Geographisches Kolloquium

Wintersemester 2026/2027

GIB Lecture Series (Hybrid-Veranstaltung)

„Klima und Kapitalismus"

Dienstag 10. 11. 2026 | 16–18 Uhr | H6 (Geo I)

Enter the Mouth of the Cloud: How Data Centers Metabolize Earth for Computation

Dr. Steven Gonzalez Monserrate *(Goethe Universität Frankfurt)*

Amid the rise of generative artificial intelligence, scholars and publics have become increasingly attuned to the ecological footprint of computational infrastructures. And while the materiality of computation is planetary in scope, the metabolic circuits that undergird it are site-specific negotiations. The design and operational norms of data centers are shaped by the affordances and obstacles provided by local environments and climates. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in data centers sited in three different continents, this lecture maps the Cloud's diverse ecologies, charting the interplay of more-than-human and human actors as they make Earth habitable for computers. Case studies include facilities in Iceland, Puerto Rico, and the Southwestern United States. Considerable attention will be devoted to the way that Nature is constructed and deconstructed by technicians, governments, residents, and more-than-human agencies that include microbes, obscure zoning laws, and the whims of weather.

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