Anastasia Battani^{*}, Maurizio Memoli^{**}, Elisabetta Rosa^{***}

Public time-space, Interstices, Intersections and Traces-as-remains: Possible Chronotopes of the European District in Brussels

Keywords: chronotopes, rhythmanalysis, non-representational geographies, European District-Brussels

The most common image of the European Quarter of Brussels is built on the idea of a clean, free, safe and controlled space that attracts people with high economic, social and cultural capital, and a growing number of "passing" users (tourists or consumers). Against this background, our research aimed to investigate the nexus between the material, symbolic, normative and discursive construction of the EU district time-space, on one hand, and everyday life, on the other. To do so, we explored the potential of a rhythmic and nonrepresentational approach in deconstructing dominant socio-spatial-temporal representations, scraping off the layers of the commonly-known to unveil alternative chronotopes. In this article, we present and discuss a reinterpretation of our experience and discuss the results of our analysis through four chronotopes linked to the spatio-temporal rhythms we observed, rhythms we have called Public time-space, Interstices, Intersections and Traces-as-remains.

Spazio-tempo pubblico, interstizi, intersezioni e tracce-permanenze: possibili cronotopi del Quartiere Europeo di Bruxelles

Parole chiave: cronotopi, ritmanalisi, geografie non-rappresentazionali, Quartiere Europeo-Bruxelles

L'immagine più comune del Quartiere Europeo di Bruxelles è costruita sull'idea di uno spazio pulito, libero, sicuro e controllato che attrae persone con alta disponibilità di

* Università IUAV di Venezia, Master course "Architettura e Culture del Progetto", Via Garibaldi, 96, 09045, Quartu Sant'Elena (CA), anastasiabattani@gmail.com.

** Università degli Studi di Cagliari, Dipartimento DICAAR – Ingegneria civile, ambientale e Architettura, via Santa Croce, 67, 09124, Cagliari, memoli@unica.it.

*** Université catholique de Louvain, Faculté d'architecture, d'ingénierie architecturale, d'urbanisme (LOCI) Place du Levant 1, 1348, Louvain-La-Neuve, Belgique, elisabetta.rosa@uclouvain.be.

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capitale economico, sociale e culturale, e un numero crescente di utenti "di passaggio" (turisti o consumatori). Sulla base di queste premesse, la ricerca che abbiamo condotto aveva l'obiettivo di indagare la relazione tra la costruzione materiale, simbolica, normativa e discorsiva dello spazio-tempo del Quartiere Europeo da un lato, e la vita quotidiana dall'altro. Per fare ciò, abbiamo esplorato le potenzialità di un approccio ritmoanalitico e nonrappresentazionale nel decostruire le rappresentazioni socio-spazio-temporali dominanti e nel rivelare cronotopie meno note ma non per questo meno reali. In questo articolo proponiamo una rilettura di questa esperienza e delle narrazioni alternative attraverso quattro cronotopi legati ai ritmi spazio-temporali osservati, e che abbiamo chiamato Spazio-tempo pubblico, Interstizi, Intersezioni e Tracce-permanenze.

1. INTRODUCTION. – With its one million inhabitants, Brussels – officially, the Brussels Capital Region – encompasses nineteen municipalities possessed of a high degree of autonomy and superposed with many other administrative layers: the Federal (National) one, the French Community Commission (COCOF), the Flemish one (VGC/VC), and the Common Community Commission (COCOM). For example, streets fall under the competence of the Region while municipalities own the benches; the ownership of car parks is shared between these two actors, bus shelters are the responsibility of the STIB (Société des Transports Intercommunaux de Bruxelles), and parking rules vary from one part of the city to the next, even considering a space just ten meters away. This complex administrative and institutional framework results and materialises, among other things and particularly in the last two decades, in a myriad of construction sites that constantly shape and reshape the urban landscape and social, spatial and temporal practices.

In addition, Brussels is a site where French and Dutch officially coexist and every public communication is bilingual, adding a layer of complexity and oversignification. Many other groups and populations – Moroccan, Romanian, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, etc. as well as Belgian citizens with foreign origin – have arrived over time and make up approximately 57% of city inhabitants (BISA, 2018). Is Brussels a Flemish city, a Francophone city, an autonomous city-region or a cosmopolitan city? Does thinking of Brussels bring to mind a municipality, a city, a region, a metropolis, a local or global reality, or a mix of all these (Genard and Berger, 2020)? Multicultural and fragmented, socio-economic differences and cleavages materialise in the urban fabric and patterns and give rise to both dynamics of gentrification and ghettoisation (Clerval and Van Criekingen, 2014). At the same time, the architectural 'cut and paste', the strong smells in the streets – exotic cuisine, garbage, waffles' caramelised sugar, flowers, French fries and smog – all speak to a cosmopolitan chaos, a potpourri of things, people and their stories.

Of these multiple layers, one is that of the European district. Indeed, Brussels is the headquarters for a large number of European administrative, political and legislative institutions and, as such, is commonly considered the EU Capital (Demey, 2007). Most of these institutions are located in the European district together with a vast number of satellite bureaucratic buildings, and it is here that Eurocrats work and live. The result is a "bubble", as the district is called in common discourse; a city within the city that has its own spatial, temporal, normative and behavioural character. The square in front of the EU Parliament, Luxembourg place, thus becomes "Place Lux" or even "Plux" in the communicative code of the "after-work population", all those who fill the place and its bars on Thursday evenings in a kind of urban ritual halfway between work and leisure time. Ironically enough, if you happen to mention "Plux" to any Brussels inhabitant who is not a habitué of the EU district, he/she would hardly understand the reference (and probably start laughing, as we have experienced). This part of the city unfolds with its own particular paces and rules made up of high levels of control, after-work lobbyist events, a number of daily commuters or international businesspeople landing in the morning and taking off in the evening, oversized office-style architecture, and overpriced bars, shops and restaurants¹. Common images of the European district are built on and tend to reproduce the idea(l) of city beautification (Dessouroux et al., 2009; De Wandeler and Dissanayake, 2013), i.e. a clean, clear, safe and controlled space that is appealing to and attractive for individuals with high social, economic and cultural capital, inhabited by a growing number of people who are just "passing through", whether for tourism or consumption. Against this background, our research aimed to investigate the nexus between the material, symbolic, normative and discursive construction of the EU district time-space, on one hand, and everyday life, on the other. To do so, we explored the potential of a rhythmic and chronotopic approach in deconstructing dominant socio-spatial-temporal representations, scraping off the layers of the commonly-known to unveil alternative narratives.

2. EVERYDAY LIFE AND THE ORDINARY: BETWEEN DIAGRAMS OF POWER AND SPACES-TIMES OF ASTONISHMENT. – Following a pragmatist approach, we consider the city as both "a category of practices" (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000) and a set of virtualities composed of current and potential entities and their multiple and unpredictable encounters in which performative improvisations can reveal and generate unpredictable futures (Amin and Thrift, 2002).

