

Rutgers Center for Chinese Studies (RCCS) presents

Global China and Infrastructure Power: The technopolitics of the 'China Model' of development



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Tim Oakes is Professor of Geography at the University of Colorado Boulder. From 2012 to 2021 he served as Director of Colorado's Center for Asian Studies. Oakes is Project Director for China Made, an international research collective exploring socio-technical perspectives on China's infrastructure-driven model of development. His work examines landscapes of urbanization in and beyond China where Chinese infrastructure investments concentrate.

Abstract:

China's expansive engagements beyond its borders over the past decade have resulted in increased scholarly attention to the idea of a 'global China.' While there is a broad range of activities inherent in this term—including construction investments, digital technologies, development finance, and soft-power projects—popular conceptions of global China tend to focus on the signature policy initiative of the Xi administration: the Belt & Road (BRI). Yet there is a significant disconnect between the policy narratives of the BRI and what China actually does as a development actor in specific places around the world. This talk proposes an alternative framework for analyzing global China, deriving from the concept of infrastructure power, the field of power through which the state wields authority and asserts

domination over society. State power in China is, at least in part, constituted through the construction of dams, highways, railroads, power plants, electricity grids, wireless technologies, ecological environments, and other socio-technical forms known collectively as 'infrastructure.' And this is a form of power that China seeks to wield beyond its borders as well. Yet, the techno-political analytic explored in the talk reveals the ways that such power does not itself emerge from "the state". Instead, state power is co-constituted through infrastructural configurations, meaning that the projects driving China's expansion beyond its borders often produce outcomes that are unintended, unpredictable, and even counter-productive to Beijing's strategic interests.

Details:

Tuesday, October 24, 2023
12:15 - 2:00pm

Lucy Stone Hall B-120
(LSH-B120, LIV)
Livingston Campus

Free and open to the public.

Light lunch provided.