

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Reconsidering time in schools: an everyday aesthetics perspective

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Abstract

The main purpose of this article is to describe and analyse time in schools from an everyday aesthetics perspective. Expanding on current scholarship, the article calls attention to the way everyday sensory experiences in schools models time in peculiar ways that have serious educational implications. On the one hand, based on the work of Katya Mandoki, we discuss how schedules and classroom movements tend to project an ominous sense of time, where students' sensibilities are neglected in favour of objective, regular and efficient rhythms. On the other hand, based on Yuriko Saito's account of Japanese garden design, we offer an alternative understanding of time that incorporates interruption, delay and 'unwrapping' as means to an enriched experience. The article concludes by identifying new questions and pedagogical orientations that contribute to reconsidering how schools teach to perceive, conceive and live time.

KEYWORDS

everyday aesthetics, everyday aesthetics in education, school rhythms, school time perception, time in school

INTRODUCTION

Time in schools remains a relevant topic for educational research. Notwithstanding that, in the past decades, there have been impressive achievements concerning access, equity, curriculum development and new teaching and learning methodologies, among others, the comprehension of time in schools seems to be anchored to some distant point within modernity (Escolano, 1992). That was the era when Western schools incorporated calendars, schedules, wall clocks, attendance lists and specific physical routines as means of organising time as a valuable and scarce resource that had to

be managed with utmost responsibility (Hargreaves, 2012). Eventually, schools became clock time-focused, revealing a peculiar 'time consciousness' (Rapplee & Komatsu, 2016) where teachers and students seem to perform a daily tightrope act framed by 'careers' and 'deadlines' and an aversion to inefficiency and delay.

In this scenario, philosophy and education scholars have delved into questions such as: How does the comprehension of time influence pedagogical practices? What does school time organisation reveal about the meanings and purposes of education? What specific value of time do students learn throughout schooling? Along this line, it is important to acknowledge the work of Kenklies (2020) who, from a Buddhist perspective, calls into question the pervasive future-oriented mentality that alienates present time and ends up framing schooling as a frenetically productive enterprise. His research invites us to look for alternative understandings beyond objective, linear and causal time. On a related note, Kakkori (2013) challenges the presumption that teaching and learning develop homogeneously at a regular pace and through discrete stages. By emphasising that the experience of time is intertwined with people's age—rather than unidirectionally determined by it, her work sheds light on diverse ways of 'being in time' that incorporates a phenomenological sensibility.

In addition, it is worth considering Papastephanou (2014) who strives for a complementary relationship between *chronos* and *kairos*. While *kairos* permits cherishing an intuitive and plentiful sense of present time within typical standardised and measurable educational patterns, *chronos* may prevent capricious or arrogant self-appropriations of *kairos* that would dissociate personal time from school time. Ultimately, what is at stake is the opportunity to reconcile diverse experiences of time within everyday schooling. Similarly, Alhadeff-Jones (2017) warns about the tendency to assimilate antagonistic temporalities or 'schizochrony' (Pineau, 2000) as an inescapable predicament within education. According to him, this is the condition of those who learn to live in a divided time as if having to prepare a presentation while wishing to have a conversation with a friend. In the end, this would inhibit comprehensive interpersonal rhythms.

Building on these authors' work, we wish to expand current scholarship through an everyday aesthetics consideration of time in schools. By 'everyday aesthetics', we refer to the ongoing Western aesthetics debate that aims at 'restoring aesthetics to its original task: investigating the nature of experiences gained through sensory perception' (Saito, 2017, p. 1). In brief, by attending to the colours, smells, textures, flavours and sounds that build up our days, as well as the different sensory routines, gestures and physical postures that we adopt in habitual interactions, everyday aesthetics reclaims the existence of a true aesthetic dimension that precedes the artistic and that may condition the way we relate with key aspects of life (Leddy, 2012; Marini, 2021; Melchione, 2013; Saito, 2010). Thus, building on the work of Mandoki (2017) and Saito (2017), we will revisit taken-for-granted perceptual experiences of time in schools that hold serious pedagogical implications. After all, among the diverse things students learn in school over 12 years, they learn—in an explicit or implicit manner—how to perceive, conceive and practice time.

