Infrastructure as gesture

published (2016) in Infrastructures and Social Complexity: A Routledge Companion. Eds. P. Harvey, C. Bruun Jensen, A. Morita. London and New York: Routledge.

Infrastructure as Gesture

Gisa Weszkalnys

A licensing round: *March 2010. The first licensing round for petroleum exploration rights in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of São Tomé and Príncipe is launched at APPEX, "A truly global A&D [acquisitions and divestitures] conference" held in the Business Design Centre in Islington, London. The participants include exploration firms, individual country delegations, and service companies such as PGS, which has acquired STP's seismic data and now supports the country's presence at the conference. PGS seeks to capitalize on STP's prospective oil. Products are being shown off on large-sized posters, maps and leaflets. Pens, sweets, coffee, biscuits, and other freebies are handed out. The PGS representatives assure me that the turnout is fulfilling their expectations. At least two companies have already shown interest in visiting PGS's Surrey data room. The EEZ is virgin territory, they explain, and frontier areas attract interest. They expect bids to come in soon. Three per block would be good. On a screen in a darkened auditorium, STP's Prime Minister Rafael Branco launches the licensing round. His failure to attain a visa prevented him from being there in person. The long-awaited licensing round was repeatedly delayed by conflicting political interests, mere foot dragging, or maybe by nothing at all. Time runs slowly in Africa, PGS representatives tell me. All that counts is that "today is an auspicious day for us", as one of them proclaims. Ten years of seismic surveying and considerable investments—about $100,000 per day just to hire the research vessel—are finally coming to fruition.*

A citizens' workshop: *August 2015. About 140 Berliners gather in the Park Inn Hotel at Alexanderplatz, a public square in Berlin's eastern centre. They have come to discuss with city planners, various experts, and each other Alexanderplatz's future fate. A master plan for the square's redevelopment, first conceived in the early 1990s but only partially implemented to date, is now considered in desperate need of revision. However, the parameters for the development will remain in place, explains Berlin Senate's building director in her opening talk. Her words are carefully chosen: the aim is to update, not to redraw, the plan. In any case, as the architect who designed the plan emphasizes—repeating his view of twenty years ago—Alexanderplatz's current socialist design is hardly worth keeping. When pressed, his prognosis is optimistic: "Two-thirds of the envisaged high-rise buildings will be built within the next five years". "Capital has confidence in the location," comments one of the participating experts, citing the developers' preliminary €73 million investment in infrastructures as evidence. Yet, he adds wryly, their confidence has not quite sufficed for high-rise buildings. What we are doing here, says one citizen, is to help dream the new Alexanderplatz into existence—complete with appealing shops and restaurants, adequate amenities, and affordable apartments—even as the master plan seems increasingly obsolete.*

In this chapter, I consider a specific modality of infrastructures in relation to the contradictory dynamics of contemporary capitalism.[1] I call this modality "infrastructure as gesture". The infrastructures I examine include a range of practices and devices, such as the licensing round for

São Tomé and Príncipe's EEZ and the citizens' workshop for Alexanderplatz. I argue that, as gestures, infrastructures are neither simply means to an end, that is, instruments in the realization of larger-scale projects. Nor are they ends, or project outcomes, in themselves. Instead, infrastructures as gestures suggest the existence of productive potential—often over extended periods of time and in situations where this potential may threaten to remain unrealized. They provide us with a clue to what sustains a notion of capitalism's propulsive force, which we often take for granted, in the face of its characteristic contradictions (Harvey 1989). Infrastructures as gestures thus differ, in important ways, from infrastructural projects that have blatantly failed (Green, *this volume*), from those that have been called into question by their users (von Schnitzler 2013), and from infrastructures that ought not to work but have nonetheless persisted (Richardson 2016). By contrast, I argue that, in their gestural form, infrastructures contribute to the postponement of failure. Specifically, they prevent the projects of which they are part from being written off or abandoned.

