

The struggle to belong
Dealing with diversity in 21st century urban settings.

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Exploring the “grammar” of events.
**A third sector’s strategy for enhancing everyday local
solidarity**

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Over the last 30 years urban contexts in western developed countries have witnessed a significant shift in the social organization of everyday solidarity. Such a shift consists of the space and time disembedding of sociality from working places (Lockwood 1999 p.72) and everyday settings (Lévy 1997). Nowadays, in contemporary urban societies social - non instrumental - “ties are kept away from the locales of everyday interaction and they are re-constructed on faraway and indefinite space and time arches. Society is stretched in space and time” (Bagnasco et al 2001 p. 273). Such a shift in the space and time organization of social relationships is strictly linked not just to the overall change from an industrial society to a knowledge-economy but also, and especially, to “the rise of the network society” (Castells 1999).

Indeed, together with the surviving of more local forms of structuring social relationships, a new forms of sociality is emerging. Social analysts describe it in terms of a specific function of the social and economic organization of urban contexts because it works for enhancing the competitiveness (Vicari Moulart 2009) and attractiveness of cities on a world scale. Such a new form of sociality is disembedded because it consists mainly of *urban events* that do not involve the inhabitants and the everyday activities normally unfolding in the specific settings where they take place. Ephemeral events are used to give the city hosting them visibility, for attracting fluxes of money and affluent people and to enter the network of urban cool milieus. Thus, events such as cultural festival or other types of arts’ show are more and more promoted by local councils or other type of collective subjects interested in developing and regenerating decaying urban contexts, turning them in attractive and living place for the new international wealthy and highly mobile upper class (Urry 1995). We could think that the contemporary changes occurring in western cities are a simple implication of the emergence of this new mobile class and of its dominance in shaping the social construction of urban spaces. Instead, things are more complicated and the analysis of the event proposed in this essay is meant to illustrate this point. Indeed, urban events play a double, ambivalent, role with respect to the contemporary changes of the spatial organization of everyday social interactions: on the one hand they maximally represent and foster the aforementioned disembedding of sociality but on the other hand urban events have become a significant part of the repertoire of action used by non-profit groups aiming at eliciting local solidarity amongst diverse people and at re-embedding sociality.

This paper focuses on the analysis of some conditions of possibility and of the related outcomes produced by urban events used by third sector actors to contrast the shrinking of public places, the decay of the local social fabric and the diffusion of social exclusion in urban contexts characterized by an increased diverse population.

1. THE TERRITORY OF NON-PROFIT EVENTS: A FOCUS ON TWO TYPES OF EXTENSIONS

Events used by third sector’s actors to re-embed everyday solidarity are part of what has been called the contemporary “industry of the restoring of social ties” (Lévy 1997 p.31), which comprises the variety of endeavors deployed by non-profit actors to contrast “deterioralization processes that generate social exclusion and break social relationships” (ivi

p.33). This “industry” aims at “re-embed” sociality: “re-appropriate and re-define social relationships at the local conditions of space and time” (Bagnasco et al. 1997 p. 209) by carrying out the “work of social inclusion, reconstituting individual or collective identities” (Lévy 1997 p.31).

Though extremely heterogeneous among themselves, the efforts carried out by the actors animating such an “industry” share two elements: a) the focus on *face-to-face interactions* as privileged dimension to develop and regenerate social relationships; b) the framing of the enhancement of social ties as a *proxy to address broader issues* such as urban poverty, unemployment, gentrification processes or housing shortage.

The observed third sector’s strategy was characterized by the fact of using events to pursue goals of eliciting everyday solidarity and thus it is worth to broadly define this repertoire of action. Though – as we shall see soon - this form of action may be significantly heterogeneous, events can theoretically be defined as *ephemeral occasions of face-to-face interactions for many people* or focused or non-focused gatherings of people in a given time-space delimited setting and in reciprocal co-presence (Goffman 1963). Following the viewpoint of the actors animating the observed third sector’ strategy to enhance everyday solidarity, there were two main elements characterizing the use they made of events. Firstly, events were set up to *generatively* (Vitale 2010) pursue the goal of embedding sociality, that is to say that at the eyes of their promoters events were suited tools to make people meet and develop social ties among themselves. Secondly, events that made the observed third sector’ strategy consisted of *ephemeral occasions* strictly tied to provisional gathering of people that could at maximum aspire at being recurrent over time but that in any case was not meant to last over time.

