University of Bayreuth

31

African Studies

WORKING PAPERS

academy reflects 7

Future Africa?! Timescapes and the Flattening of Time in the Modern Era

Susanne Lachenicht, 2022

africamultiple
CLUSTER OF EXCELLENCE

INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN STUDIES

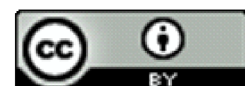
UNIVERSITÄT BAYREUTH

31

University of Bayreuth
African Studies
WORKING PAPERS

Future Africa?! Timescapes and the Flattening of Time in the Modern Era

Susanne Lachenicht, 2022



CC BY 4.0

Institute of African Studies (IAS)

The *University of Bayreuth African Studies Working Papers* are published by the Institute of African Studies (IAS), Bayreuth, Germany.

The IAS promotes and coordinates African Studies involving scholars from a wide range of academic disciplines covering almost all faculties at the University of Bayreuth. The IAS acts as umbrella organization and has three central units: the Iwalewahaus, the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, and the Africa Research Center (*Forschungszentrum Afrika*, which is under construction). The IAS coordinates research and teaching as well as the training of junior researchers, cooperates with partners worldwide and facilitates the exchange of information between persons and institutions engaged in research and teaching in or about Africa.

In the *Working Papers* series, we present empirical studies and theoretical reflections, put preliminary findings up for discussion and report on ongoing projects and current research. The Working Papers usually reflect work-in-progress; all contributions relate to African Studies in general and Bayreuth African Studies in particular and invite discussion and feedback.

Submitted papers are subject to internal review at the University of Bayreuth. Contributions may be submitted to the editor-in-chief Dr. Jane Ayeko-Kümmeth (ias@uni-bayreuth.de).

The *University of Bayreuth African Studies Working Papers* feature on the EPub document server at the university library:

2005 - 2018
https://epub.uni-bayreuth.de/view/series/Bayreuth_African_Studies_Working_Papers.html

2018 - ongoing
https://epub.uni-bayreuth.de/view/series/University_of_Bayreuth_African_Studies_Working_Papers.html

Institute of African Studies

Director: Prof. Dr. Eva Spies
Vice Director: Prof. Dr. Thoko Kaime

University of Bayreuth
Wölfelstr. 2
D-95440 Bayreuth

Phone: +49 (0)921 554511
Fax: +49 (0)921 554502

www.ias.uni-bayreuth.de
IAS@uni-bayreuth.de

Academy *reflects*

As the Working Paper Series of the Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies which is part of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, **Academy *reflects*** offers a forum for research conducted and presented by international Fellows and Postdoctoral researchers affiliated to the Bayreuth Academy. The series includes papers such as presentations given at the Cluster's Knowledge Lab, invited lectures, workshop contributions, or conference papers related to the ongoing research projects of the Fellows and Postdocs.

Founded in 2012 and since 2019 part of the *Africa Multiple* Cluster of Excellence, the **Bayreuth Academy** is a centre for interdisciplinary research at the University of Bayreuth. It complements the Cluster's research structures by offering a stimulating environment for Fellows, and a hub for early career scholars.

The Academy hosts International Fellows at different career stages from all over the globe. They are selected in competitive calls for a stay lasting from one to six months, and contribute to the Cluster's activities in its various research structures. A specific residence programme for artists of all genres is organised in close cooperation with the Iwalewahaus. Furthermore, Cluster PIs and other scholars at the University of Bayreuth may become Internal Fellows of the Bayreuth Academy when invited for a sabbatical of one semester to participate in the working formats of the Academy. The Academy also promotes working formats for Postdoctoral researchers of the University of Bayreuth and externals. Convening international working groups is part of a special postdoc qualification programme.

With its specific programmes, and closely connected with the African partner institutions, the Bayreuth Academy brings together researchers who enrich the Cluster debates with their multiple ideas and related perspectives. They are thus part of the lively international network that makes the impressive strength of Bayreuth's Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence.

Academy *reflects* complements the existing Working Paper Series published under the umbrella of the *University of Bayreuth African Studies Working Papers*: **Africa Multiple *connects***, the series featuring research conducted and presented by researchers affiliated to the Cluster, including papers submitted by the Cluster's guests and visiting scholars; and **BIGSAS*works*!**, the platform for publishing research-related articles and edited volumes by Junior Fellows of BIGSAS.

Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies

Prof. Dr. Erdmute Alber
Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence
Vice-Dean of Research

University of Bayreuth
Nürnberger Str. 38, ZAPF Haus 3
D-95440 Bayreuth

Phone: +49 (0)921 554595
https://www.africamultiple.uni-bayreuth.de

About the Author

Susanne Lachenicht is professor of Early Modern History at Bayreuth University, Germany. She works on Europe and the Atlantic World with a special focus on diasporas, religious migrations, knowledge transfer and transformation as well as temporalities in the early modern world. She has been a visiting fellow/professor at the Université de Toulouse II, the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, the Université d'Angers, the Cluster of Excellence: Africa Multiple, Bayreuth University, and at All Souls College, Oxford.

Her recent publications include (as ed. with Charlotte Lerg and Michael Kimmage) *The TransAtlantic Reconsidered* (Manchester University Press 2018/paperback 2020), (as ed. with Mathilde Monge) *Nations et empires*, thematic issue of *Diasporas. Migrations, circulations, histoire* 34/2 (2019), (as ed. with Marianne Amar, Isabelle Lacoue-Labarthe, Mathilde Monge and Annelise Rodrigo) *Négocier l'accueil /Negotiating asylum and accommodation*, thematic issue of *Diasporas. Migrations, circulations, histoire* 35/2 (2020) and (as ed. with Guido Braun) *Spies, Espionage and Secret Diplomacy in the Early Modern Period* (Kohlhammer 2021).

She is (co-)editor of the following book series and journals: *Oxford Bibliographies: Atlantic History* (Oxford University Press), *Anthem Intercultural Transfer Studies* (Anthem), *Mediengeschichte - Media History - Histoire des médias* (Nomos), *Forum historische Forschung: Frühe Neuzeit* (Kohlhammer) and *Humanities* (MDPI).

Lachenicht was an Internal Fellow at the Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies from October 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022.

susanne.lachenicht@uni-bayreuth.de

Acknowledgments

This Working Paper is the outcome of research conducted within the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence at the University of Bayreuth, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) under Germany's Excellence Strategy – EXC 2052/1 – 390713894.

Contents

University of Bayreuth African Studies Working Papers iii

Academy reflects iv

About the Author, Acknowledgments v

Future Africa?! Timescapes and the Flattening of Time in the Modern Era

1 Introduction 1

2 Early Modern Timescapes 3

3 Conclusions 7

4 Bibliography 8

5 Latest Publications in the *Academy reflects* Working Paper Series 11

Future Africa?! Timescapes and the Flattening of Time in the Modern Era

Susanne Lachenicht

1 Introduction

In his 2013 *Essays on the Global Condition*, anthropologist Arjun Appadurai defines "the Future as Cultural Fact". He holds that "we cannot design the future exactly as we please", that "it is vital to build a picture of the historical present that can help us find the right balance between utopia and despair" (Appadurai 2013, p.3). The "historical present" Appadurai diagnoses is that of the "global condition", the "age of high globalization" (*ibidem*), the "broadening of risk-taking and risk-bearing as properties of human life that link distant societies, cross national and market boundaries, and connect both the institutions of power and the agencies of ordinary human beings worldwide" (*ibidem*). Other scholars such as Ulrich Beck have dubbed this dominant global social form "risk society" (Beck 2007). The world – as these and other scholars say – is in a state of crisis. To find solutions, Appadurai claims that we need to study how human societies construct and organize the "future as cultural horizon", that we should engage with "the variety of ideas of human welfare and of the good life that surround us today and that survive in our archives of the

past" (Appadurai 2013, p. 5). Studying how human societies construct and organize the "future as cultural horizon" means according to Appadurai to study "three notable human preoccupations" that is specific forms of "imagination", "anticipation" and "aspiration" (Appadurai 2013, pp. 286-287). Based on these premises, Appadurai calls for a "robust anthropology of the future" (Appadurai 2013, p. 5).

