

# A.1.2. Nightlife in Italy

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## STATE OF THE ART

### Introduction

When writing about nightlife in Italy, generalizations should be avoided because the country is extremely heterogeneous for what concerns typical nightlife: the different traditions, trends and nightlife activities vary according to the particular geographic location, and in relation to the season of the year (Pallaver, Rizzi, 2011). Moreover, the social context deeply influences the trends and the way of living nightlife.

Until a few years ago, the common trait of Italian nightlife could have been the presence of music. In fact, a feature in common with all the settings of recreational consumption could have been that most of the time the setting was a place where people could dance or have something to do with dancing (as confirmed by the terms 'pre- or post-disco' used by these recreational settings). However, in the last few years, the musical element no longer plays the key role it used to have until a decade ago when describing the types of nightlife settings. Especially in some areas of Northern Italy, it is now quite common to have an aperitif, which could be considered a sort of prelude to a typical night out. Often, drinks are offered with snacks or appetizers: «In order to keep up with the high demand, bars offer a successful combination of drinks and free food to beat their competitors. Anything from salty snacks to veritable meals can be included at a lower price along with a large order of drinks. 'Aperitif-time' has thus become an important source of income for bar-restaurant owners, who continue to expand their offers and make sure their activity never slows down during the week, attracting more clients. The combination of drinks and hefty snacks typically replaces dinner time so that people can enjoy their evenings without a stopover at home» (Ibidem, p. 42). Even if aperitifs are quite cheap, since free food is offered together with a drink, the youth find it even more convenient to buy and alcoholic drink in a supermarket and prepare their own cocktails either in one of their friend's home, in a park or in a public square.

After the aperitif (and eventually dinner), people spend all evening in a pub, wine bar or café, and then usually go to the main event of the night between midnight and 1.00 a.m. So, the preferred settings to spend the evening are:

- Wine bars: these are places where many youth and young adults go. It is an ideal place for an aperitif or to conclude an evening after dinner. Despite the name of this place, all types of non-alcoholic and alcoholic drinks are served (wine, beer, cocktails, etc.). There is a balanced number men and women, and these places are usually open from 6.00pm to 02.00am. Often, there is some music, or some evenings there is a DJ or live music.
- Pubs: these attract mainly the younger population, both males and females. Here, the most common drink is beer, often served with some food (pizza, French fries, etc.). This is where the youth spend their evenings, before going to the disco or a party, especially on Saturdays. Instead, during the week, pubs are attended by young adults to spend a few hours with their friends.
- Restaurants and pizzerias: for Italians meals are an important time for socializing and sharing. So, for many people, evenings start with an aperitif followed by dinner. However, it is worthy to note that the financial crisis had changed the typical wine bar-restaurant-disco scheme and now many people substitute dinner with an aperitif in a bar that serves it with a generous quantity of food.

As mentioned above, there is a wide and diversified range of settings where young Italians can enjoy themselves. Hereafter, we shall describe the main nightlife settings on the basis of academic literature, taking into account the differences related to the target of attendees (genre, age, sexual orientation, social class), the space-time organization of the event, music genres, and the way psychotropic substances are eventually consumed.

## 1. Academic's point of view: a literature review of Italian nightlife

### 1.1. The setting of nightlife

Academic literature analyses practises, rituals, meaning and experiences in the nightlife taking deeply into account the differences between the contexts, particularly in view of the fact that the framework of nightlife is extremely diverse.

Discotheques are mainly characterized by closed spaces (although there are also ones with open spaces, especially in seaside resorts). The music genre is techno-commercial. Discotheques generally open around 11.00pm, but the major turnout time is around 01.00am and then close between 04.00/05.00am (Donfrancesco, 2009a). Sometimes, after the discotheque, the youth go out (afterhours from 4.00/7.00a.m.) and others go out on Sunday afternoons (after-tea) (Ranieri et al., 2005).

The ratio between genders is balanced, whereas if we consider the age brackets we find a prevalence of young people (under 26), even if a lot depends on the context, because some discotheques are mainly attended by adolescents, while others (considered more trendy) are mainly designed for a target of young adults. The most frequent substances are alcohol and Mdma, although in some places also other substances are used (mainly cocaine).

Discotheques can be considered true temples of mass amusement, where DJs are the undisputed shamans of the scene, the witch-doctors of the night (Mori, 2007), the stars of the console (Ranieri et al., 2005; Bagozzi, Cippitelli, 2003). Along with the DJs, in recent years a new professional figure has appeared, the vocalist, a young man who with a microphone incites guests to dance and enjoy themselves using stereotyped sentences, and greeting the richer clients by uncorking bottles at their tables (De Giovanni, 2008).

The typical model of the discotheque originated at the end of the 1980s, but in the 1990s a clear distinction arose between those called "trendy discotheques", a meeting place for those who loved refined and very rhythmic music, proposed by some referential DJs who together with their followers moved from one disco to another across the Italian peninsula, and commercial discotheques, chosen by the young for their particular environment rather than for the music or the disguises (De Giovanni, 2008). Participating in the nights organized by the trendy discotheques involves playing an active role in the event and each time a sort of group ritual is celebrated where the young have to wear particular clothes, which are sometimes particularly eccentric. Some discotheques are characterized by these targeted events giving life to a phenomenon, the so-called "Saturday night nomadism": thousands of youngsters, in order to participate, are ready to travel hundreds of kilometres and return home at daybreak (ibidem).

At the beginning of the new millennium, the traditional model of discotheque that flourished in the 1990s fell into crisis due to two phenomena: on one hand the music they proposed became evened out, thus making it difficult to distinguish the various types of discos merely on the basis of music; on the other, alternative solutions to discos begin to flourish attracting mainly young adults (25-35 year-olds). In the first case, we can summarize by saying that currently the previous differentiation between trendy and commercial discos is less marked. Today, more opportunistically, we could make a distinction between fashion discos (where people who pay more attention to fashion and their look go), and discos characterised by refined music, version house and Afro discos (De Giovanni, 2008). Regarding the second aspect of change (emergence of alternative proposals), we have to acknowledge that with the new Millennium completely alternative settings have flourished: disco-bars, street-bars, and especially in the summer and on the coast, and beach resorts.

These places offer their clients more freedom, who can freely decide how to spend the evening without the rigidity of the disco: the opening hours are different and definitely longer (starting from early evening), there is no entrance ticket to pay, drinks and snacks cost less and people can choose whether to just listen to the music played or also dance freely, without specially dedicated places, such as the classic dance floor. In addition, at the entrance people are not selected, as it often happens with some discotheques, where the manager or the security guards practically decide who can enter and who cannot, according to arbitrary judgements on whether the way people are dressed is appropriate or not for that disco.

The current panorama continuously changes: mega-discotheques have now been shut down for years and in their place new buildings and supermarkets are standing, and many clubs try to survive by organizing one or maximum two events during the weekend. There are practically no more midweek events, which allowed many people to hear about the place, because it became the usual meeting point for insiders. Disco-bars and street-bars continue to be crowded both in the summer and winter,

especially during weekends, where the youth spend all the evening, having a drink, chatting with their friends, and sometimes dancing.

As well as the discotheque, rave parties are probably the most investigated recreational context by sociological literature in the last decade, with the main purpose of studying its social rituals (Donfrancesco, 2009a, 2009b, 2013; Mori, 2007). A rave party, also known as free party, places all participants at the same level, but without unifying their look, thought and behaviour (Ranieri et al., 2005). Unlike discotheques, here DJs are not sacred, but rather overshadowed. A rave party can last only one night, or continue for several days, and depending on the type of rave, it can be either indoors or outdoors.

Unlike the United Kingdom, in Italy rave parties are not characterized by a countercultural political and social component, but they are prevalently mass phenomena with purely recreational purposes and included in an official circuit of amusement, although a transgressive component still remains (Donfrancesco, 2009a). Rave parties pick up some aspects of the free festival, in particular music is seen and conceptualized as a tool of creative experimentation and challenging "contamination". Rave parties represent the need to break with conventions and daily routine, in view of trying new forms of freedom and socialization. They have an essentially ritual component, by ritual we mean «that cultural framework - at the same time spatial, temporal, cognitive and affective - enabling the creation, maintenance or rethinking of social relationships» (Ibidem, pp. 119). In other words, a ritual has often the explicit purpose of creating a particular relationship between who is the object of it, and one or more people. «The essence of the ritual act è therefore eminently social; the nature of the relationship that this act makes possible or tries to create is symbolic» (Ibidem, p. 119).

In order to illustrate the countercultural component, we have to distinguish situations organized legally (on circuit), which include expressions of illegal behaviours, from illegal situations right from the beginning (off circuit). In the off circuit, rave parties can be described as illegally organized free gatherings based on techno music (outdoors - forest clearings, beaches; or in abandoned industrial areas - warehouses, ex-factories) by informal groups (tribes) without requesting an authorization. The on-circuit ones include events legally organized in spaces such as discotheques, clubs, or even outdoors, where you have to pay to enter. Generally, those who take part in the off-circuit events from a cultural point of view, they consider illegality as a distinctive aspect compared to peers who take part in legally authorized events. This identification with being illegal can develop into the refusal of any event that tends to commercialize the values at the basis of one's own cultural system of reference. However, we must point out that the "community" of ravers is irregular, it is not possible to make a clear distinction between totally illegal events from those that completely refer to mainstream culture .

The most common forms of raves are: techno raves and Goa raves. With regard to techno-raves, we can refer to studies conducted by using Donfrancesco's participating observation technique (2009a, 2009b, 2013). From mimetic observation became visible a clear characteristic of these events, in other words uncontrolled opening and the freedom of managing space and time. These aspects emerge through some dimensions, such as: absence of participant selection mechanisms, free entrance, no fixed opening or closing time. Techno music, through the compulsiveness of its rhythm and the use of drugs (in particular MDMA) contribute to this space-temporal dilation and favour the creation of a feeling of unity among all those who take part in the party. As Donfrancesco says: «Spatial and temporal organization, music, dancing, and psychotropic substances, in the light of what has been said until now, therefore favour the creation of a common emotional space, which facilitates relationships among individuals overcoming communication barriers, status differences that characterize everyday life. (...) What is important, are not so much the drugs but the environment, the climate you experience during raves. In fact, some people no longer take drugs during these events» (Donfrancesco 2009b, p. 125).

One of the most interesting findings of the research conducted by Donfrancesco shows how social differences during rave parties level out, and horizontal relational routes are favoured rather than the vertical and hierarchical ones of daily life. We must note that during a rave party social differences related to the money subjects have are not cancelled but mitigated, reduced. Therefore, during a rave party, people partially leave behind their ordinary social roles thus resulting in a freer, relaxed relationship with others. Moreover, the Author deems interesting another consideration: this type of recreational event does not end with the conclusion of the event, because this experience continues to be mediated by direct relations that ravers build amongst themselves and with people who were not at the party. In addition, often through the Internet, it is possible to retrieve pictures, videos, and comments concerning their rave party experiences. When they look at these pictures, those experiences are narrated, comments are expressed, everyone talks about emotions and personal sensations. It is as if they were experiencing again the rave party reviving it through collective narration. Therefore, we can state that as an apparently mimetic event, centred on the present, temporary, and within a limited space, the extra-ordinary (out of the ordinary) experience of the

rave party shows the different shades of its space-time dimensions, replacing itself in the sphere of ordinary (daily) relations. Notwithstanding its extra-ordinary nature, rave parties show their links with ordinary life. In other words, a rave party can be viewed as a ritual event that goes beyond the space-time borders of its occurrence; the rave experience becomes one of the elements ravers use to build their own identity.

In his study, Donfrancesco identified three different profiles of those who go to techno-rave parties (2009, 126):

- 1) Non-integrated ravers: prevalently unemployed young people, who live on their wits or discontinued working activities, who refer to a "street culture" characterized by the ethics of reciprocity "militating" against vertical social mobility. For the first type of youngster, streets are their "natural habitat";
- 2) Integrated ravers: instead, the youngsters of the second type are integrated in the official labour system, they tend to be in the streets only during their free hours, they refer to the ethics of individual responsibility, which corresponds to a type of activity that promotes social mobility;
- 3) Semi-integrated ravers: we could say that the third type is a mixture of the two previous ones, with a clear distinction between genders. In fact, they are girls who are integrated in the official educational system – since they are all students living in the town of their university – and when they return to their town of origin they spend many hours in the streets together with boys of type one and, just like them, they tend to refer to ethics of reciprocity.

