COMPARING THE WORTH OF THE WHILE IN FIJI AND FINLAND

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1

Introduction: The Stuff of Time

This book explores different assumptions about time that people – knowingly or not – employ when they make assessments about what constitutes time well spent. The aim of the book is not so much to articulate a theory of time as it is to do what anthropology does best: to foreground established assumptions about time and value by means of comparison. I contrast material from Fiji (first half of the book) with my native Finland (second half) in order to call attention to the ways in which time is made conceptually available as a vehicle of valuing. Time may be intangible, but it is also thoroughly embedded in phenomena such as duration, sequence, or growth, on the one hand, and in shared social concerns and practices, on the other. This gives time an almost material aspect: the stuff of time, if you will.

This is therefore also a book about value in that extensive sense in which anthropology uses the term (Robbins 1994; Gregory 1997; Graeber 2001). If 'value' can be defined as 'the importance of our actions' (Graeber 2001: 49–90) or as the answer to the question 'what matters to people?' (Sykes 2018: 1), then temporal duration offers a different register to money, for example, for observing and comparing what matters.

I thus also explore the well-worn idea that 'time is money', but seek to do so in a way that goes beyond the narrow confines of the economy. This book was, in large part, born out of a desire to compare economic, symbolic, and moral ideas of value without getting trapped into questions about money. The anthropological literature on the symbolism, use, effects, and defining attributes of money is vast (Bohannan 1959; Hart 1986; Parry and Bloch 2010 [1989]; Thomas 1991; Gregory 1997; Akin and Robbins 1999; Guyer 2004; Maurer 2005, 2006), and it has significantly contributed not just to our understandings of money and the economy, but also to the most general objects of anthropological research, ranging from signification, relations, and memory to rank, propriety, purity, and morality. One of the original impetuses for this book was therefore a desire to explore these ideas but omit the central role that money ends up playing in analyses. As Chris Gregory (1997: 6) points out, '[b]ooks that begin with a definition of money eliminate the most interesting question the subject poses, that of how different people define money to suit the pragmatic needs of the specific situations they find themselves in'. Sidestepping money, by contrast, allows me to elaborate even further the basic point that economics is not the same as economy, for the latter is a mode of living, and as such an immensely more complicated matter than the mode of analysis practised by economists (Gregory and Altman 1989: 3). An emphasis on time rather than money therefore serves to highlight the role of human valuers in the ascription of value.

The material for this book was collected in two very different contexts. I was born and raised in Finland, a Nordic country where the Protestant work ethic (Weber 1930) and accompanying time discipline (Thompson 1967) underwrite the meaning of 'time'. But I have conducted most of my field research in Fiji, where these ideas have a more ambivalent history, to the degree that many of my indigenous Fijian interlocutors recognise time as a valuable resource for Europeans or the Japanese, or even the Indo-Fijian citizens of the Republic of Fiji, but not necessarily for themselves. And it was this contrast that really opened my eyes to the uniqueness of Finnish time, not to mention the demonstrative value of the contrast. The two case studies from Finland that I wanted to further explore for this book – university time-allocation software and timebanking – are examples of just how far a post-industrial sense of the preciousness of time can underwrite social practices. The time-allocation systems deployed at all Finnish universities display this tendency at its most absurd, creating a system of accounting for the fictitious time of fictitious personae, a system whose rationale Finnish academics find hard to understand, but whose operating principle – the idea that time units are natural tokens of academic productivity – can be taken for granted. My second Finnish case, the Helsinki Timebank, involves a community of people who have set up an 'alternative' trading system that uses clock time as a medium of egalitarian exchange. In this instance, the concept of saveable, bankable clock time has been pushed so far beyond its early-modern roots that clock time is in this case deployed in pursuit of degrowth, downshifting, and similar counter-consumerist ideologies.

By contrast, the ideas connoted in conceptualisations such as 'Fiji time', discussed in the first part of the book, are an antithesis of Finnish time – almost too perfect opposites, in the way that they display a reversal of European time discipline. Fiji time can be used in reference to relaxing, even an indigenous wellness philosophy marketed to international tourists, but it can also mean unpunctuality, lateness, and, by extension, behindness. But most importantly, Fiji time marks a completely different field of social deployments of time, wherein time can be an object of respect, aggrandisement, or levelling just as well as – and more often than – an object of wasting and saving. Indeed, this book was also born out of a sense of astonishment or naïve wonder that I experienced during PhD fieldwork in Fiji in 2007 when I first saw how people in Fiji lived in and with time (Eräsaari 2013). In short, I felt drawn to an attitude towards time that felt more interesting, relevant, and eye-opening than the exchanges and observances I had aimed to study. I might describe it as an absence of the temporal anxieties that I have grown up with: my Fijian interlocutors did not appear to fret over the finitude of time as I (and a good many of my fellow Finns) do. As I jokingly pointed out to friends, this felt more exotic than all the palm trees and floral print shirts of Fiji put together.

But having described this phenomenon as exotic reveals a problem at the heart of trying to convey a radically different way of valuing time. Not only does describing a society or cultural disposition as 'unhurried' or 'relaxed' – as Fijians themselves habitually do – come dangerously close to racist portrayals of lazy foreigners, but it also bears all the hallmarks of what Johannes Fabian (1983) has termed the denial of coevalness. Fabian criticises anthropology for situating its objects of study historically upstream from practising anthropologists, of making the people we study representatives of other times – past times, to be precise. And so strong is the link between clock time and modernity that to imply a society has not thoroughly internalised the time discipline associated with the clock (Thompson 1967), or developed ways to flout such ideas (Veblen 1912 [1899]; Benjamin 1983), is almost equal to implying that a society has somehow failed to reach modernity.

Yet surely we would end up making even more awkward propositions if we were to make such a claim. It would amount to arguing that European modernity is a universal stage of human development, perhaps defined by the labour theory of value, 'acceleration', or other similar features (not to mention giving rise to an increasing preoccupation with ever more precise quantification of time, a topic discussed in the second part of this book). That is to say, it would lead to the kind of assumption that Fabian's core argument is directed against. This book is based on a different proposition. Let us assume that 'clock time' – here used as a general term for standardised time that is available for allocating, disciplining, and even wasting – has, by the early 21st century, reached just about every corner of the Earth. Its measures certainly have: it is now a generally recognised fact that days can be bundled into sets of seven called weeks, that a day can be divided into twenty-four hours, and that each hour comprises sixty minutes, which in turn last sixty seconds (and, in turn, are subdivided by the hundred). In other words, practically the whole world follows the same mix-and-match combination of solar, lunar, seven-, twelve-, and sixty-unit systems (Birth 2012). Yet this does not have to mean that people everywhere hold similar ideas or attitudes towards time. The baseline established by the anthropology of money applies to time as well: anthropology has shown that the Western myth of money's origin as an outgrowth of original economic behaviour natural to all men is a cultural construct born out of our own, highly particular, economic assumptions. In doing so, anthropologists have also shown countless ways in which moneys are connected to religiosity, kinship, morality, and various other phenomena that standard economic theories of money cannot account for. Clock time likewise combines a familiar Eurocentric discourse with social worlds where time is embedded differently; taking on different meanings, social roles, and values.

This basic assumption allows me to specify the kind of time examined in this book. Time, as a recent 'temporal turn' has shown (Bear 2016), can be found in patterns such as recurrence, expectation, synchronisation, and change. It can be perceived as rhythms, cycles, and growth; in natural phenomena and man-made objects; in measured duration and immeasurable experience; in the depth of historical and future perspective. Indeed, there are so many things that we associate with time or the sense of being in time that current anthropological discussion often prefers the nebulous but more encompassing concept of 'temporality' over 'time'. One can talk about the temporalities of migration or refugee camps where it would seem essentialising to talk about 'refugee time' (Ramsay 2019), for instance. To the degree that different understandings of time can be kept apart from each other, this book discusses the 'stuff of time': the ways in which time is rendered into an object of assessment, valuation, and manipulation.* The kind of time discussed in what follows is found in the forms and shapes we ourselves give to time, such as words, comparisons, time units, and so forth. In other words, I will be looking into time in a particular sense of the word – as a reified object that can symbolise and be symbolised, measured, and called upon to measure even the immeasurable.

Between 2014 and 2019, I studied the stuff of time in Fiji and Finland with three broad working questions in mind. These were all connected with the time is money valuation, inasmuch as they all probed the relationship between socio-economic inequalities and the time resource. But they also helped me to keep my viewpoint sufficiently broad, so as to help me think of the range of phenomena by which time is valuated: from high-precision worktime-allocation software, timebanks, and taxes in Finland to tourism, location, and status in Fiji. I had a particular interest in 'surplus' time and inversions of the 'time poor, money rich' phenomenon: I was interested in the relative worth of time in busy metropolitan centres and in their peripheries. Correspondingly, my working questions were: 1) If 'time is money', then what else might time be? 2) How come some people are able to value excess time in positive terms while others experience it as boredom? 3) Why does the time resource appear so unevenly distributed? These questions have allowed me to maintain focus in the face of an object that, as I have come to find out, is hard to pin down and, at the same time, is all over the place – and this applies to research material as well as scholarly literature. Consequently, this book provides several answers to the working questions that guided my inquiry, but my conclusions go further: in what follows, I provide several examples of 'time is analogous to money' – some my own and some by

* In this book, I use 'valuing' and 'valuating' in a largely overlapping sense. The two terms do, however, carry slightly different connotations. The term 'valuing' emphasises the primary importance of human valuers (Gregory 1997: 15) in determining what is good or valuable in the first place – what value is. 'Valuating', by comparison, calls more attention to processes like evaluating and valorising (Vatin 2013): the more quantifiable aspects of 'valuing', as it were.

others – while I find Alfred Gell's (1996 [1992]) and Doreen Massey's (1994) work particularly insightful for issues of boredom and the distribution of time. These questions have thus been valuable aids when thinking about time as a vehicle of value: its perceived dimensions, facets, qualities – the things that allow people to hang their ideas of good (and bad!) on the hooks of time; sometimes even find in time a standard or scale for evaluating those goods. In short, they have led me to ask what the properties of time are, and how these lend themselves to qualitative and quantitative comparison.

Most notably, this research has brought me to see the shared element of 'time' that underlies the Finnish, Fijian, and other examples discussed in this book. One thing that makes the comparison of these 'times' a relatively straightforward matter is their similarity to one another. In the grand scheme of things, I find my interlocutors are all talking about the same variety of time, though using it to signify different values. They all conceptualise time as a resource, a thing that exists regardless of our actions, and whose passing is loaded with moral significance. Following E. P. Thompson (1967), I call this 'clock time' (discussed in detail in the next section). Unlike a number of others who have picked up Thompson's terminology, however, I do not seek to dismiss clock time or criticise its very existence. Instead, I want to show that although the 'clock' conception of time carries a particular way of understanding temporal phenomena, it does not provide a homogeneous object. Instead, the different manifestations of clock time can be studied to better understand the social concerns that give them shape.

Time is money – what else is it?

The ideas discussed in this book have a long history. However, one particular text has been foundational to my thinking, and that is Thompson's 1967 essay 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism'. In it, Thompson describes two radically different ways of conceiving time – task time and clock time. Building on E. E. Evans-Pritchard's work on Nuer time-reckoning (1939), Thompson depicts pre-industrial time in the UK as predominantly task-oriented, meaning that conceptions of time were embedded in the duration of different human activities – tasks – ranging from ploughing and sowing to 'pater noster wyles' and 'pissing whiles' (Thompson 1967: 58). Such a mode of time reckoning, Thompson argues, was often firmly rooted in natural phenomena and the rhythm they provide: daylight, tides, seasons, and the like. There was therefore no particular need for an abstract 'time'. This is the argument Thompson's essay is best remembered for.

Yet most of the essay is actually dedicated to describing the rise of the virtue of time-thrift. Time, in the abstracted sense of hours and minutes measured by the clock, was, at the start of the industrial period, a thing that was 'owned' by industrialists just as early clocks were: it belonged in the factories where alienated labour was measured by the hour, and where the hour was defined by the factory owner's clock. The best depiction of this outlook is a museum object: a double-dialled clock from Park Green Mill, Macclesfield, now held at the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester. The clock, made in around 1810, shows two times:

> The bottom face of the clock showed the real time. The top face showed 'mill time'. Its hands were connected to the water wheel and like the mill's machines, they only moved when the water wheel turned. If the water wheel stopped or slowed down, so did 'mill time'. Workers could only go home when 'mill time' said so. (From the Science Museum Group collection website)[1]

Thompson's essay goes on to describe a process wherein, step by step, the clock-based time reckoning was taken out into the social world outside the workplace. Yet time persistently maintained its connection to labour: first of all, as industrial work became an activity conducted outside home, it was conceptually separated from the home or 'life' in general. Work became the opposite of enjoying life. And out of this separation of work and life emerged a new valuation of time that, in the manner of money, can be saved, spent, or wasted on unworthy activities. The Protestant Church, as has been noted often enough, started preaching the virtues of saving time, until finally even resting became something to be frowned upon – a sign of idleness and unworthiness, the negation of value. The history of time discipline is obviously more complicated than I indicate here – Thompson (1967: 87) himself says as much, yet nonetheless insists that the industrial period brought out a whole new intensity both in the Church's moralising attitude towards idleness and its advocacy of time-thrift.

As noted earlier, Thompson's essay is particularly well known for the division the author makes between pre-industrial task time and industrial clock time. The idea of abundant free time, sociability, and the original lack of differentiation between life and work that Thompson associates with pre-industrial task orientation are powerful and evocative ideas that have been used to highlight certain taken-for-granted preoccupations of our modern market-based societies. But Thompson has also been criticised for trying to present this division in terms that are too strict and deterministic. Wajcman (2015) and Glennie and Thrift (2009) criticise him for exaggerating the role of technological determinism: the process he describes was not just clock-driven change, or something unresidually traceable to a mode of production (Birth 2012: 65–9), but a wider process of acceleration and intensification. A similar critique could be presented on grounds

[1] https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/objects/co8404934/double-dialled-longcase-clock-from-park-green-mill-longcase-clock.

of Jacques Le Goff's (1980) work on medieval disputes over work clocks, town clocks, church bells, and the ownership of time long before the period discussed by Thompson. Others, such as Parry (2009), criticise Thompson for his universalist assumptions: a relaxed attitude to worktime does not necessarily always precede or oppose industrial work – outfield labour can be hard, exhaustive, and time-consuming, just as factory work can be reasonably paced and sociable. And finally, Tim Ingold (2000) criticises the insufficiency of Thompson's argument by embedding notions of time into social relations in a more profound way – it is individualised time-proprietorship that makes time discipline so hard to cope with.

The sheer volume of scholarly work building on Thompson's argument reveals its significance for our understandings of time and the way they are intertwined with valuation. Yet one rarely sees people engaging with the remainder of Thompson's argument: besides presenting conceptual division into clock- and task-based time orientations, 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism' also presents a thoughtful analysis of the historical trajectory of clock-based time in Britain during industrialisation. If clock time initially 'belonged' to the factory-owning industrialists as something that factory workers had little to no control over, Thompson also argues that over the course of history, clock time was seized first by the emergent labour movement in its fight for control over the working day, and then by Protestant Christianity. The fact that the labour movement's struggles were appropriated by what Thompson calls a 'puritan' valuation of time should not, however, be read as a commitment to a unidirectional course of history: the value measured by the clock can be manifold and subject to change. As a matter of fact, the final pages of Thompson's 1967 essay present an evocative speculation over his vision for the near future, which is to say the late 20th century. Working on the assumption that ever-increasing automatisation will at some stage have to shorten the average workday, Thompson argues that 'if the purposive notation of time-use becomes less compulsive, then men might have to re-learn some of the arts of living lost in the Industrial Revolution: how to fill the interstices of their days with enriched, more leisurely, personal and social relations' (Thompson 1967: 95).

This speculation on the value of time in the future is illustrative of a much richer conception of time than Thompson is commonly given credit for. The rediscovery of an appreciation for social relations is but one of several different ways in which things could develop; Thompson noted that it was equally likely that a commodity valuation might take over non-working time as well, to the effect that the use of all that new-found free time would be increasingly the business of the leisure industry. Or perhaps the new, highly synchronised, and automated future industry might value punctuality over duration, making coordination the crucial aspect of time. This, too, would create new constellations of clock time, with consideration for co-workers bundling time, moralities, and social relations together in new ways. In short, Thompson reveals, albeit in too brief a sketch, the capacity of time to stand for other things besides the duration of abstract labour.

But how does one grasp this 'time' that is no longer embedded in naturally occurring phenomena? With the clock, says Thompson; yet his discussion is not limited to a mediated relationship with time. This new time can also be grasped without the clock: we only need clocks for precise time telling. Our ability to measure and sequence time is outsourced, as it were, to a technology that few of us understand (Birth 2012). But when 'time' becomes synonymous with all duration rather than event-like moments or specific whiles, time's scope is extended. It is everywhere.

This is what I seek to point out with my work on Fiji time, too. Clocks might not be particularly conspicuous in Fiji, and particularly in 'village Fiji' the clock-based system of time reckoning may not even be the most relevant. But ideas of worth are nonetheless constantly addressed in terms of time, and a particular kind of time at that: a Methodist pastor cited in Chapter 2, for example, depicts time as something similar to water – always in flux and capable of being drained by competing demands.[2] Fijians, too, exhibit various kinds of temporal anxieties – just not those that revolve around the opportunity cost of time. Thus, the 'time is money' analogy has never really caught on in Fiji, where 'time is just time' (*na gauna na gauna ga*), as one of my interlocutors put it (in exasperation, when I tried to press her about Fijian versions of the analogy). But time is most certainly omnipresent in Fiji.

The predominant time is money valuation was born out of a particular trajectory of Euro-American cultural reasoning. It has been noted by the likes of Max Weber (1930), in his search for the 'spirit' of capitalism, and Karl Marx (1993 [1859], 1999 [1867]), in his analysis of its underlying principles. Marx's analysis in particular is a good starting point, as it exposes a set of ideas underlying our assumptions about time. His focus on human labour, that is to say the creative and matter-transforming capacity of human beings, makes time the crucial variable in commodity production. In industrial production, humans transfer raw matter into commodities that are bought and sold in the market. But in order for there to be a market, there has to be shared evaluation – prices – and the one common point of comparison embodied by the various and disparate things we want to compare is the labour expended in them. This, in Marx's analysis, is the special domain of time:

> Variations in the duration of labour are the only possible difference that can occur if the quality of labour is assumed to be given. Labour-time is measured in terms of the natural units of time, *i.e.*, hours, days, weeks, etc. Labour-time is the living state

[2] Such competing demands typically consist of various kinship- and community-based obligations and observances, which place heavy demands on most indigenous Fijians' material and temporal resources, but also create a strong sense of mutual reliance among them. For more detailed analyses, see for example Toren (1989, 1990, 2002) and Eräsaari (2013, 2018, in press).

> of existence of labour, irrespective of its form, its content and its individual features; it is the quantitative aspect of labour as well as its inherent measure. The labour-time materialised in the use-values of commodities is both the substance that turns them into exchange-values and therefore into commodities, and the standard by which the precise magnitude of their value is measured. [...] Regarded as exchange-values all commodities are merely definite quantities of *congealed labour time*. (Marx 1993 [1859]: Part I, The Commodity, original emphasis)

To thus call all commodities 'congealed labour time' is a powerful illustration of the much-expanded scope of 'time' in the 19th century. Marx states that commodities can be compared with each other by the quantum of labour time they contain ('*if* the quality of labour is assumed to be given'), although we have for practical reasons opted to price our commodities in money instead. Hence, the inverse also applies: from such a point of view, we are surrounded by countless tokens of time, each divisible into 'natural' units such as hours or weeks. This, as we will see later, is also the folk theory of time that underlies the two Finnish case studies presented in Chapters 4 and 5: bureaucratic accounting tools that treat academic research as congealed labour time, and a local exchange system that uses units of time as currency in order to establish a more egalitarian economy. The second half of this book thus shows that while time's status as the one and only universal denominator of value in commodity economies may with good reason be questioned in the face of post-industrial economies, time's epistemological status as money's conceptual reference point remains.

The idea that time has a particular affinity with monetary value is not just part of 'lay' cultural reasoning but comes with a long-standing theoretical legacy as well. The Nobel-winning economist Gary Becker proposed in his 'Theory of the Allocation of Time' (1965) that a household ought to be viewed as an economic unit – a 'small factory' – that mixes time and goods in varying proportions in pursuit of utility. Becker proposed that to understand how an American household-factory delivers its produce – how it manages 'to clean, feed, procreate and otherwise produce useful commodities' (Becker 1965: 469) – it ought to be viewed as a production unit that combines money, time, raw materials, and other resources. To produce a meal, for example, a family has to mix time, money, and foodstuffs, but the ratio in which it does so depends on the relative availability of these resources: it can spend more money on ready-mades to minimise time inputs, if time is scarce and money abundant, or vice versa.

Anthropology has, likewise, discovered the idea of the world as congealed labour time. Fredrik Barth, for example, envisaged a study of all human behaviours as the allocation of time and (other) resources, which would give the discipline's famously messy subject matter a proper scientific object:

> Changes in the proportions of these allocations are observable, in the sense that they are measurable. New allocations are observable as concrete events that may have systematic effects and thus generate important change. And this view does not

> entail that we limit ourselves to the description of an economic sector only; it can be applied to the whole field of social organization, to describe how people in fact manage to arrange their lives. (Barth 1967: 662)

Similar to Becker's household economics, anthropology found in abstract time (at least for a while between the 1960s and 1980s) the proper substance of value quantification for non-market-based or non-monetised peoples. In a very commonsensical way, time-allocation anthropology aimed at no less than a quantitative theory of value through measuring and recording times spent on different activities. The idea, in its simplicity, is that the amounts of time people are prepared to spend on (or 'invest' in) different sorts of activities tells us something about what David Graeber (2001: 54–6), in reference to Marx, has called a society's 'creative energies'.

To give just a brief example, take Deborah Gewertz's (1983: 17–36; also discussion in Gell 1996 [1992]) historical account of Sepik River societies in Papua New Guinea. Comparing the worktimes of the Iatmul fisherwomen with those of their neighbouring Sawos sago growers, Gewertz is able to deliver a quantitative addition to Margaret Mead's and Gregory Bateson's previous work (Bateson 1932, 1958 [1938]; Mead 1970 [1939–49]) regarding the culture/personality types found in the region. The 'mystery' in need of solving – balanced reciprocal exchange relations among peoples who otherwise stand in an assertive/submissive relationship to one another – can be better understood through viewing the times required for producing the traded objects: sago and fish. Though masquerading as equal exchange – the 'principal mechanism by which equality is maintained' (Forge 1972: 534) – the groups in reality enact a relationship in which the Sawos 'bushwomen' invest three times the working time invested by their trade partners. Hence, the exchange practised does, after all, conform to the respective groups' assertive and submissive roles, once we have worked out that the sago growers are giving three times the amount – in time – that they receive in exchange.

I resume the topics of equal exchanging and time allocating in Chapters 4 and 5, though with a different agenda. For now, though, let me point out what separates Thompson from the time-economists. In a review of time-allocation studies, Wanda Minge-Klevana (1980) looks into two contrary research traditions, one arguing that total labour time per worker increases with industrialisation, the other that economic development has led to a decline in the working week. The key issue, it turns out, is which definition of productive labour we wish to use – what exactly counts as labour (take domestic versus alienated labour, for example); whose work is included (only that of adults or that of children too); where it takes place; and so forth. Consequently, her conclusion on the decisive question underlying the allocation studies reviewed – does labour time decrease with industrialisation? – is that the data available is incommensurable, and hence no conclusion can be drawn. We can only find comparable data from societies where the separation of work from the rest of life is relatively straightforward. Cross-cultural comparison based on the allocation of time becomes increasingly difficult when people classify activities differently, making categories such as 'work', 'subsistence-related', 'domestic', and 'working age' problematic.

Thompson had something altogether different in his sights: 'If we are to have enlarged leisure, in an automated future, the problem is not 'how are men going to be able to *consume* all these additional time-units of leisure?' but 'what will be the capacity for experience of the men who have this undirected time to live?'' (Thompson 1967: 95). He is not talking about the allocation of abstract time between categories such as 'work' and 'leisure'. Rather, he seems to imply an allocation – though this is not a term Thompson would use – of different values onto abstract time itself!

In line with this idea, the following chapters will provide examples of time acting as a vehicle for dignity, status, equality, relaxing, egality, accountability, and more. The underlying framework is that of Thompsonian clock time, but not in the sense of clock-mediated time-telling. Instead, I focus on ways in which reified conceptions of time can highlight different phenomena that are imagined as particularly pertinent with regard to the medium of time: what people think about time rather than what time is. Obviously, questions about the essence of time and how people regard time are closely related, even inseparable: this is precisely what makes time such a unique object of study. Nancy Munn (1983, 1992 [1986]), in particular, has argued that activities 'do not simply go on in or through time and space, but that they form (structure) and constitute (create) the spacetime manifold in which they 'go on'' (Munn 1983: 200). Time is not just an autonomous aspect of the world; it is also created through practice.

Yet, to the degree it is possible, I have here chosen to focus on time as a bearer of values rather than an outcome of people's value projects. Hence, neither the chapters on Fiji nor on Finland explore the interpersonal or phenomenological processes through which time emerges. Instead, I have limited the range of information provided from both contexts to make the comparison more effective. In this, I follow Marilyn Strathern's (2009: 7) example of highlighting particular popular concerns by means of more concise or economical description.

Michael French Smith's (1982, 1994) work on clock time on Kairiru Island, Papua New Guinea, in the mid-1970s elaborates a similar perspective on time to mine. Smith argues that the connection between clocked labour, Puritan valuation, and time scarcity does not form a naturally occurring set. Instead, he describes the adoption of clock time in a setting without a labour market, where even transport times are dictated by natural and social factors rather than the clock. But while Kairiru islanders do not trade their time away on the labour market, they do nonetheless experience a 'bloody scarcity' of time (Smith 1982). This is all the more striking, Smith notes, because the people he works with had not fully embraced a notion of autonomous, omnipresent time back in the 1970s; hence, time scarcity could not have been caused by a new way of conceiving time as a finite resource, let alone enacting it through new projects. Instead, Smith argues, it was brought about by the zeal of a host of new colonial and postcolonial state-backed authority figures – 'councillors and committeemen' (Smith 1982: 511) – who instituted new modes of temporal organisation, of talking about time, and of disciplining people in its use. 'Time' thus belonged to a political order with its roots outside the village, which espoused time discipline as a vehicle of efficiency and economic growth.

The time described by Smith is obviously of the same genus as Thompson's clock time (indeed, Smith's 1994 book *Hard Times on Kairiru Island* underlines the comparison with industrial Britain by referencing Dickens's *Hard Times*). Yet Kairiru time also branches out onto a separate trajectory, one that may be based on what Thompson calls the 'Puritan' valuation of time, but which bypasses work clocks and labour time in so doing. To bring the wider point home: time is not valued because of a labour standard but a politico-moralistic one. Kairiru time never belonged to industrialists or labour organisations, as in the history that Thompson sketches, but to councillors and committeemen who 'treat Western concepts of time and organizational efficiency as a valuable innovation of which they are the sponsors and custodians' (Smith 1982: 513). It was their haranguing and hurrying, authorised by a political structure with its roots outside the village, that created a situation of time scarcity in Kairiru in the 1970s.

Smith thus argues that time scarcity is by no means an inevitable state of affairs but the result of a new kind of scheduling, introduced for ideological reasons. Time scarcity, in other words, can occur even where the trade-off between 'life' and alienated labour does not – time can be scarce even though people do not sell theirs away. But this denaturalising of the connection between work, scarcity, and the Puritan valuation of time gives rise to a further question: can clock time occur without devaluing non-working time, that is, 'life'?

This is where I need to expand my analysis beyond the simple time is money analogy. To accomplish this, I visit the second and third working questions briefly discussed earlier; first, how come some people are able to value excess time in positive terms while others experience it as boredom, but consequently also why the time resource appears so unevenly distributed. For it is increasingly apparent that an abundance of time does not translate to wealth, and that the paradigmatic 'time-rich' people of our times are not the South Sea islanders I write about.

Wasting time

The new temporal terminology of the early 21st century speaks volumes: 'stuckedness' (Hage 2009), 'waithood' (Singerman 2011; Inhorn and Smith-Hefner 2020), 'sticky time' (Griffiths 2014), and the widely used idea of temporal rupture – we have come a long way from 'The Original Affluent Society' (Sahlins 1972) and the idea that abundant time is categorically 'good'. Instead, there are now ethnographic studies about 'killing time' ranging from Vanuatu (Mitchell 2004) to Senegal (Ralph 2008), and on ways of making time pass from India (Jeffrey 2010) to Niger (Masquelier 2013). There are edited volumes on waiting (Hage 2009; Janeja and Bandak 2018), and an expanding corpus on boredom (Mains 2007; Musharbash 2007; Van den Berg and O'Neill 2017). All these, and numerous others, deal with the 'problem' of superfluous time.[3]

The power dimension of this time problem is obvious, as pointed out by Bourdieu (2000), among others. Bourdieu elaborates the point, arguing that reified resource time of the kind discussed here is best seen as something valued against people's future projects. In short, Bourdieu states that time can only rarely escape from the logic of investing, and is thereby firmly tied to people's hopes and expectations. But their opportunities for working on their future projects are far from equal. Instead, they are affected by social, cultural, and economic wherewithal and other considerations, to the degree that, for some, future expectations translate into meaningful projects in the here and now, while for others, meaningful opportunities to bring forth the 'forth-coming' are small from the outset. Hence, people value the stuff of time according to their ability to invest it:

> The empty time that has to be 'killed' is opposed to the full (or well-filled) time of the 'busy' person who, as we say, does not notice time passing – whereas, paradoxically, powerlessness, which breaks the relation of immersion in the imminent, makes one conscious of the passage of time, as when waiting. (Bourdieu 2000: 224)

Waiting, Bourdieu hence concludes, is 'the link between time and power' (2000: 228).

This idea of the worth of present time being underwritten by the future is confirmed in a number of recent studies. Stef Jansen's (2014) nuanced work on post-war, post-socialist, post-Yugoslav Bosnia and Herzegovina is a fine example: he describes a widely shared sense of entrapment experienced by people in the Dobrinja neighbourhood of Sarajevo in 2008–10. Those in Jansen's study described their lives in terms of 'surviving' and 'chasing' short-term goals rather than 'living' and pursuing greater life goals. Back in 2008–10, people were yearning

[3] Note, however, that the 'problem' of surplus time does not exactly appear out of the blue at the start of the 21st century: see, for example, Jahoda, Lazarsfeld, and Zeisel (2017 [1971]).

for 'normal lives' partly defined by past, socialist-era future trajectories that were no longer attainable, and hung their hopes on an eventual EU membership that, it was felt, would restore future optimism. In its absence, people were fixated on rather meaningless economic performance indicators that, many thought, were indicative of the country's trajectory: 'Worse than Kenya, Better than Fiji' (Jansen 2014: S81).

Daniel Mains's (2007) work in Jimma, Ethiopia, describes another instance when present time was evaluated against the future. Mains writes of the sense of shame and boredom that accompanied waiting among young men in urban Ethiopia in 2003–5, a time when youth unemployment was estimated to be above 50 per cent. If Jansen's work describes a collective sense of futurelessness, Mains for his part writes about personal expectations, based on the assumption that after acquiring a degree one can achieve secure employment and respectable status through government employment. These expectations, however, were incompatible with the employment that was generally available in the wake of Ethiopia's structural adjustment policies – work that was not only considered personally humiliating, but also, and more importantly, shameful in the eyes of one's family. What Mains thus outlines is a setting where the worthlessness of time is not the product of an ideology of time-thrift – of the kind discussed earlier in relation to Thompson's work – but rather a reflection of one's expected place on an imagined timeline.

Such studies show that anthropology's 'time problem' reflects far-reaching global inequalities: time turns out to be an ethnographically accessible facet of the unjust distribution of global wealth and opportunities. Indeed, this is also reflected in another, closely related, theoretical approach to the problem of surplus time, this one rising from anthropology's overlap with migration studies and the 'mobilities' turn (e.g. Bélanger and Silvey 2019).[4] I am talking about studies that show and analyse how containment (Lems and Tošić 2018) or prevented movement are compounded into issues of halted social becoming (Hage 2009) in refugee camps, immigration detention centres, or bureaucratic limbos caused by extended work permit and visa processing times. If the Bourdieuan approach sees time's value regulated by future opportunities, the mobilities approach links time with movement – or lack thereof. These two approaches highlight slightly different phenomena, but with similar results: both show how time's worth correlates with power discrepancies.[5]

[4] Alternatively, one can follow Lems (2016) to label this as the 'spatial turn' emerging from 1990s anthropology. But this definition, too, is grounded in movement across and between disparate spaces.

