

Theorising Media and Time

9 & 10 November 2023 @ University of Copenhagen

Organised by Birgit Bräuchler (Department of Anthropology) and Nina Grønlykke Møllerup (Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies)

PROGRAMME

Thursday – DAY 1

09.00-09.15 Coffee&Tea and welcome

09.15-09.30 Introduction to the workshop

09.30-11.15 **Remembering past / future** (Chair: Birgit Bräuchler)

09.30	EMILY KEIGHTLEY (Loughborough University) Postcolonial time and media sociology
10.15	CATHRINE BUBATZKY (University of Tuebingen) “What would have happened if...?” Encounters with an exile photo archive of a conflictual past in 20th century Iran
10.45	ANDREAS BANDAK (UCPH) “As It Were”: Narrative Struggles, Historiopraxy and the Stakes of the Future in the Documentation of the Syrian Uprising

11.15-11.30 Break

11.30-12.30 **Archiving time** (Chair: Nina Grønlykke Møllerup)

11.30	ALI ATEF (Nadim Foundation for Heritage and Development) Archival formations: between audiovisual family collections and the anthropology of history
12.00	PHILIPP BUDKA (University of Vienna) Media Anthropology and the Archive: On Exploring and Reconstructing Sociotechnical Life, Histories, and Biographies

12.30-13.30 Lunch

13.30-15.00 **Crisis temporalities** (Chair: Andreas Bandak)

14.00	KEREN MARIN-GONZÁLEZ (University of Michigan) Rebranding the myth of violence: landscapes of insurgent propaganda and the problem of futurity in Colombia (online)
14.30	JOHN POSTILL & BIRGIT BRÄUCHLER (RMIT & UCPH) Media, time and polycrisis in a hybrid media world
15.00	NINA GRØNLYKKE MØLLERUP (UCPH) The time of the image – Violence, urgency and elsewhere

15.00-15.30 Break

15.30-17.00 **Presentism & futurism** (Chair: Philipp Budka)

16.00	PIOTR M SZPUNAR (University at Albany, SUNY) Mediated Deep Time and the Non-Linear Politics of Cultural Memory (online)
16.30	GUDRUN RUDNINGEN (Work Research Institute, AFI) Working in the Never-Ending Now – Ethnography of Presentism in Digital News Work
17.00	OLIVIER DRIESSENS (UCPH) From presentism to futurism and back: temporality, AI long termism and politics

Friday – DAY 2

09.00-09.15 Coffee&Tea

09.15-10.30 **Algorithmic time** (Chair: Martin Slama)

09.15	ANNE KAUN (Södertörn University) Automating Welfare: On timing, belatedness, and perpetual emergence
10.30	RICARDO PRONZATO (University of Bologna) Seizing existence. How algorithms shape temporal experience

10.30-10.45 Break

10.45-12.15 **Digital time(s)** (Chair: Olivier Driessens)

10.45	INGRID KUMMELS (Freie Universität Berlin) Communalising the Future: Indigenous Media Outlets and their Expansion of Time and Space across the US-Mexican Border
11.15	TIM HIGHFIELD (University of Sheffield) On digital time: The everyday temporal interventions of digital platforms
11.45	MARTIN SLAMA (Austrian Academy of Sciences) Temporal (De)Hierarchizations: Modernist Tropes and Islamic Media

12.15-13.15 Lunch

13.15-15.00 **Rhythmic / ritualised time** (Chair: Ali Atef)

13.15	ANN RIGNEY (Utrecht University) Marking Time through Anniversaries: Between Rhythm and Revolution
14.00	EVA IRIS OTTO & CHRISTOFFER BAGGER (UCPH) "Now Is Not the Time for That": Feeling time and keeping work bounded in a Danish digital company
14.30	SIMIRAN LALVANI (University of Oxford) Making routine meals with platforms

15.00-15.30 Break

15.30-16.30 **Final Discussion**

The workshop is organised with the support of EASA, Carlsberg Foundation and NordForsk as well as the Department of Anthropology and the Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen.

