

EMERGING PRACTICES FOR RENEWAL

If These Walls Could Talk: The mental life of the built environment

NEAL H. PATEL

Google, Inc., Motorola Mobility, Inc.¹, The University of Chicago

Renewing Henri Lefebvre's unfinished and overlooked science of 'rhythmanalysis,' I propose physical space becomes meaningful to us to the extent that it provides refuge from the ravages of time—specifically, the intersecting rhythms of everyday life. In other words, we develop affinity with space based upon its restorative function. Conflict between overlapping rhythms is mentally exhausting. There are cognitive costs associated with the work day's intrusion upon our sleep cycle, or extension into our evening leisure time. I will contend that we love our local bars, coffee shops, and hangouts because they are intermediary spaces, situated between cycles, thereby easing our transition and restoring our mental energy. I conclude with some examples of these dynamics at play in the urban life surrounding two peculiar Polish sausage stands on South Side of Chicago.

INTRODUCTION

Time Dilation

According to Einstein's theory of General Relativity, time slows down as an object increases in velocity relative to another object at fixed velocity (Born 1962). This is why astronauts, "actually take a short trip to the future every time they go intoouterspace" (Kaku 2009, 219). Orbiting at 18,000 mph, their clocks run fractions of a second slower than on Earth, hurling them slightly into the future when they return. Physicists call this *time dilation*.

I thought about time dilation during my last trans-Atlantic flight to Manchester, UK. The 3,868 mile journey lasts eight hours, but to the agitated woman sitting across from me, this trip appeared to be taking an eternity. I began to suspect I was simply traveling faster than her. "Eight hours," she exclaimed, between Vodka-tonics. "No Wi-Fi! Can you believe they haven't got Wi-Fi? What am I going to do with my Blackberry!" I shrugged, directing my eyes toward a dense copy of *Sherlock Holmes: the Complete Novels and Stories* (2003).

Imagine what Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's characters would have said in my place. In their time, the speediest journey from Boston to Manchester lasted between five and seven days. Decades before, it would have been the better part of a month. Watson would have marveled at modern air-travel. Holmes would have regarded it with detached inattention, having deduced its inevitable existence decades before.

In her defense, however, we live in a world it's easy—forgivable, even—to forget that our experience of time is founded vast spatial expanses. Online transactions travel across continents at the

¹ This paper solely expresses the opinions and ideas of the author and does not in any way represent, refer to, or opine on, the views or opinions of, Google, Inc., Motorola Mobility Inc. or Google/MMI personnel.

EMERGING PRACTICES FOR RENEWAL

speed of light. Shipping firms promise ludicrously convenient next day global delivery services. Even so-called “warp” travel—yes, faster than light travel—may become reality in our lifetimes (Millis 2005).

This may be why space, itself, is disappearing from the conversation. Today large corporation operate as global entities, divorced from borders, beyond nationality (Castells 1996; Panitch 1999; Sassen 2001; Pinder 2011). Markets are “interconnected by high-technology communication in real time,” blinking in and out as they “pass their ‘books,’ ... from time zone to time zone, following the sun” (Castells 1996; Knorr-Cetina & Bruegger 2002, 906). Ideas reach audiences by converting into digital bits for instantaneous global exchange in virtual space. In other words, our planet was once ruled by distance, but today, the world is flat, compressed into mere units of time by technology and globalization.

If These Walls Could Talk

Or so we like to believe. The premise of this paper is that space hasn’t disappeared or become irrelevant—just our ability to comprehend the cultural meaning of space. So as ethnographers, we simply neglect it and focus on people. I am to renew attention to space in three ways—first, by re-considering the importance of cities² and ‘places’ in the context of globalization. Second, I draw upon the overlooked work of social geographer Henri Lefebvre (1996; 2004) in order to introduce a novel theoretical framework for ethnographers to investigating the cultural meaning of built environments.

Specifically, I suggest that everyday life is a procession of overlapping, often conflicting natural, subjective, and socially-constructed rhythms—circadian, biological, economic, social, even cosmic patterns of time that rule our lives. Whereas conflict between these rhythms is a source of temporally-induced mental fatigue or ‘*temporal dissonance*’, unique physical spaces provide a sense of mental relief to the extent that they stand at the intersection or ease transition between temporal patterns. Otherwise normal built environments and physical spaces become culturally meaningful to us to the extent that they relieve forms of temporal dissonance—extracting us from the raging cacophony of everyday life.

Finally, I will examine my hypotheses in the context of an ethnographic study of two Polish sausage stands on the South Side of Chicago, near the former site of historic Maxwell Street.