In the first section, we will introduce the 'aesthetic matrix of school time' (Mandoki, 2017). The 'aesthetic matrix' is a heuristic criterion that manifests how school organises and recreates perception in a certain way, selecting, emphasising, neglecting or rejecting key stimuli, objects, rituals and sensory patterns. Based on two quotes from Mandoki's *Everyday Aesthetics: Prosaics, the Game of Culture and Social Identities*, we will discuss how school schedules and movements within and inside classrooms entail sensory manifestations with specific educational implications. Regarding schedules, we will argue that the uncritical reproduction of these devices assumes an age-based, linear and product-oriented experience of time. Regarding classroom movements, we will stress that throughout schooling, classrooms tend to prevent students from appropriating a common space, that there are uncritical obstinate physical routines that need to take place for a class to be a class and that there is a prevailing dualism between indoor and outdoor activities.

In the second section, we will present the 'everyday aesthetics of time in Japanese gardens' (Saito, 2017) as a way of developing alternative problematisations of time in schools. Based on two quotes from Saito's *Aesthetics of the Familiar: Everyday Life and World-Making*, we will discuss two ancient principles of Japanese garden design that merge physical and temporal considerations. The first principle is すじかへて [*suji kaete*] or 'changing the axis', which manifests through decisions that interrupt linear walk. We will argue that it favours inefficiency and pause as keys to alternative ways of conceiving time that may be present in school break time. The second principle is 見え隠れ (*miegakure*) or 'now you see

it, now you do not', which manifests through a scenery disposition where direct sights are blocked or delayed. We will argue that it promotes partiality and suspense as keys to alternative ways of conceiving time that may be present in flexible classrooms.

THE AESTHETIC MATRIX OF SCHOOL TIME

Mandoki (2017) proposes the notion of the 'aesthetic matrix of school' as a heuristic criterion that allows characterising and discussing sensory perception in education. In the first place, the 'aesthetic matrix' considers visual, acoustic, kinetic and proxemic phenomena, together with the distribution of spaces and intersubjective rituals, among other perceptual dimensions, that frame how it feels like to be in school. In the second place, after depicting those same stimuli, patterns and routines, the 'aesthetic matrix' allows us to ask what is the pedagogical meaning of perception that schools generate and model in students throughout schooling.¹

After considering different pedagogical practices and material attributes of school infrastructure, Mandoki (2017) ends up judging that the 'aesthetic matrix of school' 'seems to be geared to prioritising the serial production of proto-laboral identities, rather than the generation enabling enriched, creative and more flexible and solidary sensibilities' (p. 241). When justifying this claim, she emphasises that time controls the school matrix through an ominous productive rhythm that gives little to no room for students' subjectivities to develop (p. 242). The following quotation will help us argue that schedules and movement between and in classrooms refer to key perceptions and understandings of time that pervade school life:

By circumscribing priorities in the schedule, rather than in the intellectual and social aptitudes of the students, a democratic exercise is certainly practised by the school matrix in demanding what supposedly we all have in a similar measure: time ... The matrix thus cuts equivalent slices of time from each child's life from a minimum of four to six hours daily ... this way it keeps creating subjectivities that perceive life merely as a process of complying with requirements. There is no time for dreaming, adventure, leisure, 'wasting time' (p. 244).

The schedule

The use of school schedules is so universal that if we try to imagine one of these devices without even entering a school, we will probably come up with exactly the following picture: a rectangular template, with the names of weekdays on one axis and the periods of each day on the other. At the intersection of both axes, there will be instructor's or subject's names or even colours that may refer to any of the previous categories. Furthermore, the schedule will be printed and stuck on a larger piece of paper and hung on the classroom wall either next to the whiteboard and behind the teacher's desk or by the door. Each teacher, student and parent will have an individual copy of it, and there will be copies of each of the classes' schedules in the headteacher's office and the staffroom.

Simple as this description may seem, Mandoki helps us realise that schedules manifest how schools teach to perceive and understand time in a peculiar manner. To begin with, each of these devices takes for granted that the fundamental quality students have in common with their classmates... is age. This is to say, the year of birth is the yardstick that determines which of these quadrangular slots better suits each student. The presumption seems to be that students develop homogeneously and learn better when they are grouped by age, which eventually ends up encouraging the use of 'one size fits all' strategies. As philosophers of education such as Papastephanou (2014) and Alhadeff-Jones (2017) stress, calendar and chronological time operate as a backdrop against which other conditions of school experience seem to fade away. Far from arguing that age is irrelevant during school life, the uncriticised fact is that students'

personal interests, questions or wishes play a secondary role or are neglected when assigning them to a specific group within the school.

