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**With contributions from
(in order of appearance):
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Sarah**



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PRELUDE

WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

Italy, December 2022.

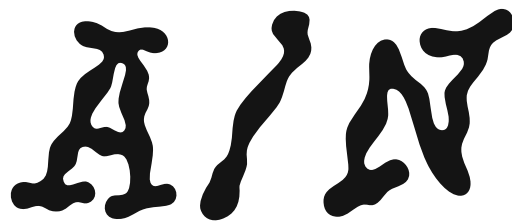
Parliament turns into law the so-called “anti-rave decree,” approved by the Meloni government months earlier. This measure not only reflects a rise in right-wing tendencies in Europe and around the world, but also demonstrates a growing repression of political dissent in Italy. In this context, free parties serve as spaces of resistance and escape.



I AM GIORGIA
I AM A WOMAN
I AM A MOTHER
I AM ITALIAN
I AM A CHRISTIAN



Starting from a chronology of what has happened, the aim of this project is to explore the meaning of free party culture through the voices of those who study and participate in it, also by analyzing how visual communication can support self-organized movements in Italy.



This project was born from a conversation with my dear friend Lily, who first gave me the idea of researching Italian collectives, and whose advice helped me immensely in the early development of the work.

Over time, the initial intention took on a more political character and led me to discover the free party scene, eventually becoming what it is today.

In this section, I would like to give a brief introduction to some of the formal, graphic, and linguistic choices that run through this PDF/fanzine.

© Document accessibility and inclusive language:

This project is available in both Italian and English.

While writing in English is much easier in terms of inclusivity, the Italian language is inherently binary (one of the first rules you learn in school requires the use of the masculine plural, even when the majority of the group does not identify with the masculine gender). However, over time (and not without struggles, which are still very much alive today), more and more ways have been found to make the language more inclusive: where it was not possible to use gender-neutral terms or impersonal forms, I opted for the extended feminine form, as this makes the document accessible to people who use screen readers. In this regard, I highly recommend reading *Guidelines for inclusive language* (“Linee guide per un linguaggio inclusivo”, CIMA Foundation 2024), which was recommended to me by my best friend (as always: thank you, Dario).

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© Images and illustrations:

All illustrations in the project are original.

The photographs used come from open-source archives and are listed in the sources at the end of the project. Some of them (indicated in the captions) were shared by the interviewees and are used here with their explicit permission.

© Interviews:

The interviews were transcribed in full and then edited for clarity and conciseness, while retaining their meaning intact. Cuts are indicated with [...] where relevant. The complete transcripts are available on request. Furthermore, the interviews were included in the project in chronological order, which therefore does not reflect any evaluation of significance.

© Author's notes:

Indicated in the text with the abbreviation a/n and used to clarify contexts, places, or names.

Enjoy your reading :)
vero



this is me 20-something years ago, but picture my facial expression as the same today

SMALL GLOSSARY

This glossary aims to explain, in a simple and accessible way, some of the terms used in this project. Many of the definitions presented here are taken directly from the words of the people interviewed (mentioned at the beginning of each definition): this is because the free party movement exists thanks to those who experience it.



DECREE-LAW:

According to the Italian Constitution, a decree-law is an immediately applicable act issued by the Government that must meet criteria of necessity and urgency. It is an exception to the normal legislative process and must be converted into law by Parliament within 60 days, otherwise it loses its effect.

factories, barracks, airports, fields, quarries, race tracks – which are occupied and transformed into a city. [...] Everyone develops their own personal experience, but what defines a free party for me is the sense of connection and complicity that is created together, a collective experience. It is when I have that feeling that I can say I am “at a free party”.



FREE PARTY ACCORDING TO FRANKY:

It's not easy to define. It's a self-organized, self-managed party that appears and disappears in a matter of days, in abandoned spaces –

ACCORDING TO SARAH:

The free party is a “non-place” of art, in every sense of the word. Physically, you are there, but in reality there are so many connections between music, art, DJs... Entering this world is like discovering many others. It's a →

→ bit like a matryoshka doll: the party is the first, then there are all the smaller ones inside it: those who prepare the food, those who take care of visual communication, those who make music, those who bring their handmade items to sell...

ACCORDING TO JACOPO:

In my opinion, raves and free parties are the same thing. However, in Italy, the word “rave” is associated with something that damages the social structure. It has been semantically defined in this way, [...] and this has remained both in the Italian cultural imagination and in the language (which is a mirror of society). A word that has been so demonized, for years, is unusable; you have to find a way around it somehow, hence the need to use the term free party.



INFOLINE ACCORDING TO FRANKY:

It was a telephone number that was activated a few hours before the party started: it told you where to go and how to get there [...], so basically how to get to the party. In France, the infoline is still used, and I believe the cost of the call is donated to a solidarity fund for sound equipment confiscated from parties. Nowadays, with smartphones, you tend to receive the coordinates directly.

SOUND ACCORDING TO FRANKY:

[...] You can be a tribe without having a sound, and you can have a sound without being a tribe. Usually, sounds are purchased gradually, one speaker at a time (*a/n: in Italian, the word refers to speakers, equipment and lights and it is short for sound system*).



TAZ (TEMPORARY AUTONOMOUS ZONES):

The concept of TAZ was first proposed by Hakim Bey (among other things: American philosopher, essayist, and writer), who, however, “deliberately refrained from defining it”. In his words, “In the end the TAZ is almost self-explanatory. If the phrase became current it would be understood without difficulty...understood in action.” (Bey 2007).



TEKNO:

Author’s linguistic choice, who believes (in her personal opinion) “tekno” to be the most commonly used term in the free party scene.



TRIBE ACCORDING TO FRANKY:

A community that goes beyond blood ties, a sort of extended family.

