



Hidden beats

Description

The online book [City Rhythm](#) published in 2018 explores rhythm to explain cities and their internal diversity, as well as differences between cities. As I have explored elsewhere, mundane and ordinary events are also [everyday](#) events i.e. events that occur every day, repeatedly, and relate to people's habits, their habitual activities. So a rhythm analysis can focus on ordinary events and things that we take for granted.

City Rhythm amplifies the rhythm metaphor by mapping *beats*, *base rhythms* and *street rhythms* across 6 cities in The Netherlands.

Different rhythms

I think by 'beats' the authors mean the dominant rhythms of a region, exemplified by the ebb and flow of the volume of road traffic. Base and street rhythms show significant transitions over time for the specific area (iii). I'm most interested in the authors' claim that this kind of analysis can bring out similarities and differences between regions.

According to the book, rhythms influence how people feel in each other's company: 'When sharing rhythm, people feel more at ease with each other.' [3] Rhythms engender trust: 'When recognizing each other, people synchronize and tune their rhythm to each other' (4).

The rhythm concept helps explain the mismatch between citizens and the systems of the city, in particular the road system.

'The roads are too wide and busy, and the traffic lights are too short to cross the streets. This situation is reflected on the mismatch in the rhythms between the elderly and the rather fast rhythms that the neighbourhood presents.' [44]

Such rhythm analysis helps explain conflicts between city inhabitants, as in the case of the insecurities felt by some older people when in proximity to exuberant youths. One image in the book shows a series of frequency curves, nearly cosine curves, of the intensities of different activities across a typical week

in the Keizerswaard shopping centre. The caption reads

“Rotterdam Image 5: Diagram showing the comparison of different rhythms [in] Keizerswaard, which is achieved through bringing together the rhythms of a fictional elderly persona (yellow), rhythms of a young fictional persona (red) and rhythms of the shopping centre (green).” (47)

Echoing some of the ideas I explored in *The Tuning of Place*, and drawing on Deleuze, they show how: “A territory happens when different rhythms come together and they create their own expressive language” (74).

Rhythm maps

I’m interested that the researchers were able to map the presence of different rhythms across city regions on grids of 500×500 metre cells. That reminds me of some of the 2D techniques for exploring the gross frequencies of parameters that vary across a surface, e.g. in [Discrete Cosine Transform \(DCT\)](#) analysis, though they adopt different numerical techniques, notably a Mixed Hidden Markov Model (iii).

The term “hidden” is alluring to anyone interested in the hidden dimensions of city living, en route to the cryptographic city.



References

- Coyne, Richard. 2010. *The Tuning of Place: Sociable Spaces and Pervasive Digital Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- Nevejan, Caroline, Pinar Sefkatli, and Scott Cunningham. 2018. *City Rhythm*. Delft: TU <https://oro-oro.s3.amazonaws.com/other-files/Rhythm%20book%2016.04v2.pdf>

Category

1. Architecture

Tags

1. cryptography
2. rhythm

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