The Rhythm Analysis of Liminal Urbanisation: Migrants' Decision-making through Multiple Temporalities

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ABSTRACT: Liminal urbanisation represents a bottom-up communal organisation of self-built dwellings, established through the social interdependence of neighbours. A study of forced migrants from Kosovo and North Macedonia inhabiting the periphery of Montenegrin coastal cities reveals spatial, temporal and social splintering of conventional decision-making processes. This fragmentation manifests through linear recurrence, cyclical repetitiveness and periodisation, which together form the spatiotemporal framework of these neighbourhoods. Linear recurrence encompasses activities during dwelling construction, whilst cyclical temporalities are shaped by communal activities in public spaces. Periodisation represents a set of social peaks that generate horizontal decision-making. The author employs qualitative methods, including questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, focused observation and informal conversations with participants from four informal neighbourhoods: Bijela Gora, Palestine, 7th July and Meljine. The study demonstrates how political empowerment of migrants emerges through their demands for affordable housing and social inclusion, ultimately challenging authorities' top-down perspectives on informal neighbourhoods.

KEYWORDS: Henri Lefebvre, linear rhythm, cyclical repetition, periodisation, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian inhabitants.

INTRODUCTION

Unlike analyses of social struggles in informally built neighbourhoods through Manuel Castells' structuralist lens or David Harvey's neoclassical approach, Henri Lefebvre recognises that timescales, through a multiplicity of rhythms, determine spatial and social dynamics (Kipfer et al. 2012). The philosopher asserts that "rhythm exists wherever there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy" (Lefebvre 2013, 26). This rhythm analysis involves tracing changes in communal activities and becoming attuned to them "as an audience listens to a symphony" (Lefebvre 2013, 96).

I employ rhythm analysis to study migrants' socialisation and decision-making processes in neighbourhoods by capturing different recurrences. For Lefebvre, rhythm is inextricably linked to understanding repetition (Goonewardena et al. 2008). Repetition involves duplicating activities and situations that embrace personal and communal differences through informal building, adjusting barriers and organising neighbourhoods. These repetitions achieve completion through "duration and intensity", ensuring that "time lingers" above its roots in class, race, ethnicity and gender (Han 2020, 8). In informal communities, mechanical or planned replication "entails operations that are not only stereotyped but also consecrated rites" (Lefebvre 2013, 39). These recurrences, as productive activities, "can only be thought of as the repetition of difference", which creates possibilities for community occupants (Hallward 2006, 71). This mode of communal productivity "generates constant newness within continuity" (Gardiner 2012, 43). Drawing from Lefebvre's modalities of rhythm, I captured the linear and cyclical repetitive everyday activities of migrants' socialisation in liminal neighbourhoods.
Liminal urbanisation creates subaltern, open-ended areas characterised by informal dwellings and the social differences of their inhabitants (Dale & Burrell 2008). These areas, lacking documented street names, legal parcellation and legitimation, form an irregular morphology of continuous expansion through "transitory dwellings" built with recycled materials and without formalised sanitation infrastructure (Shortt 2015, 645). The occupation of these residences challenges the conventional separation of "living, working, and amenities" and transcends social boundaries and expectations, highlighting the importance of spatial-temporal analysis (Van den Hoek 2009, 10). Liminal communities foster "fertile ground for bottom-up democratic practices and political participation" (Rocco & van Ballegooijen 2019, 6). The inhabitants' interdependence emerges as the most striking aspect of these districts, with migrants' involvement in self-building and communal gatherings extending beyond the available representation of horizontal alliances in studied communities.

In contrast to univalent dynamics in self-built neighbourhoods, I employ linear and cyclical repetitions as spatiotemporal characteristics of migrants: linear rhythm concerning their activities during barrack construction, and cyclical occurrences through neighbour interactions in self-constructed neighbourhoods. These two measurements integrate the spatial and temporal dimensions of migrants' inhabitation. Periodisation, emerging as a set of social peaks from these recurrences, signifies multiple temporalities of social and political non-hierarchical dynamics. It relates to thresholds being erased and replaced by accelerated communication aimed at overcoming social and political restraints. This raises two key questions: How do migrants' linear and cyclical repetition during barrack construction and socialisation in public spaces influence different political periodisation?