However, what is the future, or what do scholars and non-scholars mean when they talk about "the future"? Over the last couple of years, as a member of the Bayreuth Future Africa project and co-PI of the subproject "Histories of the Future in modern Africa", while working at the same time with University of Bayreuth and University of California at Davis scholars on *Cultures of Speculation*, we have become aware that we need to study the historical making of timescapes to grasp 1) what "the future" is or could be and 2) what speculation about "the future" could mean. 3), and more importantly, *Cultures of Speculation* are about more than the timescape "the future" (on the project and its research results see Cortiel et al. 2020, Lachenicht 2020).

From the history of temporal cultures *and* a postcolonial studies perspective, "the future" comes as a heavily historically loaded and highly problematic concept: 1) "The future" is but one specific and historically made timescape we can make use of to think about the world we want to live in. 2) The future, as Lucian Hölscher put it in his 1999 book *Die Entdeckung der Zukunft*, is a relatively new timescape that developed according to his and other historians' research in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Western Europe (Hölscher 1999, p. 9). 3) As a western invention it was imposed on many societies in the historical contexts of colonialism and imperialism – as Frederick Cooper and Lynn Hunt have made evident (Cooper 2005, Hunt 2008). 4) The term is loaded with semantics such as 'civilization versus primitive forms of life', 'progress versus backwardness', 'development versus regression' and other similar dichotomies. Do we, therefore, need to drop the timescape "the future", if we look for integrated and integrating solutions for a world in crisis under the global condition? Critical reflection does not necessarily mean throwing out the baby with the bathwater. On the contrary: critical and historically informed reflections on modern, western timescapes might lead to a more nuanced understanding of how timescapes are about constructing cultural difference and how this obstructs efforts to find collective solutions for a world in crisis. Theorists of time have therefore suggested to study the cultural and historical contexts of time as cultural fact, or to be more precise, of time as fact *and* as culturally made – as I would put it. A "robust anthropology of the future" based on inquiries into the "future as cultural horizon", an analysis of the "futures we use to cultivate our futures with" and "what senses of futurity we bring into play" – as Wilkie, Savransky and Rosengarten put it in 2017 (pp. 4-5), is not enough. We need an anthropology of time more generally and how timescapes affect our being in the world in order to assess – as Appadurai and many other theorists of the global condition put it – "ideas of human welfare and of the good life that surround us today" (Appadurai 2013, p. 5).

In the following, I would like to zoom into timescapes prevalent in the early modern period. I would like to use early modern timescapes as a background against which we can reflect on three interrelated things: 1) the historical making and baggage of linear timescapes such as the "past, present and future" (see also Landwehr 2016, pp. 281-287), 2) on the concept of "Future Africa" or "Africa as the continent of the future" – as among many others such as the president of the French Republic Emmanuel Macron put it in 2017 and 3) how this could feed into an anthropology of time and how people relate themselves to it.

2 Early Modern Timescapes

Most obviously, timescapes of the early modern period built on and transformed older timescapes, biblical ones, ones coming out of Greek and Roman Antiquity, out of medieval times, out of Islam and Judaism with which we share important parts of "the Book", especially Genesis. Nonetheless, with the Renaissance, the age of 'discoveries' and the rise of the New Sciences concepts of time, timescapes, changed – or to put it differently, the plurality of concepts of time increased (Brendecke et al. 2007, p. 13). Many Renaissance theologians and philosophers started thinking and speculating about time.

The most important time regime in Christian worlds was *and is* God's time or rather *untime* – also called eternity. The Church's Fathers such as Augustine (1987, pp. 354-430) and theologians ever since have debated *why* God had created the world and as such *time*. While God's reasons behind *Creation* remained unknown to Christian believers, it became clear for Augustine that beings who owned a soul were subject to two-time regimes, the temporal and the spiritual, "time in motion" and the "immutable", so eternity. Furthermore, with Augustine time is not endless, time means that there is a beginning (Creation) and an end which is the end of the world. In Augustine's thought, human consciousness is capable of experiencing time. Time for Augustine – as some scholars have put it – is a fleeting instant of the present, which is real while the before and the after are illusory. In human consciousness, the past exists as "memoria", while what we today would call "the future" exists as "providentia" (Augustine 1987, pp. 353-382).

