

THE RAVE AS A CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL PHENOMENON

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Student Name: Ġorġ Vella

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THE RAVE AS A CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL PHENOMENON

Gorg Vella

M.Sc. Public Policy and Strategic Management

Department of Public Policy

Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy

University of Malta

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Abstract

This thesis was concerned with identifying how (i) actors within the Maltese rave scene policy subsystem are described, and (ii) whether raving communities influence public policy in their attempts to do so. To carry out this research, two Qualitative Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) studies were carried out: a Qualitative Media Analysis and Qualitative Semi-Structured Interviews. Conforming with NPF and Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) scholarship, this thesis showed that dominant policy narratives influence the policy process. This was identifiable through an analysis of policy narratives and the identification of coalitions within the Maltese rave scene policy subsystem. Results also showed that the Maltese rave scene does have a political dynamic, and that raving communities either chose to coalitions to articulate policy preferences or defied laws aimed at rave parties, however the effect of either strategies on policy outcomes could not be determined. This thesis contributed to the novel Qualitative applicability of the NPF and furthered ACF scholarship in a low salience policy area.

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List of Abbreviations

NPF – Narrative Policy Framework

ACF – Advocacy Coalition Framework

DJ(s) – Disc Jockey(s)

RQ(s) – Research Question(s)

EDM – Electronic Dance Music

SIN – Sex Is Natural

MFCC – Malta Fairs and Conventions Centre

LGBTIQ+ - Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer +

UK – United Kingdom

CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis

ToM – Times of Malta

TA – Thematic Analysis

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Rave culture, a 90s youth phenomenon, has been evolving worldwide over the past thirty (30) years; from illegal and unorganised beginnings to large scale licensed festivals (Callus, 2020). During this period, rave culture, consisting of rave parties and raving communities, has been the topic of many debates in sociological and youth studies (Thornton, 1995; Attard, 1999) (Callus, 2020). Rave culture has been described as moral panic (Zammit Pawley, 2012) and as youth subculture (Thornton, 1995). However public policy scholarship on raves and rave culture is scarce. Moreover, the bulk of policy literature on raves and rave culture focuses on regulatory policy regarding the rave scene, such as Glover (2003), and very few focus on raves as a contemporary political phenomenon. Hier's (2002) study explored how an outright ban on rave parties in Toronto triggered the inception of the 'PartyPeopleProject' – a coalition representing the Toronto raving communities – as well as a ten thousand (10,000) strong protest against the regulations banning rave parties in the city. Advocacy and dissent eventually resulted in the removal of the ban on rave parties, just three months after being introduced (Hier, 2002). My study shall explore if the Maltese rave scene reacted similarly on contextual policy issues by treating the Maltese rave scene as a policy subsystem in which policy actors form coalitions to articulate policy preferences.

As a raver and DJ myself, and as a student of public policy, carrying out a public policy scholarship with respect to the rave scene is a unique privilege. My personality and my experience within the Maltese rave scene have inspired this study and carrying it out will be a personal reflexive exercise. Reading about instances where raves were used as a political phenomenon around the cities of Europe and the United States of America inspired me to conduct research on whether this was also the case in the Maltese rave scene.

1.1. Research Aims and Objectives

This study aims to find instances where the rave scene in Malta has influenced or attempted to influence public policy, thereby outlining the use of 'rave' as a modern political phenomenon.

To carry this out this study must first identify the actors that make up the Maltese rave scene policy subsystem. This step will identify actors who work in favour of the Maltese rave scene, as well as those who argue against its beliefs and practices, and eventual policy resolutions arrived at within the policy subsystem. This is followed with the identification of methods used by those who work in favour of the Maltese rave scene in articulating their beliefs or expressing their policy preferences.

1.2. Research Scope

This research shall focus on the Maltese rave scene across a twenty-eight (28) year period from 1993 to 2021. This time frame was chosen since the first media coverage on the rave parties in Malta was published in 1993 and the last being published during 2021¹.

1.3. Research Questions

The aims and objectives of this research shall be met by answering the following two (2) research questions (RQs):

1) How does the media describe:

(1a) these accounts (media coverage);

(1b) those involved, and;

(1c) the policy issue(s) within the Maltese rave scene?

¹ As per Times of Malta digital archives, the sole source for Study 1 (in Methodological Chapter).

2) Do raving communities

(2a) consider raving as a modern political phenomenon, according to organisers?

(2b) If so, to what effect?

To satisfy the above research questions two (2) studies shall be conducted. Study 1 addresses RQ1 and shall consist of a qualitative media analysis in order to identify the actors within the Maltese rave scene policy subsystem. This study shall also provide a clear picture of policy struggles among these actors, as well as policy resolutions (by determining the dominant policy narrative). Study 2 addresses RQ2 and shall consist of semi-structured interviews with purposely chosen organisers within the Maltese rave scene to identify instances wherein the rave scene in Malta was used to promote policy preferences, their strategies in doing so, and to what effect (policy success/failure of raving a contemporary political phenomenon).

1.4. Key Definitions and Guiding Framework

1.4.1. Raves and the Rave scene

The 'rave' first emerged during the late 1980s in the UK (Ulrich & Harris, 2003). Historically, these parties started out in city clubs by disc jockeys (DJs) who were influenced by the House Music scene in Ibiza, Spain during 1987 (Merchant & MacDonald, 1994). These parties would go on all night and were characterised by a DJ (or a line-up of DJs) mixing electronic dance music records (House, Techno, Psytrance, and other subgenres) (Ulrich & Harris, 2003). This music generally consisted of repetitive beats that would invoke dancing. Eventually, these parties outgrew the nightclubs used in the early days of the scene, and thus the rave scene was born.

These new events were unlicensed, held in warehouses or in open-air (such as forests and fields) with high-decibel sound system set-ups, dancing, colourful and flamboyant clothing, and decorations (Anderson & Kavanaugh, 2007; Wilson, 2006; Merchant & MacDonald, 1994). As the rave scene grew internationally, Electronic Dance Music (EDM) records gained popularity within the wider music and club industry, which led to the rave scene eventually being commercialised (Anderson & Kavanaugh, 2007). Raves were also pushed into commercialisation due to anti-rave policies, such as the UK rave scene (Marchant & Macdonald, 1994).

1.4.2. 'Rave Culture'

Rave Culture has been categorised as a Youth Subculture (Hutson, 2000) which blends art in the form of EDM and social ideals (Scott, 2002). The 'youth' aspect is due to the demographics of ravers who were often between the ages of fifteen (15) to twenty-five (25) (Hutson 2000). Across various literature 'Rave Culture' has a deep-rooted sense of community, with focus on empathy, and the establishment of cultural capital (Hutson, 2000). Alwakeel (2010) explains that Rave Culture is primarily hedonistic and rejects subordination to structures that aim to disrupt its hedonism.

According to Saunders (1995) The experience of raving was comparable to tribal rituals or ceremonies, where ravers left their egos at the entrance and sought hedonism. Morgan (2004) described raving as a "culturally revolutionary practice" as it did not present boundaries based on gender, race, economic standing, or sexuality, but instead offered liberation, egalitarianism, and music; After all the sound had emerged in Chicago's Black Gay Club scene. These characteristics made 'rave' distinctive from the more commercial Club Culture, as raving communities had a more social aspect to them, rather than only commercial goals.

1.4.3. Advocacy Coalition Framework

Given the shared beliefs among ravers (Hudson & Scott, 2000; Saunders, 1995) the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) will be deployed in this thesis to understand the Maltese rave scene as a policy subsystem. The ACF allows for researchers to identify key stakeholders within a policy subsystem, their beliefs and shared policy preferences, and areas of disagreement between the policy actors. The actors eventually form coalitions within the policy subsystem to articulate their shared policy preferences and beliefs and engage in strategies to influence policy outcomes (Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier, 1994).

This framework posits four (4) premises; (i) policy change, and learning therein requires a perspective of at least ten (10) years; (ii) that the optimal way to identify policy change overtime is by focusing on the interactions between the different actors in the policy area and how they attempt to influence policy outcomes; (iii) that subsystems include an intergovernmental dimension – government actors and non-government entities such as law enforcement agencies; (iv) and that public policies can be conceptualised similarly to belief systems (set of values and causal assumptions) (Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier, 1994).

Both studies in this thesis are grounded by these assumptions. In Study 1 actors within the Maltese rave scene policy subsystem will be identified, and their interactions (and eventual policy resolutions) recorded through qualitative media analysis. In Study 2 interviews with organisers within the Maltese rave scene shall serve to identify the conceptualisation of dissent as a policy solution and its effect (if any) on public policy. Both studies consider a period of more than a decade (1993-2021), and both may carry an intergovernmental dimension within the actors' interactions among each other.

1.5. Overview

The first chapter of this thesis consisted of the Introduction wherein the context of the study, research aims, objectives and goals were presented. In this opening chapter key definitions and this research's guiding framework were also presented.

The next chapter will consist of the Literature Review. Herein literature on the Maltese rave scene will be appraised, as well as instances wherein rave parties were used as a contemporary political phenomenon in contextual policy issues across the world. The chapter concludes with an outline of the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) with respect to the role of policy narratives in the policy process concerning rave parties, or issues highlighted by actors within the Maltese rave scene policy subsystem.

The Methodology then starts with a discussion on the rationale behind the choice of the NPF to carry out both studies. The chapter continues by outlining the research design and methods used for data collection, along with an outline of data analysis techniques. Ethical considerations are discussed and outlined in accordance with GDPR Laws and University of Malta by-laws.

The Results chapter is then presented, where findings for both studies are portrayed at length. Results for Study 1 and Study 2 are reported separately in this section.

Finally, the Discussion chapter discusses the findings of this thesis with respect to the ACF, and how they build on the literature discussed. The Conclusion chapter then ends this thesis by providing recommendations for future research along with the author's concluding remarks.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter the topic was introduced, key terms and theories were defined, and research questions were arrived at following an outline of the research's aims, objectives, and goals. This chapter provides an outline of what is known on the Maltese rave scene, and what is known about the sociological and political significance of the rave scene across different contexts - a gap in literature is identified with respect to public policy scholarship on the potential of raving communities' influence on public policy. This chapter ends with an outline of the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) given that throughout the literature review the media presents itself as a catalyst in policy debates concerning the rave scene or issues highlighted within, as well as links between NPF and ACF scholarship.

2.2. The Maltese Rave Scene

In Malta, rave parties, or S.I.N. parties as they were known initially (Callus, 2020; Camilleri, 2003; Zammit Pawley, 2012; Attard, 2019) were first recorded in Gozo, among other locations, during the late 1980s (Camilleri, 2003). S.I.N. was understood to abbreviate 'Sex Is Natural', and the media sensationalism surrounding these events highlighted policy issues of drug-abuse and sex (Zammit Pawley, 2012; Camilleri, 2003). Zammit Pawley (2012) highlighted the moral panic created by media narratives surrounding the rave subculture in Malta, however Saliba (2000) suggests that no malicious intent and lewd behaviour was intended behind this name (S.I.N.).

Similarly, to how they were described in the UK (Anderson & Kavanaugh, 2007; Wilson, 2006; Marchant & MacDonald 1994), ravers in Malta characterised themselves through distinguished fashion (Callus, 2020), such as colourful and extravagant clothing and hairstyles (Camilleri, 2003).

From 1993 onwards, the rave scene in Malta started growing (Callus, 2020), which led to many clubs and bars catering their venues for rave music and crowds (Camilleri, 2003). The club scene located at Paceville adopted genres of acid house, techno, and garage, and also transformed their names to cater for the growing rave scene (Callus, 2020; Bonello, 2012).

However, the establishments in Paceville eventually transformed into multi-purpose venues, turning to more commercial music, and even offering culinary services (Bonello, 2012). These changes affected the Maltese rave subculture (Callus, 2020), and eventually the rave scene was no longer associated with Paceville. The changes in the international rave scene have brought a wider definition to the term rave, which were initially defined as outdoor events, with high-decibel sound systems, DJs, and a dancefloor (Anderson & Kavanaugh, 2007; Wilson, 2006; Merchant & MacDonald, 1994). Siokou & Moore (2008) presented four (4) changes due to commercialisation; (i) location, size, and marketing of events, (ii) composition of attendees, (iii) the atmosphere, and (iv) drug-related practices. Changes (i), (ii), and (iii) have been noted in Callus' (2020) study on the Maltese rave subculture through his arguments on social media and accessibility, and underground vs commercial, suggesting the "underground' disappeared" (Callus, 2020).

Attard (2019) even uses the terms rave and festival interchangeably - both defining events held outdoors where DJs mixed EDM records on a high-decibel sound system, and attendees dancing on the dancefloor. Promotions such as Exit and Love Sexy started organising large-scale festival events during the late 90s and early 2000s, hosting a number of local and international DJs playing different subgenres on different stages, showing how the rave scene

in Malta transcended from small-scale, unregulated events, to “revenue-making behemoths” in a wider party industry (Callus, 2020; Zammit Pawley, 2012; Camilleri, 2003). These trends were similar to those on a global scale, raves moved into licensed, large venues and arenas, and rave culture transformed into a consumer culture (Siokou & Moore, 2008; St John, 2011), and big business (Wilson, 2006).

Nowadays, the rave scene in Malta has established its base at Liquid Club (generally, see Attard, 2019), in the limits of San Ġwann, and is regulated as part of the wider clubbing/party industry. Festivals such as Glitch have also been acclaimed for their potential to attract tourist influx by a sitting Minister in 2018 (Callus, 2020). In fact, this year the promotion behind Glitch Festival shall be curating another festival in December 2023. The new festival, ‘Dalma’ shall be held at MFCC ta’ Qali, on the 8th and 9th of December, featuring twenty-two (22) acts, including four (4) local acts. During the past decade, international promotions such as ‘Abode Records’, ‘World Club Dome’, ‘Tomorrowland’, ‘Defected’, ‘Trip’, ‘Drumcode’ and ‘bpm’ have been organising annual festivals around the Malta and Gozo, boasting subgenres of Techno and House, with the latter two ceasing their annual appointments during the Covid-19 pandemic. Raves in ‘underground’ settings have disappeared according to Callus (2020), however this study aims to challenge this claim by investigating whether rave parties were organised to influence/challenge policy between 1993 and 2021 through Study 2.

2.3. Patterns and Characteristics

There are a number of studies which have linked theories related to subcultures towards the rave scene (Callus, 2020; Thornton, 1995; Gelder & Thornton, 1997) as well as later contradicting studies (Muggleton, 2005; Blackman, 2007).

