**Theory and Method in Higher Education Research Volume 5 (2019)**

***An Exploration of Rhythms in the Contemporary Academy: Time, Space and Affect.***

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**Abstract**

Drawing on Lefebvre’s theorization of rhythm (1992) this chapter presents and discusses rhythmanalysis as a philosophical orientation and as an experimental methodology for social, cultural and historical research. In particular, it innovatively deploys rhythmanalysis to explore and investigate the everyday life of the contemporary university. To this end it critically reviews the methods (and findings) of a pilot project that aimed to capture the rhythmic nature of the quotidian activities of staff and students at a ‘modern’ university in the West Midlands of England (2017-18). The novel combination of research methods employed, comprising audio-visually recorded walking interviews, time-lapse photography of three campuses and of classroom/lab/studio teaching sessions, is examined to reveal the affordances of rhythmanalysis *qua* experimental methodology. The concluding section offers a reflection on the intellectual and practical purchase of the rhythmanalytical project while suggesting the possibility to further develop these innovative methods in order to refine current analyses and understandings of the contemporary university.

**Introduction**

This chapter draws on Lefebvre’s theorization of rhythm (1992) as a philosophical orientation, experimental methodology and, more generally, as a promising mode of inquiry for socio-cultural, historical research. In this respect it advocates in favour of rhythmanalysis as a method to explore and relay the cultural, political, economic and affective transformations of the contemporary university, as they emerge from the quotidian experiences and interactions of its teachers and learners. In considering the rhythmicity of teaching and learning as everyday practices, it is our contention that place and time exert a fundamental yet under-explored influence on the way these are experienced. In other words, a focus on rhythm allows us to disentangle and critique these cultural, political, economic and affective dimensions by exploring the ways in which they interweave in the fabric of the contemporary university.

Current debates around the culture of acceleration and speed (Rosa, 2013; Wajcmann and Dodd, 2017; Virilio, 1986) and the neoliberal-managerial turn experienced in the Western university (Deem et al., 2008; Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; Giroux 2014; Docherty 2015) situate and contextualise a discussion centred on the challenges, opportunities and sustainability of the ‘accelerated academy’ (Vostal, 2016). In line with Sharma (2014) and Lyon (2018), we think that the binary often implied in discourses of speed versus slowness tend to favour time over space, producing a ‘linear spatialisation of time’ (Lyon, 2018, p.4) that obscures the complexity of lived experiences as they materialise in unique spatio-temporal and affective tangles. Conversely, we argue, rhythmanalysis as a research methodology can offer a more nuanced, versatile and embodied approach to the study of everyday life. Harnessing the strength of time-space (rhythm) as a *single* category of thought- in-action allows for the illumination of the geometries of power that play out in, and are constitutive of, time and space (Massey, 2005; Sharma 2014).

This chapter explores and tests these ideas by critically discussing the *methods* of a pilot project (2017-18) that aimed to capture the rhythmic orientations and fluctuations enveloped in the everyday activities of staff and students at a ‘modern’ university in the West Midlands of England. The innovative combination of research methods employed, comprising audio-visually recorded walking interviews, time-lapse photography of the three campuses and of classroom/lab/studio teaching sessions, are examined to reveal the affordances of rhythmanalysis as an experimental methodology. The concluding section offers a reflection on the intellectual purchase of the rhythmanalytical project as a praxis capable of translating the complexity of these articulations in their simultaneity, materiality and nuance and as a pedagogic-political tool to effect change within the university.

**Theoretical underpinnings and methodological justification**

*Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (2004)is *de facto* considered to be the fourth and final volume of Henri Lefebvre’s life-long oeuvre, *Critique of Everyday Life* (2014). Published posthumously in 1992 (Lefebvre, 2004 [1992]), it set out to outline the theory and practice of a new field of knowledge devoted to the analysis of rhythms. ‘Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is **rhythm’** (Lefebvre, 2014, p.25), Lefebvre writes, starting with a general definition and proceeding to illustrate what a systematic study of it could look like:

The rhythmanalysis here defined as a method and a theory pursues this time-honoured labour [the discovery of rhythms] in a systematic and theoretical manner, by bringing together very diverse practices and very diverse types of knowledge: medicine, history, climatology, cosmology, poetry (the poetic), etc. Not forgetting, of course, sociology and psychology, which occupy the front line and supply the essentials. (Lefebvre, 2004, p.16)

Rhythmanalysis therefore embraces disciplinary and methodological ‘nomadism’. In Lefebvre’s conceptualisation, poetry and psychoanalysis feature as practices and modes of inquiry in tune with the spirit of rhythmanalysis: with the first, it shares the attention for language and aesthetic, and a transformative gaze based on perception; with the latter, a systematic attentiveness to revealing details. In the context of socio-spatial practice then, rhythmanalysis attends to the body in space and to patterns of movements and activities, foregrounding the mutual contingency of the spatial and the social, of time and space and of place and space in the analysis of the everyday (Jacklin, 2004).

