Concepts of Time and Temporality in the Storytelling and Sensemaking Literatures: A Review and Critique

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A considerable body of literature exists on narratives and stories in explaining how individuals and groups make and give sense to their experiences in organizations. Classic Aristotelian narratives with a linear time structure (stories with a beginning, middle and end) are prominent in the storytelling literature, whereas retrospection, in drawing on the past in making sense of the present, is a temporal modality central to foundational concepts of sensemaking. In examining time and temporality in these related fields, the authors show how the conventional temporal sequence of a past, present and future dominates, with little consideration being given to time as a multiple rather than singular concept. The authors compare and contrast differences in the temporal aspects of mainstream theories and identify a growing interest in philosophical concepts of time. This review highlights how conventional explanations in these related fields of study are underpinned by linear conceptions of temporality (with an associated causality) and how there is growing recognition of fluidity in the way pasts and futures come together in temporal sensemaking of an emergent present. Although this movement towards explanations that engage with non-linear modalities deepen insight, they do not explicitly address concepts of time. Time continues to receive scant attention, with temporal but 'timeless' theories taking precedence, ultimately constraining theoretical development. In building on this analysis, the authors characterize a range of temporal modalities from which they identify six pathways for charting out an agenda for future research in which multiple concepts of time and temporality are brought to the fore.

Introduction

In a critical evaluation of the importance of time and temporality to explanations of sensemaking and storytelling processes, our aim is to assess the current stock of knowledge and identify areas in need of further research. We argue that, while discussions of sensemaking and storytelling are burgeoning, the value of serious consideration of multiple approaches to time and temporality in concept development and theorization is only just beginning to be recognized (Brunelle 2016; Dawson and Sykes 2016). Institutionalized standard universal time continues to dominate concept development in management and organization studies, with broader concepts of time receiving little attention (Adam 2004; Bluedorn and Denhardt 1988; Whipp *et al*. 2002). Under industrial work regimes, clock time – in enabling a standardized objective measure of intervals and events (Zerubavel 1981, 1982) – has developed as a critical management tool in the control and coordination of business operations (Taylor 1911; Thompson 1967). In being central to management practice (Claessens *et al*. 2007), clock time assumptions have tended to underpin (either explicitly or implicitly) most management research (Blyton *et al*. 1989; Butler 1995; Hassard 1991), with a general neglect of other time concepts such as process time (Reinecke and Ansari

2017), experiential time (Sherover 2001) and world time (Dodd *et al*. 2013). Alternative concepts of time from philosophers (Bergson 1913; Heidegger 1962; McTaggart 1993) and social scientists (Adam 1990, 2006; Gell 2001; Hassard 1990a) are gaining increasing attention (Bakken *et al*. 2013; Chia 2002; Hernes *et al*. 2013; Sonnentag 2012) and spotlight the need for further conceptual and theoretical exploration of time and temporality in management and organization studies (Hernes 2014).

The tendency to neglect time has been identified (Ancona *et al*. 2001a,b; Roe *et al*. 2009; Shipp and Fried 2014a) and has been discussed in relation to particular areas of research, such as management learning (Berends and Antonacopoulou 2014) and strategic change (Kunisch *et al*. 2017; Pettigrew *et al*. 2001). In the narrative and storytelling field, time remains largely unexplored and surprisingly absent in the extensive literature review by Rhodes and Brown (2005). While within the sensemaking literature temporality is central, it is cast as a linear movement over 'real' clock-based time in which the past is used to make and give sense to the present (Whittle *et al*. 2016). For example, in Weick's (1995) original theorizing, it is time past, through the backward glance, that takes centre stage, where sensemaking processes are seen to be triggered retrospectively by unforeseen and unusual events (particularly evident in occurrences that threaten identities), where people seek to make plausible sense of what has occurred.

This dominant linear view of temporality drawn from conventional representations of clock time (digitally embedded in a range of everyday devices) has been widely criticized (Adam 1990, 2004; Glennie and Thrift 1996; Thrift 2004; Wajcman 2015), with a growing recognition of the need to bring differentiated concepts of time to the fore (see Christensson *et al*. 2014). There is a small but expanding call to move beyond objective time (Allman *et al*. 2014) and time-free research (Hassard 1990b, p. 1) or timeless knowledge (Roe *et al*. 2009) to a more conceptually informed theorization in which concepts of time are made more explicit and openly discussed (Ancona *et al*. 2001b; Bluedorn 2002; Dawson and Sykes 2016; Goodman *et al*. 2001). In contributing to this call, we review the use of temporal perspectives in mainstream explanations and critically evaluate the place of time in the development of theoretical frames for understanding storytelling and sensemaking. We commence by outlining the work of two eminent scholars in the field, namely, Yannis Gabriel (2000) and David Boje (2008), focusing on their use

of temporal modalities. Their approaches are particularly pertinent, as Gabriel (2004a) works within a more conventional temporal frame with a recognizable beginning, middle and end, while Boje (2014) moves beyond the classical narrative form towards less consolidated webs of rough living stories (Boje and Smith 2010, p. 310) and what he terms 'a bet on the future' or 'antenarrative' (Boje 2011). Boje (2012) has also sought to incorporate radical insights about time from quantum mechanics, in contrast to the more conservative/traditional Aristotelean position of Gabriel, who is interested in organizational stories (from a folklorist tradition) that have a fixed temporality with a plot and a clear set of characters. After comparing these works, we examine time and temporal modalities in the storytelling and sensemaking literatures and the contribution of studies that examine temporal interplay and engage in a more explicit differentiation of concepts of time. We conclude by outlining a temporal characterization of sensemaking stories and identifying six pathways for charting out a future research agenda.

Methods

We commenced our research by looking at existing reviews in management and organizations that covered the themes of time and temporality, narrative and storytelling and sensemaking. On time in management research, the special edition of the *Academy of Management Review* (Goodman *et al*. 2001) and the *Scandinavian Journal of Management* (Hernes *et al*. 2013) provided useful starting points, as did the review by Rhodes and Brown (2005) on narrative and organizations and the one on sensemaking by Maitlis and Christianson (2014). A number of well-cited books on time in management and society (Adam 2004; Bluedorn and Denhardt 1988) and more recent editions (see, for example, Roe *et al*. 2009; Shipp and Fried 2014b; Wajcman 2015) all provided good sources of references. From these readings, a common and persistent claim centred on the general absence of conceptual thinking about time and temporality (Berends and Antonacopoulou 2014; Dawson and Sykes 2016).