Thornton (1995) suggested that rave subcultures differentiated themselves from what was presumed to be mainstream, thereby acquiring a new social status through their uniqueness. Gelder & Thornton (1997) suggest that these differentiations from the dominant culture signified separation by creating new values and rituals, such as through music or appearance. In his study, Callus (2020) makes links with the rave scene in Malta during the 1990s which was characterised by “shimmering neon clothing”. Muggleton (2005) rendered Thornton (1995) and Gelder & Thornton (1997) no longer applicable due to dichotomies in their theories, and moved towards post-subcultural theories, opting for more fluid terminologies such as neo-tribes over subcultures. Whereas Thornton (1995) argued that rave subcultures moved away from dominant cultures to become unique, Muggleton (2005) argued that this ‘uniqueness’ comes at a constant re-assessment, indicating that young people have indefinite choices when it comes to leisure activities and dress-styles.

However, the nature of this study is to investigate how the media describes raves, the raving community (actors), and the issues raised within the Malta rave scene policy subsystem, as well as whether and how rave communities influence the policy cycle on contextual issues, such as regulations targeting the Maltese rave scene, by using raving as a modern political phenomenon. Callus’ (2020) findings identified a shift in subculture theories, from conflict-based to more adaptable and fluid theories on groups, challenging Thornton (1995), however he also states:

“These events have shown that electronic dance music and the rave/club subculture can unite in order to break down hegemonic statuses within the dominant culture.”

Callus (2020)

Callus (2020) also draws examples from events such as the 'Rave the Planet'² (previously known as 'Love Parade') held annually in Berlin, and a video documentary on Bassiani, a dance club in Tbilisi, Georgia named "Techno as a Political Force: Tbilisi's Bassiani Against the Stigma"³. According to Callus (2020) this potential for rave culture to be used as a political force merited further research. This thesis aims to explore this notion by (i) identifying the actors within the Maltese rave scene policy subsystem, monitor their interactions over a long (28 years) period of time, and understand policy resolutions arrived at, then (ii) determine whether organisers (as actors within the Maltese rave scene policy subsystem) use raves as a contemporary political phenomenon, and to what effect on policy.

Over a thirty (30) year span, the Maltese rave scene has been composed of promoters, DJs, ravers (attendees), and other stakeholders, such as sound system rental services. Moreover, the international rave scene has undergone considerable changes due to regulations and commercialisation (Siokou & Moore, 2008), and given that the Maltese rave scene echoed trends from the international rave scene in the 1990s (Callus, 2020), it is likely that changes in regulations on rave parties in Malta and the commercialisation of the scene thereafter has affected the Maltese rave scene too, as indicated in Callus' (2020) results. The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) suggests policy actors, such as the stakeholders of the Maltese rave scene can form coalitions to articulate policy preference or advocate against specific public policies (Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier, 1994). This theory may be applied to this study to assess how the Maltese rave scene policy subsystem is described to identify actors, methods of how raving communities engaged with policymakers, and whether these engagements influenced the policy process by pushing dominant policy narratives in their advocacy. This therefore suggests that this study conforms with ACF assumptions.

² <https://www.berlin.de/en/events/7600572-2842498-rave-the-planet-love-parade.en.html>

³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHidcNsKwxY&ab_channel=ArteTRACKS

2.4. Raving as a Modern Political Phenomenon

The rave subculture transcends beyond borders and mobilises itself across different policy contexts around the world, and even on a local scale in Malta (Attard, 2019). These issues can vary from gender and reproductive rights⁴, Racism (Garcia de Medina-Rosales, 2022), Homophobia/Transphobia, and LGBTQI+ rights (Kent, 2021), among others, and even the ‘right to peaceful assembly’ (Euronews, 2023). Raving communities also mobilise to challenge hegemonic forces when policy discourse is regarding raves as an issue themselves (Hier, 2002). Hier (2002) recounts the ‘Party People Project’ which articulated policy preferences on behalf of the Toronto rave scene coalition, as well as protests organised outside Toronto’s City Hall. A mix of advocacy and dissent eventually resulted in the removal of the ban on rave parties only three (3) months after they were banned (Hier, 2002).

Almost twenty (20) years later, in Poland during 2020 and 2021, protests relating to women’s rights, specifically reproductive rights, sparked a political movement within the Polish rave scene⁴. Records such as ØTTA⁵’s ‘Silence is Oppression’ were spun to rally one of Poland’s biggest ever protest movements. The production and release of issue-specific records regarding the perception of women followed, as ØTTA released an album named ‘WXMEN’ on the French Techno label ‘Possession’⁶, highlighting the link between politics and music (see Vassallo, 2020). This signified that even though the rave subculture has morphed considerably since its inception (Callus, 2020) (Siokou & Moore, 2008), it still maintains social relevance, such as stated in Anderson & Kavanaugh (2007) and may be considered as a novel way of articulating policy preferences – a contemporary political phenomenon. This example exhibits that one way in which this social aspect remains intact is by coalitions forming to

⁴ <https://www.electronicbeats.net/rave-anthems-womens-strike-poland/>

⁵ ØTTA is a female DJ and producer from Portugal and is well known in the contemporary Techno scene worldwide.

⁶ <https://open.spotify.com/album/4L7s3XsEsU1YVJU9jrWEII?si=FeSa-xv9TkmZm-VwLYgfkQ>

oppose hegemonic forces (an example of what was posited by Callus (2020)), however the commercial aspect is evident through the issue and selling of records.

2.5. The role of Narratives

A crucial and interesting factor in analysing literature and other secondary data on rave subcultures is the narrative in which they are portrayed. In the timelines outlined in the sections dedicated to 'Rave and the Rave scene' and 'Rave scene in Malta' it can be deduced that the rave scene was initially seen as a shock, both in the UK and in Malta, and therefore narratives portrayed these events in a defaming manner – media rapportage and debates on the rave scene revolved around claims drug abuse, and also sex in raves, and homosexuality in the Maltese context (Merchant and MacDonald, 1994; Zammit Pawley, 2012; Camilleri, 2003; Times of Malta, 1993).

Over the past thirty (30) years, policy narratives about raving and rave subcultures reflected socio-political contexts; The Black Lives Matter movement (Garcia de Medina-Rosales, 2022), Ukraine's struggle for LGBTQI+ rights (Kent, 2021), and more recently showcasing raving communities contribution towards Ukraine's defence in the ongoing war which was launched by Russia in 2022. These contributions were both from within Ukraine's rave subculture, which hosted 'rave repairs' (United Nations, 2022), and the wider, global, rave culture's contribution through awareness, donations (Reuters, 2022), and dedicated events. In Malta, Disorder (MT) organised an event in aid of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society at Liquid Club in San Gwann. All proceeds from the event were donated towards the Ukrainian Red Cross Society, moreover, all of the DJs, and the club owners contributed towards the event by giving their services free-of-charge (fig.1).

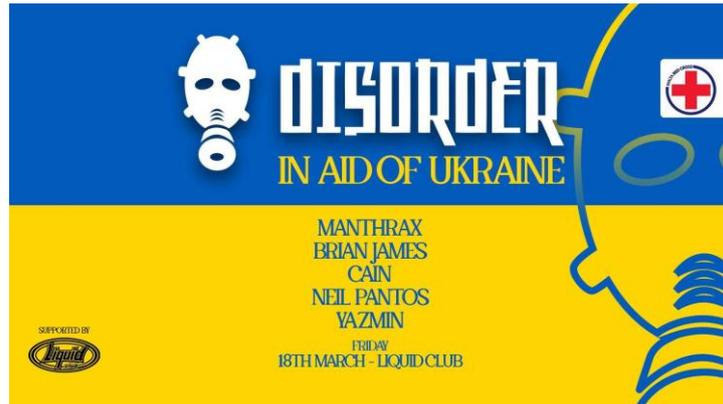


Fig.1 Poster for an event organised by Disorder Malta at Liquid Club Malta in March 2022 in aid of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society.

In Malta, besides the social dynamic, the commercial interest and potential-for-profit surrounding the rave scene generated interest from investors, and support from politicians (Callus, 2020). Coverage on the rave scene started boasting it as a revenue-making avenue and a tourist attraction (Malta Independent, 2004; Callus, 2020), a considerable leap from the “moral panic” surrounding the rave scene during the 1990s (Zammit Pawley, 2012). In a manner that is inconsistent with the narratives which started to be associated with the rave scene (Malta Independent, 2004; Callus, 2020), renowned figures in the scene such as Matthew De Giorgio, managing director of Gianpula Clubbing Village - the venue in which Glitch Festival, a modern rave, is held - argued that the wider party industry, under which the regulated rave scene falls, was suffering considerably during Covid-19, and called for aid towards clubs and discotheques, beyond bars, and ‘każini’⁷. At the same time, illegal raves started re-emerging in Malta, triggering mixed public reactions, and policy reactions (Lovin Malta, 2021; Times of Malta, 2021). This suggests that the Maltese rave scene subsystem of composed of several diverse actors which can form coalitions to share concerns or share beliefs.

⁷ <https://ohmyalta.com.mt/2021/02/19/watch-interview-with-the-brains-behind-maltas-entertainment-destination/>

Both the inception and the re-awakening of Malta's rave scene have a series of policy struggles that are marred by conflicting narratives; the regulation of the rave scene and the introduction of the 4 a.m. curfew for loud music, as well as curbing drug use in the late 1990s (Callus, 2020; Zammit Pawley, 2012; Attard, 2019), along with the return to the dancefloor after Covid-19 (Lovin Malta, 2021) and the growth of the rave scene since (Callus, 2020). Since media has been an evident actor across both settings, a media analysis presents itself as a crucial informant in satisfying RQ1⁸, similarly to how Hier (2002) conducted a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to flesh out moral panic as a political strategy to promote a ban on rave parties in Toronto, Canada. This would draw out actors and coalitions within the Maltese rave scene's policy subsystem who are either are blamed for policy issues, fall victim to them, or advocate for solutions in their distinctive methods, be it through policy or non-institutional methods.

Given that RQ1 and RQ2 are concerned with policy narratives and advocacy (through the use of raving as a contemporary political phenomenon), the Narrative Policy Framework interplayed with the Advocacy Coalition Framework has been identified as the optimal methodology to satisfy both research questions.

2.6. The Narrative Policy Framework

The Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) is a relatively novel framework that is gaining popularity in public policy literature; more specifically in understanding narrative elements and how they cause policy change by constructing meaning through 'stories' (Keunzler & Stauffer 2022; Amiri et. al. 2012; Gray & Jones, 2016). Shanahan et al. (2017) state that an increasing number of scholars conduct policy process scholarship by adopting NPF seeking to

⁸ 1) How does the media describe (1a) these accounts (media coverage), (1b) those involved, and (1c) the policy issue(s) within the Maltese rave scene?

understand the role of policy narratives throughout the process. Considering the research aims and the research questions, as well as the guiding theories of both research questions, it can be determined that it is within the scope of this research to apply the NPF to investigate whether policy narratives by the media and the rave scene in Malta influence the policy process of issues which may be highlighted by the actors within the policy subsystem.

NPF studies abide by *five* (5) core assumptions (Shanahan, 2018; 2017; McBeth & Pearsall, 2018)

1. Social Construction (areas within policy reality are socially constructed)
2. Bounded Relativity (different policy realities exist, but are bounded by belief systems and ideologies which develop overtime; therefore, these policy realities are not random, but rather maintain stability over time)
3. Generalisable Structural Elements (policy narratives are different from non-narrative text due to their distinctive qualities such as the NPF definition of policy narrative (narrative content and form)
4. Three levels of analysis that can interact (analysis takes place on an individual level (micro), group/coalition level (meso), or on an institutional scale (macro), moreover, analysis may be adopted from various levels of analysis, as findings in different levels may have inter-relevance (Shanahan et. al, 2017)
5. Narratives have a central role in human cognition and communication (an individual tends to process information in the form of a story in order to make sense of the world) (Shanahan et al, 2017)

These assumptions echo those of the ACF. Policy narratives are pushed by coalitions who form within the policy subsystem to promote solutions that fit their agenda. Both the NPF and the ACF assume that individuals and coalitions interpret policy issues subjectively though

social construction, and that these engage in 'storytelling' to convey their arguments. Both frameworks recognise interdependence of policy actors, and both understand the stability of policy realities overtime, and that policy change is not random. Shanahan et al (2011) state that the use of ACF and NPF scholarship contribute to an advancement of our understanding of the policy process, especially at the subsystem level of analysis.

In their study, Shanahan et al (2011) posit four (4) hypothesis which this research shall explore. Firstly, their research posited that the stronger the coalition is through narrative representation, the more likely it will success in influencing policy outcomes (HP1). Secondly, that policy narratives drive policy change through particularly persuasive policy narratives (HP2). Third, policy narrative characters influence the opinions of policy makers and the public (HP3). Fourth, that policy narratives are used to tap into public opinion to manipulate the scope of conflict (such as the 'devil-shift below) (HP4).

The core components of any NPF research are Narrative Form and Narrative Content. Narrative Form (or structure) refers to the elements of the narrative, such as the setting (space, time), the characters (the heroes, the villains, and the victims among other forms), the plot which links the characters to the setting and to each other (Assumption #3). The final element is the solution - the moral of the story, although realistically this solution is presented in ameliorative steps (through public policy), and not an outright happy-ending to the story (Shanahan et al, 2017). A case in point would be policies introduced to regulate the rave scene in Malta following an 'ecstasy' overdose in November 1998 (Times of Malta, 1998). Here the drug 'ecstasy' which was synonymous to 'rave parties' due to media narratives surrounding the Maltese rave scene in the late 1990s, is portrayed as a villain. The overdose victim would be the victim of the story, and the regulatory policy introductions would be the policy solution to the story.

Narrative Content then gives meaning to the elements of the Narrative Form, thus creating policy realities. This happens since individuals (micro), groups and coalitions (meso), and

entire nations (macro) are oriented by a set of beliefs and values (Shanahan et al, 2011), more so when considering issues of 'liberty' and "social justice' (Shanahan et al, 2017), and that these are not random, but rather stable overtime. This stability in values is reflected in the NPF's core assumptions (#2). Depending on the values and beliefs, narrators deploy different Narrative Strategies in order to align with the stability in patterns hypothesised in assumption #2. These strategies are meant to muster support (Shanahan, et al., 2017), with the most common strategies being (i) 'scope of conflict' (cost vs benefits), (ii) 'causal mechanisms' (intentional, inadvertent, and mechanical) (Gray & Jones, 2016), and the (iii) 'devil-angel shift' (Shanahan, et al, 2017). The devil shift emphasises the villains' power, whilst minimising the power of the 'good'; and therefore, actors portray their opponents as more powerful, and 'evil' (Sabatier et al, 1987). This is done by (i) questioning opponents legitimacy', (ii) being more critical of their opponent than most members within their policy reality, and (iii) depicting their opponents as more powerful than themselves (Sabatier et al 1987). However, when winning, the angel-shift is deployed, casting heroes as winners over evil (Shanahan, et al, 2017).

