5 Station Rhythm Enskilment

The organisation of the loading of vehicles at the Neoplan Station follows one main principle: 'fill and run'. As mentioned in Chapter 4, this means that each vehicle departs only when it is 'full', and, further, that there is no pre-designated time schedule of departures. This system prevails in both short- and long-distance public transport in Ghana, as well as across Africa.[1] And as it is in the station that the volumes, tempos, and frequencies of flows of wider social structures are enabled, sustained, and at times also disrupted, the 'fill and run' organisation of departures has wide-ranging implications with regard to the temporal rhythmic 'production' (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]; 2004 [1992]) of social spaces and, conversely, to the social structuring of temporal orders (Goody 1968).

A contrasting view of the organisation of departures common in public transport systems in North Atlantic regions can help to outline the different 'geographies' of time and rhythm (Edensor 2010). In train stations, airports, and bus and ferry terminals in Europe and North America, departures follow what we might call metronomic scores. Trains, planes, buses, and ferries depart according to a schedule fixed to the exact minute (or the more or less exact announced time of delay). Here, it is above all *clock time* – enforced via inflexible timetables and the ubiquitousness of clocks – that structures experience and action. Transport workers hasten to keep the *time, space, and machine ensemble* running (Beaumont and Freeman 2007), while passengers hasten to fit into its schedules. In this respect, it is telling that the advent of railways – with the railway station implementing the clock's cogwheel rigidity – reconfigured Western societies' 'timescapes' (Adam 1998), as it brought about a standard of national (and later international) timekeeping (Karsten 2013: 129–87).

[1] A similar system of departures has been described for Cape Verde (Horta 2013: 81), Nigeria (Albert 2007: 128), Senegal (Cissokho 2012: 181), South Africa (Khosa 1992: 236), and Niger (Stoller 1989: 69–71), among others.

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Evidently, in the clock time schedules of North Atlantic travel hubs there is also a social component. The frequency of departures is regulated according to the highs and lows of passenger inflows. Changes to the schedule, however, are made either in hindsight or in the calculated foresight of inflows, but rarely in sync with the flux of passengers. And just as the times of departure are controlled centrally, so also is a basic element in the rhythmic composition of social life controlled – and timed – in a top-down regimented manner. This is not to say, however, that the institutionalised and predictable rhythms of mobility in North Atlantic public transport produce mere repetitive and regular actions and experiences. For instance, Tim Edensor (2009) shows how the rhythms of commuting unfold in the frictional relationship between imposed and individual temporalities, with the first being countered by the decentred rhythmic strategies of individual commuters. In a similar vein, Phillip Vannini foregrounds how the qualities of eventuality, auspiciousness, and happenstance come to play a part in the 'deferred affordance' of scheduled departures (2012: 355). Tellingly, the examples that he cites from his study of ferry boat transport on the coast of British Colombia all relate to the struggles of 'would-be passengers' (ibid.) to be ready at the *scheduled* time of departure. While ferry boat passengers and operators in British Colombia may 'hustle' to reach their departure and to make that departure possible in the first place, their efforts and struggles are oriented towards, and decisively shaped by, the overriding principle of schedules conditioned by clock time.

In Ghana's 'fill and run' mode of departure, the socio-temporal orders that underlie passengers' struggles – and hustle – are structured mainly by the facility of *timing* – that is, the ability to 'keep in time' and synchronise with the tempos and rhythms of others (Clarke 1999). Borrowing some other notions from musicology, the unfolding timeline is produced in a multipartite series of impetuses, most of which converge inside the lorry park. Punctuality and unpunctuality – two notions against which the efficacy of the North Atlantic system is measured – are of little or no relevance in Ghana's short- and long-distance transport services. In the Ghanaian system of departure, vehicles are obviously neither punctual nor unpunctual, nor can they be said to be running 'late'. And although passengers may arrive 'late' for departure, this 'late-coming' does not follow from their failure to arrive at a designated clock time. Rather, it follows from their 'failure' to keep together in time, to synchronise their own pace with others' temporalities.

The practices of people working in and travelling from Ghana's bus stations are of a different temporal order, one that produces different temporal and social effects. Here, the temporal structuring of action does

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not follow a superimposed timeline. The temporal structure itself is constantly reproduced in the ongoing successions of reciprocal actions. While people's actions in North Atlantic travel hubs are configured mainly according to a (time) script, in Ghana the configuration of travel actions follows primarily from people's (timing) skills.

The reasons for the flexible mode of departure in Ghana's long-distance road travel relate to economic strictures and economic rationales. These strictures and rationales have been discussed extensively in the preceding chapters. They pertain to the lack of state subsidies, to institutionalised strategies for minimising entrepreneurial risk, to a generally low capital endowment, and to limited cash flow, among other things. These strictures and the particular rationales with which they are met – which crucially include an orientation honed on recombining contingent constellations – make shrewd resourcefulness a paramount economic maxim for Ghana's public transport operators. Hence, most drivers strive to maximise their turnover by fully exploiting the given capacity of seats, cargo, and mileage; and hence the (stereotypic) image of dilapidated and overloaded buses struggling against the odds of distance and traffic rules.

Another reason relates to a particular socio-economic ethos common across Ghana, which I have described with reference to the familiar saying that 'everybody needs to chop' (Chapter 3). In the practices of Ghana's commercial drivers, this ethos translates into a system of rostering founded on the principle of rotation: the rule of 'first come, first served'. As mentioned before, Neoplan's involuting competition has corrupted this rule, as, on about half of Neoplan's routes, there is not one but many queues of vehicles loading simultaneously. Within each queue, however, the 'first come' principle is still in place. And from the perspective of the drivers and station workers involved in the loading of vehicles in any one queue, everyone's 'need to chop' is satisfied, albeit on a rather meagre diet.