Another type of rave, totally different from the one just described, are Goa parties, analysed by Alessandra Rota (2009), also in this case using the participatory observation method. According to the Author, Goa Parties differ not only for their musical genre (Goa and the sub-genres linked to it), but it represents a true culture of reference, based on the acronym P.L.U.R. ("peace, love, unity and respect") (Ibidem). The importance of respect involves: the environment, others and oneself. This philosophy that underlies Goa Parties translates into forms of intolerance against behaviours that can degenerate in excessive use of drugs and aggressive behaviours. In some Goa Parties, it is even forbidden to sell alcoholic drinks.

Rota (2009, 199) writes that «A Goa Party does not claim to temporarily occupy a space as a form of urban repossession or a message of protest against the social system, but it is rather an expression of social disagreement that does not necessarily manifest in an illegal manner. The choice of the places where to hold a Goa Party, usually depends on aesthetic and functional factors, and not on ideological or political ones: illegality is a condition, not a preference. Therefore, mimetism becomes the need to preserve the existence of one's own culture and the selection of one's own tool of defence. In this sense, the concept of "free party" according to the Goa ethics, does not mean that you can do whatever you like, but can be summarized in the famous saying: "Your freedom ends where the other person's freedom begins"».

The main musical genres are: Psy Trance, Full On, Dark, Progressive and Minimal. These are musical genres characterized by bitmap intervals that favour the induction of a hypnotic condition, which blends well with psychotropic substances that induce the same condition (Lapassade, 1997). The favourite drugs have empathogenic and entactogenic properties (such as LSD and MDMA) or are distinguished by socializing rituals (such as cannabis and alcohol). Drugs and environment act as a social bond giving the sensation of being in a "big family" (i.e. the Goa family), but without refusing the presence of behaviours of psychotropic substance abuse, most of the participants are calm, sociable, and willing to talk. Some substances (for instance, cocaine, and GHB) are socially condemned because their effects go against the Goa culture. Therefore, a Goa party can be seen as the expression of a ritual and drugs are an intrinsic part of this ceremony, but through informal control infrastructures that suggest a controlled and responsible use of the substances.

Rota (2009) identified three types of Goa attenders:

- 1) "locals": young people who live in nearby towns and consider the festival as the event of the year, or hear of the party by word of mouth and go there because it is close, for curiosity or just to break up the usual routine. Locals arrive around midnight and leave around 5.00-6.00 a.m. They are aged between 20-30 years, wear casual clothes and not interested in some details, which instead distinguish both "disco goers" and Goans. They rarely dance, they either just move around the area of the party or sit along the margins of the dance floor. Although a little shy in their initial approach, if they get involved with other young people they become sociable and willing to dialogue. The majority mainly have alcoholic drinks and cannabinoids, whereas some say they have tried, on other occasions, also other substances (especially cocaine, speed or Mdma).

- 2) "disco goers" are young people who mainly go to discotheques because attracted by curiosity or by the closeness of the event using it as an "after" (a party after the disco). Disco goers arrive between 3.00-4.00 a.m. and leave around 6.00-8.00 a.m. They are aged between 20-30 years and are dressed very well and quite elegant. Although some appear to be at ease, the majority, after a few hours seem tired and bored. With regard to the use of drugs, they are the only ones who choose covert strategies of taking them (they inhale popper hiding their head under their jackets) and some of them present signs of alteration typical of Mdma and cocaine.
- 3) Finally, naturally the Goans – the largest group. The members of this group can be recognized by some typical characteristics: the time they arrive and leave, the way they dress and move around during the party. Goans are a quite varied group. If not already there the previous day or afternoon (they are the only ones who set up the tents), they arrive mainly between 4.00-6.00 a.m. and start leaving towards 10.00-11.00 a.m. (more than half of them stay there until the end of the party). The majority are aged between 20-35 years, but there are also many over the age of 40. They can be dressed in many different ways: many (especially girls) wear ethnic clothes or, especially boys, wear more casual clothes. Many, both boys and girls, have dreadlocks (a hairstyle typical of the Rastafarians), piercing, tattoos, etc. They also have accessories (called trip toys) that mainly include dummies, whistles, fairy or butterfly wings, antennas, hats and glasses of various shapes and with fluorescent colours. They dance a great deal, some of them keep on dancing relentlessly for hours. They use all the space available for the party, moving from one place to another, often dancing or skipping.

Rota shows how from recent trends emerges the transformation of the Goa Parties into business parties, which have lost most of the original meanings of the Goa culture described above. This translates in the presence of forms of substance abuse and episodes of violence.

Another type investigated by sociological literature are the Circuit Parties and the Gay Clubs (Bertolazzi, Canestrini 2009). They are typically organized indoors, usually medium or small premises, where the type of music is prevalently garage and deep. The most commonly used substances are alcohol, Mdma, and popper. The target of these places is mainly male homosexuals. The average age is higher than those who go to the discos. The opening hours are from around midnight to 4.00 a.m. Some clubs can be considered to belong to the disco cruising category, because inside there are specially dedicated areas for sexual relations, which allow people seeking sexual experiences to meet. Parties organized according to these characteristics are called Circuit Parties, extemporary events specifically dedicated to homosexuals and organized by private companies, but also by non-profit organizations. For several days, (generally, for a weekend), there are various forms of entertainment, such as DJ sets, light shows, concerts, male dances, etc. (Bertolazzi, Canestrini, 2009). However, not all Gay Clubs can be considered Circuit Parties.

Lately, club events are concentrated in one day a week – Saturday night – as follows: from opening time (0.45 a.m.) until around 4.00-5.00 a.m., there is the so-called "early night"; then starts the "late night", that ends around 10 a.m. Attenders are differentiated on the basis of two types of membership cards, the early night is strictly reserved for the GLBT (or gay friendly), whereas late night is also open for heterosexuals. With regard to the spaces, there are usually three areas: the main dance floor (for dancing), privè (private, more selective and dedicated to socialization), and chill-out to relieve. For what concerns the type of music, in the main hall the sound during the first hours of the night you have house and techno-house music, full of contaminations (especially with ethnic and soul music), whereas in the second part of the night, music becomes much less melodic, particularly "aggressive" and with increasingly obsessive instrumental loops: DJs mostly choose techno and underground-techno pieces. In the privè, there is mainly commercial pop-funk and commercial house music. Here the situation is totally different from the main hall: the bar and the console take up most of the room, while the dance floor is quite small. In this small room, dancing is alternated with conversation, meeting people and some effusions, whereas in the main hall, the main activity is to move to the rhythm of the music. The layout of the space generally "facilitates" dancing, but also offers the possibility to have sexual intercourses, even with occasional partners and take psychoactive substances in a concealed manner.

The most commonly used substances are ecstasy, MDMA, amphetamines (speed, crystal meth) dissolved in water, ketamine power drinks, cannabis and cocaine. These substances have different functions, mainly to improve performance, such as: facilitating socialization, improving sexual performance, withstanding tiredness and dancing all night. In any case, from our interviews and through participatory observation in the study conducted by the two authors, there do not seem to be any explicitly self-destructive attitudes, but a rather "reflexive" use of drugs. Drugs are certainly widespread, but rarely have the mere purpose of being excessive. We can say that the "controlled use" model could be used for the majority of those attending

the events observed, even though there were cases of abuse and, anyway, on the whole, the practice of taking drugs is more common than in the traditional commercial discotheques (Cipolla, Martoni, 2008).

Another type of event is the festival. Especially during the summer, in Italy there are many musical festivals. The most famous ones are: the Heineken Jammin' Festival in Imola (Bologna), Arezzo Wave, the Pistoia Blues Festival, and the Pelago Festival (all in Tuscany), Rototom Sunsplash reggae Festival in Osoppo (near to Udine, a city in the North of Italy).

Ranieri et al. (2005) conducted a study which included the administration of questionnaires to participants and focus groups with the social workers at the Arezzo Festival. The event involves five main spaces; the main stage is inside the municipal stadium. An area on which the workers and the police force focus is the camping area, which is historically an off-limits zone, a location for trafficking and disorders. Often, camping areas are in peripheral areas to reduce the visibility of the social decline that characterizes these places. In order to stop the intrusion of people who could cause trouble, spectators are now required to pay to go and see a concert. The most commonly found substances are MDMA, MDA, GHB, cocaine and free base, speed, opium, Ketamine, hallucinogenic mushrooms, and cannabis.

We can divide Festival attendees into five types (Ranieri et al., 2005):

- 1) The "Gutter Punk": a denigrating expression standing for Crusties, that are individuals who refuse to belong to the mainstream social system, and want to live on the fringes of society. They are maladjusted people, wanderers. They have broken their relationships with their family of origin and live with one or more dogs, earn their living with street entertainments. They have an aggressive and scruffy look. In fact, Crusties distinguish themselves for their scruffy look: typical dress styles include dreadlocks, piercings, tattoos and dirty clothing, which are generally second-hand or army surplus. Similar to anarchist punks, most of the clothes are black. Crusties have also been described as being typically unemployed youth with no permanent home.
- 2) Squatters: anarchists, unlawful occupants of homes. They share some traits with the Gutter Punk, such as the punk culture.
- 3) Freaks: they refuse an excessively conformist life and choose to live a free and unconditioned life, whose principles are love and brotherhood. They earn their living with street entertainments or selling handcraft products. In particular, they consume hashish and marijuana.
- 4) Travellers and ravers: Travellers have a nomad lifestyle. They travel around Europe with vans (commerz) transformed into homes and live in tribes. Ravers are rave party goers and can be divided into legal and illegal ravers.
- 5) Elves are people who decide to live in a community, usually rural and in the mountains, far from towns and social rules. They cultivate small pieces of land and try to live on subsistence farming. Unlike the first three groups, they pay a lot of attention to their personal hygiene. They cure themselves with herbs and often smoke marijuana and hashish. Often they educate their children according to the rules of their community. On average, they are aged between 20-35 years.

According to Donfrancesco (2009a), in addition to the mainstream and illegal scenes, there is also the circuit, which includes, other than street parades – which fall within this intermediate area – also community centres: typically closed spaces, characterized by mainly drum'n bass and Goa music. Here there is usually a consumption of hashish, marijuana and, less frequently, hallucinogens. With regard to the target, there is a generally balanced relationship between genders and youth belonging to different age brackets are attracted, usually between 20-30 years. Parties are organized, mostly during weekends, although events during the week are not rare, mainly for students. However, there are few studies on the recreational nightlife in this type of setting.

## 1.2. The prevention in the nightlife: strategies and approaches

During last years, in Italy environment prevention has assumed strategic importance. For example, due to the increase awareness about road traffic safety, in 2010 the national law prohibits the sale of alcoholic beverage after 3 a.m., but it should be admit that many establishment owners often violate the limit. This action is part of a wider strategy to take under control drug and alcohol use and reduce car accident in the night, especially during the weekend. In 2009, harsher penalties for violation of traffic code that occur as a result of drunk or drug driving (L. 94/2009). Police control based on alcohol test are more and more spread, in particular where there's a big concentration of nightlife events. Drug testing during the police street controls

has been also experimented, but without good outcome in terms of reliability. Italian legislation has adopted a law that impose to any venue that sell alcohol to give the opportunity for attenders to self-test the overcome of alcohol limit before driving, but also in this case tests are not always reliable.

Another example of environmental prevention program is the banning on serving alcoholic beverages to persons under 18 years. Anyway, also in this case many researches show as the prohibition is often violated by owners and underage have easily access to alcohol (Aresi et al. 2013a, 2013b; Cipolla, Martoni 2008).

However, not all intervention approaches adopt repressive strategies based on strict control. Mainly in big cities and in recreational area (for e.g., Adriatic coast) there are a lots of prevention and harm reduction programs. The typical approach is based on cognitive strategy that aims to raise awareness about risks, for example giving information about how dangerous is consuming drugs and which are side effects. Experts and operators involved in prevention activities normally work among infoshop and infopoints, they spread informative materials (brochure, gadgets, depliant... ) and try to influence behaviors.

