## Temporal Frameworks and Individual Cultural Activities

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# Temporal Frameworks and Individual Cultural Activities
## Four typical profiles

### Michelle Bergadaà

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ABSTRACT. The following article presents temporal frameworks articulated around two axes: synchrony/diachrony and instant/ duration. A framework is elaborated based on an analysis of how cultural activities bearing social and historical meaning fit into temporal frameworks on the individual level of consumers, or cultural actors. The argument identifies four types of time frames supporting individual action: 'permanent present' frame, 'modern time' frame, 'fragmented time' frame and 'in rhythm time' frame. Two studies, conducted on the topic of cultural activities involving theatre and museums, have been used to illustrate the conceptual model. They exemplify the relationship between the individual's temporal framework, his or her attitude with regard to culture and the type of cultural action he or she develops. KEY WORDS • cultural activities • diachrony • duration • instant • museum • synchrony • theatre • time frames

### Introduction

Time has no objective reality independent from human actors. Whether apprehended as circular, linear, segmented, oriented towards the future, or seen as an instant or a longer period, time is not a notion that is easy to grasp. Nonetheless, people, as well as organizations, benefit from the coexistence of different

temporal frameworks, provided they understand the rules of the game. The different disciplines that have studied time have done so because of epistemological choices and from specific viewpoints (Bergadaà, 1988, 1989; Weik, 2004). In fact, for researchers, time is representative of not only their own field of investigation, but also the type of human relations they observe, as well as of the modes of analysis they apply (Bergmann, 1992). Thus, time is understood differently by a historian, an economist, a psychologist or an ethnologist. However, in my own discipline – management – time cannot be reduced to a specific model. For researchers in this field, time is thought of as either an objective or subjective quantity (Szalai, 1972) that we allocate to activities (Davies and Omer, 1996), a performance measure, or a management tool. Time can also be considered as a backdrop that structures social and human relations as well as exchanges (Bergadaà, 1990), or as an item that clarifies the link between individuals and their environment (Usunier and Valette-Florence, 1994; Urien, 1998), or between the individual and their work (Farmer and Seers, 2004).

In this article, I present the two major assumptions for time analysis: the arrow of time representing the past present future (PPF) relationship, and conceptions of the present on the individual level. Time is not considered here as a variable, but as a framework for action. Based on 15 years of research, it will be demonstrated that human action can be understood based on two time axes. I term the first axis as diachrony–synchrony and the second as instant–duration. These two axes allow me to put forward four temporal frameworks coexisting in contemporary society: the 'permanent present', the 'modern time' frame, the 'fragmented time' frame and the 'in rhythm time' frame. These frameworks are the basis for individual adjustment strategies in the appreciation of social action.

In the second section of the article, the focus is on how cultural activities, which bear social and historical meaning (Geertz, 1973; Bourdieu, 1979), fit into the temporal framework of individuals. In my field research, the questions for consideration were 'how do individuals identify themselves with either one of the temporal frameworks?' and 'what impact do temporal frameworks have on cultural activities?'. To answer these questions, I used data from two previous researches: one about theatre and the other about museums. The two types of cultural activities are located at the crossroad between social offerings and individual motivation. In fact, theatre and museums are understood as cultural expressions, which are simultaneously products of the mind and experiences shared with other people. In fact, socialization mechanisms – be they parental or environmental – contribute to the meaning individuals assign to their social activities (Kelly, 1987). According to the original theories developed by constructivism, and more specifically by ethnomethodologists, individuals adopt a personal logic reflecting proposals that coexist in our societies (Schütz,

1932/1967, 1970; Mead, 1934; Goffman, 1959/1973; Garfinkel, 1967, 1988). This article first analyses the meaning individuals attribute to the social and cultural environment, before reconstructing their network of cognitive meaning (Leiter, 1980). Then, it presents the four main profiles, which have emerged from my analyses of theatre and museums. In sum, I will discuss future research perspectives as well as recommendations in terms of temporal organization and its links with culture as conceived and experienced by individuals.

## The Arrow of Time: Past–Present–Future

The image of the arrow of time, coming from the past, heading towards the future while going through the present, is one of the most common assumptions about time. This assumption is not only rooted in scientific research during all of the 20th century, but also in the common knowledge of western societies. Most behavioural researchers that have analysed time have focused on the hypothesis of an individual orientation in terms of 'past', 'future' or 'present'. However, when analysing human action, researchers study the temporal perspective with its individual and organizational projects. This implies that the temporal framework of the individual is not a simple line but a framework full of individual and group events that are anticipated and ordered by the individual (Michon, 1972, 1991). Individuals embrace a diachronic perspective (Lewin, 1935, 1938) in which motivation stems from past experiences and is projected onto future plans (Lopata, 1986; Nydegger, 1986). Psychologists have thoroughly analysed this approach from a perspective of motivation (Nuttin, 1985), from a temporal horizon (Klineberg, 1968; Meade, 1971), or from the individual capacity to determine actions (Rotter and Mulray, 1965). Therefore, in a time line, the individual can plan for future projects and identify 'means–ends' that will lead him/her to reach personal objectives (Gjesme, 1981; Latham et al., 1988; Latham and Locke, 1991). Still, some authors believe that the rational way humankind uses to look at time – a way to impose time on his or her environment – remains against relative time as an intrinsic value to nature (Seltzer and Troll, 1986).

