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A rhythmanalysis of the *(de)/(re)*territorialisation of self in international migration

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ABSTRACT

Drawing empirically on the case of Romanian migrants in the UK, this paper reflects on some of the ways in which the intertwined rhythms of education, work, housing, home, place, family and body combine and contribute to the *(de)/(re)*territorialisation of the self in migration. While rhythmanalysis gained currency in the study of urban processes, I take the challenge of exploring its potential for understanding migrants' experiences of traversing, ignoring, struggling against or working with assemblages of all sorts and thereby reworking their selves. To pursue my goal, I engage with the visual method of the River of Life, a hand-drawing of one's own migration trajectory, which is used for elicitation in interviews. I show how structural alignments, random encounters and personal desires produce specific rhythmical formations (of different patterns, pitch and frequency, energy and intensity) along which participants work relationally to *(de)/(re)*territorialise their changing selves as they travel through cultures, places and experiences. Whether migrants 'succeed' or 'fail' to achieve their desires, their becoming entails confusion but also excitement over who they are, where they should be and whether return to what once was is possible.

1. Introduction

> We live in time - it holds us and moulds us - but I've never understood it very well. And I am not referring to theories about how it bends and doubles back, or may exist elsewhere in parallel versions. No, I mean ordinary time, everyday time, which clocks and watches assure us passes regularly: tick-tock, click-clock. […] And yet it takes only the smallest pleasure or pain to teach us time's malleability. Some emotions speed it up, others slow it down; occasionally, it seems to go missing (Barnes, 2012p.3).

Unlike many journeys, international migration (henceforth migration) entails traversing *cultural* timespaces, the biographical past (multiple 'theres'), the present ('here' and transnational 'there') and imagined futures (here or elsewhere). These cultural timespaces are "*less a trajectory leading from location A to location B […] and more a bundle of processes, considerations and experiences in which both 'here' and 'there' in the transnational social field come to matter*" (Erdal, 2017p.104), and they do so in different ways and with different intensities at different times. Immersed in the timespaces of migration, the migrant self is being affected, reconstructed, shifted, lost (Marcu, 2017; Page et al. 2017) in such a way that migration can be seen as a journey of becoming somewhat other (Shubin, 2015).

This paper aims to deepen our understanding of the journeys of migration with a theoretically-informed focus on the timespaces of the migrant's changing self. To do this, it connects Lefebvre's (2004) temporal frame of rhythmanalysis with the spatial concept of territorialisation (Brighenti, 2010) in order to explore some of the ways in which the intertwined rhythms of education, work, housing, home, place, family and body combine and contribute to the *(de)/(re)*territorialisation of the migrant self. I borrow Zhao's (2022p.30) definition of the self as being "*an entity that the individual (a) perceives to be their own empirical existence and (b) seeks to regulate or enact as such*"; in other words, constituted biographically, the self is something one understands, creates, enacts, maintains, and transforms in ways that are biologically embodied and socially shaped through social and cultural norms and by available resources.

Lefebvre (2004) called for mobilising rhythmanalysis to obtain a richer understanding of urban processes. He maintained that '*everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of*

Abbreviations: EU, European Union; UK, United Kingdom.

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energy, there is rhythm' (p.15). He advised the rhythmanalyst to grasp rhythms through the body (one's own, others', crowds') and reflect on the articulations of the many rhythms manifested across the world (cells and nonhumans; humans' physiological, psychological and institutional life; cosmos). In this paper I take the challenge of exploring the potential of rhythmanalysis to understand migrants' experiences of traversing, ignoring, struggling against or working with assemblages[1] of all sorts and thereby reworking their self through time and space.

Lefebvre speaks of rhythms as being emplaced or displaced but their spatiality remains metaphorical, as in the highly quoted specification that '*every rhythm implies the relation of a time with space, a localised time, or if one wishes, a temporalised place*' (2004p.89); a timespace. Seeing rhythms as more than "*the coming together of spaces and times*", Brighenti and Kärrholm (2018) argue that the relationship between rhythms and space can be understood through the concept of territory. The articulation between rhythm and territory offers a useful theoretical lens to understand experiences of migration, inviting the conception of *(de)(re)* territorialisation processes as coexisting while eschewing the emotional load of the conceptual dichotomies of *(em)(dis)*placement or home *(un)* making (Harris et al., 2020; Soaita and McKee, 2019).

This paper's theoretically informed argument is developed empirically with the case study of Romanians in the United Kingdom (UK), findings necessarily reflecting certain particular conditions while not losing their broader relevance. It is difficult to appreciate the size of Romanian migration, which was estimated at 3.5–4.0 million worldwide (OECD, 2019), and 0.4–1.0 million in the UK (Soaita et al., 2023b); for a historical review, see Anghel et al. (2016). It is important to note that, in a global context, intra European Union (EU) migration is one of institutional privilege, Romanians enjoying unrestricted freedom of movement for studying, working, family reunification and access to social welfare. In the EU context, however, stigmatising discourses cast eastern Europeans migrants as 'undesired' citizens compared to their western European counterparts (Mulholland and Ryan, 2023). Moreover, Romanians and Bulgarians were granted the EU freedom of movement later than the other eastern Europeans (2014 vs 2004), making Romanian migration a more recent wave. The UK exit from the EU in January 2021 has restricted this freedom, but obtaining 'settlement' by those EU citizens already in the UK was relatively easy.

The relevance of this paper is three-fold. First, while the conceptual vocabulary of rhythmanalysis is gaining currency in the social sciences, it has been commonly applied to understanding urban space and mobility (Lyon, 2021; Smith and Hetherington, 2013) rather than the sociology of the (migrant) self. By substantiating specific rhythmical formations linked to statuses of privilege, precarity or social mobility, this study reads migration trajectories as open-ended, non-linear timespaces of becoming a new self (Shubin, 2015). Second, by applying the concepts of territorialisation to contexts of long-distance mobility initiated by the migrant self (as opposed to contexts of displacement), I show that *de*territorialisation and *re*territorialisation should be understood as concurrent processes that shift not only the relationship between migrants and their old and new territories but also the constitution of the migrant self. Consequently, I propose the concept of the double deterritorialisation of self through migration, which becomes particularly salient in questions of return; that is change affects the migrants' selves as well as the places and people left behind in such a way that there is no return to what one/once was. Finally and more broadly, by creatively reading rhythmanalysis through the visual of the River of Life, the paper advances a novel approach to the sociological biographic interview (Lahire, 2019) of multidisciplinary and multithematic interest.

Following this introduction, section 2 presents some key insights from Lefebvre's (2004) rhythmanalysis, including defining territorialisation through rhythms. Section 3 introduces the research. Section 4 develops perspectives on the rhythms of migration, by looking at specific rhythmical formations and their features (e.g. patterns, frequencies, energy) while section 5 discusses the *(de)(re)*territorialisation of self. Section 6 concludes the paper.

2. Rhythmanalysis in migration studies

To obtain a deeper understanding of trajectories of migration when migrants traverse, ignore, struggle against or work with assemblages of all sorts (e.g. education, labour, family, housing), I mobilise Lefebvre's (2004) rhythmanalysis as a way to privilege rhythm over more static temporal concepts, e.g. timeframe, duration (Adam et al., 2008). Migration scholars (Griffiths et al., 2013; Page et al., 2017) noticed that engagement with time and rhythm in migration studies is growing (Bhatia and Canning, 2021; Mavroudi et al., 2017), including through rhythmanalysis (King and Lulle, 2015; Novak, 2017; Reid-Musson, 2018; Tefera, 2021).