These claims were confirmed in a title search conducted using the ISI Web of Science combining 'narrative' and 'time', then 'narrative' and 'temp*'. Initially, the results looked promising, with a retrieval result of 980 and, even when refined to articles, amounted to 552 papers. However, on further

examination and on reading the abstracts of these articles, a lot of the material was either unconnected or had a different discipline focus. This was followed by a search on 'story' and 'time' or 'temporal*', which recorded 123,870 hits (83,896 articles), but again many of these remain outside our main focus of interest. A search on the topic of stories, sensemaking and time generated 28 results and 26 articles, of which 16 were relevant to the review. On combining the titles of 'sensemaking' and 'time', then 'sensemaking' and 'temp*', a further nine articles were retrieved, followed by 'storytelling' and 'time' then 'storytelling and 'temp*', which uncovered 29 articles.

The abstracts from 552 papers in our initial search plus the 26 from stories, sensemaking and time, and the remaining 38 articles were reviewed. We then combined these with references identified through examining reviews, books, special editions and reviewers' suggestions, and, after evaluation, a 150 references were selected for use in the review. We excluded papers that either used time or temporality in a general sense or linked these concepts to other notions outside our main focus of interest, such as paid time or temporary work arrangements. We also excluded studies outside management and organization studies that focused on other fields of research, such as scripture studies, screenwriting or the storytelling abilities of those with a hearing impediment. Although we examined a number of articles from other discipline fields that offered the potential to add to our understanding or to open up areas not previously considered, many of these were eventually discarded. While we encountered a large body of literature on each theme, we identified only 37 articles that linked time with storytelling and sensemaking. This supported the common claim that, in organizational research, time usually remains hidden or implicit and is seldom discussed explicitly (Roe *et al*. 2009).

Concepts of time and temporality in storytelling organizations and storytelling in organizations

In this section, we examine time and temporality in the influential work of two well-cited scholars who have produced books with contrasting perspectives, one entitled *Storytelling in Organizations* (Gabriel 2000), and the other with a somewhat similar but importantly different title, *Storytelling Organizations* (Boje 2008). A key comparative difference centres on their definition and approach to stories. Gabriel is concerned with completed coherent stories with a beginning, middle and end, whereas Boje examines unfinalized stories and future-oriented sensemaking. Temporality is central to both and yet, as we will illustrate, concepts of time remain implicit and inadequately theorized.

Gabriel: coherent stories, sequenced time and story types in organizations

For Gabriel, stories are a subset of narratives (while all stories are narratives, not all narratives are stories), arguing that theories, statistics, reports or documents that describe events and seek to present objective facts should not be treated as stories (nor for that matter should clichés), as stories interpret events often distorting, omitting and embellishing to engage audience emotions, they generate, sustain, destroy and undermine meaning, and while they are crafted along particular lines they do not obliterate the facts (Gabriel 2000, pp. 3–4). Drawing from the folklorist tradition, Gabriel is interested in the stories that arise in organizations from the personal experience of individuals (a form of living folklore) that, he argues, provides a useful lens on the nature of organizations. These stories are complete, with a beginning, middle and end, they have characters with plots, and the story is told with narrative skill to entertain, engage and persuade the listening audience (Gabriel 2000, p. 22). In this sense, stories are seen to provide meaning and a sense of coherence to complex sets of events in enabling temporal connection and in reducing what Brown and Kreps (1993, p. 48) refer to as the 'equivocality (complexity, ambiguity, unpredictability) of organizational life'. The plot of a story provides movement over time from 'an original state of affairs, an action or an event, and the consequent state of affairs' (Czarniawska 1998, p. 2). For Gabriel, a good story is well timed and entertaining, it encourages repetition but 'it does *not* invite factual verification' (Gabriel 2000, p. 23). He is critical of broader characterizations of stories and the stance taken by Boje (2008) that a few words can conjure up interpretative meanings that constitute a story. For Gabriel, this type of organizational storytelling (terse fragments, platitudes or opinions) is little more than a form of narrative de-skilling (Gabriel 2004b) that obscures the rich tapestry of organizational life (Gabriel 2000, p. 29). They do not engage or persuade audiences and, as Gabriel (2000, p. 20) states: 'Boje loses the very qualities that he cherishes in stories, performativity, memorableness, ingenuity, and symbolism'.

Coherent, finalized stories are embedded with a linear structure that aligns with clock time and the Gregorian calendar (Gabriel 2000, p. 239). Chronology and objective time implant these stories with an identifiable past, present and future and a linear causality that provides a temporal structure (a beginning, middle and end with plot and characters). This linearity is tied to the inviolability of sequenced events that occur within a tensed notion of time where, for example, you cannot have a character seeking revenge before an original insult has occurred, nor can you have a punishment for a crime that will be committed later. There is an attribution of causal connection within plot lines that point to one incident as being responsible for another and, within organizations, these stories of change may be challenged by counter-narratives that question the order of events and propose an alternative sequence of causal events. What folkloric storytelling and Aristotelean theory of plot have in common is an emphasis that certain events happen in sequence, and that this sequence cannot be violated.

Gabriel (2000, pp. 84–85) identifies a series of generic poetic modes in which primary types of stories consist of the comic, tragic, epic and romantic, with secondary modes being characterized by humour, cock-up, tragic-comedy and epic-comic. In outlining the predicament, plot focus, poetic tropes and emotions found within these story types, he argues that the strength and weakness of stories is how they can, through relatively simple plots, characters and key motives enable sensemaking of muddied, complex, ambiguous realities.

Nevertheless, while there is a linear causality in this sequenced timing of events, the workings of time within these stories are often far from linear, as witnessed by the original version of *Tender is the Night* by F. Scott Fitzgerald (Fitzgerald originally uses flashback in the narrative, but in the version that most are familiar with, the editor has restructured the story into a linear chronology of events), Homer's *The Odyssey*, which starts on year nine of Odysseus' ten-year struggle to return home after the Trojan War, and Grimm's fairy tales, which highlight a certain playfulness with time in the dramatic leaps, playbacks and the simultaneous unfolding of more than one plot line. From this folklorist perspective, sequenced event time predominates, and conventional temporality is not called into question, and yet there remain subtle and different conceptions of time, sometimes continuous, sometimes discontinuous, sometimes linear and sometimes timeless, that extend beyond a simple characterization

of Newtonian linear-time. However, in his critique of the folklorist perspective, Boje (2006) maintains that there is a form of chronological containment that we need to move beyond or, as he terms it, to set stories free from their narrative prison.

