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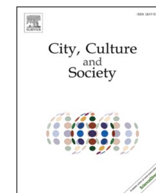

Urbans ritual · as spaces of memory and belonging: A Geneva case study

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ABSTRACT

How do cities include newcomers and established inhabitants? Do urban rituals bring people together? Because of their relative anonymity and accessibility, public rituals – as temporary processes of inclusion or emphasizers of differences – are likely to include people with respect to their differences and any intersections of these. We examine three cases in Geneva, a high mobility city – the Escalade, the Fêtes de Genève and the Saga des Géants – and their potential to foster scepticism (i.e. exclusion) or belonging (i.e. inclusion).

Our policy-relevant findings indicate that in post-migration societies, rituals are crucial in fostering belonging, especially when they are based on an open narrative, organized by or with civil-society organizations and based on elements that permit the emotional involvement of the participants. We confront this emic perspective with an etic one, using variables derived from our investigation of public policies and rituals to analyse our observations and public representations of the events.

1. Introduction

Only in the twentieth century did the city become a space that problematizes migration and differences. The city lost importance relative to the nation-state, and the diffusion of industry also lessened the economic relevance of the city. Since the 1980s and what has been called the "return of the city" (Sassen, 2010), the city has again become a bulwark against its conservative surroundings, except that this time it is not feudal power that the city is trying to limit, but the power of the nation-state, and of populist groups focused on the national territory, and ironically weakening it (Katz & Nowak, 2018, p. 6). In a transnational world of mobility and multiple belongings – the post-migrant society (Römhild, 2018) – the city is again at the centre of problem-solving and inclusion policies for people in search of freedom, and the nation-state is no longer sufficient in responding to the challenges posed by this mobile world of people with unique life courses and complex identities. But what kinds of inclusion policies can favour the production of individual well-being in an urban context?

Our paper focuses on rituals in urban public spaces as a type of "commons" that produces inclusion and/or exclusion. In a world characterized by mobility and transnational relations, and hence a constant turnover of inhabitants in any given territory, the issue of belonging poses a challenge to the governance of spaces, in particular quickly changing urban spaces (UN-Habitat, 2016).

Belonging to a place, to a city, is the complex and sometimes uncertain result of a series of factors. Urban rituals undoubtedly play an important role in developing a sense of belonging to a place. But other factors also play a role – not only globalization (Savage et al., 2004) and mobility, but also strategies that depend on the economic use and exploitation of urban space. In other words, a multiplicity of narratives contributes to forming what can be defined as elective belonging (Jeffery, 2018; Savage et al., 2004; Watt, 2010).

Mobility and migration, but sometime also disaster events (Abrams et al., 2004), challenge the way living together is understood. Everyday practices based on values and traditions have to be revised and conceived of in a way that permits inclusion of both newcomers and the established population. Without these revisions, coexistence is impossible and marginalization, resentment and exclusion result (Bauböck, 1996). The unilateral imposition of practices is oppression, while closed community building by newcomers creates ghettos and often poverty. A third way between oppression and ghettoization – the central focus of this paper – is respectful inclusion practices aimed at coexistence.

Our paper addresses the issue of inclusion by focusing on rituals in urban public spaces. Rituals produce belonging through their dynamic interplay of inclusion and/or exclusion, and they may be key to the governance of the splintered city (Graham & Marvin, 2001). Since Victor Turner's seminal book on rituals (Turner, 2009 [1969]), a great deal of research has focused on the reappearance and invention of rituals as an answer to the crisis of traditional rites of passage (in particular the crisis of religious rituals like baptism and marriage), the increasing number of

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ruptures during life courses (changing of employment, territorial mobility and divorce) and the weakening of traditional institutions (such as trade unions and religious institutions) and temporalities of reference (like the standardized work schedule; Segalen, 1998).

We are interested in how traditional and new rituals in public spaces encourage or discourage a sense of belonging to specific territories independently of the differentiated life worlds of the inhabitants and users of those territories. Because of their relative anonymity and accessibility, public rituals – temporary dynamic processes intended to either promote inclusion or emphasize differences – are likely to include people of various backgrounds in terms of origin, religion, ideology, lifestyle and sexual orientation.[1] Such rituals can be produced by institutional and non-institutional agents and are often linked to culture, art and creativity.[2] Because they need to be performed (Alexander et al., 2006), they also reveal agency (Turner, 2009 [1969]), and they require spatiality, signs and memory to be sustained (Gamba, 2009).

We hypothesize that rituals may foster inclusion through their emphasis on the communality of the ritual and their conviviality. Conviviality is a necessary aspect of public rituals (Hertz & Cattacin, 2015), which are performed by individuals who are, in the urban context, mostly unknown to each other (Simmel, 1908). Urban rituals may create links between the history of a city or neighborhood and the personal and collective memory (following Maurice Halbwachs, 1950) of the ritual's participants, thus generating a sense of belonging that offers symbolic legitimacy for the city's users (Bhandari et al., 2010, pp. 3477–3482), who include not only its inhabitants, but also commuters and tourists. Urban rituals are essential in producing a temporary, inclusive commons[3] that may be a prototype of more enduring forms of territorial belonging in post-migrant societies created through shared memories.[4]

In this article, we offer a brief description of the characteristics of urban rituals, followed by case studies of three large public events in Geneva, in an attempt to determine the potential and limits of using rituals to promote inclusion of difference and territorial belonging. Geneva is a particularly interesting case study because it is often considered to be a city without community and with many internal conflicts.

