

Psychoactive drugs and the management of time

Abstract

The main objective for this article is to explore how users of psychoactive drugs experience time and the role psychoactive drugs play in the management and construction of time. The data in this study consists of different kinds of written documents such as anecdotal accounts and scientific articles and reports which was collected using a purposeful sampling technique. One important result is that time is experienced and constructed differently among users of legal drugs compared to users of illegal drugs. The use of heroin is for example associated with shrinking time-horizons and being afraid of looking back and looking ahead, while smoking cigarettes is correlated with killing chronological time and instituting a parenthesis in normative time. Another conclusion is that users of illegal drugs experience greater problems synchronizing social and subjective time compared to users of legal substances. The results of my study also suggest that drug users' experiences of time are intertwined with the social context and social meanings of drug use.

Keywords: management of time, subjective time, social time, psychoactive drugs, drug use and the escape from time.

IN SOME CLASSICAL studies in the field of drug research time is conceived as a social and cultural fact that regulates people's actions. However, by treating time as a structural phenomenon theories like these lose sight of and neglect the subjective experiences of time. In his study "Passage to Play: Rituals of Drinking Time in American Society" Joseph Gusfield (1987) analyzes the meaning of alcohol in American culture and uncovers the existence of a specific social time frame that specifies the proper time and place for a drink. He concludes that alcohol is a cultural and temporal object that symbolizes and ritualizes the transition from work to play and from work time to leisure time. The idea that time is an objective structure regulating peoples' actions, is also an important ingredient in the study "Drunken Comportment. A Social Explanation" by Craig McAndrew and Robert B Edgerton (1969). In their research alcohol is treated as a cultural symbol and the drinking of alcohol is interpreted as a passage between different time frames – a process they define as a "time-out". They also question the role of alcohol in creating drunken comportment and suggest a social explanation as to why the drinking of alcohol is accompanied by disinhibited behavior. According to McAndrew and Edgerton the lack of restraint is caused by a "time-out",

i.e. a relaxation of the norms of everyday life and the injunction of rules associated with drunken behavior.

In contrast to these classical studies of drug use the main objective for this article is to explore how users of psychoactive drugs experience time. Several drug researchers have noted a shortage of studies that explicitly study drug user's experience of time (Klingemann 2000; Klingemann & Schibli 2004; Järvinen & Ravn 2017). Another objective is to investigate the role drugs play in drug users management of time. The data in this study consists of different kinds of written documents such as anecdotal accounts, scientific articles and reports which was collected with a criterion-based sampling technique called purposeful sampling. The logic of this sampling technique lies in the selection of information-rich cases that can provide an in-depth understanding of issues which are of central importance to the purpose of my study (Patton 1990). Important sampling criteria has been accounts where users of different kinds of psychoactive drugs describe their experiences and management of time, as well as researcher's interpretations of what meaning drugs have in drug users social and personal worlds. According to Weil and Rosen (1993) there are four main types of psychoactive drugs: *stimulants*, *depressants*, *narcotics* and *hallucinogens*. I have collected accounts that exemplify these types of drugs: nicotine and caffeine (stimulants), alcohol (depressants), heroin (narcotics) and cannabis (hallucinogens). Besides shifting pharmacological properties psychoactive drugs also differ in social meaning and legal status. Nicotine, caffeine and alcohol are legal and socially accepted drugs in the West, while heroin and cannabis are classified as illegal and are socially discarded by mainstream society.

Psychoactive drugs are consumed for many different reasons. Weil and Rosen have specified reasons such as to explore the self, establish an identity, alter moods, treat disease, escape boredom and despair, promote and enhance social interaction, enhance experience and pleasure, stimulate artistic creativity and performance, go along with peer pressure and to rebel. However, one important reason left out by Weil and Rosen is that drugs are also used in order to manage subjective experiences of time. The consumption of psychoactive drugs is the principal method for inducing altered states of consciousness (Blätter, Fachner & Winkelmann 2011). Altered states of consciousness are defined by Ludwig (1990:18) as "any mental state(s) induced by various physiological, psychological, or pharmacological maneuvers or agents, which can be recognized subjectively by the individual himself (or by an objective observer of the individual) as representing a sufficient deviation in subjective experience or psychological functioning from certain general norms". Although altered states of consciousness have many features in common there are also differences both in outward manifestation and subjective experience, due to diverse factors such as cultural conceptions and personal motivation and expectations. Ludwig suggests that despite these differences, altered states of consciousness have a number of common features, where a disturbed sense of time is one of the more prominent characteristics. He contends that a greatly altered sense of time is characterized by specific experiences such as feelings of timelessness, time coming to a standstill, and the acceleration or slowing of time. This is also pointed

