

LIVING IN THE WORKROOM. ELEMENTS FOR A (RHYTHM) ANALYSIS OF THE EVERYDAY DURING A LOCKDOWN

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ABSTRACT

This paper sets out to offer an analysis of the specific context of remote working from a domestic space during the lockdown imposed by the Covid-19 crisis. Referring to the works of Henri Lefebvre on rhythms and spaces, this article develops a critical account of the impact that the intrusion of labour rhythms from workplaces to domestic spaces, especially through the mediation of information and communication technologies. Furthermore, the argument brings rhythm analysis in dialogue with other theories that highlight the affordances of digital technologies to act as powerful *pharmaka* that take part in the process of individuation, and de facto its destruction. Finally, the essay reminds the call for theorists such as Bernard Stiegler to be more careful in the way they study and describe the non-human. When technophobic ideas cannot help to warn us about the ideological domination of technologies, that may act as instruments of alienation in those troubled times, when the quotidian is being locked in limited spaces with digital devices, there is more than even a need for a radical immanent critique that help us to think with and not despite the assemblage of beings, things, and rhythms that compose our everyday life.

KEYWORDS

Rhythm analysis. Henri Lefebvre. Work-leisure. Everyday life technologies. Bernard Stiegler

1 INTRODUCTION

I am writing these words to fill a void on a space called the page. Space, and certainly time, are the two key words in these troubled times. As many individuals, I am also suffering from the main side effects of yet another lockdown. My daily life is limited to my flat – I think about some of my students that are cloistered in their rooms – without any contact with my family, friends, and colleagues other than via my computer or my phone. I am in London, and the habitual has never been so monotonous. When you are not satisfied with the ordinary,

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maybe you should question it, dig beneath it to find out what makes it so “common” and question the “infra-ordinary” to quote Perec. The question is trivial by essence, but it needs to be addressed. I have stopped typing, I am now facing my “library” – well, should I call it a library? It is rather a pile of books on a low table next to my desk – where I have “classified” the books by authors and genres. Did I write “classified”? Perec is all around. My first movement is to pick another Perec book and try to find an answer – even a fragment – there. The question about what again? Ah yes, space... or the lack of spaces. I pick “Species of Spaces and other Pieces” and sit down in front of my computer. Thinking about the four rooms that have been the limits of my daily life for the last three weeks, I read: “To live is to pass from one space to another, while doing your very best not to bump yourself” (PEREC, 1997, p.6).

Mentioning Perec’s to start this essay is barely anecdotal since his books, which I was seeing every day next to my desk those last months during the first lockdown in March-April 2020. In this manner, one could say that Perec’s books acted as transitional objects, since my intention was to read them as manuals to an uncertain rehabilitation, as therapy, after a few months to move progressively *from the domestic areas of my apartment to other species of spaces*: the street, the neighbourhood, the town, the countryside, the country...

Of course, I knew that these were different times. But one can find some residual elements that were at the heart of Perec’s concern about the place of domestic and private spaces, and their major roles in politics. I would not waste the reader’s time by reminding the importance of Haussmann’s renovation of Paris to control the people in the 19th century, or the events of May 68, when students and workers united to take back the streets, making barricades out of paving stones, mimicking the Communards a century later; and more recently, the movements of the yellow vests that have taken the streets of Paris. As Perec said, “the problem isn’t much to find out how we reached this point, but simply to recognise that we have reached it, that we are here” (1997, p. 5).

We are here, indeed. But what is this here? For most of us – at least the privileged ones who still have a job and work remotely, without having to put their health at risk – the here is a room where, for long hours, we are sitting, working, eating, sleeping, reading... in front of a screen. It is a bedroom or living room, a space traditionally dedicated to relaxing or socialising. But shall we still call that room a bedroom or a living room? Indeed, that space that serves for

almost everything gets close, by a mirroring effect, to the exact opposite of what Perec called “a space without a function” that would have no purpose at all (1997, p. 35).

