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Of Weaving, Repairing, and Resisting

Ulrike Felt

"Time is everywhere and it permeates everything" is the statement with which Barbara Adam opens the preface to this book. She highlights the importance of engaging with taken for granted, often tacit, assumptions about time, pointing to how the diversity of times is woven into complex timescapes (Adam, 1998) – an argument as relevant to academia as much as it is to everyday life. To understand and research academic times, Adam argues, means questioning how "the incompatible time logics that currently stress and stretch our lives and entails rendering explicit what is currently known implicitly" can be "combined into a coherent whole" (Adam, this book). This collection of chapters has taken important steps in this direction. The reader was taken into many corners of academic lives and work relations, investigating them from time-sensitive perspectives. We were incited to reflect on the uneven distributions and diverse understandings of time and to engage with phenomena of acceleration, while simultaneously feeling a shortening of time. Our attention was drawn to academic careers and to evaluation as loci of temporal expression. We were witnesses to specific moments and situations in which we could see and somewhat feel how time gets done (e.g. through managerial discourses and practices). And it was possible to follow how "we," be it as researchers, mentors or evaluators, are not simply subjected to temporal orders, but always also proactively perform time.

The chapters together have convincingly demonstrated the multiplicity of the visible and invisible forms of time at work and pointed to how time often tacitly governs (Felt & Fochler, 2010) academic processes, practices, and lives. They showed how through policies and decision-making practices different forms of time get expressed and thereby frame academic institutions, processes, modes of justification, and (e) valuations (Boltanski & Thevenot, 2006): in short, the chapters conveyed a deep understanding what living and knowing in academia means under these temporal conditions. Together this brought into perspective how these forms of time emerge out of and simultaneously enact academia, and how being sensitive to time allows the telling of different stories of development and change, of trading and wasting time, of in- and exclusion, and of (in)justices and (in)equalities in academia.

This final chapter will by no means even try the impossible task of coherently drawing together the different strands of discussions, all of which profoundly question specific articulations of time in academic environments. The following thoughts are more an opening up within the context of this rich backdrop – and are definitely not a conclusion. The introduction to this book by Filip Vostal (this book) did much of this broader framing of the issues at stake. The following thoughts should rather be read as an invitation to more

closely reflect the multiple connections of the observations found in the different chapters, to ask how we can productively address and deal with the many dimensions of time identified, and to think in broader terms about the politics of time – the chronopolitics – that governs academia (see Felt, 2017a, 2017b). In particular, I want to invite the reader to consider the challenges to be met when trying to combine different academic times into a coherent whole, and how the connections between multipleincompatibilities of temporal logics can lead to a more systemic rethinking of academic environments.

This chapter will address academic times from four different analytical angles to reflect on the entanglements and assemblages of different forms of time and timing in academic environments. Before doing so, I want to highlight that such a project never solely has an analytic purpose, but always also a *normative one*. Which of the many temporal phenomena that order contemporary academia we select to focus on, and how we investigate them, brings about different realities to care for, points to different vulnerabilities, gives voice to different actor groups, and brings into being specific matters of concern (Latour, 2008). Normative dimensions also have to be addressed when weighing the risks related to the introduction of specific temporal orders against the possible benefits, when pondering over who should carry the burden of proof when it comes to performing along ever new temporal logics, or when pondering over the question whether to align different temporalities is an individual or a structural/collective responsibility.

