Rave Culture – Freeparty or Protest?

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In this chapter we argue that rave culture can be classified as a form of protest; as a youth-oriented subculture or "tribe"[i] based around social ideas, music and art, raves emerged from the era of Thatcher's children, whose "cultural heroes came in the form of radical young entrepreneurs, who started up clubs and record labels, rather than the politicians and poets of yesteryear"[ii]. Furlong views raves as "a mix of hedonism, consumerism and escapism"[iii], a sanctuary away from education and work, in which participants are free from boundaries and controls, in an environment that involves active protest and consumption of drugs. In examining criteria that might shed light onto this discussion, we explore the narratives of rave organisers, and find elements of shared values, activities and motivations, and common processes as utilized by more conventional events organisers.

Having previously sidelined raves to the realms of 'unplanned events', Getz's typology now recognizes the existence of "events at the margins"[iv], that encompass elements of planning, but which might have an "anti-establishment"[v] flavour, instigated by "agitators… or social activists"[vi]. Whilst now acknowledging that protests involve some planning, Getz argues that there is "no real organisation or responsibility"[vii] for such events. In this research, we explore the role and contents of an event planning process for raves and freeparties, as evidenced by their organisers.

Historical origins of raves

Whilst the role of popular music in social protest is well-recognized, Peddie[viii] debates Lahusen's assumption that pop music in and of itself "is inherently oppositional"[ix], but recognizes "that popular music does, at times, define itself through opposition"[x]. In this study, it is argued that rave culture can be classified as a form of protest. In the late 1980s, raves known as "warehouse parties"[xi] were met by police control and confiscation of PA equipment, sometimes resulting in full-scale riots and, on one occasion, "the arrest of 836 people at a single party"[xii].

In part, a response to the "yuppie lifestyle and laissez-faire economics"[xiii] of Thatcherism and Reaganism[xiv], raves emerged from and for the youth of this era, youth influenced by a spirit of entrepreneurialism, to develop their own alternative entertainment industry[xv]. These events led to the development of a youth-oriented subculture or "tribe"[xvi], originally based around a combination of social and political ideas, and music. The "grassroots organized, anti-establishment"[xvii] rave, in which "drug use is portrayed as the defining characteristic"[xviii], is examined here through the lens of protest, in 2014's political environment, as compared to its

Thatcher-era origins, when most rave attendees today might have been toddlers, or even, yet unborn.

Raves? Or freeparties?

Having been treated historically as forms of symbolic protest, raves have evolved into what are now known as 'freeparties', which still take place on a weekly basis. The former term 'rave', with its negative connotations, is shunned by organisers, who prefer the term 'freeparty', defined by one organiser as: "A gathering of like-minded people. An all-night or longer event where people go to dance, socialize and have fun in an uninhibited way", in what they call a "temporary autonomous zone", a reference to Bey's poetic phrase that declines to be defined, yet is "understood without difficulty… understood in action"[xix]. The perception that freeparty organisers aim to project is that these events are parties of freedom, where attendees are free to have fun, away from the constraints of everyday life, in the context of what is viewed as a restrictive and controlling society.

Primary Research – Freeparty organisers

This research has been undertaken through in-depth interviews with organisers of freeparties. These organisers adhere to perceptions of a freeparty as a sanctuary, away from constraints and restrictions, yet in doing so, they appear to create their own constraints and restrictions. Some of these restrictions might be made apparent through the development of a manifesto, that states their shared organisational values, their rationale for freeparties, and instructions for behaviour. These rules for freeparties define acceptable behaviour, imposing their own societal values, some of which could be viewed as "restrictive and controlling", which in some instances exceed that of 'normal' society.

In addition, the interviewers have identified organisations that run politically-related freeparties, including a freeparty following the death of a prominent political figure. The publicity for this event announced the organisers' interpretation of the political standpoint that this figure embodied, compared to their own ideals and values, which led to a decision to celebrate this death. The event itself was popular, and held in a countryside location. As with any rave, the invitation text from the organisers provided a phone number and instructions which should only be passed on to trusted and known people; these instructions, grounded in secrecy, instituted a high level of accreditation. Further instructions included warnings against the use of any social media, and to delete the text immediately.

