Bielefeld University

Collaborative Research Centre (SFB) 584:
The Political as Communicative Space in History

Research Programme

Summary

The Collaborative Research Centre (SFB) 584 is studying the transformations of the political across all epochs of history from Antiquity to the present. The objective is to explore how spaces and representations of the political have changed through continuous processes of re-definition and re-enactment. Particular attention focuses on the agents, media and mechanisms involved in such changes, and on the conditions in which changes occurred. The SFB defines the political as a historically variable communicative space made up of practices, symbols and discourses. Such a broad definition is required, because at no time in history have there been fixed boundaries between political and non-political phenomena. Similarly, there have always been contests over who may participate in political activity, in which role, and under which institutional regime. For these reasons, the research network dissociates itself from any kind of restricted definition that would link the political to specific agents (governments), organisations (states) or modes of action (decision making). This distinguishes the Bielefeld SFB from more conventional approaches in political history in which it is taken for granted that governments and states are under all circumstances, and always have been, at the core of what is political. To be sure, the SFB does not exclude the study of decision-making processes within governments and state institutions. However, these decision-making processes, just like other activities, are looked at from a different perspective, centred above all on the ever-changing constituents of the political communicative space itself. Therefore, the SFB's main concern is to show how boundaries were drawn between the political and the non-political. Individual projects concentrate on the ways in which agents were included or excluded, topics admitted or rejected, and particular forms of action, even violence, integrated into or banned from political communication.

Despite our basic claim that definitions of the political have changed in history, and will continue to change, certain formal criteria are necessary to distinguish between political and non-political communication. Since the establishment of the SFB in 2001, the following criteria have been developed and successfully applied in our practical work:
Communication is political when it (a) aims at having, has in fact, or is recognized as having a broad impact, sustainability and obligatoriness; (b) deals with rules of social life, power relations or the limits to what can be said and done; and (c) refers to imagined collective entities either explicitly or implicitly. These criteria have the advantage of being applicable across all periods of history and all kinds of regimes – imagined or real. They can be used to trace the political in medieval corporations just as in modern nation states, in the Greek poleis just as in religiously founded communities, in federal entities like the European Union just as in areas of limited statehood. Hence, the coherence of the SFB does not result from being limited to certain regions, periods of time or constitutional regimes, but from its focus on explaining the changes of the political as a communicative space in history. In addition, all the sub-projects start from a theoretical approach that conceives reality – within the framework of contingent constellations – as being constructed by communication, and that assigns agents a major function within this communication. Whether these agents are analysed as consciously intervening subjects or as the recipients of communication is something that is left to the discretion of individual sub-projects.

The SFB has been organised into three research areas. Research Area A: "Presentations and Representations of the Political" is addressing theatrical, rhetorical and medial strategies and semantic struggles over the concepts and horizons of the political. Research Area B: "Shifting the Boundaries of the Political" is studying the processes by which topics become politicised or depoliticised and how political spaces are constructed through semantics and practices of inclusion or exclusion. Research Area C: "Violence in Political Space" is dealing with the negotiations surrounding the use of violence and counter-violence as a part of political communication and is clarifying their role in politicisation or depoliticisation processes.

Any attempt at offering one single "grand narrative" on the transformations of the political from Antiquity to the present day would be futile. However, the SFB has explored various hypotheses concerning the transition from the pre-modern to the modern era, assuming, for example, an increasing politicisation due to the growing density of communication or an increasing autonomy and dominance of the political over other spheres of life. Although these hypotheses have been inspiring, they have proved to be too linear. Instead, the analyses of processes and constellations in the sub-projects tend to reveal changing and at times contradictory movements of politicisation and depoliticisation. It has also become evident that, while the modern age has certainly witnessed an increase in the self-reference of a functional system defined as "politics", that system "politics" itself was challenged at the same time – and increasingly – by the discourses and logics of other systems.
For the last phase of the SFB, ending in 2012, a new synthesis project has been designed to link together the findings of the sub-projects and formulate mid-range hypotheses on continuities and ruptures, epochal trends and repetitive patterns in the modes of constructing the political. In doing this, the synthesis project will also reflect on how the writing of political history has to change when its focus is no longer defined only in terms of content but, above all, as the outcome of communication.

**Positioning the SFB in the Research Field**

Since its foundation in July 2001, our research network has done a great deal in explaining the historically variable functions and boundaries of the political. Examples can be found in the book series *Historische Politikforschung*, published by the Campus-Verlag. The starting point of many sub-projects was, and continues to be, the communication processes and social practices, also violent ones, that precede, accompany and influence political decisions. Research in the SFB has been guided by a broad consensus in cultural studies and the social sciences that conceives social reality as a phenomenon that is being refabricated continuously through discourses, symbols and practices. Accordingly, the political is seen as a changing, communicatively created variable. Studying its transformations is the shared goal of all sub-projects.

By taking this approach, the Bielefeld SFB has stimulated the writing of political history both in Germany and abroad. During the second research period (July 2004-June 2008), this was reflected in an increasingly controversial debate among historians on the "Neue Politikgeschichte". In contrast to the advocates of a political history restricted to states, governments, their decision-making and the accompanying public discussion, the SFB maintains that political history can only be dealt with meaningfully in a long-term and cross-cultural perspective if it starts from a broad definition of the political, not referring too closely to agents, institutions or procedures that may be specific to a certain historical period or individual culture. Therefore, the SFB defines the political as a communicative space with continuously changing external and internal boundaries, institutional forms, and verbal, aesthetic, visual and performative representations whose permanence is only temporary or restricted to single dimensions. Defined in this way, the space of the political is neither all...
encompassing nor amorphous; its boundaries and rules are not diffuse, but can always become controversial again. And it is precisely this affinity for controversy that determines the continuous communicative reshaping of the political.

Although states, governments and their decisions have certainly been a major element in this political space since Early Modern Times, they have been far from being the dominant element for all agents and their communication. Governments or state actors receive a great deal of attention in many of the sub-studies in the SFB, for example, in the concluded projects on the Presidents of the Federal Republic of Germany (A 2 b), on the "politics of trust" in Franco-German relations since 1949 (A 14), on statistics as a medium of political communication in the governmental and administrative practices of late absolutist states (B 2) or in the ongoing project on the challenge to the state monopoly on the use of force by the Autonomous since the 1980s (C 3). However, questions are never directed solely towards explaining the views and actions of state agents. Other groups of agents are always included as well.

By focusing on the shifting boundaries and ways in which the political is constituted, historical research on the political at the Bielefeld SFB also sets different accents compared with the "cultural history of the political" (although this takes a similar basic direction and is, in many regards, stimulating). Numerous projects at the SFB are taking a similar approach to studying the in- or excluding function of symbols, rituals, norms and discourses in or between political collective entities as well as the rhetorical, medial and visualising strategies of those who possess or strive towards power. Explicitly, these issues are addressed particularly in Research Area A ("Presentations and Representations of the Political"), although they also play a role in projects within Areas B ("Shifting Boundaries of the Political") and C ("Violence in Political Space"). Cooperation with German and foreign scholars in this field was and continues to be intensive. However, within the framework of the Bielefeld SFB, such inquiries into the cultural history of politics are always embedded in our broader questions concerning the long- and short-term changes in the political space, the dynamics of

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2 Rödder, Klios neue Kleider; for a somewhat polemical approach, cf.: Kraus/Nicklas, Einleitung, and Nicklas, Macht – Politik – Diskurs.
3 Mergel, Überlegungen zu einer Kulturgeschichte der Politik; Landwehr, Diskurs – Macht – Wissen; Stollberg-Rilinger, Einleitung, in: Was heißt Kulturgeschichte des Politischen?
4 See, e.g., Frevert/Braungart (eds.), Sprachen des Politischen; Jussen (ed.), Macht des Königs; Andres/Geisthövel/Schwengelbeck (eds.), Sinnlichkeit der Macht; Gilcher-Holtey/Kraus/Schößler (eds.), Politisches Theater; Andres/Braungart (eds.), Ästhetischer Konservatismus.
5 See, among others, the discussions with Rudolf Schlögl (Konstanz, SFB 485, "Norm and Symbol"), Herfried Münkler (Berlin, SFB 640, "Representations of Social Order"), Dietrich Harth (Heidelberg, SFB 619, "Ritual Dynamics"), Hans-Georg Lippert (Dresden, SFB 537, "Institutionalität und Geschichtlichkeit"), David Apter (Yale), Kathleen Canning (Ann Arbor).
politicisation or depoliticisation, and – with respect to modernity – the interdependencies between a functional system called "politics" and other functional systems. In contrast to many recent works on political history, the SFB projects discuss explicitly how "politics" has been conceptualised by contemporaries and how its relative importance as a functional system has changed within the broader communicative space of the political.

