

Live event-spaces

Place and space in the mediatized experience of events

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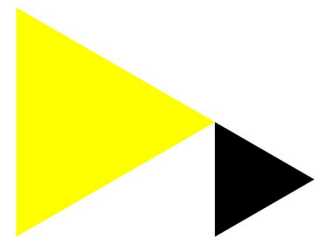
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13 Live event-spaces

Place and space in the mediatized experience of events

Esther Hammelburg



Yesssss
#Oerol
#Terschelling
#sea-sun-wind
#beautiful things
#excited

When arriving by boat . . . you see the island approach, and in that moment I think: “Yes, wonderful!” And then I have a photo, and I say [on Facebook]: “Oerol, yes, beautiful things”. And that has to go [on Facebook] immediately, because then I am just totally . . . you get excited by it [clenches fists].

I want to share that immediately.

Figure 13.1 Quotes and photo by Simone, taken at Oerol Festival (2017).

Source: Reproduced with permission.

Arriving on the Dutch island of Terschelling for Oerol, Europe’s largest festival for location-based theatre and art, has a special feel to it. You enter a space in which you know that you will be surprised and touched – by unique theatrical performances and installations, by special encounters with other visitors, and by the majestic landscapes of the island. The sensation of leaving the mainland behind and stepping into the atmosphere of the festival

evokes that special “Oerol feeling”. As Monica, a returning festival visitor, explains: “I always feel it when I am there. . . . For a whole week I don’t think about anything else; I am really only there on the island”. Being in the “Oerol bubble”, as this feeling is often described, makes the mainland seem far away. You are simply there on the island. But are you really?

From the boat, you post a photo of your view on Instagram: “#Oerol here we come!” A video story on Snapchat shows your friends that you are entering the port. When landing on the island, a WhatsApp message comes in from a colleague wishing you a good time. And on your way to the campground, you stop to photograph the familiar view of the beach with low tide for your friend who cannot be there. These anecdotal examples illustrate that we are never just “here”; even in an event such as Oerol, organized within the geographically confined space of a small island, (deep) mediatization leads us to be here, there, and everywhere all at once.

This chapter takes up the challenge set forth in the Introduction of this volume and investigates the deeply mediatized experience of place and space within lived practice by studying two annual cultural events in the Netherlands as cases, Oerol Festival and 3FM Serious Request. Substantial participatory fieldwork during these events reveals how deep mediatization concurrently gives rise to more complex experiences of space and generates a real sense of a shared “here”. The study addresses the question of how participants in these events navigate spatial complexity and experience spatial unity. I will demonstrate that – through a dialectical multitude of translocal connections within *eventspheres* – fluid and temporal event-spaces are constructed in which participants have a clear sense of “here” and “there”. Using the concept of *liveness* as a theoretical vantage point helps to better understand this dialectical experience of space: liveness addresses how, through media, spatial fragmentation is overcome and proximity is created. I argue that it is the sense of liveness that creates the closeness between the near and the far elements within the mediatized eventsphere and binds it all together into one event-space.

Understanding space within deeply mediatized eventspheres

Due to the current degree of digitalization, former levels of mediatization have been surpassed such that “[n]o matter which domain of society we consider, its formation is in one way or another related to the technologically based media of communication” (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018: 17–18). Couldry and Hepp (2016) introduce the concept of *deep mediatization* to address this current intrinsically mediatized situation in which every element of society is co-constructed with media, as are the ways in which we form meaningful connections. Continuing from the premise that the world is deeply mediatized, an event cannot be regarded in itself, isolated from the media through which the event is experienced, shared, and envisioned. In their seminal work *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History*

(1992), Dayan and Katz describe how broadcast media function to express belongingness by creating moments of shared focus on an event. Volkmer and Deffner (2010: 220) address the experience of events within a further mediatized situation, arguing that these events are “‘reciprocal’ processes of mediation where the meaning of ‘experienced’ events is reconstructed”. This conceptualization of the experience of events is aptly captured by their term “eventsphere” (ibid). The eventsphere encompasses the field of experiences, happenings, and media texts connected to the event through which it is discursively re-mediated.

