

Reassembling the Infrastructures of Citizenship

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National citizenship is in crisis. Mainstream and social media overflow with accounts of eruptions around the world, which together diagnose a profound malady in the organization of political belonging, identity, rights and obligations. The signs and symptoms of our current crisis seem disparate, perhaps even disconnected: crises of indigenous peoples' lands and sovereignty in the face of transnational extractive industries; crises surrounding the rights of refugees and the provision of asylum in a world of thickening borders; crises regarding local livelihoods in an economy organized through speed and flexibility in trade across vast distances; and crises of police violence that breed profound distrust in the core institutions of the state for racialized urban communities. Yet, as different as these conflicts and struggles may appear, they also highlight common cause; the exhaustion of a model of citizenship organized along exclusive national and territorial divisions in the context of overlapping jurisdiction, global circulation, and rapid urbanization. Contemporary crises of citizenship are also profoundly connected in that they may all be understood as conflicts over infrastructure.

Infrastructure is arguably at the centre of political life today, despite the fact that it is often managed as a technical concern beyond the pale of questions of power and difference. What kind of creative futures for citizenship could be uncovered if material and social infrastructures were placed at the centre of collective deliberation? While political identity and the legal architectures of formal citizenship status remain powerfully tethered to national territory, the crises identified above are diagnostic of a different form of connective tissue that literally, materially, holds people together today. When they work, infrastructures bring us food, water, power, resources, consumer goods, information, security, and connections to loved ones. But the infrastructures that distribute the necessities of life are themselves unevenly distributed. The story of infrastructure is also a story about disconnection, failure, blocked access, containment, and dispossession. Even in popular discourse, expressions like 'the other side of the tracks' or 'back of the bus' hint at how infrastructure can organize inequity alongside vitality.

The challenges facing Canadian citizenship today demand a bold and creative response that recognizes the severity of the situation. This project asks that we take the seemingly enormous risk of rethinking policy and political community from precisely the points of conflict, injury, and difference in crises of infrastructure that haunt the Canadian polity. It asks that we learn from communities whose lives are positioned at the margins of contemporary political life. And it posits that these same communities offer invaluable insights and creative trajectories in their diagnoses of the problems of our present. This project emerges out of a deep commitment to the possibility of a more just and sustainable future for Canadian citizenship, and a firm confidence in the potential that this particular path offers.

With this Trudeau project proposal I invite a deliberative, reparative, and creative process of rethinking citizenship from the space of infrastructure - not as metaphor or symbol, but as real physical and social architecture that underpins contemporary Canadian life. This project will work through four fraught yet promising cases where the politics of infrastructure are thrust onto centre stage:

1. Pipelines and Power | How/are questions of Indigenous sovereignty and histories of settler colonialism negotiated through the expansion of oil pipelines? How could energy infrastructures be re-imagined to cultivate just and sustainable social and ecological futures?

2. Bordering Belonging | How/can we rethink national borders in an era of migration and crises of asylum? How might border infrastructures be recast to sustain rather than contain citizenship?

- 3. Policed People** | How/ can the social infrastructures of the city undermine rather than intensify experiences of racial and gendered inequity? Can social infrastructure be made meaningfully social?
- 4. Carrying Cargo** | How/ can infrastructures of transnational trade be governed so they may also support local livelihoods? How might the connectivity they foster enrich collective deliberation?

Uncovering Infrastructure

Infrastructure surrounds us. Infrastructure brings us the necessities of daily and intergenerational life. Networks of infrastructure underpin human social worlds in the early twenty first century. As infrastructures have multiplied, expanded and become more integrated, they have also become *critical*. Key domains of human and non-human life are now dependent on constant connectivity. Energy systems, waste and water supply, welfare distribution, communication systems, policing practices, supply chains, intimate relations, transportation, and financial transactions, all rely on the integrity of infrastructure. Infrastructure is heralded as a marker of progress and celebrated for its promise to remake the depressed into the developed. Yet, while it can hold communities together, it can also break them apart. Infrastructure connects and divides, and it does so in highly uneven ways. The same structures and systems that enable greater mobility for some also often disconnect and dispossess others.