One conflict is related to the high number of foreigners and binationals (Swiss and another country) living in Geneva. Binationals constitute 27 per cent of the population, and foreign inhabitants 37 per cent. In total, 64 per cent of the population of the Canton of Geneva over the age of 15 holds a foreign passport. There is no predominant nationality in the foreign population, and the largest group is people with a Portuguese passport, who constitute 12 per cent of the foreign population (Geneva Statistics, 2019b). The consequence of this presence of a large percentage of foreigners is a large "mosaic" (Necker, 1995) of communities identified more with their place of origin than with their place of living (Felder et al., 2015). This highly heterogeneous population is the result of the territory's history as a place of protection and welcome – which has contributed to the image of Geneva as a "Cité de refuge" (Camisa, 1991). However, it is not only a place with a long history of migration, but also a centre of global (international) institutions with a large number of officials. This has arguably contributed to a loss of sense of place and community.

A second conflict concerns the international border with France. Geneva is an urban border region with about one million inhabitants, half of whom live in France (Geneva Statistics, 2019a). The high number of commuters working in Geneva and living in France has resulted in political debates and populist anti-French political movements for the last 40 years (Dacorogna, 2014).

A third conflict relates to the high number of inhabitants employed by international organizations and multinational firms. Cantonal politics in Geneva promotes this trend: Geneva's official brand is "Genève internationale". But the presence of these inhabitants has changed the local housing market, and rents are continuously increasing, making Geneva one of the most expensive housing markets in the world (Mercer, 2019) and mobilizing critics against these inhabitants (Pattaroni, 2015, pp. 141–172).

A final conflict concerns summer tourism, particularly around Geneva Lake, and tourism-related events organized by the Geneva Tourist Office. Inhabitants perceive the tourist presence during the summer as an occupation, as we discuss below.

These four urban conflicts mark political debates in Geneva and are all related to mobility and inclusion.

Methodologically, we rely on field observations conducted during public rituals, newspaper reports and participants' accounts. We confront this emic perspective with an etic one, using variables derived from our investigation of public policies and rituals to analyse our observations and public representations of the events.

2. What are urban rituals?

Every definition of ritual is partial, insufficient and confusing (Goody, 1977, pp. 26–29). Van Gennep's concept of rites of passage (van Gennep, 1909 [1981]) invites us to focus on liminality: the moment in a ritual that brings out participants' fragility, when agency and symbolic attribution are connected to each other. Durkheim emphasizes the social dimension and regulatory power of the ritual, which he sees as a mechanism for group consolidation (Durkheim, 2008 [1912]). For Durkheim, rituals work to establish order by interrupting it: they interrupt order, but they also normalize the interruption by bringing the situation back to order. More generally, in classic anthropology the most important characteristics of rituals are consolidation over time and subsequent invariability.

If we consider urban rituals as producers of inclusion,[5] and as fundamental, and not merely incidental, to the reproduction of a continuously changing post-migrant urban society, these definitions are insufficient. Other, more relevant and specific elements of urban rituals need to be considered in order to understand these rituals as events that can promote respect between the participants (and beyond), create connections with the city's history and encourage belonging, and thus offer symbolic legitimacy for its inhabitants (Sennett, 2006).

One of these elements is the invention or reinvention of ritual, the possibility of (re)inventing a ritual that does not necessarily emanate from a tradition, or of transforming and integrating an already existing tradition. Turner (1979) popularized the idea of legitimizing the invention of rituals through the concept of the liminoid phenomenon – a phenomenon that does not necessarily have a collective origin, and that can originate and be developed and completed by known or unknown

[1] It is useful to understand how the social, political and economic dynamics of distinct cites have enabled differences to emerge and thrive in urban spaces, thus encouraging, to a greater or lesser degree, inclusive pluralism and establishing diversity as an asset rather than a threat (Sennett, 1994).

[2] See, for instance, Costanzo & Zibouh, 2014.

[3] We use the term commons in Elinor Ostrom's (2011) sense.

[4] By urban rituals, we mean rituals that are strongly rooted to the territory and have an explicit dimension of performance, which can be found in particular in festivals, celebrations and urban events. They can be reinventions or re-symbolizations of traditional rituals, or rituals invented ex novo. They can also be informal, i.e. spontaneously organized by the participants, or highly formalized and organized by secular institutions, such as municipal administrations, or religious institutions and parishes. Our study focuses on the specific category of territorialized urban rituals, which does not include other types of rituals, although they are equally present in cities – for example, funeral rituals, which can take place in the public space.

[5] We refer to Häussermann and Siebel's idea of cities as "integration machines" (Häussermann & Siebel, 2003; see also Stienen et al., 2006), but we prefer the less politicized term of inclusion instead of integration (see, for instance, Cattacin & Chimienti, 2010).

individuals, later to be shared with others to produce collective effects of inclusion. Such rituals tend to develop in places assigned to the sphere of leisure, sometimes on the margins of public institutions, and participation in these rituals results from participants' personal choice, and not from an obligation arising from their social role (Turner, 1979; see also; Luckman, 2016). Consequently, if belonging to a community is also, and above all, the result of a process of the imagination (Anderson, 2006 [1983]), rituals – reinterpreted or invented – play the role of devices that include differences, because they are characterized by variable and not (completely) traditional elements that touch the sphere of everyday life and which everyone can grasp (Hobsbawn & Ranger, 1983).