But the most theoretical interesting trait of the observed third sector’s strategy was the *territorial component* of events, that is to say their interactional dimension or, to be more precise, the territorial affects of the interactions and spatial practices in which events consist of. Indeed, I propose to deem territories as “the effect of the material inscription of social relationships” (Brighenti) and to observe the events used by third sector actors trying to outline which types of territorial effects are produced by such ephemeral –spatial and interactional – practices. This type of analysis aims at studying the conditions of possibility through which events set up by non-profit groups territorialize, specifying how different events define different types of territories in order to detail the possibilities events have of developing processes that overcome their ephemeral nature and may affect local solidarity dynamics. Territorialization processes always “work to form social groupings” (Brighenti 2010 p.7) and thus looking at the territorial component of events should be telling about which type of solidarity they can elicit and which type of inclusion they entail: indeed, “inclusion and exclusion correspond to openings and closures that are the basic operations of the territorial machine” (*ibidem*).

In order to see how events territorialize is crucial to pay attention to the *extensions* of the spatial practices in which the events consist of and in particular it is worth looking at how such practices overcome their ephemeral nature, affecting broader symbolic and/or relational aspects which publicly define a territory. Indeed: “the theoretical question that

lies at the core of territory and its relationship to social life at large can be put as follows: how does it happen that the material transforms into the immaterial (Vandenberghe, 2007)? How does it happen that spaces transform into relations? In traditional ontology, spaces and relations are two different sets of things. But the distinction between the spheres of the material and the immaterial is weakened by the fact that, in social practices, these two dimensions do not simply interact but ceaselessly prolong into each other. This is what happens with every territory” (Brighenti 2010 p.8). The theoretical stake of the proposed analysis is that of focusing on the *extensions* of the observed events to understand how they territorialize, at which conditions they can affect local everyday solidarity.

In particular, I propose to pay attention to two types of *extensions of interactions taking place in the events in other types of relational spaces*. In the first type of articulation events (or some elements of them) extend in the *media sphere*, while in the second type events extend in other – mediated or immediate - interactions, taking place afterwards the observed event but drawing on it for their unfolding. In both cases there is an overcoming of the ephemeral nature of events but different territories are enacted and they do not possess directly comparable social implications. Indeed, these territories refer to different territorial scales of action, they possess different capacity of addressing social needs of local solidarity and they are differently capable of affecting the conditions of development of such social needs. In particular, media communication is linked to large-scale processes which require a significant effort of “growing in generality” to develop, while the second type of extension normally take place on a smaller scale and has more capacity of addressing dynamics of solidarity and social needs defined at the local level.

2. NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS USING EVENTS TO RESTORE EVERYDAY LOCAL SOLIDARITY

Habermas paid specific attention to civil society actors and even to urban events, specifying the conditions making them the intermediate level of the public sphere (Habermas 1998) according to its normative model. In its perspective events may represent space articulation of the public sphere when they fulfill two requirements (Sebastiani 1997): firstly they are connected with the attendees’ lifeworld concerns and secondly they are able to affect the institutional media sphere (Habermas 1998). Indeed, in this way events can articulate the communication between the lifeworld and the institutional media sphere, allowing a proper functioning of the public sphere according to Habermas’ siege model.

Instead, according to the argument proposed by my analysis events set up by non-profit groups face a “grammar” – meant as a specific type of relation between two entities which cannot be affected on purpose - that make particularly hard the communication between the poles Habermas outlined.

According to the adopted hypothesis events may differently territorialize but in any case they aren’t suited forms of public action for making lifeworld concerns extend in and affect the media sphere. I empirically illustrate the argument proposed by comparing two clearly different types of events, which territorialize according to different processes of extension

of the interactions in which they consist of. Then I will consider how the two types of extensions relate with each other when they both concern the same event, exploring the “grammar” of events by showing some reasons of the difficulties they have in communicating.