Infrastructure refers to “the physical networks through which goods, ideas, waste, power, people, and finance are trafficked” (Larkin 2013). Pipes, cables, and concrete are the ‘stuff’ of infrastructure, classically understood as supporting the circulation of other things. Infrastructure is undoubtedly material, though it exceeds the simply physical. *Social infrastructure* is constituted by the networks, relationships, organizations, services and facilities that allow communities to build capacity (Casey 2005, 8). Infrastructure Canada understands it to include, “hospitals, community and recreational facilities, public spaces, social housing, volunteer networks and community based agencies,” and suggests that it “increases social cohesion in urban cores.” The integration of these physical and social systems can be a measure of the overall strength of a community’s infrastructure (Clutter-buck and Novick 2003).

In recent years, as infrastructure has become increasingly critical to everyday life, it has also attracted more attention from government, scholars, corporations, and communities. Institutions such as the World Bank have become more and more committed to infrastructure, and now see it as the key to international development. The Bank now uses infrastructural integrity as a metric for national competitiveness, which they assess by indexing the performance of logistics infrastructures (Cowen 2014, 56). Infrastructure has experienced a major resurgence in national action. The recently announced ‘New Building Canada Plan’ – the largest ever investment in infrastructure in the country’s history- commits \$80 billion of public funds, building on a prior \$33 billion in infrastructure investment in 2007. Yet the revival of infrastructure underway here and in many jurisdictions is premised on an impoverished conception that emphasizes its narrowly economic functions. Infrastructure is furthermore governed as an eminently technical matter, best left in the hands of experts. This technocratic and economic approach that understands it as a means to a predetermined end forecloses a broader political engagement with infrastructure. The securitization of critical infrastructure over the last decade may further hamper democratic deliberation as we have seen aggressive surveillance (through digital infrastructures), even outright criminalization of those who contest its design and management.

Yet in direct contrast with this treatment of infrastructure, we see the emergence of widespread protest. Diverse constituencies insist on the politics of material and social systems, and have thrust them to the centre of public discourse. Infrastructure has become a prime target for social movements aiming to disrupt the status quo. Ports, highways, rail lines, websites and

pipelines have become subject to a growing number of blockades and occupations by a long list of social movements and forces. And the uneven distribution and targeted violence of social infrastructure is now an undeniable question for the future of the polity. What these diverse conflicts of infrastructure expose, and the movements that have announced them as such reveal, is that infrastructure is already at the centre of Canadian political life.

Haunted Belongings and New Cartographies of Connectivity

What would it mean to ground citizenship in the material architectures and social relations of infrastructure? The promise of this project lies in reconsidering how infrastructures connect us across space and time. Infrastructure links us from one device, household, or community to another, and it does so in configurations that are contingent on its spatial and social forms. Because infrastructures endure through time and act as connective tissue of social and economic life across space, they bind us to one another's pasts, presents and futures. Infrastructures implicate us in collective life and death.

We could, in fact, recount the history of citizenship through the lens of infrastructure. Long histories of infrastructure expansion lie at the heart of nation building. In Canada, we need only think of the railway system and the movement westward that made the polity possible. The process of building nation through rail expansion was also a violent one; the reach of rail infrastructure into Indigenous lands made colonization possible. We could also highlight the organization of its construction on the backs of indentured Chinese labourers and raise further questions of power and inequity. Likewise, the social infrastructure of public and private police have long histories in North America that are tied to the capture of escaped slaves and the protection of colonial infrastructures, both with deep ties to military force. We could say the politics of infrastructure were central to national history since its earliest moments, and more specifically, that expanding access and connectivity for some was often achieved at the expense of others.

