

Get into the Groove: the Role of Sound in Generating a Sense of Belonging at Street Parades

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I: I'm outside the Food Gallery, on Vincent Street, the main street of Daylesford. People are standing around me, waiting, too, for the ChillOut parade to start. I close my eyes and listen ... I hear more clearly around me the murmuring of expectant adult voices. People chatting in groups. 'Two lattes? Who ordered two lattes?' Then above that all I hear is revving engines. Where am I? I guess I... I could be at the Grand Prix, or perhaps a busy interchange in Melbourne? Where's the sounds of Kylie? Cher? Fed up waiting, I open my eyes. Nothing's changed; there are still people around me expectantly waiting, albeit with arms crossed.¹

II: I'm standing along the main Daylesford-Hepburn Road, not far from the Hepburn Springs reserve, waiting for the Swiss-Italian parade to start. Children run back and forth, excitedly calling out to friends and family standing along the path. I close my eyes ... a man's voice calls out, asking those in the parade to get to their positions. The deep clanging of cow bells moves past me, and a marching band commences with a drum roll. Where am I? The Italian-speaking canton of Ticino? (Swiss Italy)? But what about the brass band playing 'When the Saints Go Marching In'? I can hear people moving past me, caught up in the flow, meandering, but still keeping some sense of time with the marching band as it leads the parade down the street. I'm left standing on my own. I open my eyes and quickly try to catch up...²

Introduction

We begin with entries from our research diaries because they illustrate how sound is an imperative part of where you are. Research undertaken in a range of fields has sought to understand the significance of sound and the processes of listening in making sense of social worlds. This inherently interdisciplinary pursuit has particularly emerged in sociology cultural geography, cultural studies, musicology and music therapy.³ Yet, a great deal is still not known about the interplays between music, sounds, spaces, bodies and our sense of self.

An examination of sound and music offers two main insights into the connections between space, belongings and identities. First, music and sound are commonly examined as a place-based resource for constructing individual and group identities. The spatial qualities of listening are integral to making sense of self through place. Particular *meanings* are attributed to sound and music because of the context in which they are heard or associations they make possible.⁴ However, most previous studies have explored the relationships between space, music and identity in ways that produce ethnographic records telling us how people think the world is; that is, they are representative accounts. What these sorts of studies struggle to tell us is how

people *do* things, and how people constitute their worlds through *sensing* and *experiencing*, beyond their own descriptions.⁵ Recognition of these limitations then leads to the second potential significance of music and sound in understanding social space, beyond representational practices. Music and sound elicit emotions that help constitute various places through the ways in which people individually respond to sensing sound or music.⁶ By focusing on the experiential responses aroused by music and sound, we can start to think about the role of emotions and affect in encounters between places, individuals, and things. Following the work of Shouse,⁷ we understand emotions to be a social projection of an individual feeling. While feelings are understood as personal and biographical because they rely upon interpretation and categorisation from previous experiences, expressions of emotion are sometimes refracted through particular contexts. Affect we understand as pre-personal; it is a non-conscious experience of intensity that is always outside of language because it is conceptualised as prior to and outside of consciousness.

In this paper we wish to take up the challenge proposed by Ros Bandt (2001) to be attentive to how sounds collide into each other in unpredictable ways.⁸ Our contribution to this area of research is to think about the ways in which sounds shape our experiences of place, specifically two street parades. The two parades we analyse are held at different times in the twin-town of Daylesford-Hepburn Springs, and celebrate two very different 'community' identities. The first is the lesbian and gay ChillOut parade held along the main street of Daylesford, Vincent Street. The second, the Swiss-Italian Festa parade, is held a month later on the main road of Hepburn Springs. The context for our research on these street parades is a wider project on the social and economic significances of festivals in rural towns.⁹ Here, we focus on the ways in which people engage with particular performances of community identities. Their affective responses to the sounds of these representations are, we argue, significant to notions of belonging or not belonging to certain communities of Daylesford-Hepburn Springs.

The success of these performances of community in terms of creating a sense of community and belonging has much to do with the creation of event-full moments. McCormack argues that the study of event-full moments – those times in which people, activities, emotions, and place come together 'charged with potential and possibilities' – in geographical inquiry can help us understand how the 'affective power of the non-representational processes animate[s] and enliven[s] spaces of practice and performance.'¹⁰ In this paper, we draw on McCormack's alternative spelling so as to encapsulate the range of affective relationships experienced in the specific instances of celebrations such as festivals. Using the term 'event-full moments' in this paper we focus specifically on the physical and psychological elements inherent in our responses to sound. Our challenge is to open our selves, both aurally and bodily, to affective practices of place-making through music. Building on Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualisation of music as a process,¹¹ we specifically explore the role of sound in helping meld individual responses to street parades – an interaction we argue that is integral to sustaining event-full moments that help to generate a sense of belonging in place.

