The production of knowledge about the past as well as the future is frequently informed by speculative rehearsals of various possible scenarios. However, while the playful consideration of multiple unrealized possibilities is an operative principle of counterfactual historiography, it can always also render service to revisionism and outright denial. The latter, in particular, seeks to mobilize and coopt ideas of the open-endedness of interpretative processes in order to draw into question or delay the established consensus regarding the reality, in particular, of genocidal events. On the other hand, the future-oriented fields of risk management and crisis governance deploy speculation and possibility not in order to develop utopian visions, but in order to secure a more integrated control of future calamities. Simulation technology and scenario modelling make a point of integrating errors and anomalies in order to enhance response capacities vis-à-vis a constantly shifting horizon of uncertainty. Meanwhile, constructivist approaches propose pragmatic, experimental, or fabulatory spaces in order to generate and realize alternative futures. The conference Possibility Matters brings together different disciplinary perspectives and individual case studies involving speculation and possibility, fact and factuality, the real and reality, provoking a systematic confrontation of the two divergent temporal horizons of contested histories and uncertain futures.

Organized by Alice von Bieberstein and Aurélia Kalisky

An ICI Event in collaboration with the University of Cambridge, the Center for Literary and Cultural Research Berlin (ZFL), and with generous support of Fritz Thyssen Foundation.
Friday 4 December 2015

9:30 MORNING COFFEE

10:00 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:
Alice von Bieberstein and Aurélia Kalisky

10:15 – 12:30 Thresholds of Time (Chair: Arnd Wedemeyer)
Janet Roitman
Anti-Crisis
Aurélia Kalisky
Normal Men Don’t Know That Everything Is Possible:
On the Law of Evidence
Alain Denault
The Denial of Massive Crime Using the Obfuscation of Legal and Financial Technicalities

Discussion and Q&A

12:30 – 14:00 LUNCH BREAK

14:00 – 16:15 THE (UNFULFILLED) PROMISE OF CLOSURE (Chair: Rosa Barotsi)
Başak Ertür
On Closure: The Judge and the Historian Revisited
Alice von Bieberstein
No Virtue in Erring on This Side of Doubt:
Denial of the Armenian Genocide
Maria José de Abreu
The Invasion of the Martians: Radio Drama, Panic and the Third Secret of Fatima

Discussion and Q&A

16:15 – 16:45 COFFEE BREAK

16:45 – 19:00 THE PROMISE OF SCIENCE AND ITS OTHER(S) (Chair: Maria José de Abreu)
James Faubion
From Possibility to Plausibility: On the Epistemics of Scenario Planning
Carlo Caduff
Pandemic Possibilities
Cori Hayden
Pharmaceutical Equivalences, Commodity Dreams

Discussion and Q&A

Saturday 5 December 2015

9:30 MORNING COFFEE

10:00 – 12:30 AESTHETICS OF ALTER(N)ITY (Chair: Banu Karaca)
Ralph Buchenhorst
Generation of Evidence vs. Negation of Evidence: History and Future of the Representation of Genocides Based on Shoah Remembrance
Charles Hirschkind
Reflections from Granada on the Place of Islam in Europe
Matthias Schwartz
Alternative Histories of Fascination:
The Case of East European Popular Fiction

Discussion and Q&A

12:30 – 14:00 LUNCH BREAK

14:00 – 15:30 ENACTING POSSIBLE REALITIES (Chair: Preciosa de Joya)
Aline Wiame
Ecologizing Thought:
Latour’s Theatre of Negotiations and Speculative (Pre)Enactments
Katrin Solhdju
When Effects are the Criteria of Truth: Pragmatism and History

Discussion and Q&A

15:30 – 16:00 COFFEE BREAK

16:00 – 17:30 POTENTIALITY OF EVIDENTIARY TRUTH (Chair: James Burton)
Erna Rijsdijk
Does a Poststructuralist Ethics of Researching War Lead us to Fiction?
Sheila Sheikh
Performing the Politics of Memory:
Grupa Spomenik, the Bosnian Genocide and the Articulation of Justice

Discussion and Q&A