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ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

This thesis is a research about the way people experience and make street parades. It is based on a long-term fieldwork in Brussels where I actively participated in the creation of parades while being part of a collective that organized its own parades. Using many case studies, I tried to develop an anthropology of parades. While doing so, I positioned my analysis at the intersection between different bodies of literature. Starting from theories of embodied space (Low 2013, Sen and Silverman 2013) and phenomenological approaches looking at the lived experience of individuals that come to collectively inhabit a shared space in a parade, I then make connections with Marxist approaches of the urban (Lefebvre 1991, Harvey 2011) by showing the possibilities of political resistance located in people's experience of the city. I engage in the discussion on democracy and the spatialization of political freedom (Arendt 1990, Sennett 1994) by showing that parades fulfil the conditions for exercising political freedom. Then I contribute to the debate on public sphere (Habermas 1991, Henkin 1998, Chattopadhyay 2013), by showing how it comes to be materialized and embodied in the physical experience of the city that is enabled by the parade. I also demonstrate the possibility of alternative public spheres. I define the concept of alternativity by using emic conceptions that I could collect, and I look at parades as alternative happenings that happen in a dialectical relationship with what is perceived as not alternative (e.g. official, dominant or mainstream). As such, I propose to look at parades as a crucial momentum for forging alternative sociabilities around alternative practices and imaginaries. I also look at the way technologies are creatively appropriated by people in order to make parades in new ways. In this thesis, I tried to construct a frame for the study of street parades. This revealed many relevant patterns that could be further discussed and experimented with.

ABSTRACT (GERMAN)

Diese Arbeit ist eine Untersuchung über die Art und Weise, wie Menschen Straßenparaden erleben und gestalten. Sie basiert auf einer langfristigen Feldforschung in Brüssel, wo ich aktiv an der Gestaltung von Paraden teilgenommen habe, während ich Teil eines Kollektivs war, das seine eigenen Paraden organisierte. Anhand zahlreicher Fallstudien habe ich versucht, eine Anthropologie der Paraden zu entwickeln. Dabei positionierte ich meine Analyse an der Schnittstelle zwischen verschiedenen Literaturen. Ausgehend von Theorien des verkörperten Raums (Low 2013, Sen und Silverman 2013) und phänomenologischen Ansätzen,

die sich mit der gelebten Erfahrung von Individuen befassen, die bei einer Parade einen gemeinsamen Raum kollektiv bewohnen, stelle ich dann Verbindungen zu marxistischen Ansätzen des Urbanen her (Lefebvre 1991, Harvey 2011). Dies tue ich indem ich die Möglichkeiten des politischen Widerstands aufzeige, die in der Erfahrung der Menschen in der Stadt liegen. Ich greife die Diskussion über Demokratie und die Verräumlichung politischer Freiheit (Arendt 1990, Sennett 1994) auf, indem ich zeige, dass Paraden die Bedingungen für die Ausübung politischer Freiheit erfüllen. Dann trage ich zur Debatte über Öffentlichkeit (Habermas 1991, Henkin 1998, Chattopadhyay 2013) bei, indem ich zeige, wie sie sich in der physischen Erfahrung der Stadt, die durch die Parade ermöglicht wird, materialisiert und verkörpert. Ich zeige auch die Möglichkeit alternativer öffentlicher Sphären. Ich definiere das Konzept der Alternativität, indem ich emische Konzepte verwende, die ich sammeln konnte, und ich betrachte Paraden als alternative Ereignisse, die in einer dialektischen Beziehung zu dem stehen, was als nicht alternativ wahrgenommen wird (z. B. als offiziell, dominant oder Mainstream). In diesem Sinne schlage ich vor, Paraden als einen entscheidenden Impuls für die Schaffung alternativer Geselligkeiten rund um alternative Praktiken und Vorstellungen zu betrachten. Ich untersuche auch die Art und Weise, wie sich Menschen Technologien kreativ aneignen, um Paraden auf neue Weise zu gestalten. In dieser Arbeit habe ich versucht, einen Rahmen für die Untersuchung von Straßenparaden zu schaffen. Dabei kamen viele relevante Muster zum Vorschein, die weiter diskutiert und erprobt werden können.

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Introduction

Powerful sonorous aura filling the entire space and lifting the vibrating crowd forward in effervescence, pulsating bodies suddenly unleashed and animated with ardor, human tides flowing through the city. Cry of exaltation, screams of joy or of pain, weeping of emotion or from teargas. Then suddenly, breathless gazes at a tightrope walker in the void or at a mime hanging in the trees. Fairies twirling around in the street, champion pole dancer on the sidewalk, a giant unicorn galloping above the cortege and a thousand persons dressed and masked taking the streets.

The city was no more the terrain of daily routine, it became the terrain of epic adventures, unmediated and embodied, directly accessible to the senses. Reconquering the city in parades and turning the everyday functional space into a ferric, mythical, magical space is much more than a festive entertainment. During such momentum, the relation of domination was truly inverted. It felt like the almighty power surging through the streets could never be equaled by the formal institutions of power, no matter how many weapons they used, for the feeling was as contagious as it was invincible. Whereas the people that organized and made possible those extraordinary moments, transgressing the very idea of normality, they forged powerful bonds as they embraced and hugged in solidarity, wildly celebrated in victory, and loved each other in complicity for they felt as they had accomplished the impossible together and lived the culminating momentum of a legend.

Sometimes we could feel the sacredness of a religious procession or the solemnity of warriors before the battlefield of police confrontation. At other times it turned into a triumphal walk, or it slipped into the delirium and extravaganza of collective effervescence. Or it felt like being part of a fairy tale unwinding before our eyes. It was like no dam could be large enough to contain us, no power was strong enough to repress us. Our mere presence, materializing an unmediated imaginary world we had foreseen, was already an irreversible victory. In the theatricalized sequence of events, individuals conquered the sense of being actors of their own life, performers of their own play, unchained. Sometimes, the audacious exaltation gave place to contradicting ambitions and then to division. But most importantly, it planted the seeds of many creative ideas and projects that will keep evolving long after the making of the first parades.

BACKGROUND NOTE

This thesis develops an anthropology of street parades. Between spring 2021 and summer 2022, I participated in the creation and the activities of the Schieve collective in Brussels. A collective that aimed, through the organization of street parades, to counter-balance the distancing dynamics of the covid situation, to claim public space as its main stage, and to reappropriate the politics of everyday life in the city space. From the position of this collective, I have researched what it means to participate in street parades and why this participation can be so important to people. I tried to answer the question of how participants in a street parade experience and make the city space. I analyse these findings within the context of theories of space. My contribution to existing anthropologies of space is to offer the street parade as a unique vantage point from which to refine empirical and theoretical insights about the politics and phenomenology of space. To my knowledge, this is the first comprehensive anthropological study of street parades in a European city.

These empirical observations coupled with a theoretical framework allow me to describe acts of reconquering the shared space of the city and the dynamics that undermines them. By the generic use of the term parade, I designate happenings of collective mobility through the city that are alternative (alternative in the sense that they subvert authority, are non-lucrative, alter the social norm or is legible to an alternative public, as explained in figure 4). I could observe three parades corresponding to this definition which are the main case studies in this thesis. Namely, the Schieve Parade, the Carnaval Sauvage and the Critical Mass. There are also secondary case studies such as demonstrations, the cyclonudista (naked bike parade) etc that I use as points of comparison or as secondary anecdotes. Visual traces documenting this ethnography were compiled on the following website :

<https://floriandeschutter.wixsite.com/thesis/cat%C3%A9gorie>

I tried to show that parades constitute a meaningful act of resistance and an elaboration of alternativity for those who participate in its making. In order to make this point, I first look closely at the lived experience of people in a parade and then at the complex intricacies that exist between places, sociabilities, shared practices and imaginaries. Looking at society from this perspective emphasizes the alternative undertakings of popular dissent compared to the formal political authority. This perspective inverts the relations of domination and hegemonic powers appear as ephemeral and fragile outgrowth from popular immensity. Indeed, “when one examines this fleeting and permanent reality carefully, one has the impression of exploring the night-side of

societies, a night longer than their day, a dark sea from which successive institutions emerge, a maritime immensity on which socioeconomic and political structures appear as ephemeral islands.” (de Certeau 1990 p.67) Translating the social inversion that is characteristic to carnivalesque happenings in my description is a way to keep intact the way it is lived from within.

I engage in the academic debate by trying to open a new field of study and develop an anthropology of parades. In this purpose I will attempt to construct a theoretical and conceptual framework that allows to describe parades in a relevant manner. I will try to conciliate phenomenological description of lived experience and historical materialist description of the built environment by using the concept of embodied space (Csordas 1990, 1999, 2004 ; Low 2013, 2017 ; Sen & Silverman 2013 etc) while looking at people’s experiences. This assumes that sociocultural processes are spatialized and embodied. By doing so, I will try to answer the call to grant an active role of populations in the formation of cities and the potentialities of political resistance located in people’s experiences of the city (e.g. de Certeau 1990, Lefebvre 1991, Adam & Comby 2020 etc). Thereby, I reconcile two very different approaches in order to provide a theoretical framework to the study of parades.

MAIN POINTS OF DISCUSSION

After explaining the theoretical framework, the methodology and the context of my fieldwork, I will detail my ethnographic findings in two chapters. In a first chapter, I will describe how people experience the city space in a parade through 1) imagination, 2) appropriation and 3) liberation. First, I will explain how the parade sets the imagination of urban space in movement through narrativization and poetization. Second, I will discuss the appropriation of space through a phenomenological prism and show how the experience of owning a place by occupying it and moving through generates experiential ethics and politics of space. Thirdly, I will look at the notion of liberation through movement, at the empowering experience of liberation from social norms and from spatial order and finally at the enactment of political freedom. This threefold structure will be used as a coherent basis for the layout of informant’s testimonies on their experience of parades.

In a second ethnographic chapter, I will look closely at how publicness of space is produced and how common space is produced through a shared experience. I will then argue that

the open space of the city constitutes the materiality of an embodied public sphere¹. From this viewpoint, I will describe how it produces an alternative, materialized and embodied public sphere through the alteration of mobilities, of modes of presence or disruption of textualities. As such the parade produces alternative publics which can have a huge impact on the formation of political subjectivities.

Then I will explore the alternative dimension of parades by looking at how the parade constitutes a momentum and an inversion for the alternative milieu. I will look at the relation that exists between squats or temporary occupations and parades by showing how parades rely on a network of such places which are produced as alternative. Then, I will look at the specific imaginaries of confluence that produce and are produced by parades. I will explain how those imaginaries impacts the agencies and the life trajectories of individuals. Finally, I will look at the new ways of making a parade through the use of new technologies to create soundscapes as well as the use of mapping technologies in order to technically mediate a space that is produced in the parade.

¹ Habermas defines the concept of public sphere as a conceptual space where where individuals converge to form a public and public opinion can thereby be formed. He traced the origins of a public sphere with the appearance of newspapers, of literary cafés and the proliferation of print media which allow the formation of a public.

Theory Chapter : Conceptualizing street parades as an embodied place-making practice and experience

There are many theoretical viewpoints from which we could analyze parades. The spatial turn, urban anthropology, mobility studies or studies of social movement and political resistance are established approaches offering vast extents of literature and grid of understandings of my topic. Nonetheless, none of these literature bodies provide an analysis solely focused on the topic of parades. At best, they mention it as a side phenomenon and treat it as a peripheric element or describe similar and yet different forms of collective mobility and place-making. In this thesis, I aim to lay the foundations for the study of parades as a topic worthy of attention in anthropology and beyond.

To construct the foundations of a study of parades, I will refer to various publications that are more or less related to the topic of parades and offer original ways to describe such happening. For example, Low describes acts of collective strolling known as *retreta* as a way to appropriate and make embodied space (Low 2013, 2017). Vesna Vučinić-Nešković and Jelena Miloradović (2006) provide a similar insight on the Serbian Corso which is a ritual promenade. John Gray (1999) describes how the *hirsels* are being produced by the shepherd as a unified place by his walking or cycling through the hills. In a different manner, Popan looked at certain mobilities as sociable practices and thereby described the kind of sociabilities that are involved in parades such as carnivalesque or swarm sociabilities (2019). Udvarhelyi (2009) studied the Budapest Critical Mass as a form of political participation and a transformation of democratic workings. Furness Zack (2007) depicted the Critical Masses through a situationist perspective. Nancy Sheper-Hughes (1993) describes how the carnival in Brazil is a moment to enhance the sensuality and sexual vitality as well as a moment of counter-balancing the struggles and misery of everyday life. Yet, none proposes to conceptualize the parade and use it as the main catalyzer of an academic study or theoretical approach. In this thesis, I propose to lay the basis for such an undertaking.

First, I will posit the fundamental notions and evolutions in the study of space and place. Progressively zooming from a larger philosophical genealogy to the notion of social space in social science writ large and finally the genealogy of the concept within the discipline of anthropology itself. Then the theoretical framework will reflect the overall structure of my thesis. I will look at the discussion about the embodiment of space and how my field brings new insights

to this approach. Secondly, I will explore the theoretical constructs that display the making of embodied spaces as a form of political resistance.

In another section, I will look at the concepts of public space and public sphere, how they interact and how they come to be reconsidered. I will try to explain how my field takes the reconsideration of public sphere and public space to new horizons. Also, I will look at the theoretical proposals that envision parades and collective mobility as a sociable practice that forges sociabilities. The study of sociabilities forged in public space is nonetheless still incomplete in the case of parades. I will participate in filling this gap by looking at the specific sociabilities that I could observe in my field. Finally, I will look at the clashes between different concepts of space. While doing this, I will try to keep intact the coherence of people's agency, instead of looking at it as scattered and unrelated actions, as they oppose the formal spatial order (as it has often been depicted).

By drawing this theoretical framework, I will adopt a phenomenological and embodied space theoretical standpoint. Through this, I will look at larger social and political forces and examine how both ends of the spectrum (the phenomenological and the political economy) are in fact very much connected through the body, through practice and lived experience. The dynamics of embodied placemaking and phenomenology of space on the one hand and the politics of the built environment on the other appear in my study as mutually conjugated. This is chiefly because of people's awareness of social issues at stake and of their performance of what is known as critical praxis. I will show that this awareness of social issues and the coherence of people's agency is not so much enabled by the knowledge of social theories but rather through imaginaries.

THE NOTIONS OF SPACE AND PLACE

Genealogies of space in philosophy

The genealogy of the concept of space reaches deep in history of ideas before to find its social and phenomenological definitions. Those are the most fundamental notions of this research. To begin with, in antiquity, Aristotle had an empirical explanation of space as a category for ordering the data of the senses. This prefigures an empirical definition of space. Nonetheless Aristotelian space did not succeed in dominating the philosophical debate and assert itself against the conception of space that would last for centuries and which we have to deconstruct in order to conduct this research. Greek geometers modeled Euclidian space as a

mathematical abstraction of physical space. In the continuity of an abstract space, Descartes later operated a decisive conceptualization by claiming a definition of space as absolute and as a container of everything. In the Cartesian conception, the world is extended in an all-encompassing mathematical space. The world and all its components would be contained in an abstract space. In turn, Newton develops his physics of a mechanical universe in the continuum of Euclidian and Cartesian space which probably remains until today the most spread intuitive definitions of space. Yet Newton makes the distinction between absolute space and relative space. The first being everlasting and all-encompassing and the second being determined by our senses, thereby making a first step in our direction. Yet, for him, relative space is still a secondary dimension subjugated to absolute space.

On the contrary, Leibniz argues against Newton that space cannot exist as an independent entity and supports the relational theory – of which he is seen as a major character - for which space exists solely as relations amongst bodies. There would be no space outside of the relation between the objects that composes it. On his part, Kant did not reject the notion of an objective space, but he refreshed the Aristotelian conception by placing experience back in the center. Kantian space is an a-priori condition of sensibility, an ideal form present in consciousness that allows to ordinate senses.

It is with the Austrian philosopher, Husserl, that we finally reach the kind of definition that most of current social sciences rely on, and so does this thesis. Husserl rejected the geometrical space for the reason that it gets rid of all cultural properties of things that exist in the praxis (Husserl 1935). This critique of the limitation of space to its geometrical dimension is also explored by other phenomenologists, such as Heidegger (1927) or Merleau Ponty (1960). Husserl and the phenomenologists propose instead the foundations of a phenomenological space that is lived, embodied, and experienced by the subject. The within and the without of the being or the subject are mutually generative and exist only in their interconnection. Not only is space configured inside the being, but also, the being is itself a space. The phenomenological envisioning of space leads to a marvelous text of the 20th century written by the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard. For him, who summoned for the creation of an anthropology of the imaginary, “space seized by imagination cannot remain the indifferent space delivered to the measure and the reflection of the geometer. It is lived, and it is lived, not in its positivity, but with all the partialities of imagination.” (Bachelard 1957 p.50) The breach that the phenomenologists

had opened was calling for more. And further applications were made, especially in social sciences.

Social space

A crucial theorist of space for social sciences to whom we will return, the French sociologist Henri Lefebvre, posited the theoretical basis for a space that is defined by its social aspect. *“Thus social space, and especially urban space, emerged in all its diversity - and with a structure far more reminiscent of flaky mille-feuille pastry than of the homogeneous and isotropic space of classical (Euclidean/Cartesian) mathematics. Social spaces interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another. They are not things, which have mutually limiting boundaries and which collide because of their contours or as a result of inertia.”* (Lefebvre 1991 p.86-87) In the legacy of Lefebvre, de Certeau calls to *“distinguish from “geometrical” univocity the experience of an “outside” given in the form of space, and for which “space is existential” and “existence is spatial”. This experience is a relation to the world (...) The perspective is determined by a ‘phenomenology’ of existing in the world.”* (de Certeau 1990. p.173-174)

What we can conclude from this genealogy is that there is a gradual elaboration of a modern concept of space which emphasizes its relational, relative, empirical, and subjective dimensions. It finally leads to the elaboration of a concept of space for social sciences, a social space. The phenomenologist’s conception of space is particularly important to social sciences. Indeed, the re-insertion of praxis, of cultural properties, perceptions, and experiences – in brief, the re-introduction of the anthropologic dimension – together with the rejection of the Euclidean and Cartesian abstract space is crucial to this undertaking. In fact, most of contemporary research in the field of social sciences partially stands on the shoulder of phenomenology.

As he describes the social production of space, Lefebvre is influenced by Marxist theories which he uses as a frame, but he also is inspired by other thinkers as Heidegger, Nietzsche, Foucault, Althusser etc. His works can hardly be restricted to a single academic branch. Lefebvre posits that every society “produces a space, its own space” (1991 p.31) and argues that there are three constituents of social space, three ways into which space is being produced. It has to be noted nonetheless that this threefold conceptual construct is not limited to the production of space and encompasses elements of a constructivist approach (the construction of space) and in the meantime opens possibilities for the embodiment of space.

First are the spatial practices which concerns the space created through practices. In his words, “*spatial practice consists in a projection onto a (spatial) field of all aspects, elements and moments of social practice. In the process, these are separated from one another, though this does not mean that overall control is relinquished even for a moment: society as a whole continues in subjection to political practice - that is, to state power.*” (Lefebvre 1991 p.8). In short, “the spatial practice of a society secretes that society’s space” (p.38)

Secondly are the representations of space which consists in the way space is being conceived and thought of such as topographic maps or normative models used for urbanization. This is the conventionalization, modelization and rationalization of space. These are “tied to the relations of production and to the ‘order’ which those relations impose and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes...” (p.33) Lefebvre identifies it as the dominant space in any society.

And thirdly are representational spaces which is defined as the “space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of inhabitants and ‘users’...” (p.39). The representational spaces concern for example the lived experiences of the inhabitants of a city in regard to the urban social space of their respective city. But it is also linked to the “clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art” (p.33). “*This is the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects.*” (p.39)

Lefebvre theorizes the social space with the use of perceived, the conceived and the lived space and even talks about the embodied dimension of space. This threefold conceptual device is important, especially in the interrelations that it suggests, such as the relation between representations of space and representational space. It allows to describe the disruptive and resistant reactions to the dominated space. I think it is important to outline that the strict categorization between secluded schools of thought with delimitations between constructivist, phenomenologist, Marxist etc. is condemned to remain approximative. All these approaches unavoidably intersect and intermingle. We can observe it in Lefebvre’s triad where he simultaneously mentions lived spaces and spatialization of state power, the embodied or the symbolic space of inhabitants and the role of capital. I will attempt to demonstrate this further in my thesis.

Also, the notion of space and place are differentiated in various manners by various disciplinary approaches but also by various disciplines. The conceptual differentiation between space and place was particularly important to geography but were also brought forward in social

sciences with the spatial turn around the 1980s. In de Certeau, place is “the order according to which elements are distributed in relations of coexistence. (...) it is an instantaneous configuration of positions” (1990 p. 172-173) meaning that things cannot lie at the same place, they occupy their own proper emplacement. Whereas space would be a “*crossing of mobiles. It is in a way animated by the set of movements thereby deployed. Space is the effect produced by operations that orientates it, circumscribe it, temporalize it and lead it to functionate as a polyvalent unity of conflictual program or contractual proximities*” (Certeau 1990 p.173). In short, for de Certeau, place is a settled condition of emplaced things whereas space is a practiced place produced through motion and interrelations. This proposal of space as produced by movements meets another important theorization that we will mention further.

Genealogies of space in anthropology

Space or place ?

In anthropology, Setha Low (2017) synthetizes various schematizations of the relation between space and place. Either, she explains, they are fully separated constructs that can exist independently from each other, or one contains the other hence maintaining a predominance, or they are coterminous as it often happens in everyday language, or finally they are overlapping creating a third zone where they intersect. I am not sure it is necessary to choose between those five schemas. Most of the time, the terms space and place are used interchangeably not only in everyday language but also in academic texts. Still, I propose to refer to space as a more general, global, and abstract notion such as the ‘urban space’ or the ‘public space’ which does not designate a specific location but a form of spatiality characteristic to various places. On the other hand, place points to concrete locations, it relates to specific topos such as particular streets or parcs.

Production and construction of space

In anthropology we can distinguish, writ large, between two major approaches that occupy the central stage, namely the social production of space and the social construction of space (Low 2017). The social production of space approach focuses on historical materialism and political economy (e.g. Smith 1984, Lefebvre 1968; 1991, Harvey 1985; 2011, Adam & Comby 2020 etc). It looks at the production, reproduction, and resistance to spatialized forms of social domination, at social control and spatial governmentality (Low 2017 p.36). This school of

thought often describes how urban space is shaped by capital, hence using a Marxist theoretical framework (as in Lefebvre 1991, Harvey 2011 and Adam & Corby 2020 etc). It describes the ways governments produce a rationalized and functionalist space and how it encounters resistance (de Certeau 1990). As well as how class struggle is spatialized in the built environment.

Whereas social constructivist approaches consider space and place as abstractions which are given meaning through practices, representations, or social interactions, through shared understandings. The analytical priority is thereby given to the people themselves instead of the physical environment and space becomes a much more flexible concept that is not enclosed in the physicality but is constantly revived and actualized. Low also suggests other approaches for studying space through language and discourse, affect and emotion or translocality. Each of these do inevitably have a presence in my findings and somehow find their coherence in theories of embodiment of space. Yet they do not need to occupy center stage to explicate my findings.

If the distinction is useful to understand different academic orientations, I nonetheless argue that there is no absolute separation between them. Rather, they intercross constantly. Conciliating the realities described by those two approaches is efficiently achieved by a third possibility which is the study of embodied space.

EMBODIED SPACE

The notion of embodied space is useful in a study of street parades because it allows investigation of concrete experiences and practices. Those individual experiences and practices are related to the socially produced space and the socially constructed space. Indeed, embodied space requires “theories of body and space that are experience-near and yet allow for linkages to be made to larger social and political processes.” (Sen A. & Silverman J. 2013. p.19). Looking at experiential and agentive narratives leads to make the connection of “modalities of sensation, perception and subjectivity to pervasive political arrangements and forms of economic production and consumption.” (Desjarlais 1997 : 25. As quoted in Low 2013). In my view, a phenomenological approach does not necessarily turn away from larger political, historic, or economic considerations. I propose to use the concept of embodied place-making as “a category of critical analysis to add rigor and depth” to more traditional kind of analysis, not to replace or oppose it (Sen A. & Silverman L. 2013).

Phenomenology and embodiment in parades

In my perspective, the great advantage of a phenomenological approach centered around embodiment is that it succeeds in making sense of both the production and construction of space while maintaining intact the “architectonics of the lived world” (Bakhtin 1993). This kind of undertaking preserves a great loyalty to the lived realities of the people and keeps the ethnographic representation of the other as close as possible to the other’s own world.

Merleau Ponty (1945) defined embodiment as an existential condition of possibility for culture and self in his works on the phenomenology of perception in which he uses the concept of lived space to describe the interpenetration of space and the being. Based on Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological definition, Csordas consolidates this concept as he proposes to use embodiment as a new paradigm for anthropology (Csordas 1990). The term embodiment is defined by Csordas as an “*indeterminate methodological field defined by perceptual experience and mode of presence and engagement in the world.*” (J. Csordas 2004 p.12). Creation of original perceptual experiences and extraordinary mode of presence and engagement with the city are major elements of parades. In this logic, I argue that theories of embodied space are relevant to parades.

Collective movement through the city

We can also look at parade as an experience of collective movement through the city. Trying to respond to the ‘new paradigm’ called upon by Csordas Munn proposed to center space in the subject and counteract the opposition between space as static and time as dynamic. Thereby, Munn tries to move away from a definition of space as spatial regions independent from moving spatial fields. Instead, space would be configured in a mobile spatial field, that is, through movement (Munn 1996)². In a continuum to Munn, the processes of embodied placemaking through movement was tackled by Setha Low as she explains that “movement and walking create space” and “bodily movements and activities produce different kinds of spatial

² Munn adopts the standpoint of a “*space defined by reference to an actor, its organizing center. Since a spatial field extends from the actor it can also be understood as a culturally defined, corporeal-sensual field of significant distance stretching out from the body in a particular stance or action at a given locale or as it moves through locales. This field can be plotted along a hypothetical trajectory centered in the situated body with its expansive movements and immediate tactile reach, and extendable beyond this centering vision, vocal reach, and hearing (and further where relevant). The body is thus understood as a spatial field (and the spatial field as a bodily field).*” (Munn 1996 p.451)

experience.” (Low 2013 p.25). The unordinary kind of movement through the city entailed in parades would thus configure space in an unordinary manner.

Senses and soundscapes

The assumption that the sense of vision has a supremacy in western world and supplants the other sensibilities of the body was argued by many authors (e.g. Jackson M. 1983, 1989; de Certeau M. 1990; Stoller P. 1989; Laplantine 2014). This often leads to efforts to replace the primacy of vision in analysis of place-making processes by including cenesthesia, proprioception, kinesthetic, haptic, touched, remembered, heard and smelled (e.g. Yi Fu Tuan 1977; Hiss T. 1990; Seamon D. & Mugerauer R. 2000). In the case of parades, the designing of soundscapes in an acoustic public space (e.g. Adam & Comby 2020) is crucial.

Embodied resistance and spatializing alternative politics

For Sen & Silverman, embodying is to be understood as “an act of making an abstract idea corporeal and incarnate” which occurs when we read place as “a material product of human imagination and experience.” This allows to see the “powerful ideological role played by place in the formation of human subjects” and most importantly, to underline both the “emancipatory and oppressive possibilities” of placemaking. (Sen A. & Silverman L. 2013. p.4). In the study of parades, it is mainly the emancipatory possibilities of placemaking that is tackled. Indeed, if some (mainly feminist scholars) have looked at the perspective of a colonized body whereby the forces of social domination are embodied (Scott 1996), the study of parades points to how the body can also be the place of political resistance to these forces (Harvey 1998). By refusing determinist approaches on the body (e.g. Bourdieu’s concept of habitus 1984), I attempt to restore the body as a site of agency (Haraway 1991). In the same line of thought, “a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities and interdictions, then the walker actualizes some of these possibilities.” (de Certeau 1990 p.149). The tactical actualization or non-actualization as well as the transgression of possibilities organized by a spatial order suggests that the walking body may indeed be a space of resistance and creative interplay with the spatial order. The cognitive and habit memories involved in the embodiment of space could appear as fixed in the first place and yet they are being constantly actualized, reproduced, or transformed in practice. In the parade, the spatial order is collectively overthrown by the mode of presence and engagement of bodies in space. The parades thereby locate resistance in bodies.

Freedom and liberation

Through my ethnographic investigation, the most recurrent description of the experience of parades was related to freedom and liberation. Therefore I tried to make sense of parades by using various conceptions of freedom. First, Arendt (1990) suggests that liberation and the embodiment of freedom is intimately linked to the power of locomotion – that is, the free movement of bodies in space – (Arendt 1990). This points to the idea that liberation is primarily something that is embodied in the experience of moving and explains why the parade, as a collective motion, is experienced as a liberation. The movement is entailed in the act of walking together but also in dancing. Aimee Cox (2014) in a feminist fashion, depicts dance as a way for Black woman to produce their own space of freedom. Cox's standpoint implies a political component to the movements of bodies in space. For her, dancing is a form of political power.

Nonetheless, Arendt argues that freedom of movement and political freedom are different. The latter would correspond to the participation in public affairs which in turn relies on a space where freedom of appearance is guaranteed (Arendt 1990). According to this, political freedom also relies on relations between bodies and space, it is embodied and spatialized. This reinforces the idea that the body can be a place of resistance to a political system (or of its reproduction). It corroborates the idea that the revolutionary search for freedom is to be located in the body and his relation to space. But also, as I will detail further, it supports the argument that parades, by creating a space where anyone can freely appear and participate, produce an experience of political freedom. Indeed, in a parade, the movement of the body in an opened space constitutes an appearance in the public realm. According to this theoretical standpoint, the parade is closely related to freedom through 1) movement and 2) appearance and participation in a public happening.

Following Arendt, Mensch tried to conceptualize embodied freedom. He opposes a disembodied notion of freedom that is simply equated with desire. Instead, he claims that embodied freedom is “a function of both the inner, hidden realm of the choices available to us and the public disclosure that first introduced us to such choices” (Mensch 2009). Thereby, embodied freedom is inherently collective. Bringing together Arendt's ideas on the space that is necessary to political freedom and Mensch proposal of the collective nature of freedom, I come to envision the commonality of appropriated spaces that happens during parades, as a condition for freedom. Parades, as an act of communalization of space through reappropriation is an enactment of freedom.

