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1 Introduction to rhythmanalysis

Introduction: Why rhythmanalysis and why now?

There's a scene that has stayed with me from when I lived in Italy in the early 2000s. I would often pass a small grocery shop in the centre of Florence on my way to catch a bus to work early in the morning when the shop was first opening, or in the late afternoon when trade has resumed. State regulation stipulates the clock-time of operating hours¹ but this collective schedule also resonates with temporal norms of meal times and rest which leave room for the cyclical rhythms of the body, the household and the social life of the city. As I walked along the Via dell'Albero, I frequently saw a young man who was part of the family grocery business on the threshold of the shop talking to someone in the street – friends, fellow shopkeepers or customers it seemed – and I would also stop to say hello and exchange a few words when our paths and pace converged. The conversation had its own form and rhythm and shoppers were sometimes made to wait while it came to its conclusion. I can now see the constellations of rhythms that gave rise to these moments of coming together in time and space, on the street but not quite, the young man at work but sidestepping its totalizing hold, myself on the way to work but out of step with the day's trajectory in this encounter. The patience and accommodation of the shoppers feels important too; a collective refusal perhaps of the imposition of the linear rhythms of exchange and a tactic to retain a quality of everyday life that encompasses pleasure and meaning.

¹ Opening hours of small food shops are approximately 8.00 am–1.00 pm and 4.00 pm–7.30 pm, closed on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons and all day on Sundays. Exceptions to tightly defined operating hours already exist in tourist areas and recent legislation has extended flexibility. The impact of global capital, the demands of tourism, the presence of smaller units in city centres owned by supermarkets, and the readiness of migrant shopkeepers and workers to offer extensive trading hours in convenience stores are likely to lead to further change.

This book is concerned with understanding social life through the lens of rhythm. It emerged from my long-standing interest in how time and space are lived, produced, remembered and imagined, and how they shape the experience of everyday life as in the scene recounted above. Rhythm, it now seems, stimulated my curiosity beneath the surface in a series of projects in recent years. In a study of construction work, I was spellbound by the working rhythms of a man laying screed on a floor which he literally smoothed into shape through a combination of visual judgement and the graceful movement and pressure of his hands and body (Lyon 2012). And I can still bring to mind the sounds of fishmongers at work in a south London market as their gestures in chopping and filleting fish produced their own rhythm which could be heard all around – ‘bang, bang, slice, pause’ (Lyon and Back 2012). In these studies, I was interested in the reach and coordination of work across practices, people and things in time and space at different scales, such as the timing of laying screed in the refurbishment project or the sourcing of Caribbean fish to suit the tastes of the market’s local customers. Rhythm finally came to the fore in my visual ethnography of Billingsgate fish market as I sought – and struggled – to identify the different coexisting spatial and temporal relations of market life. It was this project with all its surprising turns which prompted me to use and reflect on the potential of rhythmanalysis as a research strategy and a set of practices in the field (Lyon 2016 and see Chapter 3 for a discussion of this study). In this book, I explore what it means to undertake empirical research when attention to the ‘flow and form’ of rhythm comes into view (Benveniste 1966).

The intellectual starting point of the book is the work of the French ‘philosopher cum sociologist, sociologist cum literary critic, literary critic cum urbanist, urbanist cum geographer’ (Merrifield 2006: xxiv) Henri Lefebvre, and in particular his *Éléments de rythmanalyse: introduction à la connaissance des rythmes*, published in French in 1992, one year after his death and in English as *Rhythmanalysis, Space, Time & Every day Life* in 2004. For Lefebvre, rhythm is always spatial and temporal and offers a means of grasping space and time together (Elden 2006: 186) and this remains its strength and appeal. There are many other scholars whose writings address rhythm in one way or another² but as far as I am aware, there is none whose

² See Henriques, Tianen and Väliaho (2014) for an account which highlights different contributions.

influence is felt so strongly in empirical research across the social sciences at the present time.

This book asks: What can attention to rhythm do for empirical research in the social sciences? What does working with rhythm as a tool of analysis – rhythmanalysis – offer? First though, what do we mean by rhythm? The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines rhythm as ‘a regularly occurring sequence of events or processes’ such as the rhythm of the tides. Equally, rhythm refers to a ‘repeated pattern’ such as in music or in language where there is a ‘relation of long and short or stressed and unstressed syllables’.³ For Lefebvre, ‘Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm’ (2004: 15). Rhythm requires repetition. But this is not enough on its own. Indeed, ‘absolute repetition’ is a ‘fiction of logical and mathematical thought’ (7). Instead, ‘there is always something new and unforeseen that introduces itself into the repetitive: *difference*’ (6, emphasis added).

