago, but twenty years ago no one was considered cool, you were considered a dope"*).

Regarding the younger generation, on the other hand, one could say that there is almost a sense of ingenuity with respect to the past: earlier generations are seen as freer, emancipated, and not subject to the (unpleasant) attentions of governments and law enforcement:

El Drito: *"Many groups after us continued with the festivities, but they themselves had no respect for the places. That is also why the authorities began to crack down on the scene"*

Participant Andre*:" You used to be able to smash everything, have a real party, put everything back the way it was, and bye-bye".*

Participant Bea: *"Yeah... I'm pretty sure that for people who partied in the Nineties, what we do now seems like a disco bar birthday party, there was a much cooler and freer way of having fun, in my opinion there were no limits to how much one could really do."*

In conclusion to this theme, I believe that rave culture can act as a social glue and fill a generation gap, provided it finds a future that meets the expectations of participants, a new way that looks proudly back to the past but with new ideas towards the future.

Conclusions

These four themes that have emerged from all the interviews I conducted all collide into one big flow of thoughts: rave parties must be considered a unique and important safe space that has to be preserved.

The acronym PLUR - Peace - Love - Unity - Respect encapsulates the four core values of rave culture, which are now more important than ever in a society like Italy where gender violence and homophobia and transphobia are constantly on the rise. "PLUR- An inside perspective into the American rave culture" written for the Honors College of Texas State University explain what this acronym really stands for into the global rave culture: "Peace stands for the desire to share musical experiences in quiet coexistence, without the slightest desire to clash with anyone; Love refers to the bond that is established on the waves of house music, a love for oneself and for one's neighbor; Unity means an absence of prejudice and openness for newcomers, who deserve to feel those vibes as much as the regulars of a given gathering. Over time these three pillars were joined by that of Respect: quiet coexistence, openness to others, and love for those around us cannot coexist without a strong and indelible feeling of respect for oneself, for the raver next to us, and especially for those who organized the party" (Villalobos, 2015, Pg. 10). These four values are totally at variance with what is being promulgated by the Italian government and many other European governments in recent years: love in all its forms is not protected but fought against, respect for those around us and for the nature in which we live is cast aside for advantageous economic deals, peace is obscured by egomaniacal desires and power, the unity of a people is called into question only to be manipulated to confront an imaginary common enemy, often the foreigner. If this is the world we are currently living in, places where brotherhood, dancing and light-heartedness serve as pillars should be protected, and not criminalized.

9. Conclusions

As we have seen, the rave culture represents a complex and controversial cultural phenomenon, of great relevance to sociology and the social sciences in general. The rave subculture has often been the victim of prejudices and stereotypes that have led to its stigmatization and its marginalization in contemporary society. This has resulted in a number of limitations to its spread, thereby bringing into question the right to individual freedom and the ability to experiment with new forms of aggregation.

What emerged through the analysis of sociological theories, ritual dynamics and the Italian scene, shows how the rave subculture represents a source of social energy and political solidarity, capable of questioning social conventions and proposing new forms of aggregation and individual expression.

It has also brought forth the importance of those places in preserving the individual's creativity and personality, and the ability to stand free from any kind of sexual or racial oppression or discrimination. Even more so these days, in the current Italian political context, which grows more and more hostile towards minorities and the queer community: it was 5 days ago, June 8, 2023, that the regions of Lazio and Lombardy revoked both economic and representational institutional sponsorship of the pride parades in Rome and Milan, the two most important cities in Italy. The pride parades have not stopped of course, and neither must those who defend their liberty of action and expression, ravers included.

Finally, to answer the initial research questions, it is clear that rave culture still has an important social and political role in contemporary Italy, preserving cultural pluralism and nourishing the voices of the young political opposition to the conservative right wing currently in office. Obviously, there are some limitations to consider, owing to the constant change and evolution of the Italian political context: since the beginning of the researches for this thesis the situation has evolved from the "anti-rave decree", to the tightening of penalties for spaces' occupation, to the gradual penalization and criminalization of homogenitorial couples.

For future research, It would be interesting to keep records on how the current and the next governments might take action against rave parties and at the same time against the civil rights of the LGBTQ+ community, monitoring a system which will very possibly become even more oppressive and which needs to be carefully supervised.

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Appendix A - Interview guide

<u>Fixed starter questions for the first group of participants:</u>

Why do you think raves have been criminalized?

Do you think that raves play in the present historical and political context a political or social role of any kind in Italy?

How do you feel involved with rave culture?

What role do raves play in your life?

Do you think raves are a place of free creative expression for young people today?

<u>Fixed starter questions for the second group of participants:</u>

When and how did you get into the rave party business?

To date, how many rave parties have you attended and in which places?

So in a nutshell what is rave?

What role and meaning does that kind of music have for you?

