

Noncontemporaneity, Asynchronicity and Divided Memories

Bernhard Giesen

ABSTRACT. Three different paradigms of temporal inconsistency are distinguished. 'Noncontemporaneity' refers to the local and temporal coexistence of phenomena that are related to different historical periods or different stages of social evolution. This paradigm presupposes an encompassing unity of society and disregards the normality of hybridization and syncretism in real societies. The paradigm of 'asynchronicity' centres the differences of pace and rhythms between different social systems or institutional domains. Here the indispensability of temporal differences for the perception of time and change is frequently ignored. The third model is called 'divided memories'. Divided memories are generated by different experiential backgrounds with respect to the perception of core events. Generations are presented as communities of experience that differ with respect to this experiential background. Most important in this respect are triumphant or traumatic experiences that devalue the experience of the parental generation and provide a frame for the collective identity of a generation. The authenticity of these experiences is rooted in corporal presence and bodily rituals. Recently public debates tend to construct generational differences in an inflationary manner. This public construction of generations contrasts to the blurring of generational differences on a microsocial level. **KEY WORDS** • asynchronicity • collective memory • generations • noncontemporaneity

Introduction

Sometimes central concepts resist translation. The Hegelian notion of *Aufhebung* is a famous case in point. In a similar way the German concept of

Ungleichzeitigkeit des Gleichzeitigen coined by Ernst Bloch in the 1930s can only be transferred into English by splitting its meaning into several English terms. Consequently we will distinguish between noncontemporaneity, asynchronicity and divided memories in order to cope with this semantic manifold. On the most general level the concept refers to temporal inconsistency that is contrasted to an orderly and balanced relationship between events or states of reality. It should be noted that – contrary to common assumptions – we will not assume this temporal inconsistency to be an extraordinary and puzzling state that requires complex explanations. Instead we will argue that it is the normal relationship between processes in loosely coupled systems. It is simultaneity or synchronicity that can be viewed as the puzzling case that should draw the attention of sociologists and indeed – in a certain respect – it has been one of the core issues of classical sociology. Therefore the sociological perspective on our phenomenon should be tilted: instead of viewing temporal inconsistency as a substantial relationship between events or part of a social system we should explore the selective attention to certain forms of it.

The following remarks will outline the background assumptions or models that foster and increase our sensitivity for *Ungleichzeitigkeit*. The first part will present three of these models or conceptions. They represent fundamentally different perspectives on key notions of temporality and change. Noncontemporaneity for example conceives of time in terms of historical periodization, asynchronicity centres pace and speed lags and assumes a relativistic model of time, whereas divided memories focus on temporal horizons, i.e. founding events. The second part will deal with the issue of simultaneity and explore the conditions that produce the unity of the collective memory of a generation.

1. Noncontemporaneity

When we talk about noncontemporaneity in everyday contexts we refer frequently to the simultaneity or the coexistence of phenomena that we relate to different historical periods or attribute to different evolutionary stages (Bloch, 1964; Ogburn, 1964; Koselleck, 2000). Modes of action and objects that we trace back to past societies, that we can interpret only by referring to cultural frames of the past occur in the present time and are juxtaposed to other modes of action that we consider to be part of contemporary culture. We plant vegetables in our home garden and, shortly afterwards, go to a fast food restaurant. We, as tourists, observe a Beduin riding a camel in close vicinity to an oil derrik. We surf in the internet and get our wine at a local winery the owner of which we have known for years etc. The event that catches our attention as being extraordinary is constituted by the presence of seemingly heterogeneous or dissynchronous phenomena in one local site. We take notice of this event because we assume inadvertently an

encompassing unity of society in which the meaning of every phenomenon can be translated into or be related to every other phenomenon in a consistent way. There should be no breaches and ruptures in the web of meaning in society, there should be a clear architecture of symbols in a society and meaningless phenomena should be removed – no dirt in a clean room, no garbage on the table of culture. Social and cultural change occurs – according to this perspective – only as an encompassing shift that devalues and dissolves the institutions, techniques and cultural patterns of the past entirely. They should survive – like garbage – only in enclosed places and in nonserious modes of existence. Special frames like theatre, history, museum, tourism, play, decoration and sport produce this bracketed, nonserious mode of existence and thus allow for the persistence of the past. Only if this mediation between phenomena from different historical epochs by special symbolic and institutional frames fails, only if nothing separates clearly the phenomena of the past from the phenomena of the present, only then do we perceive their coexistence as noncontemporaneity.