The empirical evidences used to illustrate my argument were collected during a two-year period of participant observation of the everyday life of ten cultural associations and of the thirty two events they organized. The main research technique I used was the theory-driven participant observation (Lichterman 2002) and in-depth interviews, both involving the everyday settings in which the group’s life took place and the official contexts of events. The ten civic groups I observed aimed at regenerating social cohesion at the local level through initiatives and social programs that made people connect and develop ties with each other, mainly during ephemeral gatherings. The groups shared with social analysts the worries about the widespread risks of local social exclusion: they assumed that everyday local solidarity couldn’t be taken for granted anymore but it needed to be fostered through a social spiral that developed by making people meet and interact with each other in their living places. The ten cultural associations I researched shared such a broad assumption and operated in the same locale (Milan’s Zone four and, in particular, the neighborhood of Porta Romana), which was characterized by a rapid process of de-industrialization and significant changes in the social structure in terms of aging and increased diversity. In particular, they operated in a local context whose social life was perceived to be dangerously shrinking because of the social isolation suffered particularly by the elderly and because of the augmented vulnerability and difficulties in the access to local resources experienced by the middle class (Citroni 2010). The groups I observed possessed different organizing structures but they all had recently experienced problems in funding their activities.

The event represented a form of action particularly suited to the context’s elements in which the observed groups operated. Indeed, on the one hand the increased mobility, the high level of cultural diversity and the crisis of social integration witnessed by the local society in which the observed groups operated made events a repertoire of action particularly suited to address a public (Iveson 2009) that could not be taken for granted anymore but that it needed to be attracted through specific contents. On the other hand, events guaranteed the visibility that was crucial to build the consensus and legitimacy (Vicari Moulaert 2010) necessary to attract funds both from private and public actors. Context factors encouraged the adoption of events, but it is worth précising that this repertoire of action was *not strategically* used by the observed groups to pursue their goals. Instead, events were used by the observed groups firstly because they were able in making people animate public streets and squares: they created the conditions for making diverse people have the possibility of interacting with each other, thus – according to their viewpoint - restoring the local social fabric in decay.

3.HETEROGENOUS EXTENSIONS OF THE TERRITORIES OF EVENTS

What share a public disco party with massive audience dancing at the music of deejays under a railway tunnel and another event - called “Open Saturday” - during which

previously stranger citizens self-organize themselves in autonomous groups of discussion on specific public-relevant issues?

They both are ephemeral practices with a generative dimension making their attendees directly practicing the change they want to bring about. The differences among these events are also relevant and they exemplify the variety of events I observed and analyzed during my fieldwork research. Firstly, they both aim at enhancing public places in the locales in which they took place, though “public place” meant quite different things for the organizing groups. In the first case it meant having a lot of people gathered in the same venue and sharing good times by dancing and causally interacting. In the second case it meant giving birth to discursive arenas made of strict interactive and linguistic rules.

But the difference that most matters for my argument is in the kind of public - in the pragmatist sense (Dewey 1927) - the two events implicitly assumed, a dimension we can grasp observing the two extensions through which an event territorialize. These extensions can be outlined with reference to two ideal-typical categories of events taken from non-profit studies: “consumption of sociality” and “production of sociality” (Borghini 2001). The first category refers to events in which sociality is assumed as a “commodity” that is produced by someone (who set up the events) for the consumption of someone else (the event’s attendees). As we shall see the category of “consumption of sociality” events is particularly useful to illustrate how an ephemeral gathering of people extends itself in the media relational space. Instead, “production of sociality” is an ideal-typical category that can be used to describe events leaning towards the blurring of the distinction between who set up the event and its attendees because the latter ones assume a pro-active part in the unfolding of the event. As we shall see, this second category corresponds to a type of territory that works by extending ephemeral communication taking place during events in other face-to-face interactions unfolding in different relational spaces with respect to the initial event. Let’s explore the “grammar of events” using the categories of “consumption and production of sociality” to analyze some events set up by the observed groups.

“CONSUMPTION OF SOCIALITY”

Events whose cast was closest to the category of “consumption of sociality” were the party-like initiatives that the observed groups used to set up in the open air during the good season. As examples of this type of events we can cite the “Giant bed’s party” or the “Everybody’s diner”. In the first case a group of artists set up a giant bed of the size of an entire square of Milan, and invited the event’s attendees to use it as they wished. In the “Everybody’s diner” one of the groups I observed set many long tables in a square in front of one of the biggest train stations of Milan and invited all urban dwellers to bring food and come to eat together in a massive potluck. In both cases, during these parties music was played by deejays or live bands, people danced, drunk and chat among themselves, as it may be observed in whatever big parties held in private or public spaces.