And how do their everyday activities contribute to horizontal decision-making? Temporal urban liminality examines the migrants' social "roles played by ambivalence and hybridity in everyday life", which affect their economic, sociospatial and spatiotemporal aspects (Mady 2024, 2).

Whilst this study does not address how affluent individuals and political leaders replicate informal urbanisation models, it demonstrates how self-organised adjustment of communal spaces evolved through time patterns punctuated by ruptures, breaks and crises. In critiquing the understanding of time in informal urban areas as a continuous stream of events—such as building rudimentary units, adding recycled material, extending rooms and finishing facades—I traced overlapping timescales of households' investments in alternating sheds and socialising in parking lots and common spaces. Constant building and repair emerge as outcomes of the trial-and-error process in these communities, revealing the cyclical nature of self-building. Considering the interdependence of families isolated from broader society, time spent in communal spaces adjacent to streets and between barracks reveals migrants' resistance to the productive mode of workday expectation (Sharma 2014).

This study has two primary objectives. The first is to capture different spatiotemporal dynamics in four informal neighbourhoods in Montenegro's coastal cities. This section introduces the concept of urban liminality and its application to migrants from Kosovo and North Macedonia through a literature review of self-built dwellings, linear and cyclical repetition, and periodisation. The second objective traces cyclical versus linear repetition in migrants' communities, punctuated with periodisation as the rupturing and reweaving of horizontal decision-making. The outcome is a spatiotemporal analysis of informal neighbourhoods that traces the political potential of migrants' struggle for affordable housing upgrades, challenging local and government elected officials' top-down views. Participants' critique of authorities and desire to alter their social status affirm the Lefebvrean calls for the right to co-develop liminal districts.

1.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Self-built Dwellings as Groundwork of Liminal Urbanisation

A shelter is self-built if the household is involved in the construction by participative decision-making without the involvement of professionals. This mode of inhabitation disrupts existing and outmoded forms of housing provision and finds adaptive solutions for migrants to "devise their own, bottom-up solutions" of urbanisation (Pearson *et al*. 2020, 286). This self-construction necessitates decades-long desirable and viable alternation of shacks used to form solidarity among neighbours (Lombard *et al*. 2021). Their inventions are grounded on social practices encapsulated in building imagination and social organisation for the growth of liminal neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods embody the spatiotemporal alternation of urban tissue based on the decentralised organisation of communities as the essence of horizontal decision-making (Obremski & Carter 2019).

The Latin word *limen*, signifying threshold or boundary, explores occurrences of between-ness or inhabiting margins as opposed to a supposed "centre" or living in a temporary state (Cacciotti 2024). There are "degrees of liminality" that "weighed against persisting spatiotemporality " as the pre-liminal, characterised by separation and segregation of citizens, the liminal as transition, and the post-liminal as reintegration and aggregation of occupants (Turner 1979, 466; Bjørn 2009, 18; Chittenden 2021). The last category is beyond the scope of this study since forced migrants have not achieved acceptance from citizens from other neighbourhoods.

Urban liminality is a space-time repetitiveness of events which facilitates the constant adaptation of neighbourhoods (Pavoni 2020). This liminality encompasses social degradation, the danger of segregation, ecological pollution and multiple scenarios for political manipulation (Lancione & Simone 2021). These liminal transformations depend on "new processes, forms, structures, patterns, experiences and entities" as the foundation of urban growth in all cities (Stenner 2017, 16). I captured these processes through linear, cyclical repetition and punctuation that is "simultaneously destructive and constructive" and suspends "known norms, behaviours and identities" for giving way to improvisation, uncertainty, and experimentation (Shortt 2015, 637).

