

Re-Imagining History in Unsettled Times

EGOS Sub-Plenary 5

Chair

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The current “Historic Turn” in Organization Studies

Kipping, M. & Üsdiken, B. (2014) History in organization and management theory: More than meets the eye. **The Academy of Management Annals**, 8(1).

Rowlinson, M., Hassard, J. & Decker, S. (2014) Research Strategies for Organizational History: A Dialogue between Historical Theory and Organization Theory. **Academy of Management Review**, 39(3).

Bucheli, M. & Wadhwani, R. D. (Eds.) (2014) **Organizations in Time: History, Theory, Methods**. New York: Oxford University Press.

Godfrey, P., Hassard, J., O'Connor, E., Rowlinson, M. & Ruef, M. (forthcoming). Special Topic Forum on History and Organizational Studies: Toward a Creative Synthesis. **Academy of Management Review**

Leading up to the “Historic Turn”

- Kieser, A. 1994. Crossroads - Why organization theory needs historical analyses - and how these should be performed. *Organization Science*, 5(4)
- Üsdiken, B., & Kieser, A. 2004. Introduction: History in organisation studies. *Business History*, 46(3)
- Clark, P & Rowlinson, M. (2004) The Treatment of History in Organization Studies: Towards an “Historic Turn”? *Business History* 46(3)
- Booth, C., & Rowlinson, M. 2006. Management and organizational history: Prospects. *Management and Organizational History*, 1(1)
- van Baalen, P., & Bogenrieder, I. 2009. Historical approaches in organizational research. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 22(1).
- O'Sullivan, M., & Graham, M. B. W. 2010. Moving Forward by Looking Backward: Business History and Management Studies. *Journal of Management Studies*, 47(5)

History in Organization and Management Theorizing

○ History *to* theory

- The use of historical data (both quantitative and qualitative) to develop new or modify or test extant theories.

○ History *in* theory

- The use of the past as an integral part of the theoretical model itself

○ Historical *cognizance*

- In “history *to* theory”, developing new or modifying extant theories not in a timeless and universal manner, but trying to explicitly identify and conceptualize the influence of specific historical time periods—as a kind of boundary condition. And in “history *in* theory”, not just considering a kind of generalized past, but being concerned more explicitly with , “a theorized understanding of the historical particularities and contingencies of the relationships under analysis” (Isaac and Griffin, 1989, p. 886)

Three Epistemological Dualisms

Dualism 1 *Explanation (Narrative and Analysis)*

historians are preoccupied with the epistemological problems of narrative construction, whereas organization theory subordinates narrative to analysis.

Dualism 2 *Evidence (Sources and Data)*

history is derived from eclectic but verifiable documentary sources, but organization theorists prefer data constructed from replicable procedures.

Dualism 3 *Temporality (Periodization and Chronology)*

historians continually construct periodization from sources and historical contexts, but organization theorists treat time as a constant, or import periodization as given from historiography.

Three Epistemological Dualisms

0 From these three epistemological dualisms organization theorists will be able to answer questions such as:

- “What kind of history matters?”
- “What kind of history am I writing?”
- “What kind of history am I reading?”

Dualism 1 *Explanation*

- 0 Analysis lends itself to the standard format for a social science article
- 0 “Analytic narratives” proposed by rational choice theorists, and other forms of “narrative positivism”, are attenuated narratives
- 0 Historical narratives are different, as they present a “causal explanation of a *singular* event” as it unfolds in time, retrospectively
- 0 Whereas for “theoretical sciences, such causal explanations are mainly means to a different end — the testing of universal laws” (Popper 1957)
- 0 Meaning of narrative (and causation) are different

Dualism 1 *Explanation*

But does narrative impose a false structure on a messy reality?

