**1st Vilnius Convention abstracts**

**Shahzad Bashir**

*Time as a Cultivated Garden: Thinking with a Motif in Persian Historiography*

Authors writing in Persian in Iran and Central and South Asia sometimes describe their historical representations as gardens of time. Readers are invited to roam around these narrativised timespaces, seeing historical scenarios as tableaux for existential contemplation. I will explore how this motif may help us thematise the situation today, when history looms large everywhere even as neither the past nor the future holds redemptive value.

**Ewa Domańska**

*Anticipatory Humanities: Are There Any Historical Futures Beyond Survival?*

This talk is based on the assumption that in the age of planetary crisis and political instability, the humanities should cultivate anticipatory capacities such as foresight, imagination, temporal pluralism, and critical hope - capacities that enhance resilience and strengthen the ability to adapt. It develops the concept of the anticipatory humanities, understood as a transdisciplinary field that foregrounds the role of historical knowledge in preparing for uncertain futures. Drawing from my project on anticipatory history, I explore how the analysis of various objects placed in a time capsule created at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań in 2019 reveals multiple temporalities embedded in these artifacts and helps to conceptualize the notion of temporal pluralism. In doing so, I align historical thinking with planetary and cosmic scales, advocating for a form of anticipatory historical consciousness. This intervention reimagines history not merely as a critical resource for building infrastructures for the future capable of mediating between different times, ontologies, and ways of being.

**Blake Ewing**

*Can We Be Left Behind in Directionless Times?*

Explanations of the rise of populism have regularly alighted on the concept of the ‘left behind’. This term refers loosely to communities and groups of voters who are (or feel) displaced by processes of events. Pessimistic about the future, they yearn for returning to a past – imagined or otherwise – or to assume a more dominant position to reap the rewards of historical change. However, this concept – used either politically or reflectively – relies on an agreed process to be left behind from. Does it lose its potency if the trajectory of history itself seems increasingly directionless? What happens to its political appeal when it loses all orientation – when those ‘left behind’ become (or join) the lost?

**Javier Fernández-Sebastián**

*Directionless Times and other Metaphors in an Age of Uncertainty*

In an age of uncertainty such as ours, particularly in Europe and the Americas, images and metaphors alluding to fragmentation, chaos and the absence of a sense of collective destiny proliferate. In my presentation I will show some examples of these metaphors, taken in part from the visual arts, social networks and digital media, which point to the lack of direction, temporal disorientation and drift that grips our societies. I will maintain that iconology and tropology can be useful in detecting certain features of the temporality characteristic of the turbulent times we are living through.

**François Hartog**

Towards a Cosmo-history

“Don't build on the good old days, but on the bad new ones” is a useful reminder from Walter Benjamin's Diary (1938).

If presentism is synonymous with temporal disorientation, our entry into the Anthropocene only redoubles this feeling of disorientation that confronts us with the temporalities of the Earth, exorbitant in relation to those of the “world.” How do we find our way through these heterogeneous yet intertwined temporalities? Until recently, the discipline of History has remained anchored solely in the times of the “world”, or has sought to come to terms with presentism. Is it not time for historians to turn towards a Cosmo-history leading to a Cosmopolitics, capable of making room for humans and non-humans?

**Ethan Kleinberg**

*The Vortex, the Constellation, and the Compass: History through Temporal Anarchy*

In this paper I attempt to answer the question of what history might look like if one assumes the premise of directionless times. I begin by arguing for a condition of temporal anarchy out of which understandings or logics of time are constructed. The dominant paradigm of historicist time characterized by a uniform and unidirectional understanding of time fused to chronology is but one such articulation. Unpacking three terms, the vortex, the constellation, and the compass, I will argue for alternative logics of time, or better of temporality, unfettered from the axiomatic supposition of unidirectionality and progress. My contention is that the events of the past are both more temporally dynamic and forceful than this paradigm allows and as such requires a mode of history attuned to this temporally anarchistic force. The past on this account is a Total Other but one that becomes available to us if we are attuned such that we can mediate it and make aspects available. The means to do so is by recognizing the vertiginous because directionless moments when the past becomes available in the present for the future.