However, once the event was over, a media frenzy began. As the hashtag on Twitter fed into Facebook and Instagram, the event reached the local press and was then picked up by a national

newspaper, and a peaceful event with Police co-operation was characterised by news media as wanton destruction. Meanwhile, the pictures of the freeparty organisation's successful post-event cleanup operation found themselves copied from the organisers' own website and rebranded with a newspaper's copyright, with headlines accusing organisers of damaging a beauty spot which would incur a costly cleaning operation. It was notable that the same article quoted an organiser confirming that litter had been bagged up and removed by them, with a promise to return the site to its original state. In this report it was evident that the press showed bias towards the event, positioning it negatively, within their definition of a rave. The photographs posted on the newspaper's website showed refuse that had been collected and bagged by individuals attending the freeparty. On the organisers' website, photographic evidence shows that at the end of each event, all rubbish is collected and removed. Such media response to an event underlines Tepper's observed construction of "a 'cultural frame' that links an activity… to a lifestyle, a category of people, and a social problem, thereby constructing notions of deviance and harm in the public's imagination"[xx]. Meanwhile, Martin argues that, "Raving, as a worldwide phenomenon, does pose a significant challenge to many aspects of dominant western values"[xxi]

Legal and Regulatory Aspects of Planning and Management of Raves as Events

With limited academic research and literature on the planning and management of raves from an events management perspective, contextualising even the fundamentals of the Event Planning Process and key areas of Health and Safety when planning, managing and implementing raves, becomes almost paradoxical[xxii]. Research into the seemingly spontaneous, instantaneous and secretive underground world of the implementation of rave events not only challenges the fundamental conventions of events management itself, but also, by extension, challenges the conventions of the management of the traditional event space. We have sought to focus on the seemingly unplanned[xxiii] nature of the rave event and aim to clarify the processes that support this unusual event type, best described as an anti-commercial, utopian, egalitarian, apolitical escape[xxiv]. It is noteworthy that even attempting to define a rave is problematic, as trying to normalise the concept of a rave itself can become exclusionary and in some sense, an oxymoron; that is, attempting to provide a definition for the undefinable. Attempts to provide academic definitions for a rave range from an "event space where people dance to electronic music"[xxv] to the very basic definition of "a party"[xxvi]. Whilst sizes of raves range from 30-40 people, up to 30,000 attendees, they are capable of attracting a diverse demographic, transcending class, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation. Characterised by a sense of escapism and an almost "evangelical passion for the empathogenics"[xxvii], where patterns of consumption include drugs rather than alcohol, and a mixture of house, reggae, ska, garage, grime, dub, and techno music. Most ravers would argue that

they share a sense of community which, according to Presdee, stems from the creation of a sense of "hyperreality"[xxviii], that defines the rave space as an area devoid of a fixed authenticity (a free space) and is empty of authority. Thornton notes that the location or event space itself, provides a key context for legality and the un-regulation and lack of official or regulatory approval provides the appeal and a sense of "forbidden and unpredictable sense of place"[xxix], for the ravers. This seemingly unpredictable and forbidden space provides the context of the perceived loose legal parameters for operational and logistical elements of the rave event. In this context, it is necessary to define the regulatory framework within which legal events are required to conform, and to establish to what extent raves, as events, adhere to such frameworks.

Premises Licences and Temporary Event Notices are key to establishing a legal framework for operating safe events. The Health and Safety Act 1974[xxx] provides the foundation and requirements for safe events, within Section 2 (which alludes to a duty of care towards anyone affected by the execution of the work itself). Derivative regulations to support the implementation of the law, ranging from the Six-Pack Regulations[xxxi] and beyond, provide an operational framework for core aspects of the implementation of the event.