We can consider these events as sort of very loose choreographies that could comprise a variety of attendees’ ways of engaging in the event and a range of meanings attached to such engagements. Indeed, by carrying out informal interviews during the events’ unfolding I learned that most of the people I was speaking with possessed just a very

vague idea about the event's official content but this doesn't matter at all for them and with respect to the variety of meaning-making practices in which they engaged themselves with. For example considering the aforementioned event called "Giant's bed party", among its attendees there was who considered it as "a way to color such a grey city", an occasion "to fight the dominance of cars and give the city back to pedestrians and cyclists", "an innovative fruition of an experimental artistic practice", a possibility "to approach the art to the wider public" an occasion "to live the city differently", a "convivial party that change a public space". These excerpts¹ tell us something important about the plurality of meanings that I found in other "consumption of sociality" events and through which the sociable everyday practices in which the events consisted of were lived. What it is worth noting is that this variety of meanings were hardly coordinated among themselves and they were normally detached from the official frame given to the events by the non-profit groups that had set them up. Indeed, the party-like events I have observed were conceived by their organizing groups as a means for "upgrading public spaces"², good occasions for enacting an urban sociality made of interactions among strangers and to create favorable conditions for the generation of new social relationships that could contrast social isolation.

Observing the capacity of this type of events of using the media to articulate a public discourse we systematically note that "consumption of sociality" events were capable of calling forth media communication that gave resonance to the framing the organizing had decide for those events. For example if we consider the "Everybody diner" we see that the local and national media resonance given to these events defined them as "opportunities given to the public to live the city differently"³, turning non-places into public venues and allowing citizens to "appropriate their city in a non instrumental way"⁴. These meanings – the very way of wording them – came directly from the observed organizing group and in particular from its press office. Indeed, in my field research I noted that journalists and media workers drew widely on the writings prepared by the organizing groups to speak about the observed events and I also noted that the attendees' meaning-making practices found little space in the media resonance given to the events to which they participated. The situated meanings that the attendees gave to their participation in the events had no connection with the media discourse about those events. According to the analysis I carried out on a variety of events - and consistently with empirical findings from studies on social movements (Oliver Myers 1999) - the most significant links between events and the media discourse about them were the number of their attendees and the place in which events took place. Indeed, I systematically noticed that the more central was the place in which the event took place and, especially, the more numerous its public the more the possibilities to get attention and resonance through the media sphere. But I also noticed that the bigger and more attended the events were, the more their attendees attached to them a variety of meanings that were just loosely connected with the events' official contents diffused through the media communication.

We start to spot the distance of the two aforementioned types of extensions through which events may territorialize: on the one hand the attendees' interactions, their situated

¹ From field notes I took of the informal conversation I conducted during my participation in the event.

² From the organizing group's webpage.

³ From the organizing group's official communication through leaflets.

⁴ From the organizing group's webpage.

meaning-making spatial practices and their extensions in other relational mediated or direct spaces; on the other hand the extensions of the observed events toward the media institutional sphere which was mainly sustained by the centrality of the location of events and by the number of their attendees, independently from their meaning-making practices and the content of their involvement. The distance between these two types of dimensions was significantly linked to the differences in the type of pragmatist publics that the observed associations implicitly assumed with their very setting up of events. In particular, “consumption of sociality” events referred to a public whose worth increased with its overall number, whose simple public visibility was crucial in making non-profit groups overcome threshold of access to the media institutional sphere. We can see better the outlines that characterize the notion of public that it is assumed in this type of use of events by taking a look at another example of “consumption of sociality” events: “Centrifuge Movement”, a series of events aiming at “bringing the center in the outskirts”, that is to say at reversing the spatial organization of cultural life in Milan that normally used to concentrate itself in the city center and became more and more rarefied in the outskirts. These events were meant to regenerate neighborhood in social decay by activating a sort of “urban tourism” bringing habitants from the whole city into peripheral neighborhoods, thus turning upside down the usual mobility pattern of citizens from outskirt areas moving to the city center to take advantage of its rich cultural life. These events also proposed a new way of framing the urban outskirts of Milan, their uniqueness and their invisible resources that could enrich the whole city if given adequate attention.