Through rhythm we can appreciate the making and remaking of social practice – its relation between repetition of routines and emergence/eruption of differences within those routines. This is a mode of inquiry that extends to a variety of activities, things and affective states, such as commodities, institutions, work, training, learning, pathologies, atmospheres and so forth, on the assumption that these can be read as rhythmic occurrences, assemblages, events (Jacklin, 2004). In this sense, rhythmanalysis shares a philosophical ground with both phenomenology and new materialism. In accord with the first, its focus on perceptual relations and on the body as a ‘metronome’ of a myriad of interrelations posits rhythm as a *sensorium* or a meta-sense that registers, subsumes and conveys the multitude of human senses (Chen, 2017). Meanwhile, and in line with the latter, its emphasis on materiality and processes of materialization imply a notion of rhythm as a ‘localised temporality’ or as a ‘temporalised spatiality’. The energy that animates time and space producing rhythms occurs through *repetition*, which, in relation to *difference*, defines one of rhythmnanalysis’ central methodological categories. Other recurring categories are *linear rhythms*, denoted by quantification, measure, fragmentation, sequence. These are typically the social rhythms of (capital) production and consumption, imposed and accentuated by technology and industry. Urban life and the pulsing jolts of the city are often cast in linear terms by Lefebvre. *Cyclical* *rhythms*, conversely, characterise the vitality of the cosmic rhythms of nature (e.g. seasons, alternation of day and night) and their influence on our biological, bodily rhythms.

For Lefebvre, the linear and the cyclical interfere with one another, and he bemoans the worrying colonization of the latter by the linear rhythms of capital (production, consumption, accumulation). Repetition and difference, the linear and cyclical, overlap and exist in a permanent tension, the articulation and critique of which will be a major task for the rhythmanalyst. Furthermore, rhythms form assemblages. Their diverse, plural ensemble is named ‘*polyrhythmia*’. When a rhythmic constellation combines and functions harmoniously, it gives birth to *eurhythmia* (e.g. a state of good health). However, it is arrhythmia, which characterises a (pathological) disruption or discordance between rhythms, that interests Lefebvre the most. If arrhythmia reveals the symptom of a disorder, it can also be used – politically, socially, physiologically – as a tool to address the dysfunction. Finally, what Lefebvre calls ‘*dressage*’ denotes the process of entrainment (‘the breaking in’) that bodies undergo, through repetition over time, until absorption (e.g. military drills). Dressage echoes Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* ‘for the ways in which the body is quite literally shaped in relation to the techniques, habits and practices of class, gender, ethnicity, nationality and so on’ (Lyon, 2018, p.27).

Yet, one cannot understand Lefebvre’s critique of the everyday life without a reference to the theory and temporality of moments. Firstly introduced in the autobiographical text *La somme et le rest* (1959) and then in the second volume of the *Critique* (1961), Lefebvre introduces the moment as ‘the attempt to achieve the total realization of a possibility’ (Lefebvre, quoted in Merrifield, 2006, p. 27). Moments are opportunities to be seized and invented, modalities of presence, critical situations often characterized by spontaneity, excess and ambiguity. They represent the possibility of change and subversion within the (political) struggle against the colonization of the linear, the commodification of the everyday. The temporality of moments embraces a non-linear conception of time. Against Bergson’s notion of duration, moments are discontinuous instants that can pave the way for a revolution, thus disrupting the monotony of the everyday: **‘**The fulfilment of a moment is never an absolute present, each moment is inscribed in its preceding form while simultaneously anticipating future returns and renewals**’** (Chen, 2017, p. 26).Rhythms can therefore be seen as constellations punctuated by moments, refrains and intermissions.

The study of rhythm rests on a rich philosophical and historical tradition: Pascal Michon, a contemporary philosopher and historian of rhythm, traces its genealogy by looking at the works of Emile Benveniste, Edgar Morin, Henri Meschonnic, Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault and Michel Serres, among others (Rhuthmos website repository). Derek McCormack (2013) establishes a connection between the work of the American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey and the study of rhythm as a conceptual instrument to conceive of differentiation in process and as a promising resource to grasp the temporal and spatial nature of rhythm in their simultaneity.

