Introduction
Time Objectified

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This book takes as its point of departure a recognition that time is materialized and social. It seeps into every twist and turn of life and affects the perception of the moment—a phenomenon that, when felt as boring or as not leading in the right direction, may motivate reconsideration and change. People may choose to work on time to change their bleak prospects or the uncertainty of not knowing where to go. They may choose to anchor time in objects that represent the life they wish for themselves, thus turning these objects into affirmations of the realization of their hopes and longings. And they may experience bad times as dreadfully absorbing, not being able to drag themselves out of the depression and lack of possibility that are transmitted.

There are many matters of time: a pomegranate, prison walls, cell phones, a name, an Argentinean football T-shirt, a never-finished building, travel documents, a birth certificate, a novel in a place where literature is rare, a shouting crowd, a dead body, statistics, and a music CD. In this book we argue that such matters of time can be worked with, on, or against to change who and where one is. "The present, not the future, is ours," John Dewey writes (1957: 194), and confusion and uncertainty in relation to present activities are the occasion for deliberate action. The young people whom we focus on are caught up in situations that necessitate either reflection or action, and our interest centers on the temporal aspects of their efforts. Ideas about rational choice have been widely contested in the social sciences, but without disregarding the critique of the notion of the rational agent, we

argue that a certain kind of rationality is at play in the lives we describe—rationality in the sense proposed by William James: for the individual actors, their choices and actions provide a feeling of sufficiency in the present and banish uncertainty from the future (cited in Barbalet 1998: 47). At the core of this rationality is the force and logic of emotion and the effects materiality can have. This book is thus an investigation into the experience of time as an often-troubling, external factor in life, as well as the concomitant emotional unrest and the perhaps innovative acts motivated by it. In the following sections we expand further on our focus—time objectified as seen through the prism of youth—and the contributions to anthropological understandings of time that we hope our work will offer. We then provide a short summary of the chapters and a condensation of some of the central themes of the book. We do not offer definite conclusions but do indicate questions for further research.

Time and Youth

Our approach to time breaks with the idea of time as an independently progressing lawfulness. As a heuristic device we bracket Newtonian time and look into the conditions that make the experience of time stand out. We concur with those who see time as a constitutive dimension of social life (Fabian 1983: 24) and an inherent part of practice in the sense that "practice is not in time but makes time" (Bourdieu 2000: 206). But ours is not an interest in time as naturally incorporated in practice as much as it is an attention toward time as a figure standing out in experience. Daylight and darkness, the biological functioning of the body, clock time, institutional schedules, rising and falling levels on the stock market, and public policies all constitute markers of time, informed by social and cultural notions and not necessarily working in harmony (James and Mills 2005: 13). Often they are perceived as natural and social givens that must be adhered to if one wants to survive. But sometimes conformity is not possible.

There are occasions that might make individuals stop, perhaps step back, and realize that something has changed. That the wind is changing, that a bird portends the coming of a new season, that a bodily function is not what it used to be, that a year has suddenly passed or perhaps just an hour. Often such realizations of the presence of time in one's life do not pose a problem; they merely form part of our knowledge that this is the way life is: time passes. But time may pass too slowly or too quickly, or a feeling of temporal discontinuity or exclusion from the time of others may arise. Biological age and social status may diverge, as when grey hair troubles a young man while

he is still living with his parents and has no prospects for change. What is at stake when the realization of time becomes troublesome? Finding oneself incapable of following the timing of society may radically challenge one's sense of agency. Feeling passive and receptive opposes the very idea we carry of the beings we wish to be—an inherently modern idea of humans as active and in control (Hansen 2011; Jackson 1998). And feeling time as empty and slow, without attraction of any kind, opposes the expectation of excitement that is inherent in consumer society (Bauman 1998). When it emerges as something in itself time has to be worked on and resisted.

In this book, we probe the question of troublesome time through the prism of youth. Although young people are not the only ones to experience time as a problem, the category of youth offers a particularly sharp lens through which to explore how matters of time affect daily life. "Youth" as a category is often temporally defined as a transitory period between childhood and adulthood, and hence young people are often forced to reckon with the future in relation to their present social positions (cf. Cole and Durham 2008). Ideas of proper and improper transition dominate much thinking about youth, and cultural constructions of social problems, like early school dropouts, teenage pregnancies, and youth gangs, are the result of such thinking. In Recife, where Anne Line Dalsgård has worked, expectations regarding young people's orientation toward the future are influenced by middle-class lifestyles, and consequently, young people from low-income families cannot move forward as expected and are often cast as problematic and at risk. Even better-off young people experience frustration and uncertainty, as they cannot always follow the script of transition mapping out a linear and unbroken movement from private schools to university, job, and family (Dalsgård, Franch, and Scott 2008). Where Victor Turner once looked at initiation rites as sound mechanisms for the incorporation of young people into adult society (1970, 1995), today we may see this transition more as a dominant idea than an actual practice. However, it is an idea that powerfully structures the lives of young people and that carries connotations of control and continuity.

