

Moments and places: The 'events' as a creative milieu between society, culture and emotions

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Abstract

By their very nature (etymological at least) 'events' have always remained outside the routines of daily life, Goffman's 'everyday life', which 'is not at all simple and transparent, but complex and disquieting', and have today become almost a standard feature of daily life itself partly perhaps losing the aura of particular importance that should always and anyway characterise them. Such invasion of everyday life concerns both the real events, and the 'eventoids', or those events that have no real consistency except for when they appear in the media, but which can influence social behaviour insofar as being 'creators' of reality. Nowadays the 'events' (not more as 'extraordinary occurrences' but as 'everyday life facts') represent a highly significant and interesting typology of socio-cultural reality owing to a series of implications which will be highlighted in this essay. In particular totally postmodern features can be seen in the construction and social appreciation of events, in which 'festival' and 'traditions', 'involvement and extraneousness', 'marketing' and 'collective participation' are mixed together, and it is quite obvious that the role of the media in all this cannot but forcefully emerge; in particular, we will discuss about the events as 'emotional (ephemeral or long term) places' according to the idea of 'aesthetization of the everyday life' and the logics of post-modern cultural industry, either through the forms of interaction that arise during (or maybe also 'before'-in terms of expectations and 'after' - in terms of effects).

1. Events: Differences, specificities and newness

By their very nature (etymological at least) 'events' have always remained outside the routines of daily life, Goffman's 'everyday life' (1969), which "is not at all simple and transparent, but complex and disquieting" (Giglioli in Goffman, 1969: 23), and have today become almost a standard feature of daily life itself partly perhaps losing the aura of particular importance that should always and anyway characterise them. Such invasion of everyday life concerns both the real events, paraphrasing Mailer (1982), and the 'eventoids', or those events that have no real consistency except for when they appear in the media, but which can influence social behaviour insofar as being 'creators' of reality. Fact and event are basically synonymous, or at least that is what the dictionary tells us (Cinti, 1981) even if event, etymologically (*e-venire*) indicates an actual specificity

of obviousness. This is not of interest so much as a purely philological question but as a sociological one, insofar as now the event has become something particularly significant from the viewpoint of the study of phenomenologies whether they be macro, meso or micro.

While it is true that in many cases, the event label is probably given to facts which in themselves are not particularly important or collectively significant (that is owing to economic or political reasons etc.), this seems possible both owing to a basic devaluation of the word perhaps because of the image and simulacra (it is well known how what could be defined as lovely is now stupendous, what was important is now sensational, etc.) as much as a social construction of reality — increasingly conditioned by media — in which the absence of planning and great narrations (Lyotard, 1986) must be compensated with something, even though by and large ephemeral. This sort of devaluation seems to begin to concern the event itself: event of the year or extraordinary event are recurring expressions which, not always referred to something actually significant, are perhaps witness to an exasperated/exasperating endless search to arouse Luhmann's irritation by feeding itself (Luhmann, 2000).

Is the event a 'festival new' or a 'new festival'? The question is not only interesting from a semantic and abstract point of view; to try and answer it can be useful to better understand the original problem of the nature of the event and to do this (or at least to attempt to do so) we must open a (short) parenthesis on the 'innovation/creativity' discourse. Tajfel (1985) stresses that there is no point in speaking of 'new' without the possibility of referring to something 'old' that defines its sense and represents its specific features. Crespi (1993: 141–144) taking up Hirschman (in Dayan-Katz, 1994) in the context of a complex reasoning on social action, events and creativity, rightly considers that it can be stated that very often, even in the overall logic of the basically linear relationship with the social structure of reference, the social actor can in certain situations 'determine' considerable movements of meaning ('leaps', as Crespi defines them) that in fact make the actions themselves 'new' with respect to the past.

This is what can be defined, to quote Zolberg (1994: Ch. IV), as 'traditional' problem finder creativity (the idea and consequent propensity to action, to rediscover needs/issues and to represent them — furthermore satisfying them by means of 'something new'), an intellectual 'game' that embodies various typologies in it (Caillois, 1981) and which makes that 'leap' in the previously described meaning. Events, which today come 'to fill' a great part of our social

relations, can in our opinion be conceptually defined as the outcome of a problem finder creativity, as said before:

Events take on the importance of the sense and values that festivals used to have (...). They enable us to see, understand and experiment more. They construct works, images, symbols, memories and expectations for the collective imagination. They do not build society as they used to but they satisfy social demands and needs (Argano, 2005: 29).