In an earlier research on the role of time in individuals' actions, I have suggested challenging the hegemonic concept of an arrow of time PPF use to support human action (Bergadaà, 1990). We endorsed Schütz' perspective (1970) that is based on everyday experience, the meaning it bears for the individual and a reality rooted in the relation with its environment. We found that individuals think of themselves as either 'actors' or 'reactors' with regard to temporality (Bergadaà, 1990). The difference was that the reactors acted in order to *do* or to *achieve*, because planning is reassuring to them. In contrast, actors did not want to express their plan of action; they knew what they wanted to *be*

or *to become*; their actions were determined simultaneously by their past, present and future, with no marked preference for the present. Hence, the conclusion was that the temporal model of PPF could not be applied to all situations. Making projects is not a dominant behaviour in our everyday life. Moreover, the temporal line cannot be considered as an abstract concept independent from the environment. Although the information generated from a specific environment remains permanent, the way the individual perceives its need for communication generates a constant improvement of the way he or she interacts with the surroundings (Schütz, 1970). In another research, I used a representative sample of managers from the business world (Bergadaà, 2000). The objective was to observe how each of the managers viewed their behaviours within the project's perspective (Schütz, 1932/1967). From the data, we deduced three perspectives. (1) *The continuous future:* the first parts of the respondents consider their lives as fully compatible with their future. They think that their background (degrees, lifestyle, etc.) enables them to adapt to current/upcoming events. Therefore, those managers behave in a synchronic manner. They are all fully aware of this and are afraid that this self-satisfaction syndrome may reduce their efficiency. (2) *The unpredictable future:* The second group of respondents thinks that real breaks from the past can happen in the upcoming future, or are already happening. These respondents seem to perceive the diachrony as well as the synchrony of their current situation. (3) *The organized future:* The third group is made up of respondents who integrated a need for evolution in their professional life in the recent past, and are getting prepared for potentially upcoming ones. For these respondents their actions lie within the diachronic perspective. Hence, we deduce that the dominant model for a temporal line that is coming from the past and heading towards the future cannot be applied to all individuals. Therefore our first proposition is:

> Proposition 1: The PPF time line cannot be applied to all. Depending on the situation, some individuals would fall under the diachronic model, while others would be under a synchronic perspective.

## The Status of 'Present'

Present-time has been the focus of research across disciplines and areas of expertise. Hence, it has been central to many philosophical debates. For Bergson (1922/1992, 1889/2003), the key feature of human action remains duration. Bergson (1907/1911: 9) writes, 'If I want to mix a glass of sugar and water, I must, willy-nilly, wait until the sugar melts.' Duration consists of a series of interconnected moments experienced in a purely subjective manner; it is no longer a mathematical concept outside the individual. It coincides with a state of consciousness. However, for Bachelard (1932), the reality of the present lies in

the immediate moment, which is tangible and measurable. The use of clocks is prompted by this temporality. For Bergson, an opponent of this approach, objective time is independent from the individual perspective. He recognizes that, at another level of consciousness, individuals can segment duration in discrete moments, or a series of specific instants. In this case, time supports pragmatic action. Bachelard concludes that duration does not exist, since all we have are a series of instants in succession.

The concept of social time is also a topic that has been widely debated. A first conceptualization of the present has been the suggestion of 'eternal' present, symbol of duration. This perspective was brought forward among others by the ethnologist, Hall (1976). He introduces the eternal present as mode of time in which individuals consistently replicate models of structured behaviour. This refers to traditional rural communities in our western countries and to working in traditional jobs. This behaviour is also common to the craftsman whose objective is to produce a 'beautiful craft': his/her action will take all the time necessary to produce the desired result. He or she 'leaves time to time' as in the popular French saying. However, present-time as studied by sociologists and economists is the time of action. One of the most traditional viewpoints is that of Becker (1965) who suggests that we must coordinate the allocation of time segments and activities in order to generate satisfaction. The present's aspect of action has led to a lot of research, for instance about *monochrony* (ability to do one task at the time) or *polychrony* (ability to perform many tasks at the time) of individuals (Kaufman et al., 1991), others about the relationship between personal present and the environment (McGrath and Kelly, 1986).