The move from event to eventsphere entails an extension of its spatial realm. As my introductory example of arriving at Oerol illustrates, lived space is never a straightforward experience. Human geography understands space as a continual construction on various levels. Henri Lefebvre’s (1974/1991) concept of “social space” points out that space is constructed through the social relations brought to a place by the actors in it. Thrift (2003: 96) has analytically distinguished four types of space, empirical, unblocking, image, and place space, and argues that “the exciting thing . . . is that we are learning how to put them together in combinations that are beginning to produce unexpected insights”. Exploring the experience of space in the lived practice of deeply mediatized eventspheres does that exactly.

Media technologies play an important part in the production of space. Several authors convincingly argue that mediated communication has led to a pluralized, layered experience of space consisting of a variation of specific places (Evans, 2015; Urry, 2002). This view is supported by Shaun Moores (2004: 23), who conceptualizes “place as pluralised . . . by electronic media use” building on Scannell’s (1996: 76) observation that mediated events occur simultaneously in “the place of the event itself and that in which it is watched and heard”.

Moreover, another spatial layer is added to the eventsphere by our constant communicative connections to others, whether physically near or far away. These distant others are often perceived as more proximate than someone who might sit next to you (Meyrowitz, 1985). In eventspheres, we, as Hjorth (2013: 111) writes: “are seeing different tapestries involving a variety of modalities of presence (co-presence, tele-presence, net-locality)”. Madianou (2016) even claims that, due to the ubiquity of media technologies, we have a constant “awareness of the everyday lives and activities of significant others”, which she names *ambient co-presence* (ibid: 183). Consequently, the experience of the “here” of the eventsphere is accompanied by the awareness of a variety of distant elsewhere. Arguably, a wide spectrum of event locales are featured within the eventsphere, and proximity and distance are conjoined.

These lines of thought raise the question of how all the event-places are woven together into one shared space of the eventsphere: the event-space. I argue that a sense of liveness – defined as the potential connection, through media, to events that matter to us as they unfold (Hammelburg,

2015) – creates proximity between the near and the far elements within the eventsphere and binds it all together into one event-space. As Feuer (1983: 19) claims: “notions of ‘liveness’ lend a sense of flow which overcomes extreme fragmentation of space”. In the 90s, Dayan and Katz (1992) eloquently described how live media events create a shared experience of a centre. Although our current intensive, fragmented media use entails that these mediated centres are constructed differently, I agree with Couldry and Hepp (2017) that media still (co)create mediated centres. For instance, Bruns and Burgess (2011) and Papacharissi (2015) have identified unifying practices in networked media by showing how publics are formed through the use of hashtags. Also, although mobile and digital media seem to be more placeless, this chapter will show the importance of place and the way this is enacted in current deeply mediatized eventspheres.

Liveness has been extensively theorized in the study of mass media and large media events as an ideological construct in which spatial borders are diminished (Berenstein, 2002; Feuer, 1983; White, 2004). The notion is raised herein that media technology has “triumphed over spatial distances, the far is reduced to the near, the elsewhere is both here and everywhere” (Allon, 2004: 265). Alongside the process of deep mediatization, it is conceivable that this concept stemming from the study of (broadcast) media proper can be used to better understand our lived practices in deeply mediatized eventspheres.

Methods

The central cases in this study – Oerol 2017 (Oerol17) and 3FM Serious Request 2017 (SR17) – are both in their own way distinctive eventspheres with respect to their spatial organization. Oerol is Europe’s largest festival for location-based theatre and art. Since 1982, it has been organized every year in June on the Dutch island of Terschelling and attracts over 50.000 visitors. The festival is closely tied to the physical space of the island, as the performances are tailor-made for the locations in the landscape of Terschelling. In contrast, 3FM Serious Request, an annual Red Cross fundraiser organized in December by the Dutch national radio station 3FM, which reaches approximately 10.000.000 people and brings approximately 500.000 visitors, is inherently a media event. Three radio DJs are locked up in a transparent studio named the Glass House for a week to make radio 24/7. Thus, the main event is the radio show, and people are invited to join in this event in several mediated ways. There is a physical location, the Glass House studio placed in a different Dutch city every year, but the event itself is spatially more distributed, since the scenes also include the media streams that are made, television broadcasts, and fundraising initiatives carried out by individuals to raise money. Thus, whereas the Oerol festival programs performances intended to be experienced without media in specific locations, the “programme” of 3FM Serious Request consists predominantly of

