

# Connected Communities

## Temporal Belongings Research Network

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## **Executive Summary**

The aim of the *Temporal Belongings Research Network* project was to build capacity for a network around the issue of time and community. In order to do this we organised two one day workshops and a two day residential which focused on communities and hope, time in community development work, and the relationships between power, time and agency. To provide mechanisms to support the network outside of our events we continued to develop content for our website (including adding 37 new presentations), set up a JISMAIL discussion list and continued adding to our mailing list. Recognising that time can sometimes seem like a relatively obscure topic, a further aim was to provide pathways for understanding how temporal issues might be relevant to non-HEI partners. We have thus developed an interview series that will contribute directly to this aim. Future plans include developing a working paper series, a journal special issue, an application to the AHRC's Research Networking scheme and an edited collection that draws together work from across the range of our events over the last couple of years.

## **Researchers and Project Partners**

Dr Michelle Bastian (University of Edinburgh), Dr Johan Siebers (University of Central Lancashire), Professor Graham Crow (Scottish Graduate School of Social Science)

## **Key words**

Time, community, power, community development, hope, research network

# Exploring the interconnections between time and community

This follow-on project took place from February 2012 to January 2013. Our aim was to support the development of a research community around the issue of time and community, to build links with new non-HEI partners and to provide clearer pathways for how this topic might be of interest to those outside the academy. This report contains an outline of our key activities, a discussion of how each of our original aims was met, and an overview of our planned future directions.

## Project Workshops

Over the course of the year we ran three workshops:

1. *Mobilising Community Futures, or can/should/must we do away with hope?* took place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2012 at Birkbeck and was organised by Johan Siebers. The workshop consisted of three keynote presentations, facilitated dialogue and a participant driven discussion session. We were joined by Davina Cooper (Kent), Matthew Ratcliffe (Durham) and Peter Thompson (Sheffield). For more details: <http://www.temporalbelongings.org/hope-and-community-futures.html>
2. *Temporal Conflicts: Exploring the impact of time on working with communities* took place on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 2012 at the University of Manchester and was co-organised by Michelle Bastian and Alison Gilchrist. This workshop included three lightning talk sessions, with 14 speakers overall and a participant driven discussion session. For more details: <http://www.temporalbelongings.org/temporal-conflicts.html>
3. *Power, Time and Agency: Exploring the role of critical temporalities* took place on the 17-18 January 2013 at the Chancellor's Conference Centre, Manchester and was organised by Michelle Bastian. There were 31 speakers overall with keynotes from Lisa Adkins (Newcastle) and Jane Elliott (King's College). For more details: <http://www.temporalbelongings.org/power-time-and-agency.html>

## Achieving our aims

Our first project aim was relatively straightforward in that we sought to **connect researchers currently working on time and community**. This was achieved in a variety of ways. First were the three workshops themselves which brought together around 100 attendees to discuss the interconnections between time and community in reference to the themes outlined above. We were very pleased with the ability of the workshops to draw attendees from the full range of disciplines across the arts, humanities and social sciences. As a topic without its own 'home' discipline, research on time has been scattered across the academy and so many of our attendees appreciated the opportunity to be exposed to new ideas and approaches that they had not encountered in their own fields. We were also pleased by the international reach of these

events. In particular, our final residential workshop drew 76 applications from 20 countries, with 40% of attendees coming from outside of the UK for the event.

A further element of our approach was to run our workshops using collaborative methods such as open space technology, world café and lightning talk sessions. Our interest here was not to just talk about time, but to try to transform the temporal infrastructures that have become so dominant in academic life. We thus sought to shift the balance away from presentation to discussion. These methods proved to be highly successful in connecting multi-disciplinary groups and providing a rich workshop experience. In evaluating our final event, attendees' average rating of their enjoyment of the event was 8.5 with 10 being the highest. The organisational style and the small group discussions were highlighted as particularly strong aspects of the workshop, allowing participants to unpack ideas in more depth and to engage in quite open networking. Most of the changes suggested involved including even more discussion time.