Since the work of W. Benjamin (1999), H. Lefebvre (1958), and M. de Certeau (1990), the everyday life of the city has been interrogated from a multitude of points of view and has nourished critical approaches in analysing socio-

¹ This article draws on the data collected during fieldwork carried out between May and July 2018; hence, the proposed analysis focuses on the everyday reality of the pre-Covid city.

spatial inequalities and uncovering previously unrecognised marginalisation and resistance processes and practices (McFarlane and Silver, 2017). These studies are often based on a relational perspective, one that seeks to overcome the binary lens of 'dominant vs dominated' by looking at the city as a meshwork, a kaleidoscope in which things – places, bodies, objects, practices, discourses and representations – are assembled and re-assembled in a constant state of becoming (Fraser *et al.*, 2005). Space and time are not external to these relationships; rather, they are generated by them as well as constituting them, hence the importance of studying phenomena in their context. This perspective is interesting in that it allows researchers to consider the spatial, social, temporal, and the way they affect each other, all in the same analytical and interpretative framework. The world and those who inhabit it must therefore be understood as contingent, relational and in-the-making: every state of affairs contains others under conditions of power.

At the same time, the organization of the space-time routines marking the daily life of the city is subject to complex diagrams of power² (Foucault, 1979) that control and subjectivize individuals and normalize behaviours. These diagrams take on multiple and not always evident forms; they are bureaucratic and institutionalized, more or less technological, material and often commonplace. Everyday life is situated in a space in which different temporalities - such as working hours, train timetables, park opening/closing times, prayer schedules, or book readings at the library - strive to impose themselves. These diagrams (also) act through acoustic signals - the school bell, the call of the Imam, the whistle of the train conductor or the policeman at the pedestrian crossing, the arrival of an email or the chime of a digital organizer. These acoustic elements are combined with visual signs - the yellow, white, and blue lines that regulate traffic, the street names that give the space a more or less known identity, icons, and displays. The social, spatial, and temporal order of everyday life is thereby produced without the need for overly explicit rules, through routines that we become accustomed to and which make it possible to keep track of every situation. The most powerful effect of this hyper regulation is the conditioning and reduction, if not outright elimination, of the kind of unpredictable things that happen in cities, and of possibilities for encountering the other and forms of difference; that is to say, the same elements that also make the city a city (Lefebvre, 2009).

² Foucault's theorisation of the diagram seeks to explain how power acts on human life as a kind of abstract machine without precise goals, the functioning of which imposes "a form of conduct [...] by distributing in space, laying out and serialising in time, composing in space-time, and so on" (Deleuze, 1989, p. 35). In contemporary cities, the coexistence of a multiplicity of diagrams gives rise to systems of governance that are all-encompassing: they constitute the subject and the subject re-produces practices in a way that confirms the prevailing state of things (governed by the diagrams).

Nonetheless, such mechanisms of power fail to permeate cities completely, and they enter into contradiction with each other where and when spaces, times and practices are redefined in unexpected and irrational ways (Amin and Thrift, 2002). Lines of power (which take on materiality in projects and discourses, social regeneration and urban redevelopment, etc.) are intersected by lines of flight (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) that undermine and influence the flow: something happens, a rupture or deviation like a melodic accident between 'before' and 'after', a moment that upsets chronological continuity located between coincidence and determinism, the 'third way' of historical time in which people or individuals are able to trace new paths (Ost, 1999). We can also think of these ruptures in terms of arrhythmia, to use the term Lefebvre coined for referring to the disruption or interruption of the repeated rhythms of practices (Lefebvre, 2004). According to this perspective, arrhythmia could open up new spaces for other and new connections and eurhythmia³.

In what place and time are these 'other' space-times situated, these heterochrono-topes (Foucault, 1966) that make their way into power diagrams – not subverting but altering them and opening up new possibilities of encounter? And how can we grasp them? In some cases scholars have looked for them at the margins, those interstitial spaces that are normatively less thoroughly determined (Aru *et al.*, 2017; Rosa, 2016) and where the politics of everyday life might surface more clearly (Lantz, 2012; Colebrook, 2002; Bayat, 2010).

In the case of our research conducted in the European Quarter, we explored a part of the city that is at the centre of power and where (at least apparently) there is little room for daily contradictions to emerge. Our aim, therefore, is not to discover the invisible but rather to see that which is already visible but escapes attention, that which is apparently insignificant in the manner of Perec's infra-ordinary, to "rediscover something of the astonishment that Jules Verne or his reader may have felt faced with an apparatus capable of reproducing and transporting sounds. For that astonishment existed, along with thousands of others, and it's they which have moulded us. What we need to question is bricks, concrete, glass, our table manner, our utensils, our tools the way we spend our time, our rhythms [...]" (Perec, 1999, p. 210)⁴. For us, rhythms and their analysis become a way to question the everyday and to explore the multiple chronotopes of which it is comprised.

³ There is no moral or ethical value behind the notions of arrhythmia and eurhythmia, nor are they opposite conditions. Indeed, the focus must be placed on rhythms as on-going processes and dynamic relations, where eurhythmia contain arrhythmia and vice-versa (Blue, 2019).

⁴ We could consider Perec one of the French intellectuals of the everyday, together with Lefebvre (who was his mentor, incidentally), de Certeau, and Blanchot, even if Perec has never explicitly mentioned this (Schilling, 2006).

3. LOOKING FOR 'OTHER' CHRONOTOPES. – From Lefebvre's work on rhythmanalysis (2004[1992]) to the many studies further exploring this topic, rhythms are both an object of analysis and an analytical tool. However, some scholars argue that, when the study of rhythms is aimed at understanding how the multiplicity of times and spaces of the city articulate, the concept of "chronotope" offers a (more) appropriate epistemological and theoretical framework. Indeed, "[t]he advantage of the chronotope, as opposed to most other uses of time and space, lies in the fact that neither space nor time is privileged: chronotopes are places of intersection of temporal and spatial sequences" (Foch-Serra, 1990, p. 261).