media content. These dissimilarities make the combined material very rich in creating a view on spatiality in the mediatized event experience. My analysis of the two cases is not comparative; rather, the objective is to see whether and how certain practices recur in different situations. Furthermore, since each case shows a distinct combination of used media, studying both cases sheds light on a broad range of media use, including both broadcast and networked media. The studied events were organized in the Netherlands, yet both have an international character. Oerol has an international outreach, attracting both artists and visitors from all over the world, and Serious Request is a format that is not only implemented in the Netherlands but also in eight other countries worldwide.

I have explored these two eventspheres using both ethnographic and digital methods for data collection. Both methods have led to three datasets for each case (see Figure 13.2), the first of which consist of observations. These unstructured participant observations carried out at event sites and online were used to familiarize myself with the places and activities of the events as well as to glean a general sense of the media use of participants in the eventspheres.

DATA SETS	OEROL – June 2017	3FM Serious Request – December 2017
Collected with ethnographic methods	– Observation – 59 short interviews (<i>in situ</i>) – Ten in-depth interviews	– Observation – 59 short interviews (<i>in situ</i>) – 19 in-depth interviews
Collected with digital methods	– Observation – 5.784 Instagram posts – 12.332 Tweets (5.879 unique users)	– Observation – 3.750 Instagram posts – 85.052 Tweets (34.235 unique users)

Figure 13.2 Overview datasets.

Source: Design by author.

The ethnographic material further comprises two datasets of semi-structured qualitative interviews, that is, short in situ interviews (averaging three minutes) held with one to six persons at a time at an event location or activity and longer in-depth interviews (averaging 30 minutes) carried out with one to four persons, but predominantly individually, at the periphery of event locations or at home via video conference. Where the short in situ interviews provide unique insight into the multitude of live experiences in place, the longer interviews offered room for more in-depth exploration of these experiences. A total of 248 people participated in the interviews, 120 in the Oerol17 study and 128 in the SR17 study. These qualitative interviews form the core material for the analysis in this chapter. For the design of the ethnographic part of the research and the first phase of analyses, I followed a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This inductive approach offers an effective way of truly gaining insight into lived practices. Audio recordings of interviews were transcribed and initially

coded using MaxQDA (2018). The analysis that followed was performed using grounded theorizing and discourse analysis looking for interpretative repertoires (Wetherell & Potter, 1988). Working with the research material, clustering initial codes and finding my way through what people had shared with me, I continuously aimed to work with my datasets in an iterative way, going back and forth between my developing ideas and the data (Hammerley & Atkinson, 2007).

Additionally, digital methods were used to gather and analyse posts from Instagram and tweets from Twitter to get a sense of how these platforms were employed to join in the eventsphere. The tools used – Visual Tagnet Explorer (VTE) (Rieder, 2015) for Instagram and Twitter Capture and Analysis Tool (TCAT) (Borra & Rieder, 2014) for Twitter – were developed within the Digital Methods Initiative of the University of Amsterdam. Both tools provide the option to gather content from the platforms searching by hashtags or location. The digital datasets lend themselves to various forms of analysis, both quantitative and qualitative. Considering the scope of this chapter, they have been used here in an exploratory way to gain an understanding of the content that is created in the eventspheres.

In the following three sections, I will address how my interviewees skilfully navigate spatial complexity and experience spatial unity in the eventspheres of Oerol17 and SR17. The first section will show that the embodied experience of being-in-place is essential in their event experiences, the second part will explore how deep mediatization entails spatially complex practices, and the third will focus on my interviewees' experience of spatial unity in the eventsphere: the event-space. Following from my interest in lived practices and apposite choice of method, the complete analysis is very much grounded in the experience of my interviewees. It was often when thinking aloud during the interviews that interviewees became conscious of their media behaviour and the logic behind it. In the following analysis, I have tried to stay as true as possible to the lived event experiences of my interviewees,¹ often quoting to let them speak for themselves, since it is in these practices that place is made.

