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Neighbourhood events and the visibilisation of everyday life

The cases of Turro (Milan) and Norra Fäladen (Lund)

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Abstract

While scholars agree on the reasons behind the current proliferation of urban, small-scale, pre-organised events, the implication of these events for public life is more controversial, and involves polarised debates between enthusiasts and critics. This paper develops an international comparison between one city district in Milan (Italy) and one in Lund (Sweden), in order to explore how the variety of events that took place there between 2013 and 2015 possibly affected the local and on-going everyday public life. In both cases, the observed events aimed to de-stigmatise the broader urban districts in which they were staged, as well as to enhance a vibrant urban life in relatively disadvantaged areas. In the study, we identify three different ways in which these events make the public character of everyday life visible, and even redefine patterns of urban civility. The main argument deriving from our comparative ethnography is that the salience of events in the everyday life that they supposedly disrupt can be analytically addressed by developing a pragmatist approach to public space, discussing it in terms of territorial complexity.

Keywords

Ethnography, everyday life, pragmatism, public space, urban events

Introduction

The number of art festivals (Johansson and Kociatkiewicz, 2011), fairs (Harcup, 2000) and convivial public occasions (Richards, 2010) taking place in contemporary cities is on the rise (Jakob, 2013; Lehtovuori, 2010; Sampson, 2012). In addition, nowadays small-scale, pre-organised events (Connell and Page, 2012; Sarmiento and Ferreira, 2017) and “urban experience-based projects” (Johansson and Kociatkiewicz, 2011) have acquired an unprecedented relevance for the economic development

strategies of contemporary cities (Jakob, 2013; Quinn, 2005; Richards, 2010). Scholars generally agree on the *origins* of this relevance – there is mounting pressure on cities to produce and stage

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events for self-promotion in the context of decreasing public investment – and, thus, local community events that manage to create a significant influx of visitors and visibility assume particular importance (Sarmiento and Ferreira, 2017). The consequences of the current spread of events of different sorts are not as clear as their origins, but they have become the subject of increasing attention from different disciplines and strands of research. This paper addresses the relation of small-scale events to everyday urban life, investigating how pre-organised local events affect the publicness (Brighenti, 2010c) of specific districts' public spaces. Drawing on an empirical international comparative study that adopts a pragmatic approach to the publicness of space, we will also put forth a reconceptualisation of the relation between events and the everyday uses of space in contemporary urban contexts.

Following previous research (Citroni and Pavoni, 2016; Kärrholm, 2012; Langegger, 2016), the present study focuses on the life of certain spaces (cf. Low, 2000; Weszkalnys, 2010) – rather than on a specific group of people (McLean, 2014; Quinn, 2005; Tissot, 2014) or an organising process (Grigoleit, Hahn and Brocchi, 2013; Jackson, 1992) – and especially on “what happens when they are configured for special events” (Langegger, 2016: 1804). In the following pages, we begin by briefly framing our approach with respect to contemporary research on how small-scale events relate to everyday urban life. Secondly, we present our theoretical take on space with a discussion on territoriality (Brighenti, 2010a; Kärrholm, 2012), focusing more specifically on the “publicness of public space” (Brighenti, 2010b), and how events can be seen as part of the production of public space. Thirdly, we introduce and describe our empirical cases: Norra Fälåden in Lund and Turro in Milan. Finally, we propose our argument about how events work as *procedures of visibilisation*, and relate it to a discussion of how small-scale events can affect the production of public space and redefine patterns of urban civility.

Urban events and everyday life

There is an abundance of possible and contradictory answers to the theoretical question of how pre-organised small-scale events reconfigure the

publicness of urban public spaces; from optimistic arguments that such events are regenerative for contemporary civic life and urban communities (Sampson, 2012) as they question the prevalent division between private and public space (Sarmiento and Ferreira, 2017) and allow grassroots to exert the right to the city (Lehtovuori, 2010), to the idea that ephemeral occurrences are a “spectacularized and sanitized version of the urban experience” (Connell and Page, 2012; Johansson and Kociatkiewicz, 2011: 400). In current debates on events, three kinds of polarisations are in the way of a more open investigation of events and everyday life: the polarisation between the (bad) spectacle and the (good) appropriation, between quantitative and qualitative studies and between (planned) events and (spontaneous) everyday life (Lamond and Platt, 2016).