While the genealogy of the concept has been mapped elsewhere (Brighenti and Kärrholm, 2018; Lyon, 2021), it suffices to present some insights of relevance to my argument. First, we must speak of rhythms in the plural as we live in a multi-scalar polyrhythmic world, in which the rhythms of (un)animated bodies, social institutions, the cosmos intertwine, whether silently, in undifferentiated murmurs and noises, or under identifiable patterns (Lefebvre, 2004; Lyon, 2021). The rhythmanalyst should deconstruct polyrhythmia into the rhythmical activities that compose it, as Lefebvre (2004) did from his famous Parisian window. In migration studies, Novak (2017) analysed 'border rhythms' as constituted by history, refugee cycles and nature (e.g. farming seasons) while King and Lulle (2015) focused on the polyrhythms that frame and are framed by transnational visits in both directions.

Second, each rhythm consists of repetition with a difference, just as dawn rises each morning differently in quality and timing. Rhythms have their own but also form collective patterns, some alienating (e.g. the rhythms of capitalism, organising life under the time-clock of work and rest) others enchanting (e.g. the change of seasons, the waves of the sea). Lefebvre (2004) differentiated four patterns of polyrhythmic interactions: *eurhythmia*, a state of harmony and synchronicity between the rhythms of different activities and bodies; *isorhythmia*, a rare state of perfect harmony; *arrhythmia*, a state of brutal or fatal dissonance; and *dysrhythmia*, a lack of synchronisation below the threshold of arrhythmia. In migration studies, King and Lulle (2015) observed that a few migrants experienced eurhythmia as they were able to synchronise activities across transnational timespaces while most experienced long-lasting arrhythmia in their transnational lives. Marcu (2017) noted widespread experiences of arrhythmia among precarious migrants and eurhythmia for those migrants who were able to maintain a stable professional status.

Third, a rhythm is also characterised by "*an overall movement that takes with it all these elements (for example the movement of a waltz, be it fast or slow)*" (Lefebvre, 2004p.79). Hence, the rhythmanalyst should observe not only the causes of each or certain rhythms, but also recognise the rhythmical formation that makes rhythmical articulations recognisable and enduring. Few scholars contributed to this line of thought. I found McCormack's (2002) dance-inspired paper particularly useful in describing five rhythmic formations, those of flowing, staccato, chaos, lyrical and stillness. The first and the last apparently contradict the very nature of rhythm (the need for a pause; the need for a movement), yet, as Lefebvre (2004) insisted, there is a vantage point of observation whereby flows are shown to contain interruptions and stillness to be made of movement. It is their rhythmical formations that demarcate Lefebvre's (2004) rhythms of capitalism, Simone and Fauzan's (2013) rhythms of endurance, and in this study, the rhythms of migration.

[1] Drawing on Marcus and Saka (2006) and in tune with Anderson's et al (2012) idea of 'assemblage thinking' seen as an ethos and descriptor, I use 'assemblage' as an evocation of emergence and heterogeneity that refers to the composite product/result of multiple determinations which are not reducible to a single logic and involve states or rhythms that are often shifting.

However, as in musical compositions rhythms work alongside melody and harmony (Cooper and Meyer, 1960), some scholars argue that we might need complementing the analytical tool of rhythm with other (musical) elements that profile rhythmicity, such as theme, refrain, melody, pitch and intensity (Brighenti and Kärrholm, 2018; May and Thrift, 2001) or tempo, duration and sequence (Adam et al., 2008). In my empirical discussion of the rhythms of migration in section 4, I will borrow some of these musical terms in order to capture some rhythms' features, delineate certain rhythmical formations but also to arrange the discussion.

To understand how the rhythms of migration *(de)(re)*territorialise the migrant self, the temporal framework of rhythmanalysis could fruitfully be linked to the spatial framework of territory (Brighenti, 2010; May and Thrift, 2001). Brighenti, (2010, p.53) defined territory as a process-based, relational '*outcome of complex, heterogeneous composition (an assemblage), including legal, political and economic dimensions*' that is '*an act or practice*' as well as '*an object or physical space*'. Space is however "*defined by intensities rather than distances, such as intensity of belonging, identity or fear*" (Soaita and McKee, 2019, p.150) or by distance seen as more than spatial that is a distance that can be subjective, social, temporal or hypothetical (Simanda, 2016).

Following Lefebvre's (2004, p.99) suggestion, I can define territorialisation as the "*insertion of the rhythms of the self into the rhythms of the other*" where the latter term denotes a territory populated by socially-coded significant others (family, friends, workmates), communities (the street, the country) as well as the institutionally-coded domains of the state and the market which migrants encounter, must learn and negotiate in their new everyday life. To some extent, and because Lefebvre speaks of rhythms being *(em)(dis)*placed, a territory could be partially read through the relational concepts of place or home as long as both are freed from positive emotional assumptions and implicit dichotomous-thinking, making it possible to attend to *(em)(dis)*placement or (*un)*homing as occurring simultaneously across their constitutive socio-material axes (Baxter and Brickell, 2014; Nethercote, 2022; Soaita and McKee, 2019).

Finally, while territory, place or home is *(un)(re)*made and maintained, so is the changing migrant self. The sociology of the self (Callero, 2003; Zhao, 2022) has made important contributions about the social 'coding' of individuals through socialisation in different milieus along one's social biography (family, school, friends and peers, organisations, nations) in such a way that we can speak of the self as a 'plural actor' (Lahire, 2019; 2020) that is a social actor exposed to multiple sets of social codes that are performed, reflected upon and self-adjusted across social contexts/roles. An explicit focus on migrants as plural actors, and particularly on the formation of self-identity (i.e. one's idea of who one is) across social contexts/roles seems exceptional (Marcu, 2015; Walsh and Shulman, 2007), despite the fact that migrants traverse vast cultural timespaces whose different cultural, institutional, sociability codes need to be negotiated. Looking at the reconstruction of self through migration, Marcu (2015) examined migrants' self-identification with (sub) (supra)national territories, noting divisions across age and generations. In relation to the trauma of migration, Walsh and Shulman (2007) proposed the concept of the split self where migrants, as plural actors, fail to adjust their self-identity across their lost and new social contexts/roles, commonly embracing one and denying the other (e.g. love for one country and hate for the other). Adaptive tactics to circumvent or heal the trauma of a split self consist of allowing oneself to mourn and exhibit nostalgia over the multiple losses caused by departure together with gratification of what was gained (e.g. love and hate for each country becoming qualified). In a series of papers (Collins, 2018; Collins and Shubin, 2015; 2017; Shubin, 2022), Collins and Shubin discussed migrants' changing self-identities, touching upon other identities of the plural actor besides nationality (e.g. profession, family membership, ownership status). Rhythmanalysis, with its emphasis on the intersectional rhythms of multifarious assemblages is well positioned to shed light on the *(de)(re)*territorialise of the plural (migrant) actor (Lahire, 2019).

3. The Research

Ethically approved by the University of Glasgow, the research involved an online qualitative survey, online visual-elicitation interviews, and autoethnographic reflections; separate consent was asked for the terms of use of textual and visual data.

