Beyond Rhythmanalysis
Territorialising the socio-spatial rhythms of the playground

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Abstract. The recent, rich scholarship on rhythms proves that rhythmanalysis is extremely important and helpful as a sensitising attitude and a research technique. Despite its increasing recognition, rhythmanalysis has not yet become a proper science as its proponents had hoped. In this article we argue that rhythmanalysis could benefit from being further developed and integrated into a wider *science of territories*. What we need to attain is not simply a recording, capturing or description of rhythms; instead, the real goal is to capture the *life* of rhythms as they enter territorial formations. In other words, we invite to bring a neo-vitalistic conception into the social-scientific understanding of the relation between rhythms and territories. More specifically, we suggest that the notion of rhythm could be explored not only in terms of the recurrent patterns of association it defines, but also with essential reference to the *intensive situations* and moments it generates and, in the end, territorialises. As a case study to highlight this, we focus on a particular territorial sort, the urban playground.

Keywords. Science of Territories; Social Rhythms; Rhythmanalysis; Urban Playgrounds; Territorial Intensities

TOC

Introduction

Despite the increasing recognition of the importance of rhythms in social and urban studies, rhythmanalysis has not yet become a proper science or a discipline in a specific sense, as its proponents had hoped.[1] Since the little but important book on rhythmanalysis by Henri Lefebvre was published in 1992, shortly after its author's death, and especially since its translation into English in 2004 curated by Stuart Elden (Lefebvre 1992; 2004), we have seen a wide variety of different studies in rhythmanalysis, often with an empirical focus (e.g., Highmore 2005; Cronin 2006; Edensor and Holloway 2008; Middleton 2009; Edensor 2010; Prior 2011; Edensor 2012; Lin 2012; Simpson 2012; Schwanen et al. 2012; Smith and Hetherington 2013;

[1] See, e.g., Lefebvre (2005: 130): "Rhythmanalysis, a new science that is in the process of being constituted…".

Wunderlich 2013; Goh 2014; Yeo and Heng 2014; Mulíček, Osman and Seidenglanz 2015; Paiva 2016). This scholarship proves that rhythmanalysis is extremely important and helpful as a sensitising attitude and a research technique. It is even safe to grant that rhythmanalysis has become an acknowledged method of inquiry.

In this piece, however, we argue that social scientific scholarship should now also move *beyond* rhythmanalysis. Clearly, this does not mean to throw away the many important insights contained in the rhythmanalytical take on social timespaces. Instead, we could benefit from further developing and integrating such insights into a wider *science of territories*. Indeed, rhythmanalysis could be inscribed as an essential component of a general territoriology (Brighenti 2010). Our proposal is thus to incorporate the notion of rhythm inside a larger theoretical framework, which enables us to embark in the study of the processes of *territorialisation* at large. Just as rhythms are spatialised times and, simultaneously, temporalised spaces, so territories are as much spatial as they are temporal (Brighenti and Kärrholm 2016). Territories are constituted through rhythms, but concurrently rhythms themselves – as they explicate themselves socially, biologically or ecologically – cannot but become territorialised. Following an insight from Deleuze and Guattari (1980) which we develop below, the life of territories is as much rhythmic as it is melodic; from this perspective, rhythms are essential but far from exhausting territorialisation as a whole.

The nexus between rhythm and territory lies not only in the coming together of spaces and times, but more specifically in the *investments of energy*, or *intensities* that accompany it. For his part, Lefebvre acknowledged this fact, writing that 'everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm' (Lefebvre 2004: 15). But, as we hope to show in the following, rhythmanalysis does not sufficiently clarify the nature of such 'expenditure' of energy. The notions of investment, intensity, and credo will be needed. What are rhythms an investment in? Ultimately, we suggest, rhythms can be seen as investments in social life and meaning. It is precisely as attempts at synchronisation that rhythm has a role to play in social bonding (Launay et. al. 2016). We believe that it is the social relation as such that entails the territorialisation of the members onto a special *stratum*, characterised by distinctive qualities (rhythmic patterns and melodic lines). That is why we need a more rounded theoretical and analytical framework capable of capturing the specific intensities of the moments created by rhythms. These intense moments can be seen as an outcome produced by means of more or less salient spaces *and* times as they get caught into a co-constitutive relation – in short, as they become part of a process of territorialisation.

In the following pages, we develop the argument that what we need to attain is not simply a recording, capturing or description of rhythms, nor even an analysis of rhythms; instead, the real goal is to capture the inner *life* of rhythms as they enter territorial formations. In other words, we invite to bring a neo-vitalistic conception into the social-scientific understanding of the relation between rhythms and territories. By doing so, we find ourselves in accord with both Bennett's (2010) critical re-appreciation of vitalism and Ingold's (2016) project for a new anthropological vitalism. More specifically, in our case we suggest that the notion of rhythm could be explored not only in terms of the recurrent patterns of association it defines, but also with essential reference to the *intensive situations* it generates. We thus aim to intensify rhythmanalysis to the point of pushing it beyond itself, in order to capture the peculiar *eigenstates* created by specific rhythms and rhythmic changes.

The paper is structured as follows. In the first section, we review some notable theorisations of rhythms in the 20th century, ranging Durkheim and Mauss, through

Pinheiro dos Santos, Bachelard, Laban, Warburg and Benjamin, to Lefebvre. In the second section, we advance a theoretical discussion that aims to ascertain and clarify the relation between rhythm, synchronisation and territorialisation. In the third section, the case of playgrounds – especially the case of the post-war playgrounds of Amsterdam – is employed to examine how rhythmanalysis can be effectively integrated into a science of territories. Subsequently, in the fourth section, an elaboration on the notions of 'intensity', 'melody' and 'presence' is provided as a key to integrate rhythms and territories. In the conclusions, finally, we summarise our discussion and weave together the various themes explored in the paper.