In this and the following two chapters, I explore a set of dimensions of the 'fill and run' mode of departure that ensues from these economic rationales and the related (yet somewhat corrupted) socio-economic ethos: the dimensions of the temporal processes that are at work inside the station and the temporal practices that keep these processes working. My main aim in this chapter is to unravel the successions of rhythmic synchronisations that mark the sphere of social action and of spatio-temporal order in the Neoplan Station. Using the frame of the works of Henri Lefebvre (2004 [1992]), Tim Ingold (2000), and Michael Polanyi (1966), I combine an exploration of the rhythmic production of social space with an analysis of people's largely tacit temporal engagements

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with the dynamic working space of a long-distance bus station in West Africa. By foregrounding the relationship between bodily practice and the physical and temporal environment, this relational approach, combined with a rhythmanalytical perspective, offers a fitting analytical lens for understanding Ghanaian practices of road travel and the polyrhythmic constellations that emerge – in situ – in a road travel hub.

By attending to some of the main constituents of this relationship, I reveal how the determinants of hustling at the station – and of successful hustling in particular – depend not only on attributes such as smartness, toughness, and endurance, but also on a more embodied set of skills and relational qualities of temporal positioning. In other words, the task of mastering the moving and unstable work environment of the Neoplan Station entails more than deploying some playful tricks that give a competitive edge in the loading of vehicles. Within the complex, often bewildering, and involuting relations of yard work, the successful hustle also builds on the faculty to 'read' the rhythms, tempos, and intervals in which potentially confusing situations evolve and to align one's actions accordingly.

I begin by describing an incident during my fieldwork that provided the main incentive both for this chapter's content and for its main theoretical contention. Next, I analyse the diverse rhythms that modulate the spatio-temporal relations forged between Neoplan's yard and the many destinations served from it. In the final sections, I develop the notions of resonance and (prosthetic) kinaesthesia, which, as I show below, serve as useful concepts for making sense of the skills, practices, and experiences that structure the 'fill and run' temporalities of the Neoplan Station and that, by extension, constitute key elements of the station workers' successful (as well as sometimes unsuccessful) hustle.

When the Kwahu People Dance

A couple of months into my fieldwork, I had completed most of the basic research exercises and had built up a rapport with a number of station workers from different branches, who no longer questioned my presence at the station. I reduced the frequency of asking about their work and life in the station and began immersing myself in the station's work and life. I came to the station daily in the early morning hours and rarely left before midnight. During this time, I focused my research on the collection of materials through participatory experience, which I gathered through engagements in different divisions of the station. Using my body as both subject and object of knowledge production (Lock 1993), it was through this methodology that I began to understand the actions taking place in Neoplan's densely populated yard from a more embodied

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perspective. The forces that structure the often bewildering interactions taking place at Neoplan – and that constitute it as a place of hustle as both activity and situation – began to converge into a tablature of polyrhythmic scores in the realms of my 'bodily awareness' (Jackson 1983: 336). What triggered my understanding was a comment a co-worker made to me halfway through an especially strenuous day of station work.

It was a Friday afternoon, which is usually a busy time at Neoplan. This Friday, however, the atmosphere was exceptionally bustling. Seemingly endless streams of vehicles, people, livestock, and goods poured in and out of the station. I was working for one of the four branches that ply the route to Kumasi. Normally, my work alternated between trying to entice potential passengers to enter our branch vehicles and doing rounds of shadowing. That day, none of this work was required. All that we station workers could do was attempt to channel the groups of departing passengers, while loading luggage and distributing parking spaces between outgoing and incoming vehicles.

At such peak times of travel, it is a common practice to overcharge passengers for the fare. When performed by a skillful bookman, this practice adopts the form of an expeditiously acted-out auction, with the last seats available being sold to the highest-bidding travellers. Another effect of these times when the station is working at the limits of its transport capacity is the 'spilling over' of passengers from one branch to another one that plies a similar route. Eager to start their journey as quickly as possible, passengers are willing to pay a higher fare for any bus that passes by, or near, their destination. Wealthier passengers who usually travel with the more comfortable and expensive buses lower their standards and board one of the cheap minivans, if available, or a revamped cargo truck. On that Friday, every single departure from our Kumasi-bound branch was preceded by a hectic ticket auction. And while the more experienced station workers had no problem conducting these auctions, most of the younger, inexperienced station staff (including myself) felt pushed to the verge of lunacy.

In a less busy moment, one seasoned co-worker explained to me the causes of that afternoon's bustle. 'It's the Kwahu people's funerals,' he remarked laconically, also adding the factors of 'after-payday rush' and the *Akwasidae*. To explain: the Kwahu people, who are a subgroup of the Akans, live in an area in south-east Ghana. The main transport hub for the Kwahu area is the town of Nkawkaw, which lies about two-thirds of the way along the road from Accra to Kumasi (see Map 1). Besides being famous for their Easter celebrations, which attract crowds of revellers from all over the country every year, the Kwahu people are also known for their funerals (van der Geest 2000). As across Ghana, Kwahu funerals

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are usually scheduled at weekends, and particularly the last weekend of the month. As many workers receive their monthly salary at this time, they have more money to spend on travel and on bereaved kin upcountry. The *Akwasidae* (or 'Akan Big Sunday'; Osei 1997: 9) is a festival celebrated every sixth Sunday. During this weekend, all funerals are forbidden. With this ban on Akan funerals every sixth weekend, the volume of traffic passing through the Neoplan Station, which is Accra's main hub for all Akan areas, lowers significantly. The weekend following the *Akwasidae* is marked by correspondingly higher numbers of funerals and travellers, with people 'making up' for the previous weekend.