2. The cities as a 'stage'

Today the city can be seen not only as a natural 'stage' for the events but also the place where there are all the pre-conditions necessary for an event to make sense, whether all the conditions for the event itself produces effects (desired and non-desired) expected. This is because cities are a kind of complex synthesis of what is society , social relations, culture; a privileged field of construction, development and sedimentation of everything (such as reports, processes , structures) a social group is able to engage in, and this also in terms of differences and inequalities. As a result , the cities are in fact a laboratory of great interest if we want to understand and study the dynamics of the fundamental 'being-together': ideas, practices, currents of thought in all areas/ nature, production and/ or distribution of wealth material and symbolic goods (now ephemeral as 'mode', now more structuring as 'lifestyle'), ordinary social relations (the 'everyday life' of ethnomethodology) and extraordinary ('events'), public sphere interactions/ private sphere, conflict and consensus: all is revealed in the cities.

The city means 'modernity', is somehow synonymous; In this sense the analysis of Simmel (1995) that configures just like the 'social space' in which localize precisely the main experiences of modernity itself in all its complexity and contradictions. But the city also means 'late modernity', in so many ways, and often as a result of a processuality consists of three movements almost simultaneous as the recovery of pre-existing forms socio-cultural maintaining traits contemporary and distortion , re-creation of both in hybridisms; the late-modern city: (1) Lives the experience now, 'undocked' now 'embedded' to a common feeling, a finalization of the socially shared , albeit through paths or micro groups strongly individualistic, often even 'virtual', however 'private'; (2) Is characterized by detachment, estrangement, non-involvement of unitary expression of subjective intention and objective; the return to a solo size

(especially after the 'great seasons' solidarity of the sixties and seventies) can mean certainly the trend exhaustion of certain structures of modernity, in the broadest sense of the term, or in the process of construction of the world, of social bonds, of ethics, social action in general as well as we know them, because they lived just socialized to them; (3) Resolves, just to try to cope with the growing social complexity in the present almost like a size 'absolute' in which the 'memory' is not significant and the 'future' structurally uncertain. The present is in fact close to the social actor in place even through a 'use of time' almost unnatural, conditioner and/ or binding if not, 'colonizing' the experience through the rigid structure and standardization activities in routine and ritualism.

3. The event as a social construction: the media role

Events become 'social' insofar as (sometimes even at a later date) they are recognised as such by society itself (Griswold, 1997: Ch. V). In fact any happening is an event at the moment in which it is established as a real cultural object, even if, at least according to a merely quantitative approach, from their 'birth' this concerns a reality of collective interest. An attempt will now be made to outline a hypothesis of 'sociability' structure of the event (which goes back in a broad sense to the concept of media newsworthiness). Culture, the constitutive dimension of our experience of life, "imposes meanings on a universe which is otherwise chaotic and random" (Griswold, 1997: 133); the cultural systems transform events and things into cultural objects with specific meanings, explaining how certain phenomenologies of the social world are made important when transformed into cultural objects and/or social problems, while others remain forgotten. If culture can draw the attention to certain facts, can it sometimes create the fact itself? Let us start by considering how the events that take place can become cultural objects: the creation of a cultural object in fact is similar to the creation of an event, definable as the relationship, created by interpretation, between a fact and a structure. But how can facts become cultural objects defined as events?

According to Griswold, in order to create a cultural object (and then define it as event) it must be structured by a set of intersecting ideas and institutions (Griswold, 1997: 134); moreover, social facts tend to 'adapt' to the ideas and institutions of the society in which they are found. For this reason, 'collective' events are generally constructed in one way and not in equally possible others.

If the problems of collective interest are culturally defined, it is normal to expect that they increase and fall in popularity in time. With regard to this, attempts have been made to identify what explains the rise and fall of events, starting from what is identified as 'situation of collective interest', re-elaborating the thesis by Hilgartner and Bosk (1988) on 'social problems' which like social events are the products of a process of a collective definition and allocation of meaning.

