



CENTRO TEDESCO DI STUDI VENEZIANI  
DEUTSCHES STUDIENZENTRUM IN VENEZIG

schweizer kulturstiftung

prohelvetia



Universität  
Basel



SCHWEIZERISCHER NATIONALFONDS  
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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

#### International Conference, June 16–17, 2017

Infrastructure is a matter of shared concern, a politics in physical 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.

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.

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 Venice Art Biennale, Gardini
- 10.30 Visit to the Swiss Pavilion with the artists Teresa Hubbard and Alexander Birchler
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- 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
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- 15.15 Philip Ursprung, Teresa Hubbard and 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.
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- Excursion to Porto Marghera with architect Sandro Bisà

### Saturday, June 17

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- Palazzo Trevisan degli Ulivi  
Io Spazio Culturale Svizzero a Venezia
- 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
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- 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.