[5] Bendixsen and Eriksen's 2018 example from Norway neatly captures many of the problematics discussed here: they describe a group of Palestinian asylum seekers whose prolonged demonstration took the form of a 'refugee camp' built within the city of Oslo. The protesters in the camp were waiting for the Norwegian immigration department's decision: they were thus unable to resume their ordinary lives because they lacked the necessary legal and economic status in their country of residence. Bendixsen and Eriksen (2018: 99–100) describe a 'clash of temporalities' between the lives of the Palestinians in the camp and the surrounding Protestant Norwegian society, where the vast majority of the adult population engages in wage work, and where 'mindfulness' courses have become 'a way of voluntarily enforcing slowness and self-awareness in a cultural world where slow time has become a scarce resource'.

In other words, just like the ability to act upon one's future projects, the current global inequalities that restrict the movement of people are also restricting people from utilising their time as they believe time should be spent, and this foregrounds temporality as a problem domain. Yet the underlying questions connecting time with movement and place have a longer history that predates the current crises of mobility, or puts them in a wider perspective. Already in the mid-19th century, Marx (2015 [1857]) used the much-cited notion of 'the annihilation of space with time' to describe the acceleration that accompanies the intensification of production and distribution. He saw faster means of transport and communication as a development necessitated by the circulation of commodities: the producer of a commodity would, in Marxian terms, 'throw labour time away instead of realizing it' by allowing his or her produce to be delayed before reaching the appropriate market (Marx 2015: 439–78). Hence, while our experiences of time have changed as a result of the commodification of labour time and produced a stingy, moralistic attitude towards time use, we have also undergone the related development that social scientists usually label 'acceleration': the constant speeding up of social life that is often considered an inevitable companion to (Western-style) modernity (Wajcman 2015). The effect described by Marx was redeployed by the geographer David Harvey (1990: 200–307) as 'time–space compression'.

A classic exposition of the idea discussed by Marx and Harvey alike may be found in Wolfgang Schivelbusch's 1978 article 'Railroad Space and Railroad Time'. In it, Schivelbusch describes the 'shrinkage' (Schivelbusch 1978: 32) of spatial distances that 19th-century railways caused by increasing the speed of travel to roughly three times the speed previously achieved by stagecoaches. Schivelbusch builds on a 19th-century depiction of the map of France by the economist Constantin Pecqueur, who in 1838 presented a 'temporally shrunk' new geography of France; a condensed geography based on the new conditions of speed. 'The cities of France approach each other while simultaneously advancing on Paris' is how Schivelbusch describes Pecqueur's new geography: 'it is now possible to see "the new France as fitting into the space of the *old* Ile-de-France, or its equivalent" ' (Schivelbusch 1978: 32). The economist, in other words, depicted all of France being reduced to the size of the greater Paris region owing to reduced travel times by train.

But Schivelbusch goes beyond this 19th-century enthusiasm to point out that while it is true that travel times did get shorter, something else happened as well. Distances in space and time also underlie people's sense of what is attainable, so that in a sense an entire system of measure is connected – or calibrated? – to potentiality. Transport technology, Schivelbusch (1978: 33) states, 'is the material substratum of potentiality'; therefore changes in this technology effect an entire sociocultural space–time scale. Moreover, not only does the new transport network thus recalibrate people's expectations regarding that which is conceivable and that which is not, but at the same time it also affects the unserviced zones between the stations. The railways 'are of no use' to people living in the in-between places (Schivelbusch 1978: 35). While the railway connected 19th-century European metropoles in an unforeseen way, it also created a contrast between the connected and unconnected areas.

The concept of time–space compression has, correspondingly, been employed in reference to fast technological changes that alter the conceived 'ratio' of time and space, and therefore people's sense of distance. Massey (1994) made use of the concept in the 1990s, when greater connectivity – faxes, e-mail and jumbo jets – made people take note of the way the world appeared to be growing smaller. The 1990s was a decade when depictions of the world as 'a global village' prevailed. But Massey, much like Schivelbusch, called attention to the way in which greater connectivity for some implies, by comparison, a sense of diminished access for others.

'Who experiences 'time–space compression' and how?' Massey (1994: 147) thus asks, and do we all benefit from it in equal measure? She underlines the fact that neither movement nor communications across space are distributed equally; some people are more in charge of their own mobility than others. Massey uses the example of the Pitcairn Islands in the South Pacific, arguing that while the faster and more frequent flight connections from Korea and Singapore to Seattle and the Silicon Valley certainly made the world smaller for some, this also caused a decline in local shipping. And not only that, but the sense of potentiality created by the 747s flying across the Pacific is one of greater, not lesser removedness and isolation for those who play no part in the newly established connectedness. 'The time–space compression of some groups can undermine the power of others' (Massey 1994: 150).

Whether considered a reflection of temporal or spatial opportunity, this literature makes it very clear that the value of time is connected to quality of life. This is to say that time has the capacity to illustrate the significance of things such as dignity or self-determination, all the way to the difference between 'life' in the bare, biological sense and 'forms of life', characterised by all sorts of human pursuits (cf. Agamben 2000). One could further examine this idea over a continuum of contexts, from the 'warehousing' of marginalised or 'problem' groups (e.g. Baraitser 2017: 7) to global labour reserves and labour frontiers (see Gregory 2015 [1982]; Tammisto 2020) to further highlight an idea of value that differs radically from that put forth by the economists and allocationists mentioned earlier. The 'spatio-temporal' approaches clearly show that the value of time is not determined just by its availability. They foreground the effects of power, diminished self-determination, and restricted social connections to show that it frequently appears that abundant time is simply no good.

Considered against this background, Fiji really is something of an anomaly. Small, remote, and underdeveloped, Fiji can easily be grouped together with other 'time-rich, money-poor' peripheries (as opposed to the 'money-rich, time-poor', if such a simplification is allowed). As Matt Tomlinson (2009: 10–11, 41–3) has shown, Fijians have repeatedly been made aware of the island group's insignificance ever since the early missionaries' arrival, and this, too, serves to create a sense of out-of-the-wayness that continues to mark Fijians' attitudes to their home. Fiji has, moreover, undergone a series of military coups (1987, 2000, and 2006) during the independent republic's history (since 1970), which has hindered the country's economic and political developments. All the while, Fiji has also suffered from a high reliance on a dwindling postcolonial sugar industry, a monocrop economy reliant on an outdated infrastructure and preferential trade relations. However, while Fijians themselves constantly talk about their country's behindness, and members of the urban middle class in particular are ready to disparage their countrymen's disregard for the value of time, the problem of too much time as discussed earlier is not a common issue in Fiji.

I once met an overseas visitor in Fiji who was worried that she might have taught the notion of 'boredom' to a Fijian child she was acquainted with, and thereby perhaps introduced the phenomenon of boredom to indigenous Fiji. Her assessment – that Fijians do not know boredom because a child did not know what the word means – was hardly accurate. Still, it does resonate with a general absence of talk about boredom. Instead, there are different registers for talking about superfluous time in Fiji – from selfishly 'eating' time, to dignified relaxing or slow preparation – but the kinds of issues that are elsewhere regularly depicted as time itself losing its 'qualities' (Musharbash 2009: 307) or acquiring negative characteristics are comparatively rare. Instead, even unpunctuality and waste may acquire positive connotations in the concept of Fiji time.

This is the thematic that I sought to capture with the question that asks how some people can value excess time positively. If the experience of time is inextricably tied up with wealth and power, then what work-around allows some people to find value where, comparatively speaking, you would expect none? I did not pose such questions in order to ignore or refute the important work cited here but, on the contrary, to add to it. If power, wealth, opportunity, or connectedness do not unavoidably set the conditions for valuing time, then determining who manages to escape having their sense of time shaped by these phenomena, and how, are important approaches towards understanding the alternatives.

So what do I propose to add? As I said, recent anthropology has been highly successful in foregrounding the temporal dimension: phenomena such as pace, rhythm, cycle, circulation, futurity, and so forth (time as 'technique' rather than 'thing'; see Bear 2016). What distinguishes my work from the work cited earlier is that, like Thompson, I wanted to add time itself into the mix. Rather than looking solely at relations of power as an indication of who can utilise their time resources best, let alone looking at sheer amounts of duration as neutral measures of value, I want to take into account the difference that particular adaptations of 'clock time' can make. As Bourdieu (2000: 206) also notes, this understanding of time has the appearance of 'a thing with which we have a relation of externality, that of a subject facing an object'. But even recognising the fact that time is a construction born out of our own actions makes it no less relevant, and hardly lessens its influence over us. The 'thingness' (Latour 2000) of time – its objective (as in 'object-like') properties – affects its ability to represent different ideas of value.

This book therefore uses 'clock time' in an extended sense, arguing that while the global ascendancy of the clock appears to have gained a crucial momentum during the Industrial Revolution with its emphasis on alienated labour and acceleration, the idea of time it represents nonetheless travels pretty much like any other cultural phenomenon, receiving new meanings, connotations, understandings, and applications. It is in this sense that I propose that, instead of allocating time among different types of activities, we look into it as something to which we also allocate different values – somewhat like anthropologists have approached money (Parry and Bloch 2010 [1989]; Akin and Robbins 1999). This is what I implied earlier by provisionally accepting that time is money: that if time can act as a vehicle of both monetary worth and consequent moral ideas about progress, discipline, or virtue, then surely it can also stand for other phenomena in a similar capacity. The anthropological literature shows that time can be associated with, among other things, authority (Smith 1982), political connections (Jeffrey 2010), particular skills (Ralph 2008), or truthfulness and moral superiority (Schieffelin 2002) – just as it can stand for stagnation, boredom, and so forth. But what, exactly, does it mean that time can 'stand for' such different things?

For one thing, I suggest we do away with commonplace evocations of 'empty, homogeneous time' (Benjamin 1968: 261). Though the notion has been useful for thinking about changes in our ways of conceiving the passage of time, often in senses contrary to Benjamin's original idea (Kelly 1998), it is obvious that just as Benjamin argued for history, so in the clock-time sense, too, time is comparatively speaking hardly either homogeneous or 'empty'. If we, instead, proceed from the idea that the values people ascribe to time are part of what we ought to study – that different connotations of time have a bearing on questions of temporality – then it is also possible to imagine new avenues of inquiry derived from the assumption that it matters what 'time' refers to: how it can be captured, who can hold it, what its measures are, and so forth.

Take, for an example, the work of Tēvita Ka'ili (2017) on time use among Tongan migrants in Hawaii. Ka'ili notes how Hawaii Tongans often have to juggle several jobs alongside time-consuming traditional obligations: 'for Tongans Maui is a place where worktime beats at an accelerated pace', as Ka'ili (2017: 12) phrases it. In addition to the heavy workload, community obligations appear to have multiplied rather than reduced overseas. The sense of time Ka'ili describes is a response to these competing time demands, and possibly also partly a source of those demands. Ka'ili thus describes time as something that can be 'slowed down', 'extended', and so forth – people manipulate (or possibly 'trick', Moroşanu and Ringel 2016) time in different ways. But they do not 'extend' time to maximise a scarce resource: instead, they arrange it. The Tongan-language concept *tā* (time) can be understood as the rhythmic patterns formed by repeated beats or images (both also *tā*) (Ka'ili 2017: 44). Hawaii Tongan time–space (*tā–vā*) therefore reflects a kind of social rhythm. And even though it is used side by side with another time concept, *taimi* – as in *taimi faka-Tonga* (Tonga time) for indicating a certain amount of disregard for punctuality – the overriding concern over time, as reported by Ka'ili, has to do with its arrangement or patterning. Ka'ili likens this to mat weaving. The 'aesthetic' objective of *tā* arrangements is symmetry, and it is this notion that guides Hawaii Tongan time-use. Ritual attendance, social gatherings, and religious events tend to aim at something like balance between types of activities – balancing one's worktime requirements with those of the community, for example, through extending community events from sundown to sunrise, or taking sick days to keep up with community engagements.

The concept of time described by Ka'ili possibly travels further from shared notions of clock time than any of the cases discussed in this book. The 'value' of Hawaii Tongan *tā*-time appears concurrently as a representation of both work and community, without it being solely the domain of either labour or social relations. Insofar as one has to expend one's time in gainful employment, one should also give one's time to the community in a balanced or 'symmetrical' fashion. But, to point out the obvious, although it is conceived differently, time is obviously there too, regarded as a vehicle of value. Moreover, it is not just any symbol signifying the presence of value, but serves the purpose of establishing equivalence between these two domains. The fact that time is conceptualised as 'beats' rather than durational stretches, and valued against both work and sociality rather than just the former, gives the act of commensuration a particular outlook (balancing scales rather than a yardstick). It is worth stressing, then, that there is nothing particularly natural or obvious about time that makes it the medium of such reckoning, besides the fact that, historically, time has been the domain of labour quantification.

I have already evoked Marx's assertion that labour time underwrites the prices of commodities, and that it does so because it provides a fair reflection of the creative energies expended in the production of things, to the degree that commodities can be valuated as equivalents of the labour time 'congealed' in them. But the example given here casts time in an even more deliberate role: as a consciously manipulated sign as well as a standard for evaluation. Marx's concept of universal equivalent reflects the difference. In Marx's account, any commodity could hypothetically fulfil the role we reserve for money, that is, act as a standard of evaluation. All that this would require would be a common agreement to express the exchange value – price – of commodities using a particular commodity as a token unit. 'The exchange-value of a palace can be expressed in a definite number of tins of boot polish', as Marx (1993 [1859]: ch. 1) exemplifies the idea, though he also points out that in practical terms such a token should also afford unlimited divisibility, homogeneity of its parts, and uniform quality of all units in order for it to serve as 'money'. Any commodity serving as a universal equivalent ought to be 'just as easily divided as the labour-time contained in it', Marx (1993 [1859]) states, underlining the complementary relationship between time and value tokens.

Indeed, the final quote shows just how Marx's notion of exchange value is anchored in the idea of labour expressed as time. Labour time is, again in Marx's own words, a 'secret, hidden under the apparent fluctuations in the relative values of commodities' (1999 [1867]), a secondary measure propping up the universal equivalence of money. But could time itself be cast as a standard or equivalent rather than just a secondary, 'hidden' principle underlying other equivalents? The answer provided throughout this book is 'yes, but it's complicated'.

A universal equivalent is a fixed, external reference point used for estimating the relative worth of dissimilar things. But this idea can be mobilised beyond strictly economic appraisal. Ferdinand De Saussure (1993 [1959]: 115) sought to do so with his definition of linguistic value as a relation that involves comparison with 'a *dissimilar* thing that can be *exchanged* for the thing of which the value is to be determined' and 'similar things that can be compared with the thing of which the value is to be determined' (emphases in the original). To describe meaning as the 'exchange' of words for ideas while at the same time comparing them with other words is a strange analogy. Yet Saussure's conceptualisation captures something important about valuation as a comparative, three-point relation underlying a whole range of standardisation and measuring acts, applicable to a whole range of human phenomena. By asking in what capacity things are considered similar or dissimilar, it is possible to grasp what the choice of equivalent accomplishes. Setting monetary prices for two unique objects flattens them into one-dimensional commodities, commensurable in terms of a third that serves as a standard. But the same could be said for any other act of measuring. Determining the mutual length of two items is a simple feat of comparing them against each other, but setting them to a standard requires reducing them into expressions of a common reference point, such as a standard metre. Or, to employ an example made by one of the Finnish university administrators I briefly introduce in Chapter 4, comparing the relative worth of academics requires flattening them to a number of peer-reviewed publications – or to time.

Time and the value relation

The idea of valuation as a comparative relation can be applied to numerous ethnographic contexts covering a range of timescales and ideas of worth. To explore them all would mean finding time conceived in myriad other ways besides the expanded clock time examined in this book. Various orders based on generation, seniority, or precedence, for instance, could also exemplify phenomena where time provides an external yardstick upon which not just objects and actions, but even persons or authority may be measured by time. In such instances, the very scale in which time is conceptualised (calendric or generational rather than relating to clocks) seems to disassociate it from metaphors of 'buying', 'saving', and so forth (Bourdieu's 'investments' aside). Nonetheless, they also establish value as a quantifiable relation wherein time acts as a common denominator. However, this book will not delve into the nearly limitless prospects of time's relational possibilities (Tamarkin 2018). Instead, I focus on clock-scaled resource time with the aim of providing a simple conceptual model of time as an equivalent that allows different kinds of value estimations to take place. I offer this simplification to provide a counter-model for other, even more simplified, models usually derived from economics, but also to provide a conceptualisation that other scholars can disagree or agree with to clarify their own thoughts.

In Chapter 3, I will discuss what might be the best-known social scientific elaboration of this idea: Thorstein Veblen's notion of conspicuous leisure. But to give this idea an immediate ethnographic substance, let me reference Michael Ralph's (2008) description of 'killing time' (*tuer le temps*) in Senegal. Ralph writes about tea drinking in the context of unemployment, brought to his attention when his attempts to discuss the high unemployment rates among Senegalese youth systematically turned into conversations about tea. It turns out that in Senegal, 'killing time' involves knowledge in the preparation and serving of tea: the varieties of tea available, number of rounds served, quality of foam attained in the tea glass, and so forth. Ralph is careful to point out that the young men's tea societies are no substitute for lost economic opportunities, as his interlocutors also made clear: they clearly stated that they 'have an abundance of time' but it 'has no value' – that time's value is 'diminished by excess'. This causes Ralph to ask whether that time could not be put to more productive use (Ralph 2008: 15).

But Ralph goes on to show that one answer is to invest time in tea preparation, much as other young people want to invest theirs in athletic careers, musical production, or political protest (Ralph 2008: 12). With this, he does not mean just the masculine 'tournaments of resilience', where men compete to see who can consume the greatest amounts of strong tea, and in so doing improve his stature (7). Ralph explains that skilful tea making also amounts to artistic expression: 'Whenever I watched people make *attaya* [tea], I was struck by the careful effort they took to produce *mosse* through a process (*renversé*) that requires pouring the tea back and forth, repeatedly, from shot glass to shot glass. This occurs at a critical moment in the process of making tea that ostensibly reveals your true expertise' (19). In a way, the social reality of tea knowhow is inseparable from the economic 'investment' model: Ralph argues that in practice the 'public recognition of expertise in *attaya* is tied to perceptions about the amount of time you were idle, linked to the number of hours, it was imagined, you had available to invest' (Ralph 2008: 20). In this sense, prolonged unemployment was not a mere waste of time: among young Senegalese men it could also be a source of recognition, insofar as styles of making and serving tea can also be viewed as 'ways of building social character, learning and displaying positively valued traits' (16).

This short account hardly does justice to Ralph's full argument, so it needs to be pointed out that his article moves on to discuss Adorno and the way free time is ultimately 'shackled to its opposite', labour. I have lifted out just one strand of his argument in order to show that time can provide an external yardstick for quantifying (objectifying?) tea-making skill – and the social capital that goes with it. Ralph does not argue that an equation such as 'time equals tea skills' would prevail over the 'time is money' valuation in Senegal; quite the opposite. But his ethnography nonetheless affirms a potential alternative (or subaltern) valuation.

Contrast Ralph's case with Adeline Masquelier's (2013) work on corresponding tea societies, *fadas*, in Niger. These, too, involve 'an elaborate economy of leisure centred on the practice of making and drinking tea', Masquelier (2013: 474) writes. But the stigma accruing to tea societies appears to be stronger in Nigérien society. Masquelier writes:

> Aside from personifying endangered futures, penniless tea-sipping male youth evoke a distinct temporality, disconnected from the tempo of industrious life. They are disparagingly referred to by Hausa-speaking elders as *masu zaman banza*, 'those who sit idly'. More than simply communicating idleness, *banza* signifies worthlessness. Describing someone as *banza* not only means that he is an unproductive, lazy person but also implies that he is self-indulgent and dissolute. (Masquelier 2013: 480)

This does not mean that the young men belonging to Nigérien tea societies would get nothing out of their activities; indeed, Masquelier discusses various more ambivalent aspects of tea drinking, ranging from 'efforts to imbue life with future-oriented expectations' and 'time management' (Masquelier 2013: 472) to masculine identities and social esteem. Here, too, drinking is every bit as constructive — to use Mary Douglas's (2003 [1987]) phrase — as in the previous example: the young men discussed are shown to salvage something valuable out of the waiting they are forced to endure. But the differences are also notable: Ralph (2008: 3, 13) describes a productive overlap between Senegalese tea drinking and a national pride in *teranga* (Wolof for 'hospitality'), which holds tea as an important vehicle for building and sustaining communal ties. Tea even carries associations with cosmopolitanism and Islamic royalty. Though similar associations appear to be available in the Nigérien context as well, the Nigérien young men discussed in Masquelier's article appear unable to mobilise such ideas. Instead, their tea-drinking is described as a site of aspiring and fantasising, held against a backdrop of boredom and 'bare' life (Masquelier 2013: 488):

> For young Nigérien men waiting for jobs that do not materialize, boredom is arguably a central dimension of everyday life. From the moment they awaken until they go to sleep, they are forced to live a diminished existence in which there can be no time off since time (in the form of meaningful engagement in the world of work and wages) is never on in the first place. (Masquelier 2013: 482)

The contrast I foreground here is not one of absolute opposition: it is not as if the Senegalese youth described by Ralph were able to accumulate value from the time spent drinking tea, while the Nigérien youth Masquelier writes about only had boredom to endure. No, the nuances, both in the material and in the analyses, are more subtle than that, and in truth the two cases overlap in more points than they differ. But the question highlighted by comparison is the same that originally underlay the research undertaken for this book: what allows some people to value superfluous time positively while others are unable to do so? The answers, I have tried to show in this introduction, are not just economic, nor do they pertain to only global or regional power imbalances (the wealthy hubs versus the labour reservoirs), but also involve the way in which time is constructed or bundled together with other ideas.

Outline of the book

This book focuses on the social and cultural phenomena that allow people to allocate different kinds of values to their time. Ultimately, I am also interested in the properties, or 'affordances' in Webb Keane's (2018) sense of the term, of time: what makes time such a unique vehicle of value; what are the conceptual hooks it offers for our value projects?

The first part, Chapters 2 and 3, favours the constructivist viewpoint, asking what allows clock time to assume the significant but ambiguous role it currently enjoys in Fiji. Chapter 2 takes particular interest in the notion of Fiji time, an expression that usually denotes relaxing and tardiness without unequivocally condemning either. Chapter 3 delves into one of its regional variants from the chiefdom of Verata, a former power centre of Fijian politics that currently rather resembles a semi-subsistent labour reservoir for the urban centres. On the historical and ethnographic level, these two chapters set out to show that we can write about and observe 'other times' without turning the objects of our study into bounded 'culture gardens' somewhere beyond the passage of time (Fabian 1983). The Fiji Islands have their own particular history with clock time, which has resulted in particular ideas relating to time. These ideas can, as I have stated, go all the way to appearing exotic. Yet in the Fijian case, the exoticism is also highlighted by an underlying familiarity: though often presented as an indigenous custom from time immemorial, Fiji time (like its cognates 'Pacific time', 'Island time', 'Tonga time', 'Vanuatu time', and numerous others) is concurrently also the product of an alternative trajectory of the clock time paradigm. It contains colonial inversions and postcolonial reversals of the time-thrift morality – ideas that are certainly every bit as 'modern' as the 'Finland time' I examine in Part Two.

But besides these meta-level arguments about time and difference, Chapters 2 and 3 also respectively argue in favour of extending our understanding of clock-time valuation. Although usually considered predominantly a precursor of time-thrift, efficiency, and acceleration, there is no inherent attribute of clock time that would automatically make it only suited to measuring labour, opportunity cost, money, and the like. Chapter 2 takes a broad look at the different historical forces at play in Fiji since the arrival of Methodist missionaries and the annexation of Fiji to the British Empire in the 19th century. Present-day Fiji retains, I argue, several historically determined ideologies for clock time side by side. These culminate in the concept of Fiji time – a notion both celebrated and derided, denoting both something like 'chilling out' and of 'being behind'; actively marketed to overseas tourists as a source of indigenous wellbeing and at the same time discouraged among the indigenous population. Clock time is complicated in Fiji.

Chapter 3 goes deeper into one of the facets of Fiji time, here examined under the idea of doing things slowly – or 'wasting time' – in the Veratan style. The metaphorical tendency for slowness that people from the chiefdom of Verata are thought to embody can also be viewed as a characteristic of Veratan chiefship – a kind of gravitas. Chapter 3 thus seeks to accommodate this way of valuing time into our pre-existing models, and by so doing also conceptualises what differentiates an over-abundance of time from 'boredom'. Is abundant leisure the privilege of the leisure class, as Veblen argues (1912: 35–67), or can it be found among the under-privileged semi-subsistence farmers of Verata too? If their time cannot be money, can it be something else of value?

The second half of the book turns from Fiji to my native Finland, a society that – by Fijian standards – is quite obsessed with clocks and punctuality. After dwelling on Fiji time for two chapters, I want to draw attention to the fact that there is nothing natural or self-evident about an ideology that turns time into the stuff of taxing, banking, accounting, and equivocating. 'Finland time' – a concept of my own coinage – is certainly every bit as 'exotic' as Fiji time.

Part Two looks at time predominantly as a currency of account in order to show what makes time such a favoured vehicle of value in Finland. If the first part of the book concerns itself with showing how time can offer a relevant medium for various considerations of the good even in the relative absence of formal time-telling devices, the second part focuses on a setting where the precise calculation and counting of time is the norm. I therefore look into the way the measures of time are applied in different quantitative scenarios, and how temporal units are connected to different scales of value.

Chapter 4 introduces the widely disliked time-allocation tools employed by Finnish universities at the start of the 21st century. In many ways, the deployment of time-allocation software – originally developed for the cost-calculation needs of project work in the private sector – acts as a fine illustration of how far the 'auditisation' of Finnish public universities has progressed. The demand for standardised proof of performance has expanded so quickly since the early days of audit culture (Strathern 1996/7), that Finnish academics have by now thoroughly learned how to deploy various metrics to their own (departmental) benefit – much as the early labour movement did with clock time in Thompson's historical account. But, more importantly for this book, the fictitious time allocated at Finnish universities also serves to call attention to the difference between the logics of cost efficiency and double-entry bookkeeping. Hence, it also calls us to pay more attention to the ideological values embedded in the different evaluation regimes, to the degree where, I argue, it is the hours and minutes that have to accommodate themselves to an underlying moral standard rather than vice versa.

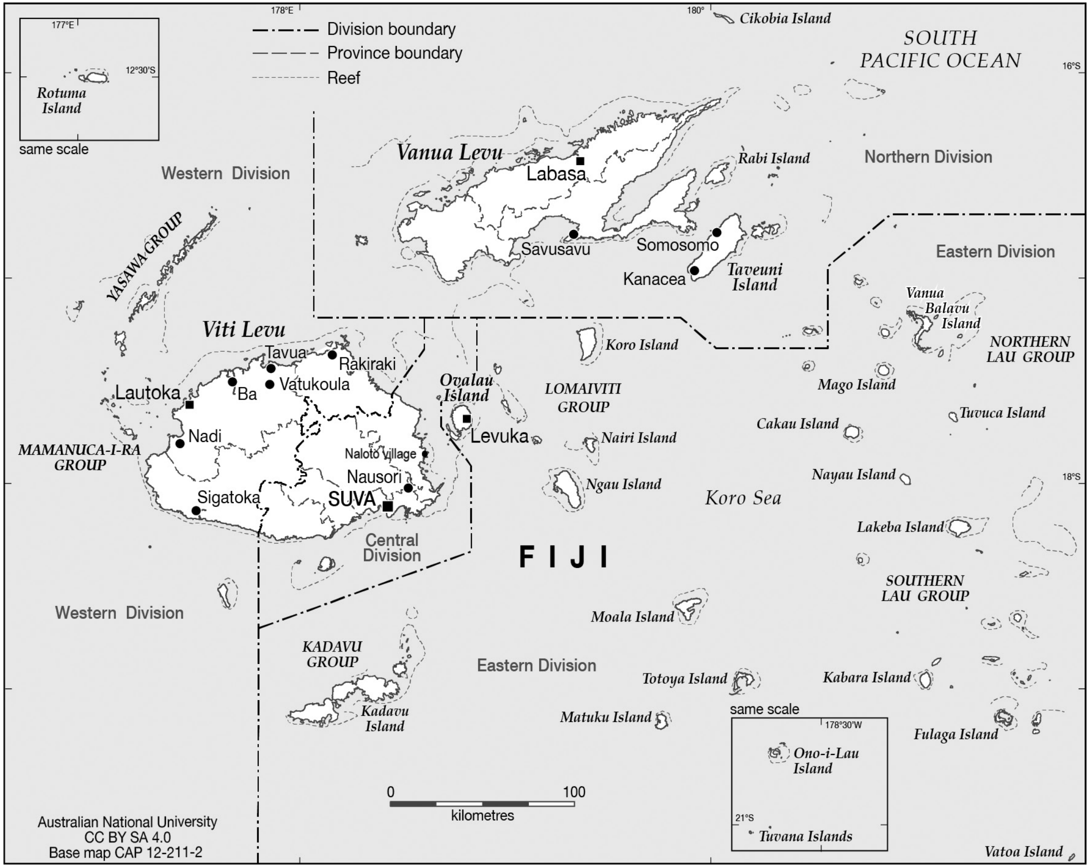
Chapter 5 further examines the idea of equivalence already discussed in Chapter 4, but this time in the context of Finnish timebanking. The Helsinki Timebank is a local trading and mutual assistance platform set up to establish informal, egalitarian exchange networks among citizens of the Finnish capital. It allows Helsinki citizens to trade services that are measured in hours of clock time and denoted by a currency known as whiles. However, the Timebank has been undermined by the Finnish Tax Administration's 2013 decision to treat banked whiles as taxable income. The deleterious effect of the state's fiscal policy is not because of the presence of taxes in themselves, but rather because the Timebank considers its mode of valuating time incommensurable with money. In Chapter 5, I therefore further outline two modes of valuating time – one according to the tax authority's labour-based model, the other according to the Timebanks equal-exchange ideology.

Both of the case studies from Finland foreground a mode of equivalence-making that, on the one hand, relies on time as a precise medium of quantification yet, on the other hand, requires the degree of manipulability that a time standard affords. Indeed, this is what makes time such a unique vehicle for value projects, as I argue in Chapter 6. Time can be made conceptually available through various different qualities or characteristics, and therefore slots into different value systems in different ways. Fijians, I have previously argued (Eräsaari 2013, 2015, 2018, in press), place every bit as much importance on equivalence as Finns, but employ a different mode for establishing it: indeterminacy rather than precision.

This is ultimately the point that I want to convey through the chapters in this book: the possibility of thinking not just about time, but also what value is and how the 'thingness' of the standards used for representing value can shape our lives (Lampland and Star 2009). But what the example of time shows is that this really is a two-way street. Marshall Sahlins, addressing the double jeopardy of applying any category in reference to the real world, once wrote of the cosmos being 'fully capable of contradicting the symbolic systems that are presumed to describe it' (Sahlins 1985: 149). The malleability of time reveals that something else sometimes also occurs: our systems of representation can, if not fully contradict the cosmos, at least treat its features selectively.

Part I

Fiji



Map of Fiji (available under CC BY SA licence from the Australian National University)

2

Four Slices of Fiji Time

We are the kind of people who know the value of time, and you are the kind of people who don't know the value of time

Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*

We often assume that an elaborate (quantified, systematised, precise) understanding of time as a resource is linked with capitalist modernity, in which labour time becomes an alienated commodity, and where urbanisation and technological advances bring about an increasing awareness of speed and acceleration (Thompson 1967; Wajcman 2016 [2015]: 37–43). But apportioning of time into specific stretches was not created by industrial modernity. As Durkheim pointed out, trying to represent time without the processes we divide and measure it with is 'something nearly unthinkable' – the category of time always draws on socioculturally specific expressions (Durkheim 2012 [1915]: 10, fn. 6). This point is easy to forget when the processes used to divide and measure time are globally standardised, so that we hardly ever stop to wonder about the collection of measures employed for the purpose. Insofar as the global standardisation of time owes its success to the Industrial Revolution and the Euro-American global expansionist policies that accompanied it, it is only fair to give capitalism, colonialism, and Christianity credit for the spread of these chosen modes of time reckoning. So while the passage of time can be considered to be a universal feature of human cognition (Gell 1996), the 'artificial' hours and minutes applied to the passage of time are something else. They are, to cite Don Kalb (slightly out of context), part of 'the most jumbo laying out of capitalist social relations across the globe that humanity has ever experienced' (Kalb 2015: 50). But does the worldwide application of these temporal ideas make time always homogeneous?