The Health and Safety Executive[xxxii] also provide extensive guidance documents in the form of The Purple, Green, Red and Yellow Safety Guides, along with other approved Codes of Practice to supplement and provide support for operating within the context of the law. Such codes exist in order to enable the provision of a safe and healthy environment, not only for the event attendees, but also anyone else involved in the implementation of the event itself, such as employees, sub-contractors and volunteers.

The Licensing Act 2003[xxxiii] requires that prior to the staging of any event, organisers apply for either a Premises Licence or Temporary Event Notice. Applications for either of these licences require that the licence applicant provide key information in terms of the size and date of event, event location and venue. There are four key areas, known as the Licensing Objectives, which include:

- the prevention of crime and disorder
- public safety
- the prevention of public nuisance
- the protection of children from harm[xxxiv].

Enforcement agencies and licence holders also have a duty to do all that is reasonably practicable in reducing and preventing crime and disorder in their area under the following legislation:

- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006

- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003

- Health Act 2006

- Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005

The essential purpose of a licence holder taking responsibility under these objectives, is to regulate behaviour on their premises that have access to licensable activities. The licence holder can only seek to manage the behaviour of customers inside and in the immediate vicinity around their premises as they seek to enter or leave, but beyond that point, they do not have any control.

Despite a perception that raves are only subversive because they are an illegal trespass (under The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994[xxxv]), Alwakeel argues that, "a specific political currency lies precisely in its very persistence in the face of regulation"[xxxvi]. We would argue that the protest aspect of raves is more than an illegal trespass, as attendees physically embody subversive action, and the media coverage from such events provides evidence that this continues to be the case.

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act also banned the playing of music during the night. In relation to raves, important parts of the Act include: Sections 61 and 62 (trespassers); Section 63, 64 and 65 (raves); and Sections 66 and 67 (seizure of equipment). Sections 63 to 65 of the Criminal Justice Act are aimed at preventing and stopping raves. Section 63-1(b) states "music includes sounds wholly or predominantly characterized by the emission of repetitive beats"[xxxvii]. The Act enables the police to seize equipment being used, and empowers them to stop people within a five-mile radius. If a police demand is ignored and people do not leave, it could result in three months' imprisonment for organisers, as well as a £2,500 fine[xxxviii].

Participant and Organiser Motivation

If raves and free parties are taken as those dance events that exist outside of the licencing and legal spheres, then it is important to understand why both organisers and attendees take risks, both safety and legal, to participate, when legal alternatives exist in abundance. Certainly from the perspective of the production available at legal events, dance events provide more extensive lighting, special effects, visuals and facilities than those that are covertly organised. As a result, it is likely that the meaning and motivations associated with attendance will differ, with Martin[xxxix] identifying two key areas of thought, based around resistance to the position individuals and subcultures have in society on the one hand, and a postmodern stance that there is no defined meaning and that behaviour is "nothing but style"[xl]. Further to these stances, there are the key concepts of community and freedom, in which the freeparty gives the space in which attendees can express alternative behaviours and ideologies, in an environment supported by others, without interference from corporate interest or judgemental individuals[xli].

Obviously there are many reasons why raves and free parties are organised. At one extreme, illegal sound systems and parties form part of events related to wider protest movements such as Occupy, anti-G8 and Reclaim the Streets. For example anti-G8 protests in Germany 2007 included the Resistance Art Festival whose stated aim was "to offer people a place to rest and to find a new energy to go back to the barricades"[xlii], whilst sound systems were set up in Piccadilly Circus in December 2011 as part of the Occupy Everywhere day of action[xliii]. Carmo calls such events the 'Protestival'[xliv], and highlights the importance of the usually non-violent, creative behaviour rooted in everyday activities, such as dance, as a means of retaking urban spaces and "subverting and liberating them from their conventional uses"[xlv]. Carmo also cites Bey's[xlvi] 'Temporary Autonomous Zones' with the freeparty a physical manifestation of free space in which political and social norms are free to be challenged.