This capacity to both contain and connect is a persistent feature of infrastructure. Whether we look to the enormous 'global architectures' of the Panama and Suez canals, or the seemingly local development of a small hydro dam, we see again and again that infrastructure projects bring resources, spaces, or relations within reach of some, often by restricting them from others. The eruptions we see around particular infrastructures today, and the surge of social movement building over the last few years all point towards histories of infrastructural violence and inequality that are not only long but ongoing. The political life of infrastructure demands a different conception of time. We cannot make sense of contemporary conflicts over infrastructure without centrally considering their histories. In particular, engaging infrastructure in this way requires recognition of conflicting claims and overlapping jurisdictions.

Reassembling citizenship through infrastructure demands that we reconsider time and temporality, but also problems of geography. For the last two centuries, citizenship in western liberal states has been defined by a national geography that assumes exclusive state jurisdiction, even in the face of court rulings that insist on the persistence of indigenous title. If citizenship has been centrally defined by its national geography over the last two centuries, then reassembling the space of citizenship also promises renewal. Infrastructure criss-crosses the

two-dimensional puzzle pieces of national sovereignty that constitute the Westphalian state system, offering a very different cartography of political life. Infrastructures have distinct form – they require attention to the particular places that they stitch together- whether through pipes, cables, or cement. In contrast to a vision of globalization that sees “territorial blocks of land regrouped into megaregions”, Blank (2006) suggests that “a transnational network of corridors and gateways” offers a more apt visual rendering. A geography of networks and nodes constitutes contemporary infrastructures of trade circulation, but so too energy grids, pipelines, and communications cables. Network architectures take form at scales above and below the nation state and traverse borders - municipal, provincial and national.

Infrastructure is also bundled in concentrated form constituting urban areas. Contemporary cities can in fact be understood as *nodes* in transnational networks of critical infrastructure. Infrastructure is not simply proximate to urban centers – it is literally constitutive of the city (Coward 2009). Social infrastructure might appear to further complicate this question of space and citizenship. Yet, social infrastructure has its cartographies too – not just in the absences and gaps that have been widely noted by marginalized communities. Along with Black Lives Matter and countless scholars and social movements, we might also diagnose an excess of infrastructures of policing and surveillance in declining and racialized sub/urban communities.

Entangled Infrastructures

This project investigates how we relate across the places infrastructure connects, and how we relate to each other through the common and concrete matter of infrastructure. It asks, what kinds of possibilities for collective life are already alive in our engagements with infrastructure? *Reassembling the Infrastructures of Citizenship* will offer fresh ideas for policy that emerge out of a bold deliberative process, anchored in the following cases.

1. Pipelines and Power | *This case explores how contemporary Indigenous sovereignty and histories of settler colonialism might be negotiated in the context of energy pipeline projects. It investigates how energy infrastructures may be re-imagined to cultivate just and sustainable social and ecological futures.* The expansion of energy infrastructure has long been the source of explosive social conflict. Whether hydropower dams, bitumen extraction, oil pipelines, or natural gas processing facilities, conflicts over energy infrastructures have had particular impact on the lands, ecologies and sovereignties of indigenous peoples. There has been particularly intense conflict surrounding the development of the Alberta tar sands. Industry pressure to get bitumen to transnational markets has provoked controversial pipeline construction. Social and environmental movements have been fighting these projects, with indigenous people at the helm in diverse locales that follow impacted communities along the path of energy infrastructures. The Idle No More movement that emerged in 2012 focuses centrally on indigenous sovereignty and the protection of lands and water. Protest has focused centrally on infrastructural violence including these pipeline projects. First Nations across Alberta and British Columbia have opposed planned pipelines in formal political process, legal proceedings, and direct actions. Further east along the energy infrastructure, the recently approved ‘Line 9 Reversal’ that will carry bitumen eastwards for export has been contested by countless groups, but most powerfully perhaps by the Aamjiwnaang First Nation and others in the Sarnia area. At the centre of these struggles are questions of competing sovereignties on lands that remain un-ceded or contested, and the long and layered histories

and geographies of social and ecological violence through transport, extractive and chemical infrastructures. While energy companies resist providing maps that detail pipeline locations, communities resisting the plans have embarked upon mapping projects as part of their constitution of alternative political process. Active organizing efforts promise innovative approaches to thinking citizenship across networked space.