out by Wittman (2018) who asserts that one important effect of using psychoactive drugs is a change in the perception of time.

Psychoactive drugs and the experience of time

Drug user's narratives bear witness of alterations in how the flow of time is experienced. In the autobiographical book "How to Stop Time. Heroin from A to Z" Ann Marlowe (1999) examines her own heroin use and the ideas underpinning heroin addiction. The title of her book underlines the importance and centrality of the experience of time in drug use. She portrays heroin use as a practice developed to stop the flow of time. As a matter of fact, she says: "When I turned to heroin, I wanted to halt the flow of time, not so much out of a desire to remain young, but out of a fear of the injuries time might bring" (p. 295). But avoiding the future by living in an eternal present was no solution in the long run, Marlowe continues, because this implies an end to personal development. According to the author using heroin is about doing time. From her point of view, heroin use is part of a subjective time frame that helps her control the future by shutting it out and by doing so provides her with a feeling of safety. But in exchange for that safety heroin will, according to Marlowe, rob you of the opportunity to have uncontrollable, transcendental and amazing experiences. But the author's experience of time is not unique in any sense. In fact, many heroin users report a feeling of time slowing down or stopping and that they become immured in an eternal present (Hartocollis 1983; Reith 1999; Kemp 2009).

This observation, that heroin users experience shortened time perspectives, is confirmed by Reith (1999) in her study of ex-opiate addicts. In this study she points out that drug use ultimately leads to shrinking time perspectives. Besides serious impairments to the future time perspective, characterized by a "blockage" of the future, drug users also experience difficulties in recollecting the past and they even talk about it in terms of "lost time". In her interviews Reith noted that the experience of addiction had a two-fold nature. On the one hand addiction is characterized by a condition in which time appears to freeze and the individual finds it hard to contemplate the future, while on the other hand the addict experiences an inability to recall or recollect the past. During the period in which they were active users they experienced a breakdown of the articulation of time, leaving them stranded in a static and timeless present. Reith concludes that opiate users are being trapped within shrinking time-horizons and in being afraid of looking back and looking ahead they are relegated to an eternal present. Moskalewicz (2016) also points out that heroin users experience being stranded in a static present. However, he argues that it isn't a genuine present, since it lacks a properly and extended "here" and "now". It is rather "an empty, momentary now, without the dimensions of past and future" (p. 1024).

These documented experiences of time bear witness of a specific kind of lived duration that remind of Michael G Flaherty's (1999) description of "protracted duration". In his book "A Watched Pot. How We Experience Time" he discusses three elementary forms of variation in the perceived passage of time, where *protracted duration* is one

of them, besides *temporal compression* and *synchronicity*. Protracted duration refers to the experience of time passing very slowly. However, in the lives of heroin users time is not only slowing down, they experience that time stand still and that they are living in a static and timeless present. The experience of time slowing down is also a reported feature of cannabis use. Wittman (2018) suggests, referring to anecdotal accounts, that time expands under the intoxication of cannabis, which leads to a clear overestimation of temporal duration.

How does heroin user's experience of time compare to the those induced by other kinds of psychoactive drugs? Apparently, suspending the passage of standard time is not only an ingredient of heroin use, it is also associated with drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes. However, there is an important distinction to be made concerning the legality of different psychoactive drugs. Coffee and cigarettes are legal substances and therefore part of socially sanctioned rituals and practices for taking time-out and suspending the passage of normative time. This is not the case with narcotic substances such as heroin and cannabis. The use of heroin and other narcotic drugs are generally considered as deviant acts in the West and there are therefore no socially accepted practices or rituals for using these drugs to manipulate the subjective experience of time.