Indeed, what is striking from the point of view of the long periods of lockdown is that many individuals, at a very large scale, expressed the same concerns about temporality and spatiality. This brought me to another French thinker of the everyday, Henri Lefebvre, and his seminal book on the rhythms of the everyday – which for a (not so) strange reason was not referring to Perec’s book². In his last published work, Lefebvre narrows down his scope, moving from his more general books of urban spatiality and politics to a more individual level, in favour of the intimate level of the domestic spaces and the body in his comprehension of the everyday where. More importantly, in his investigation of the zones of friction, the daily lives of individuals in a capitalist system, he had a very empirical ambition. From the very title of the book, *Rhythmanalysis. Space, Time and Everyday* (LEFEBVRE, 2004), his ambitious project was clear: try to pave the way for a critique of the concept of the everyday that started with the description of the perceptual experience at the centre of the research agenda. In other words, Lefebvre’s project implied a chiasm between theory and experience, where the theorist is presented as a “rhythm analyst”, portrayed as someone who does not have methodological obligation, except the (difficult) task of finding him/herself integrated in the fabric of the everyday:

He [or she] must simultaneously catch a rhythm and perceive it within the whole, in the same way as non-analysts, people, *perceive* it. He [or she] must arrive at the same concrete through experience. In fact and in practice, an already ‘knowledge’ [*savoir*] enters the scene and delineates the game (LEFEBVRE, 2004, p. 21-22; emphasis in original).

It might sound strange to some readers, especially the sociologists, that Lefebvre discards explicitly any sort of methodology. But one must keep in mind that his main focus is, as far as possible, to use his personal sensory experience as the starting point of an investigation to understand how the researcher’s specific daily life is organised. As far as possible because the bodily experience does not mean that there is no space for intellectual insights. On the contrary, in rhythm analysis, as in phenomenology, it is the tension between rhythms and analysis, a perceptual experience, and a rational process of understand a lived experience that is at the heart of critical thinking. It is at the heart of any rhythm-analytic

² The connection between Perec and Lefebvre is not coincidental, there was a clear personal and professional relationship between them (HIGHMORE, 2002).

experience, with a more important place dedicated to a critical point of view regarding the modes of production of this experience.

This essay echoes this effort to investigate what makes the condition of this new form of experience, called a lockdown. In the first section, referring to the work of Henri Lefebvre on rhythms and spaces, it aims at exploring the co-constitutive relation between the current situation of the production of social spaces where the practices of work invade the private spaces of daily life. The second section addresses the concerns about the psychological condition of individuals living in a contactless society, where interactions are mainly performed through the mediation of Information and Communication technologies (ICTs). Contra the general pessimism, I argue that intensification of the interaction with digital technologies should be addressed through the concept of *pharmakon*. This notion, developed by Bernard Stiegler (2013, 2014), acts as a valuable contribution to Lefebvre's rhythmanalytical toolbox to understand the symptoms and the consequences of the intensification of the use of ICTs. The current situation offers a rather depressing first-hand experience of the failure of neo-liberal logic, which has been driven by progress and productivity, regardless of the necessity to maintain a decent intimate life (DARDOT, LAVAL, 2010). The unpreparedness of many liberal states, considered as developed" counties, to deal with the cyclical repetition of natural rhythms, such as viral crises, upon the social is a symptom that researchers and activists have theorised in their work (DRUCKER, 1998; FRANCK, 2013), but now can *feel* at the micro-level of the rhythms of their quotidian. Lefebvre's call for immanent critique has found purchase in the work of many contemporary thinkers in the last decade. Therefore, the last part of this essay brings Lefebvre's call for a critique in dialogue with the works of thinkers, such as Bernard Stiegler and Isabelle Stengers. For the last two decades, those thinkers have offered a framework for a critical theory of sciences and technologies, without falling into pessimistic narratives that envision technologies as instruments that engenders individual and mass alienation. Both offer routes to rethink the relations between the humans and non-human agents, by the care *they take in describing, fictionalising* the rhythms, networks, and entities that constitute the fabric of the social.



