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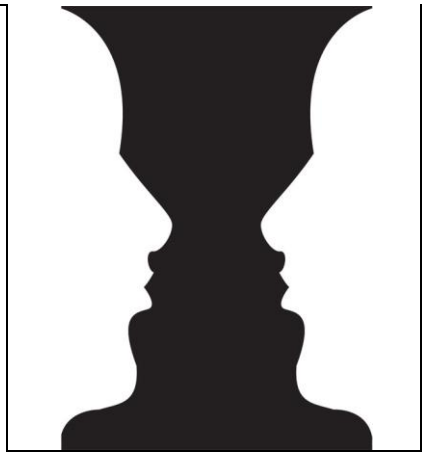

A time of meta-celebration: Celebrating the sociology of celebration

Editorial

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Temporality, spatiality, sociality: The coordinates of celebration

Whatever their particular nature – political commemorations, religious holidays, family anniversaries or other festive occasions – celebrations are the salt-n-pepper of social life. Celebrations bring a burst of flavor to the otherwise dry and dull routine of ordinary daily life of a community. They punctuate the endless routine into which everyday social living is cast with festive occasions that break the dominion of affective neutrality governing human relations and spark an outburst of collective emotions.[3]

Although not figuring explicitly on Donald E. Brown's list of human universals, a compelling case could be argued for including celebrations among anthropological constants (Brown 1991). True enough, celebration cannot be found as such in Brown's index of cultural universals. However, the constituents of celebration, such as ritual and symbolic behavior, a notion of the sacred and some forms of religion, music and dance,

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[3] As guest editors of this special issue on the "Sociology of Celebration" we would like to express our gratitude to the people who made the appearance of this issue possible. First, we thank Cosima Rughiniș (Editor-in-Chief) and her dedicated editorial team for accepting the challenge of hosting the special issue in the *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology*. Second, we are grateful to the authors who believed in the project of a sociological study of celebration and whose combined contributions articulate a first conception of how a sociology of celebration might look like. Third, we gratefully acknowledge the referees involved in the evaluation process for their valuable effort of reviewing the submitted manuscripts. Not least, we also thank the referees who declined our invitation to review the manuscripts. It was they who made us acutely aware of the challenges of managing such an editorial project.

time awareness and the cyclicity of time, jokes and play, are all recognized as shared by all known human societies (Pinker 2002: 435-439, appendix).

Given these considerations, it is safe to assume that all societies, irrespective of their idiosyncratic morphologies sometimes expressing the wildest of variation in terms of social structure, political organization, and system of economic production, are nevertheless "cultures of celebration" (Brown and Marsden 1994). The thesis of the cultural universality of celebration is supported by the "more than 3,000 holidays, festivals, celebrations, commemorations, holy days, feasts and fasts, and other observances from all parts of the world" documented in the *Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations of the World Dictionary* (Abbey 2010).

Special issue editorials are notoriously short. Instead of following the customary practice of writing a conventionally succinct editorial, we will seize the opportunity offered by this occasion and proceed otherwise. In this editorial piece, we would like to attempt a tentative mapping of the relatively uncharted field of the sociology of celebration. We will start off by setting the frames of celebration. In this analytic endeavor, the relationships of celebration with time, space, and sociality will constitute the objects of our reflections. After establishing this relational framework, we will set out to examine the constituents of "festive sociality" by analyzing celebration in its intricate relationships with rituals, ceremonies, commemorations, festivals, carnival, and festivities. The third section of our editorial will host a pluralistic typology consisting in a set of dichotomous variables in terms of which the multiple facets of celebration could be made visible and understood systematically. It is in this section, and in the light of these typologies we are articulating, that the conventional summaries of the contributions to this special issue are to be found. We end our piece in a festive fashion, in full tune with the subject matter of our special issue, by inverting chiastically the "Sociology of celebration" and calling for a celebration of sociology's renewed interest in the study of celebration.

Time and celebration: The temporal frame of celebration

Celebrations are ritual means of socially patterning time. What Henri Bergson (1996) [1896] pointed out for the individual person, Émile Durkheim (1995) [1912] has shown to be the case for societies – namely, that for both individual and collective consciousness, temporality and duration are experienced subjectively, different from the objective mechanics of time. But if for Bergson the elasticity of time was the result of the endless varieties of subjective experience, for Durkheim, it is the society which is responsible for the structuration of time in terms of its division of labor and forms of social organization.

Following the sociological footpaths of Durkheim, we shall argue that celebrations are the ritual means by which a collectivity symbolically marks time and thus, by organizing it within a system of temporal frameworks, time can be made socially meaningful. As ritual tools of patterning time, celebrations have a paradoxical disruptively-regulatory nature. In the same time as they disrupt the daily rhythms of everyday life, they also, at a higher level of social existence, regulate the communal life by

imposing to it a cyclical pattern of recursive festivities. This becomes abundantly clear when we consider the calendar, either religious or political, as a socially constructed temporal framework designed not only to organize the flow of time into predictable units, but also to set apart the ordinary (working days) from the extraordinary (holidays) and thus to schedule a program of celebrations (Zerubavel 1981).

Celebrations certainly entertain a special relationship with social time. Whenever they occur, celebrations suspend the hustle and humdrum of daily life, transforming the everyday, mundane temporality based on a "business as usual" attitude towards social existence, into a festive time. As Mona Ozouf (1975) was keen to observe with respect to the fêtes révolutionnaires, "festive time, insularly delimited, opens the parenthesis of uncommon days." Moreover, by instituting this experiential rupture, festive time stands in an "insurmountable antagonism" with the experience of men and women's everyday life (p. 372). That is to say, celebration entails an experiential shift from the temporal realm made up of mundane durations to a very different regime where people release themselves from the mechanical dominion of the clock into the flow of "festal time" (Eliade 1959: 71). Celebrations are thus ritual devices of transcending the quantitative tyranny of clock time instituted in the "metronomic society" (Young 1988) into a qualitatively different, experiential understanding of temporality.

Through celebrations, chronos turns into kairos. The two terms reflect two radically different dimensions of temporality, as they were conceived of and experienced by in the ancient Greek mindset. In Greek mythology, Chronos represented the godly personification of linear, never ending, quantitative time. Through this anthropomorphized notion of time, temporality was conceived of as the inexorable unfolding of a series of discrete and equal durations all succeeding each other along a linear path. Chronos was thought of being in charge of the past, the present, and the future, mastering the orderly passing of time through these three temporal orders.

