Rhythmanalysis as a tool for understanding shifting urban life and settings Exploratory research in Brussels and Colombo

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Abstract

This paper deals with the transience of urban realities. It posits that urban planning and design practices have been overwhelmingly concerned with permanence, while often underestimating the impact of time on urban reality and complexity. In view of the emergence and multiplication of various forms of 'temporary urbanism' (Bishop and Williams, 2012), the authors explore drivers and conditions for this phenomenon and seek to clarify the relevance of this trend for architectural and planning theory and practice. They then present an exploratory urban research project that explicitly takes time into account as a fourth dimension of urban life. Drawing on the theory of rhythmanalysis (Lefebvre, 1995[1962], 2004 [1992]) the project adopted a methodological orientation that was not 'analytic' in a strictly positivistic or scientific sense of term, but rather sided with the 'lived experience' comparable to participant observation in anthropology (Highmore 2005: 150). This approach is illustrated through fieldwork which the main author devised for students of his course in urban anthropology at the LUCA School of Arts in Brussels. The outputs offer a variety of graphic translations that link 'lived experience' to the built environment. A preliminary analysis of these case studies is complemented with a thought- experiment that the second author conducted about Colombo.

Keywords: *Temporality, rhythmanalysis, exploratory research, Brussels, Colombo*

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Introduction

Until recently, mainstream urban planning and design policies and practices have underestimated the impact of time on urban reality and complexity, and thus, often struggled with processes of change. With the accelerating pace and intensity of urbanization and the mounting hardships of a global economic recession, governments worldwide are now confronting the emergence and multiplication of various forms of 'temporary urbanism'[19]. This situation requires fresh approaches to policy-oriented research and urban planning and design.

This paper advances that time constitutes a crucial dimension for understanding and handling urban life and settings. To substantiate this approach, it first reviews drivers and conditions of a growing interest in temporality in academic circles, at different levels of governance, and among professionals and urban practitioners. The second section seeks to clarify the relevance of this trend for architectural and planning theory and practice. The next section proposes to consider time as a fourth dimension of urban life and, consequently, to study urban geographies in terms of place, temporality as well as rhythm. In line with this idea, the fourth section introduces Lefebvre's (2004) theory on rhythmanalysis as a tool for understanding and handling contemporary urban transience. This pivotal part of the paper clarifies the core concepts of rhythmanalysis and their application in an urban setting. The workability of this proposition is demonstrated in the following sections by way of an on-going research study: the fifth section describes fieldwork that master students have been conducting in Brussels as part of the main author's course on urban anthropology. It describes the methodology and some preliminary study results. The sixth section complements these results with a reflection on rhythms in Colombo. Similar to one component of the Brussels' fieldwork, this exercise focuses on rhythms of public space. In the final reflections, the authors sketch a projection of the line of research discussed here.

Temporality: drivers and conditions

The usages and experiences of time remain vastly divergent in different parts of the world, and this in spite of rational, clock-wise time-schedules and the homogenizing spatial effects of globalization. Still, many economists, stock-analysts and other business-minded experts maintain that globalized time-space revolves around a universal cycle of production and consumption. Orchestrated by a global network of advanced production service firms, the multiple layers of this cycle are directed by a limited number of control centres that are predominantly positioned in the Global North. This perspective pervades the media and widely circulates in social networks and other communication channels. Whilst it affects people all over the world, many resist to be taken for granted as unimportant, ignorant and naive subjects in such a deterministic scheme. They fear loss of local culture and traditions, imposition of a global consumption mode, indoctrination by media, and the loss of achievements that older and past generations realized at great cost or grave risk (independence, conflict resolution, democratic rule, freedom of expression, greater levels of inclusiveness, social security, etc.). The tension field between the forces of globalisation and localised experiences of time-space are not new. It has been an

[19]In *The Temporary City* (2012), Bishop and Williams elaborate cutting-edge research and writings by Berlin's Urban Catalyst team (2007) and the seminal work of Haydyn and Temel (2006). This body of work provides a remarkable array of temporary projects in Germany, the Netherlands, the UK and the US. Some of these ventures were initiated by private entrepreneurs, others by local authorities and yet others through private-public partnerships. The trend is exemplified and continuously updated in websites such as: http://popupcity.net, http://www.urbantactics.org/, http://www.meanwhilespace.com/ (all accessed on 22 July 2013).

object of inquiry for many sorts of people: for the purpose of this paper, three groups are particularly relevant.

Philosophers since time immemorial have been fascinated with the ingenious ways in which the weak handle the pressures exercised by those with more power and influence. Phenomenology have brought eminent thinkers in the past fifty years to examine ordinary people's life and ways of operating from a time-space perspective. They emphasized the importance of "lived experience" (Bachelard, 1964), "face-to-face interaction" (Goffman, 1973), "scattered practices" (Foucault, 1975), "embodied practices" (Bourdieu, 1977) and ordinary people's "tactics" as opposed to authorities' blueprint "strategies" (de Certeau, 1984). These ideas brought about a paradigmatic shift that had far-reaching implications for disciplines concerned with the natural and built environment (ecology, geography, architecture, spatial planning, etc.).

Architects and planners – once the pioneers of the modernist utopia – were particularly hard-hit by the increasingly neo-liberal discourse of the late 20th century. In addition, they faced technological advances, modes of production and regulatory frameworks (building codes, LEED, etc.) that boosted engineering approaches in design and building practices. Introspection and disciplinary anxiety at times lead practitioners – especially in welfare states of the Global North – to overlook the social responsibility of the profession. Simultaneously, it triggered efforts to transcend the discipline through inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary approaches[20].

