



CENTRO TEDESCO DI STUDI VENEZIANI
DEUTSCHES STUDIENZENTRUM IN VENEZIG

schweizer kulturstiftung

prhelvetia



Universität
Basel



SCHWEIZERISCHER NATIONALFONDS
ZUR FÖRDERUNG DER WISSENSCHAFTLICHEN FORSCHUNG

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Photo: Stefan Neuner

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NFS Bildkritik
NCCR Iconic Criticism

Infrastructure

The City as Negotiation between Nature and Power
International Conference
June 16–17, 2017

Infrastructure:

The City as Negotiation between Nature and Power

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Infrastructure is a matter of shared concern, a politics in physical form. Tunnels, canals, dams, bridges and fountains – types of infrastructure are easy to enumerate, but their collective effect is more difficult to circumscribe. Contemporary discussions of urbanism favour a consideration of cities as networked entities. However these entities exist against the backdrop of natural constraints that play more than a merely passive role in its fate. The network has its nodes, but its topology ultimately fails to dematerialise the landscape. The railway bridge, for instance, does not merely connect two locations, A to B (and back again), but is also a negotiation between nature and power, between the law and the weather, engineering and gravity. Furthermore, infrastructure almost invariably represents the outcome of a contest between collective interests and private property. Infrastructure presents the history of both the struggles and dependencies between nature and power, and between individuals and groups, in concrete form.

The study of infrastructure is, in multiple senses, central to urbanism. In terms of function, financing, and scale, infrastructure cannot be understood in terms of individual agency. The capital concentrations necessary for the creation of infrastructural projects are beyond the means of the private citizen. In the now classic example of the “Deichgenossenschaft,” Ferdinand Tönnies argued that the shared effort of the construction and maintenance

of dikes created the communal basis for Dutch society in the late middle ages. Tönnies argument can be read as a hydropolitical reflection on Hegel’s famous description of the tower of Babylon as a failed attempt at national unification: “it was built in common, and the aim and content of the work was at the same time the community of those who constructed it.” It is not merely that the community comes together to build infrastructure at its centre, but rather, that the building of infrastructure organises a community around it. At best, infrastructure is not merely a service provider, but becomes the basis for new kinds of social interdependency.

Concept:

Adam Jasper and Stefan Neuner

eikones NCCR Iconic Criticism in cooperation with
Deutsches Studienzentrum in Venedig and Pro Helvetia.

Deutsches Studienzentrum in Venedig
Centro Tedesco di Studi Veneziani
Palazzo Barbarigo della Terrazza
San Polo 2765/a Calle Corner, I-30125 Venezia

Palazzo Trevisan degli Ulivi
Campo S. Agnese – Dorsoduro 810, I-30123 Venezia

Program

Friday, June 16

57th International Art Exhibition, Gardini

10.30 Visit to the Swiss Pavilion with the artists Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler

Deutsches Studienzentrum in Venedig Palazzo Barbarigo della Terrazza

Chair: Adam Jasper

13.00 Welcome and Introduction

13.15 Hannah Baader:
Liquidity and the Infrastructures of Materiality. Ligozzi, Gaffuri and the Harbour of Livorno.

14.00 Milica Topalovic:
Earthworks: Rethinking Land in the Century of Flattening.

14.45 Coffee Break

15.15 Philip Ursprung and Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler:
A Conversation on the Film Installation “Flora” (2017)

16.00 Adrian Lahoud:
The Number of Hours

16.45 Maarten Delbeke:
The Final Cut. Water for Versailles Through Eure et Loir.

Excursion to Porto Marghera with architect Sandro Bisà

Saturday, June 17

Palazzo Trevisan degli Ulivi

Chair: Stefan Neuner

10.00 Sulgi Lie:
Infra/Structural Slapstick. On Comic Metonymies.

10.45 Antonia von Schöning:
Infrastructures and the Technical Imaginary.
The Parisian Underground in the 19th Century.

11.30 Coffee Break

12.00 Barbara Berger:
The Venetian Gasholders: Symbol of Progress or Decay?

12.45 Markus Krajewski:
Between Structure and Infrastructure. A Brief History
of the Flow Chart.