

**Time Policies: Standardization, Regulations, Practices and Experiences. Junior Colloquium of the Centre interdisciplinaire d'études et de recherches sur l'Allemagne (CIERA)**

**Veranstalter:** Centre interdisciplinaire d'études et de recherches sur l'Allemagne (CIERA), Paris

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Many authors in the social sciences have tackled the issues of time and temporalities since the pioneering works of Durkheim, Mauss, Hubert or Elias. One finding quickly emerges from the study of this vast body of literature: a lack of overall unity. The authors seem to always address the issue through specific aspects: secularization through trade capitalism (Le Goff<sup>1</sup>); time discipline through industrial capitalism (Thompson<sup>2</sup>); time synchronization through modern science (Galison<sup>3</sup>); time standardization through globalization (Bartky<sup>4</sup>). Yet these relations are never explicit nor unambiguous. That is why the study of these relations continues to benefit from significant updates. Dohrn-van Rossum<sup>5</sup> reconsiders the significance of time rationalization in industrialization through a close examination of local markets, schools and work regulations since modern clocks appeared in Europe at the end of the 13th century. Likewise, Vanessa Ogle<sup>6</sup> studies the standardization of time in the context of an ambivalent globalization movement involving diffusion, imposition, emulation and adaptation processes in different cultural areas.

These stimulating but scattered approaches to time in the social sciences should not daunt further efforts at a global understanding of time dynamics in our modern societies. Now, many young researchers revisit these issues, including in Germany and France. Drawing upon new fieldworks focusing on concrete time and clock experiences, they somehow back away from previous approaches that are more abstract. This colloquium gathered some of these researchers to compare different historical periods, geographical ar-

reas and time practices in order to better understand the diverse origins of standard time and the intricacies of its political uses. For it is from the interactions between relations of power and social practices that our relation to time has been continuously reshaped.

EMMANUEL MUNCH (Bologna) presented his project about the rush hour. The solutions typically proposed to reduce congestion during the morning rush hour are based on technical considerations: it is company schedules that dictate that workers all commute at the same time. One solution put forward by traffic engineers and policymakers is therefore to promote flexible working hours. However, this project challenges the assumption that introducing flexible working hours would automatically have the effect of spreading passenger flows around morning peak times. Drawing on an international literature review and data from the last national household travel survey in the Paris region (ENTD 08), it reveals new findings that are apparently paradoxical. Far from leading to staggered workplace arrival times, flexible working hours would instead seem to be associated with an increase in the concentration of travel within the morning rush hour.

The lecture of ANDREAS BOLTE (Freiburg) was part of a project on the temporal practices of imperial rule in British Malaya and the Dutch East Indies between 1900 and 1940. The aim of this project is to try and analyse certain temporal practices and their use not only by imperial governments, but local officials, multinational companies, and managers as well as employees of the plantation industry, the railway and small-scale city businesses, who were all involved in the bargain-

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Le Goff, *Au Moyen Age: temps de l'Église et temps du marchand*, in: *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 15/3 (1960), S. 417-433.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Thompson, *Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism*, in: *Past and Present* 38 (1967), S. 56-97.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Galison, *Einstein's Clocks, Poincaré's Maps. Empires of Time*, London 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Ian Bartky, *One time fits all. The campaigns for global uniformity*, Stanford 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Gerhard Dohrn-van Rossum: *Die Geschichte der Stunde. Uhren und moderne Zeitordnung*, München 1992.

<sup>6</sup> Vanessa Ogle, *The global transformation of time 1870-1950*, Cambridge/Mass. 2015.

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ing process of imperial rule. The main focus lies with the economics of temporal practices: explaining why certain temporal practices, like planning, scheduling, punctuality, urgency, seemed to experience periods of relevance (at least for certain people), and times in which they just don't seem to be in demand. Comparing the role planning and scheduling played on plantations, in the railway network, and in the rural areas of the colonies promises insights into the mechanics of conflict in colonial societies, but also shines a light on the temporal practices that are still important today – even beyond the spheres of the imperial.