In *Time and the Other* (1983), Johannes Fabian presents a trenchant criticism of anthropology's temporal assumptions. This critique is directed at the way anthropology has, for a long time, designated its object beyond a shared flow of time (history, change), or behind the researchers' own slot in an imagined developmental or evolutionary sequence. Fabian, in other words, quite correctly criticises 20th-century anthropology's use of temporal dimension as a value-laden platform that recreates Western assumptions about unchanging primitive societies, regarding European modernity as the crux of evolution. But he extends his criticism beyond the historical sequencing of evolutionary time, or progress and development narratives, to studies of culture-specific ideas about time more generally. These, he argues, also tend to describe 'system-internal' or 'encapsulated' times (Fabian 1983: 41); depictions of others' times that are isolated from Western-modernist time by virtue of their incompatibility with it. Thus, although Fabian sets out to discuss anthropology's misuse of the temporal dimension, he expands his criticism to studies of phenomena such as time terminology, which he sees as yet another attempt to carve out temporally disconnected cultures outside a shared history. By so doing, he appears to deny the possibility of different paths through history, to the effect that 'other times' can only exist as a result of anthropologists' delusions.

Here, I want to lay out an alternative way of approaching temporal alterity. I want to show that 'others' times' can simultaneously be part of a shared history and on a trajectory of their own; the same but different. I will therefore argue that despite a shared history with 'our' clock time, Fijian abstract time both shares and does not share a common trajectory with the times of North European Protestantism or industrial capitalism. The contrast is apparent in the terminological shift from Fabian (1983) to Gregory (1997): Fabian uses the concept of 'coevalness' to denote the condition of 'sharing the same Time' (1983: 31); Gregory (1997: 7–10) reserves 'coevality' for the commonplace contradictions between rival value systems. To spell out the difference: Fabian critiques the anthropological tradition of creating bounded 'culture gardens' whose remoteness in space assumes corresponding distance in time, so that the people studied by anthropology tend to be placed historically upstream from the anthropologists. Gregory foregrounds the concurrent recognition of often conflicting values that can relate to one another as subalternate and superalternate, antagonistic, non-antagonistic, and so forth.

This chapter approaches the different coeval – in Gregory's sense – valuations of abstract time through the concept of Fiji time, which is commonly used in reference to both a lack of punctuality and ample leisure. The idea of an 'encapsulated' Fiji time bears all the hallmarks of the denial of coevalness that is criticised by Fabian: in addition to revealing a racialised depiction of the chilled-out islander, Fiji time today also stands for indigenous assumptions of 'historical upstreamness': of being behind in, or late coming to, history. Yet upon closer inspection the notion of Fiji time also displays varied overlapping valuations that cannot be captured by placing it alongside North European Protestant time. This chapter, in other words, uses value as the lens through which it is possible to canvass different concerns relating to time itself.

The sense one often gets in Fiji is that Fijians have been blessed with an abundance of time; that while time is scarce elsewhere, Fijians are 'time-rich'. However, Fiji could also be one of those in-between places that Massey (1994) described where some peoples' greater global connectivity can make others even more isolated by comparison. The whole region's peripheral status is revealed in the way that the International Date Line cuts through it. The establishment of a standard meridian running through the Greenwich Observatory in 1884 was a sign of political prestige coinciding with Britain's maritime importance – most ships already used it anyway. The date line, by contrast, is an inconvenience: an arbitrary line signalling the abrupt change of date. In 1884, the International Meridian Conference chose the 180° line of longitude because it 'does not cross any continent but the eastern extremity of the North of Asia' and 'a number of small islands in the Pacific Ocean'. Even in Asia, the conference agreed, it was inhabited by 'people very few in number and little civilized', which is why the 180th meridian was an obvious choice 'to the inhabitants of all civilized countries'. (International Meridian Conference 1884: 79.) The course of the Date Line has subsequently been altered to accommodate sociopolitical factors, so that it now departs from the 180th meridian to go round places such as Fiji rather than cut straight through them. Yet the Date Line's location speaks volumes about global centres and peripheries, and Fiji is by and large one of the latter. This peripherality is added to by Fiji's size: as Matt Tomlinson (2009: 42–3) has pointed out, Fijians have been taught that their islands amount to no more than 'the dung of a fly' on the earth's surface ever since the establishment of mission schools in the 19th century.

At the same time, though, Fiji has also grown into a popular tourist destination that boasts one of the busiest airports in Oceania, and this partly offsets Fiji time's weak standing. In summary, the valuations I discuss here are not only born out of intersecting histories but also out of relations between locations – not just over time but over space as well. It is to this end that I evoke Massey's (2005) notion of trajectories as intertwined 'stories' that run through both time (dimension of change) and space (dimension of relations and interaction).

In what follows, I start with the Eurocentric trajectory that, according to Fabian (1983: 17), replaced Christian 'faith in salvation by faith in progress and industry, and the Mediterranean as the hub of history by Victorian England'. I do so to underline the fact that the arrival and application of temporal values relating to progress and industry were uneven and unsystematic, and instead of reproducing the values of 19th-century Britain, this idea of time brought about a set of responses, some of which could be considered adaptations, others reversals, and yet others much harder to specify. Much as in Massey's (1994) relational take on time–space compression, Fijians also valuate Fiji time in relation to other, speedier, locations such as Europe and Japan. Through such comparisons, the relative worth of Fiji time often appears commensurable with those other times, often to reveal the relative weakness of the former. But at the same time, this highlights relational perceptions such as the apparent abundance of time in Fiji, affording alternative referents or standards for valuating time.[1]

Double times

What constitutes the essence of the clock time that spread around the globe during the 19th and 20th centuries? As discussed in the Introduction, a core idea is demonstrated by E. P. Thompson (1967) in his outline of the history of time as the measure of labour in industrialising Britain at the turn of the 19th century. By locating the historical period during which another time orientation – one based on tasks and natural rhythms – was being widely replaced with that of the clock, he accomplishes two things: showing that what Marx (1993 [1859], part 1) called 'the natural units of time, *i.e.,* hours, days, weeks, etc.' are in not particularly natural, but rather a relatively newly established mode of apportioning time. More importantly, Thompson also illustrates how the adoption of time as a measure of production does not just affect time reckoning, but a wide range of other sociocultural phenomena as well – most significantly ideas about the moral worth of time-use and a newfound emphasis on time-thrift at the turn of the 19th century. In Thompson's analysis, the Protestant tradition played a crucial role in shaping a new, stricter attitude towards idleness as vice. In particular, Thompson singles out the Methodist Church whose 'method', he argues, is based on a strict time discipline – in John Wesley's own words, 'saving all the time you can for the best purposes; buying up every fleeting moment out of the hands of sin and Satan, out of the hands of sloth, ease, pleasure, worldly business' – even from sleep (John Wesley, Sermon 93, 'On Redeeming the Time'). This thrifty attitude to time is typically part of the idea that time 'is money'.

However, it should also be noted that it was not just labour time that preoccupied 19th-century Britain. The epoch's emphasis on speed was doubled by the growing need for greater and faster circulation of goods – the effect of which Marx called 'the annihilation of space by time' (1973 [2015]: 449, 464). This form of acceleration is not immediately connected with the aforementioned commodity valuation of time; rather, it highlights a parallel development towards

[1] This trajectory could be traced even further back in history: Le Goff (1980: 50–1), for example, firmly dates the origin of these temporal ideas to the first half of the 14th century, when '[w]asting one's time became a serious sin, a spiritual scandal. On the model of money and of the merchant who, in Italy, at least, became an accountant of time, there arose a calculating morality and miserly piety. […] The time which used to belong to God alone was thereafter the property of man.' Simon Goldhill (2022) argues that the underlying changes in conceptualising time date back to late antiquity.

increased pace, acceleration, or busyness more generally. These early 19th-century space–time assumptions are quite pronounced in, for example, a 1831 report by Henry Booth, treasurer of the newly founded Liverpool and Manchester Railway, who announced that the railway allowed a traveller to 'live double times: by accomplishing a prescribed distance in *five* hours, which used to require *ten*, he will have the other five at his own disposal' (Walker et al. 1831: 195). Saving time was a key benefit of speedy travel too.

But Booth did not stop at equating time with the distance covered: in a utopian account of the railway, he further argued that the time thus saved could eventually be utilised in order to combine 'the energy, activity, and enterprise of a refined and commercial people, with the simplicity and quiet enjoyment of philosophical life' (Walker et al. 1831: 197). Indeed, Booth's statement, published in the *Report to the Directors of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway*, gradually expands into a technology-driven vision of a future that allows other peoples in other places to follow Britain's lead in freeing up more time through faster travel: 'the Pasha of Egypt', 'the land of the proud Mameluke' and 'the stately Turk' would all, eventually, also be able to combine refined busyness with a quiet philosophical life – thanks to the railway (Walker et al. 1831: 196–7). In other words, the emergence of 'energy, activity, and enterprise' as qualities of refined people may well be part of the same historical shift that gave authority to the clock, but there is more to the matter. The railway man's argument attests to the fact that an idealised leisure has been contained within the time-thrift ideology from the outset.

Booth's phrasing may give the impression that the 'quiet enjoyment of philosophical life' is best suited for the refined, the stately, and the proud. Yet, despite its elitism, this overlaps with Thompson's rare speculative moment at the end of his essay on time discipline. Thompson (1967), as mentioned in Chapter 1, pronounces his hope that the Puritan depreciation of spare time may yet give way once poverty has been cured and an automated future practically forces men to rediscover value in undirected time. 'Will men begin to lose that restless urgency, that desire to consume time purposively, which most people carry just as they carry a watch on their wrists?' Thompson (1967: 95) thus asks. He then goes on to argue that, by maintaining a Puritan time-valuation in what he imagined as a less work-intensive future, we would be bound to rearticulate the value of spare time. This could happen either through the market mechanism (e.g., the leisure industries), or we might come up with a non-commodified appreciation of leisure and social relations – free time could become something that one appreciates either through spending money on marked 'leisure' activities or by 'spending' time in the company of others. Thompson's optimism, just like Booth's long before him, serves as a necessary reminder that resource time is always capable of upholding more than one answer to the question 'what matters to people?' (Sykes 2018: 1). Hence, we should not assume that Puritan time-thrift was necessarily the only mode of valuing time to have been successfully imported from industrialising Britain by the missionaries, settlers, and colonial administrators who introduced clock time in the various corners of the British Empire.

In what follows, I look into the valuation of Fijian rather than UK time, but from a Thompson-inspired viewpoint – inquiring into the potential value of undirected or surplus time. Fijians were converted to Christianity by Methodist missionaries who arrived in the islands from the 1830s onwards; wage labour reached the islands by the late 19th century, but in present-day Fiji the leisure industry also plays a major role in defining the value(s) of time. Yet none of these ideas was articulated in a vacuum but rather in a cultural setting with its own notions about dignity, pace, propriety, or indeed 'refinement'. These, in turn, became intertwined with the colonial administration's attempts to protect the indigenous population from the alienating effects of wage work, as well as its underlying notions of race and developmental trajectories. In terms of the value of time, this gave birth to multiple, coeval attitudes to time.

At the same time, a familiar set of temporal divisions has won over not just Fiji but most of the globe: hours, minutes, the working week, the Sabbath. This involves its own particular way of measuring time as if it were a physical substance, and of conceiving it as a finite resource. But this model for imagining time has grown popular even in places where the need to measure labour may be peripheral or even absent. The attitudes, moralities, and disciplines accompanying the clock should correspondingly be expected to differ in European and Fijian time.

In this chapter, I want to show how the coeval valuations connected to abstract time are created in relation to 'other times' that, to a degree, even have the appearance of spatially located 'things'. I am attempting what Massey (2005: 80) labels a 'leap into space': a lateral array of the different 'stories-so-far', with which she simply means the diverse trajectories that make any given here and now irreducible to a single grand narrative. Such 'leaps' can and should be followed by prioritisation and selection from among the messy tangle of stories (which I turn to in Chapter 3). This is a methodologically prudent way to begin an account like this, carried out in the hope of avoiding reproduction of the standard unilineal narrative. But ultimately, this 'leap' also guides the theoretical approach: once one has worked out the overlapping 'stories-so-far', it becomes inconceivable to imagine a neat, single-track, hermeneutic analysis of the value of time in Fiji. My account therefore presents a relational understanding of Fiji time, one in which it is ultimately the movement of people and ideas that maintains the various coeval valuations of time – they exist because of one another, not regardless of each other. To this end, I present Fiji time through four spatiotemporal 'slices' that stand for the entirety of 'stories-so-far'.

Fiji time #1

Fiji Time, the in-flight magazine of Fiji's national airline, provides brief snapshots of Fiji's tourist-friendly districts. The July/August 2015 issue, for example, informed the visitor that the Yasawa islands in the Western Division 'are widely known for their laidback pace', that the Northern islands 'are known for their leisurely pace', and that even the sugar-producing town of Labasa is 'sleepy' and 'relaxed'. In an interview, the owner of an eco-café near Sigatoka town explains: 'if you don't have time, then it's you who will be disappointed. You need to relax and enjoy this environment and the food will arrive on Fiji time' (*Fiji Time*, July/August 2015: 49).

The concept of Fiji time has become a product. Closely related to the notions of island time or Pacific time, it reproduces old, racialised stereotypes of chilled-out islanders who hardly notice the passage of time and cannot be bothered to work. Various souvenir shops offer a range of products depicting Fiji time: T-shirts, postcards, wall clocks, and other memorabilia. Even before reaching the islands, Fiji Air flight attendants instruct Fiji-bound passengers to 'to sit back, relax, and enjoy Fiji Time', while Fiji Tourism marketing used to advise the visitor to 'adjust your clock to island time'; the same advice is often repeated at the airport by the Digicel and Vodafone personnel who sell air time to visitors, and yet again by resort employees who welcome new arrivals by telling them that 'you don't have to worry about a thing because you're on Fiji time now'. The stereotype was also reproduced in a song called 'Fiji Time', which was released in 2013 by the English rock band Status Quo:

> please set your watches onto Fiji time;
> no need to hurry now, no need to worry now…

In short, Fiji time has been marketed as a resource; this was particularly the case during the 2010s. In this, it is similar to the image of 'smiling friendly people, white sandy beaches and sunshine' – as was pointed out to me by an employee of a top-end hotel in the Denarau Island complex in the Western Division, who told me he always tries to help his customers to put away their phones and laptops so they can enjoy their leisure time and learn from the Fijian way of life. Tourism Fiji started replacing 'Fiji time' with 'happiness' in its marketing in 2018 or 2019, largely because of Fiji's success in the Global Happiness Survey, which Fiji topped in 2014. The new tourism campaigns, executed under hashtags such as #FindYourHappy and #Bulanaires (millionaire in indigenous wellbeing) do not contradict the idea contained in Fiji time as much as repackage it. For this version of Fiji time is a commodity: an exemplar of the revaluation of leisure through the market discussed by Thompson. Fiji time is sold to overseas tourists and widely recognised as an asset by the cash-poor country's tourism industry.

Fiji time #2

When I first visited Fiji in 2003, I only heard the expression 'Fiji Time' used in reference to a general lack of punctuality: 'the bus will come eventually, but on Fiji time'; 'the office will open, but on Fiji time'. Guidebooks such as *Lonely Planet* warned visitors not to get exasperated: nothing ever happens on time in Fiji; everything is always late. The Turtle Island resort in the Western Division, in contrast to this, used to have its own time – '*bula* time' (good, healthy, or living time) – which was always one hour *ahead* of official time.[2] A retired hotel employee explained to me that the Turtle Island '*bula* time' was consciously ahead: when clocks were set an hour forward for Fiji Summer Time, Turtle Island clocks were also reset to keep them one hour ahead. In the past, he said, reference to Fiji time did not imply a marketable product in other resorts either. But the concept was always well known: tourists did not mind things happening behind schedule, and staff members could just laugh and say 'Fiji Time, always one hour behind.'

This understanding is not entirely distinguishable from Fiji time as relaxation. Both may easily be defined in terms of a general lack of time discipline, in connection with an industry that finds commercial value in leisure. However, for many of my interlocutors the latter understanding of Fiji Time contains a moral component that goes beyond the idea of missing an appointed hour.

For example, Marama,[3] a retired nurse living in Lautoka town in western Viti Levu, told me that Fiji time means 'we are always behind' – not late, but behind, just as *bula* time was ahead. Mere, a housewife who – like Marama – originally comes from the village of Naloto on the east coast of Viti Levu, though she now lives in her husband's village, defines Fiji time in similar terms: '*Keda* ['we'] always late, the Fiji time, yeah? […] In Fiji the time is not, what? Not important. Like in other places; Japan, eh? Time is very important in their life. They go with time. – Fiji? Oooh, late!' Likewise, Petero, a family man in his mid-forties who had only recently moved to remote Naloto in 2016 after a career in tourism in the Western Division, defines Fiji time in similar terms: 'You're supposed to be there on time but you're behind time. All the time, you're behind time. Not going with time, moving with time, like in some other places; some other countries.' Jone, an elderly Naloto villager who worked overseas as a seasonal labourer in his youth, goes even further: 'time is time' only for those who follow the 'European way';[4] time only means time overseas, while in Fiji 'you don't know the time'.

In a 2015 conversation with Mere and her sister, a middle-class civil servant in Lautoka town, the two women emphasised how time ought to be spent on projects

[2] The phrase 'bula time' is now generally used for 'happy hour'.
[3] Interlocutors' names have been replaced with pseudonyms throughout this book.
[4] See Toren (1989) for a description of the 'European way' and the largely overlapping notion of the 'way of money'.

of personal or collective improvement. For them, wasted time meant wasted opportunity. Mere defined Fiji time as 'Not progress in any way, to move slowly'. The sisters also provided me with a Fijian version of the idea that 'time is money' – '*volia na gauna, kakua ni volitaka*', which can be translated as 'buy time, do not sell it'.[5] Time, they explained, is actually too precious for selling – let alone wasting.

Fiji time #2, in short, stands not only for lateness, but also for a kind of backwardness associated with missed opportunities: from losing out on a career owing to missing school all the way to missing out on development. In the words of a forty-year-old family man from Naloto village, Fiji time means that

> We got our own style, Fijian style of living, our way of living, and the modern one, yeah? And some changes in the government now, they're trying to … erase this one, the old time, the old ways, and bring in the modern one. Because we've come through changes, we have to move, move with changes.

Ultimately, references to Fiji time in this sense also imply historical ordering among peoples and nations. The fact that most of my interlocutors in Fiji have by and large accepted this narrative underlines the sense of inferiority, highlighting the ideas of diminishment and loss that Matt Tomlinson (2009) has described in Fiji more generally. This sense of Fiji time is captured in the words of an indigenous Fijian village-school headmaster from the interior of Viti Levu, who stated in conversation that 'the Indians, they value time – "time is time" – but for us, maybe it's going to take us another ten, twenty, maybe fifty years'.

Allocating times to peoples

Clock time is not a recent arrival in Fiji. Indeed, quantified time as a measure of labour reached Fiji before the Cession of Fiji to Great Britain in 1874. For instance in 1865, the pre-colonial Council of Chiefs announced an annual tax on all adult males, £1 of which could be replaced by ten days' work of eight hours per day (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 August 1865). In 1916, temporal measures became a compulsory part of primary education, and telling the time was established – together with counting money – as part of the fourth grade curriculum in 1929. But clock time and its disciplining effects were allocated unevenly.

The Colony of Fiji developed a division of labour that was based on a reification of indigenous culture and the importation of Indian indentured labour from 1879 onwards. The full story of the codification and insulation of indigenous lands and traditions, and the first governor's consequent quest for a 'cheap, abundant

5 This is also a reference to a popular song called 'Na Mataniciva' (The Pearl) by Sakiusa Bulicokocoko, the story of a man who wastes his time in his youth when he should be studying and lives to regret it in his old age, when he understands that an opportunity once lost does not return.

and certain supply of labour' (Lal 2012 [2000]: 69) has been recounted elsewhere.[6] For the sake of the present discussion, it is crucial to understand that the colonial government's decision to guarantee indigenous land ownership was paralleled by an administrative structure that backed the newly codified and standardised 'Fijian culture' with the force of law. In contrast to the indigenous inhabitants, who were legislatively placed in their native villages, onto collectively owned lands, and outside the colony's plantation economy, the immigrant labour force was contracted to plantation work:

> They would work nine hours on each week day and five on Saturdays; Sundays and public holidays were free. Monthly or daily wages and task-work rates were specified. For time-work, each adult male was to be paid 'not less than one shilling' and every adult female 'not less than nine pence', while children were to be paid proportionately to the amount of work done. The same rates applied to task-work, a male's task being defined as six hours of steady work and a female's four-and-a-half. (Lal 2012: 72)

Consequently, the colony's cane fields and sugar mills came to be operated by South Asian indentured labourers, while the vast majority of the indigenous landowners were assigned to comparatively self-subsistent villages. It may be argued that this created another sense for 'double times' – one for subsistence-oriented indigenous village collectives and another for the migrant labourers of the colony's plantation economy. It was the latter's time that appears to be reminiscent of 'the monotony, alienation from pleasure in labour' that Thompson (1967: 62) associates with clock time. Indeed, as early as 1908, the Australian missionary John Wear Burton heralded the birth of 'New Fiji' in *The Foreign Field of the Wesleyan Methodist Church* journal:

> The shrill whistle – morning, noon and night – follows hard upon the heels of the discordant bell and summons the 'labour' to the dirty, wheezing, groaning mill or to the warm, wet cane fields. The river is alive with fretful, panting steam launches, tugging and straining impatiently at sluggish, ungainly cane punts. Ever and anon screeching whistles or tooting horns or scrambling sirens hideously and braggartly declare that the New Fiji has been born. (Burton 1908: 262)

This 'New Fiji', with its strict labour-time contracts, whistles and sirens, was the predecessor of a whole set of different articulations of the value of labour or the value of time, as John Kelly (1992) has exemplified in his analysis of worktime as sacrifice or 'worship' in Fijian Gandhism and its contrast with devotional Gujarati entrepreneurialism. But the colonial administration's and the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's efforts to redefine 'the labour' as small tenant farmers or even

[6] On the codification of indigenous tradition, see France (1969); Kaplan (1995); Kelly (2003). On the emergence and codification of an Indo-Fijian tradition, see Kelly and Kaplan (2001); Lal (2012 [2000]); Leonard (2019).

entrepreneurs (Kelly and Kaplan 2001) is equally illustrative of an administration that allocated phenomena such as commodity valuation and time discipline to the Indo-Fijian community. In contrast to this, the Acting Colonial Secretary William McGregor had already stated in 1884 that 'the natives have not yet learnt our high-pressure ways, and do not and will never value time by our standard' (Colonial Secretary's Office 1884: 249). The colonial administration's protectivist policies soon turned this into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Policies were, to a great extent, based on intimate knowledge of 19th-century evolutionist thought, namely that of Lewis Henry Morgan and Henry Maine (Kelly 2003, Close-Barry 2015). Lorimer Fison, the missionary-ethnographer who wrote a highly influential paper on Fijian land tenure, was Morgan's informant and admirer, and defined Fijian society according to Morgan's evolutionary periodisation: '[t]he Fijian was on his way to the feudal system, but he was a long way from reaching it' (Fison 1881: 349). Fijians, in Fison's estimate, had by the late 19th century attained pottery, the bow and arrow, salt-making, and the canoe, and upon the arrival of the missionaries, they still maintained traces of 'the patriarchal family' (Stern, Howitt and Fison 1930). All this evidence appeared to place Fijian society in the 'Middle Period of Barbarism': an 'ethnical period' that preceded private property and alienated labour. Indigenous Fijians were consequently placed under a separate legislative order from the rest of the colony, one that made them incompatible with the colony's plantation economy, and regulations were passed that required indigenous Fijians to contribute labour and garden produce to their villages and village chiefs, with others severely restricting their movement to urban centres (Eräsaari 2013: 82–90, 203–7, in press).

In short, the two peoples were placed on very different trajectories: the Indo-Fijian population was administered in a frame of reference attuned to the immediate future, with labour shortages, annual work cycles, the colony's tax deficits, and the like. The indigenous population was placed beyond the near future (Guyer 2007), into social-evolutionist time, the scale of which vastly surpasses an individual's lifespan. This trajectory, too, was subject to adjustments by later administrative regimes, but even though the original paternalistic policies had been revised by the 1920s, the dichotomy survived. For example, the government-printed *Colony of Fiji: Land and Products*, a 1925 booklet for prospective settlers, reproduces the stereotype: 'The native Fijian does not make a reliable plantation labourer, his natural temperament rendering him quite unfit for the monotonous duties incidental to cane cultivation, but the Indian coolies have proved themselves eminently suitable for the work, and have been exclusively employed by cane planters generally' (cited in Reeve 1989: 8).

Corresponding views were expressed among the Methodist missionaries. In 1936, the Rev. L. E. Bennett of the Methodist mission opined that 'the influence of the Indians upon the Fijians seems to have been stimulating. The ambition and independence of the Indians seem to have roused the Fijians out of their lethargy' (Bennett 1936: 2). Miss I. Hames of the Davuilevu Theological College, for her part, summed up the mixture of paternalism and reformism that was the mission's dilemma: Fijians should be guided into adopting European virtues – but not the vices – by their dealings with urban life. How good would it be, she reasoned, 'If Suva Fijians might receive just the benefits of contact with Europeans […] and if alertness, briskness of movement, punctuality, well-informed minds, smartness of appearance were the only results' (Hames 1938: 5). While the 'Fiji Indian' was being defined by work, 'the Fijian' was defined as inactive.

Fiji time #3: view from the Navuso Agricultural School

The first half of the 20th century witnessed various attempts at dealing with the Fijian communal organisation that had been enshrined by the first generation of administrators: restrictions were placed on ceremonial consumption and sharing practices such as *kerekere* and independent farming was encouraged. The administration sought to monetise village economies, introducing an 'absentee tax' and other fees that were set up to compensate for the removal of an individual from the village labour pool, and so forth (see, e.g., Roth 1951; Sahlins 1962; Belshaw 1964; Eräsaari 2013, in press). The value of time was not a major concern for the administration at this historical moment, but we can find it preoccupying reformers of education, a field that had been left for the churches to organise during the first decades of the colony, but came increasingly under state scrutiny in the early 20th century.

The 1930s plans to create a new type of Fijian farmer – the 'Fijian Methodist industrial man' (Close-Barry 2015: 94) – should be understood within Fiji's particular historical context. The North European emphasis on time and labour had not been the highest of priorities for the Methodist mission in Fiji. To be specific, the Methodist missionaries were strict about time discipline among themselves, and highlighted their own ceaseless labour and toil in their correspondence with the Church at home,[7] but as a rule they were disposed to accommodate Fijian culture, much as the early colonial government sought to do through its model of indirect rule. Yet the Church also required money from the colonial administration for maintaining its schools, while the administration was under increasing pressure to make the young colony generate revenue for the crown.

The topic of expanding and standardising education in Fiji occupied the Legislative Council at least from the 1910s onwards. The core arguments can be found in the Education Commission report from 1926, which documents

[7] This can be read in the pages of the *Missionary Notices* periodical from 1881 to 1886.

the point at issue between the state and the Methodist Church. The colony's need for an educational reform had grown to a scale where the mission's capacity alone was deemed insufficient, but the mission schools' teaching was also deemed impractical: they offered a 'European' education – 'foreign literature and French' – that was said to serve little purpose for its pupils. Worse than that, it prepared Fijians for civil service jobs of which there were but few. What Fijians really needed, it was argued, was less education and more practical skills: manual and vocational teaching.

The 1926 report contains multiple lines of argument. For one thing, there was a fear that too much knowledge would revolutionise the indigenous population, as it was argued had happened in India: 'The Indian student [...] fitted in admirably with this bad system. It is no wonder that such a system soon produced an "intellectual proletariat" disillusioned and disappointed in their hopes of official careers, and ready to blame the existing government for their condition' (Education Commission 1926: 8). The fear of discontent was echoed by the Bua district administrative Ratu Deve Toganivalu, who warned the Commission that the majority of schooled Fijian boys 'are idle because there are no vacancies in the clerical line for which they have been trained' (Education Commission 1926: 93). Another authority, Dr D. W. Hoodless, argued that as it had been necessary to abolish various pre-Christian customs and crafts, Fijians now had no 'hobbies' left: 'the Fijian now finds himself with a large amount of leisure time for which he has little or no use' (Education Commission 1926: 91). In other words, although the report's main claim may have been a widely shared consensus on indigenous Fijians' need to start utilising their lands commercially, one can find this argument paralleled by another that proposed it was time, in addition to agricultural land, that Fijians were wasting. With this in mind, the report called for 'a training which is not confined to the learning of subjects in a school room, but which vitally affects the lives of the pupils, carries over from the school to the home and to the village, and shows itself in its influence upon character, improved health, efficient and willing industry, ability to use leisure time well and worthily' (Education Commission 1926: 5).

The model chosen for pointing the way forward was the Navuso Agricultural School, established in 1923 by the Methodist Church in Fiji. Navuso taught boys commercial farming through an emphasis on practical farm work.[8] Ideologically, it combined the colonial state's interest in increasing private entrepreneurism with

[8] During colonial rule, Fijian girls' education was established with a view towards parenting, housework, hygiene, and so forth, usually collectively labelled under 'mothercraft' and articulated through the need for skilled mothers to save the 'race'. The objectives of girls' education thus differed from that of boys, and girls' schooling objectives were much more limited in scale, but it is nonetheless possible to see a parallel discourse on time utilisation in the context of girls' education. Take Miss F. Tolley of the Methodist mission, for example, who pronounced the need for the Church to provide 'the modern Suva Fijian girl' with 'something at which she can work in her spare time' (Tolley 1932: 7).

a Protestant work ethic, its stated aim to teach 'in a practical way the dignity of work and the principle of self-maintenance' (Education Commission 1926: 67). To this end, each student farmer in Navuso was – and still is – allocated a parcel of farm land, and once this land starts producing income, the student farmer pays his upkeep from his farming income. The rest goes into a savings account held in the student's name. In 2015, the average pupil was said to have left the school with 5,000–7,000 FJD in his savings account. This was considered good money in Fiji; a considerable nest egg. The students leave the school (now known as Navuso Agricultural Technical Institute) richer than they entered, as the Navuso headmaster was proud to point out in conversation in 2015. He clearly articulated the school's objective in direct opposition to village life; the savings accounts, for example, are necessary in order to pull the pupils 'away from their village games', he stated, presumably meaning communal obligations and not just rugby.

The headmaster said he wanted to teach young farmers how to evaluate the (monetary) worth of their time in order to count 'how much an hour of this kind of work is worth, how much two hours of someone else's work'. 'These young boys, they have education but not the time-management', he pointed out. This is why the school assesses the young farmers' work; they have to provide strict records of what they have done with their time, so it can be estimated whether this was spent wisely or not. The astute accountability for time spent is what the headmaster referred to as 'time management'. The key to time management, in his view, was discipline. 'I always elaborate time and discipline', he told me: 'I see time as a kind of God; it can sometimes replace God.' I believe the headmaster was talking about time as possessing a particular moral authority over the pupils, but his words also reveal a strong sense of the externality of time. Time can, and should, exercise coercive external power upon Navuso boys and (since 2016) girls.

In 2015, Navuso sought to teach its pupils to 'live like in the village, but using time more wisely': waking up at four for Quiet Time; second bell and morning devotions at 5 a.m.; morning assembly at 6 a.m.; breakfast at 7 a.m.; lessons from 8 a.m. until noon, then lunch and practical duties until nightfall. This strict time discipline is considered beneficial and character forming: all my Fijian interlocutors talk about Navuso respectfully. One of them even swears that Navuso turned his life around following a series of prison sentences.

But here I want to draw particular attention to the way in which the Navuso discipline is articulated in contrast to Fijian life, especially in the indigenous villages. In fact, much of the Navuso teaching is based on the assumption that what makes the school so efficient is the removal of boys from their village settings. It is also a common assumption that another time orientation awaits the graduates once they leave school. The Navuso headmaster associated his main educational problems with the village: it is there that one 'can end up wasting time: drinking grog [i.e. kava, Fi. *yaqona*, Lat. *piper methysticum*], *solevu* [ceremonial events] … One ceremony today, another the next day.' At the same time, he wanted his graduates to set a positive example for others – to show what they can accomplish, in order to encourage other villagers. But this, too, was articulated in contrast to a Fijian, village-based time regime that is regarded as both coercive and detrimental. Returned to their original environment, the assumption was that even Navuso graduates will revert to village ways.