Curiosity about rhythm on the part of scholars and social commentators has come and gone since at least the late eighteenth century as ‘rhythm moves between disciplines’ (Henriques, Tianen and Väliaho 2014: 4) across the natural sciences and philosophy, psychology, physiology, performance studies, literary criticism, law, sociology, anthropology, economics, geography and urban studies. At the present time, there is something of a resurgence of interest in rhythm in the Anglo-American academy in the social sciences and humanities.⁴ This renewed awareness – or ‘return’ (ibid.: 3) – of rhythm can be seen in the context of concrete changes in the structures, processes, spaces and temporalities of everyday life and intellectual developments that lead to their perception anew.

³ Oxford English Dictionary: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/rhythm>

⁴ In addition to the published work discussed in this book, there have been a number of recent events devoted to rhythm, including Symposium: Rhythm and Event (The London Graduate School, 2011): <http://www.thelondongraduateschool.co.uk/blog/symposium-rhythmevent/> and <http://backdoorbroadcasting.net/2011/10/rhythm-and-event/>; Workshop: Rhythm Work (University of Nottingham 2014), Conference: Rhythm as Pattern and Variation (Goldsmiths 2016): <https://audioculture.net/2016/05/25/audio-rhythm-as-pattern-and-variation-political-social-artistic-inflections/> and the CHASE seminar series, Rhythmanalysis: Everything You Always Wanted to Know but Were Afraid to Ask (Goldsmiths 2017): <http://www.chase.ac.uk/rhythmanalysis> and <http://generic.wordpress.soton.ac.uk/rhythmanalysis/seminar/>

There is some consensus that the pace of life in the Western world in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has accelerated. Speed is the motif of the times and yet we have also seen the emergence of various slow movements for alternative ways of living – in cities, food production and scholarship. But there is more to this story. The experience of speed and slowness, motion and stillness, temporal autonomy and dependence is uneven and unequal between people and over time (Bissell and Fuller 2011; Hubbard and Lilley 2004; Sharma 2014; Virilio 1986; Wajcman and Dodd 2017). On the one hand, the time of professionals (lawyers and doctors for instance) is highly valued and rewarded, if also highly pressured. On the other, the delivery drivers of the gig economy barely have enough time in the day to get by financially while low-paid service workers on zero hours contracts find their needs for work and income out of synch with those of their employers. In addition, the temporal requirements of anticipation and presence – often 24/7 – in the work of the paid and unpaid care that keeps us all going are often at odds with rhythms that make for a good life.

While speed (and slowness) is often relevant for understanding the way we live in the world, it tends towards a linear spatialization of time and is too one dimensional to comprehend the temporal intricacies of lived experience. Thinking with rhythm offers a more multifaceted approach. It suggests a nuanced understanding of the articulations of tempo, movement, flow, stasis and repetition. And it advances a mode of analysis which recognizes different spatio-temporal relations and what they do in the world. In so doing, it illuminates the complex temporalities and territories of contemporary capitalism, it punctuates the lived embodied experience of the everyday, and it captures the imagination in making sense of the world across these scales.

Although interest in rhythm has gathered pace in recent years, the challenge of researching or analysing rhythm in the social sciences remains considerable. Lefebvre's *Rhythmanalysis* offers scholars a tantalizing grasp of rhythm but many readers have characterized it as an approach that stops short of being a method, arguing that he does not provide a systematic methodology for *doing* rhythmanalysis. Highmore describes it as an 'orientation' (2002: 175) for attending to the social world rather than as a technique for interrogating it; similarly for Hall, Lashua and Coffey, it is 'more an investigative disposition' than a 'method for systematic enquiry' (2008: 1028). Edensor thinks it is a 'suggestive vein of temporal thinking rather than a definitive methodology' (2011: 190),

McCormack characterizes it as 'a speculative invitation to think rhythmically' (2013: 42), and Borch, Bondo Hansen and Lange consider that it 'constitutes a rich reservoir of ideas for empirical work' (2015: 1082). The intangibility of rhythm itself may be part of the problem here. 'Rhythms. Rhythms.' Lefebvre bemoans. 'They reveal and they hide' (2004: 36). Or as Mels puts it, rhythm 'disappears' (2004: 23) as we attempt to get a hold on it. That said, there have been a number of studies and edited collections which have developed the practice of rhythmanalysis which are discussed in the pages that follow (for instance Chen 2017; Edensor 2010a; Mels 2004; McCormack 2013; Smith and Hetherington 2013; Stratford 2015).