The questionnaire contained 10 open-ended questions on migration and housing experiences, and 20 closed-ended questions on socioeconomics and demographics, being advertised on 55 Romanian migrant Facebook groups across the UK. Facebook as a platform for recruitment has become common, facilitating the reach of geographically-dispersed and hard-to-reach groups (Braun et al., 2021; Schneider and Harknett, 2019; Weiner et al., 2017). In 2019, 60% of the UK population was active on Facebook, representation varying somewhat across subgroups by gender and age (Neundorf and Öztürk, 2023). As much migration is transitory or undocumented, the bias from social-media self-selection recruitment cannot be assessed beyond expectations of favouring the higher-income, the better-educated, the younger and the urbanites (Pszczółkowska, 2020). However, through targeted manual advertising (Soaita, 2022), this research aimed to achieve a diverse yet not representative sample. The questionnaire collected 88 responses between October-2021 and March-2022. The project's report (Soaita et al., 2023a) draws primarily on these data.

Respondents were further invited to a video interview with visual elicitation based on a hand-drawing of the River of Life (to investigate migration trajectories) and photographs of home (to investigate housing circumstances; not used in this paper). During January-April 2022, 19 interviews were conducted. To acknowledge my positionality as a Romanian migrant in the UK and respond to Lefebvre's (2004) emphasis of understanding rhythms through the analyst's body, I draw on autoethnographic reflections, including by having been interviewed as any other participant. This paper draws primarily on interview data. Interviews lasted on average 1 h:40 min, elicitation on the River of Life counting on average 40 min. Discussions and the theoretically-informed analysis were conducted in Romanian; quotes are translated by the author; pseudonyms are used for the interviewed participants and codes for survey-only respondents.

Fig. 1 presents characteristics of the interviewed subsample against all surveyed participants. The survey better depicts socioeconomic inequalities and shows more demographic diversity, nonetheless, there is adequate variation in the interviewed subsample. While the digital approach reached the geographical dispersion of Romanians in the UK (McCollum and Findlay, 2011), both samples were mostly urban. Overall, the interviewed subsample is somewhat economically more privileged, younger, of more recent arrivals and more female-biased than the larger sample. Fig. 1 shows participants' migration status (see also explanatory note); undocumented migrants were missed.

The method of the River of Life is used in focus groups as a warm-up technique (Moussa, 2009) but rarely in qualitative research as a tool to stir recollection and reflection (Iantaffi, 2011). However, whether drawn prior to or during the interview and not unlike photographs, drawings have been successfully used for in-depth elicitation, with visual and textual data analysed in conjunction, thus eschewing the main

AGE	
18-34	5 (of 18)
35-44	10 (of 42)
45-54	2 (of 19)
Over 55	3 (of 9)
GENDER	
Female	14 (of 54)
Male	6 (of 34)
RESIDENCY	
City	10 (of 48)
Town	9 (of 35)
Rural	1 (of 5)
IMMIGRATION STATUS	
Pre-settled	7 (of 27)
Settled	8 (of 48)
B citizenship	5 (of 12)
ARRIVAL IN UK	
Before 2001	1 (of 2)
2002-2013	6 (of 36)
After 2013	13 (of 50)
YOUR FUTURE	
UK	11 (of 53)
I don't know	5 (of 15)
Romania	2 (of 13)
Elsewhere	2 (of 7)
TENURE	
PRS	9 (of 41)
Homeowner	10 (of 38)
Others	1 (of 9)
SHARING	
No	17 (of 75)
Yes	3 (of 13)
EDUCATION	
Postgrad	12 (of 30)
Bachelor	4 (of 30)
High School	4 (of 24)
< High School	0 (of 4)
HOUSEHOLD (HH) INCOME	
Q1 (bottom)	0 (of 7)
Q2	4 (of 20)
Q3	4 (of 24)
Q4	5 (of 13)
Q5 (top)	7 (of 14)

Fig. 1. The characteristics of the interviewed subsample (in brackets of all surveyed respondents). Notes. *Map*: Interviews are shown in red boxes. *Immigration status*: EU citizens in the UK before January 2021 were eligible for pre-settled status if they lived in the UK for < 5 years; settled status for > 5 years; and one year after receiving settled status, British citizenship could be applied for. *Arrival in UK*: before 2002 (regime 1), the UK border-regime applied to Romanians required hard-to-obtain visas irrespective of the reason for entry; during 2002–2013 (regime 2), self-funded tourist visits were visa-free but any other reasons required hard-to-obtain visas; during 2014–2020 (regime 3) Romanians enjoyed unrestricted freedom of movement in the UK (right to work, study, visit, access social welfare). *Household (HH) income by quintiles (2021)*: Q1<£16.7 k; Q2=£16.7 k—£28.0 k; Q3= £28.0 k—£42.5 k); Q4=£42.5 k—£64.3 k; Q5 >£64.3 k. Giving few missing answers, numbers in the brackets may not add to 88 (i.e. migration status and household income). (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.).

challenge of analysing visual data outside the context of its production (Lyon, 2020). Following self-piloting, I presented participants with instructions,[2] the option of drawing a river or a path, 12 examples, and assurances that drawings can be very simple sketches (to ease anxieties for 'good performance'). Acknowledging the effort required, I offered a £15 voucher for the drawing besides the £15 one for the interview. Seventeen participants sent hand-drawings (12 of the river and five of the path; additionally, one sent a CV-like biography). Some submitted several versions or a series, making the total number of drawings 27. With the two participants who felt uneasy about their drawing skills, I explored narrated versions during the interview. The method helped participants recall events and emotions:

> To be honest, I kind of retraced events which I left in the past, I recalled them one by one, I draw this with tears in my eyes […] I cried because I remembered the sufferings that I went through, but at the same time it was also like that, phew, a relief, a moment of catharsis (Mia, female 35–44, family-of-3, pre-settled, private tenant, Q3 household-income, Town, England).

4. Rhythms of migration

Not unlike Lefebvre's window as a vantage-point for observation, the River of Life offered participants a modality '*to situate oneself simultaneously inside and outside*' (2004p.28) their mobile self. As observed by Lyon (2020), the drawings helped '*visualizing the invisible*' and were essential for me to see the rhythms of migration trajectories, particularly the ways in which they unfold at the scale of the lifecourse while elicitation brought to the fore their constitutive everyday practices as (imperfectly) recalled and (subjectively) reinterpreted by participants themselves. This section will illustrate some of the ways in which the intertwined rhythms of education, work, housing, home, place, family and body combined, shaping specific rhythmical formations in migration trajectories. The approach I take is presenting six paired cases for more in-depth discussion which, taken together, illustrate the diversity of the sample (e.g. age, gender, reasons to migrate, social mobility path) and related rhythms' specificities as revealed through drawings and narratives. Given multiple connections, narratives are summarised rather than quoted at length.

4.1. Patterns

In rhythmanalysis, arrhythmias are moments of dissonance in the unfolding of different assemblages that provoke emotional, bodily and social suffering (Lefebvre 2004). Panel A in Fig. 2 shows Anca's[3] river with its tumultuous waters, depression, struggle, eating disorder; I read them as recurrent arrhythmia over 11 long years. There were tears in the eyes of Anca and other participants, including during the interview when they recalled times of physical and emotional struggle, for instance owing to burnout, loneliness, money anxiety. Anca's migration trajectory showed multiple difficulties, which erupted in five major episodes of arrhythmia.

