HOW TO DEAL WITH THE FUTURE? ANTHROPOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS FOR STUDYING ATTACHMENTS TO TIME IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND EASTERN GERMANY

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Abstract: In this paper, attachments to the future in Northern Ireland from a unionist perspective are taken into account. Celebrating the Northern Irish centenary can hardly be uncontested. Therefore, the official engagement with this event by the Northern Irish Office, labelled as 'Our Story in the Making', appears to be non-political and future-oriented. The latter inspires this paper to offer a temporal reading of the centenary. I argue that time, especially in the form of futures, can be regarded as a resource. To strengthen this argument, I introduce ethnographic data from fieldwork in Eastern Germany. Alongside this comparative case, I show that focussing on time allows for a different reading of Northern Ireland.

Keywords: Northern Ireland, centenary, Eastern Germany, time, future

Introduction

The Northern Irish centenary of 2021 allows for a journey through time. Narratives of past and future are invented, commodified and challenged within the fluid context of present-day Northern Ireland. The temporality of Northern Ireland – a contested past, a present in doubt, an uncertain future – shapes the making and unmaking of the centenary. Furthermore, as this article argues, notions of temporality appear as a driving force in local knowledge production about everyday life in Northern Ireland. Dealing with the painful legacy of the Northern Irish conflict has become a significant policy of the peace process, politics, public discourse and academia. The past appears as an ever-present reference point for understanding and studying this place and its people. Instead of *dealing with the past*, this paper argues for understanding notions of *how to deal with the future* as a reference point for the anthropological study of Northern Ireland.

Therefore, this paper aims to read Northern Ireland differently. The peace process is frequently depicted as a role model to bring various violent conflicts across the world to an end; or as fragile, imperfect, and locked in a stalemate (see Jarman 2016; Nagle 2018; Shirlow 2018 for a detailed analysis of the peace process's contradictions). In this paper, I argue that an anthropological focus on temporality can offer a way out of this contradiction. In particular, the renewed surge on literature about the future (Appadurai 2013, Bryant and Knight 2019; Pels 2015; Ringel 2016; Salazar et al. 2017) is an opportunity to grasp how people deal with the

inconsistencies of contemporary Northern Ireland, across notions of conflict/peace, British/Irish or progress/decline. As a vantage point for such a temporal reading of Northern Ireland, I will turn my attention to the 2021 centenary celebrations, which refer to the past, take place in the present, and augur the future.

Under the aegis of the Northern Ireland Office, the future is the vantage point in the official centenary campaign, labelled as 'Our Story in the Making – Northern Ireland beyond 100' (Northern Ireland Office 2021). Whilst references to politics and the past are avoided as far as possible, Northern Ireland is portrayed as a land of unlimited possibilities. In this place, the underlying subtext, the future, is made. However, given the complexity and contradictions of Northern Irish politics, local knowledge production cannot solely align with such positive and apolitical references about Northern Ireland's future.

In this article, I ask how does focusing on temporal orientations within and beyond the centenary celebrations allow for a different reading of Northern Ireland? And what can Irish anthropology gain from framing the future as an 'ethnographic object' (Ringel 2018: 12)? In the following pages, I will use anthropological theory about temporality and ethnographic data from my research on unionism in Belfast in 2017[1] to show how references to time and notions of the future are means of orientation in current-day Northern Ireland. I will also show how official and apolitical future visions, as they appear in the Northern Irish centenary campaign, should not be understood as universal categories. Finally, to strengthen my argument and show how the merits of focusing on future notions are not limited to the Northern Irish case, I will later introduce the Central German mining district in Eastern Germany as a second field site. Here, the designated end of coal mining in 2034 is rewritten as a government plan for a better and brighter future. Comparing these two places might seem flawed at first glance but allows us to see the strategic and political element of how future orientations are built to bridge present-day 'gaps in the real' (Stewart 1996: 41). Therefore, instead of predicting *the* Northern Irish future, this article aims for a temporal reading *of* Northern Ireland.

