

Flowart, a physical activity at the level of hypermodernity, even hypomodernity

Romain Roult¹✉ • Frédéric Martineau¹

Received: 10th August, 2021

Accepted: 14th October, 2021

© The Author(s) 2021. This article is published with open access.

DOI: 10.31382/eqol.211206



Abstract

Our current hypermodern era, as described by many authors, imposes frenzied rhythms of life on individuals exacerbated by new communication technologies. In this incessant tumult, it has become more and more difficult for humans to take time for themselves or even a moment to reflect on their daily lives. It therefore seems necessary for some to indulge in more contemplative and meditative leisure and sporting activities that reconnect with the principles of otium and thus fall into a form of hypomodernity. It is in this reflective context that this study was conducted to interview seven flowart practitioners using a qualitative approach. Halfway between artistic practice and physical activity, flowart seems to allow these individuals to reconnect with a rhythm of life that is more biological than digital. These participants see a way to slow down the frenzy of their daily life in this practice while becoming more aware of their place in a cosmic and metaphysical whole.

Keywords flowart • hypermodernity • hypomodernity.

Introduction

Since the mid-1990s, but certainly from the beginning of the 21st century, we have entered a hypermodern era in the eyes of several authors (Aubert, 2019; René-Jutras, 2019; Tapia, 2012). This hypermodern era, present and studied especially in a Western context, basically refers to an exacerbation of modernity by new features oriented on connectivity, speed and even excess (Aubert, 2019). For Aubert (2008), hypermodernity is based on two specific behavioral characteristics, namely hyperconsumption as well as hyperperformance, both of which are exacerbated by the market logic of our neoliberal societies. Moreover, the hypermodern individual is a narcissistic individual focused on self-realization through the practice of various leisure activities and sports (Lipovetsky & Godart, 2018). The increased development and omnipresence in our lives of new information technologies, and especially social networks, have further accentuated this place of "hyper" in all our private and professional spheres (Gottschalk, 2018). Based in particular on Bauman's work, De Gaulejac (2008) evokes a real breakdown of our social boundaries where everything is intermingled, professional time and free time, private and public, real and virtual, at the risk of seeing a real paradoxical society emerging. The latter, based from now on and among other things on rationality and performance, contributes in several ways to a loss of meaning in humans and to a chronic inability to distance oneself from a constantly accelerating and changing daily life (De Gaulejac, 2017). In this respect, Antonioli et al. (2021) argue for the implementation of a policy to keep pace with and to counter. completely or na-

✉ romain.roult@uqtr.ca

¹ University of Quebec in Trois-Rivières,
Department of Leisure, Culture and Tourism
studies, Trois-Rivières, Quebec, Canada

rtially, this exacerbation of our lifestyles in which many people are continually 'out of breath' and de facto exposed to chronic health problems, especially mental ones. Here the notion of speed appears at the heart of the mechanisms of hypermodernity, and this, as Lipovetsky (2017) clearly states, for whom "we are no longer in a culture of ritual forms marked by slowness and patience, but in a society of hypervelocity dominated by the obsession to gain time in all circumstances" (2017: 264).

In parallel, based on several scientific studies and reflections from the fields of sociology, philosophy and psychology, we are witnessing a repositioning of the "I" or, more globally, of the "Being" where, for some individuals, one must continually seek to capitalise on one's skills and competences in order to increase one's personal development and, potentially, one's wellbeing. While for others, it seems to be central to better understand one's own self within a holistic whole for which we are only a fraction of this whole (Long et al., 2021; Bouwer et Van Leeuwen, 2017; De Gaulejac, 2011).