This book in the 'What is?' Research Methods series addresses the task of how to *do* rhythmanalysis. It presents rhythmanalysis as a 'strategy of inquiry' which sits between the theories that inform a particular study and the specific methods used to collect and analyse data (Denzin and Lincoln 2018). So rather than being a method per se, rhythmanalysis comprises a set of methods; and these will vary according to the project at hand and the questions it asks. In this sense, rhythmanalysis has much in common with ethnography and it shares some of the methods used in ethnographic research, especially observation. However, it can also take other forms, including the more quantitative approaches used in the study of economic cycles or digital interaction.

This book critically discusses what Lefebvre and subsequent scholars have made of rhythmanalysis as a set of ideas and a research practice. It highlights the methodological choices and possibilities that can be drawn from Lefebvre's writings and subsequent studies through detailed discussion of examples. It explores the lively potential of rhythmanalysis for spatially, temporally and sensually attuned practices of research and for identifying and sensing different coexisting rhythms of everyday life at multiple scales. And it argues for rhythmanalysis as a promising, even 'instructive and inspiring' (Merrifield 2006), tool for empirical research into everyday life today. In so doing, it introduces rhythmanalysis to researchers who are new to it or who would like to reflect further on how to develop their own grasp of rhythm and make use of rhythmanalysis in their own work, especially in sociology, criminology, sociolegal studies, geography, urban studies, architecture, anthropology, economics and cultural studies. It also contributes to the development of apposite social science methods for the investigation of social life in the twenty-first century.

The remainder of this introductory chapter discusses the appeal of rhythm in historical perspective and situates Lefebvre's *Rhythmanalysis* in his broader thinking and politics of time, space and everyday life, before outlining the orientation and organization of this book. For readers who wish to jump ahead, the first part of Chapter 2 considers how Lefebvre conceptualized his rhythmanalytical project and sets out his key terms. This discussion is an important grounding for the rest of the book. It is followed by a review of examples of doing rhythmanalysis across different fields (in the second half of Chapter 2) and detailed discussion of three key approaches (Chapter 3). Chapter 4 offers a critical appraisal of what rhythmanalysis is good for in a discussion of its gains and limitations and Chapter 5 includes a worked example of thinking about a new project with rhythm in mind.

The appeal of rhythm in historical perspective

If 'rhythm returns' as Henriques, Tianen and Väliäho (2014: 3) put it, in what forms, times and places has it surfaced? There are many ways to tell a history of rhythm and its role in modernity in particular.⁵ Here I restrict my focus to strands of thinking and practice in the social sciences and humanities that were either present in or parallel to the development of Lefebvre's ideas.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, rhythm attracted considerable interest and even became a 'fetishized keyword of modernism' (Cowan 2012: 18–19 in Henriques, Tianen and Väliäho 2014: 7). This period was marked by significant shifts in the pace and reach of everyday life such as the development of mechanized transport and associated processes of industrialization, changes which gave rise to considerable anxiety and increased awareness of rhythm. The appeal of rhythm was in its capacity to capture the dynamism and fluidity of the times, and as a potential force for transformation. There are some interesting parallels between this earlier period and the global and fluid character of society and economy in the present day. Thinking with rhythm may have something to offer debates on the excessive pace of life and the attractions of slower living.

⁵ Rhythm has a longer history than in modernity, dating at least from ancient and classical Greek thinking – see Pascal Michon (e.g. 2016) for a broader account.