In addition, school schedules assume that all students need to learn and approve the same contents, exactly at the same rhythm. There is no room to linger within any specific theme, or to move forward or spy on the following years' contents. Students need to start on the same basis, move at the same speed and complete each stage, always together. The presumption that student learning evolves sequentially, unidirectionally and through stages is so pervasive and dominant (Kakkori, 2013; Tesar, 2016) that timetables' closed and rigid structure negates the possibility of alternative paces within the pattern the school has instituted once and for all. Even if by the end of the year most students can 'pass the year', outliers will be punished: Those who fall behind will risk repeating the year, those who would like to jump forward better wait and adapt. If any of them refuse or cannot remain within their class rhythm, they will end up out of school altogether.

Mandoki permits reflecting on still another aspect of schedules that demonstrates the way in which school time intertwines students' sensory experience with serious pedagogical implications. As a matter of fact, students go through a variety of temporal experiences: class time, lunchtime and break time. Eventually, they also experience 'empty' time or 'free periods' when their teachers resign, call in sick or are late to work. However, the prevailing economic comprehension of time as a scarce resource that needs to be used productively makes the sole idea of including 'empty' or 'free periods' slots in the schedule ludicrous or suspicious, if not reckless. As discussed by Shahjahan (2014), school time embodies a moral imperative that favours effort, efficiency, punctuality and regularity—against relaxation, slowness, delay and interruption, and the school schedule broadcasts this imperative to the entire school, affecting students' life within and beyond the educational system.²

All in all, going back to the quotation from Mandoki, it is quite clear that the temporal exercises the school produces are only 'democratic' in a sarcastic manner, as if going through the same number of periods guaranteed equality, or adjusting to the school's absolute rhythm encouraged independence. In fact, schedules show that the way in which students learn to perceive, conceive and exercise time is usually tied to their birth year rather than to their personal dispositions and interests; homogenised through regular rhythms rather than through the incorporation of alternative speeds, intensities and trajectories; absorbed in an economic comprehension of time rather than in accompanying individuals in the discovery of a value of their own.³ This raises questions concerning schools' capacity to incorporate students' different interests and sensibilities regardless their age, acknowledging the possibility of alternative learning rhythms or even cherishing an overabundant sense of time.

Classroom movement

If the format and function of schedules are universal, the sensory design and purpose of classrooms seem one of the basic genes that build a school's DNA. Generally framed by four walls in a rectangular shape, a classroom is defined by a 'front' consisting of a screen or whiteboard located on a windowless wall next to the instructor's desk, and tables and chairs of diverse sizes according to the number of students, which are orientated towards that front. Most classrooms will have windows and pale-coloured ceilings to take advantage of natural illumination. If possible, the floor's material will be easy to clean, and the lower half of the wall will be darker to camouflage dirt and stains. Among the universe of perceptual possibilities, classroom experience relies on visual and acoustic attention. Nothing within this description refers explicitly to time, yet the following quotation from Mandoki (2017) deepens our understanding of three considerations of classroom everyday aesthetics that reflect a particular comprehension and pedagogical orientation of time:

Each classroom is generally destined to a certain course and not to a certain group through its trajectory in the school. This way students move every year to another room instead of appropriating one space for their generation as a learning workshop by collectively personalizing it ... Students have to remain

in the assigned desk and not move more than the minimum necessary during each class ... The somatic *peripatos* has been expelled from this matrix (p. 245).

The first consideration has to do with movement between classrooms, throughout schooling. The claim that by collectively personalising a classroom as a workshop, students would appropriate that space (Mandoki, 2017) helps us ponder the way in which the experience of time in school conditions students' sense of ownership. The fact is that even if students are bestowed some agency regarding such modifications as decorations, furniture arrangement or the inclusion of pets, on the very last day of school, classrooms will be sanitised, emptied and restored to their basic initial form, remaining indifferent to students' identities and sensibilities. It is as if classroom space was borrowed, certainly with the permission to use it, but temporarily. From this perspective, we argue that schools tend to promote transient and rather superficial ownership sensibilities because they inhibit the consolidation of strong ties with those spaces where students spend most of their time. In one of the few philosophy and education papers on this topic, Hung and Stables (2011) eloquently highlight how students tend to give proper names to playgrounds, cafeterias and athletic courts, among other school spaces, that would allow for a deeper sense of ownership instead of classrooms that tend to remain anonymous.