To look at the entanglements of different times means being attentive to the practices of weaving different times and temporal orders together, and sensitizes us to the fact that the practices of living across multiple and partly conflicting temporalities can create collateral damage, while each and any single temporality might seem reasonable and acceptable. Framing the issue at stake in terms of responsibility, we need to move our focus from single temporal phenomena to the question of what different times and temporal orders do together, and, thus, to look at the more complex "versions of the social that are being done quietly, incidentally, and along the way" (Law, 2011) when introducing ever new forms of time into academia. To use Law's terminology, we need to attend tothe many "collateral realities" (Law, 2011) that are being done, even when these are not being acknowledged. As many of the chapters are looking at academic lives and how they potentially can (not) be brought into being, we might also speak of "collateral futures": futures which can be realized, for example, in form of a successful career, through being labeled as "excellent," and those which are excluded. As a consequence, responsibility also has to be understood as entangledwith time, as always in development, and must be framed in new ways, maybe – to borrow a term by Madelaine Akrich (1992) – by conceptualizing it through "geographies of responsibility," in which responsibility relationships are multiple, distributed across space and time, always changing and going well beyond the spaces opened by single temporal orders.

Temporal Fabric of Academic Lives

A common thread in many contributions is an explicit and implicit critique of the linearity brought about by the strong focus on clock-time in academia. While I partly share this critique, the anthropologist Tim Ingold argues convincingly in favor of not simply rejecting the very idea of linearity and of using it to "conjure up an image of the alleged narrow-mindedness and sterility, as well as the single-track logic, of modern analytic thought" (Ingold, 2007, p. 2). Rather he invites us to engage with linearity, or with what he calls "lines," and to acknowledge that lives predominantly unfold "along paths" (which are a form of line) allowing "people to grow into a knowledge around them, and describe this world in the stories they tell." For engaging with linearities in academia this means that we need to explore how each path has some coherence, purpose, and logic; it serves some vision of how advances can be made and achievements reached and how value is generated in a specific environment. As narratives are a privileged location to observe how lines get done, studying trajectories and linearities then means scrutinizing the ways stories about lives in academia are being told, memories generated and futures projected. This fits well with Appadurai's (2012) argument that modernity tends to be caught up in the idea that everything develops along a trajectory, "a cumulative journey from here to there, more exactly from now to then" (p. 26). Even though, when taking a closer look, the connection between pasts and futures might in reality turn out to be more messy and complex, we still "tend to squeeze them into a linearity that fits this dominant way of thinking." Ingold (2007) argues that to capture these complexities we have to specifically attend to the multiplicity of lines that make up (academic) lives, and that we should understand life as "a manifold woven from the countless threads spun by beings of all sorts, both human and non-human, as they find their ways through the tangle of relationships in which they are enmeshed" (p. 3). In short, to understand academic lives we need to consider less single temporal developments and how they unfold, but rather reflect more closely how the different temporalities (and the paths they make possible) are woven together.

Indeed, many of the chapters in this collection use informants' narratives to understand the role of time in academic lives from a specific angle. Across these narratives, it seems worthwhile to look for the emergence of so-called "narrative infrastructures" (Deuten & Rip, 2000; Felt, 2017c). Using the notion of infrastructure sensitizes us to look out the "network of temporally stabilized narratives through which meanings and values of academic knowledge/work and its relation to society can be articulated, circulated and exchanged across space and time" (Felt, 2017c, p. 56). Narrative infrastructures are important as they "help to explain how coherence can emerge in multi-actor, multi-level processes, without any one actor being responsible for it" (Deuten & Rip, 2000, p. 71). They offer a shared resource researchers can tap into when trying to describe, characterize, and make sense of their situation; they allow the assessment of where one stands and how past developments should be read in relation to the present and future. Importantly, they express future promises or threats as well as moral reflections of what science more generally and academic researchers specifically should aim for. Thus, our work as analysts should not stop at collecting and bringing together specific

individualized stories about changing times in academia; rather, we need to look for those narratives that get widely shared and gain stability; it is them that are essential in creating a feeling of belonging.[1] Conceiving widely shared narratives as infrastructures also points to their invisibility. Only when such infrastructures break (Star & Ruhlender 1996) i.e. when dominant narratives make no longer sense, we become aware of their existence. Understanding narrative infrastructures is, thus, an important contribution to better capturing the temporal realities that academic researchers see themselves living in and to grasp how they "direct action and interaction, in the same way in which an infrastructure of roads and signs enables and constrains" (Deuten & Rip, 2000, p. 72).

