

## Towards conflicting chronologies: a topographic insight following Reinhart Koselleck's work

Lucila Svampa <sup>a</sup>

lucilasvampa@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0713-7950> 

<sup>a</sup> Universidad de Buenos Aires, Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani, Ciudad de Buenos Aires, Argentina

## ABSTRACT

This article considers the role that spatiality played in Koselleck's work. With that aim, we will examine how the writer dealt with the relationship between historicity and spatiality. His few theorizations regarding this topic will be taken into account, as well as different concepts relevant to his work that evoke this partnership. Through an analysis of five terms, Zeitschichten, Erfahrungsraum, Erwartungshorizont, Standortbindung, and Utopie, we will show how spatiality holds a secondary position in relation to history and how they affect Koselleck's theory of historical times.

## KEYWORDS

Space. History. Reinhart Koselleck.

## Introduction

The centrality of relationships between space and history have long been studied by the Western philosophical tradition. Kant's musings on the transcendental aesthetic in *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781) on time and space as pure intuitions marked, to a great extent, later considerations on the topic. But these connections fell within the purview not only of philosophy and history but also of geography and geopolitics. In recent decades, there has been a strengthening of the so-called "spatial turn," which led to an increase in related publications and events.<sup>1</sup> For regular readers of Koselleck, it is not difficult to see that this author's work — although it only adjacently addresses the topic — incorporates the spatial factor in its historical considerations. With an overall view of his works in mind, we must admit that, strictly speaking, there is only one text that briefly develops the relationships between history and space: "Raum und Geschichte". Indeed, there is no entry in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* — edited by Koselleck, along with Werner Conze and Otto Brunner — dedicated to Raum but neither of Zeit. This does not mean an oversight or devaluation of these concepts; it simply shows a lack of systematicity in Koselleck's work in the treatment of this particular aspect, which, strictly speaking, is representative of his theoretical legacy. In addition to the brief essay mentioned, there is a series of concepts with a spatial connotation that operate within his Historik, and which we will analyze here. Possibly, because of the marginal place that this matter occupies in Koselleck's large writings, this subject has rarely been addressed in scholarly literature. In this context of neglect, a wonderfully instructive paper was recently published by Niklas Olsen (2021), in which he elucidates the theoretical and personal path that led Koselleck to an ambivalent point of view regarding this approach.

Beyond his short discussion on time and space, we will explore some spatial concepts that appear in Reinhart Koselleck's work in at least two senses: on the one hand, as a device to understand what takes place; and on the other hand, as a means to envision what may take place. Within this first sense, we can consider categories that are very explicitly connected with space, such as Zeitschichten (layers of time) Erfahrungsraum (space of experience), and Standortbindung (bond with location). The second group involves the unavoidable Erwartungshorizont (horizon of expectations) and Utopie (utopia) as conceptual derivations. Both senses provide the author with

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<sup>1</sup> For a literature review on the spatial turn, see Angelo (2008) and Zeller (2004), who refer to the background left by Denis Cosgrove. Today the spatial turn is studied from multiple perspectives in the historiography, philosophy and social sciences: territory and capitalism (SOJA, 1989), global history (MIDDEL, 2005), just to give some examples. Other turns, such as the linguistic turn and the postcolonial (SPIVAK, 1999) are as well largely interwoven with it.

a vehicle to explain historical phenomena borrowing concepts from geography. With these resources at hand, Koselleck portrays the displacement, not only of past events but also of historical theory as such. Experience and space are utterly connected, as Koselleck states: "It makes sense to say that experience based on the past is spatial since it is assembled into a totality, within which many layers of earlier times are simultaneously present" (KOSELLECK, 2004, p. 260). Other spatially connotated terms, which we will not explore here, such as *Schleuse* and *Sattel*, may also highlight the role of topographical metaphors in his *Historik*.

Koselleck analyzes the dislocations in the ways we understand historicity after the break with the *historia magistra vitae*. Fractures and dislocations are, according to the author, essential to understanding the development of the *Sattelzeit* and the crisis through which the *Neuzeit* (modernity) came into being. To understand these changes, we need more than sources and pure facts; historical research without a theory of historical times implies serious methodological problems. For this reason, Koselleck argues that it becomes imperative to construct a *Theorie des geschichtliche Zeiten*, which, among other things, requires the "destruction of natural chronology," (KOSELLECK, 2000, p. 306) based on temporal successions.

In this context, we will try to formulate in what sense does Koselleck's use of spatial concepts illuminate key aspects of his theory of historical times. Do these spatial concepts indicate a preeminence of space over time? If periodization supposes a space made of time — the process of categorizing the past into discrete, quantified, named blocks of time — is Koselleck's theory of historical times not paradoxically resting upon linear time? This article aims to explore the confluence of spatial and historical notions in Koselleck's work. As a consequence, we will firstly try to formulate how the use of spatial concepts deals with chronological orders. To do so, we will present Olson's contribution and consider the article "Raum und Geschichte". Secondly, we will explore five spatial concepts and their implications, mainly in *Vergangene Zukunft* and *Zeitschichten*, two books in which they play a significant role (KOSELLECK, 1989; 2000). Finally, we will offer some conclusions and possible connections between space and chronological orders.

## Space between the historical and metahistorical conditions

As already stated, Olsen offers a rigorous introduction to this subject, which kickoffs wondering if Koselleck was really a pioneer of the spatial turn. In this context, he proposes a theoretical journey with nuances that should not go unnoticed when finding

a reliable answer to this question. His position is quite clear at the beginning of the text, when he affirms: “Koselleck’s reflections on spatial matters were generally too broad, unelaborated and unsystematic to constitute a unified framework or a specific research agenda” (OLSEN, 2021, p. 2).