Attempts to revive the writing of political history can be found outside the German-speaking countries. In France, for example, calls for the emancipation of political history from its former isolation and for its expansion into new fields by allying it with cultural studies have gained increasing attention. Research on rhetorical, mass-medial and visual strategies in the presentation and representation of political agents and their ideologies has long been part of the repertoire of French political historians. One need only recall the way they are anchored in the traditionally strong social and institutional history of their political system. Recently, French historians have also been looking at the conceptual history of "politics". Moreover, a "conceptual history of the political" (Rosanvallon) has been formulated that, unlike the former history of "politics", does not exhaust itself by laboriously plotting events and struggles between political parties, but addresses the historicity of the foundations of the community (cité). This shifts attention towards the transformations of statehood and the changing relation between the state and the civil society. However, all these new directions in political history are scarcely linked to each other, and remain restricted to the study of modern France since the 18th century. In Great Britain, the "new" political history is restricted even further to the nation state. At least the sterile trench warfare between the supporters of the so-called "high politics" school and the proponents of a cultural- or discourse-historical study of "popular politics" now belongs to the past. However, most of the "new" British political history continues to be based on a relatively uncritical understanding of its subject – "politics" – based on the Westminster model. Although one can find rudiments of the diachronic and comparative approach to studying the long-term transformation of the political and its institutions in France, Great Britain and other countries that come close to that taken by the

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6 Sirinelli, De la demeure à l’agora; ibid., Réflexions sur l’histoire; ibid., Histoire culturelle et histoire politique.
7 Cf., e.g., the work of Maurice Agulhon; most recently ibid., Histoire et politique à gauche.
8 Cf. Prochasson, La politique comme culture.
9 Bertrand/Guilhaumou, Le politique en usages.
10 Rosanvallon, Histoire conceptuelle.
11 Rosanvallon, Le modèle politique français; ibid., La contre-démocratie.
12 Cf. for a self-critical approach: Pedersen, What is Political History Now?
13 Cf. the research overviews of Fielding, Looking for the "New Political History"; Black, "What kind of people are you?"; Lawrence, Political History.
SFB, they still possess a narrow focus.\textsuperscript{14} The interdisciplinary, culture- and epoch-transcending design of the SFB proves to be a decisive advantage here – an advantage that has been revealed repeatedly in discussions with foreign colleagues at Bielefeld and at international conferences. A major goal during the current period will be to integrate the SFB's findings more strongly into the international discussion through cooperations between sub-projects and foreign scientists. The conferences and publications envisaged by the synthesis project D 1 should particularly serve this goal.

With its broad definition of the political, the SFB also addresses the problem of the spatial frames of political communication. It has been reinforced in this by recent debates in sociology, political science and law that are diagnosing widespread signs of a dissolution of the boundaries of a politics hedged in by national states.\textsuperscript{15} The challenges to national politics are coming from many directions. They are brought about by supranational organisations; by hardly controllable streams of global migration, finance, information and goods; by environmental change; by transnational social movements, non-governmental organisations and private companies; or by globally operating terrorist networks. Several projects from various disciplines are engaging in this internationally led discussion. Topics studied include the transnational dimensions of the communicative event "1968" (A 5), the semantics of in- and exclusion in the discourse on whether Turkey belongs to Europe (B 12), the in- and excluding functions of ethnicity discourses in South America and Southern Asia (B 13) or the democratic legitimisations of migration policies (B 15).\textsuperscript{16} These projects profit from the unusual – from a social science perspective – practice of sharing their work field with historical, literary, social-anthropological and legal-historical sub-projects. Even in ancient Greece or the Europe of the Early Middle Ages, political communication took place in spaces of varying size and coherence, and this impacted on its topics, semantics and institutional forms. From a historical perspective, it is not so surprising that the nation state, particularly in the form of the "democratic constitutional and interventionist state", has become a precarious phenomenon in recent times and is currently in a process of becoming "frayed" – as ascertained by the researchers in the SFB on "Transformations of the State" in Bremen.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{14} For example, a group of researchers in the Netherlands led by Henk te Velde (Leiden) is studying political culture and "political styles" and also paying attention to transfers; cf. te Velde, Het theater; \textit{ibid.}, Stijlen van leiderschap; Pels/te Velde (eds.), Politieke stijl. In Russia, the new German political history is being followed with interest: cf.: Krom (ed.), Novaja političeskaja istorija.

\textsuperscript{15} For a summary of the sociological discussion: Schroer, Räume, pp. 185-226; cf. also Mayntz, Handlungsfähigkeit des Nationalstaats.

\textsuperscript{16} This project, planned originally as part of the SFB 597 in Bremen, was completed at the SFB 584 in Bielefeld after the project manager switched universities.

\textsuperscript{17} Genschel/Zangl; Die Zerfaserung der Staatlichkeit; Leibfried/Zürn, Transformations of the State?
When applied to the question of transformations of "statehood", the concept of the political as a communicative space proves to be an appropriate framework for analysing the long-term dynamics of pre-modern, non-state-like forms of regulating social life, governance in the modern nation states of the 19th and 20th centuries and the new post-modern forms of "Governance in areas of limited statehood" (the title of the SFB 700 in Berlin).  

As a research network, the SFB also does not share the normative background assumptions held by some protagonists in the current debate on the end of the nation state and the primacy of politics. In the conflict between those who emphatically call for a "return of the political" in light of the global challenges mentioned above (thereby meaning that they wish to extend the democratic nation state model throughout the world) and those who seem to unemotionally accept the demystification of politics, the Bielefeld SFB adopts the position of a second-order observer. From its perspective, such a debate is initially only a continuation of the semantic struggles to mark out the boundaries of the political communicative space that form the subject of its research. Naturally, the SFB also engages in self-observation from this perspective – or allows itself to be observed by invited guest scientists. The internal and external discussions of the SFB on the historically mutable concepts of "politics" and the "political" flow into the current political communication space in which the SFB engages in participant observation. This also contributes to confirming its topical relevance.