The second consideration has to do with movement inside classrooms. Even though the usual rhythm within classrooms seems obvious, building on Mandoki, we want to highlight the 'minimum necessary' movements that need to happen for a class to be a class. Indeed, not any movement accounts for classroom movement: students arrive in class, sit, stretch back, lean forward, turn their heads, glimpse back, repeat these movements until the end of the class, then move out and arrive in the next class. In a Sisyphus-like pantomime, they learn how to stay still—without falling asleep—while remaining ignorant of the actual pedagogical purpose behind this routine. Interestingly, 'minimum necessary' movements are present across school life, demanding specific dynamics in key spaces: movements that define lunch, sports and after school programmes and that seem to be set in stone. This is evidenced by imagining having lunch in the hallway or setting up desks and whiteboards in the playground for a lesson. Immediately, these initiatives would seem 'out of place' or a 'waste of time'.

Finally, the claim that 'somatic *peripatos* has been expelled' from the way schools organise and recreate everyday sensory experiences may seem difficult to ponder. However, it is noteworthy that instead of using the word 'peripatetic', which means 'travelling around to different places' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021), Mandoki chose '*peripatos*' in italics, which alludes to its etymological origin. *Peripatos*, in Greek *περιπατος* is a noun with three primordial meanings: a walk, the place for walking and the arguments that take place during a walk, immortalised by Aristotle's morning and evening lectures (Liddell & Scott, 1889). Fatefully, none of these understandings materialise in the classroom. The traditional presumption seems to be that 'instructional time' (Robinson et al, 2008) benefits from static and indoor exchanges rather than energetic and open-air ones. In this way, everyday school life reveals a persistent dualism between activities that need to show a productive use of time and, therefore, rely on students sitting down and those playful learning instances that admit walking about, which may include the arts, sports and even ecological and civic outdoor experiences.

Revisiting the quotation from Mandoki, it seems movements between and inside classrooms echo perceptual experiences of time that are meaningful yet seem to pass by unattended. For instance, if we consider the number of hours, months and years students spend in classrooms, then the fact that they are not usually able to modify those same spaces is striking. In addition, the reality of 'minimum necessary' movements, so obstinately present in everyday schooling, allows interrogating how flexible learning experiences are. Also, the fact that walking has no room as a productive enterprise in schools challenges the habitual distinction between indoor instructional practices and outdoor recreational ones. This raises questions concerning the sense of belonging schools promote, the reasons behind ritualistic static movements inside classrooms and the tacit distinction between indoor and outdoor activities.⁴

In summary, even though a reader might argue that Mandoki's description of time as a decisive element of the school aesthetic matrix is harsh, we do agree that time in school appears to be trapped within the limits of schedules and movements between and inside classrooms. On the one hand, we are concerned by the uncritical

reproduction of packed and impassive schedules that neglect students' individual interests, discoveries and rhythms. Here, we are reminded of French-Japanese educational researcher Aniko Husti (1992) who claimed that 'thought about school time has stopped before the quadrangular template of time planning, which has become a stereotype of schoolwork' (p. 273).

On the other hand, we are troubled by the obstinacy of movements that occur in class, which neglect the appropriation of those same spaces as personal places. Building on Chinese geographer Tuan (2014), we wonder if schools are able to develop 'the "feel" of a place ... made up of experiences, mostly fleeting and undramatic, repeated day after day and over the span of years ... a unique blend of sights, sounds and smells, a unique harmony of natural and artificial rhythms' (p. 183). Overall, we do not deny that schools need to use time responsibly, with students' learning as the main goal, but we feel the tension of a product-driven environment that has transformed time into a commodity that can be borrowed or invested but hardly shared as a gift that can incorporate alternative paces and personalised places (Marini & Rodríguez Merchán, 2020).

The following questions can serve as guidelines to further advance how the perception and organisation of time plays a key role in everyday educational practice: What would it take for schools to organise time around students' interests and sensibilities rather than based on age and the presumption of homogeneous development? Why does the encouragement of effort, efficiency and punctuality seem to neglect the worth of relaxation, slowness and delay? What senses of belonging do schools promote through students' interventions in classroom spaces? Why do students tend to move inside classrooms in the same way throughout their years in school? What would it take to imagine porous exchanges between indoor and outdoor education? Where could we look for alternative everyday aesthetic problematisations of school times?

