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► **To cite this version:**

François-Xavier de Vaujany, R. Robin Holt, Albane Grandazzi. Conclusion: time and political organizing: five avenues for further research on the way to power and emancipation. Organization as Time Technology, Power and Politics, 2023. hal-04220271

HAL Id: hal-04220271

<https://hal.science/hal-04220271>

Submitted on 27 Sep 2023

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Chapter · April 2023

DOI: 10.1017/9781009297288.019

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Time and Political Organizing

Five Avenues for Further Research on the Way to Power and Emancipation¹

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As we have seen in the context of this rich, edited volume, numerous ways are possible for the exploration of organization as time and the political description of this process as power, emancipation or ethics. A politics of time, at the intersection of critical management studies and process studies, is particularly promising. In this short conclusion, we would like to invite Management and Organization Studies (MOS) researchers to explore five continents: digitality, narrativity, materiality, time-space and subjectivity as five promising intersections to think of a politics of organization as time.

Firstly, digitality, in particular digital images (see Barker, 2012 and chapter 1, this volume or de Vaujany, 2022a) are more and more central to our ways of working and organizing. Beyond a new visuality, they often settle new temporalities for what is produced through their happening, and these new temporalities also correspond to new forms of power, of agencement, of violences, of state domination. Images, their holes, folds or differential intensities, lines, speeds and rhythms, discipline and organize our

¹ Draft version of the general conclusion of the book de Vaujany, FX. Holt, R. & Grandazzi, A. (Eds) (2023). *Organization as time*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

lives in new ways (de Vaujany, 2022a). What happens in the world is the event of these images and their modes of existence. More work needs to be done by MOS scholars to understand the politics of images, their role and their possible domination of organizations and in organizing. What is decentered and how? In which way do our new Zoom-based remote ways of working become gradually image-based? With what consequences for ways of working and organizing? How do images (in particular digital images) observe and surveil each other? What are the new modes of legitimacy or illegitimacy at stake for management and managers? What is the temporal panoptic of our time, and with what role for digital images? More specifically, our selves are more and more quantified and produced by digitality and digital images. What is the importance of speed, rhythms and intensity in this process? In contrast, in what way do digital images contribute to new modes of indistinguishability of subjects and objects and of an atmosphericity of being(s)?

Narrativity is also another important issue when thinking about a politics of organization as time. If calculus has been and remains an important part of the *techne* of our time (see Ciborra, 2004, 2006; Ciborra and Hanseth, 1988; Heidegger, 1977), if technique sets forward and unveils the world in its punctual mobilization, digital technique is more and more a continuous narrative process, unveiling and revealing the world with a decentered set of narratives and images combined by digital infrastructures (de Vaujany, 2022b). Technique itself disappears, is miniaturized, grounded directly in bodies and gestures, invisible and folded in movements. Cognition is outsourced to it. Individuality becomes a digital event, or rather, the mattering of this digital event giving a sense, logic and narrativity to being. The world is told in a decentered way at least as much as it is calculated. The ‘managerial apocalypse’² of our time is told and materialized

² From the Greek *Apocalupsis* (ἀποκάλυψις): revelation, disclosure, unveiling.

in the same movement, narrated and visualized simultaneously. Managers and management continue territorializing and possessing this strategic futurity. This opening settles ephemeral pockets of time that are likely to be commodified and provides strategic directions for collective activity. But today's *Thousand and One Nights* are not told any more by a clear, identifiable, unique Scheherazade. A multiplicity of people tells the story, and 'it' tells as much as 's/he' or 'they' tell and gives a sense to the world. How to explore these new strategic temporalities of management grounded in a new narrativity? What are the relevant methods? How are emancipations and subjectivations cultivated from within this movement of narration and non-narration (visuality being part of it and beyond narration)? How does the digital management of our present makes the world ever more incomplete? How is our Anthropocene a temporal product of this new narrativity and futurist visuality? How to better inhabit our present and dwell in it?

Materiality is the third continent we invite MOS scholars interested in organization as time to explore. If being is a material present interwoven with the becoming of the world (Bergson, 1896; de Vaujany, 2022a), if events are concrete or material happenings (Whitehead, 1929; Wahl, 1932; Hernes, Feddersen and Schultz, 2021), if in everyday organizationality time is materialized and performed as much as materialization is time³ (de Vaujany et al, 2014), what is the power of these processes? What is the agency of this emergent materialization? How can emancipation happen from the within of the time-space mattering of the world (Barad, 2007)? How can it also happen in absence and silence, in the non-mattering of organizing (de Vaujany and Aroles, 2019)? If experience is propositional, made both of events and non-events

³ Parts of the literature deal with time as something performed by managerial techniques and devices (time as organization), and other parts of the literature adopt a more metaphysical approach of becoming and events as mattering (organization as time). If the former is rather constructionist, the latter is more processual. Both can result in very interesting discussions for a politics of time. Nonetheless, the former approach has been more implemented in MOS than the latter, and the chapters selected for this book were thus mainly focused on organization as time.

proposing the world (Whitehead, 1938), how can emancipation occur from this paradoxical combination of emptiness and fullness? How can the re-exploration of the unaccomplished or unfulfilled events of the past (Ricoeur, 2000) help to cultivate emancipation and freedom in organizations? How can we renew our relationships with the future and its resonance with the past to space and express more emancipated selves?

Time-space is also a key dimension for further research interested in a politics of organization as time. Events and durations open sites, expand volumes, space experience and emplace people and things (Alexander, 1920; Whitehead, 1929; Seamon, 2012, 2018; Czarniawska, 2004; Jones, McLean and Quattrone, 2004; de Vaujany, 2022a). If temporality is primordial for the process metaphysics and the phenomenologies mobilized in this book, flows and temporal trajectories are interwoven with spatial ontologies. On the way to a politics of organization as time, it is important to keep in mind that resistance often involves a spatial subjectivation (Revel, 2015). In this vein, how can happening, spacing and emplacing be jointly explored in the description of emancipation and freedom at stake in organizing processes? How to integrate time and space in the elaboration of a politics of digital organizing? What are the concepts likely to illuminate the time-space of collective activity?

Lastly (and we see our five avenues as deeply interrelated), subjectivity, subjectivation and ethics are another very important avenue for further political research about organization as time. As defended by Foucault, an important way towards a better world lies in 'acts of courage' and a 'work of the self on the self'. Subjectivation is a process from within (see Revel, 2015). But our digital or post-digital presents are obviously a new temporal order for such a work. What are the new attitudes, historicity regimes and eventalization at stake in this new present (de Vaujany, 2022b)? What are the new

processes of organizing and modes of (self)management at stake? How can we imagine and create an 'ethic of the self'? How can MOS contribute to this movement? How can new ways of teaching and learning be settled in business school? New pedagogies focussed on this necessary ethics of care need to be experienced collectively.

The five aforementioned avenues for further research are particularly exciting tasks for MOS scholars. Beyond new theories and concepts, beyond more qualitative and ethnographic explorations of our digital world, they likely require a sense of experimentation. We need to experiment further with our colleagues, respective departments, techniques and narratives. We need a more playful relationship with time. A new sense of adventure.

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