In the previous sections, I have traced the genealogy of space until the apparition of the concept of social space. Then, I looked at more specific conceptualizations of space within the discipline of anthropology and I narrowed down my theoretical framework to embodied space which I detailed further. I tried to show how embodied space is related to parades in various manners. Now that the theoretical framework of social and embodied space is set I will focus on the notion of public space, how it is reconsidered during a parade, how parades can materialize an embodied public sphere and how public space is defined in relation to private space.

Reconsideration of public space and public sphere

Opened or enclosed spaces

Curiously, the opened space guaranteeing freedom of appearance is identified by Arendt in enclosed spaces (the chamber, the theater...) for the fact that those enclosed public spaces would presumably allow the equality of its members. An equality necessary to freedom that she deems impossible in the more accessible spaces of the agora or the market (Arendt 1990). This appears as a contradiction. Instead, Sennett (1994) claimed that the immobilization of the body in an enclosed and fixed space, making him captive to rhetoric rather encouraged the conformity of discourse into a single voice and the surveillance of bodies. In my perspective, the enclosed public space is more propitious to the deployment of political power whereas the opened, outdoor public space is more propitious to political freedom which is very different. In any case, “the content of freedom and politics relies on physical parameters of space and the degrees of openness it sustains, not as determinant but as a contingency.” (Chattopadhyay 2013). In this line of thought, I propose to consider parades as a reconsideration of public space and as a manner in which the experience of political freedom is accessed.

Public sphere and legible space

In another line of thought, Habermas (1991) understood the public sphere as constituted by shared reading practices in an abstract and disembodied way. Henkin (1998) argued to the contrary that public sphere must have a materiality. The public space would thus intersect with public sphere and constitute its materiality. This idea was further explored by studying political wall writing as a form of textuality allowing the legibility of the urban space (Chattopadhyay 2013). Kudzmaite (2021) shows how the borders and the space it delimits is established through visual components, such as billboards that convey state’s discourse. She also shows that

alternative discourses are constructed. Whereas Sier (2021) explores how the Covid19 virus is made visible through the inscription of textual content onto the urban landscape in Wuhan. Sier shows that this is used by the Chinese state to prove its superiority in terms of care and capacity. These various examples show how space is made legible for political purposes.

Beyond textuality, the connection between mobile spatial fields and public space is observable in the way public places are being produced through different kinds of movements and bodily practices (Rockefeller 2009). Also, the different modes of mobility produce different senses of space and connectedness to the others (te Brommelstroet, M.; Nikolaeva, A.; Glaser, M.; Nicolaisen, M.S. ; Chan, C 2017). In this movement of thought, I wish to argue in this thesis that the mode of presence and movement in the city not only has an impact on the production of public space but also produces a materialized and embodied public sphere. Following the various arguments of the previous authors, I thus argue that parades produce public sphere.

Private and public spaces

Historically, there used to be a certain permeability of the private space in European cities a few centuries ago where *“A sort of osmosis was established between the public space and the private space. The blacksmiths, the marshals, the carpenters worked as much in the street as in their shop; there where there existed no slaughterhouse, the butchers would kill their livestock in the outside.”* (Zeller O. 2003 p.245). Parallely to this, the early modern epoch saw an increase in the polyvalence of the public space and according to Zeller, this implied a great ‘interlacing of urban sociabilities’, namely around street theater and street parades that used to be called “promenades”. Nonetheless, the permeability was progressively and drastically reduced until today and “the privatization of urban spaces seems more and more marked, physically and materially, even if this dynamic is not recent.” (Adam & Comby p.22). In fact, the notion of public space itself was elaborated in the 70s in order to denounce the risk of its disappearance by an architect (Pierre Diaz Pedregal) and a sociologist (Richard Sennett) - independently from one another. The causes of the disappearance of public space were identified in the development of a functionalist urbanism forcing public space and streets to become an interface for displacements and circulation between zones of habitat, work and consumption (Tomas 2001). This suggests that the publicness of public space does not rely solely on the dichotomy between private and public. It is limited by the restriction and conformization of the uses of space. And it relies on the possibility of its alteration and refashioning. Publicness of space relies on the possibilities of its

spontaneous appropriation which are not comprised in a strict functionalist spatial order (Don Mitchell 1995; Brighenti 2010).

Another trend of the late modern city is the criminalization and aggressive policing of the public space (Ferrell J. 2001. 2005; Amster R. 2004). The creative manners in which protesters of social movements engage with the uses and regulations of public space in their struggle with the state was examined in New York City by Bogad (2003). The aesthetic and poetic component in “senseless acts of beauty” created by ravers, travelers, squatters, direct-action protesters etc in their use of was described by McKay G. (1996). Others tackled the urban struggles between processes of spatial homogenization and attempts to create more participatory public spaces (Jordan, 1998; Ferrell, 2001; Duncombe, 2002).

Also the specific example of Critical Mass was looked at in the way that it makes visible in a positive manner the possible alternatives to the unquestioned status quo of hegemonic use of public space as a motorized space submitted to car culture (Burton 2002). The notion of public space cannot be examined without looking at streets and how the street is socially produced. Indeed, “*Streets are our largest and most important piece of public open space in the city. They account for up to 30% of the total surface area of the city, yet we consider them only as afterthoughts. Streets are everyone’s open space. We fret and tussle over every precious inch of our grassy parks, yet we overlook the massive wasted public spaces right outside each of our front doors, accessible to each and every resident. Streets could be our main stage.*” (Switzky, 2002, p.189) as quoted in Furness Z. 2007 (p.318)

Experiencing the city within a parade drives us to question the massive domination of the car on the public space and its transformation into flows of traffic (Sheller M. & Urry J. 2000) which can often be explained by the sprawl of cities in the model of suburban housing which is a corollary to automobile dependence (Adam & Comby 2020). In turn, the use of car is also a way to traverse public space while remaining in a private space and thus participate in the privatization and individualization of space (Bull M. 2004, Mc Creery 2002) whereas detournement of vertical cemented space through graffiti and horizontal cemented space through Critical Masses constitutes different and yet similar ways to disrupt the urban public space (Boothroyd 2002).

The connection between those many forms of resistance and diverted uses of public space and the situationists ideas within a paradigm of utopian urbanism was put forward by Furness Z. (2007). Like Furness Zack, Pinder (2005) adopts a situationist perspective in looking at the city.

He examines the underground visions and the possibilities of ‘unchaining’ (in a Debordian definition of the term enchaînement) the city. Udvarhelyi (2009) also brings a crucial understanding of Critical Masses as she describes it as a “spatialized enactment of a direct and embodied form of democratic participation that goes beyond and at the same time transforms representative democracy” which is correlated with the “disillusionment with the formal public sphere”. However, parades are not necessarily an act of resistance and detournement, in some cases it can also be an apology to military forces or acts of propaganda projecting the regime’s ideology onto the public space as in Munich’s Nazi Germany (Hagen J. 2008). Parades can thus take many different forms and meanings and express contradictory contents. It can also become a space of violent exclusion and repression when police practices are turning a “highly abstract and starkly dichotomic political imaginary into lived experience.” (Emanuela Guano 2013)

CLASHES BETWEEN DIFFERENT CONCEPTS OF SPACE AND THE PRODUCTION OF PARADES

I will now refer to various authors in order to explain the different concepts of space that come into competition in the making of a parade. On the one hand, I will show how urban capitalism and state’s control shape and design space. On the other hand, I will show how space embodied in the parade may come to challenge those dominant and hegemonic conceptions. On this canvas, I will then describe how alternative spaces can be produced in parades. This helps us understanding how the parade comes as the materialization of an ‘alternative’ and how it is being produced.

Urban capitalism, state’s spatial control and popular reclaiming of the city

In this section, I will explain how parades are produced in relation to the workings of urban capital. I will show that the lived experience of making a parade is linked to the political economy of the built environment. It justifies the inclusion of a Marxist perspective in this theoretical framework even though the research is primarily based on a phenomenological approach. In this purpose, I will gather literature about the relation between urban space³ and the

³ The urban space is undoubtedly the most referred type of space in social sciences. Cities have been described as a “total phenomenon into which is condensed the economic and the social, the political and the cultural, the technical and the imaginary...” (Zeller O. 2003 p.8). Furthermore, “city and society are understood only in their interrelation.” (Zeller O 2003. p.7). Dell Upton (2008) describes how cities are produced by imagination. In describing this process, he forges the concept of spatial imagination. Further, cities were described by Robert Park as “the most constant

workings of capital and finally show how the popular reclaiming is thereby produced. I will then explain how the parade is also produced in relation to spatial control exercised by the state. I aim to lay a solid theoretical basis from which I will be able to focus on the city as much as possible through the lived experience of parades.⁴

Marx⁵ was interested in space mainly for matters of repartition within the analysis of reports of production. Engels, in 1872, commented the titanic demolitions of workers and poor's neighborhoods led by Haussmann in Paris in order to replace small alleys with large avenues and boulevards⁶. This kind of urban transformation was designed to prevent popular reappropriation of the city through barricades. Urban space was not the primary concern of Marx and Engels. Yet their theoretical framework was used by Lefebvre to analyze urban space (e.g. Lefebvre 1968, 1991). He provided a pillar for the spatial turn in anthropology by describing the relation between capitalist modes of production and the formation of space. *"Formerly, each society to which history gave rise within the framework of a particular mode of production, and which bore the*

attempt, and as a whole the more successful, achieved by men to remake the world in which he lives in accordance with his desires. But, if city is the world mankind has created, it is also the world in which he is condemned to live. Thus, indirectly, and without perceiving the nature of his undertaking, while making the city, man remade himself." (Robert Park 1967 p3.) The urban is an eminently social phenomenon that induces a reciprocal relationship between the making of mankind by the urban and the making of the urban by mankind in a reality where place "contains possibilities for agency" influencing "human actions and practices" (Sen & Silverman 2013). The cruciality of the city and the urban in general is not to be proven but the mutually generative relationship described by Park is important in the sense that it corroborates the phenomenological construct which is based on the interconnectedness between the being, or the body, and space. Also, it explains the relationship between the micro formation of beings and the macro dimension of large political forces and vast built environment.

⁴ The term of city is a vague and large notion that is hardly graspable. Indeed, "the city is not an immutable category, and it would be vain to try and give it a normative and encompassing definition" (Zeller O 2003. p.7). Therefore, I argue it is important to limit the theoretical ambition, at least in some degree, for "under the name of city, accumulates a sum of historical experiences more than the rigor of a concept." (Roncayolo M. 1990. P.28). Historical experiences but also political, economic, social, cultural, and architectural elements that sediment through flowing processes. These do not fit well into rigid theoretical systems. For Lefebvre, in tackling space and the city, we should instead try to establish a thinking that is opened: "systems tend to close the reflection, to close the horizon (...) against a form of reflection that tends towards formalism, a thinking that tends towards aperture..." (Lefebvre 1968 p.9). For this reason, I will try not to get caught into too many systematic formalisms and advocate for a theoretical setting as grounded as possible in the lived experience of the city.

⁵ When Marx lived in Brussels, around 1846, he condemned the construction of the 'Royal Galleries' which planned to rub out a small alley that had a reputation to be miserable in order to replace it with a prestigious monument. Karl Marx expressed his indignation about the price of the construction in times of famine, as documented in Schuiten & Peeters (2021).

⁶ Engels described what he calls the Haussmann method in the following terms: "By the term 'Haussmann' I do not mean merely the specifically Bonapartist manner of the Parisian Haussmann – breaking long, straight and broad streets through the closely-built workers' quarters and erecting big luxurious buildings on both sides of them, the intention thereby, apart from the strategic aim of making barricade fighting more difficult, being also to develop a specifically Bonapartist building trades' proletariat dependent on the government and to turn the city into a pure luxury city. By 'Haussmann' I mean the practice which has now become general of making breaches in the working-class quarters of our big towns, and particularly in those which are centrally situated..." (Engels F. 1872)

stamp of that mode of production's inherent characteristics, shaped its own space." (Lefebvre 1991 p.412). If Lefebvre is recognized as the figurehead of Marxist studies of the urban space, he also is the author that argued for a "right to the city". In his terms, the right to the city was not a legal dispositive but an "imaginary that involves itself in the appropriation (of time of space, of physiological life, of desire)". Those appropriated spaces are "not undergone nor accepted by a passive resignation, but metamorphosed in an artwork." (Lefebvre 1968 p.119). As we will see, this kind of appropriated spaces described by Lefebvre in the continuation of his Marxist description of the city, finds its concretization in the street parades that I describe in rather phenomenological terms.

In a continuum of the Parisian sociologist Lefebvre is David Harvey, teacher of anthropology at the university of New York. In one of his texts on the urbanization of capital (2011), Harvey explains that urban space serves to absorb capital⁷ since the "politics of capitalism are affected by the perpetual need to find profitable terrains to the production and the absorption of surpluses of capital." (Harvey D. 2011 p.10). Harvey concludes this technical statement by acknowledging the importance of *"urban social movements that seek to vanquish the isolations and to reshape the city after a different social image than the one given by the forces of the great capital, the promoters supported by the finance and a local state apparatus that is more and more gained by the corporate mindset."* (Harvey p.23). Harvey draws a direct connection between capitalist transformations of the built environment and social movements concerned with creating experiences with and reappropriating the urban space.⁸ This provides concrete examples of how parades, as moments of reappropriation of the urban space and

⁷ Harvey makes a parallel between the destruction and reconstruction of Paris by Haussmann in the 19th century and urban processes that happened in New York in the 20th century. Haussmann had destroyed and forced to relocate entire fringes of the population in order to build large avenues, boulevards and luxury edifices. Moses did the same in New York in order to build urban highways and high towers. And "In 1848, occurs one of the first crisis clearly marked by the coexistence of unutilized surplus of capital and surplus of workforce." (p.12) A couple years later, Louis Napoleon solved this problem by launching a vast program of investment in infrastructures and in Paris, Haussmann was to take care of the public works.

⁸ In the case of Paris, Harvey argues that the urban revolution of 1871 known as La Commune was fueled by the nostalgia of the Paris that had been destroyed by Haussmann and the will for revenge of those that had been dispossessed of their city. In the case of New York, he makes the link with the cultural revolution of 1968 "partly nostalgia of the lost city and partly attempt to construct a new kind of urban experience" (p.17). To sum up, capital requires absorption. It is thus reinvested in urban transformations. Urban transformations lead to the dispossession of inhabitants and popular discontent as well as devitalized urban spaces which in turn leads to longings for the reappropriation of urban space and a renewed interest for the experiential potentialities of urban space. The same processes can be observed in the history of Brussels whose memory is kept alive by certain street parades we will discuss. For Harvey, "the freedom to make ourselves and to remake ourselves by shaping our cities, is (...) one of our most precious human rights but also the most neglected." (Harvey 2011 p.8).

production of experiences, can be linked to urban capital. Indeed, parades respond to the longing for alternative experiences of the city, that is itself triggered by the dispossession of the city operated by processes of urban capitalism. For Harvey, “the freedom to make ourselves and to remake ourselves by shaping our cities, is (...) one of our most precious human rights but also the most neglected.” (Harvey 2011 p.8).

Strong of the observation that capitalism must urbanize itself in order to reproduce itself, Adam & Comby (2020) depict how “values, representations, images or mythologies of spaces are produced by institutions, private enterprises, urbanists and architects but also the populations.” (p.11). In their social production of space approach, they acknowledge the role of populations and inhabitants. Indeed “*If contemporary towns are capitalist spaces, life within them is not reducible to dynamics of investment, of value production and added value or accumulation.*” (Adam & Comby 2020 p.26).

The conclusion of most materialist analysis on the production of space points towards the necessity of an active role of populations and roll out a red carpet for approaches that prioritize the lived end experienced dimension of space. It is in this movement of thought that I position my description of parades as an exercise of critical praxis by the people. Not as a negation of materialist approaches, but as a necessary contribution that prolongs it by looking at how people experience the reappropriation of urban space.

Another major problematic are the forms of state control over space. Indeed, the spatialization of state power often comes in competition with popular claims to the city. While organizing parades, we continually had to deal with state institutions that imposed restrictions, interdictions, conditions, limitations, required authorizations, deadlines etc. For an example, in the Table B (see the appendix), I could list 19 happenings out of 25 where there was a police presence and 7 out of those 19 that involved a violent repression. We regularly had to negotiate with representatives of the state and in the end, we had to get around and ignore a certain amount of their demands. The street parades challenge state authority and control over space and create an alternative use of space. I will now mention a few authors that tackled the issue of state control and how it is met by populations. I will try to show how these dialectics are engaged with in street parades.

Foucault, for instance, described the kind of spatialization in the urban environment that is involved when dealing with pandemics such as the leper and the plague. In the case of the leper, spatial strategies of exclusion at the edges of towns were set up whereas in the case of the plague,

the sick were submitted to control and spatial partitioning. This historical account of pandemics management echoes the ethnographic context. Indeed, extraordinary spatial control was exercised during the Covid period and this extraordinary spatial control imposed by the state was met with extraordinary reactions from the population such as an amplified enthusiasm for street parades. Foucault (1975), in a structuralist manner, describes only the kind of society that is produced by social institutions (e.g. disciplinary societies relying on surveillance and control over space). Instead, I propose to look at how the people react to these technologies of state power, how they creatively find ways to escape or subvert it. At the difference of Foucault, I propose to focus on people's agency rather than on structural forces.

Where Foucault only acknowledged the control and surveillance enabled by visibility (e.g. the panopticon), Brighenti (2007) adds recognition as an outcome of visibility in the public space. I argue that parades, as acts of visibilization in the public space, set in motion the dialectics between control and recognition. The ideas proposed by Brighenti will be used further in order to describe the use of masks in parades and see how parades produce an unordinary interplay between control and recognition through the shuffling of visibility. The matter of visibility and invisibility will also be tackled in the second chapter in relation to how the parade is a moment for the alternative milieu to alter its usual (in)visibility.

On control over space and how it is dealt with in daily life of inhabitants, de Certeau (1990) proposes a distinction between strategies⁹ and tactics¹⁰ as two opposed ways of dealing

⁹ Strategies are defined by de Certeau as follows: *"the calculation (or manipulation of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a space that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats (customers or competitors, enemies, the country surrounding the city, objectives and objects of research etc) can be managed. As in management, every "strategic" rationalization seeks first of all to distinguish its "own" place. That is, the place of its own power and will, from an "environment". A Cartesian attitude, if you wish: it is an effort to delimit one's own place in a world bewitched by the invisible powers of the Other. It is also the typical attitude of modern science, politics, and military strategy. (...) In sum, strategies are actions which, thanks to the establishment of a place of power (the property of a proper) elaborate theoretical places (systems and totalizing discourses) capable of articulating an ensemble of physical places in which forces are distributed. They combine these three types of places and seek to master each by means of the others. They thus privilege spatial relationships. At least they attempt to reduce temporal relationships to spatial ones through the analytical attribution of a proper place to each particular elements and through the combinatory organization of the movements specific to units or groups of units."* (de Certeau 1990 p.59-62-63)

¹⁰ In opposition to strategies, tactics are defined as follows: *"a tactic is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. No delimitation of an exteriority, then provides it with the condition necessary for autonomy. The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus, it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. It does not have the means to keep to itself, at a distance, in a position of withdrawal, foresight, and self-collection: it is a maneuver "within the enemy's field of vision," as von Billow put it, and within the enemy territory. It does not therefore, have the options of planning general strategy and viewing the adversary as a whole within a district, visible, and objectifiable space. It operates in isolated actions, blow by blow."*

with space. Strategies stands for the ways in which space is being constricted within a spatial order by the state whereas tactics is the way people, through their practice make use of such space in their own terms. As we will see, the dialectics between tactics and strategies is very present in the making of a parade. The description of tactics as possibilities of resistance to the spatial control deployed by strategical, proprietary powers¹¹ relate to my case studies.

Nonetheless, I will also argue that the use of new technologies of mapping may challenge the monopoly of the state over strategies. Strategies may also be used by the people in a conscious effort to empower alternatives to state power. Another argument against de Certeau is that it fails in acknowledging the possibility of appropriating a place, of forming a proper locus, even temporarily, that asserts itself against the precited powers. It restricts resistance as mere isolated individual gestures of daily life. To the contrary, my case studies on parades show that such tactical resistance can also break the isolation, organize itself, make itself a locus and collectively gain terrain, both symbolically and spatially¹².

Altering the city

The last bit of theoretical framework and references that I wish to put forward aims to explain why parades are so important to its participants. Here, I will refer to authors that imagined other ways of making place in a city and described how and why altering and appropriating the city can be crucial to the inhabitants. I will explain how parades, as a moment of appropriation and alteration of the city space, respond to a longing of collectively inhabiting

It takes advantage of "opportunities" and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its own position, and plan raids. What it wins it cannot keep. This nowhere gives a tactic mobility, to be sure, but a mobility that must accept the chance of offerings of the moment and seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment. It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches in them. It creates surprise in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse." (de Certeau 1990 p.60-61)

¹¹ Hakim Bey, with an intense use of style, describes the nation-state control of space as territorial gangsterism, "The last bit of Earth unclaimed by any nation-state was eaten up in 1899. Ours is the first century without terra incognita, without a frontier. Nationality is the highest principle of world governance--not one speck of rock in the South Seas can be left open, not one remote valley, not even the Moon and planets. This is the apotheosis of "territorial gangsterism." Not one square inch of Earth goes unpoliced or untaxed...in theory." (Bey 1991 p.93) To this statement he summons for insurrection and the creation of Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ) that counter such policing of space.

¹² The strategies that enable spatial control and how they are skirted finds very concrete examples. For an example, the apparition of street naming and the numbering of habitations that define and frame urban spaces appeared in European cities in the modern age for the purpose of systematization of fiscal control and the management of populations administered by the state such as soldiers and police (Zeller O. 2003). Most of the time, these elements of control are perceived as such by participants in urban social movements. Moreover, they are actively engaged with and confronted. I will show that alternative practices of marking the city do also exist.

the city in other ways. This part bridges the previous theories about capital and state with descriptions of acts of resistance themselves. In this manner, it concludes this theory chapter by opening ways of looking at parades as acts of resistance.

In a Deleuzian fashion, we could describe parades as an exploration of new forms of being together in the city enabled by the creation of experiences that are autonomous from the state, the capital and the existing categories (Purcell 2013a; 2013b, Banville 2015).¹³ Hakim Bey elaborates on various terms that could relate to parades such as poetic terrorism, art sabotage, chaos theory and ontological anarchism (1991). The most remembered idea that he developed is the T.A.Z. which stands for ‘temporary autonomous zone’.¹⁴ Parades are autonomous experiences, they are temporary and they appropriate a space. As such, they fully comply to the definition of T.A.Z. given by Bey.

Examples of such TAZ are numerous. They are so varied that one could question the validity of their association under a common definition. Yet, I will argue further that there are empirical and practical evidence of dynamics of occupation which suggests the existence of connections between various ways to occupy space¹⁵. In this logic, we could argue that parades

¹³ Standing on Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy and applying it to the field of urbanism, Purcell (2013a; 2013b) and Banville (2015), propose to incorporate Deleuze’s ethical and political thinking to urban theories. That consists in a subversive conception since it leads to the radical refusal of the state and capital and to the exploration of possibilities of new forms away from existing categories, hence favorizing autonomous experiences of the city and management of the city through a rhizomatic structure – that is a permanently evolving structure in all horizontal directions and devoid of levels.

¹⁴ First, Bey defends the T.A.Z. in expressing his preference for insurrection rather than for revolution in which he sees no more than the boring success of a certain group or ideology. From the viewpoint of the revolution, insurrection is a failure. For Bey it presents possibilities of liberation of the psychotopology of everyday life. He introduces the concept of psychotopology as a concept close to de Certeau’s tactics. It is “an alternative “science” to that of the State’s surveying and mapmaking and psychic imperialism. (...) We are looking for “spaces” (geographic, social, cultural, imaginal) with potential to flower as autonomous zones--and we are looking for times in which these spaces are relatively open, either through neglect on the part of the State or because they have somehow escaped notice by the mapmakers, or for whatever reason. Psychotopology is the art of dowsing for potential TAZs.” (Bey 1991 p.93) In short, the TAZ is a TAZ because it is opened, not ordered and chaotic – not in the sense that it is destructive but rather in the sense that it is based on a principle of continual creation rather than to settle on a fixed form.

¹⁵ The underlying element that animates such dynamic is usually identified as a longing for spatial appropriation. “More or less punctual or lasting, the experiences of occupation – squats, movements of occupation of public spaces or roundabouts, zones to defend, occupations of places of work or study, demonstrations – testify of a political necessity of spatial appropriation to break the isolation in order to organize the oppositions and the revolutionary propositions.” (Adam & Comby 2020 p.27). This citation taken from a very recent text vehiculates quite accurately an idea developed much earlier by the situationists. Vaneigem, a Belgian writer and Kotanyi which lived in Brussels, wrote in 1961 in a short text called “elementary program for a unitary urban planning office” that “Materializing freedom means beginning by appropriating a few patches of the surface of a domesticated planet.” (Kotanyi & Vaneigem, 1961, p.67). No matter whether this space is public or private, build or untouched, urban or rural, appropriating a few patches of space in a domesticated planet emerges from a similar necessity of spatial appropriation in order to materialize freedom.

are part of a dynamic of occupation based on the observation that people making parades are often involved in other ways of occupying and appropriating space.

Debord defined the society of spectacle as the removal of the lived into inaccessible representations (such inaccessible images and representations being the spectacle). Debord called for the reappropriation of the 'lost space' in order to counter the society of spectacle through practices of derive and spatial diversion. The derive consists in a free and purposeless wandering into the urban space enabling a reimagination of the spatial surroundings thereby traversed. Whereas, the detournement is a diversion of the spaces, of their prefabricated functions and utility. (Guy Debord 1967). Following this definition, parades can be envisioned as a collective derive and as a spatial diversion.

For the situationists, the revolutionary project lies in the modification of the daily life. For them, no revolutionary change of political power could truly alter society if the practices and experiences themselves are not being transformed. Reversely, transforming practices and experiences could de facto alter society and implement a revolutionary change. In similar lines of thought, de Certeau writes about the tactical invention of daily life, Bey favors the insurrection for the reason of its potential to liberate the psychotopology of everyday life and Lefebvre summoned for the transformation of daily urban life¹⁶. All these authors are very different in their origin, style and theoretical genealogy and yet they assert the same idea. They are all longing for a metamorphosis of daily life in order to liberate ourselves and meet the revolutionary project. In my perspective, parades are precisely an attempt to do so.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the theoretical framework I have laid out in this chapter is intended to serve as a basis for the conceptualization and analysis of street parades. I tried to construct a consistent theoretical framework for the study of parades that was so far missing in our discipline. While doing so, I found it relevant to give a priority to the notions of space and embodiment. I first traced the genealogy of the concept of space and the many ways it can be studied. Then I looked

¹⁶ "our political task is to imagine and reconstitute a completely different kind of city, far from this filthy mess created by a globalizing and frantic capital. But this cannot take place without the creation of a vigorous anti-capitalist movement that would dedicate itself to the transformation of daily urban life. (...) To constitute such spaces, there is no need to wait for the great day. The theory of revolutionary movement of Lefebvre is precisely the opposite; the spontaneous gathering, in a moment of irruption of disparate, heterotopic groups that suddenly catch a glimpse, even for a short instant, possibilities of collective action and creation of something radically different." (Harvey D. 2011 p.42-43)

at more specific notions of embodied space in anthropology. This allows me to stay close to the lived experience of the people participating in the making of a parade and to look at the materiality and embodied side of things instead of remaining in abstract interpretations. From there I developed the framework towards the political implications of parades. I tried to show how the lived experience of space is connected to larger political and economic forces.

I explained how movement produces space and how parades, as collective movement through the city, are impacting the urban space. Also, I depicted how the body itself is a site of resistance or of reproduction of a political system. I looked at how space can be transformed. I described how resistance can be embodied and spatialized through reappropriations of space. Then I looked at the publicness of public space and how it is reconsidered during a parade. I described how political freedom needs a space to exist and how the parade produces a materialized and embodied public sphere.

Then, I looked at clashes that may exist between different concepts of space. I tried to show under what conditions is the parade produced and why it produces an alternative to the dominant status quo. On the one hand I detailed the hegemonic and dominant concepts of space that are designed by the state and the capital. On the other hand, I described how those are met with alternative making of spaces. I showed that the urban struggles and the right to the city that is claimed in popular reappropriation of the city such as parades are directly connected to the political economy side of things. While criticizing de Certeau, I showed how the dominant space is always insufficient to fully contain and control within its own terms. To the opposite, I argued that the more it expands and intensifies, the more it is responded with resistance and alternatives. Throughout this framework, I tried to gather the various perspectives that allow to look at parades in a relevant manner. I constructed a coherence between the various sources thereby gathered in order to prefigure the arguments that I will develop in the empirical chapters.

Methods Chapter : Shaping and experimenting with the field

In this chapter, I will first explain how I unexpectedly ended up investigating street parades in Brussels. This explanation will be deepened in the context chapter and sheds light on various aspects of my positionality in the field and my methodology. I also explain how my presence in the field did not follow a strictly preestablished plan but rather formed itself anarchically through unexpected happenings and encounters. Then I will discuss the experimental and creative relationship that I developed with the field and how this produced original outcomes, shaped by imagination. In a third section, I will detail the various methods that I used which are 1) performance methodologies, 2) multimodality, 3) visual content and 4) interviews. I will develop an ethical note that considers the norms proposed by the “American anthropological association”. Finally, I will develop a reflexive thinking to shed light on how my own personality and positionality influenced the fieldwork and its outcomes.

FOR EPISTEMOLOGICAL ANARCHISM

This methodological note must start with the humility of a confession. I had strictly no idea where I was heading, what I was doing and what my doings would lead to. Nor at the beginning, nor during most of the process of being in the field. Namely because of the upheavals caused by the covid situation in my own academic tracks (but not only), I couldn't have a clue beforehand to what kind of coherence my ethnography was about to lead me to. Maybe it was too intense and overwhelmingly captivating to even question it. There was not the shadow of a doubt that the ‘here and now’ of being there in the field was the only thing that mattered. And the strength of this feeling lasted surprisingly long.

