

Call for Papers: Special Issue of *Strategic Organization* “Temporal Work: The Strategic Organization of Time”

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Time, in its various dimensions and manifestations (speed, rhythm, sequence, horizon) is inherent to strategic management (Mosakowski and Earley, 2000). The very notion of strategy implies projecting organizations into the future through decisions in the present while building on the past. Performance and competitive advantage are believed to depend on speed of decision making and execution (Baum and Wally, 2003; Eisenhardt, 1989; Dykes et al., 2018), and on capturing windows of opportunity by entering markets at the “right” time (Hawk et al., 2013; Suarez and Lanzolla, 2007) and sequencing decisions correctly (Pettus et al., 2018). Tensions and tradeoffs between the short term and long term are inherent to key strategic decisions about innovation and sustainability (Crilly, 2017; Flammer and Bansal, 2017; Laverty, 1996; Slawinski and Bansal, 2015). Moreover, scholars have shown the strategic importance of temporal fit or “entrainment” (Ancona and Chong, 1996) between environmental and organizational rhythms (Hopp and Greene, 2018; Khavul et al., 2010; Shi and Prescott, 2012).

Beyond analyses of time as an “objective” construct, recent research has also suggested that “subjective” temporal assumptions, preferences and dispositions of top management teams (such as temporal orientation towards past, present or future, temporal depth, and polychronicity) can have significant implications for strategic decision making, strategic change, and economic and social performance (Chen and Nadkarni, 2017; Crilly, 2017; Kunisch et al., 2017; Nadkarni et al., 2016; Souitaris and Maestro, 2010)

And yet, while considerable attention has been devoted in strategic management research to time-related constructs and their antecedents and consequences, more work is needed on what managers and others actually *do* or *can do* to intervene with respect to important time-related phenomena, and on how their temporally-oriented practices and activities accomplish strategic outcomes. In other words, we suggest an increased focus on action and agency, expressed in the theme of this special issue of *Strategic Organization*: “**Temporal Work: The Strategic Organization of Time.**”

The notion of “temporal work” was first coined by Kaplan and Orlikowski (2013) to describe how organization members collectively aligned conceptions of past, present and future to develop viable strategic projects. We generalize their notion here by defining “temporal work” or the “strategic organization of time” as any ***individual, collective or organizational effort to influence, sustain or redirect the temporal structures and assumptions that shape strategic action.*** This definition draws on a process view of time (Reinecke and Ansari, 2017), and is also inspired by

Orlikowski and Yates' (2002) notion of temporal structuring, linked to the thinking of sociologists of time such as Adam (2013) and Zerubavel (1985). These authors pointed out that social life in general and organizations in particular embed temporal structures, norms and assumptions about time (e.g., events, schedules, deadlines, product life cycles, planning periods, time horizons, trajectories, relations between past, present and future, etc.) that are often taken for granted, but which are produced and reproduced through ongoing activities and social interaction. Temporal work (or the strategic organization of time) is about intervening to influence temporal structures and assumptions. This is a non-trivial venture, given that would-be "temporal workers" are also embedded within existing temporal structures, as well as within their own temporal trajectories even as they attempt to act on them (Hernes et al., 2013).

The focus of this special issue suggests a variety of opportunities for developing insightful research, some of which have been exploited more than others. For example, earlier research (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1997; Gersick, 1994) considered the implications of event-time and clock-time based pacing, where pacing can be to some degree acted on (as well as enacted by) managers. Amongst other things, Brown and Eisenhardt (1997) showed how successful firms managed new product development through clock-based rather than event-based transitions, while improvising in the present and probing into the future. Scholars could build on this to examine other forms of temporal work that firms engage in to accelerate (or even slow down?) their processes and enable change. The strategic management literature has captured to some degree this idea with the notion of dynamic capabilities (Teece, 2007). However, describing something as a "capability" possessed by an organization tends to mask the actual activities involved. A temporal work perspective can contribute to opening up this black box.

Another area where a temporal work perspective can be valuable concerns the way in which organizations manage conflicts among competing temporal structures and assumptions. For example, recent studies have revealed conflicts around pacing where different units (e.g., strategic managers and scientists) and levels (top vs. middle managers) are driven by different temporal norms (Dougherty et al., 2013; McGivern et al., 2018). Relatedly, organizations find themselves increasingly operating in global and multi-cultural contexts where temporal assumptions "collide" (Reinecke and Ansari, 2015; Kim et al., 2018; Barkema et al., 2002) engendering a particular need for temporal work to bridge competing perspectives. Reinecke and Ansari (2015) showed for example how Fairtrade International engaged in "temporal brokerage" to negotiate pressures between the temporal structures of producers and consumers of fair trade products. Research that consider how managers and organizations work to bridge, transcend or reshape competing temporal structures would fit well in this special issue.