In the context of global social, political, and economic changes, continuity seems to have become an increasing problem for young people all over the world. The United Nations World Youth Report (2005) emphasizes that globalization, the rapid development of information and communication technologies, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and armed conflicts are factors that increasingly affect young people's lives and create extensive social marginalization. For young people affected by these events, the future is uncertain and not immediately controllable (Bauman 1998; see also Vigh

2006). Nations have particular interests in youths in this category in that they are seen as being threatened by detrimental patterns (Ejrnæs 2006) that could make them potentially dangerous. Simultaneously, somewhere else, a celebration of the playfulness of youth makes labor and responsibility less attractive and, in fact, worrisome for the individual who wishes to uphold a sense of youthfulness or a lack of contamination, as we see among, for instance, left-wing activists in Western societies (see Chapter 3). These tendencies seem to be opposite; however, we may see both as part of a widespread disruption of any naturalness related to the passage to adulthood.

In recent years, a growing body of anthropological literature has explored the relationship between youth and time, mainly with reference to the question of the future (Amit and Dyck 2011; Cole 2010; Cole and Durham 2008; Christiansen, Utas, and Vigh 2006; Frederiksen 2013; Jeffrey 2008; 2010; Jensen 2008; Meinert 2009; Valentin, Dalsgård, and Hansen 2008). In their introduction to *Figuring the Future*, Jennifer Cole and Deborah Durham rightly note that much literature on youth has tended to analytically privilege space over time as space emerges in ideas about "scapes," mobility, global flows, and geographical marginality. Although such foci are not unimportant, they argue, "most current analyses fail to take sufficient account of the temporal nature of youth and childhood" (2008: 5). Taking up the challenge posed by Cole and Durham, we explore time as a troublesome figure in young people's lives, but more than that, we ask what an anthropology of youth has to offer to wider anthropological theorizing on time.

We argue that a focus on how time becomes objectified in the lives of young people allows us to broach the study of time in anthropology in relation to subjects such as boredom, waiting, inactivity, subjunctivity, and inertia on an everyday level. Although a few authors have recently worked on these and related issues (e.g., Jeffrey 2010; Musharbash 2007; Whyte 2002), these are themes that generally remain neglected in anthropological theorizing and have yet to be viewed in a comparative perspective. We provide a cross-cultural comparison of how time emerges in everyday life with contributions from the Philippines, Brazil, Romania, Uganda, Nepal, Denmark, Georgia, Cameroon, and the United States.

Analytical Topics to Be Addressed

The premise that action and experience are intimately connected with questions of time has a long history in the social sciences. From the early years of the twentieth century onward, sociologists, philosophers, and psychologists heatedly debated questions of intentionality and cause and effect in relation

to the notion of time. Some of the foremost thinkers of the twentieth century, such as William James (1842–1910), George Herbert Mead (1863–1931), Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), and Alfred Schütz (1899–1959), dealt with this issue in much of their writing (Flaherty 2011). Their thoughts have lately reemerged in several anthropological studies of time. Indeed, time as an object of anthropological analysis has become prominent in recent years. Although it has been an important element in many classic anthropological studies of social change, tradition, and historicity, as well as in the development of praxis theory (Dalsgaard and Nielsen 2013; Hodges 2008b), studies that in various ways make time a constitutive part of analysis have recently multiplied (e.g., Birth 2008; Crapanzano 2004; Das 2007; Gell 1992; Guyer and Lambin 2007; Ingold 2000; James and Mills 2005; Miyazaki 2004; Ssorin-Chaikov 2006). It is widely agreed in these studies that multiple temporalities coexist and that time (or temporalities) frame social life.

As Matt Hodges argues, recent anthropological writings on time have tended to focus on notions of "flow," "flux," "tempo," "rhythm," "process," and "fluidity" (2008b: 400; 2008a). This renders time a constitutive element of social life, but as already pointed out above, it fails to describe situations in which such flows are broken. Ours will be an exploration of the experiences of temporal impasse, where boredom or hopelessness stands out, and the means young people employ to work on it.

