

## **The Nation's Two Bodies: Aesthetic Figurations of the Political**

**Luxembourg, 13th-16th June 2012**

**Deadline: 30th September 2011.**

»Nationalism is today outdated and at the same time of current interest«, Theodor W. Adorno wrote in 1959. This ambivalent diagnosis is based on the thesis that although the nation state has become obsolete as a model of identification, a mythical force has nevertheless still to be attributed to it. The conference addresses the issue of this ambivalence of the national idea in the present day. It will comprehensively analyse the »Aesthetic figurations of the political« both systematically and also historically, i.e. including all media and all artistic forms. The starting point for our conference is the assumption that political life did not originally arise out of state institutions, but primarily from imaginations and aesthetic productions of a totality of the collective. From the perspective of the cultural studies it is reasoned that the possibility of national organisations was given through diverse modes of aesthetic representation or »imagined communities« (Benedict Anderson). Although the state has institutional political embodiments (e.g. through police bodies), a common unity and wholeness is only provided by a second, imaginary instance: a »second body«. Whether and to what extent Kantorowicz's theory of »the king's two bodies« is accordingly also valid for the political body as a whole (and historically also remains valid beyond the epoch of Absolutism), will be discussed within the scope of our conference. In modern times, the figurations of the political are more complex in at least three ways than the model of the embodiment of the state in the figure of the king, described by Kantorowicz. First, the principle of the sovereignty of the people reduces the importance of the person of the ruler for the aesthetic representation of the political: if the sovereign is no longer an absolutist prince, the unity of the political must no longer be represented through the body of a monarch. Second, the mass media situation has changed since the start of the 19th century: the ancien regime of the absolutist princes controlled a relatively small range of medial representations (primarily paintings, statues or theatrical productions), but numerous »new« media have been contributing to the formation of figurations of the political since the 19th century.

Third, the nation state is no longer the sole political actor on the stage since the process of European unification and »globalization«.

Papers on (aspects of) the following areas of inquiry are particularly welcome:

1. Fictions/imaginings. Aesthetic figurations of the political from the perspective of aesthetic analyses: What link is there between aesthetic objects (texts or pictures) and the political imaginings? What connection between »Aesthetics« and »Politics« is recognisable in aesthetic figurations of the political?

2. Communities/nations. Aesthetic figurations of the political from the perspective of political philosophy: Which aesthetic figurations of the political are visible today in view of the much discussed

problem of the nation state in the 20th century (during the course of »globalization«)? How do political philosophies of »community« behave vis-à-vis the principle of the nation state? Is there something such as aesthetic figurations of Europe?

3. Visibilities/media. Aesthetic figurations of the political from the perspective of media theory: How do technological-media conditions - from photographic media to film, other media representations to

»social networks« in the Internet - structure the aesthetic figurations of the political? Which individual media-aesthetic aspects can be linked with this? Which concrete media practices contribute to this?

Organisational aspects:

The international and interdisciplinary conference »Aesthetic Figurations of the Political« is being organized by the research group with the same name, »ATTRACT«, at the University of Luxembourg. A large number of well-known scholars are invited to the conference; these include Roberto Esposito, Rodolphe Gasché, Boris Groys, Werner Hamacher, Hermann Kappelhoff, Susanne Lüdemann und Eric Santner.

All costs for travel, meals and accommodation will be paid by University of Luxembourg.

The results of the conference will be published in three anthologies by the publishing house Turia + Kant (Vienna/Berlin). A selection of the contributions will also be translated into English and published by a US American publishing house.

For more information about the conference and our research group, please refer to our homepage: [www.figurationen.lu](http://www.figurationen.lu)

Please send an abstract (maximum 500 words), together with a short bio-bibliographical profile to [info@figurationen.lu](mailto:info@figurationen.lu) before 30<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

Conference Venue:

Centre Culturel de Rencontre Abbaye de Neumünster / Kultur- und Begegnungszentrum Abtei Neumünster 28, rue Münster L-2160 Luxembourg

Conference Organizers: Dr. Martin Doll, Dr. Oliver Kohns, Prof. Dr. Georg Mein (University of Luxemburg)

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In cooperation with: Institut Pierre Werner, Institut culturel européen au Centre Culturel de Rencontre Abbaye de Neumünster

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