I was initially planning to conduct an ethnography in Dharamsala on topics related to the Tibetan diaspora and I had to cancel my plans due to the uncertainty of the pandemic situation. With the university of Vienna closed, I came back to Brussels and reconsidered my thesis project at a local scale. I had a vague idea of doing an ethnography on cycling the urban space since cycling was linked to childhood dreams, familial practices, and professional activities aside of my studies. Grasping to dusty dreams of the past in times of vanishing perspectives for the future made sense to me at that point.

What thus started as a modest ethnography on cycling the city and cycling parades. became an immersive experience in the alternative milieu and underground networks of Brussels. During this period (approximately a year and a half rhythmmed by many parades, demonstrations

and riots), my own perception of the city space metamorphosed. If I had tried to stick to preestablished plans instead of letting things arise with all their spontaneity and surprises, I would probably have missed so much of what Brussels was about to offer to me. Indeed, no project proposal, however well written, could have contained and foreseen the twists and turns that made out of my ethnography a fairy tale articulating so many elements together. Methodologically, I have to confess that I am consistently relying on “epistemological anarchism” (Feyerabend 1975). For this reason, I would like to thank my promoter, Sanderien Verstappen for her patience, her trust, for allowing me to maintain a freedom of movement all along and for her wise and adapted guidance.

The most painful effort I have had to make was on the contrary to put an end to the adventure and start writing these lines. Yet as I progressively extracted myself from the field and tried to get back to a less rushed and hectic lifestyle in order to reflect on what I had gone through; I could start seeing the coherences and the undermining logics of the field more clearly. The end of the period that allowed me to enter the social vortex that got me into the field with such velocity and thickness did not mean the end of the field nor the vortex. But it revealed certain landforms and perspectives that did not clearly appear before. As if “only the end of a time makes it possible to say what made it live, as if it had to die in order to become a book.” (de Certeau 1990 p.286)

Yet, this absence of conformity and preestablished expectations or targets was not an obstacle to the good progress of my ethnography. Instead, it became the condition of most of my ethnographic findings. I wouldn't have the vainglory to pretend that the way I proceeded is the best or only way to get to relevant ethnographic findings but I do believe that the following ethnographic findings and creative outcomes did require such openness to the unexpected and anarchical spontaneity. It couldn't have been reached with a clear plan of research.

Indeed, “to eliminate the unforeseen or expel it from calculation as an illegitimate accident and an obstacle to rationality is to interdict the possibility of a living and “mythical practice of the city.” (de Certeau 1990. p.296) And it is precisely this “living and mythical practice of the city” that was both the vehicle of my ethnography and its object. I myself had to be part of it in order to reflect upon it. I thus had to dive in the unforeseen without a map and this took me in a long and fantastic journey

I hadn't lived in Brussels for some years when I left Vienna because of the pandemic situation. Before Vienna, I had been travelling in Greece, and Indonesia, worked a year in

Australia, studied in Chile, backpacked in South America. At that point, I was pretty much unrooted from the city. Yet, since I grew up in the outskirts of Brussels, I could embody enough of the emic codes to be considered as a local. On the one hand, I could go unnoticed in Brussels and in the other I was largely defamiliarized. Which, looking back, was a rather fertile soil to start with. Again, at that point, I couldn't guess how deep I was going to dive in the far side of the city. I couldn't have known how many secrets and hidden places would be revealed to me.

CREATIVE EXPERIMENTATION WITH THE FIELD AND IMAGINATIVE ETHNOGRAPHY.

In the sequence of events that I will describe later, I never was in the position of an external observer but always being part of a co-creative process. With the edutainment project, I ended up using mobile speakers myself in parcs and creating dancefloors around town. With the Schieve collective, I joined each reunion not as an ethnographer and observer but as an organizer and member of the collective. With the Critical Mass, I ended up joining the core members in making the largest connected mobile sound systems and finding places to host the cortege. There was no separation at all between my role of ethnographer and my role of member of the collective project. Even more, it was not just being part of what was happening, but it was about designing what was going to happen. The relationship that I constructed with my field always was an ongoing creative and experimental relationship.

The way I proceeded is not so much about concealing the ethnographer's role and acting as a secret agent but rather it is about merging – or maintaining undissociated – the individual's subjectivity and the ethnographer's subjectivity. To avoid the break between a 'normal life character' and a 'researcher character'. This methodology relies on the standpoint that in order to conduct a social study, one does not only have to be aware of his positionality, but he also has to construct his positionality along the way. And nothing indicates that this must be a passive process. To the contrary, I argue it is more interesting for the social scientist to actively design his presence in the field. As I wrote in an earlier essay: "The purpose is not to merely reproduce reality as in a Larsen effect that pointlessly and endlessly echoes what is there but instead to provoke a re-discovery of the world, a new, refreshed sight on the cosmos." (De Schutter 2021) In other words, "The artist of the transition helps us to navigate the earth so that we can imagine the world we already know." (Carter P. 2014 p.259).

In a way, the relationship that I have constructed with the field meets the goals that were set by the center for imaginative ethnography as they try to "inspire possibilities that social,

cultural, political and aesthetic theories and practices offer to transgress conventional boundaries between theory and method, and to think with in creating conditions of possibility for reimagining the past, present and future of the worlds we inhabit.” Furthermore, it is about “shifting away from conventions of privileging the products of our research and towards considering as inseparable those processes and practices that shape scholarly and artistic co-creation and through which our work emerges and circulates”. (as quoted on the website of the center for imaginative ethnography¹⁷).

METHODOLOGIES

My fieldwork did not start nor end on a particular date. The field existed before my insertion into it, and it will keep on existing after the end of this thesis project. Only my conceptualization and description of the field can be clearly defined but the field itself has no clear boundaries. It is unseizable with the conceptual tools that we use to delimitate the world and make it fit our understanding. And so was my slow and deep immersion into it. “I belong to no one and I belong to everyone. You were there before to enter, and you will still be when you will leave.” (Diderot. 1778-80. p.67)

The social field I will be referring to throughout this ethnography is complex, dynamic, perpetually moving, multifaceted and interconnected. If it may be delimited under a label, it is in fact never truly cut out from the rest. To approach it, the methodologies that I have used are multiple. I have conjugated various modes of research and of description. The result is thus not a classical observation account, rather it is an original mixture of creative experimentation, of performance, of visual and multimodal ethnography, and of interviews.

Performance methodologies

Performances played a crucial role along the fieldwork. There are different ways in which performance played a role. Which is why I propose to refer to performance ethnography in an opened manner as in the definition that is given by the Center for Imaginative ethnography: “*Performance ethnography employs theatre and performance—as collaborative, multisensorial, and transdisciplinary modalities—at the level of ethnographic process, analysis, and representation. Our group members work at the intersection of humanistic anthropology, theatre and performance studies, and visual anthropology. We initiate dialogues about how*

¹⁷ <https://imaginative-ethnography.com/how-we-work/>

ethnographic performance-creation might help us reconceptualize public engagement, activism, collaboration, reflexivity, and representation.” (as quoted on the website of the Center for imaginative ethnography).¹⁸ In a way, we could argue that any parade is a performance in itself. In the case of the Schieve Parades, it consisted in a sequence of performances being held in the street and often the public was invited to participate.

Out of the 25 happenings that I listed in the Table B, there were 8 that were fully or mainly organized by the collective or by myself and 9 into which the collective or myself somehow had an active participation in the organization. For two thirds of the happenings that constituted my fieldwork, my presence was not limited to mere observation and participation but extended to the roles of initiating, organizing, planning and finding places to host reunions, inviting people to participate, artists to perform, scouting places, anticipating the logistics, making connections with other collectives in the city, making the communication of the event, putting stickers all over town, making the graphic presentation of the event (flyers, stickers posters etc.), funding the parade and finding the needed material, contacting the police and the municipality, coordinating the team, managing the timing of the performances, playing the music during the hapening etc. In some moments, making the parade represented an unpaid full-time job for me and a few other persons. Furthermore, the ongoing reflection that I nourished during the ethnography designed actions that were later posited. Meaning that the arguments I developed had a performative effect on my presence in the field and ultimately on the field itself. For an example, after developing an argument about squats and parades, I encouraged synergies between the Critical Mass and temporary occupations. In that case, the ethnographic analysis operates a performative outcome. It is not just a tool for looking at and understanding reality. It becomes a tool for shaping reality.

For Michael Peter Smith “social theories are largely constitutive of the reality we see, tell stories about, and act upon.” (2001:8 as quoted in Low 2017). Indeed, some social theories described in the theory chapter were present in the awareness of individuals even though expressed in emic terms. They actively engaged with these in the way they performed their presence in the public realm. Their reality is not only questioned in an academic paper, but also in their very deeds and acts. Performances thus allowed an interesting set-in motion of the relationship between theory and the lived reality of the field. Performance ethnographies animate

¹⁸ <https://imaginative-ethnography.com/performance-ethnography/>

the ethnographic undertaking with experimental forms. For McQuire, *“Artists can play a key role, not as de facto sociologists or anthropologists, but by initiating modes of practice that take networked public space as the site for enacting experimental forms of communication and cooperation. Over the last decade and a half artists and activists have frequently challenged dominant uses of digital networks, by problematizing the default settings of spectacle and surveillance, and by inventing new protocols, interfaces and alignments of technologies, spaces and bodies.”* (McQuire 2014 p.71)

The parade, as a collaborative performance, opened new ways of being together in the public realm, new ways of claiming the shared space of the city. “As it opens a space of questioning, doubt and ambiguity, art can not only sketch new models for being together in public, giving an experimental shape to social encounters, but it can also enable individuals to hone cooperative skills through the performative enactment of new forms of social collaboration.” (McQuire 2014 p.73)

Multimodality

My methodological approach also relies on the use of multimodal methodology. Multimodality is linked to three recently developing factors which are *“(1) the (relative) democratization and integration of media production; (2) the shift toward engagement and collaboration in anthropological research; and (3) the dynamic roles of anthropologists vis-a-vis both the profession and the communities in which they work.”* (Collins, Durington, Gill 2017 p.1). Each of these three factors were present in my fieldwork. The use of social medias (Telegram channels, facebook groups and events etc), of visual content (photographies, flyers, logos, stickers etc) and digital resources in general was absolutely essential both for the people I engaged with and to construct my presence in the field. Yet it is far from being a digital ethnography. Collecting visual material is also an important part and yet it would be wrong to say that this is exclusively a visual ethnography. Then I also operated with more classical ways of doing such as interviews. It is a multimodal ethnography in the sense that it uses various modes of interaction with the field which, altogether, form a consistent experience of the field.

Also, it is a multimodal ethnography in the sense that I practiced an engaged ethnography. I personally got politically engaged in various social struggles and supported these struggles while doing ethnography. I collaborated with the people through a collective effort to create a parade that would then serve to produce knowledge. This constituted a dynamic relation with the urban

communities I engaged with and an epistemic partnership with the people that collaborated in making the parades. For an example, the reunions of organization of parades were based on the principle of collective intelligence and everyone could spontaneously participate in the process.

Finally, my fieldwork relied on an inventory process. As I suggested in an earlier essay, “the proposal of a politics of invention for the discipline recently had an echo in the multimodal arena (Dattatreya E.J. and Marrero-Guillamon 2019) itself standing on the shoulders of earlier works on ethnography as an inventive practice and the inventive processes involved in the descriptive act (Roy Wagner 1981; Geertz 1973)” (De Schutter 2021 p.2). Here, the inventive process is not limited to the descriptive act. What happens in the field (the parades and the various forms of happening in the city) is itself being invented and created before to be described. This leads to a direct and conscious experimentation with the field.

Visual ethnographic content

My initial purpose to make a visual ethnography was made difficult because of the role I took during parades. During the Schieve parade, for an example, my role was to play the music. A role which involves to be responsible for leading the cortege and for timing the performances (since the performances were planned on a specific musical selection). This role did not allow me to take other roles of film maker or photographer for very simple and technical reasons. For an example, this made it impossible to film with my smartphone (it would have stop the music at once for the entire cortege). I thus abandoned the idea to produce a consistent visual ethnography on parades. Nonetheless, I could sometimes take a few images during the parade and furthermore, there were sometimes photographers that were present and that were happy to share their images in support of the social struggle.

I gathered such visual material that I collected and produced during my presence in the field (<https://floriandeschutter.wixsite.com/thesis>). If it does not form a consistent visual ethnography, it does allow to illustrate the ethnographic description and sustain some arguments. The wix page can be consulted independently from the text in order to provide a general idea of what is being discussed in the thesis. Nonetheless, there are many references to the visual content in the text (such as: “see video/image X”), thereby intermeshing the textual arguments with the visual material. Each image or video being numbered, the reader can directly find it when it is referred to by using the CTRL+F on the keyboard. This visual content does not constitute in itself

a visual ethnography. Rather it consists of an archive of visual content that, added to the tables in the appendix, provide an understanding of what the fieldwork was like.

Interviews

Another material that I will use in the ethnographic chapters is the more classical method of interviewing informants. I conducted two types of interviews. Individual interviews and collective interviews. The five personal interviews were targeted interviews. I selected persons for very precise questions, knowing that their experience and ways of relating to them was relevant to certain topics. These were semi-structured interviews and each interviewee was asked different questions. The collective interview was conducted with core members of the Schieve collective. The same question was asked to everyone and each could spontaneously react. This also was a semi-structured interview. I designed the interview based on the fact that they had lived the making of the Schieve Parade and various other happenings from the inside, took an active part in its preparation and performances. Another important testimony that I collected was a public oral narration of the history of the Carnaval Sauvage given by the core members of the Carnaval Sauvage. There, the accounts were not conducted by my questions but fully dependent on their ways of describing it. Each interviewee is referred to with a number and is listed in Table D of the appendix where I noted their respective genders and roles.

I then had to transcript those oral accounts and translate them from French to English. Using those interviews allowed me to stick to a content that has been delivered willingly by informants. By doing so, I could comply with the ethical guidelines. Indeed, the field I was observing often was compromising for the people involved. Activities we lead were situated at the thin and arguable border between legality and legitimacy. Material collected during random talks might not have fit the ethical standards if directly repeated in this thesis even though they helped me to understand my field bit by bit. Which is why I have chosen to only use content that I registered during public discourses or direct interviews.

APPENDIXES

In order to structure my ethnographic material and to provide a global overview of my ethnography, I have added tables in the appendixes which provide important informations. Those tables together with the visual content should give a quick overview of my ethnography. In order to sustain and illustrate some arguments, I also created figures. There are four tables and four figures.

- Table A : Lists of keyplaces and their relation to the fieldwork. I precised the status of the place as temporary occupations (21), green areas (7) or public spaces (8).
- Table B : Lists of events (happening outdoor in the city) I attended during my fieldwork. I have detailed the date, the degree of participation, the media coverage and the police presence for each event.
- Table C: List of artistic performances and participative activities that occurred during the Schieve Parades. I have listed the amount of times these performances and activities were eventually repeated.
- Table D: List of interviewees, their gender and their role. This Table lists the interviews that I conducted and transcribed but not all the persons that I may mention in the text.
- Figure 1 : This figure shows the interrelation between the body, space and the social order. It intends to illustrate how liberation occurs in interplay with these three elements.
- Figure 2 : Illustrates the various steps towards political freedom
- Figure 3 : Illustrates the production of public spheres and its various declinations that I propose in the text
 - Figure 4 : Illustrates the four characteristics of alternativity that I listed after the emic discourses on alternativity. Something identified as alternative does not necessarily need to fulfil each of those four characteristics but it usually fulfil at least one.

ETHICAL NOTE

This ethnography certainly raises some ethical questions. Participating in unauthorized gatherings, being the subject of police repression and taking a stance against the management of the Covid19 may be deemed as unethical by some. Nonetheless, according to the seven guidelines proposed by the American Anthropological Association (AAA) regarding matters of “methodological and ethical best practices”¹⁹, efforts were made in order to comply with an ethical framework.

The first of those guidelines is to “Do no harm”. It is therefore important to precise that all the happenings and the efforts that were put into it always went in the direction of pacifying a tensed situation. When there was confrontation with the police, I never participated nor

¹⁹ <https://www.americananthro.org/ethics-and-methods>

encouraged it and stayed away from any form of physical violence (except the one I received unwillingly, with tear gas for an example). To the contrary, the making of the Schieve Parade was reopening a discussion after the violent clashes that had occurred. Our presence in demonstrations where violence occurred always took the shape of festive and peaceful presence. The 2022 Carnaval Sauvage also wondered how to avoid open conflict in the streets (either with inhabitants of the neighborhood, especially Muslims that did not appreciate the carnivalesque happening in 2021 or with the police).

The third guideline (“Obtain Informed Consent and Necessary Permissions”) was met, as explained earlier, by using interview content instead of randomly collected material. The AAA also recommends making results accessible. In order to fit this point, I intend to translate this thesis from English to French so that all person concerned with the topic of this thesis may read it. Furthermore, the entire thesis maintains a strict anonymity of all my informants in order to protect them from any prejudice. All the interviews that are referred to in the text are anonymous.

REFLEXIVITY

Any ethnographer has a positionality in the field he studies. I have no pretention to rub out traces of my positioning and pretend to provide an objective account of things. Instead, the standpoint that I support is, to the contrary, to use this positionality in order to enlighten certain perspectives that may remain invisible from other angles. Even more, to creatively play with my positionality in order to achieve experimental ethnographies.

Some general characteristics of my positionality were that I was an insider, I was a young white male, I was identified as a local person and I mastered the main emic language²⁰ and even the accent identified as local. Each of these categories that I am regularly attributed induct a series of representations, stereotypes, and judgments from people, depending on their own system of representation and positionality.

Being an insider of the organization of the parade and often leading it forward certainly not gives me the same perspective as someone that looks at the parade from the outside. Nonetheless, I have undertaken that my angle was focusing on the core members. On the one hand, it could be argued that they share an idealized vision of parades. On the other hand, they

²⁰ Language is a site of contestation in Brussels. Nonetheless, all studies show that there is a clear majority of French speakers, followed by Flemish and English. In the social milieu where I evolved, French always was the main language of interaction.

provide an ethnographic account of full immersion into the dynamics of urban space reappropriation. That is precisely what interested me. I wanted to look at the full intensity of the experience in all its partiality and subjectivity rather than the external, outsider viewpoint that pretends to be objective but that only misses the point by replacing the ontology of the people themselves with an epistemological analysis. Similarly to Bachelard (1957) who argued that a poetic image has to be lived from the inside, to be seized in its own ontology, I argue that the powers unleashed by the parade require to be looked at from the inside. Thereby, I am not looking for unbiased facts that can be asserted against all arguments but rather I am searching for genuine lived experiences. Instead of an objectified truth, I am interested in what is real for the people. I thus have no interest in the notion of objectivity.

It was once taught to me during a seminar that the reflexive turn was partly triggered by the discovery of old photographs of Malinowski in the field with his informants. Seeing him, with his European clothes and colonialist style amongst natives from the islands was a shock for the discipline. The ethnographer was not concealed anymore behind the apparent objectivity of his writings. Seeing the ethnographer in the field repositioned the perception of the ethnographic account itself. The importance of not concealing the ethnographer is crucial for reflexivity. Also, I take this matter of reflexivity very seriously. At various moments in this thesis, especially in the context chapter, I refer to my own personal experience or perception. I acknowledge that the account is a personal account provided by me and not an abstract sequence of ideas living independently from the person that wrote them. Furthermore, I did include in the archive various images where I appear personally. In the image 25 for an example is a screenshot of a televised interview that I made with journalists (image 25). Another shows me leading the cortege of the Schieve Parade (image 22). This not only gives an idea of what happened, it also gives a direct perception of my positioning into these happenings.

The gender status could also be debated, and one could imagine various arguments on the basis of genders. I cannot tell whether I could have achieved and observed what I achieved and observed if I was not a man. Nonetheless, it is important to precise that the parades I am discussing are particularly inclusive. More than often, the people involved in such popular movements are at the frontline of feminist and decolonization struggles. The schieve Collective that constituted my main vessel along this fieldwork was composed of more women than men. In the anonymous interviews I collected, there is a clear majority of women's testimonies. And most of the time, the organization of the Schieve Parade was made by a pair that usually

comprehended a male and a female. The performances of the Schieve Parade were also equally performed by men and by women. It may be audacious to pretend that we emancipated ourselves from matters of gender. Nonetheless, I think it is reasonable to tell that there was a certain awareness of gender issues and that it was ethically considered. Whereas, in the case of the Critical Mass, I may note it was more often a female DJ playing in the cortege (e.g. a Palestinian woman DJ). Moreover, my case studies generally are, as I will show later, moments of transgression and liberation where the everyday alienations are being challenged. If it has been successfully argued that the public space is differently experienced depending on the gender, the parade itself is probably the most appropriate moment for challenging such conditionings.

Context chapter : the rise of street parades during covid in Brussels

In this chapter, I will describe the context and setting of the ethnographic fieldwork that drove this thesis. First, I will describe the sequence of events that happened to me personally and how it impacted my presence and perspective on the field. Then, I will look at the pandemic context, how triggered a re-spatialization of practices and new kind of struggles. Thirdly, I will describe the rise of the Schieve collective and how it allowed me to navigate the field. More briefly, I will discuss the international dimension of the context, the digital and technological context. I will present and summarize the three main case studies, I will draw the attention to the notion of underground ecosystem in Brussels and finally mention the built environment of Brussels into which the parades took place.

AN UNEXPECTED SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

I will now describe the chaotic succession of events that led to this fieldwork. It might be hard to follow given the amount of elements and connections between them. From an external point of view, the entire length of the sequence may seem a bit difficult to understand. Yet I will do my best to make it both legible and loyal to the past events.

In the month of March 2021, a curfew was in application in Belgium. Most social and cultural life was restricted or unauthorized. There was a limit to the people one was expected to frequent. Yet spring was coming, and there was a general urge to escape the long isolation of lockdowns and winter. The frequenting of parks increased drastically. Simultaneously, cycling parades were organized around the Bois de la Cambre, claiming for freedom regarding the pandemic restrictions. This movement appeared as a moderate movement which pretends to respect the physical distancing measures and works with the agreement of the police. In these parades called “cycling for freedom”, I saw an entry point to start my ethnography. A parade led to another, and I participated in the “Carnaval Sauvage” of Brussels with a bicycle. The cortege grew bigger than ever, gathering more than a thousand persons in the streets, blocking traffic. The cortege was finally violently repressed by the police, after hours of wanderings. The urge of the people to get out and participate in an event was growing wild after a long winter of lockdowns and curfews.

Animated with the same longing, I was hanging out with a friend that was developing a ‘sociocultural and permanent education project’ called “edutainment” (contraction of education and entertainment). His idea was based on the conviction that reggae music had an educative

potential and that certain values could be vehiculated through music. He was thus using a cargo-bike that initially served as a working tool for printed cultural communication diffusion throughout town - a job that disappeared with the covid – and used it to fix a mobile Soundsystem on top. This very mobile soundsystem allowed him to settle anywhere in town and start a reggae dub session. With the edutainment sound system, we circulated all-around town in various parcs and green areas all along the season. We also participated in the Critical Masses, playing reggae music in the cortege.

Linking the cycling for freedom parades, the edutainment project, and the Critical Masses together, I started drawing the outlines of an ethnographic work on mobility in the urban space until everything tumbled into a very unexpected series of events. A hoax appeared on the social medias. The joke was a fake event held in Bois de la Cambre which pretended to organize a festival with more than a hundred DJs, 8 stages and no restrictions on the 1st of April. The hoax created a massive hilarity on the social medias and even though it was clear that such a festival was obviously not going to happen, it ended with 70.000 participants on the Facebook page of the event. At a moment where gatherings were still limited, seeing 70.000 virtual participants frightened the public authorities which chose to start an arm wrestling to prevent this event from happening. Medias started talking about it too, often condemning the humoristic event. Yet these reactions only gave more visibility and fueled the success of La Boum. On the D-day, there was obviously not 70.000 persons but still, there was a large crowd that gathered in the plain in small groups having a picnic. I was present there with the edutainment crew and a couple of friends.

Then, a massive police force arrived with water cannon trucks, cavalry, tear gas, drones and lines of armed infantry. The violence that followed was beyond imagination and images of the event circulated in the medias all around the globe. What initially was a hoax on the internet became a worldwide mediatized episode of a surrealistic civil war and a breach into the discursive space of public sphere. It triggered a huge movement of protest not only against police repression and violence but also about the restrictive measures. A man called Dave Monfort launched a second edition of the event on the 1st of May. But this time, it had become a mediatic feuilleton and all eyes were looking at the 1st of May in Bois de la Cambre. Digital networks of communication grew very fast on new applications such as Telegram, and a participative organization for the 1st of May started. I landed on a Telegram group counting thousands of persons implicated in taking the joke to the next level. Subgroups were formed in order to

focalize the organization, parodying the police repression and the covid situation with activities such as water fights, soap bubbles, horse sticks etc.

It is at this moment I started taking a much more active part in the development of the situation. A talking circle was summoned at the Bois de la Cambre with people from various groups from the social medias concerned with the event of “La Boum”. The talking circle happened at the place where we used to stay with the edutainment crew - which was also present. After discussions on various topics and ideas, we started a reggae dub session and a vortex of new connections and friendships started. It created such a keen interest and motivation that three of the people decided to rent an Airbnb for the week preceding the 1st of May. They rented a luxury Airbnb for more than 2000 euros with enough room for everyone. It became a headquarter for the organization of La Boum and many people came by, such as journalists, jurists, professionals of the event sector and communication sector, film makers etc.

The outcome of this one-week residence was that we decided to organize a peaceful gathering with a distribution of flowers in the street, a great fanfare and a sort of parade that would follow a man disguised as a white rabbit which was intended to be a reference to Alice in Wonderland but also to the movie “Matrix”. Imagination was growing wild. Since I was already engaged in the direction of conducting an ethnography on mobility and place-making in the urban space, I proposed to make a distribution of flyers at the Critical Mass which happened the day before the 1st of May. On the d-Day, the flashmob gathering was a success. There was a crowd in place Flagey, dancing and singing. But as soon as the crowd started moving towards Bois de la Cambre the police stopped us. The itinerary that I had planned was following a pedestrian road and we wouldn’t have blocked any traffic. But since the police stopped us, the crowd changed direction and walked through the streets, blocking cars and buses and most of us finally ended in Bois de la Cambre anyway.

The experience of spending one week together, rushing towards an event that would become a legend in the Brussels folkloric landscape forged a strong cohesion between many of us. Stopping on such a good path was not option and we formed a “collective”²¹. The activities,

²¹ The collective was first named “BoumPartout”, in the intention to spread the spirit of La Boum everywhere all the time. It was very informal and porous. There was no way to clearly identify who was part of it and who was not. It slowly sedimented in a more fixed form in the following year. The dozens of people related to it were very varied in terms of age, gender and social status. With the organization and naming of the first Schieve Parade, it became known as the Schieve collective. It still exists today but has very little ongoing activity compared to the period I am referring to.

demonstrations, or events we participated in as a collective were very numerous. With some members of the collective, we formed teams spending entire weeks together, networking, imagining, organizing things. One crucial element of those smaller teams I spend most of my ethnographic fieldwork with is that we were always using bicycles to move around town and most of the time, we would play music on a small speaker. Each of our daily trips throughout Brussels was thus experienced as a sort of mini bike parade and our crew of a couple cyclists would momentarily take over the road in a joyful manner. In this thesis, I have come to call such mobility practice “micro-parading”.

Another key element is that after the one-week residence in the end of April we started gathering every Tuesday to discuss things of the collective. Those weekly gatherings lasted until the end of June and briefly started again in September. They gathered very variable amount of persons but always more than a dozen and sometimes around 30. After those periods of weekly gatherings, the pace at which we gathered slowed down but it kept happening casually for more than a year and a half. Those weekly meetings were crucial in socializing people around the projects. First, they happened in a temporary occupation called “La Poissonerie” in Schaerbeek which accepted to host us. This place situated along the railway lines is occupied by a non-lucrative organization active in the alternative milieu and activism in Brussels. Very quickly, we diversified our meeting points with for example “La Friche Josaphat” which is a big green area hosting important biodiversity that is threatened to be destroyed, the “Meet U” which is a former police station occupied by a neighborhood collective, “l’Alternatif” that is a house occupied by a squat opener or the Space Lab that is a huge building occupied by an engineer. The common thread linking those places is that they were each abandoned in the first hand and then occupied with various projects. The term we use for this in French is “occupation temporaire” which is literally temporary occupation whereas the term squat usually carries a more pejorative connotation.

Beyond our presence in other events and demonstrations we started to organize our own parade. This time, our collective was the sole initiator and we could design the event. We named it the “Schieve Parade” after my proposal which is an expression from Brussels dialect which means “twisted, wonky or not straight”. Then we choose to set the date around the summer solstice on the Saturday 26th of June. We invited artists and performers whose activities had been stopped. Mostly those that had already participated in activist actions in support of the cultural sector and were questioning the situation. Between African percussions, contemporary dancers,

circus artists, singers, musicians, dance workshop, the Schieve parade was a very diversified and colorful event without authorization (see table C).

The success of the event created wonder and enthusiasm in the eyes of many participants and organizers. It fueled the confidence of the collective. Even though the turn of events was still somehow related to the mobility in the urban space, I felt like I was moving away from my initial research question about mobility. In order to link more clearly the mobility in the urban space with the liberation of the public space in social protest actions and popular movements, I proposed to organize the second Schieve Parade during the car-free day, on the 19th of September 2021. By some random chance, this would also coincide with the autumn equinox which continued the correspondence of our events with the cycles of seasons. The second Schieve Parade gathered even more people (probably around 300 at the beginning) and once again, the artistic performances were numerous and of great quality. The interactions with the police and authorities turned out very chaotic once again. After this parade, winter was coming and we slowed down our activities. Nonetheless, the return of restrictions together with the vaccine campaigns and the sanitary passes triggered an entirely new wave of protest. A series of huge demonstrations were organized in Brussels. These were labelled “Europeans united for freedom” and gathered groups of activists and protesters from around the continent. By the month of January 2021, it had become huge. The official numbers mentioned 50.000 participants on the 23rd of January. It was one of the largest gathering in the street in the history of Brussels.

Together with the Schieve collective and with Dave Monfort which had re-launched La Boum on the 1st of May 2021, I proposed to have a presence in the demonstration. My proposal was to bring a giant inflated unicorn of 5 meter long and a powerful mobile speaker. We thus played music at very high volume under the giant unicorn and walked through the cortege. It was a very powerful experience which was very much noticed by the medias. The second time we brought the unicorn in the demonstration, we diverted the sign of the Finance Tower.