The peculiarity of Lefebvre’s work, though, lies in its offering of a lively reservoir of ideas to be translated and experimented with in practice. In other words, there is an underlying empirical vocation to the analysis of the everyday, justified by Lefebvre’s desire to change it. Hence why Jean Paul Sartre defined the rhythmanalytical method as ‘regressive-progressive’. First, it is characterized by a descriptive element that could be summarized as a form of phenomenological observation closely examined through a combination of experience and a general theory. Secondly, it is defined as analytico-regressive and historical-genetic because it performs an analysis of reality that is based on a re-discovery of the present, which will be illuminated, understood and explained through the excavation of the past (Merrifield, 2006).

The emancipatory, transformative ambition of Lefebvre’s project allows for versatile ‘applications’ in which philosophy/theory, methodology and methods cannot be easily separated. Even if Lefebvre did not provide a clear nor systematic methodology for rhythmanalysis, in recent years many scholars, intrigued by the potential of this ‘investigative disposition’ (Hall et al. 2008) have attempted to operationalise rhythmanalysis in a range of disciplinary fields. Dawn Lyon (2018) offers a comprehensive review of such attempts in her recent book. Within geography, for example, a substantive literature has deployed rhythmanalysis to render the ‘liveliness’ and flux of mobility (walking, running, cycling, commuting, dancing, coach travel, ferry travel)[[1]](#footnote-1). In urban studies and sociology, rhythmanalysis has been respectively used to capture urban street life and routines (Highmore 2002; Chen 2013, 2017), street performance (Simpson, 2008); the workings of financial markets (Borch et al. 2015) and socio-natural rhythms (Evans and Jones, 2008). If the connection between rhythmanalysis and institutions (practice theory and processes of institutionalization) has been explored before (Blue, 2017), its application to an educational setting has never been attempted. Our rhythmanalysis of the contemporary university revisits Lefebvre’s conceptual framework to explore the rhythms of teaching and learning, combining a range of methods that have been previously rehearsed across geography and sociology in a novel way.

At a macro level, the university can be seen as part of a broader ensemble of rhythms that connect it, *qua* institution, to the surrounding cultural, economic, political, societal and ecological landscapes. At a meso level, the university is a rhythmic time-space shelter (Wood, 2000), traversed by linear and cyclical rhythms and therefore produced by and reproducing certain rhythmic orientations. However, in order to produce a ‘critique of the university’s everyday life’, we needed to start from the micro dimensions expressed by the spatio-temporal and affective experiences of teachers and learners and work our way up to re-compose its polyrhythmia. We were interested in exploring the ways in which different spaces and temporalities at play within the institution affect the experience of teaching and learning. In particular, we wanted to explore the intersection between linear and cyclical rhythms in the everyday life of teachers and learners; namely, how institutional-structural pressures to produce against set targets (e.g. Research Excellence Framework; Teaching Excellence Framework; third stream activities aimed at wealth creation) impact on – forcing a recalibration towards the linear – the existential and professional rhythms of the participants.

The challenge presented by our engagement with Lefebvrian theory was therefore to devise a methodology that could adequately capture and translate the participants’ experience of space / time and affect. The intention was to gather data that offered insights into individuals’ experiences of space / time within each of the three campuses of the University. Within this, we sought to discern how the materiality of higher education space at each campus shaped the participants’ experience and feelings while on campus. Our methodological reflection was led by the intention to maintain the original Lefebvrian idea of a heuristic, experimental, empirical, transdisciplinary, historic and suggestive method and by the desire – and consequent difficulty – of capturing the lively fluidity of complex social phenomena *in action*. Chen’s articulation of this problematique helped us define and refine the choice of our methods in dialogic relationship with the investigated phenomena:

Apart from the shared concerns about how to best capture the liveliness and complexity of social processes, these discussions on methods often step back from the ‘taken-for-grantedness’ of the issues at hand, the research apparatus and the procedures for undertaking research. They highlight the necessity of mutual adjustment in the process of conceiving problems against how they may be conceived by using various methods. The relationship between problem and method is succinctly articulated by Wakeford and Lury as they note ‘it is this combination, we suggest, that makes a method answerable to its problem, provide the basis for its self-displacing movement, its inventiveness, although the likelihood of the inventiveness can never be known in advance of a specific use.’ (Chen, 2017, p.7)

The following sections will therefore present and discuss the choice of the methods in light of these theoretical and methodological considerations.