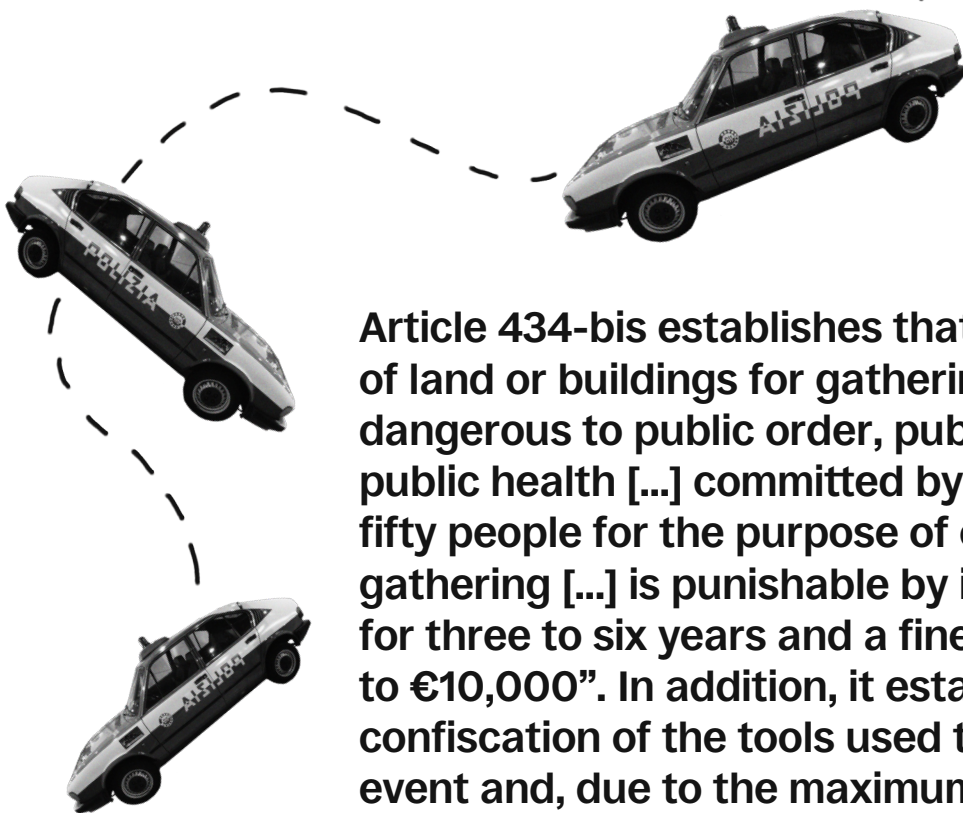
POLITICAL CONTEXT

OTTOBRE

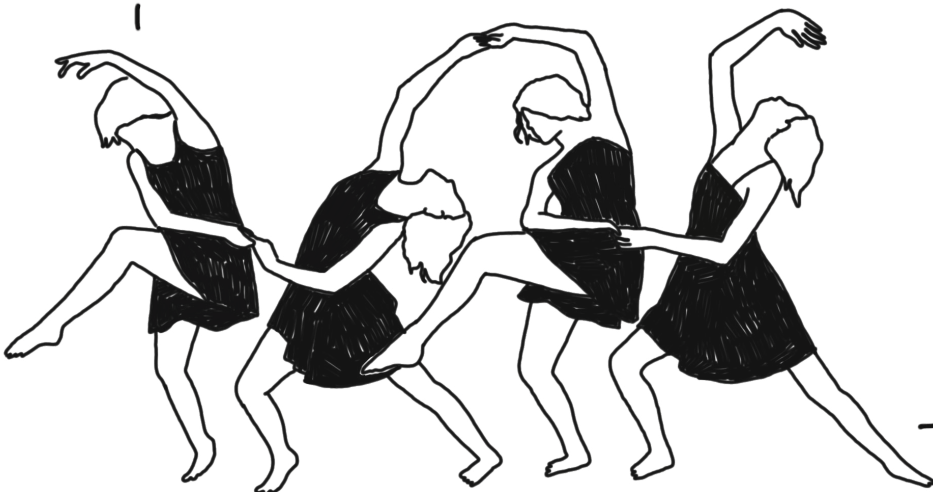
2022

The decree-law first presented on October 31, 2022, by the Italian government consists of nine articles covering four main issues, including regulations on so-called “illegal gatherings” (Art. 434-bis).

THE ANTI-RAVE DECREE-LAW



Article 434-bis establishes that “the invasion of land or buildings for gatherings that are dangerous to public order, public safety, or public health [...] committed by more than fifty people for the purpose of organizing a gathering [...] is punishable by imprisonment for three to six years and a fine of €1,000 to €10,000”. In addition, it establishes the confiscation of the tools used to organize the event and, due to the maximum penalty of six years, the possibility of intercepting telephone calls made by the organizers.



HURRY UP, TOWARDS
THE NEXT RAVE!!

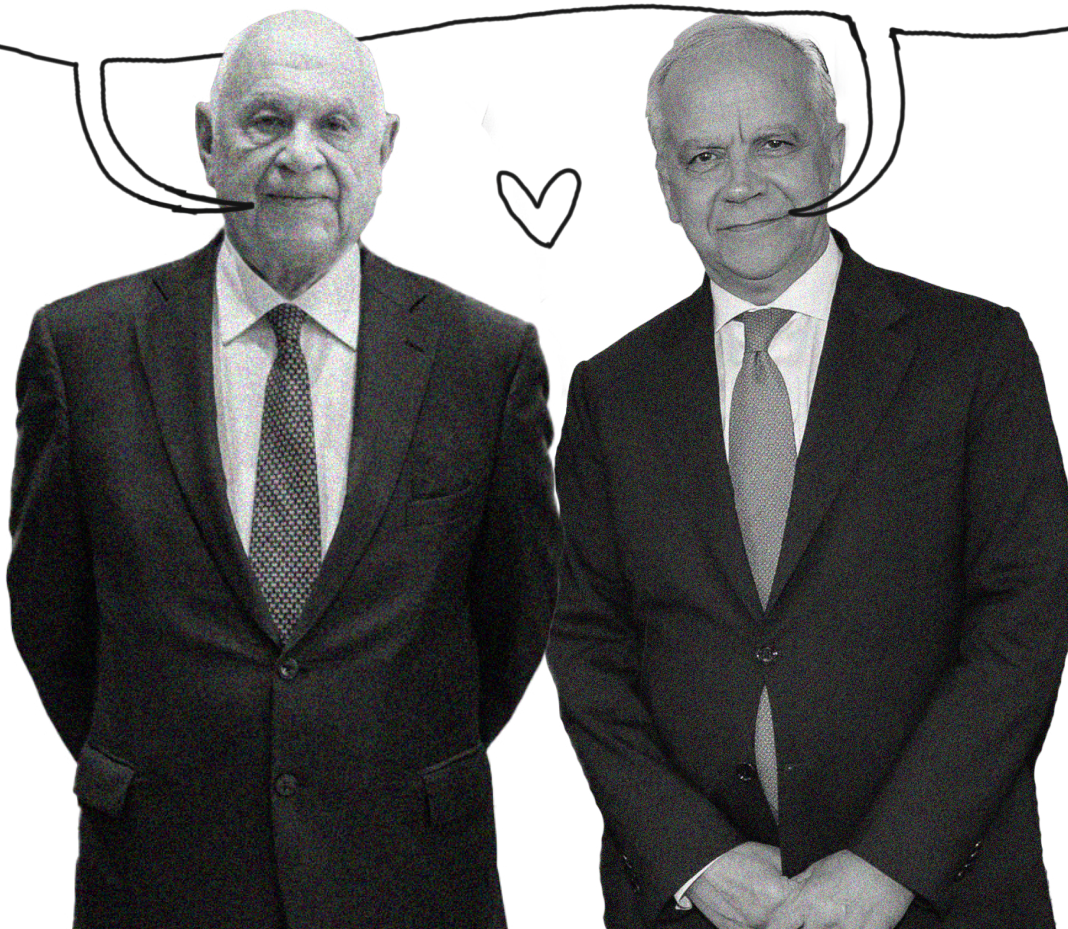
To answer the question of what were the urgency criteria for the decree-law, the government refers to the rave party that took place in October 2022 in Modena, where around 3,000 people gathered for the weekend in an abandoned warehouse. According to the government, the event required immediate action to ensure public safety and order.

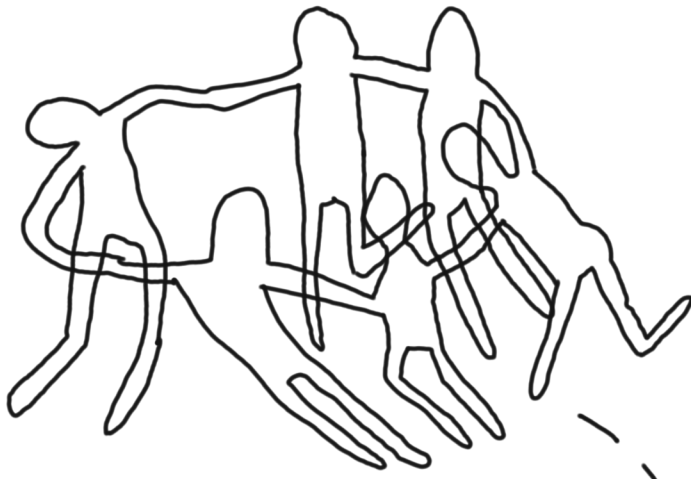


The concern that many have raised about Article 434-bis of the decree-law is that it has been written in overly general terms, without specifying anywhere that it only regulates rave parties, and that it could therefore be applied to any type of gathering of more than 50 people, including peaceful protests or sit-ins.

IMMEDIATE ACTION TO ENSURE BOTH
PUBLIC SAFETY AND ORDER

THE ANTI-RAVE DECREE-LAW





Following growing pressure on the government to change the law during the conversion process in Parliament, on December 31, 2022, the new Article 633-bis, updated and changed, was introduced into the Penal Code.



The article now punishes “anyone who organizes or promotes the arbitrary invasion of public or private land or buildings belonging to others, *for the purpose of holding a musical gathering or other entertainment event*, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term of three to six years and a fine of €1,000 to €10,000, when the invasion poses a real danger to public health or public safety [...]”. Furthermore, the Article specifies that it applies *if the rules on drugs, safety, or hygiene are not complied with*.

The confiscation of the tools used to organize the event stays, and the organizers may still be subject to telephone surveillance.

STOP!!!
You'RE A DANGER
TO PUBLIC
HEALTH AND
SAFETY!!

ARTICLE 633-BIS

Decreti 2022

PRESENT



WHERE ARE WE NOW?
(MAY/JUNE 2025)

WHAT IS IT?

Initially proposed as a bill in November 2023, then transformed into a decree-law and officially converted (during a messy session in the Senate) into a law in early June 2025, the Security Law contains a total of 39 articles introducing 14 new crimes and 9 aggravating circumstances.

HOW IS THIS LAW CONNECTED TO THE ARTICLE 633-BIS?

The article itself is mentioned in the official dossier issued by the Senate, under the heading “emergency decrees and criminal law”. In order to better communicate how important - according to the government - the conversion of the decree-law into law is, a comparison is made with other decree-laws issued during the same legislature, which also recalls all the previous cases in which the government has modified criminal law with emergency measures.