The chronotope describes, according to Bakhtin, "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationship that are artistically expressed in literature [...] In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully through-out, concrete whole" (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 84-85). Building on Bakhtin's work since the 1990s, geographers interested in the interconnections between materiality, everyday life, experience and the representation of space have explored this notion of chronotope (Folch-Serra, 1990; Lawson, 2011; Remm and Kasemet 2020). In this body of work, Crang (2001) in particular, has addressed the space-time dimensions of the city through the idea of chronotope and focused on the rhythmanalysis of the mechanisms regulating daily life (economic, social, and cultural). Drawing on Bakhtin, Crang discusses the chronotope as a spacetime unit possessed of a certain harmony, one that is recognizable, unique and unrepeatable. This unity - the specific temporality of a specific space - is in turn composed of a multiplicity of rhythms, long, short, fast, slow, synchronic, diachronic, the expression of a time that is non-linear, discontinuous and governed by becoming. No space – or, to use more fruitful terms, topos or place – is ever definitively given; rather, it happens at that moment (Crang, 2001). We can thus explain, recount, and narrate the genius tempore "typical" of that space-time for the specific situations of daily life and their times, be they easy, difficult, slow, or fast (Muliček et al., 2015).

There are two aspects that have yet to be fully investigated, however. If we detach ourselves from 'unitary' thinking and instead follow a more rhizomaticrelational perspective, what can the chronotope tell us? How are different chronotopes articulated among themselves? This is the first aspect. The second one is, how do chronotopes change according to our experience? More recent research has highlighted the potential fruitfulness of Bakhtin's thought for studying the simultaneity and interrelation between different chronotopes. As Remm and Kasemets explain, the simultaneous multiplicity of chronotopes is linked to the multiplicity of the experience each subject has of a certain space: "Chronotopic analysis is relational and depends on the chosen perspective and framing of the object. [...] In the analysis of an actual situation, there is no pre-given whole and therefore the relationality of the framework becomes even more apparent" (Remm and Kasemets, 2020, p. 258). According to Bakhtin, the chronotope stems precisely from the attempt to overcome the split between subjective individual time and the objective and abstract time of physics. The chronotope is "the result of the human being's encounter with the environment [...] and is therefore situated in the 'space of relations' between these latter: that is, in an intermediate world – on a threshold or border – between subjective and objective" (Diddi, 2009, p. 153).

In addition, the perspective of the chronotope is based on recognising world heteroglossia or semiotic heterogeneity (Folch-Serra, 1990). Chronotope thus has the potential to shift our attention towards an epistemological and methodological approach that does not privilege fixed discourses or representations but instead explores their dialogical becoming (Remm and Kaesmets, 2020). This line of inquiry can be further extended, as we have done by choosing a more-than-representational perspective and addressing the body as the basis for the construction of relationships between subjects (human and non-human) while assuming that other dimensions – pre-cognitive, affective, and emotional – precede the dialogical-verbal one (Lorimer, 2005; Anderson *et al.*, 2012).

4. Place, time, fieldwork: context and methodology

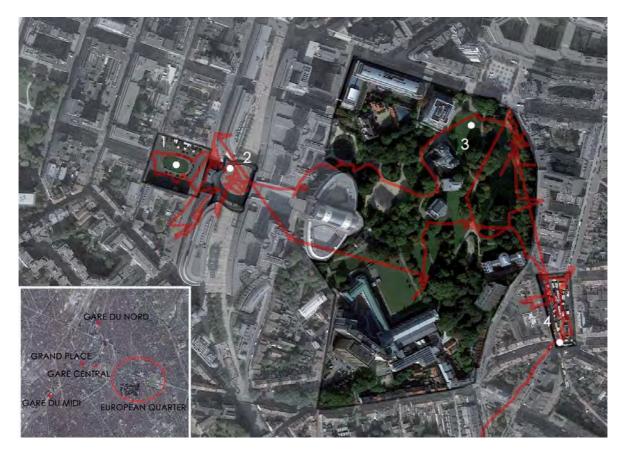
4.1 *Eurodistrict AKA Euroghetto?* – "European Quarter" is the unofficial name of an approximately triangular area extending between three parks – Parc de Bruxelles, Parc Léopold and Parc du Cinquantenaire. Its construction started in 1989 on two "plateaux" (Lamant, 2018), one of them a historically bourgeois residential area known as "Léopold quarter" that was gradually losing residents and turning into an office district during the XX century (Demey, 2007). The historical toponymal of "Léopold quartier" still exists alongside the new "European Quarter", although their boundaries are not exactly the same. In addition, a part of it belongs to the municipality of Ixelles, while the other belongs to Brussels City. As a result, it is easy to feel disoriented by contrasting signs – one side of the road is Léopold quarter while the other is the European quarter, and then Ixelles a few meters away.

As far as the embodied identity of the European district is concerned, there is a wide-ranging debate among architects regarding its "not really monumental, definitely not vernacular, not quite corporatist, not even entirely post-modernist, not clearly business-oriented, not without intentions, not totally junk, and definitely not ordinary" (Avissar, 2018, p. 65) architectural corpus. As Lamant (2018) explains, the Belgian designer Nicolas Firket warned that the district will probably be remembered for its "democratic-style" that is highly "mediocre, consensual, [and] void", while Rem Koolhaas re-baptized the area "Groundeuro", playing off the idea of a *tabula rasa*; finally, newspapers, media and public discourses call it the "Euroghetto", meaning an elite enclave that *les Bruxellois.es* prefer to ignore even if it sits quite close to the main city centre. In this mass of thousands of shades of grey granite and blue-coloured curtain walls, European institutions and the people who work there seem to be barricaded inside their impenetrable mirrored-glass palaces with everything (restaurants, sport facilities, laundry services, day nursery, heath services) *inside* while public spaces are reduced to consumption or, at the most, a few hours of jogging during the lunch break. In between common representations painting the district as a bureaucratic ghetto and 'archistars' reporting on its lack of 'beauty' and identity, we wanted to further explore what seemed to us a kind of contradiction: indeed, this latter might very well be a signal of multiplicity, of the encounter of differences in contraposition to the alleged uniformity, mono-dimensionality, flat and grey façade of the quarter.

4.2 Logbook. – The data was collected by Anastasia Battani between May and July 2018 during an intense fieldwork in which she experimented with an embodied and senses-based approach, as suggested by Lefebvre when he says that "[t]he rhythmanalyst calls on all his senses" (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 21). Indeed, "everyday life rhythms can be perceived not only aurally but also visually and haptically" (Wunderlich, 2013, p. 393). Sounds and their repetition that create "acoustic colorations" and delineate the soundscape of a place, together with the visual and haptic pattern of a built or natural environment, contribute to forming a rhythmically distinct milieu.

The first phase of the fieldwork was immersive, aimed at gleaning a detailed picture of the places we were investigating; for two weeks (8 May-19 May), Anastasia experienced and observed everyday life in four spaces in the EU district on a daily basis. We decided to focus on Place du Luxembourg, Agora Simone Veil, Place Jourdan and Parc Léopold (Fig. 1) in order to *feel* and collect 'signals' of the pluralities of lives and multiplicity of socio-spatial-temporal contexts. We chose these places for their different qualities and roles in the daily routine of the quarter and their closeness to each other⁵: Parliament, the Luxembourg train station, pleasant squares for having an aperitif, the very famous place to buy fries and the beautiful park with its lake and historical buildings, the weekly market, the Thursday afterwork, and a huge worksite occupying almost the entirety of Place Jourdan.