**Methods and practice in the pilot**

*A Rhythmic Analysis of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Time, Space, Affect*, was a pilot project conducted in 2017-18 in a post-92, teaching intensive university of the West Midlands of England. At the time of the project, the university comprised three campuses. Their different location (central, South and North of the host city), atmosphere, disciplinary division and pace of activities provided a convenient laboratory to test rhythmanalysis. We are naturally grasped by certain rhythms, but in order for us to grasp them, according to Lefebvre, we must step out of them. It is this shift between the insider/outsider perspective that makes critique possible. This consideration prompted the idea of comparing and contrasting the rhythms of City North (a ‘ghostly’ campus on the verge of being shut down), City Centre (a campus that absorbs and reproduces the vivacious urban pulses of the city) and City South (a campus located in the leafy, suburban, quiet area of the city). In order to do so we devised a multi-method research design, comprising of:

1. **Time-lapse**

The first innovation we mobilised was the use of time-lapse photography. A Go-pro camera on a tripod was located to record time-lapse data in five different locations on each campus. We planned to produce data for the teaching & learning spaces of three different subject areas (classroom / lab / workshop); the campus library; the external entrance and the main ‘social learning’ space. The plan was to record six hours of time-lapse for each campus. In fact, it wasn’t possible to gather time-lapse data for all subject areas. We managed 6 out of 9 subject areas. The implications of this are explored below in the discussion section.

1. **Teacher and student data**

In addition to the time-lapse data, a total of 18 participants were selected, of which 9 were members of staff and 9 were students, across 3 faculties and 8 departments/disciplinary fields). These participants were also spread across the three different campuses of the university. The participants were chosen by subject area to provide insights into how space / time was used and experienced in a range of disciplinary areas. Students as well as staff were recruited as one aspect of the research was to develop understandings of the interaction of pedagogy and rhythm. Data was gathered through accompanied walking interviews with each participant wearing a bodycam to record point of view (POV) data. After the walking interview (within the same session), we carried out audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with all participants. Typically, these lasted between an hour and an hour and a half. They were approached as an opportunity for discursive critical reflection on the themes explored during the walking interview. The process of data collection lasted approximately two months.

**Discussion: method(s) in the context of our pilot.**

Our research design incorporated a range of audio-visual tools. The intention was to capture and illustrate how space and time were lived and experienced within each subject-specific teaching and learning space (i.e. classroom / workshop / studio etc.). We decided that using time-lapse video could provide an appropriate form of data (Jewitt et al. 2009). Time-lapse video was used in two kinds of spaces. First, to capture movement over one hour within the teaching and learning spaces of each subject area; then, to capture rhythms in social learning spaces including libraries and campus coffee outlets where students and staff could be seen working and socialising.

While time-lapse photography has been used in researching ecosystems to chart environmental and biological changes (Brinley, Buckley *et al*. 2017), in volcanology (Magnall *et al*., 2018) and in sociology (Simpson, 2012; Jungnickel, 2015; Lyon, 2016), it has rarely been used in researching educational settings. To this end, a stationary camera on a tripod was set up for an hour in each location. A member of the research team sat nearby for the duration of the recording. In the teaching and learning spaces the tripod was set up in a position so that the camera could capture an overview of movement. This usually meant siting the camera in a raised position in one corner of the room. The camera offered the option of recording a wide angle shot with a large depth of field. With the camera carefully positioned, this gave us an image of the entire teaching and learning space.

Our hope was that time-lapse recordings would produce evidence of a signature rhythm for each subject: in other words, distinctive patterns of movement and pedagogical practice by teachers and students within the teaching and learning space. The use of time-lapse makes the different rhythms and uses of educational space visible and provides insights that simple observation and fieldnotes can miss. This stems from the ability to watch and re-watch footage while looking for patterns. In using time-lapse, we did not set out to capture the differences between the rhythms followed by teachers as opposed to those followed by students. Rather we would argue that each session presents *a* rhythm constituted by smaller tributary rhythms that combine to form a pattern and ‘feel’.

Another impetus behind the use of time-lapse photographs was that they would provide us with extra-linguistic data, a reminder that rhythm is a sensory rich phenomenon involving bodily senses, mobility, and orientations in relation to others. If the body can be seen as ‘an unfinished biological and social phenomenon which is transformed, within certain limits, as a result of its entry into and participation in, society’ (Shilling, 2012, p. 11), then the time-lapse is capable of revealing nuances about the kind of entries and the levels of participation of different individuals within educational encounters and in educational spaces. The photographs also remind us that education as a social and socialising process involves the deployment and arrangement of physical bodies in physical spaces regardless of course curriculum, to a certain extent. Furthermore, the use of photographs enables researchers to insist on the specificity of context and resist generalisation. In a nutshell, photographs remind us that education in educational spaces is essentially an embodied practice, thus reinforcing the significance of interpreting what happens in *this* space at *this* time.