Smoking cigarettes is one of many socially accepted practices for suspending the passage of standard and normative time. In his book "Cigarettes Are Sublime" Richard Klein (1995:8) states that smoking cigarettes "is permanently linked to the idea of suspending the passage of ordinary time and instituting some other, more penetrating one". Smoking a cigarette gives the smoker an opportunity to open "a parenthesis in the time of ordinary experience", which in turn give rise to a feeling of transcendence. Klein points out how intertwined the smoking of cigarettes is with the dimension of time and the experience of duration. By means of smoking cigarettes the actor not only suspends the ordinary passage of time, but also creates a more profound experience of time. In the poet Baudelaire's work, Klein has noticed a metaphoric use of smoking cigarettes. Baudelaire describes smoking as a revolution that installs a time outside itself, where smoking is metaphorically conceived as the killing of chronometric time and the mechanical measure of our mortality. In that sense smoking cigarettes is perceived as the interruption and reversal of the series of moments leading to our own death. It's an act where we defy chronological time as well as our own mortality by transcending clock time and instituting an alternative in-between time.

While heroin use seems to be associated with stopping and freezing time, smoking cigarettes is correlated with killing chronological time by instituting a parenthesis in time; a sort of in-between time. While the smoker is still smoking "an equilibrium develops that incorporates interruptions in chronological time" (Lenson 1995:38). In contrast to heroin users, smokers are not afraid of the passage of time; of looking back or looking ahead and don't experience any difficulties in synchronizing social time with subjective time. Smoking is all about killing chronological time, but not stopping time. Klein relates an incident from Bizet's opera Carmen, where the workers are standing outside the factory smoking and watching passersby. He comments that "the smoker adopts an aesthetic standpoint, outside the realm of utility or ethics, that kills

the time of work or responsibility in order to bear witness to the time, to the music, of pure passing” (pp. 118–119). Obviously, the passing of time is not experienced as a threat by the smoker, on the contrary, it is a celebrated moment of pure duration.

In the case of drinking alcohol there seems to be different kinds of experiences of time. The recreational user of moderate quantities of alcohol describe episodes of temporal compression, where alcohol makes time pass more quickly. However, in the case of alcoholics their experience of time is qualitatively different compared to those of recreational users. From the alcoholic’s perspective drinking is not about slowing time or making time pass more quickly. According to Denzin (1993) the alcoholic is an anomic temporal being living in accordance with inner and private time. In contrast to the experience of stopping or killing time, the alcoholic experience an uneasiness with his being within time. The alcoholic prefers private and subjective time to social and shared time. In line with that contention Denzin describes alcoholism as a ”dis-ease” of time, which turns the alcoholic into a temporal isolate, an anomic temporal being. The alcoholic’s experience of time is the opposite of what Flaherty (1999) describes as synchronicity. The lived time of synchronicity is a state of mind where duration goes largely unnoticed and where subjective time is roughly synchronized with social time. But the alcoholic lives in accordance with an inner and private time, which places himself or herself outside other people’s time and makes the alcoholic a different kind of temporal being.

Another aspect of the alcoholic’s anomic temporal being, according to Denzin (1993), is that the drinker doesn’t live in the present. On the contrary, he or she drinks alcohol in order to escape the experience of social time. Regular time is lived in the present, while alcoholic time is lodged in the past or the distant future. This means that the alcoholic is constantly locating the self either in the past or the future and is never really fully present in the here and now. Denzin interprets this approach to structuring time as an example of an inauthentic temporal existence, where the experience of things happening in the world are filtered through a past or future temporal orientation.