On that Friday, all these factors came together: it was the last Friday of the month, thus the weekend of the 'after-payday rush', and the weekend after the *Akwasidae*. And as the Nkawkaw branches could not keep pace with the influx of passengers, with many people left waiting for a vehicle, the Nkawkaw 'funeral rush' spilled over onto our Kumasi-bound branch. My co-worker, who explained all these factors to me in a succinct manner, then asked: 'Do you feel Nkawkaw dancing?'

This allusive question, filled with practical reason, encapsulates all the theoretical contentions I plan to develop in this chapter. My argument is that the actions of Neoplan's station workers are co-constituted as interactions with the activities taking place in the network of destinations served from this yard. The activities taking place at Neoplan's 34 destinations, which follow the rhythmic patterns of social life, resonate in the yard, mediated by the grid of routes that connect the station to its destinations. Neoplan's workers, particularly those with experience, accommodate these polyrhythmic patterns produced in the destinations by means of 'enskilment' (Pálsson 1994). This process is facilitated not by rational calculation or a script. It follows from the 'joint immersion in the settings of activity' (Ingold 2000: 163), hence from a skill guided primarily by the faculty of kinaesthetic perception.

To achieve this largely tacit way of knowing, they attend to the rhythmicity of actions taking place in the yard. Similar to what Polanyi (1966: 16) exemplifies with the use of a tool as a 'sentient extension of our body', Neoplan's workers use the yard as a prosthetic device for perceiving the rhythms and movements on the roads and in the far-off places connected by them. Their practices and perceptions are constituted essentially within the relationality of their bodies and the rhythm-impregnated environment these bodies dwell in and engage with (Simpson 2013). As I show in this chapter, the extent to which they align their practices and perceptions to the station's rhythms varies significantly according to their degree of kinaesthetic enskilment, and so does the degree to which their hustle becomes successful.

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Rhythm Production

Rhythmanalysis, a term put forward by Lefebvre (2004 [1992]), makes it possible to think about space and time together in the analysis of everyday life. For, 'everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time, and an expenditure of energy, there is *rhythm*' (ibid.: 15, emphasis in the original). This triad of 'time–space–energy' has its ultimate measure in the living body, which is the rhythmanalyst's 'constant reference' (ibid.: 67). The body, itself replete with polyrhythms, serves as the metronome against which external rhythms are measured and by which we come to apprehend the rhythmic modalities of social relations and spaces, such as relations in the space of the Neoplan Station.

In order to highlight the rhythmic modalities of everyday actions in the space–time ensemble of Neoplan's yard, we can begin by discerning four basic scales of rhythm production. The first is 'beaten out' by the organisation of social time (Gurvitch 1964). Composed of the rhythmic succession of working hours, school hours, market days, festivals, and holidays, the institutionalised temporalities of social time provide the most elementary pulsations in Neoplan's polyrhythmic set-up. Entangled with these linear rhythms of social patterns are nature's cyclical temporalities, including the circadian rhythms of nightfall and daybreak, and the passage of the seasons, which, in Ghana's tropical climate, follow the tripartite pattern of rains, heat, and dust. In between society's linear and nature's cyclical temporalities is the spectrum of 'oecological time' (Evans-Pritchard 1939) with which each season's distinct rhythms of activities correlate. The fourth scale comprises the potentially endless variations of 'arrhythmic' dynamics, some of which follow predictable schedules (e.g. major sport events and political rallies) while many others are of a contingent kind (e.g. traffic jams, accidents, fuel shortages, and strikes).

Encompassed by these different scales of rhythmic temporalisations are the relations between Neoplan's yard and the destinations served from it. These relations can be made intelligible by juxtaposing three sets of variables: (1) the linear social rhythms, cyclical natural rhythms, and contingent arrhythmic occurrences in the Neoplan Station; (2) the polyrhythmic set-up of each of its destinations (co-constituted by factors such as each town's population size, economic structure, common patterns of migration, etc.); and (3) a multitude of interconnecting and interfering factors, such as the length of the route and the road conditions along it, the volume of passengers using it, and the number of vehicles plying it. In order to unravel these variables, I will highlight the makeup of four exemplary categories of Neoplan's routes. (For an illustration of the routes and the yard parcels from which they are loaded, see Maps 1 and 2.)

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First, there are the shortest of Neoplan's routes, which connect Accra with the two neighbouring towns of Tema and Ashaiman, both situated some 35 kilometres to the east of Accra and connected by a two-lane highway. Owing to the short distance and the relatively high population size of both towns (approximately 400,000 for Tema and 190,000 for Ashaiman; GSS 2012), daily commuters comprise most of the travel flows. Their daily grind makes for a relatively high frequency of traffic during the morning hours, followed by a period of slow-going traffic during the afternoon, and an increasing number of departures with the onset of home-going traffic from about 5 p.m. onwards, which then gradually declines during the evening and eventually comes to a standstill after midnight. This pattern remains relatively stable throughout the working week. On Saturdays, the rhythmic travel 'score' is more condensed, as a high inflow of passengers extends over the hours of the afternoon but then abates earlier in the evening. On Sundays, traffic is largely brought to a halt; the main exception is Tema- and Ashaiman-based churchgoers who prefer to attend services in Accra. These circadian rhythms of locomotion translate into a well-developed routine of practices, which nevertheless require hard work if they are to be sustained (Edensor 2010: 14–15).