Though “Centrifuge Movement”'s events comprised a variety of activities, they were attended by very small audiences which normally consisted of local residents. Such an audience limited itself in being spectators of the movie projections and arts show in which “Centrifuge movement” consisted of. After seven editions in different peripheral areas of Milan, “Centrifugal movement” didn't seem to have reach its ambitious purpose because it had failed in bringing outsider audience in outskirt areas of the city. As a confirm of such a failure the following year the project was moved in one of the most lively neighborhoods of Milan, not far away from the city center, thus changing his content. But at this respect it is also worth noting that the fact that the event resulted in failing to reach its scheduled goals had nothing to do with the generation of public discourse that the event had anyway prompted on it and on the state of the peripheries.



Figure 1. Source: La Repubblica, 2 July 2008

This article's title is "I will see you in the outskirts" and it talks about "the hard challenge of inverting the flux of the amusement", of how "beautiful can be Milan's outskirts". This media communication brought to the widest attention a quite unusual way of framing the topic of Milan peripheries because it stressed cultural inequalities more than social ones. The "naming power" the organizing group exerted through the media communication is an outcome consistent with the role Habermas assigned to civil society actors in his normative model of the public sphere. The point to be stressed is the fact that such an outcome unfolded independently from the attendees' practices that the "Centrifugal movement" comprised and that determined its failure and its definitive abandonment on the part of its organizers.

In my research I've observed other cases of "consumption of sociality"'s events and in some cases they were capable of being inclusive of a diversified audience or they comprised sociable practices that entailed significant identity-related dynamics (Loukaitou-Sideris Ehrenfeucht 2009). In any case the inclusiveness of the observed events with respect to a diversified public was tied to the ways the members of the organizing groups conducted the "work of sociability" (Daniels 1985): the "conscious production of the ambience" (*ibidem*) suited to make people interact with each other and develop social ties. In particular, the more such a work was conducted according to a non intimate regime of engagement with the world (Thévenot 2007), the more the possibilities of including attendees that possessed different repertoire of sociality with respect to the members of the organizing groups. In any case, when some of the observed events affected the media communication, this occurred independently from the ways in which the work of sociability was conducted: indeed, what was extended in the media were the official events' contents given by their organizers, regardless of the situated interactions in which the attendees engaged themselves with and through which they developed meaning-making processes.

The category of "consumption of sociality" exemplifies a type of event that assume a public that lend particularly itself to the media communication and that, through it, is potentially capable of shaping the public opinion. With the category of "production of sociality" instead

we will consider events implicitly assuming another type of public, not equally suited for meeting market institutions and their logics of action but more capable of territorializing drawing on the meaning-making practices of the event's attendees.

"PRODUCTION OF SOCIALITY"

"Production of sociality"'s events are defined by the fact that they schedule a pro-active audience's involvement into their unfolding which is meant to blur the distinction between the events' organizers and their attendees (Borghi 2001). All the organizing efforts to set up this type of events are concentrated in making the audience's as much protagonist as possible in the unfolding of the events and no real effort is deployed to give resonance to the event through media communication. "Production of sociality" events are a sort of "empty box" to be fulfilled with topics brought directly by the audience, not offered them by the organizers. The category of "consumption of sociality" referred to a type of event that idealtypically territorializes by extending the official meaning given to an event by its organizers to the relational media sphere. Instead, "production of sociality" events refer to an ideal-typical way of territorializing by developing the interactions of the events' attendees in other subsequent face-to-face or mediated interactions.

As examples of the "production of sociality" ideal-type we can consider the initiatives set up by one of the observed groups called "Participatory Events". These events aimed at enacting a discursive arena among their attendees with the ultimate goal of creating new autonomous civic groups formed by previously stranger people. Indeed, thanks to work of a moderator the attendees of the "Participatory Events" were split in smaller groupings, formed by people with similar interests, in order to start topic-focused discussions that – through processes of self organization - lead at the creation of new stable civic groups. In these occasions, events' attendees pro-actively participated in the definition of the contents discussed during the events, engaging themselves in focused collective conversations. These events were meant to blur the distinction between "producers" and "consumers" of the event, given that their official aim was to make their attendees active promoters of new groups. These events aimed at avoiding a logic of simple consumption of events and at affecting the starting broader conditions that defined certain people as events' attendees and other ones as they organizers. Besides, in the relational spaces created by the Participatory Events occurred the discursive elaboration of concerns and topics coming directly from the "lifeworld" of the events' attendees: the new groupings were defined on the basis of issues proposed directly by the audience according to that model that made Habermas (1998) depict civil society actors as the infrastructure of the public sphere.