2. Bordering Belonging | *This case explores how national borders fuel crises of asylum in an era of migration. It investigates how border infrastructures could be recast to sustain rather than contain alternative futures for citizenship.*

National borders anchor modern forms of citizenship yet have long provoked humanitarian crises, dividing families and communities, and making those without formal status precarious. Many decades ago, Arendt highlighted how the bordering of belonging through the national state system was key in *producing* the crisis of stateless people. The ‘thickening’ of border infrastructure as part of 21st century securitization, and the ongoing crisis of undocumented people layered with acute refugee crises today point to the enormity of the problem. Popular imaginaries often see borders as fixed gates that control access to national space, yet these visions need updating. Artists, activists, and scholars are reworking our conceptions of how border spaces work and what they could be. At the centre of this rethinking is an understanding of the border as a zone of intense relation and attachment. These voices are not alone. Over the last few years, governments around the world have worked to recast national borders to better accommodate transnational circulation. The Canadian government has developed a range of new policies to support cross-border flows of goods and people out of efforts to protect efficient trade circulation. Yet – if the national border can be remade to serve supply chains, it can also be remade in the interests of human life. Even the US Congressional Research Service suggests that if, “the border can be envisioned not merely as a physical boundary but rather as a flexible concept that allows for the possibility that the border begins at the point where goods or people commence their U.S.-bound journey, a significantly wider array of options for border management policies becomes available.” There is consensus on the problem of the border from all sides – but this infrastructure network will focus on exploring *creative solutions*. There is practical urgency to this work as the Canadian government has already devoted \$600m to border infrastructure as part of the Build Canada Plan. Grassroots organizations like ‘No One is Illegal’ have emerged in major Canadian cities to organize for the rights of undocumented people and migrants more broadly. They are part of a much wider chorus that sees the crises of the border in the lives of our neighbours and our communities. Proposals for rethinking the geography of citizenship at the urban and transnational scale have close ties to these questions and constituencies. More broadly, attending to the crisis of the border demands that we reconsider the ways in which people are already implicated in each other’s lives in a global era, as well as the ethical and political responsibilities these relationships invite.

3. Policed People | *This case explores how key social infrastructures of the city undermine rather than intensify experiences of racial and gendered inequity. It investigates how social infrastructure might be made meaningfully social.*

Problems of urban infrastructure in lower income and racialized communities are typically understood in terms of lack. Indeed, these communities are often underserved in a variety

of ways. Public transit service is often poor, there is inadequate provision of parks and open spaces, community facilities are frequently in a state of disrepair, and residents have difficulty accessing adequate health care, educational resources and housing. The decline or outright absence of infrastructure is a typical scenario, which has prompted many to organize around increasing social infrastructure investment in these areas. Yet we could also trace an *excess of infrastructure* if we consider the questions of surveillance and policing. In fact, policing and security have long been at the centre of liberal state practice, and contemporary public expenditure. The over-policing of racialized communities has been highly politicized in recent years, culminating in the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2012 south of the border. The formation of chapters north of the border highlights what many groups have been claiming for decades; racialized communities in Canadian cities experience more policing that is more aggressive in its forms than the rest of the citizenry, and too often this problem is lethal. The problems of the under and over supply of infrastructure in marginalized communities are deeply connected, and in fact, recent policy initiatives like Toronto's 'Priority Neighbourhoods' are premised on increasing investment in social infrastructure, anchored in targeted policing strategies. A whole host of groups are now calling for a 'right to the city' as the future of citizenship in a globalizing but also urbanizing moment. Could a more fulsome politics and careful process of deliberation about collective infrastructure offer the road map to these changing conceptions and spaces of rights?