In order to grasp the implications of the concept of 'present' in our field, we analysed data from the research among managers (Bergadaà, 2000). I found that the present has four distinct meanings. The first three follow the duration perspective: (1) *merged present time*: here, individuals consider the present as holder of the seeds of the future, which will allow them to see the results of their actions. It will also carry their personal and family history from the past. (2) *Controlled present time*: the main worry of the individuals here is to succeed in doing the task necessary for the success of personal projects. (3) *Framed present time*: decision makers have a vision about the 'rails of the future', they project different actions that will drive the functions of the company and ultimately lead to a common objective. Unexpectedly, the fourth addresses not the duration perspective, but the current moment. So, in (4) *split present time*, individuals attribute high importance to filling their present time with relationships with others. They like to enjoy the maximum possible amount of pleasurable moments while working. In fact, our research had led us to consider that Becker's model – of objective allocation and individual segmentation of time to dominant activity aspects – cannot be applied to all individuals. Based on these findings, we came up with a second statement.

Proposition 2: Present time consists of moments that enable the allocation of time to activities, or of duration in which the activity will take the necessary time for its completion.

## Social Time Frames

One of the weaknesses of Schütz's (1932/1967) recommendations that inspired my earlier research, as underlined by Muzzetto (2006), is that he remains at the level of the individual's relation to time. He does not provide a link to the social set-up of time. However, our society today comprises many coexisting temporal frames. Be it the Moroccan craftsman, the worker at the Russian automobile plant, the buyer from the multinational fast-moving consumer goods company, are all men and women of their time. Analysing the perspective of an accelerating world may seem inappropriate. The time reference of the universe remains unchanged, since the globe is still turning in the same fashion. New is that we can see that on this same globe many time frameworks created by humankind to manage their business coexist. Still, it is very common to compare the different societies based on their temporal differences (Huang, 2004). The different types of societies, which have overlapped in the course of the 20th century, have always been differentiated or even pitted against each other. Hence the distinction between 'traditional' societies (also known as 'archaic', 'family' or 'rural' societies, depending on the authors), 'modern' (or western) societies, 'postmodern' societies and, finally, 'emerging' (or hypermodern) societies. In fact, time is a social construct mirroring the link between individuals and their environment. This is why capitalistic societies have integrated individual time in their education programmes (Adam, 1990, 1998). To sum up the different temporal frameworks, we will look at our previous recommendation of axes based on the concepts of synchrony/diachrony and of instant/duration as illustrated in the Figure 1.

The first temporal framework would also be the oldest. It is based on the idea of a 'permanent present' that we find in many *traditional* societies. In this framework, time is synchronic, as both past and future lie within the present. Here time is also duration, since the renewal of activities is done regularly according to the changing of seasons. In this framework, the cycle of nature and human life cycle determine each other naturally. In societies like these, individuals live in an eternal present in which past and future are grasped independently from any principle of temporal causality (Hall, 1976, 1984). Nowadays, this framework is mainly found in third-world countries and regions with strong rural traditions. However, it is also present in places where traditional trades are still carried out. In the latter, the present is characterized by customs inherited from the past, which will endure in the future. In this frame-
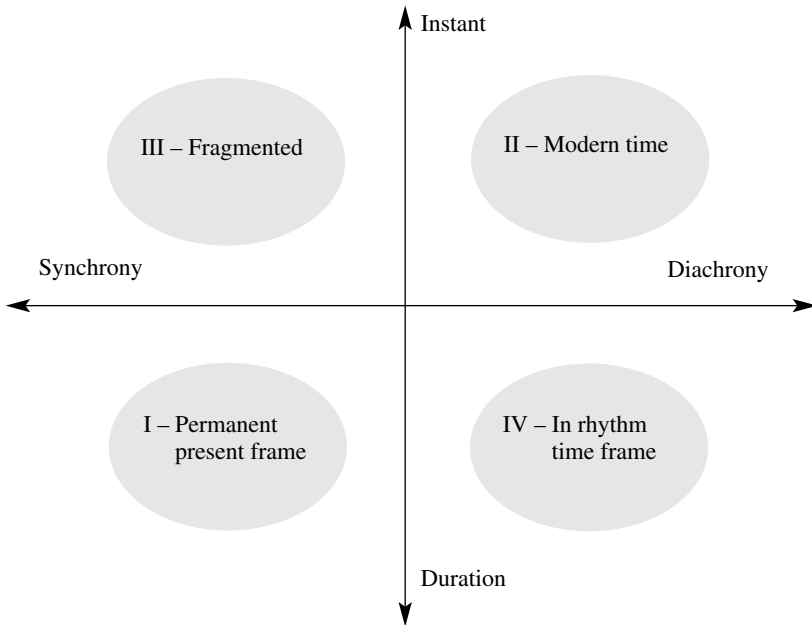
**FIGURE 1**
**Temporal frameworks and their positions**

work, with tradition playing a pivotal role, people tend to be craftsmen: they create objects with intrinsic quality. Their mutual recognition of the global quality of the exchanged service is the token of the success of their exchanges. In our societies, this type of framework is a cornerstone in for instance the industry for luxury goods. Nowadays, Swiss high-quality watches are still assembled in isolated valleys the way they were three centuries ago and the way they certainly will be in the future.

