Australian National University

Silicon Valley's Quest for Temporal Optimization

Wednesday 12 February 5–7pm

Speaker

Prof Judy Wajcman

(Anthony Giddens
Chair of Sociology, LSE)

Introduced by

Prof Genevieve Bell

Director, 3A Institute, ANU

Location

Sir Roland Wilson Building
Lecture Theatre
120 McCoy Circuit ANU
Acton A.C.T.

**Light refreshments will be served
following the lecture**

More information

Participants must register:
sociology.anu.edu.au or
bit.ly/2RRsmyE

There is a widespread assumption that digital technologies are radically altering our perception of time: that we live too fast, that time is scarce and that the pace of everyday life is accelerating beyond our control. The iconic image that abounds is that of the frenetic, technologically tethered, iPhone-addicted citizen. Paradoxically, digital devices are seen as both the cause of time pressure as well as the solution.

This talk will argue that while there is no temporal logic inherent in technologies, artifacts do play a central role in the constitution of time regimes. We make time with machines. I will illustrate this argument by exploring the vision of 'intelligent' time management that drives the design of digital calendars. Drawing on interviews with software engineers, I will argue that the shift from print to electronic calendars embodies a longstanding belief that technology can be can be profitably employed to control and manage time. This belief continues to animate contemporary sociotechnical imaginaries of what automation will deliver. In the current moment, calendars are increasingly conceived of as digital assistants whose behavioural algorithms can solve life's existential problem – how best to organise the time of our lives. In sum, the aim here is to contribute to STS scholarship on the role of technology in shaping people's experience of time.

Judy Wajcman is the Anthony Giddens Professor of Sociology at the London School of Economics. She was President of the Society for Social Studies of Science (2009-2011) and is currently a Visiting Professor at the Oxford Internet Institute. Her scholarly interests encompass the sociology of work and employment, science and technology studies, gender theory, and organizational analysis. Her current research engages with theories about the impact of digital technologies on time poverty and the speeding up of everyday life. She is the 2013 recipient of the William F. Ogburn Career Achievement Award of the American Sociological Association. She has been appointed as Turing Fellow and Principal Investigator on the Women in Data Science and Artificial Intelligence research project at the Alan Turing Institute. She is a member of the AI100 Standing Committee **ai100.stanford.edu**

Her book *Pressed for Time: The Acceleration of Life in Digital Capitalism* was the 2017 winner of the Ludwik Fleck prize of the Society for Social Studies of Science. Professor Wajcman is perhaps best known for her monographs that address the relationship between gender, technology and organization: *The social shaping of technology: how the refrigerator got its hum (with Donald McKenzie) (1985); Feminism confronts technology (1991); Managing like a man: women and men in corporate management (1998); TechnoFeminism (2004).*

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