The Importance of Cities in an Era of Globalization

The world became a considerably smaller in the latter half of the twentieth century. Shifting manufacturing operations from the United States and other industrialized nations to developing countries in Asia, South, and Central America created a new type of global firm, characterized by the geographic dispersal of economic activities, coupled with the need for their simultaneous integration (Sassen 1998). This made the central functions of large global corporations so complex and strategic that it became necessary for large corporations to outsource central functions to highly specialized

² This paper uses “cities” and “built environments” somewhat interchangeably, which is typical in much of the academic literature on urban space. In truth, what “is” and “is not” a city is a literature in itself (Park & Burgess 1925; McKenzie 1926; Hoyt 1939). Assume that ‘built environments’ refers to cities and buildings within cities unless otherwise specified.

EMERGING PRACTICES FOR RENEWAL

service firms—attorneys, accountants, programmers, financiers, telecommunications experts (Harvey 1991; Sassen 2001).

This new ‘global’ economy focuses on producing ‘command and control’ capacity more than mere commercial goods (Bell 1999). So one might convincingly argue cities, ‘places’ in general, are irrelevant in a world where economic activity is no longer tied to a single locale (Panitch 1991; Sassen 2001; Pinder 2011). But Sassen (2001) argues that this is merely half the story. Instead, select cities—like New York, London, Sao Paulo, Tokyo and others—ascend to ‘global’ status, driven by a few major historical and social trends. First, coordinating global operations requires vast telecommunication infrastructure, and due to the Cold War nearly all pre-1980 fiber-optic cable networks were situated around major cities. Second, global firms continued to require the transport infrastructure previously concentrated in cities such as access to railways, airports, shipping lanes, and highways (Sassen 1998; Sassen 2001). Third, an economy built on delivering elite, specialized services requires human capital to grow. Academic institutions situated in urban metropolitan areas furnish a steady supply of elite graduates, while cities with ‘global’ aspirations—eager to attract and retain talent—retro-engineering themselves to provide an attractive urban experience tuned to the tastes and lifestyle of wealthy professionals (Harvey 1991; Lloyd 2005).

RENEWING HENRI LEFEBVRE

Mediation: Lefebvre in His Own Words

Lefebvre describes cities as a “projection of society on the ground” (1996, 109). Physical environments, architecture, geography, and residential patterns are a *text*, encoding a dialectical conflict between two forms of social order: the *near order*—local, lived experience, culture, and social organization—and hegemonic institutions *the far order*—religion, capitalism, the nation-state (1996, 101, 114). He refers to this process as *mediation*:

The projection of the global... on the specific plane of the city [was] accomplished only through mediation... global processes, general relations inscribed themselves in the urban text only as transcribed by ideologies, interpreted by tendencies and political strategies (Lefebvre 1996, 108).

Urban denizens are, of course, the “mediators.” Those with power—politicians, wealthy business interests, civic leaders might seek influence over urban planning to inscribe their worldview on the physical stone and steel of cities. Simultaneously, there are rich local histories and community values written in murals, religious institutions, parks, and street art in urban neighborhoods. “Local acts and agents left their mark on cities, but also impersonal relations of production and property, and consequently, of classes and class struggles, that is, ideologies (religious and philosophical, etc.)” (Lefebvre 1996, 107).

At the same time, each actor is part of an institutional process, taking shape over the *longue durée*. Even actors with power are themselves agents of a larger system operating according to its own rules. “Planners,” Lefebvre observes, like to “believe that they have invented the commercial centre [sic]”—but commercial centers owe their existence to the role of cities as sites of commercial exchange since

EMERGING PRACTICES FOR RENEWAL

the European Middle Ages (Lefebvre 1996, 106). The commercial center appears necessary because it is institutionally ordained by the *far order*—“a form which has become function” (Lefebvre 1999, 107).

Cities serve as effective institutional vessels because they tend to mask tensions and contradictions in the materiality of their built forms. Buildings and monuments present the ideologies and institutions of the *far order* to people in a way that makes sense. The *far order* “projects” itself into reality by “persuading through and by the *near order*” (1996, 101). For example, consider the Dirksen and Kluczynski Federal buildings in Chicago, Illinois³. During a time of social unrest these grave, towering charcoal monoliths commanded a grim sense of authority. The jet-black, high-tensile bolted steel and concrete project a cold, impersonal bureaucratic authority, foreshadowing the ruthless display of police power during the 1968 Democratic National Convention.

Critical Reception of Lefebvre

The three scholars most directly responsible for resurrecting Lefebvre’s work are Stuart Elden (1996; 1997/2004), Neil Brenner (1999; 2000), and Edward Soja (1989; 1996).

Though presented in the nigh-impenetrable language of post-modern cultural theory (Bhabha 1994), Soja (1996) faithfully combines Lefebvre with Foucault (1991) in an attempt to foreground the simultaneous “real-and-imagined” mode of existence described in Lefebvre’s theory. The *near order* is part material, part mental, a symbolic projection of the *far order*. Soja’s point is that people react to both in the context everyday life without distinguishing between the two—but social geographers ignore this duality. “Thirdspace,” Soja declares, “is an as an-Other [*translation*: irreducible] way of understanding and acting to change the spatiality of human life, a distinct mode of critical spatial awareness that is appropriate to the new scope and significance being brought about in the rebalanced trialectics [*translation*: Lefebvre’s articulation of “dialectical” materialism, involving the trifecta of social structure, history, and space]” (Soja 1996, 10).