Kairos stands for a very different conception of time. In contradistinction to chronological time, kairotic time cannot be measured or quantified, but lived as an intensely felt experience. Kairos provides a temporary escape from the all-consuming chronos into a temporal realm governed not by the mechanic experience of time as divided by regular intervals but by intersubjective experiences that cannot be accounted or measured in terms of the discrete units of clock-time. Instead, they are to be understood only in terms of co-joint experiences of connectedness in time and space. Kairos creates a cyclic loophole into the linear movement of chronic time. Drawing on this distinction, it is our argument that celebrations open up a temporal horizon of shared intersubjective experiences within the framework of an emotionally insensitive chronology. That is to say, celebrations can be conceived of as disruptive moments in the linear flow of chronological time that enable social communities to experience kairotic moments.

Space and celebration: The spatial frame of celebration

Just as they act as ritual tools of patterning time, celebrations also mark the space into which they occur. As pointed out by James van Geldern (1993), throughout human history, "societies have traditionally reserved special places and times for the celebration of their fundamental beliefs" (p. 43). If prehistorical man found in caves a retreatment into which to worship the gods, with the emerging of an agricultural society, the priestly caste monopolized the sacred and segregated itself from the surrounding laity into temples. Continuing this timeless trend of spatial seclusion into a sacred sanctuary for celebratory purpose, "medieval monks walled themselves off from the squalid cities of Europe" in remote abbeys where they could celebrate God undisturbed by the hustle and bustle of the city (Geldern 1993: 43). In the very buzzing life of the squalid cities of Europe, cathedrals were built as spatial oases of serenity and worship insulated within the bustling urban culture of commerce, money, and greed.

When spatial settings are not deliberately constructed to harbor specific celebrations, space is nevertheless transformed for this very purpose. A rough distinction can be drawn between *ad hoc* sites of celebrations, which physically segregate festive space within or outside mundane existence, and *ad-lib* places of celebrations, which keep the same spatial anchoring but symbolically set the celebration space apart from everyday life through ritual means and decorative markings. In other terms, we distinguish between special and common sites of celebration. The former either carve out an enclave within the social space (the cathedral is the paradigmatic example of this sub-type) or set up an *extra moenia* space, cloistered outside the fringes of everyday social life (with the monastery as the paramount illustration).

As for the latter, although physically indistinct from the places of daily life, such as a market square, a boulevard, or the entire town in the case of large urban festivals, they are nevertheless transformed during the times of celebration into festive locations. "The festive environment is segregated from surrounding time and place by decorative markings," points out James van Geldern (1993: 9). A road, usually chocked by traffic, noise, and pollution, is cleared of cars during festive time and, decorated with flags, banners, and other political paraphernalia, is rendered into a boulevard ready to receive the triumphal parade. A utilitarian means of transportation is thus symbolically transformed into a *festivescape* used for celebratory purposes. Ordinary space can be thus remodeled into becoming a celebrative space. This alchemical quality of space has been highlighted by Luis O. Arata (2011), who pointed out that "a festive space can be anything capable of being altered to be used differently than intended according to the occasion. It is a space that can be played with, dismembered from its normal functions, and reconfigured for a different occasion that enables interactions along a festive theme" or a celebrative ritual (p. 96).

Celebrations are staged in spatial sceneries, either permanently segregated from mundane space inside or outside the margins of society (*ad hoc* sites of celebrations, e.g. cathedrals and monasteries) or temporarily established in ordinary locations turned extraordinary by decorative means and symbolic framing (*ad-lib* places of celebration, e.g.

boulevards, market squares, or entire towns for parades, urbane festivals, and other grand-scale celebrative programs). It follows from our argumentation that celebrations need an adequate spatial infrastructure, and when it does not have a material base designed specifically for this purpose, they colonize ordinary spaces which they imbue with a very flagrant festive aura and decorum.

In a piece of scholarly work which delved on the modeling and remodeling of festive space, Louis O. Arata (2011) has pinpointed three basic features of festive space: a) interactivity, b) structurality, and c) ecological adequacy. First off, celebrative space tends to be organized so as to facilitate social interaction and to encourage effective participation to the festivities that are being enacted. Celebrations require participation, either active engagement (such as in a costume festival, e.g. the Carnival of Venice) or passive participation (such as in a political ceremony enacted on the National Day, when the crowd is cast in the role of reverent bystanders). Secondly, celebrative spaces are structured in such a way so as to bring participants together within the boundaries of the festive event. A main challenge in setting up socially successful celebrative spaces is finding ways of integrating the participants into the event through elements of spatial design. This is usually achieved by establishing physical boundaries into which the celebrations are spatially embedded. Thirdly, ecological adequacy designates that the physical or material locations where the celebrations occur need not encumber the events. Material variables such as the width and centrality of a street on which a parade is due to unfold can have a decisive say on the success of a celebrative space. In the light on these considerations, the ecological adequacy of the particular space designated to host the festivities indicates the importance of the *material topography of celebration*.

Festivity distorts the ordinary experience of time and space. Festive time is amenable to compression, when it is brought to a halt during a moment of solemn silence, or to expansion, when, during a carnival, everyday restrictions are lift off and people are freed, although only temporarily, from the constrains of social life, including the norms and pressures exerted by time (e.g. punctuality, wake-up and bedtime hour, etc.). In similar fashion, festive space can be "universalized or minutely compacted" (Geldern 1993: 8). For instance, in the massive *Fête de la Fédération* celebrated on July 14, 1790 to honor the fall of the ancient regime, the place of Bastille, where the revolutionary turmoil started a year before, played a surprisingly minor role. The center of the festival was chosen to be the Champ de Mars, then a large field at the outskirts of Paris. In similar fashion, throughout the province, "plains, heaths and moors were preferred to village squares" (Ozouf 1975: 376). Mona Ozouf construes these curious choices as a deliberate attempt to delocalize ceremonial space and, *ipso facto*, to universalize it. Choosing the Champ de Mars instead of the iconic site of Bastille, the organizers of the Festival of Fédération "pretended to a universality that too precise a localization would threaten to destroy" (Ozouf 1975: 376-377).

On the contrary, space can be minutely compacted during times of celebration when it is anchored to a specific *lieu de mémoire* which is ceremonially instituted as the very topographical center of the social world. When time and space are fused together by an atmosphere filled with festive mood, what emerges out are *chronotopialscapes of*

celebration, i.e., a festive time-space into which a very specific type of sociality comes out. It is to this celebratory sociality that we will now turn our attention.

