



The Body in the
Social Sciences

NEWSLETTER, December, 2025

Editor: Somdatta Mukherjee

mukherjee.somdatta4@gmail.com

Board Committee

Dulce Filgueira de Almeida	President, ISA RC54
Mônica Mesquita	Vice-President, ISA RC54
Somdatta Mukherjee	Secretary, ISA RC54
Letícia R. T. Silva	Treasurer, ISA RC54
Craig Cook	Board Member, ISA RC54
Anabela Pereira	Board Member, ISA RC54
Victoria D'hers	Board Member, ISA RC54
Dietmar Wetzel	Board Member, ISA RC54

Words from the President

Dear friends and colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that, following the remarkable success of our participation in the 5th ISA Forum of Sociology, held at Mohammed V University in Rabat, Morocco, from 6 to 11 July 2025, and marked by 99 papers presented across 16 sessions, including 11 exclusive RC54 sessions and 5 joint sessions, we now announce our upcoming Mid-Term event, to be held in 2026.

Our Mid-Term event will take place in Brasília/Brazil, at the University of Brasília (UnB), one of the top ten higher education and research institutions in Brazil and widely respected throughout Latin America.

Our university, whose main campus is named after one of Brazil's most prominent anthropologists, Darcy Ribeiro, will be ready to welcome you in the second semester of 2026, specifically in October 2026. The estimated date of our event has not yet been finalized, but it will be announced soon during ISA webpage (events session) and will feature scholars of significant international standing.

We look forward to seeing you soon.

Dulce Filgueira de Almeida

President of RC 54

From the Vice-President's Desk

The BAHAMUT on the RC54
news about the beginning of our summer

...and why BAHAMUT?

Well, many of you, when you received our previous newsletter, may have seen Bahamut online as a dragon that exudes an "air" of power, frequently used in RPG game contexts and portrayed as a platinum dragon, the king of good dragons and patron of metallic dragons. However, the Bahamut evoked here belongs to the pre-Islamic figure shown here.

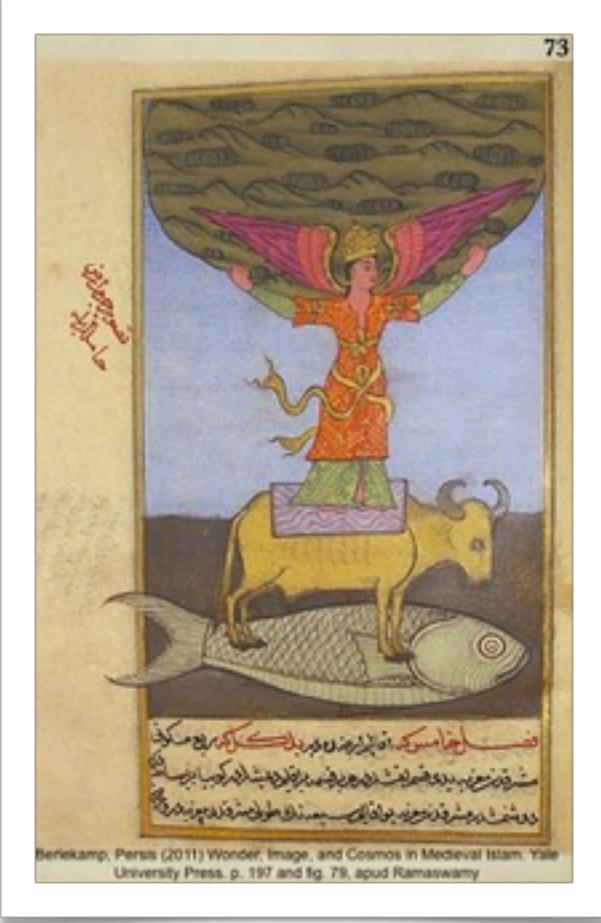
Bahamut, in this corporeal symbolism, is a gigantic fish that sustains Mother Earth and resides in an immense sea. It supports on its back the weight of a gigantic bull called Kujata, which is said to have four hundred eyes, four hundred noses, four hundred mouths, four hundred tongues, four hundred ears, and four hundred legs; a great number of appendages between each of which there is a distance of five hundred years of travel, allowing for an abstract ideation of the creature's size. Kujata, in turn, supports on his back a ruby upon which rests an angel, who, in turn, supports the seven hells, which support the Earth where, above it, are found the Seven Heavens.

