

CALL FOR PAPERS

19—21 November 2025

TEMPORALITIES AND POWER Oppression | Resistance | Justice

University of Bonn

CONFERENCE



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Time can be fast and slow or stand still. Time can be a resource and some people have more time than others. Some “others” of society are forced to exist outside of time or are fixed to exist only in the past and are erased from the future. Having time and being in time are always related to issues of power. The entanglements of power relations and time have long been a focus in humanities research. Whether it is investigating (the attempted oppression of) memory cultures and practices, highlighting the representation of temporal teleologies or anachronisms, reading for the metaphorical or material embodiments of time, or sketching the tensions between perceived temporal incommensurabilities —, scholars, artists and activists contest the control over history, historiography, and futurity. Covering a broad scope of perspectives and fields of studies including Black, Indigenous or postcolonial studies, environmental humanities, gender and queer studies, museum studies, anthropology and more, recent publications show that scholarly interest in these topics has not subsided. For instance, scholars enquire about the temporalities of the various environmental, medical, military matters of the present moment (Baumbach and Neumann), illuminate the politics of individual and collective memory (Göttsche), futurity and becoming (Mbembe and Sarr) or detail the relations between borderscapes and refugee temporalities (Nyman et al.). The multiple enmeshed crises and conflicts of the present further underline the pertinence of firmly established theories concerned with these and similar perceptions and representations of time. Among these foundational works Michael-Rolph Trouillot’s *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995), examines the invisibility of power in matters of historiography. Often identified and critiqued as strategies for the stabilization of power structures, the construction and institutionalisation of teleologies have become observable as historiographical processes. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith succinctly puts it, these strategies purposefully contain the assumptions “that there is a universal history”, “that history is one large chronology”, “that history is about development”, “about a self-actualizing human subject”, and “that history as a discipline is innocent” (Tuhiwai Smith 33–35). The dominance of these master narratives (Chakrabarty 27) has an extensive tradition of being troubled and reframed. Following from that, this conference wants to question, challenge and explore the discursive and aesthetic entanglements and continuities of power and time.

The abovementioned examples show that an untangling of the relations between power and time aims at formulating, imagining and living forms of resistance and justice. For instance, Christina Sharpe's wake work provides a framework for understanding Black diasporic life in the present as haunted by the history of enslavement (15) and proposes a way forward through an ethics of care (131). More generally, engagements with hauntology can serve as a strategic method and aesthetic to make visible the invisibility of power relations especially in relation to time, history and remembrance, to alter "the experience of being in time, the way we separate the past, the present, and the future" (Gordon xvi). Furthermore, practices of collective memory production are tightly entangled with questions of power as well as recuperative justice and solidarity as demonstrated, for instance, in Michael Rothberg's theorisation of multidirectional memory, which unravels the logic of scarcity and the supposed incommensurability inherent to certain frameworks of remembrance (4-5). This resonates with larger interrogations of museum ethics, conservation practices and time. In her work, *Potential History* (2019), Ariella Aïsha Azoulay particularly examines imperial photography as a type of memory practice and sketches the temporal violence emanating from the camera's shutter (5-6). Challenging the past that shapes the lived present, necessarily generates enquiries about future imaginaries that pertain to, for example, issues of agency including the question of Indigenous temporal sovereignty, the conditions of being-in-time on Indigenous terms, and the destructive force of the modernist paradigm (Rifkin 9) or the engagement with such notions as Afrotopia "to reappropriate one's future, to invent one's own teleologies" (Sarr 61). Comparable concerns are raised within the field of gender and queer studies. While Elizabeth Freeman exposes the "time binds" of chrononormativity and the gendered, biopolitical temporal regulation of human bodies into a heteronormative, capitalist teleology (3-4), works such as Alison Kafer's *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (2013) builds on these issues and brings disability, gender and queer studies into conversation in order to investigate how narratives about the future and time are utilised to solidify the dominance of able-bodiedness. Similarly, Kara Keeling's *Queer Times, Black Futures* (2019) takes intersectionality and interdisciplinarity to heart by theorising from within the nexus of new materialism, Afrofuturism and queer studies. Meanwhile the environmental humanities and new materialist approaches concerned with manifold more-than-human temporalities are dedicated to envisioning ecologically just futures, for instance by redirecting the teleologic vector of the modernist paradigm of progress towards what Bruno Latour called the Terrestrial or Donna Haraway's Cthulucene as a realm for "multispecies justice" (3), which moves beyond human exceptionalism. The plethora of scholarly interest demonstrates that fundamental discussions about power and time are as relevant as ever and in some cases gained renewed potential in the present conflicts and systems of oppression worldwide.

The aim of our conference *Temporalities and Power* is to continue these discussions and to critically expand notions of time and power relations while at the same time bringing together different perspectives and fields of study. We invite papers on the aesthetics, narrativisations, figurations, visualisations, rhetorics, discourses or practices of temporal oppression, resistance and justice covering an expansive range of geographies and historical periods and emerging from a wide field of the humanities: e.g. literary and cultural studies, media studies, anthropology, history, book studies and more, embracing a diverse selection of areas of study, such as: postcolonial studies, Indigenous studies, gender & queer studies, disability studies, environmental humanities, and museum studies. Equally, we are interested in exploring a broad variety of genres and form, e.g. (speculative) fiction, travel writing, poetry, (performance) art, museum exhibits, film & tv series, historical documents or immaterial practices.

While the following list of potential topics is not exhaustive, we are particularly interested in:

- the rhetorics, discourses or narratives that shape and uphold systems of temporal oppression (e.g. modernity, colonialism, heteronormativity).
- the infrastructures or policies that enforce oppressive chronopolitics (e.g. biopolitics, necropolitics).
- the historiographic practices and the role of archives and archiving practices that maintain or challenge chronopolitics.
- the production and negotiation of forms of temporal sovereignty and being-in-time.
- the forms of remembrance or grief as practices and discourses of caring for/with/in time.
- the role of (performance) art, theatre, film, and literature in theorising temporal multiplicities (e.g. queer temporalities) and seeking temporal justice (e.g. multispecies temporalities).
- the aesthetics, figurations or genres that formulate a resistance or challenge to the power dynamics of hegemonic temporal fantasies (e.g. settler time) and chronopolitics (e.g. critical futurisms, alternative histories).

Conference Organisers: Theresa Gutmann, Johann Haberlah, Marie Kallenberg, Sophie Modert, Leandra Ossege, Peri Sipahi

It is possible to submit proposals for individual papers as well as thematic panels. Please send abstracts of ca. 300 words and a short bio note to temporalities@uni-bonn.de by **April 20th**. In case you are proposing a panel, please include abstracts for the panel itself as well as for the individual papers. Presentations should not exceed 20 minutes each. The conference will be held in English.

We aim to send out acceptance e-mails and further info by mid May.

There will be no conference fee. We are able to cover the accommodation costs and a separate, limited amount of travel bursaries can be obtained upon request. We are open to making a participation via Zoom possible, however, we are unable to guarantee this due to organisational reasons. Please let us know if you require further information on either the travel bursaries or a Zoom participation.

Works cited

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