2.7. Conclusion

This chapter outlined a historical timeline of the Maltese rave scene and then emphasised on trends which echo the international rave scene. Cases in which the rave scene was used to challenge were observed, as well as studies on the sociological and political dynamic of rave culture across varied contexts. Following the identification of the media as a main informant, the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) was outlined as the optimal framework to carry out this study - with respect to the grounding theory of the research questions (ACF) - and was henceforth outlined. The next chapter, being the Methodology, will be dedicated towards how the NPF will be moulded in order to satisfy the research aims of this thesis. The NPF will be deployed to satisfy both RQs with respect to ACF assumptions:

- 1) *How does the media describe;*

(1a) *these accounts (media coverage);*

(1b) *those involved, and;*

(1c) *the policy issue(s) within the Maltese rave scene?*

2) *Do raving communities*

(2a) *consider raving as a modern political phenomenon, according to organisers?*

(2b) *If so, to what effect?*

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological approach for this thesis and starts by restating the goals and objectives presented in the introductory chapter. This is followed by a discussion on the rationale behind the choice of the NPF as the approach to this study, after which an outline of the research design that fits the NPF according to this research. Two studies will be carried out; a qualitative content analysis (Study 1), and qualitative semi-structured interviews (Study 2). These methods will answer RQs 1 and 2 respectively. The sampling and exclusion criteria and data collection methods shall be presented for each study respectively. This is followed by a description of data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.2. Research Goals and Objectives

The main aim of this study is to determine whether the Maltese rave scene is a contemporary political phenomenon, and its effect (if any) on public policy. To attain this aim two main objectives were determined. The first requires an understanding of the Maltese rave scene and the policy issues surrounding it. To do so, this thesis employed the ACF to aid in identifying coalitions formed by actors within the Maltese rave scene as a policy subsystem. Following the identification of actors, coalitions, and policy issues (and solutions), particularly those who work in favour of the Maltese rave scene, strategies to influence or challenge policy will be identified.

3.3. Rationale

This research has taken a critical stance in outlining the media as a crucial factor in determining dominant policy narratives on the Maltese rave scene. This stance was drawn

from previous studies on the Maltese rave scene which emphasised the media sensationalism surrounding the Maltese rave scene during the 1990s (Saliba, 2003; Zammit Pawley, 2012; Callus, 2020). In Hier (2002) moral panic caused through media discourse was also dubbed as a strategy in promoting regulations or bans on rave parties in Toronto.

Studies up to now on the Maltese rave scene were attributed to notions of 'subcultural capital' (Callus, 2020), clubbing geography (Attard, 2019), as well as an array of studies on substance abuse within rave parties (Cassar, 1999; Casingena, 2008). This research is concerned with identifying the actors within the Maltese rave scene policy subsystem as well as the scene's potential to influence policy, and if so, by which methods, thereby outlining it as a political phenomenon. Given the weight and development of narratives - moral panic to festival tourism - pushed on the Maltese rave scene since its inception (late 80s) up to 2023 (Zammit Pawley, 2012; Callus, 2020), as well as the wider application of the term 'rave' following regulatory and commercial developments in the global and domestic rave scene (Siokou & Moore, 2008; Attard, 2019; Callus, 2020), the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) (Shanahan et al 2017) was deemed ideal as the methodology to satisfy the Research Questions. The application and analysis of the NPF for this study is inspired by Gray & Jones (2016) who similarly applied the framework for qualitative research. Analysis is similarly inspired from Gray & Jones (2016) and Smith's (2020) application of the NPF who applied narrative elements (setting, characters, and policy solution) as their initial codes. For emergent themes, coding is inspired from Braun and Clarke's (2008) Thematic Analysis.

The first decade of the NPF's existence was spent proving the framework's validity by building knowledge of whether and how narratives could be measured empirically (Schlaufer et al 2022). As validation for the framework grew, so too did its popularity, and this was particularly attributed to two (2) reasons: Firstly, narrative data, for the most part, is freely available. Second; given the intensity of effort dedicated to proving the framework's validity (clear

assumptions and definitions on what constitutes a narrative), thus NPF studies became replicable in different scenarios (Schlaufer et al 2022; Shanahan et al 2017).

Schlaufer et al (2022), in their study on the NPF's 'travel' capacities within different contexts, policy fields, and methodological approaches, argue that the NPF is well placed to diffuse outside of its more traditional approaches of empirical measurement. In fact, recent studies deploying NPF have embraced the method's potential in qualitative applications (Gray & Jones, 2016). Schlaufer et al (2022) emphasise two aspects to consider when applying NPF to qualitative studies; adherence to NPF core assumptions (also emphasised heavily in Gray & Jones, 2016), as well as clarity in the researcher thought process as to why narrative analysis is important in their policy context.

Gray & Jones (2016) argue similarly. NPF studies can integrate more interpretive, qualitative tools when topics are of low salience - such as this study - and therefore have insufficient data to carry out a statistical analysis, unlike a NPF study on gun culture and women carried out by Schwartz (2019) in the USA, using quantitative content analysis. However, when narrative data is scarce, qualitative analysis is an essential tool to deploy (and diffuse) the NPF (Schlaufer et al 2022; Jones & Radealli, 2016). In applying NPF to studies of low salience policy topics such as this study the traditional NPF assumptions and definitions remain intact (Schlaufer et al 2022; Gray & Jones 2016), however quantitative standards are 'removed' and replaced with recognised qualitative standards (Gray & Jones 2016), such as Braun & Clarke's (2008) Thematic Analysis (TA). Similarly, to Gray & Jones (2016) initial codes will be extracted from Assumption #3 of the NPF – that policy narratives have generalizable elements - meaning that policy narratives are composed of a setting, characters, and moral of the story (policy solution), and narrators deploy narrative strategies. Initial coding using narrative content has been used in other qualitative studies, such as Gray & Jones (2016), Rodrigues & Barcelos (2020) and Smith (2020). Moreover, Braun & Clarke's (2008) TA, developed for qualitative analysis, allows for a more organic approach to coding (Braun & Clarke, 2016). This is crucial

for this study, as codes - and possibly themes - of 'narrative strategy' or motivational accounts may emerge during analysis. Since being developed, TA (Braun & Clarke, 2008) has become the most widely cited approach (Braun & Clarke, 2016), as it can be used with both large and small data sets.

This application of NPF will allow for an interpretive analysis of narratives with respect to the policy process, thereby allowing this study to (i) identify narratives on the Maltese rave scene, and construct a 'story' over twenty-eight (28) years (ii) identify the narrative strategies used by raving communities within the Maltese rave scene, and their potential to influence the policy process (iii) notice change in narrative strategies or assess the effectiveness of these narrative strategies with respect to narratives on the Maltese rave scene in the media across a twenty-eight (28) year span. These yields will be used to satisfy research questions and contribute to the diffusion of NPF studies, placing this study amongst the new generation of NPF scholarship (as predicted by Schlauffer et al 2022). Moreover, the application of the ACF allows for actors pushing a common narrative to be grouped under coalitions within the Maltese rave scene as a policy subsystem. This will allow for the identification of dominant policy narratives emanating from opposing camps.

3.4. Research Design

This section will be dedicated to the data collection tools deployed for this research. Two studies will be carried out to satisfy two research questions. This section will first present the outline of both studies, followed by further elaboration of each method. This section is followed by an outline of data analysis practices used for both studies.

3.4.1. Study 1 and Study 2: An Outline

This thesis asks two research questions:

- 1) *How does the media describe;*
 - (1a) *these accounts (media coverage);*
 - (1b) *those involved, and;*
 - (1c) *the policy issue(s) within the Maltese rave scene?*
- 2) Do raving communities;
 - (2a) consider raving as a modern political phenomenon, according to organisers?
 - (2b) If so, to what effect?

The following studies answer RQ1 and RQ2, respectively. Study 1 involved a qualitative media analysis by which sub questions 1a, 1b, and 1c will be addressed. In Study 1 narratives on the Maltese rave scene will be extracted from media articles over a twenty-eight (28) year period.

Study 2 consisted of seven (7) qualitative semi-structured interviews with six (6) of them being held with organisers within the rave scene that can give perspectives across different chronological settings. The interviews also include an interview with an expert and long-standing figure in the Maltese leisure industry. Purposive sampling was used for this study.

Analysis for both studies is inspired from Gray & Jones' (2016) application of the NPF, as stated above, where initial codes shall be drawn from narrative elements (setting, characters, and policy solutions). However, codes for narrative strategies which may emerge throughout analysis are inspired from Braun & Clarke's (2008) Thematic Analysis, and not grounded theory which was applied by Gray & Jones (2016) in their study.

3.4.2 Study 1: Qualitative Media Analysis

NPF scholarship assumes narratives impact policy (Schlaufer et al 2022), therefore a content analysis seemed necessary to satisfy RQ1. Upon initial searches in open-access databases using keywords such as 'Maltese rave scene', 'sin parties', and 'rave parties, Malta', it was found that data was scarce, and thereby insufficient to carry out a quantitative content analysis. This led to the decision of adopting a qualitative approach to content analysis.

3.4.3. Sampling

The corpus for media analysis was derived from the Times of Malta archives, through their website⁹. The Times of Malta, the oldest daily newspaper that still circulates in Malta, together with the Sunday Times of Malta - sister publication - are published by Allied Newspapers. 'Times of Malta' is independent, with no political or external affiliation. A series of considerations were onboarded in identifying the Times of Malta as the only source to inform the content analysis, these are outlined and reflected upon in table 1.

⁹ www.timesofmalta.com

Congruence with Research Objectives	The Times of Malta has consistently covered the topic from a non-affiliated stance over the chronological period of this study. Moreover, the Times of Malta are based in Malta, within the geographic scope of this study. Therefore, this source is deemed as a valuable source.
Data Availability and Access	The Times of Malta has a subscription-based online archive, ranging as far back as 1935. The subscription confirms that data was drawn in an ethical manner. The online archive is equipped with keyword search tool.
Data Quality	Out of the extracts outlined for analysis two (2) scans in the archive were not of decent quality to the extent that these were not legible. Moreover, Times of Malta's disclaimer of no external or political affiliation was a crucial aspect to data quality.
Historical Context	Given that narratives and shifts in narratives on the Maltese rave scene are crucial to inform this study's RQ1, the use of a single data source allows for insights to be drawn on changes in narrative strategy, and the development of the 'story' from a single <i>storyteller</i> .

Table 1: Considerations in identifying Times of Malta as the sole informant for Study 1

Paid subscription access to the Times of Malta (ToM) archives was acquired, and a self-assessment was submitted through URECA for the purpose of the narrative analysis. In the search specifications 'rave' was chosen over 'rave parties' as the latter brought up articles containing the keyword 'party', thus outlining extracts relating to 'political party', 'guilty party', 'farewell/retirement/birthday party', etc. Extracts containing 'rave' that related to 'rave reviews' or that referred to the rave scene outside the geographical boundaries of this study were also

left out. The time period was from 1st January 1993 up to 31st December 2021 - a 'story' of twenty-eight years.

Upon initial search, two thousand, one hundred and sixty (2160) extracts contained the keyword rave. These were further filtered by choosing the 'sort by relevance' command. This kept the same number of extracts suggested for reading, however as the author went on through data collection it was realised that at a certain point extracts were containing the word 'rave' but not referring to 'raves' or the 'rave scene in Malta', therefore data collection ceased. This left a corpus of forty-one (41) media extracts, however when considering the NPF's definition of a policy narrative (that has narrative elements and narrative strategies) (Shanahan et al, 2017), only twenty (20) extracts were eligible for analysis.

3.4.4. Study 2: Interviews

In satisfying RQ2, seven (7) semi-structured interviews were conducted with organisers within the rave scene, as well as an interview with a long-standing, and prominent figure on the wider Maltese leisure and entertainment scene. The interviews were held between 9th September 2023 and 18th October 2023.

To populate the interviews, purposive sampling was used to identify organisers and individuals with considerable experience within the Maltese rave scene, or the wider leisure industry. Moreover, purposive sampling was used to pinpoint participants from diverse subgenres, or who were most active at different chronological periods, or throughout the thirty (30) years relevant to this thesis.

An initial list of ten (10) participants was identified as possible candidates, however due to the availability of interviewees, seven (7) interviews were conducted out of the listed ten (10). Despite effort for a gender balance, only one participant was female (14% of participants),

however this was deemed as appropriate representation due to the evident surplus of male organisers within the Maltese rave scene. This was assumed based on the author's knowledge of the Maltese rave scene, however Callus' (2020) study on 'Rave/Club Subculture in Malta' also exhibits difficulty in finding female participants, suggesting a male dominance, over female and non-binary organisers/experts in the Maltese rave scene. All interviewees were Maltese, over eighteen (18), mostly white males, with ages ranging from 26-67. When it came to genre-specifics, the pool of organisers sitting for interviews came from varied subgenres, and their events fell on varied points on the underground/commercialised spectrum of 'raves'.

3.5.5. Data Collection Process: Study 2

A uniform process was adopted to carry out the qualitative semi-structured interviews. This was done with the intent to ensure the reliability of the study and to facilitate review. Before sending invitations to the shortlisted experts and organisers, an application for data collection was submitted for review through URECA. The application was confirmed in August 2023, the process of reaching out to shortlisted interviews commenced thereafter. The approval of the application submitted to FREC is attached in Appendix A.

Contacts were found through open-access searches, and invitations to participate were sent through the author's University of Malta email. In the emails sent, two documents were attached; an Information Letter and Consent Form (Appendix B). The Information Letter described the nature of the study and was to be retained by the interviewee, the latter was to be signed by the participant and given to the author before the interview.

The interviews were conducted in two ways. Physical one-on-one interviews were the primary choice, and these were held on campus. Bookings were made through an online portal provided by the Scheduling Office of the University of Malta. One interview with an organiser

was held at his residence, and two were held online using the author's University of Malta Zoom account.

In conducting the interviews, the author first greeted the participants, and collected the signed consent form. When interviews were held online, consent forms were received beforehand; signed and scanned. The author restated that the interview will be recorded, and upon confirmation from the participant, the record function was activated, and the interview commenced. –The prepared semi-structured interview schedule was generally adhered to, and probing was used when required, such as identifying motivational accounts, or in getting deeper insight of particular episodes. Following the interview, the recordings were transcribed non-verbatim (intelligent verbatim) and stored in a separate hard drive. File names were stored as such: Interviewee 'X' - XX/XX/2023.