Boje: the here-and-now, unfinalized stories and antenarratives

Boje (1995) moves beyond the classic Aristotelian narratives with a linear time structure towards the simultaneity of storytelling. He uses the concept of antenarrative, where: 'Antenarrative is the fragmented, non-linear, incoherent, collective, unplotted, and prenarrative speculation, a bet. To traditional narrative methods antenarrative is an improper storytelling a wager that a proper narrative can be constituted' (Boje 2001, p. 1). Unlike Gabriel's stories with developmental plots and structure, these 'before-stories' are more rhizomatic, non-linear, unfinalized and fragmented. From Boje's perspective, coherent narratives built on retrospective sensemaking serve to control and regulate, while living stories in the present (as in simultaneous storytelling) disperse and challenge, providing alternative interpretations, with antenarratives offering future possibilities through prospective sensemaking.

In his work, written over several decades, Boje develops and moves between three temporal perspectives. In his early work, Boje places antenarratives along the arrow of time as future-oriented ways of sensemaking that can shape future outcomes (Boje 2008, p. 13), before moving towards a more performative approach in incorporating elements of quantum mechanics and taking a Baradian (Barad 2007, 2014) entangled 'spacetimemattering' view (Boje 2012). This performative relational perspective is then later displaced in his return to a more Einsteinian connected view of space–time in using Bakhtin's (1981, p. 84) concept of chronotopes (literally, 'time space') to examine Burger King's storytelling in space, time and strategic context (Boje *et al*. 2016a).

In contrast to Gabriel's (2000) completed stories, a key finding of Boje (1991, pp. 112–113) is that 'people told their stories in bits and pieces, with excessive interruptions of story parts, with people talking over each other to share story fragments, and many aborted storytelling attempts'. Boje describes the stories he collected as 'terse' and acknowledges that, in all his transcripts, hardly a single story bears repetition outside its home territory as a 'good story'. He contrasts the temporal linearity and coherence of modernist

conceptions of narrative (Czarniawska 1998; Gabriel 2000) with the polyphony, unfinalized and temporal openness of storying in the here-and-now (Boje 2001; Collins and Rainwater 2005). For Boje (2008, p. 1) narrative has served to present reality in an ordered fashion (the arrow of time), whereas stories are at times able to break out of this narrative order and offer a more diverse, fragmented and muddled view of reality (non-linear temporality). He refers to a storytelling organization as a 'collective storytelling system in which the performance of stories is a key part of members' sensemaking and a means to allow them to supplement individual memories with institutional memory' (Boje 1991, p. 106). Narratives in which causally related episodes provide generalizations are not synonymous with stories in the here and now 'where the hearer fills in blanks and silences with chunks of story line' (Boje 2006, p. 3). Boje argues that it is the transformative dynamics from the interplay of story and narrative that changes organizations.

In what would be viewed as a playful exploration of temporal modalities, Boje (2008, 2012) contests that stories differ from structured narratives existing and operating in multiple and sometimes fragmentary forms that go beyond the retrospective. He draws on John Kriznac's play called *Tamara* in which the actors are performing in a number of different rooms of a large mansion and the audience has to decide which room(s) they want to locate in or move between and/or which actors they wish to follow as they move around from room to room. In this way, the audience are not able to view all the performances as they occur but, rather, have to make sense from the sites in which they have been present. This simultaneous storytelling in multiple sites encourages dialogue between different members of the audience to ask about stories performed in places from which they were absent. Boje (1995) uses this insight to spotlight how researchers looking through one lens (stuck in one space–time or room) will be unable to make sense of the simultaneous storying that is occurring elsewhere (in other space–times or rooms).

Boje claims that account needs to be taken of the reflexive and transcendental nature of sensemaking. Moving beyond the reflexive dialectics of Hegel's thesis and antithesis or Ricoeur's (1984) identity of sameness and difference, he draws on the work of Bakhtin (1981, p. 2) to argue that, while narrative is 'a monologic bid for order stories are more fluid and unfinalized'. Boje seeks to elevate the place of stories in organization studies in examining the interplay between the control of narrative (order) and the unfinalized nature of emergent story (disorder). His concept of antenarrative as a form of 'pre-narrative speculation' (Boje 2001, p. 1), draws attention away from clock-time in highlighting how futures (family stories or strategic possibilities) are generally constrained under linear temporal frames (see also Vaara and Pedersen 2014) but, through an antenarrative lens, can be viewed as preparations (antecedent generative processes) that can be nurtured to bring into being other potential futures. As Boje *et al*. (2016a, p. 395) indicate, through situating antenarratives in subjective time, they are able to show 'how diverse voices interconnect, embed and entangle in organizational strategies'.

In his later work, Boje (2014) further develops this concept of antenarrative. His essential claim is that there is an undercurrent of antenarrative forces (five entangled aspects are identified) that interplay with living story webs and dominant narratives, consisting of: before (fore-having); beneath (fore-conception); between (fore-structure); bets (fore-telling); and becoming (fore-care). These Heideggerian 'fore' notions (antenarrative forces) are shown to permeate storytelling fields interacting and potentially transforming living stories and grand narratives, steering shifts between dominant and counter-narratives (Boje *et al*. 2016b); and conjoining 'prospective and retrospective sensemaking, connecting grander, universal, abstract narratives to living stories' (Boje *et al*. 2016a, p. 394). In examining 'little' stories (microstoria) alongside fully formed narratives in Burger King, the authors highlight 'struggles between and beneath grand narratives with living stories of life and work in relation to the before of enacting strategic steps and the cyclical bets on anticipated actions' that shape strategic change (Boje *et al*. 2016a, p. 399). In applying these learnings, Flora *et al*. (2016) develop the notion of embodied re-storying practices (ERPs) in which habituated dominant narratives can be re-storied and reframed (these changing stories are not just words but are sociomaterial entanglements, often shaped with the aid of material objects) to enable those that have suffered from military trauma to re-integrate into their families.

It is not surprising that Gabriel (2000, pp. 18–19) is critical of this view, and the claim by Boje that these terse stories act as a central sensemaking currency for human relationships in organizations. For Gabriel, these stories are not proper narratives, as they hardly ever feature as integrated pieces of narrative with a full plot and a complete case of characters; instead, they exist as fragments with allusions

in a state of continuous flux as people talking together contribute bits and pieces. He uses the term 'protostories' to refer to this veritable soup of fragments (half-spun tales, opinions and so forth) that he argues constrain vibrant stories (counter-narratives) that have more power-political potential to supplant and subvert official narratives in organizations. Although both scholars usefully illustrate the power of narratives to make and give sense to experiences in organizations, Gabriel (2000) adopts a folklorist position with a reliance on conventional temporality and sequenced event time, in which causality is built into the narrative construction with a progressive temporality (beginning, middle and end). In contrast, Boje (2011) is interested in the more fragmented and terse stories and the ways in which these unresolved narratives open up possibilities for potential futures (prospective sensemaking). In the focus on finalized (ordered) stories, a linear temporality is fixed in the narrative structure, whereas in the unfinalized (disordered) stories, non-linear modalities are evident in exploring quantum storytelling and adopting a Heideggerian lens for examining antenarrative forces in the interplay of microstoria and grand narrative. However, time, while central, is never fully unpacked, but resonates behind a broader notion of non-linear temporality. To paraphrase Berends and Antonacopoulou (2014, p. 307), although these studies focus on different temporal aspects of storytelling, time is not adequately theorized and integrated into these domains.