**Defining Basic Concepts: Political Communication**

Work on the concept of the political was a major aspect of the joint deliberations at the SFB during the second research period. To distinguish itself from the above-mentioned attempts to revive a traditional political history, the SFB has clarified its definition of the political compared with the earlier proposals through exchanges with the cultural history of politics and the above-mentioned discussions in the political and social sciences on transformations in statehood and new forms of governance. The stronger emphasis on historical-semantic research into the vocabulary of the political itself during the current research period has

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18 Albert/Steinmetz, Be- und Entgrenzungen von Staatlichkeit; for a brief summary of the research program at the SFB 700 in Berlin, cf.: Risse/Lehmkuhl, Governance in Räumen begrenzter Staatlichkeit; for a more detailed account, *ibid.* (ed.), Regieren ohne Staat?
19 Flügel/Heil/Hetzel, Rückkehr des Politischen.
20 Kieserling, Gesellschaft der Politik?
21 Cf. Groh/Weinbach, Genealogie.
22 Steinmetz, Neue Wege einer historischen Semantik des Politischen.
contributed to this. This work did not just take place within the decidedly historical-semantic sub-projects in Research Area A, but was a cross-sectional issue involving the entire SFB. Workshops with German and foreign scientists also extended it beyond the bounds of the SFB.\textsuperscript{23}

The ways contemporaries in Europe have used the politics vocabulary was always one among several, though in modern times, an increasingly important indicator for marking the boundaries of the political. However, it has never been a sufficient indicator in itself – this is one of the findings of the historical-semantic research at the SFB (A 12). Other semantics, centred around key words such as the "nation" in 18th century France (A 6) or "ordo", "virtus" and "regnum" in the transcendentally founded societies of the Middle Ages (A 11); other categories such as the gender coding of spaces and forms of agency in the national historiography (A 13) or differentiations between emotionality and rationality in dialogues between politicians and citizens (A 15) – these have also played an important role in the definitions of the political. This makes it all the more necessary to formulate a systematic definition of the political that adopts a level of abstraction to transcend the changing contemporary semantics. This applies particularly to those epochs and spaces in which the politics vocabulary derived from the Greco-Roman tradition became forgotten or was completely unknown: in other words, in the Early Middle Ages as well as in the "peripheral" European and non-European countries before contact with western languages or colonisation. Only a systematic definition makes it possible to analyse the verbal, symbolic, visual, aesthetic and performative reformulations of the political across epochs and categorise these comparatively.

On the one hand, the definition has to possess sufficient discriminatory power to distinguish between political and non-political communication; on the other hand, it has to remain relatively abstract so that it can be used to cover the entire multiplicity of past, present and possible future manifestations in which people have, or could have, negotiated their supraindividual affairs. Therefore, right from the start, it seemed rather meaningless for the SFB to conceive the political in any way that would tie it to historically contingent forms of communal organisation (such as sovereign states), to specific constellations of agents or institutions (monarchs, rulers, parliaments) or – with reference to Luhmann – to critical elements of the "either-or" in the flow of communication (decisions).\textsuperscript{24} A collective obligation can be formed in other ways than through decisions, for example, through an unquestionably

\textsuperscript{23} Preliminary findings in: Steinmetz (ed.), "Politik".
\textsuperscript{24} For a similarly aligned criticism of the "et atistic political concept", cf. Hitzler, Wiederentdeckung.
valid consensus that is reinforced periodically through rituals or through the threat and practice of violence. This can also be a form of political communication without necessarily having to lead to decisions. Although decisions are a central research topic at the SFB, the concern is always to determine their relative weight and their specific form within a variable, institutionally differently organised spectrum of political lines of communication. There may be societies in which decision-making processes are crucial – and in which, as a consequence, much can be rendered political, as in the Greek *polis*. However, there are also societies in which little can be decided, and in which the most prominent form of political communication is the reproduction of the balance of power through consensus rituals as in the city of Rome during the High Empire.\(^{25}\)

The definition of the political formulated at the SFB meets these conditions of discrimination and abstraction. The SFB views communication as "political" when it (a) aims at having, has in fact or is recognised as having a broad impact, sustainability and obligatoriness; (b) deals with rules of social life, power relations or the limits to what can be said and done; and (c) refers to imagined collective entities either explicitly or implicitly.

Major elements of this definition have guided the work at the SFB right from the start, such as the criteria of a broad impact, sustainability and obligatoriness. These three criteria summarised under point (a) must be met before a communication becomes political from the SFB's perspective. However, it is not necessary for speech acts, visualisations or symbolic practices to actually have or exert a broad impact, sustainability and obligatoriness; it is sufficient for this effect to be claimed or attributed by one party alone. Otherwise, for example, an image of the ruler encased in a medieval evangeliary known to only a few monks in the Middle Ages would have to be viewed as non-political. At the same time, asking about the reception conditions and the effects of political communication always remains a focus of the analysis.

The criteria summarised in point (b) do not address the impact, but the contents of political communication. The SFB is well aware of the problems of defining the political in terms of its content. However, it is difficult to continue to assign the attribute "political" to a communicative sequence unless at least one of these three aspects – rules for social life, power relations, limits to what can be said and done – are discussed, made visible, ritually reaffirmed or questioned. Which aspect is central is something that changes in each specific historical constellation and concrete situation, and, of course, further contents are also

\(^{25}\) Flaig, Zwei Typen des politischen Raumes in der Antike: griechische Polis und kaiserzeitliches Rom, Lecture
possible. Nonetheless, these three content definitions can be found, to a varying extent, in all empirical studies. Within the framework of concrete projects at the SFB, they are frequently given other names, for example, when they are oriented towards the theories of Bourdieu in which the struggle over the schemes of vision and division in the social world constitute the essential feature of the political.

The criteria mentioned under point (c) were discussed less specifically in earlier research periods. However, more recent discussions have led the SFB to view the explicit or implicit reference to collective entities as an essential constituent of the political. Compared with the previous criterion of supraindividuality, this reformulation is more precise. Political communication is characterised not only by supraindividual significance, but also through the fact that it refers either implicitly or explicitly to imagined collective entities that, in the concrete case, moreover, are often contrasted with other external or imagined communities. In order to emphasize that these communities are themselves generated communicatively and are therefore subject to continuous change, the SFB calls them imagined supraindividual units. Naturally, these imagined entities can also materialise in institutions, legal norms, boundaries secured by violence and representative objects or rituals, and thereby adopt a visible and tangible form over longer periods of time. However, the formulation of the criterion takes into account that the supraindividual units addressed or implicitly assumed in political communication frequently have only a virtual existence, for example, as myths or projections. The imagined references of political communication can thereby be state-like entities or smaller units with visible territorial boundaries and institutional structures; but they can also be groups of persons with no fixed location, communities, congregations of believers, imagined communities of common lineage, races, nations, publics, utopian communities or even the entire order of creation. Without at least an implicit reference to such an imagined supraindividual unit, one can hardly talk about political communication.

This final aspect of the definition of the political simultaneously addresses the twofold – not only metaphorical but also concrete – concept of space at the SFB. When the SFB talks about political spaces or political communicative spaces, these formulations play with the twofold meaning of "space" as a topographically, institutionally or in some other way pre-structured real space (a location, an arena) in which political communication takes place, and of "space" given at the SFB 584 on October 31, 2007.

26 A similar argument from a systems theory perspective can be found in: Nassehi, Begriff des Politischen. Nassehi considers the function of the political system to be the "construction and provision of visibility and accountability", and to do justice to this claim, the political system reacts by constructing collectives: states, nations, public spheres, etc.
as something that is continuously being constructed anew through semantics and symbolic action (e.g., "Hellas", "Europe", the "international community"). Both types of reference to space are being studied in numerous projects at the SFB. Finally, in a broader sense, the political is understood throughout the SFB as a communicative space with its own specific historical Gestalt. Its breadth is limited in each case by the agents involved in the political communication in the sense described above and the topics, phenomena, practices and discourses that are labelled political.

**Reformulating Central Hypotheses, New Focuses, Ongoing Goals**

1. As well as clarifying the concept of the political, the SFB is also focussing on a relevant issue for all projects: the conditions and phenomena of politicisation and depoliticisation processes. This issue has been the subject of an internal workshop and numerous colloquia. One important outcome has been a more precise terminological distinction. While "politicisation" can always be not only the goal and strategy of groups of agents but also a desired or unplanned effect, it has proven meaningful to describe strategies that deliberately try to remove the political controversy from a topic as active depoliticisation (in German: *Depolitisierung*) and contrast this with processes of depoliticisation" (in German: *Entpolitisierung*) when empirical observation reveals that phenomena or discourses lose their political controversy. Put briefly, "active depoliticisation" describes a strategy and "passive depoliticisation" observed events. This differentiation of terms makes it easier for analyses to discriminate the successes and failures of deliberate attempts to perform an active depoliticisation more clearly from passive depoliticisation *processes* that have been taking place unintentionally and may well have long remained unnoticed. It also helps to clarify how these aspects of politicisation relate to each other.  