ABSTRACTS

Postcolonial time and media sociology

Emily Keightley

Concern with the nature of temporality under the conditions of late modern media culture has become increasingly marked as a concern across the social sciences and humanities (Mihelj, Keightley and Punathambekar 2021), and has resulted in the emergence of a wide range of analytical perspectives dealing with different modalities of time, including technological time, experiential time, genre and content time, and institutional time amongst others. However, this is not just a matter of technological change. Colonial legacies have produced particular modalities of mediated time from the communication infrastructures shaped patterns of geo-political connectivity, to the syncopated rhythms of Jazz. Colonial and postcolonial migrations and mobilities have produced diasporic and racialised experiences over time – synthesised into meaningful narratives of lives lived in (post)colonial power structures. Can we hold in view of these multiple temporal modalities to understand the character of mediated time in a postcolonial context and the ways of being in the world that it enables. In this talk I explore the conceptual and empirical challenges that this entails using experiences from the Migrant Memory and Post Colonial Imagination project as a case study.

“What would have happened if...?” Encounters with an exile photo archive of a conflictual past in 20th century Iran

Cathrine Bublatzky

In this presentation, I look at a collection of historical family and press photographs from the time of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. The photographs, privately owned by exiled artist and activist Parastou Forouhar, are primarily concerned with her parents’ political past and assassination, while being embedded in and countering public media narratives and memories of the Iranian past. First used in parts in artist-activistic installations, then in social and digital media such as Facebook, Twitter, or more recently, in podcasts by Forouhar, the mobilized images of a conflictual past transcend various temporal and media spheres (Budka/Bräuchler 2020) and form a public, yet intimate archive of “fragmented memories” (Strassler 2022) and counter historicity (Stewart 2016). As these photographs, in their ontological appearance, dynamically create and interrupt dis/continuities between places, times, and people, between the private and the public, and between different social groups, the aim is to engage with the cultural techniques of remembering, the dissemination of knowledge, and the representation of a conflictual past, and to demonstrate that its notions of temporalities and historicity are subject to constant construction (Stewart 2016, 79). Based on collaborative research with the artist and an ongoing series of joint encounters in and with the archive, the relation between media and time turns out to be highly significant, also for the engagement with the photographs. In line with their constant transit between the private and the public (and vice versa), the potential of temporal non-linearity and multiple meanings attached to them (Banks/Vokes 2010) proved crucial. Engaging with the photographs, the question “What would have happened if...?” emerged again and again. Especially regarding the study of media practices of societies with ongoing conflict and revolutionary movements such as Iran and its diasporas, the relation between time and media is complex. So how can we deal with the social and cultural implications of photographs as ‘transmedia’ and their role in remembering and making meaning of conflictual past, present, and future visions?

As It Were: Narrative Struggles, Historiopraxy and the Stakes of the Future in the Documentation of the Syrian Uprising

Andreas Bandak

The Syrian situation has since 2011 evolved from a relatively peaceful protest over a large uprising to outright civil and proxy war and now a kind of endgame seems to be unfolding in certain Northern parts of the country. This immediate condition has clearly impacted on which forms of historical writing and what kinds speech that has been allowed a space for. Currently, there is vehement struggle over narrative, which is epitomized in the burgeoning production of Syrian documentaries (cf. Wessels 2018, Della Ratta 2018, Tarnowski 2021). As such, this paper meditates on the role of media and cultural forms of expression in the aftermath of an uprising turning into a tragedy. My central concern is to unravel the changing registers of historical experience and the narrative efforts placed in keeping particular pasts alive in order to make way for the future.

As a central trope, this talk considers the wording ‘as it were’. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, ‘as it were’ sometimes is used after a figurative or unusual expression. ‘As it were’ in this sense may not just point to how things actually were but also to how they potentially could be. This play between actuality, factuality and potentiality is critical for the work on the past both in the aftermath of severe crisis and tragedy but also in any ordinary sense. Accordingly, the freedom to tell and keep particular pasts alive is a burden, which demands a work of a Penelope, a constant reweaving and retying of memory as well as narrative in the meeting with the gradual changes of actual remembrance and the passing of generations with different stakes in what took place.