Rhythmanalytical sources

Today rhythmanalysis is usually associated with the name of Henri Lefebvre; in fact, however, Lefebvre comes in late in a long tradition of studies into the nature and power of social rhythms. Indeed, since the late 19th century, a movement towards the recognition of the importance of rhythms in social existence emerged in a variety of milieus. Some of the key references in this movement include, for instance, the French school of sociology, with Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, the Portuguese philosopher Lúcio Alberto Pinheiro dos Santos and the reception of his work by the French phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard, the Austro-Hungarian choreographer Rudolf Laban, the German art historian Aby Warburg and the cultural theorist Walter Benjamin.

In *The elementary forms of religious life*, Durkheim (1912) argued that social life functions on the basis of an essentially *dual* rhythm: such is the sequence of *synods* and *dispersals* of a given population. The synods are moments where members of a social group meet all together in ritualistic forms to exist collectively. Durkheim famously believed that even in the most remote societies (such as the Australian aboriginals) it is religious assemblies that provide the blueprint for all types of synodic moments. By establishing the basic dichotomy between the sacred and the profane, religion creates and enforces the cleavage between the collective and the individual, with ritual performances embodying the collective as a kind of 'God' materialised before the individual's eyes. Consequently, in Durkheim's view, social life is rhythmic by nature, with social rhythms sitting upon, but not coinciding with, cosmic, biological and psychological rhythms.

In 1939 the French essayist Roger Caillois wrote a 'theory of the feast' (a chapter from his *Man and the Sacred*) which represents an exquisite heterodox legacy of Durkheimian sociology. A former student of Mauss, Caillois identifies the feast as that periodic moment that rhythmically re-actualises the original time (*Urzeit*) when society itself is created. At regular intervals, social institutions need to be regenerated, purified, re-sacralised, by expelling intoxicating elements and the accumulated profanations. The rhythmic occurrence of the feast thus acts in a homeopathic way, by unleashing the primordial disorder and its unbridled contagious climate, only to seal it in a timespace accurately set apart from the rest of ordinary life. The world can only be re-generated by the feast in a *mythic* timespace that stands in opposition to everyday existence (Caillois 1980[1939]: 129 ff.)

Before Caillois[2], the French anthropologist who made some profound observations on rhythms is, as expected, Marcel Mauss who, starting from the general idea that the human being is a rhythmic animal (Mauss 1947), explored rhythmic functioning in

[2] Indeed, Caillois took Mauss' classes from 1933 to 1939. In turn, Mauss was Durkheim's nephew. Caillois directly references both in his work.

not only ritual moments (as Durkheim had done) but also in a range of other domains and situations, particularly in the economic and technological activities (Mauss 1950). Indeed, acting with others entail entering a shared rhythm, synching in with them, which is something Mauss was interested in observing starting from the bodily level. The techniques of the body he described in such rich details are in fact tools for acquiring and sustaining a shared rhythm of concerted action with others. But also when it comes to economic life, Mauss pointed out, the basic formats of exchange are tied to specific rhythmic accomplishments. Most famously, he argued that the gift (not the barter) embodies the first type of exchange recorded throughout the human race. Gift making, receiving and reciprocating are activities crucially sustained by a given rhythm. Such a rhythm is, in turn, shaped by both morality and competition.[3] For instance, the moral rule that the gift must always be reciprocated establishes an in-between time that is imbued with waiting and expectation. Such dense waiting time filled with expectation (of acceptance and reciprocation) recharges, so to speak, the rhythm of the exchange itself. Given that the question about when is the right time for a gift to be reciprocated remains unsettled, the waiting time of expectation is, not a chronological, but a chronic time (Brighenti and Kärrholm 2016).

Playing (both playing instruments and playing more generally), listening to music and dancing are perhaps some of the activities where rhythm matters most immediately and compellingly. Such activities are also intimately connected among themselves. In his late 1880s tracts against Wagner, for instance, Nietzsche protests against Wagnerian music on the ground that the latter inhibits the natural, inborn tendency of the listener towards movement and dance. Wagner represents a perversion in the history of music in that his 'theatrical' approach has engendered 'the complete degeneration of rhythmic feeling, chaos in place of rhythm' (Nietzsche 1888: §I: 666) – arrhythmic swimming and floating in sound instead of healthy rhythmic walking and dancing. In those same years, a similar, intimate association between music and bodily movement is also established by the American child psychologist Bolton (1894).[4] In the following generation, in the 1920s, the dancer and aesthete Rudolf Laban (most renown for his 'Labanotation', the standard notation system for recording human dancing movements) made the point that rhythm is, in fact, an attainment that requires special training. for Laban, there are not a-priori limitations to what can be *made* rhythmic. Indeed, there is always the possibility of capturing even dissonant events and 'eu-rhythmise' them.[5] Such is the mission of art, and more specifically the mission of choreutics as *Festkunst*, or celebration art: 'The art of celebration is meant to connect to the all-encompassing rhythm in its complete and infinite variability through dance. Essentially, the Festival knows no kakorhythmy' (Laban 1921). Almost contemporary with Laban (and like him a former student from Conservatoire de Musique de Genève) was Émile Jaques-Dalcroze who developed the pedagogical tool *Eurythmics*. Jaques-Dalcroze taught that rhythm is not an external measure to follow but should rather be seen as something to be felt through one's body; to become eurhythmic, he contended, you

[3] Far from being a merely pacified interaction, the gift always borders with war, so that veritable 'gift races' are found among various populations (most famously, the *potlatch* of the North-Western American Chinook people).