Overwhelmed by Time

Pierre Bourdieu put time at the forefront of analysis in his development of practice theory (e.g., 1977, 1990, 2000). Time, he writes, usually passes unnoticed, as people are immersed in the games of the world and their "forth-coming," or things anticipated. However, when there is discrepancy between what is anticipated and the logic of the game, the engagement with the practical sense of the forth-coming of the world gives way to time objectified, and relations to time such as waiting, impatience, regret, nostalgia, boredom, or discontent come into being (Bourdieu 2000: 206). But as Maria Louw rightly notes, despite putting time at the forefront, Bourdieu does not grant these objectified relations to time much attention and therefore does not see their significance as social phenomena (Louw 2007: 141). Louw traces this to a general downplaying of consciousness, abstraction, and reflexivity in Bourdieu's work in the sense that actors are granted little opportunity to reflect on their conditions of existence (192). Because actors for Bourdieu are so deeply immersed in the field, anticipations of and adjustments to the forthcoming are done on the spot, in the twinkle of an eye, in

the heat of the moment, "in conditions which exclude distance, perspective, detachment and reflection" (12). Although there is much to be learned from Bourdieu's work on time, his distinction between the real world and the imaginary overlooks the importance of situations in which individuals are forced to reckon with this gap or where the gap, or rather objectified relations to time, is what constitutes everyday life. Although the anthropological toolbox is thus well equipped in terms of describing people's actions, it is less well equipped when it comes to approaching the inaction experienced in troubled times.

Referring also to Bourdieu's work on time, Michael Jackson has described childbirth and death as instances when we are "thrown" in a temporal sense, as nothing seems to exist outside these events as they take place (Jackson 2007: 206). In such instances a feeling of outrage can arise over "the outside world . . . still going about its business, keeping up with schedules and timetables, indifferent to our struggles for life, oblivious to our pain." Yet in the moments following a birth or a death, people will begin to reclaim the autonomy they felt they had lost and return to the world that was momentarily lost (207). However, such returns are not always possible, and at times they are even kept at bay. As the chapters in this book make clear, temporal tension can be a staging ground leading to new forms of creativity and action, but it can just as well involve apathy, inactivity, and passivity.

Figure and Ground: The Case of Boredom

"Everyday life" may be an elusive and diffuse category, as what we label "everyday life" exists only as a background condition against which particular events stand out (Lewis 2000: 539). The same may be said about an objectified relation to time such as boredom. Only because something stands out as interesting do we know that a lack of interest exists. However, boredom may also be the figure (not the ground) we focus on. For many of the young people described in this volume, boredom is one of the most prominent characteristics of their lives. It attracts their thoughts, worries, and self-criticisms, as they know life should be different—exciting and in movement. A leading characteristic of boredom is stillness, problematic stillness, but for stillness to be experienced as problematic, movement has to be expected.

Routines and repetitions are not necessarily boring. People may work on the same assembly line day after day and not find it boring. Observations of people with jobs high in repetitive tasks and low in complexity show that socially fulfilling relationships may prevent the workers from experiencing monotony (Bauman 1998: 40). It could thus be that the experience of boredom

is "in the eye of the beholder," as Peter Conrad puts it, because "what may be boring to one person may be fascinating to another. Boredom is not a characteristic of an object, event or person, but exists only in the relationship between individuals and their interpretation of their experience" (1997: 465). But as several of the contributions to this volume show, the eye of the beholder is intersubjectively constituted: all perspectives are informed by culture and social norms, and it may be impossible to keep up the standards of those around one when standards of the good life are set and constantly raised, far away from one and one's companions (see also Bauman 1998: 40; Højlund, Dalsgård, Frederiksen, and Meinert 2011).

If the good life in present-day societies is to a large degree cast in terms of excitement and constant choice and renewal, as Bauman finds, *the quality of time itself*, not the product of its use, becomes the figure to be evaluated. If time is found to be without the appropriate quality, we may wish to make it disappear or quickly pass. Boredom is linked to this way of seeing time as something that has to be passed rather than as a horizon for opportunities (Svendsen 2005: 23). But as Hans-Georg Gadamer asks, "What is actually passed when passing time? Not time, surely, that passes? And yet it is time that is meant, in its empty lastingness, but which as *something* that lasts is too long and assumes the form of painful boredom" (quoted in Svendsen 2005: 23). When foregrounded as *something*, time is problematic, at least if a socially accepted purpose of enduring time is not at hand.