Sociality and celebration: The social frame of celebration

Warping the sense of time in ad hoc or ad-lib festive spaces, celebrations create a particular "celebrative sociality." That is to say, celebrations temporarily dissolve the social barriers and suspend the anonymity of modern times underpinning mundane sociability and thus institute a conviviality based on the common participation to the same activities. A transfiguration in the very nature of sociality takes place that brings about what Victor W. Turner (1983) has called as "society in its subjunctive mood" that temporarily replaces the everyday society operating in its usual "indicative mood." Challenging the all-encompassing dominion of instrumental rationality in modern life, celebration presents the potential of breaking free of the Weberian "iron cage" stifling the human spirit.

> What we are seeing is society in its subjunctive mood – to borrow a term from grammar – its mood of feeling, willing and desiring, its mood of fantasizing, its playful mood; not its indicative mood, where it tries to apply human reason to human action and systematize the relationship between ends and means in industry and bureaucracy (Turner 1983: 103-104).

During times of celebration, a sense of *communitas* can emerge among the participants. Building on the work of Arnold van Gennep (1960) [1909] on the rites of passages, Victor W. Turner (1991) articulated the concept of *communitas* as a liminal community caught "between and betwixt" conventional states of social order. Festivals, as incarnations of *communitas*, are temporary communities of "collective joy" and celebration (Turner 2012). Stricto sensu, *communitas* is a specific configuration of sociality, inherently ephemeral in nature, in which the intricately stratified social fabric unravels and re-weaves itself into an egalitarian social texture. This is most obvious in festivals, where people leave behind their everyday statuses and identities in order to integrate into a community of equal partakers.

However, different types of celebration could have radically different outcomes in terms of how they reshape social relationships. If festivals tend to promote an egalitarian ethos by leveling down status differences, other celebrations either accentuate or reverse these otherwise durable social characteristics of individuals. Rites of power, such as the political celebrations analyzed by Tijana Trako Poljak (2016) and Mihai Stelian Rusu (2016) in this issue, symbolically emphasize the power structure of a political order. One of their various social functions is to make salient the power differential already visible in the public consciousness by enacting an impressive choreography of power. In carnivals, by contrast, social hierarchies are provisionally turned upside down through enacting various rites of inversion. Irrespective of how it twists and turns social relationships, through active social participation, including of those whose status is reversed from the privileged to the lowest ranks, celebration brings about a sense of togetherness.

Celebrations are festive forms of togetherness. They are positive modalities of being-together-in-time-and-space, leading to what we call as *chronotopial sociality*, i.e., an affective community underpinned by a spatial proximity and temporal synchronicity in sharing together the same festive experience and a common sense of duration. Celebrative communities are usually brought and kept together by the integrative force of the ritual. Carefully sequenced in formal ceremonies such as a coronation or, at the other end of this continuum, spontaneously emerging out of informal interactions between co-workers in hostile environments (e.g. Koikkalainen, Valkonen, and Huilaja 2016, this issue), rituals structure a *ritual sociality* that comes to life in times of celebration. Not the least, celebrations also configure *epiphanic socialities*, i.e., social configurations that enable joint epiphanic experiences, revealed either in drinking and partying within festivals, carnivals, and other convivial forms of celebration (Wilks and Quinn 2016), or in singing sacred music (Salzbrunn 2016), celebrating family holidays (Hadžibulić and Lagerspetz 2016), and partaking in sober political ceremonials (Rusu 2016) and rites of power (Trako Poljak 2016).

However, this celebrative togetherness shows only the bright side of the story. It should not be obscured that celebration can also have negative consequences. The sociological study of celebration seems prone to a Durkheimian bias in seeing the integrative values of celebrative collective behavior along with the centripetal forces it set in motion that periodically brings together a community threatened constantly by the specter of anomy and disintegration. Yet, celebration can also be conflictual, leading to a tearing apart of the social fabric. In stark contrast to a Durkheimian perspective on celebrative action theoretically preset to focus on the integrative nature of celebration, a conflictual approach will expose the patterns of exclusion at work in some celebrations. For instance, Christian religious feasts mark the confessional fault lines dividing the community of believers in pluralistic societies, excluding not only the non-believers but also the confessional out-groups from the in-group celebrations. This is shown abundantly clear in the celebration of Easter (a movable feast) which is celebrated separately by various Christian denominations due to what one might call calendrical asynchronicity. Moreover, in ethnically diverse communities, political celebrations such as the National Day tend to exclude the citizens belonging to the national minorities and to set them against the celebrative majority. A third factor of exclusion, besides religion and ethnicity, is certainly class. The commodification of festivals occurring in an increasingly faster pace in postmodern capitalist societies leads to the exclusion of the less prosperous from the celebrative market. As festivals and other celebrative occasions are drawn into the logic underpinning the society of mass consumption, socioeconomic status comes to be a decisive factor in who is financially entitled to buy his/her place at the table of celebration (Bankston and Henry 2000; Gotham 2013).

Rituals, celebration, festiveness: Disentangling the semantics of festive sociality

As it will become clear as we advance in our argumentation, celebration belongs to a class of slippery concepts that struggle against a too strict operationalization. Like many other

sociological concepts, the notion of celebration somehow evades being tied-up to a definitional straight-jacket. The most ambitious bid at a definition of celebration has been attempted by Frank E. Manning (1983) in his editorial introduction to *The Celebration of Society*. He starts his endeavor by situating celebration within the wider category of cultural performances. A cultural performance, as understood by Manning, is a symbolic action carried out by a collective actor staged in a spectacular and dramatic fashion. Celebration is thus a type of cultural performance that involves a dramatic display of symbolic action and cultural values. Besides *performativity*, which is its crucial feature, Manning (1983: 4) designates three other major components of celebration. Celebrations are *entertaining* performances. However, they are not merely "fun," as celebrations generally have political usages which makes them liable to ideological instrumentation. A third feature consists in the *public* nature of celebrations. Manning insists that celebrations are cultural performances enacted on public stages such as the street or a stadium. Moreover, celebrations are *participatory* performances, which presuppose a direct engagement of the audience to the celebrative actions. Although he captures some crucial features of the phenomenon in the four components of celebration – performance, entertainment, public, participation – Manning's approach is not devoid of questionable criteria. For instance, does a celebration need to be public by definition? A birthday party or a family anniversary could very well be celebrated in the private confines of the household. Likewise, one could trace a continuum of participation based on the intensity and nature of involvement in a celebrative act. A festival or carnival, just as an informal celebration with the closest family members and friends, requires an almost total immersion from the part of the celebrants. In contrast, a political commemoration or a religious service performed on a holiday presupposes only a modicum of engagement, as the participants to the festivities are relegated in the roles of passive spectators.