This desire for free spaces goes beyond the direct protest and confrontation, and can be found in both legal and illegal events. The festival has traditionally been a source of free space[xlvii], but over time, for some, the experience of organised events has become more commercialised and formulaic[xlviii]. In the UK in the last 50 years there has been a trajectory from commercial events such as the 1970 Isle of Wight festival, which was criticised by some as against the prevailing spirit of the time for its 'free music', through a growth of free festivals in the 1970s and 1980s, to the commercial festivals of the last 20 years. Anderton[xlix] argues that the politicisation of free festivals in the 1980s, alongside the right-wing moral panic when the movement coalesced with the new rave scene in the late 1980s / early 1990s, led directly to the Criminal Justice Act 1994. This Act in turn, made promoters more accountable and thus required major additional funding to ensure legality, leading to the commercialisation of such events. As a result the free spaces and behaviour they promise may still be invoked by legal festivals, but in many ways legal festivals are limited, and it is into this gap that freeparty organisers have leapt. In addition, the sanitisation of the festival experience has attracted a great many new attendees, for whom the new-found security in the ordered environment of the legal festival is a positive, and it is the presence of these less adventurous individuals which have driven away those seeking a greater sense of difference[l].

Free space is, therefore, a place in which to escape the commercialisation and conformity of legalised parties, and to be surrounded by people sharing similar attitudes to freedom. As a result, a liminal space is created in which existing preconceptions of personality, behaviour and legality can be explored[li]. Indeed for some, the experience is seen as a spiritual one[lii]. However, many legal club and festival experiences, especially in smaller and more underground sub-genre specific events, give the opportunity for free expression and illegal behaviour, such as recreational drug-taking, which is similar to the freeparty experience. The question, then, is how different are legal

events from freeparties? And is there something else, in addition to the freedom created by the liminal space of the freeparty?

Martin[liii] identifies the nature of resistance in rave attendees in that the very act of taking that step into a space created outside the accepted framework of society is a major part of the appeal. By taking oneself outside of legal controls and society acceptance, there is a personal step towards free expression, and one which is at the limit of possible experience not achievable in legal club surroundings. In addition, the very nature of the spaces used, being temporary, means that each experience is unique and unknown[liv].

It may be that this unknown quality will attract attendees whose primary motivation is thrill seeking, subcultural capital or cool hunting[lv], rather than the freedom as discussed before. As a result, the basic motivation of attendees is a concern for those staging the event, as confrontations between those of different intrinsic motivations may well impact on the freedom and free space which was the original intention of the event. As such, control of information, and accreditation by direct invitation are key to ensuring the right atmosphere[lvi].

Sacred Space

Another lens through which we explore this narrative, is by examining the concept of sacred space under criteria proposed by Ostwalt, who declared that "holiness is the otherness of place – powerful, seductive, and challenging to human being" [lvii]. For those who attend raves, the place takes on a special meaning, and attendees report that they get "lost in the music", that they lose all "concept of time", and are filled with a "euphoric" feeling[lviii].

Sacred spaces are seen as "dangerous and provocative"[lix], where it is possible to apply Grimes' concept of "ritual partitions" as "abstract ideas or mental images"[lx] that might be found in woodlands, as well as physical barriers, such as those provided by the walls of empty warehouses or underground bunkers. For freeparties, the danger lies in the likelihood of police intervention, as well as in physical activities such as the 'wall of death' or 'moshpits', and the consequences of illegal drug use. Whether "a temporal utopia or spatial, sacred places tend to attract like-minded individuals" in the search for a "utopian element" [lxi]. Individuals who attended freeparties said they even experienced collective euphoria[lxii].

The location is created to be sacred and "foundational"[lxiii]. A freeparty can be compared to a place of religious worship, a space for individuals to gather communally. Some people perceive freeparties as a "spiritual"[lxiv] gathering, where participants may actively demonstrate their beliefs when congregated. Just as sacred places "assume and promote a participatory element"[lxv] this experience is also found in freeparties. Whether places are sacralised by actions (according to Grimes[lxvi]), or whether they act as sacred in and of themselves (Jonathan Z. Smith[lxvii]), the

question arises as to whether spaces such as freeparty locations become sacred to attendees through the activities that take place within them[lxviii], or through the people attending the raves?