Routine may even be a potential site of meaning and agency, as in tai chi, for instance, in which routine is treated "as the very ground of consciousness and as a technical means to maintain an alert and reflexive orientation towards the world" (Slater 2009: 223). The practice of tai chi involves the repetition of a series of small moves. In the beginning these are mechanically reproduced, but over time they are done with deeper and deeper awareness of the changes that are taking place in the muscles, balance, and breathing. Tai chi may be boring to some; for others its repetition and lastingness is a deeply meaningful practice. The crucial question is whether there is a purpose beyond the actual practice—that is, if through my awareness of the immediate present, I can see a larger whole to which I add my small part. If I am not allowed to contribute to the world around me, repetition means standing still, eternally returning to the now.

Routine may therefore lead to resignation and loss of interest, but if nothing more is expected this can be accepted and compensated for. If, for instance, a repetitive activity leads to a remunerative end (for instance, piecework; see Barbalet 1998: 640), it may be meaningful despite being tedious. Thus, in *Righteous Dopefiend* (2009), Philippe Bourgois and Jeff Schonberg

refer to an interview with the young man Carter, a San Francisco drug addict who has just gotten himself a legitimate job after a life of criminal activity. When Carter states that he is "in a way . . . bored," Bourgois asks whether *working as such* is boring, and Carter answers, "No. It's not boring to work, right, but if I had a motherfuckin' dental plan, a benefit package, a credit union, and all of that . . . no motherfucker could pull me from my job. I'd be working twenty-four/seven, with all the overtime I could get" (2009: 163). That Carter does not earn enough to live a decent life makes him bored with his job, whereas the capacity to live with a dental plan and the like would make any toil meaningful to him.

When society changes from being guided by an ethic of work and production to being ruled by the aesthetics of consumption, toiling loses its meaning, as it does not enhance one's capacity to consume (Bauman 1998). It feels as if it is a waste of time, as time was meant for more. *This*, not the hard work itself, may be deeply boring or create a sense of discontent.

Boredom is an active discomfort—that is, an emotion rather than a complex of emotions such as anxiety, anger, disappointment, or hopelessness. When boredom springs forth as the figure, not the ground, it is present as an absence. Indeed, as Conrad notes, "it would be difficult to experience boredom unless we anticipated the possibility of something else" (1997: 468). Boredom is only explicable in terms of the fact that something is "not-yet" (Anderson 2004: 750). This "not-yet" may open up an overwhelming gap of meaninglessness, if whatever is absent is experienced as never coming into being, perhaps because "values and circumstances fail to correspond, when ways of being in the world and the world . . . are coming together in a meaningless fit" (Musharbash 2007: 315). Indeed, as Martin Demant Frederiksen has shown in his study of time and marginality among young men in the Republic of Georgia, such meaningless fits—or objectified relations to time, as we call them here—can come to constitute the very core of individual experience, rather than something that merely stands out momentarily. Sometimes what does not come together may just be the biological aging of one's body and the lack of possible routes to adulthood in one's present situation. Something as simple and concrete as a pair of grey hairs may epitomize the problem—that is, growing old in one sense while remaining young in another (2013).

In different ways the chapters in this book focus on time as a troubling figure and the emotional and often existential effects it has in young people's lives. However, we also claim that the background—the everyday, the easiness and casualness—should be taken into account to fully understand the situations and efforts we describe. It may be that life is difficult for many of

the young people we write about, but exactly because life is also more than that, it is possible to work on time.

Acting on Time

The agentic dimension of social action should be seen as a temporally embedded process (see Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 963; Mische 2009). We act on the present while acting on the future, and vice versa, at times even to change the past (see Mattingly 1998). When everything runs smoothly we may dream and imagine a splendid future for ourselves, but only when this imagined self, with its innate promises of agency and rationality, is contested and threatened by the present do we act deliberately (Dewey 1957: 194). But if our experience of time reflects both desires and circumstances (or agency and structure), then how, asks Michael Flaherty (2011: 3), do people try to alter or customize various dimensions of their temporal experience and resist external sources of temporal constraint or structure? How do people themselves make time more concrete? In his work on what he calls "the textures of time," Flaherty describes different forms of "time work"—that is, "the intrapersonal and interpersonal effort directed toward producing or preventing various temporal experiences" (11).