Another fundamental element that needs to be understood is the kinds of urban places where the rituals are performed. If a ritual is a set of communicative acts able to give meaning and produce belonging, the urban spaces where rituals take place have to be understood as places where, because of their configuration, symbolic practices are activated and emotional activities take place. As Hilary Silver has argued, such places ideally permit "face-to-face contact among strangers, who are neither brothers nor enemies […]. In this ritual exchange of gifts, strangers reciprocally perform social rites of public behavior, concealing private sentiments and enacting manners, politeness, niceness" (Silver, 2014, p. 1).

The public squares that have hosted protest movements are examples of such places – intense and connected places that integrate both the local and the global, and places of shared experiences and elective affinities.[6] The places where urban rituals occur can be filled with meaning, through both, on the one hand, the everyday tactic of appropriation and attribution of sense (Hall, 2013; de Certeau et al., 1994) and, on the other, the use of public spaces[7] as the context for the symbolic production of those rituals. This concept of ritual urban space is close to Mircea Eliade's idea of non-homogeneous space (Eliade, 1965), with the important difference that we understand the sacred space as homogeneous, a space for daily use, or sometimes without use, but that is nevertheless, because of its spatial quality, meaningful; a welcoming space that can be shared and performed by the participants – agents or audience – to produce belonging, and where symbolic power insists on the occupation and sharing of a common space, one able to create coexistence and inclusion (Hirsch, 2015).

In this respect, it should be noted that an anonymous urban space becomes a ritual urban space if it is able to become a context, a symbolic framework, i.e. to produce a symbolic agreement between participants. This ritual urban space can modify the destination of use from an everyday profane place to a ritual symbolic space because the possibility for a space to be a ritual context does not reside in any intrinsic quality of the space itself, but consists of a voluntary and collective attribution, in the limited interruption in space and time of a daily destination that acquires the power of the sacred. This space is simultaneously a symbolic and a material space where the ritual is performed and diffused, and the ritual produces effects that are not limited to the space-time of the ritual, but continue in social life. The dimension of time is also essential for the understanding of the upsetting – or sacral – place rituals take in the urban space. Indeed, the rhythms of the city are interrupted by time-defined rituals in given spaces, like parks for children in the afternoon and for youth in the evening. The ritual interrupts the city's temporalities and creates, punctually and for a clearly defined period, a common rhythm in the city, involving many, if not all, its users.[8]

The significance of space, time and context cannot be fully understood without referring to another crucial aspect of our contemporaneity, mobility – the continuous movement of individuals for reasons including work and leisure. A corollary of mobility – and typical in post-migrant societies – is the multiplication and temporary condition of life contexts (Foroutan, 2019). In this context, voluntary participation in urban rituals, with varying degrees of intensity and for varying periods of time, offers a form of belonging. The Open City – a highly porous place, both physically and symbolically, where differences are mediated and identities are built, but also transformed (Benhabib, 2002) – is a space where the invention or reinvention of rituals can produce cooperation (Sennett, 2012). Openness increases contrast, ambivalence and everyday confrontations between diverse ways of life, but also contact, freedom and reciprocal respect for otherness, and it encourages the interpretation of differences as a strength (Fincher & Jacobs, 1998; Sennett, 2006). Cities encourage the multiplication of identities, which can result in the transformation of the other into an enemy, especially when there is a lack of urban rituals, whose inclusive power to reorganize identity and otherness lays the foundations for cooperation, inclusion and recognition (Augé, 1994).

3. Rituals and memory: Memory as imaginary belonging

Multilocality, the multiplicity of relations that commuters and mobile people maintain to different places, in particular the place of origin, the workplace and the place of residence (Dick & Duchêne-Lacroix, 2014), is often considered a common characteristic of contemporary lives, albeit one that is experienced and managed in many different ways and that includes several different transnational life situations, such as those of expats, undocumented migrants, refugees and cross-border commuters (Favell, 2008; Missaoui & Tarrius, 2006). The scholarly literature on the subject often considers the identity and belonging of these migrants to be ambiguous (Featherstone et al., 2007; Ley, 2004). On the one hand, identity and belonging are considered to result from a complex aggregation of different elements (as seen in the concept of a non-territorial idea of home (first used by Morley, 2001)), including relationships; elements of spatial proximity and distance; objects that can be present or absent; and memory, a link between the past and the present (Nowicka, 2007; Rapport & Dawson, 1998; Willis, 2017). On the other hand, studies on the rise of transnational spaces, carried out mainly by geographers, focus on the importance of place and location (Ley, 2004).

We argue that memory is not only an identity link between past and present, and that space – whether transnational or not – is not the only thing that establishes and anchors a shared sense of belonging. Instead, space is also, and above all, symbolic, a context in which invention and imaginary production play a crucial role in both the production of multiple identities and the development of a sense of belonging that changes and enriches experiences as those experiences are produced and accumulated (Borer, 2006). In other words, the role of memory in the production of identity and belonging is not merely to select important historical facts in people's collective or individual past, but to offer a more complex symbolic narration, an affective narrative identity, or, as Paul Ricœur argues, a récit, which results from the intersection of a historical narrative – and which follows the rules of a documentary verification of a narrative – and a fictional narrative that focuses on an imaginative production and on variations that destabilize the narrative identity (Ricœur, 1991). Historical narrative and fictional narrative are complementary in producing the unity of human experience that corresponds to the narrative identity. Because of its construction, the narrative identity acts in a reality that is both real and imaginary.