Second, there are Neoplan's connections to major market towns in upcountry Ghana, above all to Koforidua in the Eastern region and Techiman in the Brong-Ahafo region. While the towns differ in terms of geographical location and distance from Accra (90 kilometres to Koforidua and 370 kilometres to Techiman), they share markedly similar demographic features (each having a population of approximately 110,000) and comparable economic structures. Located in areas of rich agricultural production, both towns have long served as nodes of long-distance trade routes (McCall 1962), with each hosting a large periodic market. The rhythms of social life in Koforidua mainly follow its bi-weekly market, which is held each Monday and Thursday. Techiman's peak period extends over three full days, as its market takes place from Wednesday to Friday. In Neoplan's yard, this translates into weekly crescendos of condensed travel. Due to a 'rhythmic deferral' caused by the distance, the highest rate of outflows occurs in the late-night hours before the market day, when market women (and men) start their journeys in order to arrive at dawn. The highest rate of inflows is reached when these people return in the early morning hours after the end of the market day. During these times, the areas of Neoplan's yard where the loading and unloading of Koforidua- and Techiman-bound vehicles takes place turn into sites of acute stress. As the turmoil radiates concentrically to other branches, it regularly creates bustle in the whole of the

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station. The incident of a flock of chickens accidentally released from their cage during the frantic loading of a Koforidua bus illustrates the propensity for concentrically diffusing commotion. As the birds ran wild, hiding underneath and inside other vehicles, they blocked the outgoing traffic of other branches.

Third, there are the routes marked by slowly changing travel frequencies, such as the connection to the major mining town of Obuasi (260 kilometres from Accra, with a population of approximately 100,000) and the connection to the Nigerian megalopolis of Lagos (500 kilometres, population between 10 and 15 million). For the most part, both routes are plied with a relatively regular frequency; the Lagos branch has a particularly stable schedule of departures, as drivers usually hit the road at dawn in order to pass the six border checkpoints before nightfall (see Chapter 4).[2] This regular frequency notwithstanding, there are still perceivable intervals of higher and lower travel densities. Yet, unlike the regular commuting flows on the Tema and Ashaiman routes and the market day-induced upheavals on the routes to Koforidua and Techiman, the rhythmic changes on the Obuasi and Lagos routes are caused by distant factors. With regard to the Lagos route, it is, above all, the exchange rate of the Nigerian naira that steers the ups and downs of travel demand. Changes in demand on the route to Obuasi correspond to the world market prices for gold and other precious metals. When prices on the world's major stock exchanges fall, the density of traffic leaving Obuasi increases. When they rise, so do the numbers of people heading towards Obuasi, including sex workers who hope for gains from the heightened number of transactions.

Finally, there is the route to Kumasi, Neoplan's aorta and the single most important stretch of road in Ghana (370 kilometres). Kumasi is Ghana's second biggest city (with a population of approximately 3.5 million), the host of what is believed to be West Africa's largest open-air market (Clark 1994), and a major transit point for connections further north. A substantial part of travel between Kumasi and Accra is channelled via Neoplan and is of an inscrutable complexity. Some basic patterns can be discerned, such as the propensity of business people to travel on weekdays, and the tendency of many Accra-based Akan to visit their upcountry relatives at the weekend. Generally, however, all of Neoplan's four branches that serve the Kumasi route have to deal with persistently fluctuating inflows and outflows governed by autonomous polyrhythmic cacophonies. With forecasts and calculations impossible,

[2] There are two checkpoints at each border crossing (Ghana–Togo, Togo–Benin, Benin–Nigeria), making a total of six checkpoints.

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Figure 5.1 Passengers stuck due to a shortage of vehicles.

the source of agency for navigating these rhythmic commotions is a spontaneous sensing of the transient flows.

Processing Rhythms

Within Neoplan's narrow yard, these many different rhythms intersect and converge, in turn conjuring up polyrhythmic patterns of a different kind. While the inflow of passengers determines the number and pace of Neoplan's departures, their outflow depends on the availability of vehicles. In turn, the availability of vehicles depends on the passenger inflow to the destinations that the vehicles ply. If there is an insufficient inflow of passengers at one of the destinations served by a branch, its vehicles will become 'stuck' at the other end of that route. And conversely, if the inflow outpaces the number of available vehicles (and seats), it is the passengers who will be 'stuck'. This fragile balance is further affected by the length of the respective routes as well as the conditions of the road and, not least, of the vehicles. If a vehicle gets stuck in traffic, its delayed arrival will also postpone its departure and

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may subsequently lead to a shortage of available vehicles; this applies even more if it breaks down en route or is involved in an accident.

These station-bred polyrhythmic conjunctions oscillate between two extreme ends of what can be imagined as a continuum of combined rhythmic propulsions. At one end of the continuum are particularly low frequencies of incoming passengers, which lead to a surplus of vehicles waiting for departure. The resulting spatial congestion fosters states of turmoil and agitation, stirring up competition among the station workers who increase their 'combat' for passengers. At the other end, particularly high frequencies of incoming passengers lead to too few vehicles being available, which stirs up competition among the passengers, who fight over tickets and seats. In a telling parallel to musical rhythms, the building up and resolving of tension set in motion a dynamic by which every newly resolved tension becomes a preparation for the next build-up of tension, and for particularly hectic intervals of hustle. In music, this alternation of tension and repose accounts for auditory pleasure. In the Neoplan Station, the succession of spatial and social tensions makes it possible for the station workers to anticipate high- and low-pitched rhythms and to time their actions accordingly.

The station's flexible organisational structure – at the heart of which is the 'fill and run' mode of departure – provides the infrastructural frame for these anticipatory 'synchronicities' (Edensor 2010: 10). Unlike a fixed schedule of departures, in which the inflow of passengers is mechanically steered into a rigid outflow, Neoplan's system facilitates a dynamic correlation between inflows and outflows. This dynamic alignment makes accommodating various externally induced perturbations easier, such as the contingencies resulting from the fragile regime of urban traffic in Accra.

