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► **To cite this version:**

Filipa Matos Wunderlich. Place-temporality and rhythms at Fitzroy Square. *Ambiances in action / Ambiances en acte(s) - International Congress on Ambiances, Montreal 2012, Sep 2012, Montreal, Canada.* pp.337-338. halshs-00745947

**HAL Id: halshs-00745947**

**<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00745947>**

Submitted on 26 Oct 2012

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# Place-temporality and rhythms at Fitzroy Square

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**Abstract.** *Cities are patchworks of alive locations, temporal hubs of activity where society continuously negotiates itself with nature and the architectural artefact. Places are bundles of memories, movements, changes and repetitions. On the whole, rhythmic patchworks side-by-side design the temporal city. Urban rhythms, as with musical rhythms, offer places states of temporal harmony or dissonance. As in music, this paper will explore an urban place temporal narrative whilst focusing on its rhythmically complexity, on the whole defining place's temporal aesthetics and sensory identity.*

**Keywords:** *place-temporality, place-rhythm, sense of time, performance, tonality*

## Introduction

Temporal experience in cities and places suggests that the sense of time is not only inter-subjective but also location-specific. Time in the city is both experienced and performed collectively; time is jointly perceived and shared. As the tempo of everyday urban life accelerates and home-work distances increase and affect personal and social free time, increasingly time becomes a conscious and collective object of concern. The sense of time in the city is sensory and meaningful, varying in the way of either slow or fast and according to the social and spatial-temporal complexity of places.

This paper presentation will explore the temporal aesthetics of everyday places in the city. It will offer a tangible understanding of the sense of time in urban places, with focus on its sensuality, performance and aesthetic significance. And, it will argue that the aesthetics of place-temporality, of which the principal constitutive element is rhythm, is one that is analogous to the aesthetics of music.

## The aesthetics of place-temporality

Urban place-temporality is a distinctive temporal experience and a form of representation of time in urban space, which is sensuous, represented (or *representational*) and expressive. It is a *sensuous* object revealed by dynamic and resonant corporeal gestures and bodily movements (Ingold, 1993: 160) but also by other complex temporal articulations of nature and physical space. Place-temporality is both *represented* through an evident sensual rhythmic structure which may be perceived and engaged with. And lastly, place-temporality is *expressive* in that it incites care, enjoyment and imagination. These attributes define place-temporality as an experience of aesthetic significance (Dufrenne, 1973, in Silverman, 1975: 464).

Place-temporality is a quality aesthetic experience similar to the aesthetic experience of music. It shares with it a particular set of sensory attributes, such as a vivid and distorted sense of time, the experience of flow, a vivid soundscape and rhythmicity. And, involves performance, is affective and offers meaning to urban spaces. The aesthetics of place-temporality can be defined close to the aesthetics of the performing arts more broadly,

based on the notion of “art form” (Roland Barthes, 1985). Traces of this relationship, between the aesthetics of urban place-temporality and music, can be found in aesthetics discourses on the socio-spatial complexity of city spaces, such as the socio-aesthetics of John Dewey (1934), the urban aesthetics of John Smith (1980), and the everyday life aesthetics of Henri Lefebvre (2004). These aesthetics discourses coincidentally or deliberately appropriate musical attributes such as pattern and rhythm, but also balance, harmony, resonance, polyrhythmia and others, as they elaborate on forms of expression of space, society and time.

## Conclusion

This paper presentation will explore the arguments above, and illustrate them with the results of extensive fieldwork in various urban spaces in London, and in particular Fitzroy Square. Methods and forms of representations of the aesthetics of time and its rhythms will be discussed. Overall, a new theoretical and analytical framework for place-rhythm analysis and more broadly, research on the aesthetics of urban temporal environments will be explored.

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