Some individuals or groups find themselves somehow separated from the time of society, but as several chapters in this volume make clear, this does not necessarily mean that they are left in complete passivity. Although, for instance, the future can be a burdensome presence in daily life for some young people, as the horizons ahead cannot necessarily be crossed (see Jackson 2007: xviii; Sneath, Holbraad, and Pedersen 2009: 10), the future can also be an open field of possibilities. The mere fact that it has not happened yet makes it fertile ground for the imagination. As David Sneath, Martin Holbraad, and Morten A. Pedersen write, if we accept that imagination is pervasive in all human apprehension and can be studied empirically as an outcome more than a "holistic backdrop that conditions human activities" (2009: 19), we have a key to an understanding of much of the activity written about in this volume. The outcome of various processes of imagination is, as they write, underdetermined by the environment that brings it about and, hence, playful in character.

When the Romanian teenagers that Răzvan Nicolescu describes send text messages on their mobile phones instead of an instant message on the Internet, they play with the (relative) slowness of the phone system, which extends the waiting for an answer. When the young woman Evinha in Dalsgård's study shows up for a job interview she was never invited for, she

plays with the possibility that she will be hired. And when the activists presented in Stine Krøijer's chapter provoke the police by their peaceful demonstration, they play with chance and the likelihood of a violent response to call forth exactly the situation that confirms their picture of the relationship between activists and police. In all three cases, nothing is fully conditioned; it may turn out in one way or another, but the important thing is the open-endedness of the situation, not the secure outcome.

In the chapters of this volume we describe both victories and defeats, but more than anything else, we highlight the indeterminacy of the lives we describe. We, the anthropologists (and markedly within youth studies), tend to become the judges of whether the hopes of our informants should be deemed prospective or deceptive. Or we tend to write analyses that are either too pessimistic or too optimistic, because we wish to determine the future or come to terms with it in a very literal sense (Dalsgård and Frederiksen 2013). We cannot tell how things will turn out. Indeterminacy is therefore also a condition for our writing, a fact that is addressed differently in the chapters constituting this book.

Overview of the Chapters

In Chapter 1, Jennifer Johnson-Hanks explores waiting as a state of "suspended action" that is often experienced by young people who finish school without having any plans or prospects for the future. How, she asks, do young people make a living and make a meaningful life under these conditions? In comparing empirical data from her fieldwork in, respectively, Cameroon and the United States, she shows how the activities, constraints, and aspirations of contemporary, young, college-educated American women have come to resemble those of the Cameroonian elite of a decade ago. Young Americans have begun to objectify and relate to time in the same way as Cameroonians in making uncertainty, flexibility, and the suspension of planning a new normal. This, she argues, is a contrast to the widely held assumption that global convergence will eventually lead young people in poorer countries to lead lives increasingly similar to youth from the richer North.

In Chapter 2, Steffen Jensen describes the confinement of young marginalized members of brotherhoods in the Philippines as even more concrete, as many of them have been imprisoned. In prison one's own time stands still, while the rest of society outside prison moves on. The brotherhoods define the local idiom of *buryong*, which is a particular form of boredom. *Buryong* is a "dark passenger," a despair or sense of aloneness carried on the shoulders that always threatens to take over. *Buryong* or boredom as a way of being

in time stands out here almost as a bodily symptom. Once free, outside the prison walls, the young men's *buryong* is even more difficult to handle because they are then surrendered to their own passivity—there is no excuse for not doing something other than that they are not able to. *Buryong*, writes Jensen, becomes a symptom of a present projected hopelessly into the future.

Chapter 3, Stine Krøijer's contribution, illuminates how left radical activists in Scandinavia perceive their own activities and the quality of the time in between large spectacular protest events. She shows how public discourse in Scandinavia tends to classify activists as young, implying that they are not considered to be fully fledged political citizens and leading to their being relegated to a position of waiting until their views and actions in public are taken seriously. Krøijer demonstrates how some activists perceive capitalism as an all-encompassing system with no point of transcendence, leaving little hope for the future. She borrows the phrase "dead time" from an activist protest video to describe the bodily experience of being stuck in somebody else's world.

In Chapter 4, Martin Demant Frederiksen considers governmental material constructions in the Republic of Georgia that are built to signify particular futures. However, as he shows, these objectifications of time often came to signify times other than the ones they were intended to, creating what he terms a "heterochronic atmosphere"—that is, the sensation that multiple and often contradictory temporalities coexist in the urban sphere, making uncertain both what the future was and who was part of it. This was particularly true in the groups of young men Frederiksen conducted fieldwork with, who continually used the notions of boredom and being in depression to depict their situation, despite being surrounded by images of the future. The story of a pomegranate given to Josef Stalin is used to convey the notion of a heterochronic atmosphere.