With a focus on developments in France, French philosopher Pascal Michon (e.g. 2005, 2011, 2016, 2017 and his *Rhuthmos* website⁶) offers an intellectual genealogy of rhythm through the work of Roland Barthes, Émile Benveniste, Michel Serres, Michel Foucault, Edgar Morin, Henri Meschonnic, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari as well as Lefebvre himself. For instance, Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* originally published in 1975 is precisely concerned with social and bodily rhythms – Michon argues – despite not making any explicit reference to rhythm. The modes of subjectivity produced through the new legal and political systems he discusses were most intensively rendered in institutions such as the prison but were equally present elsewhere. In *Refrains for Moving Bodies*, British cultural geographer Derek McCormack's account of the philosophical and artistic underpinnings and influence of rhythmanalysis makes some different connections. For instance, the American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey (1859–1952) (who has since had his own revival) was drawn to rhythm 'because it offers a way of thinking differentiation in process' (a view also found in the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead). Dewey and Lefebvre – despite his ambivalence towards pragmatism – embraced the 'promise of rhythm as a corporeal and conceptual nexus through which to grasp the spacetimes in which bodies participate'. For both, rhythm is not just temporal but is something which 'takes place' as Dewey puts it. This makes aesthetic experience possible and carries an ethical imperative: to multiply possibilities for living individually and collectively 'by making more of the expressive qualities generated by rhythmic spacetimes' (McCormack 2013: 40–1, emphasis in original).

These philosophical ideas were linked to efforts to cultivate rhythmic thinking or awareness through movement as 'a utopian vehicle' towards more authentic ways of life from the early twentieth century in the context of industrialization. *Eurhythmics*, developed by Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865–1950), was extremely popular across Europe, Russia and the United States, on a par with tango (Morris 2017: 52). It taught participants to increase conscious control over corporeal rhythms and complex bodily movements and develop an enhanced capacity for listening (*sofège*). For Jaques-Dalcroze, this training laid the foundations for fostering more experimental rhythms although contemporary commentators were more sceptical especially in relation to the troubling connections

⁶ *Rhuthmos*: <http://rhuthmos.eu/>

between Jaques-Dalcroze's body politics and the political choreographies of German fascism (McCormack 2013: 40, 45–7, 52). Along with Jaques-Dalcroze, Rudolf Laban (1879–1958), a choreographer now well known for his *Labanotation* for the representation of movement,⁷ and Rudolf Bode (1881–1970), a student of Jaques-Dalcroze who developed 'rhythmic gymnastics', were both fellow members of the 'Rhythmus movement' in Germany in the 1920s (Karina and Kant 2004: 66 in Crespi 2014: 34). While they agreed that rhythm was experienced at a corporeal level, Bode conceived of it as irrational and undivided whereas Laban considered it as polyrhythmic and polymorphous and their methodologies for rhythmanalysis were also at odds with one another (Laban 2014[1921], Crespi 2014: 341). Notwithstanding the uncomfortable political associations of the practices of all three of these figures and their differences in approach, the development of conscious kinaesthetic awareness of the effects of rhythm remains crucial in movement and performance (dance and theatre) in the twenty-first century (see Morris 2017) and turns out to be useful for today's rhythmanalyst (more on that later).

Important developments in the field of new media technologies also emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the realm of photography, Eadweard Muybridge (1830–1904) was something of a celebrity for his image-sequences of galloping horses and other animals in motion and his claims for the revelatory power of the camera. While Muybridge's sequences made motion visible, it was the French physiologist and Muybridge's contemporary, Étienne-Jules Marey (1830–1904), who contributed most to the scientific effort to disembody time in space. Recognizing that, unaided, the senses failed to capture the complexity of action, through his 'chronophotography' (time-writing or photography of time) he literally made the trajectory of action apparent (Creswell 2006: 78; Miller 2010: 41). Cinema's capacity for further portraying speed and movement in time and space gave rise to new experiences of intensity and rhythm.

Photography was central to what later became known as time and motion studies, associated with the 'scientific management' of Frederick Taylor. In the 1910s and 1920s in the United States and later in Europe,⁸ Taylorism,

⁷ Laban dance centres were founded in the UK and New York.