3.5. Data Analysis for both Studies

This section describes how raw data was analysed for policy narratives with respect to a number of key NPF assumptions. Following the assumptions, 'codes' are presented as inspired by Gray & Jones (2020) and Braun & Clarke's (2008) TA, followed by ethical considerations in collecting, storing, and treating data for both studies.

3.6. Assumptions

A number of assumptions in accordance with NPF scholarship have been adopted. First, NPF scholarship has a generalised definition as to what constitutes a policy narrative. Policy narratives are composed of four (4) core elements: setting, characters (villain, victim, hero), plot (the interactions of characters in a setting), and 'the moral of the story' (Gray & Jones, 2016; Shanahan et al 2017). These are further described in table 3, below.

Setting	Geography, legal parameters, and economic conditions relevant to policy actors/public policy involved.	Example: Malta, 1998. Policy context: Introduction of regulations with respect to rave party 'issues'.
Characters	Victims are harmed by the problem, villains cause the problem intentionally or without intent, heroes provide relief/solution.	Example: Neighbours of establishments, and attendees.
Moral of the story	Solution promoted by the policy narrative	Example: Introduce curfew for loud music in establishments.
Plot	Links these elements together, establishing relationships with respect to setting, characters, and the eventual 'moral of the story'.	Example: Issues emanating from parties include the comfort of neighbours of establishments, and attendees' safety. Time limits on parties are proposed as a solution to offset villains' harm towards victims.

Table 2: Defining Narrative Elements (Shanahan et al 2017) using an example from the Maltese rave Scene.

Second, narratives have an influence on policy outcomes (Schlauffer et al 2022). This is essential in mapping through the underground-to-commercial rave scene as described by the media (RQ1), and in determining whether narrative strategies have been deployed to influence public policy, possibly through exhibiting dissent (RQ2), or by linking causal mechanism (Gray & Jones, 2016) to attribute harm towards harm caused by those staged as villains. In taking

this assumption the political context of Malta was considered. Malta is a representative democracy, therefore the assumption of narratives influencing policy holds, as this democratic context allows for debate.

Third, this study abides by core NPF assumptions. Meaningful parts of policy realities are socially constructed, with these beliefs having some stability over time, and not random (bounded relativity), such as consistent advocacy for regulations to curb abuses in the Maltese rave scene, challenged by consistent advocacy for freedom from regulatory and commercial meddling. Narratives have generalisable elements (narrative elements and narrative form crucial to constructing policy narratives), and analysis happens at three inter-arching levels: micro (individual), meso (group/coalition), macro (institutional). Finally, people give preference to thinking and speaking in story form - *homo narrans* (Shanahan et al, 2017).

The fourth and final assumption is that policy narratives influence the policy process (Shanahan et al, 2011). The studies carried out in this research shed light on how the formation of advocacy coalitions within the Maltese rave scene policy subsystem group concerns and beliefs which transpose into dominant policy narratives that affect the policy process.

These assumptions are imperative for this research to conform with NPF and ACF scholarship.

3.7. Coding Methods

The definition of 'policy narrative' for NPF was adopted as the initial policy narrative codes (similarly to Gray & Jones (2016) and Smith (2020)): setting, characters, and 'the moral of the story'. Moreover, principles of Braun & Clarke's (2008) Thematic Analysis inspired inductive coding which was used for emerging concepts and themes. For instance, 'Causal Mechanisms' (the level to which perceived villains were aware of exerting harm on a perceived

victim) were observed, as well as 'Motivations for Solutions' when heroes advocated towards a particular policy route, or solution.

For example, in a letter to the editor of the Times of Malta on 29th April 2001, a concerned parent states that "every parent's nightmare is combatting drug abuse during one of those rave notorious rave parties and with good reason". "Rave parties plus techno music equals ecstasy so why on Earth are we allowing death to be promoted on our shores?". In accordance with the steps outlined above, coding commenced by first identifying the narrative elements. 'Setting' would be Malta in 2001 and refers to policies which would regulate the rave scene. The cast of characters presented the rave parties as 'Villains', parents, and patrons (the public) as 'Victims', and the 'Hero' would be government by deploying prohibition as a 'Policy Solution'. In the policy narrative, blame is attributed to the villain, and in this case the policy narrative has suggested that harm was caused intentionally, thus divulging the 'Causal Mechanism'.

The coding scheme was applied to both studies. This was done with the intention to facilitate comparison between media narratives and stakeholder narratives in the discussion, as competing narratives play a crucial role in shaping policy approaches, and in gaining preference among policy makers (Gray & Jones, 2016).

Guidelines on coding using Narrative Content were derived from Gray & Jones (2016). Following initial codes, Braun & Clarke's (2008) principles for TA were considered in developing more codes for emerging narrative strategies during analysis for both studies. The qualitative content analysis was also inspired by Smith (2020), who was also inspired by Gray & Jones (2016) in applying narrative elements as initial codes and coded inductively for narrative strategies.

To facilitate the interpretation of results codes were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to analyse the frequency of narrative elements and narrative strategies. While this step is quantitative in nature, frequencies were only used in a descriptive manner in an attempt to identify the main 'Villains', 'Victims', 'Heroes', 'Solutions' and narrative strategies on both studies, thus identifying dominant policy narratives.

3.8. Ethical considerations

A series of ethical considerations were reflected upon by the researcher - in treating the research subjects, in treating the topic, and in adherence to institutional guidelines within the University of Malta and the Laws of Malta.

Throughout the study the author made thorough efforts in citing all literature referred to - this was done by adhering to faculty-specific guidelines. Moreover, two separate forms (a self-assessment form for the qualitative content analysis and a separate form submitted for review with respect to the qualitative, semi-structured interviews) were submitted through URECA for the approval of the University of Malta, and more specifically, the Faculty of Economics, Business and Enterprise Management, and Accountancy's ethics board. Following submission, the self-assessment form for the content analysis required no further approval, and the form for the qualitative aspect of the study - the interviews - was approved. Data collection commenced thereafter, and all stipulated terms and regulations were adhered to, such as the treatment, storage, future destruction of data, and other by-laws.

The interviewees gave consent, then were briefed on how their information and the data extracted through the interviews will be managed, and that their identities will be protected through confidentiality. All participants were given an Information Letter, and a Letter of Consent before the interviews, as well as being briefed on the Data Management Plan upon request. Moreover, efforts were made to make the interview experience smooth, and to provide the interviewees with a comfortable and trustworthy environment, however no inducements whatsoever were made.

A copy of the notification of approval to carry out data collection by FREC and the interviewee consent form and are attached in appendices A and B respectively. Appendix C contains the Code Book for Studies 1 and 2.

3.9. Conclusion

In this chapter this thesis's methodology was outlined in detail. The chapter started by re-outlining the research goals and objectives with respect to the research questions. A section was then dedicated to discussing the rationale of the methodological approach chosen, as well as a reflection on the author's relationship with the topic. Next, the research design consisting of two studies - Study 1 for RQ1, and Study 2 for RQ2 - was then outlined, followed by a rundown of data analysis techniques deployed for Studies 1 and 2 respectively. The final section of this chapter was dedicated to ethical considerations and data management plans necessary for these studies. The next chapter will present the results of the analysed data sets.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I present the results of Studies 1 and 2, respectively. As outlined in the 'Methodology' chapter, Study 1 consisted of a qualitative media analysis, which entailed twenty (20) extracts concerning 'rave' parties, from the Times of Malta archives. Study 2 consisted of seven (7) semi-structured interviews held with seven (7) purposely chosen individuals deemed knowledgeable about the Maltese rave scene by myself due to their experience and involvement within it.

The results will be presented as follows: Study 1 is split into two (2) sections: Section A will be dedicated to coding attempts for 'Setting', 'Villains', 'Victims', 'Heroes', and 'Policy Solution' which are reported and tabulated respectively. This is followed by Section B which provides a report on 'Narrative Strategies' with respect to the blame attributed to 'Villains' and the motivations behind solutions proposed by 'Heroes'. These steps allows coalitions to be identified and their policy preferences determined from the entire data set.

Results for Study 2 will be reported in three (3) sections; Section A for 'setting', Sections B for characters ('Villains', 'Victims', and 'Heroes and Solutions'), and Section C for 'Narrative Strategies' behind 'Solutions'.

4.2. Study 1: Media Analysis

This study informs RQ1 by presenting policy narratives on the Maltese rave scene through qualitative content analysis. Upon completion of manual coding, as described in the preceding chapter, data was then entered into a spreadsheet on Microsoft Excel to count the frequency of the coded narrative elements for Section A. While this step of analysis has a quantitative

nature, the frequencies shall only be used for descriptive measures to facilitate reporting, and are therefore still qualitative (Smith, 2020).

Section B of Study 1 reports on codes of 'Causal Mechanism' that attribute blame towards 'Villains', and 'Advocacy Strategies' divulging motivations behind the 'Policy Solutions' put forward by 'Heroes'.

These steps are crucial in determining how characters are generally portrayed, identify the main policy solutions, and to extract a dominant policy narrative from this study so that these results may be discussed with respect to ACF scholarship in 'Discussion' chapter.

4.2.1. Section A

This section reports on codes of 'Setting', characters ('Villains', 'Victims', and 'Heroes'), and 'Policy Solution'. Results are described through reported text and supplemented by tables presenting frequencies of narrative elements.

4.2.1.1. 'Setting' the Stage

The 'Setting' outlines both the spatial context and the policy context (Shanahan et al, 2017). Following coding procedures, three (3) different policy contexts emerged. The first emerged as an initial reaction to SIN parties in Malta during 1993 and referred to educational policy in raising awareness about "this new type of activity"¹⁰. The second, and most frequent 'Setting' emerged in the agenda-setting, policy formulation, and policy implementation of laws and enforcement regulating the Maltese rave scene from 1998 to 2001. The third and final 'Setting' is the Maltese rave scene, as part of the wider clubbing scene, during the second year of

¹⁰ Dr Louis Galea quoted by the Times of Malta 17th April 1993 p.36

Covid-19 (2021). In this 'Setting' reference is made to the prohibition of mass events during Covid-19.

4.2.1.2. The cast of Characters

Eleven (11) characters were outlined following data analysis, making a total of eighty-two (82) appearances across twenty (20) media extracts. By order of frequency, the characters were: 'Government' (16), 'Rave Parties' (15), 'Attendees' (12), the 'Leisure Industry' (11) - the established Maltese club scene/party scene separate from the rave scene -, 'Support Services' (6) representing; Sedqa, Caritas, and the Diocesan Youth Committee, 'Organisers and Club Owners' (6), 'Other Political Official/Body' (5), 'Overdose Victim' (4), 'Members of the Public' (5), 'Drug Abusers' (3), and the 'Police' (1). This frequency is presented numerically in table 3.

In what follows, reports on 'Villains', 'Victims', and 'Heroes' are described through frequencies of the characters' appearances. Moreover, characters are further described through their corresponding roles in the policy narratives, as a percentage of total appearances. This descriptive use of statistics served to deduce how the individual characters were described across the entire data set. This step is also crucial in observing Assumption #2 of the NPF of 'Bounded relativity' (Shanahan et al, 2017)

Character	Frequency of appearance in policy narratives
Rave Parties	15
Government	16
Attendees	12
Leisure Industry	11
Support Services	6
Other Political Official/Body	6
Overdose Victim	4
Organisers and Club Owners	6
Members of the Public	5
Drug Abusers	3
Police	1
Total	85

Table 3: Frequency of Characters' appearance in Study 1 Policy Narratives

4.2.1.2.1. Villains

Regarding 'Villains', 'rave parties' were outlined as the main culprit in media narratives on the Maltese rave scene. 'Rave parties' were cast as 'Villains' in fourteen (14) policy narratives, followed by 'Government' which was described as the 'Villain' seven (7) times throughout analysis. 'Organisers' within the Maltese rave scene, 'Club Owners' that provided the licensed

venues wherein rave parties were held, and 'Drug Abusers' were identified as 'Villains' on four (4) occasions. The established 'Leisure Industry' and 'Other Political Official/Body' were both earmarked as 'Villains' once (1).

When considering these statistics as a percentage of the individual characters' total appearances through the media extracts coded, 'Drug Abusers' (100%) and 'Rave Parties' (93.33%) were the characters most described as 'Villains' in their appearances.

"She pointed out that drug abusers were not victims. They took drugs because they wanted to, and the more they are called victims, the more they felt encouraged to take drugs" Times of Malta, 1998 quoting a member of Caritas.

"Dr Galea lashed out at S.I.N after receiving reports that these parties were shameful activities, and without any sense of human entertainment value. These activities, he claimed, did not respect public decency, and included rites similar to those used in occult" Times of Malta, April 1993 quoting Hon Dr Louis Galea as Minister for Home Affairs (PN)

"Designer drugs, particularly ecstasy, come in a package that invariably includes a hidden message in the promotion of rave parties. The slogan, the dress, the music, and the lights at such parties all come into play" Times of Malta, 1998 quoting Hon Dr Adrian Vassallo, MLP.

The association between 'Drug Abusers' and 'Rave Parties' is used frequently throughout the data sets analysed and is applied by 'Heroes' as a means to attribute blame to specific groups, such as the two (2) main 'Villains' identified and propose 'Policy Solutions' which reduce harm induced upon a wide spectrum of 'Victims'.

'Organisers' are often criticised for willing jeopardizing patrons health, and causing a public nuisance, whereas 'Club Owners' are accused of breaching the capacity of patrons in their establishments and ignoring the associations between 'Rave Parties' and 'Drug Abusers'.

"The regulations also stipulate that proprietors of places of entertainment will be fined Lm 100 for every person under 16 found on their premises. The same fine also applied to organisers and proprietors who exceeded the maximum number of people allowed on their premises or party". Times of Malta (1999) quoting Hon Tonio Borg, then Minister for Home Affairs following the introduction of regulations for parties.

Times of Malta (1998) quoting "Labour MP Rita Shaw asked how people under 16 were allowed at such parties". Ms Law suggested that establishments where drug abuse took place should be closed down for a period of time. This measure would make owners more careful".

The 'Leisure Industry' (9.09%) and 'Other Political Official/Body' were both portrayed as 'Villains' once (1). In both policy narrative, the 'Victim', and the narrator was an 'Organiser'.