The article summarizes three arguments: that Koselleck’s reflection on space is marginal, that the spatial question involves anthropological, geographical, phenomenological and linguistic dimensions, and that the academic reception of spatial aspects in Koselleck’s work is poor. Something that Olsen makes clear, and with which we agree here, is that Koselleck’s approach to space is linked to his *Historik*. His essay begins by tracing Heidegger’s Koselleckian reception, where human existence is temporarily situated and updating the conceptual pairs proposed in *Sein und Zeit*. For Koselleck being is always equivalent to being in.<sup>2</sup> But, according to Olsen, this is only developed between ambiguities. He goes to *Kritik und Krisis*, and affirms that, in that book, spatial notions appear in three senses: 1. Based on Hobbes, Koselleck uses the inner/outer separation to justify the difference between public and private, politics and morality; 2. Koselleck relied on the difference between inside/outside and secret/public to talk about the lodges; 3. The pair master/slave were linked to their own hierarchies within the lodges. From these examples, Olsen wants to show that these reflections are held on a metaphorical level and are not directly connected to the “actual space”:

Even if they have special connotations, these categories are general terms, deeply embedded in Western languages, rather than notions that truly pertain to physical space. The perspective on the masonic lodges as a socially created space in the emergent public sphere stands out from these general uses by its connotations with concrete and literal manifestations (public/private space, citizens’ access to governmental spaces). This, it seems, is the only analytical perspective in *Kritik und Krise* that directly addresses how the spatial character of history makes a range possible a range of societal developments (OLSEN, 2021, p. 4-5).

This leads him to conclude that spatial concepts have a very restricted role both in the aforementioned text and in his later writings. Even considering the idea of

<sup>2</sup> Olsen states “But, for Koselleck, *to be* is arguably also *to be in space*. Hence, as he explains in later works, Koselleck’s anthropological system can be read as a rectification of Heidegger’s narrow focus on individual time, through a consideration of what we might call ‘collective social space’ and dynamics” (OLSEN, 2021, p. 4).

“historical space”, Olsen affirms that Koselleck’s analyzes always show a primacy of time over space.

The second approach is the geopolitical one. There, Olsen refers to the Schmittian influence and makes it clear that it contributed greatly to the expansionist aims of Nazism, through the Grossraum theory. Olsen briefly expands on the theory of the *Der nomos der Erde* and later states that the Koselleckian reception was central to a particular analysis of the economic and political development of England, traversed by its maritime life. This appears as a kick for the chronicle of an investigation never carried out by Koselleck, although he announced it with great interest in a letter to Schmitt in the fifties. Olsen then moves his gaze to the horizon of expectations and space of experiences, emphasizing the emergence of the future as a modern dimension. In addition, he adds: “According to Koselleck, in this transformation, history was not only temporalized, but — we might say — also de-spatialized, as space was superseded by time as the measure of social reality” (OLSEN, 2021, p. 7). The latter is justified by the movement of a utopia that abandons space exploration and projects itself into the future. This is combined with a theory of modernity that evokes the phenomenon of acceleration, produced by technical advances that contracted space, leaving us in a smaller world. At this point, Olsen shows a predominance in Koselleck’s interest in time at the expense of space, starting in the 1970s. Despite this, there is an undeniable protagonism of spatial language, which Koselleck makes explicit in some articles by *Zeitschichten*, which anchors its origins in Braudel and its three layers. Olsen replaces the most relevant points of *Raum und Geschichte*, highlighting the importance of the concept of *Zeitraum* (timespace). At the same time, he recovers the breadth with which Koselleck visited this theme and the fact that it resulted in a metaphorical use of spatial concepts. Olsen’s key observation is that Koselleck does not apply this evaluative equalization of time and space in his historiographical research: “In general, Koselleck refrains from setting up basic distinctions such as the one between physical space and phenomenal space and elaborates very little on the implications of the socially constructed space, the politics of space, and on space as possibly having a type of historical agency in its own right” (OLSEN, 2021, p. 10).

The problem is that Olsen says that his interest in time overshadowed his interest in space and by saying this, he is denying that there is an incorporation of spatiality in his study of historical time. He also criticizes that Koselleck has little empirical support but is not clear how this could precisely be a valid argument if we consider that Koselleck proposes a *Historik* within the framework of a theory of history, which does not necessarily have to develop a specific application to a historiographical investigation.

Once Olsen's main contributions have been reconstructed, we will now proceed to offer some reflections that may strengthen the discussion. Only once does Koselleck specifically address the relationship between space and history. This occurs in *Raum und Geschichte*, the meaning of which can be understood based on his theory of the layers of time.<sup>3</sup> In fact, this article takes part of *Zeitschichten*, in which introduction he mentions that "every historical space is constituted by the strength of time, with which space can be stridden across, becoming politically and economically controllable" (KOSELLECK, 2000, p. 9, my translation). As we have mentioned, there are also fundamental terms that move on the spatial plane and constitute pillars of great relevance to his theory of historical times and conceptual history. Here Koselleck argues that, although the relationship between these two aspects is undeniable, a clearer definition must be reached, given the broad spectrum of connotations encapsulated by each. Throughout modernity, the relationships between these two concepts were penetrated by the correspondence between history and nature and were also largely influenced by the concept of time. Once a kind of opposition was established between the scientific vision and the historical one, geography was separated from both disciplinary fields. Throughout the different traditions of thought, time — conceived of as the fundamental basis of the historical — held a very marked central role in relation to that held by space. And although there were reasons for this asymmetry, Koselleck invokes the importance of geopolitics to highlight how space is not only a condition for all history but also that it is historicized: "My thesis then would be the following: categorically speaking, space is just as much a condition of possible history as time. But, 'space' too has a history. Space is both something that should be metahistorically presupposed for every possible history and something that is historicizable because it changes socially, economically, and politically" (OLSEN, 2018, p. 27).<sup>4</sup>