The problem of synchronization of social and subjective time

In my exploration of drug users’ experiences of time I have observed that users of illegal drugs in general, experience greater difficulties in synchronizing social and subjective time compared to those who use legal drugs. This pattern is probably related to the fact that users of illegal drugs often partake in deviant drug cultures and are subject to different degrees of social marginalization. However, besides the legal status of the drug, the intensity of drug use also seems to be of some significance for the capacity of synchronizing outer and inner time. These assumptions are illustrated in a study by Järvinen and Ravn (2017), where they conclude that there is an absence of synchronization between self-time and social time in the lives of cannabis users. The interviewees experienced difficulties in living in accordance with social time norms and expectations, as well as various institutional timetables and schedules. It is suggested by the authors that the temporal inconsistencies are not only associated with the extent

of cannabis use but also connected to the users' social position as outsiders in relation to society's institutions and social networks. Järvinen and Ravn contends that the lack of synchronization of self-time and social time is a self-reinforcing process, where excessive use of cannabis and social exclusion seems to go hand in hand.

An interesting issue though, which is not commented upon by the authors, is whether the interviewees experienced problems of synchronization of outer and inner time prior to the use of cannabis. Maybe smoking cannabis originally was initiated as a strategy to manage different time structures in an effort to generate smooth transitions between diverse social worlds. Another important issue not touched upon by the authors, is the different rhythms of desire created by the drug and what role these rhythms play in drug user's effort to synchronize subjective and social time. Besides individual and generic variations, the cycles of desire for heroin and cannabis are relatively slow, while they are fast for nicotine and cocaine. In the case of alcohol, the rhythm of desire accelerates with successive administrations (Lenson 1995).

The problem of synchronizing different time structures is also highlighted by Kemp (2009) in her case study of heroin addicts. According to the author heroin addicts don't suffer from a chaotic life but have difficulties living in accordance with the temporal structures of others, especially the time frames by which treatment organizations operate. That discovery is confirmed by Klingemann and Schibli (2004) in their study of drug and alcohol clinics and the relationship between organizational time and drug users subjective time. When drug users enter drug treatment, they live according to time frames generated by their careers as drug users. But on entering they are confronted with time frames belonging to the organization and the treatment staff. Almost all clinical directors interviewed in the study agreed that patients have to learn new ways of managing time because they have problems being on time and keeping appointments. However, a more prominent problem was drug user's insufficient ability to plan leisure time or free time and their impatience regarding everyday matters. Accordingly, from the clinical directors' perspective, the patients go through problems allocating the right amount of time to everyday practicalities. In order to address these problems, treatment organizations provide clients with new structural and individual time tactics like weekly and daily schedules, as well as support in structuring leisure time and reflecting on life time.

Another example of drug user's experiencing problems managing different time structures is found in Wiseman's (1979) study of a sample of homeless alcoholics. While treatment staff meet their clients with a time perspective that includes both the past, present and future, the alcoholics themselves are mostly preoccupied with the immediate problems and practicalities of living. This partially stems from the fact that they spend so much daily time and energy making arrangements for food, housing, clothing, etc.

The problematic relationship between standard time and subjective time in the lives of heavy drug users, is also showcased in William S Burroughs' (1977) self-biographical novel "Junky". In his book he talks about the existence of a specific time frame called "junk time" and how time stops when the "junk" runs out of heroin. According to

Burroughs, junk time is when interest in other things besides junk fades away and when life becomes centered around one fix and looking forward to the next. Junk time is described as the opposite of non-junk time, which starts when junk runs out. The junkie experience serious problems when he is short of junk. A sick junkie has no escape from standard time. He has no place to go and can only wait, writes Burroughs. Being without dope the sick junkie seems to live in between junk time and social time. When the junkie runs short of dope, junk time suddenly stops and the boundary between subjective and social time breaks down.

The problem of synchronizing social and subjective time has been addressed by many scholars. In his article "Inner Time and Social Time in a World of Uncertainty" the sociologist Alberto Melucci (1998) reflect upon the passage between social and subjective time and how we can learn to pass from one to another, without losing the continuity of our presence. From his point of view subjective time refers to our experiences, affections and emotions, while social time alludes to our social roles and calendars. He argues that the differentiation of time is problematic to modern man and that the irregularities between different time frames are heightened in the modern era. He contends that the increasing opposition between subjective and social rhythms of time in modern society, is making the passage between different time frames more and more difficult, causing pressure on identity and the social organization of time. Accordingly, there is a growing need to integrate different time dimensions "within the unity of an individual biography and a consistent 'subject' of action" (p. 182).