*“I can’t remember—do I work at home
or do I live at work?”*

Drawing by cartoonist and writer Davi Sipress @dsipress on Twitter. Source :
<https://twitter.com/dsipress/status/1240016948047622147>

2 LIVING IN THE WORKING-ROOM

From my window, I can see the street, empty and noiseless, apart from the sporadic sound of a passing car or the chatter of a pedestrian. Now that I focus, the only sound that I can hear is the feeble background noise of my PC, and its screen that is showing me a myriad of open windows to different programmes that rhythms my daily life. My day of teaching is done, yet I am still in front of the screen, since I need to reply to a few emails. It seems that work never ends these days. I will certainly do that while listening to a podcast or watching a video on YouTube a friend has sent me this morning. Later, I will probably have a quick dinner, watch a movie, and have an early one, because I start teaching tomorrow at 9am. My eyes are already itching. This is the third lockdown; we are in the middle of January 2021, it is 7.34pm, and I am very tired.

With a few differences, I am almost certain that many readers will find this very short summary of a day in lockdown very familiar. If one compares this short account of a typical

day of remote working with what Lefebvre (2004) mentions in chapter 3 “Seen from the window”, she would be struck by the missing polyrhythmic assemblage made by the movement of a myriad of humans and objects composing the social life in the street, the city, and *lato sensu* the society. In the second chapter, Lefebvre portrays the rhythm analyst as someone who takes advantage of the concrete architectural landscape. The staircase, the corridors, the balconies and, of course, the windows are all depicted in a positive way, as apparatuses that afford human perception to apprehend the rhythms inside and outside the domestic space:

[The] window overlooking the street is not a mental place, where the inner gaze follows abstract perspectives: a practical space, private and concrete, the window offers views that are more than the spectacles; mentally prolonged spaces (LEFEBVRE, 2004, p.33).

There is of course a variety of rhythms taking part in the fabric of our daily life in a lockdown, but their repetitiveness becomes *mundane, all too mundane*.

Repetition is at the heart of what Lefebvre considers the colonisation of the cyclical – and natural – rhythms of the body by the linear rhythms imposed by society. In a capitalist regime, the latter are nothing else than the rhythms of work that pass through consumerism and leisure. Consequently, in a capitalist society, absolute distinction between work and leisure are blurred, and we need to consider them as a “work-leisure” unity where “leisure and work and ‘private life’ make up a dialectical system, a global structure” (LEFEBVRE, 1991, p. 40)

Following this idea, one can understand that leisure is an important part, alongside the work site, of the social organisation under capitalism: “some tend to impoverish through passivity while others are more enriching. (...) And while some involve escape into a vacuum, others rediscover ‘nature’, and immediate, sensory life, through what is sometimes a highly developed expertise (organised sports or amateur films, for example)” (LEFEBVRE, 1991, p. 32).

Tell me what you do in your free time and I will tell you which class you belong to. The fact that class division does not stop at the gate of the factories and workplaces should not come as a surprise. Nonetheless, what is more important to highlight is that, regardless of its quality, leisure must explicitly imply some sort of relaxation and *a break* from work: “leisure is the search for compensation for the alienation of work” (DAVIS, NIEMANN, 2002, p. 571).

This was a necessity for the capitalist system to work efficiently since the worker needed some rest to be effective at work.

But the distance between work and leisure has been reduced progressively in the last decades. Lefebvre already identified this phenomenon, pointing out that, for a long time under capitalism, “[only] the domain of leisure [escaped] the technical environment, escapes necessity, in other words, escapes depersonalization [imposed upon the worker alienated by a labour]”, but with time, the forms of capitalism evolve, and imply “new contents of the specifically capitalist relations” (LEFEBVRE, 1991, p. 37-38).

Lefebvre’s work was largely influenced by Marx’s theory of labour. Whereas one might argue that we might not accept unreservedly everything Marx writes, it seems that the erosion of a clear distinction between leisure activities and work, through the socialisation of labour into the public and domestic spaces, has been at the heart of contemporary forms of capitalism – mainly represented by neoliberalism³. More importantly, it is primordial to recognise the role of the computers, the laptops and the smartphones in this dialectic between work and leisure. In recent years, within the framework of a sociology of technology, there has been an overlap of labour practices the progressive colonisation of the everyday life, mainly through the emergence of ICTs and social platforms. Private companies have found a massive source of profit in the emergence of technologies of extraction that extra data for free, through processes such as *playbour* and *distributed labour* that Andrew Ross considers as the latest avatars of a more intrusive version of Taylorism:

Capital owners have long sought to transfer work from the producer to the consumer or user, or from the formal site of production to decentralized points of consumption. (...) According to [Tronti], the work discipline of the factory is exported far beyond its bounded walls, and a large share of the work of production is subsequently and increasingly performed, without remuneration, in our daily social doings. Consequently, the entire content of our everyday lives—our net subjectivity—and not just our workplace toil, becomes raw material for capital accumulation (ROSS, 2013, p. 34).