Hilgartner and Bosk (1998: 53–78) propose a model for the understanding of social events that goes beyond the traditional models. It sets out courses for the systematic study of the factors and forces that drive the public's attention towards the same event and far away from the other objective or putative conditions. The two authors define a social fact of collective interest as a putative condition or situation that is labelled as problematic in the arenas of public debate and its successive and consequent action and use a wide sphere of sociological literature as well as literature on the interpretative process in mass media, then proceeding to making use of the theory of organisation networks, submitting the influence and the interrelations between institutions and social networks to the 'publicly' framed and presented definitions of social event.

Starting from 'agenda setting' (De Fleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1995), state that the original focus (the process structuring the agenda for public decisions made in official forums) is to limit others (the process structuring whatever concerns the collective in the public arenas) in the identification and choice of events of general interest. This complex model contains a number of constitutive elements such as: (1) a dynamic competition process among the actors of a society in the assertion of the importance of events; (2) the institutional arenas that are used as 'environmental' conditionings where the social issues gain attention and growth; (3) the driving capacity of these arenas, such as the possible limit of the number of facts that can be gain widespread attention at the same time; (4) the selection principles or institutional, political and cultural factors that influence the probability of survival of the formulas of these very facts; (5) the models of interaction among the different arenas; (6) the operation networks that promote and try to control the facts, whose communication channels in turn form huge arenas.

As a first step in understanding the nature of the collective definition process, it must be noted that there is a consistent mass of potential facts, that is situations and putative conditions that could be conceived as such, and that this mass is highly stratified, even if the great majority of these putative conditions remains outside or on the edges of the public debate. Furthermore,

the temporal 'attention' span can vary enormously. Some events maintain a position outside the public debate for a long time, then fade into the background, while others grow and decline much more rapidly, others develop silently, fade away and then re-emerge again (never completely disappearing) obtaining a fluctuating amount of public attention. There are then the 'potential' events which are not only governed by their objective nature but also by an extremely selective process in which they 'compete' to get public attention in society. A fraction of potential events is often publicly presented by groups or individuals defining them as such, and these social actors coming from various sectors of society can have very different aims: actively organised political interest groups and social movements may want to use facts/events to stimulate reforms or social changes. The collective definition of social event does not occur therefore in society or public opinion as generally understood but in specific and particular public arenas in which social issues are focussed upon and develop. These arenas include the executive and legislative branches of the government, the media, political organisations, organised social actions, religious congregations, professional societies, etc. It is within these institutions that events as social issues are discussed, selected, defined, framed, dramatized, 'packaged' and presented to the public, as well as consequently experienced by the public itself.

Even if there are many differences between the various arenas, they all share important characteristics: above all each one has a capacity range that limits the number of situations that it can develop each time. It is clear that the number of situations that could be potentially interpreted as problems is so huge as to be virtually infinite, while the space and time to present the problems publicly is totally limited. It is this discrepancy between the number of potential issues and the dimensions of the public space that can host them that makes the competition among events so crucial and central in the collective definition process.

To speak of 'mediated reality by the media' means (today more than in the past) to consider: (1) the media as producers of a 'second reality' parallel (even though intersecting) to the one experientially experienced in an im-mediated way; (2) the media as 'diffusers' (but also 'producers') of 'cultural objects' with a pervasive activity strongly influenced by social behaviour.

As far as generally concerns the production of reality, the basic question is not linked to the problem of how the media 'can/wants' to distort reality (image of the media as 'manipulators') or of how the media 'represent reality itself

(image of the media as 'windows on the world'), but how, insofar as 'systems', they construct (their) reality with their own specific logic and modalities of observation, choice (gatekeeping), highlighting (news-making, but also the 'programmes'), all this achieved through 'their own' language.