The symbolic production that rituals foster is an example of how a ritual narrative, as our examples below demonstrate, can trigger an identity, and especially a process of belonging. The power of the urban ritual consists in the fact that a homogeneous space is transformed into a sacred space, apt to become the context that holds together the multiplicity and differences of a group of people in a common and shareable narrative.

[6] Lussault calls these kinds of spaces "hyper-places" (Lussault, 2017).

[7] Particularly anonymous, non-specific spaces (i.e. spaces that are not destined for a specific use).

[8] The conceptual reference is the work of Henri Levebvre on "rhythmanalysis" (Lefebvre, 1992), in which he introduces the idea of the multiplication of users of the same space dictated by the rhythm of the city.

More specifically, the public space shared and performed during an urban ritual promotes both the activation and the production of memory, also understood as a voluntary adherence to an invented imagination (in particular in a post-migrant society; Hintermann & Rupnow, 2016). A place of belonging is a place where a group or community addresses its affects and emotions regarding it by producing this particular narrative called memory (Nora, 1992), especially since forms of memory, as Maurice Halbwachs reminds us, must be deployed in a symbolic space and at the same time must refer to a concrete place, a context that is easy to recognize (Halbwachs, 1994 [1925]). In this perspective, urban rituals show how identity and belonging are manifested in the representations of personal and collective, but also social, memory, and how the city becomes a surface of inscription on which the occupants, individually or in associations, leave their own material and symbolic traces (Gamba, 2009).

For our purposes, the interesting aspect of urban rituals is that the dimension of invention, whether it is a result of a spontaneous bottom-up process or the outcome of a top-down decision (including an institutional one), promotes inclusion, as Richard Sennett has argued. According to Sennett, rituals are characterized by dramaturgical expressions that make the participants true performers, neither too immersed in their role, nor too far away, showing adequate competences in the role played (Sennett, 2012, p. 92), and this ensures a balance between competition and cooperation, which can promote inclusion and belonging, especially when there is a significant degree of differentiation between participants.

According to Paul Connerton, rituals are not simply expressive, not just formal, and their effects are not limited to the context in which they occur. They give meaning to the life of the community and contribute to that community's historical narrative, or more precisely to its memory (Connerton, 1989, pp. 44–48). However, if we limit rituals to these aspects, we notice that they play less with inclusion and belonging than with exclusion, according to an us/them dialectic, as in the case of religious or nationalistic rituals (Mendez, 2018).

In contrast, the invention of new rituals, or the integration of new or reworked elements into existing rituals, gives rise to a common narrative that can connect the various positions, experiences and sensitivities of its participants. This explicit, voluntary or arbitrary ritual invention or production of memory produces an internally nuanced sense of belonging, bringing together the differences present in a group through a complex process of renegotiation.

4. Urban rituals in Geneva: Three cases

Geneva is a city, a canton and, socioeconomically, an agglomeration of around one million people called the Greater Geneva Area (Le Grand Genève).[9] This larger territory was only officially named in 2012, after a naming contest organized by the local newspaper *Tribune de Genève* (Prieur, 2012). The contest was intended to promote a name permitting the people who live and use that space to identify with it. According to the organizations that launched the contest, this identification would facilitate the realization of transnational projects and improve the quality of collective life in this area.

The need to work on this new territory is recognized by economic, civil and political agents trying to think the future of Geneva as one of Europe's larger metropolises (Grand Genève, 2016). This project requires not only investment in infrastructure that accelerates and facilitates mobility between the different spaces of the metropolitan region, but also a climate of collaboration rather than competition and conflict. Specific agencies exist to foster this development, in particular the Forum Agglomeration, founded in 2013, which is actively engaged in the coordination of civil society organizations working in the Greater Geneva Area. One of the most important goals of the Forum Agglomeration is to create a sense of belonging to this area because little has previously been done to improve people's identification with the territory. If inhabitants have any feeling of belonging regarding this territory at all, it tends to be confined to places within it, like the neighbourhoods of Eaux-Vives and Pâquis (Felder et al., 2015) rather than to an abstract idea of Geneva or Greater Geneva (Cattacin & Kettenacker, 2011). The population living in this territory is highly mobile and represents a heterogeneous world of different origins. Geneva's population is largely composed of people of foreign origin, and the city has all the characteristics of a city of differences (Sandercock, 2000).

But because its territory is divided by an international border (between Switzerland and the European Union), a national border (between Switzerland and France) and a cantonal border (between Geneva and the Canton of Vaud), and because of strong competition (fiscal and for jobs) between the different parts of the territory, there is nothing to concretely enhance a common view of and feeling of belonging to the territory. This lack of belonging is recognized at the level of the Canton of Geneva and in many localities and neighbourhoods, and civil society and political institutions invest in festivals and events geared towards the population in general or specific groups, like seniors and children. The fundamental motivation behind these festivals and events is to encourage people to develop feelings of belonging and social ties to the territory in which they take place. More analytically, these events can be considered urban rituals of territorial inclusion (and exclusion) that can promote a sense of belonging to the place where they occur.

There are no such rituals of inclusion for the Greater Geneva Area. This fact could help explain why, although this area is certainly real, it does not elicit a sense of commitment from its residents and users, who indeed often feel aversion to it (Zaki, 2018). To discuss this hypothesis, we examine the three major public events that took place in Geneva in 2017 and 2018 and analyse their potential to foster scepticism (i.e. exclusion) or a sense of belonging (i.e. inclusion) regarding the Greater Geneva Area. The cases are the traditional Escalade, the more recent Fêtes de Genève and the new Saga des Géants.

