



SESSION ABSTRACT

Knowledge-Mediated Time and Temporalities of Media

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Abstract: Mass media have been deeply entangled with discussions on conflation and expansion of time since their emergence. This panel invites anthropologists to reflect on time and temporalities in relation to discourses of modernism, the intertwining of technology and colonialism, or the acceleration associated with the information age and the phenomenology of time on seemingly time-devouring digital devices. It critically engages with these entanglements and welcomes contributions that explore the mediation of time beyond modernist tropes in particular ethnographic contexts. The panel addresses questions, such as how people negotiate time through the deployment of various media and how particular relationships to time can enable media practices, give them meaning, and evoke affective responses. Furthermore, we invite you to explore the different temporalities of media that influence everyday practices and shape the routines of daily life online, offline, and in between. We are interested in papers that illustrate power dynamics, empowerment, and social exclusions that arise from different temporal hierarchizations widely associated with particular media practices (i.e. what is un/productive, in/effective, what is (not) appreciated). We also welcome contributions that illustrate the relationship between mediated time and temporalities and their repercussions in the context of slow and structural violence.

Scholars at various stages of their academic career are invited to submit a brief abstract (max. 300 words) for a 15-minute presentation of their work(in-progress) in relation to the overarching theme of the social and political dimensions of mediated time and temporalities of media.

SESSION SCHEDULE

Thursday, September 29, 2022 | Slot 1 | Room 3

Johanna Montanari: Curated public and the temporality of broken promises

Martin Slama: Temporal (De)Hierarchizations in the Islamic Uses of Digital Media in Indonesia

Vedanth Govi: The Haunting of Lip-Syncing for Your Life: Global Space-Time and the Spectre of Lata Mangeshkar

Thursday, September 29, 2022 | Slot 2 | Room 3

Thomas Stodulka: What Sticks: Affective Scholarship in Times of Pandemic

Anton Gumenskiy: Diaries of Silence and Media as Dark Time Machines

Thursday, September 29, 2022 | Slot 3 | Room 3

Christian Medaas: Consumer electronics repair as resistance, friction, slowness

Omer Hacker: Temporalizing the Unbounded Workplace: Tech Workers and the Transformation of Coordination

Suzana Jovicic: "Wasting Time for Nothing Actually" - Digital Media Practices among Viennese Youths

SESSION PAPERS

Curated public and the temporality of broken promises

Johanna Montanari

Once having played a crucial part in the formation of modern nationalism (Anderson 1989), newspapers today struggle to adapt to the challenges of the digital age. This is especially true in countries of the Global South like Jordan where most newspapers depend on state money and are said to be lagging behind with regards to these challenges and to be 'old-fashioned'.

Presenting ethnographic material collected during my fieldwork at the Jordan-produced English-language daily The Jordan Times that primarily targets so called Expats, I investigate mediated temporalities within journalistic practices and their connection to supposedly universal ideas of modernity and development. I argue that neo-liberal capitalism structures time and temporalities and that a non-profitable newspaper like the Jordan Times not only clings to old-fashioned media practices, but first and foremost to a certain way of governing. My work links postcolonial studies to the tradition of a practice-oriented anthropology.

In Jordan access to reliable information is scarce and freedom of speech limited. Rather than talking solely about self-censorship to describe the journalistic practices I develop the praxeological metaphor of "curating". Journalistic practices at the Jordan Times curate not just news item, but the public sphere. Building on the work of Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing on universals (2012), I point out a postcolonial dilemma:

While being bound to a Western modernity and development discourse as well as local power structures journalistic practices at the Jordan Times do the work of connection that universals depend upon and enable participation in a world that made this work necessary in the first place.

The old-fashioned newspaper that hardly invests in its digital future insists on notions of nationalism, modernity and development that are deeply indebted to its colonial past and neo-colonial present but also insists on the emancipatory promises connected these notions, on broken promises even.

Temporal (De)Hierarchizations in the Islamic Uses of Digital Media in Indonesia

Martin Slama

The paper investigates how Islamic uses of digital media in Indonesia are connected with particular perceptions of time and how temporality is hierarchically ordered in these imaginations. Before focusing on religious phenomena, it will discuss how class difference is expressed through the temporal hierarchization of media (uses) in Indonesia. It will further examine the notion of an Islamic digital divide and what consequences such a divide might have for religious media practices. Against this backdrop, the paper will introduce age as another central category when it comes to the temporal hierarchization of media uses. Both age and class are important for analysing the ethnographic example of the paper that describes the religious media uses of an elderly person who is a member of reformist Islamic organisation known for its middle-class constituency in Indonesia. The paper has a particular focus on this elder man's uses of SMS as a means of proselytization, examining its potential for subverting particular modernist imaginaries and their hierarchizations of time, which allows to develop the notion of temporal dehierarchization for phenomena where the uses of "old" media assert themselves against temporal expectations of being up-to-date. The paper closes with more general reflections on temporal (de)hierarchizations in Islamic media uses, exploring the entanglements between religion, class and imaginaries of time as they become apparent through people's engagement with media.

