

# Rue Rambuteau Today : Rhythmanalysis in Practice

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**Abstract :** This article is based on the “experience” of a reading of Henri Lefebvre’s *Rhythmanalysis*. The third chapter of this book deals with the observations Lefebvre made of the rhythms of the street in which he lived in Paris, Rue Rambuteau. The article first comments on the role and the meaning of rhythm analytical observation, in order to compare it with the experience of the same street today. This attempt to experience the text and experiment rhythm analysis raises questions about the relationships between rhythms of everyday life and longer temporalities, past and future, since the rhythms of the place observed (Rue Rambuteau and Centre Pompidou in Paris) have not changed. This article critiques these temporal relationships and reconsiders place and spatiality and their dialectic relations to rhythm.

**Key words :** Lefebvre (Henri), rhythm analysis, observation, urban rhythms, place

In the preface to Henri Lefebvre’s *Éléments de rythmanalyse : introduction à la connaissance des rythmes* (1992), René Lourau describes the rhythm analytical project as a « secret garden » (Lefebvre, 1992, p. 5) in Lefebvre’s long and intense intellectual career. This statement raises interest, but it also forecasts difficulties in a methodology which mixes all kinds of knowledge in a unified theory. Rhythm analysis is not only the completion of the *Critique of everyday life*, it is also a contribution to another way of thinking time and space. As in other books, the author mixes many different domains, including the theories of music, of the body, of media activity as well as the change of temporality in modern and capitalist society. A challenging chapter, « Seen from the Window » explains the process of Rhythm analysis. It is a description of rhythms that Henri Lefebvre has experienced for years, observing the Parisian streets from his balcony, which overlooks the rue de Rambuteau, and faces the Centre Pompidou, also referred to as Beaubourg. I will not explain here what rhythm analysis is, and what global meaning it holds in the project of Henri Lefebvre’s writings. For that purpose, I refer to Stuart Elden in the introduction to the English version of the text (Lefebvre, 2004). Rather, coming back to Rue Rambuteau more than twenty years later, I wished to repeat the experiment. I wished to follow the text, as well as to experience it, since it seems to be an important part of Lefebvre’s methodology.

At first sight, there were no particular changes. I wondered if it was of any use to do what had been done previously - if my analysis could only be one influenced by Lefebvre's. Contrary to my initial worries, I found it interesting that the rhythms remained consistent in this place. I therefore decided to attempt an interpretation of the links between rhythms and history, understood as a longer period of time. If I have succeeded, perhaps I will be able to offer an interpretation of what occurred in this place, in its continuity and change, during the last twenty years. This requires an initial examination of the role of observation and its importance in the rhythm analytical project, for the observation required for rhythm analysis is of a special type. I will then compare the text and my experience to question both the reading of the text and its pertinence, and the experience in itself. This attempt in the rhythm analysis of Rue Rambuteau argues the necessity to analyse present rhythms while taking into account their past and future occurrences ; in conclusion, we will see how rhythms link space and time, and how this relationship should intervene in rhythm analysis.

## **« Seen from the window » : observation in the rhythm analytical project**

The chapter « Seen from the window » has a peculiar place in the *Elements of Rhythm Analysis*. In the introduction to the French version of the book, René Loureau argues that in this chapter, Lefebvre abandons his previous methodology.

“Dans l'un des rares chapitres où Lefebvre renonce partiellement à la méthode annoncée dans l'introduction, se laisse aller - très modérément - à une vision phénoménologique des rythmes - il s'agit du chapitre trois, “Vu de la fenêtre” de son appartement de la rue Rambuteau, en face de Beaubourg -, il déclare : “De sorte que l'implication dans le spectacle entraîne l'explication de ce spectacle”(Lefebvre, 1992, p. 8-9).

What I would translate : “In one of the only chapters in which Lefebvre partially renounces the method which he details in the introduction, he opens himself - very modestly - to a phenomenological vision of rhythms - it is in chapter three, “Seen from the window” from his apartment in Rue Rambuteau, in front of Beaubourg - that he declares “Thus one's implication in the spectacle entails the explication of the spectacle”.