An interpretation of God's time regime building much on Augustine thought remained most powerful not only in the early modern period but far into the nineteenth century – and for Christian believers up to the present day. Time was divided into this world and the hereafter, life, death and eternity. Quite contrary to modern, western visions of the future of mankind, which all seem to share great uncertainty about what the future might look like, Europeans of the early modern period could be sure about the end of history. The Bible seemed to be clear about the destiny of mankind. Humans would live through four ages (the Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman), followed by the fifth age which would include the arrival of the Antichrist, the battle between good and evil, the very likely victory of Jesus Christ, the Last Judgement and the end of the days. While Christians could not be sure of the exact beginning of the fifth age, they knew, thanks to the revelations of St. John, what would await them (Gallois 2007, p. 244). Uncertainty reigned with regard to who would be among God's elect and who among them would be eternally condemned. Speculating about the future of mankind seemed not necessary, as God had provided a teleological and orderly history of man (Gallois 2007, pp. 33-35).

While human beings depended on God's will, His pity, compassion and grace – the Renaissance claims to have made the first fundamental efforts to measure God's world and reign over His resources. The Renaissance understood itself as "les temps modernes" (Thevet 1558) – in sharp contrast to what later would be dubbed the Middle Ages (see e.g. Hunt 2008, pp. 119-20). Today, especially history of science scholars emphasize that the process of European expansion between the 1400s and the twentieth century brought about contact, uncertainties, knowledge transfer and (trans-)formation on a scale previously not known from a European perspective (e.g. MacKenzie 1990, Jardine et al. 1996, Rice 2000, Parrish 2006). This – the narrative goes – triggered major efforts to *understand* God's creation, His laws of nature, His laws of history, the

development of man and his world. European knowledge about the world as it came to be institutionalized in the European Republic of Letters, its academies, royal societies, correspondence networks, universities and media such as major collections of objects, maps, natural histories, encyclopedias, travel narratives and dictionaries was the result of Europeans speculating on the 'new' and how the 'new' fitted into God's creation, into ancient Greek and Roman knowledge and into God's word, that is, the Bible. Some scholars hold that motives behind knowledge production and codification changed fundamentally between the fifteenth and the late eighteenth century: from describing God's creation (e.g. Armstrong 2000), people became in the eighteenth century more interested in using natural resources to improve the human condition, the economy and the early modern state's prowess (e.g. Koerner 1999); it was more and more about making "progress in history" – a master narrative that needs adjustment. As many specialists of the Enlightenment have shown over the last two decades, the long eighteenth century was about reconciling faith and reason, about reconciling the old and the new. For much of the early modern period, the Bible and other ancient texts remained the authoritative texts (Sheehan 2007) even though the New Sciences became a competitive and challenging second powerful narrative to explain the world – which, however, had not been meant to be competitive and challenging. As Francis Bacon put it in his 1620 *Instauratio Magna*, New Sciences "could affect the course of nature in useful ways, knowledge about how to ward off disease, improve crops, extend the span of life, and enhance the general welfare" (Grafton 1992, p. 197). Temporal cultures with regard to these aspects of life fostered an understanding of "the flight of time's arrow" or a clear timeline on which events and facts could be clearly marked as much as – maybe even more importantly – progress of mankind and specific cultures within.

Much of the New Sciences meant to explain the objective laws of nature building on and discussing a number of metaphysical assumptions: *inter alia* Descartes' (1596-1650) "absolute separation of [the] thinking subject from [the] material object" (Wilcox 1987, p. 30) which served as a premise for Newton's mechanics and his models of absolute time and space. According to Isaac Newton (1642-1727) in his 1687 *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* "absolute, and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature flows equably without regard to anything external, and by another name is called duration" (quoted from Wilcox 1987, p.16). Not only absolute time but also absolute space existed – according to Newton – independently of any observer. Absolute time thus progresses at a consistent pace throughout the universe. These models were highly debated in Newton's time: Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716) held that space could only be understood as the relative location of bodies, and time as the relative movement of bodies. Absolute time, then, was an invention of the 1720s, based on a metaphysical system important to some models within the developing New Sciences. It was a highly contested timescape, criticized not only by rationalists such as Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz but also by empiricists such as David Hume (Wilcox 1987, pp. 17-18).

