Visions of the good future
Temporal comparisons and ideological modalities of time in Swedish election campaigns, 1988–2018

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The relationship between time and politics is complex and multilayered, especially in issues such as global warming. This facilitates political playing with and about time; political actors use and frame time in various ways. Drawing upon the work of Reinhart Koselleck, this article examines temporal statements about the environment and the climate in Swedish election campaigns 1988 to 2018 and shows how political rhetoric has been constituted by several competing modalities of time. However, these modalities can become problematic for political thinking about the future. To resolve the climate crisis, we need a politics that acknowledges both historical and political contingency. Engaging with the past, without seeking to extrapolate a unified narrative of historical progress, explores the past from various perspectives and shows how the present is contingent. This could enable a renegotiation of possible futures and a politics for the future that facilitates both understanding and action.

Keywords: climate, democracy, environmental politics, Sweden, temporal comparisons, temporality

1. Introduction

Within politics, time constitutes one of the most important prerequisites because politics is an activity that, at least ideally, deals with how the present should be handled and the future shaped. For political possibilities to be discernible, the future must be open, at least to some degree. If the future is fully determined, there is no space for imagining, creating, planning, or deliberating (Kelz 2019; Nordblad 2021). How issues are conceptualized and how narratives are constructed is therefore crucial. Political language is filled with temporal modalities
that function as powerful tools. Politicians can, for instance, appeal to a glorious past or an idealized future to make their case for change.

Despite its inherently temporal nature, it seems – as several scholars have argued – as though representative politics in contemporary liberal-capitalist democratic nations has become fixated on short-term goals and perspectives (e.g., Assmann 2020; Gumbrecht 2014; Hartog 2003). As Rosine Kelz (2021, 905) argues: “Western societies seem to have lost their abilities to imagine utopian futures.” The fading of possible futures is an issue that has been raised since the early 1990s (e.g., Fukuyama 1992). The idea gained further strength after François Hartog (2003) published his book on regimes of historicity, suggesting a contemporary preoccupation with the present. While the closing of horizons for the future may seem to contrast with the obvious acceleration of modern society – where things appear to be in constant flux – these rapid changes are very unevenly distributed, resulting in a “hyper-accelerated standstill” (Rosa 2003, 17). However, the need for a future-directed politics, and consequently future-directed political action, seems acute. As scientific models and calculations show, we are currently on the brink of an ecological disaster, and we need political actions that can help us to avoid at least the most disastrous scenarios.

The relationship between politics and time is thus complex and multilayered. Historians and political theorists have drawn upon the conceptual history of Reinhart Koselleck to analyze the contingency of linguistic meaning. During recent years, there has been an increased interest in Koselleck’s more theoretical discussions on historical time and temporality, with a focus on his theory of the conditions for possible histories, Historik. Scholars have shown particular interest in the contingent relationship between language and temporal experiences. This article follows in the latter of these traditions, with the aim of examining how political actors have used temporal modalities and framings of time. This is achieved by examining Swedish election manifestos from the late 1980s to the 2010s, with a focus on how environmental issues, global warming in particular, were presented by the major political parties. It was during this period that environmental issues gained public recognition and climate change became one of the most important political issues.

Previous research has suggested that proportional electoral systems, such as the Swedish case, facilitate a politicization of issues because they generate incentives for the parties to articulate and capture sectors of the electorate who have a special interest in particular questions (Harrison and Sundström 2007; Ryan 2017). Hence, while the campaign material is designed to appeal to as much of the electorate as possible, it is also important for the parties to distinguish themselves from their rivals. The construction of election manifestos therefore constitutes a balancing act between the universal and the particular. Moreover, manifestos con-
stitute an arena in which the parties reflect upon the past and envisage the future. This material is thus both intrinsically political and temporal, which is why it is suitable as an empirical point of departure for this investigation. Focusing on environmental issues seems like a relevant starting point for studying ideological framings of time because these questions carry a complex layer of temporalities that political actors need to take into consideration. For instance, how the present state is a consequence of past actions (or inactions) and how the interests of future generations must (or at least should) be considered when making adjustments in the present. As will be shown, the environmental debate has been permeated with notions of time and temporality; political actors have framed time in different ways and drawn on different temporal comparisons in order to make claims for their cause.