Lefebvre develops the methodology that René Loureau is referring to in the first chapter, “The Critique of the Thing”, by contrasting two methods of analysis in order to study rhythm. The first method integrates particular occurrences of rhythms into a general theory by means of comparison and contrast. The second starts with « a full consciousness of the abstract in order to arrive at the concrete” (2004, p. 5). Lefebvre chooses the latter philosophical method. According to Loureau, the chapter « Seen from the Window » is the only chapter where Lefebvre describes an experience of rhythms. The chapter which follows is much more abstract, as it deals with « Dressage », « the Media Play », « the Manipulation of Time » and « Music and Rhythms ». This reading, which implies that Lefebvre experienced rhythms before achieving a full (abstract) consciousness of them, explains the change in the initial methodology. That is probably the reason why René Loureau states that Lefebvre sets apart his methodology in favour of a methodology of observation, in which the implication of the observer leads to the explanation of the spectacle. My reading of this chapter will challenge this vision and is based on another understanding of the structure of the book. When Henri Lefebvre states that the method to grasp rhythms begins with a full consciousness of the abstract in order to arrive at the concrete, he is not arguing that observation is excluded from the

process. Moreover, an abstract understanding of rhythm is difficult to grasp, and must be constantly aided by experience. This is the case in spite of the fact that one can experience only one particular rhythm while working towards a general concept.

According to Lefebvre, a clue to understanding this paradox is that the abstract concept of rhythm is vague, but that everyone has a sense of it. "Is there a general concept of rhythm ? Answer : yes, and everyone possesses it ; but nearly all those who use this word believe themselves to master and possess its content, its meaning. Yet the meanings of the term remain obscure" (2004, p. 5). Rhythm is a difficult concept to grasp, and it is not certain that we can adequately define it because it is, and always has been, involved in perception and in the experience of the body : it is a part of language, for diction invariably integrates rhythm, but it is not sure that it can be expressed through language. A full abstract consciousness of rhythm is therefore impossible to obtain without experience. "Seen from the Window", which relays an experience of rhythms, is thus not only fully integrated into Lefebvre's methodology, but also connected to other parts of the book. It is a factor in the understanding of rhythm analysis in Lefebvre's theory. I will first show the place of this chapter in the structure of the book ; I will then expose what is special about the observation Lefebvre describes. Finally, I will question why observation is important in the global rhythm analytical project.

In the first chapter, "Critique of the Thing", Lefebvre exposes the global rhythm analytical project and its methodology, as well as what he understands by analysis. The project is nothing less than a shift in perspective on "Things" from a substantive point of view, inherent to modern capitalist society, to a relative, rhythmic one. He points out different (abstract) concepts that are helpful in understanding rhythms : repetition and difference, measure, cyclical and linear rhythms, quantitative and qualitative, etc. These concepts are abstract oppositions, what Lefebvre calls "dualities", which are by definition limited to a dual analysis. But these "dualities" are not sufficient, because Lefebvre's analysis is consistently dialectic. In other words, complex realities require three terms to be analysed in their relations, if not in their contradictions. Relations between rhythms need to be physically grasped. This requires a point of departure, and Lefebvre chooses the body, with its particular rhythms and dimensions. Thus the analysis integrates the body, and enables a transition to the concrete. But rhythms are perceived in the world or the environment. This means that observation or experience must be understood as a part of the dialectic analysis of rhythms, because the body cannot perceive of rhythms that are not at its scale. I would claim that he develops this methodology in chapters two and three, and that the rest of the book in a way comments on the precise points he would like to highlight.

In chapters two and three he transitions to a discussion of the concrete, mirroring the process of Hegelian dialectics. Both of these chapters deal with rhythm analysis in practice, as they explore the context and imagine something of an observer who is "all ears" (Meyer in Goonewardena et al., 2008, p. 149). This agent of observation, the rhythm analyst, as he is portrayed in the first chapter, listens to his body as a metronome as he listens to the world. He uses all senses to observe. It proves that the knowledge of rhythms requires thinking with the body in a "lived temporality", as Lefebvre describes it. Chapter three is an attempt to integrate this method of the observer. The passage from chapter two to chapter three integrates the rhythm analyst in a situation of rhythm analysis. In this chapter, Lefebvre declares himself as the agent. This transition is clearly illustrated in the text : Lefebvre defines the rhythmic essence of desire and need as rhythms in interaction. "This view of temporality defines neither the ones nor the others ; it enters into the definitions : into the analysis. We have yet to catch unaware (to grasp) need, desire, reflections and passions in others" (2004, p.

26). He shows how the rhythm analyst goes from the observation of his self rhythms to the necessity of perceiving them in others. In chapter three, he logically relates observation to the way that the rhythm analyst is portrayed. The one cannot be separated from the other. This observation could not occur before chapters one and two, for the rhythm analyst, assisted by a few concepts, needs to observe in a dialectical way. The third chapter can be understood as the moment where the rhythm analyst meets the others and their rhythms : he achieves an exploration of the world rather than abstract thought. He alters the perspective on his surroundings, as Lefebvre predicted in the first chapter. He thinks rhythms rather than things.