One starting point for discussions on politicisation, active depoliticisation and processes of depoliticisation was the hypothesis formulated in earlier research periods that the growing "density of communication" to be observed in modern times has been accompanied by a "general increase in politicisation" as evidenced by, for example, the integration of more and more topics into the political and the broadening circle of participating agents who had been previously excluded. Doubts regarding the simple model of a linear expansion of the political

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28 Cf. for further explanations with examples, the introduction to Research Area B.
were already expressed before, but these have become more marked. It is certainly the case that ever more is communicated ever more frequently, that the breadth of what is communicated is expanding over the course of modern history, and that greater mobility and the emergence of mass media with their new technological possibilities are making it possible to address readers, listeners, or viewers in multiple ways. Nonetheless, this does not necessarily imply an increase in political communication in the sense defined above. However, it does create opportunities that increase the likelihood that a phenomenon or topic once identified as "political" not only will be received as such more quickly and in broader circles but also will take longer to disappear again from the political agenda. Insofar, one can state that the principal potential for facts and circumstances to become politicised increases to the extent that public channels of communication are available that are not monopolised by any authority and that are actually used by agents belonging to different groups. Vice versa, one could also anticipate a similar decline in the likelihood that attempts at active depoliticisation through, for example, appeasement or cover-ups will succeed. One example of this link between opening up channels of communication and politicisation processes is the communication through petitions in late Imperial Russia. Their increasing duplication by newspapers extended their distribution transregionally (B 11). Similar politicisation effects were triggered by the introduction of and commentaries on the new medium of statistical surveys in the communication between authorities and their subjects in the late-absolutist regimes of Germany and France: If something was countable, it now became a political issue (B 2). However, new media and technologies could, as this example of statistical surveys shows, also lead to new exclusions: If something could not be counted, it no longer merited the attention of politics. Such ambivalent effects of new communication media contradict any linear model positing a general increase in politicisation throughout modern times due to new media and a greater density of communication.

Hence, the original hypothesis has been qualified to predict that it is only possible to always assume an increased politicisation of topics and phenomena when specific conditions are given. In different historical epochs and constellations, these conditions may be more or less favourable for attempted politicisations. Alongside the plurality of communication media and access to them, this likelihood of politicisation also depends on, for example, how relations of

30 Ibid.
31 In: Das Politische, Nassehi also talks about "the principal politicisability of all possible topics, spaces, and problems". However, he sticks to the assumption that this is a characteristic sign of modern times. The SFB treats this assumption as an open question, and it searches for the conditions – also in earlier epochs – under which politicisations could occur.
power and interactions between the participating and/or receiving public and agents are shaped institutionally, organised procedurally and structured spatial-temporally at the centres of power. Massive violent protests can also lead to the politicisation of topics, as the peasant revolts in England and France during the Late Middle Ages have shown (C 1). The authorities, in turn, possessed – more or less – effective strategies to actively depoliticise violence, for example, by redefining the protest actions of peasants, consumers or Autonomous as purely "criminal" acts (C 1, C 2 and C 3) or by excluding acts of violence from the arsenal of legitimate political instruments. Institutional arrangements also impact on the likelihood that phenomena will be politicised or actively depoliticised. Whether advisory assemblies exist, whether they have a voice in decisions, whether decisions taken by the majority are recognised as binding, how often and with what frequency concerns may be discussed or re-discussed and decided or re-decided, or how forms of expression are pre-structured by spatial arrangements – all these impact on the likelihood of phenomena becoming politicised or depoliticised.\footnote{The example of majority rule is instructive here: Flaig, Majority Rule.} In addition, certain cycles such as revolutions and crises compared with periods of economic and social stability may be more or less suitable for the politicisation or active depoliticisation of topics. The SFB is still examining whether a general pattern can be found here. Hence, differences in the likelihood of politicisation are not just found between modern societies with their mass-media infrastructure and pre-modern societies with mostly face-to-face communication, but also between different pre-modern societies as well.

Instead of using a developmental model that assumes a general expansion of the political towards Modern Times, future research will be based on a model assuming cycles and waves of politicisation and active depoliticisation chances, and that these depend on the above-mentioned conditions as well as further conditions to be specified more precisely in the present research period. Some work on such cycles or waves has already been performed. For example, the project on consumption in Early Modern Times (B 8 a) revealed that the authorities exhibited a long-lasting pattern of repeatedly politicising and actively depoliticising their approach to new luxury goods such as sugar, coffee and tobacco. The project on consumption in the Weimar Republic (B 8 b) has revealed opposing politicisation and active depoliticisation trends: Attention shifted from the image of the consumer as a political agent in the years following 1919 to consumption as an abstract political variable to be controlled by macroeconomic measures towards the final days of the Republic.
A major concern in the current research period will be to systematise such observations. Once again, it will be necessary to also take account of the level of semantics, including the politics vocabulary itself. Its increasing use since the 18th century, its linkage to ever more subject areas through different word combinations (in German: Bindestrichpolitiken, hyphenation politics) or through appending words with the adjective "political", is, as one sub-project has been able to show (A 12), an indicator for the generally higher chance of phenomena becoming politicised in modern times despite the restrictions mentioned above. In addition, the act of labelling something or somebody as "political" is a factor that repeatedly advances the dynamics of politicisation.

2. There have also been intensive discussions at the SFB on the earlier hypothesis of an "increasing dominance and autonomy of the political".\textsuperscript{34} It has become clear that the formulation of this hypothesis is in some ways misleading. If, in line with the systematic definition given above, communication is deemed "political" when it aims at having (or actually has) a broad impact, sustainability and obligatoriness with regard to collective entities, and thereby addresses the rules of social life, power relations or the limits to what can be said and done, then this "political" communication is dominant \textit{per definitionem} in the sense that it claims comprehensive validity. If religious, economic, aesthetic, legal or natural-science communication meets these criteria, then it \textit{is} political in the sense of the SFB; if it fails to meet these criteria, it drops out of the political communication context. It is precisely for this reason that the study of politicisation and depoliticisation is a central concern at the SFB. Therefore, it is misleading to say that a political communication defined in this way reveals an "increasing autonomy" compared with other discourse and action domains such as religion, the economy, literature, the law or science. All these domains are repeatedly (particularly in modern times) drawn into political communication, thus making their own contribution to shaping its central concepts and forms of action – as numerous sub-projects at the SFB have revealed.

Nonetheless, asking about the degree of internal "autonomy" of specific communication contexts is meaningful within a theory on the differentiation of social systems based on the work of Niklas Luhmann. Here, relative autonomy is measured according to the specific communication's degree of self-reference, that is, according to its "increase in sensitivity to certain phenomena (capable of being connected internally) and increase in non-sensitivity to everything else".\textsuperscript{35} Whether functional systems gain in self-reference in this sense, that is,

\textsuperscript{34} Funding proposal 2004-2008, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{35} Luhmann, Social Systems, p. 183.
whether they are able to increase their ability to bring about "operative closure" to the environment, depends on a variety of conditions and givens: technological, institutional, legal, semantic and other.\(^\text{36}\) This framework of conditions can be studied historically. Viewed in this way, as a question of "whether" and "how" there is an increasing or decreasing self-reference of the functional system "politics" to other systems, the approach represents a meaningful extension to the research programme. For each specific historical period and situation, it is then necessary to study whether and how, to quote Luhmann, "the boundaries of one system can be included in the operational domain of another"\(^\text{37}\) – or whether they are not adopted.