Defining the nature of celebration would constitute a logical starting point for a study of celebration. However, there is yet another approach to the study of celebration. Instead of a start from a formal definition of celebration, one can also leave it open, an issue to be clarified by empirical research and sociological imagination. From this point of view, a sociology of celebration should not only study all phenomena that clearly fall under a predefined concept of celebration but take seriously as well all uses of the word celebration, in literature as well as in arts and everyday life. Then, certainly, ritual commemorations as well as a spontaneous emotive togetherness of two or three persons would make a celebration. And, as well, celebrities can be thought of as a specific group of people or other entities capable of materializing celebration.

In this way it will make sense to recognize celebration in its relation with various fields of social, cultural, and mundane activities and processes. A series of intriguing questions could be thus raised for the scholars of celebration: What is its relation to and role in art, leisure, and working-life? How does art celebrate community or nation? What is the role or place of celebration in social movements or revolutions? Are there any relevant features of celebration in philosophy, science, and technology – or the modern age itself, or the very process of modernization? Issues relevant to a sociology of

celebration should also include reflexive questions grounded on epistemological and ethical considerations: What are the methodological and cognitive limits to the study of celebration? In what kind of situations would it be unethical to intrude or observe celebrative action?

It is almost impossible to do definitional justice to the notion of "celebration" without aggrieving its kin concepts with which it shares a certain semantic "family resemblance." Instead of imposing order over the rich discursive realm by forcing concepts to fit into a procrustean bed so as to fall coherently into an analytical table with mutually exclusive entries, we will resort to "Wittgensteinian semantics" (Pelczar 2000). This alternative strategy will allow us to make sense of people's diverse celebratory practices by mapping a fluid semantic network of concepts instead of a rigidly defined taxonomic matrix. In his much celebrated *Philosophical Investigations*, Ludwig Wittgenstein (2001) [1953] has made the famous argument that there are phenomena, such as the dazzling variety of games, that do not have an essential, common feature. Instead, they are connected through a series of overlapping similarities, without a red thread running through them all. This wild variety, which does not prevent conceiving them as constituting a "family" in the light of these diffuse resemblances, makes it impossible to organize the family members in taxonomic tables governed by strict rules specifying the positioning of each relation to the others. Looking at the relationships formed within the discursive realm into which the notion of "celebration" is embedded, we see, just like Ludwig Wittgenstein saw when he looked at "games," "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail" (Wittgenstein 2001: §66).

The concept of celebration is caught up in a web of notions clustered around ideas such as ritual, commemoration, anniversary, ceremony, holiday, festival, carnival, and festivity. All of these practices have a celebrative dimension, although the latter is not always a necessary condition for their definition. While it is hard to even imagine a carnival deprived of any celebrative spirit (in the case of the carnival, celebration is indeed a necessary, although insufficient, condition for its definition), a ritual need not be festive. For instance, a marriage ritual (or even a divorce ceremony, see Arosio 2016 in this issue) may celebrate the union of two (or more) people as well as the values underpinning the institution of family life, but a funeral ritual will generally lack any explicit celebrative features. However, although a funeral seems at odds with the spirit of celebration, is it possible that a funeral procession can occasion a positive togetherness of the close relatives of the deceased, in which the memory of the latter is celebrated. The celebrative aspects of the funeral are most salient in state funerals and other public funeral ceremonies. In such instances, within an overarching climate of mourning, the accomplishments of the deceased as well as the cultural values for which he/she stood receive discrete celebration. A compelling case in point is provided by the recent funerals of Muhammad Ali, who passed away on June 3, 2016. The funeral procession that took place in Louisville, KY on June 10, 2016, occasioned not only a world-wide wave of tributes paid to "The Greatest" as he was hailed in the boxing hall of fame, but also to the political and civic values he stood for during his life. These values for which he fought throughout

his professional career and beyond – civil rights, antiracism, pacifism – assumed such prominence over his athletic accomplishments that an obituarist wrote that "Muhammad Ali's Greatest Victory Came When He Didn't Fight" (Heer 2016).

It is only under very special circumstances, when a Nietzschean "transvaluation of values" takes place, that death itself can be celebrated within festive funeral ceremonies (see Rusu 2016 on Romanian Iron Guard's necropolitics during the short-lived National Legionary State, 1940-1941, for which it was mocked as the "National Funerary State"). The same holds true for commemorations and anniversaries (e.g. commemoration of military defeats, anniversaries of tragic events such as genocides, natural disasters, or social catastrophes). However, the observance of these painful commemorations may incorporate an indirect celebration of the values transgressed within those catastrophes. For instance, Holocaust Remembrance Day indirectly celebrates human dignity within a ceremonial milieu of mourning and grief. Just as anniversaries of military battles, such as the Battle of Verdun Centenary of May 29, 2016, can be symbolically reversed so as to celebrate the anti-militaristic values of peace and solidarity while grieving the war dead.

If we imagine the discursive realm constituted by notions such as ritual, ceremony, holiday, festival, carnival, etc. as an interwoven semantic network, celebration can be conceived of as the cobweb that keeps them together. The concept of celebration makes theoretical sense only when set against this intricate network to which it is semantically embedded. Informed by the precepts of a Wittgensteinian semantics along with our belief that understanding is essentially relational in nature, we will not attempt to define celebration in its own right. Rather, we will struggle to make sense of the celebrative in a relational fashion, by trying to disentangle the conceptual strands connecting the notions that constitute the discursive realm into which celebration is semantically entangled.