4. Carrying Cargo | *This case explores how infrastructures of transnational trade may be governed so they support local livelihoods. It investigates the connectivity they foster as a tool for collective deliberation.* While there has been tremendous emphasis on the circulation of goods in public infrastructure initiatives, the people who operate those infrastructures are often made invisible. Those who make goods move have experienced dramatic restructuring in the conditions of their work in the last few decades, and have emerged as a powerful voice in politicizing transport infrastructures. Few other industries have experienced such aggressive forms of deregulation, with such detrimental impacts on wages, conditions of work, and even workplace deaths, as this one. In the U.S. this sector has the second highest levels of workplace death and injury, after mining. Trucking, is furthermore, now the most common occupation on much of the continent. The expansion of transport infrastructures and their increasing mechanization and standardization have put new pressures on workers and increased productivity standards leading to a race to the bottom. As the industry has become more precarious, the labour force has become deeply racialized, creating even more acute forms of social and economic marginalization. Port truckers – perhaps the hardest hit by these shifts – have engaged in some startling labour actions, coordinating thousands of rigs to blockade port terminals, or snaking them slowly through southern British Columbia highways and bringing that infrastructure to a standstill to draw attention to their plight. While these actions and others are leading to recognition of the problem, there have only been band-aid solutions developed thus far, and little in the way of creative or long term approaches to the problem. With massive investment in Canada's new trade corridors, rapid growth in these sectors is anticipated which may only attenuate the crisis. The problem of impoverished conditions of work, especially in light of the emerging Trans Pacific Partnership agreement, demands quick but careful attention, but as these infrastructures traverse indigenous lands and sensitive ecologies, these conversations need to be conducted with an eye to complex constituencies. Creative solutions are available but

require careful deliberation with diverse impacted constituencies, deliberation that recognizes the common and distinct concerns of transnational transport infrastructure lived and laboured locally.

Reassembling Citizenship Through Infrastructure

This Trudeau Foundation project will undertake a bold experiment in reassembling citizenship. It does not pretend that it could single-handedly solve all of these enormous problems – but rather it will explore alternative processes for apprehending and engaging them. This project will initiate a community-based process of creative inquiry with people and places bound together by crises of infrastructure. As a Trudeau fellow, I will **assemble** an advisory group made up of community organizers, activists, and scholars who address the politics of infrastructure in their work. Drawing on the expertise of the advisory group, I will work to **engage** particular communities and networks that are addressing conflicts surrounding the infrastructures identified above, and which offer innovative approaches to rethink citizenship. I will work with these networks to **mobilize** digital media to foster a commons where the investigation of infrastructure can be archived and visions of alternative futures created.

The experimental nature of this project is rooted in a sense of responsibility to the future, and attention to the urgency of our collective present and past. This project will explore the possibility of alternatives to current formal political process. It will learn from practices and conceptions of the political emerging out of communities contesting contemporary infrastructure. These alternatives challenge mainstream notions of *how* we define a problem, *who* we understand as implicated, and *where* we locate ourselves and our infrastructures. For instance, they may recognize overlapping sovereignties that acknowledge unceded lands and the ongoing violence of settler colonialism, or alternative cartographies of belonging that are attuned to the urban and transnational realities of actually existing citizenship. In other words, an alternative process proposes that to meaningfully address questions of rights, representation and resources requires rethinking the fundamental pillars of modern national citizenship.

Reassembling the Infrastructures of Citizenship will produce **concrete outcomes of three distinct kinds – creative, conceptual and community-based** – acknowledging the distinct value of each form. The specific nature or substance of these products cannot be determined in advance. Committing to a profoundly consultative and community-based process of knowledge production means that destination must be defined collaboratively. The three anticipated outcomes highlight:

1. The community-based building of a political process through deliberation and applied policy innovation. Outcomes will include reports from the four networks detailing innovative practices that could inform (transform?) the governance of infrastructure in Canada.
2. Conceptual insight through scholarly investigation of key challenges in the governance of infrastructure. Outcomes will include a series of papers addressing themes such as: public-private partnerships, finance and infrastructure,

‘participatory’ policing, the ‘right to infrastructure’, co-management models, and legal issues of jurisdiction.