The station hawkers are particularly responsive to the polyrhythmic patterns of incoming and departing passengers. Although they seem to wander randomly about the yard, their tactics of moving through the rows of parked vehicles and offering their services and products are skilfully attuned to the passengers' temporalities. Similar to the need of roadside hawkers to keep up with the driving speed of bypassing vehicles (Klaeger 2012), Neoplan's station hawkers need to align their pace to the differing frequencies of rhythmic ups and downs. In fact, many hawkers adapt their economic activities to the fast-changing rhythms of consumption in the yard. They form strategic alliances with different storekeepers and thus gain access to a range of interchangeable merchandise. During rush hours, they sell fast marketable goods such as snacks and drinks. When passengers have more time for negotiating a bargain, they change to movies on DVD, perfumes, or souvenirs. Here, rhythmic synchronisation makes for a veritable sales strategy. (I explore the temporal practices of Neoplan's hawkers and mobile service providers in Chapter 6.)

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Synchronicity of a related kind pertains to the relationship between circadian and seasonal patterns of transport, on the one hand, and the availability of particular foodstuffs that are distributed and consumed at the yard, on the other. The majority of foodstuffs that are processed into ready-made meals and snacks are available during most of the year and can be bought throughout the day (with limited availability during night-time hours, due to the limited number of vendors who operate at night). However, the availability and quality of certain foods and drinks are conditioned by a narrow timeframe of rhythmic concurrences.

The best time for buying (and eating) French-style baguettes, for example, is usually in the early evening hours, which is the time when vehicles from the adjacent Circle Station arrive from Aflao, a town located on the border with Ghana's (Francophone) neighbouring country Togo. The arrival of these vehicles marks the arrival of market women who sell freshly baked loaves brought in from Togo's capital, Lomé. Some of Neoplan's station workers even refer to these vehicles as the 'French bread express'. The best – in fact, the only – time for drinking fresh palm wine is in the early morning. This is the time when the first vehicles from the Akuapim area arrive at Neoplan with gallons of palm wine that has been tapped at dawn and is still largely unfermented and thus sweet.

While the station workers accommodate many external rhythms, they also produce their own rhythmic patterns, which have great potential for producing 'arrhythmia': 'a divergence in time, in space, [and] in the use of energies' (Lefebvre 2004 [1992]: 68). These station-induced perturbations mainly take shape in the sudden deceleration or acceleration of the frequency of departures. This happens when a driver loses patience and departs despite not being fully loaded, thus raising the 'beat' of departures; or when a station master raises the number of vehicles loading simultaneously, hence increasing the loading times of all vehicles plying the affected route, while slowing down the overall number of departures.

Other arrhythmic divergences occur when the rhythms of the station workers clash with the rhythmic biases of passengers. This pertains in particular to what the station workers call the 'tired time'. Most of Neoplan's branches run a 24-hour shift system, in which the workers are on duty from 7 a.m. until 7 a.m. on the following day. This wearing 'accumulation of wakefulness' (Meadows 2010: 95) brings in its wake extended periods of arrhythmia. Groups of passengers begin arriving at the yard as early as 3 a.m. As eager passengers run into tired and reluctant station workers, the 'discordance of rhythms' (Lefebvre 2004 [1992]: 16) can lead to ludicrous encounters, such as a group of passengers trying to force their way into a closed vehicle, in which gang members have fallen into exhausted slumber.

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Figure 5.2 Growing tension.



Figure 5.3 Resolved tension.

Resonance

In and through Neoplan's yard, the rhythms of different spatio-temporal scales interact in synchronicity and syncopation, then continue in shapes altered by the interaction. These rhythmic interactions are facilitated primarily by the station's susceptibility to various forms of resonance, a

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concept that looms large in the natural sciences. Of particular conceptual value for understanding Neoplan's rhythmic realms is the notion of resonance as a form of vibrating echo used in mechanics and acoustics. In mechanics, for example, it refers to the frequency of people striding or motor traffic passing on the resonating structure of a bridge. In acoustics, there is the related notion of resonant objects, or 'resonators', such as the strings and body of string instruments or the membrane and cavity of drums. A motion-induced input of energy (via a stroke or touch) is first transmitted to the main resonating body, and, leading to a kind of second-order resonance, subsequently makes other strings laced onto the instrument vibrate.

In terms of Neoplan's organisation, we can conceive of its space as a resonator of multilayered patterns of motion-induced inputs of energy, with its resonating space being susceptible to a 'multitude of rhythmic combinations that "fold time and space in all kinds of untoward localisations and intricate mixtures"' (Edensor 2009: 191, quoting Amin and Thrift 2002: 47). In an analogy to the notion of resonance in mechanics, its perpetually changing infrastructural set-up can be imagined as resonating, or 'swinging', with the frequencies of inflowing and outflowing vehicles and passengers, which follow the motional inputs produced at its 34 destinations. Borrowing from the notion of second-order resonance as used in acoustics, we can further apprehend the reciprocally evolving impacts of rhythmic changes between Neoplan's many branches as a kind of concentrically resonating vibration. Here, the motional inputs at one branch – co-produced at the respective destination and mediated via the route served by the branch – are passed on to other, adjacent branches within Neoplan's yard.

Let me illustrate these different forms of resonance by using the example of the day when Nkawkaw's funeral dances were 'felt' in Neoplan's Kumasi-bound substations. We can begin by tracing the motional inputs produced by the funeral celebrations taking place in the town of Nkawkaw. These inputs resonated back, and *forth*, to the yard plots of Neoplan's Nkawkaw substations, via the route between Accra and Nkawkaw. There, they interacted with the varying stride frequencies of Nkawkaw-bound passengers coming into the station. The resulting polyrhythmic patterns then began resonating across Neoplan's other branches, affecting in particular the Kumasi-bound branches and the routes served by them. In this sense, by following the rhythmic tension and repose of activities in Neoplan's Nkawkaw branch, one can virtually feel the ups and downs of activity in the distant town of Nkawkaw. And it is this perceptual modality that I turn to now.