1.2. Linear and Cyclical Repetition

Repletion is governed by changes that create variations or differences in "their amplitude," frequency, and the energies deployed (Lefebvre 2014a, 206). This strength recorded in liminal urban districts is shown through Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) migrants' daily adjustment of barracks and time spent negotiating with neighbours. Recurrences result from socialisation between disadvantaged households through sharing construction knowledge that "constitute[s] time" dynamics and investments (Lager *et al*. 2016; Meij *et al*. 2021, 1822). I used these repetitive activities to gain insight into the multiplicities of timescales in self-built neighbourhoods captured through the linear and cyclical processes.

Migrants' repetitive working day cycles, obligation patterns, and gatherings for discussing self-building in the neighbourhood create a time flow that contributes to linear repetition. This "linear comes rather from social practice" during the construction and adjustment of dwellings. It derives from "a series of [hourly, daily, weekly, and monthly] gestures" that "constrained and colonised" communal relations (Simonsen 2005, 8). On one side, linear repetition results in "lassitude, boredom and fatigue", and on the other, it is "amenable to being fully quantified and homogenised" households, resulting in "more activities, distractions, visual stimuli and entertainments" in informal neighbourhoods (Lefebvre 2014b, 129-130; Gardiner 2012, 46). Migrants' cyclical recurrence exudes differences in communities through exposure to relationships between neighbours. This cumulative socialisation is conditioned by "active and passive, days and nights, " and accepted and rejected practices (Lefebvre 2013, 8). This temporality

is measured as continuous communication, dependence and reliance on neighbours in car parks and communities for sharing work-related information. The target of these activities is not "routine or repetition as such", but it is central to steering the communal horizontal decision-making regarding future housing upgrades (Gardiner 2004, 238).

1.3. Periodisation

These two rhythms are joined "together because they enter into perpetual interaction and are even relative to one another, to the extent that one serves as the measure of the other" and construct periodisation (Lefebvre 2013, 90). Periodisation is a useful metronome for examining the articulations of neighbourly relations (Brenner 2009). It represents a capacity to blend linear and cyclical assemblages of migrants with the changing political climates. Periodisation represents an ongoing rupturing and reweaving of marginalised groups' organisations for "negotiating fluid spatial articulations and priorities" through interhuman dependence (Salder 2020, 1039). It frames noteworthy social conjunctures, spatial contexts, and communities' past and present challenges through horizontal decision-making (Jessop 2019; Ghulyan 2019, 3). This "periodisation of space based on the general production methods" influences social patterns in communities through "which these production methods prevailed" (Şekerci & Örmecioğlu 2020, 590). Since it depends on changing spatial and temporal properties of liminal neighbourhoods, "there can be no master periodisation that captures the essence of a period for all purposes" (Jessop 2003, 3). Thus, the periodisation of multiple levels of socialisation during self-building and communal gatherings in public areas pursues appropriate and optimal urban spatiotemporal articulation (Addie 2022). It redefines "spatial hierarchies" that oppose the dominant mode of city governance (Salder 2020, 1039).

2.0 METHODOLOGY

I completed ethnomethodology from January 2017 until March 2024. Ethnomethodology examines methods that allow group members to manage and organise inhabited places (Whittle 2018; Garfinkel 2023). The qualitative data was collected through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, focused observation, and informal conversations with participants from four informal neighbourhoods. These methods enabled me to see how migrants' spatial adjustments were timed and shared among neighbours. Migrants' time invested in self-building and community activities was embodied by my field book sketches and recorded narratives. Their sociological and temporal perspectives are entrenched in spatial measurements, the importance of timescales, and enthusiasm when asked about linear, cyclical repetition and periodisation of everyday life (Button 1991). This rhythm analysis is voiced through "undomesticated forces" that cannot be measured by income levels, construction skills, and educational level (Simone 2018, 19), which should be the subject of future investigation.
My field notes in Ulcinj, Budva, Tivat and Herceg Novi were compiled based on approximately 800 hours spent communicating and discussing spatiotemporal topics with community leaders and migrant families. These notes include how I met and interacted with the participants, the atmospheres and materiality of the public places, how interviews proceeded, and talk when the delivered questionnaires were collected. Weekly visits were conducted when government regulations were permitted to combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Alongside observing neighbourhoods, I collected 46 interviews and 73 questionnaires. Over 80% of the interviewed participants were female, and the identities of the participants are confidential. I applied principles of non-maleficence, faithfulness, integrity, justice, and respect for human rights and dignity during fieldwork provided in the International Communication Association's Code of Ethics, which brings normative research questions to ongoing analyses (Provoost 2020).