Ritual provides a first fulcrum for understanding the notion of celebration. As defined in anthropology, where it is a fundamental conceptual category, a ritual consists in a performative action cast in a standardized, repetitive, and formalized pattern which is deemed to enact symbolically a value, norm or belief cherished in the community's cultural system. Most celebrations do follow a ritual structure (e.g. marriage, wedding, coronation, etc.), although there are also informal and singular celebrations that are not governed by a ritual logic (e.g. spontaneous celebrations of an unexpected event). *Commemorations* are a type of rituals focused on remembering the past. As already pointed out, commemorations could not entail celebration, if the historical event that is the object of remembrance exclusively consists of tragic or painful meanings. A specific type of commemoration is the *anniversary*, which could be defined as a commemoration conditioned by a chronological framework, regularly set to one year, but also extendable to a "round" chronological interval (decade, jubilee years – 25^{th}, 50^{th}, 60^{th}, or 75^{th} –, centenary, millennium). William M. Johnson (1991) has pointed out "the cult of anniversaries" that sprouted in the Western(ized) world towards the close of the century. "People today package the past in bundles labeled 'anniversaries'. Any famous person who enjoys a 50^{th}, 100^{th}, or another anniversary of fifty of his birth and death is almost certain to have a commemoration mounted during that year" (Johnson 1991: 4). Besides cultural luminaries (writers, artists, scholars, scientists, etc.), cultural anniversaries also

include major historical events such as "wars, treaties, accession or death of monarchs, gain or loss of national territory, and the enacting of major legislation" (ibidem: 7). However, just like in the case of commemorations, cultural anniversaries do not necessarily imply an essentially celebrative dimension. The Battle of Verdun Centenary of 2016, as already pointed out, is first of all a rite of mourning for the two countries who grieve a combined death toll of almost one million casualties. On the other hand, the 800th anniversary of Magna Charta on June 15, 2015, occasioned the nation-wide celebration of political principles and democratic values such as the rule of law, individual freedom, and human rights.

Ritual celebrations such as those mentioned above require a ceremonial framework. A *ceremony* involves a symbolic ritual action usually performed on a special occasion. An example in this regard could prove instructive. Within the various symbolic acts subsumed to political rites of power, the coronation ceremony stands out in its exquisite ritual intricacy. The ceremonial structure of a ritual performance leaves its mark on the celebrative style, which assumes a more solemn and protocolar expression. This solemnity is felt most powerful during religious liturgies performed on major holidays. Stricto sensu, a *holiday* is "a day on which custom or the law dictates a halting of general business activity to commemorate or celebrate a particular event" (AHD 2000). That the term came to express a secondary meaning, that of "a day free from work that one may spend at leisure," reflects the secularization of holiday from a holy day to a day off from work. Irrespective of the criteria on which they are established (religious, legal, or public), holidays stop the everyday flow of time and flood the mundane, daily existence of ordinary life with a sense of sacredness. As such, holidays can be conceived of as the temporal framework of celebration.

As we shift of analytical attention towards festival, festivity, and carnival, celebration comes to the fore of these phenomena as an essential feature. Ritual, commemoration, anniversary, and ceremony were not necessarily celebrative in nature, although they could assume a prominent celebrative dimension. In contrast, festival, festivity, and carnival are unconceivable without celebration. If the former class of concepts were Janus-like with regards to celebration, these latter three phenomena are entirely bounded within the confines of celebration. *Festivals* are community feasts cast in a series of artistic events that occasion joyful expressions of "collective effervescence" from the participant festive community. Drawing on Alessandro Falassi's loose definition, festivals could be conceived of as "periodically recurrent, social occasions in which, through a multiplicity of forms and a series of coordinated events" members of a community celebrate together their cultural values, historical tradition, and social identity (Falassi 1987: 2). Given their integrative social function, festivals are also liable to serve pragmatic politic interests. As shown by Mona Ozouf (1991) in her seminal analysis of *Festivals and the French Revolution*, and later by James von Geldern (1993) in his examination of *Bolshevik Festivals, 1917-1920*, festivals are powerful ideological instruments put in the service of bolstering the status quo. Romanian culture was no stranger of similar projects. Starting with 1976 until the uprising of 1989 that brought down the regime, Communist authorities staged the "Song to Romania" (*Cîntarea*

României) national festival (Oancea 2007). This cultural innovation was in tune with the ideological shift the regime was undergoing, from a Soviet-like international socialism to a hybrid nationalist-socialist ideology. It was against the background of this ideological turn that the "Song to Romania" festival was used to consolidate the new authochtonist orientation, as well as a vehicle for bolstering Nicolae Ceaușescu's personality cult (Rusu 2015: 317-322).

Celebrative spirit can also burst out spontaneously, in various other informal *festivities*. We use this term to cover all those festive activities occurring unregulated by state and political authorities which are focused on merrymaking. That is to say, by the generic term of festivities we refer to the joyful celebration through partying that may include eating, drinking, singing, and dancing usually occurred in informal setting. Festivity thus involves jocularity, fun and games, amusement and pleasure, a time of "beer and skittles" with friends. This ludicity is best expressed in *carnivals*, where celebration takes on a carnivalesque air. As pointed out by Johan Huizinga (1980) [1944] in his acclaimed *Homo Ludens*, there is no other place where ludicity and celebration merge so intimately as in carnival, in which a "saturnalian licence" is temporarily granted (Huizinga 1980: 13).

The master theorist of carnival, Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) [1965], has produced in *Rabelais and His World* a seminal account of the carnivalesque as the epitome of a folk culture of laughter. The carnival with its culture of laughter and aesthetic ideals of "grotesque realism" is pitted against the non-laughing, agelastic culture, of everyday mainstream society governed by the principles of functional realism. The world of the carnivalesque into which the sober mainstream society recursively morphs is the ultimate festive community. It consists in a series of rites of inversion that temporarily turn upside down the hierarchic structures underpinning daily social life. As James Frazer (1990) [1890] has shown in his monumental – although seriously flawed by his evolutionary assumptions – *The Golden Bough*, people throughout history and around the world have instituted "an annual period of license,"

> when the customary restraints of law and morality are thrown aside, when the whole population give themselves up to extravagant mirth and jollity, and when the darker passions find a vent which would never be allowed them in the more staid and sober course of ordinary life. [...] Now, of all these periods of license the one which is best known and which in modern language has given its name to the rest is the [Roman] Saturnalia. [...] But no feature of the festival is more remarkable, nothing in it seems to have struck the ancients themselves more than the license granted to slaves at this time. The distinction between the free and the servile classes was temporarily abolished. The slave might rail at his master, intoxicate himself like his betters, sit down at table with them, and not even a word of reproof would be administered to him for conduct which at any other season might have been punished with stripes, imprisonment, or death. Nay, more, masters actually changed places with their slaves and waited on them at table; and not till the serf had done eating and drinking was the board cleared and dinner set for his master (Frazer 1990: 583-584).