Such a conception of noncontemporaneity is thoroughly modernist and historicist – hybridization of different historical cultures, a mixture of different periods on an equal footing is regarded to be improper. But it is not only the modernist insistence on the purity of style, that does not allow for mixing past and present, but also the modern idea of a radical opposition between past and future, the present being a turning point between a past that will and should never return and a future that is seen as the field of creativity, surprise, invention and innovation (Koselleck, 2000). The future should not be contaminated by the past. Even if we inverse the relationship between past and future and idealize a golden past in contrast to a catastrophic future, the radical opposition, tension and incommensurability between both temporal horizons remains.

Although quite common, this perspective is too simple to account for the postmodern bricolage of cultures. In particular it is unable to respond to the acceptance of multiculturalism and hybridization as the normal situation. If we reverse the perspective and consider the coexistence of historically heterogeneous phenomena to be the normal situation we can account for translations, bricolage, syncretism, but we lose our phenomenon – Bloch's *Ungleichzeitigkeit des Gleichzeitigen* as a special phenomenon becomes invisible.

2. Asynchronicity

The concept of asynchronicity differs from the model of noncontemporaneity as outlined above. It is related to the attempt to consider time not as a transhistorical and transsocial presupposition of varying social processes but it reverses this relationship and conceives of time as a varying product of social construction (Luhmann, 1990; Giesen, 1992). Variations of temporal structure, of pace and

rhythm here are determined by differences between institutional orders or social systems. In this perspective social reality appears as a relatively enduring and continuous order and this order is reproduced by a sequence of events. The pace, rhythm or speed of this sequence are patterned by the institutional order, by the logic of the system or by the structure of the field and varies in accordance with it. Market exchange has a faster pace than barter exchange, exchange systems enable and even require a faster sequence of events than political constitutions, we change our weekend acquaintances more frequently than our marriage partners, the periphery of an economic system is lagged with respect to the centre, the temporal perspective of financial markets is shorter than the temporal perspective of banking houses, and most importantly perhaps, social systems that measure time by clocks are in contrast with systems that structure their time according to natural events (we will meet at sunset) etc.

The most common perspective on asynchronicity centres problems of coordination that result from mutual interdependence and tight coupling between systems. This coordination can result from a central control agency like a government that causes the same developments and structural changes in different parts of a society. Increasing the power of the central control agency is presented as the remedy against asynchronicity. But coordination can also result from fast responses to environmental changes and mutual adaptation between several subsystems or fields without any control by a central authority. Here the asynchronicity results from the relatively slow, delayed and retarded response of systems like traditional bureaucracies as compared to fast systems like markets. Speeding up, accelerating, catching up the lead of the fast systems are, consequently, the solutions suggested by the paradigm of progress. But also the opposite can be recommended. Since Burkhardt and Seume a movement of resistance against acceleration is part of the general criticism against modernity.

These differences of pace and speed appear to be a problem of coordination between systems, but they are constitutive for the perception of social time. Speed, rapidity or slowness of temporal sequences can only be perceived in relation to the speed of the position of the observer – as the famous image of the Einstein train suggests. Without differences of speed time we would risk to losing our phenomenon – time. The perception of, for example, accelerated change hints at a reference that nobody wants to accelerate – human maturation and ageing. Instead of accelerating the process of ageing we try to inhibit it and to extend the human life span, we increase the time in our lives spent on education and learning etc. Hence it is not only the increasing speed of social systems, but also the slowing down of maturation and ageing that amounts to the perception of acceleration.