   The society of the past gave way to modernity heralded by the beginning of the 20th century. The *modern* temporal framework coincides with the manu-facturing boom in developed countries and the golden age of modern engineer-ing (Klein, 2004). Modernity can only fit into this diachronic perspective where projects implemented in the present are achieved in the future, thanks to resources from the past. Here, the only way to think of progress is in relation to the future and to the moment that enables the specific allocation of time units to certain activities. In this framework, time is functionalized. It is conceptualized

as definitely oriented towards the future: progress must come as quickly as possible. With the idea that time is linear, logical and rational, lack of progress for a company implies its disappearance. The future is a consequence of past and present causes; it also enables people to plan and make decisions about their future. Individuals are capable of apprehending their actions in their duration, and, by doing so, to allocate the time units necessary for achieving their goals. This framework – in which the notion of progress is overbearing – has been analysed and dissected systematically. In this context, the title of a publication by the Boston Consulting Group is significant: *Competing Against Time: How Time-Based Competition is Reshaping Global Markets* (Stalk and Hout, 1990). Progress results from the optimization of one's action and leads buyers and suppliers to opt for the absolute and objective arbitration of transaction prices: he/she who manages to impose his/her price ends up being the winner. This framework is typical of western economies, although time may be regarded differently in different sectors. While the framework of a buyer in the fashion industry may be four to five weeks, that of someone buying body parts in the automotive industry may be several months, or even up to a year. Nonetheless, the attempt at optimizing time is, in both cases, the basis of the transaction.

The *fragmented* temporal framework marks a clear break with the modern, linear and future-oriented notion of time prevailing in the western world (Klein, 2004). Here we talk about time as synchronic, since sense of urgency is the preferred mode of reference for actors who can change from one task to the next very quickly. However, time here is also 'moment', as this new framework corresponds to split actions that are not apprehended in their ephemeral character rather than in their duration. It has broken up with its predecessor and makes fun of them (see, for instance, Andy Warhol's artworks). This framework is that of the present, or even the instant. In this context, behaviour often becomes unpredictable. This behaviour has been the topic of many studies (e.g. Aubert, 1998, 2003; Laïdi, 2000). The only organizations adapted to this temporal framework are the ones with the ability to cope with crises: their responsiveness enables them to iron out difficult situations. In this framework, it is pointless to think in terms of 'loyalty', be it that of customers, partners or co-workers, since actors look for the optimal move in a given situation. This time frame has naturally led to the boom in e-commerce as buyers want to get rid of intermediaries as much as possible and purchase things off the Internet in one mouse click. The paragon for this trend is eBay, emerging as the leading e-commerce platform with 181 million visitors in 2005.

A fourth temporal framework – the 'in rhythm' framework – emerged in contrast to the fragmented framework, which, in turn, had appeared in opposition to its predecessor. This mode adopts a diachronic perspective; it leads actors to seek stability and duration. Its main characteristic is the ability of people and organizations to promote their will to stay firmly entrenched in their respective

environment (McGrath and Kelly, 1987). The search for stability becomes the individual's motto. Stability finds its roots in the ability of people to conceive duration even in times of emergencies or crises, enabling them to be responsive in case of failure and remain as flexible as possible. This framework, which has been dubbed 'hypermodern' by some, reconciles both the urgency imposed by the context and the temporal framework chosen by individual actors (Lipovetsky and Sébastien, 2004). Since globalization has now become an established fact, this framework is characterized by the colliding of different variable temporalities. Globalization has led to the coexistence of numerous reference time frames, with both global and local time frames intertwined. Temporal rhythms also vary according to situations, and the same person may modify his or her time scheme depending on the type of activities he or she engages in.

## Individual Action and Cultural Attitudes

After defining the framework according to the two proposed axes, I have assessed how individuals referred to it in a specific situation: that of engaging in cultural activities. According to Bourdieu (1966), direct access to legitimate culture is due to either objective appropriation (e.g. purchase of a work of art or a ticket to a show), or subjective appropriation (e.g. visiting an art gallery or a museum). He posits that, by choosing whether to conform to a cultural norm, people express their position and their belonging to a specific social group. Furthermore, they appropriate a competence granting them a form of symbolic power, which is accepted by others. Finally, a cultural activity is a practice of constructing social reality, that is, a subjective and objective means for people to communicate with each other and their surrounding world. We previously conducted a study involving people's attitudes with regard to theatre – a universal kind of cultural expression ever since antiquity (Bergadaà and Nyeck, 1993, 1995). In France, theatre takes on a profound cultural meaning through which individuals identify themselves (Bourdieu, 1979). In the Middle Ages, the population actively participated in the representations given by itinerant companies. Theatre remains a multifaceted activity: form of expression, leisure activity, status symbol, pedagogical tool, cultural object, etc. From their own perspective, and for a long time, museums were considered as repositories of the official culture and were only visited by a respectful audience. Today, many museums – most notably arts museums – still do not acknowledge the public as a central actor in their project. However, a shift in paradigm has occurred and offers an alternative; for instance, the emergence of museums that deal with important social themes (e.g. ecology, primitive art, etc.). They are an interface between society and the scientific community. Their legitimacy comes from the

fact that they have to answer the public's demands (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999).