[4] 'So strong is this impulse in all classes of people that no one is able to listen to music in which the rhythm is strong and clear without making some kind of muscular movements' (Bolton 1894: 163).

[5] 'The boundary between eurhythmy and kakorhythmy is, however, fluid. A subtly tuned organ of perception knows how to detect the rule, the order, the structure of the complexity – in short, the existence of harmonic flow even in the most apparently complicated kakorhythmy.' (Laban 1921).

need to move until you feel the rhythm from within rather than imprinted from outside (Jaques-Dalcroze 1921: especially §4).

Ranging from public events to bodily movement, the notion of rhythm thus seems to cover a vast terrain in human affairs. In 1929, Warburg completed the introduction to his otherwise unfinished Mnemosyne Project, aiming at producing a visual atlas of 'pathetic forms' in art history and beyond. His analysis opens with a view of culture at large as a rhythmic – not to say, bipolar – enterprise. Specifically, in Warburg's view, the fundamental oscillation in human culture occurs through a series of 'swings' that alternatively establish and eliminate a conscious distance between the human subject and the world in which s/he lives.[6] A similar 'universal' intuition seems to have grounded Lúcio Alberto Pinheiro dos Santos's lost treaty *A ritmanalise* (1931). We know the thesis of the Portuguese philosopher only through the mediation of Gaston Bachelard, who summarized them in *La dialectique de la durée* (1936). Dos Santos posed a theory of vibration which is not without similarities with Bergson's philosophy, and resonates with his classmate Leonardo Coimbra's 'creationist rhythmontology'. In turn, all these authors might have been influenced – perhaps even inadvertently – by Gabriel Tarde's (1890) theory of the *universal repetition*, and, through it, by a Leibniz-inspired monadology, whereby harmony is appreciated as an instantiation of rhythmic resonance.[7] In Pinheiro Dos Santos, rhythmanalysis was first conceived as a *therapeutic discipline* aimed at improving living rhythms, avoiding disrhythmias, arrhythmias and cacorhythmias, and enhancing an active rhythmic production on the part of the individual. The attempt thus somehow also resonates with Laban's, the aim being not just setting up a research technique, but creating a valuable tool for transforming subjective situations. In this sense Bachelard (1936) parallels, and opposes, rhythmanalysis to psychoanalysis, for whereas the latter offers a gloomy view of the immutable power of the unconscious, the former corresponds to a theory that believes in and strengthen the human being's capacity of transformation and renewal.[8] That is also why, arguably, Dos Santos's rhythmanalysis is not about *rhythm* in the singular and the abstract, but about *rhythms* in the plural and the concrete.

Bachelard was the only prominent European philosopher to endorse Dos Santos, yet he did so enthusiastically. Following Dos Santos (and, with him, Coimbra) Bachelard (1936: §VIII-IX) recognises that rhythm is the fundamental temporal notion and 'real basis' of temporal effectiveness. By doing so, he also comes to an interesting position vis-à-vis Bergson. Bachelard largely draws on Bergsonian

[6] 'The establishment of a conscious distance [*Bewusstes Distanzschaffen*] between the self and the external world may be described as the basic act of human civilization; and if such in-between space [*Zwischenraum*] becomes the substrate of artistic creation, then the prerequisites are met by which the awareness of such a distance can become a permanent social function which, through the rhythm [*Rhythmus*] of swinging into [*Einschwingen*] matter and swinging out [*Ausschwingen*] towards Sophrosyne signifies the cycle between pictorial and symbolic cosmology, whose adequacy or failure as an orienting spiritual instrument thus signifies the fate of human culture at large.' (Warburg 1929: §I) Please note that here we are drawing on the text transcribed by Maurizio Ghelardi from Warburg's original manuscript, not on the German published version edited by Martin Warnke.

[7] In the 1910s, Leonardo Coimbra was formulating a 'new monadology', while Pinheiro Dos Santos was taking Bergson's classes in Paris, where he met Bachelard (Cunha 2008). In turn, Bergson had taken Tarde's post at the Collège de France, and was well acquainted with the latter's work.

[8] Decades later, Lefebvre will also follow a similar therapeutic perspective of rhythmanalysis. Echoing Bachelard, in one of his own very first mentions of the concept (in *The Production of Space*) Lefebvre suggests that: 'Rhythm analysis might eventually even displace psychoanalysis, as being more concrete, more effective and closer to a pedagogy of appropriation (the appropriation of the body, as of spatial practice)' (Lefebvre 1991:205).

ontology, but contradicts it on a crucial point, namely continuity. The notion of temporal duration – as well as, more generally, the notion of time – cannot for Bachelard be explained in abstraction from the dialectic tensions that compose it. Duration is, in fact, rhythmic, made of discontinuities between efforts and rests, so that time features as alternatively a *resource* and an *obstacle*.[9] Because life is a discontinuous succession of 'events', human rhythm is always an effort at 'rhythmising' that requires active as much as passive components.