Thus, for example, the sub-project on orthodoxy and heresy from the 3rd to the middle of the 6th century AD (B 14) has traced the way in which guidelines for including and excluding agents in politics and religion converged in Christian Late Antiquity. In 18th century France, the convergence of the theological and political discourse during the Jansenism controversy did not just impact on the uses of language but also extended to the forms and media of communication, which were used to demand increased participation in both the church and the nation (A 6). In a similar way, one can also look for divergences between the main religious and political semantics and the practices and institutional solutions derived from them. For example, the long transition period between the late Middle Ages and the 18th century reveals a gradual decline on the semantic level of references to the transcendental in political communication contexts (A 11 and A 12). Nonetheless, such findings still require further empirical confirmation.

Luhmann's ideas on the differentiation of modern functional systems and – seemingly paradoxically – their increasing self-reference through "interpenetration"\(^\text{38}\) will continue to be one of the theories applied at the SFB, although more as a heuristic instrument rather than with a view to perfecting systems theory itself. Nonetheless, the SFB will empirically test the assumptions about pre-modern and modern trends that – though rarely explicated – underlie systems theory. Hence, political communication as conceived by the SFB and explained above will be analysed to see how far it is organised in a self-referential way on the levels of semantics and structure formation, for example, in the emergence during modern times of a functional system "politics" that is called such by contemporaries and exhibits its own speech rules and logics of action. Vice versa, the SFB will also ask how far political communication – at times, parallel to this – draws boundaries and adopts interpretative schemes, arsenals of pictures and metaphors, forms of action, stagings and institutional solutions from what were

\(^{36}\) Cf. for the politics system, Luhmann, Politik der Gesellschaft, p. 81f.

\(^{37}\) Luhmann, Social Systems, p. 217: Luhmann talks about "interpenetration" in this context.
originally other communication contexts. Naturally, as soon as these are adopted, they also become elements of political communication.

This line of questioning is not identical to that examining the dynamics of politicisation and depoliticisation; it adds an extra dimension. Whereas the question of politicisation and depoliticisation addresses strategies and processes through which the phenomena, topics and discourses are drawn into or forced out of political communication, the study of the relative self-reference of political communication asks which central concepts, logics of action and formation of structures in each case gain or lose importance in political communication – and when and why. Do the central concepts, logics of action and the formation of structures originate in other communication contexts that have not been political before (or were political at some time in the past, but have not been political for a long time since)? Which are these, and why is it precisely these ones? Or do the guiding semantics, logics of action and the formation of structures acquire their validity exclusively through their relation to a communication that defines itself as political – and only as political?

In this latter sense, a self-referential political communication may well be found in a more elaborated form in the antique Greek polis than in modern times. This scepticism regarding the premise of an increasing self-reference of political communication was already addressed in the previous funding proposal where it was pointed out "that the semantic and institutional frames in which political communication was admitted became more diverse, more negotiable and more diffuse on the path to modern times." Challenges to the relative self-reference of political communication typical for the modern functional system of "politics" have emerged repeatedly, or were at least desired or feared – particularly in the 20th century. Such desires or fears were uttered, for example, in relation to religion in "fundamentalist" regimes and communities, in relation to the economy in the neo-liberal discourses of recent decades, in relation to the increasing juridification of ordinary life at the expense of political decidability, or in relation to scientific expert discourses such as medicine or eugenics and their claims to have a better grasp of life as a whole, thus placing them on a higher level than politics. Several sub-projects are addressing such infiltrations and irritations of political communication through central demarcations, key terms, metaphors, organisational principles or role descriptions coming originally or purportedly from other fields of communication. Examples are the (paradoxical) self-dramatisations of literary culture criticism and aesthetic conservatism at the end of the 19th century as "apolitical" politics (A 2), the confrontations

38 Cf. ibid., p. 290.
39 Funding proposal 2004-2008, p. 16.
among Weimar constitutional lawyers over the nature of the political and the possibility or need for its juridification through the constitution of the Republic (A 8), or the vacillating self-positioning of 19th and 20th century German medical and life scientists in their relation to politics (A 12). These challenges were faced and are faced by the promise of "politics" to be responsible for global control. From the perspective of systems theory, this self-description of the political system as claiming universal control is criticised as an excessive self-demand. The SFB, in contrast, seeks a historical explanation of the ways in which this self-description is in part challenged and in part re-stabilised by the semantics and action logics of other communication fields. As in the cases of politicisation, active depoliticisation, and processes of depoliticisation, observations on the dynamics of the increasing or declining self-reference of political communication should progress from examples to the formulation of models in the current research period.

3. Discussions with the above-mentioned Collaborative Research Centres on "Transformations of the State" (Bremen) and "Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood" (Berlin) have encouraged a stronger focus on the relation of the political to the "state" and forms of statehood. Originally, the SFB started from the assumption that political topics and action scopes have been taken over increasingly by the state since Early Modern Times. On the semantic level, this could be confirmed at least for Germany from the mid-17th up to the mid-20th century. In France, in contrast, the "nation" remained the primary reference into the 19th and 20th centuries, and was held to be the object or the personalised subject of political activity. That which was attributed to the "state" in Germany, was assigned primarily to the "nation" in France, followed – with a notably lower frequency – by the "state" and concrete agents such as "le gouvernement" or "les ministres". Whether it is possible to interpret these findings so as to suggest that the close coupling, and even the identification, of state action with politics from the 17th up to the middle of the 20th century can be taken to be something specifically German – as posited by Ernst Vollrath – is something that will have to be confirmed through further comparisons with other countries including Great Britain.

On the other hand, it is correct to say that Germany has participated on both a semantic and substantial level in the movements towards detaching the political from the state or decoupling political communication spaces from national states to be observed worldwide since the 1970s. From the SFB’s first research period, the transcendence of the boundaries of

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40 Kieserling, Die Gesellschaft der Politik?
41 Cf. Reinhard, Geschichte der Staatsgewalt; Asch/Freist (eds.), Staatsbildung als kultureller Prozess.
42 Vollrath, Was ist das Politische?
43 For a differentiated typology of processes of state formation and decline in the postcolonial age, cf. the
the national state by political movements and media events was a major topic along with the increasing loss of congruence between the semantics of in- and exclusion in the domains of nationality, welfare entitlements and other services for or obligations to the community (B 7). The second funding period continued these studies in various sub-projects. Examples are the projects on the potentials and limitations of literary writers’ capacity to create transnational political spaces in and around 1968 (A 5), on the civil constitution of Franco-German friendship outside high politics since 1945 (A 14) or on the in- and excluding constructions of "community" in the relation between Europe and Turkey (B 12). In addition, these inquiries have been expanded to spaces beyond Europe by studying cross-border ethnicity discourses in the Andean regions of South America and in the Himalayas (B 13).

Research on global governance and the world society has now started to address these topics on a broad front outside the SFB. In Bielefeld, this research is located at the Institute for World Society Studies that cooperates closely with the SFB. One advantage of the Bielefeld SFB is that it provides a framework for studying the mutable forms of governance in various configurations of statehood not just in relation to the present day but also with a view to history as a whole. Inter-temporal comparisons make it possible to correct some popular ideas that have also permeated scientific literature such as the idea of a "New Middle Ages". Whether and in what sense one can talk about "statehood" or a state-like political constitution in the Middle Ages is one example of questions requiring further clarification in the present research period. Several contemporary historical and interdisciplinary projects will be studying in what ways, and supported by which media and semantics, growing spaces for political communication or political "communities" have been constructed beyond the boundaries of national states in recent decades.