Firstly, the effect of events is often discussed either as a “disneyfication” (Quinn, 2005) or as a “re-appropriation” by new groups (Lehtovuori, 2010). This polarisation is popular, for example, among critical geographers (Lamond and Platt, 2016), and its roots go back to the 1960s and to the writings of, for example, Lefebvre (“the right to the city”) and Debord (“the society of the spectacle”). Although this perspective has its strengths, it also runs the risk of reducing a complex and sometimes contradictory set of practices to “one voice” (cf. Farías, 2011). Secondly, we have the division between quantitative and qualitative studies (Sharpley and Stone, 2012). The debate on what small-scale events produce is to a great extent still dominated by a quantitative logic (Connell and Page, 2012; Richards, 2010) that adopts the same criterion as for mega-events, such as the bulk of mobilised funds and people (Cappetta et al., 2010). Thus, rather than illuminating the complexities and specifics of small-scale events, which would be possible, for example, through case-study analysis (Citroni and Pavoni, 2016; Jackson, 1992; McLean, 2014), many studies consider small-scale events to be examples of the same trend of “eventification” (Jakob, 2013) as large-scale events. The quantitative paradigm reduces the assessment of events to what is measurable (Cappetta et al., 2010; Sharpley and Stone, 2012), and thus necessarily ignores outcomes and processes that would require more sensitive conceptual tools (Langegger, 2016: 399).

Thirdly, the study of small-scale events and their implications for everyday life repeatedly assumes an ideological opposition that dates back to the category of the carnivalesque, as discussed by Bakhtin (1984 [1965]), and as empirically described by many scholars (Harcup, 2000; Johansson and Kociatkiewicz, 2011; Langegger, 2016). The planned character of events is criticised (Lehtovuori, 2010), whereas the informal and allegedly spontaneous everyday lives of the spaces where they take place are romanticised (Johansson and Kociatkiewicz, 2011). However, spontaneity and pre-organisation are theoretical dimensions shared – albeit to different degrees – by events as well as by everyday life, and this makes the two elements difficult to analyse as separate from each other. The very idea of studying the impact of events on everyday life implicitly assumes that events and everyday life are isolated from each other (Connell and Page, 2012) and, indeed, the interaction between the urban events and the everyday life they supposedly disrupt is rarely analysed empirically (Citroni and Pavoni, 2016). Event studies generally explore what occurs *inside* urban events: which diversities come into contact, how and with which outcomes (Lamond and Platt, 2016; Lehtovuori, 2010). In this paper, we seek to study the interaction between moments of events and “non-events” in everyday life (thus seeing both of these moments as parts of an on-going everyday life) in order to investigate how our everyday lives are affected by ephemeral planned occurrences.

The publicness of public spaces

In order to investigate how the relationship between events and everyday life affects publicness, we need to explicate our perspective on how public space is produced. Here we take a relational perspective on space (Lehtovuori, 2010; Sassen, 2006); that is, space seen as a product of on-going heterogeneous interrelations (Massey, 2005; Murdoch, 2006), and we particularly draw our inspiration from *territorology* (Brighenti, 2010a). Brighenti states that “territory is not defined by space, rather it defines spaces through patterns of relations” (Brighenti, 2010a: 57). Territories are always practised, they are expressive and boundary-producing power relations that define

space, but often in a complex way where every single place can be seen as a landscape of different and overlapping territorial becomings. Cities are set in a constant movement of territorialisation, transforming meaning and urban life (Brighenti, 2016: 308); urban public places and parks are thus part of on-going processes of de- and reterritorialisation, of negotiations and renegotiations. One way to describe these processes is thus to investigate urban spaces as a changing landscape of territorial productions; that is, as the proliferation of borders and interstices framing and enabling urban life. Territorial production is the process by which certain actors (institutions, collectives, individuals, artefacts, technologies, atmospheres, etc.) claim and/or saturate a certain space for a certain time. It includes both the formal and the informal claiming of time-space, producing a certain observable spatio-temporal effect (Kärrholm, 2007; Massey, 2005: 55). Territorialisation can be achieved by way of appropriation (of an individual or group); through more formalised and planned strategies; through more improvised, but still intentional tactics; or by a mere association to a certain recurrent use (cf. Kärrholm, 2012: 12–17, for a categorisation of different forms of territorial production). The territorial structure differs between different places; some are hierarchically structured while others are not, some might be dominated by one very strong territorial appropriation or strategy, while others are territorially polyphonic, or even cacophonous. In public space, different forms of territorial productions tend to co-exist and overlap, forming territorial complexities (Kärrholm, 2012: 18–21).

An increasing territorial complexity would also include an increasing number of on-going usages and it would, thus, from a certain perspective, also increase the publicness of that place (Iveson, 2007; Kalandides and Vaiou, 2012). However, the notion of publicness we adopt in this paper does not coincide with any singular or plural practice or social group. Instead, the public we refer to is a condition, “a register of interaction and a regime of visibility” (Brighenti, 2010c: 19). This is a pragmatist view of the public, which resonates with the approach to public urban everyday life made by Isaac Joseph (Brighenti, 2010c, 2016; Gayet-Viaud, 2015), who drew on and further developed a Goffmanian perspective on social interaction,

showing how fleeting interactions in public spaces do not merely entail the surface work of managing each other's impressions and maintaining "appropriate" social distance (Joseph, 1984, 1998). Joseph's exploration of such a work stressed that what is at stake in everyday interaction is a continuous redefinition of the civic(ness), a situated but patterned redefinition through which we decide how we live together as a political community and how we build boundaries towards external parties (Gayet-Viaud, 2015; Joseph, 1998). The Goffmanian and seemingly trivial (Joseph, 1984) "surface work" has deep implications, as "civil interactions display a *sense of the public* that is very profoundly linked to what a democracy is; that is, a way of *trying to define, but never from scratch*, the best way to live together as a political community" (Gayet-Viaud, 2015: 102, original italics). In particular, Joseph's explorations and reflections allowed him to pinpoint three general features that characterise what is specifically public about everyday interaction in the urban spaces (Brighenti, 2016: 312; Joseph, 1984).