The model of asynchronicity conceives of time as sequential reproduction, while the question of origin or of beginning is disregarded. This also affects the meaning of events. In the modernist or historicist paradigm the event was con-

stituted by the juxtaposition of historically inconsistent elements at a particular moment in a particular locality. In the paradigm of asynchronous speed, events are generated by the logic of reproduction. The meaning of these events can only be understood by reference to the order or system, and order and system can, in their turn, only be reproduced and turned into tangible reality by events. Both are not inconsistent, but interrelated. Inconsistency only comes in when two sequences of events are not coordinated, which points to the core assumption of the model of asynchronicity: Society is seen as a system of interrelated subsystems that, ideally, should be tightly coupled to each other, and that should exchange information accurately and in time. Asynchronicity becomes perceptible only as a deviation from this ideal, as a lack of centralized control and coordination or as a slowing down of mutual adaptation. Social life does not, however, operate according to the functionalist schedule – it operates by delays and omissions, fuzzy relationships and vague orientations, accelerations and flexibilities and it can avoid breakdowns only because it is not tightly but loosely coupled. As fuzzy and vague as social reality may be, it is, nevertheless, imagined as proceeding orderly and neatly, as coordinated and accurate. Thus the observation of asynchronicity results from the attempt to admit to the imperfection of social reality in relation to the imagined ideal order.

A slightly different model of speed differences is at the core of the distinction between different levels, layers or strata of historical change as presented by Fernand Braudel (1984) or Reinhart Koselleck (2000). As Braudel distinguishes *l'histoire événementielle* from the *longue durée* of cultural change, Koselleck separates the level of individual persons and their perception of events from generational experiences and from long-term structural or institutional changes. Traditionally the speed of change decreases if we turn from individual biographies to generations and from generations to institutional or cultural systems. But in modern societies this relationship can be seen as reversed. Here the pace of innovation in cultural systems, e.g. in scientific research or in markets for goods and commodities can exceed the relatively slow speed of individual learning: The scientific education learned at university is thought to be valid for a lifetime but is outdated soon, the succession of new car models outpaces the customers readiness to exchange their old car against a new one etc. If the rate of innovation is faster than the ability of individual persons to respond to it or to cope with it then change is experienced as vertigo, as noise, as bewildering. If, in contrast, the turnover of generations does not correspond to a change of institutional or cultural patterns, then the new generation tends to regard society as too conservative or even repressive. This asynchronicity, too, refers, however, less to actual differences of speed between individual biographies and institutional or cultural structures than to the visibility of these differences for individual persons. Differences of speed are omnipresent, but most of them escape our attention and perception – processes of innovation, growth and change pass

unnoticed until they are rendered visible by special media, by figures and records or until the process of change occurs immediately in front of our eyes and ears, in our everyday life. The analysis of asynchronicity amounts therefore to exploring the visibility of a particular difference of speed or – in other words – it amounts to the social construction of speed differences.

3. Divided Memories

The third paradigm will shift this perspective on temporality in two respects: Unlike many approaches to the social construction of simultaneity or disynchronicity this paradigm will not focus on different fields, systems or institutions as pacemakers of temporal rhythms, but, instead, will assume social collectivities to be the carriers of different temporal horizons and collective memories. In a common attempt to remember the past, social groups can and frequently will encounter differences of temporal horizon or differences in focusing special events as turning points of history. Events that have a key importance for the collective memory of one group may be ignored or omitted in the collective memory of others and even if both agree to attribute crucial importance to a particular event they still can greatly diverge in their interpretation of it. What is remembered as a victory by one party, is a bitter defeat for another. Civil wars result, therefore, in divided memories. Viewed from this perspective our theme appears as a barrier of understanding or of translation between different collective memories within one society (Halbwachs, 1992; Assmann, 1999; Giesen, 1999, 2001). Here again we have to emphasize that differences between collective memories are as normal as differences between individual memories are. In this respect splits and divisions on the horizon of memory should not surprise us. This normality of divided memories becomes even more salient if we consider the collective memory of generations. For example, the concept of nation or social class 'generation' is a thoroughly temporalized concept (Mannheim, 1928/1968; Matthes, 1985; Bude, 2000). Assuming the normality of divided memories the question is rather: Under which conditions does this division become a problem and – above all – why do different individuals merge their memories to form a collective memory of a generation?