The BAHAMUT body is associated with goodness, is a symbol of justice, protection, and leadership, and here carries the desire to conceive the ecology-body-emotion relationship.

Imbued with this sense of weaving, we add to the subtitle of this Summit a phrase that comes from a Persian proverb, "From the Moon to the Fish," seeking, with this choice, to contribute to the opening of plural spaces in which the encounter of cosmological diversity can reinforce an open, dialogical, and innovative science through the advancement of knowledge based on emic approaches that converge with different cosmogonies.

Here I invite each of you to think, with a deep breath, about your purpose in being and belonging to Research Committee 54... and I share with you what our adventure was like last summer.

As you know, prior to the 5th ISA Forum Sociology in Rabat, RC54 organized this BAHAMUT event, divided into two parts: a Pre-Event Meeting and a Summit – an open day. Both events



were developed in close collaboration with RC08, held days before the Rabat event and were supported by Ocean Literacy Observatory (OLO) – research group of [MARE Centre](#) and hosted at and [NOVA University Lisbon](#) – Department of Environmental Sciences and Engineering.



PRE-EVENT
5th FORUM ISA

KNOWING JUSTICE IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

AN INTERNATIONAL MEETING TO PROMOTE FUTURE STUDIES AROUND THE SOCIOCULTURAL, ECOLOGICAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND EMOTION AS A COMMON GROUND IN THE CURRENT HUMAN DISJUNCTIVE PROPOSITIONS.

AN AND ALL JUSTICE HAS IN THE ACTION OF THE ECOLOGICAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND EMOTION AS A SENSORIAL FACT THAT PRODUCES, REPRODUCES, REVALORIZES, AND REINFORCES THE HUMAN CONSTRUCTIONS INDISSOLUBLE FROM THE ECOLOGY IN WHICH IT LIVES.

NOVA University Lisbon
1st-3rd July 2025

OLO **MARE** **NOVA**

INTERNATIONAL EVENT
ISA RC54 WG08



INTERNATIONAL EVENT
ISA RC54 WG08

INTERNATIONAL EVENT
ISA RC54 WG08



INTERNATIONAL EVENT
ISA RC54 WG08

INTERNATIONAL EVENT
ISA RC54 WG08

PROGRAMME PRE-EVENT MEETING

2nd July

Place: NOVA SST – Caparica | Almada

10h00 – Grape Reception

10h15 – Collective Open Session: Mónica Mesquita

10h45 – Circular Symposium – RC54

D e p a r t a m e n t a l B u i l d i n g
R o o m 4 5 2
4 F l o o r

13h15 – Lunch on the Campus

14h30 – Presentation of the RC54 & WG08 Project 'State of Art': Mônica Mesquita

15h00 – Working Groups of RC54 & WG08 Project – 1st Edition

17h00 – Collective Presentation with Q&A

18h00 – Fringe Meeting at Trafaria

20h00 – Belém Dinner (LX Factory) (30 minutes walking)

PROGRAMME PRE-EVENT MEETING

3rd July

Place: Kailua – Fonte da Telha | Almada

14h00 – Lunch & Ocean

15h00 – Plenary: Marcelo Schlindwein (Keynote Speaker)

16h00 – Working Groups of RC54 & WG08 Project – 2nd Edition

17h00 – Artistic Mapping of OUR Project – First Final Draft

18h30 – Sacred Dance: Yara Couto (Facilitator)

19h00 – Collective Close Session: Dulce Filgueira

PROGRAMME PRE-EVENT MEETING

1st July

Place: Old Almada & Lisbon

17h00 – Fringe Meeting at Old Almada

19h00 – Lisbon Dinner (Praca do Comercio) (11 minutes walking)



Invited

Marcelo Schlindwein
Ana Paula
Daniel Oliveira
Francisco Silva
Fabricia Silva
Kelly Serschon
Claudia Lorenzoni





MENU KAILUA >>>

OLO
Ocean Literacy Observatory

MARE
marine and environmental sciences centre

NOVA
NOVA SCHOOL OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

In the first part - Pre-Event, the members of the RC54 and RC08 had a full three-day agenda. Dulce Figueira, Anabela Pereira, Yara Couto, Victoria D'fers, and I were able to present our research line, contextualize it within our current joint work, and chart future paths. This meeting, represented below by its program, achieved tangible results – the sparking of a project and the outline of a book – as well as intangible ones – the strengthening of our connection and the transmission of that connection to each of you. Ph.D. candidates from OLO as well as the invited speaker – Marcelo Schlindwein, bring to our days plural contexts opening our images and actions. The event also benefited from the participation in its organization of Fabrícia Silva, at the time a master's student at the Ocean Literacy Observatory; essential for collaboration in multiple ways, but especially to highlight the cultural agenda she has prepared to welcome the guests. I draw your attention to the program and



images here.