As Olsen explains, Koselleck's reformulation of Heidegger's *Dasein* maintains the importance of the temporal determination of existence, emphasizing the spatial factor. The categorial pairs he reviews in his debate with Gadamer include the "inside/

<sup>3</sup> The difference between the use of time and history holds some theoretical problems that Koselleck does not fully develop here. He picks up a debate by Kant about the chimeric nature of natural time over historical time, which could, however, serve as a guide (KOSELLECK, 2002). Koselleck (2018) also touches on this topic in a chapter of *Vom Sinn und Unsinn der Geschichte*, titled "Hinter der tödlichen Linie. Das Zeitalter des Totalen."

<sup>4</sup> As Chris Lorenz (2017) points out, this relation between space and time is not always conceived of in this way. In fact, there is a prior idea of an absolute time that springs both from the natural sciences and from the spiritual sciences, which is independent from both spheres, and which was later overtaken by Einstein's theory of relativity, according to which space relativizes time. However, citing Achim Landwehr, Lorenz affirms that: "Relativity theory in physics therefore has as yet not been followed by a relative theory of historical time, although the postcolonial critique of linear time in history can be seen as a step in this direction" (p. 118).

outside” or “above/below” oppositions: “If Heidegger described the spatiality of Dasein as equiprimordial with his ‘being-in-the-world,’ a theory of history must supplement this determination by adding that every historical Dasein is split up into inner and outer spaces” (OLSEN, 2021, p. 47). As such, there is a spatial determination that conditions the life of human beings in multiple aspects. As we will see, this has to do with geographical location and natural conditions but also with the political space itself. The latter exceeds biological limits and instead is oriented, on the one hand, towards the territorial borders that arise from the taking of territories — to use a term of Schmitt’s — and, on the other, towards the very configurations of public spatiality within political units.<sup>5</sup> In summary, space is presented as an anthropological condition. Despite this, Olsen makes an observation that indicates the author’s lack of rigor and a systematic approach to the topic within a truncated project of habilitation:

However, Koselleck did not proceed to outline a full theory of historical space in developing his doctrine of possible histories in the 1950s. In fact, he did not seem to be overtly interested in concrete space in outlining his thoughts, and it is not immediately clear how his categories can serve to show the spatial character of history, as he suggested. At the theoretical level, while the inside/outside division is readable as a spatial phenomenon with real manifestations, the spatial aspect of the above/below relation of master/slave seems to be only metaphorical. The same is the case for the man/woman and the parent/child relation (OLSEN, 2021, p. 3).

But in this article, Koselleck focuses on the tension that arises from the interaction between iterability and the singular. This is framed not precisely in the differentiation between Wiederholenstrukturen (structures of repetition) and Einmaligkeit (singularity) but rather in a distinction of the spatial and natural conditions man must deal with and which man himself created, which leads to a separation between “geologists” and “human geographers.” This causes a distinction to be made between the historical and metahistorical conditions in which the lives of human beings take place. The set of historical conditions includes aspects that are subject to change and that therefore exist during some periods but not during others, which lead to an enormous variety of political, economic, and social dimensions.

<sup>5</sup> Although he does not provide a detailed study on spatiality there, it is well known that in his doctoral thesis, later published as *Kritik und Krise*, Koselleck critically studies the connection between the public and the private in the Enlightenment.

Metahistorical conditions, on the other hand, are understood to be permanent: they persist throughout human history. Oceans, mountain chains, deserts, and plains are constitutive of the life of mankind on Earth. These geographical, meteorological, and biological phenomena seem, a *prima facie*, to be immovable and capable of conditioning the existence of humankind. This is why territorial groupings on coasts are benefited by activities such as fishing and maritime trade, while life inland is coded according to the earth's production.<sup>6</sup> However, bridges, canals, tunnels, and other engineering works have demonstrated that humankind can overcome the limits imposed by said metahistorical conditions. Koselleck thereby relativizes the opposition between these two spheres, which becomes more evident with the current ecological crisis: "Limits on the control and use of resources have shifted enormously over the course of human history, and it would be an exciting story to account for this process — as a contribution to the ecology of the present — as a common undertaking, from the perspectives both of natural science and of political and social history" (KOSELLECK, 2018, p. 29). Some examples are the difference that the distance from Europe poses for a country like Algeria in contrast to South Africa, the value of the English Channel for the British Empire, the polar ice cap for the military threats between Russia and the United States, and Thucydides's explanation of the duration of the Trojan War, which was based on the conditions of the Aegean Sea. All these situations show how the historical is understood through the metahistorical, which pushes us to evaluate historical matters theoretically.