○ Known as the “impositionalist objection to narrative”

○ Narrative *analysis*: stories are the “object of investigation”

=> reinforced impositionalist objection to narrative *construction* in organization theory

○ Organization theorists and historical theorists share a minimal definition of narrative:

○ A sequence of logically and chronologically related events organized by a coherent plot

○ Plot: chain of causation which links events

○ “Emplotment” in historical theory:

○ Plot determines the selection of “facts” & construction of events from the archives.

○ Acceptance that the same “historical facts” can be emplotted in different forms of narrative.

Dualism 2 *Evidence*

- 0 Organization theorists prefer primary data over secondary (or historical) data
- 0 Organization theorists' reservations regarding use of "organizational archives" (Rojas AMJ 2010):
 - 0 "organizations vary in what is saved and when it is saved"
 - 0 "archives tend to be rich in documents from leaders, but they have fewer materials about other actors,"
 - 0 "actors can selectively record what transpires in an organization", e.g. Meeting minutes may address major points and omit contextualizing discussions."
 - 0 As a result, "archival sources should be supplemented, when possible, with newspaper accounts, interviews, memoirs, and other materials"
- 0 Historians prefer primary sources over secondary sources
- 0 Organization theorists' secondary (or historical) data correspond to the historian's primary sources

Dualism 2 *Evidence*

- Historians' reservations regarding use of interviews:
 - Without archival research it is easy to accept interviewees' statements at face value (Dellheim *Public Historian* 1986)
 - history is equated with the use of *primary* sources, writings *from* the past produced at the time of events being researched
 - retrospective interviews count as "testimony," which almost by definition cannot constitute a primary source
- Epistemologically historians can be seen as "*explaining the evidence*" (Megill 2005)
- Therefore historians need to explain the "historiographical operation" (de Certeau 1988)
 - How the bureaucratic files of organizations are set aside and transformed into historical "documents"
 - Or as archivists would put it, how certain "records" are selected for preservation as "archives"

Dualism 3 *Temporality*

- 0 To say that time matters is not the same as saying that “history matters”:
 - Time matters for social science for specifying the chronological order of events, e.g. path dependence
 - Time matters for history for understanding events in historical context
- 0 Periodisation, and historical contextualization, are constitutive of how theory is applied and developed in history

Epistemological Dualisms

	Stylized narrative organizational history	Stylized historical organization theory
Explanation	Narrative of logically and chronologically related events organized by a coherent plot	Analysis of relationships between variables in the past e.g. 2 x 2 matrix
Evidence	Sources cited from an extensive search of multiple documents and texts with verifiable locations in archives. Verisimilitude through verification logic.	Data constructed from specified replicable procedure for analyzing a pre-defined delimited set of sources. Verisimilitude through replication logic.
Temporality	Periodization of events as defined by actors or historiography in historical time derived from historical context and sources	Chronology of predefined regular occurrences, with sequences measured against clock/analytic time, e.g. event history analysis

So does history have theory?

Theory in History

- Addition to knowledge in history is based on developing a “causal explanation of a singular event” (Popper 1957) by “explaining the evidence” (Megill 2005) with the best fit account
- RG Collingwood changed understanding of function of Hadrian’s Wall by examining the evidence
 - Not a fortification, but an elevated sentry line for look-out
 - His account fits the evidence better
- Collingwood and others like Carlo Ginzburg use metaphor of ‘detective work’
 - Ginzburg’s “method of clues”
- Exploring the evidence to find an explanation that accounts for the “totality of evidence” (Megill 2005)

THE DISRUPTION MACHINE

What the gospel of innovation gets wrong.

BY JILL LEPORE

JUNE 23, 2014

Theory in History

- Reasoning to the best explanation = abduction
- Peirce's description of abduction:
 - A surprising fact, F, is discovered.
 - But if assumption A were true, F would be a matter of course.
 - There is prima facie evidence that A may be true.
- Further evidence to support A needs to be found.
- Rival accounts need to be tested against the evidence.
- These explanatory accounts of evidence and events are emplotted in the narrative.
- Different types of narrative strategies are the result of different theoretical positions in history.