The problem of synchronizing social and subjective time is probably exacerbated by the use of illegal drugs. Accordingly, the ambition to help drug users integrate different time structures within the unity of an individual biography seems to be a particularly critical undertaking for treatment organizations. Obviously, they have an important role to play helping clients develop necessary skills for synchronizing social and subjective time.

Psychoactive drugs and the escape from time

Thus far we can conclude that drug use is associated with different experiences of time, as well as difficulties synchronizing social and subjective time. Apart from that, drugs can also be used as means of escape from experiences of time. However, there are many different interpretations in the literature of what it means to escape the experience of time. In this article the discussion will be confined to the following interpretations: the *existential*, the *cultural* and the *sociological* interpretation.

Lars Sjöstrand (2008) introduces an *existential interpretation* of the proposition that drug use is an escape from time.¹ He argues that intoxication has a specific role to

1 The idea that drugs are used in order to escape from subjective experiences and social conditions is only one of many interpretations of the mechanisms behind drug use. Another more recent interpretation is the biopsychosocial model which argues that biological, psychological, social and cultural factors interact to produce substance use.

play in making our existence more tolerable. As a matter of fact, he describes drug use as an act intended to manipulate the subjective experience of time in order to avoid anxiety. In reference to Sartre's philosophy in "Being and Nothingness", he describes consciousness as pure nothingness and as nothing more than a relation to the world. Accordingly, the actor is condemned to freedom, which means it's up to him to choose how to live his life in relation to the world. The difference between facticity and possibility runs through man's existence and is conceived by Sjöstrand as an "ontological gap" that can be closed with the help of intoxicating drugs. He describes intoxication as a denial of the choices the actor has, where the difference "between man's solid corporeality and the possibilities provided by his own consciousness" is eradicated.² But the process of erasing the discrepancy between facticity and possibility is predicated upon the experience of a timeless and eternal present. In order to avoid anxiety, the experience of the present has to be isolated from both past and future.

According to the *cultural interpretation* drug use is conceived as an escape from the standard time of everyday life. In their book "Escape Attempts: The Theory and Practice of Resistance to Everyday Life", Stanley Cohen and Laurie Taylor (1992) describes drug use as an important motive for escaping everyday life. They argue that using drugs is one of many "escape routes" and "free areas" that individuals seek out in order to escape the timetables, routines and conventions of everyday life. However, in contrast to other escape routes and forms of resistance to everyday life, drug use is not an activity *per se*, according to the authors, but is rather a case of "mindscaping" because it only involves moving things around within one's head.

Alcohol represents the classic and ordinary cultural escape route, while users of mind-altering drugs (e.g. LSD and cannabis) have a more radical strategy for actively resisting everyday life. In contrast to alcohol intoxication the use of psychedelic drugs is believed to be a more radical "reality slippage", escaping the boundaries of the paramount reality. According to Cohen and Taylor, the drug culture is impregnated with ideas about alternative realities that sometimes imply a rejection of formal work values and the elimination of the bonds of linearity and time.

The interpretation of drug use as an escape from everyday life is also a significant ingredient in Paul Willis's (2003:107) study of the hippie subculture, where the importance of drugs "did not lie in their direct physical effects, but in the way they facilitated passing through the great symbolic barrier erected over against "straight society". Accordingly, the drug user was not just defined by his drug use, but by his "existential presence on the other side of this symbolic barrier". The world of everyday life, i.e. life on the straight side of the barrier, was a world of personal responsibilities, grey colors, gaucheness and a lack of style, while life on the other side was a world characterized by freedom, lack of responsibility and stylishness. But the world on the "hip" side of the barrier was not intrinsic to drugs, which did not contradict the fact that drugs like hash and LSD had definite effects on human consciousness. However,

2 Sartre (1984) describes the denial of our options and the choices that are open to us as "bad faith".

according to Willis (2014:179), drugs were not "micro-films of experience surreptitiously slipped on to the deep projector of the mind". Psychoactive drugs were merely "tripswitches" or cultural placebos that orchestrated the entry into social worlds that were essentially self and socially created. Accordingly, life on the hip side of the symbolic barrier lead to a breakdown of conventional notions of time, in which drug users stressed the importance of living in the moment and experiencing the now for what it was. This subjective sense of time stands in stark contrast to industrial and job-oriented time structures, which are mainly concerned with social order and coordination.