CÔME SOUCHIER (Grenoble) argued that the study of time standardization helps to understand the innovative ways in which modern societies have been governed by time. In the 18th century, standardization is mostly a scientific issue. Attempts at expanding access to precise timekeeping are prompted by a minority of scientists and enlightened politicians interested in the scientific prestige associated with accuracy. The French Revolution opens the door for a new political interest in this question. In the 1830s and 1840s, timekeeping becomes a central component of booming communication and transportation networks whose efficiency relies in part upon the adoption of mean time as a substitute to solar time. In the 1860s, timekeeping draws the attention of the broad urban public thanks to the progress of electric synchronization. The accuracy of public clocks is then strongly associated with a sense of modernity, a link to be found again during the adoption of a unified time-system in France in the 1880s. However, whereas past publications have mainly considered the end of local times as a rational move dictated by the needs of communication and transportation, Souchier argued that the political thrive for national communion (living *in* and *at* the same time) should not be overlooked. He also suggested that the introduction of summer time in 1916/17, too often reduced as a measure to save energy in times of war, is a prime example of a new rationale of time government. Drawing inspiration from time management in the factories and studies of time in the social sciences, this new rationale aims at better managing society through a careful analysis, regulation and

synchronization of its diverse temporalities.

FELIX SCHMIDT (Heidelberg/Paris) analyzed the points in time when governmental time regulations reached a new climax and a new universal time structure started to spread into everyday life. His contribution focused on the introductions of different standardized clock times in the late 19th and early 20th century in Germany: by looking at concrete cases (e.g. the introduction of the European Central Time, of Daylight-Saving Time or 24-hours-system), he examined the debates about the introduction of new, uniform clock times in the industrializing society. The regulation and synchronization of clock times has a global dimension of coordination, but is introduced by national states to reinforce national uniformity and strip away local times on a regional scale. The implementation of official standard times is linked to questions regarding the role and impact of time in daily life – because only few other regulations of the state penetrated the private life as deeply as time regulation. Schmidt primarily works with sources from German administrations, who gathered material on the debates about and on the effects of new standard times. Debates following the introduction of new standard times show typical social conflicts in the process of industrialization.

The history of timekeeping has long been divided between meta-narratives: these of the technological progress of devices, of the social discipline of clock time, of the accelerating world. *Telling time*, as a pragmatic rather than abstract social function, has yet to be included among the daily practices of individuals and groups within the sensible landscape of a city. The study of LOUIS GEORGES (Paris) aims to consider time as a sensible information that constitutes an important dimension of social practices in early-modern Paris. Such an information shapes the space of the city, through differentiated accessibilities to time-cues associating different groups to different timing centres, but is also shaped by the irregularity of activities throughout the day, which creates needs for precise time-information for some, and serves as indirect time-cues for others. The study focuses on 17th and early 18th century Paris, through an extensive examination of the social archival

collections: the testimonies of the *Châtelet* as narratives of daily life, churchwarden accounts, and royal accounts of public clocks. It argues that the shift toward more precise time-information is far less a „horological revolution“, as famously defined by David Landes<sup>7</sup>, than a social evolution in the access to time-information within the urban landscape: from the aural, synchronous, time signal of the bell ringing, to the visual and permanent display of the private instrument. Such an approach helps to install time as an integral dimension of urban practices, to consider information accessibility as a practical urban function, and to introduce time strategies as a space of agency for different social groups.

The contributions at the Junior Colloquium summarized that the understanding of the dramatic changes in our relation to time cannot dispense with a genuine empirical approach to the sociopolitical configurations enabling them. It should also take seriously their political implications and the ways in which time has been used as a tool to govern societies.

#### **Conference overview:**

##### *First axis: Time Regulations and Planning*

Emmanuel Munch (Università di Bologna): Flexibility of working times in Paris region: a tool to alleviate congestion during rush-hour?

Andreas Bolte (University of Freiburg): The imperial time regime. On planning and scheduling as practices of imperial rule in the Dutch East Indies and British Malaya in the early 20th century

##### *Second axis: Time Standardization in Germany and France*

Côme Souchier (University Grenoble-Alpes): Standardization of Time in French Context: from Scientific Precision to Instrument of Government

Felix Schmidt, (University of Heidelberg / EHESS Paris): The Introductions of Different Standardized Clock Times in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century in Germany

##### *Third axis : Time Practices and Time Experiences*

Louis George (University Paris X): Was Clock

Time a Public Good? Politics and Practices of Time Information in 17th Century Paris

Remarks:

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<sup>7</sup>David Landes, *Revolution in time*, Cambridge/Mass. 1983.