3.0 FOUR CASE STUDIES

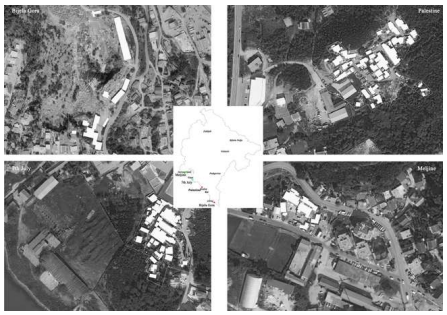
This research explores four informal neighbourhoods: Bijela Gora in Ulcinj, Palestine in Budva, 7th July in Tivat, and Meljine in Herceg Novi, located on the periphery of these cities. These districts were selected because they house most of the vulnerable groups in the southern region of Montenegro. Palestine and 7th July are the two largest neighbourhoods, and the most vulnerable families and individuals inhabit Bijela Gora and Meljine.
Bijela Gora in Ulcinj, the coastal city on the east border of the country, is located on the top of the hill 2 km northeast of the old town (figure 1). Families inhabited the decrepit buildings of a former aluminium factory that closed in 2008 when the director informed displaced families that the structure was available for occupation (figure 2). The building was left without windows and doors; consequently, migrants inhabited them by covering window frames with cardboard and other recycled materials. The spatial void of these buildings represents a challenge for households' intimacy, and the 10-meter-high ceiling obscures adequate heating during the winter season. This area is inhabited by a fluctuating RAE population from 9 to 20 households and individuals performing temporary work during the summer. The public place is covered with leftovers produced by a family over many years and materials from construction companies using the ground to dispose of their surplus illegally.

Palestine is 5 km west of Budva's old town and 1.6 km from Jaz beach. In 1985, this locale was formed between hills hidden from the main road, with two long shacks as transitory accommodation for RAE migrants from Kosovo and North Macedonia (figure 1). In 1993, ten migrant families started to inhabit these shacks permanently. Only one shack survived the fire in 1999, which initiated the informal construction cycle (figure 2). This neighbourhood contains 56 households, four from Montenegro, and the others are RAE refugees from Kosovo. After the initiation of informal settlement, the members of political parties downgraded migrants' religion and ethnicity by labelling them as Palestine people.

7th July, 16.8 km northwest of Palestine, is located at Tivat's east entrance, 1.5 km from the airport and 2 km from the downtown (figure 1). In 1990, the RAE refugees occupied the hill's northern slope; today, 35 families have

settled in this community (figure 2). This neighbourhood contains three large-scale collective shacks built as temporary accommodations for temporary workers that were transformed into permanent living units. Inhabitants adopted a more politically neutral name for the neighbourhood, marking the date the first household inhabited the neighbourhood.

Meljine in Herceg Novi, the coastal city on the west border of the country, is located at the east entrance of the city, 2.2 km away from the old town (figure 1). This settlement was established in the 1990s for the seasonal labourers and their families, and in 1999, it was occupied by refugees from Kosovo and North Macedonia. Today, these dwellings are occupied by 11 RAE families and two single residents from Montenegro, older than 50 years and mostly unable to work due to illness or work-related injuries. These units share a common wall, and the dwellers adjust the facades and extended units (figure 2). Since the local government owns the land, this housing solution is the only stability families have, and they fear being pushed or forcefully moved out.