Temporal modalities in storytelling and processes of sensemaking

In this section, we explore conceptions of time and temporal modes in the way various sensegiving devices influence and are influenced by the ongoing process of storytelling, in which past understandings (retrospective sensemaking) combine with 'future perfect thinking' (Weick 1979, p. 198). We show how, for some, modalities of past, present and future are linked to an underlying concept of linear time where the past is viewed as determinate and the future indeterminate, and where attempts to plan future objectives are set in the present in the belief that, feasibly, these objectives can be expected to occur at a predefined future date (Balogun and Johnson 2004; Fuglsang and Mattsson 2011; Weick *et al*. 2005), while others emphasize the fluidity of sensemaking processes (see Brown *et al*. 2015; Reissner 2008; Reissner and Pagan 2013). We

begin with a set of studies that draw on the interplay between time, temporality and narrative in the way stories are used for making sense of ongoing change. Attention then turns to storytelling and temporal orientation in organizations, highlighting how people interpret and reinterpret the present in retrospective and prospective sensemaking. The final section examines the importance of power and political process in influencing the way people give and make sense of the past, present and future through stories that seek to steer interpretations and decision-making in certain preferred directions. In all these studies, we draw out the underlying temporal modalities and critically assess their use of time in explanations of sensemaking and storytelling processes.

Temporal interplay in making sense of context and change

The early work of Pettigrew (1985, 1990) highlighted the importance of temporality to understanding processes of change, stressing the 'liabilities of atemporal analysis in organizational theorizing and empirical research' (Pettigrew *et al*. 2001, p. 699). Many later examples highlight the utility of Pettigrew's call for temporal analysis, for example, Middleton *et al*. (2011) focus on the ways in which managers conceptually organize time and how their perceptions influence actions and decisions. Building on the work of Butler (1995), they identify six categories of time: clock time; organic time (emergence of ideas and actions); strategic time (moves and counter moves in, for example, business markets); spasmodic time (not set but elastic); entrepreneurial time (legitimation of skills and experiences); and cooperative time (in building relationships with key stakeholders). These orientations of time provide a 'vital component of narrative for executives of firms that are internationalizing' and they argue, provide greater insight into the action and decision-making of executive managers (Middleton *et al*. 2011, p. 146). Shipp and Jansen (2011) also highlight the importance of engaging with the temporal process by which people subjectively interpret their world through drawing on memories, expectations, motives and time expectations. They question the dominant focus on objective clock time in their reappraisal of person–environment fit theory, calling for inclusion of retrospections of the past and anticipations of the future and concluding that: 'such an approach invites more realistic context-rich and in-depth studies of the qualitative experience of fit over time, to reflect today's complex reality' (Shipp

and Jansen 2011, p. 95). On this count, Baars (2007) also draws attention to the problems of an unreflected overemphasis on chronological time, while arguing that to abandon this time would be to neglect the role chronology plays in empirical studies and theory development (see also Baars 1997; Baars and Visser 2007).

The interplay between time and narrative is illustrated by Patriotta (2003), who shows how narrative-based processes of sensemaking are used in making sense of unexpected events in a batch production system. Attention is given to how people make events meaningful through emplotment and the imposition of 'a logical structure (a beginning, a middle and an end) on a flow of complex, ambiguous happenings through processes of ordering and sequencing' (Patriotta 2003, p. 363). In linking events in the present to the past and anticipatory future, time is seen to play a crucial ordering role. Patriotta (2003) likens this process to 'detective stories' in which the diagnosis and cause of a problem is uncovered and corrective action confirmed. These detective stories support a narrative structure for making sense of equivocal happenings. In other words, the time sequence of the narrative – a chronicle of activities – provides a powerful heuristic device for sensemaking (also see Patriotta and Gruber 2015).

This issue of temporal interplay is taken up by Mackay and Parks (2013) in their account of the dynamics of past (hindsight) and future (foresight) in the sensemaking processes of two public commission reports on the new terrorism. They show how, in presenting authoritative accounts of the past, reports often aim to legitimize a future-perfect narrative that sets out to confirm a secure and safe future. They suggest the need to move beyond these structured narratives by embracing flux and uncertainty in 'living forward' and that 'prospective sensemaking need not be cast as a future perfect process, but a future imperfect process' (Mackay and Parks 2013, p. 376). Colville *et al.* (2012) also highlight how the experience of 'unprecedented events', such as the rioting and looting in London, challenge sensemaking (they use the term 'simplexity' to capture this process that they claim: 'requires a fusion of sufficient complexity of thought with simplicity of action' (Colville *et al.* 2012, p. 5)). However, in their study focusing on the importance of time to sensemaking in crisis situations, Combe and Carrington (2015) point out that most studies still remain focused on objective clock time with little attempt to examine the influence of the subjective experience of the past or how leaders

imagine the future may affect how they interpret and make sense of the present.

Some researchers have sought to extend theoretical frames by considering different interpretations and temporal modalities that transcend objective/subjective binaries. In her ethnographic study of a rehabilitation ward in a Copenhagen hospital, Pedersen (2009) compares the different change stories of the consultant, social worker and senior nurse to illustrate 'the asymmetric understanding of time: the social worker is in the present, when students are arriving in the ward; the change consultant is in the future, and the senior nurse in the past telling about the unit' (Pedersen 2009, pp. 402–403). She claims that remembered events are reconstituted in different ways to form explanations of what has occurred and what might reasonably be expected to occur (Rae 2014, p. 26), which, with an absence of analysis of how events represent different interpretations of time, neglects time as a theoretical construct. Pedersen (2009) argues for the displacement of chronological time (a tendency to examine time as a given empirical event during change) with the concept of 'chronotopes' (that is able to spotlight how change is happening in a certain place and time) and Morson's (1994) concept of the 'shadows of time'. Shadows of time is a tensed notion of time in which the past, present and future continually interweave and is composed of: 'foreshadowing', which foretells a hypothetical future in which the present centres on preparation (realizable possibilities); and 'sideshadowing', which relates to possibilities not taken in accepting a story as the only one possible (unrealized possibilities) (Pedersen 2009, p. 393). By use of these concepts, attention turns from the sensemaking that occurs around an event located in chronological time to the way events represent different understandings of time (also see Alexander 2007).