THE NEW YORKER

Strategies for Organizational History

- 0 **Corporate history**, a holistic, objectivist narrative of a corporate entity
- 0 **Analytically structured history**, narrating theoretically conceptualized structures and events
- 0 **Serial history**, using replicable techniques to analyze repeatable facts
- 0 **Ethnographic history**, reading documentary sources “against the grain”

Corporate History

- 0 Holistic

- 0 Encompasses the whole history of an entity
- 0 Conceptualized as a contribution to the totality of history

- 0 Objectivist narrative literary form

- 0 Objectivist because readers are sceptical about objectivity and balance in commissioned history
- 0 Objectivism constrains corporate history from reflecting on the imposition of a narrative

Ethnographic History

- Sources found in organizational archives read as texts to interpret cultures
- Requires a self consciously “angular” theoretical perspective
- A conscious refusal to impose a plot in a move towards a “non-event worthy history”
- Relies on the serendipity of finding sources in organizational archives and recognizing the significance of sources when found

Exemplars of Strategies for Organizational History

Narrative history

- Cheape, C. 1988. Not politicians but sound businessmen - Norton company and the Third-Reich. **Business History Review**, 62(3).
- Jones, G. 2002. Control, performance, and knowledge transfers in large multinationals: Unilever in the United States, 1945-1980. **Business History Review**, 76(3).

Analytically structured history

- Chandler, A. D. J. 1962. **Strategy and structure: Chapters in the history of industrial enterprise.** Cambridge MA.: MIT Press. Chapter 3 General Motors
- Freeland, R. F. 1996. The myth of the M-form? Governance, consent, and organizational change. **American Journal of Sociology**, 102(2).

Serial history

- Anteby, M., & Molnar, V. 2012. Collective memory meets organizational identity: Remembering to forget in a firm's rhetorical history. **Academy of Management Journal**, 55(3).
- Chuang, Y. T., & Baum, J. A. C. 2003. It's all in the name: Failure-induced learning by multiunit chains. **Administrative Science Quarterly**, 48(1).

Ethnographic history

- Childs, M. D. 2002. Master-slave rituals of power at a gold mine in nineteenth-century Brazil. **History Workshop Journal**(53): 43-72.
- McKinlay, A. 2002. 'Dead selves': The birth of the modern career. **Organization**, 9(4).

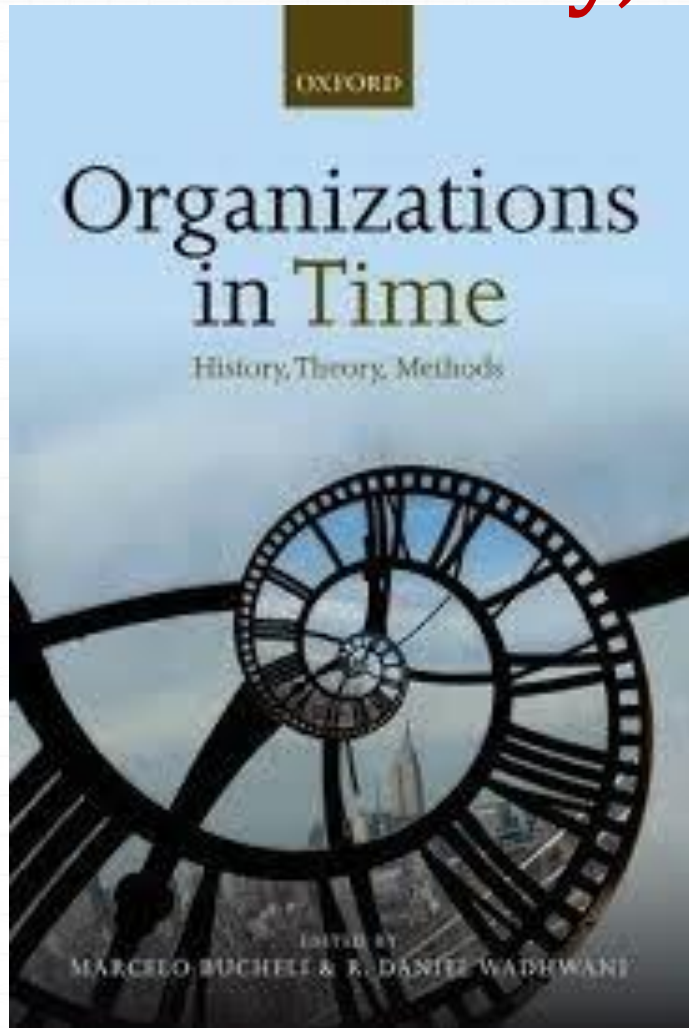
Exemplars of Strategies for Organizational History