Also, it is worth mentioning that according to my field research, the observed "Participatory Events" created inclusive settings that were particularly open to new comers. Indeed, normally pragmatic constraints to the communicative actions of the participants started to emerge just as the group institutionalized itself through subsequent meetings. If we focus our attention uniquely on the unfolding of a single "Participatory Event", specific restrictions were absent from the discursive scenes I've observed because real "groups styles" (Lichterman 2006) had not yet emerged as institutionalized properties, and this allowed

many possibilities of style of speeches, ways of defining group's members reciprocal obligations and group's boundaries. Also, the topics the attendees could refer to were widely diversified among themselves, including in a single "Participatory Event" issues such as "environmental sustainability", "arts", "games", "urban and local politics", "multiculturalism", "conditions of life of elderly in Milan", "local associations"⁵. The ways speakers could address such topics were also varied: they may represent issues on which the participants expressed their opinions (environmental sustainability was dominantly treated in such a way) or general concerns that had to be translated in concrete activities that the group could commit itself to (as in the case of arts). These modes varied significantly from one group of discussion to the another one, but also inside the discussion carried out by each group no formal or informal sanctions occurred when a member violated the dominant way participants related to the discussed topic. But the point to be underlined here is the central role played by the attendees' involvement in the territory developed by "production of sociality"'s events: on the contrary to what we have seen in the past paragraph, in this case the attendees' situated interactions during the event were the basis for its extensions in other relational spaces. Indeed, "Participatory Events" territorialized through processes that developed beyond the specific settings in which the events unfolded, thanks to the formation of new stable groups of citizens that autonomously started to engage themselves in a variety of, not uniquely discursive, activities. The new groups were formed as outcomes of the "Participatory Events" through processes that extended situated practices in different types of subsequent meetings. For example, a new informal group born from a "Participatory Event" devoted itself to gardening a disused urban space and this activity developed as a consequence of the group's members discursive recognition during a Participatory events of their shared will to use that space for gardening. Most of the "Participatory events" I observed didn't affect the media sphere, though in a few occasion this had happened. In any case the media communication did not extend the meaning-making practices of the event's attendees.

In the case of "production of sociality" events exemplified by the Participatory Events most of the organizing efforts to set up these events were concentrated in carrying out a "sociability work" (Daniels 1985) that aimed at involving in the most pro-active way the event's attendees and in making their involvement extend in other subsequent interactions. This doesn't mean that "production of sociality" events couldn't have a media resonance but it just means that the affection of the media sphere was not primarily important for attaining the organizing group's purpose of eliciting local everyday solidarity. Indeed, the effectiveness and value of "Participatory events" consisted in the formation of new groupings through processes that developed outside the media communication and that didn't need the media institutions and actors to take place for the audience that were directly involved in the event. Differently from what we have seen in the case of "consumption of sociality" events, the practices that took place inside the "production of sociality"'s events addressed a public (Iveson 2009) formed through the blurring of the distinction between the roles of "producers" and "consumers" of events, because who initially was an attendee in some cases turned in being the promoter of a new civic group. The point I would like to stress here is that the events who succeeded in addressing this

⁵ These topics were at the same time present in particular at the *Participatory Event* of 8 of July 2008.

type of public necessarily unfolded outside the mass media sphere because such a sphere is precisely *based on the distinction between producers and receivers of contents*. The media sphere can shape certain contents in order to make possible to conceive and treat them as public problem and events can play a significant role in shaping this process through a territorialization dynamic that extends events' official contents. In the observed cases such a territory didn't develop on the basis of the meaning-making practices of the events' attendees. Instead, the territory of events close to the ideal-type of "production of sociality" was different because it unfolded independently from the media sphere and it worked by extending the meaning-making practices of the event's attendees in subsequent meetings. To sum up we can consider the event as a single form of action which can territorialize - that is to say attributing meanings through spatial practices- in at least two different ways. According to the argument proposed, in any case when events are used by third sector groups to re-embed sociality they respect a "grammar" that makes particularly hard for the two outlined ways of territorializing to communicate with each other.