Kunisch *et al.* (2017, pp. 1009–1019) pick up on this issue, arguing that, while the dominance of clock and calendar time is understandable in strategic change research, other temporal modalities need to be accommodated and made explicit: for example, multiple time conceptions that might include life cycle and event-based time (Mosakowski and Earley 2000). Their review suggests that different temporal perceptions in terms of urgency, temporal focus and temporal depth as well as pacing styles and polychronicity (working on multiple tasks simultaneously) can significantly influence interpretative actions and decision-making (Kunisch *et al.* 2017, p. 1040). They call for a move towards more extensive

and explicit examinations of time and the temporal characteristics of actors in furthering understanding of the processual dynamics of change (Kunisch *et al.* 2017, p. 1050).

Storytelling and temporal orientation in processes of sensemaking

The relationship between storytelling, temporal orientation and sensemaking has also been explored. Maitlis (2005) traces sensemaking processes as they unfold over a two-year period and, although temporal interconnectedness was not a focus of her study, she concludes that: 'an interesting area for future research would be to examine . . . how different forms of organizational sensemaking and their outcomes relate to one another over time' (Maitlis 2005, p. 45). On this count, Reissner and Pagan (2013) use the concept of story-weaving to capture the assembly of small stories that straddle the past, present and future in story construction (Reissner and Pagan 2013, p. 159), while Boal and Schultz (2007) illustrate temporal interconnectedness in their study where:

> Strategic leaders articulate their visions by telling stories and promoting dialogue in which an organization's past, present, and future coalesce: stories and dialogue about our history; stories and dialogue about who we are; stories and dialogue about who we can become. (Boal and Schultz 2007, p. 420)

In examining temporal interplay, Kaplan and Orlikowski (2013) show how multiple interpretations of what has happened can influence views on what might be achievable in the future (especially in relation to the actions worth taking in the present) and that the resolution of these interpretations is an integral part of collective sensemaking. Their fieldwork on temporal processes in shaping senior managers' strategic choices usefully illustrates how provisional agreements can be undone following contextual shifts that call into question the plausibility of future projects, making them unacceptable and causing breakdowns that require further rethinking (past), reconsidering (present) and reimagining (future). This cycle of events is shown to continue over linear time until – in the case of eventual resolution – an end point is reached when interpretations connect to produce an account that is coherent, plausible and acceptable, and it is at this stage that strategic decisions are made and actions taken (Kaplan and Orlikowski 2013, pp. 981–989). They draw on the work of Emirbayer and Mische (1998), who reconceptualize human

agency as a social process situated in the flow of time where contingencies of the present are informed by the past (habitual aspects) and oriented to the future (opportunities and possibilities). As Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p. 964) state, human agents are: 'embedded within many such temporalities at once' and they may be 'oriented toward the past, the future, and the present at any given moment, although they may be primarily oriented toward one or another of these within any one emergent situation'.

Aspects of temporal orientation are also underscored in a special issue on sensemaking, organizing and storytelling in *Human Relations* (Colville *et al.* 2012), where examples from financial crisis hearings (Whittle and Mueller 2012), tales of jazz musicians (Humphrey *et al.* 2012) and contested accounts from a rugby tour (Cunliffe and Coupland 2012) all draw attention to how – as Weick's commentary articulates – 'life is antenarrative in search of narrative rationality' in which story structures provide 'temporary resting points' that clarify yet constrain our vision of what is happening often resulting in enactment of our own anachronisms (Weick 2012, p. 150). This aspect is brought to the fore by Näslund and Pemer (2012), who show how dominant stories provide fixity to more dynamic processes in normalizing and making sense of events. Language is seen to provide a structure for rendering ambiguous situations into more ordered sequences through stories that stabilize temporality in linking episodes through linear time (Näslund and Pemer 2012).

The construction of stories to accommodate, locate and make sense through plausible accounts (Weick 1995, 2010) is discussed by Cunliffe and Coupland (2012) in their illustration of polyphony and embodied sensemaking in the contested sense given to specific events in a filmed documentary tour of the Lions rugby team. Stories arise from embedded, narrative performances, which respond to the past, engage with the present and look forward to anticipatory futures. They spotlight how sensemaking is not just a cognitive temporal exercise, but embodied in sensory felt experiences. Bodily sensations in the context of the everyday are seen to colour understanding in making sense of contested events that are narrated into coherent forms through temporal stories with a plot and timeline. As the authors note: 'Sensemaking is temporal in at least two ways: in the moment of performance we draw on past experiences, present interactions and future anticipations, and second, we plot narrative coherence across time' (Cunliffe and Coupland 2012, p. 83).

Boudes and Laroche (2009) attend to narrative sensemaking in post-crisis inquiry reports in analysing the foreseeability of the deaths that occurred following the heat wave in France in 2003. They identify a tendency towards simplification and reductionism, but suggest that, rather than representing a linear temporal sequence in which recommendations follow explanation, 'the story is built at least partially around preferred lessons and the desired recommendations for action' (Boudes and Laroche 2009, p. 392). This returns us to Weick's (2012) claim that the unfinalized uncertainties of life experiences is made sense of and temporally fixed in narrative rationality, but with the added notion that these temporal constructions build on prospective ideas (a non-linear temporality in story construction, but not in the structure of the final narrative).

In their processual study, Langley *et al.* (2013) aim to 'unveil' temporality. They attend to the centrality of time and how the repetition and reaffirmation of dynamic processes underscore stability as well as change. They note the tendency to focus on fixed points in time, outcomes which they argue are 'ephemeral way stations in the ongoing flow of activity', calling for greater attention to studying how processes change over time. They argue that there is a general lack of process studies focused at the individual level of analysis tackling temporally evolving issues, such as work practices (Langley *et al.* 2013, p. 10). In one of the few papers that tackle these issues, Wiebe (2010) suggests that dissimilarities in managers' experiences – of what is essentially the same change – are constructed through different temporal modes and that awareness of these modalities enables considerable insight into the accomplishment and experiences of change that would otherwise be invisible from a clock time perspective. He argues that temporal stories do not follow a simple linear trajectory, but shape and are shaped by each other. Prospective sensemaking stories not only draw from, but also alter, views of the past by reconstructing past accounts during the process of individual and collective sensemaking and sensegiving. These prospective views of possible futures may, in turn, shift and refocus individual and collective attention in an ever-changing context, where shifting interpretations may achieve some transitory stability as particular courses of action or decisions are taken. This temporal perspective releases time from the activity of timing the successive ordering of change (the chronological cage of change sequence or the future perfect constraints of scenario planning), allowing multiple temporalities

to emerge through stories that seek to make and give sense to experiences of change.