Zedler's *Universal-Lexicon* published between 1732 and 1751 is a rather good indicator for these eighteenth-century debates about time. The article on "Zeit" introduces time as the dwelling and movement of the heavenly bodies which define years, months, weeks, days, hours and minutes. It is not Newton's absolute time. It is relative time. According to Zedler, time is, therefore – based on the dwelling and movement of the stars – measurable, there is a measurable past or a measurable future in relation to a given present. Time is about the birth, duration and death of things in relation to the dwelling and movement of the heavenly bodies. Time can be cyclical, time is also

one event following another and following out of the other, so consecutive *and* causal. With regard to other nations, Zedler holds that those peoples who cannot read the stars and measure time are "simple" or "primitive" (Zedler, pp. 725-740). Being capable of measuring absolute time, then, is about progress and civilization. All of this, however, is still embedded into God's time, as the world and time had been created by God.

For quite some time, God's time regime (Gallois 2007, p. 243) integrated "models of linear and measurable time" (Le Goffs' famous "merchant time" 1980, p. 198) as much as "absolute time" which was, as Newton himself acknowledged, a model for specific uses in the developing sciences and co-existed with many other timescapes, religious, economic and social ones.

As mentioned above, according to some Europeans, not all humans had history and not all humans were equally advanced in the "course of history". At the latest with the age of 'discoveries', it became clear for Christians/Europeans that they lived in present and civilized times while non-Christian/non-European cultures – according to their degree of "barbarism", of "savagery" and "lack of civilization" – lived in the 'past' (Fabian 2002, p. 75). This past, however, was different from European Antiquity (e.g. Thevet 1558, p. 54). According to many European authors, non-Europeans and Europeans did not share the same moment in history nor did they share the same past. For many missionaries such as André Thevet (1516-1590), a French Franciscan friar, explorer and cosmographer who traveled to the Eastern Mediterranean and Brazil, Europeans lived in "modern times" ("temps modernes"), indigenous peoples, however, were closer to man's origins, so to paradise (Thevet 1558, pp. 54, 87, 95). At the same time, non-Europeans lived in an immutable present: Thevet's descriptions of indigenous peoples rarely come with a distinction between past and present; in most cases, they are generally "timeless" descriptions that suggest that what Thevet qualifies as "savage habits" have always been this way – which is similar to what Johannes Fabian has dubbed the "ethnographic present" (2002, p. 76). Furthermore, for Thevet and many of his contemporaries, most non-Europeans had no history – at least not prior to the arrival of Europeans (Thevet 1558, pp. 84, 101-103, 106, also Labat 1722, vol. IV, pp. 222-223, 317, 332). From the perspective of European scholars, indigenous people had entered human history and 'progress' only with conquest, colonization and Christian missions; they turned into 'objects' that now had a past, present and, as we would call it today, a "future" (Fabian 2002, p. 78). At the latest with the Renaissance, we see time and civilization coming together, civilization and progress develop into one timescape, into what Johannes Fabian has dubbed for other contexts marked by coloniality "evolutionary time" (Fabian 2002, pp. 17, 29). This timescape was closely related to the context of 'discoveries', conquest, colonization and the increasing exploitation of New World resources, human and non-human; it was a colonial concept which the colonized could not escape (Hunt 2008, pp. 94-96).

Thus, some timescapes of the Renaissance, the Baroque and the Enlightenment not only served to construct civilizational differences with times past but also to mark the state of civilization of the respective 'modern era'. Building on ancient Greek and Roman timescapes to define the 'self' and the 'other', both in time and place, early modern timescapes also served to construct what Homi Bhabha has dubbed "cultural difference" in colonial contexts. The course of history, in a temporal or worldly perspective and the development of humankind was – according to many Europeans – marked by different degrees of civilization, of advancement, of progress – which could according to early modern authors be measured through Christianization (or not), political and social

organization, forms of economic production, rituals and came together with timescapes in words such as backwardness and other. In these interpretations, Europeans figured as the 'present and modern' people and were considered to be able to speculate on their own and other cultures' state of civilization. Only Europeans thought they were capable of improving man, of making progress. In the logic of this discourse, it was therefore up to Europeans to bring humanity closer to a Golden Age, a worldly one. The New Sciences and new technologies, developed by Europeans, as many proponents of the Enlightenment claimed, could guide mankind back or forth into a new Eden on earth, while Christianization was meant to prepare humanity for the Last Judgement and eternity.

