

Communication Maintenance in *Longue Durée*. A paper-based workshop

In the last decades, more and more scholars have claimed for inclusion of maintenance among the key topics and key questions of technology (Edgerton 2007, Jackson 2014, Russell and Vinsel 2018, Henke and Sims 2020,). Communication and media studies have just partially included in their methodological and analytical tools reflections on maintenance (see Balbi and Leggero 2020; Weber and Krebs 2021) and this paper-based workshop aims to advance in this aspect adding another fundamental yet underestimated layer in communication and maintenance research: the *Longue durée*.

Maintenance of communication infrastructures, for example, is a long-term process lasting for decades or even centuries. On the one hand, roads, networks and cables are constantly maintained to keep them functioning but, on the other, to understand their strategic relevance is important to adopt a *Longue durée* perspective (Braudel 1958) since those channels of communication have often political, economic, and sociocultural relevance. Sometimes, maintenance has a strong effect not only in preserving communication infrastructures but also in modifying or even dismantling them. In long-terms, communications can be radically changed because of maintenance and transformed into something totally different from what was originally to be maintained.

Furthermore, despite or even because of maintenance and its related costs, communication infrastructures are abandoned in favor of other and apparently most “advanced” technologies of communication, whose maintenance is easier for example. This is typical when new technologies of communication emerge or when new cultures of maintenance appear.

Finally, communication maintenance in *Longue durée* can also be considered in political and cultural terms. Sometimes, the technological dimension of the communication infrastructure to be maintained is secondary and political ideologies are more relevant: national or regional demands, (fake or real) ethnical ancestries, centers and peripheries, mountains and flatlands, cultural claims are all relevant in deciding to maintain an old and misused road, an undersea cable, a trait of railway, etc.

This workshop will host methodological and empirical approaches and we aim for contributions ranging from history to anthropology, from geography to political studies, from economics to obviously communication and transportation studies. The papers will have to deal with the topic of maintenance in communication in the long-term at large, have to discuss problems and challenges, opportunities and successes as well as failures, cultural changes and continuities over time in

thinking about the maintenance of communication. Papers should be focused not only on one specific point in time but take into account decades and centuries in order to grasp the hidden changes and undersea continuities which are not evident.

This two-day workshop will be held in hybrid form, live and online.

Important dates and deadlines

- In order to proceed with the selection we ask for a **300-word abstract** to be sent to gabriele.balbi@usi.ch and roberto.leggero@usi.ch by **10 September 2021 (extended deadline)**.
- The selected participants will be **notified by 25 September 2021** and they will have to provide **a draft paper of max 5'000 words by 31 January 2022**.
- This paper will be discussed collectively during the **workshop on 24-25 February 2022, held in Mendrisio (Switzerland)**.

Organizing Committee

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