

Rethinking (Post)Conflict Societies and Subjectivities through Embodiment: Bodies of Resistance (Panel 3)

Thursday 22 June 2023 15:00 (1h 30m)

While 'war' is constructed as a battle of like powers, and 'terrorism' is constructed as radical violence, resistance and occupation require a different understanding of violence. Resistance in particular produces differently performing and embodying bodies which materialise in diverse and competing ways. We aim to call attention to the many ways in which resistance fights are embodied in societies which are characterised by brutal police and military action as well as longer-term structures of oppression. People and groups involved in resistance have to embody the contradictions between being a whole human body and not being a human, between the violence of freedom and the violence of oppression, and between individual and group. The bodies of resistance members are vital in welding these contradictions and tensions into an understandable, relatable, and affective representation which can function both at a discursive and material level.

In this third panel, we aim to explore different types of practice relating to resistance and occupation, to highlight how bodies are produced and mobilised in specific ways both by oppressors and oppressed. Calling attention to the aims of the struggle, we address conflicts in Timor-Leste, Chile, Colombia, Congo, and Ireland, to examine embodied practices and the relation between bodies, representations, narratives, and resistance.

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.

Track Classification: Post-Structural Politics Working Group