Firstly, the experience of being in public is characterised by *visibility*, as it concerns being subject (or visible) to the intrusive and haptic gazes of other people (cf. Brighenti, 2010c). Visibility is the dimension that is theoretically closest to the notion of public space as an event in itself (Lehtovuori, 2010). Indeed, the pre-organised events and the focus on collective attention (Richards, 2013) and the attendees' gazes could as such be seen as almost a quintessential experience of being in public (Brighenti, 2010b). The second feature typical of public space, according to Joseph (1998) – and indeed for many urbanists and urban scholars (Barnett, 2014) – is its *material accessibility*, meant not merely as a physical component, but also as something that deals with the boundaries of possible parochial and communitarian social spaces and their access for strangers and temporary inhabitants. The third and more social characteristic that Joseph – in line with political theorists – attributes to public space is that of being *subject to conflicting tensions*, such as to processes of territorialisation and de-territorialisation, or to control and resistance.

The public is thus strongly connected to visibility, accessibility and processes of territorialisation, and the visible is by definition "the element in which the

social territorialises itself" (Brighenti, 2010c: 36). Studying territorial productions and complexities can be seen as one way in which the tiny, seemingly irrelevant, occurrences also connect to the political. Gayet-Viaud has described how the production and enacting of civility (and thus interpersonal boundary regulations) are related to politics:

People practically define, in everyday interactions, what it means to be a co-citizen: what strangers can expect from one another, can ask each other, how they can trust each other, how they can perceive each other, what help they can expect from another. (Gayet-Viaud, 2015: 109)

The categories by which we live are constantly tested, reconsidered, transformed, fought for, etc. Gayet-Viaud sees civility as a "part of this practical accomplishment of democracy" (Gayet-Viaud, 2015: 110), and a number of empirical studies show how everyday civility is negotiated and maintained in daily interactions everywhere, including in highly stigmatised urban areas (Lee, 2006).

Publics can be found in arenas of intervisibility where commonality and civility are produced and enacted, but they are not always easy to detect; publics are to some extent always both within-sight and out-of-sight (Iveson, 2007). Public space, as Brighenti would have it, is: "a *territory of affection*" (Brighenti, 2010c:125), and its borders are constantly being written and transformed. In this study, we look especially at the publicness of the local urban event, asking the following: What kinds of territories are produced and made visible by the event, and how does the event relate to the context in which it takes place? How are the local venues, seen as a territory of affection, effectively rewritten? How do the events affect and reconfigure the visibility, accessibility and commonality of local public spaces?

Comparative ethnography

Two locations were chosen for this study: one in Lund, Sweden, and one in Milan, Italy. Although these locations are significantly different in terms of cultural context, climate, design, etc., they share two main features that make them particularly suitable for the study of how the public character of urban

everyday life is possibly affected by special events. Firstly, both areas have a high percentage of foreign-born citizens who are considered relatively disadvantaged and who are, to a certain degree, stigmatised in the local discourse. As will be shown, such territorial stigma has significant consequences for the contents and goals of the studied events. In fact, many of them aimed at creating occasions of social inclusion and integration of the local communities and at enhancing urban vibrancy by attracting participants from outside of the local neighbourhood. Secondly, both of the chosen sites include an urban park that – during the favourable season – offers a variety of everyday practices and small-scale pre-organised (formal as well as informal) events. Both parks have a relatively high number of visitors, and they are also seen as a common asset for the locals, and have as such become a means of addressing local problems and of re-establishing a positive image of the neighbourhood. Indeed, both of the two larger neighbourhood events studied here – irrespective of their other differences in terms of form, content and goal – aimed at de-stigmatising and enhancing the urban public dimension of the park and neighbourhood in which they took place. The fact that both of the spaces have a variety of on-going territorialisations, and that there were expectations placed on the ephemeral events to have positive effects on everyday life, also makes them well suited for a study into possible shifts of publicness.