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Prosthetic Kinaesthesia

Obviously, Neoplan's workers use their senses as their main connection with the environment: they see the vehicles, hear the honking, smell the exhaust fumes, etc. On the basis of these 'windows on the world' (Goody 2002: 17), they relate to, and interact with, that world. In addition to these basic windows, they make use of yet another central sense-cum-window: the sensory faculty of kinaesthetic perception. Given the resonating polyrhythms of motional inputs that constitute the volatile perceptual terrain of the station, kinaesthetically guided practices are among the most important prerequisites for (successful) work at Neoplan. Here, I follow in particular Kathryn Geurts' (2002) argument concerning the centrality of balance in the Anlo-Ewe's organisation of the sensorium, and hence of their lifeworld.

In its common usage, 'kinaesthesia' describes the faculty to sense the motions and positions of the body (Geurts 2002: 50–1).[3] For the workers in the Neoplan Station, kinaesthetic perceptions (of one's *own* bodily motions) play an important role. Yet, the sensing of motions crucially extends beyond one's own body and into the wider realms of the yard.[4] As the workers dwell in the motions of the yard by 'interiorising' them, their kinaesthetic senses attune to the contexture of roads that are served from it. This *extended* kinaesthetic faculty is based on the incorporation of external 'things for attending *from* them to other things' (Polanyi 1966: 16–17, emphasis in the original). Accordingly, I suggest extending the notion of kinaesthesia by adding the prefix 'prosthetic' – hence, *prosthetic kinaesthesia*.

An image evoked by Ingold (2000: 189–208) serves to illustrate this kind of extended sensory faculty. Reflecting on modes of 'active, perceptual engagement with the environment' (the 'dwelling perspective'), he introduces the figure of the hunter, distinguishing the novice hunter, who is still unpractised in his perceptual engagements with the (hunting) world, from the knowledgeable hunter who 'can tell things from subtle indications that you or I, unskilled in the hunter's art, might not even notice' (ibid.: 190). This ability of the experienced hunter is based on his

[3] Geurts (2002: 53) points out the difficulty of distinguishing kinaesthesia from proprioception. Proprioception relates mainly to the awareness of bodily motion, while kinaesthesia describes the very sensing of motion or movements. For the sake of clarity, I include here the distinguishable attributes of proprioception in my use of kinaesthesia.

[4] Following Simpson's (2013: 183) reading of Bateson (2000), one may dissolve the boundaries between body and environment more radically by saying that, when engaging with, and within, the environment of the yard, it is the very limits of the body that extend into it.

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or her skills in the 'tasks of perception', his or her attunement to the environment. Here, Ingold defines 'task' as 'any practical operation, carried out by a skilled agent as part of his or her normal business of life', the very 'constitutive acts of dwelling' (ibid.: 195). On the model of landscape, he introduces the concept of a 'taskscape', where the 'taskscape is to labour what the landscape is to land' (ibid.). Thus, the skilled hunter dwells in the taskscape of the hunting world, sensing subtle traces left behind by game and slinking towards his or her prey, guided by this perceptual attunement to external motions.

Although the most common term that Neoplan's station workers use in metaphoric self-designation is 'warrior' (*okofo*) (see Chapter 4), the metaphor of a 'hunter' (*ɔbɔfoɔ*) readily lends itself to a conceptual framing of the perceptual properties that guide their actions in the station environment, particularly of those who load in competition. Neoplan's 'hunters' do not chase game in the narrow sense of the word. They chase passengers, always seeking to woo them into their vehicles. And like hunters in other dense urban settings (Archambault 2013: 90), Neoplan's hunters need to be attuned to the environment of the station, to improve their perceptive skills. Their daily tasks can be conceived of as acts of dwelling. Yet, the taskscape they dwell in is primarily constituted by rhythms. They dwell in rhythms, labouring in the pulsating temporalities of a rhythm-made taskscape.

Their main task consists in detecting the rhythmic timelines beaten out by other (partly far-off) groups, and then attuning their own actions to them. And the more a station worker learns to attune his sensory apparatus to the prosthetic devices (or 'sentient extension') of Neoplan's yard, sensing the subtle indications of rhythmic change, the more he will be able to align – and thus *time* – his actions with upcoming activities. In this sense, we can distinguish the novice station hunter from the experienced one, a distinction I will flesh out by way of the following two vignettes.

The Novice Station Hunter

Eric started working at Neoplan shortly before I started my fieldwork. Despite holding a secondary school diploma, he struggled to find regular employment and hired himself out as a loading boy at one of the Kumasi-bound branches. As he explained to me, this was a stopgap solution only, and he intended to get into 'proper work' outside the station's hustle. During my first weeks at the station, I accompanied him daily and considered myself fortunate to be able to join him in his learning. This episode of my fieldwork was productive in terms of embracing an apprentice's perspective. Eventually, however, I realised that what

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I learned from Eric was not an insider's workflow but many of the potential pitfalls of misattuned work-cum-hustle at the station.

A main miscue followed from Eric's reckoning of today's inflows of passengers on the basis of yesterday's inflows. This kind of inductive reasoning proved particularly fallacious with regard to the erratic rhythms of Kumasi-bound travellers. One incident resulting from this attempt to predict travel patterns left him especially flabbergasted, and exhausted. On two successive weekdays, there was a sharp increase in the number of Kumasi travellers in the late evening. On both occasions, the inflow outnumbered the capacity of available vehicles, forcing many passengers to spend the night at the yard waiting for vehicles to return. The third night started out in a less promising manner. At nightfall, the numbers of incoming travellers began decreasing. The other yard workers prepared for a slow weekday night. Eric nevertheless expected a similar rush, and acted accordingly.