Later in winter, members of my collective organized a series of performances in the tram and metro in Brussels. Those performances appeared as spontaneous happenings in the public transports but were in fact well prepared spectacles. The action was called “Metro-Schieve-Dodo” which is an alteration of an expression in French that describes the repetitiveness of the routine in big cities (Metro-boulot-dodo translated literally as metro-work-sleep). Then on the 6th of march, our collective was mandated by a neighborhood carnival to animate the street parade and we received 300 euros subsidies in order to do so. Similarly, one year after the start of my

first thoughts about redirecting my thesis project, the Carnaval Sauvage, summoned our collective to participate in their Carnival and to think collectively about the ways in which the issues they had faced the year before could be avoided. This led to our participation and to the preparation of a waste collection animation within their cortege. In June 2022, we celebrated our one-year anniversary by organizing the third Schieve Parade. At this occasion, we focused on environmental issues and the place of nature in the city. After the summer, for the second car-free day, we organized a happening related to sacred Sufi dances on a roundabout. Then, strengthened by my experience in parades, I started integrating in the team of the Critical Mass.

It is hard for me to put an ending point to this experimental ethnographic fieldwork and each time I tried to do so, the field was catching me back much faster than I could get away from it. I was aware that for this Thesis, I had to put a limit to the fieldwork. Yet each time I did so, it kickstarted again towards some new epic adventure.

THE PANDEMIC CONTEXT

The Covid situation is far from being the priority of this research. Nonetheless, it played such an important role in defining the context of the ethnography that it would be a mistake to ignore it. In fact, even though lots of ethnographers – including me - were annoyed by the impact of the restrictions on the possibilities of their fieldworks, I argue that the variations it provoked in the sociocultural fields revealed many relevant patterns on the canvas.

In this subsection, I will explain the pandemic context and how it is related to my fieldwork. To achieve this, I will use various examples that show how there was a general dynamic of urban space reappropriation due to a re-spatialization of practices. I will show how events varied in their politization, in their relationship with the restrictions and in their local or transnational aspect. I will show how the pandemic context triggered new forms of struggles and the appearance of new actors.

Re-spatialization of practices in the public and outdoor spaces

The pandemic context did have a huge impact on bodies and space. Earlier in the pandemic, I could observe that telecommuting impacted the embodiment and the spatialization of practices through the merging of previously separated spatial spheres. But if practices of telecommuting triggered such spatial implosion, the later phases of the pandemic triggered inverted spatial dynamics. After the implosion came the explosion. For an example, when the notice that outdoor contaminations presented risks close to zero, the bankrupting sector of bars

and restaurants urged to be granted the right to open terraces. They started building wooden terraces everywhere they could, and spaces previously reserved to car-parking were turned into terraces. Nightclubs and actors of the event sector demanded authorization to organize open air parties. This already was an impressive wave of urban space re-appropriation. First, lockdowns contained everyone in private spaces and re-spatialized practices in confined indoor places. Secondly, the pandemic provoked the massive reconquering of outdoor and public spaces and the re-spatialization of practices in outdoor places. There was on the one hand the legal or tolerated events that used the outdoor spaces in an effort to be covid-friendly. On the other hand were events that openly opposed covid restrictions and used the public space to make their claims.

One example is the initiative called the Bubble dance. The Bubble dance was launched by contemporary dancers in November 2020 in reaction to the fact that dance halls were closed. The concept was simple, they would gather every weekend in order to dance in the public space in groups of 4 in order to comply with the official restrictions that demanded to limit frequentations to groups of 4. This was a way to continue dancing without breaking the rules. It was reproduced in various cities abroad (Italy, Germany, Mexico...). When I first met the organizers of the Bubble Dance, we agreed that they would participate in the first Schieve Parade. Liberation of bodies through dancing in public space was a powerful way for experimenting embodied placemaking.

Another example was the Freefrequency project carried on by a DJ. The idea was to connect mobile speakers with receptors so that they could play the same music. The decentralization of the source of music would allow to split into small groups that would each have their own speaker and thereby conform to the restrictions. Nonetheless, this initiative proved to be harder to achieve. In the end, the freefrequency events mostly turned into an outdoor event with DJs playing music on a mobile Soundsystem mounted on a bicycle and a big crowd wildly gathering in front of it. The parc de forest for an example was once invaded in the middle of the afternoon with a huge crowd of wild party peoples that you usually see only in late night events in spaces dedicated for these practices and secluded from the outside. (see video 19).

These two case studies do not claim a particular political message beyond of the act itself that is posited. They do not explicitly express a political claim. Since it was happening outdoor and in (supposedly) small groups, it could even be perceived as a “covid-friendly” activity. They could potentially be joined by persons that supported the covid restrictions. A key element is that whether acts of activism against the measures choking certain sectors of society or on the

contrary attempts to try and comply with the new regulations while maintaining certain practices, they were endorsing the same dynamic of reconquering the public spaces. The same dynamic also drove a massive infatuation for cycling parades such as the Critical Mass and cycling for freedom or other kinds of street parades such as the Carnaval Sauvage which saw its numbers of participants being drastically multiplied in the year 2021. It is still remembered today as an epoch of huge booming by the organizers of these parades.

Moreover, in the same event, some participants would explain the reason of their presence and involvement for activism whereas others had absolutely no political claim. Yet both types of participants were enacting the same practices. This context of unprecedented re-spatialization of practices was providing an exceptional opportunity for experimenting with the dynamics of urban space re-appropriation. To summarize the impact of the Pandemic context, it provoked a large-scale variation in the relation between bodies and space which in turn triggered a redefinition and reimagining of the possibilities as people reconstituted their practices in a new context. And this was, I argue, a very favorable setting to explore the dynamics of embodied place-making in urban public spaces.

New kind of struggles

Furthermore, the context of the ethnography is marked by the sudden appearance of new kind of social struggles. Indeed, there are traditional forms of social struggles structured and organized around political parties, syndicates, activist networks, NGOs etc. Those rely on communities of people sharing similar claims and visions. But the pandemic situation brought a new structuration to social protests. First, the segmentation of society through sectors and the application of restrictions on such basis created sectorial struggles. On the one hand, all sectors were divided between essential and non-essential sectors. The so-called ‘non-essential sectors’ of culture, of events or of horeca (hotel, restaurant, café) were scheduled on different restrictive regimes and calendars. This sectorial segmentation of society was favorable to the appearance of communities of solidarity and sectorial protests that itself triggered unexpected interactions and coordination between actors. New actors appeared, federating sectorial struggles, such as the Still Standing for Culture which represented the cultural sector.

The Still Standing describe itself on its website as an actor that “functionates in collective and gathers workers from culture from different regions of the country (namely technicians, photographers, filmmakers, dramatists, comedians, programmers, members or not, from artistic

federations.)” and they assert that one of their actions consisted in “a call to make culture in the interstices of current liberticide rules”²². That synthesizes quite accurately the dynamics that were occurring at that time, it consisted in keeping on doing things in the interstices of the restrictive apparatus, to creatively skirt the oppressive impact that the rules were enforcing on existences. Concretely, most actions undertaken by the Still Standing were artistic performances in the urban space. Those were on the one hand a way to posit a political claim in the public realm and simultaneously they were a way to keep on “making culture” despite the closure of all infrastructures dedicated to such practices.

Another major happening called ‘La Boum’ that I described earlier was more related to the event and nightlife sector. The hoax was promising more than a hundred DJs and many stages in the biggest park of Brussels. The importance of this event was partly due to the massive echo it had in the discursive space of the public sphere through medias and official political comments. La Boum was also crucial because of its aftermath. Indeed, it was the first known big gathering of people. The absence of scientific consensus about the spread of the new virus and the risk of outdoor gatherings for contaminations was severely challenged by this happening. It triggered a feeling that people could self-manage the pandemic situation without the authoritarian hold of the governments. This single event unleashed an intense opposition and resistance to the situation.

Another example was the one of “Bezette La Monnaie Occupée” which occupied the historical opera monument where the Belgian revolution was born. They organized daily artistic happenings in front of it during two weeks. After two weeks, the end of the occupation finished in a cortege which paraded until the “rue de la loi” where the executive government makes its meetings and left a three-meter trash can there. In the same logic but with different techniques was the ‘Wake Up’ collective. Those made video-projections on the courthouse of Brussels with the batman sign and revolutionary messages denouncing the incompetency of the government. This action occurred after 22H when the curfew was still ongoing. Hereby, the disruption of the urban space takes an explicit form as it involves textual content.

In later phases, the global dimension of the pandemic gave place to delocalized forms of mobilization. First, the “EuropeansUnitedForFreedom” organized demonstrations in Brussels which intended to gather people from all over Europe. The “EuropeansUnitedForFreedom”

²² The Still Standing For Culture presents itself in its own terms on its website : <https://www.stillstandingforculture.be/>

demonstrations stood out through their transnational claims which was very innovative. The city of Brussels was recognized as the locality that spatialized transnational political claims given its status of European capital. Those happenings organized the convergence of crowds from many European countries. And the cortege was ending very close to the European commission where the riots usually took place. Finally, the Freedom Convoy planned a massive rally of trucks and cars coming from all around Europe and converging to Brussels in order to block the city until the end of the sanitary political apparatus.²³

Parallely to the rise of new forms of struggles rose the police repression. Many have noted the drastic degradation of the situation with the police and the intensification and multiplication of cases of police violence. Looking at the evolution of police repression, it was noted by many around me that it progressively became more trained, more heavily equipped, and more efficient and organized. The respect of the ‘scalar response to violence’ which is supposed to be a legal principle was rarely respected and the police violence always was justified by the political authorities. This participated in radicalizing both sides and digging the gap between oppositions.

The two last examples (Europeans united for freedom demonstrations and freedom convoy) are very different from the others in the sense that they were not much rooted in the locality of Brussels. They were not relying on a local network but on transnational connections of people that do not know each other personally and mostly established through digital communication. These eight examples also vary in their politization. Some, like the Bubble dance are devoid of explicit political messages (which does not mean that there are no politics involved in the performance) whereas others like the Wakeup actions or the “Europeans united” demonstrations carry explicit political messages.

However, I argue that these eight examples provide an overview of the dynamics of re-appropriation of the urban space which occurred during the period of the ethnography. They display the context into which my ethnography evolved. Secondly, their differences underline the ways events of re-appropriation of the urban space can vary but also how they can be part of a singular dynamic. And thirdly, they display the new kind of struggles and actors that appeared

²³ The convoy did not succeed at all. The fact that they were all coming in motorized vehicles made them very easily controllable and the configuration of the accesses of Brussels made it hard to converge. Most participants in this convoy felt lost and disoriented by a cortege that de facto secluded them from others in the closed interior of their vehicles. Occupying space with motorized vehicles proved to be a very different experience than other ways of occupying space (e.g. pedestrian or cycling occupations).

during this period. Either sectorial or transnational, whether relying on localized networks or digital communication, whether prioritizing the poetics or the politics of the act, whether willing to engage directly with the political decisionmakers or rather trying to create something in the interstices of the rules which suffices to itself, each of the actions described above were reactions to a situation that was triggering dynamics of occupation of the public space.

THE SPONTANEOUS RISE OF A COLLECTIVE

The Schieve parade constituted my main vessel throughout this ethnography. “We were the first to deconfine the streets of Brussels” once told me a member of the collective. The rise of the Schieve Collective was very much related to a collective effervescence that was impacting both the group and the individuals. In Durkheim’s terms, *“under the influence of some great collective shock in certain historical periods, social interactions become much more frequent and active. Individuals seek one another out and come together more. The result is the general effervescence that is characteristic of revolutionary or creative epochs.”* (Durkheim 1912 p.213). This describes accurately the dynamic that was ours. Furthermore, *“The result of that heightened activity is a general stimulation of individual energies. People live differently and more intensely than in normal times. The changes are not simply of nuance and degree; man himself becomes something other than what he was.”* (Durkheim 1912 p.213)

The birth of the collective revolved around the 1st of May 2021 and the first members of the collective were all concerned in a way or another with the happening. Apart from this common point, there was no explicit condition for being part of it. The constitution of the collective relied on an anarchical assemblage of connections. Sometimes through friendships and sometimes through groups on digital apps (mainly Telegram). Sometimes, they were invited for a reason, sometimes they randomly arrived after being hailed in the street. In some cases, people knew each other before and in some others they did not. There was strictly no rule about the way people could enter the collective even though most people that were present were unemployed due to the forced closures and were questioning, in some degree at least, the situation.

This partly explains why, from its very beginnings, the collective was a transversal reunion of people in terms of age, gender, and social class. Between aristocratic characters to clandestine refugee and from students to aged workers, the diversity was large. It was also cross-sectorial in the sense that it did not gather people from one single sector (such as Still Standing with workers of the cultural sector). Secondly, the anarchic constitution of the collective also

played a role in its evasive identity. There were no clearly established guidelines. This maintained a relative freedom for everyone to project his own imaginary on what the collective was and was to become, what were its missions and what ideology it should incarnate. Yet, in the acts that were posited, there was always a recourse to absurdity as a mode of representation of the lived experiences. The humoristic resort to absurdity was sometimes justified as a use of the legacy of dadaism and surrealism which are particularly present in Belgian's cultural modern history. References to situationism were also recurrent in the attempts to describe the collective's ideological position even though I doubt all the members could actually understand what this meant.

After the 1st of May, the collective kept evolving in the same anarchic manner. The major achievement of the collective was the organization of the Schieve Parade which happened twice in the season. The Schieve Parade could be described as an effort to converge the performances of urban space occupation that were occurring at that time. Indeed, it was bringing together actors that were being part of these dynamics such as the Bubble dancers or the Casa del djembe which had been present in demonstrations or the mobile sound system of l'Abîme which had launched the second "La Boum" on the 1st of May. It consisted in a re-spatialization of practices prevented by the pandemic measures, such as dancing, circus, music, in public and outdoor spaces through a re-appropriation of the urban space.

It was a participative and collective synergy that asserted itself as an effort to re-appropriate existences. Interestingly, this was achieved through re-appropriation of space. The Schieve Parade was participating in a popular longing to counterbalance the sanitary order of society with a poetic disorder. What was often presented as the guideline of the parade in terms of politics is that it was not willing to claim certain rights or liberties but instead to directly exercise those rights and liberties. The message was that we were no longer waiting for authorizations, obligations, and regulations to dictate us what our existence should resemble. But that from now on we would design our lifestyle on our own through horizontal self-responsibility rather than vertical infantilization and authority.

THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

If the context that I have depicted, as well as the content of this ethnography, is localized in Brussels, some of the dynamics I have described in this chapter were present in other towns as well. First, the pandemic context was an international context. Similar restrictions were applied

simultaneously all over the continent and beyond. Its local application was thus constantly related to a global setting. Moreover, most of the events that I mentioned carry a transnational feature. The Critical Mass happens simultaneously in various countries, the Carnaval Sauvage also exists in Marseille and is in contact with other anarchist carnivals abroad, the Europeans united for freedom and the freedom convoy consisted in a convergence of people from various countries towards Brussels. In this last example, I could meet two Danish girls that came all the way to Brussels to demonstrate. They explained to me how they were experiencing similar dynamics and participating in similar happenings in Copenhagen as we did in Brussels. People there were reappropriating the streets through festive happenings, making free parties or flash mobs in iconic public spaces. At some point they send me videos of them dancing in front of the city hall with a mobile sound system which was surprisingly similar to what was regularly occurring in Brussels.

The happening in support of the event sector of the 7th of May that I have listed (see table B) was a replicate of an identical happening that occurred in Rome and had a large visibility on the social medias. Furthermore, the bubble dance initiative was reproduced in various countries. Not only was the pandemic context transnational, but the responses to it in terms of embodied place-making also were in some degree. Furthermore, the locality of Brussels was sometimes envisioned as the epicenter of resistance, either through media coverage (La Boum was broadcasted on CNN, Aljazeera etc.) or through the convergence of people towards Brussels (e.g. Freedom Convoy, Europeans united for freedom). Whereas in the case of the Carnaval Sauvage, the project was to gather carnival companies from the entire country towards Brussels. And the 30th year anniversary of the Critical Mass in September 2022 consisted in a convergence of all the masses of the country in Brussels. This often provided a feeling of being at the epicenter of a convergence. It participated in animating imaginaries that I will discuss in the last chapter of this thesis.

TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL CONTEXT

The entire unfolding of this fieldwork always remained linked to a technological context. This link was often ambiguous in the sense that people were generally suspicious about the technology for matters of surveillance. Sometimes, they requested that everyone leaves his phone outside of the room during reunions. Yet, willingly or not, the organization and communication heavily relied on technology. I could observe that the presence on specific online groups or

platforms was often the main condition for being part of a collective. Being part of the communication channel of the collective de facto granted the membership to the collective.

The start of this fieldwork coincides with the apparition of two digital apps known as Telegram and Signal. They appeared after Whatsapp was accused of bad management of people's data and vast amount of people switched from WhatsApp to Telegram and/or Signal, thinking that their communications would be more protected from control and surveillance. Of course, for the kind of subversive undertakings, this particularly concerned us. Nonetheless, Telegram does not only offer protection of personal data and information. It also offers new functionalities that are not present on other messaging services. It offers the possibility to create canals that can be accessed through the sharing of a link. This was very quickly appropriated by politicized movements. It was also very quickly infiltrated by the police. The Freedom Convoy was a good example of such infiltration. The ambiguity of relying and yet distrusting digital tools was thus present, even on Telegram.

More broadly, the pandemic context had triggered a digitalization of practices. People were forced to do most of their activities online. The re-spatialization of practices and reappropriation of outdoor public space that I participated in was also a way to reject the confinement of activities due to the digitalization of everyday life. It was often a rejection of the digitalization of everyday life itself. The digital context was thus crucial in making the conditions for my fieldwork.

THREE MAIN CASE STUDIES

The Schieve Parade

The Schieve Parade in itself took the shape of cultural activism in the urban space in the context of the pandemic situation that I detailed above. It consisted in artistic happenings in the street. I have listed all the performances that occurred in the table C. It relied on a network of temporary occupations that I have listed in Table A.

It is in the aftermath of leading the actions of the Schieve collective and organizing the Schieve Parade that I could get access to the organization of the Carnaval Sauvage and the Critical Mass as well as other secondary case studies. It was as a figurehead of the Schieve that I could participate in their reunions and have a visibility on their relatively confidential process of creating the parade. In this sense, the Schieve parade was the main vessel that allowed me to navigate through the various happenings that I have listed in table B.

The Critical Mass

The Critical Mass is a cycling event that appeared in San Francisco in 1992. A group of cyclists gathered and took over the road in the city, thereby inverting the car hegemony and subverting the dominant functions of the road infrastructure. The anarchist event was then repeated on the last Friday of each month at 18H. It spread from San Francisco to other towns. Nowadays, it exists in many big cities from Berlin to Sao Paolo and from New York to Brussels. What thus started as a local happening became a transnational happening worldwide at the same moment (with the time zone difference).

Before the 1st of May 2021, which was a founding event of the collective, we participated in the Critical Mass in order to distribute flyers for the promotion of La Boum. Then we participated to the one of June 2021 by finding a DJ for the mobile trailer. We then used the same mobile trailer for the making of the Schieve Parade. Later, we provided them with our Soundsystem and slowly, I continually builded links with the Critical Mass during my fieldwork until I integrated their crew.

The Carnaval Sauvage

The Carnaval Sauvage (literately wild carnival) has been happening for ten years in Brussels. Once a year, at spring solstice, people dress as wild men, mask their face, make percussions and stroll through the city. The cortege start with a symbolic trial of the real estate promoter and the bureaucracy which are then burned in a public space. Then, it ends on a wasteland in Brussels with a massive fire. It was born in a temporary occupation ten years ago and kept a tight relationship with the world of squats and temporary occupations. It thus uses certain codes of the traditional Christian carnival such as burning something iconic or the debauchery. Yet, it dissociates itself from the traditional carnival (namely by choosing the date of the solstice). It is in fact a creative mixture of various cultural traits.

I was invited to reunions of the Carnaval Sauvage as they were preparing their 10th year anniversary. Their intention was to make a “total carnival” with a larger crowd than ever before and eventually to spread and divide the cortege (which did not happen). It is for this reason that they invited a member of the Schieve Parade and it is as such that I was introduced to their inner circle. It is at this reunion that I could collect the narrative of the Carnaval Sauvage told by the organizers themselves.

THE UNDERGROUND ECOSYSTEM OF BRUSSELS

First, it is in the underground milieu of Brussels that the Schieve Parade evolved. It was funded by the organization of free parties, it was organized in squats, its communications revolved around the use of stickers in the urban space, it was non-lucrative, did not rely on any commercial or traditional circuit and was unauthorized, it relied on a network involving other underground entities and practices. Also, it attracted a public from those movements and most of the performers and artists were somehow part of the alternative scene. The Schieve Parade was undoubtedly an underground event. The pandemic context fueled a revolutionary dream of a total upheaval of the political establishment that is present in the underground ecosystems. There was a feeling that this was a unique moment to be seized in order to change the course of history, that there was breach we could infiltrate in order to transform society radically and suddenly, namely by generalizing alternative practices.

Secondly, it was part of a dynamic that was pulling the concealed underground to the visible surface. With everything forbidden and restrained, the underground that usually remains the terrain of marginalized minorities was taking over larger parts of the population. The nightlife was coming out in the day, happenings and practices that usually remain in places that only accustomed frequenters and initiated publics get to access were suddenly re-spatialized in the outdoor. This was constituting an inversion where the mainstream that usually occupies the spotlight was made invisible and switched to the underground whereas the underground that stands in opposition anyhow came to visibility. Like in carnivalesque happenings where the role of the powerful and of the poor are inverted, this participated in a kind of extraordinary social inversion.

The organization of the Schieve Parade allowed me to access a vast underground social landscape in Brussels at an accelerated pace. Moreover, I came to realize that street parades themselves were surging from a concealed social landscape. This social landscape we evolved in is very hard to describe and delimit since it is a porous and unlabeled (or multi-labeled), everchanging and multifaceted. Its appearance depends on the observer. For this reason, choosing a word to refer to it was not an easy decision. I was afraid that it would be too precise to encompass the complexity and ungraspable nature of it. There are so many elements of practices, of countercultural characteristics, of networks, tastes and customs which interlace contingently that one label can hardly be enough to label it.

To describe this landscape, I needed a general term that would allow for various kind of categories and segmentations to fit in. I needed a term to describe the anarchic interlacing of countercultural elements such as free party, squats and various forms of activism, techno or punk movements, urban anarchism, skaters, graffers and rioters, street circus, new-age and neohippies, zappatist, Marxist or situationist ideals etc. None of this is well classified and ordered in the field as it could be in a dictionary. Agents creatively appropriate bits and pieces from various sources and coherence is thereby an arbitrary construct. They produce unpredictable and temporary assemblage in the boiling mixture of social encounters in the city. They are nonetheless connected through sociabilities, imaginaries, and places.

I found two terms that could encompass relatively well this ungraspable mass of intersections. These are ‘underground’ and ‘alternative’. Both refer to what is positioned in the margin of the main system. The underground²⁴ refers to something that is below society, concealed and hidden. Whereas the notion of alternative is even more malleable, it does not necessarily imply the idea of something that is concealed, only of something that is “other”. In fact, both terms are often used as synonyms. Finally, the term ecosystem allows to maintain the complexity of the interrelations that are inherent to such milieu.

BRUSSELS BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND MOBILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Brussels’ built environment is not the main focus of my thesis. Yet it is deeply related to it in the way that it constitutes the specificity of the site where my case studies were occurring. Indeed, the “dynamism of placemaking has been and remains most evident in urban public spaces, where the greatest numbers of people are exposed to spatial change.” (Sen A. & Silverman L. 2013 p.5). Those urban public spaces in brussels were constituted in Brussels through far-reaching historical and political processes. The city was consecutively subjugated to various images of modernity. In the 19th century, Brussels was transformed to resemble to Paris whereas in the second half of the 20th century it was made to resemble to New York (Schuiten & Peeters 2021). The workings of urban capital but also of the monarchy’s colonialism perpetrated massive dynamics of demolition and reconstruction. This triggered social struggles against real estate projects such as those expressed by the Carnaval Sauvage. The vast processes of

²⁴ The official definition of the underground cultures is the countercultures that position themselves in opposition to the cultural industry and the mainstream cultural habits relayed by the mass medias. It is thus not restrictive to one particular movement but can encompass many as long as they share an opposition to the mainstream. It has also been used to refer to artistic movements of avant-garde that remain independent from traditional commercial circuits.

demolition and reconstruction often devitalized the city of Brussels. Nowadays, partly for this reason, the city counts a great amount of empty, unoccupied buildings. This is a fertile soil for the striving of a squat culture that is, as we will see, linked to parades.

The mobility infrastructure first followed the hegemony of railway networks. The city was lacerated in every direction so that the train could cross the city. Brussels was imagined as the core of a continental network. Then it was entirely sacrificed to the hegemony of the car with the construction of urban highways, of car parking in the city center and digging of tunnels. This triggered other kind of social struggles such as those expressed by the Critical Mass.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, I have first detailed the sequence of events that I have personally experienced and which shaped my own positionality and presence in the field. This sequence of events contextualized my perspective on this ethnography. Secondly I have looked beyond this, at the broader setting which implies interrelations between topics that are usually looked at separately. It is a complex and multifaceted ecosystem that involves intricacies between the pandemic context, new forms of struggles, the spontaneous appearance of a collective, the underground ecosystem of Brussels, the historical transformations of the built environment and the mobility infrastructure, its related social struggles etc. All together, these elements formed a complex setting for street parades.

I have argued that there was a respatialization of practices which triggered a dynamic of reappropriation of the urban space. That new forms of sectorial struggles appeared, impulsing new communities of solidarity and new interactions between actors that were previously not communicating. I showed how the various happenings reappropriating the urban space varied in its politization, in transnationality in relation with the digital or with sectorial segmentation etc. but that despite their variations, they participated in a similar dynamic that consisted in taking the streets. I explained how my field was related to an international context. How it was also related to a digital and technological context in ambiguous manners by both rejecting the digitalization of everyday life and appropriating technologies in their own terms. I detailed the three major case studies that are mostly referred to in the ethnographic chapters. I underlined the importance of the underground ecosystem of brussels which condenses elements of counter-cultures and political resistance. Finally, I looked at the built environment of brussels and how it is related to social struggles.

Dancing with the street

The purpose of this first chapter is the description of the spatial and bodily experiences in a parade. It attempts to give an ethnographic account of the way urban space is experienced by participants of a parade. Based on empirical materials, I found out that this experience can be detailed into three major dynamics: 1) imagination, 2) appropriation and 3) freedom or liberation. The present description of people's experiences of the urban space in a parade will follow this threefold structure. Also, the three major empirical case studies, that will be referred to in this chapter are the Schieve Parade, the Critical Mass and the Carnaval Sauvage as indicated in the context chapter. Those empirical case studies will be continuously related to the relevant theoretical framework.

IMAGINING PLACES

This first section about imagination describes how parades enable participants to imagine places. I could observe various forms of spatial imagination in the making and experiencing of parades. First is what I call the narrativization of places which consists in the construction of a narrative through the selection of places in the city (usually the point of departure of the parade). Secondly is the poetization of space. This entails poetical experiences of the city which transform the relation between bodies and urban space, both temporarily and lastingly.

Imagining places through narrativizing

There exists in a city many places that undertake the function of hosting performances and narration. Theaters, opera houses and cinemas are such places designed for the experience of unfolding narratives. They trigger but also contain imagination within their walls. The parade also provides a space to enact performances, however this plays out in places that have initially not been designed to fulfill this function. By doing so, it subverts the official function and use (e.g. of circulation, of commerce etc.) of these places. I will try to show that unleashing imagination in the open space of the city builds an alternative spatial imagination²⁵. The actors

²⁵ Spatial Imagination is a term that was coined by Dell Upton (2008) in his works on the way Antebellum American cities were produced by a certain form of spatial imagination. In his perspective, space is produced by specific imaginaries that are constituting the historical field of production. The title of this chapter is inspired by the name of his work published in 2008 (another city: urban life and urban spaces in the new American republic).

mobilized in the forging of an alternative spatial imagination seek to subvert and transform²⁶ the passive experiences of space that are produced by a spatial imagination associated with the modern state²⁷.

By ‘narrativizing places’ I do not designate the narration of a place’s history nor a place that becomes the decor of a narration but the insertion of a place into a narrative whereby the place itself becomes a narrative element. An informant that was travelling internationally to organize workshops in squats about the “creation of other spaces and in situ immersive public spaces”²⁸ called this in French “la mise en récit du territoire”, which would literally mean “the setting into narrative of territory”. Through the process of narrativizing places, participants of the parade actively imagine space and learn to read the city in new ways. I will rely upon two case studies in order to illustrate the narrativization of space and I will explain how this participates in the deployment of an alternative spatial imagination. Also, I will show how they are experienced by participants.

Ulenspiegel and the Schieve Parade

Place Flagey is connected to the rest of the city by ten different streets. One of them, the Malibran street, hosts Hallal stores and a mosque. Another hosts places that are identified by city dwellers as the hotspots of the Portuguese community. One of the ten streets stretches along the peaceful ponds of Ixelles and includes the most expensive real estate in town, whilst another leads to the nearby Congolese neighborhood. On one side of the place, one reaches the bourgeois neighborhood of the Châtelain that is populated with many rich Parisians, the other one heads towards the student neighborhood. I had the chance to live in a flat next to the Place Flagey for a year, approximately the duration of my ethnography and before I moved into a temporary occupation, thanks to the many encounters I made along this long and intense dive into Brussels underground ecosystem. I can say that Place Flagey is an undefinable place. All kinds of sociability intercrosses there.

²⁶ Lefebvre describes representational space (which is namely the space of artistic creation and performance) in a similar manner as the “dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects.” (Lefebvre 1991 p.39).