Journeying through Los Angeles, Soja envisions various possibilities for Thirdspaces. *Exopolis*, for example, means living in a city that does *not* in any way resemble a city—the “re-invented” ‘city’ of Orange County, for instance, consists entirely of suburban sprawl but refuses to be called anything but a city (1996, 238). *Cosmopolis*, on the other hand, is the conscientious imposition of “global” space in local environments—like Castell’s *space of flows* driven to an absurd level of concern with global ‘worldliness’—think Peter Gabriel, ‘Putumayo,’ and ‘Fair-trade’ coffee (1996, 21).

At the same time, Soja, like his Los Angeles School colleague Dear (2002) seems unable to separate his interpretation from Los Angeles itself. Though he anticipates this criticism in the book, he does not offer any real dispute. “His response,” Elden observes, “is to suggest that what he finds in Los Angeles is present in other places... but Los Angeles is the place where ‘it all comes together.’ This may be so, but to use the tools of postmodernism continually to examine one particular place... may blunt their critical edge” (Elden 1997, 47-48). Elden further argues that Soja’s account is synchronic because he emphasizes spatial dynamics without fully attending to their history. Contrasting Soja with Foucault’s spatialization of history, Elden argues Foucault is more effective because he actually demonstrates “how space is important in a number of ages” (Elden 1997, 47).

³ Designed by Mies van der Rohe in 1960 and completed in 1964.

EMERGING PRACTICES FOR RENEWAL

Elden's (2004) work investigates the influence of German Romanticism on Lefebvre, and its implications for his theory. Lefebvre breaks with Marx (1978) by asserting physical space is not just the "locus and medium" of class struggle, but the "object of struggle itself" (Elden 2004, 183-4). At the same time, Lefebvre favors Heidegger's vision of a world alive in symbol, myth, and meaning at odds with the calculative mode of rational thought imposed by Euclidean geometry (Elden 2004, 188). Though he rejects Heidegger's Romantic obsession with ruralism, he defends the Heideggerian critique of Cartesian geography as indeterminate—approximating, but not fully capturing, spatial reality (see Latour 1999). Geography, from Lefebvre's perspective, is therefore a political enterprise. Space is not "discovered" and "occupied," but "transformed" by a process of subjective as well as physical colonization (Elden 2004, 183). Thus, Lefebvre concludes, space cannot be physically read, so much as it must be 'lived,' or 'experienced.'

Unfortunately, this is where Lefebvre paints himself into a corner. He wants to, on the one hand, construct a metaphysical dialectic with physical space—but simultaneously argue that it produces real, physical realities which we can decode in for evidence of these dynamics at work. But the indeterminacy of this reality endangers the act of "reading" those dialectics, so they must truly be 'lived' to be 'understood.' This is the sort of talk which leads Castells (1996), for instance, to argue that Lefebvre lacks any empirical grounding. "Those seeking a stringent, consistent, operational analysis forming a coherent theoretical construction," one reviewer declares, "should not turn to Lefebvre" (Simonsen 1992, 81-2).

Renewing Lefebvre

Before distilling what I hope will be 'a consistent, theoretical construction' from Lefebvre's writing, I want to suggest there's a working epistemological framework underneath his predilection toward prosaic abstraction and borderline incoherence. In *The Specificity of the City*, Lefebvre (1996) declares that classifications of "urbanism" cannot "go without a practico-material base" (1996: 103). Taking aim at theorists for whom the urban is "a kind of imaginary transcendence," Lefebvre argues that they outline their arguments according to "a speculative mode of existence of entities, spirits and souls, freedom from attachments and inscriptions," without regard to "land and material morphology" (1996: 103). In other words, Lefebvre contends that the study of urban life has to, at some point, move beyond *mentality* and into the organization and reconstitution of physical space. He thereby expands the definition of 'urbanity' to cover the mental *as well as* the material—dare we say it, ecological processes—which "produce" urban areas.

Whereas engaging with the 'practico-materiality' of urban space requires historical and empirical methods—the same does not, in Lefebvre's formulation, apply to understanding mental life. Lefebvre understands strict empiricism has its limits, so he advocates an epistemological perspective which also recognizes the proper role of abstract, theoretical, and metaphysical knowledge. "Knowledge has hesitated in the face of creation," Lefebvre argues, "either creation appears to be irrational... or else it is denied and what comes to be is reduced to what was already existing" (Lefebvre 1996, 104).