Notions of the past and future

Should the island of Ireland be one Irish state? Or should a distinct Northern Irish state on this isle remain? Not long ago, 2021 was deemed a focal point in remembering and rewriting this Irish question. The Northern Irish centenary would be entrenched between the symbolic trenches of the slogans of Protestant-Unionist-Loyalist *No surrender,* and Catholic-Nationalist-Republican *Ireland will be free*. Some feared violence on the streets and political upheaval, whilst others saw the chance for reconciliation through remembrance. However, the most important political force of change has recently challenged this outlook: Brexit and the Northern Irish Protocol, Covid and the search for new normality, or intensified debates about Irish unity. The

Northern Irish writer Susan McKay sums up: 'It was meant to be a year of celebration' but Northern Ireland 'is not enjoying its centenary' (McKay 2021).

Whilst writing this paper during the Spring of the centenary year, Northern Ireland is still shaken by the global Covid-19 pandemic and the ramifications of Brexit. Both events do not leave much space for a centenary, never mind celebrations. Political upheaval, mainly but not exclusively over Brexit, and especially the Northern Ireland Protocol, did not depend on the centenary. At the same time, the country saw a week of riots in April, which was described as the most severe outbreak of violence in recent years. But even without those political distractions, mass gatherings to celebrate Northern Ireland at 100 would not be possible, as many Covid restrictions are still in place. Therefore, the current celebrations or reflections almost exclusively occur online in historical forums or written documents such as opinion pieces for regional and international news outlets. Most of the latter with a strong focus on the antipode of Northern Ireland 100, namely the prospect of an upcoming united Ireland in the near future. The constitutional question is dominating politics and large parts of society since the foundation of Northern Ireland in 1921.

Maybe the Irish question will remain unanswered for a long time. For one side, the current status will be wrong; Northern Ireland remains contested. Whilst nationalism seeks to overcome the constitutional status quo, a united Ireland would mean defeat to most unionists. As a part of the United Kingdom, constitutionally, Northern Ireland is not Irish, or not yet. But with its distinct political and cultural setting along the dominating strands of Protestant and Catholic identity, and with the history of the Northern Irish conflict and peace process, the country is often regarded as not convincingly British either. Recalling Margaret Thatcher's words from 1981 that Northern Ireland would be as British as Finchley, Cochrane says that 'the fear is that Northern Ireland is as British as Gibraltar, or as British as the Falkland Islands – and both are a very long way from Finchley' (Cochrane 2021: 341). Against this background, and with the omnipresent peace triad of reconciliation, trust and justice in mind, how will the Northern Irish centenary look?

Historical anniversaries offer orientation and the possibility to rearrange the mutual dependence of past, present and future (Landwehr 2020: 9). Such temporal reference points all bear upon the past in one way or the other, but their meaning is shaped in the here and now (Nora 2005: 553). To put it even more precisely, '[a]nniversaries of historical events make us look at history from a perspective shaped all the more by the present' (Ther 2020: 30). Based on this understanding of historical anniversaries, this article will not deal with the past but will approach how people in the present, with reference to the past, deal with the future. This temporal reading of Northern Ireland, I propose, allows us to see things differently. Living with the ruptures of conflict and peace (or the sudden end of a political system, as I will show in the second comparative case

of Eastern Germany) challenges notions of normality in the present and ways to approach the future. The ethnographic material to follow will show how people relate to seemingly neutral future visions. But first, the following section introduces how the future plays a role in the Northern Irish centenary campaign.

Apolitical and future-orientated: Northern Ireland at 100

The following paraph gives an impression of how one of the centenary videos – a melange of political canvassing and the commerciality of a travel agency – introduces the milestones of the official centenary campaign initiated by the British government and led by the Northern Ireland Office.

A curved line pans through the pictures of happy faces (referring to a 'Youth Programme'), landmark Northern Irish sites such as the Giant's Causeway (entitled with the plea to 'focus on our ever-brighter future'), a flowery meadow (representing 'a specially-created, unique Northern Ireland Centenary Rose'), or a Royal Mail lorry in Belfast (carrying a 'special postmark' 'to mark the centenary'). Plenty more such pleas and projects occur in this video, all accompanied with enchanted piano and string music. Finally, after roughly two minutes, the line's journey ends by forming a circle, filled with the slogan 'Our Story in the Making: NI beyond 100' (Northern Ireland Office 2021).

