

SLOW POLITICS. What Europe needs in the Age of Crisis

Berliner Gazette Conference 2014

November 13–15

#bgcon14

Currencies of Commons | Workshop

Date: September 17 | Time: 2 p.m. to 3.30 p.m.

Location: Hertie School of Governance | Address: Friedrichstr. 180 (Quartier 110)

Program: Workshop with Max Haiven on "Data, Money, Wampum as Currencies of Commons"

To initiate a discussion about the "Currencies of Commons" the cultural theorist Max Haiven makes three arguments. First, he analyses our current crisis: While data is more abundant and effervescent than ever and while the spectre of Big Data haunts any discussion of current affairs, we seem to have fewer monetary resources to curate and care for it in the public interest. Second, he suggests that money is itself a means to process and manage data, that fundamentally informs our understanding of the world – this is especially problematic in an age of terrifying corporate power over both money and data. Finally, he turns to the complex use of wampum beads by Indigenous civilizations in Eastern North America in the 16th and 17th centuries for clues as to how to see beyond our current crisis.

Behind the interest in Wampum lies the idea that, in Eastern Canada, pre- and post-contact the Mi'kmaq used wampum as both currency (though not in the Western sense) and also as, essentially, a commons archive, their "library" so to speak. Wampum belts were the key means to record historical events, treaties, genealogical information and also various scientific and geographical knowledge. Max Haiven is using this case in order to figure out something deeper about the nature of libraries as they relate to currencies, wealth, power and society, and through that better answer the question of the future of commons.

Max Haiven is an Assistant Professor in the Division of Art History and Critical Studies at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Canada. He is author of Crises of Imagination, Crises of Power (2014), The Radical Imagination (with Alex Khasnabish, 2014) and Cultures of Financialization (2014).

This workshop, a collaboration between berlinergazette.de and Hertie Foundation, is a preparatory event for the international conference SLOW POLITICS, taking place November 13-15th at SUPERMARKT in Berlin. Info on the conference program will be available soon at: www.berlinergazette.de/slow-politics

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