With scientific insights into the history of the earth and of mankind, the time span of the existing universe became much larger and became – for some time – infinite. The end of the world or apocalypse became increasingly banned to the religious sphere so that encyclopedias of the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries such as Krünitz' *Oeconomische Encyklopädie* (1773-1858) could define time as – among other definitions in the same article – as two infinities, the past and the future.

While the so-called European pre-modern period developed more "models of linear and measurable time" (Nagel and Wood 2005, p. 408), while timescapes came into being that Newton and other natural scientists would call "absolute time", all of this was only two of a plurality of ways of organizing time and of being in time in early modern Europe and its overseas colonies.

It is important to state that the coexistence of (from our perspective) overlapping ("evolutionary time") or clashing temporalities (Nagel and Wood 2005, p. 404), so a plurality of temporalities, as parallel, contextualized experiences but also as coming together in *one moment*, was rather typical of the early modern period, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in particular – as Lucien Febvre already diagnosed in 1942 (pp. 393-400). Despite the challenges of the developing New Sciences and their *a priori* of measurable, linear and – in some contexts – absolute time, God's time regime (as mentioned above) was the one that embedded and integrated all other ones. This is particularly true for the visual arts: what Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood have dubbed "Renaissance Anachronism" (2005), is rather typical far into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Artifacts and monuments, especially if used in sacred/ritual events, were on the one hand "embedded in history", on the other hand, their "spiritual meaning […] lifted the event out of the flow of history". "Visual artifacts collapsed past and present", "they proposed an unmediated present-tense, somatic encounter with the people and the things in the past" (Nagel and Wood 2005, p. 408).

While on the one hand biblical narratives about the beginning and the end of the world as much as natural sciences strengthened linear and teleological temporalities, humans in the early modern period lived with plural concepts of time. In comparison with the varieties and simultaneities of early modern timescapes and with non-European timescapes (Gallois 2007) as well as considering the imposition of absolute, measurable time almost everywhere in the world, we seem to face a period of flattening of time – as Frederick Cooper and Lynn Hunt have put it (Cooper 2005, p. 127; Hunt 2007, pp. 107-108). Or – we have grown unaware of the plurality of timescapes with which we live today.

What I have tried to sketch out for the early modern period, has been described by theorists of time who looked at a variety of temporal cultures in synchronic and diachronic ways in a more

holistic perspective: not only do different societies produce different – even if related or entangled – temporal cultures; temporal cultures also are in a constant process of change as much as we deal within one and the same society with a variety of timescapes. Looked upon from a history of temporal cultures perspective, "modern western time" "which describes itself as being rational, observational, chronological, universal, unambiguous, fixed, natural, constant" becomes a "historical anomaly in human culture" (Gallois 2007, pp. 221, 246-247).

This is even more so if we take into account Einstein's special theory of relativity. The New Sciences of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries makes clear that Newton's absolute and mathematical theory of time which flows equably without relation to anything external (Gallois 2007, p. 237) was wrong. Einstein's special theory of relativity destroyed the singularity of time; it also made clear that to divide time into the past, present and future was illusory. Or as some theorists of time hold: there is only the present past, the present future and the present itself – somehow echoing Augustine (Landwehr 2016). "Time is not a singular, natural and uncontested entity, but is viewed outside the discipline [History] as both plural and as being constructed in varied manners in different cultures" (Gallois 2007, p. 242) and periods of time.

Could the "pluralization of time" (Gallois 2007, p. 242) or a growing awareness of pluralities of time concepts in all cultures and periods in human history open up new horizons in speculation, in critically assessing our own times and in producing new possibilities and opportunities for humans and the world at large?

Theorists of time and anthropologists have made efforts to uncover the lost temporal cultures of humans. It might be up to historians to think further about time, to have their share in the analysis of past and present temporal cultures and how they relate humans to each other and the world. To put it differently: for a robust anthropology of time, we need anthropologists, physicists, sociologists, linguists, philosophers, theologians – and historians. The latter, however, would need to reflect on 1) timescapes in a global perspective in an etic and emic synchronic and diachronic perspective as much as on 2) the implications of modernity and modern scientific approaches to time to co-build anthropologies of time and to explain humans and the world *in time* (see also Landwehr 2016, p. 301).