Being-in-place

When speaking of their event experiences, my interviewees notably often mention specific places. In my material from Oerol17, for example, many locations on Terschelling are mentioned, and the island seems to be important for my interviewees' connection to the festival. As Gretchen, who was organizing a photo of herself with her friends at an event location on the island, said: "I like that I can show it to my husband when I get home because he knows this place, we enjoy coming here. So, then I think: look what a nice installation they have built here. I find that very important". Since the Oerol festival is closely connected to Terschelling, it was not surprising to me that experiences of the festival and the island mutually influence each other.

Nevertheless, even though 3FM Serious Request can be considered more placeless and is organized in a different town every year, my interviewees from SR17 spoke of very similar experiences. As Kirsten says: “it was more enjoyable because it was [organized in a town] nearby, so it is also closer to you”. Another interviewee, Maya, comments: “It feels like home . . . , because it is so close by”. Often this proximity to the eventsphere is accompanied by a sense of pride. Joey tells me, reflecting on taking a “selfie” with his girlfriend at the Glass House: “Well, it is kind of special that it is placed in our city. So, I wanted to photograph that”. The event taking place in his hometown of Apeldoorn was what Joey wanted to capture. Frequent Terschelling visitors join in Oerol, Oerol visitors develop a love for Terschelling, and many of my interviewees in SR17 state that their involvement with the event grew after it visited their town or region. The eventsphere thus comprises various event-places.

Furthermore, as we are always situated in a spatial context, in our specific personal environment, the eventsphere appears to be a conglomerate of a range of locales of embodied experiences. Being-in-place is an embodied experience that is “multisensory, corporeal and active” (Rakić & Chambers, 2012: 613). As Rakić and Chambers have argued, it is through this embodied experience that place is concurrently taken in and created. In both the longer and the short in situ interviews held at Oerol17, embodied experiences of very specific locales were prominent: seeing the sun go down over a field, feeling the sand touching your feet while dancing on the beach, hearing the sound of a band playing while biking through the forest. As the photo and quote at the start of this chapter exemplify, the boat trip to and arrival at Oerol, seeing, hearing, and feeling the sea, the wind, and Terschelling, are mentioned as being “Oerol-moments” in nearly all of the in-depth interviews. In the interviews from SR17, similar embodied experiences of locales were specified: seeing the Glass House, being in the hustle and bustle of the crowd in the square in Apeldoorn, talking to the DJs through the main microphone, and donating money in the mailbox at the Glass House. It is in all of these locales that, through the embodied experience of being-in-place, event-places are consumed and produced.

Spatial complexity

In deeply mediatized eventspheres, this variety of event-places is further extended by locales that are not obviously identifiable as such. Firstly, as media let us join in eventspheres as witnesses-at-a-distance (Dayan & Katz, 1992; Peters, 2001), a multitude of sites of reception are added to the eventsphere. In both my interviews and my Instagram dataset from SR17, in which many people join partly or solely through radio and television, I noticed many private spatial contexts functioning as event-places, such as the car, the couch, and the living room. As Hetty tells me: “For me it [the event] is just at home on TV. [Outside] the weather is grey, and then I really enjoy it

[in my home]. I also have a little Christmas tree. So, for me, it is also a bit of the feeling of Christmas in these dark days”. From the way my interviewees describe their joining in eventspheres as witnesses-at-a-distance, often using descriptions of specific elements of their home, it becomes clear that their physical sense of the place that they are in is very present and taken into the experience (cf. Scannell, 1996). This is their embodied experience of being-in-place in the eventsphere.