Transdisciplinarity refers to a hybridisation of knowledge and modes of inquiry that includes inputs by lay-people who previously had never been taken seriously. It integrates discipline and profession, theory and practice, as well as the ethical dimension and the inextricable "being-in-the-worldness" of architecture and planning praxis (Doucet & Janssens, 2011:2). According to Hirsch Hadorn (2008: 431), this approach qualifies "when knowledge about a socially relevant problem field is uncertain, when the concrete nature of problems is disputed, and when there is a great deal at stake for those concerned by problems and involved in dealing with them". Recent movements in architecture and urbanism reveal a growing concern about the fleeting character of this "being-in-the-worldness".

1) In response to a growing tendency towards academisation of the discipline, architecture and planning professionals began to point out "inherent" qualities of the discipline such as "designerly ways of knowing" (Doucet & Janssens, 2011:2). This standpoint views design as a dialectic process that involves research and a designer's capacity to evaluate a design. This form of research by design taps designers' inner knowledge and insights and connects these with the social realities of everyday life. This process-like nature highlights temporality and social responsibility as the very essence of architecture and planning praxis.

2) Rising environmental awareness and social responsibility, combined with a worldwide economic recession have pressed designers and construction industries to integrate 'high-tech' and 'green' solutions and to adopt energy- and /or waste-reduction measures as part of their design, production, marketing and sales strategies. In addition, architects (re)discovered the authenticity, ecological wisdom and ethnic specificity of "vernacular" forms of architecture which constitute over eighty per cent of all buildings in the world

[20] "Transdisciplinarity is a critical and self-reflexive research approach that relates societal with scientific problems; it produces new knowledge by integrating different scientific and extra-scientific insights; its aim is to contribute to both societal and scientific progress; integration is the cognitive operation of establishing a novel, hitherto non-existent connection between the distinct epistemic, social-organizational and communicative entities that make up the given problem context" (Jahn et al., 2012:8)

(Rudofsky, 1964; Oliver et al., 2008). This renewed interest has galvanised an entirely new field of study because many conventional practitioners of the vernacular have moved from remote rural settings to mushrooming urban centers over the past decades. In the process, time-honoured, commonly practised building and dwelling customs have been declining; the "contemporary" vernacular tends to revolve around make-shift, provisional housing practices of marginalized urbanites. The study of vernacular architecture - both in its conventional and contemporary form - illustrates that a long-lasting permanence in housing and dwelling is unattainable or even undesirable for an overwhelming portion of the world population.

3) In the past decades, natural and man-made shocks and stresses have been growing in frequency, impact and scale. Urban populations in particular are largely unprepared to respond, withstand, and bounce back from disasters that may disrupt livelihoods or even shut down entire economic systems. The greatest impact of such calamities often befalls poor and vulnerable people who have fewer means to cope with crises and take longer to recover. As globalized media can instantly report these events and bring about global aid and recovery mechanisms, a new generation of architects and designers has stood up who have embraced humanitarianism. Some turn to the local wisdom of urban villages or disinvested communities threatened with eviction, others support the progression of community organization and/or redevelopment, and still others actively engage in the multi-tasked, multi-disciplinary efforts of emergency relief and disaster recovery (Alquino, 2011:6-10). These professionals are required to reconcile social distress with environmental concerns, limited (access to) resources and technological innovation. Their time frames are necessarily short-lived and of an urgent nature.

National and local authorities worldwide face distinct and yet related issues of temporality. In the Global North, they are expected to foster urban revitalisation and redevelopment as a consequence of urban sprawl, shifts in the global division of labour, de-industrialisation and ageing society. As local revenues are dwindling, authorities need to cut down expenditures. As a result, they start to "experiment with looser planning visions and design frameworks, linked to smaller, often temporary initiatives, designed to unlock the potential of site now, rather than in 10 years' time" when formal master-plans may reach implementation (Bishop & Williams, 2012:3). These experiments generally receive a positive response from private sector proprietors willing to cut their losses, as well as from entrepreneurs and creative minds eager to make the most of these windows of opportunity. These combined interests usually prompt a revision of regulatory frameworks that allows greater flexibility in the planning, implementation and evaluation of urban interventions.

In the Global South, these forms of "temporary urbanism" are less of a novelty and therefore confront the authorities with a different set of issues. The concept of impermanence is deeply ingrained in local culture, traditions, and religious beliefs. In Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism and Naturalism, all aspects of life are in constant motion; attachment to them leads to suffering, while acceptance leads to stability and peace of mind. Colonial rule and foreign models may influenced outward appearances in daily life, but rarely affected underlying assumptions and core values. Nowadays, Western concepts and curricula still influence education in the South which often spawns brilliant students. Their virtuosity lies in the capacity to attune the rationality of their training to a life-world that is governed by a fast-paced transience. The pace and intensity of urbanization in the Global South is far more overwhelming than it was in the Global North. Urban residents – many of whom recently migrated from rural areas – demonstrate an unseen resourcefulness and entrepreneurship to overcome poverty and/or attain a middle-class urban life-style. Local and foreign investors capitalize on the development

of industries, services, and in particular, of real estate. Meanwhile, authorities often lack the resources, power and control, to restrain, structure or streamline this vibrant multifarious buoyancy. This renders the task of formulating planning and design frameworks extremely precarious, especially if these frameworks also envisage to abide the rule of law and to promote equity, fairness and human development.

Time: a fourth dimension in urban theory and practice

Contemporary urban practices validate that cities are four-dimensional: the element of time is undeniably gaining importance in our everyday life. The lifting of trade barriers and free flow of financial, material and human resources on a global scale have profoundly affected economic, societal and technological conditions on a global scale. These changes are mirrored on a local scale in sectoral restructuring and employment patterns. The assent of part-time employment and the introduction of floating working hours, home working, mobile working and tele-working have fostered more flexible usages of time as well new ways to secure or diversify sources of income.