The second respect in which the memory paradigm differs from the paradigms of noncontemporaneity or asynchronicity concerns the relationship between order or structure on the one hand and event on the other. Asynchronicity conceives of events as the mere intersections in a temporal sequence, as temporal instantiations of an order, a structure or a rule. Such events would be having lunch at a regular time or watching the TV news at the same time. The memory paradigm sees events in a radically different way: It does not conceive of events as following a rule or as something that is produced

by a system, an institutional order, a mechanism and that, hence, can be predicted on the basis of accurate knowledge about this system, order or mechanism. Instead, it considers events as unexpected, extraordinary and even unexplainable. Events occur suddenly, they breach the rule, stop the sequence and disrupt the common order of things – the world is no longer the same after an event occurs, our plans have to be revised, our stories have to be rearranged, our identities have to be reshaped (Koselleck, 2000). On the most demanding level events occur as the epiphany of the sacred or the demonic in our everyday life – they result in a crisis of our commonsensical notions, they disrupt the web of meaning, they devalue the traditional experience and set the stage for a new history. The attack on the Twin Towers or the breakdown of the Berlin Wall are such events that have left a traumatic imprint on collective memory or have opened up the historical horizon in a triumphant turn.

4. Triumph and Trauma

Such traumatic or triumphant events are at the core of the collective memory of generations. The unity of a generation and of its collective memory is constructed by a fundamental common experience that devalues the experience of the previous generation (Koselleck, 2000). These experiences provide a common horizon of meaning to which, however, outsiders have only limited access. The others cannot understand that they even should not be able to understand. Experiences that create the collective identity of a generation result from victorious or lost wars, from persecution and imprisonment, from expulsion and displacement, from bombing raids and living in devastated areas, from participation in social, political or cultural movements. These events provide the backbone of collective memory because and insofar as they are related to corporal experiences and can be remembered as such (Merleau-Ponty, 1966; Rittner and Kamper, 1976; Meyer-Drawe, 1984).

In order to become the core of collective memory an experience of trauma or triumph does not have to be absolutely unique or unprecedented, but the individuals concerned have to see it that way. This tendency is fostered by the special situation of adolescents. In between the normality of their parental families and the normality of their future life as adults, adolescents encounter the extraordinary, unfamiliar and even strange in a situation of uprootedness, of transition and of social disembeddedness (Mannheim, 1928/1968). They cope with this uncertainty by participating in a movement in the literal or indirect sense (Reulecke, 1995). They change residences and know that they will not stay forever, they travel with peers, they join a movement that thrusts to change society or culture, they live in a mood of no more and not yet. This social situation of 'being on the move' is reflected by increased readiness to get rid of the

past and to discover something new and unheard of – even if from the perspective of the outside observer the newly discovered may appear as a repetition of some well known patterns. The transitoriness of adolescence favours oblivion and supports the fascination by the future as the field of possible events (Koselleck, 2000). The devaluation of tradition and the invention of the new construct the collective identity of a generation.

