

Wednesday Seminars

LECTURE SERIES IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

05.11.2025 | 5 p.m. | @ Übungsraum IKSA | NIG, 4th floor

Philipp Budka (University of Vienna)

Sovereignty by Design:

Community Infrastructures and Relational Futures in Remote Canada



Philipp Budka is a sociocultural anthropologist at the University of Vienna, where he is Lecturer and Research Associate in the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, and Study Region Lead for North America in the ERC project “InfraNorth: Building Arctic Futures.” Grounded in long-term ethnographic research in northwestern Ontario and northern Manitoba, his work examines how Indigenous and northern communities engage with media, technology, and infrastructure to shape sovereignty and futures. He is completing two books on digital and transport infrastructures in northern Canada.

This talk examines infrastructural sovereignty—the practice of community control over the design, ownership, and governance of essential infrastructures—through two ethnographic case studies in northwestern Ontario and northern Manitoba. Drawing on long-term fieldwork, I explore how communities in remote regions have worked to shape and sustain digital and transport infrastructures in response to state and market neglect. The KO-KNET broadband network, owned and operated by First Nations, exemplifies digital self-determination, while the Arctic Gateway Group—a consortium of 41 Indigenous and northern communities—has reclaimed the Hudson Bay Railway to secure regional transport autonomy. Rather than treating infrastructure as a technical backdrop, I approach it ethnographically as a relational and political formation shaped by colonial histories, practices of care, and aspirations for sustainable futures. Connecting these cases through the lens of infrastructural sovereignty, the talk contributes to anthropological debates on infrastructure, Indigenous and community sovereignty, and ethnographies of transformation, while engaging decolonial perspectives on technology, governance, and community-led futures in settler-colonial contexts.



hybrid event
join online!



universität
wien

Department of Social and
Cultural Anthropology