The other main method used in the project was the accompanied walking interview. The project involved the participants taking part in a walking interview during which they led the researcher around and talked about the spaces on the campuses that held significance for them. They were asked to comment on the significance of each place. The data comprised video footage from a bodycam, providing point-of-view (POV) footage, designed to give the viewer the unique perspective of the participants (to see what they see, to go where they go), in an attempt to reconstruct the everyday life in the university of a member of staff and/or a student. For this reason, student participants were chosen who were familiar with their learning environments and who had, therefore, established a student *habitus*: a routinized interaction with the higher education environment including the frequenting of particular places and/or patterns of meaning-making about how they used and were affected by educational and social/ educational spaces. This meant that they were recruited in their final year (the majority) or as postgraduate students from each subject area. This enabled us to explore whether patterns of interaction and use in the HE environment have developed differently across subjects and campuses.

In this design, the space and the architecture effectively constituted an additional participant. Viewed in this way, the different spaces can be seen as interacting with students and teachers: they are not a neutral backdrop against which people study, teach and socialise. Rather, they not only shape how these activities unfold but they also create an affective experience that impacts on individuals in different ways. Semi-structured interviews followed the tour, offering the participants the chance to reflect, guided by the researcher, on their relationship with space (mostly explored in the walking interview) and time (e.g. workload, pace of life/work, relationship with speed/slowness and so on). The walking interviews with bodycam, in particular, yielded a rich array of linguistic, audio and visual data that would have been reduced and rendered less nuanced and rich if it had simply been transcribed.

The combination of aural, haptic, visual and other sensory impressions helped provide a performative understanding of how space-time is *enacted* and / or *produced* rather than simply experienced. This view is consistent with Jones’s notion of architecture as constituted of ‘buildings not simply as material objects, but as urban texts that are written as much by their users as their architects’ (Jones, 2005). Put differently, the walking interviews allowed us to recast the higher education space as a quality that is produced by students and staff in ways that, while being shaped by physicality and temporality, are not constrained by them. This held profound methodological consequences, especially in terms of data representation and synthesis.

The 20+ hours of video recordings, together with the same amount of audio-recorded semi-structured interviews and the time-lapse footage obtained in the three campuses produced a vivid picture of the three sites and their rhythms. The footage of the walking interviews was synthesised by creating six video-documentaries that collated, via editing and montage, the experiences of teachers and learners in a way that emphasised the key themes that emerged during the tours in the three campuses. The audio recordings were selectively transcribed and used as a complement and a commentary to the videos. The rationale behind it was to produce a form of triangulation of data that would lend internal coherence and consistency to the ‘rhythmic picture’ created through the videos. Inspired by Dawn Lyon’s audio-visual montage of the Billingsgate fish market (2016), we edited our time-lapse footage with soundbites recorded on each site and visually juxtaposed them to create an instant audio-visual comparison of the different rhythms at play in each of the different campuses.

The time-lapse recorded in the classrooms, workshops and laboratories was edited *within* the six documentaries, in a deliberate attempt to experiment – disjointing them – with temporal and spatial dimensions. So, for instance, you can hear a participant’s voice while they reflect on the activities that *usually* take place in a particular setting, empty at the time of the interview (e.g. the jewellery workshop). At that point, the time-lapse photography of those activities (previously recorded) gets inscribed/edited in the video, producing an incredibly rich ‘story’ about the everyday life of the university, as it unfolds, simultaneously, not just in different places, but at different times. It is not just a case of conveying – following Lefebvre – the non-linear dimension of time-space as it is both experienced by the participants (e.g. in their recollections and projections) and retraced by the researchers. We quickly realised that the body, considered by Lefebvre to be the central ‘metronomic’ device that absorbs and translates rhythm(s), was insufficient to capture and relay the activities that went on at different scales, temporal registers, and physical locations.

Hence, following Lyon (2018), we crafted a research design that could do justice to and approximate this complexity and richness, by harnessing the strength of different methods, together. The real-time, deeply sensory experience of the accompanied walking interview produced a phenomenal reservoir of impressions, registered by the researcher during the sessions and revisited as ‘glowing data’ (MacLure, 2013) at the point of synthesis/editing. For example, when re-watching and editing the video of one participant (a third-year Architecture student), we noticed that the production of space-time performed in the walking interview symbolically encapsulated the entirety of his educational trajectory and experience. The student walked us through the process of ideation and materialisation of a typical Architectural model, revealing the intersecting linear and cyclical rhythms of its production: from the place where ideas are born and discussed (the lecture room; the studios) on the fourth floor, we descended to the third floor, where the initial design would become materialised into the scale model. We then moved to the second floor, where the model would be photographed and finally printed to become part of the student’s portfolio.