²⁷ In reference to Upton Dell’s concept, Chattopadhyay examines how political wall writing in India are “crafting a spatial imagination that challenges the one associated with the modern state.” (Chattopadhyay 2013 p.46)

²⁸ The collective that this informant was part of can be found on the Facebook page called “Collectif Grand Dehors”
→ <https://www.facebook.com/collectifgranddehors/>

Where the lake starts, there is a fenced small green square where I used to start my promenades and in the middle of it, a monument. The monument was built in 1894 at the initiative of the township of Ixelles in order to commemorate Charles de Coster, a writer that lived in the neighborhood. But curiously, this monument, baptized after the name of the writer, does not represent the writer. It represents Thyl Ulenspiegel and his friend Nele. Thyl Ulenspiegel is the main character of de Coster's most famous novel called *"The legend and the heroic, joyful and glorious adventures of Thyl Ulenspiegel and Lamme Goedzak in the country of Flanders and elsewhere"*. Ulenspiegel is an old literary figure of Germanic folklore whose first accounts were probably written around 1500. He is a mischievous figure, a playful mountebank who leads revolts of beggars and mocks the emperors. He incarnates the popular figure of the wise buffoon. On the frontispiece of the monument lay the symbols of a mirror and an owl. The owl represents wisdom and corresponds to the term "Ulen" whereas the mirror represents the inversion and corresponds to the term "Spiegel" in Germanic languages. Ulenspiegel enacts social inversions of hierarchy and relations of power through humor. Inversions that turn to ridicule the prestige of the rich and powerful and empower the alienated.

The signification of this legendary figure was a perfect match with the motives and mindset of the Schieve collective at its beginnings. The very first acts taken by the group of people that was to become the collective of the Schieve Parade were to turn the police repression and the dominant discourse of the political authorities during the Covid-19 into laughter and derision during a massive gathering on the 1st of May 2021 (see video 24). The water cannon trucks were to be responded with water guns, the police cavalry which had been particularly violent one month earlier were to be imitated with horse sticks and unicorns. The idea was to show the absurdity of the situation and to use parody and mockery as a mode of engaging with the authoritarian repression.

If the first gathering on the 1st of May coincidentally occurred around the square of Ulenspiegel statue, we then realized the symbols of this place and the first Schieve Parade, which occurred on the 26th of June willingly started from there. This place with a statue representing Ulenspiegel became the meeting place for all the mountebanks of the Schieve Parade. We started making references to the "great cosmic clown" as a supreme spiritual guide benevolently leading us to great pranks. At the occasion of the second Schieve Parade, three months after the first one, we gathered at the same place again. But this time we elaborated the narrative further by asking a professional taleteller to tell a story of Ulenspiegel in front of the statue. And I asked him to

finish his tale with a prophecy. The prophecy told that someday the statue would awaken from its petrified sleep and come alive to lead a revolution. The narrative of the Schieve Parade was sealed in stone.

The initial purpose of the monument to Charles de Coster was of course not to make the statement of a revolution against the political establishment. After all, it was erected at the initiative of the political establishment of the township itself²⁹. At the time, it must have been a way to construct the cultural heritage and prestige of the locality by commemorating and appropriating the success of a famous writer that had lived there³⁰. But its meaning was not determined once and for all in 1894. In 2021, we developed competing claims which were asserted through the narrativization of the monument's location. This had profound political implications. As anthropologist Setha Low argues, "contested spaces give material expression to and act as loci for creating and promulgating, countering and negotiating dominant cultural themes and political practices." (Low 2017 p.76)

Through the parade's interaction, the Ulenspiegel statue became, in Lefebvre's terms (1991), "a representational space"³¹ that challenged the official spatial imagination designed by the state's institutions. The narrativization of the Ulenspiegel monument participated in spatializing an imaginary of political resistance in the city.

Jeu de Balle and the carnaval sauvage

Winter was cooling down the streets of Brussels. At this period of the year, the darkness of the night was wrapping up the town most of the day. We were offered a free soup as we arrived in an abandoned theater called "Le Bunker". The place was made out of shredded concrete. It was a theater room which hosts various kinds of events. Fanzine, punk, techno... no doubt that this was one of those pullulating yet discrete nests for underground cultures. Lively and yet unknown to most residents of the city, teeming and yet unadvertised. Some of the faces

²⁹ The monument was sponsored by the township of Ixelles to the sculptor Charles Samuel and the architect Franz De Vestel in 1984 : https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_De_Coster

³⁰ The green political party currently in power of the township of Ixelles wrote on their website that the monument the statue as "misunderstood touristic asset to valorize" (<https://ixelles.ecolo.be/2015/06/19/pour-le-tourisme-pas-pour-le-consumerisme/>).

³¹ Lefebvre describes representational space (which is namely the space of artistic creation and performance) in a similar manner as the "dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects." (Lefebvre 1991 p.39).

were familiar yet I couldn't tell where exactly, in which squat, demonstration, or free party I had seen them. I think some of them recognized me as well.

It was February 2022, long after the last Schieve Parade and I was invited at the "reunion of swarming" of the Carnaval Sauvage as a representative of the Schieve. Representatives of various collectives were present. A call was out to other collectives in order to "swarm" the carnival for its 10-year anniversary planned for a month later, to trigger a convergence at the carnival and create what they called a "total carnival". The organizers were all dressed in black from head to toe, a dress code that is sometimes used to claim anarchism, as in this case. One of them begins by telling the story of the carnival from its beginnings...

Ten years earlier, in 2013 there was a temporary occupation of a building in Brussels with various kinds of sociocultural activities. The occupation was called La Compilothèque. But it was to be demolished in order to build something else, joining the never-ending list of places that become the forgotten victims of urban transformations. The people attached to the Compilothèque decided to organize a carnival to celebrate the end of their beloved place. The theme of the carnival was to dress as a wild man with animal skins and horns. The costumes however had to be recycled from waste. This Carnaval Sauvage, from then on, was held every year in Brussels. Now, in 2022, we had come together to prepare its tenth anniversary.

Lots of the waste was to be found at a place called Jeu de Balle where flea markets are held regularly. The Jeu de Balle is also the place where the Carnaval Sauvage always starts. It is, for them an iconic place, explains a man dressed in black:

"There is, in the neighborhood of the Marolles, a tale of urban struggle that is known as "the battle of the Marolles". The battle of the Marolles took place at the end of the 60s at a moment where there was a project of extension of the courthouse (palais de justice) on the neighborhood of the Marolles. The inhabitants mobilized themselves and led an urban struggle which ended up victorious: the real estate project was abandoned. And to celebrate this cancelation, the Marollians organized a feast, a street feast that would take the form of a burial of the real estate promoter and of his loyal spouse, the bureaucracy. So, there it is, these two characters had been buried by the Marollians but in 2013 they were still as active in the process of gentrification and destruction of the city, the destruction of places where we afforded to house ourselves to live or work. Therefore, we thought they were not really dead and that we had to kill them again. That is what we set up. Starting from the second year of the Carnaval Sauvage, we started performing a trial to prosecute the real estate promoter and its loyal spouse the

bureaucracy. So, each year, we bring them back to court and they are systematically condemned to be burned at the end of the carnival after having been taken throughout the city until the place where the cortege ends.” (Int. 8)

In returning to the Jeu de Balle every year and reenacting the trial, the Carnaval Sauvage cyclically actualize a social memory of the “place du Jeu de Balle”. The ritual grants the square a collective meaning as a place of popular resistance and urban struggle but also revives a triumph of the inhabitants. It conjures a story of social inversion in which the poor inhabitants symbolically take precedence over the rich investors that are symbolically burned in public (see videos 14 & 15).

The narrative of the Carnaval Sauvage was willingly anchored in a place which they come back to each year to gather and start the cortege in order to revive the awareness of continuous urban struggles. What is interesting in this case study is that in their process of embodied place-making the organizers not only prove to have a consciousness of the issues at stake with the political economy of the urban space, but they also materialize it. They embody the places they make by coming together in an impressive cortege rhythmized by drums and percussions. But they also conjointly embody the social theory they articulate, through the revival of the memory of historical processes that shaped the urban space. They engage with matters of urban transformation and capital in the city with their bodies. This is achieved by the performance of theatricalized situations in selected places.

This is another example of “narrativizing place”. The “Carnaval Sauvage” narrativizes the Jeu de Balle. It constructs this place as a symbol of the triumph of the battle of the Marolles and therefore as a place of resistance in all urban struggles. Through their performances, they turn the Place du Jeu de Balle into a narrative element containing symbolic constructs. Furthermore, it shows how the collective identity of a parade is being constructed in relation to the urban space.

The places that are narrativized in the two examples above are the points of departure of the parades. The urban space that is travelled afterwards is made legible by the narrativization that took place in the beginning. Indeed, once the real estate promoter and the bureaucracy are condemned and burned in public, the neighborhoods that are walked through are not anymore neutral spaces, but a space charged with the tension of urban struggles. And once the tale of Ulenspiegel mocking the powerful has been told in front of the statue, wandering through the city with children running around and ambulant circus performers takes an entirely different signification. The space that is ran through by the parade is set into a narrative that suggests a

certain readability of the city. The narrativization of places thereby performed is spatializing social struggles and imaginaries of resistance.

Imagining spaces through poetization

Artistic performances in the city

The avant-garde movement of Letterist International (1954-57), which prefigured the Situationist International, claimed that art and poetry were from now on to be situated in the form of cities. In their conception, the new poetry was to be lived. A kind of poetry that is found in temporary situations³². Very similarly, parades consist of the creation of temporary poetic experiences in the city. The artistic and participatory performances in the Schieve Parade were playing an important role in this sense. I could number 24 different performances and participatory activities which occurred in the three Schieve Parade (see Table C). A good example to visualize the kind of poetization involved is an audiovisual project that I have conducted with an artist of the Schieve Parade (video 27). It visually superposes the skyline of Brussels' towers with an aerial dance performance. The towers represent a functionalist and capitalist spatial imagination that shaped the built environment of modern cities. Whereas the aerial dancer represents the creative possibilities of the human body in such surroundings. The fences of a construction site that appear serve as a reminder of the ongoing processes of urban transformation, which residents of the city have little control over. The aerial performer demonstrates – in our view – that people have the power to autonomously and creatively imagine new ways of interacting with the city. Both the performance and our video recording of it creates moments of beauty and poetry.

From this example, we can see that imagination is enacted through bodily and artistic performances, which shapes the world outwith as much as they shape the world within. The parades, and the performances they bring forth, gives a place to utopian imaginings of the city.

³² The Letterist International, later followed by the Situationist International were criticizing the urbanization that was taking place during the era of the Marshall Plan and reductionist functionalism. To this they opposed unitary urbanism which encouraged a playful and poetic relation with the urban space. The ideas of the Letterists were developed in text written between 1954 and 1957 which can be found with this reference: International Letterist (1954-57). *Potlatch*. Digital edition by Yves Le Bail : http://classiques.uqac.ca/contemporains/internationale_lettriste/Potlatch/Potlatch.html

Those utopian visions have a profound impact on the individuals that experience it³³. Indeed, participants of the Schieve Parade were driven by a will to collectively transform their everyday life and it is by reimagining the spatial surroundings where this everyday life was located that they attempted to do so. We did so by setting up a series of artistic performance in the city. The members of the collective of the Schieve Parade actively reflected on such topics (that are characteristic of the Letterists and the Situationists).

Reenchanting space through movement.

During a group interview with 4 members of the Schieve collective, one interviewed explained how the framing of movement through space into a marked terrain and its reduction into calculable data is challenged by the parade. She explains how the parade impacts the self.

“The mobile passes from a point A to a point B and does not evolve. We calculate data (kilometers, fuel, data etc) but there is no longer this possibility that the path transforms the person that passes through. And this is sad because we live our displacements almost as burdensome. Instead, when we make a parade, we start again from this idea of journeying which transforms the mobile and we need this (...) The parade, for me, is a displacement which is not anymore in the technicalities of “how much time is it going to take, how late is my tram...”. Rather it is going into an unknown because we let go of conventions. We do not know what we will be, we will surprise ourselves, discover ourselves. And this path, we remember it.” (Int. 2)

What is formulated in the example above shows how experiencing something new in a known space (or experiencing an unknown space) can trigger a powerful imagination of space. This is what I try to describe as the “poetization of space”. Her account corresponds to the difference between an abstract, disembodied space and a creatively embodied space³⁴ that has the capacity to transform the moving subject during the parade. The experience of this embodied space cannot be measured nor calculated. She also explained that the transformation of the moving subject is contained in the “oneirism of maps” (or ‘imaginary characteristic’ of maps). In etic terms, it is contained in the projection of imagination onto the terrain. In this vision, the parade is an act of

³³ The role of utopias and imagination in shaping existences was tackled by many writers. Reflecting on Deleuze’s ideas, Aliana argues that “...the imagination projects us in the future. She prepares us to express ourselves in the field of aesthetic or in other domains. We use imagination to act and not only to evade. Imagination projects us thereby in programming utopias susceptible to redefine existential trajectories.” (Aliana. 2017 P.160).

³⁴ This distinction is similar to Lefebvre’s distinction between representations of space and representational space (Lefebvre 1991).

projecting imagination onto the terrain. Instead of merely circulating, the participant in a parade actively reimagines the urban space.³⁵

Staying with the comparison between parades and maps, when we use maps we normally use them to get from A to B. We use them for a future orientation. We are less interested in the possibilities of engagement with our surroundings at that moment. In most displacements, the destination is the finality whereas in the parade, the movement itself is the finality. There is a direct engagement of the body with the space, with the persons around. New kinds of proxemics³⁶ are established. And a predominance is given to the sensory experience of the urban space.

Following Low's proposal (2013 p.25), "movement and walking create space" while "bodily movements and activities produce different kinds of spatial experience." Here, the experience of movement and walking in a parade create a space different to the ordinary space of the city and to its abstract disembodied conception. Instead, the movements of bodies in the parade, are mobile spatial fields that make their own place in the world (Munn 1996). Experiencing space in this manner diverts the function of circulation that is given supremacy in normal times. And it opens possibilities for the imagination to re-enchant the urban space.

Imagination and memory

Apart from the artistic performances and the altered motion in space, the embracing of a playful role through disguises and play provides the experience of an imaginary world.

"(...) The fact of being able on top to disguise and play (at the Schieve Parade) brings an additional dimension of dream. Also, the sacred space that we succeed in creating through the magic and the festivity that I feel is not always present in the demonstration.

N: It brings the imaginary. Yes, an imaginary world which seizes space." (Int. 2 & 3)

³⁵ Her account recalls Sennett's description of a space that has become "a means to the end of pure motion - we now measure urban spaces in terms of how easy it is to drive through them, to get out of them. The look of urban space enslaved to these powers of motion is necessarily neutral: the driver can drive safely only with the minimum of idiosyncratic distractions; to drive well requires standard signs, dividers, and drain sewers, and also streets emptied of street life apart from other drivers. As urban space becomes a mere function of motion, it thus becomes less stimulating in itself; the driver wants to go through the space, not to be aroused by it. (...) Navigating the geography of modern society requires very little physical effort, hence engagement; indeed, as roads become straightened and regularized, the voyager need account less and less for the people and the buildings on the street in order to move, making minute motions in an ever less complex environment. Thus, the new geography reinforces the mass media. The traveller, like the television viewer, experiences the world in narcotic terms; the body moves passively, desensitized in space, to destinations set in a fragmented and discontinuous urban geography." (Sennett 1996 p.17-18)

³⁶ Proxemics is a term proposed by the American anthropologist, Edward T. Hall, to designate the study of the use of space and more specifically the distance that is set between bodies in different social contexts and cultures.

This reimagination of space happens for a short duration. Yet imagination is intertwined with memory and the reimagination of space leaves traces on those that have experienced it. As expressed by an active participant in the parade, when returning to places that were occupied by the parade; “It is like the place is the key to reopen the magic when I pass by again”. The city is turned into an imaginary terrain that is itself shaped by poetical experiences. And this involves both imagination and memory³⁷.

Of course, imagination and memories do not only include beautiful, gracious, and pleasant images. It can also include nightmarish and haunting reminiscences. In the following account, the same informant explained how she valorizes places through memory and imagination. The poetization of space enabled in the parade contrast with other sort of memories. Indeed, this shows how parades forge special kinds of attachments to places which endure even afterwards in memory.

N : So, me I lived all my life in Brussels and I relocated an incalculable number of times and when I walk around in Brussels, I walk around in my memory. From one remembrance to another. Sometimes I return to streets where I had a huge fight. And what is wonderful about when I revisit the places where we made a parade, is that they are often memories of a magical nature. And clearly, amongst all these remembrances, in the furrowing of all my life, these marks are a breath. A feeling of empowerment. It is clearly places which remain magical in my psyche where I will be attentive. Like when we met the last time at Ulenspiegel, we laughed. There is something normal, it is a bit like our place.” (Int. 2)

The above accounts of how people experience the urban space during a parade show that, through imagination, a place can be animated and embodied. This poetizing of space is situated in the relation between bodies and urban space, as this powerful final account depicts: “*My passion is to dance with space, to respond to it, to have an interaction with the architecture which is an art and to see how this immobile art influences our movements. And there, there is a point where everything becomes alive, even space.*” (Int. 6)

³⁷ For Gaston Bachelard, “Here, space is everything, because time does not animate memory anymore. Memory – strange thing! – does not register the concrete duration, the duration in Bergsonian sense. We cannot relive the abolished durations. We can only think them, only think them on the line of an abstract time deprived of thickness. It is through space, it is in space that we find the beautiful fossils of durations concretized by long indwelling. The unconscious sojourns. The souvenirs are immobile all the more solid as they are better spatialized” (1957 p.62) and “The true (poetical) images are engravings. The imagination engraves them into our memory. They deepen lived souvenirs, they displace lived souvenirs to become souvenirs of imagination.” (1957 p.87)

APPROPRIATING PLACES

In the above, I have explained how Brussels' parades enable the participants to reimagine urban space. In this subsection, I explore matters of spatial appropriation. First, I will examine the kind of appropriation that is involved, framing the statements of the participants with a linguistic argument. Secondly, I will explain the ethical and political outcomes of spatial appropriation, as experienced by the participants.

Being there and owning places

All the interviews I collected were conducted in French. This means I have had to translate the interviews afterwards. The question of the loyalty to the emic discourse does sometimes trigger dissatisfactions in the translating process. I first perceived it as an inconvenience. Then I realized that the effort of translating could reveal contrasts of significations contained in different languages. Those contrasts could sometimes be very relevant to the ethnographic undertaking.

For an example, the same formulation appeared in crucial parts of various interview transcripts. Yet it was impossible to have an accurate translation. In French, we say "chez moi" to signify "at my place" or "at my home". Yet, the literal translation of "chez moi" in English is impossible. I first considered it as an upsetting problem that I couldn't fully resolve and for which I thus had to find the least bad way out. In each case, I was trying to select the most appropriate solution like in this interview transcript which expresses the feeling of ownership of places:

"N: It is clearly places which remain magical in my psyche, where I will be attentive. Like when we met last time at Ulenspiegel, we laugh. There is something normal, it is a bit like our place (chez nous).

Y: So, there is a reappropriation of places, that are not common places anymore but owned places. It is a way to be able to be really at home (chez soi)." (Int. 2 & 3)

Then suddenly I realized this untranslatability was indicating me something that would certainly have remained invisible without the translation process. I was too accustomed to the French formulation to notice it until I was confronted with the translation issue. Indeed, to be "chez moi" in French signifies to be at one's own place and yet it is not a possessive pronoun that is used but a personal pronoun. Literally, it is not "at mine" but "at me" or "by me". While the English formulations only offer the possibility to refer to the locus ("my place" or "my home"), the French formulation refers to the being that owns or inhabits the place. It linguistically

performs a confounding between the place and the individual that owns it. In this formulation, the being equates the place it inhabits and vice versa.

In a similar movement of thoughts, an informant expressed to me how she felt a confounding of being and place when I asked what she could feel while walking in the middle of the street in the parade: *“The first thing that comes into my mind is ‘to be my own path’. It is like if there was something more embodied. In a car, it is like if I was just passing by on the path. Especially in town, I am not really there, I am in my car in town. Whereas there (in the parade), it was really living myself with all of you. I think it is a gift to be able to really live oneself, to live the magic of existence without filter or with as little filter as possible. (...) There is this aspect of filling, as if it could fill up the place but without invading it and the fact of passing by, and not staying, it is also this movement, but a slow movement. Not to impose oneself to the place, but just leaving traces. It is like leaving a footprint. It is being the path and leaving traces of life. It is a dance with the street, a dance with the beings.”* (Int. 6)

The being embodies the path that is traversed (“to be my own path”), even more, it becomes the path that is traversed. Topology ‘tumbles into ontology’ as the being embodies space. The experience of being in a place can slide towards the experience of being a place. This is the kind of intimate experience of appropriation of space that is enabled in the parade. The city can become one’s own. Setha Low, in her description of ritualized acts of collective strolling in Costa Rica, also refers to this possibility of owning the city and making it legible through bodily movement, while strolling together (Low 2013 p.41).

Not only the organizers of the parades, but others also recognize this potential of the parade. At the end of the third Schieve Parade, a policewoman once blamed us aggressively that “you people think the city belongs to you!” at a moment when we were pulling a trolley that served to collect trash and keep the street clean and a giant unicorn mounted on the Critical Mass’s bicycle trailer (see video 16 and images 17) back to our headquarters in a squatted building. We were only occupying a tiny segment of the cycling path and yet, she was accusing us of appropriating the entire city. Indeed, we too felt at that moment that our parade, as a mobile event in the public space, addressed the entire city. The motion, that is fundamental to the idea of a parade, create what Setha Low describes as a translocal spatial setting³⁸. It does more than

³⁸ Low describes translocal space as the interpenetration of one space by another. It encompasses the experience and materialities of multiple places and is yet limited by the structural and physical constraints of Corporeality. (Low 2017 p.174)

addressing specific places it goes through, but it engages with an imaginary spatiality that encompasses the city or the district.

By being in the middle of the street, in a parade, people no longer have the experience of belonging to the city, but rather have the experience that the city belongs to them. This was nicely depicted by a member of the Carnaval Sauvage: *“In fact, you tell yourself that you inhabit (the city), and that the city belongs to you and that you are no longer undergoing plenty of things. You are being there.”* (Int. 8)

I found it quite surprising how this man synthesized his experience of space with the formulation of ‘being there’ which recalls the phenomenological concept of “Dasein” of Heidegger³⁹. On the one hand, being in the city can be considered as the experience of undergoing things, which suggests being stuck in a suffering passivity. On the other hand, there is the possibility of a being that actively inhabits and owns the world, that is fully ‘being there’. From a phenomenological point of view, those two moods have the potency to open the space of the city to the being in a drastically different manner.⁴⁰ Switching from one to the other is switching from the experience of a city that is a vast whirlpool imposing constraints on the individual towards a city that is a collectively inhabited space. The parade creates the possibility to break free from the passive body (passive body as described by Richard Sennett, 1994).

The experiential ethics and politics of spatial appropriation

The ownership I have just described often comes into competition with other kinds of spatial ownership. In a legal and jurisdictional dispositive, places are measured and delimited in order to be owned through bureaucratic processes of acquisition. The owners and the space are expressed in abstract terms in a legal document such as a contract or a law (e.g. privatization of space, state’s ownership of space). Clearly, those two kinds of ownership coexist in daily life. Legally owned places are also embodied, and state’s ownership of public space may be embodied through the police. But sometimes they might compete as a place is simultaneously claimed by inhabitants of the city, by private investors or by the state. Different ways to express spatial ownership may oppose each other, as when owners of an inhabited building hire a lawyer to talk

³⁹ Heidegger’s hypothesis formulates the idea that the ‘Sein’ is its ‘Da’ and thus, Heideggerian space is not an expanse upon which the being can unfold, rather the Dasein is the place where the event of being can unfold. (1927)

⁴⁰ With Heidegger, the experience of space is an ontological experience that is opened through the mood or state of mind (Befindlichkeit). (1927)

in a court room with squatters. Or when participants in a parade occupy public space no matter what the political authorities have authorized or not.

The hegemonic conception of legal ownership of space is embedded in the spatial fixity of sedentarism, whereas the embodied notion of space that I have detailed relies on movement (inter alia a characteristic of nomadism). The parade is questioning the territorial fixity of space. In the parade, space can become one's own at any given moment depending on who appropriates it. It is flexible and flowing. I realized this when I was talking with a friend that had become a nomad and lived with a van. She said:

“Since I live in my vehicle and I am being a nomad, I consider the exterior and the public space differently: I am at my place (chez moi) everywhere now. Before, I used to feel legitimate and at ease to do what pleased me only at home, because I used to pay a rent and the law indicated to me that this was the place that belonged to me. Now that I do not have a fixed address anymore, the moment I park somewhere, the entire exterior space becomes my garden, my toilets, my living-room etc., I feel at my place (chez moi) there, but also at the other's which also share this space. Thereby, it is easier for me to invest myself in it, to embellish it, to occupy it physically and in a sonorous manner (with the chanting and the ukulele). I was already sensible to the environment and to the fact of taking care of it, but this feeling was multiplied given that it is at my place (chez moi), I want to take care of it and that my “house” be clean and welcoming.” (Int. 9)

I have included this statement because it shows that movement allows detachment from the hegemonic conceptions of space and opens new possibilities for inhabiting places. Also, the previous account shows that it triggers participatory dynamics that contrast with the agencies produced by modern state. It is relevant because the exact same thing happens in a parade. The movement of the parade allows a detachment from the hegemonic conception of public space and opens new possibilities while triggering participatory dynamics. Those participatory dynamics induced by appropriation are the basis of what I call the experiential ethics and politics of spatial appropriation. I could observe it empirically when, after parades, members of the collective would overflow with dozens of ideas about how to transform and interact with the city space. These ideas were projecting their political ideals (feminist, ecologist, anarchist ideals etc...) on to the city space. Appropriating the city in the parade had triggered a longing for further active participation in the life of the city. It had awakened experiential ethics and politics which were

somewhat similar to what Karen Till (2013) calls the “place-based ethics of care”.⁴¹ As the latter informant expressed, the feeling of care for places is multiplied as it is owned. This leads me to argue that the politics of spatial appropriation are not so ideological (in the sense that it is not embedded in an abstract political vision of the world) but experiential and embodied. The politics of spatial appropriation derives from the experience of spatial appropriation itself. The politics of appropriating a place are experiential.

The Facebook page of a Flemish activist group which had a lot of sympathy for us (and reciprocally) since we had achieved actions in the public space together during demonstrations (see video 18) was showing as a description “Niet links, niet rechts maar in het midden van de straat” which literally means “not right nor left but in the middle of the street.” This suggests that there is a difference between positioning oneself on the political spectrum and appropriating space in order to transform its political parameters. Indeed, the politics of appropriating a space is different from the politics of formal political institutions. The people in a parade attempt to directly transform the politics that are being lived and experienced in space. In this undertaking, spatial appropriation is necessary.

In summary of this section, the interviewees suggest that parades generate a feeling of owning the city. The perception of this ownership is not restricted to the insiders of the parade but it is also perceived by outsiders – as is shown in the example of the stressed-out policewoman above. To express this feeling of ownership, interviewees used terms like ‘chez moi’, ‘dancing with the street’, and ‘being there’. Their feelings starkly contrast with the concepts of ownership in the legal realm which assume that ownership operates to bureaucratic processes that stabilize ownership in the hands of a clearly defined single actor.

MATERIALIZING AND EMBODYING FREEDOM

The notion of spatial appropriation and its political implications lead us directly to the question of freedom and liberation. Indeed, in Vaneigem’s words (a Belgian figure of 1950s art movement Situationism), “materializing freedom means beginning by appropriating a few

⁴¹ In a study of the Colombian neighborhood ‘El Cartucho’ she showed that for expropriated residents, taking care of their former houses was a way to take care of themselves. She suggests that the confounding of the space and the self that happens in the embodied appropriation of places impacts the ways of life. “Residents were asked to understand and care for the places they once inhabited as a process of taking care of themselves; their embodied placemakings would remain with them as they faced unknown futures and searched for new homes and ways of life.” (Till 2013 p.165)

patches of the surface of a domesticated planet.” (Kotanyi & Vaneigem, 1961, p.67).

Appropriating places is closely connected to the idea of liberation. However, there hardly is a more ungraspable notion as freedom. Freedom can have many different meanings. Here, freedom will be approached as an experience that is necessarily situated and contextualized rather than as an abstract ideal. Freedom will be referred to as an embodied experience rather than as a disembodied concept. Even delimited in this definition, we will see that freedom can be triggered by a variety of factors.

First, looking at the sensory dimension of embodied freedom as it presents itself in the experience of the parade, I will show the role of movement. Secondly, I will look at liberation from social norms and behaviors that is linked to the carnivalesque and Dionysian festivities. Thirdly, I will examine the conditions for political freedom and how these conditions are embodied in the parade. In the three sections, we will see that relation between the body and its spatial surrounding is crucial to the notion of freedom.

Movement and freedom

First of all, freedom is related to movement. *“Being free has several levels of meaning. Fundamental is the ability to transcend the present condition, and this transcendence is most simply manifest as the elementary power to move. In the act of moving, space and its attributes are directly experienced.”* (Yi-Fu Tuan 2001 p.52). This movement can take various forms such as dancing⁴², cycling or even walking. For Arendt, it consists in the “absence of restraint and possession of ‘the power of locomotion’” (Arendt 1990 p.32). The power of locomotion, in her view, is the most fundamental condition for freedom.

In the following account provided to me by an informant, it is indeed the movement that is lived as a liberation. The movement of the parade is lived as a trigger for the liberation of bodies in space. As the continual flow of people starts, the body is more easily set in motion. *“This body that was calling for colors, that just wanted to be able to take other forms. Longing for other forms. And at the same time, to live this tension where a part of myself does not authorize it. So, there was really those back and forth and at the same time the gaze upon myself and the gaze on society. Between joy and discomfort. And gradually as we started walking, something that liberates itself.”* (Int. 6)

⁴² Aimee Cox (2014) depicts dance as a tool for Black woman to produce their own space of freedom.

The setting of the body in motion through the urban space is a first step towards the experience of freedom. Furthermore, what makes the parade different to other ways of moving through the city, in terms of liberation, will now be explained.

Liberation from social order in carnivalesque festivity

The organizer of the Belgian Cyclonudista naturist cycle parade explained to me that the common point between nakedness and cycling is liberty. *“What nudity has in common with the bicycle is liberty. The bicycle is associated with liberty and nudity is associated with liberty in people’s minds. Often, we ask people what it makes them think about and the answer is often liberty.”* (Int. 7). In one hand, the association of liberty and the bicycle is easily understood in the light of the previous argument on movement as freedom. On the other hand, the liberty of nakedness also points towards another form of liberation. For an example, the liberation from social norms of wearing clothes in public.