2. Politics and time

The analysis takes its cue from Reinhart Koselleck’s theorization of temporal experience. According to Koselleck (2004), the late 18th century marked the end of the persuasive force of the topos *historia magistra vitae*. History was increasingly understood as a singular process that led to an open future; consequently, the idea of learning lessons from history was undermined. For Koselleck, modernity represented a temporal break between experiences and expectations, or as he put it: between the *space of experience* and the *horizon of expectation*. Thereafter, the future became the dominant temporality in what François Hartog has labelled the *modern regime of historicity*. This modern regime was subsequently replaced by a new one, however, a *presentist regime of historicity*, which emerged at the end of the Cold War. As a result of fundamental changes in society – such as the collapse of the communist ideal and the fall of the Berlin Wall – any relationships to time were irreversibly shattered: “Everywhere the order of time ceased to be self-evident” (Hartog 2003, 3). Instead of looking toward an increasingly uncertain future, focus shifted to the present. This preoccupation with the present meant that any past or future events were arranged into present structures and needs; the past became a resource for the present while long-term perspectives were lost at the expense of features such as plannability and feasibility.¹

However, the current ecological crisis requires a politics that can extend the boundaries of the present and become future directed. History shows us that human actions – from the extraction of fossil fuels to genome editing – have consequences that reach far into the future. Today, we are constantly confronted with

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¹. Hartog’s thesis has, however, not avoided criticism (e.g., Latour 1993).
scientific models that put forward dystopian images of the future due to a rapidly changing climate and increased environmental destruction. Hence, there is a need for political thought that can re-politicize the future so that it can be dealt with. This article seeks to explore the temporalities of environmental politics with the aim of discussing how these affect the possibilities for creating an open future.

Drawing on Koselleck’s work, Willibald Steinmetz, Zoltàn B. Simon, and Kir-ill Postoutenko (2021, 448) have argued that temporal comparisons are inherent features of historical time, and that practices of comparing “between and across times” pervade all spheres of activity. Studying temporal comparisons is thus a way of “exploring the broad middle ground between consciously elaborated theories about time and ordinary ways of contending with time.” Steinmetz et al. state that temporal comparisons are performative activities that are carried out by conceptual and linguistic means that should be analyzed in their practical manifestations.

Drawing upon this principle, Steinmetz (2021) has put forward a typology for analyzing political arguments based on three modalities of temporal comparison: historical analogies, claims of unprecedentedness, and comparisons that postulate an anachronism in the present. The first modality stresses similarities between – or even equates – the past, present, and future. Although history was decreasingly seen as a teacher of life during the late 18th century, Steinmetz argues that past events continued to be invoked for pragmatic purposes throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. In this way, time was seen as linear and continuous; the present was understood as similar to the past, and the future was expected to be much like the present. The second modality, claims of unprecedentedness, relates to temporal comparisons that propose absolute novelty by highlighting an incommensurability of the present in relation to the past or to the future. In contrast to the first modality, this suggests temporal breaking points in history that, for instance, creates the idea of the present as qualitatively different from the past or the future. However, Steinmetz states that, in his study – German politics between 1790 and 1945 – these kinds of statements were rarely combined with any developed opinions about history in general. Instead, they served as rhetorical tools in ongoing short-term alterations. The third, and final, temporal modality targets allegations of advancement or backwardness compared to others. In these comparisons, the speaker insinuates a relative advancement or lagging behind of one group in relation to another. According to Steinmetz, this identifying of an asynchronicity of the simultaneous has been a common device in Western his-

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2. According to Steinmetz, this typology is applicable to both earlier and later periods in history than the one from which he takes examples – German politics from 1790 to 1945 – and in other political communities.
tory since the mid-18th century, when it was combined with a view of history as progress.

The following analysis is inspired by the Steinmetzian typology by examining how actors, representing different political parties, have made use of time in Swedish election campaigns, with a focus on environmental issues, the climate in particular. The study thereby sits at the domain of temporality studies, however, also sharing some characteristics of critical discourse analysis, more precisely discourse-conceptual analysis which by Michal Krzyżanowski (2019, 470) has been put forward as an “argumentation-oriented” method aiming to discover key arguments that frame discursive constructions. In particular, Krzyżanowski (2016, 309) has pointed to the “increasingly conceptual nature of discourse” as a tendency within critical discourse studies. However, in contrast to the method suggested by Krzyżanowski, this article focuses less on single concepts and their attributed meaning, and more on issues of time and temporality. It thereby relies more on Koselleck’s Historik than his Begriffsgeschichte although the two, for obvious reasons, share a close connection.