In this context, Koselleck draws two conclusions. The first holds that geopolitics poses a map of conditioning factors for human action, laying out the problem of an "ontological fixation" for those conditioning factors. The second refers to geopolitics' self-denomination as a science of political counsel. On the one hand, scientists misinterpreted the determinants of human freedom as invariable (either by referring to laws of nature or ontological questions). On the other hand, the geopolitical strategy of Nazism shows its enormous flaws: "Hitler would have never been allowed to begin the war in the first place if a rational geographical and historical analysis of space and its military potential had been applied. If the geopolitics of the time played any kind of role in decision making, such decisions depended on false theoretical premises, for geopolitics took it upon itself

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<sup>6</sup> In *Der Nomos der Erde*, Carl Schmitt (2005) — who was once Koselleck's advisor — distinguishes between three activities that define the relationship between mankind and the earth: *nehmen* (to take), *weiden* (to graze), and *teilen* (to divide up), which in principle cannot take place in the aquatic sphere. Although Koselleck does not cite this text — nor any satellite texts, such as *Land und Meer* or *Die Einheit der Welt* — it is not difficult to infer a great influence exercised by Schmitt. The mention of progressive conquests by mankind of maritime and aerial space are another sign of this influence. In addition, while Schmitt's texts mentioned above are from the 1950s, Koselleck's text is based on a conference he gave in 1986. Olsen (2014, p. 150) mentions an exchange of letters in 1956 in which Koselleck freely discusses the reordering of European territory.

to restylize geographical questions into agents that had already begun to carry out law-like necessities, or would do so in the future. Uncovering this kind of error puts the critique of ideology on firm scientific footing” (KOSELLECK, 2018, p. 33).

On this point, Koselleck introduces the acceleration phenomena, by mentioning three time curves to address the problem of acceleration, also developed in other texts<sup>7</sup> (KOSELLECK, 2002c; 2006), and which are summarized as follows:

I have thus sketched three exponential time curves that correspond to three completely different spaces of life and action. The first was large-scale space in which natural pre-givens dominated. In the second phase, the metahistorical preconditions became increasingly controllable and usable and the natural determinants of human freedom and political spaces of actions were historically subsumed and transformed. Cities, empires, and then states emerged with spaces of action that were to be optimally organized but whose natural conditions could not be transcended. Indeed, there were empires that perished as a result of their (over)extension. And finally we have sketched a third phase: the acceleration of our own era or space-time, leading to the consolidation of the globe into a single unit of experience (KOSELLECK, 2018, p. 39-40).

The relationship between surface area and population, mediated by the need for food, the provision of natural resources, and the unity posed by globality in our times, show new facets of acceleration. Without going into detail on the latter, let us maintain those introduced in this article: first, some of the elements that define the incidence of space in history are proposed, which are traced by geology; second, the inside/outside component is introduced as anthropological categories; and finally, the difference between the historical and the metahistorical with regards to space is explored.

## An overview of the spatial categories

Complementing the last development, Koselleck's carachrestical tactic transfers concepts from one field to another in order to highlight that which lacked a specific designation in one of those fields. In his own words: “history, insofar as it deals with time, must borrow its concepts from the spatial realm as a matter of principle. We

<sup>7</sup> Francisco Naishtat (2021) addresses this same topic through a theoretical triangulation between Benjamin, Nietzsche and Ricouer with regards to crisis. He observes that an increase in these three curves would lead to an eschatological scenario. We note a curious coincidence when the Argentine professor invokes thesis XVIII from *Über der Begriff der Geschichte*.

live by naturally metaphorical expressions, and we are unable to escape from them, for the simple reason that time is not manifest (*anschaulich*) and cannot be intuited (*anschaulich gemacht werden*). All historical categories, including progress, which is the first specifically modern category of historical time, are spatial expressions by origin, and our discipline thrives because they can be translated" (KOSELLECK, 2002a, p. 7). Although he never developed its theoretical functioning in depth, in this fragment, Koselleck assumes the use of metaphors as beneficial for his theory of historical times.<sup>8</sup> We will, therefore, analyze the use of five terms that illuminate this peculiar operation.

The first is *Standortbindung* — appearing in the chapter of *Vergangene Zukunft* titled "Perspective and Temporality: A Contribution to the Historiographical Exposure of the Historical World" — and it is important to mention that this term is mistranslated into English as "perspective." While this German neologism designates a relationship with place or position, the English translation omits the reference to space. This chapter is originally a 1975 paper from the *Studiengruppe Theorie der Geschichte*, published two years later in the book *Objektivität und Parteilichkeit in der Geschichtswissenschaft*. Here, Koselleck introduces a crucial dilemma for historians: while they are impelled to make true statements, those statements are always formulated from a certain standpoint. In this context, the objection of relativism quickly comes to light; Koselleck responds by going back to Dilthey's doctrine of comprehension and contending that the standpoint should never be erased. Only from modernity was it established that historical truth is stated from a determined position. However, by no means do all historical statements depend only on space: Koselleck outlines the triad *Ort-Zeit-Person* (place-time-person). This means that even if a historical investigation is carried out by the same person located in the same place but at a different time, the result will never be identical. And the peculiarity does not speak of a problem for historical science but rather of an intrinsic feature of it.

The text is a plea in favor of perspectivism, underlying the enormous importance of the moment and place from which historians produce their research:

All historical knowledge is locationally determined and hence relative. Aware of this, history allows itself to be assimilated critically-*verstehend*, leading in turn to true historical statements. To exaggerate somewhat,

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<sup>8</sup> Although Koselleck does not cite here the work on metaphorology by Hans Blumentberg (2012), he was familiar with it and mentions it on other occasions. On the use of metaphors in conceptual history, see Schmieder (2021).

partisanship and objectivity are mutually exclusive, but in the course of historical work they relate to one another (KOSELLECK, 2004, p. 129-130).

In contrast to this position, we find claims against historical relativism. Lucian, von Ranke, and others are portrayed as victims of a “naive realism.” According to these authors, historians should seek to reproduce “the naked truth” as a mirror of reality. Since they should not have a point out view, they must be apolis. The premodern imagery of supra partisanship assumed the necessity of eliminating the personal mark that the historian can bring. This allows Koselleck to reformulate the idea of objectivity and partisanship, exposing the need for a positional commitment:

Every source — more exactly, every remnant that we transform into a source through our questions — refers us to a history which is either more, less, or in any case something other than the remnant itself. History is never identical with the source that provides evidence for this history. If this were so, then every cleanly flowing source would be the history we sought (KOSELLECK, 2004, p. 150).