The gesture has been somewhat peripheral in anthropological theorizing—despite Geertz's famous invocation of the wink and the twitch in his essay on thick description, and despite its prominent place in the writings of scholars such as Mauss, Elias, and Goffman.[2] In developing the gesture's analytical purchase beyond its conventional reference to a type of bodily movement, I draw not on anthropology, however, but on the work of Giorgio Agamben who has provided one of the most compelling discussions of the gesture as a philosophical concept. Agamben sought to formulate an ethics of encounter in which the "formless kind of life" embodied by the gesture is a critical element (ten Bos 2005: 27). Building on Varro and Aristotle, Agamben pointed to a subtle distinction between the gesture's Latin root, *gerere* meaning to carry, manage, or conduct, and related action verbs, including *facere* (making, creating) and *agere* (acting, performing). In this view, "[t]he gesture is the exhibition of mediality: it is the process of making a means visible as such" (Agamben 2000: 58). The gesture, Agamben notes, is where "nothing is being produced or acted, but rather something is being endured and supported" (2000: 57). Similarly, though in a very different way from Agamben's philosophical project, I argue that although the infrastructure as gesture usually fails to be productive, it is rarely "just" a gesture. That is, infrastructural gestures are not simply tokens, not vacuous, even as ambiguity remains inherent.

I will develop the notion of the gesture's indeterminate yet sustaining force by comparing two quite dissimilar cases. The first is the protracted quest for what petro-industry experts call "first oil" in São Tomé and Príncipe (STP), a micro-island state located in the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea. First oil refers to the initial oil pumped from a newly commercialized exploration well. It acts on forms of speculative knowledge and engages one or more capital, technology, and knowledge-intensive investment projects that are the indispensable but inherently risky "motor[s] of capitalist wealth creation" (Røyrvik 2011:5). The second case is an equally drawn-out effort to complete one of Berlin's most anxiously anticipated urban development projects, Alexanderplatz, a public square and transportation hub in the city's eastern centre.

When I started out research in STP in 2007, few people expected that, nearly a decade on, oil would still remain but a distant prospect. Contracts for petroleum extraction in STP's offshore territory were signed in the late 1990s, followed by seismic research and exploratory drillings. However, the quest for first oil is always touch and go. Blockages and delay threaten at multiple points. Insufficient capital, labour, and expertise, political and institutional weaknesses, geological and ecological conditions, as well as burst commodities bubbles are among the factors that may halt anticipated resource booms (Dean 1987). First oil's long lead-up time and decades of dormancy are experienced as a rupture of ordinary productive processes, as they have been in STP where no

significant discoveries have been made to date. The unfulfilled promise of STP's resource assets has led me to examine my earlier research on Alexanderplatz with fresh eyes (Weszkalnys 2010). Not unlike oil in STP, the implementation of a master plan for Alexanderplatz, first proposed in 1994, has been encumbered by material intransigence and the seemingly inscrutable economic logic of real estate markets.

STP's oil and Berlin's Alexanderplatz each reveal a complex entanglement of the interests and desires of state actors, corporations, developers, investment funds, and citizens, which are supported in systematic but incomplete ways by infrastructural work. The technical, legal, and commercial infrastructures examined below sustain the distinctive temporality of dormancy and delay characteristic of both the Alexanderplatz development project and STP's oil exploration. Here the attainment of concrete outcomes (buildings, first oil) gets readily overtaken by the circulation of facts about them. Productivity is put on hold for a variety of reasons, resulting in what, following Marx, I will refer to as a "pause". In his analysis of the circuits of productive capital in volume 2 of *Capital*, Marx demonstrated the obstruction posed to capitalist value expansion and accumulation, for example, by labourers' need for rest, by seeds sprouting in the soil, or by a shortage of necessary tools in the market. Productive capital is held "in readiness" but remains fallow, although this fallowness "is a requirement for the uninterrupted flow of the process of production" (Marx 2013: 647). From one perspective, such pauses are the tacit drivers of an accelerating capitalist temporality: a problem to be avoided through managerial and technological change as well as credit systems in the interest of higher turnover rates and profits. However, from another perspective, pauses are partly generated by the multiple contradictions inherent in the dynamics of capitalist production (Harvey 1989:181-3). Here capital investment in suspense—sometimes for a given period a company might spend on the waiting list for a sought-after drilling barge or for the time it takes to complete bureaucratic procedure in a planning process, sometimes indefinitely. It is in the expansive moment of the pause that infrastructures acquire their gestural qualities. Despite their differences, the two cases discussed here show how epistemic instruments and technical devices—such as contracts, exploration zones, and test wells in STP, and a legally binding masterplan, transport infrastructures, and even some incipient constructions at Alexanderplatz—have become *gestures* of potentiality without compelling a predetermined outcome.