Rave Organisers' Narratives

The individuals interviewed belong to a range of organisations that plan and deliver events which they describe as 'freeparties'; they "never use the word 'raves'", viewing a 'freeparty' as "an event that is innately political", although some freeparties might also have an explicitly political theme. This change in terminology results from the desire to distance the organisers and their events, not only from past negative connotations associated with raves (still held by those in the judicial system and the media), but also because they argue that raves have evolved into brands and legal clubnights, commercialised and "homogenised" within today's entertainments industry, part of a "bingeing culture" in which people are "essentially rotting themselves from the inside". Such heavy criticism of the current culture of the legal night-time economy highlights their distance in terms of values and motivations, as they challenge the conformity of providers of mainstream festivals and clubnights, partly on the basis of commercialisation, as well as with a sense of morality, in rejecting the norm:

> *"Going into town with all the bouncers, with all the drunk people, with all the girls with skirts up to here, I find that far more immoral than what we do. You know, what we do actually has a sense of community."*

In establishing the motivations of freeparty organisers, their values are very much to the fore, with the aim of "showcasing that embracing the principles of mutual aid and solidarity can have tremendous and real societal impact". Their events are literally free to attendees, i.e. no charge is made to participants, although some organisers will send out a bucket for donations to cover their costs (which are not insignificant, such as fuel for generators, or the inevitable "collateral damage" to their own sound systems), whilst others may provide cups of tea or bottles of water for a small charge. The purpose of the freeparty is to provide an environment in which people can be 'free' to act as they will, with

> *"freedom to conduct yourself in a reasonably hedonistic manner, but also an attitude of self-policing; this is increasingly prevalent, or else it's not sustainable, there would be no event. It's not a 'free-for-all', it's a 'look out for everybody'!!"*

The organisers' use of language implies that any hedonism is controlled within specific performance parameters, which is a contradiction, in that the experience is not free of structure, nor of free will, but it operates within implied organisational boundaries, which delineate a caring community with enforced rules and codes of acceptable behaviour, in stark contrast to many of the realities of Saturday night club and street culture. The organisers recognize that these illegal

events provide a liminal space in which a "sense of mass euphoria is cultivated, which can lead people to act irrationally, or out of societal norms." And yet, at the end of the freeparty, when the sun nudges its way over the horizon, party-goers will awake to a surprise, meticulously planned by the organisers, when they find themselves "on a beach, or... in the woods, or... looking over a massive reservoir. It has to be pretty, it has to be 'fluffy', it sets the vibe".

The freeparty collaborative organisations often have explicit statements of intent, expressing their values and motivations:

> "to remind people that actually we have their best interests at heart, but specifically that it's not a profiteering or drug-based exercise, it's a social enterprise. And that the people involved are principled people, and that the people who propagate it are principled."

Such value-laden views are common across all the organisations we encountered, engendering an environment in which attendees are encouraged to explore new concepts, with an explicitly educational purpose, with or without a political connection. Even those freeparty organisers who self-identify as "fluffy" rather than explicitly "political", aim to provide an alternative to the values experienced in town and city centres every Friday and Saturday night.

From our interviews, we identified two types of freeparty organisers: those who work professionally in events, usually experienced in event production or event tech roles, and those with a full time day-job, not in events, but who are experienced enthusiasts for whom running freeparties is a serious and highly-treasured hobby. In many ways, this reflects the reality of events delivery generally, with a split between those who are professionals doing a job, and those whose jobs or other interests cause them to choose or to have to run events.

