Between Chronos and Kairos
Overlapping Timeframes in Public Policy
(and a few other situations)

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An Unconventional Starting Point: Formula 1
Three Timeframes in Races

• Race Time

• Real Time

• Design Time
Overview

• Lessons from Formula 1:
  • Timeframes in Public Policy ...

• ... Embedded in a Broader Set

• Policy Implications
Overview

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• Policy Implications
Three Timeframes in Policy

- Race Time ➔ Operations
  - Crisis Management, Logistics
- Real Time
- Design Time
Three Timeframes in Policy

• Race Time ➔ Operations
  • Crisis Management, Logistics

• Real Time ➔ Planning
  • Optimisation, Efficiency, Cost-benefit

• Design Time
Three Timeframes in Policy

• Race Time ➔ Operations
  • Crisis Management, Logistics

• Real Time ➔ Planning
  • Optimisation, Efficiency, Cost-benefit

• Design Time ➔ Strategy
  • Trends, Scenarios, Futures, Resilience
Three Timeframes
Intersections and Interactions

• Operations
  • Logistics
  • **Pioneer Generation Ambassadors**
• Planning
  • Optimisation, Efficiency, Cost-benefit
  • **Engagement of Pioneer Generation for 50th Jubilee**
• Strategy
  • Trends, Scenarios, Futures, Resilience
  • **Harnessing the “Silver Tsunami”**
Three Timeframes
Intersections and Interactions

- Operations
  - Crisis Management
  - Little India Riots
- Planning
  - Optimisation, Efficiency, Cost-benefit
  - Foreign worker policy; multiculturalism
- Strategy
  - Trends, Scenarios, Futures, Resilience
  - Source diversification + dealing with “hyphenated identities”
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Communication Time

- Press Releases
- Facebook & Instagram posts
- Tweets
- “Just Do It”
- “Move fast and break things”
- “You only live once …”
- The F1 Wedding Shoot
Product Time

Source: Everett Rogers, 1962
Micro and Macroeconomic Time

The Business Cycle

Gross Domestic Product

Time

Incentives
Play Time

- Innovation, exploration, experimentation, failure
Cultural or Attitudinal Time

Source: Eric Berlow and Sean Gourley, TED
Civilisational Time
Ecological / Biological Time

Wolves keep Yellowstone in balance

In the 1920s, government policy allowed the extermination of Yellowstone’s gray wolf — the apex predator — triggering an ecosystem collapse known as trophic cascade.

In 1995 — through use of the Endangered Species Act — the conservation community reintroduced the gray wolf to restore balance.

The impact is dramatic.

Without wolves, the coyote became an apex predator — driving down populations of pronghorn antelope, red fox and rodents, and herbs that prey on small animals.

Elk populations exploded without their primary predator, resulting in severe overgrazing of willows and aspen needed by beavers for food, shelter and dam building.

Elk numbers drop by half, allowing antelope, rodent and fox populations to increase.


Fish and amphibians thrive.

Today, biodiversity is enriched and scavenger species reap the benefits of regular, wolf-supplied meals.
Evolutionary Time

0.1.0  0.2.0  0.3.0  1.0.0  1.1.0  1.2.0  2.0.0-rc.1
Some Stories

Recovery Time

- Illness, addiction, grief
Guttorm Fløistad, Norwegian philosopher:
The only thing for certain is that everything changes. The rate of change increases. If you want to hang on, you better speed up. That is the message of today. It could however be useful to remind everyone that our basic needs never change. The need to be seen and appreciated! It is the need to belong. The need for nearness and care, and for a little love! **This is given only through slowness in human relations. In order to master changes, we have to recover slowness, reflection and togetherness.** There we will find real renewal.
Eviatar Zerubavel

• Time Maps: Collective Memory & the Social Shape of the Past (2004)
  • Plotlines and Narratives
  • Progress and Decline
  • A Zigzag in Time
  • Ladders and Trees
  • Circles and Rhymes
  • Mountains and Valleys
  • Legato and Staccato
Ideational Time

Karl Popper / Thomas Kuhn / Imre Lakatos – falsification, paradigm shifts & progressive research programmes

Vs. Pilpul - from Jewish Talmudic exegesis
“... a question-and-answer method of dialogue in which an answer might appear in ancient Babylonia to an ethical question formulated later and elsewhere in the Spain of the Moors and the Sephardic Jews.”

- **dialogically structured** by the canons of philosophical debate **rather than by historical chronology or the passing movements** of the vulgar and the vernacular

- Time **across** time
Overview

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• Policy Implications
  • What – if anything - can we do?
Time as Point, Line, Stock or Flow?

- **Point**
  - Instantaneous, transient, fleeing
- **Line**
  - Mechanistic, deterministic, uni-directional
- **Stock**
  - Malleable, but still finite, immutable
- **Flow**
  - Dynamic, living, open to human action
  - Kairos rather than Chronos
Scheduling Temporal Flows - Monasticism & Contemplation
Eviatar Zerubavel

• The Benedictine Ethic & the Modern Spirit of Scheduling (1981)
  • “Rhythmicity”
  • Standardisation of temporal location of events and activities
  • Standardisation of rates of recurrence
  • Standardisation across year, week & day
  • Differentiation/Individuation; Mechanical/Organic solidarity

• The Clockwork Muse (1999)
  • A, B & C time
We can speed up time – routines & other organizational life.
- Reminders, Deadlines
- Nagging & Nudging
- Technology helps

We can also slow down routines / organizational life.
- “Walk slower”
- Retreats, offsites, “white space”, meditation, yoga
- Leaders create “reaction space” – schedules, organizational experience of time
- Technology must be managed

We have agency.
What of Complex Systems Approaches?

- Interdependence
- Non-linearity
- Emergence

- Not just inter-temporal complexity (between identifiable times) ...
  - Mapping interdependence and non-linearity across time → dimensionality challenge
- ... but complex time (time as subject, not modifier)
- Time Togglers, not Time Travellers
Thank you – and thoughts?