

# Chronologics: Periodisation in a Global Context

**Veranstalter** Forum Transregionale Studien and Max Weber Stiftung

**Veranstaltungsort** Maison de France

**Termin** 07.12.2017 - 09.12.2017 ganztags

## Annual Conference of the Berlin-based Forum Transregionale Studien and the Max Weber Stiftung

The Berlin-based Forum Transregionale Studien and the Max Weber Stiftung invite submissions for a three-day conference in Berlin on concepts of historical periodisation in transregional perspective. The conference will feature a keynote lecture on December 7th and several topical panel sessions on December 8th and 9th. It is arranged in cooperation with the Einstein Center Chronoi and the Graduate School Global Intellectual History at the Freie Universität Berlin and the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

Epochal divisions and terminologies such as “antiquity”, “baroque,” the “classical age,” the “renaissance,” or “postmodernity,” the “long 19th!” or “short 20th” centuries are more than mere tools used pragmatically to arrange school curricula or museum collections. In most disciplines based on historical methods the use of these terminologies carries particular imaginations and meanings for the discursive construction of nations and communities. Many contemporary categories and periodisations have their roots in European teleologies, religious or historical traditions and thus are closely linked to particular power relations. As part of the colonial encounter they have been translated into new “temporal authenticities” in Africa, Asia and the Americas, as well as in Europe. German historians in particular, in C.H. Williams’ ironic description, “have an industry they call ‘Periodisierung’ and they take it very seriously. (...) Periodisation, this splitting up of time into neatly balanced divisions is, after all, a very arbitrary proceeding and should not be looked upon as permanent.” In producing and reproducing periodisations, historians structure possible narratives of temporality, they

somehow “take up ownership of the past,” (Janet L. Nelson) imposing particular “regimes of historicity” (François Hartog). Accordingly, periodisations are never inert or innocent, indeed, they have been interpreted as a “theft of History” (Jack Goody).

The aim of this conference is to uncover some of the dynamics behind particular cultural and historical uses of periodisation schemes, as concepts for ordering the past, and thus to reconsider these terminologies “devised to think the world” (Sebastian Conrad). Periodisations are culturally determined. They beg for systematic comparison in order to identify the contextual specificity and contingency of particular understandings of particular historical epochs. An interdisciplinary and transregional perspective allows for a reconsideration of the (non-)transferability of historical periodisations and the possibility to work out categories of historical analysis that go beyond nation-bound interpretative patterns.

The conference aims to show where and how periodisation reveals clear cultural, social, and national leanings and predispositions. We will discuss the making of these chronologies, the variable systems and morphologies it takes, e.g. religious, spatial and other models (e.g. linear, spiral, circular). We will focus on different agents and modes involved in the making of periodisation schemes (institutions ranging from the university to the school or the museum but also genres such as the documentary, the historical novel or local communities). We will discuss how European attempts at structuring the History, and along with them, particular chronotypes have been translated worldwide into universal and/or national, and communitarian models. At the same time, we will also focus on alternative, complementary and or silenced models of periodisation and epoch-making. By bringing together scholars with an expertise in different regions of the world, we hope to better understand the importance of temporality in the making of global history.

Further information

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