REVISING TIME IN CULTURAL RESEARCH

Preface to the special issue of Trames

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Time is multiple. It is easy to imagine differences in individual, collective and social time, cosmic and biological time, global and historical time. Time could be related to our perception of beginnings and ends, intervals and transitions; time could be handled as resource, commodity, measure, regulatory structure and gift (Adam 2002:87, 89). During the 20th century, academic thinking has abandoned the monolithic approach to time and temporality and reached the awareness of temporal diversity. The approach to time within social theory has become onto-logically and epistemologically varied. Side-effects of this multi- and inter-disciplinary treatment of temporality also brought about some ambivalence. In 2002 Bernhard Albert, while summarizing the discussion held at the 9th Con-ference Tutzing Time Ecology Project in April 2000, asserted: "Everyone talked confidently about temporal diversity but it was not everyone meant the same thing" (Albert 2002:92).

While the notion of 'time' is covered by a variety of interpretative frames and approaches which are constantly open to renegotiations, it also offers complexity and universality that opens possibilities for interdisciplinary frameworks concern-ing theoretical understanding of contemporary cultural research.

If 'time' is an additional dimension for various disciplinary approaches in social sciences and humanities, it might be therefore worthwhile to ask if it is possible to shift towards hybrid notion of *timing* as one tool for revisiting cultural theory. The concept of *timing* as Tamara K. Hareven (1991:168) defines it: "… sequencing, coordination and synchronization of various time clocks, individual, collective and social structural (historical) time" – could be useful to understand interaction between different time types as well as to see how different 'clocks' have changed over history and varied in different cultural settings.

The notion of timing as synchronic and diachronic process including human agency is a step further from the original idea of this special issue of TRAMES that derived from an idea of 'chronotypes'. The concept coined by Bender and Wellbery (1991) to mark the reflective turn in research toward a multiplication of times. With a reference to Bakhtin's 'chronotope', 'chronotypes' can be understood as "models or patterns through which time assumes practical or conceptual significance. Chronotypes are themselves temporal and plural, constantly being made and remade at multiple individual, social, and cultural levels. They interact with one another, sometimes cooperatively, sometimes conflictually. They change over time and therefore have a history or histories, the construal of which is an act of temporal construction. Chronotypes are improvised from an already existing repertoire of cultural forms and natural phenomena. Numerous chronotypes intertwine to make up the fabric of time" (Bender and Wellenby 1991:4). The notion of chronotypes is here used as a cover term for different types of time and temporal order. Hence, in order to capture the complexity and variety of time-approaches in different disciplines we propose the two-dimensional 'matrix': timing and chronotypes. The articles in the present issue of Trames are engaged in both aspects: authors describe the different time-types by using disciplinary tools that make them visible or reachable and at the same time analyse the timing practices and methods.

This issue brings together a range of disciplines on the premise that time and temporality is a central and recurring notion in most social or human research, either implicitly or explicitly. The implicit-explicit scale depends on the historical context of a discipline as the 'temporal turn' in disciplinary thinking has taken place and is happening in different periods and for different reasons.

Concerning the temporality from the perspective of cultural sociology, **Elżbieta Hałas** claims in this issue that although time and timing always exist inside social phenomena, sociology of time remained on the periphery of the discipline for a long time. The question of time has become shifted toward the centre of sociological problems by research on social memory. As an example of a modern sociological theory in which the problem of time is in the centre, Hałas refers to Niklas Luhman's theory of social systems. Hałas introduces the concept of collective memory of trauma to show the symbolic, emotional and moral dimensions of memory as cultural phenomenon.

In the spirit of Halas' claims, **Halliki Harro-Loit and Ene Kõresaar** provide an example of synthesising cultural memory studies and journalism research in the analyses of television news. Their article focuses on the timing strategies in the news discourse that employs various chronotypes to re-create collective memory in the framework of national temporality.

Social theorists, life course research and memory studies place the notions of *temporality* and *timing* at the core while stressing its non-homogeneous and dynamic character. "Time is not just conceived as a linear thinking of past to future but a complex multidimensional phenomenon that involves biographical time, which covers that lifespan from birth to death, generational time, which

provides links and attachments across generations of kinship relations and historical time, which locates individual and family lives in the wider frames of external events, environments and political landscapes" (Adam 2008:7). The cohort study carried out by **Raili Nugin** focuses on the question of generational consciousness during large social transformations. By stating that there are no automatic boundaries which define beginnings and endings of generational time (cf. Thompson 2008:25), Raili Nugin also comes to the conclusion that historical time does not necessarily articulate in a generational consciousness in all circumstances. Therefore her analysis is placed on the crossing point of individual, collective and historical time.

It is important to note that even in one discipline the emphasis on temporality might be dependent on theoretical considerations and concurrent data collection. As Raili Nugin points out: "This is a simplification, but one can somewhat forcibly talk about two approaches to the conceptualization of *generation*: one concentrating on intangible features that carry the generational consciousness: studies in memory, biographies, discourse etc; the other concentrating on social and demographical structures while constructing generations: studies in demographical behaviour, on career opportunities structures, income, social transitions."

Folklorist **Tiiu Jaago** points out the changes that time and temporality concept brought along in understanding folklore research in the second half of the 20th century. The earlier concept regarded folklore as a collection of phenomena (songs, stories etc.). The contemporary approach regards folklore as a specific type of communication: the performance situation that takes place in a certain moment of time. Proceeding from the disciplinary shift towards the performance time Jaago provides an analysis of the reception of folkloristic film that was created in the 1950s by contemporary students and demonstrates the multi-level timing between the event and interpretation.

Once the temporal dimension of culture is acknowledged, it starts to influence the perception of the object of the study along with the need to methodologically challenge it. For **Peeter Torop** and **Bruno Osimo**, one such methodological challenge in translation studies lies in the problem of addressing the complexity of the translation process. They write: "Besides the dialogue within the discipline and between disciplines, the elaboration of the methodology of studying translation and translating points also to the need for a dialogue between diachrony and synchrony." Hence, while time-dimension makes the research more complex, both theoretically and methodologically, it also becomes a connecting approach disciplinarily, as well as interdisciplinarily.

Contributions to the special issue of Trames demonstrate that when the focus is on 'time', a researcher may face diverse chronotype-timing matrixes synchronically while also taking into account their diachronic dimension. According to **Remm's** careful reading of the thinkers in his sociocultural analysis, including time-related notions in the construction of theoretical models about culture and society and thereby overcoming its ambivalent character, assumes an integrated approach to culture's diachrony and synchrony. As Remm points out,

the significance of temporality in the vision of culture involves a multitude of change trends and mechanisms, and their interpretations. **Aili Aarelaid-Tart** makes the effort to theoretically capture this diversity by proceeding from the notion of human time as a fundamental property of human reality. She demonstrates how extraordinarily complicated the temporal fabric of human time is. From this aspect she discusses individual life course and generational time as a tool for measuring polyphonic temporal order of the world.

In contemplating human time, Aarelaid-Tart states that it is possible to evoke very many different levels, aspects and reckoning systems, all of which are relevant to each other. On the one hand, this is why the cultural research (still) operates with a whole palette of concepts and terms designating diverse aspects of temporality. On the other hand, and this is what we hope the current special issue of Trames demonstrates, focusing on strategies and patterns through which time assumes practical and conceptual significance, enables not to merely go beyond disciplinary traditions but inspire complementary research.

Acknowledgements

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