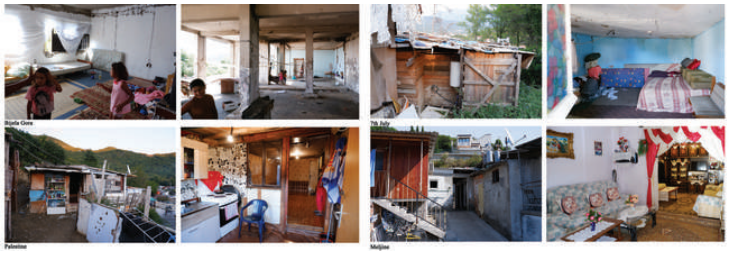


Figure 1 (left): Map of Montenegro with four case studies (central). Drone photography of Bijela Gora (left up), Palestine (right up), 7th July (left down) and Meljine (right down). Source: (Author, 2025)

Figure 2 (right): Photography of Bijela Gora (up left), Palestine (down left), 7th July (up right), Meljine (down right). Source: (Author, 2020/1)

4.0 MIGRANTS' LINEAR AND CYCLICAL RECURRENCES

Table 1: Tracing alternation of dwellings and collective places in Bijela Gora, Palestine, 7th July and Meljine. Source: (Author 2023)

Places	No. of units				Timed activities (%)				Recorded alternation of places (%)			
	BG	P	7J	M	BG	P	7J	M	BG	P	7J	M
Sheds	09	56	35	11	74	51	47	67	04↑/13↓/83O	49↑/24↓/27O	41↑/29↓/30O	22↑/02↓/76O
Repaired sheds	01	43	29	08	03	12	17	10	• /• /•	• /• /•	• /• /•	• /• /•
Car parks	01	03	02	01	09	11	15	07	• /43↓/67O	44↑/18↓/38O	47↑/• /63O	05↑/• /95O
Collective courtyards	03	04	03	01	14	36	21	16	11↑/ • /89O	48↑/11↓/59O	30↑/06↓/64O	12↑/02↓/86O

BG – *Bijela Gora*; **P** – *Palestine*; **7J** – *7th July*; **M** – *Meljine neighbourhoods*; ↑ - *explosion*; ↓ - *implosion*; O - *no changes*; • - *no data.*

Sheds' extensions determine how the spatial arrangement alters social-temporal interactions between neighbours (Lefebvre 2013). Bijela Gora has nine permanent living families and eleven temporary squatters, leaving these shelters decaying and out of repair (Table 1). In Palestine, 43 houses have at least undergone one repair cycle, while in 7th July 29 households repaired their barrack multiple times. An inhabitant stated, "In acceptance of our traditional ways of life, we persist in extending our shelters in agreement with neighbours" (March 2021 interview). In Meljine 8 families invested additional time and effort in repairing their dwelling. Bijela Gora and Meljine families did not invest in larger alternation and focused on the interior finishing. This passive inhabitation is captured by a statement from a community founder of Bijela Gora: "The big problem for us is that new migrants are just desperate and move in shelters without adjusting their shelter or front yards" (April 2018 interview). Half of the participants extended their shelter in Palestine by adding up to two rooms, and 41% of participants from 7th July followed this logic (Table 1). Almost one-quarter of subjects in Palestine imploded initially built units by demolishing walls for larger interior spaces, while nearly a third of interviewees on 7th July did the same. A third of the households in both neighbourhoods, 27% in Palestine and 30% in 7th July kept the initially built building with negligible maintenance.

These alternations of dwellings enforce linear repetition of construction processes, moulding neighbourly dependence. Families' time invested in self-building overcomes the categorisation of incremental phases, such as inhabiting basic single-room shelter, extending a room, adding additional rooms, rearranging interior partisans, altering roofs, facades and verandas and adjusting courtyards. In opposition to these phases, traced temporalities during the building of barracks revealed a series of repetitions that resulted in boredom and fatigue of less involved family members and strengthened communal relations of active participants by producing visually and material stimulating shelter envelopes. Building techniques of bricklaying are recorded in no unit in Bijela Gora, four barracks in Palestine, three in 7th July, and one in Meljine. Other households used to overlap recycled materials and water isolation layers which know-how was shared through dilogies during leisure time.

