

Cities and infrastructural warfare:

Investigating socio-technical dimensions of urban geopolitics

Department: Human Geography and Spatial Planning

Research group: Spatial Planning

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Project description

More than ever in history, modern cities depend on the seamless functioning of multiple interconnected infrastructure networks. This dependency makes cities highly vulnerable to infrastructural failures such as blackouts, drinking water shortages, sanitary crises or cyberattacks that disrupt urban livelihoods and economies and manifest far-reaching risks to social well-being, urban safety, public health, and ecological sustainability. This has become particularly evident in multiple war zones across the world (Iraq, former Yugoslavia, Lebanon, Ukraine, Gaza Strip), where modern warfare has targeted power plants, water, gas or heating networks or internet infrastructures. Moreover, artificial intelligence is increasingly shaping how urban infrastructures are targeted and protected. As malicious infrastructure attacks imply a sense of urgency for urban stakeholders in critical infrastructure protection, they force far-reaching urban and infrastructural transitions. Thus, rethinking strategies to prepare for infrastructure attacks and to (re)build resilient infrastructures have become crucial priorities in urban and military policy. Key questions of this project are: What are the socio-spatial and socio-technical impacts of infrastructure disruptions by military design, and how do and can urban stakeholders build infrastructural resilience to future attacks?

Key tasks of the research assistant are:

- To conduct a review of academic literature and policy reports on infrastructural warfare;
- To support the review of innovative methodologies in remote research;
- To support in preparing, conducting, transcribing and analyzing exploratory expert interviews;
- To support the publication of a paper in an international journal
- To support the organization of and participate in an international workshop on “cities and compound infrastructure crises” in May 2025;
- To support the acquisition of research funding on infrastructural warfare.

Job requirements

Highly motivated students who have

- an educational background in Spatial Planning, Human Geography, Innovation or Sustainability Studies or a related field,
- good writing and organizational skills,
- good methodological skills in social science research,
- an interest in studying the relationships between cities and infrastructures, and
- the ability to work independently and in a small team,

are encouraged to apply!