Although some of these theorists later relativized their positions, this vision prevailed until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Chladenius was one of the first to admit that “the inevitability of perspective does not lead to a ‘partisan account’” (KOSELLECK, 2004, p. 134-136). In addition, the temporalization of perspective included the historization of the ways in which the past is accessed. Even inhabiting the sphere of authenticity provided by the eyewitnesses, the great innovation of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century thinker was not only to distinguish partisan accounts from falsification but also to allow the historian to become a philosopher of history. Later, conceptual innovations that appeared after Chladenius showed that temporal relativity joined spatial relativity. Along with an increase in the use of terms like *Sehepunkt*, *Standort*, or *Sehepunkt*, historians accepted that temporal distance could reformulate historical knowledge. It was, indeed, a consequence of the philosophy of progress, the search for advantages that later statements may bring. In this context, Semler sketched the historization of historical knowledge itself, an idea that has not been refuted since.

Since progress depends on future projects and requires political commitment, the concept of party gained ground in the frame of the revolutions. Schlegel vehemently defended the inevitability of taking sides and sought to encourage the open exposition of opinions by historians. Said liberation was accompanied by a separation between facts and values, would ultimately preserved objectivity. In a similar vein, Koselleck

recovers Hegel's idealistic philosophy, arguing that "ohne Urteil verliert die Geschichte an Interesse" (without judgment, history loses interest). In short: this path shows that modernity skipped the alternative between truth and partisanship on the one hand, and, on the other, it opened the way to acceleration and temporalization of history that affects how time is perceived.<sup>9</sup>

In this way, Koselleck's *Begriffsgeschichte* rekindles the problem of objectivity. His insight utterly disavows one of the main premises of the *Ideengeschichte* that posits a constant role of ideas through time.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, a critique of a mechanical transfer of concepts from one time to another becomes imperative to this methodological premise. As we shall see, Koselleck reworks the Kantian and Hegelian concept of the concept, which leads him to the hypothesis of polysemic concepts: "Concepts are thus concentrations of many semantic contents. It is possible to think separately of the meaning (*Bedeutung*) of a word and what it means (*das Bedeutetes*). [...] Thus a concept may be clear, but it must be ambiguous" (KOSELECK, 2011, p. 20). This connection between Koselleck's conceptual history and his theory of historical time regarding the importance of the position of the historian explains the accusations of relativism made against his work. Koselleck does not deny, however, the power of veto of the sources because "they can never tell us what we ought to say. It does prevent us from making statements that we should not make" (2011, p. 151). This perspective is pointedly criticized by Sandro Chignola:

In other words, the history of political concepts operating from Koselleck onward, although referred to the often overlooked problem of the genesis and transformation of the basic concepts of the German language, never problematizes the standpoint from which it summons the sources and makes them speak, though respecting the "Vetorecht" of their objectivity, and does not care whether the "modern world", whose genesis it wants to trace, might actually be filled with contradictions, streaks, and heterogeneities which blow up its ideal type. Moreover: it assumes this ideal type as fully

<sup>9</sup> Chignola avers: "Not only does the present overtake the past (and thus the very past present of the sources), but the present itself will soon be overcome by the future that turns it into the past. The vortex of temporalization overwhelms history and radically resemantizes its concept, its content and its practices" (Chignola, 2020: p. 204). Koselleck develops the acceleration phenomenon mainly in a chapter of *Zeitschichten* entitled "Gibt es eine Beschleunigung der Geschichte?" (Koselleck, 2018). This problem provoked many academic interventions and points of views, such as those by Hartmut Rosa (2015), François Hartog (2012), and Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht (2014).

<sup>10</sup> "Each history of word or concept leads from a determination of past meanings to a specification of these meanings for us. Insofar as this procedure is reflected in the method of *Begriffsgeschichte*, the synchronic analysis of the past is supplemented diachronically. Diachrony has the methodological obligation of scientifically defining anew the inventory of past meanings of words" (KOSELECK, 2004, p. 81-82).

determined by European constitutional history and its heading toward the State (CHIGNOLA, 2021, p. 208).

That is why, according to the Italian writer, Koselleck's approach is subject to criticism: it reproduces a theoretical colonization, focusing only on European political concepts, and constricts heterogeneous processes into one path. In this context, Chignola, relying on Christian Geulen, proposes the term spatialization as a new indicator of the transformation of concepts. A conceptual history that aims to respond to the global reality must detach itself from ancient and outdated categories, such as those connected with the modern State.

Regarding *Zeitschichten*, the metaphor of *Schicht* (layer) is based on a term derived from geology. It enables us to describe "different temporal levels upon which people move and events unfold, and thus ask about the longer-term preconditions for such events" (KOSELLECK, 2018, p. 3). To develop such a definition, the author distinguishes three aspects: uniqueness, structures of repetition, and strata. The first of these points to the experience of *Einmaligkeit* (uniqueness), which actualizes temporal experience and may represent both the biographical and historical situations in which events appear as surprising and irreversible. He also affirms the existence of *Wiederholungsstrukturen* (structures of repetition) not only at the historical but also at juridical or linguistic levels. These two planes are inhabited by the same experiences simultaneously. This can be exemplified by a daily situation: although every letter we receive contains an ingredient of novelty, this is only possible because of the regularity with which the mail carrier passes by our homes. In Koselleck's words: "Behind the postal delivery service stands an organization whose stability is contained in the repetition of established rules, and whose financial reserves are furnished through continual fiscal projections of collected postal revenue" (KOSELLECK, 2002c, p. 135).