3. A digital commons that will support creative vision through hosting, archiving and artistic production (addressed below).

Creative Infrastructures of Citizenship

“Only if there are angels in your head will you ever, possibly, see one.” – Mary Oliver

If poet Mary Oliver is right, than *seeing* citizenship differently may also require the capacity to imagine it differently. Reassembling citizenship in ways that attend to its urban, transnational, and networked form, and its overlapping jurisdictions, is easier said than done. The national geographies of citizenship commandeer not only our legal infrastructures but also psychic ones. Thus, in addition to attending to the conflicts over infrastructure that diagnose our political present, and the histories and geographies of connections they craft through a deliberative and reparative process, the third thread of this project explores the politics of the possible.

Writing of the kind that will be produced in community reports about the process undertaken, and in scholarly analysis of the legal and conceptual implications of these alternatives, can only go so far in this regard. It needs to be complimented with more affective forms of expression from the arts. Community arts – and in particular, digital media arts - will be mobilized to re-imagine the infrastructures of citizenship. Working through digital media will allow the project to document the work of the networks and help give space for and shape to visions of the infrastructures of citizenship they generate.

Community and digital media arts have become an important part of my work regarding questions of both citizenship and infrastructure. For the last five years I partnered in a formal collaboration with the National Film Board (NFB) of Canada’s *Hybrise Project*, and in particular, Emmy award-winning documentary filmmaker, Katarina Cizek. That project, titled *Digital Citizenship in the Global Suburb* garnered SSHRC partnership funding and involved participatory research and documentary film work in Mumbai, Singapore and Toronto, investigating the ways in which digital technologies and infrastructures are remaking urban citizenship around the world. The partnership produced an interactive online film entitled *The Universe Within*, which was recently nominated for an International Documentary Association award. A book project, *Connect, Control, Contest: Digital Citizens in the Global City* that involves leading and emerging scholars, digital media artists, cartographers, as well as participants from the research in our study sites, is also forthcoming from the partnership.

Prior to this collaboration with the NFB I was involved in creating community arts projects in the inner suburbs of Toronto. The most substantial of these emerged out of long-term collaboration with the East Scarborough Storefront - a community hub that is a model for building social infrastructure in declining suburban areas experiencing crises of violence and concentrated poverty. Communities like east Scarborough are under-resourced in terms of public services and spaces with the major exception of policing. **The Bridging Project** is an ongoing annual music and street festival, initiated in 2008 following a string of suicides by recent immigrants off a local street bridge. Research I undertook with community partners found that the bridge infrastructure had ironically become a dividing line in the community -

organizing gang territory, for example. The Project engaged newcomer and First Nations youth and professional artists in a community arts intervention to transform this barrier back into a bridge, as well as participatory planning to alter the bridge design. **The Amazing Place** was a collaboration between local organizations that aimed to cultivate local citizenship in this fraught community. Launched in 2005, the project enlisted hundreds of residents in a youth led scavenger hunt for local history, a youth produced film about the local area, oral histories, and other community activities that highlight efforts to build greater social justice and environmental sustainability. In both these projects I played a core role in founding and coordinating the initiative. In both projects I also experienced the transformatory capacity of creative community interventions.