In this, the school headmaster echoed popular sentiments about time in Fijian villages. Take Adriu, for example: a middle-aged insurance salesman from Lautoka town who holds the view that 'the more educated people are now working on time' while 'the laid-back ones [are] living in the village area'. In a 2015 interview, he expressed the opinion that the village gradually changes anyone who moves in there, whatever their initial intentions:

> After a while, you'll mix up with the rural life, with the village life. So whatever you learn it starts to fade away, you start to go in line with those already in the village life. So you will wake up at about eight o'clock, more and more, and have your breakfast at about nine – ten. At about nine, after nine, you take up your knife and you go up to the plantation. By that time, the sun is already coming up. It's started to get hot. So when you're going to do your weeding or do work at your plantation, after a while you can't take the heat so you hide or you come back to the village and sleep.

Similarly, a group of factory employees from the capital were keen to point out that Fiji time is a village-based problem: people waste time in the villages, drink kava, and relax. Those who move to town do so 'for a purpose': they intend to work to pay for their children's education or some other project, and they 'leave time-wasting behind' when they do so. Likewise, Joeli, headmaster of a rural primary school, thought that 'especially in the village setting the use of time is secondary', just as Joji, a young farmer living a short way outside his home village in Naloto, thought that 'wasting of time is the main thing in the village', which is why he 'hates coming back' to it. Whether addressed as a question of residence, education, or aspiration, it is agreed that Fiji time is the antithesis of discipline and time management. Fiji time #3, in other words, is the sheer waste of time that is predominantly associated with village Fiji life. It is not just considered backwards or 'being behind' in terms of an imagined developmental trajectory; it is also thought to hold people back individually, to keep them from fulfilling their potential. But note also that this idea represents an 'outside looking in' view on the village, a depiction that is incomplete until counterbalanced.

Fiji time #4: village time

Fijian villages vary in size, organisation, livelihood, and location, but on an ideal-typical level, indigenous villages are characterised by subsistence or semi-subsistence farming. They are places where a person identified with one of its landowning lineages can live without access to money – where the old retire after completing their urban careers and the young grow up respecting the traditions of their forebears. At the same time, this idealised village life is a cliché, and one that can often skew people's life expectations. Village life is regularly characterised in paradisiacal terms, yet although it is hypothetically possible to live in a bamboo house without modern utilities, no one does so. Still, the cliché is not entirely false: indigenous lands are owned collectively by landowning groups (*mataqali*), and as members of these groups, the vast majority of indigenous Fijians are by law entitled to use family lands in their home villages. This guarantees the home village a continuing relevance in modern Fiji, providing a safety net or fall-back option when things do not go to plan. This was clearly in evidence in newspaper reports from Fiji during the global COVID-19 pandemic, for example.[9]

Village livelihoods in Tailevu Province, the region in Fiji that I am most familiar with, tend to follow a semi-subsistence model: people grow food for family consumption, to meet kinship obligations, and to sell at the urban market. The urban marketplace yields just about enough money for children's upbringing, utilities, community and church obligations, as well as bringing some much-appreciated variation to a village diet. But except for the relatively few professional, large-scale farmers (who usually operate outside villages anyway), village livelihoods are not aimed towards surplus production. Correspondingly, work patterns are not aimed at maximum productivity: rather, worktimes alternate between periods of relative ease and bouts of intensive activity, the latter mainly at times devoted to lifecycle rites and other ceremonial events. The Fijian word for 'busyness', *oga,* reflects this pattern insofar as it also connotes ceremonial obligation.

Livelihood patterns differ greatly depending on region: Fiji's main island alone contains climate types that range from lush rainforest with abundant rainfall throughout the year to dry grasslands with marked wet and dry seasons. The availability of urban employment (in terms of proximity and transport infrastructure) also has a significant influence on village livelihoods. Some villages in the more affluent western parts of Fiji even subdivide and rent their communal lands to peri-urban house builders. But in the Tailevu province in the east coast of Viti Levu, villages produce people, rather than goods, for the market.

Chris Gregory has used the notion of 'labour frontier' to describe similar circumstances. The frontier separates an economic order where wages need to be sufficient to maintain a workforce of consumers who are subject to market expenses, from an economy providing cheap or 'unlimited labour' (Lewis 1954) across the frontier; people do not have to pay for food, housing, and the like in order to feed and raise families. Gregory draws the distinction to show there are two different

[9] For a detailed account of village livelihood and corresponding expectations, see Eräsaari (2013).

kinds of rationales for spending accumulated wealth – on necessary commodities or on kinship and other social relations. The difference between working for one's livelihood and working for a project, such as meeting a lifecycle obligation, implies two different attitudes to employment. Livelihood requires more sustained employment in contrast to the more occasional kind that is made possible by a subsistence base waiting across the frontier. The urban factory workers cited earlier indicated that they are keenly aware of the difference in patterns of time use that crossing the labour frontier implies. They came to the capital for a purpose, to work for their children's upbringing, and 'left time-wasting behind' upon moving into town. But as in Gregory's description of the labour frontier, so Fijian lifecycle patterns involve the idea of moving back once a purpose has been fulfilled.

In Naloto village – which I will introduce in greater detail in Chapter 3 – moving back and forth across the imaginary frontier is an established pattern. Villagers cannot work from a village base, as the schedule of the village lorry does not allow it, so moving out of the village, to what is sometimes called 'the place/land of work' (*vanua ni cakacaka*), is the only option if one wants to earn money. Most of the village youth dream of a good job in town, or maybe at a tourist resort, before eventually returning to the village. But not everyone is successful in securing paid employment, and many village youths or young families take up residence just outside the village instead. This means either building or requesting the use of a so-called farming house (*vale ni teitei*) or bush house (*vale ni veikau*) and moving a couple of kilometres away from the village community. This allows proper concentration on efficient farming, and producing greater quantities for the urban market.

However, the typical rationale my interlocutors gave for moving out of the village was time or, more precisely, being in charge of one's own time. This calls to mind the Navuso College headmaster's fears that one can easily end up 'wasting time' in the villages. Joji, a thirty-three-year-old head of an independent household, explicitly told me that he was 'trying to counter' village time use by staying out in the bush. He said that in his farming house he was able to wake up at five, which he would not be able to do in the village, as he would be forced to stay up late socialising and drinking kava, and consequently sleeping too late. This was why, he announced, he hated going back to the village. 'The wasting of time is the main thing in the village,' Joji claimed.

This was a recurring topic in my conversations with young farmers who lived outside villages. More or less all of them gave the same explanation: in order to be an efficient farmer, one has to be up at sunrise, and in order to accomplish that, one has to live beyond sociable village life. But it was also very clear that storytelling, kava drinking, and other forms of socialising were not seen only as a lucrative distraction, but were described in more coercive terms. Indeed, even Adriu, the confidently middle-class urbanite whose disapproval of the uneducated villagers' 'laid-back' attitude I have already cited, once talked about the way in which, when he visits the village, 'people come and talk to you, hold you'.

Henry Rutz (1984), writing about the Waidina Valley, in Fiji's Central Division on Viti Levu, analyses a corresponding phenomenon – a conflict between prevailing social values and villagers' economic activities. He focuses on house building, more precisely on the puzzling observation that the people he worked with preferred to make 'modern' houses out of costly building materials, even though traditional house-building materials were available for nothing, and everyone freely admitted that modern houses were less comfortable than the traditional ones. Rutz's answer to this puzzle takes the form of time allocation: the number of man-hours required to build a traditional house is considerable in comparison with the modern' corrugated iron buildings. But this is not related to the building technology itself. Rather, traditional house building 'tends to be regulated by nonwork activities': 'slow-downs', and 'speed-ups' such as ceremonial observances, presentations of goods, food and kava offerings, and so forth. These traditional protocols give building work a completely different pace and rhythm, Rutz (1984: 113–14) argues. Ultimately, purchasing the timber, cement blocks, and corrugated iron required for a modern house costs money, but leaves the household more time for farming activities, allowing it to take control of its own time resources.

This 'social time', as Rutz calls it (following Sorokin and Merton 1937), recalls Durkheim's dictum that 'what the category of time expresses is a time common to the group, a social time' (Durkheim 2012 [1915]: 10, fn. 6).[10] But where Durkheim's primary concern is with expressions of time – units – Rutz speaks of something more profound: something like the proprietorship of time. Under traditional village order, time is not an individually held resource. The headmaster of Navuso College said as much to me in conversation in 2015, though it took me a few years to grasp the significance of his words. Describing Fijian fellow-villagers as resembling obstacles to a progressive individual's time, he made a comparison that at first made little sense: that like water, time also flows during the night, even if we only use it in the daytime: 'Most of us only use it in the morning when water usage reaches its peak; only in the morning when everyone gets very busy does the flow of water slow down to a trickle.' What I understood only much later was that he referred to water as it is accessed in countless rural Fijian settings – as a communal resource accessed through shared pipes, perhaps even operated by a pump activated at a particular hour so that people can fill their domestic water supplies, with the effect often being queues at communal water taps or shortages in parts of the network owing to insufficient water pressure. He was not saying that people

[10] Toren (2002) elaborates on the interpersonal considerations underlying indigenous Fijian space–time coordination.

should use the night-time hours more effectively, but that a village community drains or congests time.

But what may be referenced as coercive social time – people 'holding' each other or individuals seeking to wrest time from their village kin – does not have to be viewed solely in negative terms. We can also ask what is such time intended for; is not 'social time' also purposive, and if so, then what is its purpose? In posing this question, I want to recall Gregory's (1997: 7–10) point that coevality is something manifested in contradicting values that can relate to one another as subalternate, superalternate, and so forth. The metropolitan, religious, and educational discourses that underlie the condemnatory views cited earlier in this chapter can make it very difficult for rural communities to valorise 'village time' in an articulated way. This does not mean they do not value time.

Rutz makes it very clear that the 'social time' he writes about in Waidina is time structured by social observances. Likewise, the Navuso headmaster associated village time with 'one ceremony today, another the next day'. But from a village point of view, the alternate view could be exemplified by the preparations for a funeral I attended in Naloto village in June 2007. Following established protocol (Eräsaari 2018), the kin group in charge of the funeral arrangements held a meeting some days before the event to distribute the necessary tasks. Contrary to established protocol, the clan elders decided not to construct a *vatuniloa* – a canopy (or shed, as they say in the village) usually made out of bamboo and sheets of corrugated iron: the work was deemed pointless, since the village had a large meeting hall for such purposes. However, as soon as the clan elder in charge of funeral arrangements left to visit town, a group of predominantly young men went against the elders' instructions and constructed the canopy anyway. The work lasted a whole day, and in the evening one of the men answered my questions over the bowl of kava that is customarily offered at the end of communal efforts such as this. The construction, he told me, was carried out by people who 'have no money' to contribute to the funeral effort, so they gave their labour instead.

This example concerns working rather than non-working time, but it highlights a wider concern with balance. Unemployed and unmoneyed villagers can use time to contribute in place of the gifts of money and food that their urban or otherwise more affluent kin provide. Time is what they have in abundance; it is what they can give. Tēvita Ka'ili (2017: 106) affirms the same logic amid the intensive communal demands he faced among the Tongans in Hawaii, where he, too, contributed time to make up for what he considered to be an insufficient funeral donation. I find Ka'ili's approach, the way he renders time into equivalences rather than allocations, appropriate for thinking about Fiji too. This is still the abstract stuff of time, measurable by clocks, but in a context where the clock itself is not particularly relevant. The idea could be summed up by one of the very last events I witnessed in Naloto village during a 2016 visit, when the village was called into action by the death of a senior community member. During the formal kava ceremony at the end of the burial rites, I observed how a number of the urban men who had been attending the event were becoming increasingly impatient. I have always considered ceremonial kava drinking slow and uneventful, but I had never really thought that I might not be the only one suffering from the 'restless urgency' of time-thrift that Thompson (1967: 95) writes about, 'which most people carry just as they carry a watch on their wrists'. Yet on this occasion, I could clearly see many of the urban-based visitors shifting about and casting impatient looks around, a few of them even checking their wristwatches.

It is never acceptable to leave a kava-drinking event until the drink has been finished, unless one requests permission to leave (*tatau*). Of course people do leave less formal events, and younger men in particular may slip out unnoticed from the less prestigious end of an assembly. But for senior, urban, middle-class members of the village community, 'stealing away' (*dro*) from the village at the end of a formal event would simply be unacceptable. So, after several rounds of kava had been served, a senior man from the capital requested leave, presenting a whale's tooth on behalf of all the guests in attendance. The hosts responded, as customary, by granting permission – but only once the kava had been finished (*maca,* 'dry'). This, I should add, is common practice. A *tatau* can be refused, though this rarely happens on formal occasions such as funerals. But instead of wishing someone a safe journey home, it is fairly common for the hosts to respond with something like 'Yes, after a few more cups,' or even, as in this case, 'Yes, once the kava has been finished.' This is a cheeky but indisputable response, and so everyone waited. No attempt was made to hasten the interval between the rounds in order to accommodate the impatient funeral guests. The town-based guests continued to squirm and check their watches. It was obvious they would much rather have been on their way, but there was absolutely nothing they could do: the 'hosts' (*taukei*) of the funeral were in charge of time.

At moments such as this, it is evident that villagers are able to deploy time according to what matters to them: to designate the value of time. This is different from commodity valuation – village time does not come with a price attached. But by virtue of a shared principle reminiscent of Ka'ili's idea of 'symmetry', customary observances are calibrated to a notion of proportionality, balance, or a sense of sufficiency: enough time has to be reserved for these proprieties, because to do otherwise would not be – what? Respectful? Dignified? Proper? Village-centric Fiji time #4, then, comes across as a kind of dignity, although the villagers herein described ultimately lack the power to make their version count beyond the village confines. Yet the 'pace and rhythm of hospitality and visiting, of story-telling and sleeping, and of the organisation of collective activities such as ceremonial exchanges and building houses' described by Rutz (1984: 112) obviously also contains some commonly recognised 'good' that underlies the recognition of

Fiji time as an indigenous virtue in the first place. 'Maybe it's important to socialise and unwind after a hard day's work' said Joeli, the village school headmaster who proposed that Indo-Fijians were roughly fifty years 'ahead' of the indigenous population in time utilisation. But he also said he did not want 'to take an early lead', which is to say leave social events before others. Staying is a sign of respect, he told me: 'other people might be offended, they respect the teacher, the village elders, Fijian tradition'. But you also 'don't want to miss the fun', he was quick to add.

Conclusions

This chapter has looked into different meanings assigned to Fiji time. The four temporal slices that I have carved out could be condensed into 1) leisure and enjoyment; 2) lateness and being behind; 3) waste and ignorance; and 4) respect and dignity. Chapter 3 provides an in-depth ethnographic view of the fourth category: here, I have sought to make visible the multiple, intertwined senses involved in the assessment and valuation of time in Fiji. All these slices seem to owe something to the complex set of ideas connoted by clock time: notions of waste and thrift, of acceleration, of progress, propriety, lateness, and so on. For the sake of simplicity, I have located the origin point of this 'time complex' in Victorian-era UK, though as the comparisons that indigenous Fijians make between themselves and the Japanese, Europeans, or Indo-Fijians reveal, this narrative is more complex and branches out at various points.

Some of the Fijian valuations discussed here are quite straightforward reflections of the unilineal narrative that is generally thought to go hand in hand with wage labour, the time is money paradigm, and internalised time discipline. Fiji time can be understood as 'behindness' or backward 'waste'. But it can also be evaluated in contrast to it, for example by claiming market value for leisure. But to complicate matters further, Fiji time also highlights relaxation as an autochthonous stress relief, and this 'culturalist' interpretation is fortuitously backed up by the authority of custom, as I argue further in Chapter 3.

All these overlapping times date back at least to the 19th century, when Fiji time was quite markedly set apart from the colonial administrators' time. Yet by the 21st century, it is also very clear that Fijians do not value time by some unadulterated, immemorial standard either. Fiji time both is and is not on the yardstick of European time: while clocks and abstract, quantifiable time were introduced to Fiji long ago, the use of clock time in evaluating economic worth was only selectively applied. The different understandings of Fiji time combine new elaborations of these old ideas with inversions of labour value and even outright rejections of it. Viewed together, the combination of perspectives informing the various understandings of Fiji time defies simple models, to the degree that I find it is best defined in Massey's inconclusive terminology as 'throwntogetherness', or the 'simultaneity of stories-so-far' (Massey 2005: 12).

But instead of the plurality of history, what I have sought to highlight in this chapter is the coevality of different ways of valuing time. On the back of the arrival of quite familiar concerns with speed, time saving, and the rest, Fiji has become familiar with the moralities of puritanical clock time. Yet alongside this familiar story, I have tried to highlight another one: the way in which Fiji time also counters this discourse. If Massey (1994) calls attention to the negative side effects of time–space compression – the relative weakening of the worth of time in 'left-behind' places beyond the connections that made the 1990s world a 'global village' – then Fiji time offers a viewpoint that turns the relative abundance of time into an asset. Here I have discussed this asset in terms of the relations between Fiji and the tourist-sending countries as well as the relations between village-based and urban indigenous Fijians. In Chapter 3, I present a more detailed ethnographic, village-centric view.

3

‘Wasting Time’ the Veratan Way

Following the bird’s-eye view presented in Chapter 2, this chapter looks into time as a bearer of value for the people of Naloto village in the chiefdom of Verata in Fiji. Naloto is a village just outside Fiji’s main metropolitan area, with restricted access to the urban economy or wage work but with plenty of ‘undirected time to live’, in Thompson’s words (1967: 95). One cannot exchange one’s time for money in Naloto, though one can leave the village in order to take up paid employment elsewhere in Fiji’s urban centres or tourist resorts. Consequently, the village population – about 300 people – is constantly changing owing to extra-local marriages, the formerly urban employed retiring to the village, village residents moving out in search of work, and others wavering in between. These circumstances, combined with Naloto’s unique status as the largest village in a chiefdom often represented as the home of Fiji’s chiefly dynasties, results in certain very marked attitudes towards time.

Building upon Chapter 2, I discuss the particular case of Naloto to further foreground alternative ways of assigning value to time – besides time’s capacity to act as a measure of labour, or the puritanical time-thrift arising from that role. Speaking globally, the labour-based valuation of time now reaches even communities and settings where time can hardly be likened to money: labour reserves, refugee camps, or other ‘surplus’ populations, often caught in between countries, zones, and settings; people who ‘find themselves doing nothing and for reasons well beyond their control’ (O’Neill 2017: 25). The case of Naloto might not be quite as dire, but I want to discuss Nalotan time in this context, nonetheless, in order to ask when, or how, it is possible to resist or challenge the harsh valuation we often consider inherent to clock time.

As shown in Chapter 2, European clock time has been around in Fiji long enough to have established more than just a transitional presence. But this does not automatically imply a dogmatic adherence to European ideology: in Fiji, ‘time’ in the post-industrial sense can even bear values that are antithetical to time-thrift. That this should happen under conditions in which time resources seem abundant rather than scarce may sound like an obvious equation, yet it should be borne in mind that a matter of values is not just a matter of choice: one cannot simply pick one's values and expect them to have purchase. Not everyone is in a position to make 'superfluous' time a thing of value, as one of Daniel Mains's (2017: 38) Ethiopian interlocutors reminds us: 'In Ethiopia, there is too much time. Tomorrow is very far from today. The evening is very far from the afternoon. There is no difference between today, yesterday, and tomorrow.'

My ethnographic focus is on Verata, a Fijian administrative district and an ancient chiefdom whose claim to senior status is backed up by both pre-colonial and colonial-era mythologies (e.g. France 1966; Tuwere 2002; Sahlins 2004; Eräsaari 2013). Though the Verata paramount chief's title currently carries little political power, reference to Verata nonetheless evokes the gravitas of seniority that may at times be mobilised to legitimise the claims of others, as was done by the paramount of the chiefdom of Rewa during post-coup political uncertainties in 2010 (Tagivetaua 2010). Like the other traditional chiefdoms and districts of Fiji, Verata is known for a particular leadership type, or charisma (Geertz 2000 [1983]): this is slow and steady rather than rash or bold. And this traditional depiction of the polity encompasses the people who make it up, which in turn provides them with an ideological platform for (attempts at) valorising the abundant Fiji time resources in this part of the country. Veratans, in short, are historically well placed: they have at their disposal a set of ideas that, at least occasionally, enables them to uphold superfluous time as a vehicle of aristocratic virtue, in a manner more reminiscent of Veblen's notion of conspicuous leisure than of Marx's labour time.

Leisure time as a bearer of value?

Marx's analysis of the role of time in the valuation of commodities corresponds with a widely shared understanding of time as a scarce resource. For Marx (1993 [1859]), time is the 'secret hidden under the apparent fluctuations in the relative values of commodities', a fact we can all attest to in the attention we give to the precise measuring of time. But using time as the measure of commodified labour also turns it into something more than just a measure. Time becomes a medium of value, which corresponds with a recognised need for frugality in time use. We grow conscious of the preciousness of time, up to a point where a thrifty attitude to time becomes a moral issue that no longer bears an immediately recognisable relation to labour or production (Thompson 1967). This is why we find people from Finland to Fiji agreeing that time is not to be wasted.

Post-industrial clock time, as we have seen, merges three distinct ideas: the moralising attitude Thompson calls time-thrift, the conception of time as a resource or bearer of value, and the idea that time 'stands for' labour – operates on a labour 'standard', as it were. But if these ideas can, even hypothetically, be pried apart, then we also ought to be able to devise other models for valuating time, or other ways of assembling these ideas. I want to call attention to one such attempt: Veblen's conspicuous leisure, or the unproductive consumption of time practised in order to display the ability to remain idle. In *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1912), Veblen portrays conspicuous leisure as the product of a class-based need for distinction; an upper-class display of sufficient resources to not engage in productive work. But Veblen takes his analysis of leisured life beyond this simple point to show how the display of leisure can expand into a full-blown social system, which in effect serves to elaborate and embellish the appreciation of time. An illustration of Veblen's model can begin from the idea that, unlike labour time, conspicuous leisure is fundamentally expressed through constant display because – hunting and other trophies notwithstanding – leisure cannot be measured in output. Yet the whole life of a gentleman (or woman) of leisure cannot be spent in public view:

> He should find some means of putting in evidence the leisure that is not spent in the sight of the spectators. This can be done only indirectly, through the exhibition of some tangible, lasting results of the leisure so spent – in a manner analogous to the familiar exhibition of tangible, lasting products of the labour performed for the gentleman of leisure by handicraftsmen and servants in his employ. (Veblen 1912: 43–4)

In Veblen's analysis, aristocratic status is not just accompanied by highly time-consuming manners and requirements; these manners become the norm – a social fact recognisable by the power of external coercion that it exercises. An aristocrat has to verify his or her adherence to the proprieties of class, and the verification of status requires the services of various specialists whose job it is to wait on others: the valet, the butler, and the lady's maid all serve the conceived necessities of the leisure class: the time-taking proprieties of high society.

Veblen thus describes aristocratic decorum as a hierarchy of domestic servants wherein specialist skill correlates with status, and status with excessive waiting. He points out that the further up we look at the ranks of domestic servants, the more clearly waiting *on* someone becomes indistinguishable from mere waiting. They are part of what amounts to a potlatch-style realisation of value: the unproductive use, waste, almost sheer destruction of time that results in a display of rank, but also in a conceived sense of the unworthiness of productive work for those at the top of the social pyramid. Veblen's inventive rendering of aristocratic dignities highlights a core juxtaposition of productive labour time against unproductive waiting. But in his stratified model, social esteem is maintained by expending time non-productively, which in turn underlies an entire internalised temporal regime.

Hence, Veblen does not just invert Marx's idea of socially necessary labour time, but also the related notions of time discipline or Protestant work ethic elaborated by Thompson (1967) and Weber (1930) respectively. To complement an austere time discipline, Veblen highlights what could almost be labelled a 'leisure discipline', since the proper codes of conduct observed by the leisure class also wield coercive force, just as the more familiar time discipline does. Besides this normativity, conspicuous leisure also exemplifies an alternative value regime: for the upper echelons of the society depicted by Veblen, higher status corresponds with greater leisure, while for those employed by the leisure classes, status corresponds with more waiting. But in place of the energy and activity of the refined British merchants discussed in Chapter 2 (Walker et al. 1831), in Veblen's rendering refinement translates as inactivity.

I have not introduced Veblen's idea of conspicuous leisure here to provide a theory but rather a possible example of how to reassemble the value of time differently. Veblen himself offered conspicuous leisure as a 'stage' in what he envisaged to be development towards the conspicuous consumption of money. For me, conspicuous leisure rather serves as a hypothetical alternative to time-thrift: a mode of claiming value for time without resorting to labour-time valuation (though not wholly independently of it either). The reason I am interested in the matter could be exemplified by the scenario I have already evoked: when does the relative abundance of time become 'too much'; under what condition is the positive valuation of 'time-wasting' possible? Does it have to be a privilege?

Compare Veblen's leisure to Yasmine Musharbash's (2007) account of superfluous time at the Yuendumu Aboriginal settlement in the Northern Territory of Australia. Surplus time can hardly be glossed 'leisure' in sedentised, postcolonial settlement life inasmuch as leisure implies a break from work. Instead, Yuendumu surplus time stands for boredom: 'killing time' with endless card games, substance abuse, and so forth. Rather than being positively valued, the 'present becomes oppressive, like a cage in which one is caught, in which one experiences the same thing over and over again without any possibility of escape' (Musharbash 2007: 313).

Musharbash discusses boredom as an explicitly modern phenomenon, reminiscent of Thompson's view of our inability to enjoy undirected time under clock valuation. Boredom, thus framed, emerges as a by-product of a particular way of valuing time, which Musharbash highlights as a mismatch between Yuendumu life and values. Positive valuation of time is hard when people extend little control over their surroundings, to the degree that 'boringness' becomes a quality associated with life in general (Musharbash 2007: 312). The contrast with Veblen's top-down aristocratic waiting should be obvious, but we do not have to resort to these extreme scenarios to verify the significance of socio-economic status for the enjoyment of leisure. For example, Craig Jeffrey's work on waiting in university colleges in the provincial city of Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, India, also illustrates how privileged status allows some people to 'invest' their time, while others feel their time is 'wasted' or 'killed' under similar conditions (Jeffrey 2010: 75).

The example of time valuation from Fiji discussed in this chapter is offered as a point of comparison with the extremity of boredom and meaningless waiting. I do not seek to deny the experiences of boredom, powerlessness, or stuckedness discussed earlier, but to highlight one particular conjuncture that allows a group of relatively marginalised people to conceive their surplus time in a positive, or at least in a not altogether negative, sense. If it is not a simple matter of choice to allocate value to 'wasted' time, then what does it take for 'positive time-wasting' to be possible?

The Veratan way

Naloto village is part of the traditional chiefdom-cum-administrative division of Verata in the Tailevu province, on Viti Levu, Fiji. Naloto villagers lead a semi-subsistence life just outside urban Fiji; Nausori town, the end point of Fiji's main metropolitan area (the Suva–Nausori corridor) is only an hour's lorry ride from the village, but transport is too irregular to make permanent urban employment possible from a village base. Hence, approximately 300 people, either born or married into the village, live in Naloto village and practise agriculture and fishing, augmenting their subsistence by selling produce at the urban market, and in addition receiving assistance from urban relatives. Twice as many Nalotans, roughly 600 men and women listed at birth as members of Naloto's landowning clans (*mataqali*),[1] live outside the village owing to marriage, work, or both. Residence in the village can, in other words, be described as fluid: people move in and out all the time. With the exception of the immigrant village-school teachers, very few people have managed to take up paid employment while living in Naloto. As a rule, one has to move away from the village to be able to secure a job, though most urban-based Nalotans I know at least plan to settle back in the village at the end of their work careers.

Naloto is the largest of the seven villages that make up the traditional chiefdom of Verata. Roughly a mile from the paramount village of Ucunivanua, Naloto is known for having served as the Verata paramount's (*Ratu mai Verata*) stronghold during the Bau-Verata wars in 1850. Verata, for its part, is famous for three things: first, it is the home of a chiefly lineage in which all Veratans take great pride. Sticking to versions of the colonial-era 'Kaunitoni' migration myth (France 1966),

[1] The Fijian word *mataqali* typically refers to a landowning kin group descended from a common ancestor, which I translate as 'clan' more for the sake of readability than to evoke theoretical definitions of clanness. In practice, Fijian clans can merge with other clans, even act as conglomerate confederations of several landowning groups. For more detailed outline of the *yavusa* ('moiety') – *mataqali* ('clan') – *tokatoka* ('subclan') division in Naloto, Verata, see Eräsaari (2013: 22–31).

Veratans not only claim descent from the first King of Fiji, but the chiefdom is also often acknowledged as the original home of Fiji's chiefly lineages – acknowledged by other chieftaincies invested in this mythology, that is. Long after losing rank to the chiefdom of Bau in the 19th-century wars, Verata still maintains this particular status in indigenous Fiji, so that while the Verata paramount is today outranked by numerous other paramount chiefs, Verata's claim to seniority persists nonetheless.

Besides chiefs, Verata is known for its abundant supply of the small *keikoso* clams, an emblematically Veratan food, and for *solosolo vakaVerata* – doing things slowly in the Veratan fashion. Here *solosolo* means slow pace while the prefix *vaka-* turns nouns into adjectives, as in *vaka-solosolo*, 'slowly' (Capell 2003 [1941]: 200) or in a slow manner. A 1954 phrasebook translates the expression *solosolo vakaVerata* as something '[s]aid of a person who fiddles around and is slow in his movements' or '[o]f one who collects a lot of small and useless articles' (Raiwalui 1954: 16–17). Nalotans and neighbouring villagers often jokingly translate the expression as 'wasting time the Veratan way', something best exemplified during funerals and other traditional events, to which Veratans can be expected to arrive hours late.

Slowness is also an observable part of Veratan village lifestyle, while hurrying is, if not precisely frowned upon, at least something that people are uneasy with. Whether leaving to attend a funeral or just to catch a bus, every departure is always marked by an unhurried spell of waiting or 'relaxing' (*cegu*), and the same applies to arrivals, meals, work, and meetings. Even a sociable pastime such as kava drinking typically concludes with a spell of relaxed waiting before the drinkers can disperse and go home.

This makes many Nalotans claim that time has no significance in the village, or even – as it was phrased by Maciu, a village-based subsistence farmer in his late sixties – that *solosolo vakaVerata* means that 'there is no time' in Verata. For him, 'time' means discipline and punctuality: Maciu, who in his youth worked in the capital and overseas, automatically associated 'the Veratan way' with Fiji time and contrasted these to Europe, where 'time is time', he said. Veratan slowness, in other words, can be regarded as a special case of, and largely overlapping with, the notion of Fiji time, and this includes the various anxieties that Fijians have concerning a conceived lack of progress and development, but excluding any added commodity value from the tourism industry in the Western Division – as discussed in Chapter 2. Verata lies deep in the bush and holds little attraction to overseas tourists.

Timoci, a family man who worked in various tourism-related jobs in the Western Division before settling down in Naloto, was one of many who thought that time implies entirely different things in the village. He compared the urban and the village-based viewpoints:

> '*Na gauna na ilavo*'? ['time is money'?] Yeah, we use that in town, in the cities, that kind of saying […] 'Cause here in the village, whether you've got something or not, you still can survive. You've got everything that you can survive on without using money. Like, in town, you've got to work for money […] you go to work for the time, after that comes the money. But in the village, no: you can just roam around, you come home, you eat – the food is there. Everything is there, you go out, you just get it, or somebody can get it for you. You've got your neighbours, your relatives, your cousins that's living near to you.

Timoci, like many other Nalotans (cf. Eräsaari 2013: 39–44), explained the difference as affluence: 'everything is there' in the village. One can always rely on the generosity of neighbours and relatives for food and other basic necessities. The villagers all partake in the ideal of sharing anything that is not deemed immediately necessary to its owner, though in practice things are a lot more complicated. Easy access to basic necessities such as food and housing, combined with the availability of arable land and conditions that make at least cassava grow with minimal effort, leads to what can be described as ample free time – leisure, as long as one remembers that leisure refers to time away from work, hence requiring a historically particular idea of work.