Archival formations: between audiovisual family collections and the anthropology of history

Ali Atef

In contemporary Egypt, the past decade has witnessed a severe constriction of the state's promise to civil society. And yet, a marked interest in personal and family archives and their uptake as the work of public cultural institutions today present a new reckoning with personal and public history despite the contemporary limits on access to archives and production of knowledge in Egypt. In this paper, I demonstrate through ethnographic vignettes that informal archival practices such as these layout new micro-reading and view practices precisely because they're affected by the temporal stakes of making private archives a public resource.

I trace three collections across two institutions as they move from the private spaces they were in (homes, offices, or flea markets largely) and make their way to new homes in Cairo, outside the confines of the conventionally administered state archives. I ask two questions; firstly, how does the movement from the private to the public shore up different temporal strategies deployed in these contemporary institutions for presenting a historical narrative to the public of these once-exclusively private documents, photographs, analogue home movie footage, and correspondences. And secondly, in describing the three different media histories that intersect with these intimate family histories, how might we think alongside such temporal strategies of contemporary archival institutions vis-a-vis the temporalities media technologies make more invisible such as intellectual property, markets, and regulation? What are the historical stakes of the kind of labour undergone today in making collections public today?

In moving along these three collections across two cultural institutions that make the claim of attempting to organize small-scale archives, we can reckon with more recent history of public spaces in contemporary Egypt, the temporal stakes in making archives outside the confines of the state, and how archival practices today make sense of personal media technologies and its histories.

Media Anthropology and the Archive: On Exploring and Reconstructing Sociotechnical Life, Histories, and Biographies

Philipp Budka

This paper looks into digital archives and how they not only serve as facilities to collect, store, and categorize media content and artifacts, but how they mediate between the past and the present. How archives potentially contribute to the future projecting and envisioning of media as well as related technologies and practices. For that the paper explores the role of archival work in media anthropological research. It builds on material from my project on the Kuh-ke-nah Network (KO- KNET), an organization established by the tribal council Keewatinook Okimakanak (KO) to connect remote First Nation communities in Canada's Northwestern Ontario to the internet (e.g., Budka, 2019). I was particularly interested in exploring and reconstructing the sociotechnical life of the platform MyKnet.org (1998-2019), which was set up exclusively for First Nations people to create personal homepages within a cost- and commercial-free space on the web. By tracing the rise and fall of MyKnet.org, this paper adds to the steadily growing body of research into missing and marginalized internet histories (Driscoll & Paloque-Berges, 2017). Besides considering historical and sociocultural contexts of First Nations' life, it critically reviews theoretical accounts and conceptualizations of change and continuity that have been developed in an anthropology of media and technology (e.g., Pfaffenberger, 1992; Postill, 2017) as well as in postcolonial technoscience (e.g., Anderson, 2002). During fieldwork many people told me stories about their first MyKnet.org websites in the early 2000s, how they evolved, and what they meant to them. People vividly described how their homepages were designed, structured, and linked to other pages. To deepen my interpretation and understanding of these narratives, I used the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine to recover archived versions of these websites whenever possible. Thus, the Wayback Machine became an archaeological tool for my anthropological research into the sociotechnical life and history of MyKnet.org and the digital biographies of its users.

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Rebranding the myth of violence: landscapes of insurgent propaganda and the problem of futurity in Colombia

Keren Marin-González

In scenarios of political violence, the future is constrained by the ways in which war and peace—as discursive symbols—are reshaped through media-related processes mobilized by governmental agencies and illegal armed groups. To comprehend how media and conflict are co-constitutive each other and provide insights into the ways people deal with their past, present, and future precarity, this proposal departs from a diachronic ethnography conducted between 2013–2023 in Sierra de la Macarena, an epicenter of the social and armed conflict in southern Colombia since the midst of the 1960s.

In this territory, where people live in a space of not-war/not-peace, temporality is a site of struggle among the national government and dissident FARC factions, armed groups formerly part of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia who resumed their insurgency despite the Peace Agreement signed in 2016. These actors deploy through multiple media landscapes, mythological and historical narratives that build peace as a multivocal symbol, creating different depths of time able to orient social action, as it produces

entanglements with temporality in terms of expectation, anticipation, potentiality, or hope (Bryant and Knight, 2019). To understand this phenomenon, my analysis seeks to explore how mediation -as the relationship between social practices, audiences' historical agencies, and communicative interactions- unfold different teleoaffective structures (Schatzki, 2010) and technologies of imagination (Bloch, 1968) that create temporality, specifically futurity, as an experience culturally constructed and contested. This perspective considers historical and ongoing social changes, which supposes a multi-temporal approach able to go beyond the imminentism that conflates past, present, and future in an indistinct now (Postill, 2017). Finally, a special focus will be put on the study of temporal agency ethnographically.

