

Call for Abstracts: Roads to Exclusion. Socio-Spatial Dynamics of Mobility Infrastructures since 1800

Announcement published by Carolin Liebisch-Gümüş on Monday, August 2, 2021

Type:

Conference

Date:

September 8, 2022 to September 10, 2022

Location:

District Of Columbia, United States

Subject Fields:

Social History / Studies, Area Studies, Contemporary History, World History / Studies, Government and Public Service

International conference at the German Historical Institute Washington. Organized by Carolin Liebisch-Gümüş, Andreas Greiner, Mario Peters (all GHI Washington), and Roland Wenzlhuemer (LMU Munich), September 8-10, 2022

New transportation arteries, mechanized vehicles, and transit hubs are often described as engines of spatial and cultural integration. Mobility infrastructures that have been developed since the nineteenth century up to the present have been at the heart of state-led modernization projects. On both the global and local level, the extension of infrastructures embodies the promises of speed, freedom, and prosperity. Despite the integrative visions of experts, politicians, and corporations, however, the “promise of infrastructure” (Nikhil Anand, Akhil Gupta & Hannah Appel 2018) is never universal. For one thing, infrastructure planning and building reflect uneven power relations and deliberately ignore specific people and places; for another, once built, infrastructural networks often also reinforce these hierarchies, acting as tools of exclusion. Such infrastructural exclusion is the theme of a conference to be held at the German Historical Institute Washington in September 2022.

Over the past two centuries, transportation infrastructures and the dynamics of exclusion have been entangled in many ways. First, exclusion has occurred whenever new modes of transportation have come to compete with existing infrastructure systems, such as in the conflicts between cars and pedestrians. Second, contrary to promises that remoter and supposedly uninhabited areas could become integrated, new transportation corridors have often facilitated the dispossession of land and removal of minorities and colonized people. At the same time, specific places and people have ended up being marginal and immobile when infrastructures were not built.

Most importantly, means of transportation and their manifestation in space, such as bus stations and airports, have become sites of exclusion and boundary-drawing. Their regulated access and the usage practices have reinforced categories of race, class, and gender, rendering them more visible in everyday life. The dynamics of exclusion, however, have seldom been all-encompassing. The individuals and collectives affected by infrastructural exclusion or violence have often resisted and/or

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manipulated the extension and operation of these systems. Likewise, in different places and at different times, people have developed creative everyday practices of subverting the regulated access to mobility infrastructure. Vagrants, undocumented migrants, and other non-licensed users have appropriated the exclusionary systems, turning them to their own ends.

This conference aims to explore the (intended or unintended) dynamics of inclusion and exclusion entailed in mobility infrastructures, ranging from the nineteenth century to the present. We invite scholars from different regional and disciplinary backgrounds to study the exclusionary effects in infrastructure planning, its spatial and social practices, its effects on marginalized groups, as well as the resilience and resistance of these groups. The thematic range includes, but is not limited to, the following potential topics:

- Promises and failures of mobility infrastructures and their discursive representation
- Power, planning, and intentional exclusion
- Barriers, class separation, and other material and spatial practices of exclusion
- Group-specific discrimination and infrastructural violence
- Resistance, subversion, and appropriation of mobility infrastructures by marginalized actors

The event is jointly organized by the German Historical Institute Washington (GHI) within the framework of its research area “Histories of Mobilities and Migration” and the Käte Hamburger Kolleg “global dis:connect – Dis:connectivity in Processes of Globalization” at LMU Munich. The conference will take place from September 9-10, 2022, with a kick-off event on the evening of September 8 and will be hosted by the German Historical Institute in Washington D.C.

To apply, please submit an abstract (max. 500 words) and a short biography (max. 150 words) in English via the GHI online platform by October 15, 2021: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/afbcda8e4eb149e8b5da553baf538bb>

Decisions of acceptance will be announced by December 15, 2021. Provided that international travel will be safe in September 2022, the conference will take place as an in-person-event, and participants will receive an individually calculated lump sum to support their travel and accommodation costs.

For questions, please contact the organizers at roads@ghi-dc.org

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