The analysis is presented in four chronological sections, each covering two or three parliamentary elections. The study has included all manifestos published by the major political parties. However, as the focus of attention is environmental policies, in the analysis, there will be a slight overrepresentation of parties that have addressed these issues more frequently than others. The article concludes by discussing the findings of ideological modalities of time and their relevance to a possible re-politicization of the future.

3. Framing time in Swedish election campaigns

In an international context, Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring (1962) is often regarded as the start of the modern environmental debate (Kroll 2001; Lear 1997). The book was translated into Swedish in 1963, resulting in noisy debates about how humans were destroying the environment. The late 1960s has, in research, been labelled as the Green Turn, indicating how environmental concerns became issues of public and political debate. However, during this period, the various environmental problems were understood as separate issues without any clear connection (Engels 2010; Larsson Heidenblad 2021; Nehring 2009). The debate continued during the following decades and became revitalized and intensified in Sweden during the summer of 1988 when thousands of harbor seals were found dead off the west coast, something that was interpreted as a sign of environmental destruction. The so-called seal death pushed environmental issues high up the political agenda, consequently giving them a prominent role in the campaigns and debates.
leading up to the following election, popularly referred to as the Environmental Election (Bennulf and Holmberg 1990; Esaiasson 1990; Sainsbury 1989).

3.1 Debating the uniqueness of the present: The campaigns of 1988 and 1991

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, several parties drew upon a historical linearity that stressed similarities between the past, present, and future. For instance, the Centre Party stated that: “The current generation cannot impact nature such that the possibilities for a good life are destroyed for future generations” (C 1988. See also S 1988, 1991; VPK 1988, 1991). By emphasizing the need to preserve nature for the future, the past, present, and future were merged into a continuous historical development. This temporal framing was also adopted by the conservative Christian Democratic Party, that argued that the most important environmental task was to “restore the balance of nature” (KDS 1988). Environmental aspirations for the future were thus intended to preserve nature as it was in the past and the present, thereby conflating several temporal layers and horizons into one. Moreover, to many of the parties, the solutions to environmental destruction were found in a continuation of existing environmental policies, which further underlined the linear homogeneity of time and history (e.g., FP 1991; M 1991; S 1988, 1991).

The Green Party, which gained parliamentary seats for the first time in the 1988 election, positioned the present as a unique time. This was, for instance, expressed in terms of environmental problems being more acute than ever: “We have never, in the history of humankind, been so close to an ecological disaster as we are today” (MP 1991. See also MP 1988). The present was thus separated from the past because present experiences surpassed any that could possibly been had in the past. This temporal framing was also seen in the Centre Party’s and People’s Party’s manifestos, in which environmental urgency was an important topos. The present, according to the People’s Party, was a “time of change” in which “a new Sweden” was forming (FP 1991. See also C 1991).

There were also statements indicating an asynchronicity of the simultaneous. For instance, the Social Democrats argued that Sweden was “a frontrunner” in environmental policy (S 1991). This was, however, challenged by the conservative Moderate Party, the Social Democrats’ main opponent in the struggle for governmental power. The Moderates argued that: “Social Democracy looks backwards. The Moderate Party represents the alternative to a socialism that has frozen and is currently blocking the future” (M 1988). “We will not accept that Sweden is lagging behind” (M 1991). In contrast to the Social Democrats, the Moderates drew

3. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations were made by the author.
upon an inverted, or negative, asynchronicity of the simultaneous by suggesting that the Social Democrats were a relic of the past, rather than a driving force toward the future. However, the Moderate solutions to environmental problems did not draw upon any kind of far-in-advance rhetoric; instead, they were stated to be “rooted in traditional forms and values” (M 1988). Hence, they drew upon an understanding of time as continuous, linear, and homogenous.

3.2 The need for a new start: The campaigns of 1994, 1998, and 2002

During the latter half of the 1990s and the early years of the new millennium, there was an increase in temporal framings describing the present as a time of novelty, consequently suggesting an incommensurability between the present and the past. For instance, the Social Democrats argued that: “For the first time in the modern era, children will grow up in worse conditions than their parents” (S 1994). This temporal framing served to evoke a sense of urgency which was also expressed in terms of how the climate constituted the largest global threat the world faced (e.g., M 2002). Consequently, the present became “a time for change, a time for action” (KD 2002). As the future was considered to be threatened by the greenhouse effect, a temporal separation occurred between the past and the present on the one hand, and the future on the other.