Our article is organised as follows: first, we outline the context, and the importance of examining belonging in rural Australia. Next, we review the literature on soundscapes and present our concept of rhythmic time-space.¹² The third section discusses our methodology. Drawing on discourse analysis and techniques to explore embodied responses, the fourth section presents an interpretation of our interview data, participant observation, and audio and video recordings of the street and street parade. These enable us to compare how two street parades operate to generate a sense of belonging – or otherwise. The article concludes that rhythmic time-space matters in sustaining a sense of belonging not just at street parades, but wherever people wish to build social cohesion.

The context of belonging for Daylesford-Hepburn Springs, Victoria

The question about who belongs in rural Australia is particularly pertinent, given current debates about population change, decline and migration, climate change, drought and its effects on traditional agricultural sectors, and conflicts and difficulties over native title and self-determination for Indigenous peoples. So too, in the twin towns of Daylesford and Hepburn Springs, just over an hour's drive from Melbourne, belonging remains an important issue for local residents. As in other regional places such as Byron Bay, NSW¹³ and Denmark, WA,¹⁴ where industry decline meant vacant spaces became cheaply available for other uses, a diverse range of people since the 1970s have taken up residence here. Attracted by low housing prices, the romantic notion of 'the rural' and the region's proximity to Melbourne, the twin-towns have received a steady flow of migrants including artists, single mothers, lesbians, gay males, weekenders and most recently 'tree changer' migrants in their 40s and 50s. Indeed, ever since this influx, claims to being 'local' are often reserved for those families who can trace their descendants to the influx of migrants sustained by the 1850s gold rush from China, Ireland, Cornwall, Scotland, as well as a group from Italian-speaking Ticino (now part of Switzerland). Belonging for these families is materialised in streets names, with the names of ancestors literally embedded in the town landscape.

Yet, anyone familiar with European ideas of the picturesque will perhaps feel some sense of belonging to this place, regardless of whether or not they have family here or have visited Daylesford-Hepburn Springs before. The imagined geographies of Daylesford-Hepburn Springs as a place typefacing the rural idyll plays a crucial role in maintaining the steady follow of contemporary tree-changers, weekenders and day-trippers from Melbourne. The rapid decline of the area's primary industries (timber, saw milling, abattoir) has meant that tourism and its allied industries are incredibly important for maintaining livelihoods and therefore opportunities in Daylesford-Hepburn Springs.¹⁵ The term 'Melbourne country' would appear rather appropriate to describe Daylesford-Hepburn Springs, given the profusion along the main street of coffee, designer- and gift-shops to support weekend tourists. However, this sets up tensions between inhabitants of Daylesford-Hepburn Springs, as well as between residents, weekenders and tourists, where different ideas of home, community and belonging coexist, sometimes uneasily.

Ideas of 'community' are very important in the lives of residents. There is a certain level of fluidity in membership to particular community groups as people make and remake allegiances: to celebrate the lives of people who died from HIV/Aids, to save jobs, to protect the Wombat Forest, to conserve the heritage of the main street and to contain tourism development. Voluntary organised events in Daylesford-Hepburn Springs are a crucial part of creating these ideas of belonging, community and home, but also they help give rise to existing tensions. There is often a reciprocity operating within the township. On the one hand, events are deployed as a strategy for celebration of a particular social group within the town, in our case, lesbian and gay subjectivities and those of the Swiss-Italian Festa participants. On the other hand, events are deployed as an essential mechanism to sustain the local economy. Yet, these strategies can at the same time operate to heighten residents' sense of displacement through unwanted notions of particular identities, for example being mistaken as a tourist.

But, it is not simply being mistaken for a tourist that is problematic. Again in our case study of the ChillOut festival, some residents were opposed to the very identities being celebrated. Lesbians and gay males are an integral part of the social and business fabric of the twin-town, yet being 'gay' or 'lesbian' still has significant repercussions on their lived experiences. While homophobia is undoubtedly present amongst the adult population, the most extreme homophobic verbal and physical assaults have been apparent amongst young people. Discrimination continues despite local municipal discourse of 'tolerance', and the ChillOut festival organiser marketing the twin-towns as a lesbian and gay utopia. Crucially, as well as providing an opportunity to challenge the norms of heterosexuality, ChillOut exposes the ongoing homophobia in country Victoria.

Street parades associated with particular events are therefore potentially a crucial mechanism to help address these social fractures. Street parades are normally opportunities where people come together to celebrate a collective identity in a civic space, for example the collective Australian national identity celebrated at Anzac Day Parades or ticker-tape parades for Olympian sportspeople. Anthropological literature demonstrates that these events are important to strengthening the social fabric.¹⁶ In the context of festivals celebrating anything from the music of ABBA to the food of Zambia, anthropologists have employed the concept of liminality¹⁷ to suggest how street parades foster social interaction.¹⁸ In this context, liminality refers to the time-space where conventional social rules are temporarily suspended, and where differences drawn by social categories such as age, faith, ethnicity or sexuality are less important.¹⁹ This is argued to sustain a 'safe' time and space that may enable opportunities to celebrate notions of a shared communal identity or to explore contentious social concerns.²⁰ However, as Laurence Chalip acknowledges, rigorous analysis of these liminal qualities is hampered, given that participants' senses of belonging is something that is felt, rather than easily put into words (3). In our paper we seek to fill this gap by employing our concept of rhythmic time-spaces as a means to

examine the emotional and affective dimensions of street parades in establishing and maintaining a sense of belonging.