Lefebvre is not unlike Simmel (1978), though the latter suffered considerably less ridicule when he wrote about the distinction between the empirical and philosophical. Simmel opens *The Philosophy of Money* (1978) by delineating between ontological questions positive knowledge *can* and *cannot* address—such as the absolute origin of things—which are still relevant to scientific inquiry, even if they can only be approached philosophically. "If the history of the sciences really does reveal that the philosophical

EMERGING PRACTICES FOR RENEWAL

mode of cognition is the primitive mode,” Simmel observes, “then this provisional procedure is nevertheless *indispensable* when confronted with certain questions... namely those questions... that we have so far been unable either to answer or dismiss” (Simmel 1978, 53). According to Simmel, “even the empirical in its perfected state might no more replace philosophy as an interpretation... than would the perfection of mechanical reproduction of phenomena make the visual arts superfluous” (Simmel 1978, 53).

Thus, according to Simmel, the ‘art’ of abstract inquiry provides insight into the meaning of phenomena which can’t be captured through empirical measurement. Simmel justifies a *philosophy* of money on the grounds that philosophy “presents the pre-conditions that, situated in mental states, in social relations and in the logical structure of reality and values, give money its meaning and practical position” (Simmel 1978, 54). In other words, what Lefebvre refers to as the “practico-material” can be approached empirically, while the *origins of things*, the mediation and “production” of symbolic order, must be dealt with abstractly.

I could be accused of arguing that we should accept Lefebvre on the basis that he reminds us of Simmel, but their shared preoccupation with subjective and objective knowledge suggests a kindred epistemological perspective. Lefebvre must have found the ‘indeterminacy’ of geography highly seductive—it meant he could make the bold argument that space itself cannot be material ‘superstructure,’ because it is always being produced, so it must be the object of class struggle. Yet in the shift away from Marx and toward Heidegger, Lefebvre acquired the latter’s metaphysical baggage, but did not continue to carefully delineate between “philosophical” and empirical arguments in later writings.

But reconciling Lefebvre’s epistemology doesn’t address the criticism that Lefebvre does not produce a coherent empirical framework. At best, he’s offered a “supplemental” urbanism that doesn’t lend itself to definitive empirical tests. At worst, he proposes an impossibly complex phenomenological project (Elden 2004). Just imagine the scope of research required to decode “the *utterance* of the city; what happens and takes place in the street, in the squares, in the voids, what is said there... the *language* of the city: particularities specific to each city which are expressed in discourses, gestures, clothing, in the words and use of words by the inhabitants ... the *urban language*, which one can consider as language of connotations, a secondary system... Finally, there is the *writing* of the city: what is inscribed and prescribed on its walls, in the layout of places and their linkages” (1996, 115).

One of the main problems with Lefebvre is that “‘reading’ a space is not like reading a book, but more like *critically* reading a book, understanding intent, power relations, and context” (Elden 2004, 192). These are the terms in which we ought to approach Lefebvre—if we force Lefebvre’s argument to its logical extent, we reach the absurd conclusion that “books are written (produced), not to be critically examined (read), but to be read (lived). It would be a strange thesis,” Elden reflects, “that suggested that critical reading of books is therefore invalid (2004, 192).”

RHYTHMANALYSIS

Lefebvre’s Unfinished Work

I do not disagree with Elden, but my own interpretation is that Lefebvre expected to reconcile contradictory tensions among his various claims through his unfinished work on *rhythmanalysis*. In the study of rhythms, Lefebvre aspired to an empirical science of temporal modes which would,

EMERGING PRACTICES FOR RENEWAL

effectively, explain how the logic of the *far order* subverts the institutional fabric of the *near order* by subtly disciplining, molding, and re-shaping the subjective disposition of urban denizens (Lefebvre 2004 3, 39, 75).

By extending the workday, Marx (1978) explains, capitalist production made time into a weapon which intensified the alienation of labor, securing the substantial measure of production for profit, rather than subsistence. The influence of shifting temporalities on alienation, Lefebvre (2004) argues, demonstrates that at least part of human subjectivity draws on the experience of time, and temporal modes. He thereby reduces the body to a complex bundle of intersecting rhythms—circadian sleep rhythms, digestion, circulation, fertility, and metabolism. In addition, he observes that these rhythms operate interdependently, hierarchically, and concurrently. There are biological time scales such as the succession of aging, growth, reproduction, and organ death—and natural time scales, like the cosmic rhythms of seasons, phases of the moon, day, and night (2004, 55).

Dressage, Alienation, and Saturday Night Fever

Lefebvre, of course, cannot resist the temptation to re-imagine Marxist alienated labor in temporal terms. “Society,” Lefebvre argues, “a bitter and dark struggle around time and the use of time,” a dialectical contest between the circular, regenerative rhythms of nature, and the tedious “destructive” linear rhythms of capitalist production (2005, 55, 74). Over the *longue durée*, this struggle produces new social forms, embodied in temporal modes. For example, as nocturnal activities multiply, they overturn circadian rhythms, displacing social practice into the night. At the end of the modern week, instead of the *Sabbath*, a “day of rest and piety, ‘Saturday Night Fever’ bursts out” (2004, 74).