Freeparty organisers' initial motivations however, are shared, aiming for excitement, mental and emotional stimulation, and "adrenalin". In contrast, whilst attendees are likely to go to freeparties for the excitement, the organisers perceive that many attendees do not share their deeper values, recognizing that whilst they may want to attract people "like us", their events (some more than others) may also attract "wrong-uns" and the very young, excluded from the legal events scene by age restrictions. All the organisations we encountered have in place strict controls on those connected with them, using social media platforms to accept and reject prospective freeparty attendees. The smaller the contact list, the more controls there are in place, and the more likely the organisers are to reject applications they deem unsuitable. For example, the number of shared contacts with the applicant and the organisation may be helpful in enabling an aspiring member, but equally, who those shared contacts are, will have a greater influence on their acceptability for accreditation, and in enabling organisers to maintain a balance of people who are known and trusted to receive information about an upcoming event. There is a level of secrecy about the

profiles of these organisations on social media sites; indeed it was commented that the most obvious and explicit 'rave' organisations online are amongst the least likely to have any organisational part to play in the running of such events, and in some cases, even in attending them. Accreditation is, therefore, a key activity within the event planning process that takes place prior to the event. Interviewees spoke of receiving a minimum of 50-60 requests to join their social media profiles each week. The age profile of organisers is largely reflected in the age profile of their own freeparty attendees, with some notable exceptions, and these exceptional events are generally much bigger (with thousands of attendees rather than hundreds), with many more attendees in younger age groups, whilst the average age of attendees at smaller freeparties might be over 30, and include people in their 50s and 60s.

Asked about their event planning processes, it was notable that those involved in events on a professional level take a more structured approach, including keeping detailed minutes of planning meetings. A key requirement of successful negotiations with police onsite is the ability to communicate and explain event planning processes, especially regarding health and safety. This aspect of health and safety was of paramount importance to all the groups interviewed, and all demonstrated in-depth knowledge of legal and regulatory frameworks and requirements, able to quote specifics. Again this is in contrast to many organisers of traditional events, and is perhaps because, having brushed up against the law, freeparty organisers know to their cost what is required.

Through our discussions about the roles undertaken at their events, we have identified a typology of core organisational roles for freeparty organisers onsite:

- *The Problem Solver-Negotiator*: a troubleshooter who spends their time searching out problems and issues to resolve, also takes responsibility for negotiating with police. May also play the roles of peace-keeper, facilitator and mediator. A diplomat, seen by some as the '*Schmoozer'*.

- *The Soundboy-DJ*: usually male, responsible for ensuring the sound system is up and running as quickly as possible once the team arrives onsite, enjoys playing with technical equipment before, during and after the event. In smaller organisations will also be the DJ, keeping the sound system alive until the party ends.

- *The Welfare Angel*: usually female, offering tea and sympathy, compassion and care for those who are unable to care for themselves – the '*fluffy'* ones.

- *The Creative-Designer*: whether installing lighting in trees or decorating the site with fairy lights and signage, responsible for setting the 'vibe', and enhancing the atmosphere.

- *The Volunteer*: not a core member of the crew, but ready to don a hi-vis jacket in order to contribute to the wider objectives of the freeparty, whether organising the 'Wall of Death' or physically defending the party from uninvited and unwelcome guests.

These roles are common to all the organisations we met, although the smaller the organisation, the more likely an individual is to undertake more than one role.

Venue Search is another key element of the event planning process that plays a vital role in the success of freeparties. In the past, many parties were held inside, in buildings accessed via illegal means, resulting in some organisers being charged with burglary. Another limitation of holding indoor events arises from security concerns. According to one organiser, they moved to holding freeparties outdoors, because:

> *"a paramount concern is public safety, which we generally found in inner city indoor venues they are genuinely a lot more dangerous, because you can light up large outdoor spaces. The term we use is: "leaving no dark spaces for dark shit to happen", because if you have dark corners, bad things can happen in it… and lighting up a whole warehouse can be tricky. There was an event once in a 75,000sq ft warehouse… in an industrial area… and that's an immensely large area to keep well-lit and well-safe. Whereas outdoors you've got the contributing factor of natural lights, and large floodlights can be put up trees and generally larger areas can be lit up quite well."*

The move to outdoor venues prompted a different range of criteria for venue selection:

- Accessibility: In order to assemble a large number of people at short notice, the location needs to be a large site that is easily accessible; however, to restrict numbers of uninvited people, the location also needs to be hidden. Whilst some organisers we spoke to select their venue based on proximity to public transport, others prefer a more out of the way location, creating,

> *"a balance between easily accessible, to get the most number of people in as short a time as possible to create a sustainable atmosphere where the Police can't shut it down easily, to allow as many people to access it as possible, but also creating a barrier in that it should be inaccessible to the general public, and not particularly bother them".*

- Distance from neighbours: Sound travels across countryside for miles, and causes disturbances that are taken into account by local authorities and organisers of legal festivals. Care is taken to select a location that as far as possible has "no residential premises nearby", so that partygoers will not appear "too obnoxious in creating residential noise pollution issues".