Notes on the Digital

The digital revolution is having such widespread influence that few on the planet are not implicated. One does not need to own apps or devices to feel the effects of digitally networked life. Even in some of the world's most remote locations, communities without digital connection face the impacts of extractive industries that mine the metals that make digitization literally, materially, possible. The digital revolution means that events happening in one part of the world are profoundly, and often very rapidly, connected to other places. And digital infrastructure is impossible to disentangle from almost every other infrastructure system. Digital technologies play a profound role in all four of the cases that will be explored in this project. The digital is essential to the very basic functioning of energy, border, transport and policing infrastructures, and it is also the means through which surveillance of the citizenry takes place in order to protect or 'secure' these infrastructures. Social media is furthermore the primary means through which communities organize alternatives. Digital infrastructures have critical economic, social, and cultural impacts on a planetary scale, yet their development has been ceded primarily to the private sector and their governance largely removed from public or democratic deliberation. Big data and widespread electronic surveillance, and dramatic divides regarding the accessibility of service between wealthy and poor regions of our cities, regions, and nations all raise urgent questions for citizenship. The digital will thus be implicated in the work of the infrastructure networks in addressing the current governance of each system, but also in the creative work of the project. A digital commons will be established where each network can document their own process, and where dialogue across the networks can be initiated. The creative digital media work will also be hosted here.

Project Plan | Year 1: Assemble Advisory Group

In my first year as a Trudeau fellow, I will consult colleagues and communities working on the politics of infrastructure towards assembling an advisory group. The assembly of the advisory group will be guided by the questions and methods discussed above, and will begin with the assumption that the people most profoundly implicated in the expansion or operation of an infrastructure have critical insights in diagnosing its limits and failures. In each case – the communities and organizations that have emerged to contest that infrastructure will be involved centrally in rethinking its future. I will thus invite participation from scholars, organizers and artists that are connected to the communities and movements in question.

The advisory group will be made up of approximately 15 community leaders and scholars who address the politics of infrastructure in their work. I have established networks from my past

work and will draw on them to engage scholars who approach these topics from the perspective of Indigenous Studies, Diaspora and Migration Studies, Black Studies, and Urban Studies. The incredible Trudeau Foundation community will also be a key resource for constituting the advisory group. The members of the advisory group will be brought together in order to refine the central questions of the project and to outline a general pace and process for moving forward. They will also begin identifying the specific sites of conflict to be addressed and the networks of implicated communities and organizations. We will invite participation from a wide range of groups, yet I already hope for participation from grassroots networks such as: Network for the Elimination of Police Violence, No One is Illegal, and Amjiwnaang and Sarnia Against Pipelines.

Project Plan | Year 2: Engage Infrastructure Networks

In my second year as a Trudeau fellow I will work with the advisory group to engage different organizations that are already active in negotiating the politics of an infrastructure conflict to convene the first three 'infrastructure networks'. We will work to identify key groups and communities to invite into a two-year, deliberative, reparative and creative process that will address the infrastructure conflict they are involved with as a means for reassembling citizenship. Each network will be centered in the work of a particular constituency that has been prominent in publicizing the political stakes of infrastructure and proposing creative ways forward, though they will also include a mix of community organizations, scholars and artists. The specific nature of the process will emerge out of the work of the advisory group together with each infrastructure network. The initial three networks will be guided by common questions that investigate rather than assume the contours of citizenship. They will thus pose basic questions such as:

- *What* is the infrastructure in question?
- *Who* are the constituencies of this infrastructure?
- *Where* is the infrastructure located and what bounds its reach?
- *How* do questions of history and ecology inform each infrastructure?

The three infrastructure networks will design a deliberative process, the goal of which is to offer practical insight into how conflicts over infrastructure could be negotiated so as to respect and engage complex relationships across time and space. In essence, the networks will work to define *a process of inquiry* and concrete recommendations regarding how a citizenship attendant to infrastructure might be organized.