 $^{^{5}}$ This was fundamental to be able to visit all the four spaces several times during the day, moving only on foot.



Source: graphic elaboration by Anastasia Battani on a Google Earth Pro map, 2018.

Fig. 1 - The four spaces (1. Place du Luxembourg, 2. Agora Simone Veil, 3. Parc Léopold, 4. Place Jourdan), the GPS track of the author's usual day walk during the 1^{st} phase of fieldwork, and the fixed point of view of the second fieldwork phase (white circles)

We used different media to collect data, from video, photos, audio recordings and time-lapses to on-site notes and drawings, experimenting with a hybrid and mobile approach aimed at grasping sounds, images, smells, silences, distances and proximities, intensities and densities, and unfolding life in its constant becoming. The fact Anastasia was a stranger to Brussels helped her to maintain an attentive view on the field, a gaze open to astonishment:

I fell asleep under the sun in the lawn of the square. It's a nice lawn even though it was not clean at all. Then I saw some strange events at the station (Friday 18 May 2018, 3 pm, Place du Luxembourg).

What's annoying? The continuous sound of car horns. A traffic that not only is present but hyper-present, a prima donna (Friday 29 June 2018, 12:30 am, Parc Léopold).

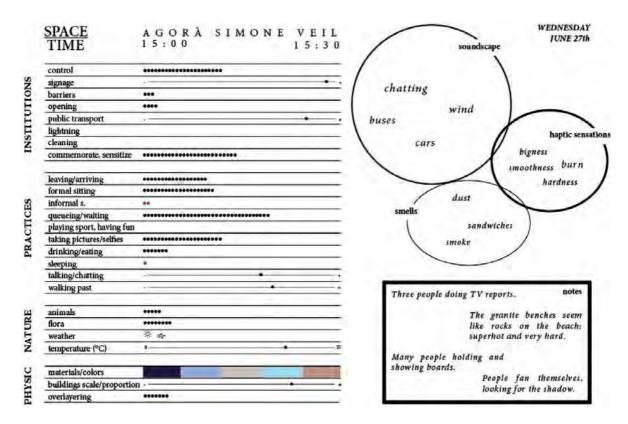
At the same time, the fact that she did not use professional equipment but only a smartphone and notepad allowed her to easily blend into different situations without becoming too visible (Fig. 2).

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Source: photos from Anastasia Battani's fieldwork notepad, 2018.

Fig. 2 - On-site notes about sensuous perceptions, rhythms, events etc.

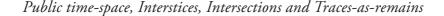
The data from this initial period of fieldwork showed us that EU District chronotopes unfold on the basis of four set of rhythms that we named institutional, practice-based, natural and built space. We use the terms "practice rhythms" to refer to the clustering, in time-space, of people performing everyday life activities/actions such as eating, sleeping, chatting or taking photos in public spaces. "Nature rhythms" include the alternation of day and night, seasons, the weather, animals and botanical life. Furthermore, "institutional rhythms" describe routines and repetition regulated by a set of norms (the opening and closing times of public parks, for instance) defined by public authorities but also private actors (car parks, shops, delivery schedules); these routines have far-reaching and entraining effects and a usually slow rate of change (Blue, 2019). Finally, built space also plays a role in shaping the specific polyrhythmia of a place (Matos Wunderlich, 2013): architectural shapes, materials, scale and proportion influence the resonance of sound and the spread of light, the space's atmosphere and its haptic perceptions, resulting in distinctive rhythmical settings.

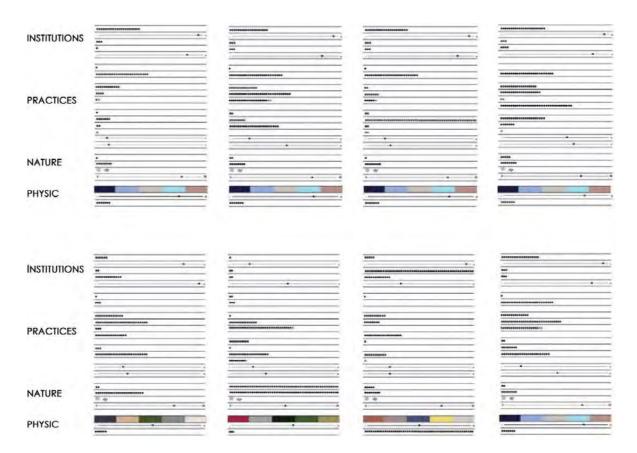


Source: elaboration by Anastasia Battani of field data, 2018.

Fig. 3 - Example of the data arrangement of a 30 min. long field observation through rhythmanalysis: we took note of rhythms intensity, sounds, haptic and olfactory sensations, details about the circumstances

In the second phase of fieldwork, between 18 June and 4 July 2018, we adopted a fixed perspective in order to record the intensity and repetition of the rhythms we had identified. Indeed, as Lefebvre argues, the rhythmanalyst has to situate him/herself "simultaneously inside and outside" (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 27), ideally, as he suggests, on a balcony or behind a window from where to observe the street. However, a view from a balcony or window entails a top-down and hidden perspective that seemed to us to contradict sharply with the idea of embodied positionality. Adopting a fixed point of view while remaining on site is the way we composed the being inside-and-outside. For every site, we chose a specific observation point that offered the widest possible view, depending on physical (temporary or permanent) configurations, but without being in the spotlight (e.g. a bench, step, bar, or the lawn, even if this site was not the most panoramic point).





Source: elaboration by Anastasia Battani of field data collected in 2018, 2020.

Fig. 4 - Comparison of 30 min. data slots: in the top table, of the same place in different times; in the bottom table, of different places during lunchtime. Overlapping and animating the different sheets, it is possible to see rhythms frequency⁶

In each site, our observation activity was broken down into slots of 30 minutes, meaning that we recorded the variations in rhythmic intensity every half an hour. This time slot, linked to the duration of some practices such as lunch breaks, workouts, police patrols, aperitifs, bus schedules, etc., allowed us to observe both repetitions of rhythms and differences (both eurhythmia and arrhythmia) and to record them, considering that we did not use any technical supports or instruments. Indeed, we adopted a subjective and symbolic form of recording: small dots represented a unit of intensity, and every 30 minutes we penned a number of dots representing our perception of the intensity of each rhythm (Fig. 3). One dot, in the case of human practices, represented a single person performing a practice, and the same unit system was used to note the presence of animals. In other cases, as for almost every built space, institution

⁶ The animation is meant to be seen on a screen in a bigger dimension.

and nature rhythms, the dot was inevitably more symbolic, and the quantity of dots was intended to *qualitatively* represent the intensity of a certain dimension according to our perception (the scale/proportion of buildings, opening-closing of commercial activities, succession of clouds/sun, and so on). Indeed, while providing a detailed and vivid picture of a single time-slot, our aim was to give a sense-based impression of the frequency of rhythms when comparing all of the 30-minute data slots, as we have done through animations (fig.4). This method is helpful for identifying variations in the composition of rhythms over time in the same space, and in particular it is effective for gaining an appreciation of different places' rhythm patterns.