An incommensurability of the present in relation to the past was also used to indicate an asynchronicity of the simultaneous. The Centre Party argued that Sweden “now” had the opportunity to “become a role model in environmental policy” (C 1994. See also MP 1994, 1998). The present was thus understood as a new beginning in which Sweden would forge ahead of its own time, consequently breaking off from the past. There were also statements indicating that Sweden was already such a frontrunner. The People’s Party, for example, argued that any Swedish environmental problems were small in comparison to those of other nations (FP 1994. See also M 1994; S 1998).

The need for a new start was also adopted when several parties warned against a business-as-usual kind of politics. However, the content and direction of such a new start was interpreted in diverse ways. For instance, the Left Party advocated a “radical environmental policy” (V 1994) while the Moderates stated that “nation after nation is voting out a tired and used-up Social Democracy” (M 2002). The latter perspective was shared by the People’s Party that argued that new ideas were making their way across Europe, and it was of great importance that Sweden kept up with this development (FP 1998, 2002). In this way, not changing was understood as lagging behind, or as the Moderates expressed it: “To stand still is to slip backwards” (M 1998). And the Green Party stated that: “The present development is a dead end” (MP 2002). The political language thus adopted a
kind of crisis rhetoric in which change was seen as fundamental in order to avoid a negative asynchronicity of the simultaneous.

3.3 The past as a successful time or a dead end: The campaigns of 2006 and 2010

Between 2006 and 2014, Sweden was governed by the liberal-conservative coalition, Alliance for Sweden – consisting of the Centre Party, the People’s Party, the Moderate Party, and the Christian Democratic Party – that launched common election manifestos, albeit also putting forward individual ones. In terms of environmental policy, the Alliance seemed inspired by the Brundtland Commission’s definition of sustainable development when stating that: “We have a responsibility to use the resources of nature in such a way that we can leave a world in balance to our children and grandchildren” (All 2006. See also C 2006; KD 2006, 2010). The language use thus built on the idea of a linear and continuous time in which the present controlled the future. Environmental problems were presented as future problems rather than present ones. However, the solutions were found in already existing techniques, in particular nuclear energy, that did not emit any greenhouse gases (All 2006. See also All 2010; C 2006). Hence, the temporal framing of the Alliance stressed similarities between the past, present, and future.

Historical analogies were also used when the People’s Party highlighted how liberal ideology had resolved various problems over the course of more than a hundred years, thereby giving it legitimacy in both the present and the future (FP 2006). The Social Democrats adopted a similar temporal framing when arguing that the “history of the Swedish model” had present relevance, and that society was to be reshaped into a “green people’s home” (S 2006). By relying on traditional social democratic concepts – such as the people’s home and the Swedish model – the party used the positive symbolic value of these concepts to motivate present reforms and envisage the future.

As a response to the liberal-conservative Alliance for Sweden, the Left Party, the Social Democratic Party, and the Green Party launched a common manifesto in 2010: a “red-green collaboration for the future” (RG 2010). Here, the present was put forward as a new beginning, it was time to “change the direction of society” (RG 2010). The goal was for Sweden to take the lead in climate work and in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. However, the red-green coalition stated: “We are currently far from this position” (RG 2010). The coalition argued that the historical development had led the nation into a dead end, and that new pathways were necessary if Sweden were not to fall back in relation to the international development. Moreover, the Left Party stated that: “Sweden and the world have never been richer,” highlighting that the present was a qualitatively new time
However, according to the Left, this wealth had come at the expense of environmental destruction and exploitation of poorer nations (V 2006. See also MP 2010; S 2010). Any lessons from the past thus showed that a new start was necessary.

Several parties also used this kind of temporal framing to argue that climate change posed “the greatest global challenge of our time,” and there was almost a political consensus that Sweden should take the lead into a new era that would be characterized by sustainable development (S 2006. See also All 2010; C 2010; V 2010). The vision was that the Swedish development would be far ahead of other nations, hence drawing upon the idea of a positive asynchronicity of the simultaneous. However, the path to a future without greenhouse gas emissions was often seen as a continuation and expansion of existing techniques, nuclear energy in particular (e.g., FP 2010; All 2010).