Project Plan | Year 3: Build Processes, Analyze Insights, Create Visions

The third year of the project will involve analysis and documentation of the project thus far, and the making of *creative, conceptual* and *community-based* products. I will invite participants of the infrastructure networks and the advisory group to a midyear gathering, where each network will be invited to share the learning underway and to begin preliminary reflection on the common project of rethinking citizenship. Video artists will also be invited to the gathering and will be paired with the networks to offer digital video skills training with the goal of supporting creative documentary work. The specific media artists that will participate will be determined by the networks and project advisors, however, I have a number of partners in this sector. My work with the NFB over the last 5 years has brought me into partnership with

award winning documentarians and video artists including Katerina Cizek, Alexis Mitchell, Paramita Nath, Saroja Poonambolam, Brett Story, and Heather Frise. The project will culminate at the end of year three with a public gathering, screening of the videos, and sharing of the scholarly and applied products – experimental political processes and creative visions for the future. Drawing on my networks and those of the Trudeau Foundation I will invite national and local public media to cover the event.

The Infrastructure of the Trudeau Foundation

As the title of this project suggests, the primary home for this work within the Trudeau Foundation is the cluster of research and expertise investigating **Responsible Citizenship**. *Reassembling the Infrastructures of Citizenship* is first and foremost about ethical responsibilities and relationships between people who are attached to each other through their attachments to the collective infrastructures of life. It poses a profound but constructive challenge to formal citizenship to rethink its own *bounds* and *grounds*. It questions the grounds of formal citizenship – the lands or territory to which citizens belong - in a number of ways, first by asking that we reconsider political community in a manner that acknowledges the real material forms and relations that connect us to each other and to places. This means asking the question of *where* the geographic boundaries should be drawn in our relationships to other people and places rather than accepting any particular answer in advance. Following our material connections to others through infrastructures may mean suspending pre-given assumptions about national territory and investigating political community at the urban scale and through transnational networks. It may also mean bringing the livelihood of our ecologies – forms and systems of life which are not contained by human political boundaries - centrally into our political deliberations. And it may also mean recognizing alongside the highest Canadian courts that the land on which the Canadian state claims jurisdiction, is itself contested and layered with the jurisdictions of Indigenous peoples. *Reassembling the Infrastructures of Citizenship* insists that we must also question the *bounds* of citizenship, or how the boundaries of formal status in Canadian belonging are determined. The project invites us to consider how our conception of *constituency* might shift to include those connected through and impacted by the physical and social reach of infrastructure. In this way, by acknowledging the growing gaps between the formal and lived experience of citizenship, and investigating ways to make the former more responsive to the latter, this project is profoundly committed to enacting Responsible Citizenship, as it also studies strategies to enhance the practice.

Reassembling the Infrastructures of Citizenship is indeed a question of Responsible Citizenship, but one that challenges the very possibility of meaningfully separating this theme from the three other areas of Trudeau Foundation focus. In asking that we address citizenship through infrastructure, this project challenges divisions that we draw in the world that are both spatial and conceptual. Thus, the very premise of this project in suspending assumptions about national cartography and asking where boundaries of belonging should be drawn - makes the question of responsible Canadian citizenship also automatically a question of the role of **Canada in the world**. In highlighting struggles for justice as diagnostic of contemporary problems with citizenship, and in structuring the process of investigating problems around the insights of impacted constituencies, this project also fits well with the priorities of the **Human Rights and Dignity** work and community within the Trudeau Foundation. This theme is further reflected in the central commitments of this project to affirm and enrich rights - to the

city, to mobility, to livelihood, and to land, for instance. The question of lands and livelihood highlights the ecological dimensions of an infrastructural approach and suggests some important relationships to be cultivated with Trudeau Foundation members and activities associated with the theme of **People and the Natural Environment**. This theme is most striking in the case addressing pipelines, where Indigenous people have asserted the priority of ecological questions, and a framework that refuses the separation of the human and non-human world.

While infrastructure is typically managed as a technical matter or an object that needs to be secured, this project posits that the conflicts that surround infrastructures in this moment are not only diagnostic of foundational problems with modern national citizenship, but also already the source of renewal and innovation. Profoundly interdisciplinary, engaging complex geographies of entanglement, and the long histories of violence and marginalization as well as creativity and solidarity, *Reassembling the Infrastructures of Citizenship* offers a vital way forward.