- Car-parking: Because the venue selected is away from causing noise disturbance to neighbours, the larger the freeparty, the more car-parking space required, because "if it is in the middle of nowhere the only way of getting there is by car". Usually, freeparty attendees will car-share, putting into practice the organisers' principled approach to sustainability.

- Environment: The surprise element that transforms the end of the party:

> *"everybody turned up when it was dark, and it was just a concrete car park, but when they woke up in the morning there were hundreds of people sat in the dunes, surrounded by dunes and they didn't know it – until the sun came up".*

Setting the scene for the end of the event is an important feature of the venue selection process, adding to the anticipation of organisers and repeat attendees.

The importance of each of these criteria may vary from one organiser to another, depending on preference, and the size of the event. However, the move from indoor to outdoor venues means that the weather plays an important part in the timing of parties, notably moving freeparties into the summer, but even then, taking account of temperature fluctuations, ensuring that,

> *"it's warm enough so people don't get cold and ill. Environmental conditions are really important – it needs to be **warm**. We have certainly put off events to the detriment of our professional reputation, based on people could get rained on and get ill. You don't want people to get hypothermia, or get ill".*

In their contact with police, organisers observed that the initial approach by the police set the tone for each encounter, noting that an aggressive police manner would usually result in the early closure of the freeparty, sometimes with confiscation of rigs and vehicles. Perceived inexperience and youth of police officers were seen as detrimental factors in such meetings, leading to aggressive behaviour, countered by organisers with cups of tea and well-practiced negotiation skills. In contrast, organisers recounted many more positive examples of responding to police arrival onsite, including having "had police dancing on my dance floor", and even developing,

> *"a certain understanding now… the local police are like 'oh it's these guys'. You know they come do their thing, tidy up, they're courteous and respectful and they are off".*

The range of responses from police varied from positive encouragement, as organisers "wander down, have a chat with them and invite them up", offering cups of tea, to police deception, arrests and occasionally, prosecution.

So, what of Getz's[lxix] assertions regarding the level of planning for such events? Each freeparty organisation had identified and communicated clear purpose to their events, fitting with Getz's stipulation, with objectives that were more deeply considered and held than those of many

professional managers of traditional events. Freeparty organisers have a programme for the event, clearly seeking to create an 'experience' – again, having given much thought and planning to choosing the venue, and developing the style, structure and content of the event. The level of controls imposed by freeparty organisers not only on methods of communication and accreditation, but also on permissible behaviour onsite, are in many respects much more strict than those used in traditional planned events. Getz's final criteria is that event producers held accountable as individuals; our research concludes that many freeparty organisers have had their equipment impounded, some have been arrested and even charged with a range of offenses, demonstrating a higher level of accountability than would be observed in legal events.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research identifies the renaming of "raves" to free parties as an effort to move away from the negative connotations associated with rave culture. The language of freeparty attempts to distance and differentiate itself from rave culture. Meanwhile, mainstream commercialized festivals and events in the night-time economy now reflect the original rave concept. For example, within the current context of legal mainstream commercial events, evidence suggests that empathogenics and hallucinogenics play a key role, combined with high levels of alcohol consumption, which is not always consistent with the freeparty ethos.

Getz[lxx] notes that "events at the margin" do not appear to follow any formal event planning process. Our research suggests that rather than following a traditional format for event management, freeparty organizers have developed a complex system of processes, catering to shorter timelines. With less time for contingency planning, health and safety planning and attendee communication, the impacts of these aspects on the critical path are key features of the freeparty planning process.