An interesting and unexpected outcome of our use of these techniques has been their ability to transform how attendees then go on to organise their own events and teaching. A significant number have reported using these techniques subsequently, with one of the attendees at our *Power, Time and Agency* event commenting that the "flexibility of space and time was exciting and inspiring – I shall incorporate some of those methods into my own teaching practice". This suggests that there is a strong interest in remaking the temporal structures of our own academic communities which has been facilitated and supported by our workshops.

In addition to the workshops themselves we have increased the reach of our communications tools, illustrating our success in connecting researchers outside of our events. This includes our website ([www.temporalbelongings.org](http://www.temporalbelongings.org)), which over the course of the project received 4,165 unique visitors with close to 14,000 page views. Viewers of our website came from 88 different countries, with the top five countries being the UK, the US, Australia, the Netherlands and Canada. This represented almost a doubling in traffic from the previous year, where we received 1,917 unique visitors with close to 8,000 page views from 81 countries. We also continued to build our mailing list, with over 100 sign-up requests over the course of the project, taking the total members to around 300. Finally, in order to build a less centralised forum for sharing information about related projects, events and issues we also set up an email discussion list through JISCMail in April 2012 which currently has 40 subscribers. We believe there is significant potential for this list to grow, as while there are lists for specific time-related issues such as time-banking and time-series analysis, we have not yet found any other free discussion lists for those researching the social aspects of time. We will thus seek to continue to promote this resource in the future.

A further aim was to **begin the development of accessible online resources** to support further research in this area. This aim was achieved via two main avenues. The first was to provide audio recordings of presentations from each of our workshops. In total we added 37 new presentations to our website, bringing our full list of recordings to 60. These have been publicised through our website, mailing lists and through twitter. The second was to develop an interview series with leading academics, but also with representatives from community organisations to provide clearer examples of how issues



to do with time arise in community work. Given that we already had such a broad range of presentations from researchers readily available on our website, we decided to focus our interviews on non-academics only. Using connections developed through this project and the AHRC pilot demonstrator project *The Time of the Clock and the Time of Encounter* we completed six hour long interviews with representatives from a national community development organisation, an environmentally focused community-arts organisation and a charity supporting religious tolerance and diversity, as well as two community development consultants with experience across a range of organisations. These interviews have been transcribed and are currently being edited for publication, with the first due to be published by the end of May 2013. All our resources have been made available with a Creative Commons license (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0) to support the dissemination of this work.

Picking up on the issue of time often seeming like an abstract academic problem, our project also aimed to **provide clearer pathways for how research on time and community may be relevant for community organisations, the public sector and policy developers**. Our interview series is a key way for us to address this aim. However our *Temporal Conflicts* workshop has also helped to outline ways in which time can be made more relevant to non-HEI sectors.

We had initially envisaged organising each of our workshops in consultation with non-HEI partners to help frame the content and to advise on potential collaborators. This proved to be more difficult in practice and required longer lead times to develop the appropriate partnerships for each of the thematic issues we had identified in our original application. We thus found that could not plan all of our workshops in this way. However our second workshop did use this method, with Alison Gilchrist, author of *The Well-Connected Community*, and co-author of *The Short Guide to Community Development*, agreeing to consult and then working closely with Bastian to design and run the event.

This event was originally planned to deal with the issue of temporal methods, meaning both methodological issues around how to research communities as dynamic, as well as temporal conflicts that might occur between methods of research, engagement and policy. In order to aim this event more directly at non-HEI participants, the organisers concentrated on the second half of this theme and Gilchrist, in discussion with Bastian, developed three themes that would allow the attendees to drill down deeper into the issues involved. These themes were: Scheduling/deadlines/pace, interventions (or the time of the 'project'), and demonstrating progress/success and accepting failure. Gilchrist wrote a short position paper which we sent to potential speakers in her networks to further explain the intent of the workshop.

The workshop themes proved to be very successful in engaging with a wide range of potential attendees, with speakers from Big Local, Locality, Local Level, A Sense of Place, the Third Sector Research Centre, Resources for Change and Catalyst contributing to the event. Speakers explored clashes that can occur between 'community time' and other 'times' including the times of politics, planning, evaluation, the internet, legal frameworks and meanwhile spaces. In combination with the interview series, these presentations are the basis for an article manuscript that Bastian will be submitting to *Time & Society* on time and community development work.