"The S.I.N. Parties organiser Mr Camilleri completely disagreed with the Ministry's statement. He held that the statement was an attempt to give him a bad reputation. Mr Camilleri claimed that the uproar had been created by competing business out to spoil his success". Times of Malta (1993) quoting Joe Camilleri (Oni), S.I.N, Party organiser

"Why do both political parties try to pretend they are solving Malta's drug problem by ordering the police to close down parties or harass partygoers? Do they really think that people take ecstasy only at rave parties?" Times of Malta (1998) quoting Jason Jones, owner of Kick Start Promotions.

'Government' is narrated as a 'Villain' in almost half (43.75%) of its appearances and is mainly attributed harm due to policy failures. 'Attendees', 'Support Services', 'Overdose Victim', 'Members of the Public', and the 'Police' were not described as 'Villains' in any of the policy narratives coded from the data collected (0%). The frequencies are presented in table 4.

"Mr Fenech warned against the imposition of archaic conditions, saying these would drive the parties underground." Times of Malta quoting Mr Phillip Fenech, GRTU (Chamber of SMEs).

"The Labour Party spokesperson on Social Affairs, Karl Chircop and Marie Louise Coleiro Preca have criticised the government for failing to control rave parties" Times of Malta, 1999.

	'Villains'					
	Rave Parties	Government	Organisers and Club Owners	Drug Abusers	Other Political Official/Body	Leisure Industry
Frequency of appearance as 'Villain' in policy narratives	14	7	4	3	1	1
As a % of Total Appearances	93.33%	43.75%	66.67%	100%	16.67%	9.09%

Table 4: Frequency of Villains' appearance in Study 1 Policy Narratives

4.2.1.2.2. Victims

The characters which were most frequently described as 'Victims' in the policy narratives identified in the media analysis were 'Attendees' and the 'Leisure Industry', with eleven (11) and six (6) instances respectively. 'Overdose Victims' and 'Members of the Public' were presented as 'Victims' on four (4) occasions each, followed by 'Rave Parties' and 'Organisers and Club Owners', which both featured as such once (1).

As a percentage of their total appearances through the entirety of analysis, 'Overdose Victims' were always (100%) portrayed as victims within the policy narratives, given that all cases reported were fatal. These were followed by 'Attendees' who were presented as 'Victims' in 91.67% of their appearances. Harm was inflicted upon these 'Victims' due to drug abuse which was perceived inherent to rave parties, and short coming from 'Organisers and Club Owners' and the 'Government'.

"A 22-year-old man from Zebbug died yesterday after falling ill at a rave party in the early hours of the morning". "The police who have come to believe death was due to ecstasy overdose immediately stopped the party...". Times of Malta (1998)

"It is a mad happening for mad people, during which a lot of money is spent by some and made by others to the accompaniment of tremendous, ear-shattering decibels, the drinking of barrels of alcohol, and the "suspected" exchange and consumption of drugs". Times of Malta (1998) quoting Hon Lawrence Gonzi as Minister for Social Policy (PN).

"A 17-year-old died of an ecstasy overdose following a rave party in Gozo during the summer, leading Sedqa clinical director, George Grech, to call for party organisers to be held more accountable". Times of Malta (1998).

'Members of the Public' and the 'Leisure Industry' were cast as 'Victims' in 80% and 54.55% of their appearances respectively. These 'Victims' often suffered collateral harm emanated from abuses and disturbances from 'Rave Parties' (such as loud music all night long) or 'Government' policies and their enforcement. As 'Rave Parties' got regulated and made part of 'Leisure Industry', well established operators felt it unfair that all 'Organisers and Club Owners' must suffer when few commit abuses.

"We are not against these kinds of parties, but we want party organisers to stick to the same rules we do" Times of Malta (1998) quoting Philip Fenech as President of GRTU.

"The GRTU has reacted angrily to several recommendations released on Friday by the Social Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives for rave parties and similar events, and for nightclubs to close at 2 or 3 am, one or two hours earlier than current closing times. The association is worried that drastic measures will be implemented with serious repercussions to the industry". Mr Fenech, representing the GRTU claimed that *"Most patrons are law abiding and should not suffer restrictions on their entertainment because of a small minority who choose to abuse alcohol and drugs".* Times of Malta, 1998.

"A party organiser is to be charged for organising a mass event during the pandemic after the police busted an illegal party at White Rocks over the weekend". "The crowd dispersed as soon as they noticed police presence. However, the alleged organiser was identified onsite and will be charged accordingly for organising a mass event during Covid-19 and also for holding a commercial activity without a license from the regulatory authority" Times of Malta (2021) reported.

'Organisers and Club Owners' (16.67% of total appearances) and 'Rave Parties' (7.14% of total appearances) are only presented as 'Victims' once (1) in all their appearances. Both these policy narratives were narrated from an 'Organiser'. The 'Organiser' as a 'Victim' was

Mr Joe Camilleri, who had drawn down claims of “wild happenings” at rave parties to rouses caused by competitors (as stated above when outlining ‘Villains’). Jason Jones cast ‘Rave Parties’ as victims as he believed political parties singled them out and blamed for the drug problem in Malta. He suggested that enforcement to curb drug-use should have been applied with the same rigour in Paceville.

“Usually, police and AFM personnel hold strategic roadblocks in the area. Youngsters are often bodily searched, sometimes stripped naked, at roadsides. During Santa Marija festivities in Gozo many youngsters had their apartment raided. So it is no wonder that some drug arrests are reported. But when you consider the amount of police and AFM operations, and the number of people attending such events, the quantity of drug-related arrests is relatively minor. Who to the police never randomly conduct similar searched in clubs and cars in Pace on a normal Saturday night?” Jason Jones (Owner of Kickstart Promotions) speaking to Times of Malta, 1998.

‘Government’, ‘Other Political Official/Body’, ‘Support Services’, ‘Drug Abusers’, and ‘Police’ were not identified as ‘Victims’ in any of the policy narratives yielded from the media analysis (0%). This report is presented numerically in table 5.

	'Victims'					
	Rave Parties	Organisers and Club Owners	Attendees	Leisure Industry	Overdose Victim	Members of the Public
Frequency of appearance as 'Victim' in policy narratives	1	1	11	6	4	4
As a % of Total Appearances	7.14%	16.67%	91.67%	54.55%	100%	80%

Table 5: Frequency of Victims' appearance in Study 1 Policy Narratives

4.2.1.2.3. Heroes

Throughout the policy narratives derived from the analysed media extracts, 'Government' (ten (10) instances) and 'Support Services' (six (6) instances) were most frequently described as 'Heroes'. These were followed by 'Other Political Official/Body' and the 'Leisure Industry' which were presented as 'Heroes' on five (5) and four (4) occasions respectively. 'Police', 'Attendees', and 'Rave parties' were both identified as 'Heroes' once (1).

With respect to these frequencies as a percentage of their total appearances, 'Support Services' and 'Police' were described as 'Heroes' in every (100%) instance wherein these characters were mentioned, given their roles in providing support to youths, and the public, and in enforcing laws since the introduction of regulations governing parties, and during Covid-19 restrictions. These were followed by 'Other Political Official/Body' (83.33%) and 'Government' (56.25%) who often proposed 'Policy Solutions' to reduce abuses emanating from 'Rave Parties'.

“The Minister said he has also started discussing one of his Ministry’s biggest headaches, the abuse at rave parties, with Sedqa. Dr Gonzi again said the government intended taking strict measures to check abuses at these parties” Times of Malta, 1998

When the Social Policy and Home Affairs Ministries proposed new regulations for ‘Rave Parties’ in 1998, a number of ‘Political Official/Body’ and ‘Support Services’ gave their feedback.

“Forum Zghazagh Laburisti representative Joe Mifsud stressed that politicians had to have the guts to fight the drug problem even if this meant making themselves unpopular...”. “He also suggested the setting up of a rave commission... to tackle the problem of rave parties...” Times of Malta, 1998.

“Moviment Zghazagh Nazzjonalisti representative Sandro Rossi said alcohol abuse could be leading to the drug problem especially when children took alcohol from a young age...”. “One reason, Mr Rossi said, could be the pressures of the educational system. More sports and cultural activities should be developed. He suggested the setting up of a commission between the Social Policy and Education ministries Sedqa, and the Kunsill Nazzjonali Zghazagh to promote such activities.” Times of Malta, 1998.

“Sedqa representative Sina Bugeja stressed that a medical team should be present at all rave parties” Times of Malta, 1998.

The ‘Leisure Industry’ was portrayed as a ‘Hero’ in policy narratives wherein it proposed ‘Policy Solutions’ to ‘Government’. These mainly consisted of advocacy for regulations to curb abuses in ‘Rave Parties’ as regards to ‘Organisers’ licensing, issues of tax and fair competition, as well as advocating for educational campaigns on the dangers of drug abuse.

“We are not trying to stop these parties. Is it simply a case of ensuring that party organisers abide by the laws. We cannot have the law of the jungle anymore. The GRTU intends on having meetings with the Police. Mr Fenech’s arguments focus on two issues; unfair competition and drug taking”. Times of Malta quoting Philip Fenech (President of GRTU/Chamber of SMEs) in 1998.

After warning against the introduction of archaic regulations Mr Fenech said, “A serious educational campaign, [he stressed], was important to help solve the problem as drug-taking was a personal decision and one had to convince oneself of the dangers” Times of Malta, 1998.

‘Organiser’ Jason Jones emphasised that rave party organisers put considerable efforts in security, and that these efforts were proactive given that no laws were in effect governing ‘Rave Parties’ up until 1999. However, ‘Government’ also suggested that ‘Attendees’ can be ‘Heroes’ themselves by reporting on friends who were ‘Drug Abusers’.

“The most obvious difference on visiting our party will be noticed in our security procedures. At our events (and I believe most party promotions operate a similar policy) we hire policemen to search everyone upon entry. Customers are searched for illegal substances and weapons, Undercover policemen usually mingle with the crowds inside the venue, and customers are frequently searched again once inside the venue.” Times of Malta quoting Jason Jones (Kickstart Promotions), 1998.

“Both Dr Gonzi and Insp. Aquilina called on the students to report what they saw and knew to help them tackle this worrying problem [drug abuse]. Though a couple of students said they would report a friend if they knew he or she was taking drugs, one student said he would be too scared to get involved. Dr Gonzi insisted that this fear had to be overcome once and for

all of the problem was to be eradicated". This article reports on a visit Hon Gonzi, then Minister for Social Policy, and Insp. Neville Aquilina of the drug squad to St Aloysius Collage on their Friday Debate themed *"Rave Parties: Are they promoting music or drugs?"*

'Drug abusers', 'Members of the Public', and 'Overdose Victims' were not portrayed as 'Heroes' in any instance (0%). Table 6 presents this data numerically. '

'Heroes'	Organis ers and Club Owners	Governm ent	Other Political Official/ Body	Support Services	Police	Leisure Industry (represen ted by GRTU)	Attendee s
Frequency of appearance as 'Hero' in policy narratives	1	9	5	6	1	4	1
As a % of Total Appearance s	16.67%	56.25%	83.33%	100%	100%	36.36%	8.33%

Table 6: Frequency of Heroes' appearance in Study 1 Policy Narratives

4.2.1.3. The Moral of the Story (Policy Solution)

Twenty-eight (28) Policy Solutions were derived from the policy narratives on the Maltese rave scene upon carrying out the content analysis. These were divided into six (6) subheadings for

the purpose of facilitating analysis. Across the policy narratives, the most popular policy solution proposed by 'Heroes' was to 'Regulate Rave Parties' (35.71%). Solutions to curb drug-abuse associated with rave parties through 'Drug Enforcement' made up 10.71% of policy solutions, and 'Awareness campaigns' on the dangers surrounding drug-abuse, as well as solutions that 'Promote Alternative Entertainment for Youths' made up 14.29% of policy solutions each. These were followed by policy solutions related to 'Organisers and Club Owners licensing and Accountability' (10.71%) and to 'Improve Health and Safety' (10.71%). An outright prohibition to 'Ban Rave Parties' (3.57%) was suggested once (1).

These 'Policy Solution' frequencies suggest the 'Rave Parties' were not seen as a problem to be eradicated (except for one concerned parent) but rather that 'Policy Solutions' were needed to address problems emanating from an un-regulated rave scene, and to curb drug-use associated with 'Rave Parties'. 'Policy solutions' are presented numerically in table 7.

"There is no denying that rave parties can be "dangerous", but it would be despotic to crush this kind of entertainment with prohibition if it can be won over with good sense. There the young people are concerned (and the young are certainly present here, even though not exclusively) the attitude would be not to beat them but to join them, at least by meeting them halfway, and trying to bring order to their celebrations. It would be cultural murder to stifle their sport and kill their fun" Times of Malta (1998) quoting Hon Dr Lawrence Gonzi, then Minister for Social Policy.

"Parents of teenagers who attend these parties are right to be concerned but they cannot very well lock up their children in their own homes and forbid them from going to Gozo to "enjoy" themselves at these parties, especially when these types of parties are taking place in their own back yard (home -in Malta). So, what is the solution? I am afraid there is none except one: to ban these parties, to prohibit these parties from taking place." Ms Valerie Borg in her letter to the editor of the Times of Malta (1999)

'Solution'	Regulate Rave Parties	Organisers and Club Owners' licensing and Accountability	Awareness Campaign on Rave Parties and Drug Abuse	Promote Alternative Entertainment for Youths	Improve Health & Safety	Drug Enforcement	Ban Rave Parties
Frequency of 'Policy Solution' in policy narratives	10	3	4	4	3	3	1
As a % of all Policy Solutions	35.71%	10.71%	14.29%	14.29%	10.71%	10.71%	3.57%

Table 7: Frequency of Policy Solutions' appearance in Study 1 Policy Narratives

4.2.2. Section B: Narrative Strategies

In this section, emergent codes for narrative strategies will be reported. These codes identify the motivations behind villainous actions through codes for 'Causal Mechanism' and 'Advocacy Strategies' for heroic policy solutions throughout the policy narratives analysed. Similarly to Section A, results are described through reported text, and supplemented by tables presenting frequencies of 'Narrative Strategies'.

4.2.2.1. Villains' Harm towards Victims

During analysis attributions of blame emerged when coding for 'Characters', and 'Policy Solutions', thus exhibiting the plot of the policy narrative (see Appendix C containing code book). Similarly to Gray & Jones (2016), codes for 'Causal Mechanism' were created, and blame was attributed to 'Villains' as; 'Intentional Harm' (illegal intent), 'Inadvertent Harm' (unaware), or 'Mechanical Harm' (due to inexistent laws, or laws which are inherently not enforced).