Communal activities in the Bijela Gora peaked from 5 a.m. until 9 a.m., while the rest of the day I recorded low or no happenings among neighbours (figure 3). Palestine and 7th July neighbourhoods are more active, having longer socialisation time from 4 a.m. until 1 p.m. and a medium level of interaction after 3 p.m. Interaction among inhabitants in Meljine is the most dynamic between 5 p.m. and 9 p.m., and the rest of the day is passive. These communal cycles directly impact the self-built sheds since their envelopes and spaces between them are appropriated for gatherings.

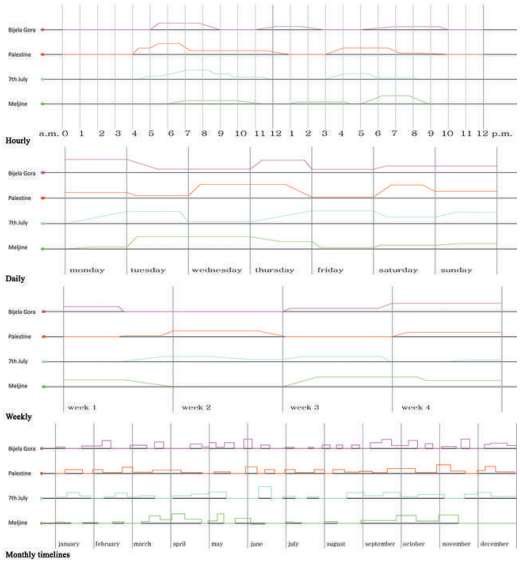


Figure 3: Hourly, daily, weekly and monthly timelines of self-building in four case studies. Source: (Author, 2025)

In Bijela Gora, inhabitants tend to put additional effort into enveloping their shelters on Monday and Thursday (figure 3). In Palestine, exceptional self-building days are Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday, while in the 7th July are Tuesday, Friday and Sunday. Households of Meljine on average engage with the living environment on Tuesday and Wednesday, and the rest of the week holds minor interaction. In Bijela Gora, self-building activities are dominant in the first half of the first week and continue in the third and fourth week of the month (figure 3). Palestine timeframes for building are recorded on the second and fourth weeks, while 7th July occupants worked on sheds the most on the second and third weeks. Meljine intensified activities most of the first week and the third and fourth weeks. These patterns created yearly construction codes repeated multiple times in the last three decades. Each repetition established differences in the outline and envelope of the liminal shelter. Timeframes in Bijela Gora revealed that throughout the year building was done sporadically in intervals up to 10 days (figure 3). In Palestine and 7th July neighbourhoods, cycles of self-construction result in more continuous work throughout the year. In Meljine, work on shelters was done mostly in spring and autumn. In general, fewer active months are in the summer season when most of the participants work long hours in multiple seasonal jobs. From one side, the traced linear timelines of self-building led to self-reliance reflected through a critique of the municipal authorities. On the other, it initiated a strong neighbouring interdependence leading toward horizontal decision-making in four communities. This dependence is recorded via dialogues between households for sharing building know-how accounting for 34% of the recorded time invested in a building in Bijela Gora, 65% in Palestine, 53% in 7th July, and 37% in Meljine. According to the interviewee from 7th July, this "construction and maintenance depends on internal agreements resulting from social conditions and time investments based on economic power of families" (June 2021 interview). These time investments enable migrants to be fully homogenised, resulting in commitment and dependence on each other.

