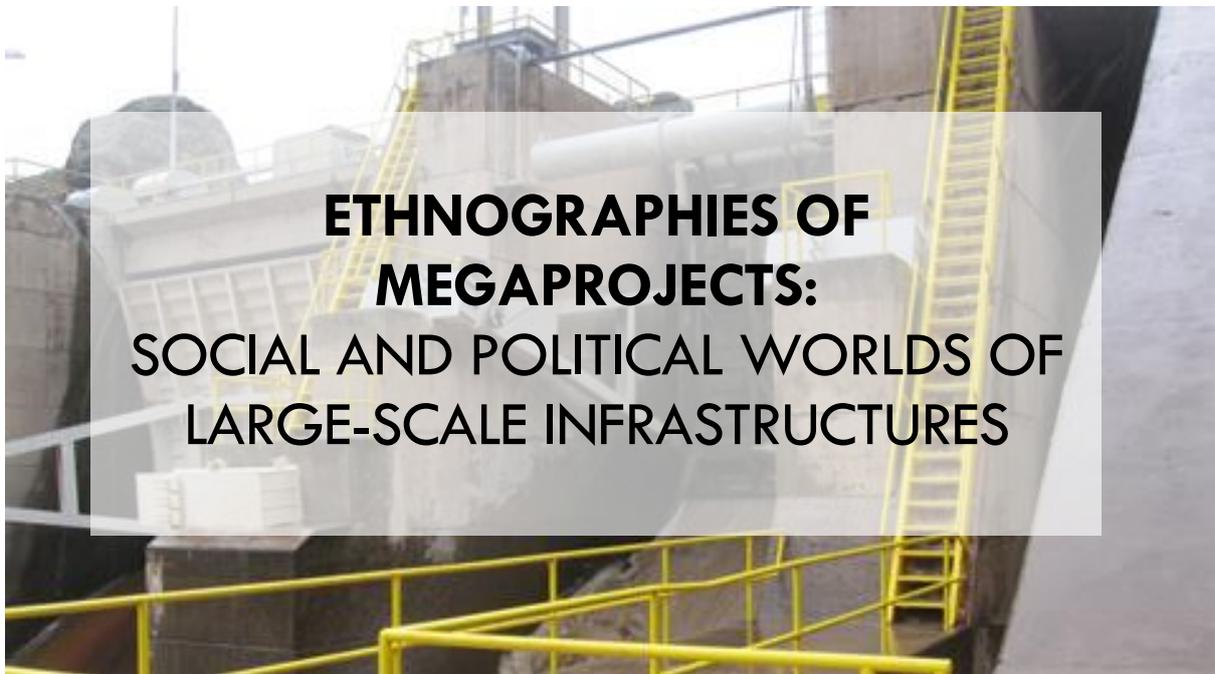


## Call for Papers



**September 12-13, 2019**

**Stockholm University, Sweden**

This symposium will bring together social scientists and humanist scholars to discuss large-scale infrastructure projects from an ethnographic perspective. On the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the pioneer study of the Yacyretá high dam by Ribeiro (1994) and drawing on the more recent infrastructural turn in anthropology and related disciplines (Anand, Appel & Gupta 2018; Harvey, Jensen & Morita, 2017; Larkin 2013) the symposium puts the spotlight on one particular type of infrastructure, namely megaprojects. In different regions of the world megaprojects such as roads, bridges, railways, airports, dams, ports, telecommunication as well as energy systems, special economic zones and urban redevelopments proliferate. Megaprojects are characterized by the involvement of multiple public and private stakeholders, by a range of professions and expertise, and by their significant social and environmental impact. Infrastructure development at large promises greater connectivity and economic growth, and harbour longstanding modernist dreams of a more prosperous future (Hetherington, 2012; Harvey & Knox, 2015; Anand et al, 2018). Notwithstanding the short and long-term promise that megaprojects evoke, they are also met by fear and mistrust. A lack of transparency and accountability often fuel protest movements and popular mobilizations. Moreover, megaprojects are as prone to produce disconnection and reproduce inequalities as they are to create new opportunities. Also, regardless if we focus on the hidden work of infrastructures or its more spectacular dimensions, infrastructures as material processes of connectivity are always subject to potential breakdown. Not only are infrastructures such as power grids, roads, railways and hydraulic works dynamic and tightly coupled technological systems—constituted by materials that age and undergo constant processes of change and deterioration—they are also planned, built and operated in social, political and economic contexts that are unstable and prone to punctuations and

transformations over time. Hence, studying megaprojects entail different time scales, varying categories of professionals and expertise, and multiple publics.

