



Friday Seminar

'Risky Data' for Inclusive Microinsurance Infrastructures



Date:
19 Feb 2021

Time:
1:00 - 2:30 pm

Speaker:
Dr. Caroline E. Schuster

Zoom Meeting Link:
<https://cuhk.zoom.us/j/99529744710>

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The recent enthusiasm for 'big data' (Data for Development, D4D) highlights the increasing interpenetration of public social policy and data from private technology firms. This talk examines the process in reverse, whereby public information systems become the basis for increasing financial intermediation. Drawing on ethnographic research on Paraguayan microinsurance programs, I describe the broader mandate of 'financial inclusion' embedded in the suite of banking services that support the state's Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) welfare initiative, Tekoporã. The talk analyses the process by which inclusive insurance infrastructures are built and maintained as an opportunity to critique the political economy of data production that supports financialization. The concept of 'risky data' describes not only the way that the social lives and relations of the poor are quantified and converted into financial knowledge, but also how the urgent new mandate to produce such data further exposes public policy and state institutions to new risks to their legitimacy. The Paraguayan case exemplifies the key mechanism of 'risky data' for inclusive infrastructures: the extraction of financial value and speculative profits from state-led investment in a public resource, which amplifies the risks of both service denial and data surveillance.

Biography:

Dr. Caroline E. Schuster is a Senior Lecturer and Australian Research Council DECRA Fellow in the School of Archaeology and Anthropology at the Australian National University, having previously held research fellowships at the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies and the Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality at the University of Chicago. Her research on the anthropology of finance has focused on the production of gendered economic subjects through microcredit programs in Latin America, which she tracks in her book *Social Collateral: Women and Microfinance in Paraguay's Smuggling Economy*. Her current research focuses on disaster capitalism and climate insurance in Paraguay, which she explores in a forthcoming graphic ethnography *Pérdida: a story of weather and finance at the edge of disaster*. Schuster is also the Director of the Australian National Centre for Latin American Studies.



ALL INTERESTED ARE WELCOME!