Another possible strategy of drug prevention action in recreational setting is based on peer education approach that include a range of initiatives where young people from a similar age group, background, culture and/or social status educate and inform each other about a wide variety of issues. We can define peer education like an approach which aims to empower young people to work with other young people, and which draws on the positive strength of the peer group. By means of appropriate training and support, young people become active players in the educational process rather than passive recipients of a set message. Central to this work is the collaboration between young people and adults.

Also harm reduction strategies are important in the nightlife, even if they are more frequently implemented in that places where very high drug use is recognized. Typical harm reduction actions are (Bagozzi, Cippitelli, 2003):

- availability of fresh and free of charge water;
- access limitation due to the capacity of the venue;
- well-trained personnel (especially health professionals);
- ensuring a space for resting: chill out as a decompression zone where people can rest or socialize with other attenders. This is the area where prevention programs are normally put in act;
- distribution of harm reduction devices, such as condoms, earplugs, sterile pipe to snort cocaine, etc.;
- immediate availability of first aid;
- regular meeting with the police.

Especially in intense nightlife areas, the nomination of designated drivers is promoted: this means selecting a person who abstains from alcohol consume and remains sober during social occasions because he/she's a responsible driver of a vehicle whilst others have been allowed to drink alcoholic beverages. In other words, his/her duty is to drive his or her companions home safely as an alternative to driving under the alcohol influence. In order to promote these arrangements, some venues owners encourage the selection of a designated driver offering free entrance or free/reduced-price or non-alcoholic drinks to designated drivers.

Pill testing is forbidden in Italy, even if it should be recognized that in some clubs and social centers social workers make tests illegally, but this means that very often results are not really reliable because the instruments adopted are fairly imprecise (Lombi, 2009; 2012).

Even if prevention and harm reduction programs are quite spread, two obstacles can be recognized: on one side, owners don't always collaborate with the prevention team projects because they see any kind of partnership as a tacit acknowledgement that their establishment is a site of excessive drug and alcohol consumption (Pallaver, Rizzi, 2011) ; on the other side, it should be admitted that the economic crisis have reduce public funds to support many initiatives.

Moreover, one should not forget that the promotion strategies we've described above refer to the legal recreational context. Illegal parties, which promotional system is based on a by word of mouth advising between ravers, are a challenge setting because nor medical or social staff or police can have easily access. It is not uncommon that a rave party is rudely interrupted by the arrival of the police and the arrest of the promoter. In this scenario, health emergency can have really serious consequences.

## 2. Statistical data about the youth nightlife

### 2.1. Moving in the night: places, times and ways

Where do youngsters spend their free time in the nightlife? Sanza et al. (2011) conduct a study in recreational setting of five Italian regions (Emilia-Romagna, Veneto, Tuscany, Marche and Puglia) collecting 1,571 questionnaires (833 males, 738 females; mean age; 24.31 years). The most popular places (answer: often or very often) are: pubs (57.1%), private parties

*TABLE 1 - THE PLACES OF NIGHT ENTERTAINMENT IN ITALY. FREQ. % (N=1.571)*

	Never/rarely%	Sometimes%	Often/very often%
Disco	52.4	22.7	24.9
Pub	18.4	24.5	57.1
Concert	39.7	32.6	27.7
Festival	55.4	28.4	16.2
Rave	86.7	7.4	5.9
University party	77.2	13.2	9.6
Sporting events	64.9	18.7	16.5
Wine bar	63.3	22.3	14.4
Cinema	39.0	32.9	28.1
Theatre	74.2	18.0	7.8
Private party	35.5	33.8	30.7
Out-of-town weekend	37.7	34.2	28.1
Daily trip	46.6	32.5	20.8

Source: Sanza et al. (2011, p. 102)

Females attend more frequently concerts, theaters, cinemas, while males are more likely to go to sporting events. No significant differences have been noted for other settings. About motivations related to the choice, females claim to decide on the basis of the factor "music and entertainment", while males are more attracted by other aspects like "substances and sex".

Age differences are significant: the youngest (under 20) prefer discos, pubs, university parties and celebrations, while over 26 like to attend theaters, cinemas, wine bars and concerts.

In addition, education is an important variable which influences the choice of recreational setting: in fact, graduates attend less frequently raves and clubs and prefer concerts and theaters. It should be noted that raves are not very popular, although this is the context more investigated in the literature.

Over half of the sample reaches the places of entertainment in less than 30 minutes (see table 2). Three out of four subjects go with friends (75.1%), 15.9% with a partner, 7.1% alone, 1.2% and 0.7% with relatives and acquaintances (see table 3).

An interesting part of the research reveals that 77.2% of the sample moves by car, 28.1% uses public transport (train, bus or subway), 22% walks, 14.4% drives a scooter, 13.4% goes by bicycle, 7.4% by motorbike, 2.5% by taxi, 4.6% adopt other strategies. Students move frequently in group of friends, while workers go out more often with a partner.

*TABLE 2 - TIME TO REACH THE RECREATIONAL SETTINGS. FREQ. % (N=1.571)*

	%
<30'	53.8
30'-60'	37.6
60'-120'	6.5
>120'	2.0

Source: Sanza et al. (2011, p. 103).

*TABLE 3 - COMPANY WITH WHICH RESPONDENTS REACH THE RECREATIONAL SETTINGS. FREQ. % (N=1.571)*

	%
Alone	7.1
With friends	75.1
With partner	15.9
With relatives	1.2
Acquaintances	0.7

Source: Sanza et al. (2011, p. 103).



TABLE 4 – HOW RESPONDENTS REACH THE RECREATIONAL SETTINGS. FREQ. % (N=1.571)

	Never/rarely%	Sometimes%	Often/very often%
Walking	59.5	18.5	22.0
Bicycle	75.6	11.0	13.4
Scooter	74.4	11.2	14.4
Motorbike	86.5	6.1	7.4
Car	13.0	9.8	77.2
Taxi	93.9	3.6	2.5
Urban autobus	80.6	10.9	8.5
Extra-urban autobus	88.4	7.1	4.5
Metro	91.5	4.7	3.8
Train	71.5	17.2	11.3
Airplane	91.3	6.3	2.3
Other	96.8	0.9	2.3

## 2.2. Psychotropic substances in the nightlife

Many researches recognizes a pervasive consumptions of alcohol and illegal drugs in the nightlife, particularly during late hours. Over the past twenty years the consumption of psychotropic substances has assumed a new meaning: «From tool to alleviate the pain, the drug would be increasingly used and interpreted in terms of a medium to intensify the pleasure» (Cipolla, 2009, p. 7). So drugs and alcohol use in the contexts of entertainment responds more and more to recreational purposes: their use aims to amplify the fun experience without altering the performance that could even be improved by the use (ibidem). Moreover, psychotropic substances facilitate disinhibition behaviors (even if within certain limits) or the perception of being uninhibited, contributing positively to share some goals that youngsters take care: meet new people, socialize, and find a partner. It must also be noted that the search for fun often takes a transgressive dimension given that the night can be considered as a «physical and mental space of freedom from the routine and the rules imposed by the models of social organization, where individuals can temporarily undress social roles for wear the evasion clothes and masks of the game» (Torti, 1997, p. 7). According to this meaning, it should be recognized that the main drug use pattern is based on polydrug consume (Cipolla, 2007; Bertolazzi, 2008). It interesting to note that alcohol is the more frequent substance that take a role in poliassumption (Martoni, Putton 2006; Cipolla, Martoni 2009): alcohol is part of the Italian cultural tradition, often considered as food instead of psychotropic substance, it is legal, easily accessible and extremely sociable (Guarino, 2011). Traditionally, Italian people belong to a Mediterranean alcohol drinking model that is based on wine assumption prevalence during meals, even if recently there are some influences from the Nordic model of drinking, based principally on the practices of alcohol consumption away from meals with mostly beer and spirits.

Since 2002, the Addiction Center of Lugo, a city in the North-est of Italy, collects surveys about drug use and risks behaviors in the recreational setting of Adriatic coast that is an area characterized by a high presence of discos, disco clubs and wine bar. Table 5 shows a comparison about frequency of drug use among respondents between 2011 and 2012 . Data show a modest drop of drug use, especially in terms of frequent use.

Cannabis is the most common illegal drug: about half of the sample have assumed it once in the life at least, even if there's a decrease of frequent users during 2012 (-3,8%). With a wide gap, the second illegal drugs in terms of spreading is cocaine, used at least once in the life by 10,8% of interviewees. See table 6.

Drug use is influenced by some socio-demographic variables:

- gender: all drugs are more common among males, especially in the case of frequent users (see table 6) and for substances that are typically considered more dangerous (such as heroin and cocaine). For legal substances (alcohol and tobacco) and "soft drugs" (cannabis), data show less marked differences. Researchers believe the gap will shrink in the future also for "hard drugs" (Cipolla, 2008; Cipolla, Martoni, 2009; Cipolla, Ruspini, 2013). See table 6;
- age class: the age group most at risk for the consumption of psychotropic substances is between 18 and 25 years, especially for occasional and frequent use. See table 7;

- occupational status: unemployment is often associated with an increased risk of consumption of all psychotropic substances. It should also be noted that even among students the use of drugs is quite high, especially for cannabis. See table 8.

**TAB. 5 - DRUG USE FREQUENCY AMONG DISCO ATTENDERS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN 2011 (N=5.171) AND 2012 (N= 2.189).FREQ. %**

	No User			Life time user			Occasional users			Frequent users		
	2011	2012	Var. %	2011	2012	Var. %	2011	2012	Var. %	2011	2012	Var. %
Cannabis	52.4	55.9	3.4	13.1	13.9	0.8	20.7	20.2	-0.5	13.8	10.0	-3.8
Cocaine	85.2	88.2	3.0	5.9	5.9	0.0	6.5	4.6	-1.9	2.3	1.2	-1.1
Ecstasy	91.0	93.7	2.7	4.0	3.6	-0.5	4.1	2.2	-1.9	0.8	0.5	-0.3
Heroin	94.9	95.4	0.5	2.6	2.5	-0.2	1.8	1.7	-0.1	0.6	0.4	-0.2
Glues and solvents	97.7	98.9	1.2	1.2	0.6	-0.6	0.8	0.3	-0.5	0.4	0.2	-0.2
Popper	85.7	90.9	5.2	9.7	7.0	-2.6	4.2	1.8	-2.4	0.5	0.3	-0.2
Amphetamine	93.8	95.4	1.6	3.1	2.9	-0.2	2.5	1.2	-1.3	0.6	0.5	-0.1
Ketamine	93.3	95.5	2.2	3.5	2.5	-1.0	2.5	1.4	-1.0	0.7	0.6	-0.1
Psychedelic drugs	91.0	92.3	1.3	5.7	5.3	-0.4	2.8	1.7	-1.1	0.4	0.7	0.3
Crack	96.2	97.7	1.5	2.2	1.2	-1.0	1.2	0.7	-0.4	0.5	0.4	-0.1

Source: Safe Style Project 2012, available at [http://www.safestyle.it/Editor/assets/Safestyle\\_Report\\_2012.pdf](http://www.safestyle.it/Editor/assets/Safestyle_Report_2012.pdf) (Last access: 10/12/2013)

**TAB. 6 - DRUG USE FREQUENCY AMONG DISCO ATTENDERS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN GENDER DATA 2012 (N= 2.189). FREQ. %**

	Males				Females			
	No User user	Life time user	Occasional users	Frequent users	No user	Life time user	Occasional users	Frequent users
Cannabis	48.0	13.5	24.2	14.3	64.2	14.3	16.0	5.5
Cocaine	83.9	7.6	6.3	2.1	92.8	4.2	2.8	0.3
Ecstasy	91.4	4.8	3.2	0.6	96.2	2.3	1.1	0.4
Heroin	94.0	3.0	2.4	0.5	96.9	1.9	1.0	0.2
Glues and solvents	98.5	0.8	0.4	0.3	99.3	0.4	0.2	0.1
Popper	88.0	8.9	2.5	0.5	93.8	5.0	1.0	0.1
Amphetamine	93.7	3.9	1.6	0.8	97.2	1.8	0.8	0.2
Ketamine	94.0	3.6	1.9	0.5	97.1	1.4	1.0	0.6
Psychedelic drugs	88.8	7.6	2.4	1.2	96.1	2.9	0.9	0.2
Crack	96.6	1.8	1.2	0.4	98.8	0.7	0.2	0.4

