

Call for Participation

Totalizing Temporalities: Time and history in nationalist movements

(23rd/24th of February, 2024)

With regards to the fascist regimes of the early twentieth century, scholars have argued that Western high modernity had “profound implications for the experience of historical time of their protagonists” (Griffin 2015, 6). Roughly summarized in the terminology of Mircea Eliade, crumbling religious cosmologies exposed individuals to the “terror of history” (Griffin 2015, 7), to time shorn off purposeful existence and a historical telos. Fascist historiographies of a lounge durée nation and race, along with palingenetic visions of the future were then to counter these temporalities of modernity. Reinhart Koselleck, on the other hand, argued that fascism was not a movement in reaction to a temporal crisis of modernity, but its epitome: “time was coming to be seen as the vector of change itself, a dynamic and historical force in its own right, an active constituent of an unprecedented future made malleable through calculated, organized human intervention. [...] the present was now imagined as a moving disjuncture or caesura between a fixed past and a fluid, perpetually unfolding future. This future was yet unknowable but could be realized according to a human vision of progress coupled to a sufficient cultural, social, or political will” (Griffin 2015, 10). If the future is perceived as the product of human interventions, this opens the ground for different forms of politics to arise to challenge the status quo and take history in its own hands.

We are not so much concerned with these regimes and the details of their constructions of histories and futures, but with the interlinkage of historical contexts, temporalities and power. We are thus directing our focus to nationalist movements that do not hold state power (yet). More specifically, we want to look at two different socio-political developments.

On the one hand, we are taking up questions that emerged from the current LIAS project by Dr. Verena Adamik, who investigates early African American nationalisms, and is therefore explicitly interested in historical ethnonationalist movements that emerged prior to/simultaneously with the fascist regimes of the early twentieth century. Are they engaging with temporalities similar to those of the emerging fascist movements? As Koselleck has argued, trauma and brutalization influence perceptions of time. Marginalized groups may thus produce different histories of power, providing a critical view of Western modernities from the margins (building on hooks 1992). For example, the sense of decadence that pervades the zeitgeist of the European early twentieth century is certainly not attractive to colonial subjects for whom these ‘golden days’ signal the height of their oppression. Black nationalist Marcus Garvey once claimed that he delivered the blueprints for the propaganda of Italian and German

fascism (Gilroy 2000, 70). Does this apply to temporalities? What histories and futures do other nationalist movements of the early twentieth century promote? This also aims at shifting the debate from those in power to those excluded from it: What temporalities did colonized, marginalized and/or brutalized peoples create in their (often emancipatory) formations of nationalist thought?

On the other hand, we are interested in the present rise of the extreme right, as explored in the studies of Dr. Adrià Alcoverro. The extreme right is the only force that has effectively activated “the affective remains” (Brown 2019, 189) left by the deteriorating liberal democracies in the last decades. Most of these “affective remains” refer nostalgically to a glorified past, and the need of care in times of broken social bonds. The timescaping of the present day extreme right should not be simply conceived as a successful populist strategy to attract desperate voters but could signal something deeper and differential of our times: the ruins of neoliberalism are, beyond economic breakdown and all its social consequences, the result of neoliberal’s decades long strive to dissolve history to naturalize a market-based order. The extreme right does not generally counter this, but continues within this order to different degrees. In presumably erasing collective historical identities, neoliberalism creates a historic void that, rather than freeing societies from the weight of history, makes them more vulnerable to the contemporary extreme right. We hold that there are distinct differences between the crisis of time in neoliberalism and in high modernity. We argue that comprehending the social depths of the dissolution of time is fundamental to understanding the rise of the extreme right’s capacity to construct puzzling and contradictory totalizing temporalities to re-define the present and to signal a reactionary future within still a market rule order.

Thus, we invite you to think with us through the temporalities of nationalist movements, both historic and contemporary. Are the patterns described above evident in all nationalist movements? How do movements who are not (yet) holding institutional power view themselves within history? What kind of nationalist temporalities do movements by the historically marginalized, brutalized and traumatized groups and anti-imperial movements draw up? Can we identify historic ruptures within the temporalities of nationalist/right-wing movements?

Please join us for two days of intense discussion on these issues at the Leuphana Institute for Advanced Studies (LIAS) in Culture and Society at the Leuphana University Lüneburg (Germany). All participants will give short *impulses* (ca. 15 min, no full ‘papers’) that connect their research to the topic at hand. We will provide a small selection of preparatory texts to be read in order to help us communicate with similar vocabularies (if there are texts you find quintessential to this debate, we remain open for suggestions). Ultimately, we are aiming/hoping that this gathering will provide the impetus for a joint publication, either an essay that summarizes the different observations, or even joining up for a special edition.

Recommended Reading

Gilroy, P. 2000. Black Fascism. *Transition* 81/82 70-91.

Dardot, P. & Laval, C. 2013. *The New Way of the World*. New York: Verso. Please read chapters 5, 9 and the concluding chapter.

Griffin, R. 2015. Fixing Solutions: Fascist Temporalities as Remedies for Liquid Modernity. *Journal of Modern European History* 13:1 5-23.

Further works cited

Brown, W. 2019. *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism: The Rise of Antidemocratic Politics in the West*. New York: Columbia University Press.

hooks, b. 1992. The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectator. *Black Looks. Race and Representation* (Boston, South End Press): 94-105.

Verena Adamik and Adriá Alcoverro

LIAS Fellows

Leuphana Institute for Advanced Studies (LIAS) in Culture and Society

Universitätsallee 1, D-21335 Lüneburg

E-Mail: verena.adamik@leuphana.de; adria.alcoverro@leuphana.de

www.leuphana.de/lias



Niedersächsisches Ministerium
für Wissenschaft und Kultur