Shifting labour demands were met with greater mobility and greater freedom to move over large territories. Many cities became more heterogeneous in terms of population (ethnic origin, religious conviction, social mobility), of activities (global network, local markets, civil associations, artists' groups, street-wise gangs), and places (the CBD, the downtown bazaar, the suburban mall, the recreation areas, the slum, the gated community). The multiplication of these nodes has yielded a wide variety of *heterotopias* (Foucault, 1986) or interstices in time-space that are void and yet bursting with potential.

Information and communication technology contribute in no small way to the transience of contemporary urban life. Mobile devices equipped with gadgets and apps have become widely available. They have exacerbated the pace and intensity of temporary urbanism. Shifts back and forth between vacancy, potential, realisation and neglect of real property have become more affordable and accessible. This encouraged speculation as well as entrepreneurship and consumerism. Whilst the economic recession may temporarily slow down these dynamics, it also adds an element of thrill that often is welcomed in today's never-ending search for novelty and trendiness.

The Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2000) summarized the above-mentioned changes as a shift from "solid" modernity to "fluid" modernity. The former was a phase where changes occurred slowly as it revolved around reducing uncertainty, chaos and insecurity and creating bureaucracy, rules and regulations. The developments of the past 50 years steered us away from a firm belief in progress and the conviction that we could make a perfectly rational world. Instead, we moved into a phase that is characterised by uncertainty, continuous risk and ever-challenging opportunity. This requires us to be constantly on our guards, flexible and ready to shift loyalties and allegiances on short notice. Bauman's perspective propounds a valid explanation for the phenomena that mark contemporary cities both in North and South. Moreover, it offers a strong argument in favour of redirecting urban research and design in way that takes full account of temporality and a fast pace of change.

Rhythmanalysis: theory and application in urban settings

Lefebvre's interest in rhythms stemmed from his life-long aspiration to link up different aspects of daily life which intellectual practice had too often kept separate: time and space, the public

and the private realms, the state-political and the personal life-sphere, etc. He saw rhythm as the nexus connecting these diverse aspects.

> In social practice, scientific knowledge and philosophical speculation, an ancient tradition separates time and space... this in spite of contemporary theories which show a relationship between time and space...how they relate to each other. Despite these theories, in the social sciences one continues to split time between lived time, measured time, historical time, work and leisure time, and daily time, etc., which usually are situated outside their spatial framework. Now, concrete times have rhythms, or rather, are rhythms -and every rhythm implies a relation of a time with a space, a localised time, or if one wishes, a temporalised place.
>
> Lefebvre, 1995: 203

According to Lefebvre (2004: 15), rhythm occurs whenever there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy. He argued that this interaction nowadays is governed by clock-wise regulated time: a complex of *rational* rhythms is overshadowing the multiple *natural* rhythms of the body (respiration, heartbeat, hunger and thirst, etc.). Rhythm manifests itself in three ways:

1) Repetitions (of movements, gestures, actions, situations, differences, etc.);
2) Interferences of cyclical and linear processes[21];
3) Progressions from birth to growth and peak, then decline and end.

Taking the human body as a point of departure, one discovers the relativity of rhythms: a rhythm is only slow or fast in relation to another rhythm. Our own body is an astonishing example of *polyrhythmia*, with each organ following its own rhythm. As long as we are in good health, we take the harmonious interaction between all these rhythms, i.e. *eurhythmia*, for granted. It is only when we are ill and experience *arrhythmia* - or disruption of our bodily rhythms - that we come to appreciate our body's synergetic vigour. To complement these observations, Lefebvre also coined the term *isorhythmia* for those rare occurrences – such as a symphony concert – where synchronisation of rhythms reaches a seamless equivalence of repetition, measure and frequency (Lefebvre, 2004:67).

The internal synchronicity of bodily rhythms resonates in external polyrhythmia, ranging from the "bundle of rhythms" of other beings, other entities, social life, global events and even the cosmic body. Drawing on Jaulin (1973), *Lefebvre (2004:95)* therefore distinguished *"rhythms of the self" and "rhythms of the other*". He described rhythms of the self as personally inscribed rites organising time towards private life and self-presence; rhythms of the other, by contrast, are turned outwards, towards representation and public discourse. This seemingly polar opposition is modulated by many intermediate levels, such as: "the bedroom, the apartment, the house, the street, the square and the district, finally the town – even the immediate family, the extended family, the neighbourhood, friendly relations and the city".

[21]Cyclical rhythms are of cosmic origin and associated with natural phenomena such as the alternation of days and nights, months and seasons, etc. Linear rhythms originate from human and social activities and manifest themselves as series of identical occurrences (e.g. the blows of a hammer, the noise of an engine). (Lefebvre, 2004:76). While cyclical and linear rhythms are analytically distinct, they are continuously in interaction with each other, "to the extent that one serves as the measure of the other" (Lefebvre, 2004:90).

Lefebvre (2004:3) proclaimed rhythmanalysis - the opening and unwrapping of these distinct but intimately entwined bundles of rhythm - as "a science, a new field of knowledge [*savoir*]". It uses rhythm as a mode of analysis: a *tool* rather than just an *object* of analysis. In order to examine and re-examine temporality, rhythmanalists draw on *lived experience* and adopt a *transdisciplinary* approach bringing together widely diverse practices and types of knowledge: sociology, psychology, anthropology, economy, history, climatology, cosmology as well as poetry (the *poetic*) (Lefebvre, 2004:16). The analysis essentially revolves around the correlation of natural, corporeal rhythms and rational, machine rhythms. Due to the importance of clock-wise, mechanistic rhythms in city life, Lefebvre chose to exemplify his theory in urban settings[22].

