



Media Times: Mediating Time—Temporalizing Media

Introduction

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The Special Section presents the work of the Scandinavian network *Mediatization Times*, which has gathered scholars with diverse backgrounds to discuss the complex relationship between time and the media. The contributions link to discussions of history and memory, liveness, and simultaneous presence as well as cultural techniques and infrastructures for temporal mediation. The section suggests that there is a renewed need to discuss temporal aspects of media and social change in the context of digital culture.

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Time as an abstract category needs mediation in order to be experienced (Frabetti, 2015). Or, as Reinhart Koselleck argues, “time cannot be intuited”: “When one seeks to form an intuition of time as such, one is referred to spatial indications, to the hand of the clock or the leaves of a calendar that one pulls off every day” (Koselleck, 2002, p. 102). Additionally, time-mediating technologies such as calendars, clocks, and diaries link the individual, lived experience of time to a shared sense of time as well as to natural temporal cycles (Lash & Urry, 1994; Peters, 2015). Besides making a temporal experience possible in the first place, media add social aspects to temporal mediation, giving rise to what has previously been described as logistical affordances of synchronization (Peters, 2015) or forms of common public time (Scannell, 2014).

In recent years, a new impetus to such discussions has come from the expanding research field of *mediatization* (Lundby, 2014). This concept has sparked valuable debates and studies of media-related social transformations. Seen as an open agenda rather than a unitary metatheoretical paradigm, it invites interdisciplinary discourse focusing on interfaces between time and media. This Special Section presents

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the collective effort of the Scandinavian research network *Mediatization Times*, which, in the course of three years, has discussed theoretical approaches toward and empirical investigations of temporal aspects of mediatization, which many today agree is an underdeveloped branch of mediatization research (e.g., Ekström et al., 2016; Kaun, 2011; Kaun & Fast, 2014). The research network is funded by the Swedish foundation for humanities and social sciences, Stiftelsen Riksbankens Jubileumsfond. The Special Section provides an interdisciplinary inquiry into notions of media time and is divided into three clusters that relate to the three fields of inquiry: (a) time, history, and memory; (b) liveness, presence, and simultaneity; and (c) cultural techniques (*Kulturtechniken*), infrastructures, and *Eigenzeit*. The first section discusses cultural aspects of temporality and the historicity of media and social change in more general terms, and the latter two introduce more specific temporalities, experiences, and material technologies.

History and Memory

The past as a temporal category is of major concern for historians in terms of both its ontology and its epistemology. Aiming to assess the past as a temporal layer is in that context crucial, as is the question of how time is experienced and related to natural time and the time of history. Ricoeur (1985, 2000), for example, differentiates between universal or cosmic time (sequences of physical events) and lived time (time as experienced by the individual). Historical time as a third dimension harmonizes lived experience with universal time. Temporalizing tools such as clocks and calendars have led to a standardization, manipulation, and synchronization of time and have increasingly abstracted time from natural cycles while still never making them completely independent from the pre-given nature (Koselleck, 2002). In relation to temporalizing tools, Aleida Assmann (2008) has proposed that memory allows us to think in temporal horizons in the first place. Further differentiating Maurice Halbwachs's notion of collective memory into cultural and communicative memory, they emphasize memory as the practice of temporal mediation.

In addition to discussing temporalizing tools and practices, more general diagnoses have been proposed of how time is conceptualized in different societies. Modernity, for example, has been predominantly linked to the temporality of progress and a future orientation, while the past is ignored or even neglected. Although the notion of progress has been criticized before 1989 and postmodernity, there is a renewed attention to the crisis of modernity's progress orientation. More recently, Helge Jordheim (2014) discusses how Aleida Assmann and Francois Hartog have argued that the temporal regime of modernity has collapsed. While Assmann (2013) calls for a reconfiguration of the relationship between the past, present, and future, Hartog (2015) is more critical of the emergence of a new temporal regime. He questions the regime of historicity that is characterized by an exclusive focus on the present. This presentism emerged after 1989, fueled by communication technologies. Hartog argues that this presentism is caught between amnesia and the desire to forget nothing. Hence, he captures the experience of the accelerated rhythm of life that has also sparked discussions in critical cultural studies (Tomlinson, 2007) and sociology (Rosa, 2005; Wajcman, 2014). Jordheim critically engages with the notion of a regime of historicity or temporality. He suggests that it is more fruitful to acknowledge a simultaneous multiplicity of temporalities that are synchronized in different ways. It is the work of historians to synchronize these different temporalities that exist all at the same time, and the notion of temporal regimes is one such way of synchronizing diverse temporalities.

The first four contributions to the Special Section relate in different ways to the discussion of time, history, and memory. Further developing Ricoeur's distinction between cosmic, lived, and historical time, **Johan Fornäs** discusses cultural time as a third time mediating between objective or measured time on one hand and subjective or experienced time on the other. Furthermore, he analyzes how different technologies for making cultural time evolve through waves of mediatization, and finally identifies remediation and reculturalization as crucial mechanisms for reproducing cultural time in late modernity. **Anne Jerslev** is concerned with the distinct temporality of celebrity culture. She contrasts the temporality of plenty—the permanent updating of digital media by microcelebrities—with the temporality of scarcity of international film stars as a way of carving out emerging temporalities in digital culture. **Göran Bolin** employs the notion of media generations and media memories to scrutinize long-term social, cultural, political, and economic changes that are related to media technologies and that have previously been described in terms of mediatization. **Anu Koivunen** focuses on the temporalities of "nationness." She derives "meanwhileness" and simultaneity as temporal structures of imagined communities. Analyzing Finnish documentaries, she demonstrates the role of these temporal structures related to affective encounters for the emergence of the nation.

