

Relacionalidades | Relationalities

Relational approaches have increasingly sought to correct theoretical distortions and methodological shortcomings in the humanities and social sciences. As well know, these fields are still very much trapped in the illusion of a self-referred and self-sufficient human subject. Examples, such as relational sociology, relational concepts of culture, relational units of analysis illustrate efforts across various research fields to develop theoretical and methodological tools capable of capturing the interdependent and entangled nature of the ties that connect both the human beings among themselves and the human beings and the planet on which they live.

Relationalities have marked the Mecila Centre's research program since its beginning. The very name of the Centre, Conviviality-Inequality, refers to two relational concepts which, additionally, are in a relationship of co-constitution. Moreover, relationalities shape the process of knowledge production at the Centre, understood not as the isolated action of an abstract cognizing subject but as a dialogical and relational practice involving researchers from different generations, disciplines and regions as well as non-academic experts such as activists and artists.

Relationalities are also present, with different but complementary meanings, in each of Mecila's Research Areas (RA). In the RA (Hi)stories of Conviviality, relationalities guide the search for approaches that avoid treating historical epochs, national histories and their forms of aesthetic representation as closed containers. Instead, histories and stories are understood as bundles of relationships which, even if anchored locally or nationally, allude to and link multiple and diverse spaces and temporalities.

Similarly, in the RA Medialities of Conviviality, the understanding is that different mediums can only fulfil their function of communication and representation when interacting with other human and non-human actants in networks of interdependent objects and meanings.

The RA Politics of Conviviality conceives politics not as a space of negotiation between individual and collective subjects, constituted prior to politics, as rational choice approaches suggest. The opposite is true: political subjects first constitute themselves in the political arena as they, based on their relational positionalities, articulate their interests and alliances.

Relationalities is the annual theme guiding part of Mecila's research in 2025. We expect that the theme, both open in terms of the specific issues and constellations that can be addressed and well defined in terms of the epistemological stance it evokes, will encourage innovative empirical and theoretical investigations allowing Mecila to advance and expand its research program.