Media, time and polycrisis in a hybrid media world

John Postill & Birgit Bräuchler

In the past two years, the notion of 'polycrisis' – a dynamic set of interconnected crises – has gained traction in academia, the media and at global events like the World Economic Forum or the UN Climate Change Conference. Although there is a growing awareness that no major crisis can be analytically isolated from other such crises (Bures 2020), still largely missing from the scholarship is a media angle. As a result, we know very little about the role of media in the making of a polycrisis. The existing literature suggests that polycrises shape the way people use social media and that these media are increasingly used to frame and maintain them – for instance, through conspiracy framings about globalist elites profiting from Covid-19 or the Ukraine war (Postill forthcoming). In this paper, we explore some of the multiple mediations and temporalities of the current polycrisis. To this end we conceptualise crisis both as rupture and as context (Vigh 2008), consider the coexistence of quick and slow crises (Lähde 2023), and posit the co-constitutiveness of media and crisis (Bräuchler & Budka 2020). Drawing on recent case studies on how crises and polycrises are framed in and through social media and the 'hybrid media systems' they are part of (Chadwick 2013, 2017), we track those interconnected mediated temporalities to understand how the current polycrisis is both made and perceived by different publics.

The time of the image – Violence, urgency and elsewhere

Nina Grønlykke Møllerup

This presentation explores the temporality of images of violence through the prism of the unprecedented visual documentation of the past decade's historic uprisings in Egypt and Syria and the ensuing violence. It argues that paying attention to the temporality of images is fundamental to understanding the political and social relations images engender. The period of uprisings across the Arab world and beyond could pertinently be termed, not only a time of uprisings, but also a 'Time of the Image' (cf. Bryant and Knight 2019:30; Hobbes 1962:100). The Time of the Image, capitalised, designates a period in history in which images have been significant, but where images have also been 'a way of organising time itself' (Bryant and Knight 2019:30). Engagements with images are inherently a temporalizing practice, always entangled in *other* times. When an image is taken, it already reaches into the past, carrying along a presence of a certain time and place and through this preservation, it reaches into the future. As Roland Barthes (1981, 91-93) has argued, photographs violently force on us time's passage. But by bringing a moment forward and at times entailing re-memembering the past, it can also provide orientations towards the future. The presentation draws on ethnographic fieldworks carried out over the past 15 years with Egyptian and Syrian activists, photographers, journalists and archivists, as well as civil society workers, who have been at the forefront of visually documenting violence in the two countries and preserving this documentation. For a while, these images were urgent. Shared immediately with fellow protesters as well as on newspaper front-pages and in evening news across the globe, these images were crucially invested in the politics of the present. While hope and urgent engagements in the present turned to trauma and despair, these images are now part of compelling archiving efforts, put together as a collective testament for elsewhere.

Mediated Deep Time and the Non-Linear Politics of Cultural Memory

Piotr M Szpunar

My current book project examines mediated futures beyond representational media and focuses on physical sites at which collective imagination, narratives, and efforts turned toward the future materialize. Much like monuments are media of the collective past, these sites are intended to act as infrastructures in the service of bringing about futures we desire or weathering the arrival of those we fear through the manipulation of our relation to time. I define media broadly, bringing together the “elemental turn” in media theory and the “futural turn” in memory studies to uncover how human engagement with the physical environment and its temporal orders reshapes the very notions of cultural memory and future thinking. To structure my analysis, I develop the notion of *lieux de futur*, which I argue are complex assemblages of media, narrative, contestation, temporal entanglements, timescales, labor, and materiality. Therein, the temporalities of political efficacy, geological change, and digital media meet; human temporal orders or impinged upon and altered by those of media, digital and elemental; collective memory supports future visions, while imagined futures also rewrite the past; humans attempt to manipulate the physical environment, which simultaneously shapes collective visions. In the project I examine three sites: Mars, the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, and the Manhattan East River shoreline. For the workshop I will draw upon two years of field work and interviews in the space industry focused on interplanetary futures. As the climate crisis looms human engagement with deep time has become a topic of increasing importance, one that has implications for political and cultural temporal orders. Our access to deep time is mediated. This project examines the technologies that grant humans access to deep time, namely spectroscopy, and how they are used to construct pasts that support visions of interplanetary futures. I argue that this engagement with mediated deep time disrupts linear orders of time, particularly in how it is conscripted into a politics in which the future functions to rewrite the past. Moreover, these entanglements raise important questions about the ethics of enabling futures along timescales beyond the human.