The campaign aims to 'showcase Northern Ireland on the world stage, […] reflecting on our past while looking forward to a positive future […]as we go beyond 100' (ibid). Academic, historical, cultural, religious, and business events are staged in Northern Ireland and in some cases across the UK. Such a high-stake centenary programme partly originated from commitments made by the British government in the *New Decade, New Approach* (NDNA) agreement in January 2020. Under the banner of 'Promoting Northern Ireland's culture, heritage and society', the UK government under Boris Johnson pledged to 'mark the centenary of Northern Ireland in 2021 in a spirit of mutual respect, inclusiveness and reconciliation' and to 'reflect on the past as well as to build for the future' (Government of the United Kingdom and Government of the Republic of Ireland 2020: 49).

The NDNA agreement, dating back to the younger history of political upheaval, is only one reminder of the highly political context in which this centenary is marked, not exclusively but prominently, by the Northern Ireland Office. Most recently, unionism mobilized against the Northern Irish Brexit protocol, whilst nationalist pressure for a border poll intensified. Or, as Evershed and Graff-McRae point out: 'There is no neutral or apolitical commemoration. What is (or is not) to be commemorated, and how, is always […] driven by political pressures' (Evershed and Graff-McRae 2020). And yet, anything political is absent in the official centenary programme. 'Our Story in the Making' can be regarded as an antipode to any symbolism of Northern Irish,

British or Irish nationalism. Northern Ireland is neither portrayed as a political or spatial entity, whilst contiguous and unavoidable discussions about a contested past are outsourced into academic forums. The absence of politics is a quintessentially political phenomenon, not as a coincidence but as a political act of its own. As the anthropologist Susan McKay indicated in her research about the 1992 Canadian 125-year anniversary celebratory policy, government-initiated celebrations would have conflicted with that time's political anger and fragmentations. Therefore, a policy was designed 'to make the celebration of Canada appear '"populist", "participatory" and non-political' (McKay 1997: 141). McKay's research introduces us to a different setting, more than 20 years ago, but shows us how apolitical centenary celebrations can be a policy designed to gloss over existing political problems.

As we have seen so far, the official Northern Irish centenary programme is merely apolitical, in line with McKay's case study of Canada, and strongly future-orientated. Northern Ireland at 100 shall mean 'beyond 100': 'reflecting on our past while looking forward to a positive future' to 'shape the future Northern Ireland as we see it' (Northern Ireland Office 2021). But this future orientation stands against all those disputes over the past and against ruptures of the present, which seem to challenge any future of Northern Ireland. The future in Northern Ireland is often regarded as the future of Northern Ireland, which is traditionally located in a binary: the Protestant-Unionist-Loyalist will to hold on to the constitutional status quo and the Catholic-Nationalist-Republican aspiration of Irish unity. However, in the official centenary campaign, constitutional arguments are avoided as far as possible. Here temporal orientations become an asset, a currency. Or, in other words, having no future is not an option. The reference to time, especially to the future, will be focused on in the following pages.

A temporal reading of Northern Ireland – Voices from the field

In anthropology, time can be understood as a relation (Fabian 1983) or 'as an intensity shaping the unfolding of relations' (Farías 2017: 35). Furthermore, time allows us to 'understand and represent ourselves in the world' (Balkenhol 2012: 7). Temporal orientations shape the actions of today, and as such, the future can guide or awaken the present (Bryant and Knight 2019: 2, 192). In *The Anthropology of the Future*, the authors go as far as to say that 'without a concept of futurity the present ceases to exist as such' (ibid. 16). In his ethnography of the Eastern German city of Hoyerswerda, Felix Ringel mentions the possibility of the future being 'lost and exchanged' (2018: 12). Therefore, Ringel argues that the different ways people relate to the future are significant to becoming aware of their present (ibid. 7). The centenary campaign orchestrated by the Northern Ireland Office already gave us an impression of how the future can become an apolitical narrative for the present. In contrast, the vignettes to follow (material from my fieldwork about unionist

attitudes to the urban changes of Belfast in 2017) illustrate a more uncertain relationship to ideas of the Northern Irish future.