⁸ Similar ideas about time and rhythm were present in Soviet Russia (Henriques, Tianen and Väliaho 2014: 14).

as it was also known, was concerned with the 'rhythmic performance' of body and machine in newly established factories and industrial processes. Equipped with a stopwatch and his powers of observation, Taylor relied on his eye and the measure of the clock in his time studies which sought to control the working body in relation to contemporary ideals of 'new kinds of ruthlessly efficient mobilities' and a belief that rhythm was key to the successful accumulation of wealth (Creswell 2006: 83; Henriques, Tianen and Väliaho 2014: 13). In contrast, his collaborators cum rivals, Frank and Lilian Gilbreth developed more sophisticated means of analysing time and motion using photography and drawing and might be more accurately credited with the development of the field of time and motion studies (Creswell 2006: 99). Laban (introduced earlier) also turned his attention to the distribution and organization of 'effort' and 'appropriate use of movement' at work, notably for women. Towards the end of the Second World War, he collaborated with management consultant Fredrick Lawrence in the UK to develop the Laban-Lawrence Industrial Rhythm to improve bodily efficiency (Laban and Lawrence 1947; Creswell 2006: 125). Drawing on Taylor, he nevertheless differentiated his approach from motion studies through his emphasis on rhythm (2011[n.d.]: 232). These examples might retrospectively be seen as instances of rhythmanalysis (ahead of the term), if not progressive ones.

Changing relationships between time and space were also an important concern of artists and writers in this period. While Cubism reconstructed three-dimensional space, displacing any single viewpoint, Futurists incorporated sequences of action within a single image in their celebration of speed (and were directly indebted to Marey in their own photographic style). These and other artistic movements invoked rhythm to 'grasp the affective excess' of experience (McCormack 2013: 45). The British Grosvenor School of Modern Art 'adopted a Cubist-Futurist-Vorticist pictorial language' (Samuel 2015: 3) and one of its best-known proponents, Sybil Andrews (1898–1992), created animated linocuts that show the rhythms of everyday life. In *Rush Hour* (Image 1.1), the composition of the image brilliantly conveys the continuous movement of the escalators (Spalding 2014: 120) and, accentuated by the title, the recurrence of action across the cycles of the day. The viewer sees bodies interconnected in space but senses their movements as more fluid than in some of the machinic resonances of other works of the time. Rhythm was clearly at play in the imagination of the times.

Image 1.1 Sybil Andrews, *Rush Hour*, 1930, linocut on paper, EP 1, Collection of Glenbow; bequest of Sybil Andrews, 1995. Image copyright the Estate of Sybil Andrews, Glenbow, Calgary, Canada, 2017.

Finally, poets, playwrights and novelists⁹ have long experimented with rhythm through language – as highlighted by one of the OED definitions of rhythm mentioned earlier. Two examples from the twentieth century indicate the capacity of language to evoke rhythm. The English writer Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) was an important figure in the literary world in the first decades of the twentieth century, prominent in London’s Bloomsbury set of intellectuals, writers and artists. According to Adam Barrows she was ‘one of the most rhythm-conscious prose writers in the English language’ and a ‘rhythmic reading of her work’ reveals her characters ‘as implicated in the global by means of their rhythmic interactions’. Rhythms are central to Woolf’s project in her experimental novel *The Waves* based on subjective monologues in six voices (and notoriously difficult to read). Here she exemplifies the relationship between the corporeal and the global as she writes human tempos and subjectivity through everyday life into a broader material environment (2016: 62–5). The second example is the French writer

⁹ I do not discuss musicians in this book although Lefebvre does have a chapter on ‘Music and Rhythms’ in *Rhythm analysis*.

and film-maker Georges Perec (1936–82) who was in fact a student of Lefebvre, an influence that is clear in his attention to the ‘infra-ordinary’. Perec was a member of the Oulipo group which famously devised literary constraints to trigger inspiration – his novel *La disparition* (1969) was written without using the letter ‘e’. An earlier novel which he later made into a film, *Un homme qui dort* (1967), directly concerns the arrhythmic experience of wandering in the city guided only by bodily sensations, its proponents marginal but free in their refusal of the urban paths made for them (Villneuve 2008: 176–8).

Fast forward to the 1970s. Michon (e.g. 2011) argues that this decade witnessed the re-emergence of an interest in rhythm when structuralism and social stability were unsettled – a position Yi Chen (2017) echoes. An important contemporary development to consider as part of this contextualization of the appeal of rhythm is the time-geography of Swedish geographer Torsten Hägerstrand (1970) at the University of Lund who from the 1960s developed a system of notation and diagrammatic representations of movement in time and space. The novelty of Hägerstrand’s work was to explicitly link space and time, for instance in research into diffusion in the spread of technologies and migration based initially on quantitative modelling and statistical techniques. This form of time-geography was criticized, not least by feminist scholars, as a rather rigid descriptive representation that was remote from everyday embodied experience (e.g. Rose 1993). Crang (2001) and later Edensor nevertheless identify Hägerstrand’s time-geography as an important antecedent of rhythmanalysis. Edensor argues that Lefebvre’s rhythmanalysis offers a ‘fuller, richer analysis of these synchronic practices in space whilst also accounting for spatial qualities, sensations and intersubjective habits’ (2010a: 2) and has sought to demonstrate this in his own work (discussed in Chapter 3). Lefebvre brings the body back into theoretical and empirical research on space and time and proposes a conceptual, practical and sensory grasp of space and time together which recognizes time space as produced in practice – and this is what makes rhythmanalysis so worth exploring today.