EVERYDAY AESTHETICS OF TIME IN JAPANESE GARDENS

This section discusses temporal experiences in Japanese gardens as a way of developing alternative everyday aesthetic problematisations of school times. It begins by introducing the everyday aesthetics of traditional Japanese gardens. Then it presents the principle すじかへて (*suji kaete*) or 'changing the axis', which manifests through diverse walkways that purposely avoid linear trajectories, interrupting habitual walk. We will argue that 'changing the axis' favours inefficiency and pause as keys to alternative ways of conceiving time that may be present in school break time. Then, we will present the principle 見え隠れ (*miegakure*) or 'now you see it, now you do not', which manifests through the disposition of scenery where direct sights are blocked or delayed, disrupting the habitual expectation to observe what lies beforehand with ease. We will argue that 'now you see it, now you do not' promotes partiality and suspense as keys to alternative ways of conceiving time that may be present in flexible classrooms.

Allegedly, the *Sakuteiki* written by Tachibana no Toshitsuna in the 11th century is the most important manual on the design and construction of Japanese gardens, incorporating Chinese and Korean models. The text consists of a series of landscaping principles concerning how to attune the gardener's mood with nature, how to create a seamless flow between indoor and outdoor spaces, the way stones ought to be placed in order to resemble mystical cardinal points, the best direction for streams to run if you seek a long life, the arrangement of waterfalls after a Buddhist King with two attendants symbolised by two small stones at the foot of the main vertical one and some frightening taboos if these geomantic principles are not met (Earle, 2013). Throughout *Sakuteiki*, Toshitsuna insists on a 'secret teaching' that 'cannot be set down in words but can only be learned through experience' (p. 9), that is to say, through the very practice of designing, building or taking time to know Japanese gardens.

With this orientation in mind, we delve into Saito's (2017) nuanced description of a walk through the stone paths of traditional Japanese gardens inspired by *Sakuteiki*. According to her, such a journey considers the 'temporal aspect of our sensual experience by affecting, or sometimes dictating, the sequential order in which our experience unfolds' (p. 155). In brief, Japanese gardens demonstrate that the perception of time is interwoven with the physical conditions in which experience takes place. Elements of daily life such as stones on the floor, which we often step on and overlook

due to their triviality and servile function, can become aesthetically interesting and temporarily decisive when considering qualities such as size, shape, texture, permeability, colour, odour and sound. The following quotation will help us discuss how everyday aesthetics of Japanese garden walkways involve peculiar temporal manifestations that may provoke further educational inquiry:

One frequently employed strategy for making the walking experience enriching and stimulating is to make the path marked by stepping stones and pavements meandering rather than straight... The avoidance of a strictly straight line is an application of the principle of すじかへて [suji kaete] changing the axis... The effect of such an arrangement is that the walker is encouraged to pause and slightly alter the direction in the middle of the otherwise straight path or bridge, which provides a different view of the garden (p. 155).

Changing the axis

Saito's picture highlights one of the salient perceptual challenges people feel when visiting a traditional garden in Japan: walkways, paths, ramps, stairs and bridges are usually not easy to walk through. For instance, it is common to find stepping-stones arranged in a clumsy manner on the sidewalk, raised walkways made of narrow pieces of wood extending over a pond, stones disposed in zigzag, bridges of exaggerated height or eroded stone paths that become slippery with moisture, all which make 'strolling at times awkward and inconvenient' (Saito, 2017, p.155). From the outset, for a walker who is not used to this setting, the experience is likely to be uncomfortable, perhaps even disturbing.

This description helps consider one of the key temporal insights Japanese gardens have to offer: the deliberate introduction of inefficiency and pause to achieve an enriched experience. If we consider that a straight path represents the fastest way to get from one point to another, then 'changing the axis' implies unnecessary effort and delay. In fact, the designer seems to have been more concerned with obstructing linear paths than with helping the walker reach another location as if savouring interruption replaces the satisfaction of reaching a destination. Here, we are reminded of Kenklies' philosophical assessment of traditional Japanese structures of time where 'there is nothing causal, and therefore there cannot be any aim' (2000, p. 11), in the sense that one cannot intend to begin this walk with the expectation of being stimulated and surprised by the change of axis. Perhaps we will feel moved to stop, look down and notice what is lying beneath our feet, or we might even be tempted to close our eyes and get a different perception of the garden. *Sakuteiki's* orientation seems to be: simply walk, here and now.