This is also because the media, like every other system, is basically self-referential, capable that is of structuring the environment and therefore of 'interpreting', 'translating' and 'retransmitting' the same according to criteria and/or self-constructed internal processes for which any 'data' can become relevant. As far as the production and reproduction of culture is concerned, it is certain that the media, even in the context of a complex process that includes stages and actors as well as a system of highly differentiated needs/functions (Griswold, 1997: Ch. 4), constitute a fundamental moment of the process itself, from its beginning to nowadays. This is a crucial moment both because it is now mainly by means of the media that the 'cultural objects' (Griswold, 1997: 26) become collectively such (often as 'mass' phenomena) in a sometimes 'surplus' and 'unanchoring' way (Crespi, 1996: 219–220) often also creating a 'difficulty in considering culture as a coherent system of meanings'.

In the context of the cultural production process, the media 'diffuse' and 'stabilise' (even if at times ephemerally as can be seen with 'fashions') the cultural objects created elsewhere, 'considering them' in time and 'handing them down' considering also their more than consolidated function of primary and secondary agents of socialisation contributing therefore to imprinting, to the basic as well as individual personality in a way that is not to be underestimated. The action of the media in cultural production however is not necessarily limited to diffusing and/or handing down but to 'valorising' (or 'devalorising') the socio-cultural facts (Luhmann, 2000: 27), both symbolically and instrumentally far besides whatever is highlighted by the agenda setting, to 'reifying' the same to make them 'appear' and/or 'disappear' according to a logic independent of the nature of the cultural objects themselves, but on the basis of system logic. It must nonetheless be remembered (with the threat of an 'apocalyptic' reading of this essay) that decoding is not necessarily the 'preferred' but often the 'negotiated' or even 'confronted' one (Griswold, 1997: Ch. 4) or rather, that the so-called "valorisation and reification" are not achieved in the sense of 'Pavlov's dog', or also that between 'message offered' and 'message interiorised' (Livolsi, 2000: 276) there is however 'no easier said than done'.

4. The events as 'emotional places'

Although emotions are essentially 'subjective', generally and necessarily not shared with others, it is entirely possible that more individuals together, interpreting and experiencing an event with the same intensity, these emotions make it truly 'collective'; in other words, we can talk about an 'emotional contagion' as a form (immediate and automatic) of emotional sharing, characterized by the absence of any cognitive mediation (Bonino, 1998). Some basic considerations about that. First, according to Turnaturi (2007: 15), there is no field or aspect of contemporary life that is not flooded with emotions that run rampant in public discourse, in the media sweeping all forms of confidentiality and discretion, breaking all barriers between the public and private. Showing their emotions seems to have become the 'only way' to express themselves and to be there to get excited with others. Therefore I exist if I show my emotions publicly, 'buying' notoriety and visibility through this new 'pass'. The public discourse and in public, only possible if respectful of their and others' discretion and the distance between himself and others, has been replaced by the emotional speech where every distance between 'me and you', me and the other is canceled in the sea of the alleged involvement.

Second, the origin of the emotions, passions and feelings (Cerulo, 2010) is strongly influenced by the cultural background of each community: that is why there can never be an emotional feeling unique and universal fact, although subjective and individual, the 'emotion is linked to the socio-environmental circular: it changes our social action but is triggered by the latter. Most defiantly, there is the version of sociality with which Sartre (1948) was concerned. In this case, emotion is conceptualized as socially *constituted*. In this form of sociality, emotion is seen as being defined by and defining social relationships. This perspective suggests that we cannot know anything about our social relationships without the emotions that we use to navigate ourselves through these relationships. But, similarly, emotion is fully encompassed by those social relationships. This implies that emotion does not exist within the solitary individual because it depends on social configurations to not just trigger it, but also to actually form it (Tiedens & Leach, 2004: 3).

Third, in the late-modern contemporary collective dimension has partly disintegrated: the individual swings closer weakly between individual freedom and existential loneliness, emotions in general are more collective and the feeling is so disjointed. What is important is to consume: objects, assets

(including intangible assets such as the 'events'), provided services consumed instantly, quickly, and even the mass media, which is now 'live with us', fill and condition our space, and everything is 'liquid' (Bauman, 2009), changing, transient including personal relationships and emotions reduced to consumer goods 'disposable.'

