

Temporal Belongings

Researching the interconnections between time and community

Power, Time and Agency - Exploring the role of critical temporalities: A two day interdisciplinary collaborative workshop

11-12 July 2012, University of Manchester

Despite time often appearing as an inert background to social life, there has been a wide array of work, across a range of disciplines, that argues that varying understandings and embodied experiences of time are intimately intertwined with power and agency. Johannes Fabian's diagnosis of a denial of coevalness (or shared time) within classical anthropology represents a key example. But his analysis of the use of time to distance self from other has been significantly extended within a variety of critical fields of inquiry including post-colonial theory (e.g. Chatterjee, 2001 and Chakrabarty, 2008), queer theory (e.g. Freeman 2010, Halberstam 2005) and feminist theory (e.g. Grosz 2005, Hemmings 2011). These and other areas of work have sought to situate time as a significant component in social mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, of social legitimation and in social responses to perceived threats.

Recognising that particular kinds of time uphold, and seek to enforce, particular kinds of social formations and power relations, the need to think and live time differently has come to be seen as a necessary part of the work of challenging particular hegemonic regimes and of opening up new modes of agency and action. As a result, a range of what might be called 'critical temporalities' have been proposed, both from within and outside of the academy. Homi Bhabha's 'enunciative present', Barbara Adam's 'timescapes', Dana Luciano's 'chronobiopolitics', Jacques Derrida's 'time out of joint', Elizabeth Freeman's 'chrononormativity' and Deborah Bird Rose's 'multispecies knots of ethical time', as well as social movements such as Cittaslow, Voluntary Simplicity, the Long Now Foundation and Transition Towns, all problematise and rework traditional Western allegiances to a supposedly progressive, all-encompassing linear time. The role of 'critical temporalities' is thus complicated and wide-ranging, bringing multiple disciplines into proximity around a shared concern with the role of time in the workings of power and the possibilities of agency.

The aim of this workshop then is to draw together these multi-disciplinary attempts to challenge and rethink time in order to provide participants with the opportunity to explore potential overlaps, dissonances and opportunities for cross-disciplinary conversation. How might queer temporalities and the temporalities of post-colonialism speak to or challenge each other? Could the time of feminist visions of heterogeneous community provide insights into how to think multi-species communities? Might movements like Cittaslow and the Long Now federation, which challenge the accelerating, and yet narrow, time of neoliberalism, be further challenged or extended by indigenous critiques of the temporalities of international development agencies?

We invite applications from those researching the links between time, power and agency from across the humanities and social sciences who would be interested in thinking with the broad spectrum of critical temporalities. We are also inviting applications from those working within community organisations, government or policy who would like to explore how questions about time, power and agency, arise within their work.

Format of the workshop

The residential workshop will include around 40 participants and will take place over two days at the University of Manchester's conference and hotel facility; Chancellors. In order to explore the breadth of approaches, and support new collaborations, the workshop will include a variety of session formats. Along with a small number of longer invited papers, there will be themed sessions of 5 minute papers followed by discussions. There will also be collaborative, participant-driven sessions where themes emerging from the paper sessions can be synthesised and explored in greater depth.

Suggested Themes

Presenters are welcome to approach the theme in the way they think is most thought-provoking, although we have suggested possible topics below.

Time and Power | Articulating and/or critiquing the variety of ways concepts of time are used to include and/or exclude | Time as a means to create distance and hierarchy | Using different mobilisations of time to legitimate power relations (e.g. how might mobilisations of class and class privilege be supported or undermined by time use, conceptions of the future or understandings of the temporalities of action?) | The denial or assertion of coevalness for political or ethical ends, for example causes or peoples being dismissed as anachronistic, asynchronous, or timeless | Inter-relations between alternative concepts of power and alternative concepts of time? |

Organising Time | Explorations of conflicts between different senses or modes of time, within bureaucracy, between conservationists and policy makers, between activist organisations, between evolutionary time scales and neoliberal speeds of production, etc. | Challenging/transforming normative life-course narratives |

Critical Temporalities | Counter-stories, counter-temporalities| the temporalities of resistance to neo-liberalism? | Critical analyses of the use of non-linear accounts of time for seeking to adequately respond to pluralism, non-homogeneous communities etc | Actively seeking to extend sense of time beyond usual frameworks to connect issues, groups, peoples usually thought to be separate from each other |

Time and Agency | Rethinking the link between senses of agency and a sense of futurity | Thinking time differently in order to open up different possibilities of action, concepts of agency and/or future visions | Exploring the continued potential of the past for marginalised groups through notions such as 'what might have been', the 'not yet', the 'to come'.|

Conceptualising/ Experiencing Time | Temporalities of diaspora and migration | Challenging the hegemony of 'progress' as a justification for action | Challenging who or what represents the future, be it the West in general, children, men, science, culture etc. | Critiques of exclusions/ inclusions produced through periodisation | Time poverty and responses such as slow food, slow cities and voluntary simplicity. | How might conceptualisations of

community be produced through, or perpetuated by particular uses of time? For example, examinations of the link between presence and community, or techniques of distancing community into an idealised past free of conflict |

Costs

There is a fee of £60 for this workshop. However, as the workshop has been funded generously by the AHRC this will cover workshop fees, accommodation costs and the cost of the workshop dinner.

How to Apply

If you would like to participate, please send a short outline of your interest in the topic and of your potential contribution (250 words max) along with a short CV. Please indicate whether you would like to contribute a five minute presentation or whether you would prefer to only participate in discussions. Applications are due no later than the 30th of April 2012. The list of participants will be confirmed in mid-May.

Contact

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See our website for more information: www.temporalbelongings.org