

Temporalities of the Political / Zeitlichkeiten des Politischen

Meeting and Workshop of the dgv-Commission “Europeanization_ Globalization:

Ethnographies of the Political”

with

Stef Jansen (University of Manchester, for the entire workshop) and **Arjun Appadurai**
(NYU/HU Berlin, for the PhD/PostDoc seminar on Friday morning)

Thursday, 22.2.2018, from 2.00 pm until Friday, 23.2.2018, 5.00 pm

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“Hope/ing”, “yearning”, “aspiring”, “anticipating”, “remembering” – anthropologists have developed different concepts to grasp temporality(ies) as a fundamental dimension of social practice and human coexistence. We are particularly interested in their relation to political configurations, projects and processes, such as “statehood”, “development”, “transformation”, “europeanization”, “austerity”, “crisis” or “capitalism”. Drawing on such debates, this meeting aims at engaging with the following questions: Does an analytical engagement with “temporality(ies)” enable a better understanding of the conditions, developments and effects of political processes, which progress at speeds ranging from “business as usual”, to stagnancy or revolutionary acceleration? How and in what ways are temporal orders politically created, controversially negotiated, and empirically tangible as forms of governance? How does our perspective on “europeanization” change if we examine the spatiotemporal structures created along the external borders of the EU as geopolitically produced “waiting rooms”? What role does the generation of visions for the future or the mobilization of utopias play in legitimizing, anticipating, implementing or even subverting political projects? How is “hope” for possible future political action structured socially, symbolically and materially? Can an ethnographic focus on the intersections of different – e.g. biographical, institutional, ecological, religious – temporalities lead to a different notion of “simultaneity” and “coevalness”? And does it make sense to differentiate between different “modes of assembling” in order to ethnographically trace “policies” as processes of formation?

Temporalities not only arouse our interest as cultural, social and symbolic constructions, but also as objects and effects of scientific knowledge as well as in terms of their material and infrastructural dimensions. Of particular importance to us is the question of how different temporal structures and concepts as well as their relation to the political can be examined ethnographically. The meeting will address this question in four different formats:

- A **keynote speech and presentation of the book** *Yearnings in the Meantime. ‘Normal Lives’ and the State in a Sarajevo Apartment Complex* (Berghahn 2015) by Stef Jansen (University of Manchester) on Thursday evening.
- A **joint discussion** based on selected texts to be read by all, on temporality as a condition and general objective of anthropological research and the question of “simultaneity”; on the relationships between politically-evoked temporal structures and everyday lives/practices; on the concept on “temporal reasoning” as a potential ethnographic unit of analysis; on different understandings of “aspiration”, “hope”,

“yearning” and the contribution of the political in generating them. The joint text work will take place on Thursday and Friday afternoon.

- A **PhD/PostDoc seminar** to discuss empirical material and conceptual conclusions from ongoing ethnographic research projects on Friday morning (further information below).
- The **actual meeting of the commission** to discuss current affairs and to plan future activities and foci on Friday afternoon.

To register for the meeting of the commission and the entire workshop, please send a short e-mail by 8 February 2018 to adamjens@cms.hu-berlin.de. The final program and a selection of scanned readings will be available from January 22, 2018 and sent to all participants.

Call for PhD/Postdoc Seminar

Following the questions posed above, this seminar will particularly focus on the discussion of ethnographic material and experiences from current research projects. We suggest to sharpen our conceptualization of “TEMPORALITY(IES)”, especially in relation to three possible points of departure in ethnographic research:

- PRACTICE – which is always temporally situated, links temporal dimensions and can be understood as an enactment of temporal structures/imaginings;
- MATERIALITY – which can be understood either as an inherent part or as an external dimension of “practice”; as well as, as an expression or residue of state/imperial promises for the future or as shapeable and controversial components of political projects;
- POLITICAL PROJECTS – which often represent powerful starting points of temporal structures, compete for narratives of temporal orders or can constitute general objectives for ethnographic work.

It is against this background that we wish to focus the discussions in this workshop on the following questions: Are these suitable starting points for looking at temporality ethnographically? How do we conceptualize the relationship of these three concepts to each other and to temporality(ies)? What do these respective approaches mean for their operationalization in ethnographic research, which especially aims at examining temporality(ies)?

We would like to discuss these questions together with **Stef Jansen** (Manchester) and **Arjun Appadurai** (New York / Berlin). In preparation, we invite you to send us a short abstract (max. 400 words) illustrating your ongoing research with regard to the topic outlined here and the empirical or conceptual issues which you are currently facing. We will select three of them to be discussed in more detail based on their ethnographic material and within the theoretical scope outlined here. All other participants are invited to participate in the discussions based on their current research. All abstracts will be compiled in form of a booklet and sent out to all participants for preparation.

Please, send your application and abstract to Janine Hauer janine.hauer@hu-berlin.de & Jens Adam adamjens@cms.hu-berlin.de by February 4, 2018.

Convenors: Jens Adam, Janine Hauer, Asta Vonderau, Michi Knecht, Jörg Niewöhner

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- Kleist N and Jansen S. (ed) (2016) Hope over Time - Crisis, Immobility and Future-Making. *History and Anthropology* 27.4, p. 373-467.
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- Stein, F. (2017): Selling Speed. In: Ders.: *Work, Sleep, Repeat. The Abstract Labour of German Management Consultants*. Bloomsbury.

Translated from German to English by Ulrike Flader.