4. From the start, the SFB has focused on aesthetic, rhetorical and medial presentation and representation strategies in the field of the political. Although this applies predominantly to the projects in Area A, it also plays a major role in the projects on shifting boundaries, in- and exclusions and the use of violence of Areas B and C. Insofar as political communication is directed towards supra-individual concerns of general significance, it has to use presentation and representation strategies that can claim to be valid for all agents and that should be understood by all. Symbolic and ritual performances are particularly significant here. They demonstrate not only consensus but also exclusions and they reinforce these in actu. The SFB

*articles in: Reinhard (ed.), Verstaatlichung der Welt?  
44 Cf. for an overview: Bonacker/Weller, Konflikte; Albert/Stichweh (eds.), Weltstaat.*
has already shown that this type of communication is, as such, relevant for all epochs, either pre-modern or modern, because all social communication depends on it.\footnote{Funding proposal 2004-2008, p. 16.}

Admittedly, the conditions given by technological and economic surges of innovation lead to growing opportunities for medial expression and forms of dissemination. That is, both have been strengthened by the "media revolution" of Early Modern Times and the audio-visual (photo, film, television) and digital "media revolutions" of the 20th century. These revolutions have multiplied the forms and increased the possible ways of interpreting symbols, rituals and verbal or visual images. This change is more than just quantitative. Naturally, the constitution of political spaces, collective entities and institutions continues to draw on well-practised semantics, (verbal) images and narratives that have often been handed down from Antiquity (A 11 and A 12) and include patterns of gender coding (A 13). Nonetheless, political ideas in modern times doubtlessly gain a much greater, more comprehensive and potentially also broader and morelastingly effective visibility and presence through the above-mentioned conditions. The increased politicisability of topics and phenomena in modern times mentioned above has contributed to reducing the likelihood that attempted active depoliticisations will succeed.

In modern times, the strategies of aesthetic, rhetorical and medial presentation and representation are additionally subject – together with the semantics and the formations of structures – to processes of social and cultural differentiation. New inventories of expression and forms of observation and criticism are being developed and applied in the media, and these impact in turn on the political. Examples are literary and artistic cultural criticism (A 2 a) or the mass-circulation images in school textbooks, national historiographies or advertising.\footnote{The updating of collective pictorial knowledge and other forms of visual political communication have been the subject of two international SFB conferences on "Visualizations of Politics" carried out in cooperation with Yale University.} Since these developments, any communication that defines itself as political increasingly has to anticipate being observed, be it by the literary, legal or scientific discourses or be it by mass-media discourse. All these discourses have their own rules on what can be said and pointed out. Agents have to take this into account if they wish to succeed in political communication. Those with few other power resources, such as writers or German Federal Presidents, have to try to change the ideas on political reality in the consciousness of citizens by establishing new rhetorical and visual "images" and new schemes of perception and interpretation (A 2 b and A 5). Old, archaic protest rituals can become recharged with new meaning under the conditions of modern media communication
(A 5). Medial representations and stagings of emotionality are becoming increasingly important for the necessary "trust-generating work" – not only in official diplomatic relations between states but also in the meetings between civil agents from previously enemy nations as in the case of Franco-German relations since 1945 (A 14) as well as in the personal meetings or written communication between rulers, politicians and citizens (A 2 b and A 15). Credibility needs to be conveyed by the media.

As difficult as it is to formulate long-term hypotheses on qualitative change in political communication, previous findings from projects at the SFB during the first and second research periods permit the assumption that the growing number of observers in modern times and their penetration of political communication are developing an increasingly differentiated repertoire of expression. This raises the pressure on agents to become media professionals. Adjusting to and gaining mastery over an increasingly rapidly changing media arsenal becomes an indispensable precondition for political participation. In this sense, new communication media, as mentioned above, also generate new forms of exclusion. Professionals of aesthetics and rhetoric, specialists for symbol and ritual, media virtuosos with their specific performance competencies are all gaining in importance. There is no obligation to unconditionally share the popular argument that politics is increasingly gaining a show-business character, and is, in this sense, becoming more and more defined by the media in the modern world. However, there is no denying that political communication is becoming fundamentally more dynamic, more fragile, and more elaborate in aesthetical and medial terms. The scopes for staging, presentation and representation have expanded in contrast to societies in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times in which the actual presence of a public dominated political communication. Admittedly, this does not have to be linked to any greater effectiveness in securing political dominion or in generating consensus – disenchantment with politics is more of a phenomenon of the modern world rather than of the "ceremonial" pre-modern. The present research period will continue to pursue the long-term hypotheses on the qualitative changes in aesthetic, rhetorical and medial presentations and representations sketched here and their impact on political communicative space. These will also be linked to a systematic formulation of hypotheses on the conditions and effects of politicisation, active depoliticisation and processes of depoliticisation; on the dynamics of the increasing or decreasing self-reference of political communication; as well as on its increasing transnationalisation in the modern world. Preferred locations for forging these links will be,
on the one hand, the discussions in Research Area A as before; on the other hand, the cross-sectional workgroups to be set up in the synthesis project D 1.

5. In the form of an independent Research Area C, the SFB upgraded the problematisation of the use of violence as a component, medium or boundary of political communication and made it one of its central perspectives during the second research period. Three sub-projects set up in the second research period have been working on case studies ranging from the 14th century, the second half of the 19th century up to the late 20th century. These sub-projects are being continued. Dialogue across epochal boundaries is facilitated by joint research questions and a similar "research design". All three case studies focus on the political significance and legitimacy of the use of violence by non-authority or non-state groups (peasants, consumers, Autonomous). This focus has made it possible to perform valid comparisons on several levels. Continuous co-ordination between project staff and a joint conference have strengthened these joint approaches to research even further. By adopting ideas from research on the use of violence in the social sciences and in history, the projects address not only the performances, representations, functions and effects of violence in political communication but also the reflective and norm-setting discourse over the use of violence that grants or denies it a political character. This integrates the projects on violence into the main line of research into the conditions and forms of politicisation and depoliticisation as addressed by the SFB as a whole.

Violence could be not only an important factor within the framework of politicisation processes but also an object of – more or less successful – depoliticisation strategies. Hence, the recourse to violent forms of action in the case of the French and English peasant revolts of the Middle Ages seems to be a continuation of what had previously been unsuccessful non-violent protests (C 1); and the analysis of the role of the Autonomous in the 1980s has shown that violent actions by marginal groups succeeded, at least in the short term, in triggering communication processes within the new social movements and the political institutions of the Federal Republic of Germany (C 3). In contrast, the study of the periods of unrest caused by inflation in the late 19th century has shown how the ritualised use of force that had still been acceptable within the framework of traditional negotiation practices became marginalised after the middle of the century as discussions on supply problems shifted from taking a moral to a primarily macro-economic stance (C 2). Parallel to this discourse shift, the criminalisation of those protesting against inflation proved to be an effective means of

observation formula of the political system: Japp/Kusche, Kommunikation des politischen Systems.

Cf. Trotha, Soziologie and Heitmeyer/Soeffner, Gewalt.
actively depoliticising their behaviours and concerns. Similarly, the analysis of the *Startbahn-West-Konflikt* (a long-lasting conflict over a new runway for Frankfurt airport in the early 1980s) has shown that a phase of escalating violence and intensive political debate was followed by a depoliticisation of the conflict by shifting it to the level of the law courts (C 3). However, criminalising protest does not always mean its depoliticisation. One outcome of the revolt of 1381 in England was that "criminal" violence also came to be viewed increasingly as seditious, thus leading to an expansion of the domain of violent activity subject to interpretation as political (C 1).

The similarities in the research designs of the projects in Area C also permit statements on the formation, consolidation and, in recent times, the questioning of the authorities' or the state's monopoly on the use of force. The revolting peasants in the Late Middle Ages sometimes staged their acts of violence like court cases. This was a way for them to express that the previous bearers of the legitimate use of force – the aristocracy in France, the Royal Courts of Justice in England – had proven unworthy of their task. From a more long-term perspective, their attacks on the privileged positions of these agents helped to promote the centralisation of the legitimate use of force in the monarch as both a practice and a postulate. The studies on the protests against inflation in the 19th century, in contrast, demonstrate the state monopoly on the use of force during a phase of effective implementation. The *Autonomous* in contrast, though still acting broadly within a framework limited by the national state, understood how to present themselves (at least in sub-sectors of the public) as a legitimate alternative to the state monopoly on the use of force. This attacked a crucial sign of modern statehood at its core – and thereby a central aspect of the self-description of the modern functional system of "politics" – though without any lasting impact.