Working in the Never-Ending Now – Ethnography of Presentism in Digital News Work

Gudrun Rudningen

The everlasting present is the unescapable nature of journalistic work; the present is embedded in news practices as stories are written based on newsworthy happenings for fast publication. What happened yesterday seems like a thing of the past that holds little relevance for what is taking place in the present. At the same time, every moment might be jeopardised by something even more newsworthy appearing. With the digital entry and the possibility of immediate online publication, an even stronger sense of presentism is manifested in the newsroom – a compressed, fragmented, and stacked time governed by the significance of ‘right now’ – an endless immediacy. Based on nearly one year of ethnographic fieldwork in a Norwegian news organisation in 2017 and recurrent visit over ten years, this paper describes how presentism has become the dominant temporality in the newsroom affecting how journalism is carried out, the ways of knowing, the norms and ideals, the sense of belonging as well as narratives and memory. The fieldwork was carried out within the news workers’ working hours in an editorial office space characterized by hastiness and repetition undergoing a comprehensive transition towards ‘the new digital era’ and immersed in grand narratives of ‘media-in-crisis’, acceleration, and uncertainty. The theoretical contribution in this paper evolves around practices of presentism; a temporality in which the past is no longer relevant, and the future is acted upon as already in the present. The paper maps out four practices that can be seen as orientation from which one navigates, reinforcing presentism as a dominant temporality. The two first practices are called ‘*practices of forgetting*’ and ‘*practices of predictability*’, describing how the everlasting present in the traditional print news production is maintained while detailing how this has been enhanced by digital news production. The third practice is ‘*organisational oblivion*’ that taps into the duality of remembering and forgetting during rapid change, highly mediated by digital technology. The fourth practice is ‘*organisational contemporariness*’ that depicts how broader organisational practices of planning are affected when actions seem to be limited by what is ever-present: in the never-ending now.

From presentism to futurism and back: temporality, AI long termism and politics

Olivier Driessens

This paper is concerned with the shifting temporal orientations between presentism and futurism. First, it takes stock with accounts by Hartog (2016) and others that the dominant temporality in the Global North is presentism, arguing that this position undervalues the various ways that futures play a decisive role in societies and cultures. Social practices involve a certain teleology (Bryant & Knight 2019) and expectations or anticipation, for example, while strongly future-oriented technological visions have been circulating throughout modernity. Next, I focus more in-depth on such visions, particularly on Artificial Intelligence (AI)-industry visions of long termism. Through an analysis of recent communications (interviews, social media posts, blogposts), I show how different temporalities and especially long termism feature in their visions and imaginaries, and for what purposes. One of the central critiques of AI-industry's long termism is that it relies on technological solutionism and draws attention away from the many problems that need addressing in the present – and that technology or AI cannot fix. In addition, we could also think of Berlant's (2011) cruel optimism and the critique that long termism acts to delay the good life in the present. In response, I introduce work by scholars such as queer-feminist political theorist Lorey (2016, 2019) and Latin American and Iberian Cultures scholar Evinson (2021) who argue for presentist politics. Instead of thinking about solutions for a possible not yet, we should focus on acting now by interrupting the present, for example through sabotage. This is not a present that eyes the future, but a present that pulls the future into the now. Overall, the paper suggests looking at presentism and futurism not as monolithic temporalities but as competing orientations that inform technological imaginaries as well as inspire specific forms of politics.

Seizing existence. How algorithms shape temporal experience.