Bringing the temporal fabric, rather than single threads, into focus irreversibly alters our way of understanding how different forms and performances of time matter. Indeed, while most papers follow one dominant thread – for example, time and writing, interpreting CVs vis-à-vis time, time and profession – through different arenas, and critically investigate the potential consequences of these threads, we would have to move beyond this approach to ask what the many linearities together manage to achieve – for better or worse. This means that we need to look for where and when different temporal threads get interlaced, encounter each other, are woven together; how they together offer the space for, or at least allow, the development of some form of satisfactory academic life. We need to ask: Can they be woven into a fabric that academics can make sense of, that offers some stability and support for leading good lives? How much maintenance work needs to be done to keep the temporal fabric in shape, and who needs to do this work? And if the temporal fabric breaks, can it be repaired, and what would such repair work look like?

I have, so far, used the notion of *academic lives* when arguing for a more complex understanding of the impact of the way in which academia gets temporalized. Coming from a science and technology studies perspective, I conceptualize living in academia as deeply entangled with how and what we can know. Looking into academic lives allows us to think about how the temporalities analyzed in this book could relate to the knowledge that can or cannot be produced. While knowledge appears from time to time in the book, little is said about the impact of time regimes *on* knowledge – on epistemic objects and practices. Sure, we have encountered rich descriptions of the impact of projectification on our ways of know (e.g. Ylijoki, this book), yet we know little about the kind of knowledge that gets lost through these temporalizations of academic worlds. Embracing a co-productive argument, I want to argue, with Jasanoff (2004), that "the ways in which we know and represent the world (both nature and society) are inseparable from the ways in which we choose to live in it" (p. 3). This means that both the space researchers can inhabit in academia – the epistemic living space (Felt, 2009) – but also the wider societal space which academia is embedded in impact what and how we produce knowledge. Retiming science and society, therefore, does not remain without

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[1] Edensor (2006) has pointed out for societies at large, that the sharing of the idea that certain temporal routines are adequate and at least acceptable plays an important role in creating a feeling of belonging.

consequences for how we know the world, and for the "ecologies of knowledge" ([Star, 1995](#)) that can emerge and strive. In the context of this chapter, the concept of ecologies of knowledge is meant to remind us of how time matters in the delicate balance between different knowledges, practices, material substrates, and forms of life as well as between diverse individuals, communities and parts of organizations. The multitude of elements that bring a system into being, and the balance (or absence of balance) between them, thus, moves to the center of our attention. Using the notion of ecology does not imply an approach to academia as a functional and closed system, but instead seeks to highlight the importance of making space for flexibilities in timing life and work in academia, for allowing different speeds and rhythms to unfold, for cherishing research without the *immediate* expectation of impact, and for sensitization to the different timescales that matter if we want diverse forms of knowledge and lives to take form. It further invites us to acknowledge that sustainability is an essential quality to care for in a knowledge ecology. Directing our analytic gaze to the temporal dimensions of an ecology should then also make us aware that today we largely live off knowledge resources that were created decades ago in a system with less tightly organized temporal structures and with a less clear call for research mainly oriented to quasi-immediate needs. We, thus, have to pose an inconvenient question: will the current highly temporalized regime of knowledge production be able to provide knowledge resources broad and diverse enough to address future problems ([Felt, 2015](#)).