The context of sustainability provides a particularly rich domain for time-based research where tensions between short term and long term perspectives become entwined with (and sometimes confused with) those between social, environmental and economic goals (Bansal and DesJardine, 2014; Slawinski and Bansal, 2012; Slawinski and Bansal, 2015; Hahn et al., 2015; Sharma and Jaiswal, 2018). Work examining how firms and organizations can work on or shift taken-for-granted temporal structures and assumptions to reorient thinking about issues such as sustainability and climate change within and across organizations are clearly relevant to this

issue. In addition, studies that reveal how temporal structures more closely aligned with ecological and human social rhythms may be enacted in non-Western societies (Kim et al., 2018) or in other non-traditional settings such as the “slow movement” (Parkins and Craig, 2006) could be useful in thinking about new ways to approach the strategic challenges of sustainability, and in understanding the barriers to be overcome.

The ability to make temporal shifts depends of course on the scope, embeddedness and institutionalization of existing temporal structures (Orlikowski and Yates, 2002). Grandqvist and Gustafsson (2016) illustrate what they call “temporal institutional work” in their study of how institutional entrepreneurs changed the temporal norms driving the higher education field in Denmark. Studies that reach beyond individual firms and organizations to examine how collectives involving individual and organizational actors accomplish temporal work at this level are important and very welcome here.

The special issue is also concerned with the different forms that temporal work may take. Since temporal work is about influencing temporal structures and assumptions, a variety of kinds of practices may be engaged in. Some of these may involve direct interventions relying on the hierarchical power to formally set schedules, deadlines and temporal evaluation criteria (Chen and Nadkarni, 2017; Gersick, 1994). Such interventions may of course be explicitly or covertly contested or resisted, with potentially unexpected results (McGivern et al., 2018).

Other important forms of temporal work may be discursive. Suddaby et al. (2010) for example introduce the notion of “rhetorical history” in which past events may be strategically mobilized to orient future decisions. Historical narratives can serve as potential strategic tools to reconstruct organizational identities (Schultz and Hernes, 2013) and motivate organizational change (Suddaby and Foster, 2017). Consistent with this perspective, Dalpiaz and DiStefano (2018) show how managers reimagine the future, rethink the past and reconsider present concerns in processes of managing transformative change. They argue, similarly to Schultz and Hernes (2013) that deeper connections to the past allow more radical reorientations in the future. In a somewhat different vein, several authors have discussed the power of “temporal framing.” For example, Crilly (2017) shows how manager’s framing of time in more or less agential ways can have important effects on short-term or long-term emphasis, and Nadkarni et al. (2018) find that frames expressed with more or less temporal vagueness or distance in firm’s external communications can have an important effect on the timeline of competitor reactions. There is room for further research on the discursive aspects of temporal work.

Finally, temporal work may also implicate materiality. Historical artefacts from the past can serve as inspiration for future strategies (Hatch and Schultz, 2017; Schultz and Hernes, 2013). Moreover, artefacts and visualizations may also serve as means for what Comi and Whyte (2018) call “future making” as they are mobilized for imagining, testing, stabilizing and reifying abstract ideas into realizable strategic projects. Ravasi and colleagues (2018) use the term “material memory” to describe how organizations use material artefacts to revisit their history in light of present-day concerns and to inspire future action.

Overall the proposed focus of this special issue on temporal work and the strategic organization of time offers multiple opportunities for relevant, insightful and ground-breaking scholarship. We welcome empirical papers using a variety of methods to address these and related topics. We are also open to considering conceptual and methodological papers that make a strong novel contribution to the understanding of temporal work in strategic organization.

Timeline and submission instructions

All submissions should be uploaded to the Manuscript Central/ Scholar One website: <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/so> between November 1 and November 30, 2019. Once you have created your account (if you do not already have one) and you are ready to submit your paper, you will need to choose this particular Special Issue from the drop down menu that is provided for the type of submission. Contributions should follow the directions for manuscript submission described on the SO webpage: <http://journals.sagepub.com/home/sog>. For queries about submissions, contact *SO!*'s editorial office at strategic.organization@hec.ca. For questions regarding the content of this special issue, contact one of the guest editors.

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