Carnivals such as the Roman Saturnalia have been understood by various authors as implying a complete reversal of social structure or power relations. King became

beggar; masters turned into slaves; while men dressed up as women and women put on manly clothes. In a word, "the powerless switch places with the powerful on the designated day; the Dickensian dream becomes a ritual reality" (Kertzer 1988: 131). It is in this *topsy-turvyness* of the social world inherent in the inversion ritual that the core of the carnivalesque resides. The carnivalization process entails the creation of a counter-society, an opposite mirror of the everyday social order, in which the normative codes regulating behavior are not only suspended but entirely overthrown. Scholars have pointed out that such ritual degradations of the powerful and symbolic empowerment of the powerless worked as a relief valve meant to manage the built-up anxieties of the oppressed and to give them a modicum of symbolic satisfaction. These saturnalian festivals operated as compensatory mechanisms deemed to give a sense of ritual satisfaction to the oppressed by producing a provisional simulacrum of social justice obtained through the total overthrow of social structure.

But whether or not there was such a psychological function in all this, the carnival fully reveals its politically ineffectiveness in promoting social change. Acting as pressure relief valves, they are paradoxically bolstering the status quo which concedes a day out of a whole year to a parodic mockery of institutionalized social order. It is precisely this political ineffectiveness of the carnival that prompts a radical Marxist critique. The temporal inversion of social structure performed during the carnival, it is pointed out, is nothing but a well-conceived political ploy devised to play out as a self-serving machination. From this interpretive angle, festive consciousness boils down to false consciousness, while the carnivalesque *communitas* emerging out during times of celebration, far from being the Turnerian "anti-structure," is rather a buttress reinforcing the structural, consecrated, social order. Carnivalesque consciousness, argue critics along the traditional Marxist lines, just like religion with its promise of a post-mortem justice in the afterlife, is another outcome of the "opium of the masses."

Against this pessimistic view, it is our argument that even for the inveterate Marxists, there is still hope to be found in the carnival as a source of socio-political change. Indeed, as Bakhtin was keen to point out, "in the carnival, dogma, hegemony, and authority are dispersed through ridicule and laughter" (Lachmann 1988: 130). However, "the carnivalesque counter-ritual remains without effect in the realm of politically and socially relevant praxis: in the carnival, *phantasma* replaces *pragma* (ibidem: 132). Nevertheless, as Bakhtin (1984) insisted, the carnivalesque opens up the possibility of a "complete exit from the present order" (p. 275). It is in this possibility that lies the potential subversiveness of the carnival. Although pragmatically inefficient, the carnival is the source of a carnivalesque imagination that could conceive of radically different, utopian social forms of life. In Renate Lachmann's words, "in the carnivalesque game of inverting official values, he [Bakhtin] sees the anticipation of another, utopian world in which anti-hierarchism, relativity of values, questioning of authority, openness, joyous anarchy, and the ridiculing of all dogma hold sway, a world in which syncretism and a myriad of different perspectives are permitted" (Lachmann 1988: 118). This resonates very closely with Victor W. Turner's emphasis on the carnival's creative potential, not only on the artistic and cultural level, but also in the political realm. Focusing on what is

perhaps the most flamboyant expression of its kind, Turner (1983: 124) has argued that the "*Carnaval* [in Rio] is no Aldous Huxleyan 'orgy porgy,' for its ironical, whimsical, urbane, and genial touch dispels such a thought. Rather it is the creative anti-structure of mechanized modernity."[4] It is instead a potential crucible in which a very different social order is being forged. As such, carnival can be conceived, along Turnerian lines, as a potentially explosive "Dionysian drama" unfolded in the interstices of an otherwise Apollonian society.

Mapping the facets of celebration: A pluralistic typology

Celebration is not a thing to put your finger on, but a state of mind, rooted in a certain chronotopialscape, shared by a number of people who thus emerge as a festive community. Thereby, celebration does not have a univocal meaning. It speaks in tongues, as the word goes, and it has many faces. Resorting once more to Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), celebration is polyphonic and heteroglossic. In this section we will attempt to map the semantics of celebration by devising a pluralistic typology based on a set of conceptual dichotomies that could be employed in analyzing particular cases of celebrative rituals. It should be emphasized from the very outset of our endeavor that these conceptual dichotomies we are advancing are not mutually exclusive, but the end points of a continuum, with many cases falling in between the middle and the far end of the spectrum. In devising such a dichotomous matrix, we are all aware of the cognitive pitfalls of Manichean thinking based on a dualistic view of the world. If constructing a dichotomous matrix turns out to be a powerful analytical device for sharply categorizing data, it is the task of a subtle interpretative gaze to acknowledge the rich shades of grey lying in between. The power of sociological analysis lies exactly in exercising the interpretive art of theoretical nuancing the dichotomous (or trichotomous, or sometimes even more analytically elaborated) conceptual structures upon which abstract ideal types are set up in order to make sense of the empirical data. We thus provide the conceptual skeleton as a background against which such an interpretive art to unfold. It is also in the light of these dichotomous variables that we will situate the contributions to this special issue.

A first analytical distinction can be drawn between *public* and *private* celebrations. In terms of their location in the social space, celebrations can be enacted either in the public sphere, i.e., the realm of politics, the state, and public institutions, or in the private domain of the domestic life and family relationships. As already mentioned, the two terms form a continuum rather than a discrete dichotomy. Many celebrations fall neatly into either one or another of these categories. Political celebrations are *par excellence*

[4] "Orgy-porgy" refers to an orgiastic ritual performed in the dystopic society imagined in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. It involves wild dancing and singing, taking drugs (*soma*), and having group sex. The ritual was devised as a mechanism of control meant to protect the social order by channeling individuals' potentially disruptive energies into a hedonistic orgy of the sense, thus rendering them politically inoffensive. The refrain sounds like "Orgy-porgy, Ford and fun,/ Kiss the girls and make them One. Boys at one with girls at peace;/ Orgy-porgy gives release" (Huxley 2006: 84-85) [1932].

public in nature, while birthday parties are private affairs of the celebrants. There are, however, hybrid cases, where the disjunction between the public and the private is turned into conjunction. This is shown very clearly in Sabina Hadžibulić and Mikko Lagerspetz's contribution to this issue, where they examine the colonization of a private celebration, originally observed in the family milieu, into a public one endorsed and promoted by state authorities.

