AIAS Workshop: Organizing Time

Abstracts

Tor Hernes, Professor of Organization Theory, Copenhagen Business School

Time as a Research Lens: A Conceptual Review and Research Agenda
Based on an extensive review of time-based organizational research I present three dominant lenses: time as resource, time as structure, and time as process. I discuss how the three lenses offer an integrative framework to support future research.

Ali Amidi, Depatment of Psychology, Aarhus University

The Time of Our Lives: At the Intersection of Biological and Psychological Time
Every 24 hours, the Earth's rotation around its axis generates a cycle of dramatic environmental changes—most notably in ambient light and temperature—that are both dynamic and remarkably predictable. Over evolutionary time, these rhythmic cues have shaped the development of an endogenous timekeeping system observable in all living organisms, known as circadian rhythms.

Circadian rhythms are intrinsic, approximately 24-hour biological cycles regulated by a central pacemaker located in the suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN) of the hypothalamus. These rhythms orchestrate a wide range of physiological and behavioral processes, including sleep–wake cycles, body temperature, and hormone secretion, by synchronizing the internal biological clock with environmental cues such as light and darkness.
Circadian rhythms confer a significant adaptive advantage: by anticipating rather than merely reacting to environmental fluctuations, organisms can optimize critical functions such as metabolism, activity, and rest. In doing so, circadian rhythms enhance survival and efficiency across a wide range of biological systems.

Despite the relative stability of the circadian system, modern life has fundamentally reshaped the external environment, leading to behavior that increasingly diverges from these biological patterns. The advent of artificial light and the demands of social life have dramatically altered the temporal structure of our environments, enabling greater flexibility in sleep–wake cycles and daily activities. Furthermore, social obligations—such as work, school, and cultural norms—often impose schedules that may conflict with our internal circadian timing. When such “social clocks” are misaligned with the biological clock, individuals experience a phenomenon known as *social jetlag*—a state of circadian misalignment that mimics the effects of travel across time zones, yet occurs without leaving one’s local environment. This dissonance can have wide-ranging consequences, from impaired cognitive performance to long-term health risks, highlighting the tension between biological imperatives and societal expectations.

In contrast, psychological time—commonly studied through time estimation and time production tasks—refers to the subjective experience of the passage of time, which is influenced by cognitive and emotional factors such as attention, working memory, arousal, and mood. The role of the circadian system as a modulator of psychological time has received

limited attention. Emerging evidence suggests that circadian rhythms may directly or indirectly influence time perception through modulation of cognitive and emotional functions and via neurobiological pathways that potentially intersect with internal timing mechanisms. Furthermore, a provocative theoretical question remains: could psychological time perception itself influence or entrain circadian rhythms? This points to a possible bidirectional relationship between biological and psychological time. Such an evolving understanding calls for integrative research approaches to uncover the dynamic interplay between these two fundamental temporal systems.

This presentation will first provide an introduction to the circadian timing system and its interaction with social clocks, and will conclude with an overview of a recently funded research project designed to investigate the potential bidirectional interaction between psychological and biological time.

Pernille Smith, Department of Management, Aarhus University

Researching the emergence of the unplanned and the unexpected
Some organizational phenomena appear suddenly and we do not know how they came about. This is the case with serendipitous discoveries, emergent leadership, and paradoxes. Pernille Smith will reflect on how a temporality lens has been instrumental in her research to open up the black box of such phenomena.

Lotte Meinert, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

Temporal Afflictions: Mental illness and Time work

This contribution explores recent work on temporal dimensions of mental illness, proposing that conditions such as PTSD and ADHD can be understood as *temporal afflictions*: disruptions in subjective and inter-subjective experiences and affects of time structures. Drawing on the concept of *time work* (temporal agency), I argue that aspects of mental illness can be understood and approached as matters of organizing time at individual, family and institutional levels (Flaherty, Meinert and Dalsgård 2021).

Aspects of psychological trauma or PTSD may be conceptualized as a form of time disturbance that collapses the past-present-future structure of time, causing flashbacks. Based on anthropological fieldwork in Uganda, Williams and Meinert (2021) show how people affected by war-related trauma experience intrusive memories and flashbacks that interrupt the present and future orientation. In this context, repetition practices such as prayers, songs, and scriptural recitations emerge as a crucial practice of time work. Rhythms and repetition seem to have the capacity to reorder experience, enabling afflicted individuals to stabilize the experience of flow of time and rejoin a shared temporal world. While these practices are framed in spiritual terms by the afflicted persons,we argue that they also function as embodied technologies of temporal agency that help to re-establish temporal coherence in lives fractured by violence.

We broaden the discussion by drawing in research on ADHD showing how ADHD can be understood not simply as a disorder of attention, but as a condition of temporal

desynchronization (Nielsen 2018). Individuals with ADHD often experience time as fragmented, slow or fast, leading to difficulty coordinating with social rhythms of everyday life. Individuals engage in time work—using timers, alarms, calendars, routines, and embodied techniques—to resynchronize with surroundings. Research in Danish families living with ADHD reveals how temporal disturbances are not confined to individuals, but circulate in families as *mutual temporal affect*: Rapid or chaotic rhythms of one member affect others, producing shared states of temporal intensity or exhaustion. Families attempt to manage these affective time flows through various strategies (Rasmussen, Flaherty and Meinert 2024).

By approaching PTSD and ADHD as conditions of temporal breakdown and repair, this paper contributes to a broader rethinking of mental health as an issue of living and organizing time. Mental afflictions, in this view, are not only matters of internal disorder but often also ruptures in the temporal fabric of intersubjective life. Repair, then, requires not only therapeutic intervention but cultivation of new rhythms, shared temporalities, and practices of synchronization.

Matthias Wenzel, **Organization Studies, Leuphana University of Lüneburg**

Temporality and future-making

Management and organization studies has devoted increasing attention to „future-making“, i.e., practices through which organizational actors produce and enact the yet-to-come. This talk positions research on future-making within the broader research program on time and temporality. In doing so, it elaborates on the relationship between present, past, and future in future-making practices.“