Testing rhythmanalytic research methods in Brussels

This research project was triggered by a series of ethnic conflicts in various European capital cities in the first years of this century[23]. Ever since the 1960s, Europe had experienced growing migration flows as well as a proliferation of ethnic, cultural and religious heterogeneity. National and local authorities had adapted a variety of multicultural "models" which began to crack up and fall apart, resulting in seemingly sudden eruption of violence. Although it was spared from major clashes, Brussels offered an exemplary research site.

The Brussels Capital Region (BCR) makes up less than 10 per cent of the Belgian population but generates close to one fifth the country's GDP. It accounts for nearly half of all labour positions the country's formal economy and therefore relies on an important influx of commuters. The region has an intrinsically pluralistic tradition of governance; this proved a valuable asset to accommodate its nineteen municipalities, the multi-layered bureaucracy of the federalised Belgian State as well the burgeoning maze of European institutions. In parallel with this growing administrative density, Brussels evolved into an increasingly complex patchwork of social, cultural and ethnic intricacies[24]. The presence of such a widely diversified migrant population made the BCR into an important node in largely informal networks that run a multi-ethnic business sector. Migrants' settlement patterns and informal businesses operations are more or less distributed according to ethnic origin and duration of stay in the BCR, with long-time settlers clustered in certain neighbourhoods while more recent arrivals are more scattered.

Municipal and regional authorities are thus confronted with a situation in which prolonged and excessive immigration has obliterated the preponderance of their initial host population (and of their electoral basis). How to manage this multicultural diversity? How to encourage all groups

[22] The third chapter of Lefebvre's (2004) essay describes rhythms as "Seen from the Window" set in the centre of Paris. The essay is followed by a rhythmanalytical project in which the author together with Cathérine Régulier (Lefebvre, 2004: 71-100) attempted a rhythmanalysis of Mediterranean cities.

[23] The Flemish right-wing 'Vlaams Blok' party heavily criticized Belgium's policies of 'multiculturalism' as early as the 1980s. More polemics erupted in the Netherlands after the statements and assassination of the politician Pim Fortuyn in May 2002, and later, after the November 2004 murder of the controversial film director Theo Van Gogh. Mayhem culminated in the July 2005 bombings in Britain, the November 2005 civil unrest in France, and a variety of other incidents in Denmark, Sweden and other countries.

[24] The BCR's multi-layered administrative set-up is mirrored in its demographic composition. Since the 1960s, the population has become increasingly heterogeneous in terms of geographic origin, linguistic or religious affiliation and ethnic belonging. As native populations grew older or moved to outlying suburbs, migrant populations - due to migration and natural growth - began to outnumber the native population in several municipalities. Cultural and ethnic diversity was exacerbated by social and economic disparities, which lead to distinct spatial settlement patterns. This trend applies to migrant groups as well as to more privileged Eurocrats, especially after the enlargement of the EU in 2004 (De Wandeler & Kuhk, 2009).

to coexist and avoid that they would turn upon themselves and away from others? How to foster social cohesion, when aspirations, time horizons, means and motivations of the different groups involved are so vastly divergent?

The research project was devised to address these questions through rhythmanalysis. It has been running for four years as part of a course on Urban Anthropology in the international masters' degree at the LUCA school of Arts in Brussels. The overall objective of the project is to examine how participants in a *de facto* urban multicultural society like Brussels (inter)-act. How do they get around in the city? How do they negotiate, reject and/or appropriate urban space? How do they negotiate, reject and/or appropriate an active role in urban governance, management and administration? (De Wandeler, 2010:2). Master students – most of who came from other European countries – have examined these questions by collecting primary data from a person of the same nationality / ethnic group who had been living in Brussels for at least two years (De Wandeler, 2013). This required close collaboration between students and their respective respondents along four lines of inquiry:

1) *Element 1: Socio-cultural rhythms* (e.g. festivals, parades, religious days, commemorative days) compared customary socio-cultural rhythms in the home land with the way respondents adapted this pattern to life in Brussels.
2) *Element 2: A detailed overview of* the respondent's daily activities - over a period of minimum one week comprising five working days and one weekend.
3) *Element 3: A time-space analysis of these activities,* categorizing them into:
    - Rhythms of the self (physical/private activities)
    - Endogenous rhythms (activities which respondents performed for and with family, relatives or close friends)
    - External rhythms (activities imposed/performed under external pressure or upon demand by third persons – e.g. working hours, train schedules, etc.).
4) *Element 4: An analysis through participant observation of a public place* that the respondent frequently visited during the observation period. This provided a possibility to reconstruct the respondent's *rhythms of Public Space*.

As part of the experiment, students could choose the way in which they would report and graphically render the results of their study. This produced a wide variety of presentation styles. Currently, near to one hundred of the most complete case studies are being inventoried to enable in-depth analysis. A preliminary assessment reveals several noteworthy patterns.

Respondents' profile

Less than one quarter of the students who participated in the study was Belgian. The large majority consisted of Erasmus-exchange students or regular international students; most came from EU countries and a few came from more distant origins such as Iran, Malaysia, Morocco, Turkey, and most recently: Sri Lanka. Belgian students typically selected respondents among their fellow-students, friends and relatives. Their respondents mainly comprised young people in their twenties who recently settled in the BCR for study, part-time work or a first full-time job. Non-Belgian students were clearly influenced in their choice by the international community in Brussels: some sought compatriots among fellow-Erasmus students, others approached acquaintances made during their leisure time, and a remarkable number came up with people working in EU-related institutions. Therefore, respondents in this portion of the sample were far more diversified, with an average age over thirty, well-traveled and settled in Brussels since

several years. Some were married or lived together with their partner; many had a long-distance relationship in their home country, which involved regular travel back and forth.