Source: Safe Style Project 2012, available at [http://www.safestyle.it/Editor/assets/Safestyle\\_Report\\_2012.pdf](http://www.safestyle.it/Editor/assets/Safestyle_Report_2012.pdf) (Last access: 10/12/2013)

TAB. 7 - DRUG USE FREQUENCY AMONG DISCO ATTENDERS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN AGE CLASS DATA 2012 (N= 2.189). FREQ. %

		No User user	Life time user	Occasiona users	Frequent users
13-17 years	Cannabis	76.4	7.9	5.6	10.1
	Cocaine	94.3	3.4	1.1	1.1
	Ecstasy	95.4	2.3	1.1	1.1
	Heroin	97.7	0.0	2.3	0.0
	Glues and solvents	97.7	1.1	1.1	0.0
	Popper	97.7	1.1	1.1	0.0
	Amphetamine	98.9	1.1	0.0	0.0
	Ketamine	97.7	1.1	0.0	1.1
	Psychedelic drugs	95.5	3.4	1.1	0.0
	Crack	97.8	1.1	1.1	0.0
18-25 years	Cannabis	53.8	11.6	23.8	10.8
	Cocaine	89.6	4.7	4.5	1.2
	Ecstasy	94.6	2.7	2.3	0.4
	Heroin	95.6	2.1	2.1	0.3
	Glues and solvents	99.3	0.4	0.1	0.2
	Popper	92.0	6.1	1.7	0.2
	Amphetamine	96.1	2.2	1.3	0.4
	Ketamine	95.5	2.3	1.8	0.4
	Psychedelic drugs	92.5	5.2	1.5	0.7
	Crack	97.8	1.2	0.6	0.4
26-30 years	Cannabis	52.4	20.4	18.4	8.8
	Cocaine	83.6	9.6	5.8	1.0
	Ecstasy	91.2	5.4	3.1	0.3
	Heroin	95.2	3.4	0.7	0.7
	Glues and solvents	98.0	1.0	0.7	0.3
	Popper	85.7	11.3	2.7	0.3
	Amphetamine	93.2	5.8	0.7	0.3
	Ketamine	92.8	4.8	1.4	1.0
	Psychedelic drugs	91.2	5.4	2.7	0.7
	Crack	97.3	0.3	1.7	0.7
Oltre 30 years	Cannabis	58.1	24.0	11.5	6.5
	Cocaine	77.5	12.4	7.8	2.3
	Ecstasy	88.5	8.3	1.8	1.4
	Heroin	91.7	5.5	1.8	0.9
	Glues and solvents	98.6	0.9	0.5	0.0
	Popper	82.9	14.3	1.4	1.4
	Amphetamine	92.2	4.1	1.8	1.8
	Ketamine	96.3	2.3	0.9	0.5
	Psychedelic drugs	89.9	7.8	1.4	0.9
	Crack	97.2	1.8	0.9	0.0

Source: Safe Style Project 2012, available at [http://www.safestyle.it/Editor/assets/Safestyle\\_Report\\_2012.pdf](http://www.safestyle.it/Editor/assets/Safestyle_Report_2012.pdf) (Last access: 10/12/2013)

TAB. 8 - DRUG USE FREQUENCY AMONG DISCO ATTENDERS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN EMPLOY STATUS. DATA 2012 (N= 2.189). FREQ. %

		No User user	Life time user	Occasiona users	Frequent users
Students	Cannabis	56.1	10.5	24.9	8.5
	Cocaine	93.2	3.4	2.6	0.8
	Ecstasy	95.8	2.4	1.4	0.4
	Heroin	94.3	2.6	2.6	0.4
	Glues and solvents	98.8	0.6	0.4	0.2
	Popper	94.2	4.4	1.2	0.2
	Amphetamine	96.8	1.8	0.8	0.6
	Ketamine	96.2	2.4	0.8	0.6
	Psychedelic drugs	93.1	4.3	1.8	0.8
	Crack	98.0	1.2	0.6	0.2
	Workers	Cannabis	61.9	10.4	18.7
Cocaine		93.8	2.7	2.8	0.7
Ecstasy		97.1	1.5	1.2	0.3
Heroin		96.9	1.6	1.3	0.1
Glues and solvents		99.3	0.6	0.1	0.0
Popper		96.2	2.6	1.2	0.0
Amphetamine		97.9	1.2	0.7	0.1
Ketamine		97.6	1.5	0.7	0.1
Psychedelic drugs		95.1	3.7	1.0	0.1
Crack		98.4	1.2	0.0	0.4
Student workers		Cannabis	52.2	18.7	19.0
	Cocaine	82.0	9.6	6.6	1.8
	Ecstasy	91.6	5.3	2.6	0.6
	Heroin	95.5	2.6	1.6	0.3
	Glues and solvents	98.7	0.6	0.4	0.3
	Popper	86.0	11.0	2.5	0.6
	Amphetamine	93.6	4.0	1.6	0.8
	Ketamine	94.3	3.2	1.9	0.7
	Psychedelic drugs	90.8	6.3	1.8	1.1
	Crack	97.7	1.0	1.0	0.3
	Unemployed	Cannabis	43.8	11.5	19.8
Cocaine		80.2	9.4	8.3	2.1
Ecstasy		78.1	9.4	10.4	2.1
Heroin		88.4	7.4	2.1	2.1
Glues and solvents		99.0	1.0	0.0	0.0
Popper		81.1	14.7	3.2	1.1
Amphetamine		86.5	10.4	3.1	0.0
Ketamine		87.5	5.2	5.2	2.1
Psychedelic drugs		82.3	12.5	4.2	1.0
Crack		90.6	4.2	4.2	1.0

Source: Safe Style Project 2012, available at [http://www.safestyle.it/Editor/assets/Safestyle\\_Report\\_2012.pdf](http://www.safestyle.it/Editor/assets/Safestyle_Report_2012.pdf) (Last access: 10/12/2013)

In SafeStyle project, another questions has investigated what people have assumed during the night of interview: disco attendees' have consumed mainly alcohol (52.5%, M=57.8%, F=46.8%). followed by cannabis (6.2%, M=7.9%, F=4.3%) and cocaine (1.4%, M=2.2%, F=0.5%). For details, please see table 9.

*TABLE 9 - ALCOHOL AND ILLEGAL DRUG ASSUMPTION DURING THE INTERVIEW NIGHT. A COMPARISON BETWEEN GENDER DATA 2012 (N= 2.189)*

	Males	Females	Total
Alcohol	57.8	46.8	52.5
Cannabis	7.9	4.3	6.2
Cocaine	2.2	0.5	1.4
Ecstasy	0.7	0.4	0.5
Heroin	0.5	0.0	0.3
Inhalant	0.5	0.0	0.3
Ketamine	0.3	0.5	0.4
Psychedelic drugs	0.4	0.1	0.2
Crack	0.2	0.0	0.1

Source: Safe Style Project 2012, available at [http://www.safestyle.it/Editor/assets/Safestyle\\_Report\\_2012.pdf](http://www.safestyle.it/Editor/assets/Safestyle_Report_2012.pdf) (Last access: 10/12/2013)

Even if the recreational settings (and discos, in particular) show high rate of alcohol and drug consume between night attendees, people don't use psychotropic substances only in these places. Sanza et al. (2011) conducted a research on 9.052 students, where clearly emerge that the main settings of alcohol assumption are pub, disco and café, while illegal drugs are more often used at home, with friends (see table 10).

*TABLE 10 - ALCOHOL AND ILLEGAL DRUG USE AMONG STUDENTS: MAIN SETTINGS. DATA 2010 (SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: N=5.040; UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: N= 4.012). FREQ. %*

	Alcohol		Illegal Drugs	
	Secondary school students	University students	Secondary school students	University students
Home, alone	4.5	5.8	6.2	8,0
Home, with parents	19.6	20.8	1.9	2.1
Home, with friends	37.1	47.2	32.7	46.7
Café	38,0	37.7	7.1	7.6
Pub	72.7	82.4	12.6	12.9
Disco	57.7	54.1	27.7	16.9
Other	9,0	5.2	39.6	15.9

Source: Sanza et al (2011, 128).

## REPORT OF THE EXPERTS

### In the experts' voices

To deepen the analysis on the nightlife in Italy, we collected some interviews with experts during January 2014. All interviews were individual, except in the case of the interviews n. 4-5-6 that have been collected together to satisfy the request of the main expert involved in the interview.

According to the methodological guidelines suggested by the research group, interviewed have been selected in order to ensure the presence of people from the following areas:

- a. Academic: we opt for a researcher with previous experience of research about nightlife and young risk behaviors;
- b. Political-technical: we contact an expert who work in the drug field, with a wide knowledge of prevention and harm reduction programs for young people. He has a great knowledge of young culture. His interview involved also two sociologists who work in his staff.
- c. Leisure industry: the C.E.O. of an important disco located in Milan has been selected. He has also a political-technical role as local President of SILB (Italian Trade Union for dance clubs).
- d. Recreational: we interviewed a young participant and protagonist of the nightlife.

### 1. Expectations and values of youth leisure

Interviews' analysis reveals how night can take on multiple meanings which are firmly rooted in the process of growth and personal evolution. Experts have traced various representations and meanings attributable to nightlife, indicating distinctions which, in parts, are linked to differences in age, and partly related to different entertainment contexts (eg. mainstream circuit versus sub-cultural circuit).

Nevertheless, it is possible to identify a common denominator recognized by all the interviewees as to what the meaning of nightlife is for young Italians: it represents a moment to break from the daily routine, a relief valve, a pressure relief moment, an interlude from the social impositions which weigh upon daily life and a suspension from the expectations of traditional roles. At night, free from the daily obligations and commitments, young people can engage in fun thanks to a greater tolerance towards behavior that is not considered socially acceptable by the adult world during the daytime. In the opinion of the interviewees, this translates into the ability, for a few hours at least, to free themselves from the social impositions that can alter an individual's identity. Thus, they are allowed the freedom to enjoy being themselves and not what society expects them to be.

Nightly entertainment is a part of one's primary needs. It represents a moment of leisure, outside of work and study commitments. It 's a necessary moment, but a delicate one, because it reveals a desire to break the rules. The nightlife, therefore, assumes a pedagogical aspect: in its nature, it acts as a kind of safety valve to relieve pressure. The night means excitement, especially for the younger ones. And it is the time when many romances are born, which during adolescence, have a great importance [Interviewed 2].

In clubs, people seek the opportunity to let loose. One is not judged by characteristics that in ordinary life can be a source of discrimination, such as sexual orientation. People are the protagonists for one night allowing them to be themselves. Surely, the judgment aspect changes due to the fact that outward appearance and attention to one's look are important [Interviewed 3].

There is another meaning that is both crucial and deeply connected to the previous point: the night-time responds to the need of coming together and socializing. It is through shared leisure time that one can meet others, share feelings, create meaning and build personal identity. Especially for the younger ones, the peer group represents the universal reference in terms of values, behavioral patterns, the definition of limits and the creation of meaning and design. The night becomes that time frame during which one experiences a greater intimacy between night-life regulars, who are united by friendship, complicity and by the desire to share emotions.

The significance of the night-life lies in identity building, especially during adolescence. For many young people, the night represents an occasion to spend time with their peer group. Strong and profound relationships are developed with the group of people you choose to spend the night with, distant from the eyes of parents who have moved away from the nightlife scene. At night, there's a social time that does not exist during the day, relationships run deeper, and there is more intimacy and fluidity. Often, you can eat and drink together; thus, there is space for sociability. We share choices (where to go, what to do, how to do it). There is physical contact (e.g. sharing a ride in a car). There is also the dance aspect, but this influences less, since it is not the only aspect of physicality [Interviewed 4].