Cyclical recurrences depend on active and passive moments, day and night activities, and accepted and jugged use of public areas. It occurs in car parks and community courtyards where music, games, laundry, gardening, mechanical reparation and recycling materials are performed for sharing community and work-related information establishing reliance on neighbours. Bijela Gora residents park cars between junk, and there are three common gathering areas (Table 1). "All neighbours park their vehicle in front of the barrack. I like marking territory with my car to protect my family's belongings" (July 2023 questionnaire). In these public areas, 29% of active sharing of information and engagement was recorded. From 8 p.m. until 6 a.m., the community is predominantly inactive, and the most recorded communal engagement is from 10 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. (figure 4). In the central zone of Palestine, there is one car park with recycled steel frames, the first business in the neighbourhood, two smaller parking spaces and four community courtyards on the periphery. These areas hold 71% of all active participation of inhabitants which is conditioned with gatherings after 7 p.m. when all participants finish their working day, and daily interaction from 7 a.m. until 4 p.m. 7th July has a smaller parking lot on the north perimeter, a medium-sized on the southeast boundary, one courtyard for community interaction, and two gathering places are on the main internal street. These public places generate 59% of interaction among migrants integrated with two timeframes from 6:30 p.m. until 9 p.m. and from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. The Meljine community has one parking lot used for community gatherings, which generates 23% of cyclical recurrences. From 10 a.m. until 11:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. until 7 p.m. is marked with neighbours' communication and the rest of the time inhabitants stay inactive. The social benefit of these timeframes is captured through the interviewees' emphasis on music, games, laundry, gardening, mechanical reparation and recycling materials.

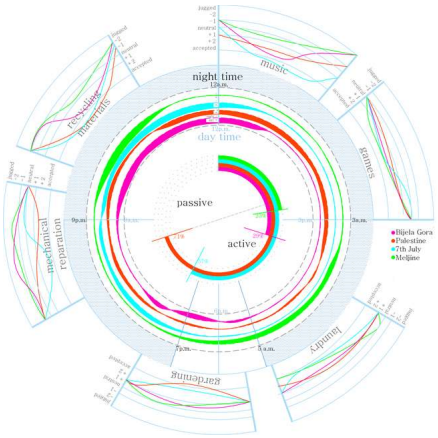


Figure 4: Cyclical timelines in four communities. Source: (Author, 2024)

Concerning neighbourly relationships in public places, I traced that most of the surveyed migrants in Meljine jugged used loud music, while in the other three case studies the tolerance was higher (figure 4). All participants expressed neutral and slight approval of games in shared areas. The higher reception rate was using common places for laundry and display of household items, and even higher was assigned to gardening which was viewed as beautification of the communities. In Bijela Gora and Meljine repairs were viewed as an obstacle to the community growth, on the contrary, it was an asset to the diversification of activities in Palestine and 7th July. Similar divided views follow recycling and storing materials in public places, as inhabitants of Bijela Gora and Meljine stated that it "created an intolerable hazard in the community" (May 2021, questionnaire in Bijela Gora). This acceptance and judgment unveil the uneven opportunities between households, which outcome is a mode of horizontal decision-making aiming at the right to coproduce housing upgrading projects.

5.0 PERIODISATION TOWARD HORIZONTAL DECISION-MAKING

Assembling linear and cyclical temporalities compose periodisation as an apparatus for horizontal decision-making dynamics. In four case studies, uneven opportunities between family members during self-building and household attending community gatherings strengthened dependence on neighbours and critique of community leaders.

Apart from four households in Palestine and three in 7th July that used bricklaying, the rest of the participants established a neighbourly relationship through sharing knowledge of different techniques of overlapping recycled materials and water isolation layers. This self-building know-how influenced weekly, monthly and yearly repetitions through households' mistrust of local and governmental authorities leading toward horizontal decision-making. This horizontality is viewed in a self-organised cluster of households: two in Bijela Gora, six in Palestine, four in 7th July, and one recorded in Meljine. These groups share meals, construction knowledge, and assist neighbours in repairs of barracks after a storm. These collectives influence decision-making in neighbourhoods by restraining community leaders who are in all cases affiliated with political parties. These limitations shared among clusters strengthen the social bonds of households and reveal their struggle for spatial and political changes in liminal communities.