Temporal Multiplicities and the Ontological Politics atWork

Following the different storylines in the book shows that whatever event we observe, whatever site we focus on, and at whatever scale we investigate, we always encounter the co-presence of multiple forms of time. Therefore, any analysis offers a specific enactment of time and academic life, rendering specific temporal articulations visible while making others invisible. This means that, as in any research endeavor, we undertake and in this book as a whole, we decide to enact a specific set of "relations that make some things (representations, objects, apprehensions) present 'in-here,' whilst making others absent 'out-there'" ([Law, 2004](#), p. 14). In this case, an edited book is always a choice of a set of authors that come on board and an editor that aligns them in specific ways, not forgetting reviewers, who also give shape to a volume. This book works through cases, through specific story lines that traverse the complex timescapes of academia. Other elements, however, are less explicit. The methodological angle each chapter uses does not simply carve out a specific temporal reality at work; the methods chosen participate in enacting these realities. Our approaches to time in academia, therefore, have political implications: they create visibilities, the presences in discourse around academia and its sustainability that we want to produce in a hope for change, and potentially make other things invisible. Further, we as analysts are part of these academic environments and are, thus, continuously engaged in temporal work – we make time, offer time, take time, waste time, organize time, and much more – as much as we are impacted by dominant academic timescapes.

Reading these different diagnostic narratives about time and academia reminded me of Annemarie Mol's (2002) *Body Multiple*. In this book, she takes the reader to different places in a hospital to see how a seemingly stable and well-defined medical condition becomes multiple through different practices which enact the condition in fundamentally different ways. In a similar manner, the chapters of this book take us to different locations and settings in academia in and through which time gets done, and specific understandings of the ailments of academia are enacted. The reality of academic time is actually performed differently in different places. Studying time in academic environments therefore requires "keep[ing] track as persistently as possible of what it is that alters when matters, terms, and aims travel from one place to another" (Mol, 2002, p. viii). This makes us aware that what we observe is a form of *ontological politics* (Mol, 2002), a politics that is related to the ways in which challenges in academia get framed differently through the lens of specific temporal aspects – be it careers, CVs, assessment rituals, project times, and many more – and to how academic institutions, value systems, ways of working and living, and knowledges are pushed and pulled into one shape or another.

As for the patient in Mol's story about the multiple enactments of a medical condition, this has massive consequences for the researchers in our stories, that is, for those who see a life in academia as something to strive for, those who expect academia to deliver achievements for broader society, and not least for us as analysts (we are also entangled in the stories). Yet temporal realities are not independent or uncoordinated. Mol shows us that in her case, these different enactments within practices finally come together in a patient's file. Even though they are enacted through practices in seemingly separate places, the realities, thus, produced are never entirely separated. When coordinating these different temporal realities some can "win" over others – can obtain priority. In other moments realities compete with each other, entailing a negotiation between the practices that produce them. However, this analogy prompts us to ask what is the equivalent of "the patient file" in our multiple enactments of temporal ailments of academia, and who "the patient" is that needs to be cared for. Where do different enactments of time get together, get coordinated in academic life? And what is of core concern when doing the coordination – is it the academic institution, individual academics, disciplines, or societal actors who are in need of knowledge to solve problems?

A Slow-burning Crisis and its Regimes of Imperceptibility

Many contributions to this collective volume offer a very critical reading of how temporal orders turning academia into something difficult to live in. It is framed as deficient on several levels, blind to some of the subtleties and diversities in academic work, and pressured to prove its efficiency and impact. It is the analysts' construction work which brings about this critical view. We encounter in reading the book several moments where we are invited to think in terms of crisis, ruptures, rifts, or the like. But what kind of crisis are we speaking of, and does this conceptualization of transformational moments as crisis matter to how we are able to grasp what is happening in contemporary academia?

