Public Works vs. Infrastructure
The word *infrastructure* is still in its infancy, having only recently become the primary way we refer to the physical and organizational structures that allow our society to operate. Although the term was used by the US military to describe certain tactical projects in the 1940s, it was not commonly used in a civilian context until 1970. Until that time, these civic structures were referred to as *public works*, a term with a very different political connotation. Whereas the word *infrastructure* remains abstract in its relationship to existing social systems (connoting only the physical or some invisible substratum thereof) the term *public works* suggests a constructed reflection of the needs, priorities, values, and aspirations of an associated *public*.

Border as Center
The San Diego – Tijuana Metropolitan Area is a territory of continuous urban fabric that includes the city and suburbs of San Diego in the US and Tijuana, Playas de Rosarito, and Tecate in Mexico. The population of this region is just over 5 million, making it by far the largest bi-national community in North America.

Paradoxically, the geographical center of this vibrant metropolis is marked by a fissure in the urban fabric, the US/Mexico border. While the cities that make up this bi-national metropolis are linked in myriad ways, the border that bisects them is a demarcation of extreme political contention.

Acting like a massive funnel in this vast bisected territory, the San Ysidro - Tijuana Port of Entry channels the majority of its population from one side to the other. This is the single busiest border crossing in the world, with over 40 million people traversing it each year. It is a bizarre circulation machine, with pedestrian checkpoints, a trolley station, freight train lines, and 32 vehicle inspection lanes. It is this community’s most prominent architectural ambassador, yet it speaks no language.

Civic Suture
This site offers a unique opportunity for Mexico and the US to replace a banal and congested piece of infrastructure with a project that reflects the shared aspirations of North America’s largest bi-national community; a counterpoint to the proposed ‘Triple Border Fence’ it traverses. This studio will propose ways this community can assert its connectedness through a *public work* that offers new opportunities for communication, occupation and political action.