At the same time, institutions of the *far order* impose rhythms on personal life for a more insidious purpose. “One breaks-in another living human being,” Lefebvre observes, “by making them repeat a certain act, a certain gesture or movement” (2004, 39). Rhythms of *dressage* alternate “innovations and repetitions,” producing a linear series of “imperatives and gestures [which] repeats itself cyclically” (Lefebvre 2004, 39). In other words, *dressage* creates a new “everydayness,” conquering our time when contested institutional imperatives of the *far order* become an essential and absolute part of the temporal organization of life (2004, 75). The production of space, therefore, encodes itself in time to ensure ‘compliance.’ Something passes as *natural* precisely when it “conforms perfectly and without apparent effort to accepted models, to the habits valorized by a tradition” (Lefebvre 2004, 38-39).

Rhythmanalysis as an Ethnographic Perspective

I offer two amendments to Lefebvre’s *rhythmanalysis* intended to establish a new theory explaining why built spaces become socially meaningful in everyday life. In doing so, I propose a research program designed to investigate the social meaning of built environments in an empirically rigorous way.

First, I want to suggest that overlapping rhythms make conflicting demands upon our time, and traversing multiple time scales in everyday life costs cognitive energy, inducing a sense of *temporal dissonance*. Lefebvre’s discussion of *dressage* implies that rhythms overlap, imposing themselves, and conflict with each other. He is, of course, obsessed with the metaphysical costs of these dynamics, but ignores the more obvious possibility—that conflict between temporal modes in everyday life is mentally exhausting.

EMERGING PRACTICES FOR RENEWAL

But beyond binary rhythm of capitalist production and nature, Lefebvre concedes that time “divides itself in to lots and parcels,” creating manifold rhythms corresponding to “transport ... work, entertainment and leisure” (2004, 74). Every activity in life either belongs to or operates according to own hierarchy of rhythm. There is not time to do everything in life, but “every ‘doing’ has its time” (Lefebvre 2004, 74).

Indeed, life is not a ‘symphony’ but a ‘cacophony’ of overlapping cadences and rhythms, each competing for our time and mental attention. The work day warps its way into our leisure time, which overlaps with familial or domestic cycles—like the preparation of food, or the maintenance of vehicles—influenced, in turn by the circadian and metabolic rhythms which dictate the needs of children. For instance, Hochschild’s (1997) study of work-life balance, for example, illustrates how working adults resolve *temporal dissonance* by borrowing against their own circadian rhythms, but not without cost. Gwen, for example, becomes increasingly overwhelmed by the extension of her work day. She “used to work a straight eight-hour day. Now it is regularly eight and a half to nine hours, not counting the work that often spills over into life at home” (Hochschild 1997, 11).

Second, I hypothesize that individuals seek recovery from temporal dissonance in physical environments situated at the nexus of multiple temporal modes. Indeed, I propose that physical space becomes meaningful to us to the extent that these spaces relieve us from the ravages of time—providing detachment from the conflicting rhythms of everyday life. We love our local bars, coffee shops, and hangouts because they are intermediary spaces, positioned between cycles, which ease our transition among temporal modes, and restore our mental energy.

I devised this formulation in search of empirical measures of *temporal dissonance*, based on task-oriented diagnostics and psychological assessments designed to detect mental fatigue. Moreover, time studies and journaling can capture whether, or the extent to which, subjects experience overlapping temporal modes. The design and context of physical environments can be experimentally configured and re-configured to determine whether they truly relieve mental fatigue.

The foregoing observations of Old Maxwell Street do not incorporate these methods, which are intended for a future research project. However, the spatial and temporal dynamics observed on Old Maxwell Street demonstrate social forms associated with the presence of both *temporal dissonance* and the relief from temporal dissonance conferred by intermediary space.

(OLD) MAXWELL STREET

Background

For nearly 150 years Chicago’s Maxwell Street served as a “gateway” neighborhood for immigrant communities. First settled by Europeans in 1847, Maxwell Street grew into a thriving and prominent Jewish merchant community by 1920 (Berkow 1977; Eshel 2001; Eshel and Schatz 2004). From the Southern Reconstruction of the late 1800s to the post-World War II era, migrant African-American laborers from the American South transformed Maxwell Street into one of Chicago’s first truly integrated multi-ethnic communities (Berkow 1977; Grove and Makedulski 2002; Eshel and Schatz 2004).

The cinema-verité masterpiece *And This is Free* (1964) captures the liberated, anarchic, ‘carnavalesque’ sensibility of the Maxwell Street Sunday Market and the neighborhood itself. The Maxwell Street Sunday Market, famous since the days of its open-air pushcarts in the 1920s, the market

EMERGING PRACTICES FOR RENEWAL

reached from Canal and Roosevelt to Blue Island and Racine Avenue, bordered on the south by Sixteenth Street (Grove and Makedulski 2002). It was the crown jewel of middle- and working-class entrepreneurship. Mississippi Blues musicians and Gospel singers wailed on street corners and in Church fronts before finding their way into clubs, auditoriums, and recording studios (Berkow 1977; Zashin 2002).