For matter of space, I describe one sequence; Anca arrived as an accepted but unsponsored master student in 2010 (period 2 of the UK border-regime), when Romanians had no right to work in the UK (except in a few circumstances) and students were not eligible for maintenance loans. Housing: Anca arrived with her then boyfriend, sleeping one night in the airport, another with friends, two weeks in a hostel, months in several shared, crowded, poor-quality houses, sometimes feeling that "*I really wanted to leave that house, to stop being in that city, to stop living in that house*". Finance: landed with £1,500, they decided to marry so that her boyfriend gets limited work-entry in the UK; '*fought the Home Office*' to obtain his work-permit and National Insurance Number in only two months; he then became able to support them both. Relationship: "*we had relationship problems, and this aspect of life is so important to me. I would have ended that relationship sooner hadn't I been financially dependent; but I couldn't as I wouldn't have had a place to live, I wouldn't have had a place to go, I wouldn't have had anything to eat*"—the staccato rhythms of her bygone distress being transposed in the rhythms of her speech. Arrhythmia affected Anca's body with diagnosed depression and eating disorder.

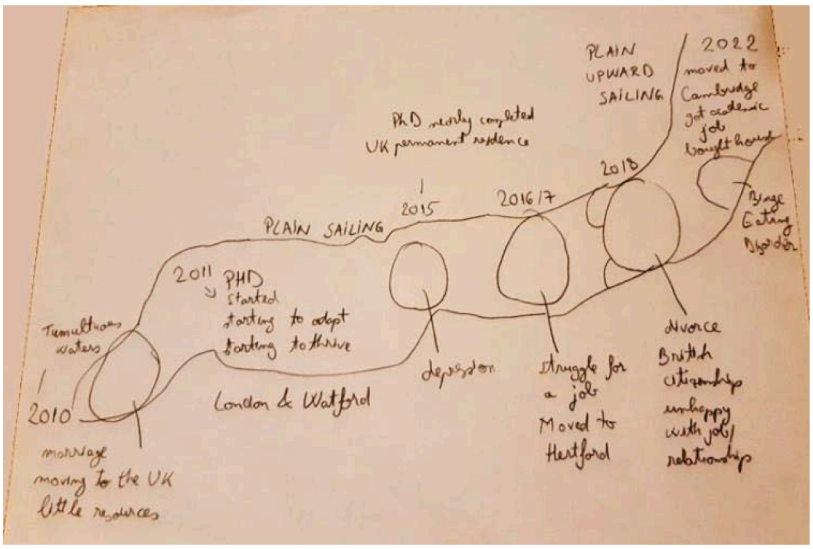
However, in her case, after 11 long years of recurrent arrhythmia, the water has cleared and the winds blow '*upward sailing*'. The various rhythms of her life have synchronised in eurythmia. Anca has found a job matching her expertise, divorced and with her new partner (a comfortable British national running his own business) bought a house so that she can finally feel safe. She explained to her partner "*I never asked you to marry me, I never asked you for money, I only wanted a house, it was the only thing I insisted on and finally, after 11 years, I managed to have my own house*". She sent photographs of the cakes she bakes because she finds the domestic rhythms of baking soothing, the baking smell homely, but also because she will never be evicted again for this very reason nor forced to use poorly-fitted, crowded shared kitchens as she did in the past. The rhythmical formation of her migration trajectory, Anca's 'waltz', is one of social mobility by which arrhythmic forces become synchronised into eurhythmia but not without having affecting her body, as she (metaphorically) said '*the many slaps I got hardened my skin*'.

Conversely, panel B in Fig. 2—showing Bayzar's[4] second drawing, a simplified version of his first—constitutes an example of unremitting isorhythmia. If eurhythmia means harmony between numerous rhythms, isorhythmia represent a rare case of perfect harmony as under "*the direction of the conductor's baton (his magic wand), a rhythm falls into place and extends over all the performers, however many they may be*" (Lefebvre 2004p.68). Bayzar, Romanian of Tatar ethnicity, described his life as a cruise—which nonetheless fitted a busy worklife—a metaphor that directs our attention to slowness as a manifestation of power (Choi 2022). There were his highly-paid, top-managerial positions that enabled his cruising of life and the harmonious intertwining of the spheres of '*work, work, work*', family (wife, daughter and grandchild who always followed him) and geographies of choice. Shared values of patriarchy in the household determined his wife to give up in 2008 her own top-managerial position in Romania to join him (while occasionally working as a child minder), so supporting Bayzar's life isorhythmia. Arrhythmic moments entered visual representation in his first drawing, and belonged to the body: a health weakness as a child determined his family's relocation to the cityport of Constanta, facilitating his later education and career in naval engineering; a heart attack (aged 46) made him give up the addictive everyday rhythms of smoking. In his other drawing, Bayzar drew his name on an undated tomb at the end of his river, in anticipation of the body's fatal arrhythmia awaiting us all. With retirement in July 2022, Bayzar returned to his 'remittance house', entering a different rhythm-regime of travelling back-and-forth transnationally as his daughter's family remained in the UK (where he maintained his owned flat). With two citizenships and two residencies, Bayzar's mobility is now patterned by cyclical returns not unlike those of

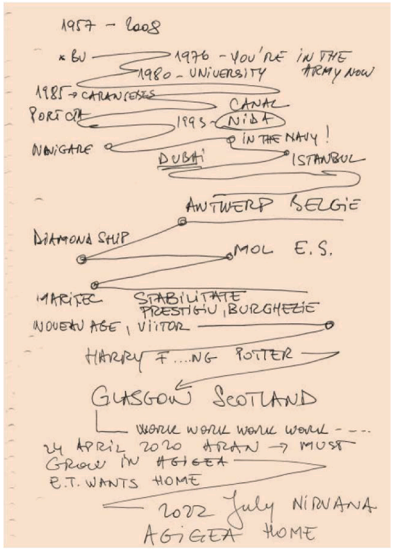
[2] I suggested five steps: 1. Reflect (were there changes of direction, ups/downs, slow/fast transitions in your chosen timeframe?); 2. Plan (start drawing, mark timeline in age or years; mark key events and emotions; can you define and name periods? add notes); 3. Influences (mark relationships, persons or institutions which were significant to your journey); 4. Contextualise (what was happening in the world, locally, regionally, globally that may have influenced your journey?); 5. Evaluate (assess what was more important to you at a certain time, and whether the different domains of your life fit together harmoniously or there were tensions).

[3] Female 25–34, couple, British citizenship, homeowner, Q5 household-income, Village, England.

[4] Male 55–64, couple, British citizenship, homeowner, Q5 household-income, Town, Scotland.