The Haunting of Lip-Syncing for Your Life: Global Space-Time and the Spectre of Lata Mangeshkar

Vedanth Govi

Jacques Derrida in the Specters of Marx reminds us that the present is open to ghosts or those figures that can disembark from the past and appear in a time in which they did not originate. This paper is focussed on how specters disrupt the everyday practices of queer globalization and the coterminous imagined states of being-present, instantaneity, simultaneity, or 'real' time. This paper draws on the disruptive character of one such spectre: that of famed Indian singer Lata Mangeshkar, to investigate how the tradition of the lip-sync plays multiple roles in sonic fabulation, possibility and authorship. By tracing the details of how a drag queen named Mallika's performance was haunted, I argue, the lip-sync is deployed to invoke a sense of belonging in an imagined gay globality in a Toronto bar in its gay village. The aim of this paper is to foreground the role of location and emplaced class/gender/ racial hierarchies in conditioning notions of global space-time. I argue that the drag queens in Toronto make discursive attempts to re imbue the Hindi filmic tradition of the lip-sync within a Western narrative of gay modernity, which are produced and reproduced through a fraught relationship with pre-existing representations of Western drag. I explain the politics inscribed in the lip-sync within the context of the Hindi filmic soundscapes and

how its arrival in Toronto's gay scene in the present of gay globality remains unsettled by Lata Mangeshkar's spectre, on the wishful relocation of its mechanism to a different space-time, to an elsewhere and an else when. to a different space-time, to an elsewhere and an else when.

What Sticks: Affective Scholarship in Times of Pandemic

Thomas Stodulka

The Covid-19 pandemic wreaked havoc. Its reverberations widen global and local precarity and privilege gaps. It renders workers, laborers, and academics jobless. It leaves millions of families and communities without a source of income. The pandemic caused the deaths of loved ones, and it took a significant toll on everyone's health. In addition to more looming gloom, Covid-19 substantially affects anthropological attempts to make sense and ascribe meaning to an emergent new world. Fieldwork plans cannot be made or easily changed; mobility is limited and being present on-site and engaging with interlocutors face-to-face is often replaced by online interaction; and security and routine give way to uncertainty. In times of unpredictability over yet another "Corona wave" or "variant" threatening to roll into ever different parts of the world with existential consequences, anthropologists started resorting to remote, mediated, or tele-ethnography and proxy-fieldwork in full consideration of fieldwork ethics and responsibility. Demands to conduct "fieldwork online" and turns to "digital ethnography" have inundated graduate methodology classes and supervision debates. The Covid-19 pandemic compels anthropologists to reflect on the strengths of their methods and more anthropologists feel the urge to collaborate with other scholars and expand methodological knowledge on how to conduct online conversations and analyze large data, digitized infrastructures, mediatized artifacts, or the affective repercussion and embodied dimension of signs, signals and sticky tapes within epistemic frameworks of shranked temporalities related to curtailed funds and abbreviated fieldwork timelines. I will discuss these emergent temporalities and practicalities of (new) fieldwork designs through the lens of Affective Scholarship by engaging affect as method.

Diaries of Silence and Media as Dark Time Machines

Anton Gumenskiy

Media manufacture time (Dimke and Koryukhina, 2012). The times, produced by traditional mass media, are more long-lasting, slow-moving, and universal, whereas the new digital media produce multiple, condensed, and individually adjustable times with a very short "consumption period". As media inevitably excommunicate and connect to the "dark side" of the reality (Galloway, Thacker, Wark, 2014), we can conclude, they also produce the "dark time".

Under the terms of the ongoing 'Diaries of Silence' experiment <http://silence.tilda.ws/eng>, participants should abstain from using electronic media, gadgets, internet services and live speech for seven days. The participants must also keep a self-observation diary. From 2012 to 2021, 150+ diaries of men and women aged 20-45 were collected. These diaries have revealed such different emotions and experiences of the participants as "awakening of the senses" (better hearing, brighter taste, in one extreme case the first ever sense of smell) and the "muting of the senses" (one could not write poetry without being able to speak), etc.

The participants have also experienced both celebrity status and excommunication, while some of the most common and revealing discoveries have been those concerning the relationship between media and time. In a situation where live speech and digital media cannot be used, time becomes an attribute of the local social and natural environment and of micro-context of the body. On the one hand, participants depend more on the help of family members to carry on with their normal routines, but on the other hand, they feel more in control being deprived of the media endlessly producing for them multiple strange and bizarre "dark temporalities from beyond" in the form of other people's plans, schedules, deadlines and appointments.