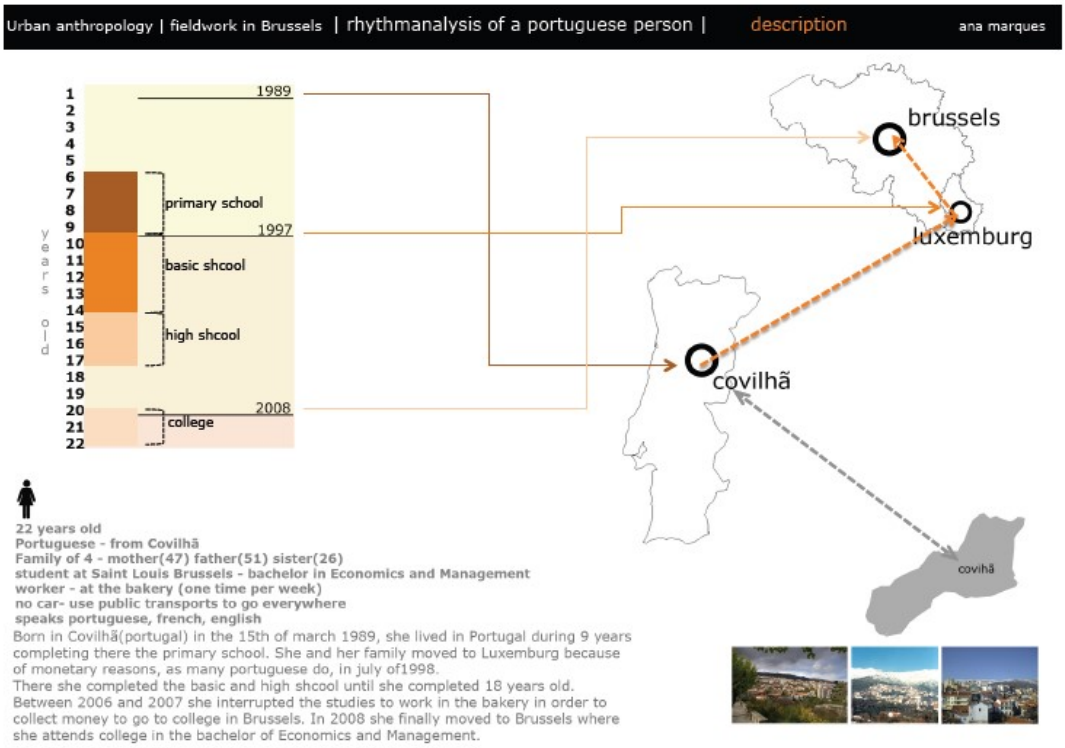

Fig. 1: Rhythmanalyis Research Project Brussels. Graphic representation of a respondent profile. Source: Ana Marques (2011), *Rhythmanalysis of a Portuguese person*

Socio-cultural rhythms

Most Belgian respondents followed a typical pattern of students living in rooms or shared accommodation: as cities and villages in Belgium are well connected by road and reasonably priced public transportation, they returned to their parents' home during weekends and holidays. The frequency of these family gatherings largely determined when subjects would fall in or decline with the family's observance of traditional socio-cultural rhythms. Possibly due to the far-reaching secularisation in the country, respondents attached more importance to worldly events like sports events, music festivals, etc. The younger contingent among non-Belgian respondents was not that different. However, they displayed an enhanced awareness of their cultural specificity, either due to more pronounced religiosity or to international exposure and exchange. Many kept up the habit of returning home, not only for Christmas or Easter holidays, but also for region- or city-specific festivals. Whenever respondents could not physically attend home celebrations, they exchanged greetings and wishes through social network- and/or video communication channels. Information and communication technology considerably helped maintain and enhance endogenous rhythms.

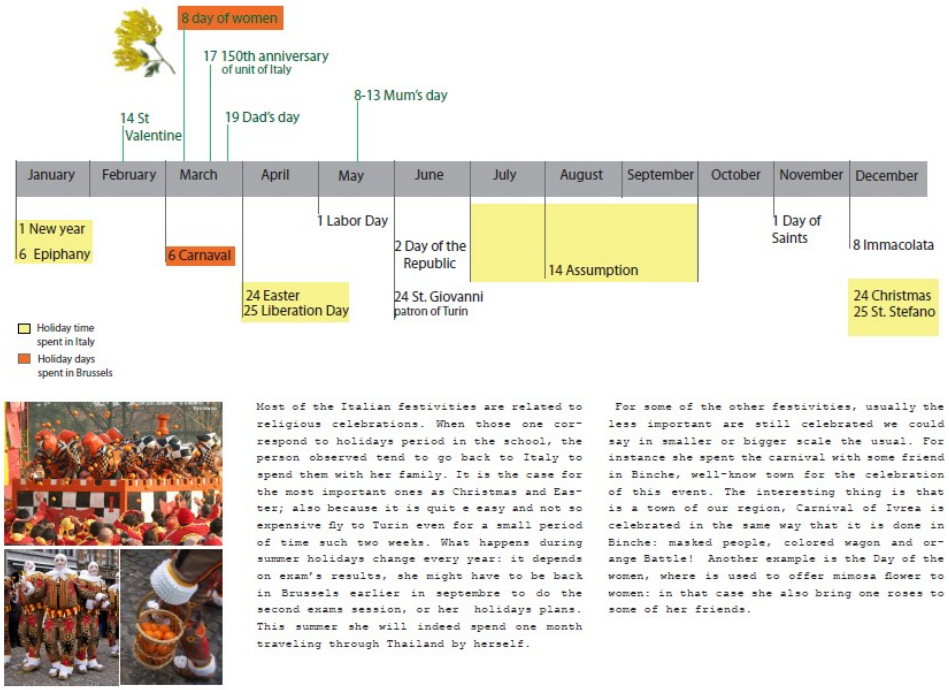

Fig. 2: Rhythmanalyis Research Project Brussels. Chart of socio-cultural rhythms and related travel
Elena Bologna (2011) *Rhythmanalysis of an Italian person*