Finally, the *sociological interpretations* propose that drug use is related to the rationalization and standardization of time in different spheres of modern life and that drugs are used in order to escape and resist rational and chronological time. Although Max Weber (1974) didn't discuss temporal issues as such, he argued in "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" that there is an association between a general process of rationalization, a protestant work ethic and an economic approach to time. According to Weber, the rational orientation to time in the West is essential to the spirit of capitalism. Capitalist societies are built upon the primary principle and ethic that time is money and that the earning of more and more money is an end in itself. Weber (1974) claims that in capitalism economic acquisition is no longer subordinated to man as the means for the satisfaction of his material needs. On the contrary, in capitalism the accumulation of more and more money is combined with the strict avoidance of the spontaneous enjoyment of life.

Thompson (1967) confirms the close connection between industrial capitalism and the idea that time is money. During the nineteenth century different measures were implemented in the workplace, combined with a new time discipline, in order to enhance workers' time efficiency. This was accomplished by the division and supervision of labor; the introduction of fines, bells, clocks, and financial rewards; preaching; and schooling combined with the suppression of fairs and sports. According to Thompson (1967:91) it was also commonly observed that the English industrial worker was somewhat different compared to the Irish, not because he worked harder but through "his regularity, his methodological paying out of energy, and perhaps also by a repression, not of enjoyment, but of the capacity to relax in the old, uninhibited ways".

Besides inventing a new work discipline and self-control amongst working class people, the industrial revolution also introduced a division of time into work and play and into week and weekend. According to Gusfield (1991:405) the workers had to "learn disciplines of routine, punctuality, and perseverance while overcoming the traditional habits of spontaneity indefiniteness, and the mix of work and play". According to this new work discipline drinking at work was banned and relegated to the workers leisure time, underlining the great importance of the timing and location of drinking in the development of industrial production. But the attempt to control drinking among workers also created conflict and tension in the relationship between work and drinking. This tension is illustrated in Ambjörnsson's (1988) study of working class' mentality and ideals in 19th century Sweden. The extensive drinking and brawling observed among workers and craftsmen at the time is interpreted by the author as a

protest and resistance against existing class and power structures.

The tension between work and drinking is also alluded to in Alasuutari's (1985) study of suburban working-class and male pub-goers in Finland. He notes that work and drinking are antithetical according to the male pub-goers – drinking can only take place during one's free time. The tension between work and drinking has specific meanings to the male pub-goer: wage labor is experienced as a kind of coercion, while drinking at the pub represents the realm of freedom. In line with that dichotomy, drinking and having a good time is interpreted as breaking free from "the coercion and norms of everyday life".

The rationalization of modern organizations and the invention of institutional timetables are not possible without the precision of the clock. A basic requirement for the participation in everyday life is, according to Zerubavel (1976), a standard time orientation that contains standard units of duration and standard systems of time reference. A certain temporal structure and time orientation is internalized by individuals as they are exposed to the use of the clock, the calendar, and the standard chronological system. The daily structuring of time through the use of schedules and timetables is a prominent feature of schools, workplaces, and institutional life in general. These institutionalized time systems and binding social rhythms should not be thought of as neutral facts but rather as important mechanisms for regulating and controlling social action with oppressive consequences.

Nicole M Shippen (2014) presents a similar line of argument in her book "Decolonizing Time: Work, Leisure, and Freedom". She argues that the system of capitalism colonize time and greatly restrict the ability of individuals to make choices with regard to their own time. In that respect there is an intimate relationship between power, social control and temporal regularity. According to Shippen time has become political under the rule of capitalism, which means that capital dominates the social meaning, value and organization of time. Societal conditions like these make it hard for people to "recognize alternative understandings of time as legitimate or possible, which in turn makes alternative organizations of time seem utopian" (Shippen 2014:1). One aspect of the colonization of time is the rationalization of the workplace, enabled by the precision of the clock. This is a process that has transformed the meaning and experience of time itself by denying any meaning beyond the quantification, control prediction, and efficiency needed to ensure profit. Shippen argues that the rationalization of time contributes to the reification of time-consciousness, understood as the collective or political consciousness of time, and only by demystifying the colonization of time by capital is it possible to decolonize time.