In daily life, the behaviors and norms that regulate the presence of humans in the city are relatively homogenized. But in the parade, the gestures that are accomplished all throughout the year are suddenly put aside. This is what makes the parade so extraordinary (in the sense of beyond the ordinary). Instead of crossing the street on Zebra paths and following the straight lines of sidewalks, people start dancing and gesticulating weirdly on the rhythm of the drums (see video 20), climbing on top of trucks (see video 21), or climbing on trees: *“And I think the proof that it is truly liberating is that human has plenty of impulses, he loves climbing and all this stuff and here we are really stuck on the ground, just walking. And when you are in parades, as soon as there are possibilities to climb up a tree, they do it. You see people are enjoying it. Because they always want it but because of the social mores, they never do it. And there, all of a sudden, you really have spaces which are not just two-dimensional on the ground. But bam! A bit of tridimensional. It really opens and impulses sally out.”* (Int. 5)

This account makes a direct connection between social mores, space, and bodily gestures. The liberation from social mores enables new and spontaneous gestures (e.g. climbing up a tree) which in turn modifies space (e.g. from two-dimensional to three-dimensional). This can happen only if bodily gestures were contained by a social order in the firsthand. The interrelation between those three elements is illustrated in figure 1. In short, each part of the triangle produces and is produced by the two others. A modification in one part of the triangle induces a modification on the two others. For an example, bodily gestures can either reproduce or

transgress a social order. An altered space can induce different bodily gestures. Finally, a social order produces bodily gestures and uses of space.

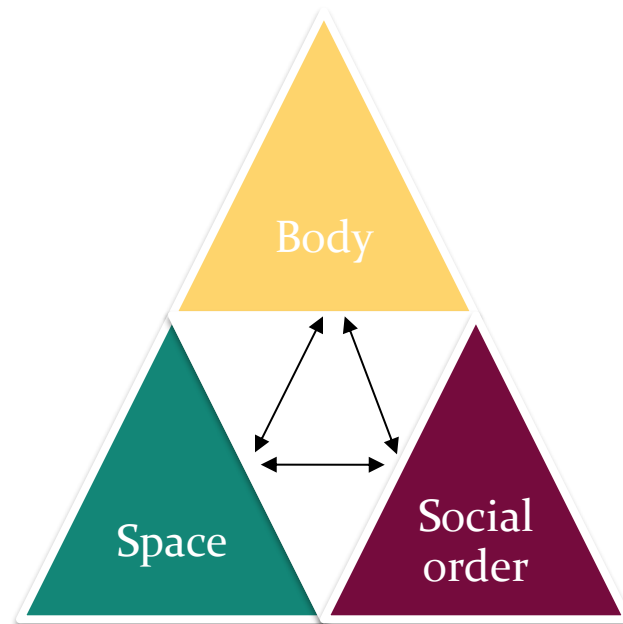


Figure 1: triangle of liberation

The liberation from social norms and behaviors which happens in a Carnavalesque parade are thus closely linked to the disrupting of the relationship between body and space. The same informant often told me that in modern cities, we are “forced to march along the walls”. He envisioned the sidewalks as the small scrapings left over for pedestrians. On the contrary, parades enable movement from small sidewalks along the walls towards the middle of the street. It enables the body to occupy a new space that was previously restricted and thereby inverts the spatialization of a social order. This materialization of freedom through the appropriation of a space imprints durable desires for the participants of the parade.

“When you get to a place where there are no more cars and you see the city has, all of a sudden, taken possession. I feel like living completely differently in those places, it has opened so much liberty that each time I can’t stop myself from revisualizing them and to tell myself ‘we could do so much better!’ (than what space is usually used for). Because we lived even if only a day, an hour by passing through. And it gives the desire, at each place where you return, to really transform it so that it can last as a free space where people enjoy. (...) To me it makes me want to redo it until it lasts.” (Int. 5)

The street parades that constitute my case study (Schieve Parade, Carnaval Sauvage, Critical Mass) are recent creations and cannot be reduced to a mere actualization of a tradition. Nonetheless, it is interesting to notice that they are echoing certain characteristics of traditional carnivalesque and even Dionysian festivities such as the inversion of social order⁴³. Such festivities were moments where order was suspended, and hierarchies reversed. Wretches would occupy the place of the bishop in the church and perform a fake mass and the king would be mocked publicly. One carnival even culminated in a successful revolution in the year 1580 in the town of Romans, where the poorer parts of the population overthrew the established power of nobles and riches during the annual festive happening (Le Roy Ladurie 1986). The taleteller of the Schieve Parade had been making research about the social signification of carnivals. He reflected on the creation of a parade that we were experimenting with.

“I make a lot of analogies with the carnival which disappeared as a pagan tradition around the 17th or 18th century and it is contiguous with the industrial revolution. In this space of parade as the metroschievedodo etc, we assert another system of values. It is where we have a form of liberation and that is what touches people, even in an unconscious manner. Because they are rituals that have existed for so long, of inversion of things, of reappropriation of things and thus at that epoch, carnival still occurred in a very ritual and very formal way. Before, we were not in the same space, we were not in a system of norms, in fact that is very recent. We were not in the same space that is so gridded, so it makes even more sense now to do this in this urban space where we take possession of the city. There is not only a personal liberation but also a collective one. We live a very strong collective moment. We allow ourselves to do this, with authorization or not. We gather and we seize people through joy, party. I have the feeling that carnival has been replaced by partying. Party is when we are away from work, from obligations and we assert that we do not care, we do what we want, we get drunk, we take drugs even though it is not healthy, we dance until late hours. In these times even more because they are spaces that are threatened to disappear, the space of party, the space of expression, of artistic creation. They are threatened even more by recent events, (e.g. lockdowns during the pandemic or also the

⁴³ Cailliois writes that “we contrive to behave in an exactly opposite manner to normal behavior. The inversion of all relations seems to be the obvious proof of the return of the chaos, the epoch of fluidity and confusion. Also, the festivities where we relive the first ages of the world, the Greek Kronias or Roman Saturnalias carry the reversal of the social order. The slaves eat at the tables of the master, command them, mock them, and the latter serve them, obey them, undergo insults and reprimands.” (Cailliois R. 1950 p.155-156)

closing down of squats that host the alternative life of the city) so it makes even more sense to assert it and take this freedom.” (Int. 4)

Interestingly, he relates the importance of liberation with the degree of control of the urban space. Secondly, he perceives that traditional carnivals have been replaced with the practice of partying as a way to liberate oneself from social order. Also, he mentions the role that the closure of places during the pandemic played in the desires of liberation. Such liberation revived the spirit of ancient carnivalesque happenings by moving the practice of party away from places dedicated for such use and back to the open space of the city. Looking back at the triangle presented in Figure 1, changing the spatialization of bodily practices, as it occurred during my fieldwork, disrupts social order. With liberatory festivities, people started reclaiming the public spaces and free parties occurred in parks in the daytime (see video 19). Persons that were already involved in the organization of wild happenings in public space were joined by other urbanites seeking for moments of liberation during the pandemic. In fact, this re-spatialization of partying practices in public places renewed the political dimension linked to festivity.

The attribution of a political dimension to festivity is not limited to the temporary disruption of the social order, it also “asserts another system of values”. For an organizer of the Carnaval Sauvage, as he was reflecting on the way such a happening could be legitimated given the issues it had provoked the year before (confrontation with the police, condemnation in the medias, fights with civilians of the neighborhoods), he asserted that *“in fact, it is also a day when we succeed in asserting countervalues to what the official order advocates for, that things circulate, that we make no noise, that things remain clean. There is a vital energy which is based on noise, that is based on disorder, that is based on party. Without these values, we cannot live. That is how I see it and legitimate it.” (Int. 8)*

Values of order, quietness and docility in public space are replaced with values of chaotic creativity, spontaneous acts, and noisy presence. The account above naturalizes parade’s values and norms by describing it as a “vital energy” based on chaos and party that is antagonistic to the values of the official ruling order. It does not merely assert different values, it asserts countervalues. It performs an inversion of the values of the ruling order. The inversion and chaotic spontaneity are themselves the social norms of the parade which organizers actively seek to trigger through various artifices. By achieving this, the participants collectively experience the abolishment of the relation between ruled and rulers, which is as we will see later, a condition for political freedom.

Masquerades: togetherness, visibility and effervescence

Now I will examine a specific feature of carnivalesque festivities which is the use of masks and disguises. I will discuss it as a manner in which the participants in the Parade collectively attempt to perform freedom. I will show how this happens through a threefold perspective. First, masking is a way to perform a particular kind of togetherness. Second, it is a way to disrupt visibility. Finally, it can lead to a loss of individuality and a collective effervescence. Togetherness and visibility are both conditions for freedom as we will see later, whereas effervescence was described by Durkheim as great moments of liberation (1912). The use of masks will thus be discussed as a tactical practice to generate freedom.

First, the fact that everyone wears masks at the Carnaval Sauvage implies particular copresence in space. It is a form of togetherness where everyone is equal. Without individual recognition, no one stands above the other, everyone is the same, equally unrecognizable. The masquerade is a way to reach a state of isonomy that is specific to carnivalesque parades. A member of the Carnaval Sauvage explained their choice for wearing masks in the following manner: *“We thought that wearing a mask changed something at the point of view of intimacy for the carnivalist because when we wear a mask, something happens. The mask can seize you, which is less the case when we have make-up. When we have around us, so many masks, we realized that it provides an entirely particular energy to the celebration and that it was this energy we wanted to work with. We could also think that identity has become an obsession of civil order and that going out in the public space, taking public space while being anonymous, was also a way to counter what we observed developing itself ten years ago and that is now at work everywhere.”* (Int. 8)

In this account, wearing masks is also perceived as a way to escape control which occurs through the identification of individuals. Those processes of control were more precisely described in an interview with members of the Schieve Collective:

“...we are diminishing ourselves, we are in a diminishing world where I am called such name, I have such gender and I am born in such place and I have such nationality but in fact we are much more.

N: And we are our national registration number also.

Y: Yeah exactly, and our address...” (Int. 2 & 3)

The relation between ruled and rulers is contained in these processes of control which reduces the individual to a subject of the state. Therefore, escaping control through anonymity is

a way to escape the condition of being ruled. According to the figure 2 in the following section, it is a tactical way to reach political freedom. Moreover, Brighenti (2007) explains that there are two outcomes to visibility which are recognition and control. Visibility in the public realm can either be a way to achieve recognition (that is necessary to political freedom) or be an enactment of control (such as cameras, visual surveillance etc). This dual outcome of visibility finds a very particular configuration in the case of masquerades. On the one hand, the recognition enabled by the parade is very intense. On the other hand, the fact that everyone wears masks or is disguised allows control to be escaped.

Finally, there is a loss of individuality that is enabled by wearing masks, disguising or even merely being in a cortege. When I asked someone what she felt when she was taking part in a parade, she answered without hesitation: *“Freedom. Even more when I am disguised. For me the first time was in a demonstration at the COP21, when I was dressed as a clown, there was a point where I detached myself from the people I came with, a point where I felt connected to everyone.”* (Int. 2)

This loss of individuality, correlated to a feeling of merging with the group (“connected to everyone”), is better explained by a more classical reference to collective effervescence. Durkheim (1912) describes collective effervescence as moments where the individuality disappears, and the unity of the group is intimately experienced. In the parade, the unity of the group is doubled by the openness of space.

“For me, at this moment, when we take space by walking on the street altogether, it is something that is opened. We are in a space where everybody can come and join us, and we have the will that this parade sows something on the outside. It is not a hermetic space between us. There really is this aspect of aperture where for a moment, the entire space is connected. That is why I do not need to be attached to my boyfriend. You will just lose yourself, you will dance somewhere then chill somewhere else. Because at this moment, everything is connected.” (Int. 2)

This dual force of togetherness and spatial openness is crucial to the possibility of political freedom. For Chattopadhyay (2013), “the fundamental principle of public space is its openness to political action. The openness is indexed in the freedom of appearance.” (p.47) Furthermore, political freedom “could only appear in public space, where it could become visible to all” (p.47). Indeed, these moments of effervescence are liberating: *“In parades, the first time that I disguised myself, transformed myself in fact, it provided me a liberty of tone, of act. Even*

more with the context that it is.” (Int. 2). These moments are liberating but they are also empowering.

Indeed, there is another aspect of Durkheimian collective effervescence which is the experience of superhuman empowerment. In the effervescence, individuals are carried by the group and their power is multiplied. The connection between the unity with the group and empowerment is very clearly expressed in the following account of a participant in the Schieve Parade: *“I used to experience demonstrations as a space where I can connect myself to everyone. I feel connected to everyone. Which is only very little the case in a city where each and every one lives for himself, we barely look at each other, we just cut across each other. (...) It allows me to be connected to everybody and for me, these are really moments of empowerment. I feel the energies, it nourishes me. And it gives me a power. Each time I come back I feel less lonely, less isolated, more powerful, stronger as a human.” (Int. 3)*

The dialectics hereby described suggest that isolation and loneliness keep the individual in a disempowered and weak state. Whereas, to the contrary, togetherness and unity lift the individual to a state of strengthening empowerment⁴⁴. This empowerment is even more powerful as the contrast between the two states is extreme (which was particularly the case in this context). The empowerment occurring in parades is dual. There is on the one hand the empowerment flowing from effervescence and on the other, a political empowerment. Both, I argue, mutually reinforce each other in one’s experience.

Embodied political freedom

In this section I reflect on the political implication of this emphasis on liberation, through the lens of Hannah Arendt’s theory of political freedom. Liberation is a condition for freedom. Yet, experiencing liberation does not necessarily lead to political freedom. For Arendt (1990) *“All these liberties (...) are the results of liberation but they are by no means the actual content of freedom, which (...) is participation in public affairs, or admission to the public realm.”* (p.32). For Arendt, freedom is a political phenomenon that appeared with the rise of Greek city States. It is to be understood as *“the form of political organization in which the citizens lived together under condition of no-rule, without a division between rulers and ruled.”* (Arendt p.30)

⁴⁴ For Durkheim, “The power felt is real, and is felt not only in the physical being of humankind but also in its mental being-humankind’s conscience collective, that is, in both “conscience” and “consciousness.” Besides, its reality can be dramatically transforming. During the exaltation of the French Revolution, for example, “[w]e see the most mediocre or harmless bourgeois transformed ... into a hero or an executioner.”” (Durkheim 1912 p.

This was made possible not thanks to democracy but to isonomy which is fundamentally different. Isonomy is a state where all citizens are politically equal and thereby free from the rule of others. This is how political freedom is defined by Arendt. It is antinomic to the idea of democratic representativity which we are accustomed to.

What is of greater interest here is that such political freedom required spatial conditions. Indeed, for Arendt, freedom was manifest in certain activities which could only exist when others saw, judged, remembered them. Freedom relies on the presence of others. Therefore, it also needs a place for people to come together, a political space – such as the agora, the marketplace or the polis in Ancient Greece. (Arendt 1990 p.31). In short, freedom needs a place to exist.

In the following figure 2, I simplify the process by which political freedom, in Arendt's definition, is forged. The first step consists in liberating a place that must be opened and accessible. The openness and accessibility are crucial in the sense that it guarantees the equal participation of all citizens, it is the basis for a state of isonomy. The second step consists in guaranteeing a freedom of appearance in this open space. This means that the individual can appear spontaneously in the political space and participate in the ongoing public affairs. The third step is the abolition of the division between the ruled and the rulers. Entering in a condition of no-rule, the individual can finally experience political freedom.

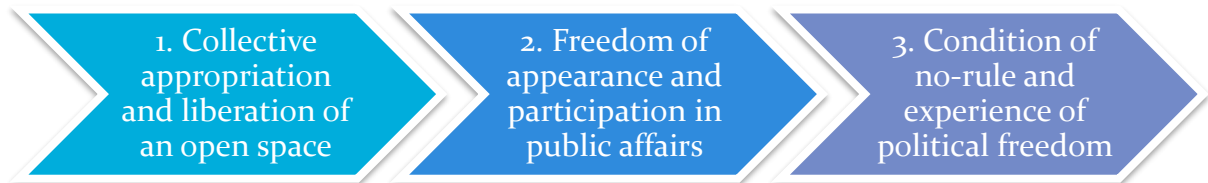


Figure 2: the making of political freedom

In my interpretation of Arendt's vision, political freedom is an experience of the body in space – it is not an abstract concept granted by a state to its subjects. Second, the experience of liberation that we have discussed previously is not merely a liberation of the individual or the group: it can be interpreted as a liberation of space itself. This is the first conditions for political freedom. Applying this figure to the case studies suggests that:

- 1) The public space that the parade appropriates and liberates is free of access, it is opened. Anyone should potentially be able to join.
- 2) The participatory dimension of the parade (anyone can come and perform) induces a freedom of appearance.

- 3) On the one hand, the act of being authorized by the political institution (the ruler) produces a relation between the ruler and the ruled. On the other hand, not being granted an authorization and doing it anyway emancipates the individuals taking part in the parade from this relation. It enables a “condition of no-rule” in Arendt’s terms.

There needs not to be everybody as far as the space is opened and accessible. And for the people participating in the making of this space which challenges relations of power, it is lived as an empowering experience. The following account gathers these three elements of 1) whatever amount of people as long as it is open, 2) being there without authorization and 3) empowerment. *“B : In fact, either 80 or 1500 like last year, I feel there is such a popular power in being there without authorization, you take over the city and it is really powerful. Howsoever, I live it like this.*

A: You mark your territory.” (Int. 8)

My point is that the parades we looked at contain the various steps needed for experiencing political freedom. They are a kind of laboratory that experiments with the bodily and spatial conditions required for political freedom. It clarifies Udvarhelyi’s observation that Critical Masses “can be read as the spatialized enactment of a direct and embodied form of democratic participation that goes beyond and at the same time transforms representative democracy.” (2009 p.121) Also, it makes clear connections between spatial parameters and freedom. According to Chattopadhyay, “the content of freedom and politics is contingent to the physical parameters of space and the degrees of openness it sustains” (Chattopadhyay 2013 p.49). Furthermore, there is great proximity between the notion of political freedom and political power. The liberation is also an empowerment.

Utilizing Arendt’s definition of embodied political freedom, Mensch (2009) makes the distinction between a disembodied and abstract conception of freedom and an embodied freedom. The former envisions freedom as something that is an innate property that has to be protected from others through violence and authority⁴⁵. Whereas the latter is contained in our capacity to act upon the world and change it, resulting from our encounter with others. Embodied freedom is necessarily collective. (Mensch 2009). In this interpretation, the act of collectively acting upon

⁴⁵ Mensch explains that this notion of freedom is at the basis of the social contract as theorized by Locke or Hobbes. It assumes that without authority and violence of a political power, humanity would necessarily be in a state of war against everyone since everyone’s freedom (which is in fact hereby equated with desire) would compete with others. Thereby, it legitimates state’s power, monopoly of violence and authority.

and changing the urban space by participating in a parade leads to an embodied freedom (as defined by Mensch). Indeed, there could be no political space, nor political freedom without the others. Political freedom must necessarily be performed together. Indeed, “‘historically the right to petition is the primary right’ and the historically correct interpretation must read: the right to assemble in order to petition.” (Arendt 1990 p.32). The right to assemble implies a space for assembly. Guaranteeing freedom thus begins with an inherently spatial question about the kind of places that are needed to exert freedom. Arendt herself defines revolution as an attempt to guarantee a space for freedom. In this logic, we could argue that the parade is a revolutionary undertaking.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have tried to answer the question of how participants experience parades. While doing so, I have emphasized the agencies of participants. First, this allowed me to explain how the narrativization of places in a parade happens through bodily engagement and performances of theatricalized situations in selected places of the city. This process constructs a specific legibility to the urban space for those that experience it. Also, I have shown how the power to autonomously and creatively imagine new ways of being in the city is revived and amplified through temporary poetic experiences in the city. Places are animated and embodied through imagination. And parades enable participants to reimagine the urban space through processes of narrativization and poetization of places.

Secondly, I have described how parades generate a feeling of owning the city. This spatial appropriation involves a confounding between the being and the place. It can create a collectively inhabited space and a break from the passive body. Also, it triggers participatory dynamics that are fundamental to the experiential ethics and politics of spatial appropriation. These are a kind of ethics and politics that flow from the experience of the self with space and contrast with the hegemonic legal conception of space.

Thirdly, I have shown how parades enable an experience of liberation of freedom in various ways. The movement of the body in space is experienced as a liberation. The parade also liberates bodies from social norms and behaviors that usually regulate spatial order. I have examined how the use of masks constitute a tactical practice of liberation while performing specific kinds of togetherness, shuffling the dialectics between visibility and recognition and amplifying collective effervescence. Finally, I have looked at the notion of political freedom as

defined by Hannah Arendt and shown how the spatial conditions for freedom are tackled when participating in a parade.

Taken altogether, those three aspects of the parade (which are imagination, appropriation and freedom or liberation) show that the content of political agency and the mode of presence in space are transformed as the urban space is reimagined, appropriated, and liberated in a parade. New imaginaries and politics are materialized and embodied.

The confluence of a constellation

In this chapter, I will depict what produces and what is produced by parades. Trying to answer this question, I will first construct an argument about the relation between the parade and the notion of public sphere. Second, I will describe how the parade is produced by and produces alternative forms. These consists in practices, sociabilities and imaginaries that are being constructed as alternative (as defined in figure 4) in a social milieu. Thirdly, I will show how new ways to make parades are enabled by the use of new technologies. I will explain how the use of such technologies in parades produce new relations with the city.

PARADES AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

To build my argument about the relation between parades and public sphere, I will first need to engage briefly with the production of publicness and publics in parades. Then, I will define the notion of public sphere as it was initially conceived by Habermas and see how this relates to parades. I will examine the materiality of public sphere, how it is constructed by the textuality and the physical experience of the city. Finally, I will look at alternative writings and altered mode of presence in the urban space produced in parades.

This will allow me to gradually zoom into the specific relations between parades, publics, and public sphere. Also, the unfolding of my empirical data within this conceptual frame will allow me to show how parades produce alternative publics and alternative political subjectivities. The movement of thought that I am following is illustrated in the figure 3.

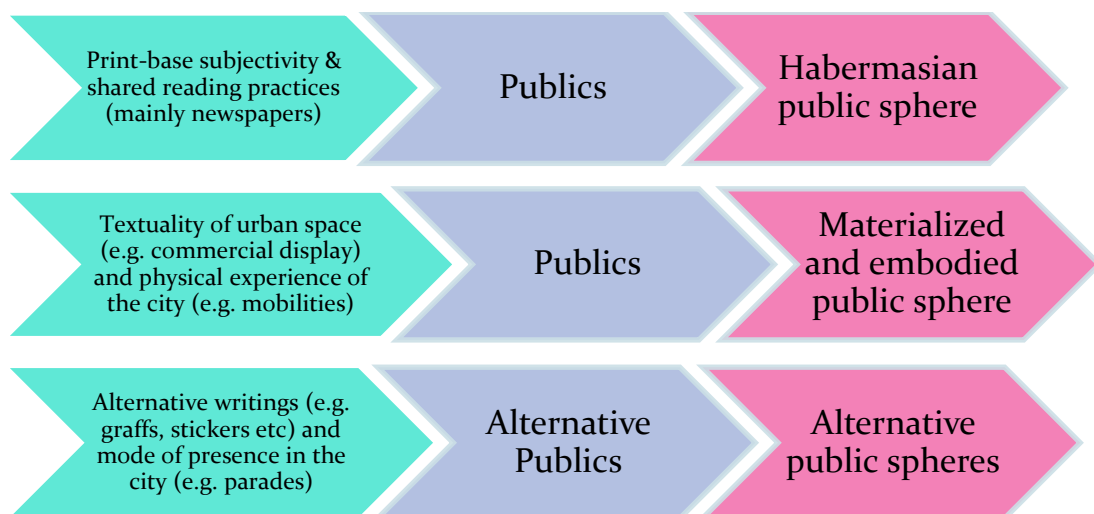


Figure 3: the production of public spheres

Habermasian Public Sphere

The concept of public sphere as proposed by Habermas is based on the idea that the publicity of monarch's representation to his court was replaced by a sphere where the circulation of news and opinions allowed a (supposedly) rational and critical deliberation which would in turn influence the activities of governments. In both cases, the mode of governance of society is produced by publicness. Publicity is thereby closely connected to political governance and power. In Habermasian conception, the public sphere was enabled by the proliferation of printed media (books and newspapers). Print-based subjectivity resulting from shared reading practices first concerned a sphere of bourgeois people meeting in places of intellectual sociability (cafés, salons, coffee houses etc). Moreover, the roots of this public sphere lie in the development of commercial life. The free circulation of ideas followed the capitalist models of free circulation of resources and commodities (Habermas 1991). This description corresponds to the 1st line of the figure 3.

There is undeniably a link between happenings of collective appropriation of public space, such as parades, and the public sphere. In the table B, I could list more than 10 events which occurred during my fieldwork that willingly or not, were covered by medias and received an echo in the public sphere. In some cases, we could even argue that the parade's finality (especially demonstrations) is to have an echo in newspapers and medias (or the Habermasian public sphere). For an example, when I was interviewing the organizer of the Cyclonudista that is also a counselor at the city council, he depicted such kind of relationship between the parade and the Habermasian public sphere. For him, the only real purpose of organizing the parade was to have an echo in newspapers and thereby exist in the official public sphere: *"So I did Critical Masses and I was quickly deceived. The Critical Masses are wonderful, very amusing. But there is no press communication, there is no search for visibility of why we do it. Even if we ourselves know why we do it. We want to create a cyclist traffic jam to show that we too can occupy the street. I do not know how many times I have done the Critical Mass, but I noticed there never was a single journalist that came by. And then, I heard that in 2001 in Sarasota in Spain, they had more or less willingly, during a Critical Mass, undressed themselves. It made a mediatic scoop. And so, starting from there, in 2004, it is a Canadian that retook the idea (...). It is at that point that the organization of the WNBR (world naked bike ride) was launched. That was in my mind, really a way to attract mediatic attention. The parade for me, it is just having fun and provide images.*

But all the work is made upstream. That is to say by sending press release before, explicating why we do it etc...” (Int. 7)

The political relevance of space and the act of reappropriation itself did not matter much for him except for the possibilities of having a mediatic publicity. Creating a common experience in space was only a tool to access newspapers and not a purpose in itself. I believe his strategy was quite efficient, at least for the purposes that he fixed himself which revolve around mediatic visibility. Himself became an elected political person after being involved in the Critical Mass and then organizing the Cyclonudista. Habermas’s concept also proved to be very successful.

Materialized and embodied public sphere

Nonetheless, there are various critiques I could oppose to Habermas. For an example, he does not tell how medias can be used by political persons to represent themselves in front of a public and symbolically assert a relation of power in a relatively similar way that the King used to represent himself in front of his court. He also does not tell how medias allow very little space for critical deliberation but rather often consist in the diffusion of prefabricated representations. Media cannot just be idealized as a tool for deliberation, it also has to be looked at as a tool for the reproduction of power relations and social forms. Finally, his theory does not encompass the role of digital technologies in the formation of public sphere, which for his defense were not yet observable at the time of his publications.

However, my main critique to Habermas, is that his concept of public sphere is deprived of spatiality. It is like an abstract and disembodied entity floating above society. Habermas had no interest at all in public space and how it could relate to his notion of public sphere. According to Henkin (1998), Habermas’s public sphere (as well as Anderson’s imagined community) is abstract and dispersed in its day-to-day existence. Instead of emphasizing the physical and material aspect of social life, it turns space into an aspatial context for political life (Henkin 1998 p.12).

This aspatial context was present in this slogan of a media which I could read on a cycling fluorescent vest “Brussels Nieuws: hier begint de Stad” (Brussels News: here begins the city). This slogan turns the city into a technically mediated space of information. All the contrary, what I suggest here is that there must be a materiality of the public sphere which reaches much beyond the materiality of newspapers circulating anonymously between citizens. It also reaches beyond the materiality of the parliament and other buildings that enclose political deliberation and de

facto seclude it from the outside. For an example, it has been argued by various authors that textual content in public space such as political wall writing (Chattopadhyay 2013) or commercial display (Henkin 1998) shapes publics, triggers debates and oppositions. Public sphere is to be found in the physical experience of the open space of the city. There exists a public that is rooted in the experience of the physical city and which produces a materialized and embodied public sphere (as illustrated in the 2nd line of figure 3). This materialization and embodiment of public sphere is particularly present in collective experiences of space such as parades.

Public space

As I was talking to a French lady from Nantes that came to Brussels to host a workshop named “creation in other spaces: in situ immersive public space” in a squat, she explained to me that her main motivation was to “create common in the public”. Together with a collective from Nantes⁴⁶, she was making various sort of happenings in the urban spaces in the purpose to create a common in space. The distinction that she was making between common and public stood in the idea that a public space is a space that is given at disposal. This induces a relationship between someone that provides for space in its own terms, and someone that disposes from it. In her perspective, the idea of public space entails a spatial governance and was thus not her primary interest. Instead, a common space is a space that is forged by a collective experience. Not by the sum of individual experiences of the same space but the collective experience of a same event in space. In her point of view, public space is not necessarily common and vice versa.

Others have argued similarly that the publicness of public space is not a given but an outcome of temporary situations (e.g. Don Mitchell 1995, Shaw 2017). For Don Mitchell, the status of “public” is produced and maintained by the political opposition between those who seek control and order and those who seek oppositional political activity and unmediated interaction (Don Mitchell 1995 p.115). A space that is at disposal for preestablished functional uses is different from a space that is produced by a common experience. My point is that the publicness, or commonness is not inherent to space, it has to be produced. And there needs to be publics for the production of public space. Through common experiences, parades create publics in the urban

⁴⁶ The collective that this informant was part of was organizing various type of performances reflecting on space. It can be found on the Facebook page called “Collectif Grand Dehors” → <https://www.facebook.com/collectifgranddehors/>

space and thereby restore the publicness of public space. I will progressively describe the production of publicness and of publics in parades and how it has deep implications for the formation of subjectivities.