Tronti, a major figure of the Italian *operaismo* witnessed this phenomenon of “social factory” in the 1970s, which has increased exponentially in the last decades, and reached its paroxysm with the Covid-19 crisis (STIEGLER, 2021), where the escape from work discipline of

³ Usually, the post-war period is considered as the period of the generalisation of this new form of liberalism, but some authors consider the Colloque Walter Lippmann in 1938 as the official birth date of neoliberalism (STIEGLER, 2021, p.26).

the workplace seems impossible. This inextricable situation is mainly due to the mobility of the ICTs, which afforded euphemism – one of the most prolific neologisms of neoliberalism – “freeing” work beyond from the walls of the offices and factories but now trapping the worker between the walls of her domestic spaces, *transforming bedrooms, kitchens, and living-rooms into workrooms*.

For most of us – at least those working remotely –, the pandemic is a crisis that comes in many forms. The crisis of the health system is just an epiphenomenon of a bigger crisis, the crisis of the modern liberal project, which is based on movement of people, commodities, and information. This rationale advertised by modernity through the last decades – has been seriously put into question. We are facing the paradoxes of the emergence of a new epoch that is supposed to represent the establishment of quasi-optimal flows of data, a new era that some thinkers called “wired society” (MARTIN, 1978), “Information Age” (HALL, PRESTON, 1988), “network society” (CASTELLS, 1996) or even “liquid” software-based modernity (BAUMAN, 2000). The logic behind those theories is that technology “comes from outside society as an invasive element, without contact with the social in its development, yet it has enormous social consequences when it impacts on society” (WEBSTER, 2006, p.12).

But our everyday life interaction demonstrates the ambiguity of such an imagination, and that technologies are by essence part of the social. If the lockdown has proven anything when it comes to the deterministic fantasies around ICTs, it is that we are very far from living in a fluid and immaterial times. A closer look at the economy of attention, in these last months, demonstrates that not only the social platforms are not always working perfectly – think only about the daily failures and connection issues – but more importantly, videoconferencing cannot remedy the feeling of isolation in a social distance regime. Rather than being a “revolutionary” age, it seems that the digital has not brought us into a new society paradigm, but reproduces *mutatis mutandis*, the old model of Taylorism or Fordism. The only different with the classic capitalistic models is that, today, the proletariat is joined by a new group that are now known as the “information workers”, “cognitive workers”, members of the “info-proletariat” or “cognitariat” (DRUCKER, 1998; NEWFIELD, 2009).

This said, it is indisputable that the ICTs are not mere mediators in our everyday lives and, depending on the context, they can have social agency to afford a certain continuity of the different practices that compose the social sphere. Clearly, the “social” during a pandemic

looks very like a “all-digital” society, where corporate giants such as the GAFAM⁴ that have long before teleworking put our lives at a distance, taking our attention⁵, our personal data, organising our (virtual) learning, our visit to the doctors, to our friends. In those circumstances, it becomes difficult to argue that they have acquired total hold on our “contactless” everyday life – let us hope temporarily.

3 CONCERNS ABOUT BEING TIRED IN THE MEDIA DAY

I am a “believer.” But a realist believer! Like Hegel, every morning I do my atheist prayers by reading the newspapers. I read them online, though. I did that even before the current crisis. And now, like then, I never miss the ritual: every single morning, drinking my coffee, waiting for my first class to begin. I am always amused when I read or see a politician say: “these are the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19”, and I always image a tiny virus going, adjusting its glasses, before taking a tiny pen and ratifying some new legislation about social distancing or imposing a curfew to restaurants and bars. The idea is not that strange and, to be honest, sitting in front of my desk, looking from time to time through the window, I just comply with these disciplinary measures imposed on the entire neighbourhood, the whole city or continent. I just know that I will...as any “good believer” who trusts in the “good spirits” – The Spirit is always right, Hegel says – that command and prohibit. I will follow what they have in their mind, since I feel that I have lost mine.