It is important to highlight that the theory of sediments of time, informed by solid structures, conceives of different durations, which, in some cases, may last for generations but are not permanent.<sup>11</sup> That is, they are exposed to changes and their influence is

<sup>11</sup> In his work on the paradoxical *Sprachbildlichkeit* in Koselleck's work, Jordheim (2021) reviews the English translation, published in 2018 by Stanford University Press: "Although the word 'sediments' is very effective to capture the multiple processes of geological stratification, the emerging strata do not come into view very clearly. 'Sediments' or the German synonym 'Ablagerungen' (sediments) are not themselves strata, but they describe merely the Material, from which strata can be build: fluvial deposits, lake deposits, sandstone - or chalk deposits, that are through processes in the crust of the earth over millions of years into rock stratum transformed" (JORDHEIM, 2021, p. 238, my translation). The Norwegian professor appeals to the *stratigraphischen Prinzip*, which allows the concept of *Zeitschichten* to have a geological meaning.

temporally restricted. The structures place singularity within a pattern of repetition, and it is this very uniqueness that puts an end to these structures of repetition. Singular events are capable of changing long-term layers: “The advantage of a theory of sedimentations of time lies in its ability to measure different velocities — accelerations or decelerations — and to thereby reveal different modes of historical change that indicate great temporal complexity” (KOSELLECK, 2018, p. 6). This characterization captures the various parallel movements that take place across a single historical event. To illustrate this dynamic, there is no better example than the changes produced after the fall of the Berlin Wall: although both parts of Germany were constitutionally, institutionally, and legally unified, they were not reintegrated economically or in minds of their citizens, such that “Every empirical investigation of this topic would seem to need to work, at least implicitly, with a multilayered theory of time” (KOSELLECK, 2018, p. 39). In order to shed some light on time strata, Koselleck acknowledges their similarity to the *Ungleichzeitigkeit* (the noncontemporary). Building on Herder (1998), he avers:

Properly speaking, any changeable object contains the measure of its time within itself; it exists even if there were no other one; no two things in the world share the same measure of time [...] At one time, there exist (one can say it truly and boldly) countless many times in the universe (KOSELLECK, 2002a, p. 111).

The different depths that inhabit the sediments of time bring new questions about the actuality of natural and historical chronology. This is why Koselleck points out the centrality of a historical and theoretical approach capable of tracking these discrepancies, where the diachronic and synchronic come into play.<sup>12</sup>

*Standortbindung*, *Erwartungshorizont*, and *Erfahrungsraum* (space of experience), all originally coined by Viktor von Weizsäcker, are neologisms that Koselleck borrows from Karl Mannheim. History as a metanarrative covers the entirety of its own extension. Conceived as a transcendental category, it would contain the conditions of possibility and knowledge of events, all reconcilable in a final significance. When achieving coherence, “The historian reaching into the past — beyond his own experiences and memories, guided by questions and desires, hopes and troubles — is initially confronted by so-called residues which are to some degree still available” (KOSELLECK, 2004, p. 255). Experience

<sup>12</sup> The necessity of a theory of historical times plays an important role in Koselleck’s work. His insistence on a *Theoriebedürftigkeit* lays on the hypothesis that disciplinary isolation of the historical science can be prevented by means of a *Theorie der geschichtlichen Zeiten*. For a survey of this problem, see Jodheim (2011).

and expectation are presented by Koselleck as formal metahistorical categories from which it is not possible, however, to derive specific content. Both indicate a human condition and are mutually dependent. They work according to the temporalization of history and the great relevance that the future gains in the imaginary.<sup>13</sup> They dismantle the definition of history as exclusively addressing the past because they embody past, present, future, hopes, memories, and present practices.

Take as a simple example the experience of the execution of Charles I, which revealed, over a century later, the horizon of expectation of Turgot as he urged upon Louis XVI reforms which should preserve him from the same fate. Turgot's warnings were in vain. Nonetheless, between the past English and the approaching French Revolution, there was a temporal relation that was ascertainable and revealed a relation that went beyond mere chronology (KOSELLECK, 2004, p. 258).

The end of this excerpt touches on the relationship between natural chronology and historical time and directs it towards the discussion of experience. Experience and expectation rarely coincide: they tend to distance themselves from each other because, on the one hand, it is difficult to bring our expectations to fruition, and on the other, we are able to change our past experiences when our expectations vary, for instance, after sharing our memories with others. In Koselleck's words: expectations have a "retrospective effect." Either way, the *Neuzeit* accentuates the distance between both of them: "Thus, experience of the past and expectation of the future were no longer in correspondence, but were progressively divided up. Pragmatic prognosis of a possible future became a long-term expectation of a new future" (KOSELLECK, 2004, p. 268).

Chignola (2003) criticizes this pair of categories. His reproach to Koselleck could be summed up as follows: how could two modern categories have metahistorical validity?<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the possibility that a historically determined variable can be applied to such dissimilar realities, such as those present in the Stone Age and in our times, is

<sup>13</sup> Lucien Hölscher (1999) reconstructs how the future was only discovered in early Modernity. From a historical-conceptual perspective, he studies the history of the future by exploring representations in different social aspects.