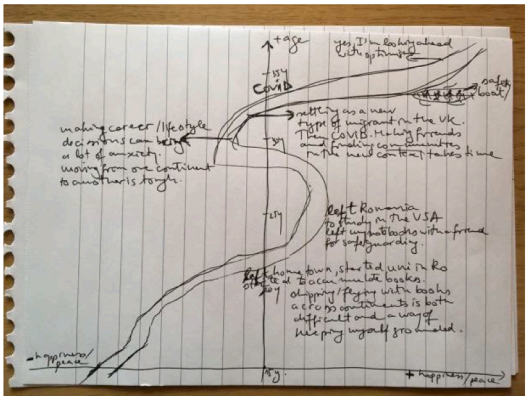


Panel A: Anca's river of recurrent arrhythmia ('*struggle*') and eurhythmia ('*upward sailing'*)

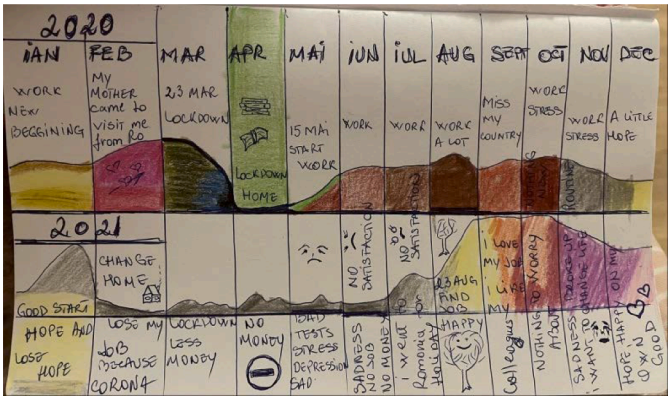


Panel B: Bayzar's river of isorhythmia ('*life as a cruise'*)

Fig. 2. Rhythms' patterns.



Panel C: Claudia's river of 'lyrycal' rhythms



Panel D: Dorina's path of 'staccato' rhytms

Fig. 3. Rhythms' pitch and frequency.

the seasons. Clearly, Bayzar's 'life as a cruise' shows the isorhythmic formation of privileged migration.

4.2. Pitch and frequency

Each "*rhythm has its own and specific measure: speed, frequency, consistency*", tells Lefebvre (2004p.10). Polyrhythms not only form specific rhythmical formations, as discussed above, but show different pitch and frequencies. Panel C in Fig. 3 shows Claudia's[5] drawing of large sways and long timeframes of what I call, following McCormack, (2002 p.163), a lyrical rhythm "*the most "complex'' of the rhythms*", "*lighter*", whereby the self realises it has '*the freedom to keep shifting energies so as to never get stuck in any one possibility*", knowing that "*all possibilities are available to us at all times"*. Lyrical is the rhythmical formation of smooth becoming.

Claudia (panel C in Fig. 3) put deep thinking in deciding the anchoring '*variables*' of her river: the horizontal axis of happiness/peace (running from minus to plus) and the vertical axis of age, which encapsulates the entangled times of the body, the lifecourse, her becoming a sociologist. Her lyrical rhythmical formation is one of social mobility no less than Anca's, but it is inscribed (and lived) with *ligature*, which is the musical symbol indicating that a series of notes should be played in a single gesture, with smoothness (Cooper and Meyer, 1960). Her consideration of *'peace*' also suggests a softness of pitch, a polyrhythmia almost concealed by melody (Brighenti and Kärrholm, 2018). Realising the possibilities available to her, Claudia, who became increasingly estranged from her parents, moved away from the happiness^{minus} of her parental home to study '*as far away as possible'*, first in Romania (BA and MA) than in the US (PhD), where she breathed in the great polyrhythms of New York City.

Her long sway to happiness/peace^{plus} was interrupted *'by a lot of anxiety'* when she and her partner decided to move continents, entering a new timespace of happiness^{minus}—a *ligatured* disrhythmia—deepened by the social disruptions of Covid-19 pandemic starting just months after their arrival. What has sustained Claudia's lyrical formation of migration were her *'many books*' and her partner—the former being displayed in her drawing and photos while the latter was not represented. During the interview, I asked where her partner was in the drawing. She laughed telling he asked the same very question; she explained he was

[5] Female 25–34, couple, pre-settled, private tenant, Q5 household-income, City, England.

an '*atmosphere*', everywhere and anywhere, invisible but of utmost importance to her state of happiness/peace.[6] Claudia's lyrical atmosphere reminds Lefebvre and Regulier's (Lefebvre, 2004p.76) notion of appropriated time, "*a time that forgets time, during which time no longer counts*", emerging "*when an activity brings plenitude, whether this activity be banal (an occupation, a piece of work), subtle (meditation, contemplation), spontaneous (a child's game, or even one for adults) or sophisticated*", in other of their words, a present with meaningful '*self-presence*' (p.95).

Conversely, Dorina's path[7] (panel D in Fig. 3) indicates not only the staccato rhythms of sudden changes of tunes (Cooper and Meyer, 1960), but a remarkable short timeframe of two years only, which is telling of the time-horizon of precarious work (as opposed to Claudia's choice of representing two decades of her life in the left panel). Dorina's path is most indicative of the emotional augmentation of wellbeing/illbeing in contexts of labour precarity, migrants being additionally disadvantaged by their small social networks and poor institutional 'know-how'. The drawing shows the fast succession of moments of joy and distress. Joy emerges with mother's visit, work starts (two jobs in two years), visit to summery Romania, the happy domestic time of evenings spent with her daughter. Distress comes from stressful work, redundancy, lack of money, health worries, depression, longing, lack of satisfaction, eviction, noisy neighbours.

Yet, there is always hope in struggle, clearly marked in Dorina's drawing and emphasised during the interview through words and mannerisms (tears mixed with smiling, the rhythm of breathing and resting her hand on the heart, as I also observed of Mia who shared a similarly precarious migration trajectory). The existence of hope in struggle endorses Lefebvre's (2004) suggestion that arrhythmia is not necessarily all negative as it can unleash the potential of becoming, as in the discussed case of Anca, who achieved eurythmia. Therefore I will not describe Dorina's '*bittersweet*' experience as rhythms of subsistence or endurance (Simone and Fauzan, 2013) but as rhythms of hope and struggle as she hopes for social mobility not just survival, and emphasised achievements (i.e. supporting her daughter) amidst challenges. Migration studies of eastern Europeans in the EU (Moroşanu et al., 2021), as this study (Soaita et al. 2023a), showed that social mobility can be realised at every level of skills, particularly when thought of in transnational terms.

4.3. Energies

Brighenti and Kärrholm (2018p.2) argued the last term in the rhythm's triad of space–time-energy "*can be regarded as investments in social life as meaning and as concerted action*" and thus linked to territory and territorialisation. The drawing exercise has powerfully evidenced contrasting experiences in terms of participants' investment in social life. Fig. 4 shows two examples, Emanuel's[8] (low-energy, panel E) and Florin's[9] (high-energy, panel F).

Emanuel's path was exceptional in its lack of detail, which he explained as follows:

> I didn't manage to draw in great detail because I couldn't do it, in my life there were only two jobs. I moved only once in my life, in 2017, here, for my second job. And here I've only moved in two, well, I stayed in two rentals before, and the third was this flat that I bought. And that's about it. That's why I say there weren't that many important events in my life.

