

CALL FOR PAPERS

Diverse Infrastructures? Gender, Queer & the Foundations of Society

3rd Vienna Workshop on STEM Collections, Gender and Sexuality

Keywords: Infrastructure, Gender and Sexuality, Science and Technology, Materiality & Material Culture, Museum Studies

When: 6-8 September 2023

Where: Technisches Museum Wien

Infrastructures are socio-technical systems and immaterial networks that link people, materialities, places, institutions and services. In the form of, e.g., transportation routes, water and energy supply systems as well as communication networks, they create long-lived structures but also path dependencies. They provide, enable and prevent social functions—e.g., mobility, interchange, communication—and ensure the operation and functioning of society, the economy, and politics. By being embedded in social structures, they reproduce social realities.

Societal notions of order and orientation materialize in infrastructures—at the same time they structure daily life, in which gender and sex are pervasive. Gender assignment thus means different access to infrastructures. Not everyone benefits equally from investments in transportation and utility networks, and not everyone has the same needs or uses these networks in the same way. As much as the conception of new infrastructures means exploring future possibilities, so much these processes are shaped by power relations and inequality—which shows, among other things, in the fact that gender and sexual diversity rarely play a role in infrastructure development (one notable exception being, for example, the Canadian QUIN—Queer Infrastructure Network).

Infrastructure research is done from numerous perspectives—including (technology) history, STS, cultural and social anthropology, media theory, postcolonial theory, architecture and urban planning. In the context of a gender-informed perspective on material culture, studies on the materiality of infrastructures (e.g., Jan Hansen & Frederik Schulze) as well as on an “infrastructure of intimacy” (Ara Wilson) have, among others, proven useful. As institutions, (technological) museums are part of cultural and educational networks, at the same time they provide (infra-)structures for the preservation of documentation of, as well as education on, things and narratives. In this capacity, they have the power to enable and prevent social participation and representation.

Picking up on these considerations, the workshop wants to promote interdisciplinary exchange and invites entries from various different disciplines. We are looking for diverse responses from a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives. We encourage contributions from early career scholars, practitioners, and museum professionals. We are also especially interested in proposals that tackle the intersections of gender and sexuality with religion, ethnicity, race, or disability.

The workshop will take place in close cooperation with the project "Colonial Infrastructures" at the TMW Research Institute. In addition to lectures and discussions, exhibition tours, workshops etc. will be part of the event.

Submissions can address, for example:

- Infrastructures, gender and/or sexuality in (technical and natural science) collections and exhibitions
- Infrastructures, materiality and gender and/or sexuality
- Histories of infrastructures and gender and/or sexualities
- Inter-relationality of subjectivities and space
- Intersectional perspectives on infrastructures with regard to gender and/or sexuality as well as ethnicity, religion, disability, race
- Questions of documentation, indexing and categorisation
- Working groups, publics, and involving 'outside' expertise in science museums and collections

Please submit abstracts of 150 words for 15-minute paper, workshops or creative provocations and a biography of no more than 100 words to gender@tmw.at by 31 May. Decisions will be made by the workshop leader Dr Sophie Gerber (Technisches Museum, Vienna).

We can confirm that the workshop will have the following access provisions: wheelchair accessible, lift access, non-gendered bathrooms for the day, pronoun badges, guide animals, room for breastfeeding/expressing milk, quiet room (prayer and/or sensory breaks). No hearing loops available. Our priority is to make the workshop as accessible as possible. If you have any queries, or if there are other confirmations needed, please contact the organisers on gender@tmw.at.

Participation is free and we are willing to support participants with possible grant applications.

The workshop language is English. We are planning an (electronic) publication of the contributions in German and English.

If the overall pandemic situation does not permit a face-to-face event, contributors will be informed about the change to a fully online format. We understand submitted contributions as binding offers for the two possible formats of an online or a face-to-face event.

We look forward to receiving your submissions!