This part of my research assesses the meaning people give to the two activities using a methodology that stems from ethnomethodology. Because they create reality, human beings are also capable of verbalizing it, both for themselves and for others (Garfinkel, 1967, 1988). This basic principle of ethnomethodology has led me to investigate the following question: how do individuals express their actions in one of the temporal frameworks as defined above? To answer this question, the following aspects, analysed in my literature review, have to be taken into account: what meaning do individuals give to the temporal framework of their own actions? What is their view of time as per the PPF logic? What is their position related to the present? After the assessment of those attitudes, I have observed how cultural activities lie within the temporal framework. My last question therefore is 'how do people develop the temporal meaning they ascribe to cultural activities?'

In order to answer these questions, I have re-analysed data from two specific researches with similar methodologies in two different countries (France and Switzerland). The two samples are now reviewed in light of the temporal framework exposed earlier on the one hand and in terms of the importance of the frameworks in people's cultural activities on the other hand. The first analysis of cultural activities had to do with culture in general and people's attitudes towards theatre (Bergadaà and Nyeck, 1995). Fifteen in-depth interviews were conducted with people who went to the theatre more than five times a year. The second study, carried out in Switzerland, involved people who were going to the museum, either on their own initiative or as part of a package tour. Twenty in-depth interviews were conducted. I used a similar interview process in both studies. In this kind of research, a guide is only used as input.[1] The respondents speak openly about themselves and the way they construct their lives through cultural elements. They do so regardless of their educational or social background. In addition, they can speak unambiguously about the way they envisage theatre and museums.[2]

Once the respondents were identified as having opted for either one of the four frameworks, elements relating to the meaning they give to culture were analysed. The aim was to underline its structuring dimension consecutively to understand the link between temporal frameworks on the one hand, and cultural attitudes developed by individuals, on the other. The purpose of the analysis was also to determine the different individual profiles with regard to theatre and museums. The concepts that have been developed are thus both context-specific and reflexive: cultural activities acquire meaning in the light of this personal conceptualization.

## Conceptual Proposition about Individual Profiles

People have good reasons to be what they are. With regard to temporal frameworks, the profiles have been developed by considering the following dimensions: (1) attitude with regard to time; (2) attitude with regard to fate; (3) plans; (4) complexity of the world; (5) perceived risk. Cultural profiles have been induced by analysing the following elements: (1) attitude with regard to culture; (2) origin of culture; (3) knowledge content acquisition; (4) relationship to others. The following factors have been used to identify attitudes towards cultural activities: (1) type of theatrical form and relation sought; (2) type of museum form and relation sought; (3) relationship to others.

Based on the respondent's reaction to these themes, I came up with four profiles of individuals that correspond to the quadrants identified by my temporal axes. The Table 1 presents a synthesis of the results, followed by further analysis in the upcoming pages.

### Quadrant 1: 'Permanent present' and 'reactor profile'

In the two research projects, the first analysis of temporal framework isolated people who locate their actions in a 'permanent present'. In this category, individuals identify themselves as living mainly in the present because they have certain fears as to the future. Nonetheless, their past is still very vivid in their minds. They accept their fate and avoid planning anything. They sometimes have dreams, but their plans remain rather vague. They think today's world is a little bit crazy and worry about social issues in the future. Thus, they remain very suspicious of any new piece of information and reject anything that seems 'strange' to them as that could challenge their heuristic schemas. They react to events that occur but do not anticipate surprises in their lives. Therefore, these people look for high degrees of convergence with known situations.

In the two research projects, the second analysis, which focused on cultural profiles, identified people who are 'reactors' with regard to cultural activities (this is in line with my results from 1990). Generally speaking, reactors consider that one has to 'possess a certain amount of knowledge'. They think it is up to the parents to pass on the will to acquire culture. For these people, education is somewhat of an obligation, except if it is presented as a game. Their relationships to others are characterized by the pursuit of security and stability. Solidarity in their immediate reference group (family, friends, and neighbours) is important and is at the heart of their attachment to the culture of their family and their peer group.

