

Risk and Vulnerability in the In-between City: Governing through Infrastructure

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This paper examines strategies of risk management as a means of governing through physical and social infrastructure networks in the in-between city. Here, risk and vulnerability are perceived as possible sudden, traumatic and often unpredictable events that rupture physical connectivity and everyday flows within the city. Within urban regions that confound formal boundaries and conventional perspectives of city development, managing risk is understood as particularly difficult, given the range of municipal jurisdictions, levels of government, and changing land use patterns involved in any given area.

Efforts to secure infrastructure not only focus on physical networks themselves, but are also closely linked with particular strategies of governing. These strategies place subjects on a continuum of risk - as potential threats or victims – depending on their physical locations, identities, and trajectories as they make their way through the city. Through a combination of technologies of surveillance and freedom, regimes of risk management become articulated through infrastructure.

In many ways, these regimes can be understood as a continuation of liberal and advanced-liberal means of governing through the city (particularly through its built environment). However, the increasingly decentralized form of the in-between city however poses particularly difficult challenges for governing. Given the seemingly unplanned or unmanageable development of contemporary cities, overt means of governing are redrawn and combined with different strategies that both mobilize subjects as partners in risk management, while at the same time positing them as threats. State, private and quasi-state agencies become enrolled in developing ways of minimizing risk and preventing disruption.