4.1. L'Escalade

Geneva was Celtic (Helvetians), Roman and Catholic until the early sixteenth century, before the arrival of German traders who spread the Reformation. Protestant Geneva was born with Calvin, a French refugee who arrived in the city in 1536. The dominance of Protestantism in the city was strengthened through the influx of refugees from France and Italy, who doubled its population in a decade. In 1602, these newcomers helped repel the Savoyard attack, which was intended to re-establish Catholicism (Dufour, 1997; Piguet, n.d.). This victory is commemorated every year during the Escalade Festival, which has been included in the list of living urban traditions recently created by the Federal Office of Culture (BAK, 2011).

The Escalade is celebrated at the beginning of December and includes a procession of children, usually dressed in carnival costumes, and adults in historical military uniforms. It has also come to include a footrace through the historic centre of Geneva. In addition, the day before the procession, high-school students wear masks and march with music through the streets of Geneva while drinking alcoholic beverages. The festival ends with a bonfire in the square in front of St. Pierre Cathedral, where Calvin preached in the sixteenth century (see Fig. 1). Of all of these events, the most solemn is the procession with the proclamation of independence and the bonfire – which was only introduced as a regular feature in 1948, whereas the celebration – a mockery of the Savoyards – probably dates to the beginning of the seventeenth century.

The event mobilizes a large number of civic, economic and government organizations. The organization responsible for the historically informed events is the Compagnie de 1602, founded in 1896; economic partners are important as sponsors of the other events, especially the

[9] Le Grand Genève, a not-yet-complete urban project, is planned to unify a large territory that includes the City of Geneva, the Nyon District and a French metropolitan area across the border.

Fig. 1. Feu de joie (December 12, 2012).
Source: Abraham de Baptista CC BY-SA 3.0.

footrace; and the Canton and the City of Geneva are also partners, coordinators and organizers of the festival, which they consider the most important in Geneva.

Originally, the Escalade was explicitly a festival against Catholics and the people living in the part of Greater Geneva located in France. More recently, the narrative has changed slightly, with the reasons for the event receding into the background and new elements being introduced. The Escalade today is a celebration of the openness of the city, which welcomes athletes from all over the world, thus addressing the cleavages related to the complex composition of Geneva's population. It is also a moment that uses elements of the Catholic tradition – the carnival costume during the children's parade and the high-school students' march – and most of the participants are no longer Protestant (Cattacin, 2015).

Even the song that, for many years, was associated with the festival, taught at school and sung by children during the celebration came to be criticized for the violence it expressed against the Savoyards and Catholics, and new lyrics have been taught in schools since 2002. For example, the original "Savoyard, gard, gard" (Savoyard, on guard) has been replaced with "Savoyard ou Genevois, on est chocolat" (Savoyards or Genevois, we are chocolate) – indicating the common destiny of the Geneva region.

In short, the festival has come to consist of a series of events of inclusion, in line with the policies of Geneva Tourism and other cantonal and city bodies, which attempt to show Geneva to the world as a city open to mobile people from all over the world – the International Geneva (Cattacin & Kettenacker, 2011).

Although the explicitly exclusive narrative of the festival has been transformed into an implicitly inclusive one, many elements and symbols function as reminders of the original narrative: the uniforms, the locations (the Parc des Bastions, in which the university founded by Calvin and the International Monument to the Reformation are also located), the food (a chocolate pot, echoing the soup pot thrown on the Savoyards), popular books about the event (Buscarlet & Klopmann, 2017) and comments from politicians living on the French side of Geneva (Fatio & Nicollier, 2002; Simon, 2002) all serve as reminders of the old narrative.

4.2. Les Fêtes de Genève

The Fêtes de Genève, which takes place in August, was created by the tourism industry, and they contributed to anti-tourism attitudes among Geneva residents. The festival is organized by economic and tourism industry organizations, in particular Geneva's hotel industry. In the 1920s, when the festival began, it was called Flower Festivities (Fêtes des fleurs). Its name was changed after the Second World War, when the scale of the festival also expanded. A two-day event in 1947, by the 1970s it had become a three-week-long event with music, carousels, float parades and other elements that continue to change over time (Lévy et al., 2002). The only fixed element of the Fêtes is the fireworks show on Lake Geneva, which attracts some 400,000 people (ATS, 2018).

The desire to promote tourism has always been the festival's raison d'être, which has alienated Geneva residents. This alienation, together with the private organizers' financial problems, has resulted in criticism of the festival, and even a political debate (in 2017) regarding whether to abolish it. For many inhabitants, the festival is too long and the noise unbearable (Lugon, 2018b). The municipal government also maintains that the festival does not promote social cohesion and has left its organization to the cantonal government as a tourist event (Lugon, 2018a; Prieur, 2018).

On March 4 2018, this discussion culminated in a popular initiative to reduce the festival to seven days and a vote on a counter-project proposed by the municipal government to permit an eleven-day-long event that promoted respect for the environment and the people who live in the areas where the festival takes place, but also living together. The counter-project also proposed that the Fêtes had to be financed privately. A majority accepted the municipal government's proposal. Fig. 2 features a poster by the political party FDP. The Liberals, which was opposed to both the initiative and the counter-project on the grounds that both would harm the economy and limit the freedom of entrepreneurship.