Infrastructures of First Oil

In a chronicle of STP's nascent petroleum economy, Luís Prazeres (2008), the former head of the country's National Oil Agency, neatly sums up the infrastructural work that has been carried out to generate first oil there. Since the late 1990s, maritime boundaries have circumscribed the prospective hydrocarbon asset, expected to be located principally offshore; three licensing rounds allocated access to it;[3] mechanisms for good governance and transparency have been implemented; and a series of agreements have defined the obligations of the country's various industry partners. The National Oil Agency has been part of this effort as the body charged with managing the technical aspects of future hydrocarbon exploration (Weszkalnys 2011). More recently, the Agency organized the licensing round for the Santomean EEZ, discussed at the start of this chapter, which further buttressed a notion of Santomean oil prospects in the absence of their commercial realization.

These legal, commercial, and technical infrastructures are constitutive of a socio-material arrangement of measurement, connection, and qualification characteristic of the global oil industry (Barry 2006). Importantly, with the continued deferral of STP's first oil, these devices have

acquired additional salience. First, they supply the tangible scaffolding to what is largely a speculative endeavour (Tsing 2005: 63). Second, they provide an "informational enrichment" (Barry 2014: 141) of geological matter, making it amenable to the exploitative fantasies of states and their economic partners (Braun 2000). Third, in the face of a sluggish exploration process, they have become gestural. Like measurements of a foetal heartbeat, they furnish hope by signalling dormancy not death. Together, they prevent the pause into which STP's first oil has entered from turning into a failure or loss. A closer examination of three such devices—the contract, the zone, and the well—will illustrate their sustaining or gestural force (cf. Agamben 2000).

The start of what is locally referred to as STP's "petroleum era" (*era do petróleo*) is often associated with the signing of a contract between the Santomean government and the Environment Remediation Holding Company (ERHC), a little-known U.S. oil company, in May 1997. The contract granted ERHC some extraordinary allowances in the exploitation of STP's hydrocarbon resources. For a fee of US$5 million, it assigned the company 40 per cent of the revenues from future oil and preferential rights in future concessions. ERHC promised to raise the funds necessary to kick-start exploration activities. It would act as negotiator with any other company wishing to explore Santomean oil, and earn a 5 per cent fee from any payable bonuses. That is, rather than providing a course for action, the contract established a promissory value. Despite the company's limited expertise and financial resources, ERHC staff convinced the Santomean officials of their ability to carry the project through and to raise US$100 million in seven months. These promises were supplemented by a number of gestural moves: A maritime boundary claim was filed, a joint venture oil company was formed between ERHC and the Santomean government, and in 1998 another contract was signed with Mobil, later ExxonMobil, obliging the company to initiate seismic research in STP's offshore territory where the key prospects were expected to be located (Seibert 2006: 372).

Over the next few years, ERHC and the Santomean government broke off, revised, and entered into new agreements. Accusations of bribery and corruption flew through the air. In 2001 the company was acquired by Nigerian businessman, Emeka Offor, and subsequently battled bankruptcy and an investigation by the US Securities and Exchange Commission.[4] While imperfectly quantified oil potential has begun produce some value for ERHC,[5] for the Santomean state ERHC's involvement is deemed responsible for a substantial loss of possible earnings, and is now criticized as a liability. However, such argument benefits from hindsight, I was reminded by Afonso Varela, the National Oil Agency's former legal director. After all, he argued, ERHC effectively turned STP into a petroleum frontier at a time nobody paid attention. It indirectly generated 2,723 km of 2D seismic data of STP's oil prospects, which were indispensable to attract additional investors (cf. Seibert 2006: 372).