Emanuel felt '*empty*' in his linear everyday timespace punctuated by worktime—and so were the photos of the home he sent, practically furnished, no decorations. His life in Romania, while not better contoured in his drawing (though two periods of arrhythmia related to high-school and divorce are shown), was nonetheless rich in meaningful everydayness. He talked fondly of the regular, 'appropriated' time of family dinners (of which he repeatedly dreamt in his sleep), embodied conversations with his brother (digital connection meant a lot but it was far from the same), outings with friends (he had none in the UK), but he did not feel that such prosaic everydayness, now deeply missed, deserved recognition or that it could/should be drawn in his path. Such everyday practices were not unlike Claudia's atmosphere or Lefebvre's (2004) murmurs, marking the fundamental difference between his life before and after moving to the UK. There was no meaningful presence in Emanuel's UK present but emptiness and boredom as he fully belonged to his place of origin. In other words, in the UK he felt displaced, deterritorialised (and not because of want of trying as he initially shared a flat for conviviality but it did not work out).

Conversely, Florin's river (Fig. 4, panel F), not unlike other three participants who drew very similar drawings, expressed high investment in social life across the lifecourse:

> When you draw this river, you travel along your life, recalling beautiful memories, the bad ones erased long time ago, I only remember positives […] Mine was quite a winding route, not particularly difficult… it simply happened, I had no goals, I just wanted to be happy. I knew I didn't want to live in Romania, but I didn't know what I wanted to do or where I wanted to go. I had a desire for adventure, to develop myself, a desire for financial gains which I let go as otherwise it dominates you […] I had a pleasantly rich life, maybe not as much as others but more than many others, I saw parts of the world, I enjoyed working with people from the whole world. And I concentrated to fit all this on the paper.

Florin was now fully invested in learning 'Britishness' from his wife and parents-in-law (UK's history, the conversational rhythms of turn-taking), in his daughter's bodily rhythms (there was not one day of him not feeding and bathing her), in the domesticity of his home (gardening, cooking), in his development (training, self-employment), while slowly moving away not necessarily from the 'Romanianess' still inscribed in his accented speech and lively mannerisms, nor from his Romanian family but from childhood places, friends and social codes long left behind. Florin was emplacing himself by inserting the rhythms of self into those of his significant others while concomitantly removing himself from the cultural prolongations of territories of past significance.

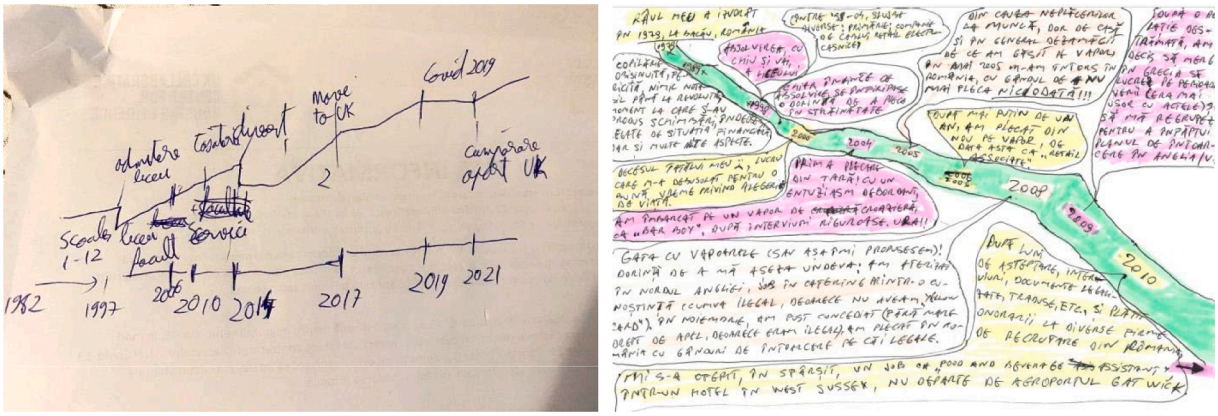
Florin's and Emanuel's lives in the UK exemplify Lefebvre's (2004p.47) distinction between present and presence, whereby in a present with "*presence there is dialogue, the use of time, speech and action*", immersion and accomplishment in rhythm and appropriation of time. Conversely, a present without presence consists of alienation, boredom, simulacra. Florin and Emanuel shared many sociological 'variables' (age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, socioeconomic position, urban origin) but their social world and their investment in it remains so fundamentally different, one alienated from his migration experience, the other fully invested. While sharing numerous sociological 'capabilities', their motives for migration differed. Florin '*knew from a fairly early age I did not want to live in Romania*' (left aged 25, 2004) whereas for Emanuel migration "*was the madness of a moment, a beer with a friend who said "why don't you come", and I said yes, why not*" (left aged 35, 2017). The enduring tension which some migrants feel between 'roots' and 'mobility' (Blokland 2017) has alienated Emanuel as he moved away from a place '*where people know you*' to find out he missed precisely that quality of place. Tensions between roots and mobility in *(de)(re)*

[6] Conceptual links between rhythm and atmosphere were observed elsewhere (Paiva 2016; Preece et al. 2022). Atmosphere also reminds Lefebvre's idea of murmur as an indistinctive presence.

[7] Female 35–44, single mother, pre-settled, private tenant, Q2 household-income, Town, England.

[8] Male 35–44, single, pre-settled, homeowner, Q4 household-income, City, England.

[9] Male 35–44, family-of-3, British citizenship, Q5 household-income, homeowner, Town, England.



Panel E: Emanuel's path of low-energy rhythms Panel F: Florin's river of high-energy rhythms

Fig. 4. Rhythms' energies.

territorialising processes affected other participants, for instance Paula[10]:

> I've never been comfortable with change, for me it was always difficult to make changes. It's really a paradox to want to emigrate and at the same time to know it's very painful for you, it's hard to overcome this impasse. I love Romania, I didn't want to leave, I left only because I wanted to study architecture abroad and practice in a country where I'm paid ok and respected for it. I'm haunted by homesickness, yet I love my profession. I really don't know how I could combine the two.

To some extent, Emanuel's present without presence and Paula's tension are manifestations of the surprisingly rarely used split-self concept (Sequeira 2021; Waldeck 1979; Waldenfels 2004), a more traumatic instantiation of the plural actor (Lahire 2020), where the needs of one self contradicts the other(s). This internal tension directs the attention to the *(de)/(re)*territorialisation of the migrant self, to which I now turn.

5. The *(de)/(re)*territorialisation of self

Brighenti (2010p.63) pointed to the fact that the sequence of the "*three movements, or vectors, in the territorial process: deterritorialization, reterritorialization and territorialization*" was so identified in order "*to counter the idea that these processes occur temporally one after the other*", and emphasise they co-exist as "*one cannot leave a territory […] without at the same time creating another territory somewhere else*". Indeed, those who depart deterritorialise themselves, even if some were not fully territorialised before departure since for this very reason they may have emigrated (as Claudia, departing from her estranged family or Florin, knowing from an early age he did not want to live in Romania). Once departed, the work of reterritorialisation starts, though it may have even started before: exceptionally, Narcisa[11] pursued a 4-year preparatory work so that she could leave Romania with good English, a nursing degree, one year professional experience, a job contract and her dog.

In the vocabulary of rhythmanalysis, territorialisation means inserting the rhythms of self into the rhythms of the others across job markets, state institutions, communities, significant (transnational) others. Clearly, having (almost) citizenship rights, a stable job or children[12] open possibilities and desires to become territorialised, emplaced (Ryan, 2018): 53 of my 88 respondents saw their future in the UK. Nonetheless, to do so, the rhythms of the self require negotiating the cultural proximity/distance (Simandan, 2016) between the timespaces of Romania's 'east' and the UK's 'west' (Müller and Trubina, 2020) that migrants have physically traversed and indeed continue to traverse in the process of their *(de)(re)*territorialisation. I exemplify this argument below.