Rhythmic time-spaces

R. Murray Schafer introduced the concept of the 'soundscape' as a means to encapsulate how people inhabit and understand the sonic environment in which they live.²¹ Moreover, as Barry Truax argues, embedded within the soundscape is an underlying sense of communication; we are not passive listeners but are actively creating and attributing meaning to what we hear, and that 'this exchange of information is highly dependent on context.'²² We add our concept of rhythmic time-space to such discussions as a strategy to engage more thoroughly with emotional and affective politics experienced in place.

'Rhythm' means, at a very simple level, regular repetition. Any recurring pattern of activity — be that the repeated stressing of particular beats within a musical piece, the body's daily physiological cycles, the succession of seasons, or the even the procession of stars extended over thousands of years — can be described as being rhythmic. Yet, it is also rhythm that connects and contextualises us. The rhythms we perceive in music are in fact an illusion; our brains are highly sensitive to timing — this enables us to localise objects and our relevant positions in space — but our brains are also responsible for creating an illusion of structure through grouping of sounds.²³ As Henri Lefebvre suggests, the conscious and unconscious perceptions we have of our bodily rhythms means that we think with our bodies 'not in the abstract, but in lived temporality.'²⁴

We want to bring together these physiological responses with the processes of giving meaning to particular sounds. In doing so, this enables us to examine place not as a static 'stage' or 'backdrop' for social activities, but as constituted by heterogeneous and negotiated sets of relationships. What we have called rhythmic time-space is a material, physical space that has been territorialised through sound over a certain time period, which then gives rise to certain spatialised social relationships. Rhythmic time-space is, therefore, not only the audible sounds that structure space, but also the repeated occurrences — the repetitive activities of daily life — and the sets of relationships occurring within that rhythmically structured space. Various sounds (whether broadcast as music or an amalgam of different types of background noise) invade and envelop physical space, and as we discuss below, they create a particular rhythm — whether musical, physical or psychological. Understanding our responses to rhythmic time-spaces enables examination of how a sense of being 'in-place' is generated aurally and how our bodies both move and communicate to each other through our responses to sounds and music.

There is much to learn here from scientific disciplines. Studies in neurobiology on communication between mother and infant suggest that infants are sensitive to gestures of communication, be it through spoken or signed language.²⁵ Infants seek out active participation in communicating, and have

an expectation of how bodily and vocal interaction 'fits' into such a framework, so much so that they become distressed in those situations where communication does not correspond to these expectations.²⁶ Stephen Malloch argues that this relates to music and dance, in that they are 'inextricably bound to our ability to appreciate their unfolding narratives of gesture' (15). This suggests that the expectations of communication occur within certain temporal and implied spatial forms – we are programmed and alert to the potential of interaction between ourselves and others. Moreover, we understand the 'correct' rhythms for a range of communication activities (such as conversation) and seek to insert ourselves within such rhythms, and, as suggested by studies of mothers with post-natal depression,²⁷ our emotions have an impact on this rhythmic communication. Music, and our emotional responses to it, has a role in the emergence of processes that regulate the dynamics of social interaction. Indeed, some studies in human evolution suggest that music had a significant role in creating and enhancing deep communicative interaction and social bonds between individuals within a group. For example, Jaak Panksepp and Gunther Bernatzky propose,

All these social abilities can impact our moods and hence it is easy to imagine how affective experiences evoked by emotional sounds and hence eventually music could have an adaptive evolutionary basis. Thereby, we can appreciate why many brain/mind processes (e.g. our deep inner feelings) that are hard to communicate in mere words can be more easily expressed in music (Langer, 1942).²⁸

What such studies in physiology and psychology suggest is that we have an inherent sense of the pulse with which communication occurs. Communication operates within a rhythmic framework, a movement between two points or individuals. Moreover, certain rules govern how we act and interact within that social space and these then provide physiological and social benefits. If we wish to communicate effectively, regardless of difference, we need to be able to perceive and negotiate the framework of rhythmic flow between ourselves and others.