Towards an epistemology of mediated temporality: from ethics to empiricism

Tim Markham

This paper is concerned with the possibilities for ethical subjectivation in a world that is multiply, digitally mediated, and how the experience of temporality can be empirically investigated. This experience cannot be made a direct object of conscious cognition, which raises two serious concerns. The first is the possibility that digital actants such as algorithms can intervene in, exploit and modify temporal experience in ways that fly under the radar. The second is the challenge of constructing an epistemology and empiricism up to the task of investigating such phenomena in the pursuit of ethical principles including autonomy and accountability. In theoretical terms the paper takes a phenomenological approach in which the present is always ontologically prior to any notion of an origin: in short, we always begin from the experience of finding ourselves thrown into a present – including a presently embodied self – that exceeds our grasp. The experience of temporality is the unfolding of that grasping, of disclosing the world by navigating and acting in it, and that means that understanding it is not a matter of excavating or working backwards to account for how we got to where we are, but mobility from the present. After considering what provides the momentum for this mobility, characterised by Hansen as a feeding-forward, the paper ends by exploring methodological possibilities for investigating how we move between objects, forces and others that are encountered mostly peripherally, ambiently or distractedly, which point the way to an empirical model for scrutinising temporal experience itself.

Consumer electronics repair as resistance, friction, slowness

Christian Medaas

The smartphone is a novel (and soon ubiquitous) type of consumer object which, among other things, abets the acceleration and "devourment" of time. Simultaneously, smartphones are designed with a relatively short useful "lifespan" themselves. This is enforced by, among other things, their obsolescence (planned or unplanned) and the difficulty of their repair.

Based on extensive ethnographic research with mobile phone repairers in the urban centers of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Oslo (Norway), and Accra (Ghana), my research suggests that moments of repair, seen as interventions, create a sense of *slowing down*, an instance of friction somehow at odds with the intended experience of smartphones as smooth, frictionless, and unknowable.

These moments of repair, mediated by repairers, can be analytical windows into the materiality of smartphones (including their before-and- afterlives), the material culture that surrounds them, and the undervalued work of repair that, in its sustention of the

object, both *slows down* and *opens up*, in both literal and figurative senses, the black boxes that so many of us now live with.

The impetus for this PhD research project comes from longstanding interests in environmental justice, consumption, electronic waste (and its uneven distribution), and practices of repair and maintenance. My contribution to the panel will be a 15-minute presentation based on the notion of repair as an intervention of slowness, illustrated through my own multi-sited ethnographic research with urban smartphone technicians in Dar es Salaam, Oslo, and Accra.

Temporalizing the Unbounded Workplace: Tech Workers and the Transformation of Coordination

Omer Hacker

Time and work were intertwined in modernity: from the authority of the clock as the measuring unit of work to Taylorism and scientific management (Gregg, 2018; Thompson, 1967). Work was set according to a rigid time system, that reflected a centralized and hierarchized power system. However, recent years brought a radical shift through neoliberalism/post-Fordism: individuals became a kind of an independent business, and hierarchy or strict rules were perceived as limiting the worker and preventing self-fulfillment. Gradually, especially in the tech industry, workers detached from the power of a specific workplace, both conceptually and physically as time no longer signified the boundaries of work (Berardi, 2009; Gershon, 2020; Rose, 1989). In this paper, I ask how this ongoing revolution is shaping new concepts of time? To do so, I rest on an ongoing ethnographic work I carry in a tech corporation and on dozens of interviews with tech workers. For the people I study, the shift from shared and standardized working time meant that they were responsible for setting time for their work. While recent scholarship highlights the undeniable stress of this new situation (Bear, 2015; Sharma, 2014; Snyder, 2016), in my current work I will explore how new conceptualizations of time are mediated by new technologies used by tech workers. First, the unbounded workplace, which means the possibility to work across the globe and in different time zones, created a state in which every hour can be a working hour. To manage this challenge, many of my interlocutors used the company's online calendar to guard their time off like holidays or even nighttime. Second reconceptualization of time is the use of task-management programs that conceal the role of time as a parameter to work. The result is a change in the role of time and how people use it.

“Wasting Time for Nothing Actually” - Digital Media Practices among Viennese Youths

Suzana Jovicic

(Digital) media technologies in the Eurocentric context have a long history of problematic entanglements with time. Beyond the dominant framing of media and technology as drivers of acceleration and modernity, the use of digital media technologies among young people seems to be associated with a different kind of time – idle and thus wasted time hijacked by the irresistible and distracting spell of immersive digital technologies. In this paper, I explore how such narratives of (digitally) wasted time are inextricably linked to broader time regimes among youths I encountered during my ethnographic research in youth centres and schools in 2018 and 2019 in Vienna, Austria. Confronted with external time regimes – be it accelerated time in educational contexts in the race for social mobility or chronically

slow time in the context of long waiting for an apprenticeship or a job – youths continuously negotiate guilt and pleasure when spending time online in seemingly unproductive ways. Based on an analysis of digital “non-events” such as scrolling and swiping through social media feeds on one’s smartphone, I argue that the Protestant notion of wasted time and “doing nothing” as sin extends to the way digital practices are commonly perceived and discussed. Consequently, unemployed, and potentially bored and troubled youths, in particular, are associated with deficient media practices, as the legacy of class-related notions of productive time and disciplined leisure is implicitly reproduced in digital literacy narratives. As such, marginalised youths are made the ideal beneficiaries of digital literacy interventions that promote mastery of digital time, thus ignoring the everyday reality of youths struggling with school pressures, chronic boredom, and access to leisure on the one hand, and the time-dissolving design of digital interfaces created to erase effort on the other.