3 Conclusions

In this paper, I have tried to show that modern western concepts of "the future" developed out of European epistemes and their need to understand God's creation, to understand God's laws of nature to create a better present for mankind and to further progress and civilization. While theorists of time today distinguish between scientific, religious and philosophical understandings or definitions of time, it is important to state that much of this developed out of Jewish and Christian religious systems and specific historical needs to explain God's world.

With European expansion, colonization, the development of western, modern timescapes enshrined in the development of the New Sciences came the imposition of these timescapes on other societies. From de-/postcolonial perspectives, these are today looked upon as forms of domination of "alien civilizations" which have not only destroyed other temporal cultures but

cultures and societies at large (Hunt 2008, pp. 95-96). Furthermore, the imposition of western, modern timescapes integrated an understanding of other civilizations as lacking history and/or a future or as not being developed and part of the same moment in human history.

If we readily adopt the concept of "the future" for Africa or – as Appadurai claims – opt for a "robust anthropology of the future", we also adopt its Christian and colonial baggage. We risk measuring the entire African continent against narratives of progress and "the future" which might run counter to what Appadurai calls "the variety of ideas of human welfare and of the good life that surrounds us today and that survive in our archives of the past". These ideas, experiences, practices are inextricably tied to specific temporal cultures, temporal and spiritual ones which are – as much as western Sciences – embedded into and/or coming out of religious belief systems.

Does our global society, our risk society need *one* universal temporal culture, a universal concept of history, of the past, the present and the future? Moving beyond Appadurai, I would think we need to study temporal cultures of humans, in a synchronic and diachronic perspective, in their specificities, their entanglements, how they imagine the world not only in the past, present and future but also in other timescapes, such as untime, eternity, immutable time or dreamtime. We need to acknowledge – as Barbara Adam put it – the "multitude of times which interpenetrate and permeate our daily lives" (1995, p. 12) and the lives of others in time and space. We might also need to acknowledge that – to some extent – we do live in the immutable present ourselves – which historian Reinhart Koselleck associated with the pre-French Revolution, so the pre-modern period (Koselleck 2004, p. 58) while others wonder whether we have ever been "modern" and "future orientated" at all (Latour 1993). Modern, western notions of measurable and/or absolute time, as developed by Newton and others in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, replaced by Einstein's re-description of time and the world, need to become self-reflexive, they need to face their own and other different temporalities in which people live and relate themselves to the world and out of which they develop ideas of well-being and human welfare.

4 Bibliography

Adam, Barbara. 1995. *Timewatch: The Social Analysis of Time*. Cambridge: Polity.

Appadurai, Arjun. 2013. *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition.* London, New York: Verso.

Armstrong, Patrick. 2000. *The English Parson-naturalist: a Companionship between Science and Religion*. Leominster: Gracewing.

Augustine. 1987. *Augustine/Augustinus Bekenntnisse/Confessions.* Trans. Joseph Bernhart. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Beck, Ulrich. 2007. *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity,* 2d edn. Los Angeles et al.: Sage.

Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.

Brendecke, Arndt, Ralf-Peter Fuchs, and Edith Koller. 2007. Die Autorität der Zeit. In *Die Autorität der Zeit in der Frühen Neuzeit*, eds. Arndt Brendecke, Ralf-Peter Fuchs and Edith Koller, 9–22. Berlin: LIT.

Cooper, Frederick. 2005. *Colonialism in Question. Theory, Knowledge, History.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cortiel, Jeanne, Hanke, Christine, Jan Simon Hutta, and Colin Milburn (eds.). 2020. *Practices of Speculation: Modeling, Embodiment, Figuration*. Bielefeld: transcript.

Fabian, Johannes. 2002. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Febvre, Lucien. 1982. *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century: The Religion of Rabelais*, reprint of 1942 edn. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.

Gallois, William. 2007. *Time, Religion and History.* Harlow, London, New York: Longman-Pearson.

Grafton, Anthony. 1995. *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery.* Cambridge (MA), London: The Belknap Press.

Hölscher, Lucian. 1999. *Die Entdeckung der Zukunft*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer.

Hunt, Lynn. 2008. *Measuring Time, Making History.* Budapest, New York: Central European University Press.