After the vote, Geneva Tourism, the organizer of the festival, decided that the 2018 festival would be a much smaller affair, consisting of fireworks and some carousels, and promised to rethink the festival completely for subsequent years (Armanios, 2018).

The Fêtes de Genève has no specific narrative, except that it is an

Fig. 2. FDP.The Liberals' poster against the initiative and the counter-project. Source: PLR, Ville de Genève; http://plr-villedegeneve.ch/association/nos-affiches/

event for the entire population that is intended to promote tourism. Although its organizers refer to it as a historical event because it has existed for almost a century,[10] no real work on constructing a narrative or memory of the event has been done. For instance, there are no commemorative books about the festival. The only element of continuity is the fireworks display, but even that has not really been appreciated by the population because for many years admission required tickets, which cost money or were reserved for hotels, and hence tourists. In 2018, the fireworks display was free, although that was only possible as a result of public subsidies. Without a doubt, the Fêtes is an established feature in the Greater Geneva Area's annual calendar. With hundreds of thousands of participants, it is probably the most inclusive event in the region, but it is also an ambivalent one, as the campaign in 2018 indicated: although the Fêtes was not prohibited, most residents favoured a more modest and local event. The confrontation offered a chance to discuss the future of an urban ritual intended to promote inclusion over a large area, but the result reproduced the ambivalence already felt towards an economic endeavour presented as promoting social integration, an ambivalence that Daniele Del Giudice – from the point of view of the outsider – alluded to in discussing the fireworks, which he referred to as "incompatible with Geneva's sobriety" (cited in Lévy et al., 2002, p. 35, our translation).

4.3. La Saga des Géants

In 2017, from September 29 to October 1, a remarkable event took place in Geneva: 850,000 people from throughout the Greater Geneva Area participated in the itinerant history of two giants, the Little Girl Giant and the Grandmother Giant. After their arrival at two different sites – the Bâtiment des Forces Motrices and the Place de Sardaigne – the giants (5.5 and 7.3 m high) were animated and accompanied by about 50 Lilliputians (actors from the street-theatre company Royal de Luxe; see Fig. 3) as they travelled from the arrival sites to well-known and spacious locations – the Parc des Acacias, the Parc La Grange, the Rotonde du Mont-Blanc, Port-Noir and, the largest, the Plaine de Plainpalais – with spectators following their movements and stories. At the end of the third day, the giants left Geneva by the lake, with a magnificent farewell ceremony.[11]

At the same time, a set of media initiatives accompanied, commented on and completed the performance. A dedicated website presented the prologue of the giants' history (along with logistical information); a Facebook page was created to collect followers' posts and a Geneva group launched a photography contest on its Instagram. A month after the event, a book was published by a local editor (Slatkine & Passard, 2017) and at Christmas that year RTS1, Switzerland's main French-speaking public television channel, broadcast the documentary *Les Géants à Genève – Les Temps d'un Rêve*.

The narrative of the event, "The Giants' Saga, Chapter: Geneva", was entirely invented, and its development was nonlinear: the website narrated the locations where the giants were expected, and the Grandmother Giant recounted the giants' Geneva origins and past history in an invented but comprehensible language (a mix of different sounds and languages including French, German and Spanish) during their stop at Parc La Grange.

The Saga of the Giants was a widely inclusive event that included not only the residents of the City of Geneva proper, but also and above all tourists, employees of the international and multinational organizations and residents of the Greater Geneva Area. All participants could feel themselves to belong to Geneva, precisely because the storytelling was not addressed to a specific group, namely people from Geneva, but instead to all people present.

Fig. 3. Grandmother Giant and Lilliputians.
Photo : Fiorenza Gamba.

This festival was a top-down initiative organized by the theatre Le Théatre de Carouge (Atelier de Genève) and the City of Geneva, with support from many public and private sponsors and volunteer groups. It elicited spontaneous public agency capable of triggering genuine enthusiasm, which culminated in Grandmother Giant's telling of her Geneva origins, including her birth on Tramway Line 12, in Parc La Grange and in the farewell celebrated at the lake, which was so crowded that it was almost impossible to walk. The Saga of the Giants was unique, both temporally (because the festival was intended as a one-time event) and formally (at first sight, it appeared to be a parade, but it was actually a true and uninterrupted performance).

The Saga of the Giants can be considered a liminoid phenomenon (Turner, 1979), and we can recognize in it the symbolic value of belonging. The event acquired the value of a ritual, because the public that attended but also participated felt a sense of belonging that was not linked to specific personal conditions – for instance being a resident of Geneva – but to its relationship to the space in which it occurred (Hénaff, 2008).

The symbolic power of the Saga of the Giants is demonstrated by the role played by memory. There was no common memory, but only an imaginary history of a place and its elements – the birth of Lake Geneva and the original route of Tramway Line 12 (still active today). Nonetheless, it was a story that everyone could recognize, appropriate and share with all others present.

5. Discussion

The three examples we have presented above have many elements in common. They are all mega-events with hundreds of thousands of participants. They all try to create community. But the differences between them are also relevant. The three festivals mobilize different (and ambivalent) territories of affiliation. The Fêtes are organized by the tourist sector and subsidized by the Canton of Geneva. The most important moment in the event is the fireworks. The festival evokes an

[10] See Geneva Tourism's internet site: https://www.fetesdegeneve.ch/2017/fr/une-histoire-de-fetes.