The remaining chapters can be understood as precisions on particular points that Lefebvre was not able to develop before. For example, the chapter on “dressage” seems to be inspired by the observation of the street and the way that the body is shaped by society and co-presence. “The media play” and “the manipulation of time” seems to result from the same kind of meditation. At the end, the chapter on music completes the panorama of different directions that can be taken from the study of rhythm. In my reading, then, “Seen from the Window” is a major chapter in the structure of the book. That is why I would like to focus on the notion of observation that Lefebvre develops. One could say that he tries to describe a dialectical observation.

To observe in a dialectical way ? How is this possible ? What is the difference between observation in rhythm analysis and other forms of observation as they are practised in phenomenology or social sciences ? To understand these questions, we need to remember that what is felt and what is experienced is not only due to a stimulus of the senses, but that perception itself is a mental process which involves some kind of epistemology. We can train ourselves to perceive in a certain way. This is the metamorphosis that the rhythm analyst should accomplish. It is similar to the one that artists often describe. In addition to their experiences, other types of observation can be drawn upon to further this point. I refer here to Michael Gardiner (2000). In the introduction of *Critiques of everyday life*, he wants “to distinguish the counter-tradition discussed here from such established approaches as ethnomethodology or phenomenology” (Gardiner, 2000, p. 3). *Elements of Rhythm analysis* is based on the critiques of everyday life that Lefebvre wrote, and it could even constitute the fourth book of this long-term critique. Thus Gardiner’s remarks on the global methodology of critique also apply to the observation in rhythm analysis, for it also differs from phenomenology and social sciences.

First, Lefebvre refuses to integrate what he is doing in a phenomenological perspective. Because phenomenology uses all body senses in trying to give sense of what is merely present, we could say that in a way rhythm analysis is a kind of phenomenology. But all observations are not phenomenological, and Lefebvre notes that phenomenology is unable to achieve the observation of rhythms that rhythm analyst can. Why is it impossible to make a phenomenology of rhythms ? It is because phenomenology “passes over that which quite rightly connects space, time and the energies that unfold here and there, namely **rhythms**. It would be a more or less well-used tool. In other words, a discourse that ordains these horizons as existence, as *being*” (2004, p. 18) ? According to Lefebvre, phenomenology deals with things and would therefore consider rhythms as things to interpret them. Rhythm analysis clearly inscribes in its project and methodology a criticism of the modern process of *reification*. This means that rhythms should not be considered as things, and the main concern of the rhythm analyst is not to say that *there are* rhythms, that rhythms exist, but to analyse them and to find what they reveal about what they are supposed to link : time, space and energy. His purpose is to qualify these rhythms. However, Lefebvre also sees rhythm analysis as a preoccupation with presence and with the present, thematics which are very closely linked to

phenomenology. I would claim that the difference between the two approaches lies in Lefebvre's dialectical analysis. This analysis involves three terms, differing from the dual analysis often employed in phenomenology, which proceeds from oppositions.

Secondly, the observation that Lefebvre undertakes in rhythm analysis is not comparable to social sciences observations, which needs to be kept in mind while reading "Seen from the window". In the introduction to his book (2000), Gardiner retraces the history of different kinds of microsociologies and outlines their "important contributions to the study of everyday life" (p. 4). However, they are different from Lefebvre's project because even if they are interpretive, "such approaches can be located firmly within the familiar metatheoretical and epistemological assumptions of academic social science." (Gardiner, 2000, p. 4) Rhythm analysis is at once rooted in the Critique of everyday life project, and it contains this critical project. Thus the methodology is influenced by its critical purpose, which distinguishes it from "the pretence to objectivity, scholarly detachment and non-partisanship that has served to legitimate the social sciences for the last 150 years" (p. 5). In social sciences approaches, the meaning of everyday life for individuals is not questioned ; it is seen as a taken-for-granted structure : "The concept of 'everyday life' remains a purely descriptive or analytical concept." (p. 5) On the other hand, critical theorists of everyday life try to show the development of this structure in history, and how its repetition produces transformations, which can sometimes lead from the ordinary to the extraordinary. They go over surface accounts of practices to attempt to see "asymmetrical power relations that exist between a given bureaucratic or institutional system and its users" (Gardiner p. 7 quoting Warf, 1986). They analyse what is familiar in order to see what is unfamiliar. If these remarks apply to critiques of everyday life, I would say that they also apply to rhythm analysis. Its methodology reflects this stance on observation and explains the differing accounts of observation in rhythm analysis and sociology. Furthermore, an analysis of rhythms can be either descriptive or critical, and Lefebvre's project is critical.