The second event – BAHAMUT Summit – was an open day to introduce our RC54 to new ideas, new possibilities, but above all, to new friends. This meeting was essential to consolidate research on the Body within the context of Natural Sciences, especially because it was the Department of Environmental Sciences and Engineering at NOVA University Lisbon that hosted it and created the conditions for it to have the effectiveness it did. This event was attended by approximately seventy people from various parts of the world and with different backgrounds. With a great honor, the Professor Tim Ingold was the main-speaker – a unique moment. Other deep moments were experienced as a round table full of intellectual encounters in present cultural diversity, five rooms full of oral presentations, and two interconnected moments, in which Sacred Circle Dance and the Somatic Practice of Recognition with the Earth were able to shape our experience. Beautiful to see and difficult to describe.

Again, I draw your attention to the program and images here.

In name of RC54, I share our gratitude for RC08, a complementary research group into ISA which have been the difference in our paths; for all participants in BAHAMUT event; for the host institutions [MARE Centre](#) and [NOVA-SST-DCEA](#); and for all staff in these both institutions that makes them possible.

With this news, I send a bem-haja to all of you, remembering that in 2027 we will have even more Bahamut moments and, without you, none of this would make sense.

Mônica Mesquita
05th December 2025



Stalwarts Speak

Erwan Diantéill

Learning with the Body: Brief Reflection on Embodied Ethnography in Afro-Cuban Religions

Erwan Diantéill, Paris Cité University, CANTHEL

This note gives me the opportunity to revisit a field experience from the early 1990s in Havana, working with practitioners of Afro-Cuban religions¹. In retrospect, I see the body as the true convergence point of field learning, gender hierarchies, relationships with the gods, and the organization of space. For me, this ethnography of Santería (and more broadly of Afro-Cuban religions) was not just an investigation into beliefs: it was also an experience of bodies in motion, marked, tired, traversed by the gods in rituals and initiations, put to the test in the city.

It took me a long time to understand that knowledge is constructed through physical engagement. Today, I cannot imagine an ethnographer who would be content to simply interview practitioners: they inevitably get caught up in the rhythms of ritual life, in traveling by bus or on foot, in the exhausting waits at the doors of the casas de santo. But at the time, I was immersed in a rather "intellectualist" epistemology, still steeped in structuralism and, more generally, in typically French rationalism. Now, the fieldwork seems to me much more like a series of situations in which the ethnographer's body is constantly tested—heat, fatigue, noise, promiscuity—and in which one learns, through the body, a locally relevant "way of being."

Here I find the "techniques of the body" analyzed by Marcel Mauss² very useful: walking, dressing, sitting, dancing are not natural gestures but socially regulated forms. From this perspective, I know that the ethnographer is obliged to adjust his attire (adopting white ritual clothing, for example), his manner of standing in the temple-house, whether or not to touch objects, and whether to eat certain foods offered to the orichas. Photographs of rituals—bodies

¹ See: Diantéill, Erwan, *Dioses y signos, Iniciación, escritura y adivinación en las religiones afrocubanas*, Madrid, Editorial de la Universidad Complutense, 2019, 465 p. (first edition in French: Paris, Editions de l'EHESS, 2000)

² See: Diantéill, Erwan (ed.), *Marcel Mauss, en théorie et en pratique. Anthropologie, sociologie, philosophie*. Paris, Editions Archives Karéline, 398 p.

bowing around an officiant, an initiate lying on the ground, participants crowded together in a courtyard—embody this work of adjustment for me: entering into religion, as an observer or as an initiate, means accepting that one's own body becomes a vehicle for rituals, gazes, and prescriptions.

In Afro-Cuban religions, the schematic opposition between body and soul, typical of Christianity, is replaced by a plurality of components: head, blood, breath, skin, each of which can be worked on ritually. The head occupies a central place: it is the "seat" of destiny and the privileged point of contact with the orisha. The rituals of shaving, washing, and anointing the head, the "rogaciones de cabeza," manifest this conception. The initiate, lying down or sitting, gives his head to the expert hands of the officiants, while liquids (water, herbs, sacrificial blood) circulate between the altar and the human skull. The body then becomes, in my view, a material interface where the "aché," the vital force of the gods, is deposited.