In this context and for De Gaulejac (2008), "at the time of triumphant individualism, the tension is more and more sharp between the requirement of "to be oneself" and the impoverishment of the interior space, the dissolution of the interiority which gives the subject its subjective consistency" (2008: 2). In these circumstances, several authors wonder if the harmful and deleterious effects of hypermodernity should not lead us instead to hypomodernity where stability takes the place of continuous change and where social and spiritual liquidity evaporates in favour of reflective consistency (Citot, 2005; De Gaulejac, 2008). This hypomodernity, in a leisure context, refers us to the very principles of otium in terms of contemplation, ethics and inner reflection (Bellefleur, 2002; Pire, 2020). For Pire (2020), our current market society has literally excluded otium and its meditative attributes because of its unfounded appearance of uselessness. This contemporary otium opens up to different forms of otherness, empathy for others and sensitivity towards difference, elements and notions that are central to human flourishing but which are very often evacuated from hypermodern daily life. This is in line with the scientific thinking of Heintzman (2021), who sees in the definition, but also in the classical interpretation of leisure, forms of contemplation, but more specifically, elements of spirituality combined with notions of experience and flow. At this level, we are also linked to the principle of resonance formulated by Rosa (2018) through which, in particular, sensitivity, touch and physicality

are to be brought to the forefront in order to better grasp the scope of our actions in a common whole, both human and natural, but also to reconnect with the latter.

It is within this reflective context that this study was conducted through the study of flowart. The latter is a practice that triangulates the mesh between the notions of spirituality, flow and physical literacy at work. It refers to a practice consisting of the manipulation of specific objects in artistic movements coordinated with rhythmic body movements. Despite the lack of scientific writings on flowart, this practice seems to develop at the boundaries of physical activity and artistic performance while having similarities with certain more traditional activities, such as yoga, dance and Tai Chi, where the movement of the body and the notion of flow are central. Thus, this study aims at studying flowart in the light of hypermodernity in order to analyze how this practice is grounded but also distinguished in this societal context in the eyes of several participants. More precisely, this study aims at answering this question: How and in what does flowart unfold in our hypermodern society and what spiritual escapes does it offer to its practitioners?

Method

In order to define the essence that constitutes the experience of flowart as it is lived and perceived by the people who practice it, phenomenology appeared as a logical choice. This type of scientific research is interested in the phenomena as they appear in the human consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). The search for participants was conducted via Facebook, by posting an announcement on the following groups: Flowmies of Earth (12 400 members), Poi Chat (31 000 members) and Flow Arts Institute Community (997 members). The inclusion criteria established and communicated in this sense were that the participants have been practising flowart for at least two years and on a regular basis, at least once a week. Each person was carefully selected for his or her potential contribution, in accordance with the phenomenological approach, which aims to bring out in-depth data and does not seek to generalise or make the results representative (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006; Morse, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989;). The sample is thus made up of seven participants between the ages of 24 and 47 from four different nationalities (the United States, England, Colombia and Venezuela).

Data saturation was observed after the fifth interview, i.e., no new themes or significant data emerged.

Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide constructed in two parts. The first part asked "what" do participants experience in terms of the phenomenon? The second continued by asking "how" the participants experience the phenomenon? The interviews lasted an average of 75 minutes and were conducted via videoconference, using the Facetime, Zoom and Whatsapp applications, due in part to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Regarding data analysis, the fundamental writings used were those of Clark Moustakas (Phenomenological research methods, 1994), himself inspired by the ideas of Husserl (1931). In his approach, Moustakas (1994) suggests strategies for data analysis that will help answer the research question. Phenomenology allows us to understand the essence of the lived experience (Creswell, 2007, p. 58) and responds to the need to describe the phenomenon of flowart as it is experienced by the practitioners. The first step, bracketing and horizontalization, consists of examining the verbatim and identifying and codifying all the significant statements that are close to or explicitly speak of the participant's experience (Patton, 2002). A total of 725 bracketed significant statements were identified and organized into 41 codes. The second step, the phenomenological-transcendental reduction, consists in delimit invariant constituents and then eliminating the expressions that are too vague, repetitive, overlapping or irrelevant (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). The third step, clustering, was to cluster all invariant constituents into themes (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). The fourth and final step, imaginative variation and themes validation, was then aimed at examining the themes from different angles and perspectives in order to develop an enhanced version of the invariant themes (Patton, 2002).