While Timoci's words prove that wage labour is a well-attested reality in Fiji, the Fijian language itself does not really distinguish between 'working', 'doing', and 'employment'. Gounis and Rutz (1986: 62) illustrate the matter through the statistical oddities of the 1976 census, which ended up classifying virtually all males aged fifteen years or older as 'economically active', while owing to the exclusion of 'unpaid home duties', women's statistics were driven in the opposite direction. They (Gounis and Rutz 1986: 73) point out that the Fijian word for work, *cakacaka*, is 'neither a specialized or institutionalized sector of activity nor is it restricted to the market as an exchange of labour for wage remuneration': instead, 'work' designates virtually any activity that is not labelled 'rest', *cegu*.

I have often found myself thinking of Marshall Sahlins's 'The Original Affluent Society' (Sahlins 1972: 1–39) while in Fiji. For although Sahlins's essay was written to address assumptions about hunter-gatherer populations living in particularly challenging environmental settings, it raises two key themes for Fijian village life too. The first is the way in which Sahlins defines affluence as the rejection of surplus needs, which is also highly relevant for understanding Fijian village ideals. The vast majority of Naloto villagers articulate their ideas of good or proper life as a subsistence lifestyle wherein one can produce all the necessities of life with minimal effort: food is easily available and housing can be constructed from traditional materials, should one wish to do so. And if one requires tea, sugar, or other commodities the village does not produce, all one has to do is to ask. Money is thought to be unnecessary in the village because 'everything is there' – although in practice, residents use a combination of small-scale cash cropping and remittances to pay for clothing, electricity, transport, school fees, and so on. But the village-centric discourse ignores these expenses and thereby makes it possible to liken village life to 'Paradise' (*Parataisi*). Like Sahlins's affluent hunter-gatherers, Nalotans also 'keep banker's hours, notably less than modern industrial workers (unionized), who would surely settle for a 21–35 hour week' (Sahlins 1972: 34–5).

I conducted two small-scale surveys on time usage in Naloto in 2007. The first I considered something of a failure, if an illuminating one: I asked ten households to record their daily working times for one week, but instead of receiving quantified records of time use, I was given lists of tasks performed by household members. I mention this to point out that in the village, task orientation may in many respects be more relevant than clock time. Yet it also coexists with wall clocks and prestigious wristwatches; with church, school and transport schedules and TV programmes: task and clock orientations are not binary either/or alternatives, especially for a population alternating between agrarian and urban employed livelihoods.

My second survey was too small in scale to be more than generally indicative of time use in the village, but serves as an example nonetheless. I spent a week recording the lengths of time that men on the northern half of the village spent away from home – which is where most Nalotan men's work tends to be – arriving at the rough estimate of five hours per day.

This estimate excluded men who spent the entire day resting at home: had I included them, I would have arrived at average daily working hours of slightly below two hours per day. At the other extreme, these daily averages went up considerably thanks to an elderly fisherman who spent two nights out on the reef, sleeping in his boat with fishing lines on his fingers and toes. Moreover, my imprecise estimate does not reflect the fact that weeks differ from one another, or that working hours are not evenly spread across the working week. The relaxed pace of the early week picks up towards the weekend, when many villagers get busy readying their produce for the Suva and Nausori marketplaces. The week preceding a ceremonial event requires more work from the entire village community, while the week after tends to be more relaxed. Finally, it should be noted that women spend more time on tasks that are predominantly domestic and are therefore even harder to allocate apart from the rest of life than men's work. In addition to domestic tasks such as laundry and cooking, they also collect clams or forage for other foodstuffs, and sometimes firewood as well, plait mats, take turns preparing lunch at the village school, and so forth.

The crude estimate of five hours per day can nonetheless serve as a point of departure for looking into how village-based men spent these hours. Here is an example of a working day from October 2007, translated and abbreviated from my field diary:

> After breakfast, we relaxed a while together with Mosese and then set out for the clan's garden lands at 9.30. Maika joined us on the road to the farms, which we reached after a forty-five-minute walk. We then decided to take a break by Luke's 'bush house'. After a half-hour rest, other men of the clan arrived, and we rested with them a while longer. After the break, some of us conveyed news of an upcoming event to three nearby houses, all within a stone's throw. Exchanging news and relaxing a while took another half an hour. After relaying the messages, the group decided to move indoors to Luke's bush house, where we relaxed for another half an hour or so. Finally, at about noon, it was decided that we should get started: we walked some ten minutes into the bush until we reached the clan garden, where the younger men pulled up the cassava while the older sat nearby supervising. This took half an hour (we did not plant new ones to replace the old). We then sat down for a while and enjoyed a couple of green drinking coconuts before carrying the sacks back to the road, where someone suggested another break. Instead of resting, however, everyone embarked on the busiest spell of the day: climbing trees for breadfruit, collecting *ota* [an edible fern], searching for vines to tie up bundles, and so on. One and a half hours later, the village lorry picked us up. We were back in the village at three o'clock, bringing the day's working time to five and a half hours.

This abundance of relaxing was not an isolated occurrence: sometimes we watched movies after walking to the farms; once or twice, someone even commented that people back in the village would think we had been keeping busy. As a rule, the busier days were spent accompanying individuals to their gardens without a crowd of fellow-villagers, but relaxing was always part of work all the same – and that applied to women's work, too.

The Fijian word for resting – *vakacegu* – is derived from the root *cegu*, 'to breathe', 'to take a break'. It connotes both resting after an exhausting activity as well as more generally taking it easy, but the villagers usually translate it as 'relaxing'. The term *vakacegu* also carries religious connotations: while in North European Protestantism, one 'rests in peace' only in the afterlife (and toils hard in the present one), Fijian Methodism often seeks to assert resting or relaxing as virtues in this world. In sermons at Naloto Methodist Church, *vakacegu* is contrasted with undesirable rapid change,[2] while both the Fijian Methodist Hymnbook and even the Pentecostal gospel groups' repertoires abound with references to rest and resting. And of course there are the endless debates about the Sabbath. As Henry Rutz and Erol Balkan (1992) have pointed out, the Sunday Observance Decree, which declared Sunday a sacred day for everyone in Fiji irrespective of their religious background, was one of the first political actions taken by Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka following the 1987 military coup that he led. The Sunday ban has been a recurring topic for political debate ever since, and was endorsed again by the

[2] The religious use of the word covers a range of meanings, from relaxing and resting to what might be best translated as 'serenity', 'peacefulness', and so forth.

Methodist Church annual conference in 2007, only months after the December 2006 coup.

To highlight the contrast: the often-cited (North European) Protestant work ethic (Weber 1930) puts rest beyond this world – gives it an outworldly orientation (Dumont 1992 [1982]: 23–59) – while the Fijian ideal of *vakacegu* requires obeisance in this world too. The church elders in the village preach on the merits of resting, and the villagers repeatedly praise village life for the rest it affords. Indeed, when a villager employed outside the village retires – *vakacegu* – he or she at least expects to move back into the village: Overton (1993: 45) calls Fijian villages 'retirement homes'.[3] *Vakacegu*, relaxing, is also something that is offered to honoured guests in the village. And finally, although working hard is also highly valued in the village, young men who spend too much time working can easily become the subject of jokes from their peers.

Levelling with time

The Fijian words for busyness, *oga* and *ososo,* both indicate being busy with people. The former implies traditional ceremonial obligations, and hence is often synonymous with worry; the latter means being crowded with people. Busyness implies the bustle of ceremonial events, with everyone working day and night.[4] But collective efforts also bespeak of an ideal that allocates more time for relaxing when there is no particular reason to work hard.

At one extreme, there is collective work (*solesolevaki, lala*) that is organised under customary (*vanua*) protocol with chiefly leadership and traditional reciprocal obligations.[5] This mode of organisation is used for large-scale work such as house building or clearing new gardens, typically with the presence of senior men to provide an air of respectability, and with kava provided at various stages of the work effort to the same effect. This often gives collective labour an inefficient feeling: junior men work in short shifts interrupted by tea breaks and 'breathers' (*cegu*), senior men give support, while women take turns providing food and refreshments. But as a retired Nalotan teacher once pointed out to me, collective labour is a way in which efforts that are too big for one man or household can be accomplished. With no wages or other rewards, save for the kava at the end of the day, it would be pointless to push people to toil harder. The work will be done eventually.

[3] *Vakacegu* is also used to rely news of a death, and some urban employed Nalotans associate village retirement with 'waiting for death'.

[4] For more detailed ethnographic descriptions of different ceremonial events, see, for example, Toren (1989, 1990); Thomas (1992); Eräsaari (2013: 164–86, 192–202, 2016).

[5] On the difference between *vanua*, *koro* and *lotu* organisation in Naloto, see Eräsaari (2013: 112–13); on *vanua* ideology, see Tuwere (2002); Nabobo-Baba (2006).

This is the 'social time' discussed by Henry Rutz (1984) in his analysis of the popularity of corrugated iron houses in village Fiji. In choosing the corrugated iron house, he argues, the household unit takes control of its own time resources (Rutz 1984: 113–15). But the 'social time' observed in Naloto village at the beginning of the 21st century differs from that which Rutz observed in the late 20th-century Waidina Valley. First of all, in Naloto, the 'tin' house is also a collective effort – perhaps not in the formally ritualised sense implied by Rutz, although a Naloto household group trying to build its own house would surely see a number of neighbours and relatives springing into action to help in the effort, thereby initiating the cycle of reciprocities and acknowledgements that always accompanies collective work. But more importantly, in Naloto, time itself is regularly treated as a communal resource rather than a simple matter of individual or household-level decision-making. In this sense, time parallels land, which in indigenous villages is owned communally by kin groups (*mataqali*), reminiscent of Ingold's (2000) suggestion that time may not just be embedded in the tasks people carry out, but also in the social groups that perform the tasks. This is evident in ceremonial collective labour.

Even ordinary joint efforts, such as the visit to a clan's common gardens described earlier, tend to be conducted at a relatively slow pace, sometimes alluded to as 'eating [the] time' (*kania na gauna*). Compared with this, working on one's own is efficient, and consequently when one needs to get more work done – typically when getting produce ready for the urban market – one does not ask others for help beyond household members.

The idea that effective work is conducted on one's own is evident in residential life-cycle patterns, too. As mentioned in Chapter 2, young families often move outside the village for a period of time to accumulate the resources for a house, children's school expenses, and other household costs. The decision is always explained in terms of efficient time utilisation: living away from the village proper, close to one's gardens, one goes to sleep early, wakes up early, and concentrates on farming rather than storytelling and kava drinking. Ideally, a young farmer living in the close vicinity of his farm ought to wake up at 5 a.m. and leave the house when the sun rises, work until it gets too hot, then have lunch and rest until the weather cools down in the afternoon, and work again until it gets dark before an evening meal with the family. Young housewives, likewise, are busy working on their own while possibly also attending small children. Though most families who live out on their own expect to do so only for a fixed period – a year or two – the motivation for moving into the bush is always expressed in terms of better time management. For young men, this includes avoiding kava-drinking and storytelling, group activities that are virtually inescapable when living within the village boundaries.

Within the village, by contrast, time use is subject to greater peer pressure, which may even amount to a kind of levelling. Young men in particular who are seen toiling too hard are often the subject of jokes from their peers. But social pressure on time use is best and most amply evidenced in kava drinking, an activity where it is easy to lose face in front of one's peers. Young men are particularly prone to take each other's slights seriously, to the degree where leaving a company of kava drinkers earlier than the others is very difficult. But not even senior men are immune to this: I have seen a seventy-year-old clan elder, aching with fever, being pressured by his peers to join the kava ring.

Besides the kava drinking that accompanies storytelling in the evenings, simply holding someone in conversation or otherwise engaging with them is something that cannot be ignored without a proper excuse. There is even a Nalotan village slang expression for seizing or 'tying up' someone else's time in such a manner: *vesumona* (lit. 'tying the brain', with a wide range of meanings extending from hypnotising to seduction). Joeli, a married man in his early forties, defined *vesumona* as keeping somebody tied up for one's own end against their will. Akuila, a few years his junior, translated *vesumona* as 'taking somebody else's time'.

Akuila also provided a good example of what *vesumona* means. On a Friday evening in October 2007, back then in his early thirties and father to a small baby, he was preparing his garden produce for the farmers' market, when a group of young men walked up to his house demanding to buy kava. Knowing where this would lead, he tried to tell them that he had none, but failed because they had earlier seen him drying kava roots outside his house. The men produced 12 FJD and demanded to buy twelve bags of pounded kava, making Akuila pestle the entire amount for them. Once the task was finished, they told him to produce a mixing bowl: Akuila still tried to refuse, whereupon they told him they would drink their kava in his house nonetheless. Since Fijian notions of hospitality make this an unacceptable alternative, there was nothing he could do but to host the group as they demanded until the small hours.

At the informal level of young cross-cousins'[6] joking relationships, this is simply considered light-hearted pranking, as my interlocutors were keen to explain. No one is forcing anyone; there is always a choice – you either host the kava session and earn the good esteem of your cross-cousins, or you do what you have to in order to earn your children's upkeep, although this risks the spite (*kakase,* gossip) of your peers, as village-based Mosese explained to me.

Ordinary kava drinking works in a similar fashion (Toren 1989). As mentioned in Chapter 2, quitting a kava session (*talanoa*, 'yarning') before others requires permission. Some younger men in particular consider requesting permission embarrassing, but it is also entirely possible that one will not be granted

[6] The child of one's mother's brother or father's sister. See Barnard et al. (2008) on cross-cousinship, and Toren (1990, 1994) for cross-cousinship in Fiji.

'release' (*tatau*) by one's peers – which also qualifies as losing face. A typical course of action for young men in particular is to 'flee' (*dro*) without asking permission if they cannot take the drink any more, or otherwise need to leave. But since this also leaves the person who is fleeing open to all kinds of jokes behind his back, it is a course of action that is rarely adopted: most of the time, the majority of drinkers finish together. This applies particularly to young men, but no one is exempt from the pressure to stay in company; it is a matter of respect, I was often told.

Kava drinking induces a pleasant, drowsy atmosphere for storytelling and good company, but there comes a point in most informal kava sessions whereupon everyone is too sleepy for conversation, people doze off against the walls, or just sit in silence – interrupted only by the occasional request to 'please tell a story' (*talanoa mada*). If villagers usually give kava drinking and storytelling as prime examples of 'eating time', it is useful to ask whose time is being eaten in the kava ring. The fear of ridicule and corresponding pressure to conform are the prime mechanisms of what village youth call 'spoiling': 'pulling' or 'bringing down' someone rather than letting them accomplish a thing, exemplified by the act of chasing away a school of fish rather than allowing another to catch it (Eräsaari 2013: 47–52).

Remaining in company is also a matter of respect, not just towards one's fellow villagers but towards received protocol as well. Kava drinking is fundamentally a chiefly, hierarchical activity (Toren 1990), and even if Nalotans every so often disregard the actual chiefs themselves, the ritualised formality of kava drinking lends itself to an air of respect and dignity that is nonetheless described as 'chiefly' (*vakaturaga*). From the visible pride displayed by youths who are allowed to participate in kava drinking, to the pride that men exhibit when serving the drink on formal occasions, or the pride of someone being allowed the first cup, a kava session is an event in which one does not just lose face but also wins esteem. One of my village interlocutors even likened kava to a work career: 'some dream about a good job in town; others dream of getting respect by drinking *yaqona* [kava]'.

But a 'career' in kava drinking is also frowned upon. Marika, a Lautoka-based man from Naloto who used to make a living in the tourist industry, once criticised the village as a whole for being 'asleep', staying inactive when villagers ought to strive towards development. This is a common enough critique of village life, typically voiced by the urban employed. Over the course of the conversation, Marika went on to criticise his village kin for trying to aggrandise themselves in the kava ring: 'today, everybody wants to be the chief, to drink first'. In so doing, he was evoking another popular criticism, one most commonly heard at the end of a disapproving account of the state of affairs in the community: '*levu na vievie turaga*' 'so many want to be like chiefs', or, more to the point, 'people do not know their place any more'. He was, in short, criticising the villagers both for not being ambitious enough and for being too ambitious – of misdirecting their energies.

The 'chiefly' or status aspect of kava drinking is only a minor strand in the complex valuation of time that takes place in the village. Certainly the levelling of time points in an opposite direction, and absolutely no one dreams of claiming rank on the basis of relaxing at their plantations. Yet it is also true that a slow, deliberate comportment goes with seniority and positions of rank, such as that of the elder supervising collective work or the presentation of chiefly kava. They are examples of an ideology that, at the top of the social hierarchy, associates paramount chiefs with stasis – 'just sitting' (Tomlinson 2014: 58; Sahlins 2004: 60). And it is because of the cultural values expressed in such ceremonialised articulations that the high appreciation of a dignified, leisurely comportment may also assume the form of coercive behaviour. Imagine the village enforcing relaxation on its inhabitants in parallel to the decorum of more formal contexts. Or, more to the point, imagine relaxing as a norm capable of exerting external constraint upon individuals: a school teacher from the neighbouring province, for example, explained that not pausing to rest a while at the end of completing a kava session would feel like an offence – he would 'start to feel bad'.

Verata in the blood

Let us now return to what makes Fiji time special in the context of Verata. As noted earlier, Veratans regard their chiefdom as senior among the chieftaincies of eastern Fiji and the seat of power of a mythical first King of Fiji. Historically, too, Verata appears once to have been a ruling power, though its power has been declining for centuries (on Verata, see, e.g., Tuwere 2002; Sahlins 2004; Eräsaari 2013). Sahlins designates Verata as a 'kingdom of [the] blood' (*matanitu ni dra*) vis-à-vis Verata's ancient enemy, the powerful but genealogically junior chiefdom of Bau, a 'kingdom of force' (*matanitu ni kaukauwa*). The two stand for different, coexisting political types: Verata for the gravitas of seniority and Bau for the *celeritas* of force (Sahlins 2004: 67–8). That Fijians should still consider these things significant was evidenced, for example, by the prophecies that circulated Fiji in the aftermath of the 2006 military coup, which claimed that Fiji would only know peace once a true chief emerged from Verata. A current Nalotan interpretation of the difference in corresponding political ideologies was explained to me by a clan elder, who stated that *solosolo vakaVerata* indicates 'proper discussion' and 'fairness': decision-making that leaves no one unhappy.

Discussing the topic of time with a group of senior Naloto men in 2015, they collectively rejected the translation of *solosolo vakaVerata* that people had been quite fond of during my PhD fieldwork in 2007. It does not mean 'wasting time', they explained, but rather that someone is well prepared: 'slow but sure'. This at least partially echoes the explanations that used to be taught in Fijian schools and phrasebooks (Raiwalui 1954). *Solosolo vakaVerata* used to be among an established curriculum of idioms of Fijian traditions, taught alongside the old myths pertaining to Verata – the first King of Fiji, the running contest to determine his successor, the stolen whale's tooth that was the mark of the king's authority, and Verata's consequent fall from power. I went on to ask the group if it is significant that one does things slowly in the 'Veratan way' – why not talk about, for example, *solosolo vakaBau* – acting slowly in the Bauan way? After a moment's stunned silence, everyone hastened to point out that Bau is known for a different thing – *vere vakaBau* (sometimes also *politiki vakaBau*) – plotting or scheming in the Bauan fashion.

In saying that venerable old Verata should be known for slow but sure action, the villagers were also assigning stately dignity to slowness. Not only does it yield better decisions (one of the men exemplified the point by referencing the film *Home Alone*, where haste causes a child being left home unattended), but also, by contrasting Veratan slowness with Bauan rashness, people indicate that chiefly authority reflects these characteristics, inasmuch as both chieftaincies are encompassed and personified by their paramount chiefs. Much like Geertz's (2000 [1983]) view into the various forms that political charisma can take, we could say that Veratans imagine chiefliness as slowness. This does not mean, however, that the reverse would apply – slowness is not always correlated with chiefliness. Nor am I talking about a causative process (e.g., 'ideology of chiefship produces particular behaviour'), but rather trying to describe how the valued ideas of slowness and relaxing are elaborated in and organise the relations between other cultural elements (Robbins 2007: 297).

As mentioned earlier, the village is home to just one-third of the people registered as Naloto landowners, and while the majority of village-based Nalotans seem to value a relaxed and slow pace, many emigrant villagers express the opposite view. Many of them treat Veratan slowness as just another expression meaning Fiji time. In the village, where people predominantly live off the land, it is a common assumption that many urban residents 'eat money' (*kana ilavo*) in town – they eat into their earnings by having to pay for food, rent, and things they would get for nothing in the village. The idiom has a double meaning, though, since 'eating money' also means wasting it, and what is more, the implication is often that one who is 'eating money' is wasting it on personal indulgence when it could have benefited his or her family or the community. From the communal viewpoint, 'eating money' means 'using money that does not belong to you', as one of my Nalotan interlocutors defined it. To understand the implications of the ideal of sharing, it is necessary to keep in mind that even long-term urban residents such as Adriu, the middle-class insurance sales representative we met briefly in

Chapter 2, admit that 'all your income's not all only yours. You have to share it. [...] Because you know, at the end of ... one day you go back to the village.' The critique of 'eating money' thus echoes the ideals of a community where sharing remains the morally acceptable thing to do with any surplus, even if in practice this issue, too, is more complicated.

But inversely, it is also possible to criticise villagers' time use in similar terms: the village is 'asleep' when it should be developing; the villagers are 'eating time' (*kania na gauna*) when they ought to be striving to make improvements. 'Doing something that's worthless or nothing' is how a former tourist resort employee explained the notion of 'eating time'. Joji, a farmer in his late thirties trying to earn enough for his child's upbringing at a bush house outside the village, put it even more strongly during a discussion in 2015:

> *Kania na gauna,* eh? Like we sleep all days. We're doing something meaningless or worthless, like staying home, relaxing [...] *Kania na gauna* means you just stay home watching video or maybe drinking *yaqona*. [...] yes, that's famous for the village people [i.e. 'villagers are famous for']. Because that's what we do. But that's something you have to ... like ... to move up from, the wasting time.

The negative depictions of emigrant Nalotans highlight the degree to which *solosolo vakaVerata* encapsulates the coercive power of a Durkheimian social fact. While village-based Nalotans are more likely to translate *solosolo VakaVerata* as 'slow but sure', 'slow and steady', or 'well-prepared', emigrant villagers are likelier to explain it as lateness, excessive kava drinking, and missed opportunities. The double meaning of the idiom was illustrated in a three-way conversation with a Naloto clan elder (*turaga ni mataqali*) and his daughter in Suva in 2016: the old man was explaining *solosolo vakaVerata* as 'slow, steady, and good' while his daughter, laughing in the background, kept on interrupting her father to tell me it means '*berabera*' – 'slow' or 'late'. Revealingly, a Nadi-based Nalotan tourism employee once assured me that the idiom *solosolo vakaVerata* is derived from the historical downfall of the Veratan polity in the 18th-century wars with Bau: the Verata army reached the battlefield too late, and hence lost the war.

But these views are not a simple village versus town binary. The Naloto community, as I have said, is ever shifting back and forth. Yet the different settings can have a marked effect on people's views. I once interviewed a freshly returned immigrant from the Western Division who, during the interview, explained 'the Veratan way' as time-wasting and tardiness, but a week later told me that it *actually* means preparedness. Vice versa, people also find their village views questioned when they emigrate to towns. Three Nalotan women, all living away from the village, defined *solosolo vakaVerata* – independently of one another – as something that they carry 'in their blood'. One of them was Laisani, a middle-class civil servant from Lautoka town, who had left the village more than fifteen years ago, during which time she had converted to one of the prosperity churches and then back to Methodism. She explained in 2015:

> Most of the time, I'm on that mode. Like, I always have it with me, but I want to quit of it. Most of the time most people told me: 'You shouldn't do it. Come on. Does not matter that you're from Verata when you act slow like that. Now it's … times change. You should switch your time to this time, don't always late, late, late.' […] It's not a good thing. But it's like inside me. […] In the blood.

It is easy to hear echoes of Thompson (1967) on the emergence of time discipline here. Critiques of Veratan time-wasting juxtapose slowness with propriety, improvement and progress. The Methodist Church took part in this discourse in its early 20th-century efforts to give birth to the 'Fijian Methodist industrial man' (Close-Barry 2015: 94). The establishment of vocational schools such as Navuso, discussed in Chapter 2, was intended to teach Fijians the dignity of work and industrious habits as the means for 'every individual to reach the fullest all-round development of which he is capable of' (Rev. L. M. Thompson, in Education Commission 1926: 67–8). The emphasis on work ethic survives in examples such as Hymn 360 of the Wesleyan Hymn Book, originally written for the Davuilevu Boys' School by the Methodist educator and historian R. A. Derrick:

> *So, ra dau nanuma wale* (some people have idle thoughts);
> *Nodra mamarau e dai* (enjoying the day);
> *Gunu wale, veimau tiko* (just drinking, playing);
> *Vakaoti gauna mai* (wasting time away).
> *Sega tu na toro cake* (there's no progress);
> *E na sala ca ko ya* (in that bad way);
> *Vu ni noda lutu sobu* (the reason of our downfall);
> *Bula gogo, madua* (feebleness and shame)

But as I have tried to show, the idea that idleness leads to moral decay is (to a certain degree) counterbalanced by a kind of gravitas of unhurried action, which makes the positive valuation of unproductive time, even time spent relaxing, possible. But I want to be absolutely clear here: I am not describing a political ideology, let alone a hierarchical order, underwritten by time use. Indeed, I have elsewhere (Eräsaari 2015, 2018) shown that Nalotans do not even seem to uphold a particularly strong version of Fijian chiefly hierarchy. Rather, I have tried to illustrate that in the face of all the moralising and disapproval found in present-day Fiji, we can still find an ideology that seems to function in favour of people who cannot measure the worth of their time in money or production. Here, I have borrowed the Dumézilian terminology adopted by Sahlins (1985, 2004) to highlight the historical connection that allows even a moderate degree of dignity to pertain to traditional Veratan 'gravitas'. I have done so to show the relevance of the Nalotan case for a wider discourse on 'left-behind' populations and the value of surplus time.

The value of wasted time

Gell (1996 [1992]) offers a useful idea for thinking about the value of superfluous time. In his formulation, it is the existence of other, feasible alternatives that make us capable of even talking about 'wasting' or 'killing' time:

> We say things like 'Henry spent the afternoon killing time', which suggests that the afternoon in question was surplus to Henry's requirements. But what this really means is that Henry had to wait out the afternoon, engaging in irksome, obligatory, underfinanced consumption, when in another world, he could have been engaged in activities more to his taste. [...] It is not the 'objective' facts which make time surplus or deficient; 'surplus' time is simply time which we have to spend doing X when we would rather be doing Y. (Gell 1996: 211)

Gell elaborates his point by evoking Sahlins's (1972: 1–39) well-known interpretation of Charles Mountford's 1960 Arnhem Land data in 'The Original Affluent Society'. Sahlins labels the time-rich Arnhem-Landers 'affluent', an interpretation Gell juxtaposes with a reading inspired by Peter Just (1980) who, Gell maintains, would rather describe them as 'unemployed'. In Gell's Justian interpretation, the Arnhem-landers 'invest a lot of time in low-cost consumption, hanging about, conversation, football, etc. [...] the Arnhem-landers have such a leisurely lifestyle because they are poor, not because they are affluent' (Gell 1996: 213). But Gell goes on to reject this view as well, pointing out that in order to be 'unemployed', one would have to, at some level, be able to entertain the hopes of employment, a condition he thinks did not apply to the Arnhem-landers in question in the 1960s.

Gell's idea of the value of surplus time is defined by the existence of another, alternative set of worthwhile activities that one has to be able to at least imagine substituting for whatever one is presently doing. Yasmine Musharbash' (2007: 315) analysis of boredom in the Yuendumu settlement as a mix of being 'neither-there-anymore' (the boredom-free pre-settlement past) and 'not-there-at-all' (mainstream Australian society) illustrates Gell's point well by showing how a sense of entrapment outside both of these worlds gives rise to boredom. The devaluation of time occurs where another location, context, or activity would be preferable over that which one currently finds oneself in – much as with Massey's Pitcairn Islanders, who found their social world diminished by the transcontinental connectivity available to others in the 1990s.

But the question neither Gell nor Massey pursue is whether the devaluation of time, which gives rise to boredom and corresponding phenomena, has to happen under such conditions. In my previous work (Eräsaari 2013: 44–56), I discuss people's discontentment with village life, which occurs in Naloto side by side with the paradisiacal ideal of village life. Such discontent was voiced particularly bluntly by a young man from Naloto whose career aspirations in the capital had forced him to move back into the village in the early 2000s. He described the village as 'the last place for us', meaning a fall-back option when all other options had been exhausted, though he hastened to emphasise that he was only speaking for himself. Yet he was hardly alone in his thoughts – there is now an undeniably fast-growing division between the haves and have-nots, corresponding with a fast-expanding Fijian middle class emerging in the country's urban centres.[7] Yet one thing this has not done is to consistently turn Fijian experiences of time into 'investing' and 'wasting', even though Naloto villagers are constantly evaluating village life in comparison with life in town or overseas. As I have argued in Chapters 2 and 3, the paradisiacal view of village life is constructed vis-à-vis the expenses of life in town: 'in town everything costs money'; 'in the village everything is free'. Yet the urban consumer lifestyle also remains something Nalotans look up to as an achievement. Even the nouveau riche (*vucuniyau,* 'brimming with wealth'), are not scorned as much as they are respected, to a degree where even Paradise might appear to be a second choice. The 'time surplus' available in Naloto might not translate into similar riches, but it does not constitute the worthless here and now of unemployment, boredom, waithood, or stuckedness either. And this is, judging by the ethnographic accounts from other out-of-the-way contexts, a rare accomplishment.

Conclusions

One way to look at this rare accomplishment is to explain it as a fortuitous overlap of rural surplus time with customary notions of authority and hospitality, as I have done here. But I also want to call attention to the way in which conceptualisations of time itself cannot be divorced from the ideas of value that time is called upon to signify and measure. Recall the spatial distinction of Fijian times discussed in this chapter and Chapter 2: village times, urban times, and so forth. The way in which the rural communities are able to seize hold of or 'eat' time parallels the notion of 'social time', of traditional village obligations as discussed by Rutz (1984), evident in Fijian terms for busyness such as *oga* and *ososo*. Indeed, Rutz's (1984: 111–15) dichotomising division into 'social time' and 'budgeting time according to the clock' further parallels a recognisably Fijian way to conceptualise issues of time. Andriu, the insurance salesman already cited, put this into words by insisting that '*solosolo vakaVerata* is something for the community' rather than practised by individuals. And yet this is precisely why these two times could just as well be held up as evidence of converging depictions of time amid coeval valuations. Instead

[7] Indigenous villages' status as a fall-back option was reaffirmed during the COVID-19 pandemic. *The Guardian* (2 April 2021), for example, reported that one-third of the country's workforce (115,000 people) had lost their jobs from the pandemic-induced economic fallout, many returning to their villages or taking up farming and fishing.

of illustrating a distinction between 'different' times – social and personal, task-based and clock-based – I have tried to underline how far the notion of time in Fiji, Fiji time, coincides among the salaried urbanites and semi-subsistent village communities. It is these conflicting valuations, and corresponding demands to share, that find expression in the medium of time.

This is why I have chosen to describe the degree to which idioms, conceptualisations, and practices relating to time come together as a more or less coherent whole in Naloto, from the religious appreciation of rest to the social acceptability of enforced relaxation and temporal levelling in the kava ring. From these details, I have assembled an image of *solosolo vakaVerata* as a markedly unaristocratic version of Veblen's conspicuous leisure, a local ideal that does not create rank so much as draw upon old notions of chieftainship to lend an air of dignity to surplus time. The idea I have sought to convey leaves me short of the 'time is money' valuation of time that I evoked to set up my analysis: Nalotan dignity has little to do with the kind of universal equivalence that has accompanied clock time everywhere it has travelled. Neither is it even a widely accepted ideological construction, but rather tends to be looked down upon, particularly by those who have embraced the prevailing notions of modernity, progress, and self-improvement. So what is Verata time good for?

The core argument sustained in this chapter has presented *solosolo vakaVerata* as an ideological framework against which superfluous time may at times act as the bearer of positive values such as dignity, and contradictorily even of egalitarianism. Crucially, it is not just unused labour time or the absence of some other valued activity. As in Veblen's model, so in Naloto too, the value of time is 'systematised' in relations between people and cultural phenomena. The coercive power of leisure time offers an easy route to affirming its continuing relevance – its social factness, if you will – while attempts to denounce the leisure discipline only make its coercive power more tangible. It persists 'in the blood', as some emigrant Nalotans phrased it to me.