During my field work I have also observed from close events that represented intermediate forms with respect to the two aforementioned ideal-types: events that at the same time succeeded in having a media resonance and in extending themselves in subsequent face-to-face interactions. The close observation of these events allowed me to further detail the relation existing between the two outlined processes of territorialization. In particular, I noted that even when they both concerned the same event they were regardless the one of the other one and it never occurred that the media communication on the event was significantly linked to the situated meaning-making practices of the event's attendees. As an example of this point we can consider the case of an event called "Out of fashion". This was a bridge-building effort to connect, on the one hand, residents and everyday users of Milan and, on the other hand, the fashion system of Milan, mainly stylists and fashion companies. The event of "Out of fashion" took place during the fashion week of Milan, when the city hosts the world major fashion stylists and fashion shows. "Out of fashion" was in the viewpoint of the non-profit organization that had set it up an opportunity given to the whole city to live the "fashion world of Milan differently" from the exclusive and elitist way in which it is normally lived. It represented a proposal to conceive the relation between the "fashion world" and the city that hosted it twice a year alternative to the dominant way in which it was deemed to be perceived. The spirit of the event became more clear by reading the introductory text written by the organizing group to present the project and that was included as part of the press release that accompanied the project:

In Milan the idea of the "fashion world" has been distorted: boundaries have been built between this exclusive world and the rest of the city. Thus, nowadays, rather than being an opportunity of creative and cultural development of the whole city, fashion easily ends up being an instrument of standardization and an invitation to consumerism.

"Out of fashion" was held in the central stock exchange square of Milan from 6 p.m. of the 22th February 2008. The four entries of the square had been closed for the events and it was delimited a smaller square inside the big one, with two bar spaces, a 40 meters long catwalk in the middle and a spacious place for the deejay in front of it. The event was

preceded by the launching press conference were a famous Milan architect had been invited to introduce the event:

“Good night and welcome to everybody! Tonight we are here to launch the project called “Out of fashion”; it is a project on which we have been working very hard with a variety of actors, because we think that Milan need it. We have spoken with many stylists and fashion companies who all said to be very interested and tonight it is like if we invite them to take an active part into the project”.

The conference unfolded in his typical format, with journalists asking questions and conference speakers answering them, for about 40 minutes. The last part of the conference introduced to the event that took place immediately afterword. The last speaker invited the audience to get a free warm vegetable soup from the bar space at the corner of the square, because the night was quite cold and the event was “meant to not end very shortly”. The event included a variety of playful activities (vaguely related to the fashion) that the audience was invited to perform: engaging in such activities represented concrete practices to live the fashion differently. Example of such practices included the fact that the audience, while was going to enter the square, was invited to wear a white overall and come into the event by parading in the big catwalk put in the middle of the square. Entering the event by parading was a playful practice, which included a sort of carnival way of making fun of the seriousness of the fashion shows. Other examples of the attendees’ engagement included the fact that they had been invited to bring clothes they wished to exchange in a collective bartering. This was meant to be a sociable activity in which the fashion was just an expedient for a strategy that would fight tendencies of social isolation with respect to the relation the city possessed with the fashion system. Another playful practice the audience was invited to perform was represented by the fact that they were asked to fill with their heads a blanket provided with holes and then parading in the catwalk. The blanket could include two holes as well as six holes and this meant that people were forced to ask to strangers to collaborate and then to parade with them, with all the heads inside the blanket, in the big central catwalk. The event was quite a success because the audience came massively and engage themselves actively in the planned playful practices. The audience was formed by a young urban and cultivated public, plus a conspicuous presence of foreign tourists. Everybody seemed to enjoy the event and especially the variety of playful activities loosely related to the fashion that the event included. During the whole event, high music was played by deejays and this strongly contributed to the party like general climate. Events participants engaging in the variety of scheduled activities shared a sense of commonality, that reciprocally confirmed their positions as events participants. The atmosphere recalled me of a sort of carnival where people subverted the usual exclusiveness of fashion shows and enacted occasions where everyone was invited to “take to the catwalk” and play the part of the protagonists, making deliberately fun of them. Attendees were brought together, the attention focused and the interactions intensified by the audience’s playful engagement (Loukaituou-Sideris Ehrenfeucht 2009).

