



German  
Historical  
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London



## **Chronopolitics** **Time of Politics, Politics of Time, Politicized Time**

London, 7-9 May 2020

— *Call for Papers* —

Time is so deeply interwoven with all aspects of politics that its fundamental importance is frequently overlooked. Building on the work of Charles Maier and Christopher Clark, we define chronopolitics as research into ‘how politics is about time’ as well as what kind of time is ‘presupposed by politics’ (Clark), how the perception of time and change affect decision-making and how concepts of time and history give meaning and legitimacy to political actors, groups and ideas. However, instead of taking time as a given, we set out to analyse how it is socially and culturally constructed through political and scholarly practices.

On first glance, politics and time coincide as policy makers are constantly making decisions in the present, against the background of a past and in the name of a future. Yet, in order to scrutinize the nexus between time and politics more closely, it is necessary to differentiate. We are looking for submissions on the following dimensions/aspects of chronopolitics:

(1) The *time of politics* refers to the arena of the decision-making process and to the changing rhythms and durations within which politics take place. As George W. Wallis argued, the *time of politics* is a ‘time of transition’ in which political players lay the foundations of tomorrow or forgo doing so. It is subject to formalizations such as terms of offices or legislative sessions; its configuration is radically altered if the present is perceived as crisis, and it is structured by expectations and fears.

(2) The *politics of time* on the other hand refers to the regulation, synchronisation and allocation of time by politics. The object of this chronopolitical dimension is an allegedly objective, physical ‘clock time’, whose measurement and standardization both on national and global scales have lately been drawing much attention, as have also debates about calendar reforms, daylight saving time or the length of the working day. In the latter cases time figures as a ‘scarce social resource’, as Charles S. Maier notes, usage of which can be contested and distributed.

(3) *Politicized time* is time employed as a weapon of politics, as a means of legitimising one's own programme, challenging and discrediting political opponents or opposing political views. Whether advocating change or continuity, politicians refer as much to the past for orientation and legitimation, as they outline futures. Progressive versus conservative – the very categories of political differentiation since the French Revolution are temporal ones. Recently, Brexit and Trump have both been portrayed in terms of a temporal politics, as indicative of 'being stuck in the past' or the nostalgic yearning for a Golden Age.

(4) A subset of politicized time poses particularly pressing questions we hope to discuss, i.e. the *politics of (de)synchronisation*. Civilizing missions, development and modernizing projects – in the colonial periphery as well as at the nation's margins – were based on a temporalization of the other that Johannes Fabian aptly named the 'denial of coevalness'. Yet, while temporal exclusion and stratification lay at the heart of 'modern' chronopolitics, it also comprised the promise of coevalness. Chronopolitics was about fighting anachronism, making history and accelerating its course.

(5) When it comes to chronopolitics, historians as well as scholars of further 'historicist' disciplines such as anthropology neither were nor are mere observers. In fact, these disciplines are among the main producers of 'the characteristic images of history and temporal order' (Maier) that both inform chronopolitics and constitute its very object. Thus, we would like to critically reflect these images and – following the lead of Reinhart Koselleck, Achim Landwehr, Ethan Kleinberg and others – discuss alternatives to more or less hegemonic *historicist temporality*. We invite scholars to explore concepts such as pluritemporality but also to historicise chronopolitics of 'pre-modern' periods and to reflect the pre-occupation with modernity and the emergence of modern time regimes. We are particularly interested in case-studies probing into the coexistence and clashes of different temporal imaginaries and postcolonial, feminist or queer temporalities, and in papers explicitly addressing the modern/pre-modern dichotomy.

Organized by Tobias Becker, Christina Brauner and Fernando Esposito for the Arbeitskreis Geschichte + Theorie in conjunction with the German Historical Institute London, the international conference aims at bringing together scholars from across different periods and disciplines (such as history, art history, philosophy, anthropology, ethnology, sociology, economics, literary, cultural, gender and queer studies). We invite proposals for presentations (20 min) that combine an interest in theory with empirical case studies.

Please submit an abstract of no more than 500 words, along with a short CV, by 30 April 2019 to [chronopolitics@ghil.ac.uk](mailto:chronopolitics@ghil.ac.uk). The conference will take place at the German Historical Institute from 7 to 9 May 2020. Subject to a successful funding bid, costs for travel and accommodation will be covered.