**Iryna Klymenko**

*Beyond “Eastern Europe”? Rethinking European History in Times of Unfinished Pasts*

European history has long been shaped by nation-state narratives and a persistent East–West divide, rooted in imperial power structures and epistemic hierarchies. Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine has renewed attention to shared historical and historiographical experiences, prompting a reassessment of inherited conceptual frameworks. This talk interrogates the construct of "Eastern Europe" and its contemporary contestation through the lens of unfinished pasts and open-ended futures shaped by war and temporal disruption. It reconstructs current regional conceptions and explores how recurring patterns of rupture, repetition, and return unsettle dominant memory regimes, seeking for epistemological tools for understanding Europe’s complex historical entanglements.

**María Inés Mudrovcic**

*From Time-as-Noun to Time-as-Relation: A Shift in Metaphors, or in Ontology?*

This paper argues that replacing the timeline metaphor with a relational web in historiography demands more than a change in representation—it requires an ontological shift. Building on critiques of homogeneous, substantive conceptions of time, it highlights the persistence of anthropocentrism, colonial epistemologies, and digital regimes that impose synchronization and capture. Drawing on relational ontologies and Indigenous temporal struggles against state-imposed temporalities in Brazil, it proposes *convivencia* as an ethical and political bridge of ontological friction between incommensurable worlds which coexist without synthesis. In dialogue with relational ontologies and critiques from the Global South, it suggests that the task ahead is to dislocate the grammar of history itself and inhabit the tensions it renders visible.

**Alexandra Paulin-Booth**

*About Time: Political Temporalities and Contested Futures Between ‘Left’ and ‘Right’*

How have different political movements situated themselves in relation to time? At first glance, it may seem that left-leaning movements have usually focused their efforts on the future, seeking to forge ahead with revolutionary or reformist change; movements associated with the right, on the other hand, have viewed the past as their battleground, attempting to shape particular historical narratives or recreate certain elements of the past. This paper takes late 19th-century France as its starting point, but also draws on mid-twentieth-century decolonial movements as well as evidence from contemporary France, the UK, and the USA. The paper takes the long view to try to understand the extent to which this model is historically valid and, more pressingly, whether it still holds today. In the disruptive political realignments taking place today, it seems more difficult than ever to develop new visions of the future.

**Eglė Rindzevičiūtė**

*Orchestrating the Future: Towards the Intellectual and Transnational History of Scientific Prediction*

In this talk I will reflect on the epistemological opportunities and pitfalls of writing the intellectual history of future-oriented scientific knowledge in the late modern period. Drawing on key cases of international transfers and translations of anticipatory knowledge and predictive technologies during the Cold War, I will examine the difficulties of decentring the history of modernity by going beyond linear East-West transfer. This difficulty, I argue, is further reinforced by the political orientation of historiographies of small and medium countries which consider the history of science and technology and the history of industrialisation as marginal to their nationally-oriented frameworks. We need, therefore, key epistemological innovations and discipline reorientations to develop rigorous and comprehensive history frameworks to better understand societal and political production of the futures.

**Priya Satia**

*The Moral Hazard of Linear Time, Or, Recovery of Connection as Historical Means and End*

In this talk, Prof. Satia will briefly trace the destructive impact of history's emergence as a branch of moral philosophy in the modern period and then examine the twentieth-century reinvention of the discipline as a site for redeeming what was lost through its linear conception of liberatory time. The talk will conclude with reflections on alternative conceptions of time and human purpose that anticolonial thinkers put forward in order to restore ethical clarity to the exercise of historical agency.

**Balázs Trencsényi**

*The Politics of Synchronism and East Central European Political Modernity*

The presentation draws on my comparative analysis of modern East Central European crisis discourses, and their interplay with various projects of synchronization from the second half of the 19th century onwards. These discourses were rooted in various regimes of temporality and spatiality. For East Central European intellectuals, crisis could mean the cementing of their subordinate position in view of the Western socio-economic structures, but also a possibility to overcome the chronotope of “belatedness” that has characterized the region’s auto- and hetero-stereotyping since the Enlightenment. From this perspective, the presentation seeks to localize the variety of spatio-temporal tropes employed by representatives of different political and intellectual subcultures in the region to thematize the problem of synchronicity and asynchronicity and how it resonated with different ideological streams (from liberalism to fascism), how it got entangled with the narratives of a comprehensive crisis of European civilization, and what are the repercussions of these debates in the 21st century on the direction(lessness) of history.