Strategies	Exemplars	Explanation	Evidence	Temporality
<i>Corporate history</i>	Cheape (1988)	Narrative of Norton company in Germany during Third Reich	Primary documentary and narrative sources , company letters and reports, interviews	Stated periodization 1933-1945 derived from historical context
	Jones (2002)	Narrative of Unilever's performance as foreign MNC in USA	Primary documentary sources , internal company committee minutes and reports	Stated periodization 1945-1980 derived from sources
<i>Analytically structured history</i>	Chandler (1962) ch. 3	Narrative of strategy and structural reorganization at GM, emergence of M-form	Selected primary documentary sources for structure, secondary or narrative sources for strategy	1920-21 (periodization not stated) derived from sources
	Freeland (1996)	Narrative of successive organizational structures at GM as corrupted M-form	Primary documentary and narrative sources , letters from executives to shareholders	Stated periodization 1924-1958 derived from sources
<i>Serial history</i>	Chuang & Baum (2003)	Analysis of name changes for nursing homes in multiunit chains	Data compiled from archives of licensing organization and associations of nursing homes	Stated chronology 1971-1996 derived from complete data set
	Anteby & Molnar (2012)	Analysis of "structural omission" in official history of French firm Snecma	Data constructed from content analysis of primary narrative sources: internal bulletins	Stated chronology 1953-1999 derived from complete data set
<i>Ethnographic history</i>	Childs (2002)	Analysis of slaves' routines and rituals of power at Brazilian gold mine	Primary documentary and narrative sources , e.g. board minutes, circular to shareholders	1834-1879 derived from sources (periodization not stated)
	McKinlay (2002)	Analysis of Scottish bank clerks' careers with illustrative micro stories	Primary documentary and narrative sources , internal bank staff ledgers and published texts	Stated periodization 1894-1913 derived from sources

Examples of Strategies for Organizational History

	Strategies			
Dualisms	<i>Corporate history</i>	<i>Analytically structured history</i>	<i>Serial history</i>	<i>Ethnographic history</i>
Explanation	Narrative (corporate entity)	Narrative (conceptual construct)	Analysis	Analysis
Temporality	Periodization	Periodization	Chronology	Periodization
Evidence	Sources	Sources	Data	Sources

Organizations in Time: History, Theory, Methods



- Group of historians and org theorists
- Emerged out of EGOS (Standing Working Group 8), PDWs at AoM, & sessions at the Business History Conference
- Examining value and possibilities for historical approaches to org studies
- Central theme: epistemic differences between historical & social scientific perspectives on organization & how to handle them
- Examining organizations in *historical time*, *not clock time*