But on a more general level, I have also wanted to show that time has the capacity to carry perhaps limitless valued ideas besides those of labour and progress or boredom and powerless waiting that are habitually assigned to time. The dignities of rural life discussed in this chapter are not fully commensurable with the 'time is money' analogy that underlies my analysis, but neither are they fully disconnected, as their critique makes evident. This is the fundamental reason why I have dwelt so long on ideas of Fiji time – to show, through both historical and contemporary, ethnographically specific and broad-sweep accounts, that 'clock time' is not a single monolithic entity that always contains the same values and ideological constructions. A society does not follow another time ('task time' or 'cyclical time', for instance) until it adopts the practice of wage labour, and even in the relative absence of clocks themselves, or the obsessive quantification of time units in relation to labour, we can still discern a temporal ideology that treats time as a resource.

I point out this obvious fact because the second half of this book moves away from Fiji, into my country of birth, Finland. Finland is in many respects the opposite of Fiji: obsessed with punctuality and the quantification of time. Yet in Finland, as in Fiji, time can, and does, act as the vehicle of varying ideological projects, as I hope to show through two case studies. The second half of the book involves another change in perspective besides moving from Fiji to Finland. Chapters 2 and 3 have collectively shown that time's capacity to act as a vehicle of valuations is affected by contextual factors – sociocultural 'properties' that provide a basis for employing time in particular ways. Chapters 4 and 5 turn the focus to the possibilities that abstract time affords for sociocultural processes.

Part II

Finland

Map of Finland (JRC, EC, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons)

4

Work and Time in Finnish Academia

There is something very wrong with what we have made ourselves. We have become a civilization based on work – not even 'productive work' but work as an end and meaning in itself.

David Graeber, *Bullshit Jobs*

Intellectuals are always being led astray, because they think about irrelevant things like time and space and reality, things that have nothing to do with real life.

Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*

Introduction: Finland time

Unlike the notion of Fiji time discussed in the first half of this book, there is in Finland neither a folk conceptualisation nor a recognised discourse on 'Finland time' or Finnish time orientation. Yet if one were to conceptualise a Finland time, it would surely stand for ideas such as time-thrift, punctuality, discipline, and the well-travelled notion that 'time is money' (*aika on rahaa*), which is to say that Finland falls squarely within the clock-time tradition described by Thompson (1967). But as I have already argued, that tradition is hardly uniform even in the industrialised west. In Chapters 4 and 5, I focus on a particular preoccupation of Finnish time: the emphasis on measured accounting of time.

This emphasis makes Finnish time almost the direct opposite of Fiji time. In Chapters 2 and 3, I discover Fiji time in notions of hierarchy, levelling, resting, and communal effort. I show that these manifestations of Fiji time also reveal an understanding of time as a resource, one that underlies Thompson's idea of clock time, too – that in this sense one does not need to have clocks in order to have the essentials of clock time. Instead, Fiji time becomes conceptually available in accordance with the different value projects of traditional Fijian aristocracy, emergent urban middle classes, or rural communities that are often cut off from the urban economy. The clock with its hours and minutes plays a relatively small part among these: Fiji time is a resource, but not a fully standardised one. Time plays a significant part in the comparison of the creative energies or human attention allocated to different domains of life in Fiji too, yet Fiji time itself has no single equivalent.

Finnish time, for its part, keeps strictly to the Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) standard and has a clear equivalent in money, to the degree that time is regularly deployed as an auxiliary currency of account. For instance, when the Finnish parliament proposed in 2018 that unpaid traffic tickets could be transformed into prison sentences, local newspapers colloquialised the proposal to the public as a conversion from money fines into time. Or to give a more far-reaching example: when the neoliberal Sipilä government (2015–19) failed to reach an agreement with the trade unions over a proposal to increase national productivity through a general pay cut, it instead imposed the so-called Competitiveness Pact (*Kilpailukykysopimus*) of 2016 – a collective agreement that extended the Finnish working day by six minutes. The pact resulted in various local adaptations ranging from sarcasm (a second-hand bookshop announced new opening hours from 8.57 am to 5.03 pm every day) to the recalibration of entire bureaucratic worktime allocation systems used by most government agencies and universities. Indeed, various ripple effects of the Competitiveness Pact outlived the government that created it: while the pact itself was gradually disestablished in 2020, the renegotiations over labour time involved new solutions such as the adoption of so-called worktime banks, which enable the 'banking' of overtime instead of overtime pay (not to be confused with the timebanks discussed in Chapter 5). In other words, not only does 'time is money' appear as a Finnish folk model, but the Finnish state also actively upholds and utilises the idea.

Corresponding to this idea, Finnish attitudes to time also display the time-thrift ideology that Thompson (1967) saw as part of the 19th-century shift to clock time, which he described as compulsively purposive (Thompson 1967: 95). Hence, although the amount of leisure time available to Finns is steadily increasing (or at least was increasing until the 2016 pact), and although work, career, or further education occupies relatively few Finns during their 'free' time, the great majority (75 per cent) of Finns rationalise even their holidays in terms of 'recuperation' or as 'charging their batteries' (Zacheus 2008: 18). Social relations and hobbies are also important, but just as the concept of leisure is defined by working time, so the proper purpose of Finnish leisure is to sustain labour.

I point all this out to underline the fact that Finnish time, unlike its Fijian counterpart, is underwritten by money and labour to a remarkable degree. This corresponds with a constant awareness of the worth of time, coupled with a particular need to control it. My analysis of Fiji time has highlighted the ways in which Fijian everyday politics of time is clearly not just – to evoke Graeber – a struggle to appropriate value but to establish what value *is* (Graeber 2001: 88). Finnish time, at first glance, appears to treat that particular matter as largely resolved. But in what follows, I will show that even a standardised, monetised valuation regime allows all sorts of manipulating to take place, and it is often through the technocratic processes of matching units and quantities that the other, coeval values of time become apparent. This is where we get to see what makes time such a unique vehicle of value: the insubstantiality of time allows all sorts of actors responsible for quantifying time to do so according to their particular needs..

To illustrate the claim that the quantification of time may accentuate the ideological, even ethical, concerns of the reckoner, this chapter looks into the deployment of the 'time is money' paradigm in a context that is often considered particularly unsuited for such appraisal – the academy. Here, the conflicts between commodified time and the outworldly temporality of academia can be found in long-standing arguments about the unsuitability of neoliberal management at university level, conceptualised in evocative ideas such as the 'McUniversity' (Parker and Jary 1995: 319), the 'academic assembly line' (Barry et al. 2001: 87), or of academics as 'state-subsidised entrepreneurs' (Slaughter and Leslie 1997: 210). But I want to dig deeper beneath the general mistrust for administrative and audit measures as a kind of Trojan horse that smuggles neoliberal performance measurement and market value ideologies into the university. The case I discuss is far more intriguing than commonplace assumptions about 'the mind-set of the political class' (Graeber 2018: 37) or of neoliberal management.

What this chapter describes instead is a phenomenon that I consider parallel to what Tēvita Ka'ili discusses in terms of 'slowing up time' and 'extending time–space' (2017: 16–18, 111) – the idea that people can manipulate, even 'trick' time (Moroşanu and Ringel 2016) according to their expectations and priorities. But where ideas such as 'time tricking' refer to 'the many different ways in which people individually and collectively attempt to modify, manage, bend, distort, speed up, slow down, or structure the times they are living in' (Moroşanu and Ringel 2016: 17), the manipulation of time discussed here utilises the established units of time rather than temporal experience. Units of clock-based time – hours and minutes – are both observable as duration and as an insubstantial abstraction. This duality leaves a certain room for manoeuvre when time is matched – as in equated or exchanged – with other value tokens. At Finnish universities, time may even be deployed in a fully fictitious capacity, as I show here. Indeed, the fact that time allows such fictitious transactions is what makes it a unique bearer of value.

Academic time

I start my account of Finnish academic time in May 2010, when a group of Finnish academics, most of them affiliated with the University of Turku in western Finland, launched an online citizens' initiative titled 'We refuse to use the SoleTM

[Time Management] system' (*Kieltäydymme SoleTM -järjestelmän käytöstä*). The petition was signed by 957 people, mostly employees of Finnish universities, their identities verified by the 'addressit.com' online platform for public petitions.

The petition text was brief, so I cite it here in full (translated from Finnish by the author):

> SoleTM is unsuitable for the university. Besides forcing system users to supply false information about the use of worktime and to record imaginary figures on a monthly basis, it is also a continued source of frustration and obviously wastes our valuable worktime – on things that should not concern at least the highest-paid, university-employed experts. No one understands the ultimate function or the benefit derived from this system, but we obviously understand that these (inaccurate) figures will be used, for example, for comparing the prices of degrees at different universities. Yet people do not know what would be the strategically best way to enter these figures, whose truthful recording is impossible. We refuse to use the SoleTM system.

Further comments posted below the petition – fifteen in total – were all written in support of the petition, stating that SoleTM is, among other things time-consuming, unethical, irrational, not legally binding, unfair, ridiculous, a form of bureaucratic bullying, and a source of false data. But what is SoleTM and why did it anger Finnish academics?

SoleTM is a piece of worktime allocation software used at all Finnish universities to document university employees' worktime. It was created by Solenovo, a Finnish company that specialises in cost and project management systems. The company describes SoleTM as 'a convenient, cross-organizational working hour allocation management system that helps the work done become transparent and targeted correctly' (Solenovo website [2019]). The company also advertises the system's capacity 'to change inefficient working hours into effective working hours' (Solenovo website [2019]), a claim that is inarguably true, at least from a social-constructionist viewpoint, as I will illustrate later.

The SoleTM system was introduced to Finnish universities in 2008–9 in order to collect online timesheets: to record what the administration calls 'completed' worktime. To be more precise, the Finnish expression *toteutunut työaika* means 'fully realised' or 'actual worktime' – time actually spent working. To this end, the system allows users to report their worktime with considerable precision, down to one hundredth part of an hour, on a daily basis. SoleTM can also be used for allocating worktime among a number of different activities (labelled 'tasks') such as teaching, research, or attending meetings, and for allocating that work to different sources of funding. Finally, the system can be used to report sick days, holidays, and the like. The University of Helsinki, the primary source of the data collected for this chapter, expects its employees to submit their worktime reports at the end of each calendar month, or no more than three days into the new month (extended to a week for project leaders).

In practice, however, average employees hardly ever use SoleTM at so precise a level: at the University of Helsinki, both the SoleTM interface and the administrators in charge of the system discourage employees from being too accurate with their timesheets. Instead, users are instructed to report their daily working hours as spelled out in the collective labour agreement: 7.25 hours for the majority of the University of Helsinki employees. Most employees have their work pre-allocated into appropriate activities – such as project work – by administrative support staff. But as should be evident from the petition cited earlier, the perceived problem with SoleTM is neither administrative control per se or an excessive workload. Rather, what is at issue is, first, that the system puts an additional strain on academics' time management because, secondly, most academics work considerably more than 7.25 hours a day.

Let me be clear: the University of Helsinki administration has not forbidden truthful time sheets, neither is truthful reporting punished either by the employer or by the system. I have encountered various circulating interpretations – higher-education conspiracy theories of sorts – concerning the reason why one ought not to report more than the required 7.25 hours per day. Many researchers and teachers have passed on to me second-hand knowledge that excess hours either miscalibrate the system or reflect badly on their research and teaching units (formerly known as 'departments'). One senior administrator likewise once told me that reporting overlong workdays affects holiday allocations in proportion, and should therefore not be done. But none of these explanations appears to be true. To test this out, I tried recording my own working times as faithfully as I could during the first month of my 2017–20 research project at the University of Helsinki, which caused me to end the month (September 2017) 22.5 hours above the 152.25 working hours I was due to report for that particular month.[1] In no way did this affect my SoleTM allocations – or anything else for that matter.

But even back in 2017, I knew that this was not what I was supposed to do with SoleTM. By using the default setting, employees like me – who have no project leader obligations, who are not employed on multiple sources of funding, and can easily access the system via the university's own intranet – can take care of an unpleasant duty with the simple push of a virtual button. Clearly, the system gets more complicated as soon as there are multiple projects and funders involved: allocating project employees' time between several projects and activity codes takes much more time and makes the inflexibilities of the system all too apparent. One of those who signed the petition against SoleTM, a sociology professor from the University of Helsinki, calculated that he uses 3 per cent of his worktime on SoleTM and associated systems. His situation obviously corresponds to what David

[1] Even this was not accurate, since the system does not allow the recording of work conducted during the weekend.

Graeber (2018) labels the 'bullshitization' of work: the ever-increasing amount of meaningless tasks that 'make no difference in the world' (Graeber 2018: 104). But for the majority of academic staff, SoleTM offers automated default time allocations: as long as I am happy to report the daily quota of 7.25 hours of project work as my 'completed working hours', all I have to do at the end of the month is log into SoleTM and click 'accept' to sign off the default number of hours.

One does not even have to 'accept' one's automatic worktime allocations: after the three-day window for confirming completed working hours has been closed, the default hours are automatically locked and filed with no penalty incurred or misuse of the system flagged up. For the majority of academics employed by the university, SoleTM can be extremely easy to operate.

Sole concerns

The petition cited earlier reflects a degree of frustration with the computer program that is used to collect worktime data. But more than that, it reveals a deep mistrust of both the SoleTM system and the motivations underlying its use. This is not surprising, since the petition was launched on the heels of the Finnish Universities Act (558/2009), which was passed in 2009 despite widespread objections from Finnish academics. This Act affected both the organisation and the legal status of all Finnish universities by loosening their connection with direct state administration and subjecting them instead to simulated free-market disciplines, while at the same time encouraging a top-down administrative model. In other words, it established extensive New Public Management-style administration of the universities.

This is not the same as auditing, which was introduced at Finnish universities some years prior to the Universities Act, yet the ensuing organisational forms cannot be easily distinguished from the 'audit cultures' that are described in the scholarly literature (Power 1997; Strathern 2000). These studies have repeatedly stressed that assessment regimes display an evident mistrust in people – that 'checking only becomes necessary in situations of mistrust' (Strathern 2000: 4; paraphrasing Douglas 1992) – which in turn induces a sense of being under constant scrutiny (Shore and Wright 2000: 76–7). And amid the growing number of efficiency and quality control systems, Finnish academics worry about how their activities appear in the timesheets. Are they represented as lazy or inefficient if their daily tasks take more than the allocated 7.25 hours? Or, on a collective level, does SoleTM portray university employees as unrealistically efficient, thus belittling the workload that many academics have to cope with? A 2009 article on Finnish university work – titled 'Wissensarbeit Macht Frei' ('knowledge work sets you free') in sardonic reference to the slogan found on several Nazi concentration camps – warns that recording overtime in SoleTM is not advisable precisely because it gives the impression of inefficiency (Kaitila and Peltokoski 2009: 36). The authors, both critical social scientists, argue that calling SoleTM a time allocation tool amounts to conscious deception, for what it really does is monitor time. They write:

> Everyone has a set worktime in SoleTM. Within the confines of that worktime, one must choose how to 'allocate' it to categories that cannot be fully upheld in real life. The system was created to suit the needs of the funders. It is a controlling device meant to make employees monitor their performances and rationalise their worktime. (Kaitila and Peltokoski 2009: 35–6, translated from Finnish by the author)

The article discusses SoleTM as an exemplar among an increasing number of quality control measures adopted at Finnish universities. As the authors note, these systems are predominantly preoccupied with quantity and measure. This emphasis regularly takes the form of an almost absurd infatuation with quantitative data, a case in point being the University of Helsinki's 2014 audit information event, where the vice-rector in charge of outlining the university's Quality Assurance protocol stated that 'we can't document everything, but we try to document as much as possible'. This aim stands in marked contrast with Strathern's (2000: 7) point that audit measures require an amount of trust in the measures and sources chosen for the task of evaluation precisely because 'it simply would not be humanly possible to check everything'.

The difference between these two views – one stating that more data is always better, the other that there needs to be a consensus on what is (relevant) data – reveals a further difference between Finnish Quality Assurance audits and the 'classic' audit type. The latter have consistently been described as rituals of verification (Power 1997; Strathern 2000), with an emphasis on the ritualised features involved in sanctioning or 'signing off' the numbers that may then be proceeded on (Harper 2000: 35–6). Finnish audits pay little to no attention to the ritual aspects of verification, to the effect that it can be very hard to know what constitutes data and what is only numbers. Anything could be a measure, even, for example 7.25 hour worktime allocations that are automatically filed if one does not sign them off within a three-day time window.

This point is raised in the anti-SoleTM petition too – that 'no one knows what would be the strategically best way to enter these figures whose truthful recording is impossible'. An anonymous online commentator supporting the petition even labelled SoleTM use as ethically unacceptable for researchers, who should never play a part in the production of false data. Actually, the system was initially introduced at certain Finnish universities under the assumption that it collects data for efficient decision-making. For instance, when the 'full costing' accounting model that SoleTM also serves was first introduced to staff at the University of

Jyväskylä in 2008, the university circular stated that 'worktime allocation and cost calculation support the planning, administration, and monitoring of unit and project activities' (University of Jyväskylä 12 September 2008). In 2019, when a brand new Tampere University was founded out of the merger of three Tampere-based universities, the newly appointed administrators at Tampere tried to discontinue the practice of automated SoleTM allocations – because what would be the point of collecting pre-established worktime allocations?

But SoleTM is *not* connected to any assessment, audit, or direct performance-monitoring system. I have no doubt that the figures collected via the system *could be* deployed for various ends, and perhaps the next time tool, currently being designed at the University of Helsinki, will be even better suited for performance monitoring. But the administrative staff I interviewed in Helsinki only used SoleTM to counterbalance the payment of salaries – as proof of performance (discussed in due course). Besides university financial services, SoleTM only connects to national health insurance services: it does not exchange data with any of the university's systems or record data for other purposes. And it gets better – or worse, depending on how one views it. Alongside SoleTM, the universities employ another time-allocation tool, one that academic personnel use to create annual worktime plans. This second allocation is conducted once a year to apportion the following year's working hours – 'unrealised' time, as it were – into appropriate categories using the (appropriately named) SAP Human Resource (SAP HR) software from the multinational SAP corporation. SAP HR, colloquially known as *sappi* (bile), tends to get confused with or blends into SoleTM, yet even these two systems 'do not speak with one another', as a colleague from Tampere University had come to realise – which helped her to accept that SoleTM 'has nothing to do with *my* time'.

Like SoleTM, the SAP HR system also works on an underestimated worktime budget: for a full-time employee of the University of Helsinki, for example, a year's work means 1,624 hours. Employees can distribute this time across a number of categorised activities. The requirements and recommendations for SAP HR have regularly left academics frustrated, as this tool – just like SoleTM – simply does not allow one to indicate the true number of hours required for completing one's work tasks. For instance, postdoctoral researchers funded by the Academy of Finland should allocate 5 per cent of their annual worktime to teaching; professors should leave one in every four teaching periods free of teaching, teachers should allocate four hours of preparation per hour of teaching, and so forth. Similar to SoleTM, the SAP operation's factual problem is that it does not provide the employee with enough hours for a truthful work plan. Moreover, just as has been the problem with the anthropologists' time allocations discussed in Chapter 1, so with SAP, too, the real world simply does not conform to the activity categories offered by the university. Incidentally, increasing the number of options to choose from does not seem to make things better: while the University of Helsinki employed a range of forty-eight activity categories in 2016, the much better-liked system at the University of Eastern Finland only had twelve (Pesonen and Toikkanen 2016).

The two time-allocation systems – SoleTM and SAP HR – are not only divorced from the everyday realities of their users, but they also followed different standards regarding the length of the academic workday until recently. This is because the time that employees ought to allocate in their annual work plans in the SAP HR system changed from 1,600 to 1,624 hours in response to the aforementioned 'Competitiveness Pact' introduced in 2016. The administrative personnel in charge of SoleTM at the University of Helsinki simply ignored the national worktime extension, leaving the workday at 7.25 hours (7 hours 15 minutes). At least two other Finnish universities, meanwhile, chose to conscientiously recalibrate their daily SoleTM worktime to 7.35 hours (7 hours 21 minutes) in response. Yet while Helsinki University considered the six-minute change unnecessary for its research and teaching personnel, it did recalibrate both its annual work plan software – SAP HR – and a third worktime system, the SAP Fiori system, which the university's technical and assistance personnel use to produce their timesheets, to 7.35 hours. This tiny difference in allocated working times is of little significance in itself, as six minutes here or there hardly makes a difference – particularly since it is all make-believe anyway. Rather, I want to highlight the disregard for accuracy in these matters, which implies the insignificance rather than the particular importance of the numbers fed into these systems. Why is this the case?

Before pursuing that question, allow me to make a slight digression into time discipline. To understand the unpopularity of these time-allocation systems, it needs to be pointed out that the two systems are similar in one respect: they create a very particular sense of inadequacy by conveying very precise ideas about appropriate time use, while at the same time indicating that these ideas ought not be taken literally. As Joel Kaitila and Jukka Peltokoski (2009) point out, such devices make employees monitor their own performances and rationalise their worktime. Knowing that my workday, even if just theoretically, ought to last no more than 7.25 hours, or that, hypothetically speaking, I have indicated that I can prepare a lecture in four hours, makes me constantly question the amounts of time I actually dedicate to the different tasks I perform.

A much-cited study of time perspectives in academic work in Finland by Oili-Helena Ylijoki and Hans Mäntylä found – back in 2003 – that Finnish academics live under constant time pressure, which characterises the everyday reality of academic work. As an example, the authors cite a professor stating that 'time is the only thing I would need to buy. I don't need anything else but time. It has been the most scarce resource in my life.' The authors refer to this as the tyranny of 'scheduled-time' tasks, which constantly threatens to take over Finnish academics' working and personal time (Ylijoki and Mäntylä 2003: 30).

Now, besides calling attention to an unfortunate state of affairs in Finnish universities, and in academia in various other places as well (see Berg and Seeber 2016), I want to point out the obvious: this talk of buying and selling predates the introduction of time-allocation software at Finnish universities, just as Ylijoki and Mäntylä's assessment that time is treated as 'a uniform, unidirectional, absolute, divisible and independently measurable entity' capable of being 'treated as a form of money that can be measured, counted and divided into units' (Ylijoki and Mäntylä 2003: 73) precedes these systems. The language, the imaginaries, the very idea of time as a scarce resource were already present – waiting for all the SAP HRs, SoleTMs, and SAP Fioris, as it were.

In a nutshell, these applications latched onto an institution that was already struggling with particular anxieties over time. The allocation systems have certainly not alleviated these tensions: in *The Slow Professor* (2016: 23), Maggie Berg and Barbara K. Seeber point out that even well-intentioned guides and tools for time management tend to 'exacerbate our anxiety over time poverty by always measuring it' (much like an overabundance of dietary regimens, they say). Which is to say that the experienced effects of time allocation in academia have not been positive, particularly in a society already rather far along the path of puritanical time discipline. But allow me now to finally turn to what these tools are really good for.

The admin's point of view

One thing that became quite clear through three free-form interviews conducted with University of Helsinki administrative personnel (two financial controllers and a head of development) was that from an administrative point of view, SoleTM has nothing to do with the management, monitoring, or measuring of 'real' time. Here, I am talking about the people who use SoleTM in their daily work, to the degree that they have developed a verb for using SoleTM: *solettaa*, 'to Sole something'. And from their viewpoint, the hours logged into SoleTM are used in a sort of exchange operation, as proof of performance used in accounting as the equivalent of funding received.

I have heard SoleTM allocations described as 'fictive' or 'imaginary' by research personnel, but when that happens, it is accompanied by a sense of irony. However, the people who use SoleTM for their daily work tasks were quite keen to state, without irony, that SoleTM does not measure real time – that from the administrative point of view, it is not a surveillance tool. One of them explicitly stated that recorded worktime 'has nothing to do with reality', while another described the time allocated in SoleTM as 'fake' (*feikki*). So while the researchers and teachers may use 'imaginary' in a somewhat derisive sense, the administrative personnel described SoleTM's 'fakeness' as a matter of fact – as a technical solution relating to a practical arrangement.

SoleTM-time is 'fake' because, in essence, the completed hours recorded in Sole act almost like a counterweight (or 'compensation', see Chapter 5) for the funds received by the university. Worktime allocation was deployed as a pragmatic response to the full costing accounting model originally required by the European Union (EU). Full costing, employed by Finnish universities as well as by major funders such as the Academy of Finland since 2009, is a cost calculation method adapted from business accounting.[2] It replaced the previously used marginal cost model to act as an all-encompassing method for displaying both the direct and indirect costs relating to the universities' so-called cost objects – teaching, research, and so forth – but also to match the costs arising from these different functions to the funds provided for them by external institutions. In a sense, time assumes the task of signifying the imponderable facets of academic work: it flattens everything that goes into research and education, reducing it to duration. Many other EU countries have not adopted full costing, while others have moved on from it since its introduction in 2009 (Gideon 2017: 154), but full costing persists in Finnish public administration.

To present the matter in simplified terms: the 7.25 'fake' hours entered into SoleTM by a university employee represents one working day, a standard 'unit' of academic work. In terms of the employer–employee relationship, the university receives 7.25 'completed' hours from the employee and pays a day's salary in return. From the university's point of view, the fake completed hours allow the university to transfer corresponding salary and overhead funds from a particular project account to the university's general expenses account: the fake hours are a receipt of sorts. In practice, the SoleTM exchange is carried out once each calendar month rather than on a daily basis, so that for full-time employees who receive their entire salaries from a single source, SoleTM might as well be calibrated to full days rather than quarter hours, minutes, or one hundredth parts of an hour.

The main reason why SoleTM nonetheless operates by the hour, and in so doing creates an illusion of worktime surveillance, is because it is also expected to reveal the cost of different activities ('cost objects') by showing how employees' worktime is divided between research, teaching, societal interaction, and duties related to the university community. But owing to the time-taking nature of this allocation, it is more often conducted not by the actual employees themselves, but by whoever is in charge of their contracts: in my case, all my hours have been

[2] Besides the universities, Finnish public administration has also developed a similar time allocation system called Kieku – loosely translatable as the cock's crow – which by all accounts operates on default allocations much like the academic system (to the equal bafflement of government ministry employees).

allocated on my personal WBS code number. This acronym stands for Work Breakdown Structure, which under my latest contract was something like 95 per cent research and 5 per cent teaching. My individual code, in other words, incorporates another fixed allocation.

Protocols such as the one conducted by the WBS are sometimes known in university slang as *tuntien kaataminen* – 'pouring' or 'decanting' hours (into SoleTM). This indicates configuring a default allocation for an employee's different duties and feeding this into SoleTM. I remember an email from the administration years ago, back in the pre-SoleTM days when I was beginning my PhD studies. It named a member of administrative personnel who would be available to help with allocating worktime for those University of Helsinki researchers who received their funding from either the Academy of Finland or the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation. Their time, I assumed, was too precious to waste on time-allocation tools. The Kafka-esque absurdity of a salaried person being tasked with allocating work hours for others stayed with me for years. Only upon conducting research for this project did I finally come to understand the real nature of the operation, which involved working out the default settings or contractual breakdown of working hours – not someone manually feeding their colleagues' working hours into the system.

I am not the only Finnish university employee who has formed fantastical ideas regarding the people in charge of SoleTM. After one of several workspace reallocations in the building where I work, a particularly unpopular section of open-plan office in the middle of the ground floor was designated to two new people whom no one had seen before, and for a few days, colleagues were telling me in hushed tones that these people – sitting apart from everyone else like pariahs – were 'the people who send us the SoleTM reminders' (they were not, just for the record). Even more amusingly, a Tampere University employee, while telling me why the petition discussed earlier never gained momentum in Tampere, told me about the early days of SoleTM there: 'if you refused [to do your SoleTM allocations] someone from the administration would do it anyway, so the system would work even if you refused'. Consequently, the protest movement hardly spread beyond coffee table talk at Tampere University. My interlocutor referred to the departmental secretaries as 'invisible elves' (*näkymättömät tontut*) who went about, out of sight, 'secretly logging [hours] for people who knew nothing about it'.

But it is not just the hours and the people in charge of allocating them that appear fictive. Paavo, a Head of Development at one of the University of Helsinki campuses, recalled first setting up a system that allowed an administrator to take care of several people's time allocations. Instead of employees themselves having to record working hours on Excel spreadsheets or similar documents, the new system maintained individualised profiles that automatically allocated working hours according to anticipated time use in the manner described earlier.

From Paavo's point of view, such a system took care of a tedious duty that would otherwise take up everyone's time. He admitted that he sometimes wished that the humanities and social sciences personnel could just uncritically accept a practical solution handed to them, just as people in the other faculties did.

Lasse, one of the university's financial controllers, described the idea of virtual profiles almost as made-up persons: 'a profile is created for each employee, and the profile logs the worktimes pretty much on its own'. From this point of view, not only are the logged hours 'fake', but so are the virtual individuals logging them. Lasse described the arrangement as a 'silent compromise' approved by the funders and the administration alike.

I have not described the faking and fictiveness involved in these time-allocation operations merely to foreground the fact that Finland time can be just as exotic as Fiji time, or even more so. I also want to underscore the fictitious nature of the time in SoleTM. Polanyi (2001 [1944]: 71–80) applies the qualifier 'fictitious' to commodities that have not been made for the market but are being treated 'as if' they were. In *The Great Transformation*, he specifically identifies land, labour, and money as such, discussing at great length the manipulation required to fit fictitious commodities into the market, or the market for fictitious commodities. The 'fiction' involved in what Polanyi describes refers to the juridical, political, and various other processes whereby tracts of the surface of the Earth are rendered into ownable things, or the labour power of humans into a thing sellable in the market. SoleTM-operated worktime is obviously an outgrowth of the latter process, but one where the fictitiousness has evolved beyond the process described by Polanyi. The fake time of university bureaucracy is not just fictitious – it is fictive.

Fictive time

I have tried to outline the manipulations required to render time 'fictitious'. But besides that – besides being rendered available for commodity-type transactions – SoleTM-time is also more comprehensively fictive or made up: it does not need to reflect the actual length of the academic workday. It makes little immediate difference to academics whether their workdays are recorded as 7.25-hour or 7.35-hour stretches, and they could be equally well recorded as 10–12-hour or 4-hour workdays. Most of the time, what the University of Helsinki administration requires is simply one 'unit' of work completed, and for that purpose, it is irrelevant whether that unit is 6 or 12 hours in the real world, or whether the collective agreement between the employers and trade unions has calibrated that unit at 7.25 or 7.35 hours. But while a more tangible unit of measuring value – such as an ounce of gold or a string of twenty cowries – retains certain properties that cannot be altogether overlooked, abstract resource time allows more leeway.

Compare the SoleTM transactions to Jane Guyer's analysis of the way that scales of value operate in Atlantic Africa. In *Marginal Gains* (2004), Guyer illustrates the value question through the various scales employed to give it substance in a region covering several past and present nations: state moneys, trade currencies, vernacular enumeration, customary sets, trade units, and so forth. Guyer argues that, from precolonial to present times, the region has sustained a multitude of scales rather than striven for a single, standardised measure. Both different peoples and different sociocultural institutions have employed their own distinct measures – some of them recognisably economic, others rooted in prestige and rank. This continuum of internally coherent but overlapping scales allows value conversions from one scale to another so that an actor familiar with the field can be expected to make marginal gains while crossing from one scale to another. Guyer emphasises the importance of the phenomenon she discusses as 'thresholds', 'tropes', and 'hooks' in reference to the crucial points in measuring scales that link them with other scales. She illustrates the idea with the inconstancy of different ethno-linguistic 'hundreds', combined with the constancy of the number twelve that once created a series of trade units for items such as cowries across West Africa: 'the *mithqal* was twelve Muslim hundreds (12 x 100), the *gros* was twelve Bambara hundreds (12 x 80), the *soa* was twelve Mandingo hundreds (12 x 60), and the *ackie* was twelve strings of cowries (12 x 40)' (Guyer 2004: 54). The established threshold points of different scales could be treated as equivalents, even though the quantities involved spanned from 480 to 1,200 cowries.