The study is mainly based in ethnographic studies of the on-going territorialisation processes of the studied areas, both in everyday life as well as during the pre-organised events that took place there from 2013 to 2015. Ethnography is increasingly used as a method for researching events (Lamond and Platt, 2016; Sharpley and Stone, 2012). Due to its consistency with the immersive nature (Citroni and Pavoni, 2016) of events, a growing number of scholars – from as far afield as management studies (Cappetta et al., 2010) – are now using ethnography in order to experience their own object of study more directly. In this paper, observation studies have been used in conjunction with longer interviews with event organisers and inhabitants, and with shorter interviews *in situ*.¹

Participant observation in Lund took place in the neighbourhood park *Borgarparken* in 2014 and in

2015, and included shorter interviews and observation notes. We studied the everyday life of the park, especially in the spring and autumn of 2014, noting the variety, extension and duration of different activities. These studies also included the attendance of the largest neighbourhood event, the annual *Fäladskalaset* in 2014 and 2015. In addition to this, we also did eight in-depth interviews with inhabitants (in their own homes), discussing how they use their neighbourhood. In Milan we selected a neighbourhood and a public space characterised by high levels of diversity and civil interaction. We chose the *Martesana Park*,² as it is both the main neighbourhood public space and the place where most events organised by local associations and public authorities are concentrated. The park was studied from June 2014 to July 2015 with regular field observation of everyday uses and practices in each season, over the course of the day (from morning until night time), during festivities and on regular workdays. Seven organised events were observed, four of which were part of the same community festival, called *Popolando-mi*.³

The adopted theoretical framework allows us to address different events, analysing how they affect the on-going everyday territorialisation processes and their implications in terms of publicness. In order to analyse and choose from the empirical material, we have thus especially focused on how different processes of territorialisation were affected and reconfigured by those associated to the studied events. This means that we have tried to find and describe situations of territorial contestation and transgression; that is, situations that can somehow serve as indicators of a territorial complexity.

Case 1: Norra Fäladen, Lund (Sweden)

Norra Fäladen is a typical housing area in the southern Swedish city of Lund. It was built during the Swedish Million Program (1961–1975). The area, located in the northern part of Lund, was planned for 9000 inhabitants (of which 2000 were students), with 23% built as single-family housing and the rest as flats in three-storey buildings. Most of the residential units of the area (ca. 2/3) are rental apartments. The

area was planned to include a variety of public services, including schools, a public library, swimming facilities, health care and a local square with grocery stores, a bank, a post office, etc. Already in the 1970s, the area was known for having many immigrant residents, especially from Chile and Latin America; later, from the 1980s and 1990s, there were also many residents from Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Today, the percentage of people living there who were born outside of Sweden is about 25%. The area was called Fladden (a reference to the Latino population's pronunciation of Fäladen). New housing areas started to be built during the 1990s as the neighbourhood both extended and slowly became densified. An important new extension was the area of Annehem, dominated by single-family housing. Residents of this area have a higher income and level of education than in the rest of Norra Fäladen, and people there do not always identify themselves as part of Fäladen, although the area formally belongs there.

At present, there are about 12,000 inhabitants in the Norra Fäladen area. It has two central and important public spaces: *Fäladstorget* (Fäladen Square) and a large park located next to the square called *Borgarparken*. The park includes playgrounds, tennis courts and a beach volleyball court, different kinds of grassy areas and small hills, a small football/soccer field, a dog exercise park, a large fountain and a skateboard ramp. The park is quite well used during the warmer part of the year, and encompasses different territorial appropriations and tactics. On a typical day, Chinese groups practice tai chi there in the morning, others dance line dance, Pakistanis play cricket, some immigrants from the rental apartments at "Maggan" have a barbecue, students read or just lie in the grass, a couple of people are set up an agility course for dogs, kids skate, people play tennis and kids play in the fountain. The playgrounds are the most popular, populated almost all year around, and so is the dog exercise yard. In terms of territorial association, our informants seem to consider the park to be a venue for spontaneous sport events in the summer: barbecues, sunbathing, etc.

During the 1990s, the area started to work actively with the community identity and against the explicit tendencies of stigmatisation that had been building up during the 1980s. Spontaneous and/or to some

extent reoccurring events, such as an Environment Day, the ACLA day (ACLA is the local immigrant association), local flea markets on the square, etc., became important and were announced in the local newspaper. The local neighbourhood newspaper closed in 1999, and today there are fewer, less spontaneous, but perhaps more stable events. There are basically three larger annual events that gather the neighbourhood to some extent: the celebration of Walpurgis Night (30 April) arranged by the Social Democrat Party; Norr-dagen (the day of North) in November, arranged indoors by the local school *Fäladsgården*; and the largest event, the neighbourhood festival *Fäladskalaset*. The local church, the municipality and the local library have collaboratively organised *Fäladskalaset* every year since 2001. Initially, Romano Trajo (the Romani after-school recreation centre) was also part of this, but the association was closed down by the municipality in 2009. Other short events include, for example, local street parties, more or less spontaneous student parties, school or day-care activities, such as jumble sales, and protests; in 2014, for example, there was a protest demonstration against the plans to build housing in *Borgarparken* and on the schoolyard of the local school.