Organizations in Time: History, Theory, Methods

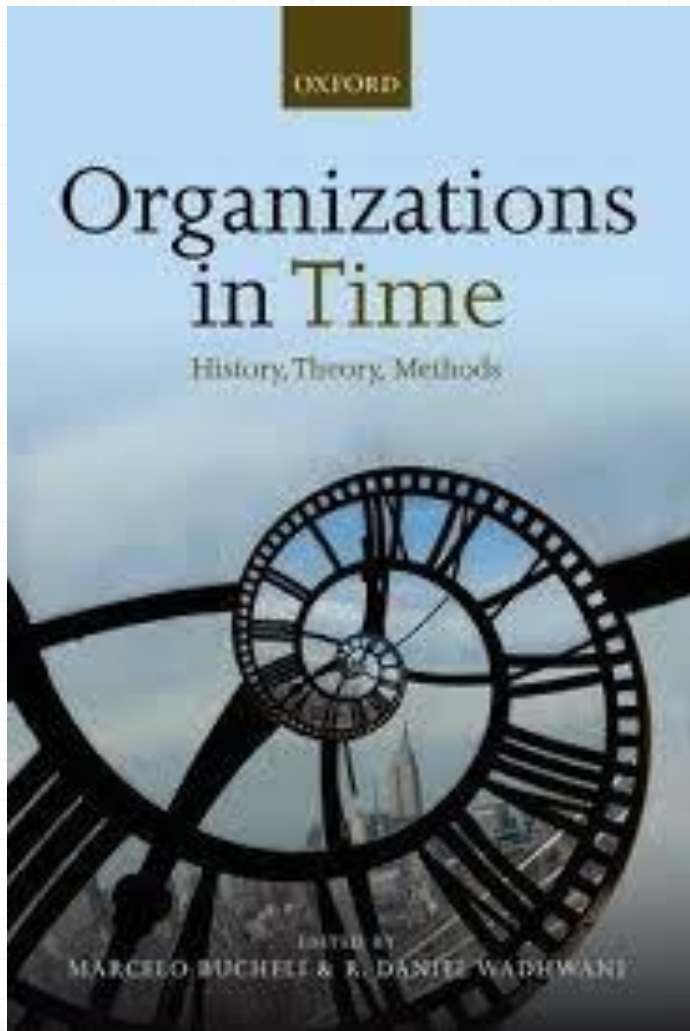
Org Theorists

- Howard Aldrich
- William Foster
- John Hassard
- Jin Uk Kim
- Huseyin Leblebici
- Steven Lippmann
- Albert Mills
- Mahka Moeen
- Michael Rowlinson
- Roy Suddaby
- Behlül Üsdiken

Historians

- Marcelo Bucheli
- Jeffrey Fear
- Geoffrey Jones
- Matthias Kipping
- David Kirsch
- Michael Rowlinson
- Daniel Wadhvani
- JoAnne Yates

Organizations in Time: History, Theory, Methods



- 0 Introduction: The Future of the Past in Management & Org Studies
- 0 Part 1: History & Theory (Epistemology)
- 0 Part 2: Actors & Markets (Concepts)
- 0 Part 3: Sources & Methods (Methods)

One Central Theme: Temporality & Historical Explanation

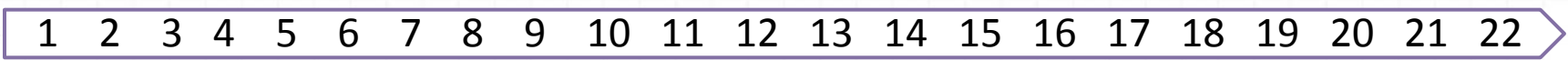
- Differences in temporal perspective underlie many of the differences between historical explanations and social scientific ones
- Fundamentally history makes sense of actions and events from the vantage point of the present looking backward
 - Historical accounts hence able to assign significance (eg cause, effect, meaning) by 'grasping together' (Ricoeur, 1985) or 'seeing together' (Danto, 1965) actions/events at different moments in time
 - Significance of an action/event interpreted both from antecedents and consequences
 - This perspective helps explain the reasons for the epistemic dualisms mentioned in Rowlinson, Hassard, and Decker (2014)
- Hence, Organizations in Time is *not* about Organizations in Clock Time but Organizations in Historical Time
 - Not longitudinal
 - Not chronological (i.e. sequence of events on a time line)

What History is Not: Cross-Sectional

Researcher



Clock Time

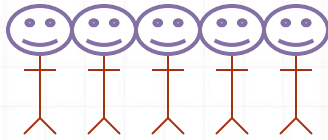


Observations



What History is Not: Longitudinal (at least, not exactly)

Researcher



Clock
Time



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Observations

What is Historical Perspective?