The 'workday' obviously provides a similar threshold or 'hook' that connects SoleTM with both the funding institutions and the labour laws. But unlike the various examples discussed by Guyer, this linkage is not a site for making gains from scalar manipulations – at least not directly. Although time-allocation software offers inarguable proof of the intensified commodification of time in academia, it also shows that equating this commodification with the maximising rationality associated with neoliberal capitalism is too hasty a generalisation. To be more precise, a system such as SoleTM encourages numerous employers to further 'time-thrift', and hence creates a new layer of time discipline in universities. But at the same time, the common suspicions – that these figures are used for the comparison of degree price tags, or to calculate the most efficient input-output ratios – do not appear to be justified. What we find at the University of Helsinki is not the 'small factory' thinking of Becker's (1965) 'new home economics', but rather the preoccupation with equivalence that Mary Poovey (1988) highlights as the systemic logic of double-entry bookkeeping.

Poovey is principally interested in the epistemological consequences of the ascendancy of accounting, but as part of this project, has pointed out that double-entry bookkeeping has its own mode of arraying facts: the two-column arrangement created for balancing credits and debits unresidually. This mode of arranging 'facts' gains much of its persuasive power from notions of formal precision and accuracy, which underlie the authority of accounting. Accounting, in other words, follows a zero-sum logic aimed at balance rather than carving out differences. It is a similar preoccupation with equivalence to that which Graeber (2012 [2011]: 75–87) finds distasteful in his critique of tit-for-tat reciprocity as a bourgeois quest for independence accomplished by extinguishing the sense of indebtedness that so often marks various social relationships. Bill Maurer (2005) explores the moralities of equivalence in a similar vein, a topic I will pursue further in Chapter 5.

SoleTM is likewise calibrated to the accountant's zero-sum logic of equivalent contributions, attaining a zero at the bottom of the page. This indicates, for one thing, that to really understand the workings of neoliberalism at Finnish universities, one would have to be disposed to explore the different logics that comprise it. But here I want to pursue 'fictive' time. What I have tried to convey here is a sense of the role that abstract time can occupy in establishing equivalences. In a working environment where people's contractual and actual working hours are an approximate match at best, time does not really measure work performance so much as represent it.[3] Tiina, a financial controller for the Social Sciences faculty said as much while discussing the relevance of SoleTM: 'for you researchers the correct metric is probably the articles you publish'. In other words, she pointed out that the university, too, is multiscalar in Guyer's sense, although the conceptual hooks between the merit bestowed by peer-reviewed articles and the academic performance measured in workdays remain yet to be established (and long may this circumstance last). Under these conditions, time can be fitted into the accountant's columns as a quiet working compromise that does not affect 'the irreducible purity of number' (Guyer 2004: 16) or of clock time.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have sought to take the analysis to a level where the different ways of allocating value to time highlight a more general capacity of time. After all, clock time is an insubstantial abstraction, which makes it a very particular bearer of value. One is reminded of Claude Lévi-Strauss's (1987: 55) floating signifiers, pure symbols that are able to 'represent an indeterminate value of signification'.

Almost, but not quite. For I am not saying the values represented by time are indeterminate – rather, it is clock time itself that is. Catherine Alexander and Andrew Sanchez (2019) argue that indeterminacy defies the classificatory order of

[3] This generalisation disregards teaching, where schedules and workloads are estimated in hours, both for teachers and for students.

the modern bureaucratic state. Their Douglasian view on indeterminacy couples formlessness with disorder – not to argue that indeterminacy breeds disorder per se, but to examine indeterminacy as a third term that can 'challenge binary category-making from within' (Alexander and Sanchez 2019: 27). However, focusing not on categories of meaning but their media reverses the picture. Here, I have outlined a case in which the indeterminacy of time enables bureaucratic operations in defiance of the messiness of the real world.

The bureaucracy examined in this chapter may indeed be an example of what Graeber (2015: 297) discusses as 'a strict division between means and ends, between facts and values, [which] is a product of the bureaucratic mind-set, because bureaucracy is the first and only social institution that treats the means of doing things as entirely separate from what it is that's being done'. But the idea of time foregrounded in bureaucratic operationalisation was not developed as a vehicle for bureaucratic projects alone – it has just been abstracted even further in that context. If we approach clock time in a 'continuum' frame – rather than as an abrupt change or rupture – then even Thompson's (1967) classic portrayal of clock time agrees with the idea of gradual abstraction. Thompson describes the emerging new mode of conceptualising time against its assumed opposite, 'task time'. But the category labelled 'task time' is not just a mode of measuring labour by the task: it is not another word for piece work. Thompson's 'task time' also covers various natural phenomena such as tides, daylight, and of course the human body that performs work. The transition to time measured by clocks therefore marks an increased detachment of time from material circumstances until, finally, even the link with labour fades into the background (cf. Graeber 2018: 260).

This is not to say that time has grown wholly abstract: the case of Finnish university time clearly shows that besides clocks and almanacs, time retains its links with days, months, and often the limits of the human mind and body too. But these are points that link abstract time with 'in-worldly' phenomena and processes – like the 'hooks' that, in Guyer's (2004) analysis, provide connecting points between disparate scales. They do not set the base or standard for measure of time, they merely establish a set of conditions that even fictive time has to adhere to.

At the same time, though, the deeper we proceed into the realm of pure number, the greater the manipulability of clock time. The fact that hours and minutes are not 'natural' units of time means that they can be deployed in order to make equations correspond to a desired state of affairs, such as the need to keep one's books in balance. I will examine this idea in further detail in Chapter 5, which discusses a dispute between the Helsinki Timebank and the Finnish Tax Administration, two organisations whose ideas of worth are derived from different ethical standpoints, and therefore yield two different conditions for equivalence.

5

A While's Worth: 'Exchanging' Time in Finland

In Chapter 4, I show how the duration of temporal units can become a secondary attribute when time is turned into proof of performance. From the Finnish university institution's point of view, the paradoxes of time allocation are manifold, but I seek to draw attention to the way in which standardised units of clock time – minutes, hours, and workdays – allow us to drag time into the realm of unassailable, accountable 'facts' (Poovey 1998). Yet it is time's manipulability, as it is translated from duration to numbers, that allows us to see the encompassing valuation regime's systemic preferences. In the case of academic time, I show that the manipulation of the academic workday does not occur with the aim of establishing maximal profit or efficiency, but in order to balance the books. University time management is a system geared towards producing proof of the work conducted. As such, it is driven to balance rather than increase, even if this is done at the expense of factual objectivity.

In this chapter, I want to explore such systemic preferences even further. I take my subject matter from the Finnish version of timebanking. Timebanking is not to be confused with the worktime banks mentioned at the start of Chapter 4. Worktime banks are a state-approved, formal contractual arrangement for 'saving' employee overtime for future leisure instead of withdrawing it as overtime pay. Finnish timebanks, on the other hand, are informal networks of citizens who trade services and assistance using time, rather than money, as their currency of account. Stadin Aikapankki, the Helsinki-based timebank discussed in this chapter, encourages Helsinki citizens to trade their time on an equal-exchange basis wherein everyone's time is worth exactly the same. The 'good' created by such a system is the community it builds and sustains, increasing spontaneous relations among Helsinki citizens and communal sentiment – some activist members hope it may even give rise to participatory politics, with Helsinki citizens self-organising according to their own interests without active involvement from the state or municipal authorities. But others engage in timebanking simply because they find it convenient, interesting, or fun: one does not have to be an idealist or activist to participate, even though the timebank was created with a set of ethical core principles.

The Helsinki Timebank shows us how clock-time valuation may be employed even by projects that stand in direct opposition to the industrial-capitalist mode of production that clock time is usually associated with. Timebanking, as practised in Finland, involves local mutual-exchange networks that engage in trade using time rather than money as their currency. By employing this new concept to create a division of labour, the founders of the Helsinki Timebank expect it to produce communality and social relations rather than commercial profit. Yet despite its markedly anti-market ethos, timebanking builds on the notion that time is (like) money: it can be saved, wasted, traded, and so forth. In this sense, timebanks are the embodiment of Thompson's (1967: 94–5) idea that clock time may one day be employed in the service of social relations and 'life' rather than in their devaluation.

But besides confirming Thompson's vision, I want to establish something else here. Where the first part of the book displays time's capacity to 'stand for' various other things besides abstract labour, I use the two Finnish case studies to explore quantity making, and more precisely the way equivalences are established with reference to time. I have taken my cue from Maurer's (2005: 104) call to treat the 'mathematical form of the equivalence function' as 'a moral form', which is to say that the seemingly neutral acts of quantification involved in the process of evaluation cannot be viewed in isolation from wider concerns for the good implied by the concept of value (Gregory 1997; Robbins 2013).

In order to elaborate this claim, I contrast the Helsinki Timebank's model for evaluating time with the one established by the Finnish Tax Administration in 2013. Since the Tax Administration's 2013 instructions, the time banked in Finnish timebanks has been officially classified as taxable income. The Helsinki Timebank has repeatedly sought to make the tax authority reverse its decision. More to the point, the Timebank is not opposed to the state taking its share, but rather objects to what the conversion of banked time into money does to the worth of the 'while,' the timebank's currency of account. Objections to the timebanking tax have more to do with the moral form of value conversion than the moral status of state revenue.

Here, taxation offers a fine point of contrast to timebanking, since it too functions as a system of valuation. The English word for tax originates from the Latin verb *taxare*, with the double meaning of to '*reproach, charge*, or *tax* with a fault', and, more to the point '*to rate*, *value*, *appraise*, *estimate*, *determine* the worth of a thing' (Lewis and Short 2009 [1879], original emphasis). The Finnish word for tax, *vero*, meanwhile, provides a glimpse into the scope of things appraised in taxation. Etymologically, the Finnish word once stood for substitutes such as dowries or land rents, while its historical cognates in Ostyak languages, *wer* and *værro*, also referred to 'debts' and 'sacrifices' (*Suomen sanojen alkuperä* 2000). The Institute for the Languages of Finland currently defines the word *vero* as 'a compulsory money payment that a state or similar public corporation exacts without compensation [Fi. *Vastike*] from private individuals or certain communities on legal grounds to cover its expenses' (*Kielitoimiston sanakirja* 2018, my translation). But whether citizens conceive of taxes as an act of substitution or uncompensated seizure, taxation requires a standard for rendering a thing's worth into a compatible, measurable form that corresponds to Marx's idea of universal equivalent. In Finland, taxes were previously also appraised using units such as a 'hook' (*koukku*), the area farmed by a man with a pair of oxen, or a 'man count' (*manttaali*), a unit based on the yield of a land tract (Sipola 2019). Dialect and cognate versions of the Finnish word *vero* have also been used in reference to the 'land area cultivated by two men', a 'one-time portion of food', and to dowry (*Suomen sanojen alkuperä* 2000). These historical units are not important for the present argument: the point to keep in mind is that taxation, too, might be calibrated onto various other scales, using other measures than money, and those different denominators would require different calculations, create different equivalences, and promote different ideas of wealth.

The argument I make here is that a time 'standard' can easily agree with a certain idea of good. It affords practices and behaviours appropriate to the Helsinki Timebank's idea of the good, just as a labour standard affords historically particular goods and bads. Or, as Karen Sykes puts it, the concept of value 'entails a human judgment about what is *good* about specific forms of association' (Sykes 2013: 98, emphasis in the original). Indeed, the case I review here could just as well be employed to illustrate the value of social relations (gift) versus the value of alienable labour (commodity), or the way modern bureaucracy has 'undermined the meaningful attachment of persons to the social order of which they are a part' (Hart 2000: 293). But rather than to echo Hart's (and indeed the Helsinki Timebank's) critique of an alienating state bureaucracy, the focus here is on time: the way the use of time as a medium allows the emergence of two conflicting ways of creating equivalence – one based on an ideology of exchanging time, the other on a notion of compensation (*vastike*). To construct these two viewpoints, I draw upon small-scale participant observation in the Helsinki Timebank, along with public documents both from the Finnish Tax Administration and the Timebank. The Timebank itself is a loose network of people, most of whom have never met each other: to talk of 'the Timebank's point of view' as I do here requires constructing that very viewpoint. I have done so by accessing openly available documents such as tax instructions, timebank guidelines, workshop materials, and other public information. This has allowed me to 'distil' a model, a logic that underwrites timebanking in Helsinki. I have added material from the Helsinki Timebank open meetings and my experiences of the Timebank where appropriate, but this chapter nonetheless remains focused on two models – the tax authority's and the Timebank's – rather than 'thick' ethnography.[1]

The Helsinki Timebank

Timebanking grew popular in Finland in around 2009, the year when the Helsinki Timebank was established. In a short while, dozens of timebanks – informal time-based exchange networks – were established around the country. Unlike the better-known timebanks in the UK and the United States, the Finnish version of timebanking was not established in connection with welfare or charitable institutions such as nursing homes or welfare centres. Instead, Finnish timebanking involves minimal organisation, perhaps more comparable with classified ads websites or neighbourhood associations. What this involves is a list of services offered and services required that members can access and respond to.

The Helsinki Timebank grew out of a local exchange network named after the Kumpula district in Helsinki – a district known for its communally and ecologically minded middle-class citizenry. The original group traded services using a local currency called kumpenni, short for the Kumpula penny. In 2010, the name of the group was changed to Stadin Aikapankki (STAP) – the Helsinki Timebank – and the currency of account was changed to *tovi*, a quaint, non-quantified Finnish word for a 'while'. Although it remains associated with a middle-class, community-minded core, the Timebank has a versatile membership that hails from all around the greater Helsinki area.

The Helsinki Timebank uses a South African trading platform called Community Exchange System (CES). In 2021, the Timebank had about 3,500 registered members in its CES network, although under one-third had been active within the past three years, while another third had never completed more than one exchange through the Timebank. The online network allows members to exchange services against the while currency. In practice, this means that work (services) are not swapped against each other (bartered) in dyads, but move in a wider network, while the CES system maintains a personal account for each

[1] I participated in in six Helsinki Timebank meetings between March 2017 and February 2020, and these meetings have made a crucial difference to my understanding of the Timebank. But since the number of people present at these meetings has at no time exceeded twenty – which is less than 0.5 per cent of members – the meetings give a very partial representation of the Timebank. I have also participated in seminars and discussion events where the taxation of timebanks was debated, used the Helsinki Timebank's online trading platform, completed one official exchange through the Timebank, and provided one while's worth of bicycle repair services as a gift that was given at the Timebank Christmas party.

member. All transactions have to be agreed to by both parties in order for a transaction to be complete. A new member enters the system with 0 whiles on his or her account, but a timebank member's credit/debit balance has to reach +/-50 whiles before the system flags a problem.[2] Timebank members can also buy, sell, and rent things with their whiles, though such activities are directed to a separate 'flea market' established for this purpose on Facebook. Most of the things sold through the Timebank flea market are used objects of very little monetary value.

The Timebank, in other words, evaluates work according to the time it takes to complete it. One while is worth an hour of a community member's time, at least when trading clockable services such as carrying things, catering, IT support, or alternative therapies. Sometimes, people use the timebank to arrange recurring or continuous assistance such as cat sitting or plant watering. In such instances, the parties involved negotiate a price in whiles. In other cases, such as transport, the time expended is compensated in whiles, but other expenses such as gas are paid in money. Yet the fundamental principle underlying all transactions is a strict notion of equality that is written into the Timebank's ethical guidelines: 'We are all equal, and every one of us has necessary contributions to make to community life. Everyone's time is of equal worth. Service providers and users as such stand in an equal position towards each other in Helsinki Timebank' (Helsinki Timebank 2013b).

This principle is maintained through strict adherence to the rule that one while is always worth precisely an hour. Whether the service provided is hard work or a light hobby, requires professional training or is the kind of mutual aid anyone can provide, a person should only request one while in compensation for each hour of work they have provided. Anna-Maria Isola, who studies poverty in Finland, has pointed out that the timebank thus reforms the economy in a way that particularly benefits the poorest in society. In a Helsinki Timebank publication, Isola (2016) argues that it is particularly important that the timebank affords equal participation to people who are otherwise systematically made to queue in various bureaus and institutions. These are the people, Isola argues, whose time is constantly devalued through various institutional arrangements that force them to waste time on meaningless waiting and form filling. Her point is confirmed by a number of Helsinki Timebank members who have pointed out at members' meetings that their motivations for joining were about 'doing something rather than sitting at home doing nothing', about the fear of being spurned in the job market because of dyslexia or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and so forth. The Timebank allows them to participate, not as recipients of social services, but as exchange partners in a way reminiscent of Mauss's (2016 [1925]: 192)

[2] In practice, this triggers an automated e-mail query ('why is the timebank not working for you?'), which does not affect a member's ability to use the Timebank.

call to 'replace the concept of alms with that of cooperation, of a task performed, of a prestation made for another'.

The fact that, for the timebankers, the while currency has a 'time standard' is evident in the conceptual slippage between whiles (*tovi*) and hours (*tunti*) in conversation. Helsinki Timebank members talk about 'doing' or 'performing [the] hours' (*tehdä tunnit*) when they mean performing work services, 'charging hours' (*laskuttaa tunnit*) when they mean requesting the equivalent number of whiles through the CES trading platform, 'receiving hours' (*saada tunnit*) when they mean receiving the online currency, and so forth. In other words, as the alternative currency circulates in the online network, the participants imagine and discuss their activity as like-for-like exchange.

Thus, by deploying time as a quantitative value form, the Helsinki Timebank realises its core principle – 'everyone's time is of equal worth' – as a form of symmetrical reciprocity: equal exchange. Anthony Forge (1972) once named the equal exchange of things of the same class or of identical things 'the principal mechanism by which equality is maintained' (534), a point that has been further elaborated by Joel Robbins (1994). The careful matching of gifts and counter-gifts is by now a classic theme, particularly in Melanesian ethnography where it typically accompanies egalitarian ideologies all the way to 'competitive equality' (McDowell 1990). Such exchanges have served as examples of the non-maximising rationale underlying transactions of a non-commodified kind.[3] Both anthropology and the Timebank label such transactions as 'exchange', although anthropologists tend to use it as an umbrella category that encompasses distinctions between such categories as 'gift' and 'commodity' exchange (Gregory 1997: 44; Peebles 2015). The Timebank, however, deploys the term 'exchange' in sharp contrast to paying with money or other commercial transactions.

'Don't talk about "paying"'

The transfers of whiles that take place in the Helsinki Timebank's CES network are called exchanges. This terminological choice is written into the Finnish version of the CES platform, wherein individual transactions are labelled '*vaihdot*' ('exchanges' – but note that the original English-language version uses 'trades'). To be more precise, the term connoting 'exchange' acts as an umbrella term for different activities that take place in the online trading platform – it covers both 'buys' (*ostot*) and 'sales' (*myynnit*). Thus deployed, the fact that the Timebank

[3] But, as pointed out in Chapter 4, Graeber 2012 [2011: 75–87] challenges this doctrine, choosing to emphasise the relationship-closing capacity of exact reciprocation.

chooses to emphasise the category of 'exchange' shows a predisposition also to emphasise an idea of dyadic swaps or barter-like activity, rather than transfers of online currency from one CES account to another. In Finnish (as in English), the primary meaning of exchanging indicates replacing something with another thing, just as the Finnish noun for 'exchange', *vaihto*, is defined as 'giving a thing for another thing' (*Nykysuomen sanakirja* 1978). The image of swapping is further accentuated by the conceptual slippage between whiles and hours of time among Timebank members that I have mentioned. But 'exchange' is also the term preferred by timebankers offline.

This preference for the two-way concept of exchange over the one-way concept of transfer parallels one of anthropology's disciplinary biases. Anthony Pickles (2020) has called attention to the established anthropological convention of using different varieties of exchange as the ideal-typical category of economic transactions. This is in marked contract with economics, where unidirectional transfer predominates as the elementary unit of analysis. Both conventions, Pickles (2020: 20) suggests, present a partisan analytical view: 'Anthropologists overemphasize reciprocity, relationality, and altruism, and economists do the same for atomism, markets, and egoism.' The same bias is found in the timebanking community.

The terminological choice was debated in several Helsinki Timebank meetings in 2017. Monthly meetings are open discussion events announced by e-mail to all Timebank members, but they are usually attended by no more than a dozen people, who typically voice their ideas and concerns while the more active core group members give updates on current affairs. The meeting held on a Sunday evening in late August 2017 in the Oma Maa (My Land) eco café was attended by just seven members, among them a young man in his mid-twenties who had only recently joined the Timebank. He arrived with a bag of sweets that he passed around while awkwardly pointing out they were suitable for vegans, repeatedly – something I read as a clear indication of his assumptions regarding the kind of people that participate in timebanking. He told us of a proposed deal where another Timebank member had asked him to give several whiles per hour for the extra-dirty kitchen cleaning job that he wanted done. The members present at the meeting emphatically told him that such requests go against the rules of the Timebank, which clearly state that one hour equals one while: proposals such as this are considered a form of 'cheating' and should be immediately reported to the Timebank administrators. But during the discussions that ensued, the young man also bluntly stated that he did not really believe in the benevolent ideas underlying the Timebank; instead, he thought that most people in it were 'business-oriented' like himself, and were trying to see how the Timebank might benefit them best. Two members quickly responded by outlining the Timebank ideology in full. One of them announced heatedly that words such as 'business' should not be used in the timebanking context.

In an earlier meeting held in March, Tapio, an active long-term timebanker in his early fifties, had made a impassioned request that members should not talk about paying in the timebanking context, but about exchanging instead. No one disagreed with this; on the contrary, this started a lively conversation culminating in a collective decision to remove all references to paying from the Timebank's guidelines. In an ensuing conversation, people used the technical expression 'registering an exchange' when the meeting decided to set a fixed deadline for charging whiles for work completed.

The Timebank's key principles – that we are all equal and everyone's time is of equal worth – are concretised in the practice of equal exchange. But although the principle is straightforward, the way in which the Timebank quantifies dissimilar tasks – from bicycle repairs to reiki healing – as equal units of time should also be understood as a choice that determines the quantities established as a result. An illuminating point of comparison can be found in Strathern's (1992) analysis of enumeration as quality in Melanesian exchange. She argues that instead of reifying the classic commodity/gift division in terms of a quantitative exchange ratio between things versus the ranking of donor and recipient, we could focus on the way in which substitutable units of exchange are created. Strathern thus calls attention to different Papua New Guinean calculi, whose number bases are rooted in the properties of the human body, so that bases of four (fingers of one hand minus the thumb), five (fingers of one hand), ten (both hands), or twenty (both hands and feet) can all be treated as representations of one person. These number bases can thus serve as the equivalents of one (person), thereby yielding exchange equations such as 20 = 1. Indeed, if a base number such as 20 stands for one person, it may even be possible to equate 400 with one, 20 x 20 standing for a 'person' of 'persons', so to speak (Strathern 1992: 184; cf. Pickles 2009). One could thus say that these calculi operate with a 'human standard', to the degree that the material reference to parts and the whole human body determines the mathematics performed with the resulting numbers. But as with the idea of taxation discussed earlier, the important point here too is to recognise that various logics can be employed for deciding on the appropriate unit to be matched with another unit. The Helsinki timebankers have found, in clock time, a means for apportioning units of exchange in a way that allows exchange in a like-for-like pattern.

Hence, the matching of equal contributions serves as a tangible way to ascertain that 'service providers and users […] stand in an equal position towards each other' (Helsinki Timebank 2013b). But the version of this ideology that is practised appears to go even further – assuming that the two stand in an identical position. The terminological preference for 'exchange' acts as a means of erasing the roles of buyer and seller. And it goes even further: the CES platform keeps track of the transfers of whiles within the network, so that any one user can access another user's history. Many Timebank members use this to check up on the person they are about to exchange with – after all, there is no way to make sure that the people in the Timebank are who they say they are; some do not even use full names.[4]

At one extreme there is Tapio, whom I have already cited. Tapio said that he checks the number of completed exchanges when he needs to evaluate a potential transaction. For him, a timebanker's reputation is based on the number of individual exchange events rather than the accumulated time in the bank. He even went so far as to state that he does not trust people who have accumulated whiles into their accounts: 'the more the whiles, the more suspicious the person' (*mitä enemmän toveja, sen epäilyttävämpi henkilö*). Tapio also announced that he finds a person who owes whiles to the Timebank more trustworthy than one who has accumulated them – though he later toned down this comment, and said that saving a lot of whiles does not make a person untrustworthy as such. But the balance-driven, anti-accumulation ethos promoted by the Timebank is clearly evident in such comments.

But the number of exchanges completed (both buys and sells, that is) also acts as a Timebank member's reputation offline, in the members' meetings, where it could even be compared with an expression of rank. Robbins (1994: 41–2) once illustrated how in many Melanesian societies even hierarchical relations can be expressed in terms of the dominant value of equality: a 'Big Man' status is achieved by having more equal-exchange partners than others, through being quantitatively more equal than others. I was reminded of Robbins's point when faced with the way Helsinki Timebank members express status differences through the number of equal exchanges completed.

This occurs when one introduces oneself to other Timebank members in meetings. All membership meetings at the Helsinki Timebank begin with a round of introductions for the benefit of first-time attendees. In addition to names, the information provided is the number of exchanges one has completed, as in: 'My name is Matti, and I have done one exchange through the Timebank.' Obviously, this is neither a rigid nor a significant system of rank, but does nonetheless end up separating the old hands from the novices; those who speak with experience and authority from those who do not yet fully understand. But note, this is not something I point out in order to claim that the Helsinki Timebank is a rank-driven 'big-man system': the political advantage gained from exchange reputation is minimal and definitely secondary in comparison with the Timebank's commitment to egalitarianism. I simply mention this to highlight how different an ideology of exchanging is from the appraisal involved in the Tax Administration's model, to which I now turn.

[4] The Timebank strongly recommends that people enlist with their full names, but has neither the power nor the will to force the issue – after all, people might have all sorts of legitimate reasons for withholding their full names, ranging from abusive relationships to celebrity status.

A state tax on timebanks

As already pointed out, the timebanking concept quickly gained popularity in Finland at the start of the millennium: a Helsinki Timebank member estimates that there might have been up to forty timebanks at the peak of the phenomenon. The Helsinki Timebank was the biggest of these and remains active to this day, while the others had more or less withered away by the 2020s. From 2009 to 2013, the Helsinki Timebank went through rapid growth: in some months, as many as fifty new members would join the bank, while even in quieter months the figure would not drop below twenty. Trading was also active: Heli, who joined the Timebank in those early days, initially registered to find someone to help her with software updates, and to her delight found 'five pages of offers just for computer installations'. There was a sense of momentum around timebanking: radio programmes, articles in periodicals, and word of mouth. Even politicians got interested: the City of Helsinki listed timebanking among the sustainable practices supported in its Global Responsibility Strategy of 2012. An enthusiastic local politician made the suggestion that timebanks should be made tax exempt. This started the problems.

In September 2013, the Finnish Tax Administration released a set of guidelines for the taxation of timebanks. The official document on 'the taxation of work bees [*talkootyö* is a word used for intense, short-term communal labour],[5] neighbourly help and work exchanges carried out by natural persons' (Tax Administration 2013) is in certain respects a formidable feat.[6] What makes it particularly impressive is that it seeks to give formal definitions for phenomena such as family obligations or 'good manners'. The document identifies distinct categories of 'labour exchange', from services among family members to those among neighbours, and eventually more remote fellow citizens too. The document defines a pattern of uncompensated occasional work, which commonly involves no professional skills and follows a pattern established in agrarian tradition (*talkoot*). It likewise rules that 'neighbourly help' is 'uncompensated' *(korvauksetta tehty*), occasional, and unprofessional, but, unlike a work bee, is carried out on an individual basis. This stands in contrast to 'bilateral reciprocal work exchange', which is considered to be contractual, a swap: you do a service for me and I will do one for you. This has the effect that 'work exchange is by default compensated, though it can also be comparable to neighbourly help'. Finally, the document distinguishes the modality

[5] The Finnish word *talkoot*, translated here as a 'work bee', refers to a type of collective work event best typified by seasonal tasks such as harvesting a field in an agrarian community or raking up fallen leaves around a residential building in suburban Finland. *Talkoot* can also be organised to mend broken property and so forth – the key feature is that it is organised as a collective communal effort. Note also that Finnish uses the same word, *työ*, for both work and labour.

[6] The Tax Administration issued a revised version on 4 July 2018. The key principles discussed in this chapter were not altered.

of multi-party work exchange, which refers to recently emerged exchange and trading systems, where work services are exchanged among registered members on a scale that requires bookkeeping. The last category, which covers timebanking, is listed as taxable income by virtue of being beyond what the tax authority labels 'a show of gratitude that is considered part of good manners' (*hyviin tapoihin kuuluva kiitollisuuden osoitus*).

Perhaps this is all straightforwardly self-evident in communities shaped by stranger-sociality: there are things we customarily do in the capacity of family or community members. When services are extended to people whom one does not necessarily know in advance, and to a degree that requires bookkeeping and commensuration, it becomes something else. It is a curious detail, though, that the Tax Administration should invent a model oddly reminiscent of Sahlins's (1972: 199) spheres of reciprocity, implying but not openly recognising the principle of generalised reciprocity. But a group of tax officials can hardly be criticised for their unfamiliarity with Sahlins's work – not even in Finland, though Finnish tax officials are comparatively well educated and often willing to discuss and negotiate taxational matters to a considerable degree, and even to research the underlying principles of taxation.[7] Defining a 'cultural' order of reciprocity in order to define the scope of taxation is a strange but not an altogether unimaginable approach for the Finnish Tax Administration.

But having established the taxability of labour exchange, the document proceeds to appraisal: what is the taxation value of banked time? Here the instruction (Tax Administration 2013) directly addresses 'exchange networks such as timebanks'. 'In exchange networks', the document states, 'the performer of work receives, instead of work directly from another member, a unit of exchange, with which s/he can acquire other work performances from other members of the network if and when s/he wants to do so.' The document determines the taxation value of these units of exchange according to the 'compensation' that an exchanger eventually receives through the network: the tax on timebanking ought to be understood as an 'income tax' on what a timebanker receives in return for a service provided.

The precise taxation worth of timebank time is determined by professional identity: 'walking a cat or dog', 'raking leaves', or 'a massage provided by anyone except a trained massagist' are listed as examples of tax-exempt work. But if an activity 'is connected to the provider's or recipient's paid employment, livelihood, agriculture, or other source of income', it is considered taxable income. A series of specifications and clarifying examples illustrate that what is particularly at issue

[7] Recently, an employee of the Tax Administration produced a speculative outline for outer-space taxation in anticipation of a time when commercial work in space will be a reality. The paper explores issues such as what or whose time applies in outer-space taxation and to which country do spacemen and women pay their taxes (Lallukka 2016).

is professional history and identity: if a window-cleaning entrepreneur cuts his neighbour's hedge and later gets his car tyres changed in return (example 13), the activity is tax exempt. If a gardening entrepreneur restores an accountant's garden in exchange for accounting services (example 14), the activity is taxable. The taxation value is estimated on the basis of average market rates for individual professions. Declaring income from the timebank is the responsibility of individual timebank members in accordance to the principles described here.

The Tax Administration instructions were designed to plug a potential loophole. It sought to define the limits of the informal economy in Finland, making sure timebanks would not turn into a vehicle for tax-evading swap deals. Päivi, one of the Helsinki Timebank activists who organised public meetings with the officials in the wake of the taxation guidelines, recalled how, following a debate held in 2014, the Tax Administration's representative confessed to her that 'we [the tax authority] are not interested in what you do' – that the Timebank was considered a potential route for tax evasion, not a potential source of revenue. But while plugging this loophole, the Tax Administration also created a mode of converting banked hours – or more specifically whiles, the tokens that stand for banked time – into euros. The Helsinki Timebank took objection to the convertibility of whiles, which stands in contradiction to its egalitarian ethical commitments. In a nutshell: contrasting the work of high-earning professionals with atypical task work performed by people in marginalised positions serves to highlight the worthlessness of the non-wage earner's time vis-à-vis the calculable market averages of professional labour. The Timebank was calibrated to redress this disparity by trading in identical units of durational time.

Since the publication of the 2013 instruction, the Helsinki Timebank has continuously sought to engage public authorities in negotiations over the appropriate mode of taxation. Following the publication of the document, the Helsinki Timebank first made a request to the Tax Administration for a two-year tax exemption. When that failed, the timebankers, together with the City of Helsinki, organised a public workshop on timebanking and taxation. Later in 2014, the Timebank organised another event, this time with invited representatives of the Tax Administration and local politicians and researchers. Since then, activist members of the Timebank have written letters, drawn up alternative taxation proposals, and attended further meetings, where either the taxation issue or related themes such as alternative currencies or sharing economies have been discussed with state or municipal representatives. They have allied themselves with other non-governmental organisations and public institutions in order to engage in discussions over the tax issue. The Helsinki Timebank has consistently argued that it is a non-profit, mutual aid organisation that seeks to create social benefits that cannot be counted in euros, and the monetary worth of whiles could not even be realised in full owing to ethical considerations and limited conversion possibilities within its network. But their protests have received minimal responses from the tax authority. From the Tax Administration's point of view, the problem is juridical rather than ideological: in Finland, taxes are collected in the currency recognised by the state, the euro. Unless Finland changes its laws, the tax authority cannot change its mode of appraisal. But what represents a legal technicality to the tax authority is treated as a moral issue in the timebank, great enough to be taken up with the legislative powers.