Finally, from an ethical point of view, the data collection was authorized by the human research ethics committee of the authors' home university of this article and respects all the rules relating to research in the humanities and social sciences. The participants' anonymity has been duly respected and their identity is protected by the attribution of fictitious names.

Results

Because of the succinct format of this article, the dimensions of flowart presented are those that are the most relevant to the subject of interest, the transition from hypermodernity to hypomodernity. Our study has thus allowed the identification of two major dimensions of the practice of flowart that allow the affirmation that the interviewed participants live principles related to otium: the flow state and the feeling of connectedness. The data was collected from candidates between the ages of 24 and 47 with a variety of socio-demographic profiles from the United States, Mexico, Venezuela and England. Their anonymity is, of course, protected and they are given fictitious names.

Flow State

Unquestionably, the flow state is implied in the practice of flowart: "can get yourself in a kind of trance" (Broden), "go free" (Jericho), "so in the zone" (Leana). References to optimal experience are also emphasized in the participants' discourse: «The present moment becomes the only moment» (Evan); «I'm really not thinking at all, and kind of just dancing I guess, and then the prop becomes an extension of myself» (Broden); «not easy or too difficult » (Flynn); «I think that when I do movement, I can escape myself» (Jericho). It is obvious that the flow state and optimal experience is an inherent dimension of the practice of flowart.

It is also clear that this altered state of consciousness in which the participants find themselves during the practice of flowart is consistent with certain characteristics of hypermodernity, that is to say speed, performance and excess. Let us note in this respect the distortion of time which is directly linked to this assertion: «Time seems to slow down » (Evan). Moreover, participants systematically link their experience of flowart to their understanding of the world: «After I've learned the connection, I'm applying it right now in every aspect of my life» (Leo). For this reason, it can be said that flowart is more than simple leisure for these participants. It is a kind of art of living, even a state of being and perception of reality.

The feeling of connectivity

This last statement is evident in the sense of connectedness inherent in the practice of flowart: «Flowing can be a very meditative experience, tuning into your body to feel the connection between you and the prop, or you and the earth» (Broden). The way

they experience this state thus seems to be a total immersion in the present moment and a sense of “mental clarity” (Broden). A connection seems to be established between the body and the mind. When this connection occurs, the participants claim to feel themselves entering a “higher state of consciousness” (Leo). Indeed, this connectivity goes far beyond the self. The participants recognize a form of connection to something much greater and through this they feel in a state of “fullness” (Broden): «It’s connected to everything. I feel connected to my being and those around me, and my creator» (Evan); «you understand people, even bad people and good people, you are in a state like beyond the good and evil. It’s like you’re feeling that you are one with everything» (Leo); «I feel I am part of nature» (Flynn); «It’s a fusion of mood, technic and universal forces» (Broden). Here we notice without a doubt an increased sensitivity of the participants towards otherness and the constituents of their existence, both tangible and intangible, as well as what we could call a feeling of unity in diversity and the cosmos. This sensitivity translates into a certain attitude in the participants, an openness to movement: «And so now, instead of looking at life like I have to resist whatever is coming my way, I flow with it, I move with it [...] it’s about being receptive to those changes. I think flowart is something that gets you open to all of that» (Evan). Through these words an expression of reflexivity and a sensitive look can be seen towards existence on the part of the participants.

The essence of flowart

The analysis of the data leads to the establishment of this definition of flowart, constituted from textural and structural elements faithful to phenomenology, that is to say, respectively what do the participants perceive as a phenomenon and how do they experience it?

Flowart is a game of movement and manipulation of accessories without end, with progressive and constant intellectual and physical challenges that push the participants to surpass themselves and to enhance themselves. The opportunities of development of the individual inherent to flowart can be manifested in all the spheres of a person’s life, which makes it possible to qualify this leisure activity as holistic, even emersive, by its capacity to activate what is alive inside the body. This practice becomes a symbolic space in the image of the individual and paves the way to a kind of art of living and an art of being for the participants who integrates the learnings

and “connect” them to their life, thus giving rise to a rich spiritual development.