The long hours spent in front of the different screens can make us believe that we are living in a long “media day [that] never ends, it has neither beginning, nor end” (LEFEBVRE, 2004, p.46). The excessive interaction with ICTs in the same closed space leads us towards a situation of extreme tiredness. “Home” is the only space where almost everything happens, it becomes very difficult not to feel this fatigue, when we are deprived of the contact with others

⁴ Also called the “Big Tech”, GAFAM is an acronym that refers to the five most potent companies in information technology; namely, Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple and Microsoft.

⁵ In a previous paper (BAKHTIAR, 2020), I have discussed the ambivalent agency of ICTs in the context of remote education during a pandemic, where the omnipresence of virtual interfaces helps to keep a pedagogical continuity, but also takes part in an economy of attention that contributes to the pauperisation of the teachers, both symbolically and materially.

for long periods of time, when our living and working spaces are the same room, we are almost unable to disconnect from rhythms of work are very close to what Byung-Chul Han describes as a burnout stage:

This development is closely connected to capitalist relations of production. Starting at a certain level of production, auto-exploitation is significantly more efficient and brings much greater returns than allo-exploitation, because the feeling of freedom attends it. Achievement society is the society of self-exploitation. The achievement-subject exploits itself until it burns out (HAN, 2015, p. 46-47).

Luckily for many of us, we have not – yet – reached this extreme level of auto-exploitation, but there is a pathological pattern there, which cannot be denied if one becomes acquainted with the impact of repeated long lockdowns are having on people’s mental health, especially among children and young adults⁶ (ADAMOU et al., 2020).

This ambiguous situation is at the heart of Bernard Stiegler’s pharmacological project that aims to diagnose the modern condition of *what makes life worth living when one has lost the feeling of existing*; “the pharmacological question is not merely an academic issue for learned philosophers: it obsesses each and every one of us” (STIEGLER, 2013, p.4). Stiegler’s *tour de force* is to address the *question concerning technique*, avoiding the downfall of the two extremes of *technophobia* and *technophilia*. The former, which is, by far, the most represented among critical theorists (AGAMBEN, 2009; ELLUL, 1967), always envisioned technologies as *powerful apparatuses* of oppression and control; the later see technological devices as neutral instruments, essential in the path towards progress. Echoing the thinkers of the Frankfurt School, Stiegler shares their concerns about technology in the age of modernity. However, he also argues that there is no human existence without technology, which is at the heart of our pharmacological condition, which needs to be addressed in terms of *potential, portion, addiction, desire, poison and cure*:

[A]ccording to Adorno and Horkheimer, what is at stake is the relation to the pharmakon, that is, to technics. But Adorno and Horkheimer fail to understand technics pharmacologically – or else they see in the pharmakon only its poisonous character, which means that they do not see it as pharmakon (STIEGLER, 2013, p. 18).

⁶ There have been an important number of publications on this subject, see the World Health Organisation survey about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health services. <https://www.who.int/news/item/05-10-2020-covid-19-disrupting-mental-health-services-in-most-countries-who-survey>

Consequently, he offers a work that looks like a conceptual *pharmacopeia* that is more than opportune in times of global pandemic and can provide an interesting upgrade to Lefebvre's toolkit.

Derrida was the first to coin the notion of *pharmakon*, taken from Plato (see DERRIDA, 1993), but did not envision the critical importance the pharmacological question would have in the 21st century: not only as an object of investigation for academics, but what seems to be an obsession for all of us, as a matter of concern. Stiegler reused this concept to apply it to any transition thing – including writing, which acts as an artificial memory – “what *enables* care to be taken and that *of which* care must be taken – in the sense that it is necessary *to pay attention*: its power is *curative to the immeasurable extent* [*dans la mesure et la démesure*] that it is also *destructive*” (STIEGLER, 2013, p.4; emphasis in original).