When we are communicating, we expect a certain back-and-forth between others and ourselves. There is then a centrality of time in these experiences, a 'being-in-time-together.' As William Benzon explains, 'individuals are physically separate, but temporally integrated. It is one music, one dance.'²⁹ The medium in which these communicative acts occur implies an underlying sense of a time period that controls the unfolding of the narrative of gesture. Yet, the term 'rhythm' contains a paradox. Rhythm can imply regularity, lawfulness and measure, but it is also an expressive or compelling motion, gesture or shape. Our communication arises within a recognisable pulse, where, as music theorist Christopher Hasty explains,

rhythm focuses our attention, not on time as a substrate or medium of events, but on the events themselves in their particularity, creativity and spontaneity. To speak of rhythm is to speak of the rhythm of something — a characteristic gesture or shape that makes something special. Moreover, it is to raise the question, special for whom?³⁰

In using the term rhythmic time-space, then, we point to sound as a means to territorialise space.³¹ Music and sounds generate particular 'sound spaces' or 'sound communities' that then generate emotional responses in the individuals involved. These responses are in turn outcomes of interactions *within* ourselves, arising out of the interface between our inner dialogues, between our emotional and rational thoughts, between our desires and inhibitions. The body's interventions into the soundscape help to constitute identities.³² For example, our desire to dance in response to certain soundscapes such as at a rave party, demonstrates our physical and emotional reactions to particular music as well as our identification with certain groups of people. We conceive these interventions as integral to the processes of how we align ourselves with, or sense alienation from, particular places and social groups. Furthermore, interactive engagements between people and how people move through space always have rhythmic qualities.³³ In the context of particular recognised cultural codes, these bodily expressions become meaningful through how they occur within the acoustics or background pulse.

In this paper, we conceptualise the rhythmic time-space of street parades and role of the interplay between bodily movements and the soundscape in sustaining particular feelings of being 'in' or 'out' of place. We argue that at street parades, those instances that result in feelings of belonging rely upon moments where actions, performances, emotions come together in a particular rhythm to create a sense of *being special*, or of social camaraderie. In rhythmic time-spaces where the pulse is not recognised, or the rhythmic flow of bodies within the sound community is lost, a sense of being out-of-place and alienated are created. What we have termed rhythmic time-space is that which 'brings spaces, peoples, places "into form"'.³⁴

Rhythmic time-space thus provides a helpful conceptual tool to critically explore events, including street parades, as a political mechanism of social cohesion by disrupting everyday rhythms and creating other, more celebratory rhythms. To promote social cohesion and sustain a sense of belonging, we argue careful consideration must be given to interplay between the spatial, multiple identities, and lived experiences. This is illustrated by comparing your emotions if part of an audience at a street parade in the place that you live, compared, say, with one attended while on vacation; as well as contrasting a range of street parades including a lesbian and gay Pride march, Olympic sportspeople, or Australian war veterans. Emotional responses to a street parade can be multiple, each valid but distinct. We argue that event-full moments that generate a sense of belonging rely upon the communication established by flow of bodies and sound. Rhythm is an integral part of generating instances within parades where actions and joyful emotions come together to help sustain an affective intensity that unites people, regardless of social differences. Generating rhythmic time-spaces is therefore crucial to sustaining event-full moments that have the potential to work across social difference, generating alternative narratives about belonging. Those parades that celebrate particular identities can sustain potential opportunities in which meanings are generated that help to (re)make how people think about social

differences. Crucially, where such expectations are not met – where there is a hesitancy arising within rhythmic time-space – opportunities are missed to create event-full moments. The absence of certain sounds or having the ‘wrong’ sounds (whatever they might be) produces faltering effects – ‘stutters’ in rhythmic time-space.

Data collection and analysis

As a means to access emotional and affective responses, a crucial method was participant observation of peoples’ reactions to the sounds of the parade – what others have termed the soundscape.³⁵ In order to uncover the emotional and affective responses of subjects to sound, we used a number of strategies, including keeping a record of observations of the parade in photographs, sound and video recordings, in-depth interviews, and our field notes. Our analysis of these materials was guided by recent work by Duffy.³⁶ Our field notes indicate that at these street parades we are simultaneously researcher, audience and participant. In our notes we focused on recording how our own bodily sensations contributed to feelings of belonging (or not) at these street parades.

To aid interpretation on what we observed, 20 interviews were conducted with street parade participants at the event. The interviews lasted between 5 and 20 minutes. Participants were asked to describe what they thought about the parade. These interviews were not transcribed but provided insights about expectations, levels of enjoyment, comparisons with past and other similar events, and different notions of what the goals are of such events. However, we were mindful that the emotional responses of participants are more difficult to access, presenting the major methodological difficulty in this sort of research project.³⁷ When people talk about their musical experiences, they are articulating experiences that they have had time to consider, which means the visceral immediacy of their involvement is lessened. Further, this experience is translated into another mode of knowledge, that of language or text.