In the chapter "Seen from the window", we can see how the analysis goes from the observation of the rhythms of the streets (first paragraphs) to the critique : "The succession of alternations, of differential repetitions, suggests that there is somewhere in this present an order, which comes from elsewhere. Which reveals itself. [...] The State, which is not seen from the window, but which looms over this present, this omnipresent State." (2004, p. 32) If we continue to draw a parallel between rhythm analysis and the critique of everyday life, we could draw inspiration from the evolution of the project from the first to the third critique (Lefebvre, 1981). The first critique attempts to deploy the concept of everyday life to gather fragments of activities and unify them in a concept which allows an understanding of the whole, as Marx did with the concept of work. In this first step, according to Lefebvre, the aim is to show what is hidden and dissimulated in everyday life's apparent clearness. The second critique aims to transcend this everyday life, while the third critique argues a metamorphosis. Rhythm analysis may follow the same steps if we consider this chapter to be the first step of the critique. This would show how observation and critique are connected.

Thus observation has a special place in rhythm analysis because it is integrated in the process of analysis as well as the definition of what is being analysed. It is at once different from phenomenology, while it contains its critical dimension. It is a critique that is not only conceptual but experiential, for it mixes the *felt* with the *conceived*. However, before pursuing this argument, we should understand what Lefebvre meant when he said we have to use the body as a metronome for rhythms. If "to grasp a rhythm it is necessary to have been grasped by it" (2004, p. 27), we need to try it first. Coming back to the same street that Lefebvre experienced, we can compare our present experience to the third chapter, in order to understand how the experience now differs and

to focus on the evolution of the street and what it tells us about our recent history.

## **Observing rhythms at P. centre ; present, past and future**

Sunday, 4PM. The sun is shining. Spring is beautiful. A lot of people are outside. I have just read the *Elements of Rhythmanalysis*. I am trying to understand this book by practising it, because informed experience is part of the analysis, as we just have seen. If we follow Lefebvre well, we must go outside and feel the rhythms in order to think or analyze them adequately instead of remaining in the library and commenting on the experience of others. Lefebvre applied this principle his whole life. There have been numerous comments on Lefebvre's being an outdoor philosopher, living fully his life, his intellectual work being feed by it. So I make my way to Rue Rambuteau, in front of Centre Pompidou, trying to guess which balcony is Lefebvre's. I approximate by looking at the orientations given in the book. Lefebvre had to leave this apartment at the end of his life because of the rise in prices. Here I am. First problem : I cannot access the balcony. I need to find a place on the street, where I could be an observer, being outside and inside, as Lefebvre says. If I stop in the street for a long time or try to climb something, I disturb people and I am in turn disturbed, because my body is trained not to behave in this way, as suggests chapter four on "dressage" (Lefebvre, 2004). I would be uncomfortable and disturb others' rhythms ; I would then be unable to listen to my own rhythms and understand the city's. The best way (and a nice was as well) is to sit outside a *café*, where I can enjoy the spectacle without trouble.

This method was briefly indicated by Lefebvre, as well is another one, sickness. If I am breathless, for example, I will be more conscious of the rhythm of my breath than a person who is not sick will be conscious of his or her own. You do not feel your body when you are healthy. Rhythms are bound together and dissimulate themselves ; sickness reveals them. Sickness could play the role of the broken tool in Heidegger's analysis of concern in everyday life in *Being and Time*. When it stops working, the tool reveals the entire complex of tools in which it is included because we stop to see it out of the context of its purpose. It starts to exist for itself and we get a sense of it. The process is similar with rhythms : they appear for themselves when they go wrong. It is the case in the disturbed body (breath, cardiac rhythm, sleeping rhythm, etc.), but it could equally be true of drastic changes. To take an example old industrial Europe knows well, just imagine the silence of a town, for example Dunkerque in the north of France, right after a huge heavy industrial complex closes. The silence is at once felt, uncannily revealing the previous order which shaped everyday life and its rhythms.