(“Seeing together”)

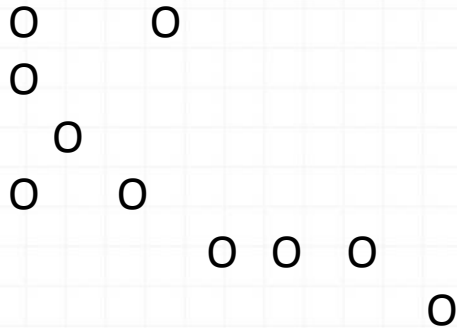
Researcher



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Time



Observations



What is Historical Perspective?

(hence talk of sources, not observations)

Researcher

Clock
Time



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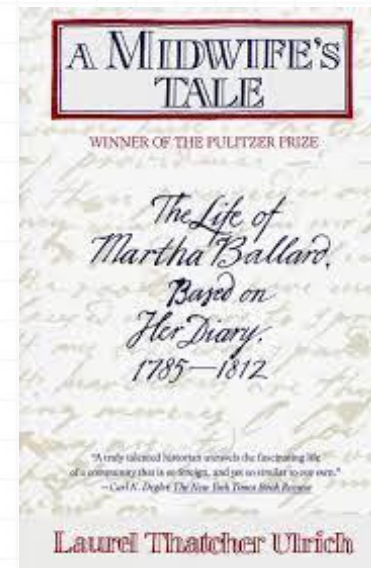
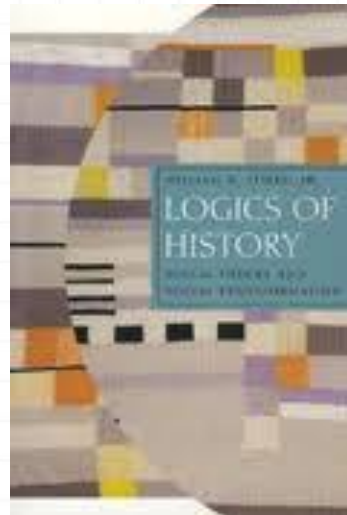
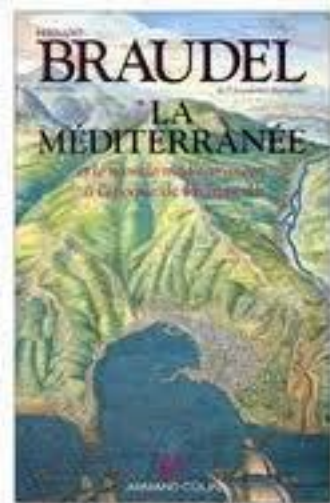
Sources

Part 1: History & Theory

- Limits of the value of using history to “test” or build “general theory”
- Helps account for evolving role of history in organization studies over the twentieth century (Üsdiken & Kipping)
- Alternative 1: Trans-disciplinary research (Leblebici)
- Alternative 2: Implicitly historical theories
 - Institutional Theory (Suddaby, Foste & Mills)
 - Evolutionary Theory (Lippmann & Aldrich)
- Alternative 3: Critical organization theory (Rowlinson & Hassard)

Part 2: Actors & Markets

- What can history do? How can it provide unique insights into organization?
- Variety of forms of insights depending on how one uses historical perspective



- Chapters explore these varieties & apply them to domains of org research

'Constitutive' Temporality

- Understandings why, how, and with what effects historical actors narrate their own histories
- Examples: uses of history, rhetorical history, social memory