In the period from the 1960s through the 1980s, synthesising Bergson-Dos Santos-Bachelard and the Marxist perspective, and with influences from the Situationists, Henri Lefebvre highlighted that rhythms are not merely natural and social occurrences, but also means of class domination. Lefebvre brought up the subject of rhythms in *Critique de la vie quotidienne II* (1961), then discussed extensively rhythmanalysis in *La Production de l'espace* (1974)[10] and later spent several texts on the subject during the 1980s (Lefebvre 1981; Lefebvre and Régulier 1985; Lefebvre and Régulier 1986) later published as *Éléments de rythmanalyse: Introduction à la connaissance des rythmes* (Lefebvre 1992). Lefebvre's 're-discovery' of rhythmanalysis in the 1970s and 1980s brought a lot of different themes together, but also tended to obscure the many sources that, before him, had already investigated the rhythms.

In fact, there were also other contemporary French thinkers interested in rhythms and the *quotidian.* For example, during the 1970s a writer like Georges Perec and a semiologist like Roland Barthes pointed towards a rhythmanalysis more firmly based in everyday life, and were both less caught up in dichotomies than Lefebvre's later work. Perec had made his own literary rhythmanalysis (although never named it as such) through brief and repeated observation studies during the early 1970s, working, as Sheringham (2006: 266) notes, with how to represent rhythms with difference. For example, in Perec's observation of recurrent busses in *Tentative d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien* (1974), he makes small variations in his notation; first he writes 'Un 63 passe' then just 'un 63' and then, inverting the order, 'passe un 63'. In his 1977 course at the Collège de France, Barthes cast a specific interest in rhythms through his concept of *idiorrythmie* (Barthes 2002; Sheringham 2006: 201-206). Inspired by the example of how monks on Mount Athos parted from the usual idea of a quite regulated monastic community, and spent more time alone, Barthes used the concept idiorhythm to discuss 'the way the subject engages with the social and cultural code' (Sheringham 2006: 202).

Barthes' interest lied in understanding how the individual could interact with a community without being totally controlled or subdued by it. Idiorrythmics thus has to do with how individuals in their relation to others always act through the moods, affects and desires that intersect their everyday life. In a sense, it lays very close to Lefebvre's later theory in that it seeks to capture conflicting rhythms and resistance to temporal homogenisation, but there is also a difference. Dolidon explains how: 'To put oneself in an idiorrythmic state presupposes that one lives at a different pace from the rest of society within society' (Dolidon 2010: 4). This state of rhythmic difference, presupposing some kind of negotiation, imply a more heterotopic approach than the one advocated by Lefebvre; the different rhythms mirrors each other in different ways, but there is no pre-given moral or natural 'right' inscribed in either of them. Idiorrhythm also allows the different rhythms to be both within and

[9] On this point, Bachelard also crucially refers to the psychology of Pierre Janet.

[10] So, it is actually not introduced as a concept in *Critique de la vie quotidienne III* (1981) as Sheringham (2006:160) seems to claim.

outside each other simultaneously – and this is an important point. Rather than basing a discussion in dichotomies – i.e. focusing on dominating or dominated rhythm – we need to look at rhythms of different paces and saliences, i.e. different degrees of interdependent or at least co-existing (synchronous and synchorous) territorialisation.

Territorialising rhythmanalysis

Even though Lefebvre was not very keen on recognising his sources of inspiration, there are several merits in his re-capitulation and re-actualisation of rhythmanalysis.[11] The following key analytical points might not have been invented by Lefebvre, but can be read quite clearly through his work.

First, whereas Bergson had emphasised temporal continuity (duration) and Bachelard opposed 'evental' discontinuity (dialectics), Lefebvre highlighted that the two aspects must coexist. Indeed, a rhythm introduces both a qualitative difference between moments (discontinuity) as well as, simultaneously, a single movement that leads through them and connects them (continuity).[12] On the other hand, the Durkheimian sociologist George Gurvitch (1963: 53) had already remarked that rhythms entail a constant search for balance between temporal continuity and discontinuity. In other words, the first insight is that rhythm itself is a special struggle between continuity and discontinuity.

Second, rhythm is contradistinguished not only by *returns*, but more pointedly by *accents*. The notion of *stress* – ranging from linguistics, through psychology, to everyday language – hints to the existence of qualitatively distinct (stressed) moments. Rhythm thus presupposes the existence of qualitative differences between temporal moments – in Bergson's parlance, differences of nature that cannot be reduced to differences of degrees. Both the vitalist and the phenomenological perspectives teach us that, for instance, acceleration and deceleration are not simply symmetric events; on the contrary, they possess and convey different and irreplaceable *meanings* in terms of lived experience. Yet the distinction between strong and weak times also makes sense from a structuralist perspective: so, in Durkheim and Caillois, we find the distinction between the dense, heightened time of the synod (the rite or public event) as opposed to the sparse time of mundane, private life.

Third, the duality of *calculative* and *emotional* dimensions of rhythm – the rational-legalistic and the intimate-passionate – is also clearly identified by Lefebvre: 'Rhythm – he writes – appears as regulated time, governed by rational laws, but in contact with what is least rational in human being: the lived, the carnal, the body.' As seen above with Mauss, the body is an important source of rhythms – to the point that in Lefebvre (2004:68) it becomes 'the paradigm of rhythmological study'. Following French anthropology, Lefebvre discusses how the extended rhythms of the body in the use of tools such as the hammer, but also gestures and mimicry (given that, with Mauss, the body represents the first technical tool of humanity), produce its own well-characterised spaces. Also in consonance with the studies of micro social interaction

[11] Fraser (2008) has also documented a consistent attitude in Lefebvre to obscure his sources, especially never mentioning Bergson as a major source: Lefebvre, comments Fraser (2008: 342), 'continues to work with Bergsonism without calling it by that name'.