Riccardo Pronzato

This contribution showcases the results of an empirical research investigating how individuals relate with digital platforms and, more specifically, how time is interpreted in and through digital platforms and the ways in which these technologies contribute to shape temporal experience. To do so, I draw on 40 auto-ethnographic diaries, prepared according to a critical pedagogy approach (Markham, 2019). Results highlight patterns of heavy consumption to suppress boredom and feelings of sadness, frustration, inadequacy, and anxiety. These experiences arise from the impression of having wasted time while “lost in the flow” of algorithmic media instead of being productive. Furthermore, this situation and the constant, routinized use of digital platforms is considered as inevitable, in the same way as the operation of platforms according to datafication, surveillance and user retention logics. Within this scenario, I argue that that time is conceived by participants in a typical, individualistic, commodifying, Western manner (Wajcman, 2019; Nagy et al., 2021), and that, while digital platforms promise to help individuals optimize their temporal experience, these technologies rather act as captivating infrastructures (Seaver, 2019), which construct human temporal experience in order to make it suitable for colonialist extractive practices (Couldry and Mejias, 2019). Indeed, as the British colonizers imposed their way of understanding time on aborigines (Nanni, 2012; Barassi, 2020), so platforms impose on users ways of experiencing temporality. This grab of time (Senft, 2008) by tech corporations is enabled by infrastructural features based on the principles of gamification (Ytre-Arne et al., 2020), which favour the algorithmic production of a “right time” (Bucher, 2020) and the naturalization of value-laden activities over time (Markham, 2021a), within socio-technical recursive loops (Airoldi, 2022). To better understand the social and cultural implications of the algorithmic construction of time, I draw on relational theories of the Self and sociality (Markham, 2021b), and an on existentialist ontological framework (Thiele, 1997; Lagerkvist, 2017), to discuss the implications of the algorithmic construction of time for practices of digital selfing (T. Markham, 2020) and perceptions of ontological security (Giddens, 1984; Markham, 2021b), which are continuously subjected to processes of algorithmic individuation (Prey, 2018).

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Automating Welfare: On timing, belatedness, and perpetual emergence

Anne Kaun

Automation has sparked dreams of overcoming human boundaries and boundedness since at least the 1950s. The past decades have however seen a new upswing of imagining the bright techno-future, with artificial intelligence solving societal, economic, and political challenges. This includes increasingly public administration and welfare provision. The process of introducing algorithmic automation comes, however, with intense frictions. On the one hand, the enthusiasm for algorithmic automation within the industry and public sector is still striving. Large-scale digitalization and automation projects are presented as revolutionizing force in public administration and welfare. On the other hand, public discourse is increasingly painting a dystopian picture of the digitally automated welfare state including biases as well as loss of accountability and autonomy. In this presentation, I take the frictions, conflicts and contradictions that emerge around technological change as a starting point to zoom in on temporalities of algorithmic automation. Considering three temporal aspects of automating welfare – timing, belatedness, and perpetual emergence – I outline the contours of the digital welfare state and consider critical implications of delegating decisions to algorithmic systems. Drawing on diverse and extensive empirical material including citizen

surveys, in-depth interviews with civil servants and developers as well as observations at public agencies, I engage with the unfulfilled promises of the fully automated welfare state.

Communalising the Future: Indigenous Media Outlets and their Expansion of Time and Space across the US-Mexican Border

Ingrid Kummels

This contribution examines the role which novel Indigenous media outlets play for negotiating the multiple temporalities and places of residence that have emerged in the course of Zapotec and Ayuujk migration between Mexico and the United States. Due to restrictions at the international border and the unauthorized status of the majority of migrants who live in cities such as Los Angeles, Indigenous Internet radio stations, multimedia platforms and community influencers dedicate themselves to overcoming isolation and immobility. These outlets report on transnational community projects brought to fruition thanks to migrant money and solidarity from the home village—and disseminate images of a common future. They have harnessed live streaming in cutting-edge ways to create a communal lifeway across the border. Based on multi-sited ethnographic research carried out between 2016 and 2021 (Kummels 2023), I explore the ways Indigenous mediamakers reconcile the diverse temporalities that condition urban and rural work in both countries and open space for envisioning a “communalised” future. When they livestream on Facebook for a transnational audience, they manipulate mediated temporalities in self-determined ways despite their use of corporate- owned social media governed by “data capitalism” (Couldry and Mejias 2019). I argue that by synchronising the diverse time regimes of festive calendars on both sides of the borders (like the Mesoamerican calendar and the US holiday seasons) they manage to produce a “time- space expansion” (Vokes 2016). Internet radio stations, multimedia platforms and community influencers decelerate daily work rhythms by carving out time that is shared and pleasurable. By promoting the idea of obligation to reciprocate and share with the Mexican village of origin and vice versa, they allow their audience to sense this connection in real time—and shape transnational Indigeneity in essential ways.