It is also a way of highlighting the fact that the regulations issued are following a consistent line of action.

SECURITY



PROCLAMATION.

GAZZETTA UFFICIALE



Art. 24

Stricter penalties are being introduced for damaging public property with graffiti and writing, now punishable by imprisonment from 6 months to 1.5 years. The main targets of the measure appear to be environmental movements, which have often resorted to painting statues or public works to draw attention to the cause.



Art. 12

The penalty is also increased in the case of general damage during demonstrations: in this case, the prison sentence ranges from 1 year and 6 months to 5 years, with a fine of up to €15,000.



Art. 19

An aggravating circumstance is added in the case of violence or threats against a public official during protests against the construction of a strategic public work (as in the case of the construction of the Strait Bridge or the high-speed train in northern Italy).

(INCOMPLETE LIST)





Art. 14

Roadblocks are now a criminal offense, punishable by imprisonment for six months to two years if several people block access to roads or railways with their bodies (a tactic used, again, mainly by environmental movements, such as Extinction Rebellion Italy; these forms of non-violent protest were decriminalized in 1999, as they are closely linked to freedom of expression).



Art. 22, 23, 28

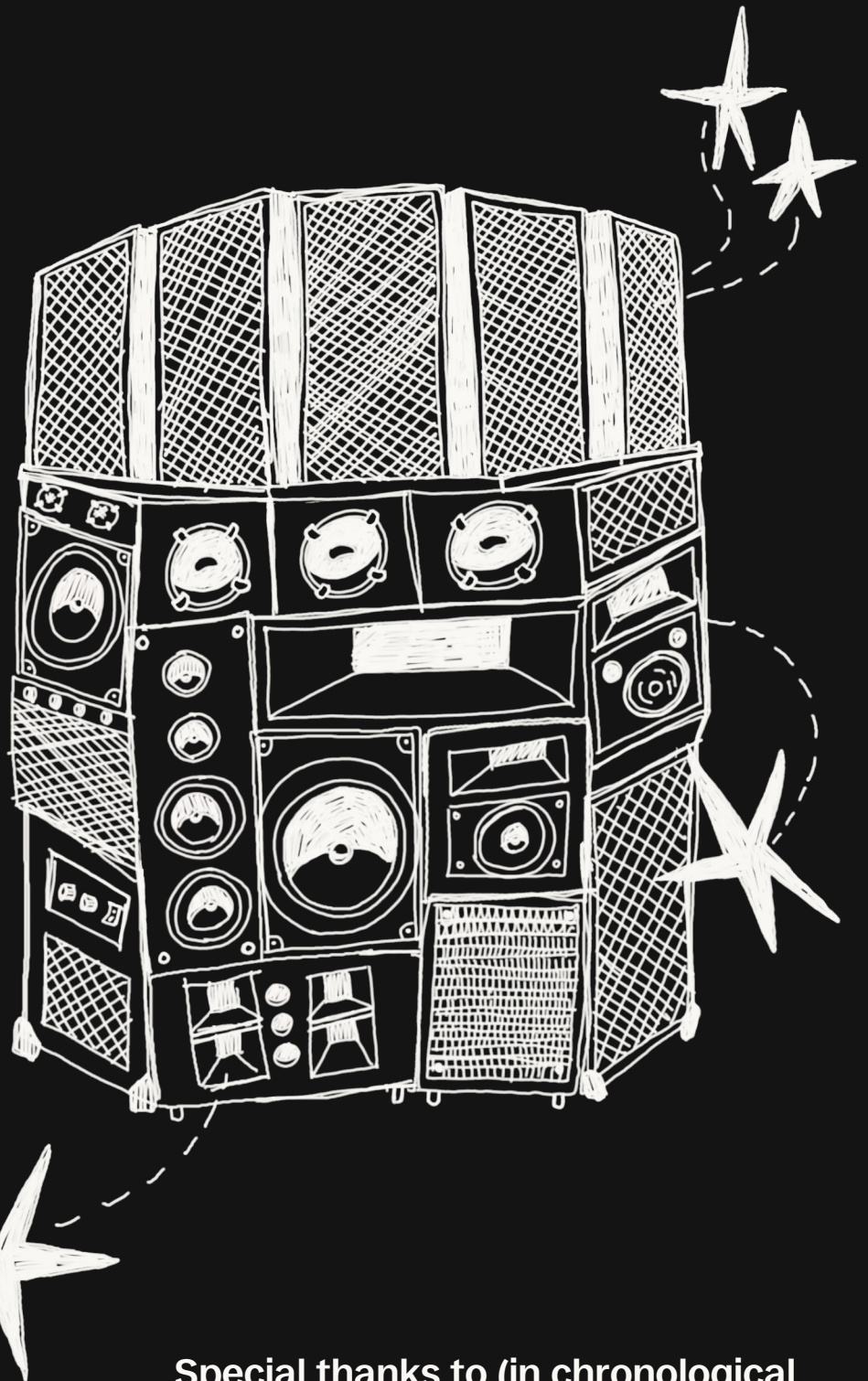
State protections for public officials are increasing: police officers, *carabinieri*, and other law enforcement officers under investigation for incidents that occurred while on duty will no longer be automatically suspended, and the state will cover legal expenses up to a maximum of €10,000. Law enforcement officers are also authorized to carry private weapons without a license even when off duty.



IF WE CONSIDER THE ORIGINAL
TEXT OF ARTICLE 633-BIS,
WHICH REFERRED TO SO-CALLED
“DANGEROUS GATHERINGS,” IT
SEEMS THAT THE GOVERNMENT
HAS IDENTIFIED, THROUGH THE
SECURITY LAW, THE WAY TO
HINDER PROTESTS AND
PUBLIC DISSENT.



INTERVIEW



Special thanks to (in chronological order of interview): Franky, Sarah, and Jacopo, for contributing to this project by sharing their ideas, experiences, and stories of resistance.

With Franky (he/him) we meet in Tempelhof.

V: To begin with, could you tell me how often you used to attend free parties in Italy?

F: Once every two or three months, it was easy to travel from Bologna to northern Italy. You usually start with some of the smaller parties, then move on to the bigger ones, like Witchtek (I went to the one in Bergamo in 2013) or the party in Salento in the summer (I'm from the province of Taranto). Incidentally, Witchtek in Modena was the last party held in Italy in 2022 before the anti-rave decree. It was broadcast live on the news and cleared on the orders of Piantedosi (*n/a: Matteo, Minister of the Interior*). They used it as a pretext for the anti-rave decree.

V: Can you tell me more of Witchtek in 2013?

F: Let's just say that the vibe wasn't great: partly because of my personal experience, partly because the problem with parties in Lombardy is that often, when you're too close to cities, once the news spreads in the newspapers, you start getting a flood of people who don't know much about free parties and become more of a problem..

V: Can I ask you what you mean by people who don't know much about free parties?

F: People who find out about the party through other channels (newspapers, TV, social media) that are not "the usuals" don't have the right attitude towards the party, respect for it and the music, or for other people or themselves. This ranges from toxic substance abuse to, unfortunately, harassment...

(a/n: in agreement with Franky, there is no personal presentation of him at the beginning of the interview)

FRANKY



V: Would you say there are unwritten rules for free parties?

F: Let's say there's a way to behave and enjoy the party: respect the sound, protect the party, take care of yourself and others. Being a self-organized reality, it's up to us to protect it and enforce certain rules (which are merely common sense). The way I experience it, and I think the way many other people experience it, is with a sense of community: a community that comes together out of nowhere, that is self-managed, where even if you don't know people, you talk to them, you hug them, you check on them to see how they are doing. You are totally free from impositions, so you can behave in the way you would like society to behave, excluding toxic dynamics.

THE DIFFERENCE COMPARED TO OTHER EVENTS AND PLACES IS THE POLITICAL NATURE OF THE PARTY, WHICH DOES NOT SET ITSELF A FUTURE HORIZON OF LIBERATION OR EVOLUTION, BUT IS SOMETHING THAT TAKES SHAPE IN THE HERE AND NOW.

Here I would like to refer to Hakim Bey's concept of TAZ, "Temporary Autonomous Zone". [...] The party is open to everyone, but you have to know how to behave.

V: Let's talk about communication channels.

F: In the beginning, there was the paper flyer, often handmade, which was printed in A5 format and then distributed at other parties or directly in community centers. →



NO PARTIES
ANYMORE!!!