<sup>14</sup> Chignola affirms: "Koselleck, on the other hand, necessarily attributes foundational value to general metahistorical categories (the rigorously formalized and, therefore, modern categories of historical time: for example, past, present, future, or experience and expectation) that only allow us to establish the historical framework within which different historical-semantic contexts are contained. Even those who are unaware of the philosophical-historical (eschatological-Christian, first, and, later, modern) distinction between experience and expectation should, in turn, remain constitutively impermeable to such interpretative instances" (CHIGNOLA, 2003, p. 54, our translation).

paradoxical. According to this perspective, the very contingency of historical science, which forges modern concepts, is not turned against itself. But, since publication of the aforementioned study about the relationship between space and history, we know that metahistorical categories can become historical categories. Because of their capacity to change their own status, we could think of their validity as hypothetical. Both topographical topoi, *Horizont* and *Raum*, have explicit spatial connotations that conjugate history and place in a prolific way.

One of the benefits of the concept of *Erwartungshorizont* (horizon of expectations) is that it has a farther reach than simply collecting sources and making claims of objectivity. Insofar as we contemplate our projects, fears, and hopes by means of relics, the future has a predominant role because it intervenes in the present, announcing what is about to happen or even what will not happen but remains desired, *das Noch-Nicht*, *das nicht Erfahrene*, *das nur Erschließbare* (the not-yet, the non-experienced, what is to be revealed). This last idea enables us to reconstruct a truncated past, recovering the forces at play in the *Kampfbegriff* (concept of combat). As Walter Benjamin (1982) affirms in his theses on history, the memory of the oppressed is threatened by so-called civilization. The possibility of redemption lies in an act of remembrance, based on the premise of a hope that comes from the past. At any rate, it would be interesting to identify, on a first level, what can take place in a specific context, based on the potentialities at hand. And, on a second level, thanks to an expansion of this field, we could explore the projection of new features that are capable of modifying the configuration of existing possibilities; that is, to expand the limits of calculation that function as a guiding reference. The legibility of this horizon that opens up a variety of possibilities can never be ascertained in advance. It depends upon the objectives that inform our actions as a hypothetical guide; for instance, the idea of progress presupposed by many theories and political approaches that changed the perspective of new generations concerning the doctrine of *perfectio*. The advances that science would bring, as well as the promises of social improvement, determined optimistic scenarios for many societies. Later, this brought with it the experience of failure, not only because many expectations could not be met but also because terrible and unexpected events took place.

In relation to the concept of *Utopie*, although it is developed laterally in *Vergangene Zukunft*, a more rigorous framework can be found in an article of *Zeitschichten*, entitled “*Die Verzeitlichung der Utopie*” (KOSELLECK, 2002c, p. 131-149). Characterizing the temporalization of utopia presupposes, following Koselleck, finding either a negative or a positive valuation, which most of the time has little in common with the meaning attributed to it by Thomas More. The positive valuation points to the changes that

can be proposed at a given time, whereas the negative evokes the image of a fool who irresponsibly claims transformations disconnected from reality. Koselleck treats the preeminence of space in the conceptualization of utopia first by means of Mercier. An early text from Carl Schmitt entitled *Die Buribunke* is the second example that Koselleck touches upon. In this parody, all citizens must write down every detail of their lives in order to make it real and create history. Koselleck provides two examples: one satiric, the other idealistic. Both share the important role of writing, and they teach us that history does not always match our future imagination.

A traveler can experience a faraway society as advanced and developed when compared to their own and can bring back to their homeland this new and improved way of life. In German, there is an etymological familiarity between *fahren* (to go) and *erfahren* (to experience) which is certainly — though not explicitly — being played down here. Koselleck observes a transformation in the nature of this term over time. At first, it is meant to refer to a non-spatiality but then points to a temporality that incorporates the future as an area of concern. This happens throughout stories such as Mercier's futuristic novel, *L'An 2440*, published in 1770. At that time, mankind had explored the planet almost in its entirety:

Therefore, the authors of 'nowheres' had for some time already switched over to the moon or the stars or descended below the surface of the earth. Once recognized, the spatial possibilities for establishing a utopia on our earth's finite surface were exhausted. The utopian spaces had been surpassed by experience. The best solution for escaping this growing pressure of experience was simple, but it had to be found. If utopia was no longer to be discovered or established on our present-day earth nor in the divine world beyond, it had to be shifted into the future (KOSELLECK, 2002b, p. 86).

Schmitt's essay shows a mockery of the excessive hopes of progress of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including the human confidence in the possibility of "mastering" history just by writing. The fictional future shows the triumph of Buribunkology at the end of history. In that society, all citizens must write a mandatory diary that is sent for public inspection, under the motto of "I think, therefore I am; I speak, therefore I am; I write therefore I am; I publish therefore I am." The constant recording of life determines the present existence of humans and their future memory: not a single person will be forgotten, thanks to their archival tradition. They constantly create new narratives and seek survival beyond their biological lives. They preserve the past: "This is the moment of birth; that is to say, the birth of the past, for the present is but the midwife

who delivers the lived historical past from the dark womb of the future” (KOSELLECK, 2002, p. 94). This is how Koselleck concludes that these beings participate in the collective consciousness of history. The story of Ferker, their first leader, which showed his search for immortality, although he kept secrets omitted in his diary, works as an example of the exonerated of “being historized”. No history can remain if no writing is delivered. But memory is not the only objective of this organization; it also seeks political surveillance. The system prevents resistance to collective writings and discards those who are not capable of writing:

Through this negative utopia readers are situated before an alternative that they are scarcely capable of perceiving in the tradition of the historical and progressive view of the world. Death and love remain the only counter authorities that could have prevented progress from ending in a racially legitimized two-class state where the ruling class is composed of writing-conscious ideologues and the other class is drowned in the nothingness of intellectual oblivion (KOSELLECK, 2002, p. 98).