Indeed, it is interesting in its own right to remark that writing on crisis has been part and parcel of academic production in the last decades. It points toward a perceived intensification – a dramatic, situational exacerbation of certain phenomena that runs the danger of bringing the academic system to the edge of its functional capacity. Instead of framing the proliferation of this notion as a problem, I rather want to engage with the temporal properties of the time-related crisis captured in this book. Etymologically, crisis means the turning point in the development of a disease, when something either turns to the better or worse. In writings on crisis (or disasters) a differentiation between slow-burning and fast-burning crisis is made. In many ways the academic crisis that is diagnosed could be classified as the former, that is, "gradual and creeping, […] where there is political and scientific uncertainty about how to resolve the issue" (Seabrooke & Tsingou, 2018, p. 470). Yet to understand crisis it is not only essential that we understand how policy makers or academic leaders construct and react to it, trying to govern the "problematic objects/situation." The way that subjects perceive, react to, and make sense of crisis is equally essential. Our inquiry, thus, has to move to the perceived intensity and tempo. We have to grasp the "combination of the political salience and emotional valence that an issue has for both authorities and social actors" (Seabrooke & Tsingou, 2018, p. 471) and to consider "the speed at which policy failures are transmitted between authorities and social actors" (Seabrooke & Tsingou, 2018, p. 471). The notion of fast and slow burning crisis, therefore, helps us to both think the moment through the pace at which change happens while also considering how it is perceived and affects those concerned. In my understanding of the re-timing of academia we have witnessed over the past decades, we are confronted with a slow-burning crisis. Time-related changes happen gradually, in parallel along non-connected paths, often in a non-concerted manner and they are triggered from within academic institutions as well as imposed from the outside (e.g. by funding agencies). Also processes of envisioning academic futures are important loci for retiming academia. It is the entanglement of all these diverse temporal threads that then needs to be at the core of our concerns.

It is, thus, crucial to carefully unpack how different actors in a specific situation, event, or setting read and make sense of change – how they push it or suffer from it, participate in making it happen, embrace or reject it. The divides alluded here, however, are not always clear. Accountability measures related to a (perceived) crisis might, while being described as oppressive by some, be experienced as empowering by others. Indicators, to take but one example, are often pointed at for their oppressive nature; however, sometimes they also offer moments of empowerment and pleasure (see Felt, 2017a; Ma, this book). Being satisfied when one seems to fit into a wider academic imaginary of performance, having a feeling of being in line with dominant expectations (i.e. synchronous with others), and, thus, being able to produce a coherent narrative of performance and progress can be observed in evaluation boards, the writing of CVs, and other moments where being up to speed and in time appears essential.

However, we need to also carefully examine the thin line between visibility and invisibility of the potential impact of re-timing academia. Borrowing the concept of "regimes of

imperceptibility" from Michelle [Murphey's (2006)](#) study on sick building syndrome[2] makes us aware of the difficulty of sensing temporal transformations in academic environments, which often happen backstage and remain unnamed over long periods in time. We could, therefore, read the oft-diagnosed time-related crisis in academia as having started a long time ago, and as silently and gradually emerging in a manner difficult to clearly perceive. Unacknowledged, as part of academic governance structures, a "regime of imperceptibility" has been put in place with regard to the changes in the temporal fabric of academia, the "building" researchers live in. This notion captures the institutional, social, and epistemological traditions which allow or disallow us to perceive the many temporal shifts that have restructured academic work, lives, and knowledge that is being produced. It is not that these changes could not in principle be seen; rather, they were *made* invisible, in part through dominant neoliberal narrative infrastructures and their visions, ideologies, and attendant practices. Competition at any price, indicator-talk, value for money discourses, the project logic as a sign of efficient knowledge work, the need to win the race, and many other tropes are examples encountered in this book and beyond. This is tied to a specific politics of time which manages to infiltrate the narrative infrastructures of academia, creating a new understanding of normality that makes critically surveying temporal change almost impossible. The history of how successes and advances in academia were rendered perceptible (e.g. through numbers of papers, impact factor counts, third-party funding attracted) was intrinsically linked to a delineation of what was made imperceptible. How the re-timing of academia came to exist is closely linked to how other elements and features came not to exist, even if only partially. Areas of imperceptibility can, thus, be seen as the inevitable result of the ways that researchers came to render the new modes of time measurable, quantifiable, assessable, and knowable in some ways and not others.