A second way in which deep mediatization multiplies place in the event-sphere is by including all those places that we imagine or visit due to our communication with others (also see Chapters 14 and 17 in this volume) often referred to by scholars as mediated co-presence. When being-in-place, whether at an event location or in our living room, we are simultaneously present in several other places, such as the park where a friend is walking, the office where colleagues are working, or your own home where your partner is while you are at the event. One story, of two individuals named Walter and Lenny, at Oerol17 nicely illustrates this. They tell me how they are involved in a tongue-in-cheek battle on Instagram. They attach the hashtag “#FuckIbiza” to their posts to address the location of two friends who cancelled their Oerol plans to go to Ibiza instead. This awareness of Ibiza being another place to be in, choosing here while their friends are there, seems to co-constitute their experience of being at Oerol17. In this example, it re-affirms the fun that they are having. In other situations, interviewees explain that the awareness of other locales takes away from the experience of “being there”. Emma explains why she put her phone away during an “Oerol expedition”: “I think that you experience it differently when you take a picture of it. You would be thinking of [everything going on in] the present again and of home and for whom you take the picture. While when you are sitting there, you are just with your own thoughts, without the photo”. Thus, reflexive awareness of “distant others” and “distant elsewhere” can re-affirm or lessen the embodied experience of being in the eventsphere.

These experiences of being witness-at-a-distance and our awareness of distant others and distant elsewhere also influence the embodied experience of being-in-place “on the ground” at an event. Many of my interviewees express their excitement about being in places that they have seen before through media or that gain importance in relation to distant others (see also Chapters 12 and 17 in this volume). For instance, being at the Glass House is co-constructed by expectations raised by all of the images that visitors have seen of it before coming there. As Thrift (2003: 100) argues: “images are a key element of space because it is so often through them that we register the spaces around us and imagine how they might turn up in the future”. Many interviewees describe their being-in-place at the event location in contrast to earlier experiences as witnesses-at-a-distance and state that it feels “more real to be there in person”. When asked to reflect on this realness, they refer to senses that are not transferable via media technologies, such as the bodily

closeness of others, touch, smell, and vibe. As Oerol17 visitor Sasha says: “of course you can take a selfie, but that won’t reflect the feeling, you know”.

Furthermore, many of my SR17 interviewees recounted that, where they were restricted by the camera view before, now they can look where they want to look and see everything that the television director may not focus upon. This – almost freeing – embodied experience of being-in-place “without” media is something that I have also noticed at Oerol17, where many interviewees expressed that they prefer to go offline or minimize their smart-phone use. In both case studies, interviewees described these “media free” practices by using the word “live”, a term they also used for several mediated participations in the eventsphere. This shows that “liveness” is experienced in a diversity of ways. As we will go on to see, the “live experience” is very often affirmed by media use. And even when media technologies are deliberately put away in favour of the presumed “pure” experience of the moment, this deliberate non-mediation co-articulates the moment (cf. deep recursivity in Couldry & Hepp, 2016; and the paradox of dis/connectivity in Hesselberth, 2017). Media technology, whether used or deliberately not used, always plays an important part in the live experience of being-in-place.

Another way in which media technologies co-articulate being-in-place is by asserting the embodied experience of being there and affirming the importance of this. The authoritative power of the broadcast media institutions of radio and television was especially evident during my participant observations at SR17: people waved at the cameras, situated themselves perfectly in front of them, and eagerly looked at my recording device asking me if I did radio interviews. My interviewees in SR17 tell me that seeing themselves on TV provides enjoyment and pride. Seeing yourself, a friend, or a familiar place on the screen strengthens the experience of being there, and the visibility of cameras and screens awakens the desire of your presence to be captured by them. As Hetty tells me, she stays put on the couch in front of the television for at least two hours after sending an SMS to SR17 just so she can see her message appear on TV. Joyce shows me a picture of a television screen showing herself in the crowd in front of the Glass House, taken by a friend who noticed her when watching SR17 on TV, telling me that it makes her happy to “be seen”. And then there is Pif, who was filming the live stream on the large screen next to the Glass House. Explaining why she chose to film the screen instead of the actual scene that was taking place on the other side of the Glass House, her boyfriend speaking to the DJs, she told me: “Well . . . he is on TV, so you have to show that, right. A bit of showing off your man, that does add to it”.