Closely related to the former, in terms of their source of authority, a distinction can be made between *official* and *vernacular* celebrations. This dichotomous structure has been established by John Bodnar (1992) in his book, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*. There, Bodnar distinguishes between state-sponsored commemorative programs (official memory) and unofficial commemorative projects initiated by non-governmental organizations (vernacular memory). Although it overlaps considerably with the public–private dichotomy, Bodnar's conceptual pair could be usefully employed to the study of celebrations. For instance, Tijana Trako Poljak (2016) focuses her analytical gaze on examining an official celebration by excellence, i.e., the Croatian Statehood Day. Other contributions, such as that of Saara Koikkalainen, Jarno Valkonen, and Heikki Huilaja (2016) shed light on the nature and functions of informal celebrations.

In terms of their religiosity, celebrations can be conceived of along the lines of the *sacred–profane* continuum. The sacred and profane dichotomy was established at the core of the sociology of religion by Émile Durkheim (1995) [1912] in his *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, where he defined the ritual as consisting in "rules of conduct that prescribe how man must conduct himself with sacred things" (p. 38). The antithetical opposition between the sacred and the profane was further posited by Mircea Eliade (1959) in his phenomenological approach to the history of religious thought. Drawing on this dichotomy, Monika Salzbrunn (2016) delves into shedding light on how religious celebrations expressed through musical performances can reinforce belonging but also act as a means of migrant incorporation and acculturalization. The interpretation of Beethoven's *Ode of Joy* by a female choir of a mosque in Lake Geneva Metropolitan Region is seen as "a regional event on the edge of political and religious expression [that] has united music from Syria, Kosovo and Tunisia in order to put on stage the cosmopolitan characteristics of Swiss Muslims" (Salzbrunn 2016: p. 59). In revealing how the politics of identity entangle with religion, her analysis calls into question the century-old Durkheimian separation of the sacred and the profane. Although the distinction between the sacred and the profane provides a powerful analytical tool in making sense of various types of social behavior, it must also be taken cautiously, so as not to reify it into an absolute, mutually exclusive, dichotomy. The amalgamation of religion with secular politics has been made abundantly clear in Mihai Stelian Rusu's study on the celebration of a "political liturgy" during the Hohenzollern dynasty in Romania (1866-1947). Rusu has shown that the royal rites of power through which the political regime was periodically reinforced were the outcome of a sacralization of politics occurring concomitantly with the politicization of the sacred.

Another important distinction was advanced by Amitai Etzioni (2000) in his endeavor of laying the groundwork a sociological theory of holidays. Drawing on Talcott Parson's functionalist approach to the study of social systems, Etzioni advances the distinction between *recommitment* and *tension-management* celebrations. The former "use narrative, drama, and ceremonies to directly enforce commitments to shared beliefs" (p. 47), while the latter temporarily lift the prohibitions regulating everyday life in order to release the pressure build-up during these long period of obeying societal mores. Both recommitment and tension-management celebrations prove to have integrative value, although the former socialize the members of a society into the social order directly, while the latter does it indirectly, by venting off the tension accumulated from prolonged conformity to social norms. The case studies examined by Tijana Trako Poljak and Mihai Stelian Rusu respectively exhibit a clear pattern of recommitment celebrations, as political rituals enacted on the National Day serve to remind citizens of their belonging, identity, and duties, as well as to reinforce loyalty towards the status quo. On the other hand, drinking in order to cope with the harsh nature of working as safari guides Finnish Lapland could be conceived of as a tension-management ritual (Koikkalainen, Valkonen, and Huilaja 2016, this issue).

In a close intertwining with the former lies the distinction between *conservative* and *innovative* celebrations. Celebration rituals exhibit a dual nature: they bridge time, linking the present to the past, but they can also bridge the present, anchored in a more or less imagine past, into the future. They can be either backward looking, striving to recreate the past into the present, or forward looking, hoping to bring the present closer to a desired future. When celebrations are out of phase with the times and lag considerably behind the changing social world, they are conservative towards the status quo (e.g. the celebration of mass in the Catholic Church or the celebration of the Divine Liturgy in the Orthodox Church). In contrast, when they are in tune with the trends of society, when celebrations become means of promoting and legitimizing social change, they are innovative rituals that break from the traditions underpinning social order. A good case in point is Laura Arosio's contribution to this issue focusing on the innovative celebration of divorce, which signals a cultural shift in how divorce is perceived in contemporary postmodern societies. In "liquid times," love itself goes liquid, liquefying the institution of marriage (Bauman 2003). Against the background of an unprecedented divorce rate in Western societies, symbolic practices are adapted to this societal trend. It is in this context that new celebrative forms emerge, such as the celebration of divorce. At a closer look, what we have called "innovative," forward-looking, celebrations that promote social change differ from their "conservative," backward-looking, counterparts rather in terms of the degree of which they lag behind the developments of social reality. Just as their conservative counterparts, innovative rituals such as the celebration of divorce also linger in the wake of society's course. But while conservative celebrations resist social change and attempt to arrest the flow of time by clinging to a past they want to actualize in the present, innovative celebrative rituals follow the latest social trends. If the former celebrate the past and consecrate social stasis, the latter tend to celebrate the present and to legitimize social change.

With regards to their regularity, celebrations can be categorized in *serial* and *singular* events. This distinction overlaps to some degree the *institutionalized–idiosyncratic* dichotomy. Serial celebrations follow a cyclical pattern, as they are scheduled to occur as episodic events belonging to a recursive ritual calendar. Political celebrations such as the National Day, or religious feasts such as Easter and Passover, best exemplify this ideal type. By contrast, singular celebrations tend to be idiosyncratic events that display an opportunistic feature, as they celebrate a nonrepetitive, unexpected, or unscheduled accomplishment. Laura Arosio's study on divorce ceremonies falls into this second category of idiosyncratic celebrations.