In fourth place, on the other hand, the emotions in the postmodernity have gained considerable importance, both in the private than in the public and held at the same time the role of the middle, and the end parameter of sociality. It seems that people orient their lives in search of excitement and pleasurable sensations, and judge the experiences and relationships according to their intensity. Quoting Bauman: "we can say that the common perception of the postmodern citizen's duty is to lead a good life" (1999: 51). The result is a model of individual who is identified with the one proposed by Bauman, e.g. the 'pleasure-seeker' and 'collector of pleasures', as opposed to the 'purveyor of goods' representative of early modernity.

Finally we have to remember that people enter into relation with each other even (or perhaps especially) through the emotions, and social interactions that result further develop emotions, in short, emotions are socially constructed and change to changing social practices (Flam, 1995). And the human emotions are contagious, and feel strong emotions would have the effect of synchronization of brain activity between people: it is the findings in a study conducted at Aalto University in Finland (Nummenmaan, 2012). Observing the emotions in non-verbal communication of others, for example the smile, causes in us the same emotional response, this synchronization of emotional states between individuals supports social interaction: in fact, when all the members of the group share a common emotional state, their brain processes information from the environment in a similar way.

In the research in question while the study participants saw short films pleasant, neutral or unpleasant their brain activity was investigated with functional magnetic resonance imaging. The results have revealed that they are especially unpleasant emotions and intense to synchronize processing networks in the frontal regions and medians; while living situations very exciting result in the synchronization of networks that support the vision, attention and the sense of touch . According Nummenmaa, the sharing of other emotional states gives observers a somatosensory and neural framework that facilitates the understanding of the intentions and actions of the other and lets you tune in

with him. This automatic tuning facilitates social interaction and group processes.

There is a wide agreement that social events and entities outside the individual play a role in the generation of emotions....there are numerous way that emotions can be social. For example, psychologists have long conceptualized emotion as *responsive* to social events (...).emotions are typically considered as responses to important events in our lives, and social events are among the most important (...).finally, emotions is conceptualized as socially constituted. In this form of sociality, emotion is seen as being defined by and defining social relationship (Tiedens & Leach, 2004: 2–4).

It is in the events (or rather, participation in social interactions with them) that emotions can occur more freely and widely: an encounter with the 'other', not much 'mediated by the media' that encase the experience through their own codes, but not really experiential neither trivial nor artefact routine. In other words, the events, 'products' postmodern culture industry and at the same time 'producers' of culture and social, must be regarded as a 'place' where (through the dynamic ritual event itself) the collective emotions take shape and are expressed, becoming therefore themselves, in turn, 'product' of the event and producing culture. It should also be said that the culture industry postmodern implication (in the sense of 'producer') in the event and in the same way that builds self-referential, it also compiles the process of consumption, which in some way affects the livability of the event and, consequently, what it can ensue as, indeed, the emotions.

The event produces 'squares' (real and/or virtual), places that meeting, sharing emotions 'here and now' without, as we have said, a contribution of the all-encompassing media, penalizing them just the interpersonal relationship and direct contact, the event creates conditions to accommodate the need to 'get together' with a great emotional outlet. This need, however, is modelled in terms of postmodernism, which is not necessarily stable and long-lasting but not be limited to a concept of happening: on the one hand and then the emotions that revitalize social ties, on the other hand, a considerable instability of the same.

Events that are periodically repeated in time therefore become a constant feature of socio-cultural experience can take on the importance of traditions. With an extremely meaningful etymon wavering between delivery and teaching, traditions or 'canonised collective memory' (Jedlowski & Rampazi, 1991), can be defined as the 'models of beliefs, customs, values, behaviour, knowledge and competences that are handed down from generation to generation by means of

the socialisation process' (Seymour-Smith, 1991: 411). This term is then generally used to indicate both the "product and the process" (Cirese, 1996: 96) of the relative cultural production of the transmission/teaching of the same. Traditions come to make up a fundamental part and a distinctive element of cultural identity and belonging, and moreover constitute a significant point of reference for social action in general and, in particular, support a specific Weberian typology of the action itself, 'in conformity with acquired habits that have become constitutive of custom; it is the reaction to consuetudinary stimuli that are in part considerably imitative. Most of the actions in our daily life are dictated by the sense of tradition' (Morra, 1994: 96).

