



STATEMENT

RAVE IS UNDERGROUND

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE DREAMS

A counterculture – its values, its direction, its handing-on

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PROLOGUE

There was once a counterculture, and it did not die because it was banned. It faded because it was bought up, invited in, copied, and advertised under its own name. Anyone young today knows only the copy and takes it for the original. They went to parties where they were told this was the underground, and had no reason to doubt it, because they never saw anything else.

This statement is not a look back and not nostalgia. It is an attempt to hold on to the values and the direction before no one remembers they existed, and to pass them on to those who come after. We do not orient ourselves by a year, but by an attitude that is older than we are and that does not belong to us. We inherited it and we pass it on. The tools change, the spaces change, the enemies change. The core does not.

There are books we lean on without repeating them. In the nineties they gathered what was then running through the scene as ideas — party, tribes and resistance, the visions of a networked counterculture. Much of it still holds today. Other parts drowned in a pathos and a spirituality we do not need and that harmed the cause more than it helped. We take the values and leave the incense burner standing. What remains is harder, clearer, and easier to defend.

A single red thread runs through everything that follows: the struggle for the dreams. Not for power, not for markets, not for the next booking. For the right to imagine that things could be otherwise — and to make it real for one night. Every chapter is only one side of it. And at the end of every chapter stands, briefly and in italics, what it comes down to in that respect — so that the thread stays visible even when the themes change.



I. THE LAWLESS SPACE

A party was never an event. It was a lawless space, cut out of the order of the city for one night. An empty building, a patch of forest, a wasteland, a street — add power, add a sound system, add people, and for one night different rules applied. No laws, no rule of anyone, no logic of admission. Only the agreement of those present to look out a little for themselves and a little for the others. And it worked.

This is the basic fact on which everything else depends: that a group of people can organize themselves for a limited time, without command and without exploitation, and that what comes out of it is not the chaos we are threatened with, but something better than the ordered rest. A temporary autonomous zone, if you want to call it that — the term comes from a theory of the early nineties whose author later held untenable positions. The concept outlives the person not as a relic to be worshipped, but as a plain description of what we were doing anyway: a space that consists precisely in not being mapped, not registered, not permanent.

Permanence is the trap. As soon as a place has a name, an address, a regular crowd, it is no longer free but established — and the established gets administered, and the administered gets exploited. Hence the moving on: not out of romance, but as a form of organization. What you build must be transportable. The place is not the achievement; the ability to open a new one at any time is.

The first dream is the simplest and the greatest: that for one night a piece of the world belongs to no one.

II. RECLAIM — TAKING THE STREET BACK

What began in hiding, in the empty hall and on the field, always had its open form too: taking the street back. Reclaim the Streets was nothing other than the lawless space carried out into the visible — a junction, a motorway, a square, withdrawn from traffic and commerce for a few hours and turned into a place where people dance instead of driving through. The message was simple: not even the commons belong to you the way you think. Public space is public until someone actually uses it publicly.

This connects the party with the squat and with the demonstration. It is the same gesture in different keys: here is a place you have designated for your purposes, and we take it for something you did not intend. Whether housing that stands empty and is speculated on, whether a street that only serves the flow, whether a night that is meant to be sold — the appropriation is the act. Everything else is trimming.

The dream here is a spatial one: that the city belongs to those who live in it, not those who own it.

III. COLLECTIVE, NOT STAR

In the old days you did not see the DJ. He stood in the dark, behind the people, next to the rig, somewhere. It did not matter who he was. That was not modesty, it was the principle: on the floor there is no front and no back, no stage, no idol, no one everyone looks at. The collective experience is the thing, not the self-display of an individual. Whoever puts themselves in the middle has not understood where the middle is — there is none.

Star culture is therefore not a side effect of commercialization, it is its core. The moment the DJ becomes a name, a brand, a face on the flyer, the thing has already tipped over. Then it is about the fee, about reach, about the next booking, and the space is only a backdrop for one person. The pop posturing, running your hand through your hair three times in the spotlight, having yourself celebrated — that used to be mocked, and it deserves to be mocked again.