The analysis of attitudes towards cultural activities showed that reactors like going to the theatre to see entertaining comedies. They look forward to unwinding; the atmosphere of leisure, pleasure and emotions is what they are looking

**TABLE 1**
**Temporal frameworks and their characteristics in western societies**

| Temporal framework | 'Permanent present' | 'Modern' time frame | 'Fragmented' time frame | 'in rhythm' time frame |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lived time | Present | Short- and medium-term future | Immediate present | Three zones |
| Attitude towards destiny | Due do fate | Due to oneself | Due to chance and oneself | Due to oneself |
| Complexity of the environment | Complicated and disquieting world | Complicated and disturbing world | Exciting and simple world | Simple world |
| Cultural profiles | Reactors | Rational actors | Intuitive actors | Creators |
| Meaning of culture | Imposed amount of knowledge | Intellectual enrichment; socially encouraged behaviour | Eclecticism; personal development | Personal development as a challenge |
| Meaning of theatre activity | Entertainment; pleasure derived from big events | Acquisition of substantial culture | Entertainment; dream; strong experiential relation | Incentive for intellectual enrichment |
| Meaning of museum activity | Obligation; constraint | Safeguard of culture | Propensity to big events | Emotion; answers an urge to discover |

for. In the study about museums, this profile was found with people who have a liking for big local events. Museums are living memories; they constitute an opportunity for communion in which it is important that children participate. Since reactors do not particularly want to learn or cultivate their minds, they usually go to museums as part of a package tour. At the end of the day, the most important thing for them is to be able to say 'I have seen it all' and not to feel frustrated at still having a lot of things left to see. Guided tours reassure them since they reinforce the feeling of togetherness with the other people participating in this collective event. The feeling of togetherness depends essentially on the guide's ability to create an atmosphere conducive to interactions between the different group members. They also appreciate museums through the souvenirs they can buy and take home with them. That way, they can revive their memo-

ries of the museum at home. These people are not involved in theatre, rather they prefer comedy shows for fun and leisure.

## Quadrant 2: 'Modern time' and 'organized actors profile'

The first analysis of temporal frameworks revealed people who locate their actions in the 'modern' framework. These individuals say they live in the immediate future to avoid thinking about their past with nostalgia. They think the future can be favourable to them provided they manage to plan realistically and fulfil their engagements. They do not believe in chance and hardly believe in destiny: they think they more or less control what happens to them. They find today's world complex, but this does not bother them, as long as they have a clearly defined line of conduct. Nonetheless, they try avoiding surprises by not putting themselves in risky situations.

The analysis of cultural profiles identified respondents from this temporal quadrant as 'organized actors' with regard to cultural activities on offer. These individuals consider culture as part of their intellectual and social duties. Culture is the result of a certain amount of knowledge one should regularly acquire in order to remain in line with one's background. They accept new pieces of information as long as these supplement their knowledge and, at the same time, are in agreement with their opinions and attitudes. Despite the fact that they envisage cultural choices as a matter of taste, to them knowledge is mainly represented ritualistically in institutional and social contexts. If a piece of information makes them uneasy, they tend to reject it. If news about the environment is unpleasant, they avoid thinking about it. In addition, they like being part of groups who share the same set of beliefs. In fact, these groups of social belonging (family, friends) give them input as to what they should know.

The analysis showed that, because culture to them is the cornerstone of civilization, going to the museum seems of paramount importance. Their need to learn is fostered by the trust they place in the people in charge of museums. What they like in a museum are its beautiful setting, its intelligent design, its crystal-clear visit and the fact that it is nicely done up. The use of signs, written comments and historical indications is also a strong point to them. Invitations to come visit 'well packaged' temporary exhibitions are considered enticing. They particularly like 'cultural' guided tours. Visits to museums are often described as 'pleasant moments to share with one's family'. Because it emphasizes social recognition, theatre makes it possible for organized actors to acquire substantial culture. They like to spend some of their free time on intellectual or artistic activities, as long as new content is easily assimilated. People with this profile tended to regard museums, with their symbolic representation, as safeguards of the cultural heritage. Arts museums are the ones that naturally spring to their minds.

## Quadrant 3: 'Fragmented' time frame and 'intuitive actors profile'

The analysis of temporal framework allows us to induce respondents who locate their action in a 'fragmented' time frame. These respondents enjoy their life. For this reason, they live in the present that they find exciting. They are absolutely not nostalgic. They like to think about their future. However, they live intensely all moments of their lives. In fact, they like fragmenting their present in order to engage in multiple activities and discover new challenges. In the short term, they have various kinds of plans, but they do not locate them in any given planning scheme, which would prevent them from spontaneously seizing new opportunities. They do not really believe in destiny. They think they can become what they are able to become by leveraging the opportunities that are available to them. They are self-confident and very spontaneous. They find the world complex because of its syncretism of sports, money, the media, politics, etc. However, they feel human beings can adapt to anything and that complexity can lead to enrichment.