When contrasting this type of inefficiency and pause with habitual school times, we believe that break time shows a multifaceted correlation. On the one hand, a break allows for an experience that really changes the axis of habitual school practice as manifested in the American 'recess' or the Canadian 'recreation' that explicitly frames this moment of school life beyond productivity. Remarkably, in nations like the United Kingdom where 'there is no statutory requirement for schools to provide children with a break in the school day' (Baines & Blatchford, 2019, p.5), the fact that schools still allot time for this pause calls for further investigation. It would seem schools tacitly incorporated a regular event that admits activities without academic purposes or that simply lets pursuing 'disinterested' tasks in the sense that there is no explicit focus of attention or guideline during a break (Masschelein & Simons, 2014). What is more, break entails such a changed and unstructured time that there are not even 'minimum movements' that must take place: Students can stay still, run, walk, jump, sit or simply move erratically. The presumption seems to be that there is something valuable, yet difficult to set in words, in interfering with the habitual flow of school time. A particular experience that only manifests as students and teachers take time to rest, eat or simply talk about life.

On the other hand, one could claim that from an economic perspective of time as described by Mandoki (2017), a break will exist as long as it allows making better use of instructional time. If students and teachers find more efficient ways of distracting, resting and refocusing, or need more time to cover the curriculum, break will probably reduce

its duration⁵ and eventually disappear altogether⁶. On a related note, it is worth minding students' break typically involves teachers' supervision: while some can take a tea and organise their work in the staffroom, others will spend that same time accompanying children until break ends and new classes begin. It is as if some were only entitled to pause, and others were given the opportunity to rest or even re-create, but no one could regularly experience the richness of break throughout the entire school day. Put differently, it seems the 'changing of axis' schools admit can only exist for a while and within an overarching efficiency-oriented structure, as evidenced by the fact that break rules teachers and students' biological clock. After all, this is the moment when toilets and dinner halls are packed.

Returning to Saito's quotation, the 'changing the axis' principle may help us reflect that break time not only entails altering the trajectory of school rhythms but also allows pondering alternative understandings of inefficiency and pause. Certainly, it may be the case that one moves unconsciously from class to break time and back to class, like obstacle racing through the Japanese garden. But it may also happen that the interruption of break time actually 'distracts', literally 'separates forcibly' (Lewis & Short, 1879), from habitual ways of perceiving the pedagogical value of time. As stated by Kenklies (2020), we should not expect a causal relationship here but simply the chance to relearn about educational times as we linger within the everyday aesthetics of break time. An informal conversation between one of the authors of this paper and a senior schoolteacher may help synthesise the point: When asked 'What would it take for a newcomer to understand a school's rhythm?', she immediately replied 'Just spend time in break time'. This raises questions concerning what we can learn from students' and teachers' break time, what are the activities that always/never take place during break, what are the educational reasons that maintain break time within the school's regular schedule.

Now you see it, now you do not

Another design strategy is 見え隠れ [*miegakure*] literally meaning 'now you see it, now you do not' ... achieved by intentionally blocking or partially obscuring a scenic view ... giving us only hints and glimpses ... Anticipating a full view excites us and invites us to proceed (Saito, 2017 p. 160)

Saito's description of this second principle adds to the strangeness one can feel in a Japanese garden. If 'changing the axis' interrupted habitual walking rhythms, 'now you see it, now you do not' literally puts obstacles before our panoramic pretensions. For someone who lives and works in an Internet screen-based environment, it might be tempting to think that the objects of our vision are fully present, instantly, when we focus on them and vanish when we change our attention. The 'now you see it, now you do not' principle is more modest as it incorporates an alternative way of seeing: unwrapping. This is produced by the appearance and disappearance of roofs, walls, verandas or ponds as the walker moves through the garden. Counterintuitively, getting closer is no guarantee of perceiving more accurately. One can be two yards away from a majestic main house yet only see a small bench encircled by purple maple trees or be half a mile away from an island yet clearly notice its bridge's roof. Such a design welcomes the possibility to see something suddenly, to develop intuition, to go through scenery layers with alternating attention.

When contrasting this premeditated perceptual unwrapping with habitual school times, we believe that flexible classrooms show an interesting correlation. By 'flexible' we refer to the vast diversity of class designs that rely on both architectural and furniture decisions and that may stimulate different experiences of time. For instance, L-shaped classrooms (where there are always students and teachers who cannot be seen or heard), and open-door classrooms (that expand into outdoor spaces making the inside/outside boundary porous) depend on architectural decisions; whereas fishbowl classrooms (where students in an inner circle discuss, while those in an outer circle observe in silent attention) or classrooms that allow dividing students into groups of different sizes, and then regrouping them into a plenary session, typically depend on furniture arrangements.