Daily activities

Activity patterns of students and free-lancers largely diverged from those of people with other occupations, irrespective of their place of origin. The former devoted ample time to rhythms of the self and endogenous rhythms, whereas the latter were bound to a stricter discipline by external rhythms. Regardless of occupation, respondents' activity sheets almost all show a clear distinction between weekdays and weekends.

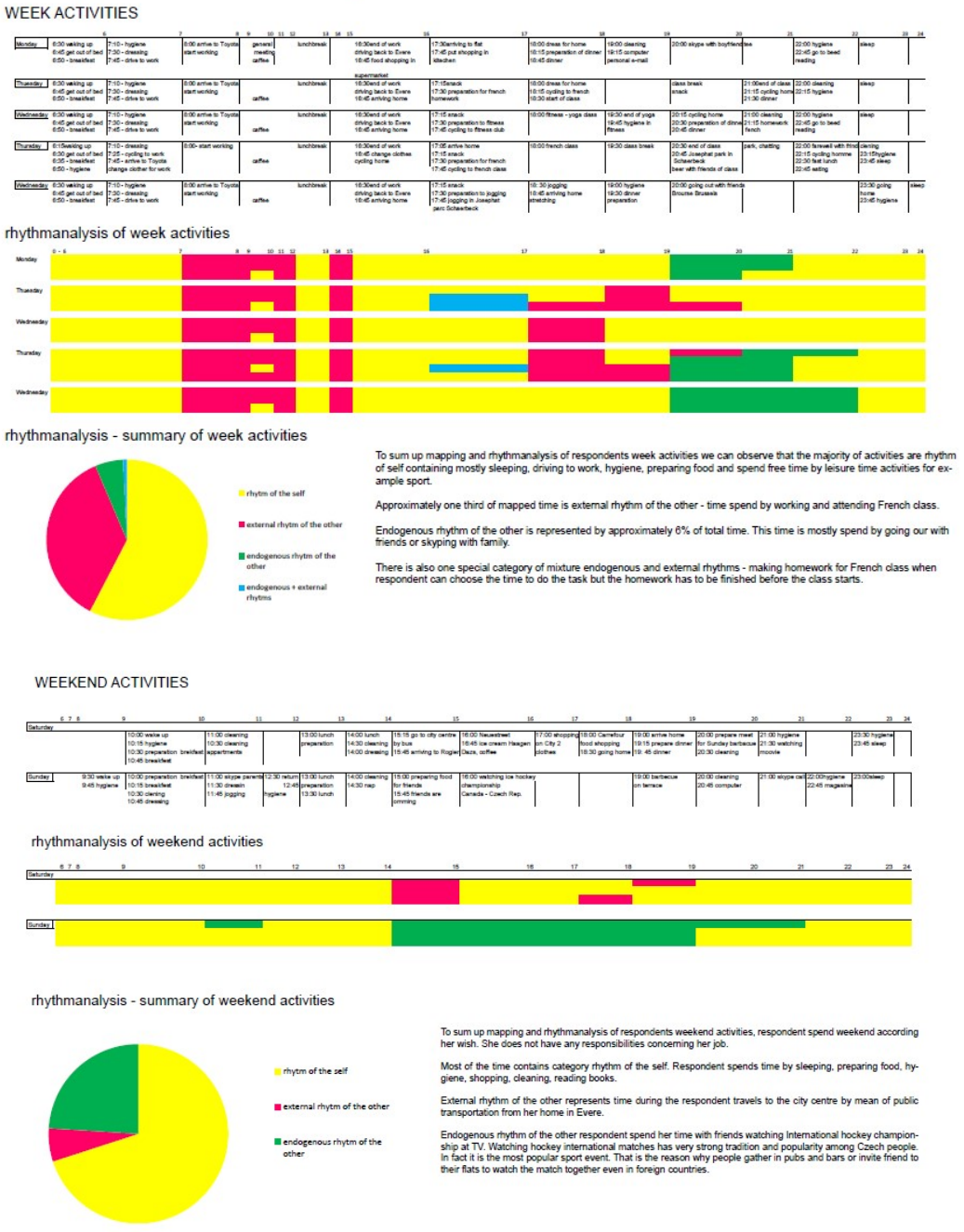

Fig. 3**:** Rhythmanalyis Research Project Brussels. Activity sheet and overview of rhythms of self, endogenous and external rhythms during weekdays and weekends.
Source: Petra Holubová (2013), *Rhythmanalysis of a Czech person*

Given the available range of eateries, bars, events and cultural activities, endogenous rhythms took up important parts of the weekend and brought about important shifts in sleeping patterns. External rhythms fall back to all but null. This is remarkable because throughout the entire week, transportation between home and places of work, study and leisure did not substantially add to external rhythms. This can partly be explained by the historical expansion of the Brussels Capital Region, where each of the nineteen municipalities quite autonomously

established its social infrastructure (health center, kindergarten, primary and secondary schools, playgrounds, parks, etc.), and encouraged - be it for tax purposes - commercial activities ranging from weekly markets, fairs, groceries, local supermarkets, etc.. As a consequence, many respondents made their daily errands by foot or used the available network of public transportation (bus, tramway, metro, local trains) to reach their places of work or leisure.

