

Rethinking (Post)Conflict Societies and Subjectivities Through Embodiment: Non-Human Bodies of War (Panel 2)

Thursday, 22 June 2023 10:45 (1h 30m)

While most understandings of war focus on the human, 'war' as a structure both disrupts the world in its corporeal being and further redefines how we understand the world and make it significant in our lives. Both material objects and technological systems underpin our understandings of 'human', 'world', and 'society' today, and all are remade through the practice of conflict and violence. As such, we need to explore how artifacts, objects, images, and technology are vital aspects of societies and how they impact conflict, conflict resolution, and attempts to (re)build social cohesion. In this second panel, we aim to reconfigure the earlier discussion of 'human' bodies of war to focus on its non-human elements, so as to highlight how embodiment is not solely anthropocentric but rather our human embodiment requires our entanglement within material and virtual surroundings. Our production as humans is fundamentally reliant on the non-human, and the agency of the systems in which we find ourselves imbricated. Understanding the agency of these systems and positioning them as actors is something which is regularly overlooked by researchers, in both their focus and practice.

As such, this panel explores the non-human from a variety of perspectives, focussing on how different forms of space, sensation, and sensibility are produced. Engaging with the natural world, technology systems, weapons, statues, and infrastructural rhythms, we will illustrate how our surroundings produce a variety of embodied experiences which both are necessary for our humanity, but also transcend the human as the subject of analysis.

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