4.3 Scrapbook. – The use of visual survey methodologies is not new in the field of urban studies and geography; indeed, it is an established practice, especially in post-structuralist studies. As Tolia-Kelly points out (2012), a real neo-visual turn has gradually taken hold in geography, whereby "contemporary research collaborations between a visual culture and geography represent almost a new orthodoxy within the discipline [...] in its drive towards participatory research, impact and engagement within the academy" (2012, p. 135). The literature dealing with the production, interpretation and socialisation of images and visual products is now vast, encompassing epistemological (Driver, 2003; Crang, 2003; Hughes, 2012; Roberts, 2012) as well as methodological (Rose, 2001, 2003) and empirical perspectives (Pink, 2013; Aru *et al.*, 2018).

The possible key readings, the plural hetero-chronotopes and rhythms that construct and deconstruct them, were assembled in the form of a web-doc⁷ comprising all the different media to create non-linear narratives. We chose the web-doc as a form of rhizomatic, more-than-representational narration (Lorimer, 2005; Anderson *et al.*, 2012) through which different forms of representation can be brought together in a way that leaves open-ended the relationship among them and among the spaces-time-practices recorded.

Working with images (understood in a broad sense) can distort the analysis of the observation of reality, and this is especially true when such images are produced, composed, or created in a deliberately positional way, i.e. privileging a specific visual angle, a chosen theoretical and physical positioning in space that stems from the researcher's degree of sensitivity and the conditions guiding and attracting his or her eye, gaze, camera, and attention. While on one hand these methodologies raise the issue of overcoming the purely subjective meanings inherent in images (sentimental, linked to a sense of belonging or creativity), on

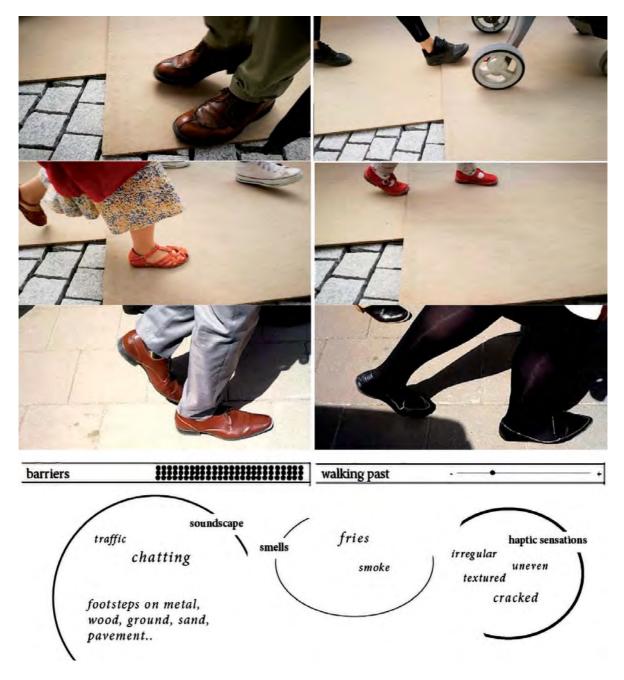
⁷ The web-doc "Chronotopes of the European Quarter" by Anastasia Battani (author/web designer) and Elisabetta Rosa (co-author/coordinator), with the collaboration of Maurizio Memoli as advisor, is available at the page https://societageografica.net/sgi/EuQuartBxl/.

the other hand depicting space in this way generates relational glances and meanings, reduces the distance between observation and the field being observed, and calls into question the hierarchies underlying the order and power of discourse. Representing spatial objects means producing a fragmentation and redundancy of meanings poised between reality and narrative and between narrative and its descriptive adherence to the reality. The place-communication (a novel, website, film or, in our case, a web-doc but also the images included in this article) in which these representations materialize and take shape becomes a space-time in and of itself; it is a space-time with its own symbolic significance in that it is enacted by its own laws of mediatisation, semantic norms, psychological meanings, and points of visual emphasis.

5. FOUR POSSIBLE CHRONOTOPES OF THE EUROPEAN DISTRICT. – On the basis of the data collected, we identified four chronotopes that come from the articulation of different rhythms we observed. Of course, this correspond to a subjective and partial interpretation (many) other possibilities exist and could be unfolded.

5.1 Chronotope 1. Public time-spaces. – The way people sit and walk – how, when, where and for how long – has to do with the publicness of public space and time, how the design of such spaces and times affects co-existence, encounter, self-care and conviviality (Rishbet, Rogaly, 2017), and how the provision of places to sit or the absence of sitting places is related to normative intentions. We there-fore focused on how bodies, through sitting and walking, perform rhythms at the intersection of institutions, practices, nature and built environment, and how bodies and rhythms reciprocally affect one another.

Walking has a sound that derives from the assemblage of the body (shoes, weight, luggage, tiredness, backache) and the atmosphere (rain, wind, etc.) together with other non-human elements, particularly differentiation in pavement and ground textures and materials (cobbles, grass, wood, etc.) (Fig. 5). We used video and time-lapse recordings (Simpson, 2012; Lyon, 2016) to explore these chronotopes more than we did for the others, as we wanted to focus on the intermittence and succession of fixity and movement. In so doing, we adopted a ground-level perspective to observe and record the pace of people passing by, the shape of the terrain, and the accessibility/walkability of public space.



Source: collage by Anastasia Battani of frames from videos, on-site notes on sensuous perceptions, and elaboration of field data (part of the rhythmanalysis), 2018.

Fig. 5 - The feet pass by Place Jourdan worksite: barriers are many, and even if few people walk past, they influence the soundscape

Walking-with-a-trolley is very common in the EU district and particularly around and inside-outside the EU Parliament and Luxembourg railway station, and the smooth surface of the Agora Simone Veil seems consistent with the image of a busy business district. At the same time, smooth surfaces allow people to gather for standing-contemplation purposes, be it tourism or awareness-raising campaigns (Fig. 6).

