

*Dynamic Time
and Creative Inquiry
in Organizational Change*

An Improvisational Conference

June 18-21, 2002
Essex Conference Center
Cape Ann, Massachusetts

Sponsors
Center for Creative Inquiry
Organizational Development and Change Division,
Academy of Management

Organizations depend on knowledge to survive and prosper. But knowledge is limited by initial assumptions. One core set of assumptions involves time. Conventional approaches to time end up treating the future in past-centered terms. In a world of permanent flux, this can be a fatal error.

This conference aims to activate a different, experience-centered approach to time—one that lets new ways of knowledge emerge.

We expect this approach will have personal and professional benefits for each participant. We also expect that participants will gain valuable insights into how to open the experience of time—and the availability of knowledge—within organizations. Such insights will find applications in the fields of organization development, organization theory, and strategy..

**The conference will be limited
to thirty participants**

The following participants will attend by invitation

Barbara Adam, Cardiff School of Social Science

Alan Bluedorn, University of Missouri

Mary Jo Hatch, University of Virginia

Jack Petranker, Center for Creative Inquiry

Bill Torbert, Boston College

CONFERENCE THEME AND SPIRIT

The usual ways of coping with the reality of constant and ever accelerating change are based on controlling time. Time is seen as either a scarce resource or a hostile force. But that view is coming under challenge. The 2000 AOM Conference in Toronto, which took time as its central theme, reflected a healthy openness to alternative approaches. Following on this conference, the AMR issue for October 2001 makes Time and Organizational Research its special focus.

Building on this foundation, the Dynamic Time and Creative Inquiry Conference will bring together a small group of participants to experiment with experiential inquiry into time. Over the course of three days (Tuesday afternoon through Friday morning), we hope to make the dynamic of time available differently.



WHAT IS AN IMPROVISATIONAL CONFERENCE?

Anyone familiar with standard academic conferences knows that the most fruitful parts of any conference happen spontaneously, “between times,” in the hallways and the bars. This conference is meant to be an “all between-times” conference. It will be planned to maximize creative interactions, offering participants the chance to engage collectively with an immediacy that the usual academic structures discourage. It will take place in a setting conducive to such interactions.

By proceeding in this way, we hope to engage the dynamic of time and discover what knowledge it offers. The conference format is thus inseparable from the conference theme. We want to explore what it means to take improvisation beyond the level of an appealing metaphor (see box). The interests and concerns of participants will shape the conference program. Formal presentations will be kept to a minimum, and small-group interactions encouraged. The aim throughout will be to stimulate inquiry and interaction rather than communicate information.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE CONFERENCE

Keeping in mind the improvisational structure of the conference, here are some elements that might well come into play:

Group discussions that center on papers submitted in advance and posted for discussion on the website of the Center for Creative Inquiry. Authors will not “present” their papers, but will chair discussions on the themes, perspectives, or approaches they contain.

Experiential and interactive sessions/workshops.

Discussion by participants of their own work in progress (e.g. consulting interactions or case studies) that shed light on how temporal dynamics and views of time influence organizational change processes.

APPLYING TO PARTICIPATE

Those wishing to attend should send a statement of 500 words or less indicating the applicant’s interests in the conference theme, and how the applicant’s interests and background will enrich the improvisational nature of the conference. Applicants who submit statements by January 15, 2002 will be given preference. Deadline is June 1, 2002.

SUBMISSIONS

All submissions will be peer-reviewed. Three kinds of submissions will be considered:

A full length paper, accompanied by a statement explaining how as an author you would design a highly interactive session that engages participants in creative inquiry and dialogue related to the substance of your paper. Please submit a 500 word abstract by February 15, together with plans for making the session interactive. Authors will be notified of acceptance by March 1, 2002; final papers will be due May 15, 2002.

Proposals for experiential and interactive sessions/workshops that explore the dynamic of time and allied questions. Potentially relevant approaches include phenomenology, action inquiry, embodied inquiry, contemplation, and experiential exercises or thought experiments that evoke new ways

IS MANAGEMENT REALLY LIKE JAZZ IMPROVISATION?