Participants experience this phenomenon as a powerful connectivity first internally, between body and mind, and then externally, to nature. Once “connected,” a sense of deep peace and well-being is felt. Through the practice of flowart and the immersion in flow state, the participants repeat the optimal experiences. In doing so, they experience a wide spectrum of positive emotions and strong, life-building experiences. It also gives off an energy, even a force that provides a deep enchantment that influences the participants’ perception of existence, notably through the recognition of this living connectivity that constantly recurs, an invisible link that connects the entire ecosystem. This is a “way” that can reach individuals in search of connectivity and a more human meaning to life, in contrast to the substrates of hypermodernity.

Discussion et conclusion

In the light of the results presented and analyzed, it can clearly be seen that the practice of flowart, by these seasoned practitioners, goes beyond the simple framework of physical activity to become a real way of life based mainly on a desire to reconnect to oneself and to one’s physical and spiritual environment. It is interesting in this respect to make a link with the words of Aubert (2006) who reminds us in her collective work on the hypermodern individual that “if we now consider the etymology, we see that “sense” comes from the Indo-European root “sent,” designating, on the one hand, reason, attention, common sense, and on the other hand, the fact of walking, of setting off, of taking a direction, often towards the unknown” (2006, p. 87). In this respect, we note that the participants in this study seem to agree with this etymological definition of the term meaning in several respects. Indeed, they aspire to find optimal experiences in themselves and around them which are likely to lead them to renewed sensations of well-being and connectivity. Flowart becomes this avenue for them towards this form of searching for meaning. These research findings are in line with those of Long et al. (2021) who conducted a study on taijiquan defined as “originally a martial art, [...] which today presents itself as a self-practice that transforms the way of living, of seeing things, of inscribing oneself in space and time.” (2021: 67). For these authors, this practice opens the way to experiences of flow because of its fluidity, the

transformations in the perception of time that it offers and even the feeling of possible communication with the environment (Long et al., 2021: 69). Thus, through the work of Long et al. (2021) and our own research approach, we see the body as a way of inhabiting the world, as expressed by Lesage (2021) through sports practice. This body, moving in sporting configurations, allows us to connect, resonate and unfold in environments tinged with sensitivity (Lesage, 2021).

However, it goes without saying that the results also contribute to highlight a certain paradox, observed more globally in hypermodernity by different authors. In this respect, it is interesting to wonder if flowart, practiced as our participants express it, is not, in the end, and in some aspects, an umpteenth playful escape to reach a purely individualistic state of physical and spiritual well-being. Or if it is really a way, a strategy or a time to slow down and reflect on one's place in society and on the possibility of modifying one's lifestyle for one's personal well-being but also that of the community, understood as a living whole. We agree here with De Gaulejac (2011) who sees in the hypermodern individual a constant tug-of-war between the need or even the societal requirement to improve oneself through different means and to try to escape the ephemerality and the insignificance of certain actions and activities on his Being. In this regard and in relation to our research results, it seems interesting to mention the idea of paradoxical happiness put forward by Lipovetsky (2013). He believes that hypermodernity offers individuals a multitude of hedonistic experiences, most of which are to be consumed in the short term and which boast possibilities for personal fulfilment, but which nevertheless, if not automatically, give rise to numerous frustrations and disappointments due to their continual multiplication and their commercial features (Lipovetsky, 2013).