We would hereby like to invite contributions from researchers in the social sciences and the humanities working on large-scale infrastructure to explore the potentiality of critical and comparative ethnographies of 'megaprojects'. Topics of interest include but are not limited to temporalities, experts, publics and methodology.

**Temporalities** Large-scale infrastructure projects are shaped by multiple temporalities, from project planning to execution/delivery and subsequently operation and maintenance. At the same time as they are firmly anchored in visions of and aspirations for the future, most, if not all, megaprojects also have a longer history rooted in older projects of modernization. Moreover, many large-scale infrastructure projects are characterized by delays while others are simply not executed. How can we relate to such apparent failures and their traces that linger in terms of material imprints including expectations and disappointment? How can we better understand gendered, legal, bureaucratic, ethical, affective, experiential and material dimensions of time and infrastructures?

**Experts** Contemporary megaprojects are assembled through the mobilisation of public agencies and private companies that are staffed by skilled professionals in different areas, ranging from the technical and scientific domains to the economic, legal, and sociological realms. As members of epistemic communities, they enact their expertise through practices of socialization, authentication, and institutionalization (Carr, 2010). In the making of the megaproject, experts interact in collaboration and conflict with multiple other experts who are also involved in designing, negotiating, planning, building, operating and maintaining such infrastructures, and with different publics who support or contest their endeavors. Which are the sites of interconnection, boundary objects, and calculative devices through which experts enact their knowledge and skills? How do experts navigate moral dilemmas and engage social values in their daily work and the politics of megaprojects?

**Publics** The definition of the population that will benefit from infrastructure investments (the 'beneficiaries') and by extension the definition of 'public interest' are central to how politics works through infrastructure. Moreover, once in place large-scale infrastructure systems mediate material and social relations, thus producing multiple publics, connecting some publics and disconnecting others (Anand 2017). It is thus crucial to ask what publics are made visible or invisible, excluded or included in large-scale infrastructure projects. In other words: how does infrastructure create different publics?

**Methodology** How do we study megaprojects ethnographically? Single-, multi- and translocal fieldworks have been undertaken in planning offices, government ministries, engineering companies, construction sites, among publics in urban and rural settings. Megaprojects seem to bring matters to a head, however, by way of their scale, scope, duration, and webs of actors. How do we conceptualize ethnographic fields that can grasp the multiplicity of scales, the punctuatedness of the long term and complexity? How do we get access to securitised spaces and classified information? Can we complement the ethnographic toolbox with innovative research methods to better grasp the megaproject?

## Key note speakers

- Ashley Carse, Assistant Professor, *Vanderbilt University*
- Penny Harvey, Professor, *University of Manchester*
- Gustavo Lins Ribeiro, Professor, *Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana - Unidad Lerma*
- Gisa Weszkalnys, Associate Professor, *London School of Economics*

## Programme & Participation

The symposium will take place at Stockholm University in Sweden 12-13 September 2019.

Places for participants are limited and will be allocated by refereed selection. Applicants should send an abstract (max. 300 words) of their proposed paper with a short biography (max. 250 words). Please send these in a single PDF file by email to [gabriella.korling@socant.su.se](mailto:gabriella.korling@socant.su.se) and [susann.baez.ullberg@antro.uu.se](mailto:susann.baez.ullberg@antro.uu.se) by **15 February 2019**.

We will be able to fund travel and accommodation expenses for a limited number of participants. When you submit your paper proposal please indicate whether you have funds to cover your own travel and accommodation costs, or whether you will require funding.

Successful applicants will be expected to submit complete drafts of papers (max 5000 words in English) **by 30 June 2019**. All papers will be circulated to the participants in advance.

As an outcome of the conference we envisage a joint publication, either an edited volume or a thematic journal issue.

The symposium which is funded by the Swedish Research Council and Marie Skoldowska Curie Actions FP7 facilitated by the Department of Social Anthropology at Stockholm University in collaboration with the Forum for Asian Studies and the Institute for Latin American Studies.

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