On digital time: The everyday temporal interventions of digital platforms

Tim Highfield

This paper considers the temporal as it is framed by digital platforms, where time is both a critical motivator for user engagement and constructs specific conditions for working with these platforms. In doing so, it argues that time is a critical consideration for the study of digital media; their temporal logics, structures, and features reflect how time is a form of power, showcasing how different platforms are designed, and for whom. A variety of temporal strategies are employed by major platforms, from nudges and push notifications to temporal gamification and algorithmic logics. These include the framing of social media as being consistently experienced in the present and the now, the treatment of every piece of data contributed to a platform as a potential ‘memory’ to be resurfaced, and the disruption of chronological order through algorithms promoting an endless flow of content delivered at the ‘right’ time. This also extends to the expectation of when a user may engage with a platform: from the ‘ideal’ user ready and able to ‘BeReal’ at a given moment when prompted, to the promotion of streaks and gamified habits in communication and educational apps, platforms invite everyday integration within their users’ lives. Collectively, these contribute to the creation of digital temporalities, which come up against other temporal experiences and orders of time on and beyond each platformed context. This paper is the result of a long-term examination of temporal interventions by social media and digital platforms since 2017. Drawing on examples from across social media (e.g. Instagram; Facebook; Twitter; BeReal), function-specific apps (e.g. Duolingo; Uber), and the broader digital media ecosystem (e.g. Spotify), this paper asks what time is created – or imposed – by digital technologies? How is this realised by platforms? Whose time is privileged in the process, and how do users engage with – and resist – digital temporalities? In the process, this paper reflects on how exploring the relationship between digital media and time allows us to interrogate both the political economy of digital time and the sociocultural ways in which time is experienced, resisted, and repurposed on digital platforms.

Temporal (De)Hierarchizations: Modernist Tropes and Islamic Media Practices

Martin Slama

The paper explores the notions of temporal hierarchization and dehierarchization based on research about Islamic uses of social media in Indonesia. It is concerned with the actual Islamic media practices of Indonesian Muslims as well as with their ideological underpinnings that include not only Islamic conceptualizations of time but also modernist tropes that privilege the future over the present and all the more so over the past. The paper investigates particular imaginaries of time that emerge at the conjuncture of the rise of new media technologies and the introduction of new media practices on the one hand and pre-digital concepts of human action on the other. It has its focus on the hierarchizations that such imaginaries of time comprise and how they get dehierarchized in some instances. By doing this, it considers hierarchizing factors such as age, class and particular interpretations of Islam and how they can turn (surprisingly, in some cases) into the opposite showing dehierarchizing potentials. An instructive example discussed in the paper is the sending of SMS as a means of proselytization among Islamic reformists, indicating the subversion of particular modernist imaginaries and their hierarchizations of time, where the uses of “old” media (such as SMS) assert themselves against temporal expectations of being up-to-date (in this case, using messaging apps) and, counterintuitively, stand for an Islamic modernity of the future. The paper closes with more general reflections on the analytical value of the concepts of temporal (de)hierarchizations and what consequences such an approach might have for the study of (Islamic) media uses, investigating the intersecting fields of religion (or any other form of ideological expression), class (or any other form of societal inequality) and imaginaries of time as they become apparent through people’s engagement with media. The paper partly draws on and further develops a blog post that appeared on the website of the Digital Ethnography Initiative (founded by researchers working at the University of Vienna’s Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology: <https://digitaletnography.at/some-provisional-thoughts-on-temporal-hierarchizations-and-the-digital/>).