In addition to these observations and interviews, we also draw on another forty in-depth interviews with Daylesford-Hepburn Springs residents. The interviews lasted between 30 and 180 minutes. They were conducted in participant’s homes and cafes over a two-week period. The interviews were semi-structured, taped, then transcribed. Participants were asked to explore the importance of festivals living in Daylesford-Hepburn Springs, through reflecting on their level of involvement and modified routines during a festival. Our analysis was guided by Waitt’s discussion of discourse analysis.³⁸ These narratives give a sense of the everyday rhythms of this township, in terms of how the main street is inhabited by residents and visitors, and the translation of this into notions of belonging. So the concept of rhythm is used in both a musicological and metaphorical sense. It is this relationship between soundscape, place narrative and belonging that we think is important in what we have termed rhythmic time-space – that ideas about belongings can be uncovered within event-full moments sustained by the flow of, or disruption to, the rhythm of an event.

**‘What a feeling (I am music now), being’s believin’ (I am rhythm now)’³⁹:
reading streets parades as rhythmic time-spaces of belonging/
displacement**

Our interpretation of the in-depth interviews with residents suggest that the event spaces of the Swiss-Italian Festa parade generate more event-full moments – ones that translate into less contested narratives of belonging – in comparison to the ChillOut parade. How this is apparent can be conceived in both representational and non-representational terms. If we think about the sounds of these street parades in terms of representation, the differences are obvious not only in terms of musical or sonic practices, but also their politics. As a text, we recognise musical sounds and genres can represent particular groups of people.⁴⁰ Both of the street parades depicted certain notions of communal identity contextualised within a rural setting. In the case of ChillOut, the street parade celebrated sexuality, particularly lesbian and gay identities, that operated to unsettle stereotypical accounts of a resolutely heterosexual rural femininity defined by home-making and an equally steadfast heterosexual primary-industry masculinity characterised by physical strength, independence, mateship and mastery of the environment (Figure 1). For example, the instances in the ChillOut parade where a drag queen rode past in an open car on the main street, miming to Diana Ross’s *Never Can Say Goodbye*, the music played an integral part of these camp performances, with the potential to help unsettle ideas about country towns being ‘the natural place’ to find heterosexuality. Equally, ideas of country towns as devoid of same-sex desire were troubled by the strategic use of gay anthems, including Irene Cara’s *What a Feeling* played by Zaque, a youth group from nearby Ballarat. While same-sex desires have always been present in country towns, the music played at the ChillOut parade was an integral part of performances that have the potential impact of subverting hegemonic ideas of sexuality. The liminal spaces of the parade indeed did provide opportunities for participants to explore sexuality. The 2006 parade provided opportunities for at least two Daylesford residents to explore their transgender identities for this first time, and for another to talk freely about the same sex activities of his youth.

Figure 1. ChillOut Parade, 2006 (Photographs: Chris Gibson)





However, equally, the parade's use of music could be read to reinforce normative sexual identities through the references to iconic inner-city gay performers and songs. For example, Jane, a senior citizen who had lived all her married life in Daylesford commented:

The ChillOut, that parade is organised for gays and lesbians. It's an event that puts money back into the community, but its just one of the many things that goes on in our town now for tourists, it's a fund raiser. Tourists come from Melbourne, they watch the event, go places, and buy things to show-off to one another.⁴¹

For Jane, as a spectacle for tourists, the event did little to challenge ideas of sexuality in Daylesford-Hepburn Springs. The parade was one more event embedded within the weekly calendar and rhythms of weekday (mostly locals going about their business) versus weekend communities (influxes of tourists). Furthermore, the parade was far from unproblematic for some lesbian mothers for whom parenting is a primary source of identification, rather than their sexuality. As Tina, a business owner and lesbian mother pointed out:

For that one day I no longer feel like a minority – that's great, being part of that buzz. However, the drag queens are all from Melbourne. They don't live around here. I sometimes wonder why they are in the parade... I find myself for about a week or so having to explain to my friends who are not lesbian and gay that I am not going to suddenly go rushing into the hairdresser with a dildo tied to my waste – I am a mum, just like them.⁴²

While succeeding in opening discussions about sexuality that work towards understanding across difference and temporarily displacing the norms of heterosexuality, Tina's reading of the parade suggests a far more complex politics at work. Interestingly, amongst some lesbian residents the ChillOut parade was contested by its references to iconic music, inner-city gayness and prioritising one identity – sexuality – over, for instance, being a mother or businesswoman. Given the highly contested representational politics of the ChillOut festival, it is crucial for bodies to be able to begin to communicate through rhythms of movement, pulse and music. Because certain iconic music strongly communicated a certain inner-city (gay male) identity, other rhythms – and sense of belongings – were muted.

In contrast, the Swiss-Italian Festa (re)created a migrant identity based on hybridised ideas of a particular European community, with a strong rural focus.⁴³ Most children carried banners they had made in school covered with drawings to represent various aspects of a specifically Swiss-Italian heritage, as well as images of a more generalised Italian identity drawn from popular culture. Some adults and children chose to wear masks, referencing the carnivalesque nature both of the parade and the historical links to public culture in northern Europe. Traditionally-costumed men walking with the clanging of large cowbells swung over their shoulders were suggestive of rural European cowherds. Even so, this representation of rural European culture – along with yodelling, dancing, and the playing of the alpine horn – actually refer to the cultural practices of the Swiss-German community, practices eschewed by the Swiss-Italian community of Europe.