The analysis of cultural profiles highlighted the respondents of this third quadrant as being 'intuitive actors'. In terms of culture, they constantly try having a better understanding of society, challenging and improving them. Cultural activities have to be opportunities for them to interact socially, discover new countries, etc. They try improving their personality and broadening their ideas by acquiring new knowledge. They accept the idea that new information may dramatically change the way they think. They like diversity, and their knowledge has to reflect this for them to be able to achieve improvement from a personal but, most importantly, from a human point of view, since they like meeting new people. Society is a constant entertainment for them: it is alive, interesting and they are actors improvising a part.

The analysis carried out determined the kind of museums the intuitive actors appreciate. The involvement of intuitive actors stems from their liking for big events. They are happy with the idea that visitors may get a feel for the objects on display, as they were 100 or 1,000 years before, since history becomes 'alive'. They are reluctant to take guided tours: they are afraid the guide will misunderstand their needs and background knowledge. Very often, their taste for social events and their curiosity has developed in the bosom of their families. Museums also give them the opportunity to share their impressions with their relatives and friends, since the network of social interactions go well beyond the duration of the visit. Concerning theatre, the show must meet their hedonistic need for diversity: leisure is perceived as a means to dream and entertain oneself. The experiential relation must therefore be rich and varied. They like specifically to go for a stroll, stop in front of an original show, watch musicians or actors trying on their costumes. They prefer the live street shows to the formal theatres.

## Quadrant 4: 'In rhythm' temporal framework and 'creators profile'

The analyses of time frames lead to the conclusion that, for a set of respondents, actions occur rhythmically. They feel that present events constitute a process of constant evolution and development. The present is made up of both the past and the future, which are constantly manifested. They would like to live in the future, but the future worries them. They perceive the world as being complex and distressing; however, they do not fear directly for themselves: they mention risks for the youth and their future in a world prone to extremism. However, they do not think about the underlying risks for themselves. As far as they are concerned, they think of themselves as intuitive; they believe in chance and say they are able to seize opportunities as they come along.

The analysis of cultural profiles identified people looking for this kind of temporal framework with a 'creator' profile. These individuals think of culture as the main means for one's own personal and spiritual improvement. They have a clear understanding of their centres of interest. They say they look for anything that can challenge previous cognitive perspectives. Intellectual challenges motivate them as they open up new intellectual worlds. They look for the meaning of any new piece of information and tend to interpret it immediately and personally. They do not trust knowledge fads and short-term social movements or events. They think of knowledge as a multidisciplinary and flexible whole, which they are happy to grasp in a personal way. Their choices are guided by their intellectual and emotional sense of satisfaction. Creators like the idea of 'personal improvement' and, therefore, favour an intimate notion of culture where knowledge is self-acquired and comes to feed their intellectual and personal evolution. Other individuals seem to play a negligible part in their acquisition of culture.

These respondents are excited to go to the museum, to get acquainted with artists and their works, or go to a specific event. Museums thus quench their thirst for discovery. They think that understanding in detail the artworks they are seeing is a way of perceiving the passing of time and understanding the 'relay' being passed on from one generation to the next. They rarely go on guided tours. What they miss in museums are employees, who can give museum goers relevant cultural information, and with whom they could engage in a one-on-one relation. Creators are curious and sensitive – two characteristics that are often valued by their direct environment. A visit to the museum ought to be shared. Thus, they talk about the visit and their impressions with their friends and relatives. However, social interactions are limited and few since the beauty of a museum comes from the 'inside', which enables creators to be at one with a work of art or a message. The analysis also established the fact that, for creators, theatre is an activity whose main purpose is intellectual improvement. It fosters their personal development and generates new stimulations. They choose to be eclectic, and therefore like to be surprised.

## Discussion and Conclusion

While building my theoretical framework based on the review of literature of former researchers, I found out that premises ought to be challenged. This challenge inevitably leads to the use of qualitative methodology and inductive analysis, because of the need to avoid reproduction of previous frameworks. As a result, I have used a method inspired by ethnomethodology. The main advantage of this method is that it enables the observation of the concepts under study beyond metaphors and individual mental representations. This has allowed me to induce both the underlying temporal framework of individuals, and to observe how their reaction as players in context. Both earlier and current research results confirm the two initial propositions:

> Proposition 1: The time line PPF is not applicable to all individuals of our society. Some individuals conceive a more diachronic framework, while others would prefer a synchronic perspective.

> Proposition 2: The present time could be made of moments that enable the allocation of time to different activities. They could also be made of duration in which the activity will take the time necessary for its completion.