But this is not the case at the Centre Pompidou. The method must allow an observation of the rhythms with all body senses, and work towards an understanding of what they reveal. There have been no drastic changes since Lefebvre observed this street more than twenty years ago. This is an important point, for it is difficult to have a sense of incremental changes over a long period of time without having been there from the beginning. This is understandably even more difficult in places where nothing has changed at all. It is interesting to note that even though a tiny percentage of the people who are there today were there twenty years ago, the rhythm is quite similar. People change, rhythms continue. Consequently, rhythms are not the combination of every individual taken separately, and rhythms cannot be reduced to an addition of individual rhythms. This similarity will be explored in comparing the text and my experience. It reveals an order, which is why observation can lead to critique. This comparison of the text produced by Lefebvre in the beginning of the 1990s and my experience of this place in 2010 proposes the problem on a longer time line and allows a consideration of the link between everyday life and history through repetition. We will follow these main concerns throughout the observation, which took place in May and June of 2010. I came there at different times of the day and different days of the week. To organise the remarks on my

experience, I would like to draw a parallel between rhythmanalysis and the third *Critique of everyday life* (Lefebvre, 1981). The main problem of the critique of everyday life, according to Lefebvre, is this one :

« Le quotidien est-il un abri contre les changements surtout quand ils arrivent brusquement ? Est-il la forteresse de la résistance aux grands changements, ou à certains changements mineurs mais importants ? Ne serait-il pas au contraire le lieu des changements essentiels, passivement ou activement ? » (p. 45-46)

What I would translate : “Is everyday life a shelter against changes, especially when they suddenly occur ? Is it a fortress of resistance against big changes, or from some small but important changes ? Would not it be, passively or actively, the place for essential changes ?”

We can transfer these remarks to rhythmanalysis, since everyday life is made of rhythms, to determine if this similarity in observations is the product of the resistance of everyday life rhythms or if small changes affected it and transformed it. To answer this question, I will consequently follow what Lefebvre did in his third *Critique* (1981) : I will first look at what continues and then look at differences, discontinuities.

Chapter three, “*Seen from the window*”, of *Elements of Rhythmanalysis* describes an unexceptional place. It is just basic everyday life street spectacle. And this is still the case today. But the more this spectacle is familiar, the more difficult the critique is, because what is exposed is hidden at the same time. Following the text, we can see the similarities and differences in the experience. There are still many people on Rue Rambuteau on this first day of observation. There is still noise and murmurs in Rue Rambuteau. The noises remain indistinct ; they mingle and require focus and practice to distinguish them. I could experience the same rhythm at the junction, with no peculiar change. The soundscape is similar, even if cars are perhaps a little less noisy than in the 1990s, and the efforts to curb traffic have had some effect. This remark also applies to the smell of the traffic. Buses now have their special lanes, as well as bicycles weaving across the lanes with their own rhythms, in between the cars and pedestrians. But these small changes do not transform the basic rhythm of the traffic. They only added some different tones. It could be the similar to what Lefebvre calls cyclical or alternating rhythms. They did not change at all. We can still see schoolchildren, shoppers and tourists, each with their own time, each with their own rhythms. Around 5PM people started leaving their work place to mix with the casually dressed tourists. The street is animated by these distinct but superposed waves. These rhythms are social rhythms, imposed by social activity. Even tourism, which is often considered as free time, is cadenced by social rhythms : dinners, time to have a drink first, museum opening hours... At night, nobody is there once the cinema in Rue Rambuteau is closed, except when warm nights allow people to linger. Night is both a natural rhythm and a social rhythm ; it is lived differently from place to place.

Another kind of rhythm is what Lefebvre calls natural rhythms, or what we could call environmental rhythms. Of course they are still there ; they are characterized by their repetition and slow evolution in time. We think they are repeating constantly in the same way, even though we know the climate is changing. The alternating day and nights will hopefully still be there, as well as seasons and years. The square in front of the Centre Pompidou is particularly sensitive to these natural rhythms, including seasons and weather. During the winter everybody crosses the square quickly, or are at

least standing. It is the same every time it rains : nobody lingers.

But when it is springtime and the weather is good, there are several rhythms to observe. People start to sit all over the square when it is not raining and in different ways if the sun is shining. The shadows on the square then offer rhythms to the people staying on it. In the beginning of the afternoon, the square is bathed in sunlight. People do not sit. They just cross the square when it is warm. They remain under the trees on the top of the square. In the afternoon, the shadow of the trees and the street behind them inch onto the square. People sit in the shade, making their way further and further onto the square. It changes atmosphere. During the afternoon, there is a moving front of sitting people changing all the time, progressively mixing with the people who just cross the square to go to the Centre Pompidou. At the end of the afternoon, when the temperature has cooled down, people are sitting everywhere, and those who wish to cross the square have to walk between them, the flux being perturbed as rocks perturb the flow of a river. This is an example of a natural, cyclical rhythm, which is created by the interference of a natural phenomenon on human spatiality. I do not know if Richard Rogers, Renzo Piano and Gianfranco Franchini thought about it when they created the square. But this is the kind of long rhythm that cannot be sensed easily, even if it has a marked effect on the place. You can sense it with your eyes, because the people can be seen sitting in the shadow while no one sits in the light. But you can also feel it with your own sensitivity to heat as you walk through the square. The moving border line of people sitting and its cyclical rhythmic essence is what is important to grasp.