The enormous difference between temporal and spatial levels is that the former, unlike the latter, is susceptible to verification through experience: “The reality of the future exists only as the product of the writer while the controllable ground of the present is abandoned” (KOSELLECK, 2002b, p. 87). As a result, the development of humanity on the surface of the earth seemed like something that could eventually be achieved over time, which, in this sense, could only provide progress. At any rate, it is a feasible future for its own protagonists, whose destiny is not sealed by an extra-mundane factor; and this is why, in the realm of future plans, feasible scenarios tend to be incorporated. The concept of “utopia” acquires a general political character that refers to possible political projects and the likelihood of turning them into reality. A recently secularized society affected by the crisis of modernity placed the future at the center of its agenda: inasmuch as the future was conceived as the result of actions by human agents, these were intended to program it, not in a technical sense, but politically, through associations and clubs. The task of becoming the architects of our own future challenged humanity to occupy their reflections with the forcefulness of projects, as opposed to mere ramblings. As a model and a promise, utopia operates as a critique of the state of affairs. It can also amount to pointless criticism, or a critique that is projected as a realizable future.

## Conclusions

Throughout this paper, we have clearly shown that Koselleck's concern with the relationship between history and space was limited, but that this included the use of categories that incorporate the spatial dimension. All of these are a part of his work on the construction of a theory of historical times, and on occasion they strictly align with his historical-conceptual project. Olson's remark on a preeminence of time over space neglects the fact that the spatial question is incorporated into his historical reflections. Furthermore, the use of spatial terms in a metaphorical sense does not necessarily make them less important: an examination of the concepts proposed here shows a ubiquity of the spatial factor in the theory of historical times.

We considered these five spatial terms that Koselleck migrates to the field of history, illustrating both historical facticity and its potentiality, namely *Zeitschichten*, *Erfahrungsraum* (space of experience), *Standortbindung*, *Erwartungshorizont* (horizon of expectations), and *Utopie* (utopia). In all cases, we can see that his theoretical approach shows a strong rejection of homogenous time, of uniform composition, leading to the division and disaggregation of events into three temporal dimensions. Such characterization would imply that all elements shaping the past rely on a sort of homologation not of content, but of form. Indeed, the concepts just described highlight discontinuity as a key to understanding historical events. In the first case, the layers of time show a contemporaneity of the non-contemporary and provide us with the possibility of capturing different rhythms within and across periods. In the second and third case, the horizon of expectations and the utopia go beyond what actually takes place and opens up the historian's vision to what a society can imagine and desire, leaving behind facticity as such. In the fourth case, the space of experience indicates indexes of limited spaces that determine what may occur. And finally, the perspective of a certain place presupposes fluctuations in the point of view and the relevance of partisanship when we describe the past. Consequently, there seems to be an ambiguity in the relationship that these concepts hold with linearity. Stated more concisely: all these members of the family of topographical concepts remain indebted to chronological orders.

Since it is impossible to conceive of historical phenomena as not spatially located, Koselleck establishes no primacy between time and space. So, these five core notions show that divisions within time, such as periods, are definitely useful but not a sufficient condition to describe the theory of historical times. It is said, traditionally, that history outlines temporal orders by classifying past events and understanding time as a homogeneous continuum. What Koselleck proposes is a *Theorie des geschichtlichen Zeiten*, enabling us to think of multiple layers of times with various rhythms, starting points, and durations. Epoch means, after all, a space of time that helps us measure

and conceive of time. Thanks to this concept, we can think of the past, present, and future as flexible dimensions.

However, fissures predominate both in the reconstruction of particular events and in the creation of narratives about them: this is evident in *historia res gestae* and in *historia rerum gestarum*. So, this conflicting nature puts us in a difficult predicament if we choose to base our historicity upon chronology as a way of ordering and stabilizing events. Nevertheless, what we find in Koselleck is not exactly an anti-chronology opposed to all kinds of sequential records based on dates. An extreme measure against periodization would not allow us to count on epochal references to determinate changes across history. Koselleck constantly maintains the relevance of differences of periods. In fact, the beginning of modernity that he investigates and situates in the 18<sup>th</sup> century stands on the foundations of his conceptual history. If we want to use a terminology that maintains a certain distance from chronology, that is opposed to a chronology, we may consider other alternatives. The coexistence of different rhythms and periodizations mobilizes not a space where all events would equally tend to fit but potential conflict in history. As a consequence, a relativization of temporal units — and of the borders between the beginnings and endings of epochs in favor of multiple constellations that order events without fixing them — becomes evident. Spatial concepts, according to this theory of historical times, are based upon an ambivalent interplay oscillating between the periodization and non-periodization of events.

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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### ACADEMIC BIOGRAPHY

Lucila Svampa is researcher at National Council of Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET), in the Gino Germani Institute and lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Buenos Aires. She holds a Ph.D. in Social Sciences (University of Buenos Aires) and she has completed a

postdoc in Philosophy (FFyL-UBA). She was a DAAD scholar (2014 and 2017) and she is now an Alexander von Humboldt fellow at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv. She published articles in *Res Publica*, *Cuadernos de Filosofía* and *Daimon*, among other journals. She also published *La historia en disputa. Memoria, olvido y usos del pasado* (Prometeo, 2016) and the compilation *¿Qué hay de política en la filosofía? Ocho ensayos* (Colección CLACSO-IIGG, 2018).

#### CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS

Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani, Oficina 1, Uriburu 950, 6to. Piso, Ciudad de Buenos Aires, C1114AAD, Argentina.

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