At night, young people find true friendships. The group with whom people experience the night is the result of a personal choice, while the people frequented during the day are those with whom you share commitments, such as classmates and work [Interviewed 5].

The night is the place where you are put to the test, away from the look of adults. It's an area of freedom, where people can be uninhibited. The night is the place where people freely come together: often you change your group looking for people that are closer to you [Interviewed 6].

The night is free game time, during which people can experience different roles. To go out, means to meet friends and make new acquaintances. It means living a moment of levity, without the daytime's hectic pace, and committing acts of small transgressions that may simply even be to stay out as late as possible, waiting for sunrise [Interviewed 1].

Nightclubs allow people to be, at a lower cost, the person you want to be, who in ordinary life you can never be. Music is important for a limited number of people. For the most part, the coming together is important, the more people there are the better [Interviewed 2].

If nightly entertainment helps to strengthen group relationships through the sharing of emotions, at the same time, it allows you to meet new people, favoring the possibility of developing new friendships and new romantic relationships. It should not be overlooked that for certain subjects, above all the male gender, not infrequently, the nightlife cross-references an opportunity to meet people to have relationships of a sexual nature with.

The night is often associated with looking for a long-time lasting partner, but also for a casual one. Especially for teenagers, the night becomes the time to experiment with early love affairs, meet the opposite sex, and to get to know one's body and physicality [Interviewed 1].

Some interviewees pointed out that, especially for the younger ones, enjoying the night meant competing with their own sense of limits, especially in relation to alcohol consumption.

The night, changes meaning depending on age. For teenagers, the night often means competing with alcohol. At night, you can drink more than you do at home, even if initiation to alcohol occurs in a family context, often with the encouragement of parents during the holidays and on festive occasions [Interviewed 4].

The night is the place where you are put to the test, away from the look of adults. It's an area of freedom where people can be uninhibited. The night is the place where people come together. Often you change group looking for people that are closer to your way of living, ideals and interests [Interviewed 6].

The interviewees have admitted that it is important for certain people to choose a social context based on a favorite genre of music that is prevalent. The identification of a certain type of sound represents an attempt at cultural distinction, an expression of their social identity. However, several experts have pointed out that this motivation is shared only by a small number of young people involved in the nightlife scene and how, not infrequently, the subjects move from one genre to another in an attempt to experiment with both different identities and groups of friends. For many people, the need to belong leads to embracing mainstream culture, which somehow conveys a higher degree of security, rather than experimenting with different and changeable group belongings.

Faced with an acceleration in the musical differentiation processes, both within the same genre and between different genres, one notices a decrease in the need for cultural distinction. Subcultures are no longer antagonistic expressions of the dominant

culture, “the society of adults,” but worlds in which the individual passes through reflexively, ie consciously and conscientiously, in order to shape and reshape their own personal identity. Instead, the confrontation-clash with other youth groups becomes relevant: This means that, in addition to clothing, even certain behavior, such as violent or non-violent attitudes, types of music listened to, types of places frequented and types of drugs consumed, will be decided in opposition to the choices of other subcultural groups, and moreover, to other social groups [Interviewed 1].

Is it possible to say that night life makes a contribution to the making of plans in young people’s lives ? To this question, the experts provide different opinions. For the most part, a clear division prevails between the daytime aspect and the evening one, such that the night is a parenthesis that allows for that physical and mental detachment necessary to take on the next morning those life projects that find a place only during the day. It should be noted that, when you mention the size of the project, the interviewees refer mainly to work and school commitments. For two interviewees, however, the intense friendships that are made at night can contribute to life’s big projects, in the sense that at nightfall, discussions referring to the future are born, ideas are developed, and indicative goals are established. Although it is unlikely that these projects will ever take shape, the discursive exchange that underlies it can contribute to the construction of subjective identity and strengthen friendships. The evidence reported below gives an account of these different positions:

I think there is a clear separation between day and night. During the night out, people do not want to think about life’s big plans. On the contrary, they want to distance themselves and embrace a moment of levity. This is especially true for the younger ones: during the night, they do not talk about school or work, disconnect is a “must”. For the older ones instead, at night, you can also discuss projects: a dream vacation, new home, a life in another country. But they are more often dreams than projects [Interviewed 1].

At night, we discuss major projects. Ideas are born, perhaps chatting over a beer or returning to the car at dawn. Maybe these projects will never find fulfillment, but they allow you to dream and define your guidelines [Interviewed 4].

Among the interviewees, those who perform professions related to night-life stressed in pointing out to us that many people who love the night try to develop a profession that allows them to regularly live the after-dusk hours (e.g., bartenders, public relations managers, models...). For these people, it is during the night that projects take shape. An interviewee also stressed that the nocturnal dimension may represent a key resource for some who live daily life at a disadvantage: in these cases, planning is short term and it is oriented towards making fun-time a central point as the essence of vitality.

The night acts as a parenthesis, especially for those who are very satisfied with their lives. Who is not satisfied, invests heavily in the night and says he/she will never give up that life: the only one that is full of meaning and a source of identity. For these people, choosing where to go, how to dress and how to move at night is the ultimate expression of their life projects, at least at a specific stage in their lives [Interviewed 6].

With respect to the topic of values that young people develop and share during the night, experts have recognized the importance of socializing, sharing, and the reciprocity within the group of friends who spend an evening out together. Being together, sharing time and emotions is an important aspect for young people. Then, there are rules that reinforce the behavior of the group and therefore the value of friendship as this interviewee explains:

The members of the group know that certain behavior that is traditionally subjected to forms of informal control during the day is tolerated at night. I’m thinking about, for example, the increased use of alcohol or more intense physical contact between participants. In attempts at experimenting, especially among adolescents, what may happen is that threshold is exceeded without, however, exaggerating; in these cases, the group must exercise certain restraint in not revealing what has happened. Likewise, group solidarity emerges if someone is ill or shows some problem: if you do not exceed the acceptability threshold, the group shows tolerance and provides psychological and physical support [Interviewed 5].

Some experts have argued that young people’s search for values cannot find the appropriate means and venues at night, something which is mainly due to the lack of a policy aimed at promoting youth initiative. This means those values developed pre-exist the nocturnal dimension. However, some argue the need to make a distinction based upon the type of nightly event.

Young people would like to express values, but there is a general climate of distrust, which is aggravated by the economic crisis. An adequate policy to promote fun-at- night is just not done. Instead, it is demonized and considered as something problematic.



There aren't the venues and the right means. So, in many cases, the nightlife is translated as the search for a breakaway, giddiness and escapism. Situations should be created so that youth values can take concrete form at night [Interviewed 5].

It is important to note that the nightly venues are not all alike. There are contexts in which there is no room for values, in that the sole aim is to spend an evening out looking to be uninhibited, relieve pressure, and sometimes trip out indiscriminately. In some contexts, what takes on the meaning of value is criticism of mainstream society (I'm thinking of certain types of rave parties, a clear value of the counter-culture). Other types of parties, such as a Goa party, however, are imbued with values, such as respect for the environment, for others and for oneself. Often, there are sales initiatives of handmade or eco-friendly products [Interviewed 1].

As previously mentioned, the night is the temporal dimension for testing one's limits. For this reason, experts were unanimous in recognizing that there are forms of learning that are primarily aimed at understanding one's personal threshold that should not be exceeded. This is particularly valid for the consumption of alcohol.

Especially for the younger ones, the first nights out result in hangovers. They must learn to measure up to alcohol: at night, you can drink more than you do at home (let's not forget that initiation to alcohol, unlike other substances takes place in family contexts, often with the encouragement of parents during the holidays and celebratory occasions) [Interviewed 4].

In addition to being able to control alcohol consumption, it is possible to recognize other forms of learning. For example, thanks to the presence of informal control mechanisms, people learn to recognize what is tolerated and what is not in terms of relationships with other people (physical proximity, sexual advances, comments, jokes, etc.). They also learn to avoid getting into risky situations (e.g., trying to break up a fight). Forms of learning can even be traced to cases where young nightlife goers have been stopped by the police and then punished for some reason (alcohol consumption over the allowed limit, speeding, etc.).

Especially for younger people, the nightlife means acquiring social skills and a sense of limits. You learn, for example, that you cannot always justify yourself with the excuse of alcohol. You learn not to interfere in fights. You gain a sense of responsibility when driving a vehicle carrying friends, but the night can often-times educate using harsher methods (e.g. loss of driving license, accidents, involvement in fights) [Interviewed 1].

## 2. Patterns of youth night leisure

Experts agree in reporting that there are many different places where young Italians can go and spend the night, places that are strongly linked to the times. In fact, there are places for the pre- evening hours (bars, cafes, wine bars and pubs), places for nightly entertainment (discos, clubs, various kinds of parties) and so-called after-hours (same type of nightly entertainment place, but with specific characteristics).

Then, there is another distinction on which interviewees agree: that between "commercial" clubs and trendy clubs. The first ones are more popular, frequented mostly by young people with an average age of around 25 and with a balanced gender ratio. Here, the main objective is to meet people and spend time with friends. The second type, trendy clubs, are more refined, with a more restrictive selection criteria, higher entrance fees and an elite clientele. These contexts are by nature more transgressive. Importance is placed on the size of the show and the look of the club-goers who go to these venues to be able to enjoy themselves in a context where there is more likelihood of being uninhibited. The music issue is more refined and a number of people who attend these places do so also in relation to the evening's DJ. They often have a private room inside where the selection is even more rigid. Usually, these places can be labeled as gay friendly.

These clubs are just not for entertainment, but also for show. The show is the presence of "entertainment shows" created and looked after by the staff, centered on the "hot girl image" with particular attention given to the "look" of the participants. There are also often theme nights. The focus on the aesthetic dimension is reflected in the worship of all that can be beautiful, well-groomed, sophisticated and non-trivial. However, we should not forget how the current economic crisis has seriously affected the fashion clubs, making it necessary to lower the selection criteria, but which has also, at the same time, worsened the quality of the events. The selection process used to serve as a form of decorum guarantee [Interviewed 3].

An interviewee also discusses the presence of so-called ethnic clubs that play Afro, Hip-Hop and Latin American music. They are spreading especially in big cities like Milan, Genoa, Turin and Rome functioning as places which provide recreational opportunities for foreigners but without favoring integration with the native population.

It is possible then, to present distinctions that concern the relationship between legality / illegality, talking about three types of initiatives:

Returning to the classification of an Italian scholar, David Donfrancesco, it is possible to identify three types of entertainment circuits: the mainstream circuit includes discos (mainly organized in a confined space, although mostly, during the summer, including many outdoor settings; the music is mainly commercial techno), clubs, authorized places (mostly outdoors) and gabber rave; the collectively-managed circuit has events that are made up of social centers, street parades and music festivals; the illegal circuit covers illegal raves which can be of different type (techno, Goa, etc...). [Interviewed 1].

With regard to the times at night, interviewees agreed that a night-time event should not only be interpreted as the evening itself, but should also consider the pre and after events. This is especially true for certain types of events (parties in fashion clubs, raves, and concerts), as explained by this interviewee:

The evening (especially if it takes place over the weekend) begins a few days before. For example, for a Saturday evening, especially when it comes to trendy clubs, it begins as early as Wednesday, when you call the assistant to the PR (public relations manager) and you begin to get to know the type of event, the cost of tickets and table listings. A lot of information is disseminated via the Internet and social networks in particular. Always, a few days before, you start to reflect on what clothing to wear, which is often agreed upon with friends: this is a very important preparation phase, because it creates the right mood. It's a different topic, however, when it comes to commercial clubs, where everything is more improvised and advertising does not make use of a PR person, but relies on the use of flyers. In this case, the choice can also be done at the last minute [Interviewed 3].

The evening's development then, follows a different trend depending on factors related to the type of event as well as to the participants' socio-demographic characteristics (of these, age is the one that has the most influence). Especially for the younger ones and females, these two categories will usually go to a friend's house to get ready and get dressed. In any case, as reported in research papers, experts recognize the importance of starting the evening with a drink:

The very young (18-20 year olds) head towards the clubs a couple of hours before entry closing time (scheduled for 1:00 AM) and have a drink in a bar not too far from the disco with a group of friends (between 6 and 10 people), often moving around with public transport. For the older ones (25/30), the evening is quieter and less energetic. At this age, one starts with an aperitif. The pre-party is the most important part of the evening. It's a time for one's emotions, the stage in which people enter the mood of the evening. Almost always, they move around with their own means of transport, unless they reside in large cities [Interviewed 3].