The SFB will continue to focus on the struggle over the instances and boundaries of the legitimate use of violence as well as the significance of violence as a factor or an object of politicisation, active depoliticisation, and processes of politicisation. This will involve a temporal and thematic extension of the previous projects as well as a spatial expansion to an international level and to non-European countries as far as the 20th century and the beginnings of the 21st century are concerned. Alongside those challenging the state monopoly on the use of force – from the protest movements of the Late Middle Ages to the *Autonomous* – this will also focus more strongly on the states themselves as agents exercising force within a political communication space that is organising itself increasingly transnationally.
Conception of the Current Research Period

During its third and final research period, the SFB will continue to study the above-mentioned communicative processes in the space of the political, but now on the basis of more precise definitions and guiding hypotheses. Instead of setting up completely new fields in the form of new project areas, the final funding period will concentrate on developing descriptive models that can be used to plot typical trajectories and formulate long-term hypotheses based on the findings that have been gathered from limited time periods and selected spaces. When selecting new projects and reconfiguring existing ones, a main objective has been to close major gaps in time and topics and to extend work in fields that still reveal an insufficient empirical basis for formulating hypotheses and developing models. This retains the original design of the SFB with its division into three empirically oriented research areas. However, in a new initiative, the results will be bundled together into models that transcend the single case and also document the methodological gains from the single projects in a synthesis project (D 1) specially designed for this purpose.

The synthesis of the single findings to be sought in project D 1 will concentrate particularly on relations between institutional, medial or semantic constellations on the one hand and the dynamics of politicisation and depoliticisation along with the dynamics of increasing or decreasing self-reference in political communication on the other. The hypotheses to be formulated may refer to patterns and processes that are either repeatable or historically unique. Hypotheses may cover periods measured in several decades or even centuries. The synthesis will also pursue the question whether epochal transformations of the political can be identified across the entire course of history – from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, from the Pre-Modern era to the (multiple) modernities of the 19th and 20th centuries, from the (western) Modernity to the present age. However, this is not the only goal. Prior experience at the SFB has shown that single projects tend to falsify rather than confirm long-term hypotheses oriented towards any linear model of the development of "the history" of the political. At the same time, the findings reported above do support the retention of the initial assumption that political communication has undergone a qualitative change on the path to modern times.

Again, Niklas Luhmann's ideas on the differentiation of functional systems in modern times will have a role to play in this context, and further work is needed to test the hypothesis derived from his work, namely, that although an increasingly self-referential field of communication and action known as "politics" has developed since Early Modern Times, this
process has been accompanied by a *simultaneous* increase in reciprocal interpenetration between this field of communication known as "politics" and other, likewise differentiated and operatively closed communication contexts.\(^{49}\) However, in contrast to Luhmann, research at the SFB is not restricted to the transition to modern times, but examines functional differentiation (or its opposite) and the accompanying reciprocal interpenetration as processes that could, in principle, also have occurred during earlier epochs. In addition, the SFB projects also do not just see themselves as mere users of premises from systems theory, but develop their own methodological procedures that draw mostly from approaches in discourse analysis, praxeology, field theory or historical semantics. One objective of the planned synthesis project D 1 will also be to reflect on the benefits of this methodological pluralism.

Earlier research periods already saw relatively intensive studies on the superimpositions of and interconnections (or also divergencies) between political and *religious* guiding semantics, in- and exclusion criteria as well as the formations of structures since Late Antiquity (A 6, A 10, A 11 and B 14). On the semantic level (A 12 and A 17), the SFB is continuing to track the gradual decline in references to the transcendental in political communication since the end of the Middle Ages. The SFB has also been addressing the interconnections between political and *legal* communication right from the outset in the example of the discussion on the public and constitutional law in the Weimar Republic (A 8); it will now be the subject of a follow-up project on the discussions over the jurisdiction of the constitutional court in the Federal Republic of Germany and on the European level (B 18). Building on previous studies on homages (*Huldigungen*) in the 18th and early 19th centuries and on the aesthetic-rhetorical strategies of cultural criticism around 1900, new research will again examine the role of literature as a participant observer in politics (A 2). In this final research period, it will be tracked in the medium of the historical dramas whose productions and rhetorical patterns shaped the staging of the political from the late 18th up to the end of the 19th century to a greater extent than almost any other literary medium. This is a particularly good example to illustrate the simultaneity of the increasing claims to autonomy of functional systems (literature, politics) and their reciprocal interpenetration.

The premise that the semantics and logics of a functional system that has established its autonomy as *economics* since the 18th century has repeatedly challenged, infiltrated or even dominated the developing functional system of "politics" was already a sub-topic in the previous studies on consumption (B 8) and on statistics as a medium of political

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\(^{49}\) Cf. Becker, Einleitung: Geschichte und Systemtheorie.
communication (B 2). The example of the publishing market round about 1968 also reveals the permeability of the forms of communication between protest politics and a publishing industry going through economic modernisation (A 5 b). Not least because of its topicality, this problem is being studied systematically in the current research period. Initially, it will be addressed in the continuing studies on consumption, but taking a broader empirical basis and making European comparisons over longer periods of time (B 8). The reports on consumption problems will also be used to cast light on the completely different relation between economic and political semantics and action logics in a communist social system – the Soviet Union (B 11). In addition, within the framework of the historical-semantic studies on the politics vocabulary (A 12), one sub-study will be explicitly studying the boundaries drawn between "politics" and the "economy" in the discourse of political economists and business managers up until the "neo-liberal" shift in the 1980s. This will follow up the analyses on medicine and on social hygiene by casting light on a further discourse between experts and how it relates to politics and the political. From yet another standpoint, the new sub-project on the discourse and practices of corruption in Early Modern Times (B 17) will focus on the repeated encroachment of behaviours motivated by the private economic sector into a political system that claims to establish its autonomy and function according to its own norms and standards: The increasing self-reference of the political system can be read off here in the way that entanglements with other action fields (private enterprise, family relations, systems of patronage) increasingly have their legitimacy rescinded and are labelled as "corruption". It is precisely these accusations of corruption that simultaneously promote the politicisation of economic, familial or patronage practices and structures that may previously have been tolerated on the quiet. It should be recalled here that all the SFB projects take the same approach to these two sets of processes: the processes of the differentiation of functional systems in the sense of Luhmann with their reciprocal interpenetration and the competing claims to validity of action patterns or institutional solutions and the processes of politicisation and depoliticisation. They treat them as two interrelated procedures that nonetheless have to be studied in analytically separate ways.

The question whether and in what form the emergence and the comprehensive distribution of new mass media in modern times has led to a qualitative change in political communication was already investigated in several earlier projects. These focused on politicisation processes within selected mass media (radio, television, newspapers) and their feedback links to political communication in general (A 4 and A 5). This perspective will now be extended systematically to cover the entire complex of relations between politics, political
communication and mass media (B 13). The SFB is linking up with current issues in political and media history here: Will politics become increasingly staged through the application of the mass media, or is its existing staging only becoming more apparent? Are the various forms of medialisation inevitably leading to a domination of "politics" by the media?

Theoretically, systematic contrasts of political communication between societies equipped with mass media and societies with predominantly face-to-face communication offer a potential for generalisable observations. The technological availability and the technological potentials of mass media do not inevitably have to change political communication, although they do make it possible to achieve a significant serial multiplication of acts of communication, to extend their range and to accelerate the speed of communication right up to immediate transmission. However, it is highly probable that simply the multiplication of acts of observing political activities influences the perception and evaluation of political communication. It is still necessary to ask how this occurs in the single case. Moreover, one central factor that needs to be studied comparatively is the regulation of social agents' access to the mass media and the access of the mass media themselves to the centres of power in political space. It tends to be easier to explain these rules of access through the conditions of a specific political system rather than through characteristics of the media themselves (B 11).  