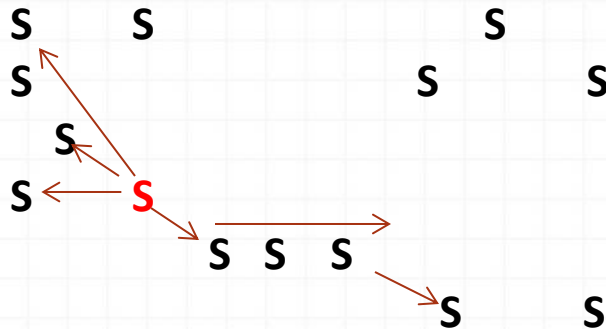
Researcher



Clock Time

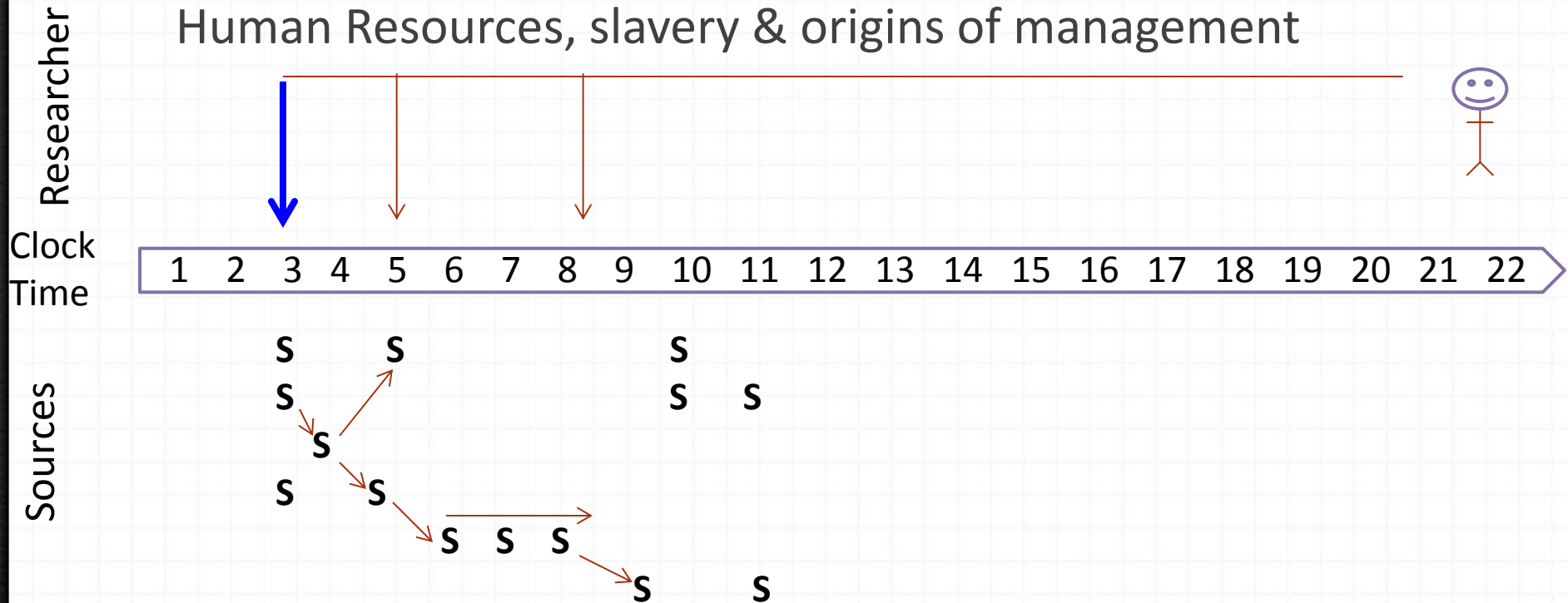


Sources



'Critical' Temporality

- Taking new perspectives on accepted historical claims (by for instance seeking prior or under-represented perspectives)
- Examples: critical histories of Scientific Management & Human Resources, slavery & origins of management



Part 2: Application to the Study of Actors & Markets

- Organizations and Organizational Change (Fear)
- Entrepreneurial Processes (Wadhvani & Jones)
- Industries and Organizational Fields (Kirsch, et al)
- States and State-organization relationships (Bucheli & Kim)

