

## Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (All Submissions)

0136

A1 | Beaumaris Lounge

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Space, Time, Belonging, Becoming: Chasing Rhythm in the Contemporary University

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**Research Domain:** Access and widening participation (AWP)

**Abstract:** This paper examines the spatio-temporal and affective dimensions of teaching and learning in the contemporary university by revisiting the findings of an experimental project conducted in a post-1992 HEI of the West Midlands. Showcasing a range of innovative methods inspired by Lefebvre's Rhythmanalysis (2004), it frames the crucial existential notions of possibility and belonging in the contemporary university as quintessentially rhythmic, encouraging us to think of space and time *together*. Emphasising the affective, aesthetic and political dimensions of our everyday practices, through rhythm we appreciate people's experiences - and struggles- of production and appropriation of time-space in higher education. The second part of the paper looks at the relationship between university, rhythm and future, arguing that theorizing the anticipatory potential inherent to rhythm while framing education as a suspended time-space shelter can provide an imaginative approach to current debates about alternative modes and forms of higher education, within or without the university.

**Paper:** This paper examines the spatio-temporal and affective dimensions of teaching and learning in the contemporary university by revisiting the findings of an experimental project conducted in a post-1992 HEI of the West Midlands. Showcasing a range of innovative methods inspired by Lefebvre's Rhythmanalysis (2004), it frames the crucial existential notions of possibility and belonging in the contemporary university as quintessentially rhythmic, encouraging us to think of space and time *together*.

It initially foregrounds the *experiential* by unpacking 'a (typical) day in the life of' staff and students in a post-92, West Midlands institution. Videos and interviews extracts from a pilot project unveil tensions and contradictions inscribed in the fabric of the *quotidian*, illuminating rhythmic dispositions and disruptions. The relationship between time, space and belonging is captured by looking at how teaching and learning unfold across different sites within the same university. The novel combination of research methods (audio-visually recorded walking interviews; time-lapse photography of campus life and of classroom/lab/studio teaching sessions), is here presented and

examined to test the strengths and limits of Rhythmanalysis as an experimental methodology.

Key findings highlight methodological and theoretical implications. Methodologically, the teacher & learner's spatial, temporal and affective experiences are reframed to translate the rich complexity of these articulations in their simultaneity, materiality and nuance. Theoretically, the paper examines two claims, concerning the complexity of spatio-temporal experiences in the accelerated academy. First, it considers zones of spatio-temporal 'suspension' (Masschelein, 2011; Sharma, 2014; Baraitser, 2017) as strategic and existential devices through which academics reconfigure – within the institutional space- islands of eurythmia against the backdrop of increasingly 'toxic' academic-scapes. Second, it addresses the relationship between university, rhythm and future, arguing that a lot more can be achieved if we unveil the anticipatory potential inherent to rhythm and frame education as a form of suspension *from* the dominant time-economies and, concomitantly, as an incubator *for* possible, rather than probable futures (Poli, 2014).

Therefore, the second part of this paper delves deeper into the relationship between rhythm (space-time), emancipatory education (possibility) and future (becoming). It argues that teaching and learning in higher education are not only quintessentially rhythmic activities, but fundamentally and increasingly future-facing and future-oriented. In this respect, the contemporary university could be used as a laboratory to explore and test ideas related to rhythm and anticipation, to promote alternative spatio-temporalities *in* and *for* education (Wozniak, 2017; Neary & Amsler, 2014; Bennett & Burke, 2017). It will be argued that the existential crisis of the university could be turned into an opportunity for imagination: political, cultural and educational shifts are crucial to bring out the anticipatory potential intrinsic to higher education as a rhythmic, future-oriented system. Facer (2011), for instance, urges a 'recalibration' of educational curricula to draw-out anticipatory elements and update disciplinary knowledge through stewardship, modelling, reflexivity, experimentation, and through the fostering of emotional intelligence. Working towards a 'future perfect' for the university allows – in other words – a conceptual and practical synergy between rhythm and anticipation.

The argument is structured as follows: the first part demonstrates a theoretical compatibility between rhythm and anticipation by revealing significant parallels between Lefebvre's 'theory and temporality of moments' and psychological/anthropological/sociological understandings of anticipation. The Lefebvrian moment happens in a certain space, at a certain time, 'disrupting linear duration, detonating it, dragging time off in a different, contingent direction, toward an unknown staging post' (Merrifield 2006). Against Bergsonian notions of 'duree', Lefebvre's understanding of time is non-linear: 'the duration, far from defining itself solely as linear and punctuated by discontinuities, re-orientates itself like a curl of smoke or a spiral, a current in a whirlpool or a backwash' (Lefebvre, 1959). This view is consistent with the idea that all the modes of time are mutually interconnected, so that changes occurring in any one of them (for instance, future) reverberate on the others. The second part reviews Appadurai's characterisation of the future as a 'cultural horizon' replacing the past as 'cultural reservoir' (Piot, 2010). The paper proceeds then to expose how and why the contemporary university subscribes to aspiration, imagination and anticipation yet fails to acknowledge the fact that futures are socially differentiated and aspirations unequally distributed.

Finally, the paper will make a strong case for the use of Rhythmanalysis as a philosophical orientation, heuristic method and radical pedagogy to transform the university into an emancipatory 'time-space

shelter' and an agent/enabler of anticipation. Interrogating the rhythms of teaching and learning by examining their arrhythmic and eurythmic dispositions will be a first step towards expanding the field of imagination and promoting true aspiration. Two essential conditions for the development of a future inclusive, creative and critical citizenship. The paper concludes by revisiting the findings of the experimental research project, assessing its 'results' against the conceptual and theoretical tenets of Anticipation and Rhythmanalysis: will the rhythms of emancipatory education be able to harness the potential of uncertainty to develop open-ended futures and embrace 'future present', as opposed to ideas of future as a mere calculative projections of the past?

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