A second gesture in STP's quest for first oil was the country's filing of a maritime boundary claim and the establishment of an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) with the United Nations Law of the Sea Commission in New York City in 1998. Filing such claims, as a legislative act, has important consequences for the demarcation of new resource frontiers as well as the identification of owners and their legitimate partners. Dreams of sovereign substances and petroleum-based national self-sufficiency were soon challenged, however. Seismic surveys of STP's offshore hydrocarbon potential, carried out by a subsidiary of the global petroleum-services provider Schlumberger (paid for by ExxonMobil), had located the most valuable prospects in areas bordering Nigerian waters (Seibert 2006: 372-3). Whilst Equatorial Guinea and Gabon readily accepted the suggested boundary of a Santomean EEZ based on a principle of equidistance, Nigeria proved recalcitrant. It questioned the principle's appropriateness on the basis of its much larger coastline.

Three years of protracted negotiations ensued, leading to another important item of bilateral jurisdiction: a zone managed jointly but unevenly split between the two states, with Nigeria receiving sixty and STP forty per cent of any revenues that may be generated from it.

The delineation of the joint development zone (JDZ), covering 34,450 km^2, was a critical gesture, sustaining a notion of exploitable potential and opening up possibilities for anticipatory gain from substances not yet extracted. Now, exploration blocks could be allocated in auctions for exploration rights. However, especially the second of these licensing rounds, held in 2004, turned farcical the conventional wisdom that auctions are foolproof instruments for establishing a fair and real price. A report by STP's Attorney General alleged clandestine decision-making involving Nigerian and Santomean government figures and their advisors, and called for the annulment of the licensing round.[6] Similarly, the authority managing the zone, the JDA, which has its headquarters in Abuja, has been seen as a fitting enactment of STP's absent oil—an inflated bureaucratic apparatus with a budget of several million dollars per year, eating into STP's limited petroleum revenues.[7]

Finally, at the start of 2006, "encouraging early signs" from Obo-1, the first exploration well in Block 1 of the JDZ drilled by Chevron Texaco and the most "low-risk target" according to the company's technical expertise, made ERHC share prices shoot up. Thousands of feet of steel had been lowered to perforate the icy-cold sea floor, a drilling riser bringing up the mud, people busy operating the equipment, measuring, analyzing, and ascertaining that the technology remained stably connected in this floating environment. Wells can increase companies' stockmarket value by turning so-called possible and probable into proven reserves (cf. Mitchell et al. 2012: 30); but the geological conditions they reveal may also disrupt a project previously deemed technologically feasible and economically sound.

Speaking to the press, Chevron's expat representative, Tim Parsons, recommended caution before commercial viability was proven: "[I]t is too soon to speculate about a date for the first barrels." Data so insufficiently analysed and confidential, it would be unethical for the company to even start guessing what they might reveal. For the moment, the reservoirs were deemed not to "justify economic development on their own." Indeed, in 2010, Chevron withdrew from the JDZ for reasons that are likely to have included a careful balancing of geological prospects, technological possibilities, assessments of future oil markets, and the company's need to satisfy both shareholder expectations and long-term crude supply for an integrated business. The disappointment was temporarily relieved by French multinational Total and its promise of a US$200 million investment to explore the JDZ's Block 1. However, this company, too, pulled out less than two years later spelling, as some observers suggest, the end of Santomean oil hopes (Seibert 2013).