The 2010 election also witnessed a new party entering national politics, the nationalist and populist Sweden Democrats. After several election surveys indicating that the party would win parliamentary seats, the Sweden Democrats stated that: “Everything points to this becoming a historic election that will change the political map of Sweden for all time” (SD 2010). The present was thus framed as an absolute novelty. However, in terms of environmental policy, the Sweden Democrats argued that “Sweden alone cannot master the climate threat,” and that the party would therefore strive for a continuation of existing measures and further development of nuclear energy (SD 2010).

### 3.4 Debating historical lessons and worrying about the future: The campaigns of 2014 and 2018

In 2014, after being in opposition for the previous eight years, the parties of the Left drew upon a temporal framing in which the present was portrayed as a turning point, or an absolute novelty; for instance by stating that climate change constituted “the greatest problem of our time” (MP 2014). The historical lessons showed that a new era had to begin: “The world cannot afford a climate policy in which nations are awaiting each other’s moves rather than leading the way” (MP 2014. See also S 2014; V 2014). According to the Left, it would be impossible to save the climate without challenging the economic interests that predicated a dependence on fossil fuels such as oil and coal (V 2018). The Green Party stated that: “There is no longer any alternative; we must reduce our emissions and adapt our

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4. There is an ongoing debate about how the Sweden Democrats should be ideologically positioned (e.g., Elgenius and Rydgren 2017; Hellström, Nilsson, and Stoltz 2012; Mulinari and Neergaard 2014; Towns, Karlsson, and Eyre 2014).
society to the thresholds of nature” (MP 2018). The future was hence thought of as having to be different, to be incommensurable with the past and the present. An incommensurability between the past and the present was highlighted by the Social Democrats when stating that: “We live in a changeable time. This summer, Sweden has been on fire, extreme weather shows us the acute consequences of climate change” (S 2018). The present was thus portrayed as a qualitatively new time that required new solutions.

The liberal-conservative coalition, however, used a framing of time in which temporal linearity and continuation were important features. For instance, the Centre Party stated that Swedish emissions of greenhouse gases were decreasing, and the People’s Party once again argued that environmental problems in Sweden were relatively small compared to international ones (C 2014; FP 2014). “We have expanded renewable energy sources and reduced climate emissions” stated the Alliance (All 2014). In this way, the past was portrayed as a historically successful time, and a continued development was stressed as the approach for the future. This was also the perspective of the Sweden Democrats, who continued to emphasize that Sweden alone could not “solve the environmental problems of the world” and that the existing solution of nuclear energy was enough (SD 2014, 2018).

However, several parties admitted that there were reasons to “worry about the future environment” (KD 2014. See also All 2014; C 2018; L 2018; S 2018). For instance, both the Social Democrats and the Centre Party emphasized that the nation needed to be prepared and equipped to face the consequences of climate change, such as extreme weather conditions (C 2018; S 2018). The consequences of past actions thus extended into the future; they had to be acknowledged and dealt with in the present. Almost all parties argued that Sweden should become a role model in climate work and policy, hence suggesting the goal of a positive asynchronicity of the simultaneous (e.g., C 2014, 2018; FP 2014; L 2018; M 2018; MP 2014, 2018; S 2014, 2018; V 2014, 2018).

4. Ideological modalities of time in Swedish election campaigns

This study has shown how the major political parties in Sweden constantly used temporal comparisons and framed time in different ways. Previous research on the issue of ideological modalities of time is divided; however, the majority seems to lean toward the idea that there are no clear ideological differences in how time is framed (e.g., Clarke and Pammet 2020; Steinmetz 2021). The analysis has shown that all three modalities of time were used by the parties, none of them was monopolized by a certain party or ideology. Moreover, the modalities were not clearly bound to any concrete time period in this study.
Although the parties used several temporal modes, some ideological characteristics can be drawn from the analysis. The emerging left-wing block in Swedish politics – the Left, the Social Democrats, and the Greens – often put forward the present as a new start, hence emphasizing the incommensurability of the present with the past. Any lessons that could be learned from the past only showed that the current development was a dead end, and that a new era had to emerge. As the Greens stated: “There is no longer any alternative” (MP 2018). This incommensurability was thus used as a crisis rhetoric highlighting the need for a new start. However, the Social Democrats also drew upon similarities between the past, present, and future when using traditional social democratic concepts, such as the Swedish model or the (green) people’s home, to describe future society. The liberal parties often emphasized historical linearity and continuous development as important features. Time was understood as a smoothly flowing motion gradually leading toward a better future. The task for Swedish politics was consequently to keep up with this development, but also to preserve nature for the future. This was also the perspective put forward by the conservative parties, the Moderates in particular, that often presented a negative asynchronicity of the simultaneous, highlighting the risk of slipping behind. Meanwhile, the nationalist Sweden Democrats repeatedly stated that existing Swedish measures were enough, and that the nation should therefore focus on making other nations follow; thus drawing upon a positive asynchronicity of the present.