I met Philip[2] at a family fun day at the Museum of Orange Heritage in East Belfast. Here, where the Orange Order intends to showcase its history in a family-friendly way, I contacted him in the café/shop area of the museum, and I quickly learnt about his passion for the Ulster-Scots people and language. We agreed to continue our conversation a few days later. When we met again, Philip offered me a cup of tea, some biscuits and the chance for me to finally understand something about Ulster-Scots 'talk, sound, language and how to worship God', as he describes it. Philip grew up in the Northern Irish countryside, and his parents are actual Ulster-Scots speakers. He is a Presbyterian Protestant, engaged in a marching band: 'I play the pipes'. Philip passionately speaks about and defends Ulster-Scots, he dismisses the claim that it would be just dialect or 'bad English', as he frames it.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, modern Irish nationalism initiated a 'wider ethno-cultural revival' to provide 'new symbols for the emerging Irish national identity' (Watson 2014: 179). The pressing demand for an independent Ireland in the 19th and 20th centuries left unionists in Ireland without manifold cultural capital resources. Therefore, the Ulster-Scotland linkage had to be re-invented. 'Nationalists find a potent unifying force in the Irish language, unionists seek a counterpart in Ulster-Scots' (McCoy and O'Reilly 2003: 156). The foundation of the Northern Irish state initially solved this problem. As the constitutional question was answered, political support for Ulster-Scots declined. But more than 70 years later, during the peace process, Ulster-Scots suddenly became important again. The unionist negotiating team needed an equivalent because of nationalist demands for cultural and political equality, so Ulster-Scots had its political revival. Unfortunately, as Philip declares in disillusion, for tactical reasons merely, 'they didn't know an awful lot about it.' Although Philip passionately believes in Ulster-Scots, he knew that such political tactics would only manifest the public image of Ulster-Scots as something *inauthentic*, especially in contrast to the massive Catholic-Nationalist-Republican campaign for an Irish Language Act (O'Doherty 2019: 181).

Philip knows about this public image of Ulster-Scots. He vigorously defends Ulster-Scots as something enjoyable, inclusive and profoundly positive. But Philip is not welcome everywhere. Some see his work as something political, as 'part of conflict'. To him, this should be separated. 'Culture is culture; language is language; health is health. There should be a place for everything.' Philip here points out a vital point in understanding unionism in Northern Ireland. Culture, for example, in the form of Ulster-Scots, had to be made beneficial. Nationalists, in the absence of political participation in a young Northern Ireland, had their

distinct Gaelic tradition. Unionists needed to fill this vacuum (Vallely 2008: 250, McCoy and O'Reilly 2003: 156).

Ulster-Scots identity is made of such contradictions: 'it's not cut and dry, it's complex,' Philip argues. But, on a temporal scale, how can such faults align with future visions? After nearly two hours, our discussion about Ulster-Scots has moved into the territory of Scottish independence, Brexit and, as Philip considers, all those 'uncertain times' that lie ahead. Philip explained that

> you have started me on now thinking about all this and me enter a state of depression. It's this, who are we? What does it mean to be a unionist, loyalist, whatever it may be? Where are we going in the next ten, twenty, thirty years? Whereas you have this drive focus and strategy in Irish nationalism and republicanism. I don't think they have this level of doubt and some soul searching as to who exactly are we. We are unionists here, but we know rightly that London and the Prime Minister would quite happily get rid of this because we cause much trouble. We are a huge financial drain on the economy for all we ever produce. We are loyal to the union, but is the union loyal to us?

Philip's anticipation of a Northern Irish, Ulster-Scots reading of the future reveals the 'multitemporality of the present', as Peter Pels argues: 'how specific futures work out in different past and present-day locations' (2015: 789). That the Northern Irish centenary does not equal celebration is only one reminder of how contested history is and 'how narratives on violence in the past are tied to particular ideas about politics in the present' (Evershed 2018: 78). Meanwhile, Brexit might be a 'turning point in British history' (Shore 2016: 490), in which 'everything, including our theory of society, is now open to negotiation' (Evans 2017: 219), 'an event through a mix of hoped and feared, promised and threatened, futures' (Anderson et al. 2020: 257). What does that mean for Northern Ireland, as 'Irish unity has again come onto the political agenda in response to Brexit' (Todd 2021: 62)? Asked more precisely, 'does Northern Ireland have a viable political future?' (Cochrane 2021: xiv). In such circumstances, the present appears as a *rite de passage*, as the not yet and no more, stuck between change and standstill. As the second vignette illustrates, seemingly neutral future visions raise questions about attachments to and finding a place in the future.

