Between Care and Security – Heterodox Actors in Crisis Governance

COVID-19 has exposed profound governance challenges that demand more diverse and creative approaches to governing crises in the contemporary world. Focusing on the field of global health, this lecture will argue for more political and academic attention to how politically marginalized and epistemically invisibilized actors, who depart in crucial respects from the liberal orthodoxy, play a crucial role in global health infrastructures. The lecture then focuses on the case of Czech women, who in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic started to organize to sew and distribute homemade masks for their families, medical professionals, elderly and vulnerable people, and local communities. Drawing theoretically on feminism, postcolonialism, and science and technology studies, and empirically on original data from questionnaires and interviews with the volunteers who sewn the face masks, the lecture will explore the gendered, political, and cultural context of caring for others in times of crisis.