

Call for papers (15 September 2022)

Governance by Infrastructure

Special issue to be published open-access by *First Monday*: <https://firstmonday.org>

Papers due: 23 December 2022

Publication: Summer 2023 (see calendar below)

In March 2022, the ISS and ISSTI jointly organized with the support of the Swiss NSF a workshop in Lausanne on the subject of **Governance by Infrastructure**: <https://wp.unil.ch/workshopgbi/>.

With over 50 registered participants (30 on site) and 25 contributions, the workshop collected a rich variety of interests and work in progress.

In 2023 we intend to consolidate the results of the workshop and open them to contributions from new colleagues and institutions in order to **prepare a follow-up workshop in 2024**.

The original call for the 2022 workshop was:

The governance of the large sociotechnical systems that invisibly power and support the social world has long been a focus of STS scholars. One may recall the work of Hughes (1983) on the electrification of America, Star and Bowker (1996) on classifications and standards, or Latour (1993) on the Berlin Key. When we speak of infrastructure, and as Bowker and colleagues (2010) note, we often think of large collections of materials necessary for human organization and activity, such as buildings, roads, bridges, and physical networks of communication. But beyond bricks, mortar, pipes, or wires, infrastructure also includes entities such as protocols, standards, or system architectures. These more abstract entities are part of infrastructure because they perform an infrastructural function. That is, they help to shape, enable or constrain our common life.

Starting from the classical studies of infrastructure, STS has developed a rich inquiry between computer and social scientists, charting the development of information infrastructures in various social contexts (Monteiro, Pollock and Williams, 2014). This research is complemented by at least two other research fields interested in infrastructure in its functional sense: platform studies and Internet studies. The first has been primarily concerned with large platforms such as Google, Facebook, Twitter, Uber, Airbnb or Wikipedia, sometimes with more localized cooperative platforms (Scholz, 2014; Plantin et al., 2018). The second has been mainly interested in the Internet itself of course, but also in Internet-based services, sometimes built in a technically distributed mode (Musiani and Dulong de Rosnay, 2016).

These different fields have opened question of governance *and* infrastructure. While some scholars explore the governance of platforms and infrastructures via institutions and regulation, others have engaged in a questioning of governance, where governance is understood as a set of dynamics of “social ordering” (Law, 1992) that does not take place exclusively, or even primarily, in politically designed institutions, but is also enacted through the ordinary practices of people engaged in maintaining or challenging the social order (Musiani, 2016). Branches of government, stakeholders and advocacy groups, policy makers, technology designers, platform companies or contractors, and users, all participate in governance. By focusing on governance *by* infrastructure, this workshop aims to interrogate how technologies, infrastructures, platforms, devices, algorithms, reflect and influence, mediate and translate ordering processes. The starting point is the technical object and the way in which it, in its design or in its uses, acts on the social order. We wish to understand how infrastructures lead to transformations of society, by bringing changes in governance, possibly embedded in their design.

The **editorial team** (coordinates below) is calling for contributions directly or indirectly related to the subject of **Governance by Infrastructure**, possibly along lines such as:

Topics of interest (not limited to):

- Theoretical work on Information Infrastructures (IIs) and the concept of governance
- Design issues about governance and IIs
- Case studies of IIs or II projects from the perspective of their governance, politics and policies
- New methodological openings and critiques of existing methods in the study of IIs and their governance
- Normative perspectives on the conditions of existence and the sustainability of IIs and their governance

Authors are invited to **submit a full paper**, ready for review, until **23 December 2022**, by e-mail to **the full editorial team** listed below. The editorial team is available for authors who would wish to discuss their intentions prior to submission.

Papers should be no more than 10,000 words and respect the following style guidelines: <https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/about/submissions#style>

Papers will be internally *reviewed* by two members of the editorial team and by at least one additional external peer reviewer. We encourage authors to propose external peer reviewers for their paper.

Calendar:

- 18 August 2022: initial call for papers
- 6 September 2022: online meeting of *editorial team*, open to *interested authors* and *workshop contributors*
- 23 December 2022: submission deadline for V1
- 24 February 2023: response to authors
- March 2023: general meeting (hybrid) in Edinburgh for V2 and special issue contents
- 28 April 2023: submission of special issue to *First Monday*

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