Hence the mask, hence the function name instead of the personal name. Not as a pose, but as a consequence: you are there to make the music, not to be seen. Anonymity here is not coquetry but protection and stance at once — it denies exploitation its point of attack. A brand can be bought. A mask anyone can stand behind cannot. The name on the poster should stand for a cause, not for a face.

The dream here is a communal one: that the experience belongs to everyone and to no one.

IV. NO AUTHORITY BUT YOURSELF

The anti-authoritarian core is older than techno and reaches beyond it. It says: no authority but yourself, and that is not a licence for arbitrariness but an obligation. Whoever accepts no ruler above them must carry the responsibility themselves that the ruler otherwise claims to carry. Self-determination without self-organization is only consumption with a better feeling.

This is the difference between us and the arbitrariness that likes to borrow the same vocabulary. Freedom does not mean that everyone does what they want and the rest can fend for themselves. Freedom means that no one disposes over another — and that the order which otherwise comes from above is produced together from below. On a good party there are no laws, but there is an understanding: look out for one another. The one replaces the other.

The dream of the hippies who went to Stonehenge last, before that too was taken from them, was the same as ours, only in different clothes: a life without command. We left out the flowers and kept the core.

The dream here is an inner one: that a human being belongs to themselves.

V. LET ALL WOMEN BE WITCHES

A space that abolishes front and back cannot at the same time wave through the old above and below of the sexes. The liberation is either there for everyone or it is none. The floor belongs to everyone or it is just one more stage on which the old conditions carry on, this time with bass.

"Let all women be witches" was the slogan against what was done to women over centuries: that those who withdrew from disposal, who healed, who knew, who contradicted, who lived independently, were branded as dangerous and persecuted. The witch is the image of the woman who belongs to no one. On our floors this is not a provocation but the precondition. Whoever places one sex over the other here, whoever turns the space into a hunting ground, has understood the matter as little as the one who looks for a leader.

The dream here is a shared one: that no one disposes over another, in any respect, including this one.

VI. CYBERPUNK IN REAL LIFE

It was never apolitical, and it was never only analog. Electronic resistance has two bodies: the space in which people dance, and the network over which they communicate, organize, disappear. What in the early theories was called electronic civil disobedience is today simply the condition of survival: the ability to coordinate without going through the channels that can be surveilled and switched off.

The control system has not collapsed since then, it has grown. Every platform we talk over belongs to someone who reads along and can switch it off. Every trace we leave is a point of attack. Whoever announces a party over a commercial messenger has already half reported it to the authorities. Whoever sells tickets over a portal has built a list that does not belong to them. Convenience is the door through which control comes in — not by force, but as a service.

Cyberpunk in real life does not mean acting out films, but drawing the consequence: your own infrastructure, decentralized communication, knowledge that does not depend on commercial services, anonymity as standard rather than exception. The rig on the field and the encrypted channel over which the address is passed on are the same tool. The data body we leave behind is as real as the body that dances — and it is more vulnerable, because it remains when the night is over. To protect it is not paranoia but part of the same care with which you dismantle the rig and leave the place clean.

And it is worth turning around the relation that is sold to us. They offer the young a metaverse: a virtual space in which one supposedly moves freely, meets, experiences another world — in truth a fully measured cage owned by a corporation, in which every movement is a data point and every encounter an advertising surface. We have had the real cyberspace for a long time, and we had it before the internet. The free party is the real cyberspace: a space beyond the normal laws, in which identities flow, in which you can be someone else, in which the borders of the everyday world are suspended for a few hours. It is the darknet in real life — not mapped, not searchable, reachable only over the right channels and the right trust. It is the freespace that science fiction conjured, except that it has a floor you really stand on and people you really touch.