Recognition of these ethnic constructions of rural space served to confirm discourses that circulate within the Daylesford-Hepburn Springs, where Swiss-Italian heritage is attributed as a causal determinant of the residents' strong civic spirit. The Festa helped to naturalise ideas not only about Swiss-Italians being 'in place' in Daylesford-Hepburn Springs but for anyone who helped prepare for, or participated in the parade, to enhance their sense of belonging. This was clearly articulated by Jill, a single mother who had moved to Daylesford over 10 years ago. While speaking about the local prejudices often experienced by single mothers, she spoke favourably about the Swiss/Italian festival:

As a single mother I experienced a lot of prejudice in Melbourne...I moved to Daylesford because it was affordable back then...When I arrived I found a support in other single mothers, a friendship network... As a single mother, festivals were important when they involved the schools, you know, family involvement. The Swiss/Italian festival, I can honestly say that that helped how I felt living in Daylesford, helping prepare the banners, the food, involvement in the music. The bigger versions of the Swiss-Italian festival seem less relevant, the gourmet food formulaic, less relevant for families anyway, and the entry costs are too high.⁴⁴

Figure 2. Swiss Italian Festa Parade, 2006 (Photographs: Michelle Duffy)



The Swiss-Italian Festa was really a hybrid, a chaotic mix of identities and cultures – Swiss-Italian, Swiss, Italian, Daylesford local, Swiss-German – and all sorts of interesting conglomerates in between and beyond. This chaotic mix was apparent in the music of the parade that included a brass band playing the American spiritual ‘When the Saints go Marching In’ to the ringing of Swiss German cow-bells. Yet, this seemed less important to participants, who were willing to ‘join in’ with a festa celebrating what were spoken about

as 'traditional' Daylesford-Hepburn-Springs lifestyles and values. A reading of these two street parades in terms of representations suggests that it was perhaps their focus on certain identities that enabled residents to affirm their sense of being 'in place,' while in some instances, creating alienation, through heightening a sense of 'displacement'. As we discuss here, though, beyond representation there were differences in the rhythmic time-spaces creating, and resulting in senses of belongings.

'Get into the groove'⁴⁵: Being in street parades and generating narratives of belonging

The uncertainty over whether event-full moments able to sustain narratives of belongings were generated amongst lesbian and gay respondents at the ChillOut parade, suggests that there was an absence of a 'something else', beyond drag queens, rainbow flags and gay anthems. Conversely, this something else was clearly evident in how the Swiss-Italian parade was able to sustain narratives of belonging and community. With a focus on representation, the *processes* of participation and engagement are missed. The following two ethnographic field notes demonstrate the importance of a rhythmic framework to understanding how the time/space of the street parade sustained a sense of being 'in' or 'out' of place.

III: Listening, I hear the sounds of expectation and excitement building up around me. Someone I met earlier in the week asks, 'Have you seen the parade before? Where is the best place to watch?' Others, too, are trying to find the best place to see the parade. Some sit on the sidewalk, taking possession of the closest spot to the street. Most around me are adults, some with young children. Small girls in fairy costumes twirl their wands or take care their wings are not bent out of shape. There are lots of cameras. We hear the parade, led by the Dykes on Bikes, move up along the other side of the street, but wait for what seems an eternity for the parade to pass by us. Some think they may have chosen the wrong side of the street, and start to talk about moving. 'Is that it?' I hear one querulous voice behind me ask. Somebody else says, 'I wanna go!' Revving can still be heard, but now, in the distance, percussion and brass instruments can be heard. Some attempts to clap along. The Dykes on Bikes finally rev past, and unlike the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras only a few of us wave and nobody screams, or shouts words of encouragement. Many look on silently. The bikes move on and we wait again. We seem to be waiting an eternity. People walk across the street to where they can hear something is happening. For those of us who stay, our attention is again drawn by the sound of revving bikes. Expectancy turns to confusion when the Dykes on Bikes reappear! Some of the audience begin to lose interest. The movement of people, changing location, going into cafes, wondering where to go for lunch, replace the sounds of the parade. Played from a car stereo, I can barely hear Irene Cara's 'What a Feeling'.⁴⁶