Example: Historical Approaches to Entrepreneurship Research

Historical Temporality:	Structure	Sequence/Process	Constitutive/Cognitive
Theory	Braudel (1958) North (1991)	David (1985) Sewell (2005)	Dilthey (1910) Carr (1986) Ricoeur (1984)
Constructs	Institutions	Path dependence Contingency & change	Historicity of actors Narrative
Exemplars	Baumol (1991)	Schumpeter Jones	Popp & Holt (2013)

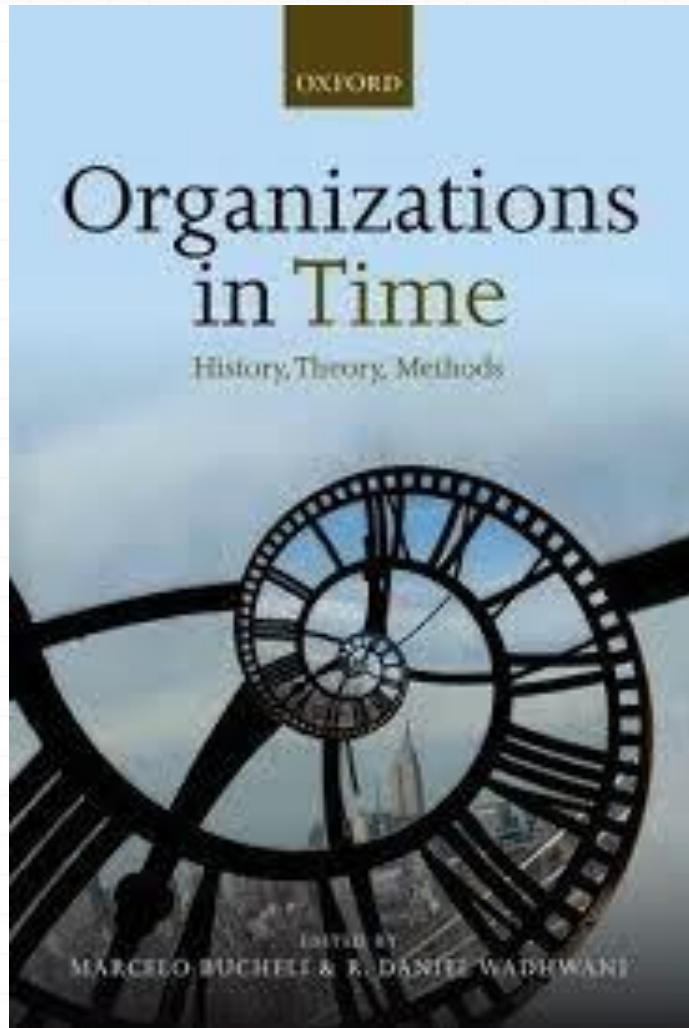
Part 3: Sources and Methods

- It is the temporal perspective from the future looking back that shapes many of the central methodological concerns of history (Yates)
 - Sources & source criticism (Lipartito)
 - Triangulation (Kipping, et al)
 - Hermeneutics (Kipping, et al)
- BUT, more work needs to be done on this to allow historical methods to address organizational research questions

What's Needed

- Range of methodological tools for historical interpretation that match research questions
- Extension and application of historical approaches in particular research domains (entrepreneurship, strategy, etc)
- Rethinking the role of history within business schools (both different from History Departments & traditional 'business history')
- Uses of the Past a particularly important and fertile area for new contributions

Conclusion: The Broader Context



“In a world that is growing ever more complex, we realize **the shortcomings of the decontextualized tools associated with mainstream management knowledge and practice.** As we stand in the midst of an economic and financial crisis with potentially major consequences, it is clear that we **need other lenses** to understand and navigate our stormy world. **Bringing history back in is one of the most promising paths to follow.**”

--Marie Laure Djelic