

HISTORIA CRÍTICA

Call for Papers

Historia Crítica, a journal of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Universidad de los Andes (Bogotá, Colombia), announces a call for papers for its special issue

“Latin American Infrastructures in Historical Perspective: Territories, Politics, and Sociotechnical Assemblages (Nineteenth–Twentieth Centuries).”

This project will be carried out in collaboration with Santiago Urrutia (Institute of Geography, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Chile; Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina), Andrés Núñez (Institute of Geography, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Chile; Conicet, Argentina), and Simón Uribe (School of Social, Political, and International Studies, Universidad del Rosario, Colombia).

Articles will be accepted from
January 20, 2027, to February 20, 2027.

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The renewed interest in infrastructures within the humanities and social sciences reflects their central role in contemporary dynamics of accumulation and global geopolitical relations.¹ In this context, Latin American historiography offers an established tradition of scholarship that treats infrastructure as a privileged site for understanding the formation of nation-states, the production of their territories, economic transformations, and power relations in the region.² This body of work has identified several recurring features of the Latin American infrastructural experience.

First, it has shown that infrastructures have historically served functions beyond their strictly technical dimension. Promising progress, integration, or development, these works gave material form to specific imaginaries of modernity, mobilized expectations, and legitimized projects

1 Gastón Gordillo, “The Metropolis: The Infrastructure of the Anthropocene,” in *Infrastructure, Environment, and Life in the Anthropocene*, edited by Kregg Hetherington (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 66-94.

2 Dhan Zunino Singh, Valeria Gruschetsky, and Melina Piglia, coords., *Pensar las infraestructuras en Latinoamérica* (Buenos Aires: TeseoPress, 2021).

of territorial transformation whose effects far transcended their utilitarian functions.³ Second, it has demonstrated that infrastructures offer a privileged vantage point for examining the historical forms of Latin America's dependent integration into the global economy and the power relations that enabled them.⁴ Finally, far from establishing a linear history, this body of scholarship highlights that Latin American infrastructures follow long, discontinuous, and turbulent trajectories, shaped by political shifts and institutional and economic crises that mark successive cycles of investment and disinvestment.⁵ From this perspective, the history of Latin American infrastructures emerges as a history of competing modernities, interrupted projects, and unfulfilled promises—but also of creative and unexpected collective re-appropriations.⁶

More recently, the so-called infrastructure turn in history and the social sciences has enriched this field by drawing on insights from historical geography, ethnography, and science and technology studies. These approaches understand infrastructures as sociotechnical assemblages in which material objects, forms of knowledge, institutions, regulations, and actors are articulated—albeit not without tensions. This perspective treats them not merely as elements situated within a pre-existing space but as processes that actively participate in the historical production of territories. Just as roads, ports, railways, dams, and energy networks facilitate the circulation of people, goods, and resources, they also transform how space is inhabited, imagined, and organized. In this way, infrastructures help shape territorialities, reorganize social relations, and redefine the links among society, nature, and power.

Furthermore, these approaches challenge the notion of infrastructures as neutral technical devices, instead framing them as deeply political artifacts. Beyond fulfilling practical functions, infrastructures help construct societal projects, development models, and imaginaries of progress, integration, or sovereignty. In Latin America, infrastructures have been closely linked to processes of state-building, territorial integration, and natural resource exploitation, driving economic and socio-spatial transformations while also fostering forms of dependency and inequality. Studying infrastructures thus makes it possible to explore historical tensions that have characterized the region—such as the dynamics between development and dependency, integration and exclusion, or modernization and dispossession.

Finally, these approaches treat infrastructures as processes of constant construction and transformation rather than as finished works. Their uses, meanings, and materialities shift over time through practices of maintenance, repair, reuse, or abandonment, producing effects that often extend beyond the original objectives of their construction.⁷ Analyzing these trajectories helps explain how infrastructures continuously participate in shaping social, territorial, and political relationships.

- 3 César Martins de Souza and Martha Ruffini, "Dictadura, poder estatal y grandes proyectos en regiones marginales. La Amazonia brasileña y la Patagonia argentina durante la década de 1960 y 1970," *Folia Histórica del Nordeste*, n.º 43 (2022): 81-106.
- 4 William Summerhill, "The Development of Infrastructure," in *The Cambridge Economic History of Latin America*, vol. 2, *The Long Twentieth Century*, edited by Victor Bulmer-Thomas, John H. Coatsworth, and Roberto Cortés Conde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 293-326.
- 5 Guillermo Guajardo Soto, "Infraestructura y logística en la historia económica: una contribución a partir de los casos de Chile y México, ca. 1850-1970," *América Latina en la Historia Económica* 22, n.º 2 (2015): 7-27.
- 6 Raquel Velho and Sebastián Ureta, "Frail Modernities: Latin American Infrastructures between Repair and Ruination," *Tapuya: Latin American Science, Technology and Society* 2, n.º 1 (2019): 428-441.
- 7 Nicolás Richard et al., "El camino, el camión y el arriero: la reorganización mecánica de la Puna de Atacama (1930-1980)," *Historia* 396, n.º 1 (2018): 163-192; Jonathan Alderman and Geoff Goodwin, eds., *The Social and Political Life of Latin American Infrastructures* (London: University of London Press, 2022).

On this basis, this special issue aims to contribute to the historicization of Latin American infrastructures, understood as evolving historical processes that cannot be reduced to their roles as technical artifacts or material supports. Infrastructures offer insight into the production of territories, how diverse societies addressed environmental, economic, and political challenges, and how power relations and modes of circulation and regulation were shaped over time. Approaching infrastructures through their historicity enables examination of both the conditions of their emergence and the transformations in their meanings, uses, and effects across different historical and geographical contexts.

This call for papers seeks to foster research that engages with questions such as the following: How did infrastructures shape the historical production of nation-states and their territories in Latin America? What imaginaries of progress, development, integration, or sovereignty contributed to the conception, legitimation, and materialization of infrastructure projects? In what ways did they participate in the construction of state power, processes of accumulation, and the production or transformation of specific social and territorial relations? How were they appropriated, contested, or re-signified by diverse social actors? What insights can historical research—in dialogue with other disciplines and approaches across the humanities and social sciences—offer for a better understanding of the material, temporal, and scalar complexities of infrastructures? How did infrastructures influence historical approaches to addressing socio-environmental risks and disasters, and what role did they play in the processes of territorial reconstruction and transformation?

Without attempting to exhaust the complexity of the infrastructure phenomenon in Latin America, this dossier particularly invites submissions that engage with any of the following themes:

- State-building and contested territorialities in the historical production of space and nature.
- Everyday life, affects, local re-appropriations, and uses of infrastructure.
- Accumulation processes, (infra)structural violence, and resistance related to infrastructure projects at various scales.
- Infrastructure, transformations in society-nature relations, and energy transitions.
- Infrastructure, risk, vulnerability, and disasters: historical processes of reconstruction and territorial transformation.
- Production of technical knowledge, expertise, representations of technology, and modernity projects associated with infrastructure.
- Transnational circulations, technology transfer, and linkages between local, national, and global processes.
- Labor, workers, and infrastructure.
- Sources, archives, and methodologies for the history and historiography of infrastructure.