We conclude that Getz's assumption that there is no organisational responsibility is inaccurate, as the organisational structures we have identified (unlike a more formalized event management structure), takes a decentralized collaborative approach, with no single event manager identified. Lines of responsibility include organisational responsibility from the planning team, as well as community and collective responsibility that all attendees have towards each other. This feature is not as explicit within the formalized event context. Team roles are allocated according to skill sets with the identification of roles such as the "problem solver" responsible for logistical elements and health and safety issues, "Soundboy DJ" the entertainment provider, "Welfare angel", welfare management, food and beverage, responsible for first aid and emergency responses as well as attendee wellbeing. The "Schmoozer", often assigned to interact with local authorities while the

event is live, takes police on site visits, and is the main point of contact for non-attendees on site, and also serves as the mediator within and amongst the wider event team.

The objectives and motivations of attendees differ from those of organisers, although it was observed that many freeparties served as political protests, which was a greater motivation for organisers than for attendees. It was evident that other motivations included protests against certain elements within the societal framework, such as the pursuit of an alternative lifestyle, involvement in subcultural activity, as well as wishing to engage in what is perceived as anti-establishment activities. Key concepts and philosophies within the freeparty community include the freedom of ideas and the 'Protestival' nature of such events.

Despite the accurate perception that raves operate outside the formalized legal framework, the freeparty institutes high levels of health and safety and security, with these elements forming key logistical considerations both in venue selection and event implementation. Risk assessments are conducted, with hazard identification and risk assessment and mitigation forming core elements of the event management process. The use of in-house volunteer stewards and security ensures that acceptable levels of behaviour are enforced, and inappropriate behaviour results in ejection from the event, reinforcing the philosophy of mutual aid, safety and self-policing.

If sacred space is deemed as "dangerous and provocative"[lxxi], a clear area of danger for this type of event is more externally-focused, on police intervention and ensuring that the "wrong-uns", or non-members, do not gain access to the event. Another key criteria for maintaining this sacred space is to ensure that there is no violence or anti-social behaviour. This is clearly evidenced in codes of behaviour or organisational manifestos. High levels of accreditation and very strict control of access to the freeparty event minimizes the perceived danger of the event. Although there is an encouragement for hedonistic behaviour, there is clear evidence that codes and parameters of behaviour are enforced and the paradox of definite levels of control exist within this 'free space' environment.

The planning process of events such as freeparties is questioned by some academics; however, from our research, it is clear that the event planning process is evident. A key area of difference is the critical path of the event, which creates a much shorter timeline for the planning, co-ordination and implementation process. Shared with a formal events context, aspects such as venue search and selection, health and safety issues, entertainment and logistical elements are all clearly part of the freeparty planning process, with aspects such as security clearance or accreditation being carefully managed as a priority. Marketing the event and attendee communication become critical to the success of the event in establishing a viable number of attendees prior to the possible arrival of police. Police intervention can include termination of the freeparty, based on a manageable

numbers of attendees leaving the freeparty, thereby causing police to assess the risk cost of terminating the event versus allowing it to continue. The rapport built between the organisers and the potential impact on the local community and the police can also influence such decisions.

Overall, it is clear that the common perception of the rave – now freeparty – can be reframed within a context of high levels of planning and organisation, with many elements of event organisation being implemented at equal if not higher levels than their legal counterparts. With the added complexity of operating within significantly shorter timelines, it is evident that the freeparty event itself meets all the specific characteristics of a formal event planning process.

Freeparty organisers might engage in this activity to meet a variety of political objectives – whether linked to explicitly political themes, or through implicit anti-capitalist or social enterprise values and principles. As to whether freeparties are free, whilst attendees are not required to contribute financially to gain entry, in terms of the freedom to participate in hedonistic behaviour, very specific boundaries exist to facilitate control within the party itself. Whilst embodying subversion and disdaining official approval, in creating value-driven communities that care, freeparty organisers demonstrate a sense of responsibility that reaches beyond that of many conventional event organisers – a political act in itself.

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