Announcements of "no oil", however, have been swiftly rephrased as "no oil yet". Official pronouncements have remained optimistic. As STP's Minister of Natural Resources claimed in an interview with a local newspaper in October 2013: "Companies have their politics, their profit margins and other [considerations], and they act in accordance with their expectations…[W]e have confirmed reserves [of hydrocarbons] in sufficient quantities to make [Block 1] viable." Recent efforts to open up STP's exclusive economic zone to commercial exploitation with seismic research and the licensing round discussed at the start of this chapter continue to act as gestures of the prospect of oil. Similarly, sporadic official announcements, assessments carried out by the IMF or the African Development Bank, new plans to deploy advanced exploration technology in the JDZ, and recent exploration contracts for blocks in the EEZ have not ceased to sow optimism.[8] In lieu of productive value, they continue to hold out the promise of a profitable future.

A Square Suspended

I now wish to trace an instance of gesturing beyond the extractive sector. A case in point comes from my earlier research on an attenuated urban development project in post-unification Berlin (Weszkalnys 2010). Between 2001 and 2002, I carried out fieldwork in Berlin—a city caught, it seemed then, in an endless cycle of demolition and rebuilding following German unification a decade earlier. My research explored this dramatic transformation. I was particularly drawn to the controversy around Alexanderplatz, an emblematic square in the city's eastern centre. If oil developments in STP have been associated with expectations of economic growth, prosperity, and greater autonomy from the grip of international donors and global governance agencies, the planned development of Alexanderplatz similarly supported the projection of a specific future imaginary. In this case, it was one of bringing the city back to an assumed normality after forty years of national division. This was to be accomplished through a massive spatial reordering of the square that, till then, had been characterized by its distinctive socialist design, in public-private partnership with a disparate group of national and international real-estate and investment firms. The controversy around Alexanderplatz crystallized some important issues about the painful process of building a future out of Berlin's fragmented cityscape, and the conflicting ontologies of space and people, "East" and "West", in the new Germany.

A square suspended, *ein Platz im Wartestand*, was the nickname that Thomas, a member of a civic action group I worked with at the time, attributed to Alexanderplatz back in 2001.[9] When I met Thomas again in 2015, after many years of being out of touch, the group of which he had once been a member to defend a "gentle" redevelopment of Alexanderplatz, had long dissolved. But, we agreed, the square still lay in anticipation of its future transformation, notwithstanding some visible changes: partially reorganized traffic routes, a new three-level underground car park, embellishing street furniture and pavestones, and even a new building or two sealing Alexanderplatz's frayed seams. Yet this was still a large step removed from the radical change that had once been envisaged.

I-B4a,[10] as the master plan for Alexanderplatz is known by Berlin's planning administrators is, in some sense, a hangover of the optimistic post-unification period when Berlin was projected to become a booming capital. First conceived in 1993, this plan came into force in April 2000. Its vision is one of near complete redevelopment: five high-rise buildings of up to 150 metres will be erected around the square, plus several more in the vicinity—comprising a volume of 417,700 square metres of mixed-use functions, three times the volume available at the time the planning process was initiated. This vision has been slow to materialize. As a result I-B4a has displayed both fragility and obduracy (Hommels 2005; Richardson 2016).

When I returned to Berlin in 2015, I attended the workshop discussed at the start of this chapter, following an earlier call by Berlin's parliament to review the plan's future fate. Years of non-implementation, as Thomas explained to me, had allowed time to reconsider, for example, the value of the GDR architecture around the square. Two of the former socialist buildings, Haus des Reisens and Haus des Berliner Verlages, have now attained "listed" status, setting unexpected constraints for the master plan's realization. What's more, an oversight by Berlin's planning administration has meant that the two newly-erected buildings correspond only minimally with the high-rise vision. With an eye on short-term gain, developers have opted for a lighter, less costly construction technique than would be necessary for these buildings to be integrated into the more voluminous high-rises. Other, historical infrastructures have proven recalcitrant, too: a huge World War II bunker and underground train tunnels are obstacles to one of the planned building's foundations.