Some two hours before midnight, it was his turn to load the next bus in line, which happened to be a large 50-seater. In such a case, drivers and station workers usually decide to make an exception from the 'first come, first served' rule and allow a smaller vehicle to take precedence. Eric was convinced that passengers would still come, however. And he was eager to rake in the large share of ticket sales that filling the bigger bus would grant him. The anticipated rush of late evening passengers did not materialise. And the few ill-fated travellers who did purchase a ticket from Eric (and tickets are non-refundable, as per Neoplan's unwritten sales policy) found themselves stuck in an empty bus with departure deferred until some indefinite time. At dawn, most of the seats were still empty. Even worse, Eric's co-workers, unwilling to wait any longer until their turn for loading, began loading in parallel and thus poached newly incoming travellers from him. It was not until late in the evening of the following day that the driver, upset by the passengers stuck in his bus, relieved Eric from his wearing duty and decided to depart, despite still not being fully loaded.

At this stage of his station career, Eric clearly represents the novice hunter. Still unskilled in his perceptual engagements with Neoplan's environment, he himself had fallen prey to the seemingly unfathomable forces of polyrhythmic inputs that pervade the yard. His attempt to calculate the inflow of passengers by means of a facile temporal script did not compensate for his lack of perceptually attuned timing skills. Because he was unable to sense the changing rhythms of Kumasi-bound journeys, his miscalculated (and badly timed) loading blocked the smooth outflow of vehicles, a problem that was aggravated by the competitive and better-timed parallel loading of his co-workers. Although the

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novice lacks the honed senses needed for perceiving the rhythms in the yard, he will be very much affected by them, and virtually forced to act on them. Being without a sense of balance (or 'out of balance', as Geurts 2002: 215–16 puts it), he will struggle to keep in time with an unknown timeline, spinning around with shaky movements as if trying to dance while unable to hear the music play.

Eric's behaviour in the yard while scouting for new passengers had similarly adverse consequences. In order to 'hunt down' passengers ahead of workers from competing branches, it is imperative to position oneself where the passengers are coming in, or where they will be coming in. Eric determined his position according to a facile calculation and usually lurked at the station's main entrance, which is where he expected most passengers to come in. Yet, while this entrance is in fact the main point of entry, it is not the place where tickets are usually sold. Many passengers are scared by the aggressive demeanour of competing station workers, who tend to aggregate in the narrow space of the central gate. Moreover, the heightened competition of (predominantly young) station hunters waylaying travellers at the main entrance reduces the chances of each individual worker 'bringing down' a traveller willing to buy a ticket from him. Above all, Eric's static positioning at the central entrance disconnected him from the dynamic changes of constellations inside the yard. At the main entrance, a continuously high flow of people and vehicles prevails most of the time. It is inside the station yard that these flows disperse into a complex field of polyrhythmic syncopations. And it is here, inside the rhythmically differentiated parts constituted by the 13 branches, that Neoplan's yard reveals its resonating function, in turn opening up windows for kinaesthetically attuned perceptions of – and actions within – colliding rhythms.

The Skilled Station Hunter

The experienced station hunter will be able not only to perceive, and dance to, a multitude of rhythms simultaneously, but also to co-orchestrate many of them. Kwabena brought to perfection the skills needed for embodying the station's polyrhythms, and for turning hustling at the yard into a success. Aged 48, he had laboured in the transport business for more than three decades. He began as a driver's apprentice in the Brong-Ahafo region, then briefly took up driving himself, but soon realised that his vocation was the work at the station. His back was not made for the long hours of sitting that the job of a driver requires. He needed to 'move around', as he explained to me. For many years, he toiled as a loading boy. When I met him in 2012, he was long

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established as a station master, taking shifts in supervising the yard activities of Neoplan's biggest branch, the No. 4 branch, which plies the route to Kumasi as well as to 12 other destinations in Ghana's western regions. He had three children from his first marriage and three from his second, all of whom depended on his support. When speaking of his work, he usually first referred to the responsibility he had towards his 'two families', saying that he needed to work twice as hard as others.

Without doubt, Kwabena was a hard worker, and seeing him in action was both fascinating and exhausting. Like most of the station workers, Kwabena worked in 24-hour shifts, starting at 7 a.m. every other day. His zeal was unswerving throughout these shifts. The only time he allowed himself a break was when he took a shower halfway through the shift, after which he changed into fresh clothes and resumed his activities with renewed verve. Striding up and down the rows of vehicles loading under his charge, he would check the number of passengers inside each one and give directions to every loading boy and driver he encountered. He would then cross over to the other side of the yard, trade jokes with the workers, and take stock of the loading capacities of competing branches. Before returning to his own branch, he would survey the volume of traffic passing by on the street. Kwabena was indeed moving around tirelessly. Even while eating his lunch, he shouted out directions whenever he deemed it proper. And when there were signs of emerging turmoil, some potential arrhythmic divergence caused by a sudden increase in incoming passengers or by an outgoing vehicle blocked in the station's internal traffic, Kwabena was there, 'orchestrating' the human and vehicular movements.

Enviers accused him of being rapacious, saying that Kwabena was magically drawn to where easy pickings could be made. In fact, many eruptive moments of rhythmic perturbation created opportunities for cashing in, such as through illicit ticket auctioning, a trade Kwabena was adept at. However, his sensing of these opportune moments was not an end in itself but resulted from his finely adapted kinaesthetic skills, which enabled him to time his actions to the prosthetically mediated heralds of rhythmic change. Endowed with the ability to sense and accommodate the many rhythms resonating through Neoplan's yard, he dwelt in the station's polyrhythmic taskscape with sovereignty and foresight, anticipating the course of events in his own and other patches of the yard.

