

Anticipation 2019 – Paper proposal

Exploring ‘University Rhythms’ as Anticipatory Practices.

Dr. Fadia Dakka

From exceptional moments to ordinary events; from nostalgia for the past to sudden leaps to near or distant futures: we are immersed in perceptual relations. Our everyday life is shaped by and partake of an incessant series of rhythmical fluctuations as we experience the mutuality of entanglement and negotiate time-space in the various ways in which we consume, produce and reproduce feelings, desires and objects.

For Lefebvre (2004), past and future converge in the ‘dialectical presentness’ of our every day, *via* recurring and omnipresent rhythmic constellations. The latter, characterised as they are by repetition and difference, discovery and creation, continuities and disruptions, mechanical and organic processes, linear and cyclical occurrences, can offer significant philosophical and methodological insight into a variety of disciplines within the realm of social sciences and humanities. In fact, Rhythmanalysis has been recently foregrounded as an alternative method for cultural-historical (and archival) research (Chen, 2017; Merrifield, 2006).

Yet, this paper maintains that a lot more can be achieved, methodologically and theoretically, by revealing and exploring the anticipatory potential inherent to rhythm. It argues that teaching and learning in higher education are not only quintessentially rhythmic activities, but fundamentally and increasingly future-facing and future-oriented. In this respect, the contemporary university could be used as a laboratory to explore and test ideas related to rhythm and anticipation, and to promote alternative temporalities *in* and *for* education (Wozniak, 2017; Neary & Amsler, 2014; Bennett & Burke, 2017): here, education becomes a form of suspension from the dominant time-economies and an incubator for possible, rather than probable futures (Poli, 2014).

Now more than ever the existential crisis of the university must be turned into an opportunity for imagination: political, cultural and educational shifts are crucial to bring out the anticipatory potential intrinsic to higher education as a rhythmic, future-oriented system. Facer (2011), for instance, urges a ‘recalibration’ of educational curricula to draw-out anticipatory elements and update disciplinary knowledge through stewardship, modelling, reflexivity, experimentation, and through the fostering of emotional intelligence.

Working towards a ‘future perfect’ for the university allows – in other words – a conceptual and practical synergy between rhythm and anticipation.

The paper will be then structured as follows: the first part will demonstrate a theoretical compatibility between rhythm and anticipation by revealing significant parallels between Lefebvre’s ‘theory and temporality of moments’ and psychological/anthropological/sociological understandings of anticipation.

The Lefebvrian moment happens in a certain space, at a certain time, ‘disrupting linear duration, detonating it, dragging time off in a different, contingent direction, toward an unknown staging post’ (Merrifield 2006). Against Bergsonian notions of ‘duree’, Lefebvre’s understanding of time is non-linear: ‘the duration, far from defining itself solely as linear and

punctuated by discontinuities, re-orientates itself like a curl of smoke or a spiral, a current in a whirlpool or a backwash' (Lefebvre, 1959). This view is consistent with the idea that all the modes of time are mutually interconnected, so that changes occurring in any one of them (for instance, future) reverberate on the others.

The second part will review Appadurai's characterisation of the future as a 'cultural horizon' replacing the past as 'cultural reservoir' (Piot, 2010). It will then proceed to expose how and why the contemporary university subscribes to aspiration, imagination and anticipation yet fails to acknowledge the fact that futures are socially differentiated and aspirations unequally distributed.

Finally, the paper will make a strong case for the use of Rhythmanalysis as a philosophical orientation, heuristic method and radical pedagogy to transform the university into an agent and enabler of anticipation. Interrogating the rhythms of teaching and learning by examining their arrhythmic and eurythmic dispositions, will be a first step towards expanding the field of imagination and promoting true aspiration. Two essential conditions for the development of a future inclusive, creative and critical citizenship. The paper will present the preliminary findings of an experimental research project, designed to capture the rhythms of teaching and learning of three campuses belonging to a post-92 higher education institution. It will 'measure' its results against the conceptual and theoretical tenets of Anticipation and Rhythmanalysis: will the rhythms of emancipatory education be able to harness the potential of uncertainty to develop open-ended futures and embrace 'future present', as opposed to ideas of future as a mere calculative projection of the past?

References

- Appadurai, A. (2013), *The Future as Cultural Fact*. London: Verso.
- Bennett, A., Burke, P.J. (2017), 'Re/conceptualising time and temporality: an exploration of time in higher education', *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*.
- Chen, Y. (2017), *Practicing Rhythmanalysis: Theories and Methodologies*, Rowman & Littlefield International.
- Facer, K. (2011), *Learning Futures. Education, Technology and Social Change*. Routledge:
- Lefebvre, H. (2004), *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, Bloomsbury: London
- Lefebvre, H. (1959), *La Somme et le Rest*, Nef de Paris Editions.
- Merrifield, A. (2006), *Henri Lefebvre. A Critical Introduction*, Routledge: London.
- Neary, M. & Amsler, S. (2014), 'Occupy: a new pedagogy of space and time?', *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, Vol.10 (2).
- Piot, C. (2010), *Nostalgia for the Future. West Africa After the Cold War*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Poli, R. (2014), 'Anticipation: A New Thread for the Human and Social Sciences?', *Cadmus*, Vol. 2(3).
- Wozniak, J.T. (2017), 'Towards a Rhythmanalysis of debt dressage: Education as rhythmic resistance in everyday indebted life', *Policy Futures in Education*, Vol. 15(4) 495-508.