

Rhythmanalysis - Rhythm as Mode, Methods and Theory for Analysing Urban Complexity

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Abstract : In his last project the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre aimed to develop rhythmanalysis. This was an attempt to understand the pulse and life of the city combining the strengths of the overview of the urban choreography as seen from a window with the intense experiences of living down in the streets. Rhythmanalysis is about acknowledging the tension between these modes of observation and participation, and simultaneously, by developing qualitative and quantitative aspects of rhythms, interpreting and acting it, allowing for a complex understanding of urban life. Like polyrhythms in music, combinations of individually simple rhythms form a complex, living, and nearly incomprehensible whole. Our aim to develop rhythmanalysis as mode, method and theory focuses on natural, social and cultural rhythms, change and diversity, as a precondition for “just sustainability”. For this, artistic research methods are necessary : because methods, actions and performances developed in art compile rhythm, body, and presence. They further allow for actively changing or affecting rhythm as a means to understand present situations. By developing art experiments directly in the city, strategies of capturing, being captured by, producing, and changing rhythms, opens for other ways of interacting and hereby of interpreting the urban context. Rhythmanalysis in this sense is about discovering the complex reality through production in order to elucidate theoretical and methodological concepts from change and experiments as a research method. In the analysis it is shown how by interrupting, influencing, combining and introducing rhythms on places and in buildings, actions, reactions, and new meanings arise. This makes rhythmanalysis a powerful mode of analysis that merits further development, and provides important insights into the complex, emergent processes and meanings of contemporary urbanity.

Rhythmanalyses is a collaboration between artists, architects and researchers at the School of Architecture and the Built Environment, KTH and the University College of Arts Crafts and Design, Stockholm.