The codes and rhythms of sociability should be learnt for 'successful' insertion into the dominant world—a phenomenon referred to as 'dressage' by Lefebvre (2004), to which some participants collaborated enthusiastically, as Florin, but many resisted. For instance, Anca, derided British codes of friendship for being not just appearing shallow, those of politeness for being insincere (a common Romanian criticism), and those at the workplace for being distant. Likewise, the cultural codes of togetherness conflicted through the British affection for the armchair and the Romanian for sharing a sofa, as Anca interpreted with disdain in terms of insularity vs intimacy. Public and private institutions were commonly appreciated for their efficiency, professionalism and meritocracy, but countless tacit learning/dressage was required for the presentation of self in meetings and encounters of all sorts, email writing and form filling, a learning process presented by participants as fighting against an institution or fighting against oneself.

Time, climate and latitude also needed to be incorporated. For instance, in the prosaic practices of the everyday, two time-clocks should be synchronised in transnational digital encounters (Cojocaru, 2021). The rainy British climate triggered desires to leave for a few, or active work of reinterpretation for many (e.g. as if the green banks of the River Tay in Scotland were no different from the sun-scorched banks of the Danube[13]) while the rhythms of the body needed adjustment to the long days of summer and the long nights of winter.

Through such myriad practices of dressage within the realms of the everyday, education, work, housing, place, family and body, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation co-existed for my participants, producing transnational eurhythmia (growing to belong to both places, enjoying both cuisines, watching both national TV news, having two 'homes'), partial eurhythmia (confined to certain timespaces e.g. the all-Romanian household; the British/Romanian couple with one guiding, the other learning; the British landscape), mild or harsh arrhythmia (e.g.

[10] Female 25–34, single, settled, private tenant, Q2 household-income, City, England.

[11] Female 45–54, couple, homeowner, settled, Q4 household-income, Town, England.

[12] Of the 88 respondents: 49 were employed full-time and 31 part-time/self-employed; 41 households had children and 22 were singletons;

[13] R50, male, 35–44, family-of-3, homeowner, settled, Q5 household-income, City, Scotland.

hating the greyness of the sky; suffering eviction) or lasting disrhythmia (e.g. Emanuel's present with no presence).

As observed in the previous section, work, relationships and housing were assemblages of utmost importance in territorialising one's changing self, or conversely deterritorialising through brutal arrhythmia. Eurhythmia across these domains has been paramount to migrant emplacement of the self in an appropriated territory, whether the affective timespace of the country, city, workplace, family. The many photographs of home which participants were eager to send (on which we reported elsewhere, see Soaita et al., 2023a) showed their (extra) ordinary practices and materialities of homemaking in the UK (e.g. enjoying a coffee, playing with children, celebrating Christmas), of emplacing themselves temporarily in a rented home or more permanently in the owned home—a division created by the capitalist codes and rhythms of property ownership in the UK (Soaita and McKee, 2019). A focus on time and rhythm is important to understand and inform policy on the importance of synchronicity across different life domains, a synchronicity that is never flat or static; its duration can never be guaranteed being rhythmically open to unexpected interference.

Over time, the changing migrant self becomes increasingly territorialised in some or multiple geographical scales, notwithstanding initial migration intentions. Return is harder to imagine, often postponed. All interviewed participants noted a sense of 'growth', as Radu,[14] an informal lodger in precarious work (in his fourth residence and second job in three years) tells below:

> I grew year by year, I evolved, I'm a transformed person, I'm still in continuous transformation. I'm not materialistic, material things don't really delight me and I'm happy I managed to travel to a country where I've never been before, learn new things. In this sense, I've evolved.

Another (survey) respondent[15] wrote:

> I discovered that I not only think in English, but also dream in English. It is easier for me to express myself in English. Culturally, I am more English than Romanian.

Taken at their face-value, words as above express 'success', yet Walsh and Shulman (2007) alert us, they testify to the trauma of migration through their defensive outlook (the stigma of failing to achieve material success or that of being a migrant). The questionnaire asked respondents to describe if they ever dreamt of 'home' in their sleep, whatever home meant to them. Twenty-three dreamt of: flying home, sharing family dinners, chatting on the sofa, being with family and friends in the garden or under the same roof, looking at or touching their mother's face. More traumatically, one[16] wrote:

> I dreamt of the places where I used to play, friends I was with and how they were saying "come back… what are you doing over there?" When I have a difficulty here, I think about my mother's house and her garden full of flowers and I cry… it helps me to unload emotionally.

Paradoxically, the challenge of return was contemplated precisely by participants who envisaged return-migration at retirement—a structural condition of a new migration-wave of first-generation migrants who did not have enough worktime to build financial security for retirement in the UK. In this context, Bayzar reflected:

> [Romania] is just like any other harbor for a sailor. You take that plank from the sideboard, put one end on the ship, the other on the quay, and down you go. You start all over again because your friends are no longer there or have other friends. For good or for bad, neither you, nor them, nor the country is what it used to be, is something completely different.

Indeed, migration produces a *double* deterritorialisation of self: new learnings distance the new migrant self from the old self but the people and places left behind also change in a way there is no return to what one/once was (see also Erdal 2017; Page et al., 2017; Ryan 2018). Following one participant's reference to a well-known children's story of Romanian folklore (Ispirescu 1985),[17] I position its symbolic plot as the Romanian archetype of the double deterritorialisation of self. Having left his homeland in search for '*youth without ageing and life without dying*' (i.e. a frozen time):

> He arrived in this new magic territory, making a family, remaining as young as when he came. Until when, getting lost in the Forbidden Valley, he found himself home. Back home, he found other people, other cities, while the old ones had changed beyond recognition; forests had changed into plains. With tears in his eyes, he searched for every pantry, every nook and cranny that reminded him of the past. He found but ruins. He noticed he now was 100 years old and Death awaited him round the corner (my summary).

Here, life in the magic territory could be read as deterritorialisation in the non-timespace of forever happiness where fairytales end as there is nothing more to say (oddly similar to deterritorialisation though boredom) while return to ruins signifies deterritorialisation through the loss of the biographical self and the sudden realisation of an ageing, changing self. Indeed, migration inherently means multiple losses (e.g. objects, language, culture, ability to make jokes), mourning being part of the process of healing a split self (Walsh and Shulman 2007). Valentina[18] wrote:

> I have a recurring dream in which either one of the flats I lived in has more rooms than in reality, or in Bucharest I would have an extra apartment compared to the two which my family owns. The feeling is not necessarily one of abundance:) but somehow of confusion, something is unclear there, it is not clear to me where I am or where I should be. As an interpretation, I think it's about time to have my own house considering the social pressure to prove that I've become a responsible adult, especially since I didn't tick the other markers (I'm not married, I don't have children). Alternatively, given the prevailing feeling of confusion, perhaps I unconsciously feel more of a need to be rooted, to be fixed in a place, considering that these are the values with which I was raised, even if I reoriented myself over time towards valuing nomadism more. Before moving to the UK, I thought that home, beyond the affective component, meant mainly living in an owned property, I felt reluctant to live in a rental, as I was forced to do once I moved to the UK.