As an item of local state planning and jurisdiction, I-B4a has proven inadequate in many ways. Yet few would call for a complete abandonment of the project. First, although the investors have consistently claimed economic conditions in Berlin to be unfavourable to development on the scale envisaged, there is a clear interest in hanging on to the significant square footage inscribed in the plan. And while Berlin's planning administration might consider I-B4a a hindrance to the stated goal of urban enhancement, challenging the plan could have major political and legal repercussions. In the 2015 workshop, the Berlin Senate's Building Director raised the possibility of a revision of the existing contracts with the investors. However, in conversations with administrators following the event, it became clear that such a revision was unlikely. Not only would it risk reopening a Pandora's box of dispute and delay. It might also lead the investors to seek indemnification, not least for those €73 million already spent on infrastructures. Last, some of the citizens who participated in the workshop clearly did consider the event an opportunity to argue for a thorough overhaul of the existing plans. Comments scribbled on yellow, red, and blue cards and on writing boards distributed throughout the venue belied the apparently consensual atmosphere. They asked whether Berlin required any high-rise developments at all, demanded respect for the GDR architecture, and noted, quite simply, the master plan's obsolescence. However, there was also much worry about what the future might bring. Many residents expressed a sense of devaluation, or at least a lack of correspondence between their own aspirations and the square's ugly presence, largely associated with post-unification socio-economic changes. In this view, too, the desire for "improvement" was undiminished.

In short, I-B4a has helped to sustain a notion of great economic, aesthetic, and ethical potential in the heart of Berlin's eastern centre. Alongside the urban infrastructures that anticipate the future Alexanderplatz and the incipient building works, it is part of a repertory of gestural features pointing to a modern unified Berlin (cf. Kendon 1997: 119). Although I-B4a has functioned perhaps most effectively in structuring present relations between Berlin's government, private investors, and citizens (cf. Baxstrom 2013), its anticipation of a developed Alexanderplatz has not been completely unsubstantiated. Planning, here, has been a matter of contingency and accommodation rather than a linear progression from intentions to results (Weszkalnys 2010; see also Abram and Weszkalnys 2013). The 2015 workshop could be seen as part of an effort to fix the plan "in increments", befitting the size and complexity of this infrastructural system where "changes take time and negotiation, and adjustment with other aspects of the system are involved" (Star 1999: 382). I-B4a has thus been made to withstand the elasticity of time (Weszkalnys 2010: 113) produced by the continued out-of-step temporalities of state planning, real estate and investment markets.

Pausing and Gesturing

In this chapter, I explored the relationship between processes of pausing and gesturing, that is, the role of infrastructures in sustaining a specific temporality characteristic of capitalist development. Here infrastructures play an important role, though not necessarily that originally intended. Façade, fake, or failure—anthropologists have highlighted a number of ways in which infrastructures gain visibility without fulfilling their expected purpose (Star 1999). So-called white elephants, for example, operate in what Larkin (2013: 335) dubs a "poetic" mode and embody a politics reliant on "arbitrary symbolic acts" (Mbembe and Roitman 1995: 337). White elephants don't come to anything because, by definition, they are expressions of corrupt rule, underwritten by bribery and embezzlement (Appel 2012). In the contemporary economy of appearances, infrastructures may

also provide fraudulent evidence propping up the illicit collusions between corporate and state agents and new circuits of financialization (Tsing 2005). Last, infrastructures that have proven blatantly harmful may be kept in place by political processes that aim to overrule unsustainable material realities (Richardson 2016). By contrast, the infrastructures discussed in this chapter are more indeterminate. Contracts, licensing rounds, economic zones, wells, plans, and workshops participate in dispersed sociomaterial arrangements designed to bring greater certainty to unwieldy, highly contingent projects but they inadvertently upend their stated goals. Instead of contributing to the realization of the potential that was envisaged, they become gestures of what *might* be. Even as their effects remain contested, they hold in suspense the possibility that, eventually, they will lead to something.