18:03

AGORA SIMONE VEIL

A girl passing by the square with two trolleys

18:13

18:05

PRACTICES

INSTITUTIONS

A woman going out from the Eu Parliament with a trolley

Two people passing by with their trolleys and a homeless man (in the background) staying in a square interstice

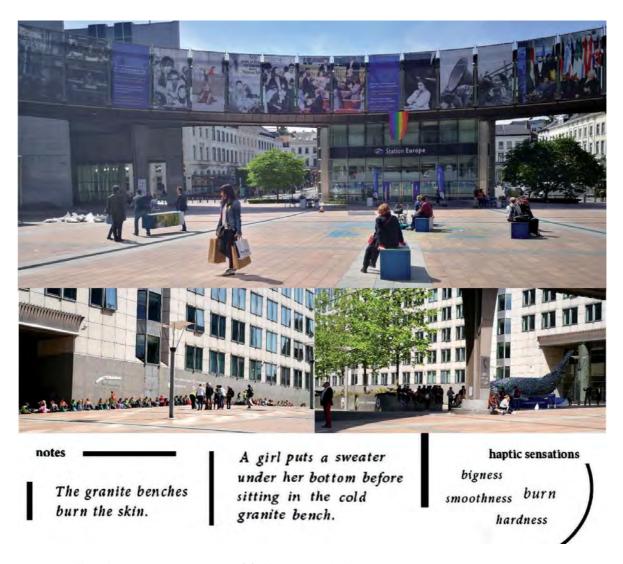
leaving/arriving	•••••••••••••••••••••••••		
formal sitting	*****************		
informal s.	000000		
queueing/waiting			
playing sport, having fun			
taking pictures/selfies	*********		
drinking/eating	86		
sleeping	•		
talking/chatting			
walking past			
control			
signage			
barriers	***		
opening	****		
public transport			
lightning			
cleaning			
commemorate, sensitize			

Source: collage by Anastasia Battani of on-site notes and elaboration of field data, 2018.

Fig. 6 - Notes about ten minutes spent in the Agora on a Tuesday in May 2018 and its overlapping rhythms on different days/hours.

Although workers leave (passing with their trolleys) mostly before the weekend, and the square remains even more empty for tourists to take photos and selfies during this time, "commemorate and sensitize" rhythm is, however, quite high in every day of the week

In the Agora, there is a striking lack of benches or other places to sit. Granite benches are hard and quickly become scalding or freezing, discouraging people from lingering there to rest. An exhibition about the Azores islands was installed in this space in July 2018, linked to a delegation to Brussels and EU Institutions. Several graphic maps of the islands were placed on the ground so that people could walk around them, while vertical exhibition structures displayed pictures and short explanations. The day the exhibition ended, while workmen were dismantling the installation, the vertical structures were laid down for a while. People passing by used them as benches; children on a school trip to the EU Parliament, after looking around for a place to rest, climbed the edges of the high tree boxes and sat all together on one of them (Fig. 7).



Source: collage by Anastasia Battani of field notes and photos, 2018.

Fig. 7 - Informal sitting strategies in Agora Simone Veil (May 2018) and notes about its uncomfortable "programmed" seats (end of June 2018)

In a kind of extraordinary discovery, we found that "people tend to sit most where there are places to sit" (Whyte, 1980, p. 28)⁸. This does not mean that people would sit on any benches or other suitably designed object or space despite its position, material, shape, etc., nor that even having benches available would prevent people from sitting on the ground or where they are not "supposed to". The point is rather about how far design should go in defining a space, knowing that a smooth, mono-chromatic and visually clean space is often the expression of a normative intentionality and a "guarantee city" (Breviglieri, 2013). The issue, once again, is related to the extent to which public space is appropriable in the sense of Lefebvre (2009).

In Place du Luxembourg, afterwork is supposed to begin at 5 pm; parking rules change at that time and vehicle circulation is modified. Bar terraces are restyled, with bar staff replacing chairs and tables with stools to fit more people into the space and customers standing for as long as it takes to drink a beer and ready to move on to the next one at another bar. The dividing lines between working and leisure time become blurred and performed by the alternation of staying and moving, a collective practice rehashed every Thursday (Fig. 8).



Source: photo by Anastasia Battani, 2018.

Fig. 8 - Thursday afterwork in Place du Luxembourg. Especially young interns working for the European Institutions occupy the lawn in the middle of the square to eat, drink and chat from 5 pm until late at night

⁸ This comes from a research Whyte did in New York.

5.2 Chronotope 2. Interstices. – The city is a space of over-visibility, constantly presenting and representing its own image according to global rules of competition. At the same time, the city is also a space of surveillance. Technical devices produce a kind of super-eye that monitors people and spaces. The dark side of this over-exposure and its associated selection of images consists in concealing certain urban practices, practices that are relegated to the margins of the city. Nonetheless, spaces of invisibility do exist and are not limited to the 'dark side' of the city; rather, such spaces underlie, sustain and nourish the realm of the visible. We call these spaces "interstices" (Tonnelat, 2003; Brighenti, 2016; Nuvolati, 2019) as they stand in between visibility and invisibility, light and shadow, publicness and privateness. In this analysis, interstices are understood as urban fragments that mark the discontinuity between material objects as well as the intervals between practices, rhythms, or diaphragms that separate concealing from unveiling. They express a time-space dimension in which we perceive ourselves as more (or less) vulnerable because we are exposed (or no longer exposed) to the control exerted by a gaze, sight, or recording.

The Agora Simone Veil is a huge architectural embrace created by the curved shape of the EU Parliament buildings. The façade of the EU Parliament is sensitive to the weather, as changes in light and passing clouds are reflected and amplified by the mirrored glass. Nature is a moving picture, an on-going show. On normal days (i.e. when there are no EU Summits), two soldiers are set to monitor the Agora together with the many cameras. Here and there, a sign with a large eye tells that you are being watched. When soldiers are standing in front of the benches, people move away (Fig. 9).



Monday 14th May 2018 13:49 The soldiers are standing in front of the benches and people don't sit there anymore. Car horn. Group photo, laughing. Many different languages. Clouds. Lot of movement. Soldiers move 14:05 The granite is freezing; the cold passes through my trousers.



Source: collage by Anastasia Battani of time-lapse frame, on-site notes and photo, 2018.

Fig. 9 - In the Agora the mirrored glass reflects the moody sky, while soldiers and cold granite discourage long stays. The big brother watches you with dozens of eyes

The encounter between the two "arms" of the canopy and the lateral symmetrical buildings of the railway station, on one side, and the Parlamentarium, on the other, creates an arrhythmia, an in-between space that is inhabited by two

homeless men, one in each corner. They are not visible to passers-by, as these interstices are the only part of the Agora always immersed in shade. During the period of our fieldwork, one man was always there, day and night; he rarely moved. The other one was often gone during the day. Sometimes they begged for change at the entrance to the Luxembourg railway station. There is a public bathroom in the station, but there is a charge for accessing it and it is closed after 7 p.m. and on weekends. Indeed, self-care is strictly regulated in terms of both time and space.