Stiegler focuses on both aspects but dedicates more space to the destructive aspects of digital technologies, which have proliferated since the 1990s, and that have produced “a constant industrial channeling of attention and resulting in a new phenomenon: a massive destruction of attention, (...) [which] implies the destruction of both the psychic apparatus and the social apparatus (formed through collective individuation)” (STIEGLER, 2013, 81-82). It would be difficult for us to deny the latter point. How many of us have a feeling of loss of socialisation, and the virtual meetings through Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet or other platforms ends up being more frustrating than compensating effectively for *actual meetings*. Not that the virtual and the actual are both real experiences but are opposed qualitatively in their potential to form the *process of individuation*, necessary to the emancipation of the self, through an engagement with a collective. Extending his understanding of individuation on Simondon's work on the concept (COGAN, 2010; STIEGLER, 2014), Stiegler addresses not only the material misery that this extensive use of the digital – as a long-lasting solution – during and beyond the Covid-19 crisis, but also the symbolic misery that comes with it, especially for those who traditionally produce the symbols:

[I]t is those who work with the mind or spirit who find themselves having to adapt their intellectual activity to the prostheses of cognitive capitalism (...) Having been workers of the spirit, they now find themselves becoming employees of 'cognitive capitalism': no longer workers of the 'spirit of capitalism', but rather employees of a capitalism that has, precisely, lost its spirit, that is, its mind (STIEGLER, 2013, p. 102).

This is very similar to Lefebvre and Han's diagnoses, and it looks immensely demoralising. What is to be done? Stiegler's answer, far from a solution, comes as therapy.

First, we need to investigate the pharmacy that our condition offers us and find or adopt a *pharmakon* that can act as a cure to the alienation one may experience in the context of the control societies. If there is no existence without *pharmaka* – or technologies – therefore, individually, one needs to adapt those that will help to parasite, disrupt the noxious ones. Then, collectively, we need to work for the “advent of a new pharmacological (which is also to say, retentional) order that suspends these established programmatologies” (STIEGLER, 2013, p.119).

Stiegler insists that this economic and political crisis is not separate to the current personal disillusion of our everyday life experience, and the emergence of a new pharmacological regime passes by a profound re-evaluation the relation *between technologies and individual desire*:

[In] the pharmacological context of digital transitional space characteristic of the twenty-first century – it is the economy of the object of desire that must be reconstructed as libidinal ecology, from and as a new critique of the politico-libidinal economy of sublimation and of contemporary transitional milieus (STIEGLER, 2013, p.79).

The notions of *libidinal ecology* and *desire* open the question to other perspectives. It resonates with what Felix Guattari understood as an *ecosophy*: an ethical-political project which needs to englobe the social, mental and the environmental to respond to the contemporary ecological crisis (2000). Those three levels should be answered simultaneously, but since I have started this essay on a very personal level, I shall focus in the next and last section of this essay on the most subjective dimension of ecology.

4 THINKING WITH AND NOT DESPITE OF THE ART OF TELLING WHAT IS HAPPENING

It is late and I am looking back at the notes taken for this paper. It seems that I have taken scrutiny to keep a certain dialectical relation between the concrete and the theoretical to articulate my everyday during this never-ending lockdown. I am not afraid to write “my”, since the amount of theory that composes those lines is witness to my lived experience, as an academic, that is culturally and socially grounded. And a question comes to my mind: did I convey it “well”? I feel trapped asking this question, and there is no way to escape it, but only to work through it.

One might find in both Lefebvre and Stiegler's theories a sort of bleakness comparable to a nostalgia of the thinkers of the Frankfurt School, who initiated this *tradition of the ruins*, where there is not the slightest trace of utopian thought, but always a potential of transformation, that needs to be found in the material and symbolic conditions of the present, in the *piles of debris left by the storm called progress*, as Benjamin would say (2007, p.258).

The rhythmanalytical and pharmacological perspectives cannot give an absolute solution to the present situation, but they suggest leads – even fragments – for a critique that needs to be found within the quotidian immanent practices, and then taking the time *to give an account of what is happening*:

We cannot step beyond the everyday. The marvellous can only continue to exist in the fiction and the illusions that people share. There is no escape. And yet we wish to have the illusion of escape as near to hand as possible (LEFEBVRE, 1991, p.40).