Situating Rhythmanalysis in Lefebvre’s spatial politics and critique of everyday life

Henri Lefebvre was alive for most of the twentieth century – from 1901 to 1991 – and his thinking is as broad as the social, political, economic and cultural changes he witnessed, and often lamented. His start in life was in

the hamlet of Hagetmau in the foothills of the Pyrenees in southwest France where he was raised a Catholic. He would subsequently spend summer vacations close by in Navarrenx where his mother's family originated, and he returned there for military service and in retirement. His home region was also the subject of his early interest in agrarian and cyclical ways of living, the appeal of which remained with him and significantly informed his work. Rural life retained a certain authenticity and humanity for Lefebvre and was in tune with the rhythms of nature and the seasons. These connections were being eroded by the fragmentation and alienation of the industrialized consumerist society of contemporary France he saw taking shape. Trained in classical philosophy – gaining a degree at the age of seventeen – Lefebvre was dissatisfied with its 'relentless abstraction away from lived social relations'. The study of everyday life – with the help of Marx and Heidegger – kept his feet firmly on the ground (Alvarez 2007: 53–5).

Lefebvre's early working life was varied including military service – and time in the Resistance to Nazi occupation – factory and media work, teaching, and driving a Paris taxi (Elden 2004a: 2; Alvarez 2007: 52). He was sixty when he was appointed to the first chair in applied sociology in France at the University of Strasbourg in 1961 after working for most of the 1950s at different research centres in Paris. Over the previous decades, he had had a rocky relationship with the French Communist Party (PCF) which he joined in 1928 and from which he was suspended and then finally left thirty years later – a longer-lasting involvement than many of his contemporaries. However, free from the restrictions imposed by the party, he relished the opportunity to speak openly and gathered a large student following in Strasbourg and later Nanterre to the west of Paris. Theory and practice were inseparable for Lefebvre making politics part of his everyday and he is recognized (by some) as an important figure behind the 1968 student protests. He was involved with, influenced and was influenced by many of the key movements and groups of the second half of the twentieth century including Maoists, Situationists, notably founding member Guy Debord, and the CoBrA group of architects, especially Constant Nieuwenhuys who also shaped his interest in the urban (Elden 2004a: 3; Merrifield 2006: 33; Ross 1997: 70).¹⁰

¹⁰ Lefebvre also recounts that it was a direct experience of 'brutal urbanization' that shifted his attention to the urban: 'One bright day, in my region, when bulldozers arrived and starting levelling the trees – they had discovered oil there' (Ross 1997: 76).

Stuart Elden argues that Lefebvre's work should 'be understood in the context of his Marxism and philosophy' and that his writing and teaching was always 'theoretically informed and politically engaged'. Lefebvre's was a humanist Marxism in contrast to the structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Louis Althusser. His analysis of the extension of capitalism broadened rather than departed from Marxism. He argued that alienation, as proposed by Marx, was not only a central concept for understanding the experience of labour in the formal or informal economy but that in the twentieth century it was relevant across all spheres of life including leisure and rest. Capitalism 'had increased its scope' in extent and form in a new way in the twentieth century and had come to 'dominate the cultural and social world as well as the economic' (Elden 2004a: 6, 9, 111).

Capitalism's colonization¹¹ of different spheres of life, notably through consumption, meant that it dominated what Lefebvre called *la vie quotidienne* – 'everyday life'. And this is a theme he wrote about at length in his three-volume *Critique of Everyday Life* (2014a) originally published separately in 1947, 1961 and 1981.¹² He uses the term 'everyday life' to describe the invasiveness of capitalism into routine practices, in other words, how lived experience is appropriated through ever more abstract and linear conceptualizations of space and time (Crang 2001: 201). Political, bureaucratic and commercial power seek to order rhythms in ways that are quickly habituated and undetected and thereby 'difficult to knowingly contravene' (Edensor and Holloway 2008: 483). The normative rules and conventions of social life often instituted by commercial forces and the state tell us what to do when, Power 'knows how to utilise and manipulate time, dates, time-tables' and to imprint rhythm in our practices (Lefebvre 2004: 68–9).