Source: collage by Anastasia Battani of photos and elaboration of field data, 2018.

Fig. 10 - Friday 22^{nd} June. Two homeless men sleep (the not black points). One, while the square is crowded for Parliament tours. The other while many other people take a nap on the lawn. In the photos, the asleep man in the shadow of the Agora interstice and the items suggesting someone is living in the Parc Léopold

Some pieces of cardboards and small bags were the signs of the men's act of dwelling. Dwelling consists in leaving the signs of one's presence on the ground or other surfaces while at the same time taking care of the space; it involves maintaining a relationship with this ground and place. Things and their endurance embody the difference between businessmen who take a siesta during lunchtime in Parc Léopold and the (three or four) homeless men inhabiting the park (fig.10). The latter pitch two tents hidden by a huge hedge at the very edge of the park. As B. Goetz argues, "dwelling is a way of spatializing but also a way of temporalizing, a way of bringing into play the relationships of space and time" (Goetz, 2011, p. 91; our translation). The rhythms of inhabiting are those of the liminal articulation between public and intimate space and time.

5.3 Chronotope 3. Intersections. - Intersections are where a multiplicity of space-times lines, surfaces and volumes come together; in this coming together, they are suddenly modified both in intensity and directionality. We understand intersections as a sort of "point of inflection" or "point-fold" (Deleuze, 1988) produced by the encounter of opposite yet co-existent levels of powers. One "solid" characteristic of the EU quarter is the hyper-signification of space. This hyper-signification stems from multiple normative intentions on the part of institutional actors responding to different centres of power. From this perspective, the European Quarter makes visible (or more visible than elsewhere) the multiplicity and multiplication of such centres. In this dense network of power, the embodied corporality that criss-crosses and inhabits the public space of the EU district is sometimes disoriented while at other times it generates an exchange of communication mediated by space and time (people who add a few words to an incomprehensible sign banning something, for example) (Fig. 11). At still other times, it is not concerned with normativity or perhaps, more simply, super signification gives rise to indifference.



Source: collage of photos by Anastasia Battani, 2018.

Fig. 11 - "Négligence?" Comment on a A4 self-printed warning sign, roughly glued on a temporary fence in the rear entrance of the European Parliament

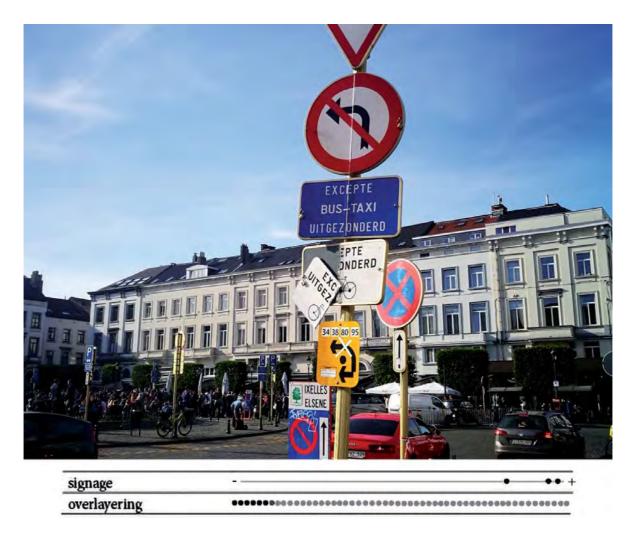
These assemblages are territorialized and embodied in non-human bodies, such as the countless signposts and even construction sites. Even such bodies that have been removed from their original positions but not completely eliminated are part of this population. It is common to come across signs "resting", piled on the ground as they wait to be taken away or (re)installed (Fig. 12). The signs are an expression of the territorialisation of forms of power, but what is interesting is that they often remain "beyond" power in the sense that they are still there even when we believe that power has lessened its grip on a certain space. Temporary signage becomes permanent; it is always present, sometimes simply waiting in a corner for its time to come again. There is the sensation that something is always about to happen.



Source: collage of photos by Anastasia Battani, 2018. Fig. 12 - Laying street signs (for days or sometimes months) around Place Jourdan

The Summits have a certain rhythm, and a set of signals are transmitted to residents every month. There is the rhythm of public demonstrations (for the purposes of protest or propaganda) and that of the bodies joining forces in the Agora. There is the rhythm of the Place Jourdan building site, which produces an overlapping of signs that criss-crosses the space and modifies its flow and intensity. There is the rhythm of the Thursday afterwork drinking in place Luxembourg. There is the rhythm of uncertainty, confusion and the unexpected - people who find themselves passing through or visiting the neighbourhood at random will always be surprised and rarely know in advance what they are allowed to do, where and for how long. It is a sort of eventuality that transcends the organized event; it is an ordinariness marked by the rhythm of predictable unforeseen events. The ordinary-becoming of the space-time of the event can be read in the signs/ signals and, at the same time, the proliferation of signs/signals contributes to the ordinary becoming of the event. In this process, the rhythms of the exceptional become institutionalized or normalized and facilitate the further reproduction and repetition of a specific and given set of rhythms that were not the norm before (Blue, 2019) (Fig. 13).

This hyper-signification materializing in the public space of the EU district somehow seems out of synch with the images of the area commonly disseminated by the media. Indeed, such representations usually depict the silence and order surrounding the European Commission buildings, the smooth space and noise of flapping flags, a narrative of clarity and readability.



Source: collage by Anastasia Battani of photo and elaboration of field data, 2018.

Fig. 13 - Overlapping of the two rhythms most contributing to the sensation of hyper-signification in the Agora Simone Veil, Place du Luxembourg and Place Jourdan on Thursday 28th of June, a day of European Summit and afterwork. However, the high intensity of these rhythms does not strictly depend on these events, because their variations during the week are so small that are irrelevant. Above, in the same day, the over-presence of signals causes disorientation.

5.4 *Chronotope 4. Traces-as-remains.* – "Traces are indications of activities that have already happened and were not necessarily observed. They allow you to locate activities in space, but less precisely in time" (Tonnelat, 2003, p. 103). In the

case of traces of observed activity, observation can provide some insight into the residual presence of the activities in question and a measure of their impact. At the same time, traces are often considered remnants in need of removal by maintenance services, and their existence/persistence provides an approximate indication of the prevailing degree of tolerance towards unforeseen/informal activities. Traces identify the weak points in institutional control, possible forms of tolerance, and negligence. Remains, traces, and objects are non-human components of social life and social relations.



Source: collage of photos by Anastasia Battani, 2018.