[11] For more information about the event, see: https://lesgeants-geneve.ch.

international community and tries, for economic reasons and without significant success, to create commitment to Geneva on the part of an abstract group of people. The Escalade is organized by associations and state agencies. It speaks to the inhabitants of Geneva. Its strength is that all people in Geneva have easy access to its rituals; its weakness is that it is clearly focused on the smaller territory of the City of Geneva and not the Greater Geneva Area. The Saga was organized by the City of Geneva, was open to the entire population of the Greater Geneva Area and was not based on an exclusionary narrative (see Table 1).

The three cases make it possible to understand what is necessary for urban rituals to promote territorial inclusion. A narrative is lacking in the Fêtes de Genève, and the Escalade's narrative has exclusionary consequences. The narrative of the Saga, even though it is entirely fictional, has the potential to promote identification with a larger territory. It tells a story of another Geneva and thus permits participation without requiring the participants to come from a specific place.

Another strength of the narrative is that it can be told to others as an invented myth – and the beauty of the narrative lies in the fact that it is knowingly invented and shared. It is an explicitly inclusive narrative. Organized as a one-time event by the City of Geneva, the Saga will not have a long-term impact but will be remembered as an important local event by its participants. Newcomers and future generations will not benefit from this event. Organizationally, the Escalade is the strongest of the three festivals. It mobilizes public agencies, but also volunteers, civil society organizations and economic players as sponsors. In addition, it is an annual festival, thus creating expectations and renewing the offer of territorial inclusion to all inhabitants in the more restricted area of the City and Canton of Geneva. The Fêtes is also an annual festival, but it is seen as a top-down event intended only to promote economic interests. The Fêtes does not create territorial inclusion, but instead, and only, economic benefits. For this reason, it is regarded ambivalently by residents, as the March 2018 vote on its future revealed. The Saga is the most inclusive in terms of participation and fostering a sense of belonging, but it lacks the repetition necessary to establish a new narrative of belonging. Through its ritual of the fireworks display, the Fêtes is distinguished from the other festivals by its creation of liminality: at least during that moment, it transforms participants simply by virtue of the fact that they are part of the event's beauty. The Escalade and the Saga also have elements of transformative emotionality – liminoid elements – but they are not concentrated in a single event, but instead distributed over a longer period of time, which weakens their transformative effect.

6. Conclusion: Rituals as commons

The city is not a static place to live. Its continual socio-demographic transformation requires us to produce a context that makes concrete offers of inclusion – such as employment, education and healthcare – but also symbolic ones. It is only through symbolic acts of occasional creation of symmetrical belonging that the city can respond to the challenge posed by its continuous transformation and continuously produce civilized and civic users of its territory. In the context of Geneva, we can specify some elements that promote a sense of belonging to the Greater Geneva Area. They are indicated in bold in Conclusion: Rituals as commons. As the Table 2 shows, none of the urban rituals analysed combine all of them. The elements that can transform a ritual into a common good for a territory are explicit inclusiveness (a ritual of belonging for all); a collaborative endeavour with the strong involvement of civil society, organizations and public agencies (representing the idea of the production of a common good); an open narrative (permitting ongoing changes to the history of belonging and thus speaking to all people present at the ritual); a high degree of emotional inclusion, which makes it possible for participants to change their attitudes (and create new belongings through concrete identitarian boundary work); and an explicit offer to make the ritual available to all, thus offering established residents the ability to refer to a common urban place of ritual belonging and enabling newcomers to enter this place.

What can we learn, from a public-policy point of view, from our analysis? Territorialized urban rituals are one of the main ways of creating inclusion. They should be promoted in their creation, supported in their implementation and propagated as an element that creates belonging. To be effective, these rituals should not be standardized, but rather oriented to follow a logic of inclusion without discrimination, an open-ended narrative, a participatory emotionality from as many people as possible and a cyclicity to respond to a mobile urban population (Gamba et al., forthcoming).

These basic elements can be taken as necessary for urban spaces to successfully create belonging, without excluding newcomers, established residents or neighbourhoods. They can also be produced to rebuild territorial communities after dramatic events like natural or human-made disasters (Roshan Bhakta et al., 2010) and to rebuild communities in declining areas (Hirsch, 2015).[12] They permit cities to survive as inclusive and open spaces. Openness is not defenceless and fragile, but an everyday challenge that cities have to deal with if they want to face the normalcy of a continuously changing place. If cities conceive of themselves as closed spaces, they will reproduce homogeneity of people and values, control and exclusion.

Homogeneity, control and exclusion may perhaps improve a city's cleanliness, but they also undermine its chances of surviving politically and economically, and of finding innovative answers to future challenges. As research around the shrinking cities in Germany has clearly indicated, and as Italo Calvino described in the city of Zora (Calvino, 1972), closed cities are disappearing cities, places that lose political and economic agency and population (Hannemann, 2003). Openness also means contrast and ambivalence, an everyday confrontation of diverse ways of living in the city, but also contact, the opening of horizons, learning to respect otherness, freedom and reading differences as a strength and opportunity (Fincher & Jacobs, 1998; Sennett, 2006). But how do cities organize openness?

