

WINS Seminar [Winter Semester 2016/17]

The WINS Seminar is held during academic term on Thursday afternoons, 15:00–17:00 hrs (ct), in Room 4088 of the IRI THESys, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Quartier Stadtmitte, Friedrichstrasse 191, 10117 Berlin.

Platz zum Querdenken (off the beaten track)

This year WINS is dedicating three Seminars (Thursdays 03 Nov., 01 Dec. and *05 Jan.) to make space for lateral thinking and debate on the Seminar Theme - Governability in the Anthropocene.

Thursday 05. Jan. 2017

Discussion Thema:

Technologies of Rule. How is governing through infrastructure changing in the Anthropocene?

Investigating the relationship between technologies and political rule calls for insightful ways of conceptualising socio-materiality. Analytical approaches need to be able to describe how power relations get encoded in material structures, for example how the design of physical infrastructure reflects the influence of powerful social actors. Conversely, such approaches need to consider how materiality can influence power relations and political regimes. This 'work' by physical artefacts, such as leaking water pipes, can restrict or enable human action, whether directly and materially or indirectly and discursively.

This week's *Off the beaten track* Seminar will explore the role of technology and infrastructure in the governability of the Anthropocene. It marks one way of putting the "T" (for Technology) in the "SETS" agenda of WINS, complementing its socio-ecological knowledge base. Following a short input by Tim Moss on ways of conceptualizing the socio-material dynamics of infrastructures and applying them to study the relationship between infrastructure and political rule, we will have an open-ended discussion around the question: How is governing through infrastructure changing in the Anthropocene? To kick-off, we'll be asking: In what ways and with what effect is technology materializing and institutionalizing responses to global change? Participants will be encouraged to reflect on the role of technology/infrastructure in their own field of research and what research issues in this respect are calling for attention.

Semester Theme, Winter Semester 2016/2017

Governability in the Anthropocene

As the negative impacts of anthropogenic climate change, habitat destruction, pollution and resource depletion become ever more prominent, the failure of contemporary governance structures to provide for effective solutions is increasingly apparent. Scholars from a range of disciplines argue that the basic form of governance challenges has changed as humanity has achieved a more or less fully globalized and industrialised world. It has been argued that conventional institutions such as states, markets and international organisations are no longer up to the task of ensuring governability in what has come to be called the Anthropocene.

IRI THESys

Integrative Research Institute
on Transformations of
Human- Environment Systems

WINS

Berlin Workshop in
Institutional Analysis of
Social-Ecological Systems

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The question of whether or not the Anthropocene can be governed at all has been raised and it has even been suggested that democracy and free-trade might be incompatible with achieving governability in the Anthropocene. Some scholars see these challenges as an opportunity to address long recognized limitations in contemporary institutions, others see them as a matter of grave concern, a threat to democracy and to free-trade. This year, for the WS 2016/17 WINS Seminar, WINS takes up this debate about governability in the Anthropocene as a guiding thematic for the Seminar series. In this way we aim to foster critical and constructive dialogue on the topic and invite presenters to address, within the scope of their area of expertise and interests, and to address within their lecture, their position regarding what role(s) institutions might be playing in shaping these governability problems and whether, and if so, how they might contribute toward solving them.

* the date of the third Platz zum Querdenken Seminar has been changed: from 2 Feb. to 5. Jan. 2017.