The largest event, *Fäladskalaset*, includes a flea market, attractions for kids (such as pony riding, face painting and climbing), food stalls, dog agility, local associations that present themselves together with the library and the fire department (which brings one of their engines) and, perhaps most importantly, a stage where local schoolchildren perform (see Figure 1). This event takes place every year in the beginning of June from 12:00 to 17:00. Earlier, the event went on until 22.00, but this was changed due to some incidents of unrest and property damage. For example, on the evening of the festival day in 2014, windows were smashed both at the local library and at the recreation centre.

During the event, almost half of the park is crowded with people, which means that the usual everyday activities cannot take place there. However, the festival attracts a lot of everyday users, and it also seems to attract people who do not go into the festival area but use other places in the peripheries or outside the area. During the festival, the park – especially the



Figure 1. Fäladskalaset 2015 (photograph by Mattias Kärrholm).

areas bordering the festival – becomes more densely used than otherwise. Inside the festival, territories are strategically planned, but there is overlapping at the borders, and things often become more intense there. It is, however, over time that the role of this event for the territorial complexity of the park becomes most obvious.

On non-event days, this part of Borgarparken is used by different groups, but most intensely by the people who live at “Maggan”. During the festival, new actors are introduced, mostly through the school, which is an important actor in bringing different groups together in the same space through the musical entertainment provided by the schoolchildren. Although the festival comprises a large number of activities, the stage and the performances on it dominate the festival, also drawing spectators from the whole area. One informant mentioned that it is one of the few times when people from Annehem come to visit the park. The inhabitants of Annehem generally do not want to call themselves *Norra Fäladen* inhabitants – the lay worker from the church explains to us that she usually just calls the area *Norr* (“North”, as in the northern part of town). People from the single-family housing areas in general and Annehem in particular seem less dependent on community events and local spaces: “perhaps they spend

their leisure time in other places”, as one informant puts it. Another informant said that in Annehem, you only greet people and never stop to talk: “it is not that I do not want to talk, but everyone is in such a hurry”.

Case 2: Turro, Milan (Italy)

The selected area is located in the north-eastern periphery of Milan and comprises the former village of Turro, which has been included in the city since the administrative reform of 1918. The area was severely damaged by bombing during the Second World War. There were plans to rebuild it and substitute its previous main square with a large park; the park was built only in 1978. Like the larger zone within which it is situated,⁴ from the 1950s onward the area started to develop in a disorderly fashion under the pressure of an immigrant influx. Initially, they came from rural and southern Italy, and from the 1970s also from abroad (mainly Maghreb, Central and South America and Southeast Asia). A series of zoning variances added public services – schools, health care centres, post office and a public library – to the disorderly urban growth. Nowadays, the area continues to be commonly known as *Turro*, although most of the original boundaries of the former village



Figure 2. Overview of the Martesana amphitheatre during the setting up of a concert (photograph by Sebastiano Citroni).

have become blurred, substituted by two high-speed streets that delimit its east and west borders, a canal in the north and the railway to the south. The area is still home to some small factories, but it is primarily a peripheral residential area, with a population of 10,800 inhabitants. Foreign residents account for 32.7% of the total (with 14% from Asia), consistent with 30% of the wider administrative area (Zona 2) in which it is located, but almost double the general number for Milan (17.4%). Its traditional image as a poor area with a migrant population and the highest percentage of foreigners in contemporary Milan contributed to a stigmatisation of the area, which worsened from 2010, when the killing of a young Egyptian man led to urban riots (Arrigoni, 2011; Citroni, 2015). Thanks to intensive media coverage, the neighbourhood made the headlines for a number of weeks, which led to the area becoming a nationally recognised symbol for the problematic local integration of migrants. As a reaction to the negative media image, local associations, private foundations and public authorities began promoting a variety of social programmes and events intended to de-stigmatise the

area and foster its positive image. Most of these activities took place in the main local public space: the park located along the canal on the area's northern border, which comprises a playground, dog parks, grass meadows, a small hill and an amphitheatre that was inaugurated in 2010 (Figure 2).

Especially – but not exclusively – during summertime, the park hosts a variety of *everyday activities*: teenagers rehearsing choreographed dance steps with speakers playing loud music; young mothers chatting next to their children playing in the playground; lone tennis players hitting balls against the wall; kids and families playing football/soccer and volleyball on the grass; people running or cycling along the canal; South Americans having barbecues and playing music; sunbathers on the hill; elderly people reading newspapers or chatting on the benches; young Arab men in small groups or people talking on the phone; people with dogs both in- and outside of the dog parks; a group of men, drinking at their usual table; a group of saxophone players that regularly stand in a circle on the grass to rehearse (see Figure 3).



Figure 3. Sax players rehearsing as an everyday park event (photograph by Sebastiano Citroni).