Harm was attributed to 'Rave Parties' in its fourteen (14) appearances as a 'Villain', eight (8) of which was due to vacuums in legal frameworks or applications of enforcement and caused harm unwittingly in three (3) policy narratives. This suggests that harm caused by 'Rave Parties' was perceived to be caused by shortcomings in their governance and management. Harm was caused intentionally by 'Rave Parties' on 'three occasions'. In each of these three policy narratives 'Intentional Harm' was attributed on the notion that 'Rave Parties' are organised to that people abuse drugs.

"We are not against these kinds of parties, but we want party organisers to stick the same rules we do" Times of Malta (1998) quoting Philip Fenech, President of GRTU (Chamber of SMEs)

"Rave parties could mean trouble, and we have learned to provide measures to deal with the trouble as it arises, possibly to control its arising in the first place. Check and controls have gone into operation. Still, all is not well. Drugs can be hidden on the premises long before or after the checks, and they can be swallowed down just before entering the premises on the night of the party". Times of Malta, 1998.

“Rave parties, plus techno music, equals ecstasy, so why on earth are we allowing death to be promoted on our shores?” Ms Valerie Borg in her letter to the editor of the Times of Malta, 1999.

Misdeeds by ‘Government’ were not intentional on any (0) occasion, but harm was ‘Inadvertently’ in five (5) policy narratives. In all five (5) policy narratives in which ‘Government’ inflicted ‘Inadvertent Harm’, the argument made by the narrators was that over-regulating, or prohibiting parties/rave parties would create an underground (illegal) scene. ‘Government’ also caused harm due to shortcomings in public policy; (1) failing to support students’ academic stress, (2) failing to enforce regulatory policies introduced regarding ‘Rave Parties’.

“Another student, David Zahra, warned [Hon Gonzi] that if rave parties were closed at 2 a.m. they would go underground, creating an uncontrollable problem” Times of Malta (1998) reporting on a debate held at St Aloysius College titled: “Rave Parties: Are they promoting music or Drugs?”

“Caritas representative Josette Farrugia said young people went to rave parties because they were stressed out by the education system, and bored with nothing else to do” Times of Malta (1998),

“The Labour Party spokespersons on social affairs Karl Chircop and Marie Louise Coleiro Preca have criticised the government for failing to control rave parties. In a statement, they said that following a parliamentary question, it was revealed that only one application had been made to the police for the holding of a rave parties between last September and June. This showed that unregulated rave parties were being organised without any control by the state.” Times of Malta (1999).

Harm caused by 'Organisers and Club Owners' was deemed intentional in three (3) of the four (4) policy narratives they featured as a 'Villain', and was attributed to greed in willingly overcrowding parties, or blatantly going against rules to organise parties. The other instance was considered as 'Inadvertent Harm', as some issues happening within 'Rave Parties' are out of the 'Organisers and Club Owners' control, such as patrons who overdose even though checks and controls are implemented.

"A party organiser is to be charged for organising a mass event during the pandemic after the police busted an illegal party at White Rocks over the weekend as Covid-19 cases reached record numbers. Police said the alleged rave organiser will also face charges of holding a commercial activity without a licence" Times of Malta (2021).

"Ms Law suggested that establishments where drug abuse took place should be closed down for a period of time. This measure would make owners more careful" Times of Malta (1998) quoting Hon Rita Law (MLP)

In their single (1) appearance as a 'Villain', the 'Leisure Industry' and 'Other Political Official/Body' caused harm intentionally. The 'Leisure Industry' is accused of willingly defaming Joe Camilleri, the organiser behind S.I.N. Parties, where the main political parties, under 'Other Political Official/Body' are accused of only blaming 'Rave Parties' for the drug problem in Malta '

"The S.I.N. parties organiser Mr Camilleri completely disagreed with the ministry's statement.. He held that the statement was an attempt to give him a bad reputation. Mr Camilleri claimed that the uproar had been created by competing business out to spoil his success" Times of Malta (1993) quoting Mr Camilleri's reaction to Hon Louis Galea's (PN) statement that "these activities did not respect public decency and included rites similar to those used in occult".

Drug Abusers' are considered to be inflicting 'Intentional Harm' in every policy narrative in which they feature.

"Mr Fenech said nothing was fool proof, as was tragically proved yesterday [fatal overdose incident at rave party]. Despite all the precautions taken nothing fool proof can be done if an abuser takes drugs before going to a party, he said. "The law-abiding leisure industry should not be tarnished due to a few who still decide to abuse" he said." Times of Malta (1998) quoting Philip Fenech, President of GRTU (Chamber of SMEs).

These frequencies are presented in table 8.

'Villains'	Intentional Harm	Inadvertent Harm	Mechanical Harm	Total Villainous Actions
Rave Parties	3	3	8	14
Government	0	5	2	7
Organisers and Club Owners	3	1	0	4
Drug Abusers	3	0	0	3
Other Political Official/Body	1	0	0	1
Leisure Industry	1	0	0	1

Table 8 Frequency of 'Harm Attribution' by 'Villains' in Study 1 Policy Narratives

4.2.2.2. Advocacy behind Heroes' solutions

'Heroes' advocated for 'Policy Solutions' that either promote 'Victims' safety and comfort, or discourage 'Villains' harm. 'Government', the most frequent 'Hero', advocated to 'Regulate the Rave Scene' across seven (7) policy narratives, followed by advocacy for 'Awareness Campaigns on Rave Parties and Drug Abuse' (1), and to 'Promote Alternative Entertainment for Youth' (1). Support Services, such as Caritas, Sedqa, and the Diocesan Youth Committee advocated for 'Organisers and Club Owners Licensing and Accountability' (2), called for initiatives to 'Improve Health and Safety' (2) and to 'Regulate the Rave Scene' (1), as well as advocated for 'Awareness Campaigns on Rave Parties and or Drug Abuse'.

'Political Officials and Bod(ies)' outside of government, such as the Opposition or Members of Parliament within the Opposition, and youth factions within the Malta Labour Party and Malta Nationalist Party generally advocated for 'Policy Solutions' that 'Promote Alternative Entertainment for Youth' (3), as well as advocate for 'Drug Enforcement' (1), and for 'Awareness Campaigns on Rave Parties and or Drug Abuse' (1). In their single appearance throughout the policy narratives coded, the 'Police' advocate for 'Organisers and Club Owners' Licencing and Accountability' (1).

The 'Leisure Industry' advocated for 'Policy Solutions' that 'Improve Health and Safety' (1) promote 'Awareness Campaigns on Rave Parties and or Drug Abuse' (1). Expectedly, the 'Leisure Industry' also advocated for policies to 'Regulate the Rave Scene', yet 'Organisers and Club Owners' advocate that they are proactive in setting standards for 'Improved Health and Safety' (1) in their only appearance as a 'hero'. One 'Member[s] of the Public' advocated for an outright prohibition to 'Ban Rave Parties' (1). 'Attendees' advocate for 'Drug Enforcement' (1) by reporting drug-abuse. These frequencies are presented in table 9, below.

	Regulate the Rave Scene	Ban Rave Parties	Organisers and Club Owners Licensing and Accountability	Awareness Campaign on Rave Parties and/or Drug Abuse	Drug Enforcement	Promote Alternative Entertainment for Youth	Improve Health and Safety	Total Heroic deeds
Government	7			1		1		9
Support Services	1		2	1			2	6
Other Political Official/Body				1	1	3		5
Police			1					1
Leisure Industry	2			1			1	4
Organisers and Club Owners							1	1
Attendees					1			1
Members of the Public		1						1
								28

Table 9: Frequency of 'Narrative Strategies' deployed by 'Heroes' in Study 1 Policy Narratives

4.3. Study 2: Interviews

The results of this study satisfy RQ2 and reports on results are provided across three (3) sections. Section A assesses the interviewees' awareness of the 'Setting' by determining their knowledge regarding the policy context in which they narrated. Section B presents the characters; 'Villains', 'Victims', and 'Heroes and Solutions', while Section C outlines narrative strategies exhibiting motivations of the 'Heroes and Solutions'. In order to satisfy this study, only policy narratives wherein the 'Hero' is the rave scene - regulated and unregulated - are considered in this report. This decision was taken since RQ2 is specific to "raving as a contemporary political phenomenon" and whether it "effects" public policy. Moreover, the transcript of the interview held with the expert from the leisure industry was also purposely omitted, since RQ2 specifies on the organisers' views and understandings on raving as a contemporary political phenomenon. This knowledge is crucial in identifying the motivations behind proposed 'Solutions' by the raving communities from the qualitative semi-structured interview policy narratives in which RQ2 is concerned.

4.3.1. Section A: The 'Setting'

All respondents exhibit familiarity with the policy frameworks and legalities concerning the Maltese rave scene, and the regulations which govern rave parties. These include the "4 a.m. law" and restrictions on mass events during Covid-19.

However, while regulations concerning 'Rave Parties' (Study 1's most frequent 'Villain') were deemed as 'Policy Solutions' in Study 1, conflicting perceptions were recorded in Study 2, which considered these solutions as attempts to stifle expression and liberty of the Maltese rave scene.

4.3.2. Section B: Characters

This section presents the narrative elements of ‘Villains’, ‘Victims’, and ‘Heroes and Solutions’ coded from interviewee policy narratives. Seven (7) characters emerged with ‘the Rave Scene’ being the most prominent (9), followed by ‘Government’ (6) and ‘the Party Scene (including the regulated Rave Scene)’ (6). ‘The Rave Scene’ refers to illegal rave parties, whereas the regulated aspect of the ‘Rave Scene’ falls under ‘the Party Scene (Including the regulated Rave Scene)’ - this encapsulates the holistic party industry in Malta. The ‘Police’, ‘Young Persons’, ‘Attendees’, and ‘Political Turmoil and Authoritative Oppression’ make two (2) appearances each. In total, these characters make twenty-nine (29) appearances across the ten (10) policy narratives in this report from six (6) interviews with organisers.

4.3.2.1. Villains

From the ten (10) policy narratives coded, ‘Government’ (6) was the main attributor of harm in the perception of the organisers. The remaining attributors of harm were the ‘Police’ and ‘Political Turmoil and Authoritative Oppression’, featuring twice (2) each. All these characters were only portrayed as ‘Villains’ in each of their appearances, as can be seen in table 10.

“Żgur illi l-politika ta’ dak iż-żmien kellha effett bil-mod ta’ kif ż-żgħazagħ ta’ dak iż-żmien kienu jesprimu ruħhom – kemm fl-Ewropa mbagħad eventwalment f’Malta. Tinsiex l-Ewrope kienet maqsuma bejn id-dinja tal-West u d-dinja tal-East. Dawk kommunisti, u dawk kapitalisti; żgur illi r-rave ħa spinta b’saħħtu ħafna fl-Ewropa meta waqa’ l-ħajt ta’ Berlin. Malta wkoll kienet għaddejha minn tibdil politiku dak iż-żmien, fejn sal-80s kienet ekonomikament magħluqha fiha infisha, mbagħad bdiet tinfetaħ kompletament għad-dinja tal-Punent. Filli magħluqin, f’daqqa waħda miftuha. Għalina żgħazagħ ta’ dak iż-żmien, kif ġara fil-Ġermanja, r-rave (mużika u kultura) tatna l-opportunita’ li ninfetħu mill-għeluq li ġarrabna fl-80s. Il-gays bdew

joħorgu iktar fil-pubbliku. Fwejjeg aktar kkuluriti, mużika qawwija u storbjuża, u kellna opportunita' li permezz ta' din il-mużika stajna nesprimu ruħna.” Interviewee 1

“Kienet revolution. Revolution kontra kollox; kontra l-politika, oppression. Dak iż-żmien, 80s, 90s. Friġna mill-80s, kien diżastru, 90s kienu great għax, jien 90s kid, twelidt fis-70s, imma l-karriera tiegħi fin-90s kienet. Minn 16 l'fuq 90s hux. In-90s beda kollox. Bdiet il-freedom movement ngħidilha jien. Ma kienux iħalluna! Taħsibx li kont tagħmel party u ma jiġux il-pulizija jttfulek kollox. Ma kienx hawn liberta', pero disco kien idum sas-6:00am, minnhom sa' 12:00. Kien hawn u ma kienx hawn oppression, ma nafx kif nispejga. Kull ma ridt tagħmel tħallas xi Ministru biex iħallik għaddej.” Interviewee 7

	'Villains'		
	Government	Polic e	Political Turmoil and Authoritative Oppression
Frequency of appearance as 'Villain' in policy narratives	6	2	2
As a % of Total Appearances as a Villain	100%	100%	100%

Table 10: Frequency of 'Villains' appearance in Study 2 Policy Narratives

4.3.2.2. Victims

According to the organisers, the main ‘Victims’ were ‘Young Persons’ and ‘Attendees’, which featured twice (2) each across ten (10) policy narratives. Both of them were ‘Victims’ in all (100%) of their appearances. In the organisers’ view, harm was inflicted upon ‘Young Persons’ and ‘Attendees’ when ‘Political Turmoil and Authoritative Oppression’ (as quoted above from Interviewee 1), ‘Government’ and the ‘Police’ limited their freedom.

“One important factor as well for the 4am curfew. It was a key turning point as well. My first gig when I was 16 it was 1 or 2 am and that was not considered a good time among DJs as parties went on for so much longer, you know. Yes that huge impact. Usually, it was possible to see a sunrise with you friends while clubbing, and then all of a second it was till 4:00 a.m.”
Interviewee 3.

“...għara inċident ikrah ieħor, kien sar event għewwa Paceville meta kien għie Carl Cox l-ewwel darba wkoll, u biex ngħidu kollox, ma kienx sar minn promotur, kien negozjant bla esperjenza fix-xena però għal xi raġuni beda jara r-rave jikber, ra opportunita’ ta business, u ħabba li kien bla esperjenza saru xi żbalji biex iseħħ dan l-avveniment. L-avveniment għie magħluq. Għew il-pulizija u hemmhekk saru ħafna problemi. Iż-żgħażaġħ irribellaw kontra l-pulizija, infatti niftakar parti mis-sound system spiċċa gol-pool, intuża gas tad-dmugħ.” Interviewee 1.

Since the introduction of regulations addressing issues emanating for rave parties in Malta during 1998, the ‘Rave Scene’ has become regulated as part of the wider party scene in Malta. To this effect, two (2) character codes were created for rave parties; ‘The Rave Scene’ refers to raves held outside of the parameters of dedicated legal frameworks, whereas rave parties which were regulated and held in a licensed environment fall under ‘The Party Scene (Including the regulated Rave Scene)’. The interviewees of this study have participated in both

these settings, and therefore had the ability to inform this study on both forms of the Maltese rave scene.