→ It included the date of the party, a very general area, and the infoline. [...] This is how the aesthetics of the party were created, and they are often difficult to decipher. There are flyers that you won't understand unless you have the right knowledge. [...] Flyers still exist, but now they are distributed digitally. More collages of old images are now used, I see fewer handmade flyers, everything is done through softwares. The worst ones are those made with artificial intelligence, which are really awful to look at.

V: If you had to think of a symbol that is used repeatedly in flyers, can you think of anything?

F: There is definitely a recurring iconography, from the spiral (I even have it tattooed) to the number 23 and the cyberpunk aesthetics. The spiral in particular originated with the Spiral Tribe (*n/a: a techno sound system that emerged in the first half of the 1990s*). It is a symbol that has no beginning or end, it is not something definite. [...] The symbolism can be considered heritage of the movement, which was created in England by a combination of acid parties, common festivals (1960s), and squatting. [...]

V: And where does the number 23 come from?

F: There are many theories: some say it is the number of members of the Spiral Tribe, others attribute it to Jewish Kabbalah (*a/n: the esoteric teachings of Rabbinic Judaism*). If, for example, I were to go to the beach and meet someone with the number 23 tattooed on them, we would recognize each other. Or at least I would try to strike up a →

23



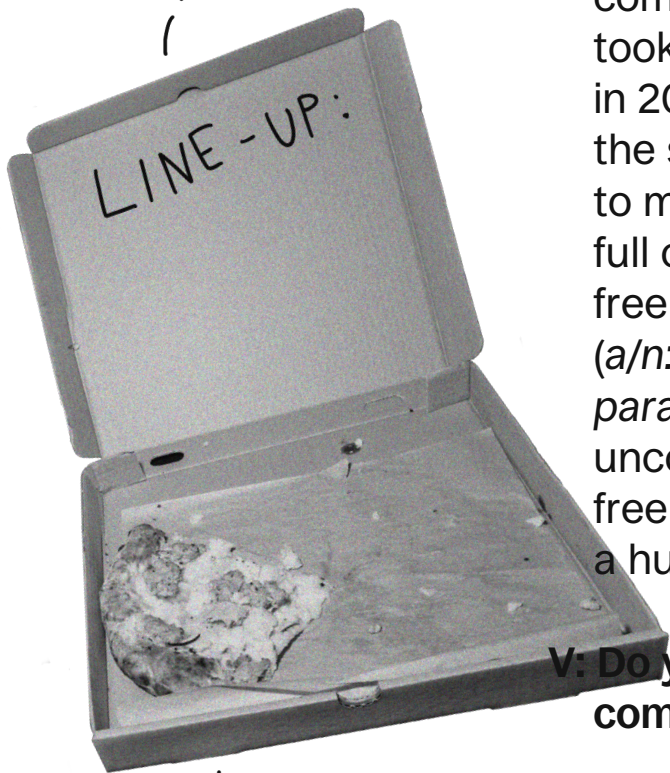
23



→ conversation... Then again, maybe it's for Michael Jordan.

V: What motivates you to choose free parties?

F: So, I started going to free parties pretty late. When I first moved to Bologna, I didn't even like tekno. I started with some tekno at the community centers in Bologna, then someone took me to a party. My first time was at TAZ in 2013 in Turin: that's where I fell in love with the scene. [...] I realized what partying meant to me once I arrived in Berlin. Berlin is a city full of raves, but in my opinion, there are no free parties. For example, at Rave The Planet (*a/n: an electronic music festival and techno parade that began in 2022 in Berlin*), I feel uncomfortable, while I feel perfectly fine at a free party in a forest in Poland with less than a hundred people.



V: Do you feel that there is a lack of sense of community at legal parties?

F: Yes, legal parties are certainly lacking it: there are certain restrictions, a visible security team, predefined start and end times, and a whole set of rules. People's attitudes are also different. It's not because everyone goes, it's because you don't feel that sense of community. [...] You don't get the experience of going to the party together, but also of leaving the party together. At free parties, you don't find the line-up. Maybe you do, next to where they're playing, but it's something written on the lid of a pizza box with a marker. At a free party, you can know what genre they play (from tekno tribe to acid to electro) if you know the tribes that play, but you don't know exactly who is playing. At legal parties, →



→ there may even be producers I like, but it's not the same thing. [...]

V: How would you define a tribe?

F: [...] I link the tribe to the historical phenomenon of clandestine rituals: a community that stands outside official society to celebrate itself, with its own rituals, its own ways and its own music, persecuted because it is immediately and concretely opposed to the idea of a heteronormative society. Take the Sabbaths: a community composed mainly of free women who possessed a knowledge that was forbidden to the patriarchal society of the 1600s and were therefore persecuted. The same for the Bacchanalia (*a/n: orgiastic parties in Roman times, which later became propitiatory to the gods*), which could not be accepted because they were against the *mos maiorum* (*a/n: the center of traditional morality in Roman civilization*). Free parties are the same thing.

Contemporary society tells you “kid, you have to go to the factory to get work experience, and if you have to die there, you die there. You can't go dancing and partying, and if you want to have fun, you can do so in these places from Saturday to Sunday, paying this, doing this and that.”

V: What do you think were the consequences of the anti-rave decree in Italy??

F: For one year (2023) there were no parties; it was a time of reorientation. There were street parades: I went to the one on December 17, 2022, in Bologna, where the Smash Repression network was born. In 2024, the →





→ parties started again. For example, I went to the Easter TAZ in Bologna. I definitely noticed the difference, both because younger tribes are organizing the parties and also because there is a different dynamic in the way the news is communicated. The term TAZ is often used, and they have statements circulating, saying why it is important to have the party.

WE SEND A POLITICAL MESSAGE AGAINST GENTRIFICATION, AGAINST THE COMMODIFICATION OF BODIES AND LIVES, FOR LIBERATION AND SELF-DETERMINATION, AND TO CREATE A NEW WAY OF BEING TOGETHER. IT ALSO ADDRESSES ISSUES THAT PERHAPS HAD NOT BEEN ADDRESSED IN THE LAST PERIOD OF THE MOVEMENT IN ITALY.



This is also due to the influence of people active in trans-feminist collectives, such as Non Una Di Meno (*a/n: not one less*), which has led to greater awareness and questioning about self-care and being together: messages that go beyond the “punkabbestia” aspect. The exit from the party is done in a caravan all together to protect the sound, to avoid being identified, to send a signal.



The first year went well, but in recent months the police have started to react with totally unmotivated charges and disproportionate, very vindictive violence, especially in Trentino (*a/n: region in north-east Italy*), where they also used tear gas (*a/n: he's referring to the →*

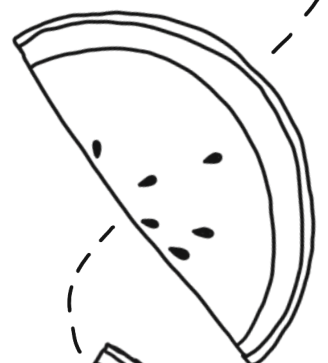
→ free party in early May in Malga Lomasone). We have always been illegal, they have always cleared us out, but that was because we were occupying spaces. The anti-rave created the crime of partying, placing it in the chapter on environmental disasters. The article before that one is for those guilty of building collapses, and then there are free parties. They thought they had us on our knees, but they created a return of free parties, even in the middle of the cities.

The decree-law produced a repoliticization of free parties. Now there is also a greater contamination from France, which is very advanced in terms of awareness, risk reduction, and visual communication. When I was at a Teknival in France, I noticed this. The graphic design focuses on the political essence of the party: it is about reconstructing its own history.

THERE IS ALSO A CLEAR SUPPORT OF THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE. OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, AT EVERY PARTY I HAVE BEEN TO, THERE WERE ALWAYS PALESTINIAN FLAGS: WE ARE TALKING ABOUT THREE-METER-LONG BANNERS.

Graphic design can communicate this very well, as it is an integral part of the party.

V: Do you think that the Italian scene has also evolved in this direction, when it comes to visual communication? Are we adding this political aspect here as well?



F: In my opinion, it's going in that direction. [...] I see a comeback of political communication in flyers, they are often containing protest slogans. [...] This stuff was absent for a while in Italy, but I think it's also because at a certain point we were throwing way too many parties, one after the other, sometimes even two or three times in the same place in the space of a single year. We got carried away, perhaps a little too much.