Similar to the case of the sick building syndrome, implementing such a regime of imperceptibility leads to a situation where problems related to the re-timing of research cannot be identified, classified, or straightforwardly addressed. There seem to be ailments and sufferance which remain often diffuse, becoming palpable only through the reports on the challenges of academic lives that we find in journals like *Times Higher Education*[3] or *The Scientist,* which describe the complex conditions under which academics live and consequences seen as related to that. In short, various nonspecific symptoms occur in occupants of the building "academia," but no single specific cause can be identified.

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[2] Sick building syndrome describes a situation in which occupants of a building experience health related effects that seem to be linked to their being in the building. However, a specific cause cannot be identified.

[3] Two such examples of innumerable articles on stress-linked mental health problems (see https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/half-uk-academics-suffer-stress-linkedmental-health-problems); on stress in academia and competition (see https://www.thescientist.com/profession/the-awesome-stress-of-science-and-how-to-relieve-it-60951).

One way to escape this imperceptibility trap is careful comparison of different academic systems, allowing us to perceive the often not clearly spelled out time-related structures which can push and pull academic lives in quite considerable ways. This would allow the analyst to throw dominant forms of imperceptibility into relief, and to demonstrate that imperceptibility is not necessarily happening accidentally and inevitably but is sometimes purposefully generated and maintained. This brings me back to my argument concerning the importance of looking at the temporal fabric as such, and not only at single, more, or less related threads. We need to understand the arrangements of narratives, practices, processes, values, epistemic objects, and people in academic environments, and to look at how they can articulate each other under specific temporal conditions. The central question we are left with is, thus, how to develop such a regime of perceptibility, one that is able to render us capable of *seeing* and *understanding* the temporal structures that are being introduced, enacted, lived in, and reproduced.

Temporal Infrastructures and Regimes

So far, I have outlined three analytic angles through which we can look at temporal orders in academia, starting with highlighting the entangled character of different temporalities, continuing by drawing attention to multiplicity and the related ontological politics of temporalizations, and ending with looking at re-timing academia through the concept of crisis and regimes of imperceptibility. In this last part, I want to use sensitizing notions of temporal infrastructures and regimes to offer a final angle which can shed light on the entanglements and assemblages of different forms of time and timing in academic environments.

The concept of infrastructure nicely captures our shifting focus from single temporalities/temporal orders, and the sites where they are enacted, to the connectedness and entanglements between them. In using infrastructure I follow Slota and Bowker's (2017, p. 531) argument that the key question to be asked

> *is not whether a given thing is in essence an infrastructure but when it is an infrastructure. There is no system that is inherently infrastructural; there are only observed infrastructural relationships.*

As analysts, it is, therefore, crucial not to look for temporal infrastructures as given, stable things, but to focus on infrastructural relationships of different forms of time and temporal orders in certain situations and expressed in actual practices (Star, 1999, p. 380). We, therefore, have to shift our attention to the processes of *temporal (re)infrastructuring* academia. This means closely considering practices of imagining, narrating, designing, making, and adapting times with the aim of creating a tightly knit temporal fabric. We also need to acknowledge that infrastructures "emerge out of and store within them forms of desire and fantasy" (Larkin, 2013, p. 329). They address specific concerns and speak to certain values and not others – for example, more efficient research or better competition – and, thus, call for close reflection concerning whose values are scripted into these infrastructures. Finally, infrastructuring academia through re-timing also brings into being specific kinds of academics,

individually and collectively, who envisage, rethink, and perform time, potentially in radically new and non-intended ways. The highly experimental character of temporal interventions, thus, needs to be acknowledged, and we should ask who the experimental subjects are, what kinds of experiments are acceptable, and to what ends and under what conditions.