Marking Time through Anniversaries: Between Rhythm and Revolution

Ann Rigney

The annual celebration of anniversaries has been a feature of left-wing movements since the French Revolution. In this presentation I will consider the history of the ‘revolutionary calendar’ as a cultural form for mediating time in the intervals between mobilizations, exploring how the rhythmic and predictable time of commemoration relates to the open-ended time of potentially transformative ‘events’. How does the ritualised commemoration of what has already happened feed into movements for change, and what does this tell us more generally about the role of memory in activism?

”Now Is Not the Time for That: Feeling time and keeping work bounded in a Danish digital company”

Eva Iris Otto & Christoffer Bagger

Three confluent factors would seem to hinder the temporal division between working time and leisure time, implemented with the industrial era: Working in the production of digital media (Chen, 2022; Schreier, 2017; Pein, 2018), relying on “always on” media such as enterprise social media in working life (Schaefer, 2023; Bagger, 2022) and the increased technological mediation of work during COVID-19 lockdowns (Bagger and Lomborg, 2021).

This paper explores a critical case (Flyvbjerg, 2006) acting as counterexample to these received notions within media studies. With inspiration from a media-practice approach (Bräuchler and Postill 2010) we theorize the ways time-work practices play a central role in constituting “work” and “leisure” in media-based work-practices. To make this argument we combine two in-depth empirical archives: (a) A long-term ethnographic fieldwork in a Danish digital company over a period of 14 months- partially covering an “all-digital” period during the Covid-19 pandemic, and (b) a quantitative analysis of the digital traces of the company’s internal social medium (Leonardi et al., 2013) over 12 months overlapping the fieldwork.

Through this dual methodological angle, we present two major empirical findings. Firstly, we find a surprisingly bounded temporal rhythm of working life online, with regular holidays, business hours and predictable activity. Secondly, we observe that this bounding of working life exists alongside repeated anxieties among workers about time and timings in media-related practices related to their working life (cf Janeja and Bandak 2018). Zooming out, we thereby ask how these orderings of time with and around internal social media relate to individual affective experiences and larger scale organization of time-processes on a company-wide and society-wide scale. We argue that the different affects and orderings of time on the same medium are intimately connected to the re-production of distinctions between “leisure time” and “working time” within this Danish company and in Danish discourses about work more broadly. As such, we critically interrogate how micro-practices and experiences of time through internal social media are embedded in culturally specific explanations for the ongoing negotiations of temporal norms, broadening current discussions on work and leisure in the face of enterprise media.

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Making routine meals with platforms

Simiran Lalvani

“Do your duty..be lazy on Sunday!” “don’t get out of bed.” Food delivery platform Zomato reminded me through this push notification (PN) on a Sunday afternoon that I could tap a few buttons and order food. In this paper, I ask: how do platforms try to become routine features in people’s lives? Where are platforms in people’s routines of arranging meals in the everyday? I draw from my doctoral work on what digital platforms do to the labours and cultures of food or foodwork. I gathered 1500 PNs for one calendar year as part of a digital ethnography of food delivery platforms Swiggy and Zomato’s relationship building with their users through push notifications, an analysis of their APK files and use of social media platforms (2020–21). By studying remotely how platforms spoke to users via promotional talk like PNs on their apps, I found specific ways in which they were being temporally sensitive to existing socio-cultural rhythms, the weather, festivities and topical events. I complemented that with in-person ethnographic fieldwork (2022–23) that investigated how users (individual/household and restaurant/industry) engaged with food delivery

platforms. Moving between home, work and the street, I found the use of food delivery was shaped by pre-existing infrastructure of hawkers near railway and metro stations, food trucks, vending machines, rhythms and menus of eating light-heavy, veg-non-veg on weekdays, weekends, festivals. I place together making routines from the point of view of platforms and their users. While platforms promised speeding up on consumers' behalf, consumers were scheduling, synchronising, time between home and work to optimise time and do care for the self and others. This included an emphasis on slowing down and enjoying which manifested in a variety of ways. Several people adopted brass and earthen vessels and a city-walks business cropped up that urged people to pause and enjoy. Platforms' promise of ten-minute deliveries showed overlaps but also tensions between people and platforms. As consumers were concerned about the risks of being habituated to ease of tapping buttons to get food, the quality of food and the safety of food delivery workers.