

AAC Workshop

Social protest and its futures **For a temporal approach to political action**

What are the future temporalities of contemporary mobilisations? In social protest, the hopeful future and the belief that a better future is within reach have long marked revolutionary rhetoric and progressive political fervour (Koselleck, 2016: 87-105). Today, however, enthusiastic and strategic partisanship seems to belong to the past. Indeed, for many historians, philosophers and sociologists, it is an entirely different approach to the future that has dominated Western social representations for several decades: that of the “crisis of the future” (Dubar, 2011: 2), the “crisis of the future” (Leccardi, 2011), the “loss of the future” (Anderson, 2017: 466). We are living in “apocalyptic” (Foessel, 2012; Carey, 2019), “dystopian” (Díaz, 2017: 5) or “catastrophic” times (Dupuy, 2002; Chateauraynaud and Debaz, 2017).

All these works refer to a defeatist approach to social struggle and the erasure of long-term future temporalities in progressive political discourses. It is no longer a question of projecting oneself into a distant future, especially when it comes to global warming and environmental degradation, economic recession or the feeling of lack of democratic control in the face of the dismantling of the social state and the organisation of the world of work, but into a catastrophic present.

And yet, social struggles continue to be organised around the world and in a variety of contexts (Semal, 2019). What do our ethnographies say about this? Does the optimistic and enthusiastic vision of the future no longer have a place in the contemporary political imagination? What relationships to the future are included in the social mobilisations that continue to be organised despite everything? Does the paradoxical idea (Revault d'Allonnes, 2012; Vigh, 2008) of a global and permanent crisis have repercussions on the nature and form of this social protest? What conflicts of temporality exist between the demands of civil society, the functioning of public action and the actions of enterprises? Are the actors on the ground confined to a temporality of “reaction” or do they nevertheless make distant temporal horizons exist? Are the aspirations for more justice and the desire for collective emancipation still digging the furrow of utopian projects or, on the contrary, is the prospect of a “collapse” (see Allard et al., 2019; Tasset, 2022) contributing to a demobilisation and an unprecedented individualism? Would “presentism” (Baschet, 2018; Hartog, 2013) then impose itself as a dominant temporal horizon?

Based on the postulates that 1) the temporalities surrounding social life are necessarily multiple and sometimes antagonistic (Grossin, 1996; Pels, 2015); 2) that individuals' projections towards future temporal horizons coexist with those of other relationships to time, whether they be past and present temporal horizons or rhythms, deadlines, feelings of urgency (Anderson, 2017) or boredom; and 3) that imaginaries of the future shape emotional states (individual or collective) that orient the content of practices aimed at transforming the world (Persoon and van Est, 2000; Adam, 2009; Appadurai, 2013; Chateauraynaud, 2013); this call for papers wishes to bring together researchers working on the temporal aspects of contemporary social contestations.

Through a transdisciplinary discussion and on the basis of works based on both European and international fields, this study day wishes to take note of the diversity of temporalities that exist in contemporary social protest. The aim is to provide empirical elements that will allow us to concretely understand which factors influence (or not) the elaboration of future temporal horizons, whether it be socio-biographical characteristics, political ideologies, cultural or religious frameworks, the desire to link up with past struggle movements or even current events.

Without pretending to be exhaustive, the works focused on international climate action networks, the phenomenon of "return to the land", whether driven by autonomous aspirations (Sallustio, 2022) or survivalist practices (Barker, 2020), boycott practices, contemporary forms of resistance and struggle in the workplace, activist strategies within political parties or associations, or emergency aid initiatives deployed in the context of migration, armed conflict or natural disasters will be welcome.

Organiser

Madeleine Sallustio, CNRS post-doctoral fellow at the Centre de sociologie des organisations (CSO), Sciences Po.

Timetable and modalities

Proposals can be written in French or English and should contain, excluding the bibliography, +/- **1200 words (1 page)**. They should be **sent before 15 January 2023** to the following email addresses: madeleine.sallustio@sciencespo.fr and simon.cordonnier@sciencespo.fr. Please name your document and the subject of the email as follows JE_CS0_Last_Name_First_Name.

Papers may be presented **in French or English**. All disciplines are welcome. The programme of the study day will be designed to ensure that the papers are complementary and enter into dialogue.

Successful proposals will be announced **by mid-February 2023**.

The study day will take place in June 2023 at Sciences Po, Place Saint Thomas d'Aquin, 75007 Paris.

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