However, for as long as Old Maxwell Street existed, urban land developers sought its destruction. Ira Berkow (1977) traces threats to abolish the market to as early as 1905. The street shrank in 1926 when the city re-routed the Chicago River and installed new railroad tracks over the eastern end. The construction of the Dan Ryan Expressway in 1957 bisected the street and pushed the market further west. According to historian Steve Balkin, the Richard J. Daley, Sr. Administration made several attempts to ‘fence in’ Maxwell Street, starting with the 1967 expansion of the University of Illinois (“UIC”), followed by the development of the Barbara Jean Wright Courts Apartments, and culminating in the closure of Old Maxwell Street in 1994, led by Richard M. Daley, Jr. The 1994 campaign wiped nearly all traces of Old Maxwell Street from the map—further expanding UIC, re-branding the neighborhood as “University Village,” a high-rent district. In 2008, the city moved the Market itself from Maxwell Street to Roosevelt Road.

Thus in the “production” of ‘New’ Maxwell Street we observe the mediation between the institutions of the *near order*—Old Maxwell Street’s ethnic roots, working-class ethos etched in Blues, Gospel, and the untamed urban experience of the Market—and the neo-liberal, growth impositions of the *far order*. ‘New’ Maxwell street is a sterile, orderly cluster of corporate chains resembling one of Hausmann’s Parisian Boulevards. The polished front façades of the old buildings, staring outward from renovated new retail spaces at bronzed statues of black soul singers and street hawkers project an awkward sense of hyper-reality. ‘New’ Maxwell Street is a sanitized, cartoonish re-imagination of Old Maxwell Street, compliant orderly, obedient to whims of the *far order*.

Yet, one block east of ‘New’ Maxwell Street, tucked against Interstate 94, the culture of the Old Market thrives as if uninterrupted, localized entirely around two curiously juxtaposed Polish sausage stands which never close, have the exact same menu, and seemingly deplore each other. Merchants beckon from tables piled high with socks, t-shirts, bootleg CDs, DVDs, and watches. Street musicians play drums and horns, street urchins hustle for money, a curious fellow wrapped in telephone phone cord chases around his pet rooster (we will later learn his name is “Chicken Charlie,” and that he used to live on Maxwell Street). These two Polish sausage stands, and the intense micro-climate of cultural expression surrounding them, first provoked my interest in the relationship between built environments and time.

Observational Study: Maxwell Street Polish

Between January 25 and February 10, 2006 researchers from the University of Chicago set out to learn more about these peculiar Polish Sausage stands. They spent 2-3 days per week recording observations, shooting video footage, interviewing subjects on and off camera, collecting life histories, and interacting with patrons, street merchants, and former Maxwell Street residents. In addition, researchers met with business owners, collected oral accounts from local activists and residents, observed Maxwell Street Sunday Markets, and interviewed experts Professor Steve Balkin and Julie Grove of the Maxwell Street Preservation Society.

EMERGING PRACTICES FOR RENEWAL

Jim's Original Maxwell Street Polish began as a hot dog stand in 1939 on the corner of Maxwell and Halsted Street. That same year James "Jimmy" Stefanovic—born on July 11, 1901, in Gostivar, Macedonia, Yugoslavia—immigrated to the United States, and got his start selling taffy apples on Maxwell Street. In 1941, bought the stand from his aunt, and collaborated with "Sausage King" Leonard Slotkowski to create the first Maxwell Street Polish Sausage Sandwich in 1943 (Berkow 1977). The recipe, a smoked polish sausage with mustard and grilled onions, has not changed since 1943. Jimmy's cousin, Tomislav Lazerevski, immigrated to the United States a few years later to work at the Polish sausage stand.

But before long, Lazerevski hatched his own plans. Sometime in the 1950's, Lazerevski bought the storefront across the street at the corner of Maxwell and Halsted, and opened up his own Polish sausage stand—originally named 'Maxwell Street Polish,' but eventually renamed to 'Express Grill' to avoid litigation. The sausage 'arms race' which followed created the menu and offerings as we know them today—two stands, both open 24 hours a day, offering an identical array of Polish sausages, hot dogs, cheeseburgers, pork-chop sandwiches, all with free fries and hot peppers.

Today, Jim's Original Maxwell Street Polish and the Express Grill, along with St. Francis of Assisi Church, are the last surviving institutions of Old Maxwell Street. They are the only two Old Maxwell Street businesses still operating in the wake of City Hall's 1994 'slash and burn' redevelopment efforts. Equipped with the financial means to fight relocation in court, the stands settled with UIC in 2005, moving to Union Avenue, adjacent to the Dan Ryan Expressway.

