

Rhythmanalysis

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Cities, Organizations, Movement, and Media: A Multi-scale Rhythmanalytic Approach to Complex Biosocial Phenomena

How do value-producing socio-technical processes synchronize, blend, diverge, interfere with one another?

How do new phenomena — innovations, tactics, inventions — emerge, not merely as functions of the conditions at a single event nor even a set of discrete events, but from extended regions of durations and sociotechnical ensembles?

Such questions can be asked of any biosocial complex system: cities, organizations, groups of people in movement, computational media. This project studies how these biosocial complex systems evolve, cohere, disintegrate, and most importantly generate novel pattern via a special attention to rhythm. For our purposes, rhythm can be described as the variation of material = energy + matter + media through different biosocial, physical and symbolic states. Understood this way, rhythm is not sonic, it does not have to be regular periodic, indeed it does not have to be unidimensional or any particular dimension at all.

Borrowing from Henri Lefebvre's last book, a key feature of this rhythmanalytic approach is to respect the rich diversity of phenomena and not expect to come up with one-size-fits-all models. In particular, the rhythmanalytic approach is not a study of rhythm as abstract pattern, but a particular sensitivity to the dynamic aspects of the ever-changing world, as experienced. This attention to rhythmic features of cities, organizations, bodies, and media recognizes that the phenomena always will exceed any a priori frame of reference, that no model will adequately capture all the most interesting qualities of biosocial phenomena.

This project constructs an empirical scientific method that can be applied transversally yet non-reductively across multiple scales of biosocial phenomena.

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