Traditionally, clubs close around 5:00 am (6:00 am for special events). And mainly for the younger ones, they can then go to an after-hours party that can last even up to 8:00 am. Nightlife hours were also analyzed with respect to trends during the work-week:

The evenings out can differ in respect to the time during the week. Indeed, there is a distinction between the evening out during the work week and the evening out during the weekend. The Monday and Tuesday night out is for the elite, a niche segment. There are people who simply do not want to mingle with weekend people. The music is commercial, there is a light atmosphere, the evening starts out with a dinner and ends a bit earlier. Then, there are the university students who often come out on Wednesday or Thursday. On Friday and Saturday, there are fewer college students, because they return home. However, the weekend is the most popular. There are many people who even come from far away areas. Oftentimes, on Sunday night, ethnic events (African, South American, hip-hop) are organized or particularly fashion nights. Costs can also change during the week. For example, for the university evenings, prices are significantly reduced compared to other evenings such as the elite Monday evenings [Interviewed 2].

Regarding the number of nights out, some interviewees have pointed out that the economic crisis has led people to go out with much less intensity. One interviewee pointed out the changing of typical habits.

People who love the night life have not changed the number of evenings out due to the economic crisis, instead they have changed their ways in managing the evening. For example, they acquire on-line coupon books of entrance tickets to save money and also book tables that allow for more people to have a seat, so that they can drink more at a lower cost per head [Interviewed 2].

The evening time is, therefore, marked by some rituals:

- above all for the young, the at-home preparation phase with friends;
- the early evening drink (often, appetizer buffet);
- the breakfast that ends the night (even if it takes place in the morning);
- especially for the older ones that enjoy greater independence, often the evening finishes with a “last cigarette” at a friend’s house who lives alone or with a group of friends who share an apartment.

As a ritual significance then, there is also an important feature of the after-evening which concerns the degree of the shared memory: the participants love to retrace the important happenings of the evening in order to share the emotions and meanings attributed to it, as explained by this interviewee:

The end of the evening does not coincide with the end of the event. This experience, although relegated to a small part of each participant’s life, continues to be relived in the face-to-face relationship that the young participants maintain with each other and even with those who did not attend the party. In addition, often through the Internet, you can recover images, videos, and comments on the evening itself from those who were involved. When one looks at these images, a narrative begins, comments are made, and everyone talks about the emotions and the personal feelings experienced. It is as if you are reliving that night recreating the scenes through the construction of a collective narrative. These narratives become part of the participants’ personal history [Interviewed 1].

Thus, the rite is constituted as a cultural device, which is at the same time spatial, temporal, cognitive and affective - enabling the creation, maintaining or rethinking of social ties and so, in this way, the ritual creates a collective identity.

To the question “What’s scandalous in relation to nightlife ?”, interviewees gave different answers, but they agreed on the fact that although at night there is greater behavior tolerance, compliance with the rules of group social life represent a limit that should not be exceeded.

Betrayal of affection and friendship are shameful. This behavior is not tolerated, even if it occurs at night. You cannot be excused even if those who betray accuse the consumption of alcohol and drugs [Interviewed 4].

It is shameful to embarrass friends due to behavior that exceeds the limit, the limit of social acceptability [Interviewed 5].

There are different levels of behavior acceptance based on age. A young adult cannot behave like a teenager [Interviewed 6].

The “fiatness” of the night can be shameful, because it determines a state of dissatisfaction that can bring subjects to offend since they are suppressed even at a time and place that once enabled them to break free from the constraints and roles of daily life [Interviewed 2].

What it takes to overcome the limits of decency is shameful, as is what is not fun, what offends and what delegitimizes [Interviewed 1].

### 3. Youth relations during the nightlife hours

Concerning the relational aspect of the participants, the interviewees argued that there are differences related to both the short term (the differences between the evening out during the week and at the weekend) and the long term (changes related to the life cycle).

Regarding the first point, the interviewees pointed out that during the week, nightlife regulars prefer to go out in pairs (with a friend or your partner), while during the weekend, going out in groups prevails (often even medium - large size groups, especially when it comes to children and young people). The evenings out paired with a friend are often oriented to the purpose of meeting new people, but if one goes out in groups, you often do it to be with friends without seeking relationships outside the group. However, if one gets to know other people, the person just met can often be introduced to the whole group. Alternatively, an evening out in pairs can be linked to a particular interest in the music played at a nightly event.

During the week, the evening out in pairs prevails, but these are mainly couples. Over the weekend, larger groups are more prevalent, because in many cases these are people who commute distances that can be quite significant [Interviewed 2].

The presence of mixed groups gives a peaceful air to the evening. If you go out with people of the same sex, you are looking for meeting new people for emotional and sexual reasons [Interviewed 5].

The no-longer young crowd (over 40) who frequent clubs move in small groups. Sometimes, even by themselves. They are interested in the music. The very young, however, move in large groups [Interviewed 3].

The different needs in relation to age are also confirmed by space management: for example, the older types prefer to frequent a private adult club and "chill outs", places where there is greater intimacy between the club-goers and the chance to chat quietly. On the contrary, young people prefer to stay on the dance floor, usually in the main dance-hall, where they can be with their friends or widen their circle to include new groups:

During the evening, young people are always on the dance floor, because it is there where they can find people of their own age. Often, 5 people go on the dance floor and then 20 people come off together. This is because they socialize a lot; it is crucial for them. However, the slightly older (over 25), remain always at a distance from the dance floor; they prefer to talk in a quiet corner, such as in a private room or a "chill out" with a drink [Interviewed 3].

The coming of age leads to the majority of clubbers interrupting their evenings out, which is caused by new needs and increased work-life commitments. The Italian nightlife, then, is the realm of children and young people: adults are present in small numbers and in most cases, they are people who are not in a couple, although there are exceptions. However, in most cases, it is people who love music very much and that look for places where they can listen to quality music being played:

When people have their own family (partner and children), they are in a new form of aggregation that replaces the peer group. In addition, once you add up the duties of family and work, young people move away from the nightlife even entirely. Adults (over 40) who frequent the nightlife scene are predominantly single subjects or people who have broken off a relationship that then go back to hang out at clubs [Interviewed 2].

Heterosexual couples that are no longer young and still frequent clubs are rather open. They often go out because they are attracted to events from a musical point of view. While younger couples are always together (to the point that the boy even walks the girl to the bathroom and waits outside), the more mature couples socialize with many people. There are no scenes of jealousy, they move around in complete autonomy [Interviewed 3].

The interviewees agree not only by considering the impact of ICTs to be very high, but also in saying that the real technological revolution is based on two factors: the spread of smartphones (which can take pictures / videos, add tags, comments and images published in any location covered by the network) and social networks (Facebook in particular). These two factors, when considered in a logical combination, have the effect of making public what happens at night, affecting the image of the club and its guests. Besides, the internet is not only a medium of sharing, but also an instrument through which to advertise a club and/or event:

The Internet has completely changed the nocturnal scene. It is no longer hidden, it is made public via social networks. There is also a choice of places to go via internet (photos, reviews, forums...) [Interviewed 5].

It is not so much the internet that has changed the scene at night, but more smart phones that allow you to take pictures, post them online in real time while also providing a geo-location feature. In addition, the real revolution is given by social networks (Facebook in particular) [Interviewed 4].

Information technology has fundamentally changed the role of the PR (in charge of Public Relations), which is a peculiar figure of the Italian nightlife culture. The PR is the person who interfaces between the nightclub (mainly the disco) and the visitor. Through the Internet (and in particular Facebook and Twitter), he/she promotes the evening events and tries to sell tickets at a moderate discount. This also facilitates the event's organization as organizers manage to estimate the number of attendees. PRs steer the advertising in relation to the type of evening and make specialized invitations based on user profiles.

Add to this, the revolution that has led to smart phones, which allow you to disseminate real-time images of the evening, affecting access. If the photos show a busy evening, it immediately attracts more people. This is a peculiarity of discos and parties: while in other situations (restaurant, theater) quality assessment of the evening does not depend on the number of guests. Discos seek the highest possible aggregation in terms of attendance. Photos can give an idea of the atmosphere for that evening. And to the real aggregate sum of guests, we can also add the virtual ones, who include the people linked to the Facebook page of a club.

Finally, we should not neglect the contribution of ICT in terms of web security (think of the increasing numbers of cameras in nightclubs and on the streets) [Interviewed 2].

The spread of the internet has changed the role of the PR, which is crucial for clubs and entry to clubs. The PR must be very computerized managing profiles, contacts and communications through social networks (Facebook especially). The PR once distributed flyers in places that were frequented by potential customers. Today, it is mostly social networking sites that are being taken advantage of that allow contact between a club and its guests who do not interface with the PR. A figure which has essentially lost its relevance, the PR must now create their own image on their FB page. Having a lot of friends and followers is important. There is more competition, even if things are easier on a practical level [Interviewed 3].

According to an interviewee, the spread of social networks has changed the method of building groups, expanding the relationship network and freeing them from the traditional class-based divisions:

For Maffesoli, a known Italian scholar, post-modern time is characterized by a decline in the importance of traditional class differences (as well as gender and religion) relative to establishing individual identity. The reference groups are now formatted around consumer frameworks and practices that enable individuals to create a new contemporary society. These new leisure tribes represent social configurations on a smaller scale, being complementary and distinctive at the same time. That is to say that these new networks and associations seem to encourage pluralistic group identity both fluid and occasional, which in social networks find the highest degree of fulfillment. Here, the social groups that are created can be described as unstable and existing in a rapidly changing environment in which individuals enter and leave for reasons related to the fulfillment of their "tastes " and personal needs [Interviewed 1].

#### 4. Risks and problems in youth nightlife

Even if not necessarily, the nightlife scene can be linked to a greater number of risks, such as the use and abuse of psychotropic substances, driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs, violence (in particular, fights) and risky sexual behaviour.

Concerning the consumption of psychotropic substances, the interviewees agree that it is for the most part alcohol, considered to be the most widespread and dangerous substance due to its legality, low-cost, and by the fact that its consumption is culturally legitimized and informally, widely promoted. Alcohol consumption makes people more uninhibited when dancing and in relations with other nightlife regulars.

Other drugs are less common and are mainly used for performance purposes: ecstasy, in particular, is widespread in many trendy venues (house music disco, for example), and its use responds to the need of withstanding fatigue, dancing all night, developing empathy, promoting disinhibition, socializing with others, or encouraging sexual encounters.

Cocaine is quite widespread in Italy, more than in other European countries, but its role in the nightlife scene is rather controversial. On the one hand, it remains an expensive drug, although its price has dropped in recent years (but a sharp reduction in its quality has also been observed). In addition, nowadays, drug dealers prepare lower doses per gram, a fact that facilitates the possibility of buying for many people, especially for young party-goers. Although cocaine cannot be properly considered a popular drug, its spread has increased considerably, especially in big cities, such as Milan, Rome and Turin. And even if it is quite popular for its ability to build resistance to fatigue, its use is not always compatible with the aims of many nightlife regulars who use drugs: cocaine use, in fact, makes people less empathetic and so can cause difficulty in social e sexual relationships. On the other side, it should be noted that sharing cocaine can represent a way of socializing between consumers of this substance. Heroin is considered to be the antithesis of recreational nightlife because this is a substance that leads to a state of complete estrangement and isolation from the social context and in relationships.

In recent years, then, new drugs have made their appearance onto the nightlife scene, such as GHB and ketamine, which are quite popular in trendy clubs and used primarily, although not exclusively, by the homosexual male population.

Overall, interviewees agree that the increase in police vehicle road checks and tougher fines have contributed to a major increase in at-home substance use.

For young people, alcohol plays an important role. The fun is to exceed the limit ("I'm not enjoying myself if I'm not drunk") [Interviewed 4].

