



## Invitation to the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference of RIIA: “Mobilities and Transformations: Perspectives from the Americas”

Erlangen, June, 26th - 28th, 2019

The transition from nomadic hunter-gatherers to a sedentary way of life was one of the major transformations for the first human society, the great Neolithic revolution. This supposed physical permanence has mainly been represented as lineal progress in most of the research (Deleuze and Guattari 2002). According to archeological studies this change allowed for an increase in the complexity of the structures and networks of interaction and cooperation between people and groups, a reorganization of kinship relations and the specialization of trades, occupations and craftsmanship.

However, this passage from mobility to permanence has not been stable nor rigid; instead it has been characterized by its gradualism, constituting itself as a process that is perpetuated until today. People, groups, ideas, identities and knowledge move, today more than ever, transforming themselves from these mobilities. The supposed sedentary lifestyle or immobility has been conceived in many representations as normal, but its complexity is evident when it is analyzed closely and contrasted with the processes of mobility; in all the dynamics of permanence there are processes of mobility and vice versa (Codesal 2016).

Mobility is a term that is intertwined with migration (Hannam, Sheller, Urry 2006). Both concepts share a Latin etymologic origin and although their meanings differ, their use is complementary nowadays, as they make reference to transit, movement, change and flows. To migrate, for people or things, is to change place; to move. But as studies of migration flows and processes have shown people, relations, ideas and identities are affected and transformed during the migration process. Whether or not they imply changes of place or residence, mobilities and permanence have socio-political effects.

In the Americas, the concept of “mobility” has been associated with the lexicon: “migrants,” “wetbacks,” “(il)legals,” “(i)regulars,” “expats,” “deportation,” “in transit,” “citizens of the world,” “migration flows” “chain migration” (Lara 2010), “migration networks;” these, among others, are words and schemes of meanings that go along with the ways that we see and understand the people and the things that move. The use or disuse of some of these words for the benefit of others is articulated in economic and political structures, class systems, and forms of differentiation, representation regimes and legal frameworks that express and justify meanings on different mobilities.

This and others expressions and challenges of mobilities, migrations and their transformations would be developed during this conference. Understanding that these occur within complex social, economic, political and cultural processes, this activity looks to explore and analyze them not only through an academic discussion, but also through artistic and literary representations and expressions. This way, we will introduce the concepts of (in)mobilities and transformations in the Americas to later explore them in more detail during the following sessions. On Thursday and Friday the panels will lead us to ponder and discuss different experiences of transformation and mobilities, the tensions of different categorization and constructions of wanted and unwanted human movement, problematics and repercussions that shifts in shared spaces, social actors and social roles bring to local communities, for example in the processes of transformation occurring in Colombia due to drug-trafficking, conflict/post-conflict and border crisis between nation-states. We will explore the power dynamics and their influence on territory and the mobility of people, as well as the effects on the media and the journalistic representation of migrants. We will also discuss processes of change, readjustments and movements across the political spectrum in South America and the U.S.A as the rise of populism brings challenges new trends in the development of public policies and their connection with migration regulations.

These issues and perspectives motivate the call we make to participate in the first conference of the Interdisciplinary Research Network on the Americas (RIIA). A network that was born precisely from mobilities, encounters, work and permanence of several researchers and students interested in the Americas at FAU in the Erlangen-Nürnberg area. This research network seeks to bring together graduate and doctoral students, alumni, researchers and professors working and doing research in the American continent as well to encourage, support and facilitate academic and professional exchange and cooperation between Germany and the Americas.

We hope you will join us,

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