Movement and the legibility of urban space

The most invasive form that turns the urban space into a readable space is certainly the commercial display. Advertising billboards are everywhere in the modern city. Nonetheless, if the same billboards are duplicated everywhere, I could observe that its legibility is not the same for everyone. Its legibility varies on hermeneutic factors of course, but also it depends on the physical experience of the city. Different physical experiences of the city produce different legibility of the urban space. While discussing with a member of the Schieve collective with whom I had been micro-parading (cycling in small groups with music in the city) during the making of the Schieve Parade, I realized that the mode of transport modifies urban space's legibility. She gave me this account after she had left Brussels and moved to Paris:

"I think that on a bicycle, we are much less victim of the mental aggression of advertising all day long. Because in fact, when we stare at the road and we fly by and we are in the open air, we do not end up having to wait at bus stops and in metro stations right at the places where precisely there is advertising all over which are being there with their injunctions that enter your brain and that are made to penetrate your memory and make you buy things. I realize now that since I live in Paris, it is greatly unpleasant, and it shocks me how much the injunctions of advertising can in fact be very tiering. I was not undergoing this at all on the bicycle (in Brussels). And I think it is because you are outside, you never have to wait at a place and be bored and look around you and undergo advertising. You are like, on your bike, you make your way and thus you are much more liberated from this. Even compared to a car in fact. You are not stuck in the traffic jam, you keep whizzing. The only moment where you stop it is at the red light. And so yeah, I realize this, and I miss my bicycle." (Int. 1)

This testimony shows how the advertisement can be actively rejected by altering one's mobility in space. The legibility of public space differs depending on the way someone moves through the city (bicycle, car, public transport or by foot). Different ways to move in the city produce different readings of the city. The cycling space does not enable the same reading of the city as motorized space does. This suggests first that the legibility of the city flows from bodily

experiences of the city. Second that the textual content present in public space is not the only component impacting public sphere.

Performance and mode of presence in space

The parade, whether it is a cycling parade (e.g. Critical Mass or cyclonudista) or a pedestrian parade (e.g. Schieve Parade, Carnaval Sauvage), challenges the legibility of the urban space in a particular way. Indeed, it is not only the textual content in a parade (e.g. slogans one can read in demonstrations) that makes of public space a materiality of public sphere. And beyond textuality is a major element. The very presence of bodies in the urban space and their ways of being there, is constitutive of public space. Street parades, as a temporary transformation of the mode of presence in the shared urban space, reveals how bodies produce and reproduce public space. If, for an example, people suddenly adopt an entirely different mode of presence in space as it occurs in street parades, space finds itself transformed.

In other terms, public sphere's materiality finds itself transformed in the parade. Fights (which I could observe) between cyclists and automobilists at the Critical Mass or between naturists and opposants of naturism at the Cyclonudista are examples of how the bodily presence in public space can trigger deliberation (even physical confrontation) about public matters. In fact, the body becomes a space of negotiation for different modes of being in the city that sometimes compete or contradict each other. The abstract notion of a public sphere that anonymously connects private individuals through the circulation of prints is transformed into a public sphere that is embodied through direct physical connections in the materiality of the city.

Artistic performances also often addressed political issues (e.g. the political discourse of a tightrope walker or the subversive legend of a taleteller), turning public space into a place of political deliberation, representation and participation through a bodily performance. Debord (1967) described the main characteristic of contemporary society as the removal of the lived into inaccessible representations and the aggregation of individuals into a public (e.g. commercial display). Reversely, the participants in a parade relocate the lived into accessible experiences. And instead of a passive public made out of secluded individual trajectories, the participants in a parade come together and become the content of public sphere themselves, with their bodies. By claiming a political cause with one's bodily presence in space, the participants in a parade collectively set the ground for an embodied and materialized public sphere. The political deliberations are not just dispersed in an ungraspable sphere, but they are rooted in bodies.

Alternative Public Sphere

I observed in my field that elements that are producing publics and are connoted with hegemonic powers (capitalist or state power) are actively rejected. This active rejection either diverts existing elements or creates its own forms. This is important because there is a difference between oppositions about the content of public sphere and opposition to the presence of content itself. The latter consists in a refusal to be inserted into a public. It is a rejection of a certain form of public sphere. Furthermore, this shows how the organizers of a parade actively engage with and reflect on the legibility of urban space.

In this section, I will discuss the ways alternative publics are being produced. Before to start, the term alternative that is being used has to be specified. To perform something that is alternative does not merely mean to perform something different. The notion of alternativity is usually connoted to four characteristics which are 1) unauthorized or at least subverts the official authority, 2) alter the social norm, 3) be legible or accessible only to a corresponding alternative public and not to others and 4) be non-lucrative. The four characteristics for the production of alternativity are illustrated in figure 4. What is identified as alternative in the field (in emic terms) does not necessarily gathers all four characteristics at once but it usually partly comply with at least some of them.

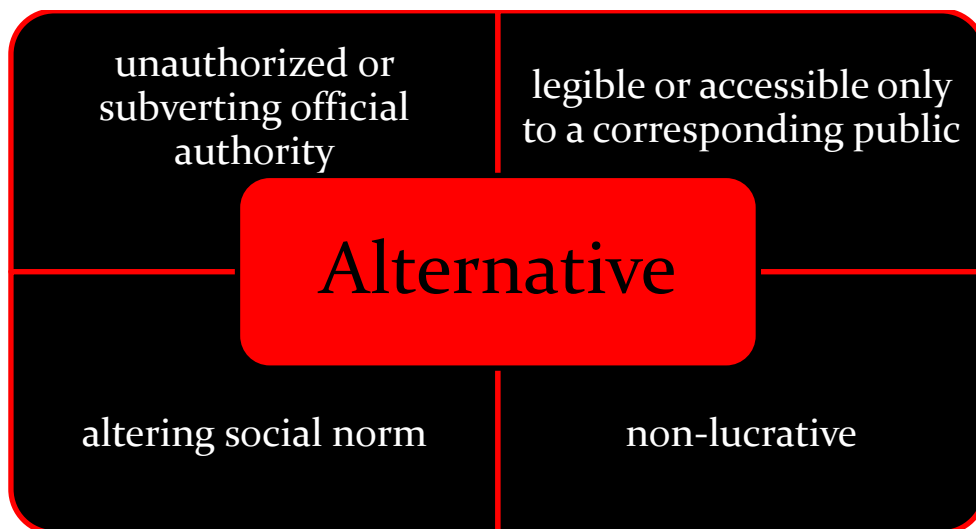


Figure 4 : characteristics of alternativity

Diverting textuality

An example of diversion of textualities that produce publics was designed by the Schieve collective. It occurred in the course of winter 2022, at the occasion of the greatest demonstration

that Brussels had known for many years. Tens of thousands of persons were flowing through the streets in a cortege. The idea was to make a *detournement* of the signs in front of the Finance Tower where the cortege was passing by. Instead of “Finance Tower” one could read “Schieve Power” (see image 1 and 6).

The Finance tower is the second highest building in Brussels and is part of a platform that is the “administrative city of the state”. This tower and this platform standing on a huge underground parking for cars were built at a place where there used to be houses for people. Houses that were demolished, people that were expropriated to make place for the erection of the finance tower. Those big metal letters laid out in the street were a symbol of statal and capitalist power. And its diversion, by covering it with other letters, hijacked the officially intended meaning with another kind of power, the “Schieve power”. Furthermore, the moment of the diversion granted another symbolic dimension to the act. Symbolically, it was not just a few members of a collective but the popular horizontal crowd of the cortege that was taking over the vertical finance tower.

It asserted the existence of alternative powers to those erected vertically above the city. Interestingly, the straightness and rectitude of the vertical tower was replaced with the power of the Schieve (which is in Brussels dialect, twisted, crooked or non-straight). The ‘Schieve Power’ was challenging what Walter Benjamin and Henkin depicted as the “particular authority of altitude” and the “dictatorship of the perpendicular” (Henkin 1998 p.120). Diverting textualities and writing alternative urban spaces is a strong tool in the making of a spatial imagination that defies the one coupled with the modern state⁴⁷.

Creating textuality

When the idea of making stickers for the promotion of the Schieve Parade was proposed, I remember thinking that I never paid attention to stickers in the street and doubted this would grant us a lot of visibility. But after participating in collective missions of sticking, knowing the spots of predilection for sticking and that thousands of our stickers were spread everywhere, I started paying attention to stickers and sometimes even stopped to look at new stickers I hadn’t yet seen. I could recognize the stickers of other collectives in town. I knew what they meant and which people or social struggle they were linked to. It became not only visible but also legible.

⁴⁷ In Chattopadhyay’s words (2013), “In performing an act of creating space, it is a challenge to the privileged materiality of public space that flows from the spatial imagination of the modern state” (Chattopadhyay 2013 p.64)

Later on, the name of the Schieve Parade was ringing a bell to vast amount of person that did not necessarily know precisely what it was. The textual presence in public space through stickers had created a public.

The same was also true for certain graffiti that I started seeing everywhere once I knew what they were related to. A three-letter graffiti 'TAO' I never noticed before began to appear everywhere. Moreover, when looking for abandoned houses in order to open squats, I sensed there was a relation between graffiti and abandoned places which could help me in my search. Abandoned buildings slowly get covered with graffiti when they are spotted as such. And this might as well go perfectly unnoticed if it has not been made legible beforehand. A new form of legibility of the urban space, previously hidden, was appearing to me. I could read the city in new ways.

Mode of presence in parades

The two former examples showed how alternative textual content can produce alternative publics and alternative experiences of the city. The textual content had no relevance independently from the physical experience of the city. But of course, parades do not only tackle the textual content. It mainly impacts the mode of presence in the city which, as we have seen earlier, is crucial in forming the materialized and embodied public sphere. People in a parade produce an alternative mode of presence in the urban space.

Pedestrians dancing in the middle of the street, cyclists playing music while riding in the tunnels of an urban highway or a pole dancer performing on a street sign on the sidewalk are alternative modes of presence in the urban space. It implies other types of writing the city and produces alternative publics through the shared attendance of such events. The visual contents collected from this fieldwork are so many examples of happenings where the mode of presence in the city is being altered. By actively modifying one's mode of presence in space, participants in a parade produce an alternative public sphere.

Alternative subjectivities

The same way that diffusion of newspapers enables shared reading practices which in turn produce print-based subjectivities (in a Habermasian framework), the parade enables shared alternative readings and mode of presence in the city which in turn produces alternative subjectivities. As such, the parade is very powerful in forming political subjectivities and even shaping life trajectories. Practically all people I met which were in the past active in the making

of parades in the city ended up leading lives that were somehow related to the parade they were involved in. Amongst others, here are a few examples to illustrate this:

- One organizer of the Critical Mass → started a business that proposes a rental of cargo bikes (in order to replace the use of cars).
- One organizer of the Carnaval Sauvage → became the head of a field project with children that inhabit a social housing tower in the center of the city.
- The main organizer of the Cyclonudista → became a member of public institutions active in matters of mobility and naturism.

This shows how the parade, as a moment of transformation of the bodily presence in space, can create new forms of implication in the political field and inflect the life trajectories of their participants. Of course, this concerns mainly the most diligent individuals that endorse a central role in the organization and making of parades. What I am describing here is not merely an individual's interest for a topic that is amplified by the parade. Instead, it is the insertion of the individual into alternative collective bodies, or "shared cultural formation" (Henkin 1998). It transforms subjectivities through the insertion into a specific kind of inter-subjectivity. This insertion is enabled by participating in and organizing a parade. Through diverting or creating textual content or through altering one's presence in space in parades, people construct alternative collective bodies and political subjectivities.

Standing on those observations, I would like to argue that there are multiple public spheres. There are public spheres that coexist and potentially oppose each other's while competing in the same spaces. Also, we should not judge the alternative public spheres on their capacity to influence the activities of the government but on their capacity to create alternative political subjectivities and collective bodies. We should judge them on their capacity to implement new practices and inflect some people's lives.

A CONSTELLATION OF ALTERNATIVE FORMS

Focusing solely on parades may give the impression of an idealized vision of parades as all-encompassing and omnipotent events. To avoid this confusion, it is important to acknowledge that parades are not the only kind of events that fulfil the condition for alternativity (presented in figure 4) nor are they the only ones to create alternative publics (as in figure 3). Other events or places present the same characteristics such as free parties, squats, or insurrections. It is thus not surprising that participants in parades are often involved in other forms of alternativity. These

various forms of alternativity are equally legitimate in shaping publics and subjectivities. In fact, from my presence in the field, I could observe that parades are part of a constellation of alternative forms. They have no existence independently from this constellation which comprehends not only alternative happenings but also alternative places, bodies, practices etc.

In this section, I will first describe how a constellation of alternative forms produce the parade. I will explain how participants in a parade perform an inversion between the alternative and the official and how this inversion is a crucial moment in defining the alternative milieu. Then I will explain the relation between squats and parades. This will allow me to describe the alternative practices that undermine both the making of parades and of squats, hence organically producing connivance. Finally, I will describe the political imaginaries of confluence which produce and are produced by parades.

Inversion

Centering this research on parades may give the optical illusion that parades are the center of the alternative world. However, there is no real center in a constellation (unless every point is a center to itself), rather there is a complex web of relations. Nonetheless, the interconnections between different alternative forms that appear while examining parades reveal something else. It reveals that there is a constellation of alternative forms. That there is an alternative world which at moments can become articulated. I once saw a sticker in the street saying: “there exists another world and it is within this one.” The idea of another world that is unveiled in parades is just like this sticker. It reveals in the open space of the city that there exists another world in the interstices of the one that occupies the main stage.

Looking at parades reveals that there exists a socialization of individuals in an alternative milieu through events, practices, and places. And that parades produce and are produced by those alternative sociabilities. This relation between shared practices, sociabilities and alternative happenings was clearly expressed by an organizer of the Carnaval Sauvage, showing that they have a relative awareness of social theory which is itself constituent of the reality they live.

“What I find interesting in this organization is that we realize that the carnival lives through practices and that it is collective practices that makes that there is a sociability that is specific to the carnaval sauvage which occurs and diffuses itself through people that came, maybe one year, and that afterwards made their costumes at their home, by themselves but know what the ways are to functionate.” (Int. 8)

If parades are not the epicenter of the alternative milieu (which has no center), it is nonetheless a crucial moment for the way alternative sociabilities define themselves. It is crucial because alternative sociabilities define themselves in relation to what is not alternative. It is defined within a dialectical relationship with the official. And parades shaken those dialectics in unusual ways. The parade is a unique moment when the two polarities (what is considered as alternative and what is not) are confronted. The alternative that usually remains hidden takes over the main stage. The invisible world of the undergrounds comes to the surface. Whereas the official and hegemonic order that regulates everyday life is suddenly relegated to the margin. It is like an eclipse. It performs an inversion between the official and the underground. Between the hegemonic and the alternative. This momentum of alternative sociabilities collectively coming out in the open was nicely described by a member of the Carnaval Sauvage.

“It really starts from a place, from many people that are connected in certain places, certain occupations (occupations is an abbreviation for temporary occupation or squat). It is a bit like if all of a sudden, we decide to come out of the basement. Because we spend our time in basements, in bunkers, where many things happen. And all of a sudden, we do not ask for authorization, and we are there in town, in the street and even we can, except last year where we couldn’t, make an enormous fire all night long. Police never came until last year to prevent us from doing that. (...). It is a way to get out in the open, from the basement to the open. With nice costumes.” (Int. 8)

What he describes there is a confluence of people that are connected by “certain places, certain occupations” where “many things happen”. People socialized in alternative places around alternative events come together and perform an appearance in the open space of the city.

Parades and squats

The previous account already mentions that the Carnaval Sauvage and squats are related. It is described more accurately how this came to happen in the development of the Carnaval Sauvage and how it is given a meaning in relation to larger processes of urban capitalism.

“Now it is the tenth that we organize. The first one, we organized it at the compilotheque. It was an associative place where there were many concerts and an occupation that we held for 6 years. And we decided to make the carnaval sauvage the year we had to leave from the compilotheque. It was, for us, first of all, a feast. It was a way to celebrate the end of this place. And in fact, in carnivals, there is the notion of rhythming time. For us it was a way to say that it was the end of the compilotheque and the beginning of another compilotheque. The notion of time is cyclical. At

this moment, there were other places that were closing around us. There was the FTT that was closing and the year after there was 'l'imprimerie'. That is to say, in fact, places of ours. Important places for the alternative life in Brussels. It turns out that these places were around the canal and the canal was one of the sites of Brussels where gentrification is at its highest. So, we had something to say about this. We were concerned by this phenomenon.” (Int.8)

Squats are identified as a stronghold of resistance against processes of gentrification and urban capitalism. It has a particular importance in the site of Brussels given the number of buildings that remain abandoned and unoccupied (Between 10.000 buildings which consist in 17.000 to 26.000 housings⁴⁸) parallelly to the rise of real estate price. They are seen as islets of resistance of the inhabitants of the city in the ongoing urban struggles. In this vision squats are not isolated places, rather they form a network of connected places. People construct the network of squats as a constellation of places that are “important places for the alternative life in Brussels”. They are places where alternative forms are being produced and reproduced, where practices are being shared. For an example, the practice of making masks and costumes for the Carnaval Sauvage out of recycled materials (which is identified as the main element of the Carnaval Sauvage) often happened during workshops in squats.

“Thus, we shifted this question of economy of means by fixing a rule for the creation of costumes which was: “we do not buy materials for the fabrication of costumes and thus we make it only with recycling, but I prefer to say with waste and garbage because this brings a notion which is that capitalism produces an appalling quantity of waste and that is what he does with the most pugnacity. And it is also a way to react to this fact by saying that we make the carnival in this manner.” (Int. 8)

However, the practice of recycling that he describes is not only related to squats because it casually happens in squats. As he mentioned earlier, once people have integrated the practice, they may as well just do it at home and then come to the Carnaval on the D-day. It is related to squats because the very practice of recycling in order to build masks and costumes is parallel to the practice of opening squats. As he expresses, it goes against the capitalist dynamics that “produce an appalling quantity of waste”, the same way squats go against dynamics of urban capitalism (which leaves many abandoned and unoccupied buildings for various reasons such as

⁴⁸ These numbers were provided in a research led by the two main universities of Brussels (ULB / VUB). It was published in 2021 and requested by the secretary of state for housing: <https://logement.brussels/un-cadastre-regional-des-logements-presumes-inoccupes/>

speculation). It transforms those wastes or abandoned places in the city and animates them with a new life. For a member of the Schieve collective which had lived in temporary occupations in town for many years:

“The milieu of temporary occupation is involved in an upcycling of (abandoned) buildings. (...) When I met those collectives that were spotting empty houses in order to transform them (...) I realized that when something is not marked up (balisé), we do not look at it and we do nothing about it. (...) And what was funny was that when we were in squats, often the people believed that the waste were ours. Whereas we were trying to revalorize them. They thought that it was us that were dirty. We were amalgamated. For an example, when we started recuperating food, at the beginning it was horrible. We ended up doing a job that was not ours, to manage all of this surplus of decaying material. Then, little by little, we found out how to not throw it away. But it was horrible, because we were there with all this heap of supermarket and the people were looking down at us as if we were shithheads smoking joints and making a mess. Whereas we were in fact cleaning their own mess.” (Int. 2)

The practices of the alternative milieu hereby described are attempts to solve the ethical issues of a failing society. They are envisioned as a transformation of the decay of society into something new while opposing the society that has produced such decay. Similarly, parades reanimate places in the city. It often selects devitalized places. The Carnaval Sauvage takes as a point of arrival of the cortege wastelands in the city in order to make the carnivalesque fire. The Schieve Parade animates the city with artistic performances in times when the cultural life was canceled, and the lockdowns drastically reduced the activities in the city. Whereas Critical Masses create a festive and lively happening in streets that are usually occupied by traffic jams that strictly delimitates the social interactions that can be enacted. *“When you get to a place where there are no more cars and all of a sudden you see the city that has taken possession. I feel like living completely differently in those places (...)” (Int. 5)*

This idea of reviving, reanimating, recycling things and spaces is a common point to various alternative forms. And it is a major common point between parades and squats. What makes the proximity between parade and squat is first because they are both places that are made in a similar manner. The existence of both opposes the workings of hegemonic power and authority, reanimate places, and challenges the social norms. People taking part in parades or in squats are actively participating in a similar dynamic of occupation of space (Adam M. & Comby

E. 2020 p.22). These connections are not merely theoretical, they are organically present in people's practices.

The entire process of creating the Schieve Parade and other related apparitions in the public space demanded a great deal of reunions and meetings to socialize the collective around a common project and to concretely organize and set up this common project. These gatherings almost always happened in squats and temporary occupations. I have listed up to 21 different occupied places in Brussels that were at some point related in a way or another to the activities of the Schieve (see table A). Furthermore, opening a temporary occupation to make a headquarter for the Schieve was considered various times and a member of one of the largest temporary occupations in town proposed us to join their new place. The entire undertaking of the Schieve was relying on and evolving in an informal network of occupied places in towns. Occupied buildings served for an afterparty for the 1st Schieve Parade, as a point of arrival for the 2nd Schieve Parade and as a headquarter for a residency for the 3rd Schieve Parade.

This was confirmed to me even further when I discovered that the Critical Masses had its headquarters in an occupied place of Brussels. One of its leaders once told me that he was looking for a new place to stock the material of his association specialized in the making of mobile sound systems on bicycle trailers. I directed him towards a temporary occupation which accepted to host his project. Showing once again the ongoing alliances between such undertakings. Squats and parades are both intermingled in ongoing urban struggles that assert themselves through common imaginaries and practices. The world of squats was the invisible shadow behind the visible apparitions in public space.

Imaginaries of confluence

The same way the Carnaval Sauvage is not strictly concerned with the organization of a parade but also engages with broader issues of urban struggles, Critical Masses do not only consist in organizing a collective bike ride in town but are concerned with the making of a cyclable town (as one can see on their Facebook page, they regularly publish content encouraging the transformation of the infrastructure and ideology linked to urban mobility). Furthermore, discussions that happened in the Schieve collective did not only concern the parade itself. Such discussions were moments of projection and presentation of original political imaginaries. By examining three examples of political imaginaries that animated members of the Schieve

Collective, I will examine the relation of mutual production between parades and political imaginaries.

The first example was very present in the beginnings of the socialization of the Schieve collective. It was imaging another society as a mandala. The mandala was divided in seven branches. Each branch corresponded to a kind of people (healers, warriors etc) associated with a color of the rainbow. The mandala was intended to replace society. Practically, this was supposed to happen by making people fit into the compartments of the mandala. However trivial this might seem to a social scientist; we should not judge this political imaginary through an epistemological prism. The value of the idea does not lie in the concrete possibilities of its realization but in the utopian imaginary that it vehiculates. It suggests starting everything anew. It suggests the replacement of the ways of doing and ways of being. And it envisions a society that does not rely on capitalist and statal power. Finally, it envisioned the Schieve Parade as a moment where this mandala would come to life with a cortege divided in seven parts with seven colors. In this vision, the Schieve Parade was to be the confluence of alternative subjectivities of the mandala. That is not the way the Schieve Parade happened in the end. However, it participated in the production of the parade. People produced the Schieve Parade through an alternative imaginary. As much as the Schieve Parade produced an alternative imaginary.

The second project was presented to the Schieve Collective by one of the most present members. It attempted to structure itself through the creation of a non-profit organization mostly with members present at reunions of preparation of the Schieve Parade. It was a bit more grounded than the mandala in the sense that it departs from already existing undertakings. It planned to create an alliance of non-profit organizations, temporary occupations, and collectives all over Brussels. The sum of skills, people and places thereby generated would allow to create schools, cultural centers, food production etc, autonomously from the official way of doing things. In his words, it would literally “take over the city”. By connecting all the alternative initiatives in the city and unifying them under a single alliance, the alternative world would be empowered and overthrow the existing political powers of society. Those wouldn’t be needed anymore and would simply collapse. Like the mandala, it consists in an imaginary of confluence. The non-profit organization was founded during a reunion of the Schieve collective. Again, the parade is closely intertwined with imaginaries of convergence. It produces and is produced by it.

The third project is even more concrete and grounded. It was invented by a member of the collective (which had an active part in the presented interviews). She redesigned the idea of

someone that worked for the European commission before to make a burnout and to end up meeting people of the Schieve. She had received 80.000 euros of funds to create a world map of imaginary projects. An algorithm then calculates their production of CO2. People using this website would be able to use this map as a tool to gamify the energetic and societal transition. Instead, the person of the Schieve collective that was taking over the project and the company was willing to use it in order to make visible all the existing alternative undertakings in Brussels. She thinks of using it as a mapping of various existing micro solutions to problems of society. The intention behind is to empower them by breaking the image of insignificant, isolated initiatives and replace it with the image of a connected network that is already present everywhere in town. By mapping them and granting them a collective visibility, it would not only generate more volunteering. It would also construct an awareness of the alternative possibilities as an active interconnected network.

Those three projects carry various degree of realism. But each are deploying an imaginary of missionaries of the underground coming together and forming an alternative society that grows until it eventually replaces the precedent. They depict the confluence of isolated experiments, of laboratories for alternative possibilities that have slowly been developing for years, into a coherent whole. They make the calling for the confluence of a constellation. It is the imaginary of the convergence and the transition, of a slow and unstoppable revolution progressively opening its wings. I am not interested in discussing the successes of those imaginaries in producing what they intend to produce. Instead, I am demonstrating that the parade successfully produces imaginaries of confluence while being produced by it.

These three projects show how the parade is related to specific kind of imaginaries. In a similar vein, the Carnaval Sauvage has the dream to create a “Carnaval Total” which would gather ‘all of Brussels’. Not just their collective and followers but all the collectives, all the of the alternative spheres of Brussels, into one single cortege. That is the purpose that they fixed themselves in the organization of a “swarming reunion” that I documented for this thesis. Whereas the very name of the Critical Mass is borrowed from a term of nuclear engineering that corresponds to the amount of material required for a sustained nuclear chain reaction. Translated to sociodynamics, the Critical Mass corresponds to the number of individuals adopting a new behavior required so that this new behavior sustainably spreads in a chain reaction. The dream of the Critical Mass is to create a Mass that is large enough to swing the balance. Therefore, the imaginary of confluence is not just characteristic of the Schieve Parade. It animates parades in

general. Parades produce and are produced by the vision of a marginalized minority that converges and becomes an overwhelming mass.

NEW WAYS OF THE PARADE

New ways of making a parade are now emerging. Parades can be traced back to ancestral traditions and then to more recent happenings in the modern city. Yet the latest technologies that have been developed are enabling new ways to make a parade. Through the description of those emerging ways, I will relate to the making of soundscapes and to mapping.

Making soundscapes

Making a soundscape and designing an extraordinary sonorous public space is not in itself a new component of parades. Percussions and brass bands are one of the most recurrent themes of carnivalesque and festive parades. Also, Critical Masses often use bicycle bells to mark their presence. When one starts ringing his bell, others answer by doing the same (see video 28). But, as I will argue, the sonorous occupation of space can be elaborated in original ways which consider the acoustic qualities of the surrounding urban space. Second, I will show how new technologies are appropriated by people in ways that allow them to create innovative soundscapes in parades.

The acoustic qualities of the built environment

Returning regularly at the same places with a cortege allows to learn about the space that we flow through, reflect on our presence, and prepare our future apparitions in the public space with more awareness. That was the case when we returned almost every two weeks on the same route during the winter 2021-2022. The demonstrations were growing in numbers and in diversity with more and more people coming from abroad. There was one long street (rue Belliard) edged by very tall buildings on both sides. Quickly, we realized that the sound was different in this street than in the other very large boulevards and avenues. The sound was spread in the cortege with particular intensity, amplified by the configuration of the built environment. Also, this street is slightly inclined downwards before to flatten so that one has a vision of the entire cortege ahead. This passage was particularly intense from a sensory point of view.

The music to be played in this place was carefully selected in order to create an emotion. The reverberated sounds of violins and laments bewitched the crowd marching together as one. For some, the intensity of such moments even triggered tears of emotion. A little further in the

same street is a bridge. When the mobile sound system stopped right under the bridge, the music was amplified to a much greater extent. The 126 decibels emitted by the sound system were diffused all around the place. We thus planned beforehand to stop at this place and let a couple of tunes play before to continue walking. This orchestrated pause allowed dancefloors to happen spontaneously.

Another example was collected when I was doing the scouting mission with the organizers of the Carnaval Sauvage. Together with other members of the Carnaval, we were cycling the roads that we considered taking during the D-Day. We also had to plan various stops so that the cortege could regroup. As we were discussing about a potential stop in front of a huge cathedral with other tall buildings on its side, one person mentioned that the sound of the percussions would be amplified in this place. The sound would be echoed against the tall facades. This solved the discussion and during the D-Day, the pause in front of the cathedral was indeed a powerful moment in terms of acoustic perceptions. Finally, the passing of the Critical Masses in the tunnels of Brussels (which are present all along the urban highway that was built around the city center) is a moment when the sonorous public space is being actively created by cyclists in the parade. While inside the tunnels, the sound is amplified and people start screaming, ringing their bicycle bells, or playing certain tunes.

The anticipation of musical selection in Rue Belliard during the demonstration, the pause in front of the cathedral in the carnaval sauvage and the behavior of cyclists in tunnels during the Critical Masses are three examples that show how the acoustic qualities of the built environment are interacted with in order to create a soundscape. It shows how the sensory perceptions of space play a role in the designing of a parade. It shows how the city space is embodied through the senses and how people's acts are consciously designed on the basis of such embodied space.

Creating soundscapes with new technologies

The development of new technologies and how they are creatively appropriated by people allows to play music in new ways. First the development of powerful batteries and resistant sound systems now enable to construct mobile sound systems (mobile in the sense that they do not need to be plugged in to play music). Those mobile sound systems appeared only recently and they are already spread everywhere in parades (except the Carnaval Sauvage which excludes amplified sound in order to privilege live instruments). In demonstrations, such mobile speakers are now very common. At the Critical Masses also, more and more people are coupling the use of

cargo bikes or trailers with mobile sound systems. Using the smartphone, this allows to play any kind of music at any time at any place at very high volumes, thus creating a common sensory experience for a great amount of person. This technological innovation allows an unprecedented flexibility in the creative making of soundscapes.

Furthermore, the use of transmitters and receptors using UHF frequency allow to connect various mobile sound systems and make them play the same music without latency. The setup of such device is a bit more technical and implies some skills. But various persons were dreaming to connect many mobile sound system at the same time and create a huge aura of sound. The leader of the project of La Jacqueline, the leader of the collective Amaai or the leader of the “Freequency” parties were each active in the development of such soundscape. They bought material (cables, transmitters and receptors) in order to achieve this. It often was more complicated than planned to connect many sound systems and we are still making efforts to bring this idea to new horizons. However, at the 3rd Schieve Parade, we did succeed in connecting three sound systems that we positioned in a triangle so that a large area was covered by sound. At the 30th year anniversary of the Critical Mass, four mobile sound system mounted on trailers and cargo bikes were connected (see video 29). The trailer that transmits the music is equipped with an iPad that enables the rider to mix music while riding his bicycle. Those technologies, tinkered and assembled in order to create soundscapes, open new possibilities which are being experimented in parades.