By blocking direct and comprehensive visions, what these flexible settings have in common is that they stimulate students to find new partial perspectives, revealing different ways of perceiving class time, while recognising the pedagogical value of suspense. A first consideration has to do with the way in which these scenarios encourage the search for new partial perspectives. It is not simply a matter of disrupting the traditional infrastructure of a classroom but rather an invitation to acknowledge the perceptual impossibility of achieving something like a definitive perspective. Here we are reminded of Merleau-Ponty's (2004) investigation concerning how vision is not only conditioned by our personal relation with the world but, more precisely, made possible by personally intertwining with what we are seeing. Paraphrasing his description of the prehistoric paintings on the domed walls of Lascaux Caves, we never get 'to see it' completely, we 'see according to' or 'with' it. In this sense, providing the opportunity to freely move inside or outside, towards the front or towards the centre, remaining in the spotlight or in the corner, among other alternatives, may disrupt altogether the minimum movements that are supposed to take place in a class, together with the expectation of achieving one vista that would synthesise the entire classroom situation.

Another consideration has to do with the way in which flexible layouts aid reflection on the personal ways of experiencing time that takes place in class, drawing attention to the diversity of interests and focuses that coexist in the same course. By recognising that some students can work more comfortably sitting by themselves, walking around in small or large groups or lying next to the window, schools can contribute more directly to helping students identify their own spatial and temporal ways of being and learning. Here, it is important to point out with Duncheon and Tierney (2013) that temporal diversity not only depends on socioeconomic considerations—where more school resources would eventually allow for more spatial opportunities—but also on different cultural understandings—where the distinction between slow/fast, delay/promptness, distant/close by, concealing/exhibiting is far from obvious and can reach a greater complexity when considering current online diachronic practices.

Finally, flexible classroom arrangements permit the recognition of the pedagogical value of suspense. If the 'now you see it, now you do not' principle invites garden visitors to seek further, excitingly anticipating what is to come, an arrhythmical or uncharted modification of classroom space may encourage remaining attentive to what one is seeing and doing right now while holding in suspense multifaceted openings. This does not mean irresponsibly forgetting about the lesson's objectives or leaving classroom space in perpetual chaos but rather allowing for uncertainty as a proactive learning opportunity that encourages classroom space to become more than a pre-written logbook. Put differently, flexible classroom arrangements may hold a key to valuing what is yet to come as a decisive learning opportunity amid a rapidly changing world where education is challenged to be inclusive and diverse as possible.

Saito helps us see that 'changing the axis' and 'now you see it, now you do not' can contribute to reconsidering the everyday aesthetics of school time. On the one hand, 'changing the axis' helps us ask whether schools actually provide opportunities to challenge the way they teach children to perceive and understand time beyond efficiency-oriented frameworks. This is not to say that school time is completely driven by an economy of time, but rather to affirm that the perception of school time remains solidified by tradition or past legislation. In this sense, we believe break time holds a key to interrupting the transparency of the perception of school times by calling attention to possible alternative ways of productivity, change, pause and delay. On the other hand, 'now you see it, now you do not' adds another emphasis as it facilitates questioning the habitual ways of seeing and moving about that characterise everyday schooling. This is not to say that schools ought to promote a careless attitude regarding what is seen in class but, rather, it is to explore the vast diversity of associations between ways of seeing, moving and experiencing time. In this sense, we believe flexible classrooms help incorporate partiality and suspense as a dimension of schooling and life in general.

The following questions may advance how temporal experiences in Japanese gardens could contribute to developing everyday aesthetic problematisations of school times. What can we learn from students' and teachers' break time? What are the activities that always/never take place during a break? What are the educational reasons that keep break time within the school's regular timetable? Which are the images, movements or pedagogical experiences schools are willing/unwilling to postpone? What is the role suspense plays in everyday educational practice? What is it that students are eager to see in class?

CONCLUSION

This paper reconsidered time in schools from an everyday aesthetics perspective. First, it summarised current scholarship within philosophy and education. Here, the work of Kenklies (2020), Kakkori (2013), Papastephanou (2014) and Alhadeff-Jones (2017) helped challenge future-oriented mentalities that neglect students' diverse ways of being in time, as well as dichotomous accounts of time that inhibit comprehensive interpersonal rhythms.

Second, the paper presented everyday aesthetics as a perspective that can further expand and enrich those same themes by promoting attention to the perceptual manifestation of key temporal devices, rituals, architectural and administrative decisions. In this sense, everyday aesthetics sheds light on the way schools teach how to conceive and live time. To deepen this argument, the paper discussed the 'aesthetic matrix of school times' and the 'everyday aesthetic of Japanese gardens' based on the work of Katya Mandoki and Yuriko Saito.