Liveness and Simultaneous Presence

As Jordheim notes in his discussion of regimes of temporality, different forms of historicity have been linked to particular ways of temporal mediation, and thus to specific technologies. For example, television was intimately connected with the temporality of liveness, offering ways to connect broader publics through the experience of a shared now or a "common public time" (Scannell, 2014). Its enabling of access to the most distant, as well as transporting of the most proximate, promoted an experience of "all-at-once-ness" (McLuhan, 1964), in sharp contrast to traditional notions of time. In the 1970s, Pierre Nora (2014) noted the need for historians to rethink the categories of memory and history in response to the impact of the live broadcast. In the 1980s, Fredric Jameson's (1991, 2003) analysis of postmodernism related our weakening sense of the past to the cultural dominance of television. In his seminal work on television, Raymond Williams (1974) developed the idea of mobile privatization: a technology that managed the contradictory social pressures of the modern world, toward increased mobility on the one hand and home-centered organization on the other. Clearly, the implications of this interface were also temporal: synchronizing the time of the home (family life, subjectively experienced time) with the ongoing flow of world events (actualities, the news cycle).

Exploring the mediation of liveness, presence, and simultaneity, the contributions to this Special Section also analyze the different ways in which media technologies may enable its experience (and how different temporalities are synchronized within it) before, in, and after the era of television. **Espen Ytreberg** studies the 1914 Oslo Centenary Jubilee Exhibition—a sort of media event *avant la lettre*. Its organization involves notions of mediation and indirect presence, not only through the representations of the "ordinary" media of the day but through structures of transportation that coordinated the physical movement of people, objects, and information to create a sense of mediated simultaneity. **Staffan Ericson** focuses on Ingmar Bergman's TV adaptations of Swedish playwright August Strindberg, whose modernist plays from the first years of the 20th century have been widely assumed (by Raymond

Williams, among others) to “anticipate” the technologies of moving images. Ericson explores the historical conditions of this assumption, the temporal form of the plays, and their reception as television in the early 1960s in terms of tele-technology, mobile privatization, and monitoring. **Ekaterina Kalinina’s** article focuses on the current Russian television channel Nostal’gia, which is dedicated to reruns and reproductions of programs and schedules from the Soviet era. The study applies an autoethnographic approach to the notion of nostalgia, and the attempt to re-create the liveness of Soviet experience, at television’s intersection of archival past and immediate present. Finally, **Anders Ekström** relocates the theme of the present to the environment of new media, specifically online news. The study exemplifies how the temporal register of “real time” is established on the Web and in videos, TV clips, and series of stills, particularly in relation to disasters and extreme nature events.

Cultural Techniques and Infrastructures

If time always is and requires mediation, then technologies of mediation play a key role. The third body of research presented in this Special Section focuses on temporal mediation by discussing cultural techniques as time-mediating tools. Part of this understanding is a broad definition of media that goes beyond mere representation or meaning production. Following Johan Durham Peters (2015), media are here discussed as not only as time-mediating tools but as infrastructures combining nature and culture in various ways.

Geoffrey Winthrop-Young (2013) has suggested cultural techniques as the English translation of the complicated German term *Kulturtechniken*, which captures both practices (i.e., writing, reading, and calculating) and technologies (i.e., telegraph, television, and the computer, but also doors and towers). Bernhard Siegert argues that, “when we speak of cultural techniques, therefore, we envisage a more or less complex actor network that comprises technological objects as well as the operative chains they are part of and that configure or constitute them” (2013, p. 58). Initially, the term described rural environmental engineering opposing nature. Around the 1970s, media were considered as shapers of society that require both certain technological hardware and software such as VHS recorders and television sets as well as a set of techniques in terms of skills or literacy. The main question for theorizing cultural techniques is whether culture rules technology or culture is subsumed under technology. Around 2000, the concept was revived and migrated into philosophy and anthropology as part of the posthuman theorization. Winthrop-Young suggests that current contributions to the discussion of cultural techniques rely heavily on the antihermeneutic work of Friedrich Kittler. However, while media theorists such as Bernhard Siegert and Cornelia Vismann are interested in the entanglement of practices and technologies, Wolfgang Ernst emphasizes the technological part and suggests that, in order to understand cultural techniques, one needs to comprehend their internal logic—*Eigenlogik*—including the inherent temporal logic (*Eigenzeit*) of media (Ernst, 2011, 2013). Hence, calculation processes of mediation are his main interest.

The third set of articles of this Special Section focuses on media as cultural techniques of temporal mediation, emphasizing the complex relationship between technologies and practices. **Christine Evans** and **Lars Lundgren** examine the infrastructures of satellite television systems and claim that the discussion of time cannot be separated from the discussion of space. Developing the notion of geographies

of liveness, they show how different temporalities of the Cold War were coordinated over the bloc border by the transnational live program *Our World*, which was planned to be broadcast in 1967. **Jesper Olsson** takes up the notion of *Eigenzeit* developed by Ernst in order to analyze contemporary art projects that consider reading as a digitally mediated technique. These artworks focus on the inherent temporal logic of reading as a process of digital mediation. Similarly to Olsson, **Anne Kaun** is interested in the notion of *Eigenzeit* of digital media and asks how the temporal regime of digital media is transforming the political work of activists. She uses archiving practices and tools as one way to investigate a growing desynchronization between political temporalities and the temporality of digital media.

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