

The Chair of Comparative Politics is calling for applications for

BA and MA theses: critical infrastructure and the state

The Chair of Comparative Politics is currently involved in a large-scale research project analyzing Swiss economic history along granular data on new firm foundations and exits (for more information see [here](#)). One part of our research relates to the provision of critical infrastructure. Critical infrastructure comprises sectors that are considered highly important for the functioning and wellbeing of a state, e.g., health, ICT, transportation, energy, and water. The topic has recently received more public attention with regards to securing the provision of infrastructure (such as access to natural resources necessary for energy production) and protection of this infrastructure from foreign influence and espionage (such as data security of ICT infrastructure).

We are offering bachelor and master theses around three related topics (see below). Please note:

- Depending on the stage (BA or MA), research questions, methods and workload will be adjusted.
- Theses include a literature review and either quantitative data analysis, case studies or interviews.
- For data analysis with Swiss data a proficient knowledge of German and French is necessary.
- A thesis at our Chair now also implies a presentation of the findings prior to handing in the thesis.

Topics

- 1) The role of the state in providing critical infrastructure in general and, specifically in Switzerland.
 - a. How did the role of the state evolve in providing critical infrastructure and what was considered *critical* since the beginning of the industrial revolution?
 - b. Are there any particularities of providing critical infrastructure in Switzerland, for example in the division of responsibilities between national and cantonal governments?
- 2) Salience of critical infrastructure sectors for the security and economy.
 - a. What are critical junctures (such as time periods, events) in the provision of and discussion about critical infrastructure?
 - b. What is the role of different actors, and in particular, parties in this politics-economics-nexus?
 - c. Which topics were predominantly discussed around critical infrastructure? (including data analysis on Swiss parliamentary discussions on critical infrastructure)
- 3) Public and private provision of critical infrastructure.
 - a. When and in which sectors can we observe a switch from private to public provision of a good (i.e. 'becoming critical')?
 - b. When and in which sectors can we observe a switch from public to private (or mostly private) ownership?

How to apply

- Please prepare a *one-pager* in which you describe your interest in one of the topics, propose your research question (what do you want to find out?), motivation (what makes this question relevant?), and ideas for a research design (how are you going to answer this question?).
- Enclose an up-to-date *transcript* of your grades. We are particularly interested in which method courses and thematically relevant compulsory elective courses you have attended in the course of your studies.
- Please send the application documents as a single .pdf file to ipw@unisg.ch