Researchers observed three distinct social, spatial, and temporal suggesting the presence of both *temporal dissonance* and the restorative effect of socially significant space. First, the stands operate at a nexus of conflicting, overlapping social, professional, and commercial rhythms—creating tense social formations which are both realized and relieved in the presence of the Polish sausage stands.

University Village businesses operate according to strict zoning laws, which the stands won partial exemptions to in their court battle. So while surrounding businesses, save for a handful of sports bars, shutter promptly at around 6:00 P.M., the stands continue on into the evening. As local residents retire from their work day, evening work crews, truck drivers, and construction workers if all stripes are clocking in, grabbing a Polish sausage for 'lunch' on the way to work. Wednesday through Saturday, corporate professionals in dress casual flood the stands at around 8:00 P.M. to make a quick gastronomic transition from the happy hour bar scene to the late night club scene.

As the activity continues into the night, Police become more prominent. Black squad cars and police vans encircle the block at relative intervals, eager to dispense warnings for broken tail-lights, noise violations, or 'drunk and disorderlies.' By 10:00 P.M. the old Maxwell Street residents trickle in, some from the underpass adjacent to Maxwell and Union. The street vendors set up merchandise tables soon afterward—hawking bootleg clothing, DVDs, CDs, socks, and other goods.

Then an interesting chain of events, as coordinated as a wedding waltz, begins to unfold. The merchants break down shop, pack up their goods, and return to their vans. The police circle by and, finding nothing, proceed on their routine nighttime patrol. Once they are gone, the tables snap back together and commercial exchange continues. The waltz continues on a regular cadence until around 3:00 A.M., when the club crowd arrives, and sets the entire block ablaze with cars, music, and bodies. By 5:00 AM, all traces are swept away, a few stragglers happen by, and the sausage crews settle in for the morning rush.

This gleeful procession repeats itself, in an orderly fashion, 3-4 times a week without leadership, organization, or any discernible planning. I believe it is possible, and perhaps only possible because the

EMERGING PRACTICES FOR RENEWAL

stands, by remaining open 24 hours a day, synchronize these various social rhythms. Where it cannot, locals develop unique modes of temporal negotiation, like the ‘waltz’ observed between the police and street vendors.

In other words, the Polish sausage stands do not simply mediate between the *near order* of Old Maxwell Street and the *far order* of University Village, they provide safe harbor from the imposition of *dressage*—with its curfews, loitering laws, and noise regulations. The fanfare of Old Maxwell Street operates concurrently within the spatial confines of University Village’s regimented urban shopping district, because the stands operate *outside* of any real schedule and in all schedules at once. They’re simply *always open*, and, as a result, liberated.

Second, this allows the stands to function as a spatio-temporal anchor point—a pilgrimage site, if you will—for diverse leisure routines. It is simply not ‘a night out’ until you make a visit to the Polish sausage stands—they are the geographic capstone on a thousand evenings. Researchers observed a remarkable diversity of patrons from all manner of social strata—wealthy couples in overcoats on their way home from the symphony, urban bikers on a quest to disrupt traffic, goth-rockers, skinheads, skateboarders, white-collar workers, construction crews, ravers, Euro-clubbers, North Siders, South Siders, frat guys, hipsters, and everyone in between. When we interviewed subjects, many remarked it was not simply the food—there are plenty of places to purchase fast food in Chicago—but the food coupled with the journey itself. One subject, who we nicknamed ‘Cigar Guy,’ remarked, “I come late at night—get my girl a couple Polish, get me a couple, get my other girl a couple. You know what I’m saying? We going to do the damn *thang* tonight!”

Third, subjects report that the Polish Sausage stands serve as a cognitive and historical anchor point to residents with memories of the old neighborhood. They continue to return to the stands for their entire lives because, for a moment its sounds and smells transport them backward in time. Jim’s Original owner Jim Christopolous reflects—“Sunday changed... the feeling of the market. But even today, we still get people coming from the market over here to eat. Even after Jim’s relocated from the northwest corner of Maxwell and Halsted Streets, he marvels at the fact that “today people come here. I mean, the food, I know, brings back memories to people... they’ll say ‘oh yeah, my father used to take me down [here] to buy boots, shoes, suits at the old market,’ and they always get a Polish sausage.” Displaced, longtime resident Leonard affirms this story. “He would feed us. Back in the day, when we didn’t have money, he would take us up to the shoe store, buy us shoes.” “I remember when Howlin’ Wolf used to be there,” recalls Jesse, another resident. “On the corner and stuff, yeah! That brings back—aww, man—now you gotta go to a club to see these guys... You’d hear these guys doing their Mississippi blues and stuff like that. [*Sighs*] it was pretty cool.”