There are also other rhythms that are formed by animals, particularly pigeons. They walk in a group, going from place to place to find food, and then, without any apparent logic, they all take off and fly in the same direction. Some of them cross separately the square in a random fashion. They interfere with pedestrians' bodies, as they are more awkward in walking than they are in flight. If they encounter a pedestrian, they try to avoid flying by walking in another direction, and if they cannot do that they fly. That is their rhythmic answer to the human pace. This human pace obeys what Lefebvre called dressage. The way people walk in the street has changed over history. I could experience it while watching a game a little girl was playing in the street next to the square. As Lefebvre describes, it takes time for children to successfully integrate dressage. The little girl was walking from one pavement stone to another very slowly, stopping at the edge of each stone, and then jumping to the next one. She could not mingle with the crowd while obeying her own rhythm, which disturbed the pedestrian flux. Her mother was sitting at a *café* and watched as her daughter narrowly escaped being bowled over by a motorbike.

Lefebvre also remarked that the special, festive activities of this place were linked to an important number of tourists, who participated in a "medieval-looking festival". Some jugglers or musicians played alternatively. After a sequence, a pause, and the beginning of another sequence in a corner of the square and the streets close-by. This superposes musical rhythms (music is often played) and other rhythms, accentuating the animation of the street. They cannot play together. Each one has its own style to attract people. It could be considered as another alternative rhythm. All these rhythms create the animation of the street, which is every time different but still the same.

This is present, and it was also present for Lefebvre. For the moment, no special changes have been noted in the rhythm of this street. The present is repeating itself, and Lefebvre warned us that it has a tendency to dissimulate. Maybe I will not be able to follow my plan : to find some discontinuities that express some kind of major changes in the last twenty years in the rhythmanalysis of Rue Rambuteau. Perhaps following Lefebvre further in the analysis would help.



The second step of analysis consists in finding the order which underlies those rhythms. According to Lefebvre, the State provides that order, as we have already noted it. The persistence of influence of the State could explain the continuity in the rhythms observed. Everyday life is still related to the structures even if the structures are residual. The belief of a revolutionist like Lefebvre is that a change of governance could change the most intimate and visible elements of everyday life ; consequently, it would change the rhythms. This means that we have to find an order of rhythms in the political power. If we want to consider the meaning the continuity that we observed and analyse it, we have to understand the link between everyday life and history. How did the structure of the State change in the last twenty to thirty years ? We need to analyse the link between everyday life and the past. For that purpose, we should come back to the third *Critique of everyday life : from modernity to modernism* (1981), which helps us to understand what it is that has changed in our era and analyse the production of everyday life nowadays. Immediate analysis and experience in rhythmanalysis, are never separated from an historical viewpoint.

In the third *Critique of everyday life ; From modernity to modernism* (1981), Lefebvre returns to the historical evolution that lead him to think everyday life as a unified concept. He sees everyday life as the product of modernity, but in the introduction he traces the evolutions of modernism. Here I will not engage in the debate concerning Lefebvre's thoughts on post-modernism. I would like to focus on what he sees as continuities and discontinuities between modernity and what he calls modernism. Even though the 1980s can be seen as post-modern because of the dissolution of some distinctive frames of modernity, he exposes the continuities he perceives in this period, including, in the first place, everyday life. Everyday life is like a social landmark which maintains the present reality. Reality and present dissimulate change through the routine of everyday life. There are other continuities that Lefebvre develops : family, merchandise, identities (including national identities), everyday life talk (*doxa*), vulgarity, and conservative schemes. What are discontinuities then ? Lefebvre evokes the problem of work in an automated society : what becomes of the labour class when the end of work arrives ? We are still thinking our way through this question, even if automatism is not seen to be the only cause. Crisis is there, even if veiled. Space and time are affected by it, but Lefebvre shows how revolutionary ideas have been recuperated in a global reformist movement. Informational and financial economy is the new order that shapes everyday life and its rhythm under the veil of continuity.