Generally speaking, these varied activities loosely intermingle, with practices apparently at odds with each other taking place side by side, separated by porous and temporary boundaries. For example, one can see dancing South American girls rehearsing in front of the benches where elderly Italian men sit chatting among themselves or simply enjoying the spectacle; it is not uncommon to see young joggers drenched in sweat run through groups of Arab mothers in veils chatting next to their playing children, or South Americans and Asians drinking alcohol and hanging around teenagers playing football/soccer on the grass or doing workshops with social workers. Even the activities that are supposed to be confined to a designated space, letting dogs off their leashes, for example, are actually not; some dogs simply run free in the park. All of the observed activities trace temporary boundaries, which nevertheless entail different degrees of difficulties to be crossed: that is, young men transforming any available portion of the lawn into a football/soccer field or simply passing the ball to each other in a circle, or when specific spots are used to have barbecue parties, or when in the summertime gazebos are brought into the areas

and used as refuge from the sun. A flexible equilibrium among a variety of activities co-exists in close temporal proximity and the spaces sustain a high level of territorial complexity on an everyday basis.

A number of organised events take place in the park between spring and autumn. Many of them were initially set up as attempts to de-stigmatise the area, eventually stabilising themselves over time. The main event, *Popolando-mi*, is a community arts festival that takes place in June and is divided into four main events, each of which takes place on a different weekend (generally from Thursday to Sunday) and is devoted respectively to “cultures”, “arts/young people”, “theatre” and “cinema”. The festival is preceded by traditional dances, which attract the attention of passersby (Figure 4), and it is opened by an “ethnic parade”, which starts at the border of the neighbourhood and arrives in the park. The parade is meant to lead the people from the neighbourhood – whose cultures are officially represented in the parade’s performances – into the park, where the whole community festival unfolds. The festival, indeed, was initially funded by a former bank foundation⁵ with the official aim of “bringing culture”



Figure 4. A Greek traditional dance attracts public attention the day before the opening of the *Popolando-mi* festival (photograph by Sebastiano Citroni).

into urban peripheral areas that lacked opportunities for cultural consumption (movie theatres, libraries and the like).

We also studied three other events: (a) *Festa delle bande musicali*, a rally of traditional marching bands, organised in October by the local municipality – an all-day event that was primarily attended by enthusiastic elderly people and Italian families; (b) *Corsa dei due parchi*, a running race that was also organised by the local municipality and included a short (7 kilometres) circuit and a longer one (21 kilometres) in the neighbourhood. The other observed event (c) was organised by a local association and consisted of a “Yarn Bombing” day, during which citizens and the park’s users were invited to participate with the association’s activists and volunteer to dress the park’s trees in handmade sweaters.

Shortly after the aforementioned 2010 urban riots, both the park and the events taking place there became the object of high expectations in the local public discourse (Arrigoni, 2011), as the main public space capable of fostering – and showing the media – practices of integration among different social groups, especially foreigners and Italians. According to the sociologist Arrigoni (2011), the expectations generally remain unfulfilled, as everyday spaces’ uses remain separated by ethnicity, thus reproducing divisions existing in the broader context (firstly among Italians and foreigners). Here, the application of the territorological lens allows us to paint a different

picture of a variety of potentially conflicting uses that co-exist without open tensions, both on an everyday basis and during events.

Events as procedures of visibilisation

The division between everyday uses and special events cannot be seen as clear-cut in our empirical studies, both because they often demonstrated porous boundaries, and especially because the observed events did not unfold irrespective of everyday practices. There were several examples of how everyday uses turned into regular events – like the South American saxophonists’ rehearsals in Turro or the Pakistani group playing cricket at Norra Fälåden – but also cases where, during formal events, some trivial occurrences took place (such as when an old man fainted from the heat during a performance while one of the authors of this study was seated next to him). At both sites, the observed spaces were materially and cognitively reconfigured for events through, for example, the building of stages, the staging of art performances and the production of points of focused collective attention. These kinds of reconfigurations did affect the existing territorial complexity in different ways – not necessarily contributing to an increased publicness as such, but nonetheless, according to the argument we propose, the events acted as *procedures of visibilisation* (Brighenti, 2010c) for the publicness of everyday social life. Visibilisation procedures do not neutrally make visible what would otherwise be invisible; instead, they introduce significant differences and distinctions where they were not present before, thus triggering new territorial productions, boundary and meaning-making processes. Procedures of visibilisation are not simply an enhanced gaze; instead, their development entails a new type of situated coordination among things and actors (Brighenti, 2010c).