Thinking academia through the notion of temporal infrastructuring also calls for in-depth scrutiny of what Rinderspacher (1988, p. 14) has called "time generators." For him, time generators are those key sites, processes, and imposed practices that manage to create binding temporal requirements and regulations and impose a rhythm on a specific system, and that can create homogenized time standards. We need to explore more closely how they come into being, not forgetting what imaginations have been scripted into them by "designers" (i.e. university administrators, policy makers, funding agencies) and what sorts of values are supposed to be performed through them. In contemporary academia as much as within society at large, ever new time generators have been put in place over the last few decades. They range from funding programs and processes over institutional accounting cycles to highly structured career paths – to mention but a few of the more obvious time generators. Needing to accommodate these different, often conflicting, temporal demands, and the efforts necessary to make different temporal orders cohere, is not radically new; yet, due to the multiplication of newly introduced time generators, the task of weaving together different temporalities in a way that makes sense to academics seems to have become a much bigger challenge.

In this context, Innerarity has reminded us that "controlling temporal resources," as well as "the regulation of rhythms, duration, speed, sequencing, and the synchronization of events and activities," are an important way to express power relations (Innerarity, 2012, pp. 79–80). Indeed, as "time becomes the locus of social opportunities," it is essential to observe whether or not it is possible for academics to synchronize with systemic temporalities – whether they have access to information to anticipate developments and, thus, take decisions at the right moment in time. Exclusion from academic environments, to give but one example, no longer occurs through visibly depriving people of material resources. Exclusion can happen invisibly by not allowing particular individuals to be in line with the dominant temporal infrastructure. This points to how important understanding of temporalities becomes for academia. Ultimately the temporalities and the related sense-making processes act on the people within the system, on what they can do and what they can know, drawing the line between those who can enter and stay and those who cannot.

This brings me to a second notion, that of a temporal regime,[4] which specifically addresses the multiple entanglements that need consideration. Speaking of a temporal regime invites the consideration of three dimensions. First, we need to be attentive to *academic institutions, the people who run them, the guiding myths and ideologies and what they are supposed to produce*. This means posing questions concerning academic leadership, decision-making

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[4] In using the notion of regime I am inspired by Hecht's (2001) definition.

procedures, and (re)distribution and reward mechanisms, but also the many mission state-ments that we encounter when engaging with institutions. In short, it means engaging with the "narrative infrastructures" that academic institutions have crafted over time to account for their choices and behaviors. How does time fold and unfold in and through these stories? Similarly, histories of institutions and memory practices matter – the ways in which institu-tions continually invent their tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983), how they cherish their place in the rankings, how they produce knowledge and reproduce themselves, and many such more. This is closely connected to the time generators that institutions put in place, re-inforce, and adapt.

Second, it is essential to look at the *prescriptions* performed through these institutions, and more specifically how these prescriptions are expressed through the concrete temporal infrastructures that academics have to live by. This does not only point to formal temporal policies or institutional practices, but also alerts us to broader visions of the temporality of socio-epistemic orders. This speaks to ideal rhythms of career, to contract length, to dis-courses that connect quality (and, in particular, excellence) and time, but also to production and evaluation cycles, to mention but a few. We, thus, need not only look at perceptions of time and the emotions our informants express when it comes to temporalities in their aca-demic lives, but also combine this with institutional documentary practices. These documents are constitutive of and perform the material culture of time in institutions. Many of the time generators mentioned above are actually not simply "put in place," but are outlined and rea-soned in documents; they can, therefore, teach us "how institutions think" (Douglas, 1986). These documents, and in particular their exchange, how we are continuously reminded of how to look at the academic world and its temporalities, are important. The chapters in this book that deal in a rich manner with evaluation processes tell us something about documents, but much less about how we are trained *to document* and what rules of documentation look like, for example, how we as reviewers are asked to document our choices in specific ways and not others. It seems essential to incorporate more extensively this seemingly mute material evi-dence into our qualitative inquiries into how time is (to be) performed.