IV: Listening, I hear the very excited shouts and squeals of school children as harried officials try to get them to fall in line behind banners. They've started! A silent clown (he never speaks the entire time of the event) swings his arms around in imitation of the flag bearers, joining in with them as they lead the

parade down to the reserve. Many of us line the footpaths on either side of the road, walking alongside the costumed groups who keep in time with the musicians. Many others fall in behind the marchers, strolling along to the sounds of 'When the saints go marching in'. Those who remain on the footpaths laugh, greet and call out to those walking past. The parade flows on; dogs barking, cowbells still ringing, some bystanders clap and cheer as the procession makes its way along the street. I join in the parade. We turn and head off the street, and so end up winding our way through the park and towards the reserve. I overhear two women; 'Isn't there supposed to be lanterns?' 'No, that's tomorrow evening, to end the Festa. It will be like the New Year's Eve parade.' 'Ah! Yes, New Year's Eve! Isn't that great! A real community feel.' Although the bands are only dimly heard where I'm walking, we keep up the pace they initiated, weaving between goats, dogs, children in costume, adults wearing masks, but all of us happily making our way, following those ahead.⁴⁷

At the ChillOut parade, listening with our ears and sensing with our bodies presented us with a space full of resonances, but resonances that often failed to help us make sense of the rhythmic time-space of the street parade. When we listened before the parade began we heard chatter, voices of family and friends talking to each other, conversations of: 'Isn't it hot?!'; 'Where shall we meet for lunch?', 'Has it started yet?'; 'Were you at Mardi Gras?'; 'Have you seen this before?'. Parade participants were hidden in a side-street, so we had few aural – or visual – clues to signal the start of the event. Then, it started. In a seemingly conventional Australian lesbian and gay parade opening, the Dykes on Bikes, revved-up their engines and sounded their horns. We turned expectantly and waited... indeed, standing and waiting seemed to dominate the rhythmic time-space of the parade.

A comparison to Sydney's Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras is worthwhile, where music and movement operate to help envelop the participants and audience in a rhythmic time-space that offers a sort of aural 'safety blanket' under which celebration, dancing, clapping and singing along can be enjoyed unselfconsciously. At ChillOut, floats and participating performers were too spaced out and moved at different speeds, creating problems of timing that ruptured the expected rhythm of persistent continuous sounds. At ChillOut the pauses and silences created lapses in the rhythmic time-space, where clapping stopped and people milled around. The audience was insecure about how to behave given the lack of prompts from the music and sounds. The composition of the audience at ChillOut made these cues essential given there were both lesbians and gay males (especially from Melbourne) who hoped to enjoy and participate in a certain way, and Daylesford residents, some of whom were very tentative about being there at all.

In comparison, when we listened to the Swiss-Italian Festa parade the audience had very obvious aural – and visual – rhythmic clues. Family and friends were milling about and chatting, calling out each others' names, saying 'Hello' and waving. Then the drumming started and everyone immediately recognised that the parade had begun. Generating and sustaining an ongoing beat, marching bodies trooped past those on the footpath. Infected by the

rhythm, many chose to tag onto the end of the parade. As one parade body enveloped in the soundscape of a (hybridised) representation of Swiss-Italian culture, they ambled towards the Hepburn Springs reserve.

The field diary notes included in this paper point to the role of rhythm in providing a medium for sociality in ways other than marking out certain spaces through representative practices (for example banners or posters, costume, props). It is not simply that people come to listen to particular performers or genres of music, although this is significant for why people are present at a musical event. Rather, sound, music and rhythms create an aural marking of the space as an event in which people then feel encouraged to engage in sets of behaviour understood as social. This meant something very different at each of these parades.

Alongside this marking of space is the arousal of emotions. Our concept of rhythmic time-space provides a framework that is useful and appropriate to understanding emotional relations and interaction between people and places, 'where meanings and understandings emerge through tacitly known and emotionally experienced processes of becoming.'⁴⁸ Without rhythm, the audience's interest in the ChillOut parade began to dissolve. The importance of generating a rhythmic time-space at this event was imperative given that sexuality remained contested in Daylesford-Hepburn Springs. Unlike the Swiss-Italian Festa, sexuality remains invisible and thus uncontroversial, in part because nostalgic notions of Swiss-Italian masculinity and femininity act to naturalise the constitution of bodies and the street as heterosexual. Such controversy only heightened the nervousness of those onlookers (who were not familiar with lesbian and gay culture), the uncertainty of some local heterosexual participants (who feared being categorised as 'gay', and assumedly 'deviant', for engaging actively with the parade) and the apprehension of most lesbian and gay visitors from Melbourne, who were uncertain about how to behave in the main street of a country town. It is not impossible to imagine that with more persistent music – and more volume – a rhythmic time-space may have emerged in which people could clap, call, dance or talk with more comfort and anonymity, potentially improving the conditions for sociality and generating a sense of belonging.