Our comparative study allows us to pinpoint three types of procedures of visibilisation through which events may relate to everyday practices. Firstly, small pre-organised events affect how everyday routinised practices are perceived – especially by those most accustomed to them – by openly problematising their seemingly trivial character and neutral

implications. As they appear in public spaces, events introduce a “stranger’s perspective” (Cressey, 1984) that encourages lingering on the everyday practices next to which they take place and reflection upon the broader implications of such practices. This occurred even when the *everyday complexity of the place was quite high and the events were seemingly too small to significantly affect it*, such as in the Turro case-study, where it was clear how the considered events rendered elements that otherwise remain in the background particularly visible. For example, this first type of procedure of visibilisation was observed during a field observation on an ordinary Saturday afternoon in Turro. The park was full of families and children playing on the playground, and a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) parade burst forth in the park, with loud music and people dressed in shockingly bright pink and military clothing, drinking, smoking and dancing, but this did not disrupt the on-going quiet practices. It attracted some curiosity and attention for a while, and after that the paraders set up in the park, lay down in the grass, bought beers from local South Americans having barbecues and positioned their stage in a corner of the park that was relatively empty. Instead of claiming that the parade added to or detracted from the existing territorial complexity, one could argue that it contributed to the visibility of otherwise less conspicuous Arab women seated on a bench (now in the middle of on-going events) and of South Americans drinking beers. Such a new scene is not more or less public than the previous one; instead, it features different boundary-making processes (Iveson, 2007; Kalandides and Vaiou, 2012) in which some elements previously in the background come to the foreground and vice versa (Lee, 2006).

A second procedure of visibilisation could be detected when events visibilised everyday complexity more openly as they *staged* specific practices occurring on an everyday basis, extending them *through the media of the events* and the other possible mediated communication associated with it. For example, most of the art performances taking place during the “ethnic parade” in Turro consisted of the choreographed dance steps rehearsed daily in the park. Also at Norra Fälåden, activities that usually took place in the neighbourhood could continue

during the festival, but they were staged or performed in front of a larger audience (see Figure 5). Events such as beach volleyball tournaments, skateboard shows, dog agility performances and running races were simply a structured version of the everyday activities that already took place in the park (and also included some of the same people). One informant explained how he started in the local jujutsu club after having been able to try jujutsu at the Fålåden festival. Another explained how the festival is one of the few occasions when people from the adjacent Annehem actually integrate with people from the “old” Norra Fålåden: there is, thus, a very clear extension of this event into everyday life, and vice versa. In fact, bringing people together was among the original objectives for the festival, and also introducing newcomers and inhabitants to the possible activities and organisations of the neighbourhood. Events recurrently stage everyday practices, but this staging is not neutral with respect to everyday interactions; instead, it autonomously acts back to seemingly trivial practices of everyday life, transforming and mediating these practices. Events are, in short, one of the many ways in which the rhythm of everyday life reproduces itself as a repetition with a difference (cf. Lefebvre, 2004). A possible increase of territorial complexity thus becomes discernible only over time as new activities or groups are introduced into the neighbourhood.

The third procedure of visibilisation does not contribute to the visibility of specific practices that occur in the public space, but instead to the overall “public regime” (Brighenti, 2010b) in which such practices are embedded. Unlike those regimes analysed through urban regime theory, the regimes with which this paper is concerned are cognitive forms of a human being’s relation to their physical environment, to other people and to themselves. In our study, both everyday uses and organised events adapted to – and thus contributed to the reproduction of – a public regime. In everyday life, this was evident in the various forms of public attention observed towards single actions and practices performed in the studied spaces. Indeed, during our field observations, we noticed that we were not the only ones engaged in systematic observation; a similar focused attention was exerted by amateur drawers, photographers or people just hanging around by



Figure 5. Everyday activities, such as skateboarding (here at Fäladskalaset), seem to attract more attention during events (photograph by Mattias Kärrholm).

themselves who devoted similar attention to the scene before them that we did as researchers. The very fact that such attention was overtly exercised by a plurality of actors is telling of how such an option is practicable in that space (contrary to other, seemingly similar, publicly owned spaces) and of how the activities developing there – regardless of their intimacy and personal character – take shape in public visibility.

Such a condition was occasionally perceivable through the justification that some observed actors gave when they perceived themselves as responsible for “inappropriate action”, such as invading the space of other people (Lee, 2006). Some of the in situ interviews with attendees of the events were triggered by such unintended invasions, for example, when a lady apologised to the researcher for the aggressive behaviour of her dog, which then led to a conversation about the event that was going on. Certainly, not all of the observed practices displayed the same level of generalised responsibility and consideration for strangers sharing the same space; for example, this was not the case for the group of male teenagers playing football/soccer in a circle in Turro, and whose game made it particularly difficult, if not impossible, to cross that area of the park without running the risk of being hit by the ball; or by the sword fighting students in medieval armour who quite aggressively claimed part of the park and a

portion of the bike path at Norra Fäladen. However, paradoxically, in this and similar episodes, the public regime was confirmed through its violation, and through the way in which this violation was given an important significance by those performing it, who seemingly enjoyed their “transgression”. In other cases, some everyday practices were publicly performed with the assumption that they could become the object of the focused attention of passersby (e.g. rehearsal of choreographed dances, acrobatic gym exercises or live sax music). Other practices were more hidden (e.g. barbecue parties, smoking joints), which demonstrated similar respect for the “public regime” through which most of the park’s spaces were lived.