To the question of knowing if the the (rhythm) analyst is close to the writer or the poet, Lefebvre answers that “[like] the poet, the rhythm analyst performs a verbal action, which has an *aesthetic import*” (LEFEBVRE, 2004, p. 24; emphasis in original). This does not mean that you need to be a poet or a writer to offer an immanent critique. Practices might change from one situation to another, but “be he [she] an author or not, the man [woman] of our time carries out in his [her] own way, spontaneously, the critique of *his* [her] everyday life” (LEFEBVRE, 1991, p.29).

Yet, I suppose that, for me, and perhaps for the reader of this paper, writing – and, de facto, reading – is an important part of our way to connect with other individuals and collectives. Writing one's experience, even though “subjectivity still gets a bad press, and those who deal with it, in practice or theory” (GUATTARI, 2000, p. 36). The reason is certainly because, for most scientists and theorists, recognising the part of fiction in their work would be synonymous of losing their objectivity, their coldness in their study of an object⁷. However,

⁷ The construction and deconstruction of how sciences and technologies, and their inscription in the social, is at the heart of the work of Bruno Latour and the other Actor-Network theorists who works on “material semiotics” to product one of the most ambitious and challenging corpus about the importance of technologies, as “scripted” entities, in the composition of societies (AKRICH, 1992; LATOUR, 1993, 2005; LAW, 2009). I have extensively referred to their work in another paper (BAKHTIAR, 2018).

we need to answer them that any scientific production has a part of composition, of narration, of literature that is necessary to convince the reader, by reason or affection:

I myself have come to regard the apprehension of a psychical fact as inseparable from the assemblage of enunciation that engenders it, both as fact and as expressive process. There is a kind of relationship of uncertainty between the apprehension [la saisie] of the object and the apprehension of the subject; so that, to articulate them both, one is compelled to make a pseudo-narrative detour through the annals of myth and ritual or through supposedly scientific accounts [descriptions] (GUATTARI, 2000, p. 37-38).

The need to understand any scientific account, both in hard and social sciences, a “pseudo-narrative detour,” to reuse Guattari’s terms, has deeply influenced a generation of theorists of science and technologies, like Bernard Stiegler and Isabelle Stengers, who are also “convinced that the *question of subjective enunciation* will pose itself ever more forcefully as machines producing signs, images, syntax and artificial intelligence continue to develop” (GUATTARI, 2000, p. 41; my emphasis).

This should be a theme for another work, but I want to conclude by reminding that this essay, like any essay, is about this question of subjective enunciation, especially in troubled times. As Isabelle Stengers writes in *In Catastrophic Times*, it is a “matter of trying to think, starting from what is in the first place an observation [that gives the] the power to make us think, feel, imagine, and act” (2015, p. 27). It is a matter of trying to think from a fact, “of essaying, in the pragmatic sense of the term, in the sense that the essay defines what would make it a success” (STENGERS, 2015, p. 33). This is also how I understand Lefebvre’s call for an immanent critique based first and most of all on an empirical experience of the here and now, and transcription of the rhythmical perception of the inescapable quotidian, and “yet we wish to have the illusion of escape as near to hand as possible” (1991, p. 40). An illusion indeed, since as Stiegler mentioned it, writing is also a *pharmakon*; the first one, the one which, according to Plato, corrupts the purity of the idea, of the mind. But, as all *pharmaka*, writing – and especially fiction – can be a cure also, depending on the illness and the dosage, since “[what] characterizes the *pharmakon* is at the same time both its efficacy and its absence of identity. Depending on dose and use, it can be both a poison and a remedy” (STENGERS, 2015, p. 100).

In the current circumstances, I cannot escape the lockdown, I cannot escape my workroom, I cannot escape the economy of attention and the rhythms imposed by the digital devices around me... Many actions I cannot do. But I can describe my situation, in a sort of

therapeutical act in a pharmacological regime. I can, as much as I can, take care of the art of telling what is happening. What I can do is to write what is happening and read what others tell about it, since this seems to bring me more joy or sadness. In sum, the difference between one *pharmakon* and another is about the affective effects it has on you. In specific circumstances, one acts as a poison and destroys the process of individuation, and socialisation; the other performs as a remedy to a depressive condition, and helps you to “think *with*, and not *despite of*”, to use Stengers’ beautiful formula (2019, p. 25; emphasis in original).