This is not a metaphor, it is a reconquest. They stole the freedom of a whole generation and sold them back a simulation of it — the club instead of the squatted hall, the festival ticket instead of the field, the metaverse instead of the night in which everything was possible. The robbed youth often no longer even knows that something was taken from them, because they never saw the original. To bring back the real free space means showing them that the simulation is a simulation — and that the real thing remains reachable as long as someone knows how to open it.

The dream here is a technical one: that the means built for control can be turned against control — and that the freest space is not a screen but a dark field with a rig on it.

VII. THE DIY ECONOMY

It is like in every real do-it-yourself culture, like in the squat: there is not the one contribution. One cooks, another wrenches on the rig, one makes the shirts, one runs the stand, one draws, one builds the lights, one plays. Everyone brings something in, everyone learns from the others, without coercion, without a wage relation, without anyone disposing over the others. What circulates is not in the first place money, but ability, time, trust.

This is not a weakness of the organization, this is the organization. Self-organization does not mean structurelessness, but a different structure — one that grows from below instead of being decreed from above. It has its own hardships: whoever contributes nothing and only takes stands out; whoever shows off gets corrected; the responsibility cannot be delegated. But it knows no boss and no owner, and that is the whole point. An economy in which you work for one another instead of against one another is not a dream for the distant future. It happens every weekend, in small, as proof.

And it is more than a nice side effect. It is the actual political argument, more striking than any theory: here, in this place, on this night, a society without wage labour, without ownership of the means, without command, functions — and it functions not worse but better. Whoever says it cannot work, whoever claims that humans need the market and the ruler in order not to sink into chaos, take them to a good party and let them watch. The model is small and it is temporary, but it is there, and in its very performance it refutes what is sold to us as having no alternative.

The dream here is an economic one: that people can produce without anyone pocketing the surplus.

VIII. A LINE ACROSS BORDERS

This music never had a homeland, because it comes from homelessness. It always ran as a line across borders: the bass from the sound systems of Jamaica, which made the rig itself an instrument; the machines from a dying industrial city, out of which people built a future that no one else granted them; the rooms that the excluded took for themselves because they were let in nowhere else; the convoys, the fields, the squatted houses. Whoever knows this origin will not be talked into believing this is a place for nation, purity and leaders. It never was one.

That used to be no debate. The milieu was left and mixed — squat, demo, concert, party, all the same web, a punk context without clean borders. That Nazis have no busi-

ness at a party no one had to argue. That there are no nations to defend was consensus, not point of contention. Today it has to be said again, because many think socially but have become national — and that is exactly the break at which it is decided whether someone belongs or only uses the cause. Social and national is a contradiction, not a programme.

This is where the boundary of our open door runs. We talk to the one who does not yet know the cause. We do not talk to the one who divides, who sorts by origin, who wants to carry the border into the inside of the dance floor. That is the only bouncer we know.

The dream here is a borderless one: that a bassline does not ask for your passport.

IX. WHAT CALLS ITSELF UNDERGROUND

You have to name honestly what is left, otherwise the rest is a lie. Most of what is called underground today is club culture, outsourced onto the field, fitted with a cool stamp so it can be cashed in better. Energy drink at club prices, a word-mark over the rig, the CBD machine in the corner, and that calls itself resistance. The sound has stayed, the cause is gone.

And even what still looks wild you have to check. There are systems that run hard, illegal, uncompromising — and yet are not the line. Sometimes there stands someone who bought the sound system for thirty thousand from his parents and cannot play himself, and the others play, and the whole thing is a kindergarten theatre with an underground coat of paint. Some are hard against everything, but nationally charged instead of anti-imperialist — wild, but empty. The Czech system is not the Austrian is not what we mean. There is no common front just because the same machines are running.

Wildness alone is no content. Anti-capitalist parties are the fewest. The few that still exist are real for that — and exactly those are meant. What is meant is the attitude, not the sound and not the outfit.

The dream is defended here: against the copy that bears its name.