All modalities of time have their own unique quality and come with different problems. Statements merging several temporal layers into one, consequently fusing different horizons, not only point to past responsibilities that have been ignored but also temporally domesticate the future. As Simon (2021, 510) has argued in his analysis of the Anthropocene concept: “in trying to connect with the past by smoothing past, present, and future into a pattern of deep continuity, it disconnects from the discourse in which the Anthropocene was proposed as a conceptual effort to capture radical novelty” (see also Fagan 2019; Nordblad 2021). Thus, by drawing upon historical analogies, the future becomes restricted by the past and the present. Arguments that postulate the present as an absolute novelty – highlighting the uniqueness of the event – risks, when combined with a positive asynchronicity of the simultaneous, resulting in what Lauren Berlant (2011) has called a cruel optimism, an optimism that becomes destructive by extending the political horizons indefinitely. Although the future may be indeterminate, it is not – in the case of climate change – uncertain. As shown above,
asynchronousities of the simultaneous easily become crisis talks that may be of rhetorical or polemical value but of no, or at least of very limited, practical value.\(^5\)

Environmental questions in general, and the climate issue in particular, are permeated with notions about time and temporality. This enables a political playing with time in which political actors can use and frame time in several ways and for different purposes. However, if the current climate crisis is to be resolved, we cannot let the future become completely domesticated by the past, nor can we afford to extend the horizon of expectation indefinitely, hoping that the problem will somehow magically go away. We already know what is expected; in a way, the future is talking back to us. Meanwhile, the past – or history – is affecting the atmosphere in the form of already released greenhouse gases. As Andreas Malm (2018, 5) puts it: “the air is heavy with time” (see also Malm 2016, 4–8).

Political systems are the result of several overlapping processes that do not follow any necessary pathways. In contrast to many other forms of rule, the idea of (political) democracy presupposes its own contingent foundation (Kelz 2019). Democratic politics consequently leans on the idea that there is no single, correct understanding of the world. As Cornelius Castoriadis (1997, 274) argues: “If a full and certain knowledge (episteme) of the human domain were possible, politics would immediately come to an end, and democracy would be both impossible and absurd: democracy implies that all citizens have the possibility of attaining a correct doxa and the nobody posses an episteme of things political.” Openness is thus an essential democratic quality; democracies need to – if they are to stay democratic – accept that there are no final conceptual, legal, or institutional answers. Jacques Derrida (2005) has put forward the notion of democracy to come that highlights the necessity of constant renegotiation. Democracy is, to Derrida, an unfulfillable promise (see also Rosanvallon 2006). Hence, the future can never be safe or certain which is why it requires continuous political engagement.

What is needed is thus a democratic politics that acknowledges both historical and political contingency; a politics that understands that even though society is not organized completely at random, it could always be organized differently (Marchart 2007). Engaging with the past without seeking to extrapolate a unified narrative of historical progress makes it possible to explore the past from different perspectives. While this activity needs to be careful not to slip into revisionism,

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5. Krzyżanowski (2019, 467) has argued that “past-to-future thinking” about crisis constitutes a “peculiar form” of imaginary because it does not only serve as a past/present-related description but also as a powerful ideological description of the future. According to Krzyżanowski (2014, 346–47), this kind of imaginary can be described in terms of pre-legitimization as it allows the speaker to present his or her visions rather than accounts of practices although the visions are constructed from “experience-like aspects of discursive representations of social action.”
it could help us to highlight that the present – while not arbitrary – is contingent (Hoy 2009; Kelz 2019). Thus, making historical contingency explicit could enable a continuous renegotiation of possible futures. In this way, the present can be opened up to different futures that activate different timescales and display a variety of qualities. Hopefully, such a present could result in a politics for the future that facilitates both understanding and action.

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