As a distinctive element of culture, traditions take on both endogenous (of self-recognition) and exogenous (of identification) importance for the social groups referring to them. The traditions system can be interpreted as a real social institution, both in the sense of 'form of belief in action and recognised behaviour, decreed and constantly practised and in the sense of "consolidated practices, habitual ways of doing things, characteristics of a group activity" (Gallino, 1993: 388). Therefore, as institutions traditions acquire a complex social functionality that can be summarised as follows (Mongardini, 1993: 222–225): (1) simplification of the social action (a sort of collective preconceived thought making behaviour easier); (2) behaviour compass (the supplying of pre-arranged schemes of reference). Among the most widespread forms of event with a numerous following that are to be seen today and which are repeated in time, the 'street cultural events' are probably the most significant. On the one hand, this is:

An interpretation of a cultural fact as a live and present fact, of action and relations (...) to strongly express the culture in which we live, its memories and traditions, projects and utopias. This course, with a demanding rush for extent and greatness is all synthesised and realised in the here and now of an event (Argano, 2005: 23–24).

On the other hand,

The street is an environment in which to plan and organise facilities, or rather experiences, and is as hard as it is interesting. It is a habitat worthy of attention as it belongs to what in jargon is called the urban interior, where the boundaries, inhabitants, customs, functions, habits, furniture, climate, uncertainties, the intrusive (exogenous) and endogenous factors are those of a particular increasingly multi-ethnic, intercultural and multi-social cohabitation, but at the same time respectful of privacy, differing interests and

of the limits that the privatised use of the public facility imposes (Gilberti, 2004: 12).

Cultural street events enjoy an increasingly high participation and this we believe is not only due to the 'content/s' of the events themselves (even though fundamental) but also sociologically speaking, due to the chance to meet and know oneself again through a common (or communication) action formalised in what we can define as a ritual:

In a certain sense, the ritual, like the set of schemes that structure and organise the way of carrying out certain collective activities from the symbolic point of view of feeling and imagination, characterises all the elements of a practical culture, from the material ones to the social and personal ones. In the economy of practical culture (of action and practice) it therefore represents what the expressive symbols in the strict sense of the word represent in theoretical culture, that is, it diffuses communication (Catemario, 1996: 395).

Rituals can now be defined as 'social dramas' (Turner, 1993) and 'means of collective expression of socially regulated feelings' (Valeri, 1981, 1978) and also as collective practices with a highly symbolic and psychologically liberating content, aimed at strengthening social cohesion and perpetuating the cultural reference outcome and can be classified in rituals (to emphasise loss of status and/or individual and collective social inefficiency), in strengthening rituals (celebrations of particular positive results achieved), in renewal rituals (to back up significant moments of socio-cultural change), integration rituals (actions to stress and launch collective news), (re)composition rituals of conflicts (with the aim of recomposing deteriorated social balances). Besides the specific typology, rituals constitute a real compass for collective social action, a particularly suitable instrument to ensure the cultural continuity of social groups by means of the very possibility (especially at critical moments) of symbolic meetings.

5. An events society?

Since, and without having to refer to Weber, sociology and the social sciences are in general 'all encompassing', trying that is to interpret social phenomenologies both 'as they are shown' and 'with respect to what they show' in a detailed logic, we cannot avoid hypothesising that the success of events in today's society is not accidental or 'exceptional' but can come into an interpretative logic of the widely consolidated contemporaneousness itself, or

