CfP "Infrastructures of Injustice", Cambridge-Singapore-Princeton Network workshop series

Dear All,

Please find below a call for papers for a workshop "Infrastructures of Injustice: Law & Conflict” to take place at St Edmund’s College, University of Cambridge, on 26-27th Oct. 2018.

This Cambridge workshop is part of the Cambridge-Singapore-Princeton Network workshop series. The workshop series interrogates the interrelationships between infrastructures and injustice; alert to the manner in which law threads through the material, the conceptual, the ethical, and the affective. We seek work at the junctions of infrastructure and injustice to provoke a reconceptualization of injustice across multiple empirical settings, but particularly within regimes of conflict in the Global South. We intend to achieve this through delving into key ways in which the interactions of human and (in)tangible infrastructure materializes injustice today. Recognizing accelerating trends of securitization, financialization, and calculability, means that interrogating the complicity of infrastructure in the moralities and ethics of contemporary social life is urgent and imperative.

In keeping with the workshop’s push to excavate law’s sometimes subterranean presence, the Cambridge workshop will focus on infrastructures of conflict. The second workshop in Singapore in January 2019 will examine migration infrastructures, and the final workshop in Princeton in April 2019 will draw these two themes together.

The Cambridge workshop operates from the premise that accounts of armed conflict can be productively unpacked through the analytic frameworks of infrastructure, and notions of injustice. Ferguson (2008, 36) rightly says that human, social and material “infrastructure define how war is fought and what is fought over”. The framework of infrastructure is usefully enhanced through grappling with notions of injustice because, war is often prompted by actual or perceived injustices. In addition to affecting human, cultural, and social infrastructure, armed conflict also disrupts the functioning of built infrastructure. Armed conflict leads to the unequal provision of multiple forms of infrastructure, or infrastructure deficiency. The space of conflict zones is also the space of “pirate” and “fugitive” infrastructures and territorialities (Simone 2006); elusive infrastructures that are more likely to develop in complex and alternative forms. More broadly, the workshop’s concern will be with the loss of infrastructure in the context of armed conflict and the dehumanization of social capital in the process.

The Cambridge workshop seeks to explore a set of concerns that are framed by but not limited to these questions:

- How are infrastructures of injustice temporally and contextually formed and how do they morph and change dynamically in relation to shifting circumstances of war and conflict? If lawyers simultaneously make law and non-law (Johns 2014, 1), what role does legal infrastructure play in this context?

- What are the infrastructures that sustain, perpetuate and reify injustice(s)? Here we are
looking for empirically grounded analyses that deconstruct the ways in which injustice continues to work. We are interested, for example, in intersections of social capital and public infrastructures in cases of armed conflict (eg. hospitals and militaries).

- How are infrastructures of injustice countered, including in situations of conflict? What are the discursive, material and performative strategies of structural subversion and individual resistance? How, for instance, does collective organisation depend on technologies of communication? (eg. underground railroad, safehouses)

- How does infrastructure cope with changing notions of injustice, across time and across place in conflict zones? When do forms of infrastructure become obsolete? Do new or reconfigured infrastructures become necessary to maintain injustice and perpetuate the subjugation of the subjects of injustice?

John Comaroff (Harvard) has confirmed his participation in the Cambridge workshop. Selected speakers will be asked to produce a first draft of their paper three weeks before the event in Cambridge for pre-circulation. Interested participants are expected to cover their own expenses but limited funding may be available to scholars with no funding available to them. There is limited funding available for scholars based in the Global South.

Please note, a selection of presenters from the Cambridge (and Singapore) workshops will be invited to present their revised papers at Princeton University (workshop hosted by Carol Greenhouse) on 26-27 April 2019; travel and accommodation expenses will be covered by Princeton University.

Please send an abstract of 250-300 words and a short biographical statement by May 11th 2018 to Sandra Brunnegger (sb529@cam.ac.uk) and Laavanya Kathiravelu (laavanyak@ntu.edu.sg) and also state if you will be available for the Princeton meeting in April 2019 if selected.