Yet for Lefebvre modern capitalism could never be 'seamless' and the 'level' of the everyday is also the site of revolutionary possibility (Merrifield 2006: 26; Lefebvre 2014a: 339). He sought radical change that would put an end to alienation, holding onto a belief in the future amid his darker musings

¹¹ In 'Clearing the Ground' in the second volume of *Critique of Everyday Life*, Lefebvre attributes to term 'colonized' to Guy Debord (Lefebvre 2014a: 305).

¹² Elden (2004a: 112) draws attention to the different meanings in French of '*quotidienne*' and to Lefebvre's own thoughts on its translation into English (Lefebvre and Levich 1987). While 'everyday life' is a fair translation of '*la vie quotidienne*', he argues, it misses the sense of the repetitive character of life that the French term implies, made more explicit in French as '*quotidienneté*' which can be translated as 'everydayness'.

(Elden 2004a: 117). The point of critical inquiry then was to bring about this transformation: 'The study of the everyday is not to be understood as literally documenting the details of life from one day to the next,' Lefebvre writes in the second volume of *Critique of Everyday Life*. 'Critique implies possibilities, and possibilities as yet unfulfilled. It is the task of critique to demonstrate what these possibilities and thus lack of fulfilment are' (2014a: 337, 312).

Rhythmanalysis emphasizes that linearity and standardization can never wholly capture either interior life or the patterning of the everyday (Barrows 2016: 87). This short work is often considered to be the fourth volume in the *Critique of Everyday Life* series. It demonstrates why Lefebvre was such an important thinker of the twentieth century within and beyond Marxism (Elden 2004b: vii). It shows how change occurs through the imprinting of new rhythms on an era (Lefebvre 2004: 14) and reveals how rhythms 'below the surface' are 'weighted with power' (Edensor 2010a: 8). As such, it offers potential for social analysis today and for thinking about new ways of living in the context of the social, economic and environmental challenges of the twenty-first century.

Orientation and organization of this book

While trying to do rhythmanalysis for the first time at Billingsgate fish market, my introduction to reading about it was through the work of Tim Edensor (2000, 2008, 2010a, 2010a, 2011, 2014) and Paul Simpson (2008, 2012) and I gratefully acknowledge their influence on this book. I have read and returned to the text of *Rhythmanalysis* itself to identify and develop insights and instructions for the practice of rhythmanalysis and have familiarized myself with some of Lefebvre's other writings. Since I was not a Lefebvre specialist, I am indebted to the accomplished scholarship of Stuart Elden¹³ (2004a,b, 2006) and Rob Shields¹⁴ (1998) in trying to get to grips with the range and significance of Lefebvre's thinking. The work of Andy Merrifield (2000, 2006) has also been a great help in gathering a sense

¹³ See also Stuart Elden's Progressive Geographies blog: <https://progressivegeographies.com/>, notably, 'Where to start with reading Henri Lefebvre: <https://progressivegeographies.com/resources/lefebvre-resources/where-to-start-with-reading-henri-lefebvre/> and *Henri Lefebvre, Key writings* (2017) edited with Elizabeth Lebas and Eleonore Kofman.

¹⁴ Shields (1998) includes a comprehensive list of Lefebvre's writings.

of a man 'who wasn't afraid to philosophize on a grand, sweeping scale' in an astounding sixty or so books which have since been translated into thirty different languages (2006: xx). These and additional works (notably Butler 2012; McCormack 2013; and Stanek 2011) have alerted me to writings by Lefebvre that predate *Rhythmanalysis* and studies that have subsequently developed it, steering and opening up my understanding.

