



Invitation to the 2nd RIIA International Conference:

“Bodies in the Americas: Subjectivities and Identification in Times of Polarization”

Erlangen, July 20th - 23rd and July 27th - 30th, 2020

RIIA’s second international conference seeks to encourage dialog and debate around three conceptual axes: Identities, Polarization, and Bodies. These proposed concepts seek to guide the conversation regarding increasing contemporary tensions and divisions that have become more evident across the continent. From Trump in the U.S.A. to Bolsonaro in Brazil, populist political and corporate leaders have capitalized diverse subjectivities and lived experiences, creating polarized, divisive, and even antagonistic feelings within different sectors of society. In turn, these fractures have deepened some of the pre-existing social, economic, and environmental inequalities.

1. **Subjectivities and identification:** Imposed or self-constructed, our identifications determine how we interact with our surroundings. On a smaller scale, these *identities* shape how we are perceived by others and how we interact with other subjects (either on an individual level or as part of a collective). On a larger scale, identities permeate the power relations and configure the reality(ies) in which we live. These power configurations have socio-political repercussions which become visible in public,



economic, domestic, and international policies when the discourse of Otherness plays a role in contrast to the imagined "Self".

2. **Polarizations:** The changes at the turn of the century in the Americas provided evidence of the contradictions of the socio-economical systems implemented in the 20th century. A discourse of international opening and collaboration came along with the greater integration of nation-states to international and transnational institutions. Around the world and in the Americas, this discourse has been changing as it faces the resurgence of social demands, growing skepticism towards globalization, and waves of social movements and civil disobedience condemning social inequality. Contemporary horizontal and leaderless grassroots movements intertwine and contrast with more traditional (un)organized civil society. This dynamism further contributes to polarization amongst political leaderships and social groups, as political and corporate elites seeking to maintain their power promote division by focusing on civil unrest, emphasizing issues of national security while criminalizing social dissent.

3. **Bodies:** As Judith Butler argues, materiality is an effect of power; therefore all these discourses also have repercussions on concrete human bodies. Regardless if it is the body of the citizen, the body of a community inside a nation, or the body of an imagined community (UN, political parties, etc.), different policies, ideologies and relations determine what a legible body is and how it might be intervened in, modified or even erased. As it has been argued in the latest stage of capitalism, bodies themselves (un)willingly became commodified, to the point where human lives become disposable while remaining profitable, as in the case of the prison-industrial complex and the whole illegal invasive migration discourse in the Mexico- USA border.



With all this in mind, the Interdisciplinary Research Network on the Americas (RIIA), in collaboration with BAYLAT and the Zentralinstitut für Regionalforschung, cordially invites you to take part in our international conference, where we will approach these topics from different disciplines (Political Science, International Relations, Human Rights, Literature and Cultural Studies, among others) while searching for a more interdisciplinary dialogue (hemispheric perspective).