These accounts illustrate another form of restoration from temporal dissonance. Socially significant built environments resurrect and preserve memories long overwritten by history. The Polish stands are not music venues or museums in and of themselves, but they provide a deeply felt moment which renews engagement with a long gone past. Hence, they are monumentally significant to an entire generation of former Maxwell Street residents.

CONCLUSIONS

These brief observations of Maxwell Street’s Polish Sausage stands are intended demonstrate two things. First, that conflict between forms of rhythm in urban life results in *temporal dissonance*, a kind of mental and cognitive fatigue. Second, built spaces have restorative abilities when they ease the

EMERGING PRACTICES FOR RENEWAL

transition between impinging rhythms, function as geo-spatial anchors in temporal routines, and relieve the mental ravages of time by reconnecting individuals with past experience.

More broadly, this paper offers a formulation of the relationship between built environments and mental life that lends itself to empirical research. Future contributions will analyze the results of experiments designed to test of the presence and extent of *temporal dissonance*, while measuring the remedial effects of built environments.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to gratefully acknowledge Professor Ryon Lancaster and Professor Omar McRoberts from the University of Chicago: two people who have been far more patient with me than I deserve.

REFERENCES CITED

- Bell, Daniel
1999 *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting*. New York: Basic Books.
- Berkow, Ira
1977 *Maxwell Street: Survival in a Bazaar*. New York: Doubleday.
- Bhabha, Homi K.
1994 *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Born, Max
1962 *Einstein's Theory of Relativity*. Dover, UK: Dover Publications.
- Castells, Manuel
1996 *The Rise of the Network Society*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers.
- Dear, Michael
2002 "Los Angeles and the Chicago School: Invitation to a Debate." *City and Community* 1(1): 5-28.
- Elden, Stuart
1997 "What about Huddersfield?" *Radical Philosophy* 84: 47-48
- 2004 *Understanding Henri Lefebvre: Theory and the Possible*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Eshel, Shuli, and Roger Schatz
2004 *Jewish Maxwell Street Stories*. Chicago: Archadia Publishing.
- Foucault, Michel
1991 *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Random House.
- Grove, Lori, and Laura Makedulski

EMERGING PRACTICES FOR RENEWAL

- 2002 *Chicago's Maxwell Street*. Chicago: Arcadia Publishing.
- Harvey, David
1991 *The Condition of Postmodernity: an Enquiry into the Conditions of Cultural Change*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Hochschild, Arlie R.
1997 *The Time Bind*. New York: Henry Holt and Co.
- Hoyt, Homer
1939 "The Patterns of Movement of Residential Rental Neighborhoods." *The Structure and Growth of Residential Areas in American Cities*. Washington DC: Federal Housing Administration.
- Kaku, Michio
2009 *Physics of the Impossible: A Scientific Exploration into the World of Phasers, Force Fields, Teleportation, and Time Travel*.
- Knorr-Cetina, Karin and Urs Bruegger
2002 "Global Microstructures: The Virtual Societies of Financial Markets" *American Journal of Sociology* 107:4 (905-50).
- Latour, Bruno
1999 *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Boston University Press.
- Lefebvre, Henri
1996 *Writings on Cities*. Malden: Blackwell Press.
- 2004 *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time, and Everyday Life*. Trans. by Stuart Elden and Gerald Moore.
- Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels
1978 *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Ed. By Robert C. Tucker, 2nd Edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Millis, Marc G.
2005 "Assessing Potential Propulsion Breakthroughs." *New Trends in Astrodynamics and Applications*, Edward Belbruno, (ed.). *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 2005: 441-461.
- Panitch, Leo
1999 "The Impoverishment of State Theory." *Socialism and Democracy* 13:2 (19-35).
- Park, Robert E., Ernest W. Burgess, and Roderick D. McKenzie
1925 *The City*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press.
- Pinder, Sherrow
2011 "The Nation State in the Era of Globalization: Some Challenges." *International Journal of the Humanities and Social Science* 1:2 (139-148)
- Sassen, Saskia

EMERGING PRACTICES FOR RENEWAL

1998. *Globalization and its Discontents*. New York: New Press
- 2001 *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Shea, Mike, Gordon Quinn, and Howard Alk
1964. *And This is Free*. Kartemquin Films. (52 minutes)
- Simmel, Georg
1978 *The Philosophy of Money*. Tr. T. Bottomore and D. Frisby. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- 1971 “The Metropolis and Mental Life.” *Metropolis: Center and Symbol of Our Times*. Ed. Philip Kasinitz. Washington Square: New York University Press. Reprinted from *On Individuality and Social Forms*. Ed. Donald Levine. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1995.
- Simonsen, Kirsten
1992 “Review: The Production of Space.” *Geografiska Annaler, Series B, Human Geography* 74(1): 81-2.
- Soja, Edward W
1989 *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. New York: Verso Books.
- 1996 *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Wilson, William J.
1990 *The Truly Disadvantaged: the Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.