The event received a wide media coverage: traditional media, in particular the press but also local information in television, widely reported the event and the website “you tube” received a conspicuous amount of videos that had been made directly by the attendees

during the event. Media reports drew mainly on what the organizing group declared during the press conference and on the official press release. The event should have been the first of a series of initiatives that were meant to make Milan citizens bridge with the fashion city world, but no other events followed the first one, though other ones had already been planned and announced through the media. In terms of contribution to the public media sphere it was not important that none of these projects had actually been developed because their appearance in the news had been sufficient to bring to the attention of a wide audience the fashion in new terms and namely as a collective issue that could involve the whole city. This refers to a process of “addressing a public” (Iveson 2009) through the media: indeed, in this type of communication the organizing group formulated the event’s purpose in terms of bridging citizens to the “fashion world”, thus assuming the existence of these two entities and at the same time “creating” them. The massive media coverage of the event of “Out of fashion” gave a crucial visibility in shaping those publics. What it is worth noting is that in these cases the addressing of a public was mainly a media process that took place extending in the relational sphere of the media the official meaning attributed to the event by their organizing in the press conference or through the press release.

At other level of observation, the situated practices of the attendees’ involvement in the event unfolded, leading in certain cases to an extension of such involvement in other face-to-face interactions both between part of the public and the organizers and amongst the attendees. This type of process of extension drew on the spatial practices through which the attendees shared the mocking of the official fashion world that had been planned by the organizers. For example the fake fashion show in the middle of the square had lead some attendees to develop an interest toward the organizing group and to build a relationship with them. In other cases, instead, the playful involvement didn’t extend itself in other subsequent interactions, neither with the organizers nor with other attendees. In any case it is worth underlying the fact that the meaning-making practices of the attendees in certain cases extended in other meetings but in any case they had no relation with the outlined process of media resonance. This resulted for all the events that implied both a pro-active attendees’ involvement that developed in subsequent face-to-face meetings and any sort of media visibility.

The two types of territorialization I outlined hardly communicate with each other because they unfold according to different conditions of possibility and they refer to different institutional logics of functioning: the extension in subsequent interactions is a long-term process which is elicited by small-scales events that assume a pro-active involvement on the part of their attendees. Instead, the affection of the media institutional sphere is facilitated by large-scale events promoted through significant media campaigns and involving the highest number of attendees: regardless the nature of their involvement because the meaning-making practices and the situated interactions occurring during the events play no significant role in shaping the media communication.

3. A “GRAMMAR” SETTING THE CONDITIONS FOR PUBLIC ACTIONS

According to Habermas, urban events can represent important articulations of the public sphere when they succeed in communicating both with the worldlife of their attendees and with the media institutional sphere. The analysis I conducted has shown the difficulties experienced by events set up by non-profit groups in significantly connecting with the two poles Habermas outlined. The argument proposed is that non-profit events are inadequate tools to build such a double connection and thus this repertoire of action – though rapidly spreading in urban contexts – can hardly represent an articulation of the public sphere (Habermas 1998).

But the analysis has also indicated that at certain conditions this form of action is highly capable of using the media to affect the public discourse and that it can activate processes of social inclusion in relational space of heterogeneous publics. In particular, we have seen that the first outcome is especially tied to the capacity of the organizing non-profit groups of mobilizing an elevated number of people, while the second upshot is linked to the situated conduction of an adequate work of sociability (Daniels 1985) that include attendees with different repertoire of sociality and is capable of activating long-term processes of involvement through subsequent events. Thus, while for Habermas the two outlined processes were significantly connected with each other, the analysis I carried out has shown that their activation cannot be taken for granted and especially that it is tied to factors significantly heterogeneous among themselves to which neither Habermas nor scholars of civil society normally pay much attention.

Also the conducted analysis has suggested that events set up by non-profit groups territorialize according to extensions that unfold respecting a sort of “grammar” in which processes of affection of the media sphere and the longstanding significant involvement of attendees don’t communicate with each other because they develop overcoming qualitatively different threshold of access. Also the analysis has indicated that the “grammar” we have started to explore matters in shaping the possibilities non-profit actors have of using events to elicit everyday urban solidarity and re-embed sociality at the local level. Indeed, such a “grammar” refers to conditions non-profit actors have to face in order to succeed. In particular, the exploration of this “grammar” has shown that while events hardly lend themselves to physically articulate the public sphere (meant according to Habermas normative model) they can exert a naming power that affects the public discourse through media communication and they can shape the development of social interactions and ties in urban contexts.

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