V: **Has repression become stronger since free parties started conveying political messages again?**

F: Yes, I think so. We began to feel the repression in Italy in 2007, with the Teknival in Pinerolo (a/n: province of Turin). Before that, the police didn't even know what a free party was. There were few parties and few people, organized in small towns or on the outskirts of large cities. When the police arrived, we would tell them, "we're having a birthday party," and that was the end of it. However, since 2007, the media has also begun to take an interest in free parties, but always with that perverse attitude of the news: they don't know exactly what's going on, so the party becomes something that embodies all the worst, from the excessive use of substances to people getting sick while dancing. They built a toxic narrative, which culminated in the 2021 Teknival of Valenzano (a/n: province of Bari), where they said there were people giving birth among slaughtered goats: all bullshit of course, but it was never denied, and that's where they started laying the groundwork to legitimize the repressive crackdown that followed.

Then there was the Nonem and Hazard →



→ party in Cusago (a/n: province of Milan) in 2013, which was cleared out by the police during the night. That was a decision that even the police criticized; it was stupid to do this in a warehouse at night.

Repressive violence has returned strongly the last two times in Turin and then in Trentino a few weeks ago. Seeing that the decree did not stop us, violence is no longer just a tool to enforce the law, but becomes vindictive. The latest incidents I referred to earlier took place at the end of the party, when people were already leaving the warehouses. It wasn't even to confiscate the sound. What's the point of smashing car windows if you want to seize stuff?

This anti-rave decree was passed riding the media wave of Modena's Witchtek, and the problem is that it is a law applicable to any kind of gathering, to any kind of occupation. It is exemplary of how things are done in Italy: a wide margin of interpretation, laws written in "legal Italian" (which means everything and nothing at the same time), leaving the discretion to the police. It's something we've been dealing with since Covid: it was the police who decided who could go out and who couldn't. In Italy, especially in small towns, there are always people who don't mind their own business: everything is reported and then claimed on the news as "rave of x many people cleared out." Then it turns out it was a birthday party.

This decree is now starting to be applied to legal events as well. Time and time again, parties organized with all the necessary authorizations have been banned by →

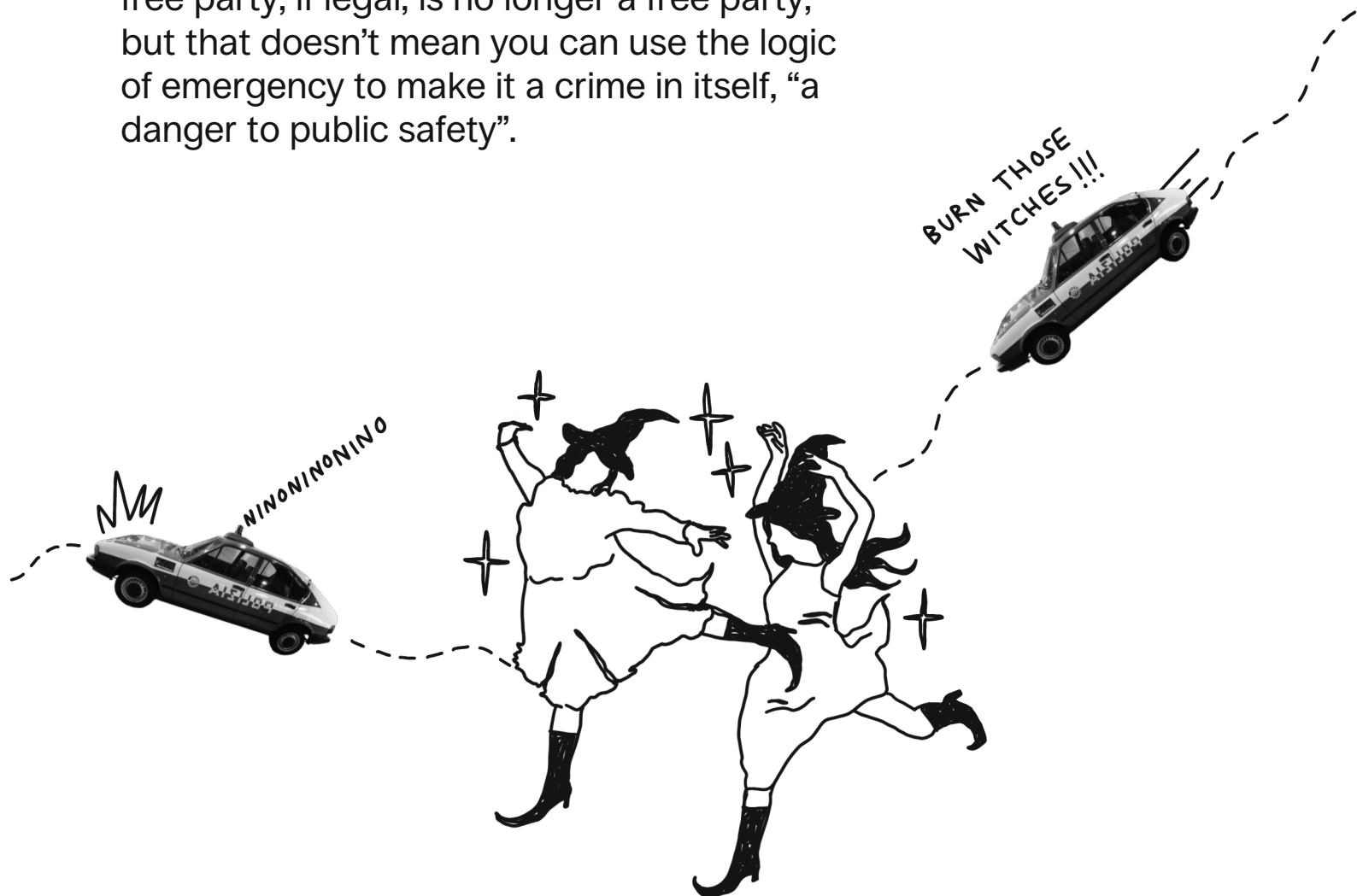


→ whoever happened to be the officer on duty on that day, who received the flyer advertising the party, read “techno” and automatically associated it with free parties, and consequently pressured the venues to cancel the events.

It has become a witch hunt.

THEY NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT THIS IS NOT A PHASE: WE ARE TALKING ABOUT A COUNTERCULTURE THAT HAS MORE THAN 30 YEARS OF HISTORY BEHIND IT, WHICH UNITES PEOPLE ACROSS EUROPE. IT IS A WAY OF LIFE, A WAY OF CONCEIVING SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS.

It doesn't mean they have to legalize it: the free party, if legal, is no longer a free party, but that doesn't mean you can use the logic of emergency to make it a crime in itself, “a danger to public safety”.



SARAH

Sarah (she/her) lives in Switzerland. She moved out of Italy permanently when Meloni officially took over the government.

We begin the interview with her telling me:

“I’m not surprised that we’ve gotten to this point now, because there was no resistance to the advent of the Meloni government – for me we had already lost three years ago, when she took over. I simply decided to leave before the real mess. I thought: “I’m leaving my friends, but at least I can live my life freely.” Even the anti-rave decree and everything that comes with it, including the fact that it has now become law and is therefore no longer a hypothesis, I wouldn’t have expected anything different from a right-wing government. I don’t expect occupations to be protected, I don’t expect self-managed stuff to be protected, it’s a right-wing government, period”.

V: As a first question I would like to ask you how often you attended free parties in Italy.

S: Well, I used to participate quite often.

Actually, my musical culture also includes the underground club scene (especially in Turin between 2016 and 2022). At the same time, I also always went to free parties, I would say once or twice a month. Also because I was part of harm reduction projects, and doing that I often happened to participate in free parties as an operator on the field.

Photos courtesy of Sarah, taken at various free parties she attended.





