

Call for Papers

European Infrastructures and Transnational Protest Movements

**A workshop organized by the project “Issues with Europe” and the
Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society**

Venue: Kerschensteiner Kolleg of the Deutsches Museum, Munich, Germany

Date: 12 - 13 December 2019

Large-scale infrastructure projects and technologies have often been met with social resistance. Energy and transport infrastructures in particular have led to fierce and at times violent protest movements. Recent German examples of public protest against infrastructure projects include “Stuttgart 21,” over the reconstruction of Stuttgart main station and respective tributary railroad lines, and “Hambacher Forst,” over the extension of lignite open-cut mining into a small forest area between Aachen and Cologne. Both projects have become synonymous with civil disobedience against state and corporate interests—what social scientist James Scott would see as proof for the existence of “high modernism” in the twenty-first century.

Social protest against infrastructure projects and large-scale technologies has in fact a much longer and richer history. The new social movements that emerged not only in Germany but in many other Western European nations in the course of the 1960s and 1970s were often catalyzed by opposition to infrastructures which were understood as advancing technocratic and authoritarian policies and structures. The advance of nuclear energy in particular served as a seedbed for new social movements that encompassed left-wing fractions, Protestant churches, and everything inbetween. Sites of proposed nuclear reactors and transport infrastructures developed into protest zones, becoming what historian Frank Uekötter has called “environmental sites of memory.” In the German case, the nuclear power plants in Wyhl and Brockdorf, the planned nuclear reprocessing and storage sites in Wackersdorf and Gorleben, and “Startbahn West” at Frankfurt Airport have become signifiers for large-scale social protests, deeply engrained into the collective memory of the nation. The same holds true for Windscale/Sellafield in Great Britain, Fessenheim and Creys-Malville in France, Zwentendorf in Austria, and Ascó and Lemóniz in Spain, to name just a few. Nuclear energy for civil society has developed into a “public technology” (Helmuth Trischler and Robert Bud) that is deeply shaped by public engagement.

Wyhl also stands out as an early example of a trans-national protest movement. The small wine-growing village in southwest Germany experienced solidarity from neighbouring French Alsace and Swiss Basel. In the beginning, such protest movements had difficulties becoming international, but during the 1970s and 1980s, global resistance against nuclear power allowed for the transfer of knowledge, the transnational exchange of counter-expertise, and the rise of border-crossing protest cultures.

Similar patterns of social protest that oscillate between the regional and national poles on the one side and transnational concerns on the other can be observed in the case of European infrastructure projects, such as Alpine transit routes. The controversies over the construction of large-scale Alpine transit infrastructures both at the Gotthard and the Brenner Passes are currently being studied by the joint Austrian-German-Swiss research project “Issues with Europe: A Network Analysis of the German-speaking Alpine Conservation Movement (1975-2005),” based at the Universities of Innsbruck and Basel and the Rachel Carson Center in Munich (<https://www.uibk.ac.at/projects/issues-with-europe>).

We are looking for contributions on transnational protest movements against European infrastructures or infrastructure projects from the 1960s to the present.

This workshop is jointly funded by the Austrian Research Foundation (FWF), the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF) and the German Research Foundation (DFG) and will take place from 12 to 13 December 2019 at the Kerschensteiner Kolleg of the Deutsches Museum, Munich. Participants will be accommodated at the Kerschensteiner Kolleg and their travel expenses will be reimbursed.

Selection process:

“Issues with Europe” and the Rachel Carson Center look forward to hearing from applicants who are active in studying the emergence and development of social protest movements against European infrastructures. We ask you for an abstract of 300-500 words and a short CV.

We aim to avoid classic panel structure and promote an active exchange. Therefore, we will work with short input reports. Final drafts of papers (1500-2000 words) will be required by 15 November 2019. All papers will be circulated to the participants in advance.

Please send your application in a single PDF file by email to kira.schmidt@rcc.lmu.de by **30 June 2019**. Successful applicants will be informed by 31 July 2019.