A new aspect to be studied is the transnational dimension of the public sphere opened up by the media. The expanded Project B 13 will be examining how groups of ethnic agents in southern Asia, Latin America and the US-American-Mexican borderlands have managed and still manage to attract the attention of the media, and in which ways the mass media in turn have contributed and still contribute to consolidating patterns and strategies of ethnicisation throughout the world.

On this basis, one interesting aspect in the sense of processes of "medialisation" is the political communication practices that exploit the potential breadth and the dissemination chances of various mass media. They can do this purposefully to fit whatever specific conditions arise. One example is the mass meeting as a radio broadcast. This creates a convergence of political event and its communication. Should there be an increase in reflected media-appropriate practices or "formats" that have grown to match properties of certain mass media and that are sought out and instrumentalised by political agents, and should such forms of a media-supported political communication succeed in suppressing and replacing other

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51 Cf. as an example: Murašov, Sowjetisches Ethos.
forms of communication, this would indicate a medialisation in the sense of a domination of politics by the mass media.

Finally in this context, it is also necessary to continue to pursue the question addressing whether an increasing visualisation of politics is occurring analogue to the process of stronger "medialisation" and perhaps even ritualisation. Can the effects of such visualisations and ritualisations be predicted and controlled, that is, "tamed"? Or is political communication gaining an additional dimension of self-reference through this change in form that then becomes shaped by the intrinsic logic of mass media attention spans and exploitation potentials? The broad timeframes studied at the SFB in Bielefeld permit an empirical examination of these issues based on examples ranging from the theatrical stagings of community in antique polis societies (B 16) across the historical dramas of the 19th century (A 2) to the "political" reporting in the mass media of the 1960s and 1970s (A 5).

The changing media conditions of communication impact on the positioning of individuals and groups in concrete political spaces and times as well as on the ideas that agents have about politically relevant spaces and times. Whereas plotting out political spaces in terms of their physically perceivable but also imagined or metaphorical form has been part of the SFB agenda right from the outset, it has not systematically raised time to the status of a category of analysis and considered it as a precondition for individual and collective political experience or as an object of forward- or backward-looking political projections. This blind spot will be addressed in the present research period. Several sub-projects are now explicitly asking about the form and function of temporal references in political communication. These also view time and space as being interconnected. This approach is constitutive for a new project in Ancient History taking the example of the Greek polis world to study how political collective entities were reproduced, transformed or broken up by verbal, visual and ritual re-enactments of the past (B 16). And this also applies to the continuing project A 13, that is not only analysing how plans for the future between the 1950s and the recent past were characterised as politically desirable or dangerous through narrative links with gender, but also how political agents used the category of gender to classify the international political space since 1945 into binary classifications like East-West or North-South, thereby associating them with temporal differences in the speed of development. References to the past and future as an inclusive or exclusive element of political group and party formation, as a part of strategies of politicisation or depoliticisation and as an element of comprehensive interpretations of history and the future are central for a sub-study within project A 5 that is performing a German-
French comparison of disputes and rivalries on defining the memory of "1968" up to the present. The work of the projects A 5 and A 12 is being supplemented meaningfully by a sub-study with a historical-semantic design that is using autobiographies and memoirs of 20th-century German and French intellectuals and politicians to survey verbalisations of individual politicisation experiences across the breaks in continuity during the "Age of Extremes" (A 12). This sub-project is also taking gender and generation differences into account. Through autobiographical self-positionings in time, individuals can either enrol themselves in political action contexts or distance themselves from them. However, they do not do this in a completely autonomous way, but orient themselves towards the blueprints of the political available at the time of their living or writing. However, it appears that the accelerating pressure of modern life is leading to increasing problems of synchronisation. How individuals and groups in recent modern times reconcile the "desynchronisation between the 'idiosyncratic time' of politics and the time structures of other social spheres" observed by Rosa with their own blueprints for the past, present and future will be one of the questions that the projects dealing explicitly with temporal references will introduce into the general discussion at the SFB.

Several projects have already examined how political spaces are conceived, created, redefined and made visible and tangible through new ways of exerting power and communication media (B 2: Statistics, B 11: Petitions), through semantics of in- and exclusion (B 12: Turkey/Europe), through gender as a category for classification and differentiation (A 13: National Historiography) or through ethnicising discourses (B 13: Ecuador, Nepal). These studies will be continued and linked more closely together. More attention will also be paid to political spaces and ideas of space beyond the national state in its western form – although never losing sight of the fact that the national state remains a powerful model of political space equipped with effective norms of in- and exclusion and means of using violence. The SFB concept of the political permits an independent contribution to the international research discussion on transformations of statehood and "territoriality regimes" throughout history and not just one restricted to modern times.

Conceiving political spaces as being formed communicatively also focuses attention on the historically variable semantics, norms, practices and institutional consolidations through which they gain their specific imagined or physically perceivable form. The SFB is examining

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52 These issues were also discussed at the two conferences on "Visualizations of Politics".
53 Rosa, Beschleunigung, p. 403.
54 Maier, Transformations.
the different spatial configurations of the political in terms of their historical genesis, placing particular emphasis on the action-guiding categories and key concepts. For example, project A 12 takes a longitudinally comparative perspective to analyse the reciprocal relationship between the politics vocabulary itself and the semantics of the "state", the "nation" and other labels for collective units. This unveils how semantic couplings of "state" and "politics" differ from country to country in the way they are embedded in times and situations.

How, for example, the concept of the "international community" with its accompanying and opposing concepts came about and has been applied strategically for inclusion and exclusion purposes in various crises and conflicts since 1945 is the topic of the sub-project B 12. The protection of human rights is a further central element of "western" legitimisation strategies for interfering in the sovereign concerns of states. One sub-study in the legal project B 18 is taking the European Court of Human Rights as an example to study the processes leading to the implementation of both the idea and practice of cross-border protection of human rights through the courts. The international community, supranational organisations and world opinion are not just agents but also the targets of the transnational discourse. This aspect is being examined in project B 13 that is addressing ethnicising discourses and formations of communities on various interlinked spatial levels extending from that of international organisations (UNO, OAS) across states (Ecuador, Nepal) to transnational, regional and local spaces (US-American-Mexican borderlands).

The design of the SFB as a whole for the third research period pays more attention to capturing regional, national, international and transnational perspectives and also extends to non-European experiences. However, comparisons within Europe still remain – particularly for pre-modern times and the 19th century. This also holds for the expansion of Area C "Violence in the Space of the Political". All projects continue to share the main question on the forms and political functions of the use of violence and the drawings of boundaries, politicisations, and, in part, violent reactions of both state and non-state agents that its use triggers. The spectrum of studies has now been expanded to cover various historical periods and world regions. With project C 5, a further project has been added that opens up a dimension for non-European comparisons with the violence in Colombia during the Violencia (1946-64). As in the continued and expanded projects on the peasant revolts in England and France during the Late Middle Ages (C 1), the acts of violence against the symbols and bearers of state offices and against those with other faiths and foreigners in the German Empire and in the French Third Republic (C 2), and the militant actions of the Autonomous in Germany and neighbouring countries (Switzerland, the Netherlands, Austria) (C 3), this
project focuses on the dynamics of escalation through which the given authorities, offices, states and international organisations felt challenged to react with force. Attention is also focused not only towards the intended or non-intended, successful or unsuccessful politicising impact of the use of violence "from below", but also on the learning and adaptation processes of authorities in their pre-Modern, late Modern and current forms that have literally and metaphorically torn apart the framework of the state.

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