The events we observed operated as procedures of visibilisation, especially because they made visible the public regime to which they adapted and that they contributed to reproducing. This third type of procedure of visibilisation was detected even when the activities of the events initially seemed extraneous, both to the usual park activities and to the dwellers; for example, the movie festival and the afternoon local market in Turro, attended mainly by urban hipsters extraneous to that space. In this third case, events and the everyday life both appeared to contribute to the reproduction of the public regime in which commonality and civility unfolded. Events

did not simply make explicit trivial activities that were generally taken for granted, but instead, they revealed the generally implicit work of civic interaction that everyday practices – such as small events – have to perform when they are enacted in the public domain. Such work is, for example, implicit in the ways in which people take the expectations of behaviour in the public domain seriously (even when transgressing), and how they show a sense of responsibility by adequately managing the consequences of their own actions over other people. Indeed, the activities observed in the same space were often quite varied, both in terms of spontaneity and pre-organisation, but all seemed related to the implicit assumptions of how one is expected to behave in such a space. These relations took on different forms: in some cases, the implicit assumptions were openly respected (like the lady with the aggressive dog excusing herself), while in others they were implicitly assumed, thus succeeding in making ordinary practices unnoticed; they were also silently challenged and altered (such as when some groups of women started to sunbathe in swimsuits on some occasions, although never by themselves) or openly transgressed (teenagers publicly mocking the old band players).

Concluding remarks

The “urbanized geographies of affectedness” (Barnett, 2014) enjoy a particularly longstanding tradition of study, which focuses on “the role of cities in gathering together” (Barnett, 2014) and that has shown how the urban condition constitutes a particularly effective “procedure of visibilisation” of publics and counter-publics. Our comparative study adds to this tradition by showing how contemporary events – irrespective of their specific contents and contexts – can be included among the devices for the activation of visibilisation procedures. Indeed, focusing on the public dimension of events and everyday urban life, it is difficult to simply argue that the former augments or diminishes the territorial complexity of the latter. Instead, what events do to everyday life involves a material and cognitive reconfiguration that in our comparative study took shape through three main mechanisms: (a) events

made *trivial everyday practices visible* when such practices openly interacted with the pre-organised occasions; (b) events *staged* practices and territorialisation activities that occur in the same context on an everyday basis, in some cases affecting the future uses of the spaces; and finally, (c) especially and most significantly, events contributed to visibilising the nature of the territorial complexity, making evident the generally more implicit fine work of civic interactions through which a variety of activities (irrespective of their degree of pre-organisation) arrange themselves in the public spaces.

By making evident how events do not simply diminish or augment the pre-existing territorial complexity, but instead engage in a layered relationship with pre-existing practices, our analysis resonates with a number of recent studies that question what events produce, looking for answers through a case-study approach (Lamond and Platt, 2016). Indeed, by addressing events as procedures of visibilisation acting within a larger procedure that is the urban dimension itself, our study overcame simplistic dichotomies (events versus everyday life). Such a fresh research strand indicates the possibility of overcoming an a priori polarisation of the implications of events through theory-driven research approaches with an in-depth analysis of single case-studies (Citroni and Pavoni, 2016; Lamond and Platt, 2016). Furthermore, one of the main benefits of this nascent debate is the way in which it pinpoints how events engage with the public dimension of the spaces in which they occur, and how these kinds of relations always are complex and stratified (Brighenti, 2012; Lehtovuori, 2010) and thus also require an adequate theoretical lens to be disentangled (Barnett, 2014; Sarmiento and Ferreira, 2017). Here, we advocate a perspective that can allow for dynamic complexities rather than polarisation, and concepts that help us to see the different practices that produce a space, rather than to come with predefined explanations.

It seems as if one needs a constellation of minor violations and transgressions in order to have a public domain, and the nature of publicness lies exactly in such on-going struggles that keep the dynamics and the momentum of public life alive. Publicness has a temporal aspect that is sometimes forgotten.

When, at moments, activities might seem ordered or staged, we must remember that public space is inscribed in multiple temporalities (Massey, 2005). At every moment there are complexities hidden from view, but there are also – as in our case – new things, activities and structures made visible. The process of visibilisation can, as we have shown, very well act as a fuel that sustains the vibrant dynamics of public space and saves it from stagnation; it might, however, also plant a seed of change, a change that might unfold and enrich the place at some later stage.

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Notes

1. We are studying these two neighbourhoods in two larger projects. Besides the specific studies of the spaces and events that we present here, we have also done several other interviews and observation studies of the areas. While these other studies might serve as a kind of background knowledge about the areas, they have not been directly used in this article, and are thus not presented here.
2. Officially named in 2006 after “The Iraqi martyrs of freedom”.
3. For the webpage of the last edition: <http://www.vil-lapallavicini.org/edizione-2015.html>.
4. Called “via Padova”, after the name of the main street that crosses the area from north to south.
5. Not, however, in its last version.

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