5. Authenticity and Corporeality

The collective self-consciousness of a generation depends less on the actual uniqueness of an event than on its believability and authenticity (Trilling, 1974). The collective experience should not fit into well known patterns, it has to be taken as incomparable, immediate and authentic. This authentication is usually achieved by relating it to personal, in particular to corporal, experience. The experience that is inscribed into the body is immediate and cannot be denied or alienated – the scars testify the fight better than words (Scarry 1987; Hahn, 1993). This emphasis on corporeality responds to the modern risk of imitation and fluidification. While traditional societies related collective identity mostly to primordial attributes that resist any attempt to planned alteration and change, modern societies face the programmatic challenge of dissolving social boundaries and fluidifying social communication. If however, everything can be traded, communicated, questioned and acquired, this dissolution can also touch those fundamentals that should remain unalienable and immutable property. The antidotes against this risk of modernity are corporeality and experience. In referring to corporal experience generations construct boundaries and barriers against the risk of being understood by outsiders in a society in which neither class and descent nor locality can provide these boundaries any more – at least not in a legitimate way.

A first and basic mode of corporeal experience is provided by presence at the site of the event – one's own eyes have seen the extraordinary event, the ears have heard it, the skin has felt it. A strong collective identity of a generation – in particular of its male part (Reulecke, 2001) – is based on the actual or imagined presence at the local site of the extraordinary event – one was there on the barricade or under gunfire, in camps or in treks of refugees, at the opening of the Berlin Wall or at the collapse of the Twin Towers, at Verdun or Berlin, New York, Seattle or Gorleben – at least one could have been present if sheer coincidence would not have prevented this (Mannheim, 1928/1968).

Even the indirect presence mediated by the press, radio or TV can generate this corporeal presence although in a weakened form. Most of us remember the moment when we heard the news about the defeat of Germany in 1945, the fall of Saigon in 1974, the opening of the Berlin Wall in 1989 or the attack on the

Twin Towers and this moment relates our corporeal presence to the historical event.

Corporeal experiences are frequently reinforced by rituals and remembered by collective rituals (Turner, 1969; Van Gennep, 1977; Bell, 1997; Giesen, 1999). These rituals like common marching, singing, dancing, praying, shouting or being silent coordinate the movements of the participants. Those who are present and participate are mirrored in the body of others, they experience immediately a corporeal similarity, they are merged into a collective identity.

This corporeal experience is enhanced by the presence of a common enemy who threatens the integrity of one's own body and those of one's fellow generation. The presence of the enemy, the awareness of danger, the perception of risk generates the collective identity of a generation – at least of its male part. It may be enforced from outside or longed for by ourselves – the experience of danger for our bodies produces an authentic sense of extraordinariness that is hard to surpass.

This holds true in particular for a generation experiencing its collective self. The extraordinary experience of danger and force melts away the trust in the parental protection and in the superiority of the older generation – a new state of nature opens up, the old rules are no longer valid, the experiences of the older generation are worthless, the new generations can no longer consider themselves to be just a continuation of the old ones. They step forward out of the shadow of the old generations and take a stand on their own (Buford, 1991). At the same time the new generation in being endangered by an enemy encounters for the first time its own mortality – they are no longer children. Children can imagine death only as the death of others, but not as the inescapable limitation of their own lives.

This moment of being touched by death results in the strongest experience of corporeality – it can however, in the moment of experience, not yet be mentally integrated and symbolically represented – only later on, in retrospection, in remembering we become aware of the moment of ultimate danger. The mind cannot cope with the shocking moment of possible death, it has to ignore it in the moment when it happens, instead of renarrating it, the individual as well as the collective mind has to silence it for some time (Caruth, 1996a, 1996b; Alexander et al., 2003). The collectively shared experience of endangered life can thus engender a collective trauma, that is at first enclosed into the body of its carriers and that can be spoken out only later on from a distance, at first only among those who had similar experiences, later, when the eyewitnesses are fading away, it is also told to outsiders. This traumatic memory, the experience of utmost danger, the moment when the parents protection failed, represents the ultimate horizon of reference for the collective identity of generations.