Zerubavel (1985) takes up the thread that the invention of social timetables and schedules has injected an element of control and routine into our daily lives. Although this development has been positive for both social organizations and personal lives in general, it has also led to a loss of spontaneity. Zerubavel introduces the concepts of durational rigidity and durational flexibility to describe the conflict between routine and spontaneity in social life. Durational rigidity is associated with strictness and orderliness, while durational flexibility is related to being spontaneous. Clearly,

imposing social timetables and schedules interferes with the development of people's spontaneity and their ability to decide when to do things, how often, for how long, and in what order. In this context psychoactive drugs provides individuals with the means for escaping as well as resisting the timetables and schedules of modern life and for constructing a more subjective and flexible experience of time.

The idea that rationalization of time in the West triggers the development of uchronias and the search for alternative time structures is put forward by Helga Nowotny (1994) in her book "Time: The Modern and Postmodern Experience". In Western industrialized countries, where the pressure of time is becoming more intense, people are exploring escape routes that can take them out of Western time. People want time for themselves beyond the social schedules and timetables that organize work and leisure. For some, Eastern mysticism and its sense of time works as an escape from the stress of everyday life, through practicing meditation and relaxation. For others, the struggle to realize a fraction of "proper time", in order to fulfill one's own everyday needs, is less exotic. This struggle is furthermore unequal because the appropriation of proper time depends upon the social positions and hierarchies of power and income in which people find themselves.

Obviously, the development of different timetables and social schedules in modern society has introduced a problematic relationship between social and subjective time, which is an important theme that runs through Elias's (1992) exposition of time. He describes time as a social symbol that people learn as a means of orientation and self-control. The individualization of time is thought to be part of a civilizing process, where time, late in that development, has "become the symbol of an inescapable and all-embracing compulsion" (p. 21). In ancient societies the need for time measurement was much less than in modern times and in more advanced societies. However, with the growth of societal integration and differentiation a very complex system of self-regulation and time management has developed amongst individuals in modern societies.

Elias describe the existence of clocks, calendars and timetables in terms of external constraints and social compulsion contributing to the development of not just a personal time-consciousness, but also a time-sensibility. With an increasing acceptance of different time symbols the distinction between the natural lives of people and calendar time has been blurred, says Elias. The natural sequences of people's lives get mixed up with social time. He highlights the growing importance of timing over the centuries which is combined with certain social requirements. Among them, the need for people to co-ordinate and synchronize their activities with each other has become imperative.

Conclusions

In this article I have explored how users of psychoactive drugs experience time and what role drugs play in the management of time. In addition to that I have also highlighted different interpretations of drug use picturing it as an act of resistance and escape from time. I have applied both micro and macro-level theories to account

for drug users' experiences and management of time. One important result of my study is that time is experienced differently among users of legal drugs (e.g. coffee and cigarettes) compared to users of illegal drugs (e.g. heroin). Using heroin is associated with shrinking time-horizons and being afraid of looking back and looking ahead, while smoking cigarettes is correlated with killing chronological time and instituting a parenthesis in normative time. Another conclusion is that users of illegal drugs experience greater problems synchronizing social and subjective time compared to users of legal substances. The results of my study also suggest that drug users' experiences of time are intertwined with the social context and social meanings of drug use. Accordingly, in order to increase our understanding of drug users' experiences of time, we need to apply a more situational and contextual perspective, where social and subjective dimensions of time are treated as aspects of the same social whole. In that context the social worlds framework is well suited for developing a more holistic understanding, since it is particularly attentive to the situatedness and contingency of human action (see Shibutani 1955; Strauss 1978; Becker 1982).

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Author presentation

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