These skills of rhythmic attunement materialised, for example, in Kwabena's ability to tell when one of his vehicles was held up in traffic on its return trip, and thus threatened to constrict the capacity for channelling outflows. A station novice such as Eric would anticipate

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the 'usual' time of arrival and start acting only once the shortage of available vehicles became acute. Kwabena appeared able to 'read', or rather *sense*, the upcoming congestion on the road long before it began affecting outgoing traffic. Crucial to his ability to keep abreast of – and look ahead of – movements and events on the network of roads served by the vehicles of his branch was the elaborate and continuously updated, yet informal and casual, information network he had established with drivers, driver assistants, and station workers, as well as with regular commuters (market women in particular). Related to this was his aptitude for 'filtering' the information that he obtained from the incessant flow of fleeting encounters and seemingly trivial conversations. In addition to the knowledge he gained from interpreting and evaluating road-related talk, he was also good at discerning imminent shortages of vehicles at adjacent branches that plied similar routes, either by noticing an existing shortage himself, or by noticing that the other branches' yard workers could sense it. He would then seek means to counterbalance the approaching straits by organising additional vehicles and calling on spare drivers to be ready.

Another skill following from Kwabena's masterly perception was his ability to convince passengers not to stick to their original travel plans. He would advise them to take an alternative and more advantageous route to reach their destination. Asking them where they wanted to go, he would confront the passengers with the exclamation that they 'lied'. Only then did he adopt a gentler tone and explain why another route – usually one plied by a vehicle from his branch – would be the better choice. Not all passengers would buy into this somewhat uncommon travel advice. However, I witnessed many passengers who, after being exposed to Kwabena's recommendations, changed their plans and boarded another vehicle on the longer (and often more expensive) route instead. And, more often than not, the subsequent traffic on the affected roads proved him right. His coarse tactics were a simplified way of making comprehensible the knowledge derived from his sensing of the resonating rhythms of the yard. And surely he knew much more than he could tell (Polanyi 1966: 4).

A station worker of Kwabena's calibre will sense a spatial, and temporal, horizon that is much more contoured than that which a station novice will be capable of perceiving. Situated in an environment that itself is in perpetual motion, he will be able to keep his balance, while the novice will suffer from the peculiar form of dry land naupathia induced by Neoplan's yard. To continue in this seafaring register, Neoplan's workers need to 'get their sea legs' in the station's 'surf' of colliding rhythms, like the Icelandic fishermen's enskilment necessary for moving about on ships in rough seas that Gísli Pálsson (1994) writes about.

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This rhythmically attuned balancing is not merely a matter of calculating travel routes, road distances, and traffic volumes, but of 'acquiring the skills for direct perceptual engagement with its constituents' (Ingold 2000: 55). This is primarily a bodily way of knowing, thus a perceptually guided way of interiorising the constituents of Neoplan's varying rhythms co-constituted in the nexus of its destinations. The station workers need not only to evolve a 'temporal sense of place' (Edensor 2010: 4) but also to learn to sense the heterogeneous temporalities of many places simultaneously. Only by means of this kinaesthetic attunement to far-flung spatio-temporal relations will an Accra-based station worker be able to detect the resonating timelines beaten out in distant towns and to smoothly time the conveyance of passengers.

Conclusion

I started this chapter with a contrasting look at the organisational modes of departure in North Atlantic travel hubs and in Ghana's bus stations. The former are mainly structured by the facticity of clock time, by which the inflows of passengers are mechanically (or metronomically) steered into rigid, mono-linear outflows. The latter, based on the 'fill and run' system, are coordinated collectively by the facility of timing, which effectuates a dynamic correlation between inflows and outflows. This correlation facilitates synchronisation of the rhythms that take shape inside the station with those taking shape outside it. Here, actions do not follow in a preconfigured temporal script but result from station workers' timing skills. From there, I traced some of the basic polyrhythmic impulses that constitute the complex timeline that marks the sphere of social action and spatio-temporal order in the Neoplan Station.

My argument is that the actions taking place in the station can be framed as interactions with the activities taking place in the many destinations that are served from it. The situation of the station hustle takes on its swaying proportions within these interactions, and the activities of hustling, which here become manifest as a particular form of embodied labour, need to align with them. I have attempted to show that this interconnection across spatio-temporal difference – and distance – is facilitated by the resonating function of Neoplan's yard, whose motions (and commotions) resonate with the movements in the grid of its roads and routes. Neoplan's station workers come to embody these resonating polyrhythms by attuning their kinaesthetic senses to the prosthetic devices of the yard, and thus by acquiring the skills to dwell in its polyrhythmic taskscape. Their kinaesthetic enskilment follows from

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bodily engagement with, and immersion in, the spatio-temporal relations of Neoplan's environment.

Drawing on Gaston Bachelard (1964 [1958]), Ingold (2000: 203) writes that, while moving through a landscape, climbing its hills, and descending into its valleys, the road we follow enters into our 'muscular consciousness'. It is as though 'the road itself came to have muscles, or rather, counter-muscles' (Bachelard 1964 [1958]: 11) that emerge along the paths of our journey. We engage with the landscape by sensing its places while placing our senses along the road we take.

A similar picture holds true for Neoplan's rhythm-impregnated environment. Here, however, the process of embodiment is not facilitated by means of actual movement through a network of tracks or roads. Rather, it is through dwelling in the station yard, attuning to the prosthetically mediated impulses of the roads and the destinations they connect to, that the station workers come to embody the contours of Neoplan's rhythm-made taskscape, with some of them performing this task with mastery, others less so. And as 'real' muscles are put to use in the work by which roads are constructed, it is through the contractions of these rhythm-made muscles – formed through the embodied interactions between places, times, and expenditures of energy (Lefebvre 2004 [1992]: 15) – that circulation on the roads is enabled and sustained.

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