the late-modern condition (Lyotard, 1986). As is well-known there can be many different significances attributable to and in fact attributed to late modernity, which is our contemporaneity as presented to us: (1) It can certainly mean the basic exhaustion of some of the supporting structures of modernity, in the broadest sense of the term, or of the construction process of the world, social restraints, ethics, social action in general as we have known them, experienced exactly because socialised to the same. (2) It is resolved, in order to attempt to deal with the growing social complexity, in the 'present' almost like an 'absolute' dimension in which the 'memory' is little significant and the 'future' structurally uncertain. This 'present' in fact closes the social actor in the experientialism taking place even by means of an almost unnatural 'use of time', conditioning and/or binding if not even 'colonising' the experience through the rigid structuring and standardisation of activity in routines and ritualism. (3) It can therefore emerge as a sort of uneasy state of mind of modernity itself, in terms of what no longer exists but also 'what does not yet exist and does not know what it wants to be'; far from being an intellectual fashion, even if it could arise in the artistic-figurative field at the appearance of the term in this cultural area, post-modernity is manifested not so much in a definite and entirely definable set, but in a plurality of specific crises in the single representations of reality, the real modality of 'incremental' change not being 'strategically' linked in the different areas of culture and contemporary society. (4) It can indicate a plurality of specific crises in the basic modalities of the social construction of reality of the representation of reality itself; a cultural morphogenesis from a certainly distant past that comes to change the importance and priorities of needs, choices and spiritual and material experientiality. (5) It can appear as a 'big container in which, with difficulty, one tries to grasp and give some sense to a generalised fragmentation of experience that is at times 'unanchored' and at others 're-anchoring itself' to a common feeling and a finalisation of socially shared action both by means of strongly individualistic or common but not necessarily collective paths.

All this undoubtedly leads to a considerable increase in uncertainty and high thresholds of ambiguity in the social action in the 'imagining' and realising a plan (social and existential at the same time); a sort of continuous 'pilgrimage' between different options and hypotheses (often opposing) of life, in the search for an identity no longer founded and resistant that comes to be perceived as 'a handicap rather than an advantage', as it limits the possibility of adequately controlling one's existential path: it turns out to be a weight that hinders

movement, a ballast to be thrown overboard in order to keep one's head above water'.

The event (in itself an ephemeral situation but which takes shape and moves in a relatively certain structure, as said above) and the importance given to it at the same time seems to be something very late-modern owing to a number of reasons like: (1) The consequence of the fragmentation of experience and the failure of basic references, the 'great narrations' that somehow determine the triumph of the 'particular' over the general progress of things, of the 'moment' over the 'flow' deprived of a long term perspective. (2) The constant increase in the sense of uncertainty can be overcome (more or less as an illusion) by unusual moments like events that stimulate a recovery (more or less momentary) of the sense of the community perspective even if not necessarily collective.

The fact of constituting a strong urge to 'exit from' socio-cultural routines, from a daily life which, even if a 'safe harbour' can also be a 'weight', a constriction especially if lacking in plans. To be able to interpret the event as a typical late-modern operation, according to a well-defined mechanism by Martelli (1999: 138) it is made up of (1) the recovery of former cultural conventions; (2) the maintaining of modern features; (3) the distortion of both in surprising re-elaboration; (4) in other words the event, its collective appreciation and the significant participation in it, as the outcome at least in part of a fuzzy logic highlighted in many contemporary social and cultural phenomena. Whatever the case may be, events are now a constituent and constitutive part of our reality and this is why, as has been said and as always, only research can truly define their sense and meaning.

6. A (very short) ending

In conclusion, we can state (Argano, 2005: 15) that this phenomenon is at the basis of a new post-industrial society, like the centrality of knowledge and intellectual type activities, free time that prevails over work time, intellectualisation, creativity, ethics, aesthetics, subjectivity, emotiveness, the global and the glocal, the decline of the 'strong' (materialistic) needs and the diffusion of 'weak' (post-materialist) needs, the new fears, the new hopes, the new spirituality, virtuality, the transformation of the family nucleus and the affirmation of new social subjects, the increasingly multi-ethnic society, the urban culture, information, schooling, collective and connective intelligence,

nomadism and permanency, the decline of old ways and the start of new ones generate a spectacularly fast change in the system of expectations, experiences, relations and communication': this is why the events society rightly emerges as a further image of contemporaneity.

In short, nowadays, events (the 'real events', not 'eventoids'), are complex social facts with a relevant functional variety, as previously stated:

- sense of the *we-ness*,
- communication modality (in/out),
- shared values and lifestyles,
- emotional places,
- common practices.

So, something intimately living the indissolubility of the 'society-culture' set, in common experiences sometimes ephemeral, some other times with long-lasting effects.

Therefore, events represent an important interpretation of the contemporary climate: the social actor gives them a meaning, also achieving the sense of 'staying together' that is the final product of the common enjoyment of the event itself. Somehow, events are a reaction of the late modernity to the needs of culture and *sociability* of the contemporary social actor.

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