During their first nights out, young people often become drunk. The aim of this practice is to socially legitimize experiments. Let me explain: because they are under the influence of alcohol, people can justify their behavior by attributing offences to alcohol abuse. So, if a guy was a bit violent, or a girl gives in physically beyond expectations, it is easy to blame alcohol [Interviewed 1].

Alcohol is dominant, readily available and legal. The consumption of alcohol facilitates the male social approach with girls and helps to overcome shyness with the opposite sex. For females, it means being more uninhibited. The use of other substances (such as cocaine and ecstasy) is popular mainly in an uninhibited setting, where drug use facilitates relationships with new people. Teenagers do not consume cocaine as much as young adults because it remains an expensive drug. In popular clubs, drug use is more moderate because people want to restrain themselves, respect the limits, and maintain certain decency [Girl1].

The substances are mediums that allow you to get closer to each other, perhaps through an offer or shared consumption. Many nightlife regulars, especially younger ones, consume mainly with the logic of sharing and participation, not just for the effects of the substances themselves [Interviewed 4].

Drugs have changed during the years: although my experience is mainly from house music parties, it must be said that in the last five years it has gone from use to abuse. In the past, it was important to keep a sense of decency, now it's common for people to exaggerate and go over the limit.

Alcohol dominates the scene. Ecstasy is popular at trendy events because it is widely used due to empathetic reasons. There's cocaine, but I think it's used more in popular clubs because it is a drug that makes people less sociable. Nowadays, I can also observe a wider range of drugs than in the past (think of ketamine, speed, GHB...) [Interviewed 3].

Consumption is very much related to the nightlife context. The recreational consumption aims to intensify the pleasurable feelings that come from participating in a recreational setting.

In a house disco, people seek greater uninhibitedness, and in this context, ecstasy can represent the best choice. In popular clubs, alcohol tends to prevail and often, people do not go beyond this substance. At a Goa party instead, the use of psychedelic drugs is appropriate for attempting to expand perception and consciousness, so consumption can be conceived as a tool to grasp the supernatural rather than a purely recreational medium [Interviewed 1].

As is known, the consumption of psychotropic substances is closely related to certain socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, socio-economic status and ethnicity. For what concerns gender, the interviewees confirm that the gap between gender is shrinking especially when it relates to the consumption of alcohol and cannabis. However, consumption among males remains more common for all drug types especially in relation to frequency use and amount.

Today, girls consume more substances than in the past, although the gender gap is shrinking (especially in relation to alcohol and cannabis). For females, consuming drugs as their male peers can be interpreted as a sign of emancipation. However, drug dealing is mostly in the hands of males. Females learn from their peers what to consume and how: drug consumption of illegal substances in a female-only group is still quite uncommon, especially if we consider experimental use [Interviewed 1].

With respect to age, however, it should be noted that it is not possible to identify unique pathways of experimentation. There is a certain agreement, however, on the fact that there is an age class which is more at risk (between 16 and 20), but the majority of young people who have tried drugs do not enter into a circuit of addiction:

Especially for the very young, they are full of everything. It may be just a phase of their lives, but most of them stop within 2-3 years, 5 years at maximum [Interviewed 3].

Surveys conducted tell us that teenagers experience their first illegal substance at around 16 years old (in most cases they experiment with cannabis). Ecstasy makes its appearance onto the scene a little later (a figure of about 5-6 % of young people under 25). For cost reasons, cocaine is not so popular among the younger users. However, it should be noted that only a very small percentage of those who try drugs at a young age develop an addiction or problematic use [Interviewed 1].

Regarding the differences related to socio-economic status, experts recognize that the search for substance quality can represent a priority, as this interview passage shows:

People who belong to the upper class seek, above all, quality illegal substances because drugs end up taking on a status symbol meaning. For example, a rich person can decide to get a good bottle of wine or champagne to give proof of upper class belonging. Moreover, they look for cocaine which is less adulterated. As often happens, this stimulates the processes of emulation and competition with people belonging to lower and middle classes [Interviewed 1].

Differences related to ethnic group are complex to analyse. Consumption can be read as a strategy of social integration, or as an instrument of socialization through which the subject initiates a mimetic imitative behavior aimed at adopting the lifestyle of Italian young people (subcultures are attractive in this life phase). Secondly, consumption can be read as a form of social adaptation, it can be interpreted as an outcome of a cultural process of assimilation, a form of adaptation to local customs that appear passive and conformist. Third, the use of substances may be for certain ethnic groups a reflection of their culture that exalts the religious or recreational function of drug use. Last but not least, it should be noted that alcohol and drug abuse may represent the outcome of a social marginalization and exclusion process.

Especially for second-generation immigrants, drug use fits into practical emulation, so consuming alcohol and drugs means sharing a path of social integration. In other words, they take the consumption habits of young Italians to feel more Italian. The practice can be passive (imitation, adaptation) or active (internalization of norms in an effort to integrate themselves) [Interviewed 1].

Marginalization and social exclusion can lead to the use and abuse of psychotropic substances through different paths that reflect different and specific purposes: on the one hand, the state of deprivation related to the lack of a job can bring immigrants to illegal financing activities, such as the dealing of illegal drugs. In these cases, the step from seller to user can sometimes be very short. On the other hand, the alcohol and drug consumption in a situation of marginalization and social exclusion can also be read as an attempt to self-medicate a state of discomfort caused by the perceived failure of the migration project [Interviewed 1].

It should not be forgotten, however, as the predominant form of consumption is based on the model of multi-drug use: young nightlife regulars widely know substance effects and try to mix and match their use according to the effects they want to achieve.

Nowadays, the multi-drug taking approach is dominant. It should be regarded as the emblem of a new post-modern attitude: alcohol and drug substances, like other subcultural devices (clothing types, hairstyles, accessories, clubs, music, etc.) are often products of style's "big supermarket" where the individual reflexively resorts to according to their own tastes and inclinations. So, there are substances to warm up the evening mood (alcohol), to excite (ecstasy) and to calm and prepare for going to sleep (cannabis). Sometimes, party-goers mix very different substances to achieve new effects: an example is sniffing cocaine (a central nervous system stimulant) and ketamine (depressor), making the so-called CK combination (which recall the well-known brand "Calvin Klein") [Interviewed 1].

As mentioned above, the consumption of alcohol and drugs is not the only risk for young people who spend time in a recreational setting. In fact, the night is characterized by increased risk associated with fights, unsafe sexual intercourse and driving under the influence of alcohol. However, these relate to risks that are often overestimated:

Data reveals that those who are involved in risky situations during evenings out are about only 4% of party-goers. We forget that for the majority of young people risk rates are very low.

Anyway, we should pay considerable attention to alcohol consumption, because it is widespread and its consumption may cause other problems (fights, accidents, reckless sexual behavior). However, entry selection can help keep out drunken people and security staff workers in the clubs or discos should check on the safety of its club-goers. Drunken people are not allowed to enter in order to avoid disturbances [Interviewed 2].

At night, you can meet guys who seek violent brawls to vent their frustration. The reasons are often really stupid. Fights can widely be connected to overcrowding of the premises. More often than rarely, a simple bumping into between club-goers can be the pretext for a verbal confrontation that may lead to physical violence between drunken people. Other violent arguments can originate out of jealousy for one's partner. Episodes of race-related tensions/violence are certainly overestimated by the media with respect to what happens in reality. Moreover, violent episodes are avoided because many clubs carry out selection at the door and troublesome individuals are kept out [Interviewed 3].

Interviewees have pointed out that there is more information on substance use, and young people are now wiser than in the past concerning the effects of drugs, although the consequences of multi-drug use and the risk of addiction is neglected. In general, we can say that the new generations show an attitude of tolerance – probably due to group proximity – towards such substances as alcohol and cannabis, while drugs considered “heavy” are not tolerated in the same way (especially heroin). However, it should be noted that a more cautious behavior is related to the fear of incurring penalties (fines, driving suspensions and vehicle sequestrations) rather than a caring attitude towards their health. The peer group often has the function of informal control:

The new generations are more aware of their lifestyle and safety. Today, teens smoke tobacco less frequently. They consider hard drugs like heroin really dangerous. They are better prepared and informed. Many of them rarely or never drive after drinking. The number of accidents at night due to alcohol consumption has been halved in the last decade. People normally buy their illegal substances outside the club, so we cannot assume that clubs and discos are drug dealing places. Many of them consume at home to escape control. In other words, they are smarter [Interviewed 2].

There is more awareness, but alcohol is the substance that most reduces the perception of risk. People are worried about injuring their friends: this fear reduces the consumption of alcohol, while strangers remain quite indifferent. Cannabis is considered less dangerous and its use is considered closer to alcohol. Sometimes there is more attention to the acute effect than to addiction as a possible consequence of use (the priority may be summed up as follows: “I have to recover before returning home”) [Interviewed 4].

It must be said that, mainly due to the increase in driver safety checks, many young people prefer to consume alcohol and drugs at home [Interviewed 1].

## 5. Policy regarding youth nightlife

Currently, one of the most significant discussions about the nightlife concerns the regulatory policy on night-time entertainment venues. The interviewees, in fact, confirm this presence of very strict controls in the Italian scenario: even if these actions aim to ensure public safety, managers and nightlife regulars consider them as a form of oppression and interference in nightlife entertainment. In particular, the new traffic laws represent a turning point to help understand the current framework: the new legislation system very harshly affects those who drive under the influence of alcohol (the limit is now at 0.5 g/l), especially when the violator is a new license-holder.

The fines are high, people risk the suspension of their driver's license and also the seizure of the vehicle if they exceed the limit of 1.5 g/l. The policy of deterrence against alcohol consumption also relates to the ban on drinking after a certain time, but it has never been enforced. However, it should not be overlooked as to how this policy has brought about considerable changes in terms of greater risk awareness and, consequently, a drop in the number of car accidents.

The new laws on drinking and driving have completely changed nightlife behavior. We can see more moderation because the penalties are higher. The consequences are more serious for the younger ones (penalties for new license-holders are very strict). For adults, it is difficult to advise them to be more careful because they want to be more autonomous (they use their own cars more), and because they seem to have been getting away with it, so their behavior is more difficult to control [Interviewed 5].



The alcohol road safety checks by the police have had a great deterrent effect. It is a form of social control based on punishment. The Italian nightlife used to be a sequin world. There was an air of magic, as in a big show. Repression strategy has acted as a form of social moralization: fun has become a taboo, something to criminalize. This development has caused many nightlife regulars to go abroad (firstly, Ibiza). There was a law that set the limit to serve alcohol until 2:00 AM. Today, it has been moved to 3.00 AM, but this has not been respected by club owners. Luckily, what do you think would happen if drunk people who still wanted to have fun, had to go back home in the middle of the night? Nowadays, people purchase alcohol at the supermarket and consume it in the car while they are parked. They spend less and drink more. This limit is so stupid!

Owners don't want drunk people in their clubs, safety is important of course, but current policy is not able to ensure safety while at the same time, preserving people's desire to enjoy the night, have fun and be uninhibited [Interviewed 2].

The security issue is a relevant topic not only within the framework of national policy, but also for the individual night clubs themselves. In fact, as the interviewees well explain, club managers make a big effort to comply with the rules and regulations so that they can avoid problematic situations in terms of health and safety that could incur them heavy fines, or even the suspension of their operating license.

A club policy statement recalls a key-word: safety. And safety means just one thing: control. In recent years, the number of bouncers has doubled, not to mention security cameras. It should be remembered that nowadays, bouncers must do a training course. They are even allowed to do personal body inspections.

Another delicate issue is the selection at the door; this is a risky step. It has to be done by the security personnel and selectors at the door now pay more attention to the attitude and behavior of club goers, than to the aesthetic aspect. This can also be attributed to the economic crisis which has influenced people's clothing habits causing them to dress down and be more casually dressed. Police checks inside the clubs are considered a nuisance because all responsibility falls on the owners and promoters; they risk fines and club closings even if the violence occurs outside the premises [Interviewed 3].

Even if one can not deny the increase in police vehicle road checks in recent years, we should remember that also other strategies have been implemented to control safety in various leisure contexts, as these interviewees well explain:

Night-life administrative regulations and checks are considered a nuisance. There are prevention strategies and risk reduction campaigns which have been implemented and promoted by the health and social services. In most cases, the managers see them as a problem, although others might see them as an opportunity [Interviewed 5].