However, the prolonged altercation with the tax authority has had damaging consequences for the Timebank. Up until the Tax Administration's instruction appeared in late 2013, timebanking had been growing steadily, not just in Helsinki but all over Finland. After 2013, the number of exchanges completed in the Helsinki Timebank network quickly dropped below 200 per month from a previous 600–1,000 a month. Before late 2013, twenty to fifty new members joined the Helsinki Timebank every month, a figure that since then has diminished to just a few people. Smaller timebanks have practically closed down. Meanwhile, many people have stopped using the Helsinki Timebank because they found nothing worth purchasing in exchange for their whiles. Heli, the timebanker who once found five pages of computer maintenance offers, says she now finds it hard to locate a single suitable offer. There are now months when the offers list almost solely contains alternative therapies and outdated ads whose contacts no longer respond to inquiries.

This could simply be a case of the Timebank having reached its maximum capacity before naturally dwindling, but active timebankers claim that the stagnation was caused by the media attention given to the tax case in 2013. The Helsinki Timebank still receives emails asking about the potential illegality of timebanking; even Heli asked if the lack of IT offers was 'because this is like tax evasion'. Although none of the newspaper coverage was particularly negative, many people nonetheless got the impression that there was something illegal in timebanking. Even the Helsinki Timebank's long-term goal, institutional partnership, seems to have moved out of reach soon after it became feasible. Although the City of Helsinki listed timebanking in its Global Responsibility Strategy in 2012, all official interest has died down. The loss of interest from the municipal authorities has been a particularly heavy blow, not just because it deprives the Timebank of a potential source of things to purchase with the whiles, but also because many core members see institutional co-operation as a vehicle for reclaiming public affairs. More important yet, if the Timebank could co-operate with a public institution such as the municipality, this might lead to a reassessment of the while's tax status.

Yet the tax issue remains unfinished business, to the degree that even a suggestion of inserting a clarifying note in the Timebank's website, such as was made in a 2020 meeting – along the lines of 'there is nothing illegal in timebanking, but the Tax Administration requires that you declare your earnings' – still causes tempers to flare. Would this not be the same as giving up and admitting defeat? Years after the Tax Administration's decision, the Timebank still hopes to have it reversed. Why?

Digression: the other time tax

I understand that taxpaying does not enjoy the same widespread public approval everywhere that it does in Finland, so allow me to briefly digress in order to prove that the core issue is not just a matter of tax compliance. To begin with, it needs to be pointed out that Finnish taxpayer attitude surveys have consistently displayed exceptionally high levels of not just taxpayer satisfaction, but also approval ratings. The most recent of these, the Tax Administration's 2019 Attitude Survey, reported that 98 per cent of Finns agreed that taxpaying is important for maintaining the welfare state, while 96 per cent considered taxes to be an important civic duty, and 78 per cent thought they were getting their money's worth for the taxes they pay (Tax Administration 2019). A previous survey reveals not only that approval ratings are going up, but also that attitudes against tax avoidance are hardening over time (also reported in Lassila 2017). This hardening of attitudes concerns not only the semi-legal tax arrangements practised by multinational businesses, but also cover undeclared work or transactions conducted 'without receipt'. Similar attitudes can be found in Sweden, where Björklund Larsen (2017) has described how the state actively 'shapes' taxpayers to uphold and appreciate the legitimacy of revenue collecting, crucial for maintaining the welfare state. As in Sweden, the positive attitudes towards taxation in Finland are grounded in a widespread trust in the Nordic welfare state model, though evidence of active publicity campaigning by the Finnish Tax Administration does not reach back as far as in Sweden (see Eräsaari and Kauppinen 2021 for recent examples).

Corresponding attitudes can be observed in the Helsinki Timebank, too. Maija, probably the most vocal critic of the Tax Administration's policy in the Timebank, phrased this explicitly in a 2020 meeting: 'we do not want to undermine the welfare state'. The Timebank's actions also speak clearly: it already collects its own internal time tax, which is currently set at 2 per cent and is collected from all members, along with a one-while annual membership fee. While the membership fee is specifically collected for the Timebank's own organisational expenses, the so-called while tax goes to other organisations that are enrolled as Helsinki Timebank members, such as the Finnish branches of Friends of the Earth, Occupy, or ATTAC (Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions and Aid to Citizens, an international anti-globalisation organisation), along with a number of local groups that promote locally sourced food, ethical banking, and so forth. It is up to individual members to designate the organisation they want to give their tax whiles to.

The Helsinki Timebank was already discussing the provision of common good before the Tax Administration showed interest in timebanks: in 2012, it held a vote to decide whether or not excess funds collected in membership fees could be redistributed to good causes. Though the 'yes' was not quite as resounding as the public support for state taxes in Finland generally – with 64.5 per cent of participants (eighty-nine members) voting in favour, 15.9 percent (twenty-two members) voting against, and the rest abstaining – the decision to allow the use of excess funds for solidarity was given a clear mandate. In 2020, the Timebank's website still listed fifty members' responses to the motion, with a wide range from 'NO, NO, and NO to all taxes except those collected for immediate organisational expenses' to a suggestion that timebank-internal 'poor relief' should be set up, or that whiles should be directed towards 'services that are funded by public revenue, but that cannot be maintained sufficiently owing to cuts'. In other words, although the issue obviously divided opinion – as I said at the outset, there is no unified Timebank point of view – it clearly was not the case that the Timebank would oppose all taxes on principle: the key point between the tax authority and the Helsinki Timebank has always been the medium of taxation – the standard or base unit underlying tax collection. The 'good' affirmed by the Timebank's mode of evaluating time is the good of egalitarian relationships, and time is seen as a better vehicle for achieving such a purpose than money. After all, each of us possesses it in equal amounts.

The Helsinki Timebank has also developed its own tax proposal in response to the Tax Administration's guidelines: a while tax similar to the one it already collects from its members. Timebank activists have been eager to present this to tax officials, but to no avail. As mentioned earlier, the Tax Administration rejects the idea of collecting taxes in any other currency than the euro on legal grounds. The latest attempt to reverse the Tax Administration's stance took place in 2017, when a Finnish cryptocurrency co-operative sought out the Helsinki Timebank as a potential partner. The alternative currency group was interested in a partnership in order to launch a new digital currency within a pre-existing social network. The Timebank was willing to compromise its closed-circuit currency by allowing online blockchain convertibility for those members who wanted to partake in the project, because it was thought a digital currency might stand a real chance of reversing the official stance on alternative currency taxation.[8] Eventually, the point was discussed in a seminar held in September 2017, which brought together representatives of the Ministry of Finance, the Prime Minister's Office,

[8] The Sipilä government (2015–19) was investing heavily in wide-scale social and economic digitalisation.

and the Tax Administration. In the event, an invited alternative economies expert gave a presentation on the economic cycles of international economy and local currencies, and the mutually beneficial effects of state and alternative currencies. A founder of the Finnish digital currency co-operative cited David Graeber at length to the gathered politicians to explain the essentially social character of money. Representatives of Trustlines Network, a project working towards a globally accessible digital payment system, presented their vision of 'People Powered Money'. In response, both the Ministry of Finance and the Prime Minister's Office were sufficiently impressed to want to claim this innovation, which was when the taxation issue was reintroduced as a pre-requirement for a new currency. In the ensuing discussion, a Tax Administration representative repeated the stance that until Finland changes its laws, the tax authority's hands are tied. At this stage, an economist from the Ministry of Finance entered the discussion to explain why allowing taxes to be paid in alternative currencies was impossible: 'someone always benefits from these things', she said, which 'is discriminatory to the firms already in the market'. And with that, the issue was settled: the political will mustered at the event was not sufficient to change the law on the currency of state taxes.

Time as measure and standard

What separates Finnish timebanks from timebanks in the UK and the US is that the former have no institution underwriting their time credits. Famous timebanks founded around social welfare institutions, such as the Rushey Green Timebank in London or Elderplan in New York, have ulterior motives: redefining the institutional roles of patient and carer, providing a sense of increased self-worth for institutionalised clients, and so forth. But typically they also have institutional backing for their exchange circuits, whether this means that the credits in circulation are accepted in a local canteen or are recognised by some other supporting agency. The Helsinki Timebank is different because it operates with a currency that is almost completely non-convertible and has no institutional backing or ties.

Thus, although the while appears to be like any other community currency, the Helsinki Timebank is emphatically a *time* bank; its currency of account is not underwritten by monetary equivalence, only by time and work. A hypothetical conversion rate, 10 euros = 1 while, is sometimes cited by Timebank members, but this has never been actively promoted, nor have I heard who arrived at this rate or why. Instead, one while is valued at one hour of a Timebank member's time, regardless of who they are or what it is they do.

Let me briefly contrast the Helsinki whiles with another time-based currency, the Ithaca HOURS that Maurer (2005) writes about. The HOUR currency used in Ithaca, New York, is valued at $10 – the average hourly wage in the region back in 1991 when the HOUR was established. Unlike the Helsinki whiles, the Ithaca HOURS have maintained an easy convertibility into and from US dollars, as required by the US Internal Revenue Service. Maurer (2005) outlines numerous difficulties relating to this currency conversion, particularly those arising from the way HOURS convert between time, money, and labour. The case of making change at the marketplace is a good illustration. HOURS take the physical form of paper notes that, until 2003, came in five denominations: 2 HOURS, 1 HOUR, ½ HOUR, ¼ HOUR, and ⅛ HOUR. These denominations are an obvious nod towards the Ithaca HOUR's temporal reference, preferring quarters and halves over the decimal system. However, Maurer describes how the need to make change at the farmer's market and corresponding situations made it necessary to add a ⅒ HOUR denomination, even if it sits awkwardly with the temporal units that HOURS stand for. The absence of suitable change intensified the flow of value from the HOURS circuit, and increased compatibility with the dollar appeared as an obvious solution.

Compromising a measuring scale based on temporal conventions (quarter and half hours) to achieve a better match with monetary ones (nickels and dimes) is not a particularly heinous offence, but reflects the kind of match-making necessary when dealing with scales of different nature. But Maurer also outlines problems relating to wages, which compromise the ideal '1 HOUR = average wage' equation. For example, he writes about a local grocery store that pays wages partly in HOURS, 'but at the ten-dollar-to-one HOUR exchange rate rather than at one HOUR per hour of labor', so that an employee's hourly wage is $8.50, rather than one HOUR for an hour (Maurer 2005: 49). Correspondingly, higher-earning professionals – dentists, doctors, and lawyers – may charge as much as ten HOURS for as little as fifteen minutes of their own labour, Maurer (2005: 84) writes. HOURS, he concludes, 'are underwritten by the U.S. dollar' to a degree where they are neither particularly appropriate for retaining trade in the local circuit nor for ascribing their alternative values upon the local economy. Instead, they appear to be a mere 'hobby' of the white middle class (Maurer 2005: 49).[9]

As outlined earlier, the Helsinki Timebank has settled on a different arrangement: underwritten by neither money nor institutional patronage, the while is not merely calibrated to time, but it deploys hours of clock time in the capacity of the Marxian universal equivalent – as an object that acts as the measure

[9] The Helsinki time currency faces a different challenge, but one that also leads to the risk of being reduced to a privileged hobby. In consequence of the post-2013 degrowth in timebanking, the highly limited sphere within which the while operates makes it difficult for people to find something they want in exchange for the time they have banked. Still, the timebanking community also appears to include at least some individuals who have accumulated excess whiles in their accounts for lack of anything worthwhile to spend them on, but stay in the Timebank nonetheless, for idealistic rather than practical reasons. They just don't mind having all the unused whiles in their accounts – they can afford it.

by which all commodities are equated and exchanged. And yet, even though the Timebank thus employs what might be labelled a time standard, the while still derives its value from the work and services that timebankers measure as time. But labour, too, is deployed in a different capacity than in the Ithaca case – the timebankers refuse to valuate it according to specialisation, experience, difficulty, or market worth, instead treating labour time as if the quality or intensity of labour were insignificant, or always the same. To charge several hours for fifteen minutes, as in Maurer's example, would not just mean compromising an underlying principle: under the Timebank's rules, it would be cheating.

This is why the Helsinki Timebank's attempts to resist the Finnish Tax Administration's mode of evaluating whiles, based on labour market valuation and individual work histories, should be seen as more than just another morality tale about bad money. True, on the surface the Timebank's concern could be classed together with various accounts of 'spheres of exchange' resisting or succumbing to the corrosive effects of general-purpose money. But, on the other hand, many of the most analytical attempts to understand the idea of spheres of exchange – starting with Paul Bohannan (1959) – have turned to standards and scales for answers (Kopytoff 1986; Gregory 1996; Guyer 2004). Indeed, Guyer (2004: 19) makes the explicit point that 'scale construction is analytically separable from other aspects of "commoditization," such as abstraction, alienation, and appropriation', thereby inviting particular attention to the shapes, logical qualities, and potential for manipulation displayed by different scales. To put it in another way: the Timebank's refusal to adopt a common point of reference between whiles and euros should not be seen in isolation from the particular way it connects time and labour.

I will resume the topic of time's properties and scalar operations in Chapter 6. With respect to the present case, though, two points still need to be made. The first is that the indifference displayed towards the quality of labour by the timebank's particular valuation regime is, at least in the present day and age, probably made possible by the Timebank's marginal position within the wider Finnish society (rather than regardless of it). That is to say, even many timebankers might find it hard to accept an equal valuation of trained and untrained, skilled and unskilled labour if the timebank were the only operational sphere of exchange. Instead, it is an experimental alternative model, one where people are willing to bend or disregard prevailing conceptions such as merited salary levels. My second point follows directly from the first: although my sympathies lie with the timebankers, the conceptual juxtaposition with the Finnish Tax Administration that I have presented is, in some ways, unfair. I am part of the 98 per cent of Finns who believe that taxpaying is important for upholding the welfare state, and in so saying, I also want to point out that whereas the Timebank's alternative status allows it to disregard money and inconvenient properties of labour, the Tax Administration has to adhere to state legislation.

Nonetheless, by comparing these two conflicting visions of what the Timebank's time tokens stand for, I have tried to outline a model for approaching the wider, 'moral' standards of exchange. Both the Timebank and the Tax Administration fall squarely within the clock-time tradition – both treat hours of clock time, in Marx's words, as 'natural units' of labour – but they follow different trajectories in realising the value of the hour, and I have tried to pry open these equations to show that the calculus involved in such operations is not a neutral issue, or external to the ideological considerations under examination. And I am not talking about the stated, explicit ideological principles involved, though these, too, are important: the Helsinki Timebank's ethical guidelines in particular emphasise sustainability, local sourcing, and voluntary participation in a way that is often expressed in the language of de-growth and downshifting rather than efficiency and time discipline. Instead, I have tried to foreground an underlying mode of realigning the harsh and unyielding 'time is money' valuation with that Thompson called 'life'.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have outlined two conflicting ways to evaluate the while currency traded by members of the Helsinki Timebank. One, as articulated by the Tax Administration, regards the while primarily as an expression of individual human labour and therefore values it according to average salary levels in the Finnish labour market. The other, followed by members of the Helsinki Timebank, regards whiles first and foremost as durational units of time. I have sought to provide a description of the moral grounds upon which the Helsinki Timebank rejects the Tax Administration's model for converting whiles into euros. A lesson to be learnt is that quantification, on any particular scale, requires a standard as a point of reference, and the choice is never without consequence.

Time serves the Helsinki Timebank ideology well: in the Timebank imaginary, a while stands for a twenty-fourth part of a solar day, something that all members have in equal measure. Everyone gives and receives the same: whiles for hours or hours for whiles. To exchange rather than transfer these twenty-fourths accentuates the sense that there are no givers and receivers as such, but symmetrical exchange partners, none of whom stand to win or lose in the exchange. Everyone's while is worth exactly the same. Although the Tax Administration is evaluating precisely the same hours/whiles, its appraisal starts from the point that a while stands for individualised labour in a market where one hour and another are almost never worth the same.

I have not foregrounded this difference to criticise the Tax Administration, which I suspect is having a hard time chasing up the different forms that value assumes these days. Neither am I going to pursue the partial overlap between the timebankers' terminology and an anthropological core concept, intriguing though it be. 'Exchange' is used in the literature as a genus that branches out to species such as 'gifts' and 'commodities' (Gregory 1997: 44), or distinct spheres (Bohannan 1959) and modalities (Robbins and Akin 1999), in a way that makes anthropological analyses predisposed to favour reciprocity and relationality (Pickles 2020). This is evident in the ease with which the concept of exchange is allied with the Timebank's project. But the key point I have sought to bring home concerns the indeterminacy of clock time as a value form. One hour can measure value on different scales, but quite surprisingly, this means that while one standard yields the equation $1 = 1$, another gives us $1 \neq 1$. This is why I have followed Maurer's lead in searching for the 'morality' of these equations, or the idea of appropriate social relations underwriting the numbers.

The time/tax issue has hopefully shown that abstract time can enter valuation processes in other capacities than just the harsh Puritan version of 'time is money', which so often serves to devalue life and sociality. And this can happen in Northern Europe just as well as in Oceania. To give a further example of the reassembling of the elements involved in Finnish timebanking, let me mention that 2019 also witnessed the founding of perhaps the first timebank in the South Pacific. The blockchain-enabled decentralised time banking system, or BlendTBS, was set up on the island of Aneityum in Vanuatu by two scholars from Binghamton University, USA – Professor Yu Chen (electrical and computer engineering) and Professor J. Koji Lum (anthropology and biological sciences). According to early reports on the project (Binghamton University 2019; Coinatory 2019), this timebank was set up 'to measure the worth of humans in terms of societal obligations and assisting others' (Binghamton University 2019) – to quantify human sociality! The project is not just designed to use a mobile phone-operated currency for rewarding socially necessary (my choice of words) activities, but it will also allow participants 'to reward or penalize pro- and antisocial behaviour' (Binghamton University 2019). A South Pacific timebank that seeks to measure the worth of humans and punish people for not engaging in social relations, if it ever came to fruition, would not just replace work discipline with a 'life discipline', but also show the potential for a quasi-Veblenian hierarchy of socialisers to become a firmly articulated fact. And so, all of a sudden, the idea of a Fijian 'leisure discipline' appears a lot less outrageous.

6

Properties of Time?

This book has proceeded from the exoticism of non-economising uses of time to the even greater exoticness of thoroughly economised time use. Throughout, I have maintained that these two ought to be viewed side by side, as contemporaneous examples of 'clock time' – or as two ethnographic exemplars that can elaborate a more general understanding of time as a vehicle of value. I have also moved from time as a sign of value to time as a standard for measuring value. I will use this latter distinction as a starting point for some general conclusions.

E. P. Thompson's 'clock time' encompasses two ideas relating to time: the clocks used for measuring and dividing time with increasing precision, and the abstract, omnipresent time increasingly disembedded from various material and natural phenomena. In other words, besides measure, the idea of clock time incorporates an understanding of time as a resource-like thing instead of an event- or task-based one. This understanding does not have to have its origins either in the invention of the clock or in the Industrial Revolution, but its current predominance was, nonetheless, made possible by the coordinated standardisation of global markets that has been in progress since the 19th century.

While the measuring and synchronising function of clock time has gained surprisingly little importance in the organisation of rural life in indigenous Fiji by the early 21st century, the resource-like conception of time can be discovered in statements such as the Methodist college headmaster's 'time flows like water during the night' or in conceptualisations such as the slang word *vesumona*, used in reference to stealing someone else's time. Chapters 2 and 3 represent my attempt to capture early 21st-century Fijian struggles over the time resource in the absence of a strict measuring discipline.

At the same time, measuring occupies right, left, and centre in the two Finnish case studies I write about. Like Fiji time, Finnish time also acts as a vehicle for other values besides labour or economic purchasing power. I have highlighted contexts where time has appeared particularly convenient for foregrounding notions of egalitarianism and equivalence. But in both of the instances I have described – the timebank and the university – time also functions as a special currency of account, a lot like money. However, instead of it being used for buying and selling in a general, all-purpose sense, I have shown how time occupies a significant role in uses where the 'moralities' of exchange predetermine the outcome of exchanging. The timebanking case, in particular, displays the act of exchange (*vaihto* in Finnish) as a balance-driven, ideologically loaded concept to an extent where it becomes obvious that this term, employed as an umbrella category for all sorts of gift and commodity performances, is no freer from our own cultural biases than the idea of reciprocity.

David Graeber once even proposed that precise measuring correlates with the moralistic tit-for-tat reciprocity he places at the root of formal debt relations. Citing Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), Graeber (2012: 76–8) deprecates the tendency 'to measure values, to think up equivalences, to exchange things', which he frames as the archetype of a bourgeois reciprocity ultimately set up to establish autonomous individuals apart from mutual obligations and relations of sharing. If, Graeber argues, the widely documented impulses to annul gifts with counter-gifts and to shun gift-debts are the hallmarks of an already-established equality between the exchanging parties (because otherwise it would take the form of giving, taking, or tribute instead of exchange), then increasingly precise ways of establishing absolute parity between the parties involved works against rather than towards a baseline solidarity of mutual indebtedness. Graeber concludes his point by juxtaposing measuring and calculating with an anthropologically famous quote about gifts, slaves, whips, and dogs from Peter Freuchen's *Book of the Eskimos* (1961). He sums Freuchen up as follows: 'Rather than seeing himself as human because he could make economic calculations, the [Inuit] hunter insisted that being truly human meant *refusing* to make such calculations, refusing to measure or remember who had given what to whom' (Graeber 2012: 79, emphasis in the original).

Graeber obviously has a point in challenging the taken-for-granted benevolence of reciprocity, a concept that gets all too easily fetishised in anthropological writing (Weiner 1992). He may even have a cause for his distaste towards precise quantification, but this is more debatable. Elsewhere, I have written about the avoidance of quantification in certain Fijian exchange contexts (Eräsaari 2013: 179–84, 2018, in review). The topic is relevant for the matter at hand, so I will briefly summarise the main points here.

Fijian ceremonial exchange takes place during lifecycle events, in the presence of traditional authorities, or in the context of social relations beyond the immediate family. The formalities, functions, and volume of the events vary greatly, but any ceremony conducted according to traditional protocol (*vakavanua, vakaViti*) involves the exchange of at least some things from a limited range of gift items: 'precious things' (whale's teeth), 'wealth' (kava, mats, bark cloth, kerosene, print cloth, etc.), 'relish' (meat or fish),[1] 'feast food' (taro, cassava, plantains, etc.), and 'hot water' (flour, sugar, bread, breakfast crackers, tea, etc.). All traditional obligations are met, and respects paid, with things that fall within these categories.

These media are typically employed in pre-established units: for store-bought goods, these are shop quantities such as the bale (of cloth), the canister (of kerosene), the carton, the bag, the sack, and so forth. But for locally produced things, valuables are quantified according to a ceremonial calculus: ten whale's teeth = one *vulo*, ten pandanus mats = one *sasa*, ten fish = one *vua*, and so forth. During ceremonial events, a unit is commonly exchanged with another unit: the exact numeric content of a *vulo* or *sasa* is neither examined nor displayed during a ceremony. It might be eleven, twelve, or thirteen, but may equally well be only five. Sometimes it may be easy to see that a *sasa* of mats is too lean to contain more than half a dozen mats, and I certainly never saw a *vulo* bigger than three or four whale teeth used in the village where I carried out my fieldwork. But people treated these sets as equal amounts nonetheless: rather than working out the 'gains' made or lost (cf. Guyer 2004), ceremonial quantification makes it possible to overlook the quantity contained by the represented unit of measure.

The same is done with other ceremonial goods: bales of print cloth are always unfurled, tied into a single length, and crumpled into an unquantifiable (but impressive) pile, canisters and sacks piled in unarranged clusters. Tubers (taro, cassava) and butchered animals are often carried directly into a separate cooking canopy rather than being brought up to where the ceremonial presentations are made, so that in the avoidance-like language used in Fijian ceremonial events, an orator simply announces a presentation comprising 'a precious thing with its ceremonial wealth, feast food, and its relish' while handing over a whale's tooth that stands for, or encompasses, the totality of the given gift items. If lists are drawn by the recipients (so as to be able to reciprocate the gifts), they document the categories of gift but not the quantities. Onlookers, as I learnt during fieldwork in Fiji, are likely to report quantities with studied imprecision: 'they gave maybe some taro, maybe some mats, maybe one pig'. It is hard to tell the difference between respectful avoidance and quantitative indeterminacy.

Money, when it enters the ceremonial sphere, also loses its quantity: classified in the category of 'ceremonial wealth' (*yau*), any money presented in a traditional event is placed inside an envelope, the contents of which can only be guessed by outsiders (Eräsaari 2013: 192–4, in press). Yet in practice this systemic indifference to quantity is driven towards balance or equivalence rather than either a generalised sense of sharing or of hierarchical tributary relations. For sure, there is a chiefly hierarchical element involved in all this, an element of the 'heroic' mode of representation that Marshall Sahlins (1985) once named after James Fenimore

[1] Further divisible into 'fat' (meat) and 'salt water' (seafood).

Cooper: all presentations are ultimately pinned to the chiefly title of the group presenting them, and the senior member of the group is recognised as the present bearer of that title. Yet a lot of care and attention is taken to ensure that at the end of the day, the giving and the receiving, gifts and counter-gifts, are in balance. The order, sequence, or media of individual presentations can be manipulated, the quantity made indeterminable, or people can simply choose to not pay close attention. Organised like Sahlins's 'Fenimore Cooper Indians', refusing to measure like Graeber's Freuchen Eskimo, the rural folks of Naloto in Fiji arrive at equity pretty much like the Finns I have written about.[2]

One could argue that village Fiji treats time in a similar fashion. Recall Ka'ili's (2017) conceptualisation of Tongan temporal ideology as one based on symmetrical patterning or arrangement – much like weaving a pandanus mat – instead of time being conceived of as a 'grid' (Graeber 2018: 260). In a similar manner, the impatient Fijian urbanite unable to break off from a village funeral congregation, or an exhausted kava drinker at midnight, uncomfortable with the idea of leaving the group for the sake of respect, could be regarded as arranging or being forced to balance time between different social obligations in a way where the most 'natural' units of time would be something like 'enough' or 'as much as' – measured by the balancing scale rather than a yardstick, as it were.

Could such time, measured in balance and symmetry, any longer be labelled 'clock time'? Technically perhaps not, insofar as the defining clock seems to be largely absent. Yet, as I have argued, the temporal concerns derived from clock-time thinking are part and parcel of Fiji time too. Time is conceived as a resource whose use is balanced against other possible uses with their utilities and virtues and wasted opportunities. Perhaps such time would be better labelled 'resource time' to call attention away from the role of clocks, but I have stuck with Thompson's term in order to highlight the historical connections and trajectories involved.

But labels are secondary. What I most of all want to draw out from these discussions is the capacity of temporal duration to yield an equivalent or standard of value in the first place. Which aspects of duration are chosen for the task? How exactly does the stuff of time shape up or get represented in a particular context? This can be a consequential choice, because the specific features – properties – of time have the capacity to 'strike back', to use Bruno Latour's (2000: 107) language. The 'thingness' of time – that is to say its objective (as in 'object-like') properties – also affects the world it measures. Or if one finds Latour's 'thingness' too imprecise for this world-changing potential, think of Webb Keane's unorthodox usage of affordance; unorthodox, because Keane stretches Gibson's (1977) concept from

[2] This is hardly a fair or sufficient account of the phenomenon, but rather describes only one facet of Fijian exchange – the formal-yet-respectful middle-distance relations Sahlins (1972: 185–230) labels 'balanced reciprocity'. Yet further analysis of the means employed for example at monetised fundraising (Eräsaari, in press) would reveal yet another, quantity-conscious route for reaching the same outcome.

material objects to sociocultural constructions (e.g. Keane 2018). For Gibson (1977: 67–8), 'the affordance of anything is a specific combination of [its] properties in light of what it offers, provides, or furnishes for the animal that perceives it' (cited in Keane 2018: 31), Keane further specifies that affordances are objective features, appear in contingent combinations, and 'only exist as affordances relative to the properties *of some other* perceiving entity and *relative to that entity's activity*' (Keane 2018: 31, emphasis in the original).

The underlying idea is a familiar one. Lévi-Strauss (1966) made a corresponding point when discussing meaning making as an act of *bricolage*, wherein meanings take shape in dialogue with the available materials of the surrounding world. Out of the vast, but not unlimited, range of details available to the perceiver, we choose some as the basis of our classification schemes: colour, size, shape, and various more particular features. This is why Lévi-Strauss's idea of anthropology often requires a great deal of natural science: one needs to understand the naturally occurring differences that people hang their meanings on.

The idea of affordances is obviously not encumbered by assumptions about the bricoleurs' myths versus detached science. But, what is more, Keane (2018) presents it in a way that makes an affordance more than just a peg to hang meanings on: 'Responding to an affordance is part of a project' (31), or vice versa, 'People discover affordances through their projects' (33). In other words, perceiving affordances is not (just) a naturalists' job such as presented over the pages of Lévi-Strauss's *Mythologiques*, because things afford new affordances in consequence of our pursuits.

Nor are we talking about just the properties of physical objects, Keane points out. 'Anything at all that people can experience, such as emotions, bodily movements, habitual practices, linguistic forms, laws, etiquette, or narratives, possesses an indefinite number of combinations of properties' (Keane 2018: 32). Temporal duration also falls under that description. Just like the concept of affordance, time is neither material nor completely a construction. This is what makes the point of view provided by affordance well suited for concluding this book.

It is not hard to conceive clock time as something that is both recognised in the course of human activity and shaped through its implication in people's projects. The existing literature reveals something like this unfolding from the disputes over the proprietorship of time described by Thompson (1967) and Le Goff (1980), to the varied concerns about appropriate stretches or proper uses of time discussed in this book. Here, time is not just transformed in the course of the various 'translations' it undergoes, but also in response to the uses it is put to.

But as Keane (2018: 31) points out, this is a mutual process: 'if the characteristics of the "we" summons up the affordance, their interaction may transform the "we" in turn'. I have cited Dickens (2009 [1854]: 28) to the same effect: 'we are the kind of people who know the value of time, and you are the kind of people who don't know the value of time'. But time, I have argued, does not afford just an alliance of the time-thrifty with the precise; it also enables hierarchical and egalitarian formations, custom or nation branding, sometimes even a kind of inverted or negative nationalism (Robbins 1998).

In the introduction I conceptualised my approach to time through the idea of allocating values to time. I have exemplified such allocation by portraying time as a bearer of values such as relaxation, dignity, egalitarianism, and equity. Here I have tried to go beyond that initial conceptualisation to show that time is neither an empty nor an immutable vessel. Indeed, very often this view is absent from our considerations of value: that valued forms or media are not necessarily merely passive signs but can and do, over time, become almost like active participants – actants – in valuating processes.

But here is where time's extraordinary quality becomes apparent. Temporality can be found in various phenomena connected with duration, change, growth, recurrence, and so forth. This already gives abstract time a vast array of affordances: things for which it can be found useful. Just think of the possible temporal measures it offers, from lunar months to seasons, from generations to growth and perishing, and, of course, the various timescales related to human activities. But, building on Guyer's (2004) idea of the conceptual hooks or connecting points between value scales, I would like to point out that just as different scales may contain number bases or threshold points that are more prone to link up with other value scales, so the various manifestations of time contain their own 'hooks' that link them, not just with other measures, but with other value projects. When time is conceptualised as money in Finland, it foregrounds particular properties associated with money, such as precise divisibility or accountability. When time is likened to communal water taps, it hooks onto issues such as levelling and sharing instead.

The invisible, intangible, omnipresent stuff of time I have discussed over the pages of this book is pliant. I have repeatedly made the point that it falls obediently into all sorts of equations without 'striking back' in the manner of Latourian things, or exercising the thing-power of Bennettian materiality (Bennett 2010). And yet I have also insisted that it nonetheless matters how we make time conceptually available; that there are different clock times with different consequentialities. This is because when we insert clock time into our value equations, exchanges, equivalences, or comparisons, we make our own ideological projects easier to see. Time is not a uniquely great bearer of value because it measures everything indiscriminately, but because it shows how our ideas of the good underlie the act of measuring and comparing.

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