'The Party Scene (Including the regulated Rave Scene)' was victimised on four (4) occasions, in two-thirds of its appearances across the interviewees' policy narratives, and these were mainly attributed to uncertainty and lack of support for organisers during Covid-19. The 'Rave Scene' was portrayed as a 'Victim' once (1) across 11.11% of its appearances, and harm was inflicted by 'Government in both instances due to regulations which the organisers described as unfair, or disproportionate (to the 'Rave Scene'/'Party Scene (Including the Rave Scene)).

The table below illustrates this report (table 11)

	'Victims'			
	Young Persons	Attendees	The Party Scene (Including the regulated Rave Scene)	The Rave Scene
Frequency of appearance as 'Victim' in policy narratives	2	2	4	1
As a % of Total Appearances as a Victim	100%	100%	66.67%	11.11%

Table 11: Frequency of 'Victims' appearance in Study 2 Policy Narratives

4.3.2.3. Heroes

Two (2) 'Heroes' dominate these ten (10) policies narratives. 'The Rave Scene' is the most frequent 'Hero' and is portrayed as such in eight (8) (88.89%) of its nine (9) appearances.

It is followed by 'The Party Scene (Including the regulated Rave Scene)' which is staged as the 'Hero' in the remaining policy narratives, as presented in table 12.

	Heroes	
	The Party Scene (Including the Regulated Rave Scene	The Rave Scene
Frequency of appearance as hero in policy narratives	2	8
As a % of Total Appearances as a Hero	33.33%	88.89%

Table 12: Frequency of 'Heroes' appearance in Study 2 Policy Narratives

4.3.2.4. 'Solutions'

This code was not named "Policy Solutions" purposely. A policy solution would be a remedy to a policy problem/anomaly, in which 'Villains' cause harm to 'Victims', through public policy, which are proposed by 'Heroes' (Shanahan et al, 2017). For policy narratives in which 'the

Rave Scene’ is the ‘Hero’, ‘Solutions’ are not institutional in nature, but are instead expressions, such as an expression of dissent, or a yearning for stability. Therefore, a ‘Solution’ is proposed to avert the threat of ‘Villains’, but not in the form of a ‘Policy Solution’.

Five (5) ‘Solutions’ emerged across ten (10) policy narratives; each being suggested twice (2). The ‘Solutions’ were the ‘Free Party Movement’, and to ‘Challenge Enforcement’, to ‘Lobby against Covid-19 restrictions’, or to go beyond and ‘Challenge Covid-19 restrictions, as well as to ‘Challenge the 4 a.m. curfew’. Only ‘the Party Scene (and the regulated Rave Scene)’ proposed lobbying (a form of advocacy) as a solution. The rest of the ‘Solutions’, which either challenged policies/regulation, or promoted the ‘Free Party Movement’, were initiated by ‘the Rave Scene’. These ‘Solutions’ are presented in table 13. The next section will present the narrative strategies behind these ‘Solutions’.

Solution	Frequency of appearance in policy narratives	As a % of all ‘Solutions’
Free Party Movement	2	20%
Lobby against Covid-19 restrictions	2	20%
Challenge enforcement	2	20%
Challenge Covid-19 restrictions	2	20%
Challenge 4 a.m. curfew	2	20%
Total	10	100%

Table 13: Frequency of ‘Policy Solutions’ appearance in Study 2 Policy Narratives

4.3.3. Section C: Narrative Strategies

This final report presents codes of narrative strategies deployed by raving communities in proposing 'Solutions' when placing themselves as 'Heroes' in the policy narratives.

"...l-komunitajiet ingħaqdu taħt 'Restart', u kienet tinkludi mużiċisti, DJs, club-owners, promoturi, l-entertainment industry kollha tista' tgħid. Malta Entertainment Institute jew xi haġa hekk, għada attiva, però nħolqot fi-żmien il-Covid għall-industrija in-ġenerali (ta' kull stil), biex jitwassal dak il-messaġġ li l-entertainment kien għaddej minn ingustizzji serji." Interviewee 1

"Naħseb l-unika darba li Prattikament, tista' tgħid ingabar kullgħadd taħt keffa wahda, meta kien hemm 'Restart'. Ovvjament kif ghidt int, dan kien mument ta' despirazzjoni estrema. Speċi għadd ma kellu x'jitlef, kullgħadd kien tilef litteralment kollox" Interviewee 2

'The Rave Scene' proposed 'Solutions' which involved narrative strategies to 'Express defiance/dissent' in six (6) of its eight (8) of its appearances as a 'Hero'. The remaining heroic appearances were merited to narrative strategies that 'Advocate for Political Stability and or Individual Expression' during the early inception of the Maltese rave scene (1993-1995). Table 14 illustrates these frequencies.

"La ħriġtilna liġi, la qtajtilna l-liberta' we have to find it somewhere else hux? U konna nieħdu riskji fenominali. Jien niftakar darba minnhom krejt apparat m'għand wieħed il-Black Toe l-Mosta, ħaduli l-apparat u kelli nħallsu kollu jien. Għamilt sena naħdem għalih biex inħallsu kollu lura. U għadd ma jgħidlek x'sar minnhom dawn, sekwestrati, ħaduhom, min ħadhom? Mhux xi dar ta' xi għadd minnhom pulizija spiċċaw?" Interviewee 7

"Bħala protesta l-iktar waħda riċenti fil-covid żgur. Jiġifieri jiena mhux ħa niddejaq ngħid, konna wasalna fi żmien fejn. Legalment l-events fetħu f'April 2022. L-affarijiet li graw qabel l-elezzjoni

li tħabbret fi Frar – u aktar milli r-restrizzjonijiet sfaħxaw, l-infurzar sparixxa. Bdew isiru rallies politiċi, u nies fuq xulxin, u aħna għadna ma nistgħu nagħmlu xejn. Inċertezza totali. Ħadd ma jista' jagħmel club show [...] Konna wasalna f'punt niftakar, meta faqqgħet l-elezzjoni għidt “dan il-mument” kont ilni narah gej. [...]. Ahna konna qed nagħmlu saġrificċju għall-elezzjoni, xejn aktar, kienet purament politika. Nifhem li meta ġiet il-covid kien hemm element ta' inċertezza ghax ħadd ma kien jaf x'inh, wara ftit it was blown out of proportion kompletament. Kienet evidenti li se jkollna xi diffikultajiet, però ma kienx hemm għalfejn dik id-diskriminazzjoni. U konna wasalna f'punt fl-estremi ta' tagħha fejn fi Frar qbadna u ftaħna b'mod illegal.”
Interviewee 2.

“Some clubs in paceville has a special allocation to stay open past 4:00 a.m., and this goes on until today. I benefitted from that, both as a clubber and as a DJ. Out of all the clubs I used to DJ in Paceville, one of the most important ones and formative as well in terms of interpreting the crowd was Lady Godiva. Up till 4 am a gay bar, and then onwards it was there or Clique – dak iż-żmien Bar Sound, Red Square, imbagħad Clique. Kullħadd jizfen fuq il-bar, it was very intense. I used to have a security next to me biex in-nies ma jidħlux fija. Everyone was up to a party, so I could play stuff which I couldn't play in other settings. It was a really nice afterhours setting. I used to do three hours, sometimes four. On vinyl obviously. It was created because of the 4 am curfew. It was a really important turning point.” Interviewee 3.

“Jien insertajt l-aqwa żmien bejn 1997, imbagħad kont tlaqt minn Malta fit-2000. Dawk is-sentejn kienu bomba għalija bħala DJ. Kont indoqq ħafna illegals, u l-illegals kienu jmorru literally all out biex jieħdu pjaċir in-nies. Għax it was oppressed, li jkollok xi ħaġa oppressed, xi ħaġa illegal, people go for it more [...] aħna eżempju Friday konna nduru Paceville, kien ikollna biċċa number dial ta' frekwenza, u ħin. Allura inti ridt tidħol eżempju fit-8:30 fuq din il-frekwenza u biex issibha mhux ħa ssibha madwar Malta kollha. U kont tarahom in-nies iduru fil-karozza sakemm jaqbd u s-sound, jibqgħu jsuqu kemm jigi car [...] u kull ma nkun qed nagħmel ndoqq id-diski u kull tant nitkellem, eżempju kont ngħidilhom “if you want to join us

tomorrow, be at the car park of Splash and Fun at 10:00, nkella be at the car park of somewhere else at midnight[...] L-ewwel tara karozza, tara tlieta, tara sitta, u konna nispiċċaw b'ħamsin karozza f'daqqa waħda ġol-car parks.[...] għandek cans window of 45 minutes. Jekk ġejt 10 minuti tard mhux ha ssib fejn dan il-party, qed tifhem? U ħadd ma jista' jibgħat "ejjew hemm", ma kienux jeżistu dawn l-affarijiet. Ġejt bil-karozza ma sħabek, il-karozzi kienu jkunu kollha b'6, b'7 ma' xulxin. It was exciting. Qiegħed wahdek, f'daqqa waħda, in one minute, għandek 200-300 people u xi oħra 100 ġejjin!" Interviewee 7

'Hero'	Advocate for Political Stability and or Individual Expression	Advocate for changes on restrictions on mass events during Covid-19	Express defiance/dissent
The Rave Scene	2	0	6
The Party Scene (Including the regulated Rave Scene)	0	2	0

Table 14: Frequency of 'Narrative Strategies' deployed by 'Heroes' in Study 2 Policy Narratives

4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter the results of studies 1 and 2 were reported using analysis inspired from Gray & Jones (2016)'s application of the NPF and Braun & Clarke (2008)'s thematic analysis. These results are now synthesised in the next chapter, 'Discussion'.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1. Introduction

My application of the NPF, inspired by Gray & Jones (2016), dissected policy narratives related to the Maltese rave scene. Narrative elements of 'setting', 'characters', and 'policy solutions' as well as narrative strategies were derived from two studies, all of which contextualised through quotes from the qualitative media analysis and interviews, and each with the aim of informing the research questions outlined in the introductory chapter. In this chapter the results of these studies will be discussed with respect to NPF and ACF scholarship (Shanahan et al, 2011; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1994), thereby outlining the cast of characters with respect to their roles ('heroes' promoting solutions, and 'villains' inflicting harm on 'victims'), and coalitions which formed within the Maltese rave scene policy subsystem. Moreover, comparisons with other studies will place this research conceptually.

The results of Study 1, a qualitative media analysis, presented policy narratives which are constructed of narrative elements and narrative strategies. The individual reporting of these codes allowed for the identification of characters within the Maltese rave scene policy subsystem over a twenty-eight (28) year (1993-2021) span of media policy narratives. The dominant policy narrative, derived from the tabulated frequencies aiding the interpretation of the results of Study 1 presented a coalition of actors advocating for regulations aimed towards the Maltese rave scene and abuses occurring within it (such as the use of drugs and overcrowded venues). These results will now be discussed with respect to NPF and ACF assumptions to identify consistency or evolutions within the characters' portrayal (reported as heroes, villains, or victims), intergovernmental dimensions within the policy subsystem, and the impact of dominant narratives on public policy – a key assumption of NPF studies Schlauffer et al (2022).

Results for Study 2 narrated instances wherein, according to the 'Organisers', the 'Rave Scene' (or the 'Party Scene (including the regulated Rave Scene)) expressed defiance or articulated policy preferences. The Maltese rave scene in its entirety (regulated and unregulated) composes a coalition of 'Organisers'. With respect to NPF and ACF assumptions, the dominant narrative of Study 2 will be discussed herein to identify ways in which 'Organisers' formed coalitions to advocate policy preferences or ways in which they expressed dissent, and the eventual effect of raving as a contemporary political force on policy, if any.

This chapter proceeds by discussing the dominant policy narratives of both studies, and the coalitions behind them. Following this discussion, the chapter concludes by outlining this thesis' contribution to public policy scholarship.

5.2. Regulation and awareness narratives: Discussion of Qualitative Media Analysis (Study 1)

Study 1 dissected policy narratives on the Maltese rave scene across a twenty-eight (28) year period (1993-2021). A dominant policy narrative was reported when considering the entirety of Study 1 results: given that, according to media coverage, the Maltese rave scene harmed/posed harm to a wide range of victims, policy programs, laws and enforcement were required to address abuses happening within it, and to raise awareness on these abuses.

The culprits within the Maltese rave scene were presented as rave parties, organisers, club owners, and drug abusers. Together, these were reported to be inflicting harm to a wide range of victims, such as attendees of rave parties, overdose victims, the regulated party industry, and the general public. The heroes in the media policy narratives varied from institutional bodies such as Government and political bodies, and the Police, the GRTU (representing the interests of the Leisure Industry), and support services such as Sedqa' and Caritas. The heroes interacted between each other often to develop policy solutions addressing villains' supposed harm, promoting a dominant narrative that educational and regulatory instalments were needed to curb abuses within the Maltese rave scene.

The heroes in the media policy narratives were united by a common villain¹¹ in their policy narratives but did not stand by the same beliefs. The leisure industry was concerned with commercial fair-play, given that unregulated rave parties did not play by the same rules which they abided by. The general public was concerned with nuisance and their attendees' safety, the Police with enforcing laws, and support services with advocacy and service delivery. Policymakers were concerned with their agendas, with the Opposition exposing policy problems to criticise incumbents, and the Government attempting to address these issues to promote its vision and maintain control.

In accordance with ACF assumptions, shared concerns regarding the Maltese rave scene united the heroes in Study 1 as the 'Regulation and Awareness' coalition, in which they interacted to articulate policy concerns and arrive at common policy preferences. Moreover, each of these heroes made use of the devil-shift (Shanahan et al, 2017) to amplify the weight of villains' harm. In their policy narratives the 'Regulation and Awareness' coalition emphasised societal harm, which according to them, was inflicted by abuses within the Maltese rave scene, similarly to Gray and Jones' (2016) NPF study on regulatory reform in US campaign finance and echoing previous trends of moral panic surrounding rave parties (Zammit Pawley, 2012; Hier, 2002). According to the media policy narratives the Maltese rave scene exposed young people to drugs abuse, lewd behaviour, and the greed of club owners and organisers. Regulatory instalments were needed to curb the abuses within the Maltese rave scene, such as overcrowding, underage admittance, and drug abuse, as well as awareness campaigns, and the development of alternative entertainment. Repercussions on law-abiding establishments and households were also emerging issues. The use of ACF to identify the 'Regulation and Awareness' coalition allows for comparisons with other studies who deploy qualitative NPF, such as Gray & Jones (2016) who identified 'Expression' and 'Equality' as conflicting narratives in US campaign finance discourse.

¹¹ The Maltese rave scene, consisting of rave parties, organisers, club owners, and drug abusers.