Bringing the power of temporality to the fore: the politics of sensemaking in organizations

A number of studies attempt to bring the power of temporality to the fore. Brown and Humphreys (2002) use the notion of nostalgia in their research into a Turkish faculty of vocational education to draw attention to the way the past – in the form of nostalgia – can be an important source of resistance to hegemonic influence in reasserting identity-relevant values and beliefs (Brown 2006) and in providing access to emotional support (Brown and Humphreys 2002, p. 141), while Brown (2006, p. 741) argues that temporality is not fixed in the authorship of collective identities, but hegemonically deployed and socially constructed. In this sense, time is not neutral, but a flexible ingredient in story construction, temporality can be truncated, repositioned and enlarged (Van Oorschot *et al.* 2013) and histories can be rewritten to suit preferred political interests (Buchanan and Dawson 2007).

Similarly, drawing on the work of Munro (1998), Strangleman (1999) identifies nostalgia as providing a sense of attachment through a heightened sense of belongingness (Strangleman 1999, p. 727). He concludes that, while nostalgia may provide memorial security for employees (through collective sensemaking), it can also be an 'object of manipulation' used by management to actively instil a sense of insecurity (Strangleman 1999, p. 742). Both these studies usefully illustrate not only how the past informs present sensemaking through nostalgia, but also the 'importance of nostalgia as a strategy of resistance' (Brown and Humphreys 2002, p. 156) as well as an 'active tool in the hands of management' (Strangleman 1999, p. 742). On this count, Gabriel (2004b, p. 19) also draws attention to the way that stories allow facts to be reinterpreted and can act as hegemonic discourses in oppressing groups as well as vehicles of sensemaking and contestation.

Ybema (2004) turns nostalgia on its head by drawing attention to the future or postalgia, in examining how internal change struggles often revolve around management projections of a golden idealized future (also see Costas and Grey 2014, pp. 930–933). He argues that, in the everyday talk on change, temporal resources are used to construct symbolically a common destiny actively used by change agents as 'a basic emotive trigger' in support of change initiatives (Ybema 2004, p. 826). As a projection screen

of present-day concerns, Ybema argues that postalgia may be an activating force which, while underlined by apprehension and anticipation – in being 'a mixture of bleak pessimism with huge optimism' (Ybema 2010, p. 486) – it lacks 'the aching bitter-sweet quality of nostalgia' (Ybema 2004, p. 836). As van der Duin's work on futures research also suggests, our sense and understanding of the future affects the way we 'think, act and decide in the present', noting that: 'these predictions about the future do not have to be true, but they do prove that the future can be very real in the present' (van der Duin 2014, p. 126).

In taking a different tack, Pentland (1999) emphasizes the importance of grounding studies in temporal contexts, focusing on the enactment of stories as pointing toward intended futures. He suggests 'people do not simply tell stories – they enact them' (Pentland 1999, p. 711). In enactments, strategic narratives of intended futures are necessarily fluid in the unfolding processes of change. Similarly, Dunford and Jones (2000) illustrate how the interplay of temporal contexts are evident in the strategic narratives of senior managers who, in giving sense to others, also engage in a sensemaking dialogue with themselves (Dunford and Jones 2000, p. 1223) and produce templates for action that arise from their own interpretations and experiences (Pentland 1999, p. 721).

Taking the importance of temporal context further to include spatial dimensions, Halford and Leonard (2005, p. 670) spotlight the importance of temporal and spatial contexts in 'the construction of workplace subjectivities'. For them, organizational discourses do not simply impose identities in forging particular pathways during times of change, but are shaped and actively reconfigured in the contextual spaces in which they emerge. In examining doctors and nurses in two different hospital contexts (a large, dynamic and fast environment contrasted with a comparatively small, quiet and slow operational unit), they illustrate the importance of contextual resources across time and space (in work and non-work settings) in shaping individual relationships to discourses of change. Other times, such as memorial and caring time are referred to in pointing out how time, as a resource, may be 'performed, used and understood in different ways' (Halford and Leonard 2005, p. 661). They conclude that individuals actively draw on temporal and spatial resources in reshaping discursive attempts at managed change and in the process 'reconfigure the power relations between organization and employee' (Halford and Leonard 2005, p. 672).

The power political processes of sensemaking are also shown to be inseparable from temporal influences. Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991), for example, in their early longitudinal study examine how people seek to steer the meaning making of others in strategic change by giving a particular sense to events that present a 'preferred redefinition of organizational reality' (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991, p. 442). In analysing sequences in the process over time, they show how the:

> CEO and top management team first tried to figure out and ascribe meaning to strategy-relevant events, threats, opportunities, et cetera and then to construct and disseminate a vision that stakeholders and constituents could be influenced to comprehend, accept, and act on to initiate desired changes. (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991, p. 444)

Griesbach and Grand (2013, p. 63) support these findings in describing how management can mobilize particular experiences of the past and expectations of the future to justify decision-making and in the process: 'management influences . . . the actual situation, potentially influencing organizational becoming in the future'. As already indicated, there are a number of studies that attend to the way that stories often act as a powerful discursive resource for resistance in the hegemonic struggle over collective identities (Brown and Humphreys 2006), while recognizing that their persuasive power is influenced, in turn, by existing authority structures and power relationships (Dawson and Sykes 2016). This is particularly noticeable among stories not given voice, as well as with the untold and neglected stories which: 'unintentionally omitted, or deliberately left silent . . . provide blank spots – potential reference points on the map of organizational sensemaking that are no less indispensable' (Izak *et al*. 2014, p. 2). Attempts to assert or foreclose on stories can create conflicts and tensions that are likely to arise between stories that provide coherence and understanding to complex and ambiguous events in the form of a linear causal theorization (objective time), stories that capture lived-time (as illustrated by the work of Wiebe) and the non-linearity of subjective experience, and stories that arise in the materiality and practices of changing, especially if they contest with the procedural discourse of management centred on organizing employees in certain preferred ways.