At first glance, the two projects explored in this chapter might seem to have little in common: they take place on different continents, involving different sets of actors and technologies in the pursuit of different outcomes. However, they find themselves in a similar temporal moment, which I referred to as an extended pause. The time of the pause is not empty, not devoid of labour *per se*, even if the material transformations this labour generates can remain somewhat invisible. It is about ascertaining potentialities, and thus constituting, for example, geologic substances as a resource and plots of inner-city land as real estate. In the pause, the realization of economic potential is suspended but nevertheless maintained by a variety of infrastructural gestures, displaying a specific temporal ethics that attenuates or postpones failure.

Potentiality, in the ethnographies that this chapter explored, presents itself both as "futures fold[ed] into presents" (Fortun 2008: 285) and as stymied, marked by blockages and setbacks (Røyrvik 2011). The speculative practices of oil corporations and investment firms inscribe value of a sort that remains unsubstantiated. Contracts are divested of their legal force by reference to economic pragmatism. Wells reveal not resources but a lack of viability. And supposedly real constructions are but proxies of the original. The outcome, however, is not the collapse of the projects in question but their continued suspension, in other words, a sustained pause. In lieu of productive value, the infrastructure as gesture thus holds out the promise of a profitable future. Potentiality is continually reaffirmed. These gestures invite us to critically re-examine contemporary capitalism's persistent claims to boundless creativity. Instead, they highlight a multiplicity of speculative forms and temporal-material realignments that emerge when things slow down while everything else keeps moving.

---

[1] Portions of this chapter are reproduced by permission from my article "Geology, Potentiality, Speculation: On the Indeterminacy of 'First Oil'", *Cultural Anthropology* 30(4).

[2] Linguistic anthropologists have noted the gesture's important supportive role in communication, its ability to render speech more precise, to furnish additional meanings, or to substitute for it altogether (Kendon 1997). French anthropologist Marcel Jousse, for example, considered the gesture a predecessor to spoken language, underpinning our ability to imitate others and thus to be in the world. For Jousse, the gesture was part of what makes us uniquely human (Sinaert 1990). At the same time, enormous variety in gesture use has been observed across space and time as well as variety in the ontology of the gesture, for example, as an expression of "inner" or "unconscious" feelings or as an embodiment of ethics (Braddick 2009; Jackson 2013; Kendon 1997).

[3] The first two licensing rounds in 2003 and 2004 pertained to the JDZ with Nigeria; a third round was held in 2010 for STP's EEZ.

[4] Any proceedings regarding ERHC were formally closed in April 2012.

[5] Though overall a loss-making operation, ERHC sold some of its participating interests in Santomean oil blocks in 2006, making US$45,900,000. It also received US$51,800,000 from JDZ signature bonuses.

[6] Still, several PSCs regarding blocks 2, 3, and 4 were signed in 2005.
[7] Signature bonuses from the JDZ licensing rounds have amounted to US$324,000,000 of which STP received approximately 40%. The JDA's total budget 2004-2013 has been US$92,464,297, of which STP's nominal contribution has been a little more than a third. However, US$22 million of this amount has been loaned to STP by Nigeria (see https://eiti.org/sao-tome-and-principe).
[8] *Exploração conjunta de petróleo com a Nigéria dentre de 18 meses*, RFI Português, 4 April 2014; *Galp, Kosmos awarded Sao Tome block*, Rigzone, 27 October 2015.
[9] Until the mid-twentieth century, the expression "*im Wartestand*" connoted a specific status of non-active service for civil servants whose position had been dissolved or made redundant.
[10] More precisely, there are several partial construction plans in the Alexanderplatz area (I-B4a, I-B4a-3, I-B4ba and I-B4bb, I-B4ca and I-B4cb, I-B4d, I-43a and I-43b, I-70a and I-70b). I use I-B4a as shorthand, also because it is the one most frequently discussed, comprising the most central area of Alexanderplatz.

References

Abram, S. & G. Weszkalnys 2013. Elusive Promises: Planning in the Contemporary World. An Introduction. In Elusive Promises: Planning in the Contemporary World. ed. S. Abram & G. Weszkalnys, 1-33: Berghahn.