In a street off the Shankill Road in West Belfast, is an inconspicuous red-brick terraced house, where I was invited to learn about the future of the Orange Order, the Protestant fraternity's 'key to the relationship between Unionist politics and the Protestant churches' (Brady 2013: 231), and its main celebration in the marching calendar and cultural fabric of (Protestant) Northern Ireland, the 12th of July, *The Twelfth*. No other institution in the country unites as many elements of unionism as the Orange Order. But, as Kaufmann notes:

'Many outsiders know the Orange Order as the incomprehensible organisation at the centre of the conflict-ridden July marching season' (2007: 1). *The Twelfth* could be a celebration of culture, a tourism asset, or at least an important day for some, just a day-off for others. But parades on this day are also associated with conflict, excessive consumption of alcohol, sectarianism, hooliganism (Kennaway 2015) – and misrepresentations, Mark and Steven[3], two senior Belfast Orangeman, told me: 'We are portrayed as a dragon, we are portrayed as Neanderthals. We are portrayed as many things. Our job is to change that perception[4].' To counter the negative perception of the parades, Mark and Steven aim to broaden the meaning of the day. On top of its religious character ('We are still the defenders of Protestantism'), the Twelfth shall be regarded as a festival, a family-friendly event called *Belfast Orangefest*.

For more than one hour, accompanied by tea and instant coffee, Steven and Mark give me an impression of what *Orangefest* aims to do: 'We explain what we are all about', 'entertainment' and to 'dress the city'. Next, they reflect on problems with the *Twelfth* – 'social behaviour, drink, drugs, mindless hooliganism' – problems which most events of this size face worldwide, they both stress. Finally, they admit that they 'failed miserably' in getting their message out and intend to foster confidence by saying: 'We live with what we have got, we try to make it better. And we will make it better.'

Just as with Philip, the longer the interview goes, I am running out of questions, which is not the worst option for an ethnographic interview. So, Steven and Mark now take over to say what they want to say and what this interview has triggered them to say. It is, just as with Philip, facing an uncertain future:

> I believe we have a message. We are part of it. We can't be ostracised; we can't be thrown out. And we can't be murdered out of… we can't be killed out of society completely; we still have a place within it. And we need to put our message out, and people need to understand that we play a major part in what happens within Northern Ireland.

Phillip, Mark and Steven talk about how they aim to find a place for *their unionist culture* in a post-conflict Belfast (Komarova and O'Dowd 2013; Schiedlowski 2020). When the interviews were conducted in 2017, the Northern Irish century felt a long way away, and the future was not an outspoken issue. And still, I argue, both cases reveal how the future is an issue for my interlocutors. From different perspectives, they take the future into account when arguing about past and present-day Northern Ireland. Philip, Mark and Steven aim to find a place in the future of Northern Ireland; they aim to keep pace with future visions, try to create an attachment to or challenge them. They deal with the presence of the Northern Irish past, but they

simultaneously try to deal with the future. Anthropology can and should be 'unpacking these futures, too' (Ringel 2020: 364).

So far, we have seen that the Northern Irish centenary is less about the past than about the future – either as the apolitical 'Our story in the making' or as the prospect of a united Ireland looming. But what the examples from Ulster-Scots and the Orange Order have shown is that anticipating the future is not apolitical at all. Just as 'invented traditions' can be made out of the past in the here-and-now (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), the future is read in the present. The political precarity of unionism (Aughey 2000: 185f) especially makes anticipating the future in Northern Ireland difficult. The future is a gamble, a resource to claim. Philip, Mark and Steven all tried to envision a future of which they form a part, a direct result of sense-making in the present. The question for anthropology, I argue, is therefore less about what kinds of future visions are on the table or what is set to become a reality. As the ethnographic material shows, imagining a future can be a gamble of the present – something anthropology can show. I intend to strengthen the validity of this argument by comparison with a seemingly different regional and political context. In Eastern Germany, my second field site, I studied the unmaking of lignite mining and the making of post-fossil futures in the region around the city of Halle. Economic transformations into a post-fossil world sometimes run against the omnipresent memory of the multiple changes and ruptures of the German reunification process, called *Wendejahre*, the turnaround years 1898/1990.