Many clubs see the presence of police and social workers as an opportunity to relieve themselves of the responsibility towards the safety of the club-goers and so, they do not hinder their presence [Interviewed 4].

Prevention initiatives and health and safety promotion campaigns are common in high concentration areas of discos and clubs (such as the Adriatic Coast). But often, the approach is only informative and the results are weak. Instead, the best results are obtained when different approaches and the involvement of environmental strategies are combined [Interviewed 1].

Interviewees highlight the designated driver initiative, but their opinions do not always concur:

We should be prudent for what concerns the designated driver programs. For example, what happens if a driver has an accident? Is the club owner responsible if he chose this program? The car insurance may decide not to pay [Interviewed 2].

I think the designated driver program could represent a good example of group responsibility amongst friends.

However, we must not ignore the magnitude of the problem: for example, a person who is not driving might decide to abuse alcohol without any worries about driving, but could find themselves in other risky situations (fights, unprotected sex, etc...). So, the designated driver program should be followed up on by other campaigns aimed at promoting healthy fun [Interviewed 1].

On the subject of self-management of spaces destined for youth nightlife, the experts interviewed state that these forms of civil participation are relatively sporadic in Italy, even if some exceptions can be found in the activities of social centers. In addition,

the interviewees complain that nightlife is considered as a problem rather than as an opportunity. Local governments operate in the role of mere control instead of encouraging the promotion of night-time entertainment. To sum up, youth initiatives are considered hazardous and therefore to be kept under control.

We should promote initiatives at night that encourage young people's creativity. Our need for fun is fundamental; we must revitalize our historic city centers. We should increase opportunities for young people [Interviewed 5].

The problem in Italy is that politicians see nightlife as a problem to keep under control, and not like an opportunity. Local administrations — and not only the national government — should deal with this issue more. For example, party organizers promote the presence of shuttles that connect the city center to the party, but I think this is a service that local administrators (and not owners) should provide. A club owner might organize a shuttle service to encourage access, but this is more of a business strategy, and not a health and safety promotion initiative. The economic crisis has further reduced the few available initiatives [Interviewed 4].

In Italy, there are no initiatives to promote fun at night on account of the widespread fear about people's safety, which is in contrast to other European countries. In Berlin, for example, young people are allowed to use specific areas. One can even say that the need for fun has increased with the economic crisis, but the lack of entertainment opportunities has only served to create more problems and dissatisfaction [Interviewed 2].

Some examples of recreational nightlife self-promotion can be traced to the role played by social centers. They often have a strong cultural promotion component (films, exhibitions, book presentations. . .). Nevertheless, they are not adequately supported politically, as the regulars of these places are often stigmatized because the centers are considered socially deviant places where young people go to smoke cannabis and drink alcohol [Interviewed 1].

When a tragic incident occurs □ such as a serious injury in a fight, a fatal car accident after a night at the disco, a rape, etc... □ the media's attitude is to criminalize night-time events, creating an atmosphere of terror and prompting public demonization of night-time entertainment.

In Italy, it is common to talk about the nightlife when a tragic incident occurs; for example, after a death due to drug use at a rave party. In fact, rave parties are described as condemnable for their nature, and the event promoters are considered responsible for not putting into place measures for the event goers' safety. Many discos and clubs have been closed when these incidents have occurred. The Mass Media offers a vision of nightly entertainment as something to demonize instead of orientating the discussion towards how to promote wholesome entertainment [Interviewed 1].

With respect to possible intervention policy, the experts' proposals may be summarized as follows:

- 1) promotion of greater accountability for local governments, which should consider promoting night-time entertainment (and not only its repression) as an important part of their political agenda;
- 2) recovering the creativity of the night, through the political participation of young people and by way of a bottom-up planning approach;
- 3) promotion of the safety issue taking into consideration tried and effective policy while avoiding iatrogenic effects in the meantime.

It should be important that local governments take into account night-time entertainment regulation as an important policy issue. This policy must be discussed in round tables with the participation of young people, managers, social workers, police and all stakeholders. The nightlife must combine fun, safety, freedom and control [Interviewed 4].

Often, transport means are managed by the party organizers and owners, who also have to bear the costs. I think this a matter that municipalities should consider in their political agenda [Interviewed 5]

Firstly, we must recognize that recreational spare time has a pedagogical function if we want to promote a nightlife culture. At night, in fact, young people have many experiences that help them grow up as well as shape their individual and social identity. Self-management and self-promotion are the basis for encouraging creativity. We should ask ourselves not only "How can I ensure people's safety", but also "How can I promote healthy fun?" We try to avoid drug dealing in a disco or at a party, but

we know that many people use them in a car parking lot or at home. Policy should be directed towards the promotion of health and safety, and not only in the direction of maintaining public order [Interviewed 1].

One cannot deny that certain policy – primarily that related to road safety – has reduced the number of tragic accidents, but nothing has been done to facilitate the organization of initiatives aimed at recovering that magical and jovial dimension that the Italian nightlife scene has lost [Interviewed 6].

A lot of public policy has adopted a myopic perspective: for example, think about the ban on serving alcohol after 2 AM. The direct effect has been only to encourage young people to consume supermarket purchased alcohol and drink it in the car before driving. Moreover, the government should help event organizers adapt buildings to the new regulations, which often impose high costs that are impossible to sustain for event managers that have been hard-hit by the economic crisis [Interviewed 2].

In conclusion, one needs to recognize the deep crisis in which the Italian nightlife scene finds itself in. Although it depends mainly on the economic crisis, current national and local policy can be found guilty of poorly considering the positive effects of recreational free time. Equally, it's necessary to reconsider the nightlife's positive side and thus, not focus only on the possible negative phenomena that may occur.

### *People interview*

#### Interviewed 1

Linda Lombi, Ph.D in Sociology, is a lecture at "Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore" in Milan. She's an expert about international drug policies.

#### Interviewed 2

Roberto Cominardi is the local President of SILB (Italian Trade Union for dance clubs) in Milan and C.E.O. at an important disco located in Milan.

#### Interviewed 3

Eugenio Pasi works as expert in public relationship for many discos in Adriatic coast.

#### Interviewed 4

Edo Polidori is the Director of the Addiction Service (Sert) in Forlì. He is a consultant for Emilia Romagna for harm reduction interventions. He is a member of the Civil Society Forum, a consultant centre of the European Commission consultation on drug policy.

#### Interviewed 5

Elisa Tramonti is a professional educator that works in the harm reduction field in the schools and the recreational setting of the nightlife. She works in the national project "Youngle" as an expert of peer education and web prevention.

#### Interviewed 6

Lydia Ricci works as a sociologist at Local Health System in Forlì. She is an expert of young risk behaviours and harm reduction approach. She works in the national project "Youngle" as an expert of peer education and web prevention.

## Conclusion

For young Italians, the nightlife means to live a moment of breaking the routine, during which they can meet new people and spend time with their friends. In other words, it could be defined as a pressure relief moment during which the relationship assumes a key role. Relaxing, socializing, and sharing could be considered the main purposes of the nightlife. Also experimental dimension assumes an important role, especially for the youngsters.

It has been discussed as the nightlife is punctuated by some rituals (the appetizer, the sharing of the preparations, the breakfast in the morning, the last cigarette at a friends' house ...) that reinforce the cohesion of the group. The recreational patterns are deeply influenced by individual characteristics (mainly, gender, age and sexual orientation), the temporal dimension (the

weekend habits are different from the other days of the week, for example) and personal tastes (in terms of music, setting, kind of people attended, and so on. . . ).


Relationships evolves during the growing process: for adolescents, it is important to attend a large groups, while for young adults relationships tend to be based on a smaller groups, and they often go out only with their partner.

The main risks associated to nightlife are: the psychotropic substances use and abuse, driving under their influence, violence and risky sexual behaviour. The abuse of alcohol is considered very dangerous, because it could determine other risky behaviors. Nowadays, the model of multi-drug use is considered prevalent.

The policy analysis deserves some further consideration. Accordingly with research findings mentioned above, in fact, new tendencies in the recreational scene are emerging. Briefly, it can be said that Italian nightlife has undergone profound changes, on one side as effect of national and local policies, and their attempt to limit the risks associated to the recreational setting (drug and alcohol abuse, risky sexual behaviors, traffic accidents, fights...); on the other side as a consequence of the deep economic crisis that has involved the country.

With regard to the first point (national and local policies), it should be admitted that in Italy policy makers consider recreational setting as a high-risk environments especially for psychoactive substance use. So, in general, the intervention strategy is fairly aggressive: «The manager has to bear the brunt of financial losses as well as a tarnished reputation – once the police arrive, the music falls silent, the lights go on and the party is over. Potential customers take their business somewhere else instead and regular customers stop showing up because of the frequent presence of uniformed police or undercover officers, all of which results in diminished profits. ( . . ). Furthermore, the proprietor can be subject to charges of violating Article 79 of the Fini-Giovanardi Act, which states that any person who provides the facilities of a public establishment or any type of private association for the congregation of individuals who use the facilities to consume drugs or psychotropic substances can be sentenced to between three and ten years in prison and subject to a fine in the amount ranging from EUR 3.000 to 10.000» (Pallaver, Rizzi, 2011, p. 48). The direct consequence of this approach is the drastic reduction of the number of nightlife events, especially during the warm season. Because demonization campaigns conducted by the mass media, clubs, raves and festivals are the contexts considered more at risk from the public opinion. Notwithstanding, owners oppose drug dealing inside their places to avoid the establishment acquire a bad reputation and so more often places where clubbers assume psychotropic substances are restrooms and cars parked outside the venues (Ibidem).

Turning now to the second phenomena which influence nightlife scenario in Italy (the economic crisis), one should point out the dramatic plunge of entertainment industry that depends on two distinct processes: the supply reduction (closure of many entertainment setting) and the demand reduction (many young people spend more leisure time in private setting to save money).

Many local owners have had to close because of a very demanding local taxation system and for the inability to adapt the environment to the rules imposed by the new safety legislation. Not rarely, some owners – especially in the South of Italy  work without proper authorizations giving example of abusiveness.

On the other hand, the economic difficulties of the young Italians determine a farewell into the private sphere, with a sharp reduction of evening outings so that, at the present, the majority of young people only comes out during the weekends.

Not only people have to carefully decide when going out, but also in which nightlife venues spend their spare time: doubtless, youngster (and especially students) prefer free access places instead of other place where they have to pay just to entry. In the meantime, they adopt saving strategies such as spend the pre-disco time at home (or friends' home) instead of going out or have an aperitif rather than a dinner in a restaurant. Exceptions could be recognized for people who look for trendy events.

Nonetheless, it has been found that the economic crisis has not led to a drastic reduction in the alcohol and drug consumption, even if a modest drop has been established, as mentioned above. Scenario is a bit more complex. For example, Pavarin (2013) has investigated consequences of financial depression on social life, on time management, and on psychoactive substances consumption though questionnaires and in-depth interviews among a sample of illegal drugs users in the metropolitan area of Bologna. The study reveals that people choose to reduce drug consumption and to privilege the quality, also spending a higher price. Many people claim that they use the more free time they have available for using substances. Moreover, new ways

of collective buying are spreading: it means that a group of persons shares economic resources to buy a bigger amount of drug with less money. So doing, they reduce the final cost. For others, the unemployment encourages smuggling practices aimed at finding an alternative system of subsistence albeit illegal. Roughly speaking, it should be hypothesized that young people pay more attention to where, when and how using psychotropic substances, and they prefer to assume high quality drugs in a safe context (such as private homes) instead of a public venue.

In their attempt to deal with the crisis, owner venues are trying to propose a diversification of recreation by promoting evenings at low cost or happy hour. Moreover, given the severity of traffic controls designed to control the consumption of alcohol, many managers try to attract customers by providing them with additional services (public transport for transfer to/from the train station, possibility of overnight stay in facilities, alcohol self-test...). From these fact, one may conclude that Italian nightlife is undergoing profound changes whose future is partly linked to the answers that policy makers and owners venues will provide to attract people.

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