As we know from urban sociology, the city, because of its diversity and opportunities, offers inhabitants working on their identitarian boundaries more room for negotiation than a more homogeneous place (Barth, 1969). At the same time, the other is a foundational element of the urban context, the starting point of the city, that cannot exist without differences and mobility and which dies when mobility ends (Sennett, 2018). It is therefore all the more important, in order to save the city, to invest in the participation and inclusion of both inhabitants and newcomers (Sandercock, 2011). Based on her experiences in Australia and Canada, Leonie Sandercock has been pivotal in developing the idea of the city of differences (Sandercock, 1998). She has criticized planning instruments that conceive of the population too simplistically or according to a single dimension, like seniors when thinking about age or families when considering multiculturalism (Sandercock & Lyssiotis, 2003). Multiculturalism does not only mean a pluralism of lifestyles, but also mobility and the ongoing transformation of a city's population (Sandercock, 2000).

In this view, the city is not a melting pot, but a composition of differences made anew every day and marked by complex identities,[13] mobility, digitality and the superposition of territorial belongings (Kaufmann et al., 2017; Sheller & Urry, 2006). It is precisely in this sense that globalisation falls within this dynamic of homogeneity/heterogeneity, of openness, so much so that its defining characteristic can be said to be the complementarity, sometimes ambiguous, but creative, of the global and the local (Robertson, 1995; Wood & Landry, 2008). In other words, the city of differences results from transnationals

[12] As we have observed during the COVID-19 crisis, rituals emerge spontaneously to help maintain the feeling of a community of destiny, in particular in urban areas (Gamba et al., 2020).

[13] On the hybridization of identities in the urban space, see the contributions in Hou, 2013.

Table 1
Descriptive and comparative view of three rituals in Geneva.

	Fêtes de Genève	Escalade	Saga des Géants
Kind of ritual	Series of events. Major element is the fireworks display	Series of events with a parade (with costumes)	Mobile theatre event on the streets of Geneva
Narrative of inclusion	For all inhabitants of the Greater Geneva Area, for tourists	For the inhabitants of the City and the Canton of Geneva	For all inhabitants of the Greater Geneva Area
Memory and references	No memorial elements; International Geneva as reference	Geneva's history of independence; Protestant Geneva as reference	Fictional history of Geneva; people of all backgrounds as reference
Main organizers	Event organized mainly by the economic (tourist) sector	Event organized by private associations together with state agencies	Event organized by the City of Geneva together with artist groups
Ritual elements	Emotionality during the fireworks; yearly event (with some exceptions)	Carnivalesque elements; bonfire; symbolic chocolate pot; yearly event with a narrative	Emotional elements, precise dramaturgy

Table 2
Territorial dynamics of rituals – conceptual elements of the analysis.

	Fêtes de Genève	Escalade	Saga des Géants
Inclusion/exclusion	Explicitly exclusive	Implicitly exclusive	**Explicitly inclusive**
Bottom-up/top-down dynamics	Top-down	**Bottom-up; collaboration with the local state**	Top-down; collaboration with the local state
Narrative	Missing	Unchangeable	**Open**
Transforming liminality	**Strong**	Weak	Weak
Ritual repetitiveness	Implicit	**Explicit**	Missing

connections that persist, and it creates a hybridity of life styles, people and places (Amin, 2002; Hannerz, 2002).

It is in this ambivalence of finding together and emphasizing differences and conflicts that the city reproduces itself.[14] At the same time, the city, through its uniqueness, seeks to attract mobile people from all over the world, but also to offer them a space for self-development and self-realization.

Territorial rules of inclusion in the form of public festivals play an essential role in synthesizing the ambivalent dynamic between the uniqueness and inclusion of newcomers. These rules make it possible to recognize a given city as unique – as the Escalade in Geneva does – but also to attract others, including tourists and newcomers, and indeed everyone who is in the city at the time of the event and is open to putting themselves in a liminoid position and thus transforming their views and values. Although these events are conceived as part of the identity of the city's inhabitants, they propose themselves as inclusive events that are ritually reproduced from year to year and indicate that the city has an inclusive identity. What occurs in these rituals is not the same thing that occurs in globalized stores and fast-food restaurants, which also serve to foster inclusion for inhabitants and newcomers, but exactly the opposite: these rituals are local events open to everyone. They offer participants an opportunity to negotiate identity, to enter into boundary work. To participate in them is to become part of the city in which they occur.

As temporary moments of shared experiences and emotions, urban rituals in public space can offer participants inclusion. They have the potential, especially when public agencies are involved, to transform events and festivities into a commons where complex identities can find a common ground, a sensus communis, a cultural commons of memory (Bertacchini, Bravo, Marrelli, & Santagata, 2012) that makes it possible to mobilize new users and inhabitants of spaces, and thus relates them to a specific territory.

Given the realities of our post-migrant societies, rituals are crucial in fostering this sensus communis, because they require participation but not necessarily much formalized affiliation. This result confirms Lars Meier's observation that "a key to developing more open and diversity-friendly neighborhoods is to foster the participation of the inhabitants in local planning processes also regarding refugee settlements, to develop public spaces allowing everyday encounters across different social groups and to facilitate diverse place-making strategies of different social groups in the local neighborhood" (Meier, 2017, p. 255).

Our research on Geneva provides some insights for urban territories in search of inclusive practices that can be ritualized and offer a sense of belonging. The urban space as a continuously recomposing place of inclusive histories needs rituals as a counter to static, fear-driven and essentialist conceptions of belonging.

[14] See also the discussion on the complexity of living together, cooperation and community building in intercultural cities in White, 2018.

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