We see how such aural markings and emotional responses contribute to sociality in the field diary notes included here. Field diary note 3 talks of the excitement generated in anticipation of the parade, but this excitement dissipates when the rhythmic flow of the parade is ruptured. People were confused, not sure what was happening or even how to interact with the parade. The participants and audience described in ethnographic note 4, in comparison, did have a sense of event, of occasion, and responded accordingly. Within the rhythmic time-space of the event, in which sound, the body and the emotions come together, a sense of connection arises. It is a sense of 'being in the groove together', where personal boundaries temporarily dissolve, that contributes to a sense of belonging.⁴⁹ Yet, this engagement with sound and music may also be a difficult and challenging thing, as such processes are significant to reinforcing certain socio-cultural views. Moreover, as we see in the example of the stuttering, at times

arrhythmic time-space of the ChillOut parade, engaging with this soundscape was important in disrupting as well as creating forms of identity and social cohesion. By focusing on sound and music, we 'give voice to the fact that rhythms and sounds are the supreme mode of relation between bodies, once the screens of the symbolic usage and exchange are shattered.'⁵⁰ An understanding of how rhythmic time-spaces operated at street parades was therefore crucial to mobilising a politics of affect in this context. In this, our responses to the rhythms of music are important. Jon Hawkes, in his discussion of our involvement in music-making in terms of social justice, notes that,

making music together has been one of the most important binding agents within and between communities...connections develop. These connections can transcend profound difference, illuminate unexpected unity, bring cathartic joy and extend into everyday life.⁵¹

Further to this musical notion of rhythm, our embodied responses to rhythm are crucial to the marking out of a space of communal identity and notions of belonging or alienation. We see this in terms of the expectations inherent in the give-and-take of communication and dialogue, as well as in the way we move through and act out place.⁵² That is, rhythm creates opportunities where social differences are not only brought together temporarily, but given opportunities to make and remake individual and collective identities through embodied responses to movement, sound and music.

'Well I hear the music, close my eyes, feel the rhythm'⁵³

Our aim has not been to make value judgements that one street parade is better than another. What we have attempted to explore in this paper is how street parades, as celebrations, create event-full moments to generate narratives of belonging and to enhance ideas of community – or don't, as the case may be. We first acknowledged the importance of music as text that provided an aural signature to an event. As text, music helps to constitute the identities being celebrated, as well as helping to temporarily legitimise claims over the street as belonging to those in the parade. However, we argue that creating event-full moments that translate into senses of belonging requires event organisers to think beyond simply playing a particular genre of music. Instead, participants and audience engagement with an event is shaped, understood, and influenced by the rhythmic structuring of the time-space. We have a cerebral sense of organised time in terms of both perception and motor behaviour, so that we can easily recognise and share a sense of pulse. Our field notes demonstrate that participants and audiences at street parades wanted to participate in these rhythmic and sonic gestures of companionship and communication.

Event-full moments that are conducive to generating senses of belonging arise when bodies at street parades can communicate with each other through a particular kind of rhythm. At the Swiss Italian Festa communication was generated through spectator and participant bodies respectively clapping and marching in rhythm to 'When the Saints Go Marching In.' In contrast, at

the ChillOut parade, the audience were never quite given an opportunity to find the rhythm. Existing prejudices and the unfamiliarity of lesbian and gay culture with certain onlookers made it even more important to sustain communication between people through rhythm. Yet, alignment with the rhythm spaces was restricted by uncertainty over the beginning and end of the parade, low sound levels, large gaps during the parade, and varying speeds of participants. The ChillOut street parade missed opportunities to generate narratives of belonging when rhythmic time-spaces were not sustained long enough to work across social categories through a sense of being-in-time together. The rhythmic time-space was not enveloping enough to provide an invitation to the audience to 'join in,' despite an initial enthusiasm and receptiveness. By the same token, though, diverse audience members, local controversy, and the degree of cultural significance involved at ChillOut meant that its ability to generate an inclusive rhythmic time-space of communication and meaning was always going to be constrained. It is disappointing, but perhaps not surprising then, that narratives of the parade produced by many residents were 'as spectacle,' despite an event that had little resonance for some lesbians and gay males that live in Daylesford. Residual intolerances interacted with issues of the audience needing to be informed about what they were watching, and simple problems of sound engineering and timing, to create a ruptured, stuttering rhythmic time-space.

It is therefore in our emotional engagements with sound and music that the self and community spaces are constituted. Representational interpretations based on text and vision persuade us to perceive of our selves and our world through particular processes that often tend to overlook the intuitive, emotional, psychoanalytical processes of subjectivity. As geographer John-David Dewsbury states, non-representational approaches, such as that offered to us by music and performance, allow us to look between and beyond representational meaning in order to see 'what is also possible.'⁵⁴ The notion of rhythmic time-space enabled us to recognise these other ways in which subjectivity was experienced, constituted and expressed, and to bring a more nuanced critique to our understanding of identity, place, belonging and community. Conceptualising street parades as rhythmic time-spaces has the potential not only to better understand how event managers could optimise liminal qualities of festivals to enhance enjoyment, but also to generate narratives with the potential to work towards a sense of belonging that can operate across social categories. Our invitation is for further research that investigates the politics of affect – of sounds in space. That begins by listening to the music, closing your eyes and feeling the rhythm.

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Bio notes

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