This seemingly linear process of production and representation is cyclically repeated as the modules progress. However, during the walking interview, the student unwittingly shed light on the non-linear, affective nature of the learning experience: the incessant ‘back-and-forth’ between design and modelling to adjust and amend; the collaborative yet competitive relationship with the fellow students; the long-hours spent in the studios; the ‘anxiety room’ where the portfolio gets printed (always) at the last minute; the ritualistic ‘Tuesday morning meetings’ with the tutor, occurring in the hidden café situated on the third floor. The ‘day in the life of’ this student is punctuated by the significant events/moments recounted while traversing the institutional space ‘top-to-bottom’ with rhythmic cadence. Once captured and synthesised in the video, it allows the researcher to pay particular attention to the ‘glowing moments’ identified by the participant. These, in turn, can reveal aspects of their quotidian educational experience that are often overlooked and inevitably lost in the habitual repetition of their practices. In this respect, the video montage shows those particular-to-universal dialectic oscillations that Lefebvre sought to apprehend by entangling and disentangling the polyrhythmia of the social fabric. Here, the experience of one student unveils – often unbeknownst to them – the multiple and simultaneous entanglements with teachers, students, and their institutional spaces, politics and cultures.

The participants’ reflections, collected via semi-structured interviews, offered a critical commentary and the opportunity to elaborate on insights offered during the walking interview relating to their relationship with, and production of institutional space-time. Finally, the time-lapse photography, in its dual use, produced a powerful visual representation of rhythms and atmospheres that classic narrative accounts might not fully capture. The following section explores the relationship between methodology and method in practice, disclosing the potential of an assemblage of methods to perform rhythmanalysis in and of educational settings.

***Doing* rhythmanalysis.**

The examples below document, by way of illustration, the use of time-lapse photography in different learning and teaching spaces/settings. For all classroom time-lapse data ethical considerations were important: fully-informed consent was sought and signed forms collected from teachers and students. The first example presents a teaching session in craft, design and technology (CDT), recording a Cookery class. The second presents a Sociology lecture occurring in a standard classroom. In both cases, the use of time-lapse allowed the researchers to get a sense of how teachers and learners use space and ‘impose themselves’ onto space. We see this equally, but differently represented in the CDT/Cookery class with its practical element (the preparation of a fish dish) and in the Sociology class (a bridging session between modules on classical and contemporary sociological theorists). The movements of the teachers that the time-lapse data reveal subtend and imply assumptions about their subject, the way it is enacted as curriculum and the rhythmicity of teaching and learning.

In the example below (CDT/Cookery), the stills from the time-lapse footage are positioned to read clockwise from top left to bottom left. They identify patterns of movement in the room. These, in turn, reflect and portray a fluidity in the power dynamic between teacher and students. There are notable loci of interaction. The central desk provides a space for demonstration, a pole of attraction positioned at the centre of teaching and learning activity at the beginning of the session. As the sequence progresses, students disperse to put on aprons and re-group at the central table before dispersing again to their individual cooking areas.

Bodies in this interaction with space are (potentially) educationally generative: the class is habitually set up to support dialogical and collective knowledge production. The movements of students and teacher alter in accordance with a loose pattern of activities that involves whole class interaction, pair work and individual work. Notwithstanding the visual limits inherent in the use of stills, we can begin to appreciate the complexity of a teaching space characterised by the mutual entanglement of subject specific materials (cooking ingredients), students and the shifting gravitational centre of the lesson: the teacher-led demonstration, the student exemplar, the paired students working on their separate dishes.

The diversity of the student group is also worth commenting on. The students include people of African-Caribbean, African, Pakistani and white (English and Irish) backgrounds. As food is considered a quintessential expression of culture, this class offered an opportunity for students to share existing knowledge, experience and expertise with each other (and the teacher) and to connect this to new knowledge. This opening up of the curriculum to student identity / biography can be seen as an important feature of a pedagogy in higher education institutions with a diverse student body. The informal educational space discloses a continuing agency in meaning-making by opening up the possibility of interjections and contributions by individuals. The experience of the ‘lesson’ is therefore one in which a broad collective rhythm (the explanation and preparation of a fish dish) contains within it the eddies and diversions, the accelerations and decelerations of individual class members as they work at their own speed with their own ingredients.