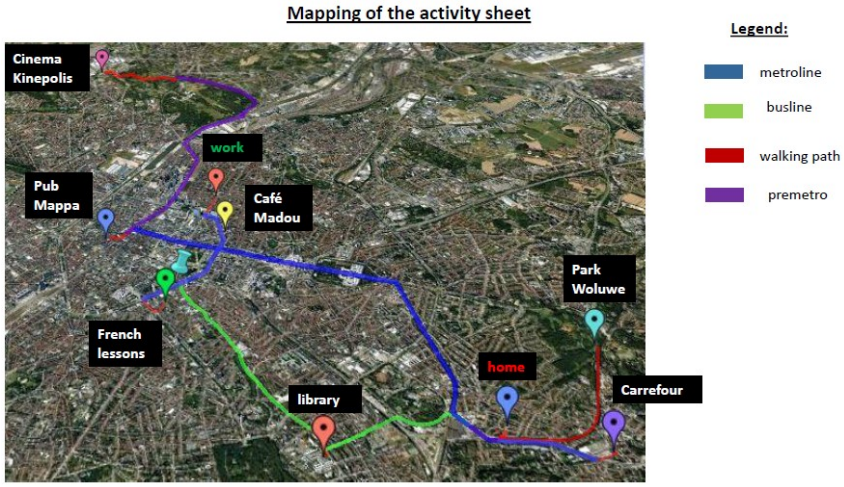

Fig.4: Rhythmanalyis Research Project Brussels. Spatial distribution of activities and transportation modes. Source: Ralitsa Dilova (2011), *Rhythmanalysis of a Bulgarian person*

Public spaces

Students identified a public space for in-depth study by considering their respondent's rhythms of the self in combination with endogenous and/or external rhythms (e.g. evening classes, jogging or other sports activities, etc.). The respondents' availability and willingness to take the student in their trail was a crucial factor in that choice. As a result, most students ended up examining "neutral" public spaces such as squares, parks, sport facilities, etc. Since many respondents belonged to the same age group as the students, many went out to have drinks together at the respondent's regular hang-out. Others invited the student to a weekly lunch with friends or colleagues, or took them to evening classes, dance school, Mass, or a country-specific cultural event. In some rare cases, students studied their respondent's working or dormitory environment.

Fig.5: Rhythmanalyis Research Project Brussels. Graphic representation of rhythms of public space. Source: Kamila Vaničková (2011), *Rhythmanalysis of a Czech person*

Thus, each of the case studies unfolded as “lived experience” in the course of which students established “rapport” with respondents, recorded and discussed a respondent’s activities and selected a time and place to explore one of the respondent’s preferred public places. Students gained a closer insight into their respondent’s daily life-world; they had a glance at places of leisure, work or residence where their respondent regularly met with friends, colleagues or loved ones. In many cases, this encounter took place at hot-spots of people with the same origin and a diverging outlook on life. It lead to reflections on the ambiguity of life abroad: adapting to new rhythms and life-styles and making the most of available infrastructure, services and living standards, while holding on to personal principles, beliefs and values.

Reflections on rhythmanalysis in Colombo

The sudden economic boom in the aftermath of the war (i.e., after 2009) has boosted urban growth in most cities of Sri Lanka. Colombo, being the political, financial and economic hub of the country, is spearheading the country's resurgence. This regeneration process – and its contested 'city beautification' component in particular – has deeply affected daily rhythms of inhabitants of the city-center and the immediate peripheries (greater Colombo area). The emerging middle class in the periphery and high-income groups began to move into the city-center, thereby pushing lower and lower middle classes to the outskirts. This process of gentrification is but one of the more obscure patterns which are currently transforming the city. It interferes with the uniquely distinguishable eurhythmia that had grown from the interaction between a highly diversified ethnic and cultural mix and its dwelling environment. The resulting "bundle of rhythms" still appears frail and unpromising for now.

Similar to Brussels, Colombo accommodates a large flow of daily commuters for a wide variety of activities; i.e. schooling, working, shopping etc. These people, who are used to slow cyclical rhythms in their rural or suburban neighbourhoods, are confronted with the fast-paced polyrhythmia of the city. They walk in a rush from the endpoint of their travel - whether train- or bus station, or public- or private car park - to their workplace, hardly noticing their surroundings. Imagine the mass of people at Fort Railway Station during peak hours. This torrent may seem to be moving about in a haphazard way, but in fact, they are following a strictly synchronized polyrhythmic routine. Picture, for example, a middle-aged man in the evening rush hour: he hurries out of the 100 or 101 bus; he knows exactly on what platform his train will be and can way-find the shortest route towards it. He does not care about the crowds in the ticketing area as his only determination is to catch the *Udatara Manike* train departing from platform one in five minutes. By contrast, a city dweller might feel suffocated in the jam-packed tight ticketing area and wish for a spacious hall where he can adhere to his personal eurhythmia while buying a ticket and waiting for the train. The rhythms of commuters and city dwellers - as irreconcilable as they may seem - should all be considered and blended into proposals that seek to restructure vital urban transportation nodes like bus- or railway stations.