But then, why not compare the future making of Northern Irish and, for example, Scottish unionists? How can a comparison based on the very individual research biography of the author strengthen the argument of this paper? Comparing two different social groups in two other places is indeed valuable, I claim. I attempt what Sian Lazar calls 'disjunctive comparison', a form of comparison she regards as 'inherent to anthropology' (Lazar 2012: 351). Northern Ireland is commonly read in the unionist-nationalist binary. But to compare apples with pears allows us to see things differently, on a broader scale. What is the bigger picture of thoughts about the ordinary and nations of the good life? Where the ordinary is lost for one reason or another, the future can appear as a bridge into it – I claim we can see that in some parts of Northern Ireland *and* Eastern Germany. Lazar says that 'disjunctive comparison has the potential to raise questions that may not emerge through a more strictly representative form of comparison' (Lazar 2012: 352). So, in the following part of the paper, I do not introduce unionist counterparts in Scotland or another post-conflict society, to mention two more common comparative examples. Instead, I introduce the Central German mining district in Eastern Germany. A place where notions of normality have been challenged and where the relationship between past, present, and future is in imbalance.

Comparative view: (Un-)Making post-fossil futures in Eastern Germany

The gradual implementation of the German coal phase-out by no later than 2038 will provide mounting challenges for the three German coal-mining districts. One of them, the Central German district, located halfway between the Eastern German urban centres of Halle and Leipzig, is this article's focus. Climate justice, energy transition, and the finite nature of fossil resources are the driving forces behind this process labelled as *Strukturwandel*, structural change, indicating that something more significant than a pure economic transformation is intended. The regionally established interplay of labour, economy, energy, politics and identity are set to change. Pillars of society will be renegotiated, modified or improved. Challenges of today are labelled as chances for tomorrow; *Strukturwandel* is set to be a transition towards a sustainable future.
Therefore, the German coal phase-out is embedded in the global and long-established debate about climate change. First and foremost, coal phase-out is one critical step in the German energy transition. Alongside the nuclear power phase-out before 2022 and the build-up of renewable energies like solar, wind power or hydrogen, Germany intends carbon neutrality by 2050. Between June 2018 and January 2019, a commission on growth, structural change and employment, *Wachstum, Strukturwandel und Beschäftigung*, aimed to find a consensus between climate justice, energy security, economic stability, and social peace in the three remaining coal districts Rhineland, Lusatia, and Central Germany. Commission members, a mixture of politicians, scientists, stakeholders, and representatives from the affected regions, agreed to power down coal energy by 2038 at the latest, while compensating this process with 40 billion euro: 'The aim is to develop the coal regions into European model regions for rooted political transformations' (Kommission für Wachstum, Strukturwandel und Beschäftigung 2019: 9; translation by the author). Besides those 40 billion euros, the focus towards 2038 allows for an otherwise reasonably open process orientation. Also, 2038 seems to be quite far away from all those compulsions of the present. Such a long timeframe is not bounded by legislative periods but turns into a space of unlimited possibilities.

Within this process of *Strukturwandel*, no one can escape the future. Political, economic, and social actors invite 'future workshops' and ask, 'How do we want to live in 2040?' There exists omnipresent haste for the future, in which visions and fears of the present are caught. The future becomes a necessity in which to participate with *Strukturwandel*. However, due to the afterlives of the breaks and ruptures from German reunification, parts of the local population are sceptical towards such notions of change, progress, and future. Civil servants responsible for implementing these changes are well aware of those cold and distant notions. They emphasize the moment of gradualness: 'We now have 20 years to prepare', as the 'decay of the old (industrial) parallel universe only begins in ten years[5].'

The Central German coal district is no stranger to the ideas of *Wandel* and *Wende*, transformation and change. This becomes obvious when we frame the Southern parts of Saxony-Anhalt and the Northern parts of Saxony not as Central but as a part of Eastern Germany. Today's 'model region' framing was the 'blooming landscapes' narrative back then, famously coined by German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Blooming landscapes were set to illustrate that all the effort and sacrifice of the Eastern German population – the break-up of their economy, of their state, of their everyday reality – was worth it in the long run. Today, one can identify such landscapes in this region: a chemical industry of national importance, the European infrastructure hub airport Leipzig-Halle, and various academic institutions with international networks, among others. However, a different reading of East Germany illustrates why Kohl's 'blooming landscapes' are so often quoted in cynicism. Less economic power, less wealth, less trust in state institutions, accompanied by clichés like less open-mindedness, less grace, less good: 'The East is and remains a special problem area, not just because of its ongoing deprivation, but also because the past left scars' (Mau 2019: 164, translation by the author).