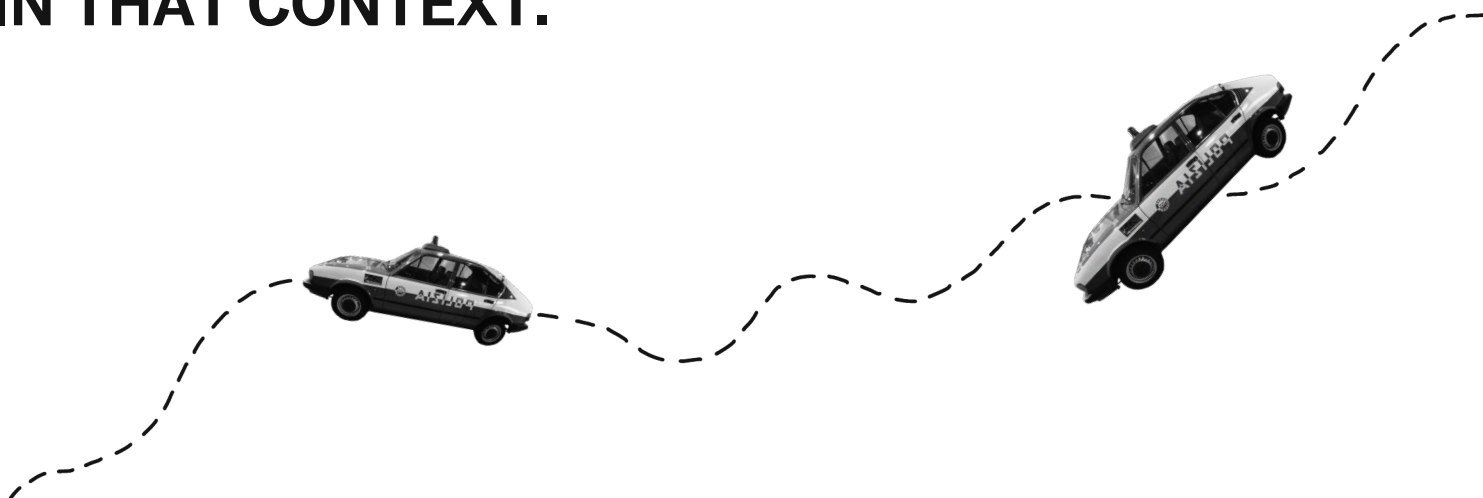
V: Did you do harm reduction within a collective?

S: Within the Neutravel project, which is the pilot harm reduction project in Turin, where we also did free counseling. There was also a psychological advice station (also free) for people who use substances. We had a permanent base, which then had to close with Meloni. Now we have reopened it, but on a political level it was a struggle.

V: How would you define free party?

S: The word I would use to define free parties is freedom. It's something I feel a lot there: I'm free to be who I am, without having to worry about anything. It's an environment that, even though it's particular in some ways, because unfortunately there are prejudices there too, is free. People can be who they are without having to follow pre-established patterns.

THEN AGAIN, I THINK THAT EACH ONE OF US HAS THEIR OWN DEFINITION OF THE THING, THERE IS NO DEFINITION EQUAL TO ANOTHER AND THIS IS ALSO THE BEAUTY OF IT, THAT EACH ONE CAN GIVE THEIR OWN MEANING TO THE EXPERIENCE THAT THEY LIVE IN THAT CONTEXT.



V: Are there any specific free parties or parties from specific collectives you often attended? If so, why?

S: Yes. There are friends and enemies also in the free party scene, but in my opinion it is very important, regardless of this, to choose the right parties, where you feel safe, where the organizers care about certain details (such as harm reduction). This, luckily or not, comes with experience. I am happy to support the scene when it comes to people with whom I share fundamental values. It is a bit what has been missing in recent years of the movement in Italy, having expressed values during the party. Now we have finally started to do it again, also thanks to the Smash Repression network.

V: Would you like to tell me through which channels you usually find out when there is a free party?

S: For the sake of protecting the movement I don't want to talk about the channels on which the news of a party is spread, but the "old school" method is definitely the flyer passed from hand to hand, which at the time was also the safest method of sharing. Today the concept of protecting information remains the same, only the means change.

V: Building on the topic of flyers, do you know people who do graphic design for free parties?

S: Since it's an underground field, normally the names of the artists who do the graphics are not mentioned, again for a question of self-protection. Lately, with the advent of →





→ techno in the clubs, unfortunately many flyers are done directly with artificial intelligence.

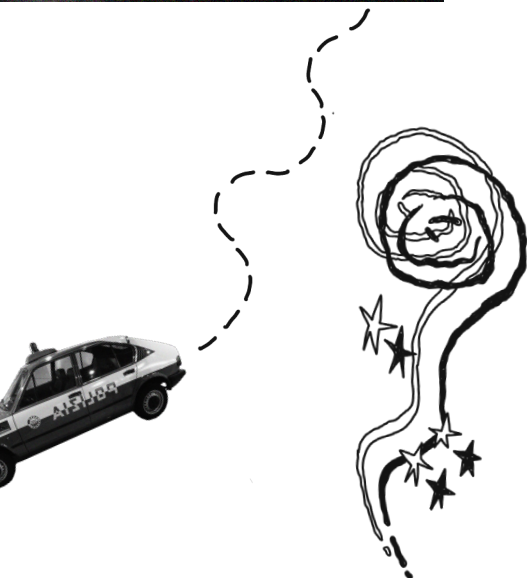
V: If you were to think of recurring symbols and images from the point of view of the visual communication of the free party, does anything come to mind?

S: Yes, mostly old school drawings in black and white with some trippy elements, for example spirals, alien-like characters... But these are not always very clear drawings, I find them very complex in terms of graphics compared to more mainstream club flyers. We as a community are very messy, and this shows on a graphic level too. The trip and music part, however, remains recurrent.

V: What drives you, and drove you, to choose the free party?

S: Actually, I don't think I chose it, I think it's something that sort of came to me. Also because in my area (I'm from Susa Valley) (*a/n: north-west Italy*), it's quite normal to party in the woods or at the river, you turn on two speakers and dance there. It's a culture that I've always found myself in, sometimes I ended up in free parties without being aware of it, since I was 14/15 years old. You start with small parties and then you realize that there's a movement behind it, from there I became more interested.

V: Since the introduction of the anti-rave decree, have you noticed any changes in the way free parties are organized, controlled and repressed?



S: For sure.

REPRESSION HAS ALWAYS EXISTED, BUT SINCE THE ANTI-RAVE DECREE IT HAS BECOME SYSTEMATIC AND JUSTIFIED. IF REPRESSION WAS POSSIBLE BEFORE, NOW THE LAW GIVES THE POLICE AN OFFICIAL PERMISSION TO IMPLEMENT IT.

The way of organizing free parties has changed. At the moment, organizing a free party in Italy is not easy. You have to be extremely careful, especially because in recent times there have been many high-conflict situations, especially in Turin, where in general the police are very mad. Obviously our approach has also changed, for a free party you risk going to jail for 4 to 6 years, something that was absolutely unthinkable before.

V: Have you (or people you know) ever faced legal consequences or felt threatened at a free party by the response of the state and specifically the police?

S: Now that I no longer live in Italy, I think I have managed to escape some stuff, let's put it that way. However, I have found myself in many situations of direct confrontation with the police, which unfortunately have also turned ugly: I have friends who ended up in the hospital (and not only at parties, but also at protests). So let's say that on the one hand it went well for me as far as potential charges are concerned, but it went badly for me on the other hand, because then I got beaten →

WE ARE
PISSED !!!



STOP, YOU
CANNOT PROTEST !!!



→ up with batons anyway. I don't know what is better and what worse, they are simply two different forms of repression.

Of course, paying for a trial for a free party is a different matter than having to directly confront the police and then everyone goes back home once it's over. In this regard, I would like to express my solidarity with all the people who are having troubles with the law, because it could be any of us.

V: Since you mentioned the parades: the decree was initially written differently, then they changed it to specifically target the free party. Despite this, what I heard from people in Italy is that even a legal party, if reported to the police, could still be cleared out. It seems to me that this law is being exploited to hit everything that the Government considers inconvenient.

S: Exactly, the anti-rave decree is not only against raves but it targets any kind of party, it targets housing occupations, it targets community centers, it targets protests. Essentially, any form of dissent that can be expressed not only by the party-goers but also by the anti-fascist movement as a form of protest is silenced in this way. Whether it's a free party or a march, it's always about saying no to something, even temporarily, but it's still a form of protest.

This is precisely the expression of fascism, isn't it? This attitude of "things are like this and you can't protest because if you do so you'll be repressed". It's definitely a law based on fear and terror.

Now I'm happy that there's at least a lot of response to the Security Decree. Besides, only the Government knows what kind of →

→ security the law refers to, probably only its own.

V: In your opinion, are free parties that express political messages more subject to a violent and harsher repression?

S: Actually, I don't think so. I don't think that repression depends on the content of the party, sometimes it depends on simple luck. For example, when multiple parties are happening simultaneously, two out of three might go unnoticed, and something can occur at the third. I don't think the two things are connected.

V: Do you feel like saying that free party culture has a political value? If so, why?

S: Yes, absolutely, especially with the fact that we managed to bring back those values into the parties.