[12] More precisely, Bachelard (1936: 76) characterised rhythm as simultaneously 'structure' and 'construction' – which might be a sophisticated way to include both unity and variation. A similar notion of unity-with-multiplicity is also already present in Canetti's (1960) conceptualisation of crowds, specifically where Canetti described the crowd as a wave-like event which is unique and multiple at the same time.

(form Simmel to Goffman), Lefebvre (1991: 207) comes quite close to describe the process we call 'rhythmic territorialisation': 'through the mediation of rhythms … an animated space comes into being which is an extension of the space of bodies'. The body is both a rhythm machine and a producer of space, capable of expressing and sharing as well as concealing meaning. A number of questions, however remain unanswered at this point: on the one hand, which specific spatial effects do these rhythms and gestures generate; and, on the other, which other dimensions do these spaces draw on that, in turn, intersect and affect rhythms?

Here, however, is also where the Lefebvrian approach reveals its limitation. While rich in interesting examples and suggestions, Lefebvre often ends up in discussions reduced to stark contradictions and oppositions that at times end up seeming a bit naive. This is especially true about his last book, *Rhythmanalysis*, which reads as a veritable catalogue of contradictions and oppositions (see in particular Lefebvre 2004: 68). Ultimately, Lefebvre's understanding of rhythmanalysis remains too dialectic, too dualistic. This is especially unsatisfactory by his own standards, given his long-term advocacy of trialectics and the 'third body' capable of introducing indeterminacy in the system. In particular, Lefebvre's repeatedly discussed opposition of *temps cyclique* versus *temps linéaire* (introduced already in Lefebvre 1961), while intuitive and at first sight appealing, turns out to be misleading. This dichotomy is in fact a reiteration of a nostalgic and, at bottom, moralistic idea about modern time seen as mechanic and unhealthy, as opposed to the ancient time seen as organic and curative. The opposition of 'qualitative' and quantitative' rhythms, or cyclical and linear, thus indulges a Manichean vision of good versus bad. It is not hard to claim that we need a more rounded understanding of rhythms which remains open to rhythmic phenomena and the role they play without trying to define their status and qualities – whether they are endogenous or external, good or bad – outside the situations in which they are enacted.

In a similar way, Lefebvre's characterisation of eurhythmia and arrhythmia appears as a transcription of classic notions of utopia and dystopia that is not particularly helpful. In fact, we must acknowledge that there is no *fundamentum in re* for this distinction: The prefixes 'eu-' and 'dys-' or 'a-' are always correlative to a judgment, to an evaluative point of view. Therefore, similar distinctions cannot be grounded in pseudo-universalist binaries such as nature/culture and so on, as Lefebvre does; instead, what amounts to a 'good' or 'bad' rhythm must be gauged in the light of a political stance and, ultimately, a political project.

Finally, Lefebvre's approach to rhythmanalysis is imbued in a phenomenological background – hence his insistence on 'lived' temporality, and so on. We are far from disputing the importance of phenomenology for social theory. However, in our view, as previously argued elsewhere (Brighenti 2014), phenomenology – understood as the analysis of the absolute local here-and-now, must be complemented by ecology – the analysis of relative global elsewhere-at-other-times. That is why, as we are going to detail in the next section, in order to advance towards a more sound understanding of the processes at stake, rhythms must encounter territories. Territories are complex creations that are as much phenomenal (full of meaning) as they are ecological (full of operative relations).

Synchronising the territories of play

What we above have called 'operative relations' are, in fact, affections. And affect precisely is the key to a territorological understanding of rhythmic productions and

transformations. The immediately affective dimension of rhythm has been widely recognised; but, what is rhythm if not an *attempt at synchronising* affects (action + reaction, that is, interaction)? A rhythm often tends to induce other rhythms; the beat of the drum or the rhythm of a swing often brings out a mimicking bodily movement; other people's gestures can be mimicked and even predicted and synchronised with as part of social bonding (Launay et. al. 2016: 4). Retail has known and exploited this tendency of mimicry through e.g. muzak, escalators and revolving doors, setting a rhythm in order to keep up the pace of the shopper for decades if not more (Kärrholm 2009). Rhythms are in this sense affective, they afford mimicry and synchronisation. Some studies even seem to suggest that rhythms without a specific sender might have an agency, and can improve behaviours as a kind of socialising-by-proxy (Launay 2015). In a recent article, Launay et al. (2016) bring up the role of synchrony as an alternative to other social bonding mechanisms, stating that synchronous behaviours such as music, dance, sport and exercise might be developed to enable more time-efficient ways of bonding with larger groups than, for example, through grooming. Affective synchronisation is thus, much like 'things' according to Strum and Latour (1991), something that makes our societies stick together, something that helps us structure complex socialites.

The rhythmic is both extensive and intensive; as such it is pivotal in the production of specific times and territories through synchronisation: indeed, the rhythmic territorialises. The production of territories by synchronisation is thus what we need to attend, and our everyday life is of course full of it: we sing, play and sport together, we walk together, we eat together, we take the train together and even get stuck in traffic together. Even the city as a whole was early on talked and discussed in terms of its rhythmic and synchronous qualities (Lynch 1972).[13] Here we will, however, not focus on the city as a whole, but on a specific practice of synchronisation, namely urban play, and give examples of its territorialisation. Children and 'savages' have traditionally been recognised as creature especially sensitive to rhythmic experiences. Already at the end of the 19th century, the music and child psychologist Thaddeus Lincoln (1894: 163) Bolton observed: 'There is no more striking fact in the whole field of rhythm than the emotional effect which rhythms produce upon certain classes of people, savages and children'. Although we would like to think that all people are affected by rhythms (even though the ways in which it is shown differ), we will here take the playground as an exemplary and arguably quite telling case of territorialisation.