How do you feel about the prevalence of drugs at rave parties? Have you ever used them or do you know people who do?

Why do you think raves have been criminalized?

do you think that raves play in the present historical and political context a political or social role of any kind in Italy?

How do you feel involved with rave culture?

What role do raves play in your life?

<u>Others:</u>

A fundamental part of rave culture, in fact, is the temporary appropriation of unused urban spaces?

The rituality, the tribal aspect, the hours under the till had a value beyond hedonism, the need to blow off steam. How did they convey political meaning?

So were there really all kinds of people?

What do you think is left of rave culture today?

Community is one of the key words you used. How does one become a part of it?

Why can't these events be held with permission, within the law?

Normally when people talk about rave parties, they are led to think that they are attended by drug addicts, rebellious and outcast kids, but who are you?

What do you think is the philosophy behind rave parties? And in particular why would you squat rather than pay for permits and comply?

How do you think the sale of various types of drugs is brought or handled at these parties is organized crime involved?

You write precisely about the fact that you were chasing, let's say living for and searching for this "dream" So my question is, what is this dream? Is it still there? How do you process a little bit this aspect of the precisely dream side, desire side, etc.?

Do you agree with those who see it as simply an escape from reality?

At what age did you start going to raves?

How do you perceive the ritualistic mystical element in raves?

Do you think there is a distorted narrative of rave culture in Italy?

Do you think there is an opposition between rave culture and club culture?

Is there really a magical mystical dimension? If yes, are drugs responsible for it in what percentage?

Is there a moment when the magic ends and squalor or decay begins?

Is this nostalgia that is always talked about real or is it more related to something always mystical and elusive?

Review talks about "going into it and seeing with eyes other than the bourgeois" is that really the problem in your opinion? That is, is fear ignorance a result of class difference or does this go other?

Is the rave related in its history and characteristics to a class dimension in some way?

Is this concept of consciousness expansion extended and shared by all?

Is there a very playful, beautiful side let's say, is there also another side? Is the mystical experience always a good and wanted thing or is there also a negative side, that is, an escape from reality?

Do you think it is identifiable or definable to rave as a way of life?

Do you think it is a different, more transversal or institutionalized phenomenon in Holland than in Italy?

Why do you think there is this negative narrative about raves?

Appendix B – Participants' overview

First group

1- Marco Mancassola (Italian writer, author of "Last Love Parade", 2005, narrates the birth and evolution of techno and traces through his memory as a teenager and 20-year-old the personal experiences, and otherwise, that marked those decades; also author of the podcast "Rave: una storia proibita")

2- Chiara Fossati (photographer, her exhibition in Milan "Whatever" narrates the rave aesthetic during the '90s)

3- Vanni Santoni (sociologist and writer, author of "Muro di casse", a mix between a novel and essay on the rave parties experiences, as viewed by nostalgic former ravers)

4- Pablito El Drito (author of "Rave in Italy", 2018, on how drugs and techno music had influenced Italian politics in the previous years).

Second group

Name	Location	Age	Current profession	How recruited
Fra	Italy	20s	Student	Third party connection
Andre	Italy	20s	Graphic designer	Mutual friend connection
Bea	Italy	20s	Law student	Mutual friend connection
Cate	Italy	20s	Economics student	University connection
Lollo	Italy	20s	Art student	High school connection

Appendix C - List of main used materials

1. Vanni Santoni (2015), "Muro di case", novel about rave life in italy from the 1990s to the present, with the participation and testimonies of many ravers and travelers.

2. Pablito El Drito (2018), "Rave in Italy", collection of interviews and testimonials from djs, ravers, producers, technicians, organizers on the history and evolution of rave parties in Italy

3. Pablito El Drito (2017), "Once we were ravers", novel about rave life in Italy against the backdrop of the infamous G8 in Genoa in 2008

4. Marco Mancassola's podcast "Rave- una storia proibita" ("Rave- a forbidden history"), a detailed podcast in 5 episodes about the real meaning of rave parties and about the author's experience

5. Luis Manuel-Garcia's article "An Alternate History of Sexuality in Club Culture" (2014), Historical excursus on the relationship between dance music and queer community

6. Emile Durkheim (1912), "The elementary forms of religious life", Oxford University Press

7. Randall Collins, (2014) "Interaction ritual chains and collective effervescence", Oxford University Press.

8. Anderson and Kavanaugh (2007), "A 'Rave' Review: Conceptual Interests and Analytical Shifts in Research on Rave Culture", review what raves look like today compared to their high point in the 1990s; the research also discusses how the cultural studies and public health perspectives define raves and have studied them over time, focusing on the 'pet' sociological concepts each has sought to advance. The analysis end by discussing the politics associated with the shift in rave research.

9. Various newspaper articles (see references) about rave's history of oppression by different countries and decades (Public Order Act, Mariani's Law, Anti-rave Decree ecc)