The collective trauma results – like no other experience – in a barrier of understanding between generations. This barrier exists as long as the eye-

witnesses are still alive – the succeeding generation cannot understand because they could not participate in the expulsion and trekking, in the war at the eastern front, in the trenches of Verdun etc. Thus the collective trauma of a generation constitutes a distinctive historical horizon (Koselleck, 2000), a founding event of history that for the lifespan of this generation is shared neither by the preceding nor the succeeding generation. Only later on when the generation is fading away and when the trauma is spoken out, when, what has been the unalienable trauma before, is turned into an object of historical reconstruction then the boundary of understanding fades away and the founding event is integrated into a sequence of historical narration – but this shift from generational memory to history, is, in most cases, also the time when the generation as a living community disappears (J. Assmann, 1999; A. Assmann, 2002).

But the experience of one's own mortality is only one horizon or reference for the construction of a strong collective identity of a generation. Its counterpart is the experience of an unexpected victory against the adversity of the world, the bold attempt that was taken against the advice of the parents and that remained victorious and successful, the experience of luck and triumph. Here the collective identity of a generation is not based on the experience of mortality and danger, but on the collective certainty of being born (Fanon, 1968; Jennings, 1999; Sorel, 1999; Giesen, 2004). This reference to birth does not extend to the bodily birth of its individual members but to their birth as an autonomous collectivity that disregarded the plea of their parents to be cautious, that took the risk of doing the unreasonable, the extraordinary, the unprecedented. Participation in new social movements, revolutions and struggles for autonomy results, if successful, in such a feeling of being reborn again, of finding your true self and of standing on your own. The war of liberation against the Napoleonic Occupation 1815, the German Revolution 1848 or the student's movement of 1968 provided these experiences of collective heroism and triumph.

6. From Centre to Periphery

However, neither the collective memory of triumph nor that of trauma will last forever. New generations enter the stage and they, in their turn, devalue the experiences of the previous ones. The new generations try to get at a distance from the world of adults, who, according to them, have lost their sensitivities for the new and extraordinary experience. What the adult generation considered to be an extraordinary experience is now turned into the pathetic news of yesterday. Not only the generation of Germans who rushed enthusiastically into the First World War or the generation who voted Hitler into power, but also the Generation of 1968, who had mocked the experiences of the Post-war Generation, had to face such a reinterpretation of their own constitutive experi-

ences. Those who considered themselves to be heroes – although defeated ones – were despised by the follow up generations as perpetrators, cowards or victims, those who took themselves for revolutionaries devoted to the common good and the progress of history, were, afterwards, discovered as terrorists or as irresponsible extremists, as opportunists at best, those who, by indulging in sex, drugs and Rock ‘n’ Roll, believed to redeem the world from ‘repression’, were, later on, seen as bland sexists or reckless hedonists.

It is these axial shifts in the interpretation of the collective identity that cause an acerbated feeling of divided memories on the part of the older generations. They are not only unable to tell their stories to the younger ones, but are frowned upon as outdated, as people from yesterday, are denied a chance to present their own memories in public, are removed from the core group that embodies the nation at its best. Their own generational memories do not fit into the public construction of national identity anymore. Finally they perceive themselves as a generation that made fatal mistakes and became guilty. Retreat from the fore of public attention and silence with respect to their past hint at the move from the centre to the periphery of society (Bude, 1997).

The younger generations, in contrast, experience divided memories, if the members of the older generations still hold the centre of political and social power, and defend this position against the younger ones who strive to replace them. They consequently attack the power holders by scandalizing their past, by revealing misdeeds and crimes that had been carefully concealed or ignored, in short, by questioning the legitimacy of the older generation’s authority. Thus, what could have coexisted as the inevitable difference of generational memories is turned into a public debate about the collective memory of the encompassing community: The nation. As far as key events of the collective memory of a generation are also key events in a national narrative, the public debate about the past risks to centre and aggravate a difference that is neither surprising nor avoidable: The divided memories of generations.