Figure 1. CDT /cookery class



Figure 2. Sociology class

The fluidity of this teaching and learning space differs from the way space is experienced in the Sociology class (Figure 2). Here, the static position of the students, sitting at their desks, contrasts with the movement of the teacher-in-action, whose choreographic gestures resemble those of a conductor. Immediately apparent is the larger number of students. Metaphorically, we witness the orchestration of the teacher’s thoughts and, through the expressivity of his body, his attempts to engage the students with concepts and ideas. While the difference between a ‘vocational’ subject area and an ‘academic’ one provides some explanation for the absence of student mobility in the educational space, the contrast with the CDT / Cookery session appears stark.

The teacher stands at the front and with his arms outspread symbolically attempts to open an aperture onto the subject knowledge. The non-dialogical ‘lecturer’ role positions him as the intermediary between students and subject knowledge. His dynamism and mobility compensates for the stasis of his students. On the surface, we might seem to be watching a pedagogical practice that conceptualises education as knowledge transmission but the teacher contextualised this lecture as a review session. His typical practice was to alternate this kind of lecture format with interactive seminars in which the students were encouraged to make active contributions. The last still (bottom left), shows a surge in movement, on the part of the students, who are (seemingly) now allowed to gather around the lecturer for individual questions and clarification before leaving the room.

What both time-lapses reveal, through movement in space, is a distinct sense, albeit incomplete, of how time-space is produced in relation to each subject. The difference between practice-based subjects or subjects which are reliant on simulation (e.g. CDT, Jewellery, Architecture, Nursing, Midwifery, Radiography) and classroom-based disciplines (e.g. Sociology, Education, Physics, Media) is sharp. In the first instance, the co-production of time-space is materially bound to the institutional spaces that are necessary in order to create a product (e.g. food; architecture models; radiographic images; jewellery). In the case of classroom-based subjects, what matters is the creation of an ‘intangible’ educational space, wherein the physical boundaries delimiting the class lose significance, when compared to the immaterial yet fundamental learning experience. However, in order to delve deeper into the rhythms of these entanglements and their affective dimensions, we argue that time-lapse photography in conjunction with walking interviews and narrative accounts of the lived experience together yield a rich and varied source of data to illuminate ‘the everyday’ in the university.

This rhythmanalysis of the university, thus conceived and carried out, produced a much ‘livelier’ account of what it actually means to teach, learn and experience the institutional space-time. Significantly, the articulation of the participants’ experiences, gathered through narrative and audio-visual accounts, confirmed our concerns about tensions surrounding life in the contemporary university. These were cast in terms of ‘arrhythmic’ drives and lamented as the principal source of anxiety in their everyday life. Yet, interestingly, the participants’ accounts moved beyond well-rehearsed critiques of the neoliberal, accelerated university, revealing the ways in which teachers and learners adapt, recalibrate and recompose eurhythmia within the institution. Often, this is achieved through experiencing teaching and learning as immersive experiences that manage to temporarily suspend time and space. This emphasises how students and teachers can experience educational spaces as blurring the boundary between the physical and the mental. This escape from ‘the present’ which Lefebvre describes as ‘a fact and effect of commerce’ (Lefebvre 2004, p. 47) amounts to a suspension of externally imposed rhythms. For Lefebvre, the present is in tension with ‘presence’ which ‘situates itself in the poetic: value, creation, situatedness in the world and not only in the relations of exchange’ (ibid. p. 47). An important aspect of educational experience, presence is a reflexive state of mind and being that steps outside the rhythm of the everyday and subjects the world to a critical gaze.

Within this suspension, the appropriation of the time and space of learning becomes synonymous with the enjoyment and meaningfulness of the experience. An excerpt of the interview with the senior lecturer in CDT epitomises it:

True designers, like I have been… I have my own company and I’ve worked through the night, many times…So, I think that’s because you have a passion and a love for what you are doing and I think I just transfer that into teaching. And the people that I teach are designers in their own right…so they are used to working long hours…so it’s a whole cultural, personal concept of what work means to us as designers. If you think of fashion designers, they just work until they drop if they’ve got a show on. And so do product designers. And so we grow up with that artistic view…it’s the adrenaline. **The boundaries go…and the space boundaries go. So as a designer you want to be in your workshop or your work space at any time of the day.** (Ann, SL CDT)

This view resonates strongly with Jan Masschelein’s (2011) conceptualisation of education as a form of ‘undestined, suspended’ time between past and future and with the idea of the university conceived as a permeable time-space shelter, wherein its participants produce, negotiate and re-calibrate their rhythms continually, to recover a sense of purpose and passionate attachment to their experiences.