Similarly to Gray & Jones (2016), harm reported was not inflicted purposely (for the most part) by villains in Study 1, but rather inadvertently, or due to regulatory vacuums pre-1998. Moreover, while one concerned parent suggested the rave parties should be prohibited, the dominant policy narrative in Study 1 called for “good-sense policies” and that prohibition would be “cultural murder” (Times of Malta quoting Hon Dr Gonzi in 1998), unlike the case of Toronto (Hier, 2002), in which policy makers introduced bans on rave parties in the city. However, a zero-tolerance sentiment could be noticed in harm caused by drug abuse, overcrowding, and underage admittance in the Maltese context, as harm in this regard was perceived to be done purposely.

Throughout Study 1 heroes interacted with each other to discuss policy preferences and express individual concerns – this also entailed intergovernmental dimensions (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1994). Unlike Gray & Jones (2016), in which the ‘Equality’ camp favoured anything that would limit contributions to election campaigns, Study 1 identified discrepancies between policy solutions proposed by heroes, such as the leisure industry who frequently expressed concern over the imposition of archaic regulations, and also maintained that drug-abuse was an individual choice, and not that parties necessarily equate to drug abuse. The presence of the leisure industry in the policy formulation stage was crucial in comparing the success of regulations aimed at rave parties in Study 1 of this research and Hier’s (2002) study. In the Toronto rave scene, commercial interests were not present in formulating strategies to regulate rave parties in the city, leading to the eventual failure of policy instalments when rave parties were forced underground (Hier, 2002). However, in the Maltese context, the leisure industry reminded the Government that over-regulation would create an underground. This may suggest why regulations regulating rave parties introduced in Malta in 1999 remain unchanged. Furthermore, this sustains NPF scholarship which states that dominant policy narratives influence regulatory outputs (Rodrigues & Barcelos, 2020).

In my study, the actors within the ‘Regulation and Awareness’ coalition arrived at policy resolutions by articulating their policy preferences and individual concerns. Considering

bounded rationality of policy actors (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1994), the level of stakeholder involvement in the Maltese context resulted in longevity of the 1999 regulations, as policy makers' bounded relativity was informed through active participation in the formulation stage from other members of the coalition.

5.3. Deregulation and expression narratives: Discussion of Interviews (Study 2)

Study 2 yielded policy narratives from organisers within the Maltese rave scene who gave insight from their experiences in attending and organising rave parties during the 1990s and up to during Covid-19 on instances where the Maltese rave scene articulated policy preferences. Given that only instances wherein the 'hero' of the policy narrative was the Maltese rave scene (regulated and unregulated) itself, the dominant narrative of this study challenges that of Study 1. Moreover, in this NPF study, blame is mainly attributed to the Government, as well as the Police and towards political violence which occurred in Malta during the 1970s and 1980s (see Portelli, 2009), whereas the Maltese rave scene was used as a space of liberty, expression, dissent, and collective advocacy (for the regulated aspect of the Maltese rave scene).

When speaking about the inception of rave culture in Malta between 1991 and 1993, organisers emphasised that the rave scene started as a revolution against the political turmoil which plagued Malta during the 1970s and the 1980s (Portelli, 2009). In accordance with Callus' (2020) study on the Maltese rave scene, the interviewees divulged how electronic dance music and rave culture were novelties to the young Maltese persons, and 'the Freedom Movement', as one organiser stated when recounting the rave scene's inception, allowed them to express themselves. Similarly to Hutson's (2000) findings, early rave culture in Malta consisted mainly of youths, and raving communities had a deep-rooted sense of community and expression.

Organisers then emphasised the introduction of regulations targeting raves - following a series of issues at rave parties between August and November 1998 - as a key turning-point in the Maltese rave scene. An underground was created in defiance of these laws, where club owners with special permits monopolised “afterhours” beyond 4:00 a.m., and raving communities, consisting of attendees and organisers, used novel methods to avoid being detected when organising rave parties in unlicensed locations and beyond stipulated times. Unlike Toronto’s raving communities (Hier, 2002), Maltese raving communities did not choose coalition advocacy to challenge the proposed regulations before expressing defiance through raving when rules targeting rave parties were introduced in 1998-9, yet similarly in both contexts raving was used as a contemporary political phenomenon.

5.3.1. The evolution of the Maltese rave scene following 1998-9

Following the late 1990s and the implementation of regulations, the Maltese rave scene found its base at Liquid Club, echoing findings from Attard’s (2019) study of Maltese clubbing geography and Callus’ (2020) sociological study on the Maltese rave scene. Two organisers also divulged that given the increasing popularity of rave music following Covid-19, rave parties also started being organised in the Gianpula Clubbing Village, even though it was more prominent with commercial club music. Therefore following the 1990s, the Maltese rave scene had two facets: the regulated facet as part of the wider party scene, and an unregulated facet which entailed illegal rave in unlicensed venues or in open-air, and these remain intact. This challenges conclusions arrived at in recent literature on the underground aspect of rave culture, such as Callus (2020) and Siokou & Moore (2008) who argue that rave culture has replaced its social dynamic with profit-orientation. This study on the Maltese rave scene found that organisers may place themselves on the unregulated-regulated-spectrum of rave parties as they please, and while they must align themselves with party industry goals and regulations to be licensed and compete commercially, unregulated rave parties are still used to defy the 4:00 a.m. law, or to revel beyond the boundaries of regulations when deemed necessary, thus

challenging Callus' (2020) claims that the 'underground' is dead. This is congruent with a study conducted by Anderson & Kavanaugh (2007) who found that although the rave subculture changed over the years, it still maintained social relevance in contextual issues.

This is further contextualised when organisers discussed the Maltese rave scene during Covid-19. During the pandemic restrictions on mass events and lack of clarity on when restrictions would be lifted generated uncertainty and commercial stress on the regulated party industry. Organisers of regulated rave parties pooled their concerns with other organisers in the party industry in Malta, which resulted in them uniting under 'Restart'. In congruence with ACF scholarship, 'Restart' exhibited sure traits of an advocacy coalition by pooling organisers' common concerns, articulating their policy preferences, and engaging in discussions with policymakers (intergovernmental dimensions) (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1994). Similarities may also be drawn between 'Restart' and the 'PartyPeopleProject' (Hier, 2002), a coalition of raving communities and commercial bodies which challenged the prohibition of rave parties in Toronto. Unlike the 'PartyPeopleProject', 'Restart' had no determining effect on the removal of Covid-19 restrictions on mass events, which led some organisers within the Maltese rave scene to lose confidence in advocacy and resort to defying Covid-19 restrictions and previously existing regulations on parties. Neither advocacy nor dissent had a determining effect on the removal of Covid-19 restrictions on mass events in Malta, and illegal parties defying regulations introduced in 1999 also had no effect in initiating a political movement such as found by Garcia de Medina-Rosales (2022) and Kent (2021) in their inquiries.

The findings of Study 2 give evidence that according to organisers, raving communities within the Maltese rave scene do attempt to influence the policy cycle. The regulated rave scene, as part of the wider clubbing/party industry, formed 'Restart' to articulate policy preferences during Covid-19, whereas other organisers and ravers (attendees) chose to express defiance to regulations by organising and attending illegal raves. These findings sustain Callus's (2020) notion that raving communities can unite to challenge hegemonic forces, or rather, dominant

policy narratives. In other words, this thesis has identified the 'rave' as a contemporary political phenomenon.

5.4. Contributions to NPF and ACF Scholarship

Inspired by Gray & Jones (2016), this research adopted a qualitative NPF to satisfy its research questions. Main assumptions and definitions of the NPF (Shanahan et al 2017) remained intact, however qualitative methods were replaced with two qualitative methods; a qualitative media analysis (Study 1) with respect to RQ1 and qualitative semi-structured interviews (Study 2) with respect to RQ2, as guided by Gray & Jones (2016). However, this research did not adopt grounded theory, such as Gray & Jones (2016) and Smith (2020), instead, data analysis was inspired from Braun & Clarke's (2008) Thematic Analysis to retain the ability to identify emergent codes for narrative strategies.

The findings of these studies are congruent with Shanahan et al's (2011) claim that the use of NPF and ACF scholarship may be used to advance the understanding of the policy process when applied simultaneously. Across both of my studies, the dominance of the 'Regulation and Awareness' coalition's policy narrative was evident. The media policy narratives were dominated by members of this coalition, and the interviews the organisers suggested that they were powerless in causing policy change, thus recurring to defiance. Therefore the studies carried out in this thesis sustain hypotheses HP1-HP4 posited in Shanahan et al (2011), which were outlined previously in the literature-dedicated chapter.

HP1 is sustained given that according to the results, coalitions who are stronger through narrative representation are more likely to influence policy (Shanahan et al, 2011), as done by the 'Regulation and Awareness' coalition in the Maltese rave scene. The dominance of the 'Regulation and Awareness' coalition's narrative also sustains HP2, and this research also found that a particularly persuasive policy narrative drives policy change (Shanahan et al, 2011; Schlauffer et al, 2022). Study 1 sustains HP3 as policy narrative characters did influence the opinions of policy makers and the public (Shanahan et al, 2011). In my study, this was

done when coalitions carried intergovernmental dimensions, thus resulting in actors having direct contact with policy makers. This had a positive effect on the longevity of the regulations on rave parties introduced in 1999, as policy stakeholders expressed concerns and articulated policy preferences within the 'Regulation and Awareness' coalition. Study 1 also sustains HP4, which posits that policy narratives are used to manipulate public opinion and scope of conflict (Shanahan et al, 2011). The results indicated that the 'Regulation and Awareness' coalition used moral panic, echoing recorded strategies used against rave culture (Zammit Pawley, 2012; Hier, 2002), as a devil-shift, presenting drug abusers, organisers, and club owners as evil, and rave parties as harmful due to inadvertent harm and regulatory vacuums.

This research sustains the significant role of policy narratives in the policy process, a crucial assumption of the NPF (Shanahan et al, 2011; 2017; Schlauffer et al 2022) and this is reflected in the findings of this research. As a final contribution to policy scholarship, this research also sustains Gray and Jones' (2016) statement that the NPF is adapted in adopting qualitative methods whilst sustaining core assumptions, and that this can be used to understand low salience policy discourse.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings of both studies and answered both research questions by examining the coalitions which formed within the Maltese rave scene policy subsystem, their competing policy narratives, by determining the dominant narrative, pushed by the 'Regulation and Awareness' coalition.

In Study 1, the dominant policy narrative presented a coalition of 'heroes' who articulated policy preferences of 'Regulation and Awareness' towards abuses in the Maltese rave scene. This resulted in media coverage generally presenting raving communities and club owners as villains. The dominant policy narrative resulted in the introduction of regulations and licences aimed at rave parties in 1998-9. The results and discussion of Study 1 sustain RQ1 in outlining

how media coverage describes rave, those involved, and issues being highlighted by the actors within the rave scene policy subsystem.

The dominant policy narrative in Study 2 challenged that of Study 1, with a coalition composed of organisers in the regulated and unregulated Maltese rave scene. Organisers expressed how they had little influence compared to the political and commercial entities composing the 'Regulation and Awareness' coalition found in Study 1, and thus even when articulating policy preferences as a coalition, this had no effect on policy outcomes. Other organisers chose to organise illegal rave parties, and attendees chose to attend, according to the organisers. These illegal raves were organised in defiance of regulations (those introduced in 1998-9, and Covid-19 restrictions).

Therefore Study 2 has found that raving communities do attempt to influence policy, however it has also found that this had no effect. This suggests that acts of defiance reported in Study 2 may have been instances where raving was used as a political phenomenon when coalitions either (i) failed to form, such as in the context of the introduction of regulations for rave parties in 1998-9, or (ii) failed to cause policy change even when articulating policy preferences within the Maltese rave scene policy subsystem (regarding Covid-19 restrictions on mass events).

This was followed by a discussion on how this research sustains claims that NPF and ACF scholarship may be used to increase understanding of policy processes, and that the Qualitative NPF research further extends this applicability to low salience policy areas. Beyond policy scholarship, this thesis has also contributed to knowledge on the Maltese rave scene by telling its story whilst deploying policy scholarship. The next chapter shall close this thesis by outlining future areas for research and the conclusion.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

This concluding chapter starts with a final summary of findings with respect to research aims and objectives presented in the introductory chapter and continues by outlining future areas for research with respect to policy studies using ACF and NPF scholarship. Finally, the thesis ends with the concluding remarks.

6.2. Summary of Findings with respect to Research Aims

This research has successfully deployed qualitative NPF analysis to understand the role of policy narratives on policy outcomes in a low salience policy area - the Maltese rave scene. Inspired by Gray & Jones (2016), policy narratives on the Maltese rave scene were analysed to determine characters and their roles and motivations across the story (1993-2021). The dual use of ACF and NPF scholarship allowed for coalitions and their policy preferences to be identified. It was found that the dominant policy narrative, pushed by the 'Regulation and Awareness' coalition within the Maltese rave scene, did influence policy outcomes (Schlaufer et al, 2022; Shanahan et al, 2011; 2017).

The challenging coalition was composed mainly of organisers. It was found that these formally organised themselves to articulate policy preferences only when Covid-19 restrictions banned mass events, thus affecting the party scene and the regulated rave scene. In other instances, disapproval towards policy outcomes were expressed through defiance by organising illegal raves. Neither 'Restart', the coalition advocating for a return of mass events during Covid-19, nor illegal raves, challenging the regulations aimed at rave parties introduced in 1998-9 and Covid-19 restrictions, had an influence on public policy.

6.3. Furthering Qualitative NPF and Recommendations for Research

This research has exhibited the dynamic applicability of the NPF. Similarly to Gray & Jones (2016), in my take on the NPF, core assumptions and definitions were held intact, and qualitative methods were introduced as opposed to quantitative methods, given the low salience of the policy topic of this research. Moreover, this research continues on Shanahan et al's (2011) invitation for researchers to explore how policy narratives influence the policy process, and to expand ACF usefulness. This research has also furthered the NPF's travel capacities as posited by Schlaufer et al (2022).

I therefore invite others to also explore the dynamic applicability of the NPF to understand how policy narratives influence policy, and to similarly adopt ACF scholarship together with the qualitative NPF to understand the policy process of low salience policy issues, such as those on a local and regional level, or in instances where data is scarce to carry out quantitative NPF.

6.4. Concluding remark

My research has identified the rave as a contemporary political phenomenon in the Maltese context, however it has also found that neither organised advocacy nor defiance towards laws were successful influencing public policy, all the while furthering ACF and NPF scholarship. Carrying out this research has been a privilege and a personal reflexive exercise in maintaining academic rigour with respect to deploying ACF and NPF scholarship and limiting any personal biases from influencing research outcomes.

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