A final dichotomous structure that we will explore is the one that distinguishes between *integrative* and *subversive* celebrations. The former overlaps considerably with what Amitai Etzioni (2000) has named as "recommitment" rituals, deemed to reassure the conformity of the population to the social order and to reinforce their belonging to the political body. They consist in staging public rites of obedience to the status quo into which authorities, be them political or religious, involve participants. Political celebrations and public holidays are undoubtedly powerful means of bolstering the political status quo through symbolic performances deemed to re-affirm popular loyalty toward the regime by participating to the festivities enacted by the authorities. However, they can also harbor counter-manifestations directed against the regime in power. And at times, holidays can provide the celebrative milieu for straightforward revolutionary action targeting to overthrow the established political order. This was the case with the February Revolution in Russia which was sparked by the International Women's Day demonstration on the streets of Petrograd organized on February 23, 1917 (March 8, according to the Gregorian calendar). Several months later that year, as James von Geldern (1993) pointed out, the Bolsheviks have used Petrograd Soviet Day, which they have declared on October 22, "as a dry run for taking power" a couple of days later, in the October Revolution (p. 7). We shall argue, with David I. Kertzer, "against the common view that political ritual merely serves to bolster the status quo. […]. True, kings use ritual to shore up their authority, but revolutionaries use ritual to overthrow monarchs. The political elite employ ritual to legitimate their authority, but rebels battle with the rites of delegitimation. Ritual may be vital to reaction, but it is also the life blood of revolution" (Kertzer 1988: 2). If integrative celebrations occur through rites of obedience designed to manufacture political consent and social submission, subversive celebrations express themselves in rites of rebellion that contest the political establishment (on "rituals of rebellion," see Gluckman 1952 and also Lane 1981).

The dichotomous variables that we have explored tend to sort themselves out and arrange in terms of an empirical affinity they show to each other. That is to say, although some cases can present a curious mixture of these dichotomies, such as, for instance, a private, singular, religious celebration with tension-management functions that is also innovative in its outlook towards the status quo, most of them tend to assume in bloc the dichotomous features from either one end of the continuum or the other. In general, political celebration such as those examined by Trako Poljak and Rusu are public and official, secular but bearing nevertheless a sacred aura, serial and conservative, and

pursue integrative goals. Other types of celebrations, such as those explored in the contributions to this special issue, mix and mingle various dichotomous variable values.

Festive conclusions: A time of sociological celebration

Celebration was at the nascent core of the emerging sociological discipline at the turn of the 20th century. It was Émile Durkheim's seminal insight on the supreme importance of rituals in integrating the social body, masterfully articulated in his sociological forays into *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1995) [1912], that placed the study of holidays in the very center of sociological focus. But after such a fulminant start, postwar sociology, regrouped across the Atlantic, lost its interest in the nature of celebration. As Amitai Etzioni (2000: 44) has pointed out, neither the index of the sixteen volumes of *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* (Sills and Merton 1968) nor that of the flagship American journals *American Sociological Review* and *American Journal of Sociology* between 1975 and 1995 mention the term "holiday." This lack does mean that during all this time there were no studies concerned with the topics of celebration, festivity, and holidays. However, the sparse attention given to the celebrative dimension of social life found a disciplinary hideaway in the field of social and cultural anthropology, where authors such as Victor W. Turner (1982) continued to explore the phenomenon of celebration (see, for instance, his edited book, *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual*).

After a long and undeserved hiatus, celebration is making a comeback in sociological theory. Unsurprisingly, a "sociology of celebration" is taking shape in European sociology, gaining institutional grounding in the European Sociological Association's (ESA) Research Stream (RS) bearing the same name. The RS of Sociology of Celebration made its first appearance in the ESA conference held in Glasgow, 2007. Sociologists were reluctant toward what surely seemed at the moment as a rather eccentric topic of research, especially so as the clouds of the economic crisis were gathering at the horizon of sociological interest. Altogether five abstracts were accepted coming mainly from the Nordic countries, only two were eventually given. Paradoxically, in the eye of the storm, in 2009, Lisbon, the RS witnessed a grown in popularity. Nine presentations were scheduled in three sessions, with participants coming from all over Europe. The next two biennial ESA conference, Geneva 2011 and Turin 2013, consolidated the status of the RS dedicated to the Sociology of Celebration, attracting scholars throughout the continent. The last ESA conference held in Prague 2015 proved the most successful yet, at least from a demographic point of view, with twelve presentation scheduled across three sessions.

Tacking stock of the decade of the ESA RS of Sociology of Celebration, a general pattern emerges. In comparison to other, more institutionalized, research networks established within ESA, Sociology of Celebration has attracted what contributors themselves have regarded as more or less pioneering research, situated at the fringes of conventional fields of sociological study. Papers addressing topics belonging to the sociology of celebration showed a tendency to combine theoretical concerns with empirical research, with a slight edge for the latter. This is not to say that the

presentations could easily be categorized either empirical or theoretic. Quite to the contrary. Since, thus far, sociology of celebration is not an institutionalized field of study with its gallery of classic thinkers and canons of research methods, and since the very definition of "celebration" as an object of sociological study understandably still provokes unanswered questions and concern, all contributions and discussions in the meetings have had more or less theory as well as more or less empirical research results at hand.

In terms of the thematic spectrum covered in the five biennial conferences organized thus far since the existence of the RS of Sociology of Celebration, a good deal of papers focused at first on religious and secular celebrations (an interest which still persists, see the contributions from Hadžibulić and Lagerspetz, and Salzbrunn respectively to this issue). Later on, an interest on national and countercultural celebration emerged. As the RS continuously expanded its scope, scholars covered topics from ballroom dancing to picnic in London to rave parties to revived carnivals. Still others studied topics ranging from family ceremonies to changing national feasts and ceremonies to students partying to innovated festivals to the role of celebration in nation building (some of which are also featuring in this special issue). Topics of theoretical research of the ESA RS Sociology of Celebration circulate much around eventness, eventuality, *communitas*, innovation, and the theory of semiosis.

Sociology of celebration remains an open field of inquiry, welcoming theoretical, conceptual, and methodological inputs from scholars interested in the festive dimension of social reality. It is our hope that in co-editing this issue and framing the sociology of celebration in our editorial we have not encroached upon the field's constitutive openness. What we hope to have accomplished in this editorial project is to have launched an invitation addressed to fellow social scholars to engage reflexively with the celebrative affairs so characteristic of social life. The appearance of this special issue on the "Sociology of Celebration" in *The Journal of Comparative Research in Sociology and Anthropology* marks the return of celebration on the agenda of sociological interest. This calls, we believe, for a celebration in its own right. Resorting to a chiastic structure, we would like to conclude our editorial in a festive fashion by saying that the issue on the "Sociology of Celebration" calls for a time of sociological celebration.

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