Séminaire du LATTS

LUNDI 6 DECEMBRE 2021, 14h00

Le séminaire aura lieu en B235 (salle du LATTS) et sera retransmis via un système de visioconférence :
Lien zoom: https://univ-eiffel.zoom.us/j/84728838073
Identifiant : 847 2883 8073 / Mot de passe : V8GqdF88

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How many bankers does it take to screw in a lightbulb ? Chicago’s public building retrofits and the political geographies of assetization

Successive waves of privatization in the US have transformed policy discourses around urban infrastructure from an indivisible public good into a set of revenue streams available for capture by private actors. In the post-2008 period, the focus on turning urban infrastructure into negotiable financial assets – “assetization” – has endured within new policy initiatives seeking to capitalize flows of people, energy, water, and/or data through financially-intensive investments in the built environment. This paper takes up one such example of this experimental assetization: a public-private partnership leveraging private finance to retrofit Chicago’s public buildings for energy savings, one component of that city’s sustainability plan. I use deal-level analysis to examine the multifaceted production of financial assets out of public buildings and their components. Specifically, I engage with notions of real abstraction to examine how the city worked through a mobile set of financial logics as it assembled the deal, producing shifting material combinations of buildings and building systems as the basis for assetization. Further, I focus on the legal, technical, and political problematics of turning energy savings into financial payments and collateral, beginning with the need to “fix” the materiality of a building’s various flows as investable, and extending to long-term commitments over how the city uses and occupies its buildings. I argue these offer a lens into the evolving and contradictory nature of infrastructure assetization; as these assets depend on very specific combinations of material flows and political commitments, I highlight how they introduce new political geographies characteristic of the “assetization state.”


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