The playground could be observed as an 'urban interstice' (Brighenti 2013), that is, as a minor presence in the urban landscape. Nonetheless the playground increasingly gained identity and turned into a veritable *territorial sort*, whose main purpose it clear: to synchronise and, more generally, territorialise children's play activities. In other words, playgrounds manage the spaces and rhythm of playing together. The idea of playground was first introduced during the early 19th century in Germany to teach children how to play in the 'right' way, whereas the first proper public playground is often said to have been built in Manchester in 1848 (Nordin 1999: 287 ff.). In the USA, inspired by the German examples, the playground was introduced during the late 19th century in order to instil 'American' middle class values in lower class and immigrant children (Chudacoff 2007: 73). Quite soon, the American playground also

[13] Lately we have also seen an at least partly Lefebvre-inspired development of a times-of-the city approach, discussing urban rhythms (Mareggi 2013; van Schaik 2013).

became a territory for middle class kids, but then rather as a vehicle of personal development (Spano 1991).

The Nordic example is also of interest here as it seems to have focused more on physical activity. In Copenhagen the first playground was built in 1870 (Rasmussen 1969: 208). The question of playgrounds was raised in Stockholm in 1894 and the first twelve were built around 1902, most of them quite plainly designed as simple sand-heaps. In 1963 there were 102 playgrounds in Stockholm, several of them had hired personnel to supervise the play (Rasmusson 1998: 46 ff). Although the *raison d'être* of playgrounds was both about empowering (enable physical and social activity and development) and control (territorialising and socialising play), the *will to play* was often seen as the basic force and the basic reason why playgrounds were needed. The Swedish architect Holger Blom put it this way:

> It is pointless to get a park in order without first satisfying the children's need of playgrounds. The children's need to play will have its course. If they lack *Lebensraum* [*livsrum*] they will spread like the locusts of Egypt, swarm the more delicate arrangements and damage them. (Blom 1948: 536, our translation)

Every park needs a playground because children need to play, and this play should be both synchronised and territorialized; all play should also be supervised and the playground should be visually accessible for adults (Nordlin 1999: 301). After inspiration from the book *Parkpolitik* written by the Danish garden architect C. T. Sørensen in 1931, the first *skrammel-legeplads* or 'junk playground' opened in Emdrup 1943. Here kids could build with loose parts like ropes, bricks, wood, etc., and use real tools such as hammers and nails. The play was thus supposedly freer and potentially more creative, but it also meant that the playground needed staff to supervise the children and the tools. In Sweden the first junk playground (in Swedish: *bygglek*) opened in 1948 and the concept still exists today. In England a similar concept was established as adventure playgrounds during the 1950s (Rasmussen 1998: 53 f.), whereas only a few examples are know from the US, and then much later, during the 1970s and 1980s (Chudacoff 2007: 187).

Starting with sand-pits, but developing with special tools such as swings, slides, balancing beams, and roundabouts, and later even small construction sites for children (through the junk playground), the playgrounds soon also became part in the synchronisation and disciplining of bodily techniques. Although most playgrounds were dedicated to smaller children, the development of junkyard playgrounds were meant for older children as well, and different kinds and dimensions of climbing frames, arches, globes, funnels, etc. also made some playgrounds interesting for teenagers (Roode 2002). Over time a rich paraphernalia of playing equipment was developed, where special tools such as play tables for 'baking' sand cakes (as part of 'playing with sand') or stepping stones (as part of plays like 'let's not touch the ground') synchronised different kinds of play within the playground area (or between different playgrounds) as well.

The playground as a territorial sort – and, simultaneously, territorial strategy – perhaps peaked during the post-war years. For example, Le Corbusier crowned his *Unité d'habitation* (1946-52) with a playground on the roof (Lefaivre 2007: 47). However, the post-war playgrounds of Amsterdam are the example *par excellence*. After the war, Amsterdam had a lot of vacant lots, and as of 1947, playground started to be built in the interstices of the urban fabric. About 700 of these were planned and designed by Aldo van Eyck, Cornelis van Eesteren and Jacoba Mulder, and the number of playgrounds in the city increased from less than 30 in 1947 to more than

1000 in 1968 (to compare with the 102 in Stockholm in 1963), adding up to an average of about 50 new playgrounds every year (Lefaivre, 2002; Lefaivre 2007: 44).

Amsterdam was a dense and crowded city and requests for organising suitable place for children were repeatedly raised by the citizens after the war. During the 1940s and 1950s the city got letters from the citizens complaining about the lack of dedicated places for children. Some letters begged for organised sandpits as the children used the pavement for playing with sand, or removed paving bricks to dig and find sand. One writer complains for instance about how football players keep breaking windows, and wonders if play equipment could be installed to keep the footballers out (Schmitz 2002: 59 ff.). The playgrounds thus become a means of synchronising the playing children of the local neighbourhoods, but also of synchronising specific forms of play (sometimes at the benefit of others). One might also argue that the playgrounds brought about synchronisation at an urban scale. A lot of these playgrounds stood on former bombed sites and houses where, for example, homes of deported Jews had been, and as Lefaivre notes:

> Filling them with life, in the face of these facts, was a redeeming, therapeutic act, a way of weaving together once again the fabric of the devastated city. The intention was to thwart what Huzinga in his chapter 'Play and War' had called the 'agonal' by overcoing it through play. (Lefaivre 2002: 45)

Synchronising play in open urban public space through playgrounds territorial strategies also had, as noted by Strauven, effects on children's possibility both to be associated with the city and to actually appropriate the city beyond their own neighbourhood:

> As the number of playground increased, they came to form a network – spread through the fabric of the city was a network of places that children could identify as their own territory, places where they were recognised as members of the city from one neighbourhood to another. (Strauven 2002: 81)

To synchronise with other children within a local block or a small neighbourhood is one thing, but during the years of youth it becomes crucial to synchronise with other youths and even adults, e.g. as a way of learning how to behave as a citizen in public space (Jacobs 1961; Lofland 1998). It has for example been studied how children and youths successively appropriate first local places, such as yards, then the neighbourhood, and as they become teenagers also central parts of the city (Lieberg 1992). Lately, we have also seen investigations reflecting on how these successive appropriations not only concerns spaces but also different kinds of temporalities (Gwiazdzinski 2013). The net of the Amsterdam playgrounds opened up for quite varied spatio-temporal appropriations, both for younger and older children. The Amsterdam playgrounds thus afforded a synchronisation of children from different parts of the city, as well as of different ages.

Although the supporters of playgrounds were more than the antagonists, there were certainly also complains (Schmitz 2002: 59-65). Letters from adult citizens of Amsterdam looking for peace after a hectic day at work, complained about the loud noise from kids, whereas concerned parents complained about the hygiene of the sandpits. One person complained on the planning of a new playground, arguing that the kids on the climbing frames would be able to view into his home. One letter suggests that the overcrowded playgrounds need litter bins 'to prevent the streets near these sites from being made untidy by all kinds of sweet wrapper' (Schmitz 2002: 64). Another letter complains about the regular problem of blowing sand from the sand pits. In short, playing together generated both opportunities and conflicts. Sometimes

this was not only directed towards activities, or objects ending up in the wrong places (sand, animal excrements, balls, etc.) but towards age groups, as reflected in a letter to the City administration arguing against the building of the playground on a place with trees: 'We adults would also like to see a piece of greenery in the city. Many adults do not go outside even one day a year, and then the view of the garden is delightful' (Schmitz 2002: 62).

Parallel to the critique of modernist planning after World War II, another attitude towards play also emerged. For example, Jane Jacobs (1961) had famously been arguing against functional zoning, and thus also against playgrounds as separated, mono-functional spaces. During the 1970s, the focus on control and fences decreased and play was, for example in Sweden, increasingly regarded as an activity that should be possible on other areas than playgrounds (Rasmusson 1998: 50). The question is if play really spread to other places. From the 1990s and onwards, Western Europe often saw fewer but larger and themed playgrounds (also in Amsterdam), often more focused towards the peripheries of the city rather than its centre (Strauven 2002: 82). These playgrounds sometimes became attractions and destinations for kids all over the city, and although movements across urban districts might be positive, there might also be a possible risk that, as play focuses to a few themed playgrounds, it is also increasingly synchronised to week-ends (when the children can be accompanied or even driven by their parents).

To sum up, playgrounds act through the synchronisation of children's play with specific times and places, through the synchronisation of 'proper' behaviour and certain moral values, through the synchronisation of bodies and bodily techniques, and, in the case of Amsterdam, the synchronisation of a whole city for children forming a network where children could identify their own discrete territories in the city. From this point of view, the playground appears as an interesting social-spatial innovation, a territorial rhythm machine that in terms of synchronisation is quite outstanding. This directly connects to our claim that rhythms must be understood as correlative to a series of 'operative relations', affections that are generated by territorialisation processes.

Presence, intensity, melody

The synchronisation of play relies upon and, in turn, actualises different kinds of spatial formations of the present. These recurrent forms of *presence* can also be described as territorialising moments of various *intensity*. Thus, an array of historical, societal, cultural and aesthetical rhythms manifest themselves through the playgrounds and have impacts far beyond them in the larger urban realm. For instance, the Amsterdam playgrounds were part of the firm territorial strategies of the Department of Public Works in Amsterdam, the City developer, the involved architects, etc. down to quite detailed levels. Cor van Eesteren, the head of City Development, could be even found discussing concerns about the design and measurements of a specific sand pit himself in letters to citizens (Schmitz 2002: 59). Besides the central strategy, though, here are also different kinds of appropriations, associations and tactics at play here, each drawing on its own specific set of rhythms and synchronisations. The Amsterdam playgrounds drew on the presence of heterogeneous rhythms that all play a part in their territorialisation, but the playgrounds, in turn, played their own roles in the territorialisation of rhythms, also far beyond their own borders.

Four factors can be outlined here. First, the temporary, interstitial playgrounds in Amsterdam were a matter of in-between timing, as they were filling bomb holes in the city: they 'were actions in space occurring where and when needed' (Lefaivre 2002: 45). They echo the rhythm of World War II bombings and represented counter-points to the rhythm of post-war urban development. As other urban plans are drawn and bomb holes are filled, the small temporary playgrounds also tended to disappear one after one. They had a therapeutic function, but through that function they also kept making the war present. Hence, as this was coupled with urban development and densification, there was a certain pressure to transform them. Second, the synchronisation of children's play was also part of a long Dutch tradition – discernible already in paintings by Brueghel – of educating children in republican values (Lefaivre 2002: 40). It contributes to this rhythmic association of the Dutch to children's play in public space, i.e. to the visibility of children on the streets and their mingling with the rest of the population; the playgrounds play a part in the production and presence of a specific kind of Dutchness. Third, the formation and design of the playground can very much be associated with the theories of Aldo van Eyck and Team X, in opposition to CIAM and their ideas of hierarchical design with centres and subcentres. Van Eyck thus deliberately used the interstitial spaces of Amsterdam and bottom up strategy mixed with what Lefaivre calls a 'Dirty Real Aesthetics', working with simple materials and non-figurative playground objects, e.g. deliberately leaving the rough firewalls around the playgrounds unpainted (Lefaivre 2002: 28 f.). The playgrounds are in this sense part of a recurrent presence of an alternative way of organising space, they are part of a modernistic critique and the formation of a new architectural movement (and its later offspring). Finally, and more obviously there are of course also a series of rhythms of everyday life which gets synchronised and are made salient through the playgrounds. For some local children, playing together after school before or after dinner might be part of a weekday rhythm. There might also be the rhythm of a specific game that keeps on evolving over days, and the need each time to remind each other of the rule and rewrite them. For an adult, tired after work, the daily noise from the playground might comes as a rhythmic reminder of stress and the (unfulfilled) need of silence and calm after a busy day at work.