While discussing with some of the people that are involved in connecting mobile sound systems at the Critical Masses, they explained to me that there existed in the city some places where the transmission of sound breaks down. Normally, the perimeter of the transmitters is quite large, especially when they are mounted above the crowd. But when passing in front of the U.S. embassy, for an example, it is suddenly reduced below 10 meters. This makes the sound crash in a very unpleasant noise and damages the sound systems. Now that they have spotted such places, they anticipate it and reduce the sound before to pass by. They suspected that this breakdown of transmission was due to some security measure scrambling the airwaves to protect the embassy.

First, the new technologies allow to create new forms of mobile soundscapes comprehending huge flexibility. Second, they allow to decentralize the music. Instead of having one source of sound around which everyone gathers, there can now be many different sources. Before, having a larger sonorous aura required to have larger sound systems playing louder. Now, keeping the same volume, we can just multiply the sound systems and spread them in space. This

spreads the aura of sound in unprecedented ways. It allows to make a constellation of sound systems without interferences and to multiply the sources of a same music. Third, this leads the makers of such soundscapes to experiment with the city as an electromagnetic space where frequencies are blocked or decreased in some places.

Mapping

I will now show how technologies allow new mapping practices. I will explain how those possibilities are creatively appropriated by the makers of parades. The recent technologies and software that have been developed allow mapping to take new forms. One particularly interesting mapping project is the application called Critical Maps⁴⁹. It consists in an application that you download on your smartphone. Through geolocation, it makes users of the app visible on a map during the Critical Mass ride. The great number of users (represented with bicycle symbols) create a constellation of cyclists grouped on the map of the city. This way, late comers can find the parade easily if they have missed the departure. But this is not the only advantage of this mapping practice.

Looking at the Facebook page of Critical Maps, we see that the presence of Critical Masses can be visualized all over the continent. In April 2020, they could locate Critical Mass riders in nearly 30 different European cities. In a same time zone, on the last Friday of the month at 18H, the app is swarming. This enables the visibilization of a transnational dimension of the parade. Even though Critical Masses are a local happening of people that are physically gathering, Critical Maps constructs the perception of a transnational and translocal happening. The cyclists do not only physically converge in their city, they also virtually converge on a digital map. This map makes visible a virtual confluence throughout the entire world. Another option enabled by Critical Maps is that people can share images of their ride. The shared visuals are then located on the map and accessible worldwide by all the users of Critical Maps. This enhancement of singular Critical Masses into a unified network of parades is an empowering vision for the people that take part in the masses. It also participates in producing a feeling of intimacy with other participants in Critical Masses throughout the world since they are enabled to share and view each other's experiences remotely.

⁴⁹ Information about Critical Maps can be found on their website <https://www.criticalmaps.net/> as well as on social medias (e.g. <https://www.facebook.com/criticalmaps>)

It produces an imaginary unity through a copresence on the same digital space. As such, these uses of mapping techniques are related to the same imaginaries of confluence as the parade. The imaginaries of confluence that we discussed earlier are given new extents through the use of new technologies. This shows that mapping practices (and what Lefebvre called representations of space) are far from being exclusively tools of control and governance deployed by the state and the capital (Lefebvre 1991). They are also tools that are creatively appropriated by the people in order to organize and empower resistance movements which are often expressed and manifested in parades.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have looked at what produces parades. I have discussed how parades may be designed as an attempt to have an echo in medias but they are most importantly engaging with the materiality of public sphere through the creation of common spaces. I have argued that the movement, the performances, and the mode of presence in parades are physical experiences of the city that produce a materialization and an embodiment of public sphere. Then I have argued that there exists an alternative public sphere that is constructed through the compliance with the three characteristics of alterity (as illustrated in figure 4) that I could observe in acts of diversion or creation of textuality related to parades and in the act of parading itself. I have also shown how the materialization and embodiment of alternative public spheres in parades has deep implications on the formation of subjectivities and sometimes even inflect life trajectories.

Secondly, I have described a network produced by the interconnections between alternative forms. I have shown how parades rely on such network and how alternative forms are manifested in the parade. Then, I looked at the parade as an inversion of the alternative and what it is alternative. As such, it is a crucial momentum for the alternative milieu. Also, I have shown how parades and squats are interconnected in the way that parades rely on a network of occupied places in town. Both squats and parades are manifestations of alternative forms. Finally, I have explained how the parade produces and is produced by imaginaries of confluence. This imaginary of confluence or convergence materializes itself in the parade.

Thirdly, I have detailed examples of new technologies that are being used in the making of parades. I have tried to explain how those new technologies are not only in coherence with previous characteristics of the parade but also create new ways to interact with the city. They enable new expressions of the imaginaries underlying the parade.

In the overall, this discussion based on empirical data allowed me to describe the alternative milieu as more than a mere sum of countercultural elements but as a complex ecosystem that produces its own coherence and legibility. It allowed me to show how this complex alternative ecosystem is related to the parade. It also emphasized the fact that what produces the parade is in turn produced by the parade. The imaginaries from which flows the making of the parade is in turn produced by the parade as if in a performative loop.

Conclusion : Toward an anthropology of street parades

Using the simple research question of “how do participants in a street parade experience and make the city space?” to structure the ethnographic material, I attempted to lay the basis of an anthropology of street parades. I conducted this research in a context that was exceptionally favorable to the observation of parades and dynamics of reappropriation of the urban space in general. This fieldwork was conducted in the site of Brussels which provides a particular grounding for such dynamics. Yet, those dynamics underwent comparable developments at a transnational level in various cities.

SUMMARY OF CASE STUDIES AND RESEARCH METHODS

My main case studies were three parades which correspond to a certain definition of alternativity that was present in my field. First was the Schieve Parade where I took the most active part in designing it. This case study was entirely created during the time of the ethnography. The Schieve collective was the main vessel from which I could navigate the rest of my field. It forged my positionality in the field as “member of the Schieve”. The second main case study is the Critical Mass. We actively created connections between the Schieve and the Critical Mass from the very beginning of the fieldwork. I finally joined the core members of the Critical Mass and participated in developing mobile sound systems connected in the cortege. The third main case study that is referred to in the ethnographic chapters is the Carnaval Sauvage which is an anarchist carnival related to matters of urban struggles, squats and right to housing.

I explored those three main case studies as an insider of its organization, participating in the reunions of preparation. I was not only observing from the inside the ways people were performing such happenings but I was also performing them myself. I attempted to produce ethnographic knowledge through the experimental creation of parades in the field. I practiced an engaged ethnography and I collaborated with people in my field, namely by undertaking a dynamic role towards the community I was working with. I used some visual content compiled on a website in order to sustain some arguments and provide a visual documentation of my field. Finally, I conducted targeted interviews in order to comply with the ethical guidelines and collect informant’s accounts. The methods I used to study the three main case studies are thus constituted by four elements which are 1) performance and experimental ethnographies, 2) multimodality, 3) visual ethnographic content and 4) interviews.

SUMMARY OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

First, I explained how participants in a parade actively experience the city space during a parade through imagining, appropriating, and liberating. Based on my fieldwork, I argued that participants, organizers, and performers in a parade come to reimagine places through **narrativization** and **poetization**. Through narrativization, they forge place-based social imaginaries that translate theory into practice (e.g. the marxist social theory about urban space). Performing a narrativization of places materialized and spatialized social struggles and imaginaries of resistance. Whereas in poetizing, participants in a parade forged poetic experiences in the city through artistic performances. While doing so, they are creatively reimagining the uses and interactions with the city space. They locate art and poetry in the form of cities⁵⁰. Also, the movements enabled by the parade reenchant the city space. The parade allows the projection of imagination onto the terrain. This reimagination of space lasts in the memory of participants and durably impacts their relationship with the city.

Then, I explored the appropriation of space through a phenomenological prism. This allowed me to demonstrate that there is a confounding between self and places as they are appropriated. In parades, people create the possibility of collectively inhabiting the space of the city while being there together. This appropriation of space transforms its political parameters and produce place-based, experiential ethics and politics. Those experientially produced politics of space differs from the formal politics of space, namely applied by the state.

Thirdly, I explained how making a parade operates a materialization and embodiment of freedom at various levels. First, freedom is embodied through movement. The act of moving is the primary sensory experience of freedom that is enacted in parades. Paralely is a liberation from the spatialization of social order that is characteristic to carnivalesque festivity. This liberation from social order and norms is performed in different ways depending on the parade but it is a redundant feature. Based on the observation that a social order is embodied and spatialized, I argued that liberation occurs in the interplay between the body, the space and the social order. I illustrated this interplay with various examples from my field. Afterwards, I detailed a more specific practice of masking and explained how it is used as a way to access freedom by performing an extraordinary form of togetherness, by disrupting visibility and creating a collective effervescence. Finally, I explained how the spatial and bodily conditions for political

⁵⁰ Locating art and poetry in the form of cities corresponds to the Situationist project.

freedom are met in a parade by being in an open space, by guaranteeing a freedom of appearance and participation in a public happening and by establishing a condition of no rule. In Arendt's terms, I argued that the parade is a revolutionary undertaking as it appropriates a place for freedom.

In the second ethnographic chapter, I discussed the concept of Habermasian public sphere⁵¹. First, I showed how it is related to the parade since these are often covered by medias. But more importantly, I explained how the concept of public sphere lacks a spatiality and a materiality. The open space of the city partly constitutes the materiality of public sphere and it is rendered public or common only through a collective experience. By providing a collective experience of the city space, the parade on the one hand participates in materializing and embodying the public sphere. On the other hand, it produces an alternative public sphere through restricted legibility and altered mobilities and modes of presence or disrupting textualities. This has the power to shape alternative political subjectivities and influence life trajectories.

Then I explained that the parades that constitute my case study are located within a constellation of alternative forms. As such they are crucial to the alternative milieu but they are crucial also because they are produced within a dialectical relationship with what is not alternative. More precisely, they are a moment of inversion between what is perceived as alternative and what is not. Secondly, they are closely related to squats and temporary occupations for various reasons. Parades rely on an informal network of squats and temporary occupations. Both parades and squats are produced by dynamics of place-making involving similar political claims on the city space (mainly anticapitalistic and anarchist). They are both spatializing urban struggles. Finally, I explained how the parade flows from an imaginary of confluence, it flows from the vision of a marginalized minority that converges and becomes an overwhelming mass. It is produced by such social imaginary of confluence but in turn, it also produces it.

In the last part, I showed how soundscapes are being designed in the making of parades by using the acoustic qualities of the built environment, showing how the sensory perceptions of space play a role in the designing of a parade. Soundscapes are also created by using new technologies such as mobile sound systems and UHF transmitters. They also use new

⁵¹ Habermas defines the concept of public sphere as a conceptual space where individuals converge to form a public and public opinion can thereby be formed. He traced the origins of a public sphere with the appearance of newspapers, of literary cafés and the proliferation of print media which allow the formation of a public.

technologies for mapping the parade. Those mapping practices allow to make visible the transnational aspect of certain parades such as the Critical Mass. Through visibilization they endorse the imaginary of confluence. And finally, they show that the technical mediation of space is not only used by the state for strategical purposes of control but can also be creatively appropriated by movements of resistance to tactically empower themselves.

In the end, I can now answer to the research question of “how do participants in a street parade experience and make the city space?” as follows. 1) Participants **experience** the parade through imagination, appropriation, and liberation as a moment where they forge alternative politics and poetics in the city space. 2) They **make** an alternative embodied and materialized public sphere. They **make** the parade within a constellation of alternative forms which involves squats and within a dialectical relationship of inversion with what is not alternative. They both rely on and produce an imaginary of confluence. And they make the parade through the designing of soundscapes and by using new technologies of sound and mapping.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE LITERATURE

I contributed to my field of studies in different ways. First, I contributed to my field of studies by attempting to lay the basis of an anthropology of parades. In order to do so, I builded a conceptual framework solely designed for the critical analysis of parades. **In previous research, parades were only secondary elements or looked at only through a single prism** instead of a complete research involving various relevant theoretical contributions. I proposed more complete ways of describing parades.

In order to do so, I participated in the corpus of studies about embodied space (Csordas 1990, 1999, 2004 ; Low 2013, 2017 ; Sen & Silverman 2013 etc) and **constructed my arguments according to the idea that social processes are spatialized and embodied, thereby countering abstract lectures of society**. Secondly, I combined a phenomenological perspective with a Marxist perspective, namely through the use of an embodied space framework that makes sense of both while looking at people’s experiences. Indeed, I could notice in the literature that most studies about the historical materialist and political economy aspect of space are concluded by **summoning research about the role of populations to take an active role in forming cities and the possibilities of political resistance located in people’s experience of the city** (e.g. de Certeau 1990, Lefebvre 1991, Adam & Comby 2020 etc). **I thus tried to reconcile two very different approaches**. This reconciliation was partly achieved in the choice of my vocabulary. I

willingly emphasized the agentive aspect, refusing to depict people as passive subjects but instead as active performers that shape their own reality thereby contributing to the debate between structure and agency.

In more specific arguments that I developed, I contributed to the various efforts (e.g. Henkin 1998; Chattopadhyay 2013) in criticizing and refining the concept of public sphere of Jürgen Habermas (1991) by showing how parades produce a materialized, embodied and alternative public sphere, namely through altered mobilities, mode of presence or disrupting textualities. I also used Arendt's theoretical framework (1990) about political freedom in order to describe the revolutionary politics of the parade and criticized it, with Sennett (1994), sustaining that the open space of the city is the appropriate place for enacting political freedom.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE REASEARCH

This research is limited to the various case studies that I could observe in the site of Brussels. It is limited to the alternative parades (alternative as defined in figure 4) and de facto excludes more institutionalized parades. Thereby, it is sticking to a concept of the parade as an alternative happening. Also, it is limited to the people that are actively involved in the making of the parade, through organizing, performing and being there in full support of what is happening. It practically does not consider the perception and experience of externals. It is based on a creative and experimental fieldwork that implies a maximum degree of involvement with my field instead of an external point of view. Also, the interviews present a majority of female interviewees and a relatively wide range of ages. My own position, not only as a local young white male mastering the emic codes but also as an initiator and organizer has also given a social bias to my ethnographic experiences and potentially, to the accounts people provided to me.

Future studies could thus look at external experiences and perceptions of parades and see how this contrasts with the insider's perspective hereby presented. Also, it could examine in more details the possibility of an alternative public sphere and detail further the relationship between publicness and political life and how this is tackled in parades. Future studies could also examine how come to be institutionalized instead of emphasizing the alternative side of it. It could also deepen the new technological dimension of parades and how technologies are impacting parades.

This long-term thesis revealed many ways in which people can transform life in modern cities. How they can come to inhabit collectively the shared space of the city and counter hegemonic workings of state and capitalism in their agency. It was a very stimulating adventure

and an enriching reflection. The case studies of this thesis had a lot of echoes in the social spheres of Brussels and abroad. They remain urban legends in the mind of many inhabitants of the city. This thesis leaves an academic trace of those happenings for anyone who might be interested to reflect about it.

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Appendix

TABLES

Table A : List of key places and their relation to the fieldwork

Place	Relation to the fieldwork	Status of the place
La Poissonerie	- Hosted most of our weekly meetings - Hosted events and parties organized by members of the collective - Served as headquarters for the freedom convoy	T.O.
L'accroche (former location)	Hosted a convergence meeting before the 1 st of May	T.O.
L'Alternatif	Hosted reunions of the Collective	T.O.
SEE U	Former barracks serving as headquarters/storage place and departure point of the critical Mass's crew (not anymore, the building was destroyed)	T.O.
MEET U	Former police station which hosted various of our reunions	T.O.
La Friche Josaphat	A vast green area hosting huge biodiversity on the outskirts of town and being disputed between real estate projects and ecologist militants. It hosted many of our meetings during the summer period.	T.O. + G.A.
Maxima	Served as a storage place for material of the Schieve Parade Hosted some of our organizational meetings	T.O.
La Serre	Hosted a workshop before the 2 nd Schieve Parade	T.O.
SpaceLab	Former power plant which hosted various meetings of the collective and the after party (free party) of the first Schieve Parade	T.O.
LaMAB	Hosted one event of libertarian marriages proposed by a member of the collective and a cohesion day. Printed some of our stickers.	T.O.
La Finca	Place where I lived during the winter period, and which served as a headquarter for the preparation of our presence in the demonstrations and for meetings	T.O.
Le phénix	House that I opened myself with some friends in order to house a migrant friend that had no documents. It only lasted one week before the expulsion, but it served to accommodate foreigners from the freedom convoy	T.O.

Traversière	Former youth hostel which served as an accommodation for foreigners from the Freedom Convoy	T.O.
L'accroche (new location)	Formulated an invitation to the collective of the Schieve Parade to get involved in their new location in Ixelles	T.O.
La Zinzinerie	Hosted the final and after-party of the second Schieve Parade	T.O.
Le Bunker	Former theater which hosted the swarming meeting of the "carnaval sauvage"	T.O.
KBC	Migrant T.O. which hosted a part of the carnaval sauvage final.	T.O.
TIPI	One of the person responsible for the opening of the TIPI was a major member of the Schieve collective and the place hosted some of our meetings before the 3 rd Schieve Parade	T.O.
ATOMA	Hosted the residency for the preparation of the 3 rd Schieve Parade	T.O.
ZK	Provided 'recup' food for a private event we organized	T.O.
CityGate	Hosted a reunion of the collective. Allowed us to visit the available locals in the expectative of a potential rental.	T.O.
Bois de la Cambre	- Hosted activities of Edutainment - Served as a convergence location for the cycling for freedom parades - Meeting point of La Boum 1 and 2 - Hosted a few foreigners from the freedom convoy for food distributions and parking - Hosted talking circles	G.A. + P.S.
Cinquantenaire	- Hosted Edutainment gatherings - Hosted bubble dance gatherings - Ending point of the "Europeans United" demonstrations	G.A. + P.S.
Parc de Forest	Hosted some of the "freequency" parties	G.A. + P.S.
Abbaye de la Cambre	- Hosted activities of Edutainment - Hosted the final of the first Schieve Parade	G.A. + P.S.
Square Charles de Coster	- Starting point for the 1st of may flashmob - Starting point for the 1st Schieve Parade - Starting point for the 2nd Schieve Parade	G.A. + P.S.
Parc Royal	- Intended final point of the second Schieve parade and convergence with the Freequency (was prevented by the police) - Hosted Edutainment gatherings	G.A. + P.S.
Place sainte croix (or place flagey)	Hosted various of the bubble dance gatherings	P.S.

	• Hosted the giant monopoly • Place where the authorization was granted by the burgomaster to stay on the 1st of May	
Place sainte-catherine	• Hosted various of the bubble dance gatherings • Hosted an improvised demonstration during the freedom convoy • Hosted a small jam of the carnaval sauvage after its dispersion by the police (which was in turn dispersed again).	P.S.

T.O. : stands for temporary occupation or squat (21)

G.A. : stands for green areas and parcs in town (7)

P.S. : stands for public space (8)

Table B: List of events and happenings I attended during the fieldwork, the degree of participation, media coverage and police presence.

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Degree of participation</u>	<u>Police presence (19/25)</u>	<u>Media coverage (12/25)</u>
Still Standing For Culture	February 2021	V		
Carnaval Sauvage	Saturday 20 th of march 2021	V	X	
La Boum	Thursday 1 st of April 2021	V	X	
Bezef La monnaie occupée	April 2021	V	X	
Critical Mass: promotion of the 1 st of May with disguises and distribution of flyers	Friday 30 th of April 2021	V	X	
Flashmob at place Flagey : fanfare, flowers and La Boum 2	Saturday 1 st of May 2021	V	X	Y
Happening for the event sector in place De Brouckère	Friday 7 th of May 2021	V		Y
Demonstration in bois de la cambre with medias, percussions and spectacles.	Saturday 15 th of May 2021	V	X	Y

Critical Mass + providing a DJ. Filming. Distribution of stickers	Friday 25th of May 2021	V	X	
Sticker operation	18-25 of May 2021	V		
1st Schieve Parade.	Saturday 26th June 2021	V	X	Y
2 nd Schieve parade	Sunday 19th September 2021	V	X	Y
Demonstration (EuropeansUnited) unicorns	Sunday 19th December 2021	V	X	Y
Demonstration (EuropeansUnited) unicorns	Sunday 23rd of January 2022	V	X	Y
Freedom Convoy	Monday 14th february... 2022	V	X	Y
Metro Schieve Dodo	Saturday 19th february 2022	V		
Carnaval d'Ixelles	Sunday 6th of march 2022	V	X	
Carnaval Sauvage	Saturday 19th of march 2022	V	X	Y
Demonstration for housing	Sunday 27th of march 2022	V	X	
Promenade & conference with ARAU in Bois de la Cambre	Wednesday 20th of april 2022	V		
Zinneke Parade	14th May 2022	V		Y
3rd Schieve Parade	26th of June 2022	V	X	Y
30th year anniversary of the Critical Mass	25 th of September 2022	V	X	
Ghost bike ceremony with the Critical Mass	24 th of November 2022	V	X	Y

V : main or sole organizer (the collective and/or I) (7/24)

V : active part in the set-up of the event (the collective and/or I) (9/24)

V : Mere presence involving no active part in the set-up of the event (8/24)

X : stands for a violent and armed police repression (7/18)

X : stands for a strict control of the police (4/18)

X : stands for a mere presence of the police (7/18)

Y: stands for media coverage or interviews of members of the collective. (12/24)

Table C: List of artistic performances and participative activities that occurred during the Schieve Parades

Performance and activities	Description	Number of occurrences
Aerial Fabric	Spectacles of acrobatic aerial fabric hanged in trees by trained artists. (once in the garden of a former abbey and twice in parks)	3
Bubble Dance	Contemporary dance performance in the street with a fanfare in the middle of the street	1
Pole Dance	Spectacle by the national champion of Pole Dance on the music of Swan Lake by Tchaikovsky. She was using colorful poles on the sidewalk.	1
Tightrope walker	Political discourses being enunciated by a trained artist while he is keeping balance on a string. Once it happened above a water pond with water lilies and the two other times it happened in the trees.	3
Double diabolo	Spectacle of dubble diabolo by a trained artist on a podium colored with the rainbow colors built on the sidewalk	1
Initiation to Brazilian dance	A Brazilian dance teacher distributed colorful dress to everyone (both boys and girls) and gave an initiation class to Brazilian dance	1
Griot	Music and stories told by an African Griot in a park	1
Acrobatic dance performance	A couple of acrobatic dancers (a very tall and large and a very small and thin performer) performed a prepared spectacle.	1
Double corde	Aerial dance performance on a double corde in a park	1
African percussions	Percussion concert by a group of trained percussionists called “Casa Del Djembe”	2
Cumbia concert	Cumbia concert by a group of musicians in a squat	1
“entartage” workshop	A workshop for smashing a dummy with Chantilly creme. The smasher could first write a name on a billboard (of his favorite political figure for example) around the neck of the dummy.	2
“Pet a donkey” workshop	At the first Schieve Parade, there was a donkey at the meeting point.	1
Foam swords fight	Foam swords were distributed and circulated in the crowd	3
Holi Party	Color powder was distributed so that everyone could throw colors at everyone	3
Ritual plantation of a tree	A fig tree was planted in a shared vegetable garden of the neighborhood in a theatricalized and ritualized manner	1
Waste collection	A competition of waste collection was organized in order to clean an area.	1

Parti-Cipe	Presentation of a participative political party with no election. Everyone could present his own project to change the world.	1
Face and body painting	Professional make-up artists were painting bodies.	3
Jam session	A big Jam session was organized in a park. Most of the musicians were pillars of renown temporary occupations in town.	2
Open Mic	Rappers freestyling with an “open microphone”	2
Brass Band	A trained brass band of musicians performing in front the Ulenspiegel statue and then in front of the peter pan statue	2
Disguise distribution	Disguises were distributed, either for free or for free prices	1
Percussion concert	A concert of percussion was held by a percussion group named “Tikiwaka”	1

Table D: List of interviewees and their characteristics

Interviewee	Gender	Role
Int. 1 :	Female	Main organizer of the Schieve Parade. Focalizer of reunions. We formed a co-organizing pair for many months
Int. 2 :	Female	Main contact with the police and municipality. Negotiator of the Schieve Parade.
Int 3 :	Female	Organized some activities in the Schieve Parade. Hosted reunions.
Int 4 :	Male	Taleteller of the Schieve Parade. Collected our testimonies of what happened and inserted into a narrative, a tale. (Biologically male but usually appeared transvestite as a woman during the Parades).
Int 5 :	Male	Tightrope walker of the Schieve Parade. Important and recurrent performer of the Schieve Parade. Participate in the scouting.
Int 6 :	Female	Active Participant in the Schieve Parade. Present in reunions.
Int 7 :	Male	Main organizer of the Cyclonudista. Financial director of the CPAS of Brussels. Sitting in the city council.
Coll. Int 8 :	Males	Various organizers of the Carnaval Sauvage.
Int 9 :	Female	Nomadic person living in a van which was reflecting about public space in relation to her lifestyle.

FIGURES

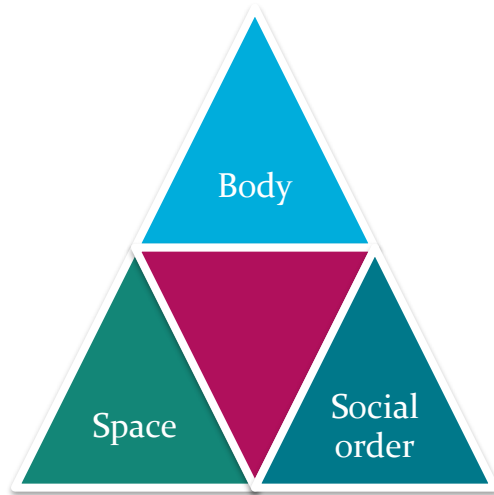


Figure 1: triangle of liberation

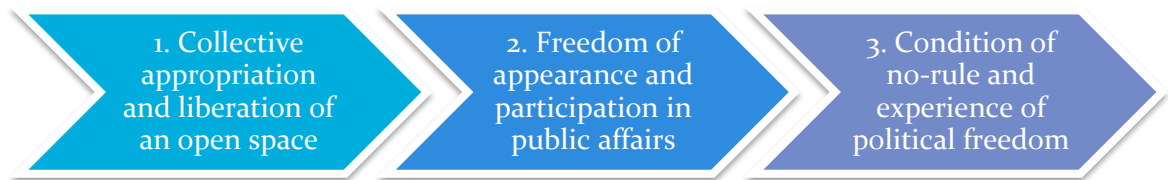


Figure 2: the making of political freedom

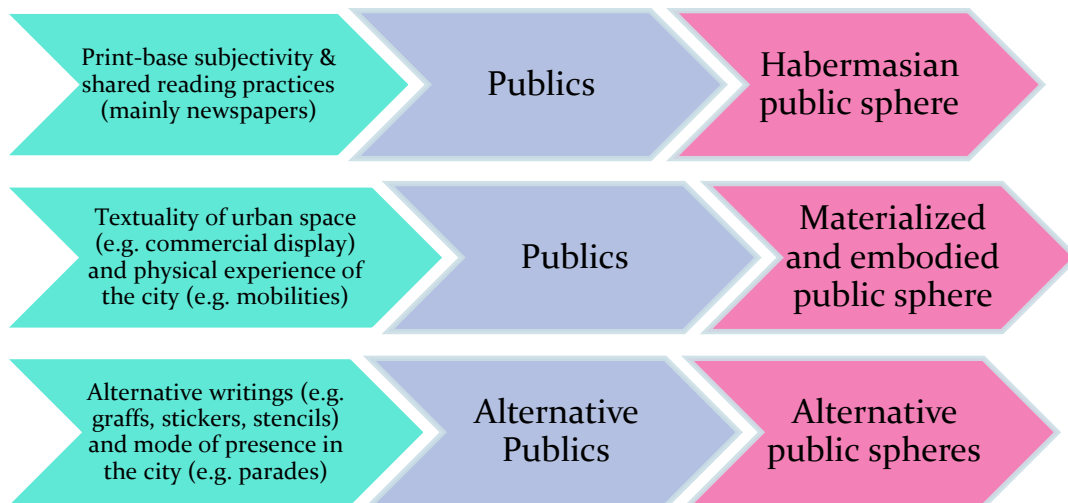


Figure 3: the production of public spheres

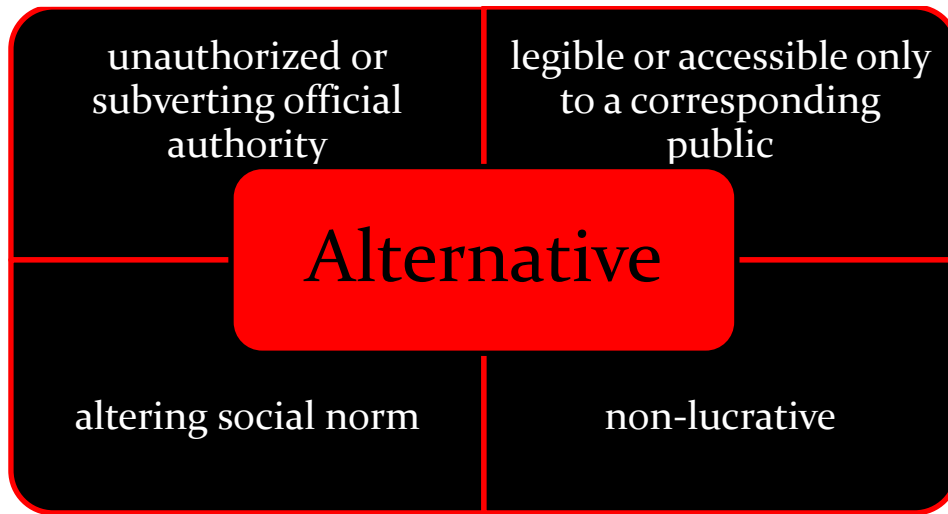


Figure 4 : characteristics of alternativity