Agamben, G. 2000. Means Without End: Notes on Politics. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

Appel, H. 2012. Walls and white elephants: Oil extraction, responsibility, and infrastructural violence in Equatorial Guinea. Ethnography 13, 439-65

Barry, A. 2006. Technological Zones. European Journal of Social Theory 9, 239–53.

--- 2014. Material politics: Disputes along the pipeline. Malden and Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

Bowker, G.C. 1994. Science on the Run: Information management and industrial geophysics at Schlumberger, 1920-1940. Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press.

Braddick, M.J. (ed.) 2009. The Politics of Gesture: Historical Perspectives Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Braun, B. 2000. Producing vertical territory: Geology and governmentality in late Victorian Canada. Cultural Geographies 7, 7-46.

Dean, W. 1987. Brazil and the Struggle for Rubber: A Study in Environmental History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Harvey, D. 1989. The Condition of Postmodernity : An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Hommels, A. 2005. Studying Obduracy in the City: Toward a Productive Fusion between Technology Studies and Urban Studies. Science, Technology & Human Values 30, 323-51.

Jackson, M. 2013. Lifeworlds: Essays in Existential Anthropology. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Kendon, A. 1997. Gesture. Annual Review of Anthropology 26, 109-28.

Larkin, B. 2013. The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure. Annual Review of Anthropology 42, 327-43.

Marx, K. 2013. Capital: A critical analysis of capitalist production. Ware: Wordsworth Editions.

Mbembe, A. & J. Roitman 1995. Figures of the Subject in Times of Crisis. Public Culture 7, 323-52.

Mitchell, J. & e. al. 2012. What Next for the Oil and Gas Industry? ed. Editor. London: Chatham House.

Nolan, P.A. & M.C. Thurber 2010. On the State's Choice of Oil Company: Risk Management and the Frontier of the Petroleum Industry. In Working Paper 99. ed. Editor. PESD, Stanford University.

Pálsson, G. 1998. The Birth of the Aquarium: The Political Ecology of Icelandic Fishing. In The Politics of Fishing. ed. T.S. Gray, 209-27. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Prazeres, L.d. 2008. Dossier Petróleo: Cronologia Histórica 1876-2004. S. Tomé: Banco Internacional de São Tomé e Príncipe.

Richardson, T. 2016. Objecting (to) Infrastructure: Ecopolitics at the Ukrainian Ends of the Danube. Science as Culture 25.

Røyrvik, E.A. 2011. The Allure of Capialism: An Ethnography of Management and the Global Economy in Crisis. New York and Oxford Berghahn.

Schnitzler, A.von 2013. Traveling Technologies: Infrastructure, ethical regimes, and the materiality of politics in South Africa. Cultural Anthropology 28.

Seibert, G. 2006. Comrades, Clients and Cousins: Colonialism, Socialism and Democratization in São Tomé e Príncipe. . Leiden and Boston: Brill.

--- 2013. São Tomé and Príncipe: The End of the Oil Dream? In IPRIS Viewpoints. ed. Editor. Lisbon.

Sienaert, E.R. 1990. Marcel Jousse: The Oral Style and the Anthropology of Gesture. Oral Tradition 5, 91-106.

Star, S.L. 1999. The Ethnography of Infrastructure. American Behavioral Scientist 43, 377-91.

ten Bos, R. 2005. On the Possibility of Formless Life: Agamben's Politics of the Gesture. Ephemera 5, 26-44.

Tsing, A.L. 2005. Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Weszkalnys, G. 2010. Berlin, Alexanderplatz: Transforming Place in a Unified Germany. Oxford and New York: Berghahn.

--- 2011. Cursed resources, or articulations of economic theory in the Gulf of Guinea. Economy and Society 40, 345-72.
--- 2013. Oil's Magic: Contestation and Materiality. In Cultures of Energy: Anthropological Perspectives on Powering the Planet. ed. S. Strauss, S. Rupp & T. Love, 267-83. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.