I was particularly struck by the postures and movements of possession. When an orisha "mounts" his horse, it is not a disembodied spirit that speaks, but a god who expresses himself through a precise body language: the way he walks, holds his arms, looks, dances, eats, or refuses certain foods. Each deity has a recognizable bodily style, which the faithful learn to read and imitate. Photographs of devotees advancing on their knees during a pilgrimage, or of a possessed person surrounded and supported by the other participants, show me that the relationship with the divine involves a drama of fatigue, pain, and physical jubilation.

Prayer, waiting for a sign, and preparing a sacrifice are done by paying attention to subtle sensations—shivers, heaviness in the head, dizziness—interpreted as signs of a divine presence. For me, religious experience no longer appears as a simple abstract belief; it becomes a way of inhabiting one's own body.

The body must also be understood as a crossroads between the individual and the community. Ritual movements—moving from one room to another within the same house or temple, visiting the homes of saints, pilgrimages to popular shrines—trace bodily trajectories that rearticulate urban space. At the street level, imagine the line of worshippers dressed in white, bodies pressed together in a courtyard, the crowd gathered around the drums—all configurations that transform lived space into a liturgical scene. The images of altars overflowing with objects, bottles,

statuettes, and sacrificed animals reveal other, non-human bodies involved in this topography: plaster bodies of saints, sacrificed animal bodies, blood, feathers, flesh and bones.

The altar, with its levels, its containers, its openings, is a kind of "body" of the gods: it is fed, washed, covered with fabrics and necklaces, and protected from prying eyes. Similarly, the house-temple can also be perceived as an organism traversed by circulations (of people, gifts, fluids) that recall the circulation of bodily fluids. I gradually came to understand that grasping Afro-Cuban religion meant learning to read an embodied geography, where each place has its own "sensibility," constructed by the repeated uses of bodies.

When I think of my first fieldwork as an ethnographer - I later conducted other studies in New Orleans³ and Porto-Novo in Benin⁴, with the same personal involvement - the body appears in turn as an instrument of knowledge (the body of the ethnographer immersed in the field), a support for social classification (sex, age, "race"), the seat of a divine presence (head, blood, trance movements), and a vector for the spatialization of the sacred (processions, temple houses, pilgrimages).

Far from being a mere backdrop, the body is the *strategic locus* where power, gender, kinship, and cosmology converge. In retrospect, I see Santeria as a religion in which one does not merely "believe" in gods: one carries them inside, dances with them *in their own bodies*, and takes them with one into the streets of the city. The anthropology of the body allows us to understand Santería not as a set of doctrines, but as a continuous practice of *incarnation*—of gods in humans, but also of social relationships in the most ordinary gestures of everyday life.

³ See : Diantéill, Erwan, *La Samaritaine Noire. Les églises spirituelles noires américaines de la Nouvelle-Orléans*, Paris, Editions de l'EHESS, 2006, 263 p.

⁴ See : Diantéill, Erwan, *L'oracle et le Temple. De la géomancie médiévale à l'Eglise de Fa (Nigeria, Bénin)*, Genève, Labor & Fides, 2024.

Publications of our members

• **Anabela DA CONCEIÇÃO PEREIRA**

Centro de Investigação e Estudos de Sociologia, Iscte – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa,
Avenida das Forças Armadas, 1649-026 LISBOA Portugal.

Global Health and Tropical Medicine, Associate Laboratory in Translation and Innovation
Towards Global Health, Instituto de Higiene e Medicina Tropical, Universidade Nova de Lisboa,
Rua da Junqueira n. 100, 1349-008 Lisbon, Portugal

- "Data, AI systems, and society: ethical dilemmas in the digital age", *AI & Ethics*, September, 2025. Vol. 5: 6007-6016. SpringerNature (<https://doi.org/10.1007/s43681-025-00834-1>).

• **Salvador VIDAL-ORTIZ**

Department of Sociology and El Instituto: Institute of Latina/o, Caribbean, and Latin American Studies, University of Connecticut, United States.