**Concluding Remarks**

In this chapter we have demonstrated the philosophical appeal and methodological potential of rhythmanalysis as an instrument to advance socio-cultural and historical research. When applied through a combination of experimental methods and techniques, it allows an exploration of the fluidity of the social as it unfolds through (human) experience and interaction. The strength of this method, as observed by Chen, lies precisely in the fact that:

Rhythmanalysis does not start from the ‘cultural’ or the ‘political’, rather it looks at the concrete social relations and exchanges exercised by the timing- spacing practices of social agents. This puts forward the nomadic nature of rhythmanalysis as a method, since there are no disciplinary boundaries which delimit the trajectories of materialities. The abstract demarcations of social fields are collapsed in the rhythmanalytical mode of exploring the connection of experiences. These specific modes of analysis indicate that rhythmanalysis is highly responsive to methodological discussion which calls for research that situates itself *amidst* as opposed to *above* social phenomena. (Chen, 2017, p.7)

Our pilot project approached therefore the analysis of the contemporary university from the angle of the ‘concrete social relations and exchanges exercised by the timing-spacing practices’ of its social agents: teachers and students. To this end we devised a multi-method research design that would ideally enhance our ability to perceive, contrast and critique the different rhythms playing out in the three campuses of the university selected as a case study. The combination of audio-visually recorded (accompanied) walking interviews, semi-structured interviews and the extensive use of time-lapse photography proved effective in revealing and unpacking the significance of time space and affect in the daily co-production of knowledge by teachers and learners. Significantly, this experiment showed how participants carve out zones of spatio-temporal ‘suspension’ within their practice as strategic and existential devices through which they manage to reconfigure islands of eurhythmia within anxiety-ridden academic landscapes (Gill, 2009; Loveday 2018). In this respect, the experimental nature of rhythmanalysis revealed itself in the modalities in which its methodological orientations helped redefine and refine the nature of ‘the problem’ investigated: by reconceptualising the university as a time-space shelter, we started moving beyond sterile critiques of the university (e.g. fast academy versus slow professor movement) to embrace a qualitative, experientially rich, embodied account of ‘what goes on’ within the institution.

Based on the initial findings of this pilot project, a promising future development could involve addressing the relationship between university, rhythm and future. The anticipatory and transformative potential inherent to rhythm needs careful investigation. Considering that teaching and learning in higher education are fundamentally and increasingly future-facing and future-oriented, the university could be used as a laboratory to explore and test ideas related to rhythm and anticipation, and to promote alternative temporalities *in* and *for* education (Wozniak, 2017; Neary & Amsler, 2014; Bennett & Burke, 2017).

In other words, education could become a form of suspension *from* the dominant time-economies and, crucially, an incubator *for* possible, rather than probable futures (Poli, 2014). Building on the analyses of Wozniak (2017) and Masschlein (2011), the notions of suspension and incubation become forms of active resistance against conceptualisations of education as ‘dressage’ (training). The linearity of rhythms experienced as set programmes, fixed hours, and institutional targets in the contemporary university enforces the dominant time-space economy that delimits and inhibits spontaneity, creativity and innovation. The liberating power of education lies in its ability to disrupt dressage by setting time free, as we have seen in the staff and students’ attempts to recompose eurhythmia through immersive experiences of teaching and learning. Within such time-space shelters, counter-hegemonic rhythms are at play that can produce education as an emancipatory practice. Once the dominant time/debt economies are suspended, we can witness what Masschlein calls a ‘profanation’ of time. This is a condition in which time, space and things are separated from their habitual use: in this separateness things become ‘communized’, open to common use and un-finished:

As education presents the world once more, unfinished, it turns the world into a common thing, and puts students as equals in the position to begin. This is, if one would like, the political dimension of scholè. It needs no political doctrine and guidance—communist or not—to become political. The time and space of scholè has an end in itself or, which comes to the same, is a pure means, a medium. (Masschlein, 2011, p.4-5)

In line with our analysis and findings, Masschlein’s understanding of education is profoundly rhythmic. It is indeed viewed as a practice that ‘entails the tracing of *spaces*, the arranging and the addressing of *matter* and the editing of *time* that make scholè (study, exercise, thought) happen’ (ibid. p. 6). It is this type of freedom, granted by a condition of suspension, profanation and attention to the world, that will allow the incubation of alternative educational futures.

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