In Chapter 5, Anne Line Dalsgård looks into specific ways of talking about life perspectives, opportunities, and emotional attitudes toward the future of young people in a low-income neighborhood in northeast Brazil. She discusses time as a flow of events that stir up affects and tends to swallow up subjective hopes and desires in boredom, depression, disillusionment, or anger. However, she argues, the experience of affects may also constitute a potential for change. Thus, the objectification of time is understood here as a distancing (and detachment) from events and dominant affects, where societal time is no longer an active force in the face of which one is a victim. Instead it is an object to be observed and, if an opportunity arises, to be acted on.

In Chapter 6, Karen Valentin examines the role of certificates among young Nepalese migrants. Migration within Nepal and from Nepal to India

has been a common practice for young Nepalese males for generations and plays an important role in their transition to adulthood. Through ethnographic insights gained from working with Nepalese people in Nepal, India, and Denmark over the last fifteen years, Valentin sheds light on the relationship between geographical trajectories and ideas of futurity through a specific focus on documents as material manifestations of objectified time, which circumscribe young people's ideas of the possible and the impossible.

In Chapter 7, Razvan Nicolescu explores boredom in relation to communication technologies and practices within a group of Romanian teenagers. Nicolescu shows how, through the use of communication media such as computers and cell phones, teenagers practice their subjectivities inside particular private spaces that are far away from the surveillance of parents or teachers. In doing so, they transform their experiences of boredom from a solitary experience into a social and meaningful practice. This, writes Nicolescu, does not render boredom completely unproblematic. However, it endows time spent alone with a certain social meaning.

In Chapter 8, Lotte Meinert and Nanna Schneidermann examine practices of creating a name among young male artists in Uganda as a specific kind of time work that objectifies and appropriates wished-for personal and social futures. The authors analyze the giving and taking of names as processes of condensing time. By taking artists' names, they argue, the young men break the rule that it is usually others who name a person. In naming themselves, the musicians try to project their own dreams on to the future in a realm of possibility that is defined not by kinship, tribe, or denomination but by popular culture and depends on an audience and fans who make them what they propose themselves to be.

Themes of This Volume

The chapters of the book overlap thematically in their descriptions of objectified time. In this final section, we present some of the themes that emerge when the chapters are viewed in a comparative light. We present our contributions within three overall frameworks: the time of the times, being outside time, and time work as relational.

The Time of the Times

Occurrences, events, and circumstances can be ascribed to the times we live in; they can be said to be symptoms of our times. But what is our time, or rather, what kind of time (or quality of time) is inherent in and constitutes

particular societal contexts? Certain ideas of time, shaping both practice and expectation, are historically embedded in specific periods. As several authors have argued, these ideas are not necessarily consistent, in the sense that multiple temporalities can coexist within particular frames (e.g., Gell 1992; Krøijer 2011; Shove, Trentmann, and Wilk 2009; Ssorin-Chaikov 2006). One such frame may be that of modernity. While modernity can be seen (or experienced) as a period that has allowed humanity an increased sense of choice and rationality, it can also be seen (or experienced) as a period in which society has trapped individuals "into an ever-increasing pace of forced routine, that industrial lives are built around the careful choreography of simultaneous rhythms which exhaust and drain us" (Wilk 2009: 146). Although these two situations represent extremes, their coexistence can help explain why modernity allows both boredom and activity.

Qualities of time can be modeled by ideological or religious principles. The former is exemplified in this volume by Krøijer's chapter on young left-wing political activists and the question of capitalism and by Frederiksen's chapter on the ideas of time inherent in the ideological foundations of the Soviet state. Another example of a societal configuration of time is that of living in a post-something context—that is, living in a society that is held to have moved away from something else, be it war or a political regime. Johnson-Hanks takes this up in her chapter on postwar Cameroon. Here crisis has become endemic rather than being an isolated period. Rather than being something people move through, it has become something people move in (see Vigh 2008: 5). As Johnson-Hanks shows, this creates particular ways of relating to the future. In Cameroon, for instance, "flexibility" was widely invoked by her young informants in the 1990s as a result of the uncertain circumstances that surrounded them. Interestingly, as she further shows, the same word gained prominence in the United States in colloquial speech and commercials in post–financial crisis United States. In a Taussigian manner, in both places flexibility has become a mode of "ordering disorder" (Taussig 1992: 17).