In the introduction of the book (1981), Lefebvre offers a very interesting reflection on what he calls "the crisis". Perhaps the link between the 1980s and today is this perpetuating crisis. Is the crisis we face nowadays structurally different from the one Lefebvre talks about in the 1980s ? It is interesting to note that Lefebvre proposed these reflections as financial capitalism settled into the political economy. The crisis, which is often understood as a factor of discontinuity or change, becomes permanent, even if there are different phases in which the crisis is more or less felt. Discontinuity introduced by a crisis is replaced by a continuous crisis, and the term "crisis" becomes inadequate. The common idea that crisis is something not permanent, that growth will return again, dissimulates the new order that is being established. Lefebvre even says that crisis becomes a mode of existence for modern societies on a global scale (Lefebvre, 1981, p. 42).

The first question that came into my mind for this project was to see if I could experience the effects of the financial crisis on the rhythms of Rue Rambuteau. Centre Pompidou is a central place for global tourism. It should be sensitive to global changes. But in fact, the idea of perpetual crisis helps to understand the lack of impact of the latest crisis, the largest one to date, on everyday rhythms in this kind of place. For crisis is the way contemporary society functions and has already functioned

for thirty years. But we should nuance this analysis because we are actually not sure of the middle-term consequences of the crisis. Maybe its effects will start being felt in the rhythms of the street. Nevertheless, this reading of the third critique of everyday life allows for some hypotheses on the continuity and the link between rhythms in everyday life and moments in history, present and past.

Even though continuity is preserved thanks to everyday life, regardless of crises, small changes put together can account for discontinuities in history. Returning to the third *Critique of everyday life* (1981), discontinuities, according to Lefebvre, turn into crises. He enumerates some of the important discontinuities that emerged in the 1980s. He points out that in a society at the end of work, body and sensations are important, for they denote an aspiration to corporeality rather than transparency. It influences the way in which space is perceived. Secondly, revolution and difference have been recuperated by progressive ideas, which is seen as a failure by Lefebvre. He also witnesses the first steps of an informational society. But the most interesting point here is what he calls changes in space and time, since they are slow but deep. Capitalism has completed this colonization process and produces space, as the *Production of Space* (1974 - tr. 1991) describes. Time becomes reversible because everyday life introduces continuity and a feeling that time will always repeat, without beginning and, above all, without end. The consequence is that the tragic inherent to life and history is abolished. Death is eliminated from everyday life. Cyclic rhythms (life and death, day and night, seasons...) are crushed by linear rhythms introduced by the production process. The future is seen as a continuation of the present via self-fulfilling projections. These changes affect history slowly, for the future is not seen as something that is unpredictable or rapidly changing, with breaks in between. Thus what we understand as a continuation is in fact a discontinuity in history, because it is a special moment in society. Today, with environmental problems, the tragic comes back into history : catastrophes, as well as the end of life on earth are possible. Environmental problems play the role of the atomic bomb during the cold war. Modern societies expect there to be another end to the history that neo-liberalists thinkers like Hayek predicted. Thus future is again in question today, since different possibilities are seen to be available. A fundamental rupture could be the introduction of sustainable development ideology, which tends to preserve the future in the present.

This consideration of the future is tangible in Beaubourg. On the side of the centre Pompidou, we can see a big poster advertising for the new Centre Pompidou in Metz, East of Paris, near from the German border. Is it a new meteorite fallen in Metz from a technocratic and centralized power, as Lefebvre suggested in his descriptions of Beaubourg ? Things have changed. Power is now more decentralized, but museums still pretend to show works of art as merchandise, Lefebvre would say. Lefebvre called Beaubourg : "The big building that was conceived not in order to be seen, but in order to give sight" (2004, p. 34). This statement refers to the architecture of the building, in which everything is seen and its function to show other works of arts. Culture became an asset in the competitive global tourism economy. In Pompidou Metz, the same statement can be said about architecture : the building first has to be seen (as the poster shows it) and is designed to be seen. And it also gives sight : the purpose is both to show the cultural tradition of France, represented (only) by its institutions on a national level in the first exhibition (about Master-pieces) and to give visibility to Metz and its region which require investments and development. At the third level of the museum, Metz and its Gothic cathedral appear before the visitor. The modern principle of transparency is combined with the predominance of vision. The architects used an optical illusion to reinforce the importance of sight : on the third level, when you are far from the windows, the Metz cathedral seems large. It becomes smaller and smaller as you approach, as if Metz was an unreachable dream. The museum's task is to incite an interest in the city and its region. Its main purpose is to attract, as Beaubourg does in Paris. And Beaubourg does it well : Lefebvre asked why

so many people came to see the big building ; and they came in endless crowds. Will Pompidou Metz have the same effect ? There is also a square, but we can already predict that it is too big for the place, and the museum is not in a lively neighbourhood. The project of Pompidou Metz incorporated the ideals of modernism while Lefebvre argued for change. Is the future taken into account by Pompidou Metz ?

