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Is IASA entering its second phase?

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IS IASA ENTERING ITS SECOND PHASE?

The IASA Third World Congress is quickly drawing near. By the time you are reading these lines, you are probably getting ready to pack your bags or are expressing your regret that you didn't register for the conference. Since its inception in 2000, IASA has developed into a flourishing association with a committed and continuously expanding membership base. The original intent expressed in the Bellagio Charter to provide an alternative to traditional, nation-based American Studies approaches has lost none of its pertinence and urgency. We are confident that the Third World Congress in Lisbon will consolidate and solidify the careful construction work undertaken during the last seven years.

The present issue of RIAS offers an exploration of the *loci amoeni* of American Studies in our global day and age. The question of place frequently pops up in debates aiming for the decentralization of established American Studies, also on the electronic pages of RIAS (see, most recently, the excellent issue on 'Cultural Modernity in the Americas' edited by Cyraina Johnson-Roullier). But it is seldom explicitly addressed in such very pragmatic terms: What does it entail for IASA to convene in this or that locale in terms of the production of knowledge about the Americas, the organization's (intended and/or real) audience, its receptivity towards hitherto underrepresented constituencies, and its resonance in the scholarly community at large? For an association which attempts to delocalize or even dislocate established conceptions of 'America' in all of its dimensions, it is of crucial importance that it allow itself to pinpoint and reflect upon its axiomatic locations—both real and symbolic—in the world.

To promote a discussion towards this end, we have asked Teresa Cid and Teresa F.A. Alves, in name of the Organizing Committee of the Lisbon Conference, to present their views on the significance of the 'White City' as a venue and meeting ground for a global exchange of ideas on the place of America in the world. In addition, we have countered their perspectives with those of the two former Executive Directors of IASA, Theo D'haen and Patrick Imbert. 'How Far is America From Here?' was the guiding theme of the Leyden Conference in 2003. Now, four years later, it is perhaps appropriate to ask: How far have we come since then? The Conference in Ottawa further developed the themes already outlined in Leyden and has opened up the multilingual potential of IASA, which is something we want to continue to explore using the possibilities offered by online publishing. Lisbon, with its heteronymous, Fernando Pessoa-like identity, seems to constitute the perfect site to continue the conversation.



Has International American Studies entered its 'second phase'? This seems to be the organizing idea behind the forum discussion presented in this issue. Anders Olsson from Mid Sweden University in Härnösand has brought together four theory-minded Americanists from Europe and the U.S.: Laura Bieger, Johannes Völz, Jeffrey Hole, and Frank Kelleter let their light shine on the current 'trans'-fever in our field and how it compares to similar developments in other areas, such as international relations and public administration. However different their perspectives, the four forum participants univocally agree that the transnational turn, if we really want to get a grip on it, demands much deeper reflection than it has hitherto received. The 'second phase', as Olsson puts it in his forum introduction, signals 'an opening up of participation and a loosening of boundaries'. What exactly does this mean for the—disciplinary, geographic, political, technological—place of our revisionist agenda? Is 'trans' a place? Should it be? Or does every move to localize it kill that which originally called it into being, that is, the incentive to get away from the established center of American Studies and lay bare its hidden disciplinary assumptions?

Not only IASA as a professional association seems to be finding its place. RIAS, too, has modest cause for celebration after rounding the cape—if you allow this nautical metaphor as a reference to one of the conference themes—of the first year of publication, a year of often frenetic but ultimately rewarding activity on the part of our editorial team. The journal, we are glad to say, is slowly shaking off its initial growing pains and is developing into a well-oiled mouthpiece for the IASA community. For the first four issues alone we have received contributions by scholars from Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Poland, Portugal, Turkey, Spain, the UK and the US. Our statistics reveal that we have on average about fifty visitors a day, by no means a bad score for a fledgling journal! I therefore want to use this opportunity to thank the authors, my editorial associates, the referees and proofreaders, and the IT and DTP advisors for their backstage work, their dedication and patience.

In the years ahead, our team will continue to reach out to scholars from underprivileged countries who can ill afford to buy paper journals. For those who, like me, still prefer the feel of a hard copy in their hands, we are envisioning the implementation of a Print on Demand Request module, which would allow us to combine the flexibility of online publishing with the advantage of having your issue printed, bound, and shipped to you at a relatively low cost. More and more authors are now submitting their texts directly via the RIAS web interface. One of the things we hope to accomplish in the near future is a fuller integration of our website with the IASA Web services and the Center for Thought Exchange. This means that users would need just one login to have access to a whole array of connected electronic facilities, including, for instance, easy-to-use communication tools for working groups.

Historically, the modern factory has its roots in the Portuguese trading posts or *feitoria* along the coasts of Africa, Asia, and the New World. We are all aware of the impact, both positive and negative, that such premodern factories had on the ways of local cultures and on our changing conceptions of space. In an age that is sometimes—

perhaps erroneously—described as postindustrial, there may be a growing need for what one could call *feitoria* of the mind, intellectual trading posts that bring people from diverse backgrounds together to debate the complex consequences of global interchange and the role of 'America' in all of this. Lisbon, with its multi-layered history, is an ideal location for setting up such a global encounter.

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