Political language in crisis and postcrisis contexts is often infused with temporal metaphors. It is, for instance, no wonder that Barack Obama's rhetoric of hope was so forceful during the U.S. election campaign in 2008 as a counter to the increasing financial crisis. While such political language can be both useful and forceful in specific periods, it being forceful depends on change actually coming into being. In Chapter 4, Frederiksen shows how a political rhetoric of hope in another "post" context, post-Soviet Georgia, has turned into a stalemate. Here, being "post" does not necessarily entail being on the way to somewhere else; for some groups of young people, it

is equally likely to entail the experience of being stuck (see Pedersen and Højer 2008). Frederiksen has elsewhere referred to this as being "haunted by time"—that is, being affected by the eerie and stubborn presence of times that were supposed to be past but that somehow remain present (2013: 6). Hence, where in one setting (Cameroon) we see the emergence of the notion of flexibility among young people as a way of experiencing temporal tensions, in another (Georgia) we see the emergence of depression. This highlights the importance of considering context not just as a particular sociohistorical configuration but also as a temporal one where time takes on certain meanings and where the societal construction of time can in various ways become problematic to certain individuals and groups. The question of particular historical times (or moments in time) thus stands out in several chapters as an important aspect of individuals' and groups' perceptions not just *of* time but also of their position *in* time.

The question of youth becomes particularly immanent in this relation. For one thing, societal scripts and dominant ideas of time in understanding, for instance, the passage from youth to adulthood can clash with the actual experience of young people (Dalsgård, Franch, and Scott 2008). For another, the time of the times is not necessarily experienced in the same manner by different generations. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty observes, "What we call disorder and ruin, others who are younger live as the natural order of things; and perhaps with ingenuity they are going to master it precisely because they no longer seek their bearings where we took ours" (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 23). Similarly, in a much quoted article on generations, Karl Mannheim (1972) argues that particular generations interact with their surroundings in particular ways, a younger generation having the opportunity to experience the world anew (what Mannheim calls "fresh contact" [108]). This is not to say that young people have more agency than older generations but rather that they may experience things differently (see Jeffrey 2010: 185; Durham 2008). Hence, "the times we live in" are lived in and within different ways by different generations. For instance, a time representing order for an older generation may be perceived by a younger one as confinement. Conversely, a time can be seen by an older generation as one of chaos and sudden rupture, whereas for younger people it might be seen as a backdrop or a time of possibility. Such differences are not necessarily confined to generations but may also be played out among groups of youth who are each other's contemporaries or, as Krøijer demonstrates in her chapter, even within one person.

Considering time as context raises a series of important questions: How quickly is one's perception of time affected by social circumstances and contexts? How quickly is a crisis forgotten? How does inertia come into being?

How much do former times and narratives of the past that are retold in stories, sayings, and lullabies matter? How are temporal misfits created?

Being outside Time

The question of societal time, or perhaps more precisely, dominant ideas of time in society, raises the question of whether certain groups or individuals believe themselves to be part of these times (see Frederiksen 2013). Being outside time may be a spatial matter. As David Harvey argues in criticizing capitalism's geographical developments of urban space, spatial form controls temporality by building geographical landscapes in its own image only to destroy them later to maintain its own dynamic of endless accumulation (2000: 177).

Constructions of what he calls "spaces of hope" may in unintended ways generate divisions, as this kind of spatial distribution of time inevitably leaves some groups behind as modernity or capitalism continues its push forward. In effect, urban space is actively implicated in creating context-dependent meanings, constituting physical, social, and moral frames that condition young people's opportunities and restrictions (Valentin, Dalsgård, and Hansen 2008). We see this in the Brazilian context described by Dalsgård, where young men from the poorer areas of the city provoke immediate suspicion when they leave their neighborhoods. They are routinely stopped in the street by the police, some people cross the road when they see them, and drivers waiting for a red light may close their windows if they see these young men nearby. In Batumi, Georgia, the young men with whom Frederiksen experienced the town avoided the conspicuous fountains in the city center, perceiving them as false and deceitful depictions of what the city, in their eyes, really was.