- Khan, Cristina and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz. 2025. "Racialized Embodiment and Eroticism." *Sex and Sexualities* 1(1): 25-31. (*Inaugural Issue*)
- Ritterbusch, Amy and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz. 2025. "Bodies that Repel: Trans Women Resisting Militarized Violence in Colombia." *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 31, 4: 396–403.
- Simonetto, Patricio and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz. 2025. "Lohana Berkins: A Latin American *Travesti* Theory of the Body." *Body & Society* 31, 3: 3-27.
- Vidal-Ortiz, Salvador. (Online First) "Death at the Border: Traces of Central American Migrant Trans Women's Lives." *Critical Sociology*.

Activities

- RC54, ISA in collaboration with WG08, ISA and OLO MARE NOVA SST organised an event – BAHAMUT SUMMIT, a Pre-Forum ISA event in Lisbon. This international event was open for the general public, with the possibility to participate through oral communication. The communication was made by OLO MARE NOVA SST (<https://www.fct.unl.pt/noticias/agenda/2025/05/cimeira-bahamut-da-lua-ao-peixe-desenredar-relacao-ecologia-corpo-emocao>).
- RC54 organised several sessions in the V ISA Forum, Sociology, held at Rabat, Morocco, from 6th to 11th July, 2025. Please visit the ISA website for more details on the sessions. Our programme coordinators were

Dulce FILGUEIRA DE ALMEIDA – dulce.filgueira@gmail.com

Monica MESQUITA – mmbm@fct.unl.pt

Our Vice-President says



The back to the future!

As announced at our last international events – the Bahamut Summit in Portugal and the 5th ISA Sociology Forum in Morocco – the RC54 Board has been developing the necessary conditions to launch a call for submissions of full papers presented at both events, within the framework of our Research Committee. In this regard, we are pleased to announce that the first call for papers will be launched in early January 2026 and, as stipulated in both calls for papers, you will have 3 months to submit your contributions.

Regarding contributions to BAHAMUT Submit, all participants – opening lectures, roundtables and oral presentations – will be invited to share their full paper for inclusion in an e-book. The final edition will be done at NOVA University Lisbon, where the activity took place, by the Ocean Literacy Observatory research group.

The contributions related to the 5th ISA Forum, from the oral sessions of our Research Committee and the Joint Sessions, will be divided into two categories: (1) an e-book containing the complete articles as proceedings of RC54 in Morocco, to be published by NOVA University Lisbon, and (2) a book to be published by a publisher. The articles received will be published in category (1) and some will be selected to belong to category (2). The selection criteria will be announced in the call for papers for the respective publications.

With this collection, we propose a current state-of-the-art overview of RC54 with the aim of getting to know ourselves and making ourselves known.

I conclude this pre-call for papers by expressing my deep appreciation for the collaboration and participation of everyone in these two international activities. It was excellent to get to know each other better and open our Research Committee to a new level, welcoming new partners and new research.

Mônica Mesquita

Vice-president

Follow us

WEBSITE	https://www.isa-sociology.org/en/research-networks/research-committees/ rc54-the-body-in-the-social-sciences/
LINKEDIN	https://www.linkedin.com/company/rc54-the-body-in-the-social-sciences- international-sociological-association-research-committee
BLUESKY	https://bsky.app/profile/rc54-isa.bsky.social
INSTAGRAM	https://www.instagram.com/isa.rc54
FACEBOOK	https://www.facebook.com/groups/186596218868733/

Editor's note

Dear Readers,

Welcome back to Editor's note!

We had a very efficacious pre-event, the BAHAMUT Summit organised by our Vice-President Mônica Mesquita, in Lisbon before the Rabat conference. And after a huge successful meeting in Rabat conference we have some new members in our group. On behalf of our RC54 I welcome them all!

In this edition we have the insightful write-up from eminent Sociologist and Anthropologist Erwan Diantell. I am sure that the engaging and thought provoking piece will add more to our understanding of bodies.

I convey my heartfelt gratitude to you all for staying with us, sharing your thoughts in the next exciting phase of the development for a modified and newer version of RC54, ISA. Your participation in RC54, ISA helps us to sustain each other throughout our academic journey. I suggest to use our RC54 platform generously to share initiatives and innovations, disseminate knowledge, communicate research findings and develop a well-connected group with diverse and inclusive array of members from different countries.

As I believe that it is always possible to do better next time please feel free to reach out at mukherjee.somdatta4@gmail.com with your positive criticism.

Wishing you a very happy year end and new year. Enjoy reading.

Somdatta Mukherjee

December 18th, 2025

Hyderabad, India.