7. Blurring the Difference

The boundaries between generations can be contested and conflicted, but they can also be publicly declared in a generally accepted way and they can be imagined by literature and media. The conflict between classes has been increasingly replaced by the turnover of generations as the prime mover of history. This temporalization of social structure is reflected by a new public sensitivity for generational differences. Sociologists, public intellectuals and lifestyle specialists are discovering and proclaiming ever new generations: The sceptical generation is followed by the critical generation, the generation of dropouts gives way to the generation of computer kids, to the generation of 98,

to the generation Golf, to the generation Berlin etc. Slight shifts of lifestyle are blown up to fundamental differences, a responsibility for the fate of future generations is proclaimed as a new ethical reference of politics, the contract between the generations advances to a key issue of retirement plans and social politics, 'generation' becomes the mythical core term of commercials and lifestyle. This inflationary use of the concept hints at a general acceptance of the boundaries between generations. But this general acceptance of boundaries risks to devalue them as barriers of understanding. Generational differences tend to relate less to unalienable corporal experiences than to lifestyles that can be appropriated by almost everybody regardless of age. This shift from corporal experiences to lifestyle subculture and fashion as the markers of a generation is not entirely new. Historical generations that were based on a traumatic or triumphant devaluation of the parental experience were frequently followed by subcultural generations that could not refer to a special historical project or to an extraordinary experience. Instead the subcultural generations tried to draw a boundary from the previous generation by adopting a style that deviated strongly from the parental taste and that hence could resist imitation at least for some time. These markers of boundary were frequently bodily attributes that in the course of time had to be pushed to the extreme in order to remain immune against being understood and appropriated by the adult generation: Haircuts had to be very long or very short, piercings and tattoos provide immutable marks, drugs and dirt keep the regular order at a distance. But even these desperate attempts to raise barriers against understanding and imitation were frequently overcome by the parental thrust to level the differences between the generations. Today parents strive to be accepted by their children as their best friends, shun authoritarian behaviour and refuse to recognize the boundary set by their children. And there are hints that they are succeeding. An increasing number of young adults in western societies see their parents as their best friends and still reside at the parental home – not for necessity but for convenience and comfort. They do not care for the staging of subcultural differences and generational boundaries, but use the advantages of 'Hotel Mama'. Thus, in a countermove to the public staging and invention of new generations, the actual barriers surrounding subcultural generations tend to be levelled. The insurmountable cleavage separating the collective memory of generations is replaced again by boundaries surrounding the family as the safe haven in a heartless world. The oedipal struggle between the generations seems to be fading out. At the end it seems sufficient to wear jeans that show the belly in a way the mother would not dare to do.

Again, it is the bodily attribute that marks the difference. This blurring of the generational difference on the social level may respond to the above mentioned inflationary use of the generational metaphor on the public level or it may also hint at the unexpected rise of strong new macrostructural cleavages and con-

flicts that take centre stage and that, in a compensatory turn, lend new salience to the family as a haven in a heartless world.

Yet, as harmonious and cosy this new coexistence of different generations may be, it does not cease the turnover between generations as such. Like other generations also the generation 'Hotel Mama' demarcates its identity in contrast to the previous one. It does so, in a paradoxical turn, by devaluating the very generational project of their parents who, as adolescents, insisted on divided memories and barriers of understanding. Their future children, however, could well return to resistance and rebellion.

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BERNHARD GIESEN is Professor of Sociology at the University of Konstanz and recurrent visiting professor at Yale University. Among his visiting positions during the last years are UCLA, Stanford, University of Chicago, European University Institute Florence, New York University. His latest books are *Intellectuals and the German Nation* (1998), *European Citizenship* (2001, with Klaus Eder), *Cultural Trauma* (2003), *Triumph and Trauma* (2004) and *The Performative Turn in the Social Sciences* (2004). ADDRESS: Universität Konstanz, Fachbereich Geschichte und Soziologie, Universitätsstr. 10, Postfach 5560, D-78464 Konstanz. [email: Bernhard.Giesen@uni-konstanz.de]