But being outside time in a spatial manner may also be more concrete, as described in, for instance, Jensen's chapter on young, imprisoned criminals in the Philippines. In the confines of prison one is removed from the time of the surrounding society. But as Jensen shows through the notion of *buryong*, this is both a spatial *and* a bodily matter, as the experience of being in a different time is something people carry with and even in themselves. Similarly, in Krøijer's chapter on left-wing activists in Denmark, we see how the experience of dead time stands out as a kind of solitude and shows how symptoms of time (whether dead time or *buryong*) hurt when one is alone. Johnson-Hanks describes time as a holding pattern. She distinguishes between the waiting for a beginning and the waiting for an ending and notes how some activities create time, whereas others do not. In Nicolescu's

contribution we see how teenagers use technologies such as mobile phones and the Internet to declare publicly to friends that they are bored, hoping that this will lead to an exchange of text messages or chat or a real-life activity. Sending out the message "I am boooored . . . ," they try to overcome the restlessness and isolation associated with the boring situation. A like kind of emotion work takes place among the young men in Dalsgård's study. Living in a low-income neighborhood, where boredom and depression are common responses to the lack of interesting prospects, they keep themselves aloof from the temptation of pessimism by supporting each other and orienting themselves toward the future.

Time Work as Relational

While certainty is often held to be pivotal in terms of planning ahead, knowing the future or at least having a relatively clear idea of it is not necessarily attractive, leading possibly to resignation but also to alternative modes of action (see Lindquist 2005). The young people in Dalsgård's contribution know very well that the day is likely to be one of downswing and disappointment. It is exactly the certainty that nothing will happen that makes them seek to do or to be prepared for something else (see also Dalsgård and Frederiksen 2013). The question of flexibility raised by Johnson-Hanks similarly conveys a situation of actively maintaining the position of availability to chance. Flexibility appears here as a particular management of time or, in other words, a particular attitude toward circumstances. As Jackson notes (2004), one can change the given into the chosen by telling the story about what has happened in a particular way. This becomes evident in Nicolescu's chapter, in which teenagers actively make use of being bored. As Nicolescu argues, by being shared, boredom in itself gains a social ethics and becomes a mode of activity. Here, we see how the introduction of new technologies allows new types of arrangements, potential spaces, and imagined times to become possible—one can, for instance, sit alone with others on the Internet.

In Meinert and Schneidermann's contribution on young musicians in Uganda, naming appears as a kind of time work. Seeking to become famed and respected musicians, the young men create artist names that are both ironic comments on their situation and expressions of who they want to be in the future. By acting as if it were so, the young men in Uganda seek to change the times they live in and become someone else, if only momentarily while they are on stage. This reveals how placing oneself outside the time of society can in some instances be an active position conducive of change. This ethnography points out that time work is often a relational matter.

As is the case with the Romanian teenagers described by Nicolescu, the young Ugandans might work on (and with) time on their own, but for their time work to work, it needs an audience or a form of recognition by others. Hence, overcoming time problems becomes a highly social and intersubjective activity.

Both recognition and trust are central issues in relation to various forms of time work. When several temporalities are at stake, how does one know what or whom to listen to? Does one trust official rhetoric promising a bright future in the long term? Does one trust the immediate signs contradicting these promises? Does one trust passing emotions of despair or the knowledge that in the end everything will be all right? What are the registers (emotional, social, symbolic, material, or technological) through which we can know the future and seek to influence it? These are some of the questions asked by several of the chapters in this volume.

A Challenge

In his book on the philosophy of boredom, Lars Svendsen quotes Georges Bernano's impressionistic lines: "[Boredom] is like some sort of dust. One comes and goes without seeing it, one breathes it, one eats it, one drinks it, and it is so fine that it doesn't even scrunch between one's teeth. But if one stops for a moment, it settles like a blanket over the face and the hands. One has to constantly shake this ash-rain off. That is why people are so restless" (Bernano quoted in Svendsen 2005: 14). Situations in which waiting, boredom, impatience, regret, nostalgia, or discontent is immanent in experience seem to be at stake for a growing number of young people around the world (Jeffrey 2010; Ehn and Löfgren 2000). This book explores such experiences by viewing young people in time and, in several chapters, also over time. The times they are in are social and societal as well as individual and existential, posing problems as well as possibilities, the settling dust creating both inertia and unrest.

Bringing attention to objectified relations to time raises questions as to the working of anthropology. For a discipline that often takes its vantage point in describing what people *do*, describing inactivity and passivity is a challenge. Likewise, for an analytical discipline like ours it may be a remote thought to take informants' insistence on openness and indeterminacy at face value. However, there may be ways of writing the experience of open-endedness or uncertainty into our analyses and allowing inactivity to be present. The chapters that follow take up this challenge, whether in relation to a pomegranate, a prison wall, cell phones, a name, or other matters of

time, and while some show that creativity, agency, and action may be embedded in, for instance, ways of waiting or being bored, others present more sinister aspects of the role of time in the lives of global youth.

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