

## Rethinking (Post)Conflict Societies and Subjectivities through Embodiment: Human Bodies of War (Panel 1)

*Wednesday 21 June 2023 15:00 (1h 30m)*

This first panel explores the production and productiveness of bodies and their parts within conflict and post-conflict regimes. Our exposure to violence as embodied beings has been studied from various perspectives, with our situation in regimes of life and death and constitutive vulnerability being well established. However, the agency of the body and flesh, and the experiences and sensations that surround and inhabit bodies as a consequence of war, have been widely overlooked in academic discussion. This panel focusses on agency of the body and its parts during and post-war, and how processes and practices of embodiment occur in relation to violence. Particularly, we interrogate how violence against bodies and their parts interacts with and interrupts processes of materialisation, and causes the production of new affective regimes which have wide-reaching social consequences.

Our bodies are always invested with markers of identity such as race, sex, and age, but reproduce and remake them in various ways. With recent stories of mass graves in Ukraine and Canada, conflict-driven starvation in Tigray and Myanmar, and constant accusations of 'improper' conflict behaviour and crimes against humanity driving media attention, it is impossible to ignore the body and embodiment as significant in how we understand violence, society, life, death, and the human. From the scars, wounds, and death that result from combat, we produce narratives which are always being negotiated both socially and - crucially - with the body itself. Exploring this through the medium of body mapping, truth and reconciliation, and the post-conflict visuality and practice of ex-combatants and veterans, this panel considers the importance of the performative body in social and individual identity production.

### **Thematic Introduction to the Panel Series:**

As Elaine Scarry famously argued, the primary mechanism of war is bodily violence. Our bodies themselves are integral in how we create typologies of violence, from 'war' to 'protest' to 'terrorism'. The effects of conflict go beyond the immediate violation of bodies, which post-violence continues to be politically productive within affective and materialist economies operating in radically restructured social spheres. These panels explore possibilities for rethinking war and conflict by considering the ways in which they are embodied experiences. Firstly, they consider how individual experiences of being embodied in and post-conflict relates to social identity, and how embodiment and identity are unstable and change over time. Secondly, the panels reflect on the social characteristics and production of bodies in relation to traumatic experiences. Thirdly, while human bodies are central to the practice of war, they exist within constellations of non-human bodies which play a significant role in producing understanding of conflict and society.

## **Membership**

**Track Classification:** Post-Structural Politics Working Group