The way in which stories also shape the changes they are describing is illustrated by Dawson and Buchanan (2012) in their examination of competing narratives in the power-political process of

technological change. They show how corporate narratives are often constructed around a simple linear temporality of event sequences that tend to sanitize the change process. Alternative versions of events are side-lined, silenced or downplayed in an exercise of power in which management seeks to assert a dominant version of 'this is the way it really happened'. In a further examination of change as a multi-story process, Buchanan and Dawson (2007, p. 673) focus on how stories that dominate are suffused with power and how 'narratives shape meanings and can act as counters in the game of organizational power and politics around programmes of organizational change'. They argue that there are always opportunities for rewriting history, given ongoing fluctuations in organizational power-political positioning.

Stories may also act as power-political constructions that shape collective identity as groups service ways of interpreting and making sense of their own and others' actions and behaviours. In a longitudinal study of contested change in an Australian colliery, Dawson and McLean (2013) discuss how miners construct stories that not only seek to make sense of what is going on, but also bolster and reinforce a sense of collective identity such as what it means to be a miner. In the relational interplay of temporal, contextual and sensemaking processes, there were several types of stories: finalized constructions of the past with plot lines and characters that serviced forms of retrospective sensemaking; partial and fragmented stories in imagining future scenarios and possible outcomes in forms of prospective sensemaking; and stories that reconstituted the past and anticipated futures in making sense of an ongoing present (Dawson and McLean 2013).

These studies illustrate a need to broaden our temporal horizon in the various ways in which individuals and groups accommodate and reinterpret the past and possibilities for the future in their ongoing living present (Hernes 2014; Hernes and Irgens 2013). Multiple accounts of the past arise as people reappraise the past (Oswick *et al*. 2000) in the light of current experiences (Huy 2001) and in thinking through a range of possible futures (Kaplan and Orlikowski 2013) co-construct stories that make and give sense to current operations and future strategic trajectories (van der Duin *et al*. 2014). Overall, they signal a movement, however gradual, away from the conventional and dominant linear framework (generally associated with the arrow of time) where events are structured in a progressive sequence from past to present to future, to approaches that are better able to accommodate multiple accounts (Dawson 2014; Peirano-Vejo and Stablein 2009) and multiple times (Bluedorn 2002; Reinecke and Ansari 2017).

Discussion: temporal characterization of sensemaking stories and the charting of a future research agenda

Our discussion commences with a fourfold characterization of underlying temporal modalities from which we extend six pathways in mapping out future research opportunities. Our first characterization of stories builds on conventional linear concepts of time with a Weickian backward glance; namely, 'finalized retrospective stories' that seek to reconstruct from the past, key events, characters and plots that provide causal explanations for making sense of current disruptions and ambiguities (these stories take on the Aristotelean convention of being characterized by a beginning, middle and end). Our second characterization turns towards 'unfinalized prospective stories' that are forward looking: time is no longer set, but non-linear and indeterminate. These stories of the future are unfinalized (like Boje's concept of antenarrative), subjective and open to re-storying in seeking to make sense of ongoing and newly emerging occurrences as well as the uncertainties, threats and opportunities of a future that has yet to be. Third are 'present continuity-based stories' that attempt to provide some reassurances about sustaining relations and values: to reassert a collective sense of belonging, sense of stability and membership, as in the heightened sense of belongingness through nostalgia (Strangleman 1999) that enables a sense of continuity between what is happening, what happened in the past and what may happen in the future. These present continuity-based stories aim to minimize the disruptive sense of change through drawing on stories of an historical (often nostalgic) past. While seeking continuation these stories engage with longstanding, historical and embedded core values and beliefs and arise due to the uncertainty and anxiety generated from a future that is ultimately unknowable and precarious (non-linear). Fourth are 'present change-based stories' often comprising a mixture of optimism in promoting the benefits of changing for the future, and pessimism in constructing stories on the potential threats and negative implications of future change (aligning with Ybema's (2004) notion of postalgia). Stories that are optimistic, pessimistic or various combinations of the two, often adhere to a sense of conventional time in responding

to a future perfect world in which certain outcomes are expected to eventuate, but they may also take on a more indeterminate tone in expressing anxieties about unclear, precarious and more unidentifiable futures.

These forms of temporal framing through story construction are important to sensemaking, offering considerable potential for future time focused research. This would include the following. First, examination of time representations in the more finalized and structured stories in organizations (see Gabriel 2000): for example, how time and temporality are used to convey a particular message, moral lesson or present a causal explanation that is both compelling and plausible. Attention would be given to the implications of using different temporal configurations in constructing stories from the more common past, present and future structure, to those that move across temporal modes in a non-linear fashion. Second, how time is variously used in past constructions that give sense to what has occurred, in for example, nostalgic tales that seek to sustain identity-relevant values and beliefs, or using time to leverage reformulations in repositioning these tales, for example, with the aim of undermining nostalgia as a platform for resistance (see Brown and Humphreys 2002; Strangleman 1999). Third, the use of time and temporality for making and giving sense to unfinalized stories, antenarratives and future scenarios (see Boje 2011), including attention to issues, such as temporal depth, time urgency and temporal orientation in promoting the need for short or long-term strategies (see Jabri 2016, p. 97; Kunisch *et al*. 2017, p. 1043). Fourth, the compression and expansion of time structures in stories that compete, and the different techniques for drawing on temporal modalities for sensemaking in the construction of compelling power-political narratives that seek to influence the sense giving of others (see Buchanan and Dawson 2007; Dawson and Buchanan 2012). Fifth, the importance of shifting contextual conditions over chronological time in the rewriting of histories and the reconstruction of narratives that reposition individuals and groups, in, for example, a movement from hero to villain (see Cunliffe and Coupland 2012; Godfrey *et al*. 2016). Sixth, investigating the use of temporal modalities in making and giving sense in the storytelling of management and other occupational groups, for example, in processes of story-weaving in the assembly of smaller stories that variously draw from the past, present and future (see Maitlis 2005, p. 45; Reissner and Pagan 2013, pp. 52, 83).

These are just some of the opportunities for future research that we would suggest combine with a need for further studies that explore multiple time conceptions (see Amburgey *et al*. 1993; Gersick 1994), processual temporal fluidity (Reinecke and Ansari 2017) and non-linear temporal flows (Hernes 2017). This would include, for example, the way subjective notions of time are used in reconfiguring time sequences of events in co-constructing multiple stories that redefine our sense of a singular order in what is and what has occurred, while also drawing attention to the various ways in which objective and subjective time dimensions interweave over linear and non-linear times (see Dawson and Sykes 2016; Reinecke and Ansari 2015). These fluid stories that are difficult to identify and study empirically (in which time is never fixed or linear) may offer alternative scenarios in reinterpreting the past and in developing future possibilities that support competing meanings and ambiguity in maintaining equivocal narratives that enable rather than constrain pathways (see Davenport and Leitch 2005; Sillince *et al*. 2012); also, in giving attention to multiple sensemaking stories as mosaics of time, in which the past, present and future continually interweave (Pedersen 2009; Reissner and Pagan 2013) and temporal modalities are reconstituted in practice and shaped by contextual power-political processes. These are all areas that we advocate warrant further empirical investigation and theoretical research.