Moreover, and more globally, our results highlight the issue of temporality in this hypermodern society where, as expressed by De Gaulejac (2018), the latter exacerbates the culture of urgency and the frantic and continuous rhythms of action. For De Gaulejac (2018), "the time of globalization overwhelms human life" (2018: 39) and leads many individuals to avoid having more hollow times, empty of activities or still linked to forms of accountable inactivity. Everything becomes based on measurement and results and is tied to the usefulness of objectives for oneself and for others. This sociological observation gives a certain dimension to the results since it can be clearly

observed that the participants see and mobilize their flowart practices as a way to get out of these exhausting, even "mind-numbing" hypermodern temporalities in order to find a certain more natural rhythm. We join in this respect the remarks of Pire (2020), based on the analysis of the otium and the reflections of Montaigne, regarding the fact that to explore the depths of the being requires a long time, a certain distance with the constant noise of society and a form of idleness. In this respect, Lipovetsky states that "the ancient otium was a time of self-construction manifested in cultivated leisure and contemplation, meditation and conversation. [The contemporary world of leisure] is one of privatisation of pleasure, individualisation and commercialisation of free time. Anything but orgiastico-extatic, the logic that triumphs is that of the individualistic time of leisure-consumption". (Lipovetsky, 2013: 238-239). Flowart would thus become for these individuals a physical activity fundamentally and intrinsically distant from the rhythms of the hypermodern society opening the way to slowing down and a possibility to renew with longer reflexive times in a combined time logic. One is thus directed here on the essence of hypomodernity, stated, in particular, by De Gaulejac (2008), not, however, on hypomodernity constitutive of acts of claim and denunciation of hypermodernity, but rather like an alternative way of life centered on oneself and a relatively limited community not necessarily involving its marginalization. Nevertheless, we must keep in mind the reflection and even the advocacy proposed by Antonioli et al. (2021), where the idea is to maintain forms of rhythmic hybridity so as not to fall into a simplistic vision or the trap of "opposing the hyperconnected to the disconnected, speed to slowness, the city to the countryside, the chosen to the subjected, the lively to the nonchalant, work to leisure, or excitement to boredom, but to consider their combinations, and in so doing qualify specific rhythms. (2021: 105).

In conclusion, we would like to mention certain methodological limitations of this study that undeniably qualify our results. The phenomenological structure of this approach led to a small sample of participants which de facto does not allow us to generalize these results. In addition, two participants did not speak English as their first language, which may have diminished the richness and variety of their comments during the interviews. Finally, several participants practice dance with poi as their main flowart discipline, leading to a relative over-representation of this discipline in the results presented. These methodological limitations lead us

to indicate that it would be relevant to pursue this research using a quantitative approach via online questionnaire surveys in order to obtain a finer and more global profile of these flowart practitioners. As well, it could be interesting to mobilise certain communities of practitioners in order to organise discussion groups aiming, among other things, at analysing in greater depth certain facets of this physical activity in relation to their lifestyles. We are thinking in particular of the relationship between practice time and work time or the way in which flowart can modify different social and human values in these practitioners. In a complementary way, it would be interesting to study a greater variety of types of flowart practices in order to try to bring out certain similarities and other analytical divergences. More generally, we believe that it is essential to multiply empirical research on this object of study, which is still little addressed in the scientific literature, with a view to enriching the more fundamental reflection on hypermodernity and hypomodernity.