This kind of discernment should underlie any alteration that affects the pulse of urban life. Development of infrastructure in Colombo is seen as a first step towards sustainable economic growth of the city as it would duly encourage industries and services. Converting the city's long-neglected canal system to a public transportation channel is a commendable initiative for enhancing urban mobility. Unlike in Venice where streets and buildings can be directly accessed from the canals, commuters in Colombo have limited sensory interaction with the communities lining the canal banks. However, this interaction has the potential to enrich the "bundle of rhythms" of city life. Indeed, passengers' hasty rhythms overlap with those of local residents in numerous instances. Passengers may catch the mouth-watering aroma of a curry cooking in a nearby house, or startle at the pounding of machines in a vehicle repair shop. One may be alarmed when a toddler nears the canal from the back of a house and be relieved when its parent grabs it away from the edge. The rumble of the approaching commuter boat attracted the child's curiosity, alerted the attentive parent, while the flash of the moment stirred the emotions of the commuter. These fleeting interactions make the boat ride more lively and induce a sense of harmony between the rhythms of the locals and the passers-by. Potential arrhythmia is thus averted and a fresh polyrhythmia are composed.

Other components of the beautification program outline sites for the future: they promote the idea of leisure and recreation, things unheard of in the recent past. Optimism for the future is

praiseworthy if it also considers continuity and reminiscence. As inner-city areas are being gentrified, it remains uncertain whether rhythms of the emerging middle-class will mesh with time-honoured rhythms of long-established communities. Health has become a priority for the emerging middle-class. Eating healthy and exercising are essential for a healthy lifestyle. The new-urban landscape of Colombo targets that lifestyle by providing public parks, jogging and cycling tracks. While these activities are concentrated in designated areas like Independence Square, Gall Face Green and the like, dwellers residing in the recently-built condominiums in the city center might prefer to jog in the streets close to their home. Whilst wider pavements along with flower-troughs and unbroken curbs might well offer a smooth and agreeable surface for jogging, they have little to offer for passers-by in search of some diversion and liveliness.

Until recently, street-hawkers on pavements along the main streets produced some of the most fascinating rhythms in Colombo. The sequence of these rhythms as days went by. Some vendors appeared from early morning with a stack of cheap garments and put up shop right next to a permanent outlet. Others appeared during the office lunch break with a cart of lunch packets. In the afternoon, when the scorching sun made the temperature run sky-high, one would relieved to run into a street hawker selling juicy pineapple pieces with a bit of salt and chili. Maybe that temporary shack would also have *'thambili'* (king coconut) to quench the thirst. Constrained by external rhythms like daily chores and routines, one might lack time to stop by a supermarket for a cool drink; the presence of a street hawker, however, could seamlessly meet this need in a refreshing and entertaining way. Such digressions from the monotony of daily routines help keep both mind and human relations in a healthy state. They converge with the aspirations for a healthy urban-lifestyle, rather than contradicting them. With the city beautification process, however, street vendors – along with the time honoured rhythms they produce – risk to disappear from the city almost completely. An alternative to uprooting these seemingly redundant rhythms would be to integrate them into urban transformation/beautification processes. European cities offer examples of this approach: along the pavements of *'quai de l'hotel de vile'* in Paris, or in the middle of the *'Sablon'* square in Brussels temporary vending spaces are an integral part of the picturesque scenery. Fully incorporated in the framework of municipal by-laws, they allow the continuation of temporary rhythms of the city.

Final Reflections

Rhythmanalysis is a scarcely explored, yet fertile field of architectural investigation. It opens up a spectrum of transdisciplinary research including social studies, urban policies, urban psychology and anthropology as well as phenomenology. While acknowledging this wide range of potential off-shoots, the project described here is still at an infancy stage. The case-studies that examined (temporary) migrants' use of time and space in Brussels Capital Region are currently being processed and analysed.

Preliminary findings indicate that city life in the BCR is to some extent influenced by the pre-existing urban tissue of buildings, streets, squares, and parks and other amenities; over time, successive users have "culturally encoded" this geographically situated, spatially confined and materially tangible reality (Jackson, 1991:226) and these settings, in turn, have some bearing on the daily rhythms of contemporary inhabitants, irrespective of their place of origin. The outspoken autonomy of BCR municipalities and their distinctive neighbourhood character, along with the Region's social infrastructure and transportation system help create an environment in which native as well as foreign respondents could quite easily make themselves "at home". This basically involved the "localisation of duration and extension" (Appadurai, 1995: 206): by

frequenting shops, bars, restaurants, churches, squares and parks respondents contributed to the spatial production of locality. By sharing these practices with their friends, they integrated their activity nodes into more or less culture-specific networks.

Context- as well as culture-specific mobility and temporality thus proved to be key-elements in the negotiation, creation, and perception of place. In the process, external rhythms were outdone by endogenous rhythms and rhythms of the self. While architects and urban planners profoundly influence the former, their authority over the latter two is limited. Moreover, respondents' heavy reliance on information and communication technology was symptomatic for the contemporary "de-territorialisation" of locality and the emergence of "translocalities" that escape any form of spatial confinement or regulation.

The exploration of urban rhythms in Colombo underscored the importance of the physical aspects of place making: highlighting the twin processes of beautification and gentrification, it drew attention to the influence of contemporary interventions on the existing urban tissue. This thought-experiment by nature was limited to external rhythms in the public realm and could merely evoke personal and endogenous rhythms that contribute to local time-space. It left out the scars left by a war-torn recent past and compressed historical influences to the years since peace was restored. The resourcefulness and resilience displayed since then partly justify this omission; besides, the evocation repeatedly suggested that Colombo's "bundle of rhythms" is in the making. It is hoped that the reflections offered in this paper may generate a platform for further research and exchange and thus help architects and planners contribute in a meaningful way to this process of place-making.

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