AT A PARTY, AT A TAZ, FREEDOM IS EXPRESSED, BUT SO IS DISSENT: THE VERY ACT OF OCCUPYING A PLACE TO DANCE IS A POLITICAL ACT, OF PROTEST AND RESISTANCE.



Jacopo (no pronouns) is one of my dearest friends in Berlin: 28 years old, half Italian and half French, J has lived here since 2022. J works at the university as a lecturer in French studies and gender and feminist studies and in the meantime is doing a PhD.

V: How are you connected to the topic of free parties and the rave scene?

J: For the sake of my research I became very interested in the concepts of future and futurity so, working and doing research, I realized that the party is – in philosophical terms – a space in which the future is created. Being extemporaneous, with rules different from those of common society and created by a culture that is parallel and part of social otherness, it is a space in which you have the possibility of creating and putting into practice something utopian. In particular, I deal with queer studies, so the rave and free party scenes I was interested in are mainly queer. The first contact I had with this type of reality went through Paris in the 80s and 90s and New York in the 90s. In Paris it was more of a gay male context, while in NY it trans and female-appearing.

I started talking about the future by relating it to raves in particular in the context of the AIDS epidemic, within which queer people did not see a future and society also did not give them the possibility of seeing one (both in terms of social and legal recognition, and in terms of medical research: there was no cure yet, there was no PREP). For this reason most queer people did not think they would live past 20 or 30 years of age. Rave spaces were spaces where these people, and the queer →

STAYC





→ community in general, gave themselves the opportunity to be, and to be in the terms in which they wanted to be, different and against the impositions of heteronormative society.

V: So far we have talked about the French and American contexts. If we were to move to the free party scene in Italy, is there anything that comes to mind off the top of your head, related to the rave as a queer space?

J: Let's start from the fact that in terms of research I have not yet approached the study of the rave scene in Italy. As a personal experience, however, I have certainly been to free parties in Italy. In this regard, let's say that their structures in contexts such as Italy and in contexts such as Germany or France are very different. In Italy, in some ways, raves still remain an activity that is organized by niche groups, which belong to very specific categories of society. Raving is not a recreational activity that is transversally appreciated by the majority of the population (as for example in Germany, where the rave is integrated into the recreational part of German youth culture, or at least of German urban culture). In Italy, therefore, and at least in my experience, it is still the minorities who manage the groups that plan free parties. We are talking about queer minorities, but also about radical left-wing groups.

The raves I have done in Italy always had a cause behind them, for example the Alta Felicità in Susa Valley, where we were fighting against the creation of the TAV (a/n: *Treno Alta Velocità, the high-speed train*), which →

MOVE!!! WE
HAVE A TRAIN
TO BUILD!!



→ would ruin the ecosystem of the valley.

In my experience, people in Italy are not socialized to raves. In Germany or France, raving is an experience that has a social impact: I do something that fights capitalism, because I don't need to have an economic power to participate in this party, but I can participate because I want to and because the people planning it give me the opportunity to do so. Furthermore, obviously, it is also a dance experience, therefore physical, corporal, and outside the rules that can be those of a regular club. When I go to a club I can dance, but I still have social limits and cultural canons that force me to do it in a certain way – in a rave, I don't.

In France, Germany and in the US metropolises, the difference between “I go to a rave” and “I go to a club” has been very clear for years. In Italy, however, I don't know if this difference is so clear, if the average Italian person can distinguish between these two things.

In Italy, moreover, there are many stereotypes. If the average Italian person looked at me, for example, he would not immediately assume I go to raves. According to the stereotype, ravers are a specific type of people, who are often labeled as deviant and who therefore are expected to look in a certain way. In contrast, in Germany or France, if someone who visually fits the norms of capitalism and pop culture says, “I go raving on the weekend”, [...] no one is surprised. This is the difference that I feel can be found between the two contexts.

I also think that, in a certain sense, one thing that unites in both contexts the people →

Foto per gentile concessione di Jacopo.



HURRY!! TOWARDS
AOSTA VALLEY!!!

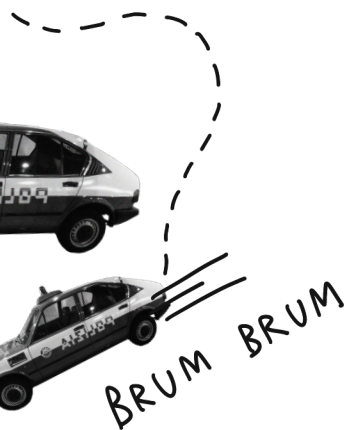


→ who go to raves and the people who create them – it may also be my theory – is the search to create something utopian, a new reality: this is why, in addition to the fact that raves remain a party that is often illegal and not up to standard (meaning that they don't pay the taxes that are imposed), raves are always hidden, and news of raves in Italy doesn't reach people as easily as they do in Germany. This difficulty in finding free parties in Italy, in my opinion, is comparable to the German or French door policy: if you're not part of that scene (for example, I'm not part of the Italian rave scene) you will have no idea how raves are structured in Italy, which are very different from how they are structured in Germany or France.

For example, I come from Aosta Valley and I know that raves are held there, but I found this out just now that I'm doing research on this topic: I never knew it before, and the Aosta Valley is extremely small

V: In relation to this, in the interview with Sarah (who comes from the valley bordering mine) I asked her how she got into the scene and she replied that Susa Valley is generally known for its free party scene: I had no idea! Obviously the fact that everything has to be communicated in a discreet way plays a role: graphic design for free parties is not graphic design for a party at Cocoricò in Riccione (*a/n: well-known club in Italy*), for example. Obviously the passing from hand to hand of paper flyers that are not traceable is a consequence of the political restrictions towards the scene.

J: Yes, and in my opinion this plays in favor of the fact that the free party remains a →



→ somewhat protected community:

HETERONORMATIVE SOCIETY CANNOT CAPITALISE ON FREE PARTIES IF IT DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO ACCESS THEM.

In my opinion this is the one thing that makes the difference between raves in Germany or France and raves in Italy. I have once been to a rave here in Germany comparable to an Italian free party: it was not advertised except through paper flyers, it took place in an occupied space in Berlin and supported Lützerath (*a/n: a hamlet in West Germany eradicated in 2023 to make way for an opencast coal mine*). So there was a purpose behind it and the context was extremely different from the classic Berlin context.

Another difference is that the Italian scene is somehow small and perpetually in dialogue. There is a sort of benevolence between the various collectives [...], they try to keep the dialogue open, which is something I don't really see in Berlin.

In Italy there is not yet the will to capitalize, perhaps because there is no possibility of doing so (otherwise it would have already happened) as much as here.

V: In my opinion, another thing that in Italy both the public opinion and the collective imagination still associate a lot with the free party scene is the consumption of substances, which is also a bit of a prerogative of how people see who goes to free parties (and a further reason to demonize them).



J: In my opinion, this says a lot about Italian education in general. Obviously in all contexts free time is the time when recreational substances are used (which can be alcohol or amphetamines) but, while these are not a taboo in Germany or France, in Italy substances are associated with a certain type of deviance that goes against traditional and traditionalist standards, that Italian self-righteousness. In the collective imagination, it is a certain social segment that takes drugs: sex workers, immigrants, queer people, or those in disadvantaged economic conditions. For the public, it is unthinkable that a middle-class Italian person could use substances.

OBVIOUSLY, SINCE THE RAVE IS THE CONTEXT IN WHICH DEVIANCE IS RELEGATED, AND ANYONE WHO USES SUBSTANCES - REGARDLESS OF ANYTHING ELSE - IS DEVIANT (BECAUSE SUBSTANCES, BEING A TABOO, ARE NOT TALKED ABOUT), THEN WE PUT EVERYTHING IN THE SAME PLACE.

This is also why in Italy substance use is so hidden, because it is neither accepted nor analyzed, and consequently harm reduction is also extremely limited.

Talking about a sober party in the Italian context is not possible. Frankly, we cannot talk about sobriety at all. Since it is not acceptable to take drugs in the first place, even trying to create a space where people are sober is impossible, because the fact that there are people who consume →

→ substances is not even taken into consideration.

It's definitely a context that needs to be studied, one that should be questioned – and that perhaps should also question itself. Though who knows if that's even possible.

V: If you had to give a definition to the term free party, what definition would you give? In the interviews I've conducted so far, I noticed that within the Italian context, people are generally more comfortable using the term free party rather than rave. What I also found interesting is that, whenever I brought up the topic with people unfamiliar with the free party scene there – with whom I used the word rave to help convey the idea – many people connotated it negatively, immediately associating it with the anti-rave decree and everything that followed.