Jardine, N., J. Secord and Emma Spary. 1996. *Cultures of Natural History.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Keßler, Eckhard. 2007. Zeitverständnisse in der Philosophie der Renaissance. In *Die Autorität der Zeit in der Frühen Neuzeit*, eds. Arndt Brendecke, Ralf-Peter Fuchs and Edith Koller, 23–45. Berlin: LIT.

Koerner, Lisbet*. 1999. Linnaeus: Nature and Nation*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Koselleck, Reinhart. 2004. *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Labat, Jean-Baptiste. 1722. *Nouveau voyage aux isles de l'Amérique*. Paris: Guillaume Cavalier. http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k741041. Last accessed 30.12.2018.

Lachenicht, Susanne. 2020. Cultures of Speculation, Histories of Speculation. In *Practices of Speculation: Modeling, Embodiment, Figuration*, eds. Jeanne Cortiel, Christine Hanke, Jan Simon Hutta and Colin Milburn, 31–48. Bielefeld: transcript.

Landwehr, Achim. 2016. *Die anwesende Abwesenheit der Vergangenheit: Essay zur Geschichtstheorie*. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag.

Latour, Bruno. 1993. *We have never been modern.* Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.

Le Goff, Jacques. 1980. *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages.* Chicago: Chicago University Press.

MacKenzie, John (ed.). 1990. *Imperialism and the Natural World*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Mignolo, Walter D. 1992. The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Colonization and the Discontinuity of the Classical Tradition. *Renaissance Quarterly* 45(4): 808–828.

Mignolo, Walter D. 1995. *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality and Colonization*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Nagel, Alexander and Christopher S. Wood. 2005. Interventions: Toward a New Model of Renaissance Anachronism. *The Art Bulletin* 87: 403–415.

Parrish, Susan Scott. 2006. *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Rice, Tony. 2000. *Voyages: Three Centuries of Natural History Exploration*. London: Museum of Natural History.

Sheehan, Jonathan. 2007. *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Thevet, André. 1558. *Les Singularités de la France Antarctique*. Paris. http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k109516t. Last accessed 29.12.2018.

Wilcox, Donald J. 1987. *The Measure of Times Past: Pre-Newtonian Chronologies and The Rhetoric of Relative Time.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Wilkie, Alex, Martin Savransky and Marsha Rosengarten. 2017. The lure of possible futures: on speculative research. In *Speculative Research: The Lure of Possible Futures*, eds. Alex Wilkie, Martin Savransky and Marsha Rosengarten, 1–18. London: Routledge.

Zedler, Johann Heinrich. 1731-1754. *Grosses vollstaendiges Universallexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste*. Halle, Leipzig: Zedler.

5 Latest Publications in the *Academy reflects* Working Paper Series

Title	Editor(s)	Year of Publication	Issue
Future Africa?! Timescapes and the Flattening of Time in the Modern Era	Susanne Lachenicht	2022	31(7)
Disputed Meanings of Women's Liberation: Social Tensions and Symbolic Struggles During Angolan Independence	Fábio Baqueiro Figueiredo	2022	30(6)
The Committee and the Uncommitted Material: Assistance to Members in Need at a Pentecostal Church in Western Kenya	Lena Kroeker and Yonatan N. Gez	2022	28(5)
The Kenya we want! From the post-colonial Departure to recent Hopes	Dieter Neubert and Achim von Oppen	2018	20(4)
NGO Visions of Development in the Changing Contexts of Ethiopia: 1960s-2015	Aychegrew H. Hailu	2018	19(3)
Themenfelder sozialanthropologischer Mittelschichtsforschung: Eine Vorstellung Bayreuther Projekte	Lena Kroeker and Maike Voigt	2017	16(2)
Socio-Cultural Diversity of the African Middle Class: The Case of urban Kenya	Dieter Neubert and Florian Stoll	2015	14(1)

Lachenicht, Susanne. 2022. Future Africa?! Timescapes and the Flattening of Time in the Modern Era. *University of Bayreuth African Studies Working Papers* 31, *Academy Reflects* 7. Bayreuth: Institute of African Studies.

https://doi.org/10.15495/EPub_UBT_00005987

africamultiple CLUSTER OF EXCELLENCE

INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN STUDIES

UNIVERSITÄT BAYREUTH