Together, these factors show how territories are rhythmical just as rhythms are territorial. In other words, rhythms are always already part of a territorialised body or form – they have *intensity* as well as *presence*. So, rhythms are always already entangled in processes of territorialisation, and are thus also always already territorialised. Rhythms have, as we have suggested, a kind of life of their own, and to live or to come to life is also a process of formation, an investment in a living and continuous body. We are thus never talking of abstract, disassociated rhythm per se, but rather about heartbeats, drum rolls, tides, cigarette breaks, etc., rhythms that are embodied and territorialised, and as such they always echo into other kinds of territorial production. The synchronisation of playing can be seen as the formation of intense moments of territorial production, and the reproduction of such a territory is rhythmical and has consequences beyond its narrow local borders – it becomes an entangled part of landscapes and ecologies.

This is also why we argue that territorial complexity cannot be captured by rhythmanalysis alone. Following Deleuze & Guattari (1980), territorialisations are not only rhythmic but also melodic, they generate whole landscapes. Melodies mingle with rhythms to create the intensity of a particular territorial presence, so that meaning can be perceived and put to fruition. Each single child who plays composes

his/her own melody of movement and sound, and interacting children will likewise compose plural – harmonic or disharmonic – lines. Certainly, these lines also possess rhythms, but the rhythms of play are always counterpointed by melodic elements that express their unique presence. In this sense, Deleuze and Guattari speak of 'refrains', which they also conceptualise as 'blocs of becoming'. A refrain, it appears, is as much rhythmic as it is melodic. In their theorisation of territorial 'lines of flight', Deleuze and Guattari were also in part influenced by the educator Fernand Deligny, who had described as *lignes d'erre* – 'wander lines' – the playing trajectories traced by the autistic children he was taking care of in the early 1960s in the isolated village of Monoblet in France. Some would even dispute that the activities of these children amounted to anything like playing; but in fact, drawing his maps, Deligny was reproducing the gestures of the children who were in charge of his residential program as they themselves compulsively drew traces and wandered around. Similarly, the psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim, working at his Orthogenic School for Disturbed Children at the University of Chicago in the immediate aftermath of W.W. II, noticed how emotionally disturbed children tended to play not in official playing spaces, but rather in in-between spaces like stairways. By doing so, they were undermining established territorial associations (Kärrholm 2013). In other words, playing children can also de-rhythmise allotted playing spaces by introducing their own specific melodic counterpoints.

In summary, it seems as if the regeneration of territorial production is rhythmic at its core: the territory is born again, it can seemingly become the same, over and over again, while also changing and ever increasing its own complexity. The formation of a specific territorial duration demands some kind of temporal desingularisation, i.e. when the territory at one moment becomes increasingly similar or replaceable with itself at another moment. The order that makes a present territory share an identity with that of its past is rhythmical, even *chronological* (Brighenti and Kärrholm 2016). However, difference is also rhythmical, but rather than evolving in accordance with chronological measures, it brings recurrent *chronic* ruptures with processes of singularisation in its wake. This way, the territory becomes a veritable *individual*, a unique moment in time and space, different from other similar territorial sorts, but also different from itself as it was before. The territory – understood as a synchorous production – is rhythmic, but also enfolds in melodic ways that might transform or change its existing rhythms into new ones.

Conclusions

In this article, we aimed to make rhythms encounter territories, in order to theorise how rhythmic production interweaves with territorialisation processes at large. One condition for this, we have contended, is to move beyond the dichotomies such as linear/cyclic, mechanic/organic, continuous/discontinuous, qualitative/quantitative that have burdened Lefebvre's rhythmanalytical project. Rather, in our view, a territoriological continuation of rhythmanalysis points towards the study of the processes of de/territorialisation, de/singularisation of territorial sorts as well as the spatio-temporal expression of properties in the form of affections and operative relations that enable territorial formation to carry and convey social meaning. Rhythms are never encountered as abstract entities, but are always produced in complex processes of territorialisation, and it would thus also make sense to advance

on discussions about rhythms through investigations of spatio-temporal intensities and presences, rather than through dichotomies.

Reviewing the theorisation of rhythms since the late 19th century, and more intensively during the 1920s and 1930s – and discussing some of the different rhythms at stake in the territorialisation and synchronisation processes of (the Amsterdam) playgrounds – we have observed how rhythms are co-producers of complex and vibrant landscapes of activity through their peculiar character of being absent and present at the same time – in other words, transformative. By bridging distances in time and space, rhythms afford and produce connections. That is why rhythms are, *in themselves*, living creatures. We submit that a contemporary vitalistic take on territories needs to include but also stretch beyond phenomenology, in order to capture the rhythmic, melodic, presential and intensive dimensions of living territories.

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