



PennState

College of Earth
and Mineral Sciences

Department of Geography

Feb 10 | 3:30 PM

112 Walker
Building and Live
on [Zoom](#)

Refreshments at
3:20pm



SEEING EQUITABLE CITY-REGION FUTURES? NEGOTIATING THE EPISTEMIC DIMENSIONS OF INFRASTRUCTURE CHANGE IN A LAGGING REGION

Speaker: Dr. Michael Glass. Director of Urban Studies Program, Territorial Ambassador to the US, Regional Studies Association, University of Pittsburgh.

Abstract: The potential of infrastructure ‘as solution’ is currently at the forefront of American political consciousness. Historic levels of investment in infrastructure proffer seismic material, economic, and symbolic transformations at a near-continental scale. However, the present policy context for infrastructure planning in the U.S. is confounded by a mosaic of decision-making authorities that hamper the development of cohesive approaches to sustainable and equitable development. This situation underscores the need to identify how urban infrastructure futures are assembled and scaled as simultaneously continuous and emergent, old and new, and marked by the diverse capacities of various stakeholders. This paper makes a case for the importance of ‘seeing like a region’ when examining transformative approaches to infrastructural change. Through a case study of the Southwest Pennsylvania Commission (SPC), we question how infrastructural futures are constructed, experienced, and changed by the stakeholders that inhabit these regions. Our analysis pays particular attention to the challenges faced by regional planning organizations when navigating the spatial-temporal frames of incremental and radical change. As the SPC operates with limited staff capacity, high regulatory burdens, and short time horizons for budgeting processes, incremental changes to infrastructure often are the best hope for solving regional challenges of structural inequality and uneven access to resources. Yet incrementalism raises equity concerns, notably regarding how to build meaningful public engagement across a regional footprint.