Fig. 14 - Pink "waves" of garbage laying on the ground at any time of the day near street signs or lamps, here in Place Jourdan and Place du Luxembourg. (The bright extravagant fuchsia of the trash bags cannot be appreciated in the b/n version of the printed publication)

The leftovers of afterwork are scattered almost everywhere in Place du Luxembourg and its surroundings and remain an indefinite period of time, as if nobody cares about them. This is especially true in the very centre of the place, a large green roundabout hosting a sizeable statue. Piles of pink garbage bags (the ones used by bars and commercial services) draw pink lines throughout the district, becoming a sort of landscape mark. In Brussels, waste collection service is decentralised; each municipality has a different schedule. Since the EU district crosses two different municipalities, the 'pink wave' is almost always present, following its own rhythms (Fig. 14). Garbage piles and leftovers "show the endpoint of an all-permeating logic of commodification, logical telos of the consumer society, and its ethos of planned obsolescence. Garbage becomes the morning after of the romance of the new" (Shohat and Stam, 2002, p. 55). Where and when is this "new"? The traces have a manifold temporality; they are not only the remains of what has been but also objects in waiting (to be re-used or taken away). They speak to an absence - of a body, of another object, of a condition. A piece of cardboard on the pavement, with a bag and a glass in front of it, indicate the space of a person who begs for money even when that person is not present. All of these

objects may also be traces of something that is yet to come, but we do not know when. Uncertainty belongs to both past and future and traces inscribe such uncertainty onto the pavement.



Composition of the rubbish (lawn): empty packs of cigarettes, slices of lemon, straw: lighters, a polaroid, bottles, plastic containers, waste paper, beer bottle caps, broken glass...

The guy of the cleanings didn't clean the lawn: he was busy with the super dirty pavement, full of cigarettes and rubbish. There are four pigeons in the dried lawn, eating the same pieces of bread they have been eating for weeks.

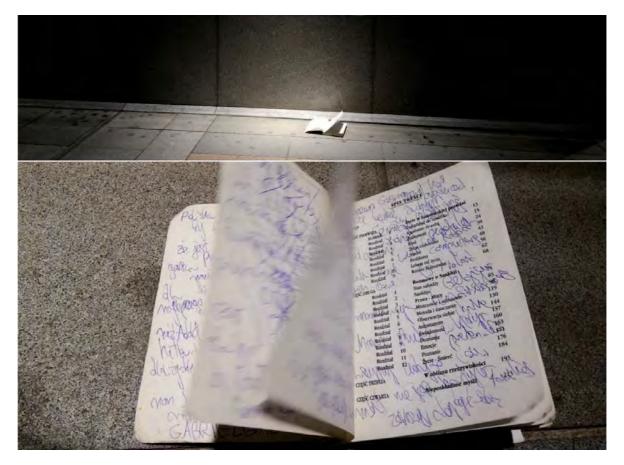
There are many garbage bags around, in many different colours.

Source: collage by Anastasia Battani of photo and field notes, 2018.

Fig. 15 - July has just begun, and the nice lawn of Place du Luxembourg roundabout has turned into an arid carpet of mixed trash, trace and memory of the practices performed in this place

The traces/remains are a presence that testifies to absence; they are the point of passage for invoking memory (*rémemoration*: reactivation of a memory) (Weber, 2014). "Someone lost a Polaroid photo on the grass: there is writing

on it that says 'happy birthday'" (Fig. 15) – an instant-picture, a commemorative image lost or forgotten, a visual device that leaves and territorialises living memories of a rite of passage in a place – Place du Luxembourg – where a commodified celebration (the rite of "faire la fête") routinizes the passage of time. A book, all of its pages filled with Polish handwriting in blue ink written over top of the printed text is lying on the ground. Were the Polaroid and book left intentionally, or forgotten or lost? They are traces of fragmented personal histories that come together and intersect in public space and time and with other temporalities, celebrations and memorials. When we found the book, it was lying under the plaque dedicated to the memory of Solidarnosc (Fig. 16). Through traces, personal and individual stories punctuate a shared duration and intertwine with each other and with public history.



Source: collage of frames from a video by Anastasia Battani, 2018.

Fig. 16 - Saturday night "gift" in the Esplanade Solidarnosc (promenade in front of the European Parliament): the book, intentionally left under the light, is in Polish. The inside is covered with handwritten words. The wind rapidly moves the pages

6. OPENINGS. – According to Lefebvre, "rhythms appear as regulated time, governed by rational laws, but in contact with what is the least rational in human being: the lived, the carnal, the body" (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 9). The EU District is a space-time in which social and institutional norms, together with spatial and temporal ones, appear in their mutual becoming. Norms are revealed not as a "meta-domain" hanging over people, but as part of the same ontological level as ordinary practices and life. Human and non-human beings are immersed in a normative world that is particularly powerful and explicit here (more than in other part of the city). This is echoed in the most common representation of the district, representations in which smooth spaces, human movement and consumption practices generate comforting images of repetition, silence and order. If ordinary life is perceived and narrated as "what follows the normal course of things", the research we conducted in the EU District was aimed at questioning the "normal" of such representations.

To do so, we explored the potentialities of rhythmanalysis in unveiling dissonances and arrhythmia, i.e. interruptions of repetitions and the emergence of difference. Moreover, the concept of chronotope allowed us to consider the inherent imbrication between the spatial and temporal dimensions in the shaping the multiplicity of rhythms that make up this part of the city. Our intention in doing so was to proceed and reason not by opposition but by assemblages, always temporary and partial, i.e. following a relational approach that studies things in their constant becoming (Amin and Thrift, 2002). Rather than asserting that 'this rhythm is more or less true than that one', we sought to place them side by side and see what happened. Following a more-than-representational approach in our exploration of the EU District, we were able to experience and perceive four chronotopes: public space-times, interstices, intersections, and traces. Such an approach allowed us to trace the way these chronotopes are embedded in each other and reveal the heterogeneity of space-time-practice patterns. For instance, interstices stand in between the publicness and privateness of public space-times; intersections and traces both express a relationship to the unpredictability of what is yet to come but is already present; and interstices and traces-as-remains both challenge the hyper-normativity performed by smooth spaces and spectacular architecture.

From our point of view, cross-contamination between more-than-representational, rhythmic and chronotopic approaches is well suited to a conceptualisation that aims not to represent, codify or imprison reality within close-ended and fixed definitions of spaces, times or practices, but instead remains open to a multiplicity of points of view, perspectives and cognitive strategies. What we have presented in this article is a path-process we experimented with under both an embodied and an interpretative perspective. It is one among the many possible path-processes, built on feelings, impressions, memories and images that produce and recompose the enchantment and disappointment of urban experiences. As when looking through a kaleidoscope, space is constantly fragmented and reassembled, uncovering and hiding the multiple, imaginary and real whole, thereby recalling Borges' Aleph, "the only place on earth where all places are seen from every angle, each standing clear, without any confusion or blending" (Borges, 2000, p. 23) and by everybody and nobody at the same time.

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