The 'aesthetic matrix of school times' (Mandoki, 2017) helps consider how a peculiar comprehension of time pervades schools' stimuli, perceptual patterns and interpersonal routines through an ominous productive rhythm that tends to neglect students' sensibilities. In this sense, schedules demonstrate the prevailing experience of time as a seamless progression of equivalent units, which, in turn, seem to rely on the age-based homogeneous development of students. Within this scheme, the passion for productivity overrules students' interests and learning rhythms and projects a moral imperative that enthrones self-efficacy, regularity, promptness and punctuality and expels any behaviour associated with 'wasting time'.

Movement between and inside classrooms adds another viewpoint to the way in which time frames the aesthetic matrix of school. After all, if we consider that students spend 12 years moving between classrooms, the fact that they are usually unable to appropriate these spaces, materially and symbolically, is striking. Inside classrooms, the 'minimum necessary' movements that are repeated in a Sisyphus-like pantomime are another example of temporal routines that need to be called into question. Furthermore, the persistent dualism between activities that need to show a productive use of time and usually rely on students sitting down, and those learning instances that admit walking about, emphasises the need to revisit movement 'inside' and 'outside' everyday school practice.

Based on Saito's (2017) reading of *Sakuteiki*, the 'everyday aesthetic of Japanese gardens' allows the development of alternative problematisations of time in schools. In this sense, the principle *すじかへて* (*suji kaete*) or 'changing the axis' helps reconsider break time as that quotidian interruption of school linear flow that may dis-interest or dis-tract from habitual ways of perceiving time. Even if one claims that break ultimately depends on instructional time as an inevitable pause to enhance academic achievement, the very fact that break still exists permits wondering about the pedagogical contribution of pause and non-purpose-oriented actions. In this regard, the traditional Japanese structure of time provides a practical warning: We should not seek to produce the change of axis but rather linger in break.

The principle *見え隠れ* (*miegakure*) or 'now you see it, now you do not' suggests we should examine flexible classroom arrangements as an opportunity to incorporate unwrapping as a valid way of seeing and organising time in school. In this sense, blocking or delaying direct sight by means of architectural or furniture decisions may stimulate students to find new partial perspectives. In addition, such decisions may reveal the different ways of perceiving time that converge in class. Also, this may help revisit the pedagogical value of suspense.

In conclusion, this paper bears witness to the theoretical and pedagogical potential of the everyday aesthetics of time in schools. By interrupting the transparency of schedules and movements within and between classrooms and by developing alternative problematisations of break time and flexible classrooms, we want to emphasise the need to reconsider time in schools. In an interconnected educational scenario such as ours, challenged by diverse demands, we believe there is a need to consider how schools teach children to perceive, model and practise time.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ From this perspective, if we hear that a school is referred to as 'a shopping centre', this may refer both to an infrastructure with long corridors and showcase-like classrooms and to an educational project that associates teaching and learning with some sort of transactional enterprise.
- ² According to Mandoki, 'It is not surprising that when one finally owns some free time during weekends or vacations, most people resort to already predesigned packages for filling up surplus time with programmed competitions, prefabricated summer courses and organized tours with a rigorous distribution of time' (p. 244).
- ³ In this sense, it is worth noting with Thomas and Whitburn (2019) that teaching and learning temporal diversity shapes the possibilities of inclusive practices in school.
- ⁴ We acknowledge the existence of progressive pedagogies—like Froebel, Steiner and A.S. Neill's—that masterfully challenge what is supposed to happen 'inside' or 'outside' schools while incorporating different experiences of time. However, it is fair to acknowledge that these are not widespread initiatives.
- ⁵ For instance, Baines and Blatchford (2019) report that in the United Kingdom, 'there has been a reduction in the length of break times since 2006 and a really marked decline since 1995 ... The main reasons given by schools for the reduction in break times are to create more time for teaching and learning, specifically to cover the curriculum and to manage or limit perceived poor behaviour of students that school staff say occurs during lunchtimes' (pp. 6–7).
- ⁶ The aesthetic and pedagogical implications of temporal experience in schools without break time is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is worth pointing out that in those educational systems that do not require break time there is usually a demand for time dedicated to physical activity that is regulated, health or sports-oriented and does not allow free movement.

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