Notwithstanding this authoritative role of broadcast media, connective media also work to assert and affirm being in the eventsphere. In all of my datasets, it is clearly visible that people want to show where they are, commonly by posting pictures and videos on various connective platforms or sharing them within closer social networks through direct messaging services such as WhatsApp. As Jason tells me about letting his friends know that he

is in Apeldoorn for SR17: “Well, you are there, so then I send a quick Snapchat video to friends. Because yeah, they are jealous that they can’t be here”. This was a really prominent theme in my material from both case studies and appears to be deeply normalized behaviour, as became apparent by the frequent use of words such as “just” and “of course”. Participants often noted that they had never thought about it but just do it. Jane at Oerol17 states: “I find it important that people know that I am here, I guess. . . . You never really think about that, but now that I do I do find it important”. Some interviewees even speak of proving that they are there, such as Claudia at SR17: “Just to say that you were there. A little bit of proof or so. It doesn’t make sense to do it, but I like it”. In my Instagram datasets, this is evident; many images – often using the platforms’ vernacular forms of selfies and first-person and point-of-view perspectives (Gibbs et al., 2014) – essentially show being-in-place. Selfies in front of the Glass House, first-person views of boating to Terschelling, and couch point-of-view shots of living rooms with SR17 on TV can be seen as a practice of visual presencing (Meese et al., 2015; Richardson & Wilken, 2012) as people visually place themselves in event locales. Whether stemming from a personal desire, from an expectation of media, or from a prompt given by the platforms in use, I would argue a combination of these, people love sharing where they are (see Chapter 11 in this volume for a reflection on how this is done in toy tourism). And by doing so, they add yet another spatial layer to the eventsphere.

Spatial unity: the event-space

Both the multiple locales in the eventsphere and the experienced spatial unity between these locales are recognizable in the prominence of the word “here” in my interviews. By “here”, my interviewees refer concurrently to the locale of embodied experience – the being-in-place on the couch, the festival ground, the boat – and to “the event” as one central de-spatialized eventsphere. Throughout my interview material, the various event locales do not stand out as separate places but rather as parts of a meaningful whole: the event-space. This event-space becomes especially apparent when my interviewees identify its borders. While they are apt to seamlessly include housework, WhatsApp messages, and phone calls in the event-space, at other moments, the smallest disturbance can annoy them because it takes them out of it. Where Gretchen’s husband is included as a distant other in the event-space of Oerol17 (as described earlier), Hetty explains that she can better enjoy SR17 when her husband is out of the house. Many speak of being distracted by their phones while joining in the eventsphere, whether via television or on the festival grounds. My interviewees’ annoyance with “elements” that disturb the flow of the eventsphere shows us that the event-space is constructed and requires active upkeep.

Being a witness-at-a-distance through live broadcasts and streams creates a privileged position in the event-space, since it enables us to take positions

in and see aspects of the event that are difficult to witness on the ground, such as a drone shot of the party on the beach or a close-up of an emotional radio DJ inside the Glass House, and all this from the comfort of your own home or mobile phone. As my interviewees portray their domestic event locales as cosy, warm, and comfortable, “being there” becomes an intimate situation in which proximity is experienced. Here we see a “classical” notion of liveness in which, in the words of Berenstein (2002: 33), “[t]he combination of the site of reception (the home) and the mode of transmission (immediacy) creates a powerful means of engaging”. Joining in the event-space as a witness-at-a-distance is experienced as truly participating in the eventsphere. As Anita describes watching SR17 on TV with her family: “You experience it. Well, we are all fully engaged [laughs]. I find it wonderful. . . . You see the people [at the Glass House] enthused, cheering, etc. [laugh] We cheer along”. Joining in the event from the couch provides for an equally valid event experience as, for instance, standing in front of the Glass House during SR17 (cf. Scannell, 1996). As Dennis speaks about his participation in SR17 through the live stream: “It [the location of the Glass House] is always so far away. . . . But to be able to follow it closely, watching the 24/7 stream, you get the idea as a viewer that only by watching you contribute to Serious Request as a whole”. As a witness-at-a-distance, your living room becomes deeply entangled with other event-places, and you join the event-space.