I have also come to this project as a feminist sociologist which means it has been a curious journey to spend so much time with the writings of a man who had little truck with feminist concerns. He had a patriarchal and heteronormative approach to the household along with a patronizing regard for the place of women in everyday life (Shields 2011: 283; Alvarez 2007: 72). For instance, while he recognized that everyday life burdens women more than men, he had no faith in women's capacity to realize and change their situations. His texts are littered with the casual sexism of the times – and an apparent reluctance to change with the times – and his personal life does not bear witness to any greater consideration of gender relations. Indeed, his own celebration of spontaneity and liberty left a string of ex-partners, ex-wives and children in its wake (Merrifield 2006: 17).¹⁵ Furthermore, despite extensive travel and international connections in a life of politics as much as of learning, it is 'extraordinary', writes David Alvarez, 'that an anti-authoritarian thinker as attentive to world-historical circumstances' as Lefebvre should write so little about French imperialism (in Vietnam and Algeria) and the associated independence movements, or about revolutions further afield in Cuba or Nicaragua (2007: 72)¹⁶ – although Lefebvre does mention risking dismissal from his post as a research director at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS)¹⁷ for supporting the Algerian cause (Ross 1997: 72). I would nevertheless argue that Lefebvre's project of thinking space and time together through rhythm can be deployed in a way that shakes off the sexism and other blind spots of its inception. As I will demonstrate, *rhythmanalysis* offers a way to analyse the complexity of space and time in twenty-first-century flexible

¹⁵ Lefebvre had a total of six children with three of his four wives (Alvarez 2007: 52).

¹⁶ Kipfer and Goonewardena argue that Lefebvre's notion of colonization 'presents a promising opening to understanding the "colonial" aspects of urbanisation today' (2013: 1). Lefebvre used colonization to understand the increasing alienation of all spheres of life through the dominance of linear over cyclical time (discussed in Chapter 2 of the present work) and in theories of imperialism in his work on the state.

¹⁷ The CNRS is the national public research institution in France.

capitalism. Lefebvre's dual attention to the experience of embodiment in everyday life and the use of the body as a tool of research (see discussion in Chapter 2) offers powerful directions for researchers doing rhythmanalysis today wanting to recognize the gendered, classed and raced production of everyday life and knowledge about it.

This book is organized as follows. In this introduction, I have situated and presented rhythmanalysis in relation to the appeal of rhythm in historical perspective and Lefebvre's politics and thinking on everyday life. More generally, I have started to make a case for social scientists to engage with rhythmanalysis in order to better equip themselves to discern the multiple rhythms that underpin and matter for how we live in the twenty-first century.

Chapter 2 explores how Lefebvre envisaged and applied rhythmanalysis himself. It presents a close reading of his writings on rhythm and shows how his work continues to offer fascinating methodological perceptions and directions for researchers today. It sets out the rhythmic elements that Lefebvre distinguishes – linear and cyclical rhythms, 'polyrhythmia', 'arrhythmia', 'eurhythmia' and 'isorhythmia', and dressage. It critically discusses his argument for the centrality of the body in the practice of rhythmanalysis. The chapter then explores the uptake and development of rhythmanalysis in recent years, notably in research on place and mobility. This discussion offers the reader insight into studies of rhythm which 'extend the methodological inspiration offered by *Rhythmanalysis*' itself (Smith and Hetherington 2013: 10).

Chapter 3 focuses on three sets of examples which operationalize rhythmanalysis in different ways. The first considers the extensive rhythmanalytical work of Tim Edensor and how in collaboration with colleagues, he deploys the body as a key tool in the research process. The second considers the work of Christian Borch, Kristian Bondo Hansen and Ann-Christina Lange whose rhythmanalysis of finance displaces the centrality of the body as a research tool and offers insight into the everyday organization of capitalism itself. The third example is based on my own research on the workings of a fish market where the body is an important but insufficient tool of research. Here I present audiovisual methods as a means to document, perceive and analyse rhythm.

Some of the gains, limitations and future directions of the 'rhythmanalytical project' are brought together in Chapter 4. First, the chapter builds on discussion of rhythmanalysis as an embodied research

practice and makes connections to methodological developments around the multi-sensory and material. Second, I critically consider rhythm in relation to other temporal concepts and discuss how we might better attend to conceptions of time in research design as well as use inventive strategies for playing with time in order to expose spatio-temporal relations. Third, it offers some reflections on the potential scale and scope of rhythmanalytical research; and in the final section, I critically discuss different means of conveying rhythm. Chapter 5 concludes the book with a worked example of 'doing rhythmanalysis over dinner' in the setting of an Italian restaurant. This imagined research is intended to reveal the questions and directions that rhythmanalysis inspires and the multiple ways researchers might orient themselves to be attuned to rhythm.