

The logo for Ladec is a green trapezoidal shape pointing downwards. Inside, the word "ladec" is written in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. Below the name, the text "LABORATOIRE D'ANTHROPOLOGIE DES ENJEUX CONTEMPORAINS" is written in a smaller, white, uppercase, sans-serif font.

ladec

LABORATOIRE D'ANTHROPOLOGIE
DES ENJEUX CONTEMPORAINS

INCERTITUDES, FRONTIERES, NATURE & POLITIQUE

**Séminaire du LADEC 2017-2018,
le 8 décembre 2017, ENS-Lyon, salle D8 216, 10h00-13h00**

Richard Rottenburg

Unfolding Futures

Human affairs depend on a certain level of predictability and are characterized by a quest for certainty in the face of an ultimately insurmountable uncertainty about the future. Anticipatory knowledge practices are about prediction, prognosis (forecasting), premonition, Imagineering and moralizing. Futures seem to emerge out of past and contemporary practices of world-making that are guided by all those forms of anticipatory knowledge. In this sense futures are being designed. Modernity was characterized by its hope in its capacity to design the future, yet this hope has always been accompanied by the fear of its catastrophic trajectory. Many contemporary debates polarize between positions that proclaim the end of the mislead hope to design better futures and those that proclaim an ever-increasing sophistication in designing the future. In this talk I will follow a pragmatist approach and rather ask about practices of future making. This approach tries to avoid the binary between control vs. out of control, or designing vs. unfolding. I will argue that some practices geared towards keeping existing socio-technical arrangement going still have far reaching implications for the unfolding of futures. Three sets of practices that are intertwined and relevant in this context can be named as “infrastructuring”, “ontologizing” and “accounting”. I will try to make my argument plausible by using examples from intersections between law and health.

Richard Rottenburg holds a chair in anthropology at the University of Halle, where he heads a research group focusing on the anthropology of "Law, Organization, Science and Technology" (LOST). Inspired by social studies of science and technology and renditions of pragmatist social theory, the emergence of material-semantic orderings and their institutionalizations are at the heart of his current work. These inquiries foreground evidentiary practices (experiments, tests, measurements) and multilayered infrastructures, which solidify and circulate evidence, and ask how they are mobilized to design and critique specific futures.