A German Democratic Republic (GDR, formerly East Germany) travel guide from the summer of 1989 indicates how suddenly the world stood upside down. In this book, the East German state is portrayed as one of the 'ten leading industrial nations in the world' (Benthien 1990: 16): the digger and buggy from Zeitz 'go out into the world' (ibid.: 365), Weißenfels is set as a 'hub of the shoe industry' (ibid.: 389), and Merseburg is regarded as 'the political, economic and cultural centre for the industrial area' (ibid.: 389). In an editorial note, the authors apologize that the 'multiple changes' between the deadline in June 1989 and the book's publishing in early 1990 could not be addressed. A brand-new book in which life in the GDR was idealized became a reminiscence of the past even before it was published. The authors, just like many others, became 'passive observers' (Mau 2019: 135) of a world gone down. The region saw 'a post-social competitiveness shock', as a solid industrialized region became deindustrialized (Bartholomae and Woon Nam 2014: 255). Economists attest to the East's lower productivity, less income, and less competitiveness than West Germany (Institute for Economic Research Halle 2019). The people's lifeworld, industrial setting, voting patterns, and understanding of democracy: everything appears to be wrong or not good enough, too often. In Eastern Germany, sometimes, something seems to be wrong with the present (Gürtler, Luh and Staemmler 2020: 32).

The quest for the future is a dual process: coal phase-out and innovation strength, decline and renewal. The latter refers to concepts such as green hydrogen or smart cities whilst the energy source coal is deemed not to be up to date anymore; 'coal is the 19th century' proclaims a sticker on a lamp-post from the environmental movement *Ende Gelände*. Future is a currency, and any attachment to coal seems to run out of capital. However, as one of the many contradictions within *Strukturwandel*, some actors tend to disagree

with this focus on future associations. For people who currently work in the coal industry and are surrounded by coal both locally and symbolically, a coal phase-out in roughly 15 years is not a faraway scenario. *Strukturwandel* as future expectation, but coal does not seem to match with that. 'If you come along with projects that include the word coal, you can turn around and go,'[6] says a coal industry representative, 'coal won't last long'[7], says a delegate from a coal council. It is their lived experience; it influences their plans for work and family life. To them, the post-coal future kicks into everyday life.

The notion of being a society in transition, of not-yet-and-no-more, is a striking similarity between Eastern Germany and Northern Ireland. *Strukturwandel* can be regarded as the condition of the East, whilst a post-conflict status is often used to paraphrase the difficulties of Northern Ireland. In both cases, as this paper has shown, people struggle to deal with the past. The future is staged as a neutral and apolitical policy, a guiding narrative towards normality, to notions of how life could be. But then, people have to relate to such narratives. Their present-day hardships define if and how they can keep pace with such notions of an envisaged future of normality.

Conclusion

In this paper, the official Northern Irish centenary campaign was taken as the vantage point for a temporal reading of Northern Ireland. I have shed light on the temporal aspects of 'Northern Ireland beyond 100' and compared this campaign with the quest for post-coal futures in Eastern Germany. I intended to show how notions of temporality are necessary forms of knowledge production in everyday life.

Felix Ringel, who compared Eastern Germany with the United Kingdom post-Brexit, argued that in both places, people 'had to renegotiate their relations to time in general and the future more specifically' (Ringel 2020: 364). How people deal with the future is a thing of the present, strongly influenced by the past. I have argued that focusing on temporality as a form of local knowledge production allows for an understanding of Northern Ireland beyond the dualism of positive and negative peace.

In Northern Ireland, past notions are starkly shaped by violence and disruption, whilst present-day politics is dominated by demands of the peace process, the ongoing Irish-vs-British divide, and the demon Brexit. Therefore, all too often, Northern Ireland was and still is regarded as a *place-apart*. To borrow from Kathleen Stewart's reading of the post-industrial Appalachian region, an 'other America', Northern Ireland might also represent 'a world in which there is something wrong with the everyday', shaped by a 'daily conflict between what is and what might have been' (Stewart 1996: 50). All too often, the linkage between past, present, and future does not make sense.

