

Call for Papers: “*Junges Forum*” Interdisciplinary Conference

**Figures and Perspectives on the Mass and the Individual
in Capitalist Modernity (19th-21st century)**

26th-27th February 2021, Marc Bloch Center, Berlin.

This *Junges Forum* Conference proposes to explore the relevance and appropriateness of literary, political and conceptual figures that oppose “mass” and individual. The aim of this event is to gather young researchers especially in the areas of sociology, literature, history, philosophy, psychology and politics in order to discuss this issue from multiple perspectives.

At least since the Arab Spring (2011), the figures of the mass, the multitude or even the “people” have acquired a new relevance. Either through popular gatherings and rallies on the streets, or via protests using social media, we are attending a multiplicity of instances in which the political fate of a country or region is seriously influenced by a great number of people. On the one hand, the concept of the mass implies, from its emergence at the beginnings of capitalist modernity, a reactionary conception of collective action, where individual rationality is eclipsed by an irrational behaviour. On the other, the mass has also sustained the hope of revolutionary struggles, especially throughout the 20th century. How is it possible then to use this notion without making it collapse into a complete condemnation of collective action or into an acritical celebration of the crowd? From there on, the relationship between mass and individual can be addressed in many fashions: Are there any specific ways for the mass to organize itself as a political subject? What are means whereby artworks represent and transform the linkage between mass and individual? What are the mutations undergone by the mass *qua* object of the social sciences? How does capitalist modernity affect the moral and psychic autonomy of individuals?

Papers could consider the following topics, without having to be restricted to them:

People, Mass, Multitude, and State

The aim here is to update our understanding about the relationship between mass and politics. It will be thus necessary to reflect on the linkages between the notions of mass, class, people and specific forms of government. By the same token, we invite to explore different ways in which the multitude organizes itself beyond, or apart from, government regimes. Can we say that there exists an autonomous self-organizing power pertaining to the mass? If so, what are the ways in which the multitude may use it in order to resist already constituted political powers?

Artistic Singularity and Anonymous Mass

The industrial revolution, the flourishing of consumerism and urbanization provoked fundamental changes in artistic activity. Feelings of fascination or horror for the mass are present in thousands of artworks. These representations may express a reactionary and/or emancipatory aspect of the mass, in both the artworks themselves and their reception by the public. Then, what are the possible relationships between representation and historical phenomena? How do writers, painters, filmmakers may help us to better understand the notion of the mass? How do they (re)present it?

Mass Formation and the Fall of the Individual

How has the category of the individual changed given the atomized life in the big cities, and how can it be related to the concept of “mass” today? Do war and revolution produce new relationships between the individual and the collective? Is it possible to recognize specific psychological aspects to overcome the authoritarian deviations that sometimes take over collective projects? Or, on the contrary, is psychology actually an inappropriate perspective to tackle these issues?

Revolutionary, Fascist and Government Masses

The emergence of the mass in modernity was always accompanied by a certain representational ambiguity. Thus the endless way in which its role has been presented, as the subject of history and the object of social sciences. How did the representation of the mass evolve? How do we “become” mass at the epoch of singularities and social media? We welcome historical and sociological approaches that focus on specific events or moments to discover the figures of the mass and the individual that emerge from them.

Comparative studies are welcome, using either synchronic or diachronic perspectives. Papers could also be meta-theoretical, thus establishing how concepts such as “mass,” “crowd,” “mob” and/or “individual” are used by different disciplines.

Papers (for a 30-minute intervention) may be proposed by **master students, doctoral and postdoctoral scholars**. They may be delivered in **French, German and English**. Please send a **300-word** abstract of your proposed paper and a short bio-note by **31 October 2020** to: jfmasseindividu@gmail.com.

Travel expenses, as well as accommodation costs for the entire duration of the conference, will be covered by the Marc Bloch Center. Travel expenses from other continents may be reimbursed up to a certain amount.

Organisation: Yasmin Afshar (Humboldt-Universität/Centre Marc Bloch), Nicolas Lema (Université Paris 1), Sara Minelli (Universität Kiel/Centre Marc Bloch), Ernesto Ruiz-Eldredge (Université de Poitiers/Goethe-Universität Frankfurt).

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