X. REPRESSION AND THE CAT AND MOUSE

Repression belongs to it, and it was part of the game from the start. Bans, conditions, confiscations, the arming of the laws against unregistered gatherings — that is the honest reaction of the state to what a free party is: a threat to its order. Repression never misunderstood the cause. It understood it exactly.

The problem is not that the cat-and-mouse game exists. The problem is that the mouse has grown tired. It needs new concepts, new considerations, new ways to open a space and let it disappear again before it is cashed in. The old routines are seen through, the old places burned. What we are building anyway elsewhere — our own radio links, de-

centralized communication, infrastructure that belongs to no one — is the basis here. Not so that it stays illegal for the sake of being illegal, but so that the free space remains possible at all when every square metre is mapped and every platform surveilled.

There is a temptation one must resist: to come to terms with repression in order to be left alone. To obtain the permit, to fulfil the conditions, to submit the safety concept, to be good. Whoever does that has already lost, without a single officer having to intervene — for the permitted party is no longer a liberated zone but a tolerated one, and toleration can be withdrawn at any time. The art is not to get permission. The art is not to need it. That demands more preparation, more trust, more discipline than any registered event — illegality is not negligence, it is the more demanding form of organization.

| *The dream stays awake here: that you cannot control everything that moves.*

XI. WHERE IT DRIFTS — AND WHERE WE GO

You can see where the mainstream is drifting. Headphone events, on which no one talks to anyone anymore, where everyone dances in their own lane and in the end photographs themselves rather than meeting one another. That is the final form of atomization: the collective experience, technically dismantled into so many individuals who are alone next to one another. It is the exact inversion of what it was about — the space remains, but the common has been surgically removed.

Against this it takes no nostalgia, but a radical counterculture, rebuilt for the conditions that come. Not the repetition of the old parties, no museum, no tribute night. But the same principle, translated into a time we do not yet know. The few old ones who are left often no longer carry the spirit — it is not enough to have survived. Creating awareness among those who never experienced it, and keeping it alive by doing it: that is the task.

| *The dream points forward here: that those who come will know that it is possible.*

XII. THE STRUGGLE FOR THE DREAMS

In the end it is this, and it was this from the start: a struggle for the dreams. A youth and counterculture does not live from consumption, it lives from people taking something they are not given — time, space, one another, the experience that self-organization works. Whoever once stood in a space in which for one night no rule held and it still did not end in chaos but on the contrary, knows something no one can talk them out of anymore: that the order which is sold to us as having no alternative is a choice and not a necessity.

We pass on no esotericism. No higher vibrations, no enlightenment on the floor, no cosmic chatter — that was always the soft entry through which arbitrariness came. We pass on a mechanism and an attitude. The mechanism: a space plus a rig plus a collective makes a zone in which the rules from outside are suspended. The attitude: self-determined and self-organized, without rulers, against the state, against capital, against nation, against the rule of one sex over the other. Play free, be free, free people.

Back into the underground does not mean back into the past. It means into where it is not countable. Where there is no admission, no sponsor, no logo, no face on the flyer. Where a night is again something you take, instead of something you buy. We have seen that it existed. That is why we know that it can exist again.

To make a new world by struggling for the dreams. That is not a slogan. That is the work order.

Rave is Underground. Everything else is the copy.



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In the line of Wolfgang Sterneck: *Tanzende Sterne – Party, Tribes und Widerstand* (Nachtschatten Verlag, 2005, ISBN 978-3-03788-142-2) & *Cybertribe-Visionen* (ed., 2nd ext. edition, Nachtschatten Verlag 1999, ISBN 978-3-907080-45-0). The title „The Struggle for the Dreams“ follows Sterneck's essay of the same name. Esotericism removed, values kept. – We use the concept of the temporary autonomous zone as an idea; we explicitly distance ourselves from its author Peter Lamborn Wilson (Hakim Bey) and his paedophilia-apologetic writings. – Signs: the eight-pointed star is our own signal, neither a party badge nor an esoteric symbol. Olive is workwear, not uniform – antimilitarist, antifascist. Free text – for free distribution.