Finally, the notion of the temporal regime would also want to capture the *contested na-ture of power exercised through temporalities*. Indeed, any regime has to grapple with opposi-tion, and has to contend with varying forms of dissent and resistance both from within and from outside. It is essential to learn more about these forms of resistance – to understand the workarounds that people develop, and how that gets reflected in practices such as handling of projects and CV writing. This entails pondering over how this capacity to resist and to de-velop counter strategies becomes an important part of academic identities, and how much work academics devote to the folding and performing of time to make it cohere for them. Taken together, the notion of the regime allows us to bring together the different dimensions of how time is enacted in different places, both institutionally and individually; to see how this is prescriptive; and to make space for non-compliance. So what would happen if we think the dimensions of division of labor (Chapter 7), projectification (Chapter 4), discourses on excel-lence (Chapter 10), and the work of reading CVs in assessment (Chapter 13) – to mention but

some of the rich analysis offered in this book – as being entangled in one place, one life, one institutional context? We then would have to acknowledge the "temporal care work" ([Felt, 2017b](#)) that needs to be done to align the fragmented and inconsistent temporal structures and to create some form of coherence and cohesion ([Giesen, 2004](#)) in academic lives, academic work, and epistemic practices. Most institutions do neither acknowledge this kind of work, nor the emotional investments demanded. Therefore, consideration should not only be directed toward to

> *the ways in which time is spent and saved, used and produced, managed and accounted for, day by day and week by week in concrete settings, but also to the plural ways it is experienced [by diverse members of the academic community] and made meaningful. ([Felt, 2009](#), p. 36)*

A Short Non-concluding Invitation

This last chapter of the book has tried to spell out an invitation to more entangled engagements with time in academia. I tried to argue how much our framing of the problem at stake matters, and how this framing pushes and pulls academic lives in one direction or another. In a way, I was warning of the danger of laboratorizing ([Guggenheim, 2012](#)) our reflections on academic times, that is, by cutting our units of analysis into small manageable and publishable case studies or by embracing specific, relatively narrow, angles which allow us to gain an in-depth understanding of one particular dimension while being blind to others. By no means is this to be understood as an easy critique of doing so. This mode of production is itself an outcome of the temporal logic which makes our world of academic analysts and writers.

I started out by thinking of time in its entanglements as a temporal fabric which gets woven together from very different threads and which needs repair work when it threatens to break, but which also creates pockets and practices of resistance. I then moved on to acknowledge the multiplicity of places and moments where time gets performed and is brought into being, pointing to the fact that what we observe here is a form of ontological politics. This also invites us, as analysts, to ask where and when these different performances of academic times need to be aligned if they are to make sense to individuals inhabiting academia and suffering from the temporal ailments of academic lives. In a third step, I moved the idea of academia in a crisis of time to the center, asking what kind of crisis we are confronted with and what tools we have as analysts and as inhabitants of academic worlds to perceive and capture the many different and simultaneous temporal changes and their entanglements. Using the concept of regimes of imperceptibility I sought to sensitize us to the fact that (im)perceptibility is not simply given, but has been put in place. However, it remained open how this regime has evolved, and by whom it has been supported and driven. This brings us back to the start of this book, where Barbara Adam pointed to taken for granted and often tacit assumptions about time – to the fundamental invisibility of time. It is this invisibility, and the fact that we have developed little sensorial capacity to capture changing temporalities, that allows time to take on such a powerful role in academia. I ended by thinking about time in terms of infrastructure, discussing how academic lives and the knowledges we can create

invite us to analyze the temporal regimes which govern academia, including forms of resistance that emerge.

All four angles have one plea in common, an invitation to be attentive to the entanglements of different temporal phenomena. This means engaging with the situations in which different temporalities need to be articulated, aligned, and synchronized. It further means asking normative questions, such as what a good academic life to be aimed for in the shadow of time is, and how our analyses could contribute to making this happen. The chapters of this book each offer insights into one or the other impacts of temporalization of academia. The reader can take these threads and use them to reflect, or simply to speculate on what further insights weaving the threads together might offer us.

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