J: (*a/n: continued from the glossary*) In Germany, in France, in general in contexts that are not the Italian one, we talk about raves when going to (and paying for) a club, which shows how much the rave itself has been capitalized. However, the reason why the word rave is used is because the rules that apply in free parties (such as, for example, “be excellent to each other”) also apply in a capitalized context.

In Italy, however, probably because the culture is still radical, the idea of calling a club rave would be impossible. These are two contexts that are still very separate.

V: Going back to the queer community, would you say that the community needs →

”
be excellent to each other”

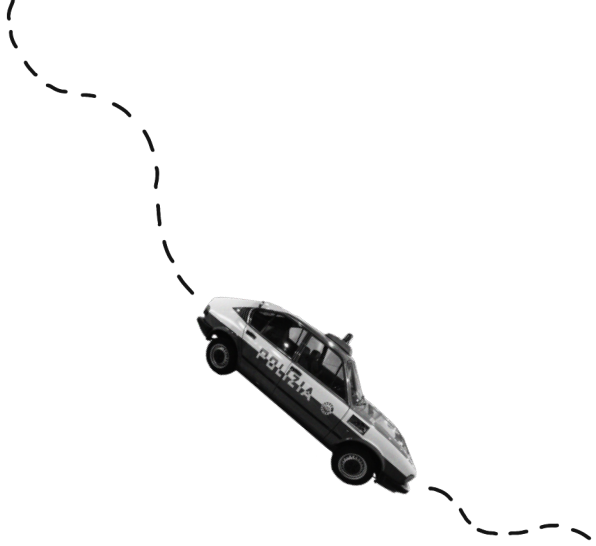
→ **the rave scene? What do they have in common?**

J: The rave scene and the queer community have everything in common. Basically, we are talking about subordinate entities that do not belong to the standard normative society. Both communities try to create a space for themselves in which they can be however they want to be, [...] without a power over their bodies that is instead present in the heteronormative society.

Now I am not talking about the Italian context, but about the French one above all, which was for me a bit like my second queer awakening. When I entered the rave context, I perceived my body in a way that I could never have perceived in any other context, because it is as if it really became mine. When I am Jacopo the lecturer, Jacopo the student, Jacopo who takes the subway, I have a power over my body that is exercised by the other people around me; if these are people who are normative within society, they will observe my body in a certain way, they will have expectations about how I use it in a certain context, about how I stand, walk, pose, use my hands. For example, it would be weird if I decided to go from my house to the supermarket dancing, people would stare at me, because a person is not expected to do something like that. Or it would be weird if I went to walk the dog and decided to only do somersaults while doing it, or to walk in my underwear down the street. There is a policy that is imposed on my body. Moreover, I say this as a white cis male, but all the other bodies (talking about the trans body, the queer body, the woman body), are bodies →



→ that are even more victims and objects of this policy. I'm not saying that this doesn't exist in the raving culture, but let's say that the extent to which it exists is extremely limited. There are no rules to follow, I can move my body as I want (as long as its use does not limit the use of other people's bodies), I can feel it in a context in which everyone is trying to do the same thing: create their own physicality and body-reality inside of that place.



IN MY OPINION, THE ACT OF DANCING IN A RAVE IS AN EXTREMELY EFFECTIVE MEDITATION PRACTICE.


V: Would you say it worked for you?

J: Yes, absolutely. [...] The non-capitalized rave is a world without aesthetic standards. In general, we all have aesthetic standards that have been attributed to us: by capitalism, by fashion, by something that certainly does not belong to rave culture. The raver has no expectations in seeing the other: seeing a person with a white t-shirt and green shorts and seeing a person dressed as a horse is exactly the same thing. You can be as you are and your body does not have to follow any kind of rule.

Let me explain: if I have a non-conforming body [...], the world will tell me: "conform! Use fashion as a tool to make your body become normative". This does not exist in a rave. I can do it if I want, but no one expects me to do it and no one is shocked if I don't. No one is shocked if I use fashion to highlight my non-conformity instead.


I don't want to fall into clichés by saying →






“difference is a value”, because difference is always valuable, but in rave it’s as if said difference would lose value. Now there’s this extremely heterocentric policy of “diversity, equity and inclusion” (which are words that were created by those who have the privilege of saying “I want to help the queer community”).

WITHIN THE RAVE COMMUNITY THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE, BECAUSE: DIFFERENT COMPARED TO WHAT? THERE IS NOTHING TO BE DIFFERENT FROM. [...]



For example, even pleasantries don’t exist at raves. There’s no discomfort in talking to a person, everyone is on the same level, there’s no hierarchy, there are no rich and poor, there are no ugly and beautiful. There will certainly be other categories, especially in contexts like Berlin where, in fact, everything is capitalized, but these are categories that are different from the categories with which we are used to reading the world.



Furthermore, the rave creates that space where people have the possibility to experience pleasure and sexuality freely. [...] Here in Berlin sex-positive parties are very widespread, in France as well: the pleasure of the rave is therefore not only a recreational pleasure, but it also has the possibility of being sexual without being stigmatized for it. So in a way if in the 60s and 70s there were sexual revolutions to depathologize homosexuality, raving – which gained power in the 80s – has the potential to become a political medium within which pleasure, sex →

→ and all their potential are destigmatized. The rave that made history, Woodstock, was extremely sexual, but it is not told as such: since it became something that America is famous for, it was not acceptable for it to be famous for something like this.

V: Returning to the Italian context, the fact that the Article 633-bis and the security law are an indication of a very concerning political situation is clear, but let's explain better why.

J: Besides the fact that contemporary Italian politics is extremely repressive [...] and does not allow for growth and development (which is, by the way, a social and natural process), these new laws demonstrate that in Italy, whenever there is a context where a potential arises for something that challenges the imposed dominant ideology, it is immediately suppressed.

Furthermore, the culture is not even given the possibility to evolve in the way it has evolved here (a/n: Berlin).

I think that in Berlin, Parisian or New York society, the fact that the rave scene has had the possibility to flourish has been like a medicine for society: [...] a healthier, more serious and effective discourse on the consumption of substances has been created, people have started to talk more about the care for the individual's body, the concept of awareness has been born... The latter is completely external and foreign to Italy, because the scene is not even being given the possibility to get to that point, whereas in Germany, France or America the idea of awareness (of your body and that →



→ of other people) was born in raves but then also spread to other contexts. [...] So the Article 633-bis precludes a whole series of basic social and cultural developments.



Furthermore, it is an attack on culture in itself. Although the average Italian person sees raves only as leisure time, they are not. These are spaces in which bridges are built, where the concepts of safety and boundaries are created and discussed about, where people are brought together:

RAVE IS A POLITICALLY POWERFUL SPACE AND IT IS SOMETHING THAT, IN MY OPINION, HAS BEEN SEEN BY THE ITALIAN POLITICAL CLASS AS A THREAT, AND FOR THIS REASON ATTACKED AND SUPPRESSED.

This was done in a context that for now in Italy is still niche, but this does not take away the fact that it is a precedent for which the same can happen with any type of cultural form that goes against the public opinion, or that has the potential to do so.



V: In Italy, in my opinion, the culture is still split into two very specific categories: we have the first-tier culture (so I go to a museum, I go to an exhibition, I go to an activity that is promoted by an institution), and then there is the second-tier culture, that is, leisure time for the sake of leisure time, within which we find, perhaps, raves. I believe that the political value that a rave has in Italy is different from that of a rave in Berlin because, as you said, raves in Berlin are capitalized, which is something that →

→ has not happened (yet) in Italy.

J: This is a question I ask myself very often, whether raves in Germany have lost their political value. In my opinion, giving value to pleasure is basically a political act. I think pleasure is important, but I have lived a life in which no one has ever taught me that. Giving yourself the opportunity to dedicate yourself to pleasure, which is not just the pleasure of a walk in the park but any type of pleasure (sexual, physical, external to your body, sober or not sober) is something very powerful that a person does, because it is a position taken within society.

I would say that raves in Berlin are still political spaces, but perhaps more on a personal and individual level, on how the subject in question places himself within the world. On the other hand in Italy raves have a political value on a more structural and schematic level: they create news that still has an effect and generates a debate. In Germany, or at least in Berlin, seeing people going to a rave is not news, but to you as an individual, I believe, it gives a sense of empowerment.

V: Is there something you'd like to add?

J: Don't be afraid to go to raves (and I'm talking to Italians). Don't be afraid to be curious. Have the courage to enjoy, *godete!*



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Rave on xx

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