Whereas it is common to oppose time perspectives that have overlapped in the course of the 20th century, the present research suggests that there is no single temporal framework for people who share the same geographic and cultural space. I did not encounter the frame of an accelerating time made of breaks whose future horizon would be shorter than the past (Brose, 2004). On the contrary, individuals are able to choose their own temporal framework. In the 21st century, people living in western countries are privileged for that matter since they can live, choose and act in the time frame that is best suited to their purposes. Provided people have the necessary intellectual and financial means to choose, they determine the temporal framework that best corresponds to their actions. If need be, they can even change according to their life circumstances. It is also possible that one same person will locate his/her actions in one time frame or another, according to the circumstances. For instance, the same temporal framework may not correspond to both work and vacations. The research presented in this article allows me to suggest two new propositions:

> Proposition 3: The attitude towards the line PPF on the one hand and towards the present on the other hand, lead us to establish a framework bounded by two axes: The axis of synchrony–diachrony, and the axis of instant–duration.

> Proposition 4: These two axes determine four quadrants from the temporal framework that I named: 'Permanent present' frame, 'Modern Time' frame, 'Fragmented Time' frame, and 'in Rhythm Time' frame.

To understand how these temporal frameworks intervene in the cultural positioning of people, the object 'culture' was considered simultaneously as the result of the official theatre and museum culture and as that of the production of culture by the audience at the time of the encounter with the cultural offer (Bergadaà and Nyeck, 1995; Gainer, 1995; Rowe et al., 2002). The research shows the respective influence of socialization and formal education (as perceived by the respondents) on the meaning given to culture. The role of the sociocultural context, which grants more or less importance to socialization and education in constructing cultural meaning, can be categorized along those four categories. Depending on individuals, this construction is influenced primarily by family, friends, the environment or the individual's formal education. This result is in line with the results found elsewhere on the development of symbolic consumption (Belk et al., 1982). The present research seems to confirm proposals by other researchers in the same paradigm: the meaning assigned to theatre and museums is as much the result of the visitor's creation as the result of the cultural service provider's offer, if not more so. Therefore, I will suggest a last proposition:

> Proposition 5: There is a matching between individual profiles as to the cultural activities and the underlying time frames. The 'Reactor Profile' belongs to a 'Permanent Present'; the 'Organized Actors Profile' belongs to a 'Modern Time'; the 'Intuitive Actors Profile' belongs to a 'Fragmented Time Frame' and the 'Creators Profile' belongs to an 'In rhythm' Temporal Framework.

Obviously, the present research is limited because of the structure of the sample (qualitative research, small samples, research done in neighbouring European countries, etc.). However, these intrinsic limits of the research from the past 15 years call for further research. Other studies could test if differences in religious or cultural backgrounds account for different attitudes with regard to temporal frameworks or profiles. Since the four profiles identified reflect different aspects of our society, it may be of interest to know if people in, say, African or Asian countries conceive time and culture in ways that reflects specific aspects of their own societies (Huang, 2004).

   To conclude, I observe that individuals participate in the production of the social reality that surrounds them. With increasing levels of schooling, education and standards of living, a new type of consumer has emerged. This social actor learns how to live with new trade and communication paradigms. Thanks to easier access to information, his/her power of action constantly increases (Ratneshwar and Mick, 2005). Individuals thus produce the meaning they ascribe to their own 'product consumption' (Moorman and Rust, 1999). If one considers that individuals produce well-being, hence, personal and interpersonal value, the proposal of a new kind of relational trade (Gummesson, 1993) should be considered from an ontological point of view, and not only in terms of the

company/customer relations. The point is to discover reasons to determine whether an individual wishes to engage in a relation with a company offering cultural services. The four profiles identified in the present research show different degrees of openness with regard to cultural relations. Yet, when it comes to cultural offerings, our field mainly opts for management and marketing practices simply derived from the practices of volume retailers (Andreasen and Belk, 1980). My suggestion is to consider the dimensions that determine people's relationship to cultural activities so that organizations in charge of culture may be able to define a rich relationship from a human point of view. Culture can only be construed as a co-creation process including everybody.

## Notes

1. In this kind of research, systematic questions are hardly ever asked, as they are written on paper. They are used to prod the respondents to answer spontaneously. While interviewers stick to their meaning, they may decide to modify them according the respondent's personality. Empathy in the field is a feature of this kind of research. The questions are not necessarily asked in a given order; they usually follow the course of the respondent's answers. The interviewer's encouragements ('yes . . .', 'mhm . . .', etc.) also participate in the informative quality of the answers given. Guiding sets of questions are clustered, i.e. A – topics determining the respondent's temporal positioning; B – topics determining the respondent's cultural positioning: C – topics to determine theatre and museum activities.

2. The content of the transcribed interviews was analysed with a view to identify temporal frameworks. For further details about the analysis, please get in touch with the author, or refer to the original articles published in French – see references. The aim was to recognize an underlying organizational pattern common to the individuals. When conducting inductive analyses, researchers are never totally active or passive, since they are part of the research design (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). It is therefore of utmost importance to check for potential interpretation biases (Kirk and Miller, 1986). This was tested at the end of the analyses by two independent researchers who did not know anything of the results and were not specialists in the field under study. They were asked to categorize the interview syntheses in the profiles established previously.

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