As we have seen, the rhythm analyst is not at all interested in what he sees, so he should not pay much attention to a poster. How can changes in everyday life be perceptible in its rhythms ? Rhythm analysis informs the present and is aided by past, but most of all it should give a sense of the future, of its possibilities. According to Lefebvre, in modern society, linear rhythms have crushed cyclical rhythms. If we want to take into account the future in the present and its link to the past, cyclic rhythms should regain their importance. Lefebvre wants to reintroduce cyclic rhythms, close to "natural" (environmental) rhythms, in order to furnish the future with all of its possibilities. The sun rises every morning, but it is new and young every day.

## Rhythm analysis in practice : Rhythm and Place

The aim of this observation was to demonstrate the importance of practice in the rhythm analytical project. I discussed the importance of the chapter related to observation in Lefebvre's book as well as some essential characteristics of the specific kind of observation that Lefebvre describes - the observation of rhythms. The attempt to undertake a current rhythm analysis in the same place, Rue Rambuteau, showed the difficulties of this methodology, namely, the difficulty to observe rhythms as well as their critical interpretation, since no major change had occurred in the place observed. It raised questions about the inscription of the rhythms observed over longer temporalities, including past and future. This problematic provided the basis for my analysis. Interpretations that have been made can still be discussed. To complete this experiment, I would like to add some reflections on the spatiality of rhythms. Stuart Elden, in the introduction to Lefebvre's *Rhythm analysis* (2004) insists on the fact that rhythms are both spatial and temporal ; as we have seen, Lefebvre describes rhythms as a link between time and place. So we should not leave the spatial dimension out of the interpretation.

Space is part of Lefebvre's analysis in two different ways. First, rhythm defines a place in an interesting manner, for the definition of place is often substantive. Its principal feature is its closure and its definite identity related to a vernacular tradition. Here we achieve a rhythmic definition of place, which is able to take into account the changing temporality of place through repetition and difference and establishes its identity with rhythmic features persisting over time. The analysis of place is also part of rhythm analysis, through its ambiances and meaning. For example, Lefebvre describes the architecture of Centre Pompidou as transcending the "human scale" that was established in this place by the proportion of the old buildings. "The windows, doors, streets and façades are measured in proportion to human size" in older buildings (2004, p.33). Centre Pompidou building is clearly bigger than the buildings of the neighbourhood, showing the power of the State, as it was imposed there. "Opposite, the constructions (Centre Pompidou) wanted to *transcend* this scale, to leave known dimensions and also all model past and possible behind" (p. 33). This vision of "human scale" can be discussed : human scale is not a clear notion because proportion and scale are differing notions. Monumental building can be well proportioned, even if their scale is different from other buildings. What is interesting here is that scale is always a relative concept, which includes a comparison. Here, the referent for comparison is the body, as well as for rhythms in the rhythm analytical observation. Scale, as well as rhythms, is related to the past and the future, the possible. It leads to the second way in which space is present in rhythm analysis. Scale is a

determinant in rhythmanalysis, since the referent is the body with its proportions and measures. Thus the observation in rhythmanalysis always depends on human scale, because rhythms are perceived by the rhythmanalyst only if they are perceptible by his body. Even if he has specific training that resembles meditation, he can only perceive rhythms at his scale. But the rhythmanalyst knows this limitation : observation leads one to question the imbrications of a single place among the differing scales of a city. "Opacity and horizons, obstacles and perspectives implicate one another because they complicate one another, imbricate one another to the point of allowing the Unknown, the giant city, to be glimpsed or guessed at. With its diverse spaces affected by diverse times : rhythms" (p. 33). Rhythms in present are understood thanks to their link to past and future, but they are also linked to a place and imbrications in larger space. Thus rhythmanalysis is concerned with scales and proportions because it is both spatial and temporal.

To conclude this reflection, I would like to point out an indication that Lefebvre gave in the article called *The rhythmanalytical Project*. In this article, Lefebvre states that "to conceive physical reality and its relation to the sensible and physiological reality of human being" (p. 81), scale, rhythm and proportion are important. He does not develop the relationships between the terms of this triad, but we can already see that they are relative to measure and to the body. A next step could be to see how this triad actually helps to understand the relations between space and time.

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