Jazz improvisation as a metaphor for managing the organization has enjoyed considerable vogue in recent years. But it is easy to overlook a fundamental distinction. A jazz band plays for the sake of playing: not to get to the end of the piece, but to make beautiful music along the way. On the face of it, the same is not true for organizations. An organization operates in order to achieve some end. What happens along the way is secondary.

Does this mean the metaphor is misguided? Not if the best way to achieve the desired end is indeed "making beautiful music." But putting the matter this way raises a new set of questions. How do organizational actors have to engage the reality of the organization in order to have the jazz experience? A good place to start looking is temporal experience. What are the rhythms of interaction? What is happening in the immediacy of the moment? How do past and future join forces, and how does each shape the other? Asking at this level engages a deep structure of improvisation that may bring the jazz-improvisation metaphor to life.

experiencing and understanding time. Submit a 2-3 page proposal by February 15, 2002.

Discussion sessions where participants present work in progress (research, case studies, emerging theoretical ideas) that focuses on time and temporal issues in organizational life. Submit a 3-page proposal by February 15, 2002.

DOCTORAL STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

The ODC division of the Academy of Management is offering two \$500 scholarships for eligible doctoral students. The registration fee will be waived for scholarship recipients. To apply, please send a 2-3 page statement outlining your personal and professional interests, particularly your interest in the study of time in organizational life. Deadline is February 15, 2002.

REGISTRATION AND ACCOMMODATIONS

Registration for the conference will begin at 2 PM Tuesday, June 18. The afternoon is free for informal gatherings and to stroll the grounds. Dinner will be served at 6 PM, and the first scheduled session begins at 7:30 PM. The conference concludes Friday at 12 noon. Registration fee is \$325 before March 1, 2002, \$375 thereafter. Full-time students at accredited business schools or management programs are eligible for a reduced fee of \$225/275 (Please provide suitable proof of enrollment.) Everyone accepted to participate will be asked to submit a registration form, available at the creativeinquiry.org website after February 15. Cancellations prior to June 1 receive a full refund less a \$75 processing fee. No refunds after June 1.

The Essex Conference Center is located less than 45 minutes from downtown Boston, on 18 acres of wooded land surrounded by 250 acres of conservation land, with a short walk to Essex Bay. Housing and meals have been reserved at the Center at the following rates: \$189 a day for private room and all meals; \$169 a day for shared room and all meals; \$69 a day for meals (and breaks) only; \$25 for an individual meal. Private rooms are limited so book early. Participants are strongly encouraged to book housing at the Center in order to promote collegiality and informal exchanges.

Payment for room and lodging should be made directly to the Center for Creative Inquiry, and may be combined with the payment of the conference registration fee. To reserve a room, we must receive a \$300 deposit no later than June 1; rooms after that will be provided on an as available basis.

CONFERENCE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Ronald Purser, San Francisco State University
Jack Petranker, Center for Creative Inquiry
Barbara Adam, Cardiff School of Social Science
Alan Bluedorn, University of Missouri, Columbia
Mary Jo Hatch, University of Virginia
Alfonso Montuori, California Institute of Integral Studies
Christian Noss, Freie Universität Berlin
William Torbert, Boston College

INQUIRIES AND SUBMISSIONS

All applications, submissions, and inquiries should be sent to programs@creativeinquiry.org. Those submitting a full length paper should follow the standard Academy of Management guidelines (30 pages maximum) and should submit their papers electronically in Microsoft Word or compatible format as an attachment to an e-mail.

The Conference program and other practical information will be made available on this website and also on the ODC webpage (www.aom.pace.edu/odc); please check back for details.

For further information, you can also contact: Ronald Purser, Dept. of Management, San Francisco State University, 1600 Holloway Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94132, (office) 415/338-2380, (fax) 415/338-0501, (Email) rpurser@sfsu.edu or Jack Petranker, Center for Creative Inquiry, 2625 Alcatraz #605, Berkeley, CA 94705, 510-849-0971, petranker@att.net.