For this reason, I hope that the reader was not shocked by the style of this essay, which navigates between rhythms of writing. I have tried to illustrate, to fictionalise at the start of each section my state of affairs in the current lockdown. In sum, I also hope that the demanding reader is not disappointed by the fragmented and perhaps unconventional character of this paper. As with any rhythm-analytical project, there is no clear method imposed, one can only compose a narrative of the “rhythms in interaction. These rhythms are analysed, but analyses in thought are never brought *to term*” (LEFEBVRE, 2004, p. 43; emphasis in original). Therefore, I believe that the composition of this essay fits the current crisis well: a moment when many certainties are questioned, one must find an activity that offers rhythms that bifurcates from those that have become routine. For me – and please do not judge me for the lack of originality here –, it has always been reading fiction and walking around the city. The former has taken an even more important place in my everyday life during the lockdown, especially Percec. As for the second one, I cannot wait to get out of the space of my flat to wander again in that other larger space called London and *get back my right to the city*.

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Viver no espaço de trabalho. Elementos para uma (ritm)análise da vida cotidiana durante o *lockdown*

RESUMO

Este ensaio oferece uma análise crítica do fenômeno do trabalho remoto no espaço doméstico durante o *lockdown* imposto pela crise de Covid-19. Referindo-se às obras de Henri Lefebvre sobre ritmos e espaços, este artigo desenvolve um relato crítico sobre o impacto da intrusão dos ritmos de trabalho dos locais de trabalho tradicionais nos espaços domésticos, especialmente por meio da mediação das tecnologias de informação. Além disso, este ensaio coloca a ritmanálise em diálogo com outras teorias que destacam as possibilidades de as tecnologias digitais atuarem como poderosas *pharmaka* que intervêm no processo de individuação e, de fato, de sua destruição. Finalmente, o ensaio lembra o pedido de teóricos

como Bernard Stiegler para que sejamos mais cuidadosos na forma como estudamos e descrevemos os não-humanos. Se as ideias tecnofóbicas não servem para nos alertar sobre a dominação ideológica das tecnologias, que podem atuar como instrumentos de alienação nestes tempos conturbados, é mais do que necessário uma crítica imanente radical que nos ajude a pensar com, e não contra, o agrupamento de seres, objetos e ritmos que compõem nosso cotidiano.

Palavras-chave: Ritmanálise. Henri Lefebvre. Trabalho-divertimento. Tecnologias do cotidiano. Bernard Stiegler.

Vivir en el espacio de trabajo. Elementos para un (ritm)análisis de la vida diaria durante el *lockdown*

RESUMEN

Este artículo ofrece un análisis crítico del fenómeno de trabajo a distancia desde un espacio doméstico durante el *lockdown* impuesto por la crisis de Covid-19. Con referencia a los trabajos de Henri Lefebvre sobre los ritmos y los espacios, el objetivo del estudio es desarrollar un relato crítico sobre el impacto que tiene la intrusión de los ritmos laborales desde los lugares de trabajo a los espacios domésticos, especialmente a través de la mediación de las tecnologías de información. Además, el ensayo pone el *ritmanálisis* en diálogo con otras teorías que destacan las posibilidades de las tecnologías digitales para actuar como poderosas *pharmaka* que intervienen en el proceso de individuación, y de facto de su destrucción. Por último, el ensayo recuerda el pedido de teóricos como Bernard Stiegler para que seamos más cuidadosos en la forma de estudiar y describir a los no-humanos. Si las ideas tecnofóbicas no sirven a advertirnos de la dominación ideológica de las tecnologías, que pueden actuar como instrumentos de alienación en estos tiempos revueltos, es más que necesario tener una crítica inmanente radical que nos ayude a pensar con, y no contra, el ensamblaje de seres, objetos y ritmos que componen nuestra vida cotidiana

Palabras clave: Ritmanálisis. Henri Lefebvre. Trabajo-ocio. Tecnologías de la vida diaria. Bernard Stiegler.

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