

Abstract

Anarchist Terrorism in Late 19th Century Western Europe

My book project deals with the anarchist *attentats* in France, Italy, Spain, and Germany during the 1880s and 1890s. These were part of a global wave of bomb attacks and assassination attempts that had unprecedented impacts, notably due to the late 19th century's media revolution, and that has been described by the political scientist David Rapoport as the first wave of modern terrorism. Not only had they heavy consequences on politics and state policies – in terms of security, immigration and the repression of social movements – as well as the perception and further evolution of anarchism. They also led to intense public debates about political violence and the question of appropriate responses by the state. My project studies these reactions and debates, in which the border lines of legitimate politics were negotiated and redefined.

Methodologically, I adopt a comparative and transnational perspective and proceed by case studies. I regard terrorism as a communication strategy and pursue three objectives: I explore (1) the media and social communication on terrorist violence, and how these affected the political space; (2) the retroactive effects of the violent acts and debates on the anarchist movement, and (3) what role transnational processes played (as compared to national or local reference frameworks) and what their impact was.