Gatherings in public places revealed uneven opportunities between households where information about community organisations is distorted and misunderstood. This imbalanced socialisation forced participants to negotiate and accept compromise for the next cycle of communal activities. These cycles of negotiations derive from participants' opposing views of poverty and marginalisation, but they are unified by critiquing municipal leaders and government officials for using their migratory status as a cheap working force. This "enslaved position" (April 2024 interview in Palestine) deprives these communities of urban facilities and isolates migrants from the rest of society. In four cities the local government delivered holiday gifts to children, basic food packages, and improved roads during election campaigns, but did not address the long-term social, ethnic, and political exclusion of RAE households and housing upgrade strategies. This top-down view of marginalisation prolonged the liminal status of these communities and motivated migrants to initiate political changes.

In Palestine and 7th July, more than in Bijela Gora and Meljine, there is political potential for channelling inhabitants' dissatisfaction in the form of bottom-up initiation of social housing projects. This potential confirmed the Lefebvrean calls for migrants' right to coproduce horizontal "political and legal apparatus" by contesting the political establishment (King 2019, 77). This governance from the below enables the RAE population to appropriate the self-building of shelters in the open-ended social housing and community relationships into a non-authoritarian and "inclusive democratic communication and decision-making" (Young 2002, 6). This decision-making is assembled "with its many threshold experiences and its tendency to incorporate older forms" of governance within the communal framework of self-building (Eiland & Jennings 2014, 8).

CONCLUSION

I examined how linear and cyclical repetition combine to form periodisation, revealing political potential through migrants' self-organisational skills. This self-reliance manifests as "movement-stasis, proceeding-waiting, acceleration-delay", which suspends conditions of social marginality (Baumann 2019, 45). The recorded household

alliances demonstrate their struggle for spatial and political changes in liminal communities. The spatiotemporal dynamics studied across four Montenegrin informal neighbourhoods emerge through migrants' linear and cyclical repetitions, as well as periodisation during barrack construction and socialisation in public spaces.

The alternation of barracks introduced socialisation patterns varying across neighbourhoods: 34% of the yearly recorded time flow in Bijela Gora, 65% in Palestine, 53% in 7th July, and 37% in Meljine. Migrants' investment in self-produced shelters revealed political punctuation within established household clusters. These groups shared building expertise and critiques of community leadership through family networks. Their alliances formed through linear recurrences of experimenting with different construction techniques, building social consciousness and awareness of minority group empowerment. Whilst these sequences do not contribute to a coherent resolution of liminal rationalism, they significantly capture the evolving patterns of neighbourhood interdependence.

Multiple cycles of migrants' gatherings in public spaces highlighted their predominant critique of municipal leaders and government officials for neglecting requests for social housing upgrade projects. Communal activities—including music, games, laundry, gardening, mechanical repairs and recycling—not only shaped the temporal and social character of these districts but also contributed to political non-hierarchical dynamics. These dynamics signify a diachronic rather than chronological sequence of building and socialisation through political "time-space compression" that calls for "an interrogation of new futures" of informal community organisations (Harvey 2020, 239).

Migrants' building creativity, self-reinvention and community decision-making confirm Lefebvre's "forgotten [and] erased place of architectural work" as design processes that incorporate communities' socio-temporal dynamics (Stanek 2011). Rather than viewing architectural practice as merely an effect and instrument of overwhelming social forces—rejecting the notion that "nothing can be done because of capitalism, which commands and co-opts" (Lefebvre 2014c, 3)—I traced spatiotemporal dynamics to support the philosopher's call for "a dialectical understanding of the conflict between a specifically architectural imagination and the forces aimed at instrumentalising it" (Stanek 2011, 250). This approach advances "the possibility of an architectural imagination beyond the architects' position", achieved through critical engagement with design and research commissions, thus encouraging a rethinking of architectural labour within "the processes of spatial production, and to renegotiate it" (Boano 2015). Ultimately, rhythm analysis enriches the architectural design process through migrants' experiences of dwelling development, transformation of communal spaces and community building renegotiation.

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