References

- Antonioli, M., Drevon, G., Gwiazdzinski, L., Kaufmann, V., & Pattaroni, L. (2021). *Manifeste pour une politique des rythmes*. EPFL Press.
- Aubert, N. (2019). *Hypermodernité*. In Vandeveld-Rogale et al. (Ed.). *Dictionnaire de sociologie clinique* (pp. 327-328). Érès, Sociologique Clinique.
- Aubert, N. (2008). Violence du temps et pathologies hypermodernes. *Cliniques Méditerranéennes*, 78(2), 23-38.
- Aubert, N. (2006). *L'intensité de soi*. In N. Aubert (Ed.). *L'individu hypermoderne* (pp. 73-87). Érès, Sociologique Clinique.
- Bellefleur, M. (2002). *Le loisir contemporain. Essai de philosophie sociale*. Presses de l'Université du Québec.
- Bouwer, J., & Van Leeuwen, M. (2017). *Philosophy of leisure. Foundations of the good life*. Routledge.
- Citot, V. (2005). Le processus historique de la modernité et la possibilité de la liberté (universalisme et individualisme). *Le Philosophoire*, 25(2), 35-76.
- Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Sage.
- De Gaulejac, V. (2018). Plus on gagne de temps, moins on en a ... Le rapport au temps dans la société paradoxante. In N. Aubert (Ed.). *@ la recherche du temps* (pp. 39-51). Érès, Sociologique Clinique.
- De Gaulejac, V. (2017). Vivre dans une Société paradoxante. *Nouvelle Revue de Psychosociologie*, 24(2), 27-40.
- De Gaulejac, V. (2011). *Entre dissimulation et ostentation, le traitement de l'envie dans les sociétés contemporaines*. In N. Aubert, et al. (Eds.). *Les tyrannies de la visibilité* (pp. 245-257). Érès, Sociologique Clinique.
- De Gaulejac, V. (2008). *Préface*. In C. Haroche (Ed.). *L'avenir du sensible. Les sens et les sentiments en question* (pp. 1-3). Presses universitaires de France.
- Gottschalk, S. (2018). *The terminal self. Everyday life in hypermodern times*. Routledge.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with Data Saturation and Variability. *Fields Methods*, 18, 59-82.
- Heintzman, P. (2021). *The religious and spiritual dimensions of leisure travel*. In D. H. Olsen & Timothy, D. J. (Eds.). *The Routledge handbook of religious and spiritual tourism* (pp. 53-67). Routledge.
- Husserl, E. (1931). *Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology*. (D. Carr. Trans.). Northwestern University Press.
- Lesage, B. (2021). Écologie et corporéité : Habiter corporellement le monde. *Staps*, 132(2), 73-82.
- Lipovetsky, G., & Godart, E. (2018). L'avènement de l'individu hypermoderne. *Cliniques Méditerranéennes*, 98(2), 7-23.
- Lipovetsky, G. (2017). *Plaire et toucher. Essai sur la société de séduction*. Gallimard.
- Lipovetsky, G. (2013). *Le bonheur paradoxal*. Gallimard-Folio Essais.
- Long, T., Caulier, E., & Chenault, M. (2021). Entrer en résonance avec le monde par des pratiques holistiques. *Staps*, 132(2), 63-72.
- Morse, J. (1994). *Designing funded qualitative research*. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook for qualitative research*. Sage.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Sage Publications.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Sage Publications.
- Pire, J. M. (2020). *Otium. Art, éducation, démocratie*. Actes Sud.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1989). Phenomenological research methods. In R. S. Valle & S. Halling (Eds.), *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology* (pp. 41-60). Plenum.
- René-Jutras, K. (2019). *Réussir son hypermodernité en 25 étapes faciles et sauver le reste de sa vie de Nicolas Langelier : l'expérience éclatée de l'hypermodernité et le retour à une littérature de l'exemplarité*. Mémoire de Maîtrise : Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières.
- Rosa, H. (2017). *Résonance. Une sociologie de la relation au monde*. Éditions La Découverte.
- Tapia, C. (2012). Modernité, postmodernité, hypermodernité. *Connexions*, 97(1), 15-25.

How to cite this article:

- APA: Roullet, R., & Martineau, F. (2021). Flowart, a physical activity at the level of hypermodernity, even hypomodernity. *Exercise and Quality of Life*, 13(2), 47-53. doi:10.31382/eqol.211206
- MLA: Roullet, Romain and Frédéric Martineau. "Flowart, a physical activity at the level of hypermodernity, even hypomodernity." *Exercise and Quality of Life* 13.2 (2021): 47-53.
- Chicago: Roullet, Romain , and Frédéric Martineau. "Flowart, a physical activity at the level of hypermodernity, even hypomodernity." *Exercise and Quality of Life* 13, no. 2 (2021): 47-53.