Conclusion

Time remains a contentious and much debated concept (Barad 2014; Bardon 2013; Bucheli and Wadhwani 2014; Butler 1995; Smolin 2013; Wajcman and Rose 2011) central to strategic (Kaplan and Orlikowski 2013) and organizational practices (Thompson 1967), and to the temporality of storytelling (Boje *et al*. 2016a) and the different ways in which people make sense of their experiences (Weick and Quinn 1999; Weick *et al*. 2005), especially during times of upheaval and change (Dawson and McLean 2013; Wiebe 2010). Underpinning conventional conceptions of sensemaking is a linear time conception that draws from the past in making sense of the present (Weick 1995). In this approach, we understand and make sense of experiences and unexpected events through drawing on knowledge of what has gone before and on the values and beliefs embedded in culture (retrospective sensemaking).

More recently, there has been a growing interest in alternative approaches that explore the way in which people make sense by looking forward to planned objectives and future expectations. In these various works, the temporal frames of the past and the future are drawn on, with a growing focus on developing the concept of prospective sensemaking to counterbalance the previous emphasis on retrospective sensemaking. In further developing these concepts, there is considerable room to consider notions of non-linearity and multiple concepts of time. On this count, the storytelling literature and narrative research (Brown 2005; Brown *et al.* 2009; Cunliffe *et al.* 2004; Czarniawska 1998) provide a useful illustration of studies that engage with a more structured temporal frame in narratives with a plot, characters and conventional timeline for sequencing events, and those that draw on stories-in-the-making, that are unfinalized and make a bet on the future (antenarratives).

In comparing the completed narrative form in the work of Gabriel (2000) with the emergent and terse story fragments of Boje (2011), we contrast approaches that use a conventional Aristotelian temporality with antenarratives and the unfolding and changing terse story fragments. In the former, temporality – in measuring and locating the successive ordering of events – presents completed causally embedded narratives through delineated sequences of events; in the latter, the focus is on unresolved emerging stories that have no clear beginning or end and engage with differential timings in the unfinalized storying that is part of changing organizations. We discuss how further concerns with time and temporality have also arisen in a range of studies that move away from an adherence to clock and calendrical time, through using concepts from philosophy and/or engaging with time as subjectively experienced (Kaplan and Orlikowski 2013; Wiebe 2010). This has often resulted in a form of dualism between objective and subjective notions of time, and with the replacement of one conception (often dominant clock time) with another (such as process time). We argue that, while this objective/subjective dualism can be analytically useful in enabling a differentiation in the approaches to sensemaking and storytelling, it can also limit broader understanding and misrepresent time in promoting an artificial separation (Peters *et al.* 2012). We therefore argue that it is important not to impose a Manichean dualism in falsely contrasting a type of Newtonian-naïve-linear-conservative-simplistic-folkloric narrative perspective on the one side

and a kind of polyphonic-polysemic-fragmentary-discontinuous-complex-sophisticated storying approach on the other. Greater attention needs to be given to non-dualistic frameworks. Elias (1993) advocates temporal non-dichotomous framing as a way of lifting us out of the dualisms that dominate western philosophical thinking and theorization, that can accommodate multiple times (Reinecke and Ansari 2015, p. 621) and unpack the dominant progressive temporalities that pervade the sensemaking and storytelling literatures.

In furthering a research agenda, we contend that there is a need to unpack concepts of time and temporality in the sensemaking and storying telling literatures and to move beyond the simple advocacy of one concept over another, or to contrasting objective with subjective time, in accommodating the temporal reweaving and transition between times that shape stories and sensemaking in the workplace. While there are examples in which explicit conceptualizations of temporality influence theorization (Pedersen 2009), the tendency has been for more implicit conceptions of time to embed silently in explanations and theories. Empirically, there is also a need to investigate whether there are significant shifts occurring in the way that people think about and experience time with digital technologies and the global convergence of universal standard time that is changing the way we make sense and story our lived experiences. If the separations that we construct (often implicitly using time) to develop sensemaking frameworks do not explain the processes by which people seem to effortlessly transition between times and engage with multiple times and temporalities, we need to find ways to address this. There may also be value in drawing on other disciplines, such as literature, the arts and history, that have a longstanding and continuing interest in changing conceptions of time.

Other areas that could usefully be explored are the power of temporal reconstructions that not only fix understanding in episodes of structured, rational sensemaking (way markers in the fluidity of life experiences), but also in the way that these stories use prospective sensemaking in building explanations of past events. Stories with a beginning, middle and end have a linear causality that may misrepresent the non-linear construction or reconstruction of stories as power-laden devices in seeking to promote a particular version of reality. In other words, while stories for sensemaking may build on anticipatory futures in the context of an ongoing present that casts a backward glance for retrospective explanation, the linearity of

the story belies the more complex time modalities and political dynamics associated with storying and sensemaking processes. These temporal dynamics are not only present in the ongoing storytelling, antenarratives and unfinalized accounts, but also evident in the formal inquiry reports that articulate a linear sequential time-frame. We argue that, while organizations may unequivocally construct temporal fixity through designating milestones for change, these processes are often far more equivocal in the practices and procedures of the everyday from within which stories emerge, interweave, are refined, replaced and reconstructed in giving and making sense of lived experience. In the finalized, completed narratives through to the unfinalized story fragments, an array of stories and sensemaking processes arise that include stories that exhibit linear retrospective time and non-linear prospective times, as well as those that call for a linear nostalgic view of time in seeking to address anxieties about the uncertainties of the future, and those that engage with conventional time in constructing future perfect worlds that seek to promote intended futures. The concepts of time underlying these stories highlight the use of temporal modalities in constructing narratives that not only serve to make sense, but to give sense to others. In bringing these dimensions of time to the fore, future research needs to engage with multiple concepts of time and temporality that include calendrical and experiential times as well as the way our subjective interpretations of time interlace with organizational clock time regimes. The agenda is not to search for a time that replaces other times, but to embrace multiple times and temporal modalities in examining storying and sensemaking processes in ever changing power-political contexts where the past, present and future are presented and re-presented in many different colours and often in competing ways.

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