In Eastern Germany, which is often regarded as an *other Germany*, notions of rupture and (constitutional) change are omnipresent, too. Studying ideas and anticipations of the future are fundamental to understand how people relate to notions of change, transition or progress. Change is omnipresent in Central Germany, but it is close-knit with stagnation. Anticipations of the future are embedded in ghosts of the past. Therefore, *Strukturwandel* intends to craft climate and economic sustainability, the sustainability of lifeworlds and regional identities. I see *Strukturwandel* as the guiding narrative in which this region shall be fixed, reconstructed, made better.

Although the local context is reasonably different, both the official centenary celebrations by the Northern Ireland Office and the long-running policy of post-coal lifeworlds can be regarded as a bridge into a future consisting of normality and notions of the *good life*. Ruptures, uncertainties and illusions can be glossed over by gifting the future. In Eastern Germany and Northern Ireland, a policy is set up to cover the 'gap in the real' (Stewart 1996: 41) by introducing the future as a resource.

To answer the central question of this article: focussing on temporal orientations means to study the interplay and mutual dependency between past, present, and future. It is not enough to study how people deal with the past. Whilst the future might be staged as a universal notion, open for everyone, the lived reality is more complex. As both cases from Northern Ireland and Eastern Germany have shown, people cannot easily break with the struggles of past and present and, therefore, fill those gaps in the real. The paper argues for studying how people align with futures visions in Northern Ireland, how they might struggle to keep pace with them and how they might or might not gain access to the resource future.

Whilst attachment to place is long studied in Northern Ireland, anthropology should also study people's attachment to time. In Northern Ireland, as in Eastern Germany, the future can become an asset. Access to future narratives plays a vital part in bridging the gap to dominant narratives of order, normality, and notions of the *good life*.

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[1] From July to September 2017, I conducted ethnographic research in and around the city of Belfast. During that time, I conducted formal and informal interviews with various unionist actors, participant observation, used written documents as a source and walking as a method. I aimed to trace how unionist actors approach, plan, think about the city and negotiate their place in a modern Belfast and thus the Northern Irish peace process. The findings of this project have been presented at the conference of the Association of Peace and Conflict Studies in Anthropology in Belfast (2019) and published with the ZeFKo Studies in Peace and Conflict (2020).

[2] Name changed

[3] Names changed

[4] 03/08/2017
[5] 25/5/2020
[6] Fieldwork conversation, 27/10/2020
[7] Fieldwork conversation, 21/10/2020.

FINDING WAYS THROUGH EUROSPACE: WEST AFRICAN MOVERS RE-VIEWING EUROPE FROM THE INSIDE

JORIS SCHAPENDONK

REVIEW BY CORRIE INNES

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Geographer and ethnographer, Joris Schapendonk offers an insight into the anthropologies of migration, mobility, borders, globalisation, and the West African diaspora in Europe, through his ethnographic exploration of the lifeworlds of African movers in Europe. Schapendonk describes his methodology as 'trajectory ethnography'; working with a core group of informants and others introduced through that core group over an extended period. He travels to meet them in their disparate locations as opposed to focusing on one single physical field site, an approach that captures 'im/mobility as it unfolds' across shifting destinations, aspirations, breakthroughs and setbacks over time (p. 8).

The book presents a 'de-migranticized' perspective on African mobility in Europe. Schapendonk presents two interrelated arguments supporting his call to move away from the language of migration. Firstly, the terminology is tied up with the 'normative logics of the nation state' (p. 2) logics his research participants – movers, as he calls them – operate outwith. They have become experts at transcending and overcoming the expectations of the nation state, refusing to 'reground in a national space' after they arrive in Europe, in favour of operating in, indeed producing and enacting, a 'post-national Europe' free of the limitations of national belonging (p. 2). Schapendonk highlights the cruel irony that while the EU has had limited success creating a post-national, integrated Europe through programmes like Erasmus, the African movers who come closest to actually producing this post-national landscape find their movements strictly and harshly controlled by the same authorities.

Schapendonk's second argument against migration terminology is that it limits us to a 'reductionist and sedentarist understanding' of the mobility of so-called migrants (p. 3). Migration language encourages us to think of migration as an in-between phase between place of origin and destination, with any further movements classified as onward migration. This fails to capture the complexity of West African movers' mobility, which frequently involves moves both between and within Europe and Africa, often living trans-local lives between disparate locations. Schapendonk also notes that the idea of the 'migrant' is a political artefact, produced and reproduced through discourses and political practices which control and restrict movement.