Carl Jung (2012) often referred to his vivid dream of his "*big, complicated house with many rooms, passages, and stairways*" as being a symbol of self, we could say of: the social (the living quarters, furnished in the cultural codes of the time, a space to welcome guests), the biographical (the much older, medieval kitchen and pantries), the forgotten (the ancient, Roman cellar), and the archetypal (the prehistoric cave below the cellar). In her own interpretation, Valentina's dream unveils

[14] Male 25–34, single, pre-settled, private tenant, Q2 household-income, City, Northern Ireland.

[15] R32, female 45–54, couple, British citizenship, homeowner, Q3 household -income, City, England.

[16] R13, female 45–54, family-of-4, British citizenship, homeowner, Q2 household -income, City, England.

[17] "*Like in Ispirescu… in 20 years or so we may return to Romania for retirement, but we no longer know anyone, basically, wherever we go we must take it from scratch*" (Sorin, male, 35–44, settled, mortgagor, Q4 household-income, City, Scotland).

[18] Female, 35–44, pre-settled, private tenant, Q3 household-income, City, England.

her confusion in the work of *(de)/(re)*territorialisation of self (‘*where I am or where I should be’*). She feels pressured to mark the social rhythms of the lifecourse, which migration often dramatically delays; to change her ideas about who she is (her self-concept) in order to accept values of nomadism (i.e. deterritorialisation) imposed over her by the rhythms of the dominant (property markets, state regulation, landlord power); and to devalue her desire ‘*to be fixed in a place’*/territorialised.

Despite the confusion suppressed in the oneiric, Valentina experiences the eurythmic intertwining of her PhD studies, academic work, mentoring relationship, a sense of emplacement in the city, which made her desire to stay longer in the UK to explore exciting opportunities of becoming. She nonetheless worried that, even though she was young, she does not have 35 workyears ahead to build a comfortable pension. Her river ends with a big Question Mark (see the graphic abstract), which reflects her current hesitancy and worries. I suspect, given her youth and diligence, Valentina will in time become fully territorialised in the UK, which is not to say that tensions in the resolution of the migrant self are resolved but reshaped, as the new migration literature on the eastern Europeans’ generation 1.5 (migrants arrived as children) or second-generation continues to unpack (Galasiński and Galasińska, 2007; Sime et al., 2022).

6. Conclusions

Using visual elicitation based on the River of Life and informed by Lefebvre’s (2004) rhythmanalysis, this paper explored some of the ways in which the intertwined rhythms of education, work, housing, home, place, family and body combine and contribute to the *(de)/(re)*territorialisation of the migrant’s self. Not unlike Lefebvre’s conceptualisation of the rhythms of capitalism or Simone and Fauzan’s (2013) rhythms of endurance, I first advanced the concept of rhythmical formation in order to read some relatively enduring patterns in the unfolding polyrhythms of migration. I discussed six rhythmical formations in migration. Two were of social mobility, eurhythmia emerging after recurrent episodes of arrhythmia (Anca’s) or along more lyrical, less disruptive sways of dysrhythmia (Claudia’s). Both were primarily enabled by educational opportunities, supported by partnership formation. Another two, in sharp contrast, were the slow isorhythmia of privilege (Bayzar’s life as a cruise) and the rhythms of hope and struggle of precarity (Dorina’s). Both were primarily rooted in the realm of work, but were also supported by a cultural patriarchy that favours males in the labour market and persuades women to give up their stakes to follow partners. The final two were the contrasting rhythmical formations of low-energy (Emanuel’s alienating present with no presence) and high-energy (Florin’s present of plenitude), both rooted primarily in social relationships. These are not exhaustive, my exploratory work inviting researchers to observe other formations in different migration contexts. A focus on the rhythms of migration trajectories is useful for understanding migrants’ experiences from a vantage point that is neither inside nor outside the present, allowing reflection on the importance of synchronicity across different life domains, a synchronicity that is never static or guaranteed.

The unfolding of specific rhythmical formations in migration shape the *(de)/(re)*territorialisation of the migrant self from one territory to elsewhere (including transnationally). Eurhythmic intersections between work, housing and social relations are the backbones of ‘successful’ reterritorialisation, however, much learning/dressage is required. I paid particular attention to the cultural proximity/distance between two differently coded timespaces which must be continually negotiated socially, institutionally and environmentally in order to avoid arrhythmias. However, arrhythmia is not exclusively negative. Moving from a state of arrhythmia to eurhythmia gave my participants a sense of excitement, of positive transformation of self (even when many slaps have hardened one’s skin), of becoming some other, or even entirely British (a rare claim, however, which must be taken with caution). Many had to heal or live with a split self.

In my participants, the trauma of the split self or other forms of confusion over what one is and where one should be was most strongly expressed through the oneiric but also in the question of return migration, whether simply visiting or planning return on retirement. It is here where the double territorialisation of the self was more salient in that change distances the old from the new migrant self just as the people and places left behind also change in ways that there is no return to what one/once was. This statement seems almost universal since no one can travel backwards in time (nor is one required to), nonetheless migrants must convert in their everyday becoming culturally split timespaces rather than just living through time whereby self and place change gradually together. Besides, some migrants will (be required to) return.

In the field of transnational migration studies, my findings expand and nuance Ryan’s (2018) conceptual work on ‘*differentiated embedding*’ according to which migrants emplace themselves in systems of social relations (work, relationships) in varying degrees, constructing differentiated belonging over time. Uniquely defined in the ethos of rhythmanalysis, the concept of *(de)(re)*territorialisation, however, allows for a better understanding of the fact that such processes are never linear nor dichotomous. *De*territorialisation and *re*territorialisation always occur concomitantly as a myriad of social, cultural and institutional codes and rhythms are learnt through dressage, resisted or negotiated in the work of inserting one’s rhythms into the rhythms of others. Furthermore, I proposed the psychosocial lens of the double deterritorialisation of self, which can be mobilised by migration scholars in questions of both (non)return, not only turning the attention but conceptualising scattered empirical insights while offering a framework able to attend to ‘*the multiple interfaces between return and economic, social, cultural and political change*’ (King and Kuschminder 2022p.13).

The field of rhythmanalysis is pregnant with methodological innovations, including novel visual methods empowered by technology (Lyon, 2021). My study demonstrates the potential of the less demanding and less intimidating method of the River of Life to produce and co-produce synthesis and reflection. More broadly, the method constitutes a novel take on the sociological biography method proposed by Lahire (2019) as a tool to excavate the tensions and dilemmas of the plural actor, of merits to multiple disciples and interdisciplinary enquiries notwithstanding their substantive enquiries. In my own ‘home’ disciplines of housing and urban studies, the River of Life read through rhythmanalysis can pluralise essentialist ideas of housing trajectories and lifecourse and contribute to mapping urban change. There, the insight that *(de)/(re)*territorialisation always co-exists, which is more evident in the context of long-distance mobility initiated by the migrant self, could inform that likewise, homemaking/*un*making and *em*placement/*dis*placement coexist at multifarious scales. More broadly, this study hopes to inspire scholars of all persuasion that, while empirically challenging, rhythmanalysis lends its rich conceptual language to theoretical and methodological innovation and cross-fertilisation.

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CRediT authorship contribution statement

Adriana Mihaela Soaita: Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Project administration, Visualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Validation, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing.

Declaration of competing interest

The author declares that she has no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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