Finally, this project sought to **advance academic debates on community through a focus on time**. Rather than focusing on discipline-specific debates, our approach was to support encounters with the range of ways issues to do with time are arising across disciplines and to explore how these might intersect with each other in supportive or contested ways. The ability of a focus on time to bring together work that has been disconnected across disciplinary boundaries was highlighted as a strength of the workshops and particularly the *Power, Time and Agency* workshop, where attendees commented that time “gives more handles to open doors to knowledge from different disciplines” and also that “it’s a shared concept that’s useful for discussing similarities and differences in communities”.

What was particularly interesting were the strong thematic links that emerged from the individually submitted papers at our final residential workshop. One theme, which chimed well with our second workshop, focused on the multiple conflicting times of development processes. These papers highlighted the way those at the receiving end of ‘development’ use time as part of their repertoire of resistance and self-creation. Our speakers proposed accounts of a variety of ‘critical temporalities’ that operated in their field sites including ‘creative presentism’ as a response to ‘enforced presentism’ in Hoyerswerda, “Germany’s fastest shrinking city” (Ringel), individualised time in the face of national propaganda in Angola around ‘Our Common Future’ (Baptista), and, in São Tomé and Príncipe, the hope of ordinary Santomeans was contrasted with the understandings of hope proposed by the extractive fossil fuel industries that would like to ‘develop’ the island state.

A second theme moved from the context of development to look at how modes of enforced waiting might be subverted, often in small ways, by those under surveillance by various authorities or institutions. This included Justine Karpusheff’s account of sleep as a tool of ‘temporal mastery’ in psychiatric wards, Laurel Mackenzie’s critique of applying temporal frameworks used for understanding prison experiences to those in indefinite detention and Kinneret Lahad and Avi Shooshna’s exploration of the way different ethnic subjects experience waiting in line to enter a nightclub either as ‘party time’ or ‘prison time’. Further themes included, time, life and embodiment, the time of political uprisings, interdisciplinary perspectives on agency and time and labour.

Attendees commented on the very high calibre of these papers, and we are currently pursuing publication opportunities, including a proposal for a special issue in *Theory, Culture and Society*.

## Where to next?

In the short term, members of the network have received funding in the 2013-2014 funding cycle for further time-related projects. In particular Bastian has received funds under the *Care for the Future* theme that includes three workshops, which will be run under the *Temporal Belongings* banner, and interviews, which will be published as part of our interview series. This will allow the activities of the network to continue and for the *Care for the Future* project to access an already developed audience for its outputs. We will also be further developing our fledgling working paper series by publishing versions of the papers arising from our first and second workshops (written by Siebers

and Bastian respectively) on our website, as well as an analysis from the *Care for the Future* project. We would like to develop this series as a platform for members of the network to communicate directly with interested audiences prior to more traditional publication avenues.

Longer term, the team is developing a proposal for an edited book that will help to set out the key issues in the study of time and community, as well as an application for network funding from the AHRC to look more specifically at the issues raised in the *Power, Time and Agency* event. The notion of 'critical temporalities', which was initially developed in the *Temporal Connectivities* scoping study, raised a great deal of interest, including from a national media outlet who approached us about potentially profiling the event. We therefore see a strong potential for making an innovative contribution to a broad range of literatures, as well as engaging with non-HEI audiences with issues to do with time and community.

## References and external links

Gilchrist, Alison. *The Well-Connected Community* Portland: Policy Press, 2009.

Gilchrist, Alison & Marilyn Taylor. *The Short Guide to Community Development* Portland, OR: Policy Press, 2011.

Project website: <http://www.temporalbelongings.org/>



## The Connected Communities

Connected Communities is a cross-Council Programme being led by the AHRC in partnership with the EPSRC, ESRC, MRC and NERC and a range of external partners. The current vision for the Programme is:

*"to mobilise the potential for increasingly inter-connected, culturally diverse, communities to enhance participation, prosperity, sustainability, health & well-being by better connecting research, stakeholders and communities."*

Further details about the Programme can be found on the AHRC's Connected Communities web pages at:

[www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Pages/connectedcommunities.aspx](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Pages/connectedcommunities.aspx)