Writing yourself into the event-space through connective media is afforded by platforms through specific functionalities. Each platform has its own way of letting the user share where she is: Snapchat has location-based filters, Instagram and Twitter use locations, and on Facebook you can “check-in”. These functionalities not only afford the sharing of concrete locations, they also enable my interviewees to connect to the event-space as these functionalities overlay it – you can use the “SR17 filter” or add “location Oerol”. This can be seen as a more abstract placing or (visual) presencing, referring not to a specific locale but to the event-space as a whole. As mentioned before, adding location is often more of a habit than a deliberate choice. It is a simple way to clarify the context of a story or photo, as Janice at Oerol17 explains: “When I post an Instagram-story, there is the option to add location, and I actually always do that. And then I don’t add text because then I think: okay, people know why I post it, because I added the



Figure 13.3 Visual presencing at Oerol17.
Source: Photo by author.

location”. Here location is more than coordinates and also more than an event-place. These functionalities are used to assert and affirm being in the event-space. This positioning in the event-space through social media platforms clearly stands out in both my interview material and my datasets from Instagram and Twitter. As we have seen, most often, event locales are used to do so. However, one recurrent visual trope is de-spatialized – meaning it has no tangible reference to a place – and still places you firmly in the event-space: the *I’m-in photo* (as I call it), which employs merchandise of the event for visual presencing. For instance, at Oerol17, as at many other festivals, people visually “chain” themselves to the event by photographing their own wrists with the wristband that provides entrance to Oerol activities. For many people, this practice is an annual photo tradition.

And then there is the hashtag, the most common functionality used on both Instagram and Twitter. Much like the “I’m-in” photo, the hashtag places you in the event-space without referring to a physical place. This placelessness makes the hashtag, and its birthplace Twitter, a perfect tool to join in media events or comment on television content. Many of my interviewees explain that they use hashtags so that people will find their comments or photos when searching for the event hashtag, others tell me that they join in the event-space by searching for hashtags, and nearly all say that the hashtag connects their content to the event. Hashtags do more than just presencing; as performative statements (Bruns & Burgess, 2011), they co-create the event-space. Hashtags such as #sr17 and #oerol17 co-shaped the event-spaces of SR17 and Oerol17. Although we have to bear in mind that these hashtags may not all be used intentionally for the formation of the event-space (Bruns & Burgess, 2011), they do shape the eventsphere and its space. Hashtags not only represent the event; they also form the event and event experiences. #sr17 assembles myriad types of content and people (cf. Papacharissi, 2015), as well as a range of locales spanning from podiums to living rooms, into one meaningful event-space.

Conclusion

Let us return to where we began and examine Simone’s arrival at Oerol Festival. By referencing Terschelling in both her Facebook post and her account of the experience – sharing a point-of-view shot of the island and mentioning the environmental elements of sea, sun, and wind – Simone shares a very embodied experience of being-in-place. She places herself in a specific physical place with sensate, affective, and cognitive experiences, some of which even resurface as she clenches her fists when recounting the experience. By sharing her experience on Facebook, she adds spatial layers to it. Similar to what we have seen in other examples from both case studies, Simone is noticeably aware of distant others and feels the desire to instantly share her excitement with them. By using #beautifulthings, she also refers to other places, distant elsewhere, in the eventsphere of Oerol17 which she

expects to encounter. Simone's mediated experience of arrival encompasses multiple places and is concurrently a unified event experience, conspicuous in the way she speaks of Oerol as a meaningful whole and the unifying use of #oerol. She is "there".

Diving into the two eventspheres of Oerol17 and SR17 – through participant observations, qualitative interviews with 248 participants, and the exploration of 9.534 Instagram posts and 92.384 tweets – has uncovered the importance of place and space in the mediatized experience of events. I have demonstrated that media concurrently de-spatialize, in the sense that they diminish spatial borders, and affirm embodied experiences of being-in-place. My interviewees experience a flow and coherence in these eventspheres, as well as disruptions thereof, which I argue are best understood in terms of liveness. Liveness – the mediatized connection to unfolding events – assembles our embodied experiences of being-in-place and de-spatialized notions of "being there" as dialectical partners. Through these dialectics, eventspheres such as Oerol17 and SR17 become fluid and temporal event-spaces within which participants skilfully navigate spatial complexity and experience spatial unity – meaningful event-spaces in which "being there" and "being here" are experienced as one.

Note

1 Interviewees quoted in this chapter have been anonymized.

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