Science, society and the human: Emergence of a constitutional model of the human in 1980s STS

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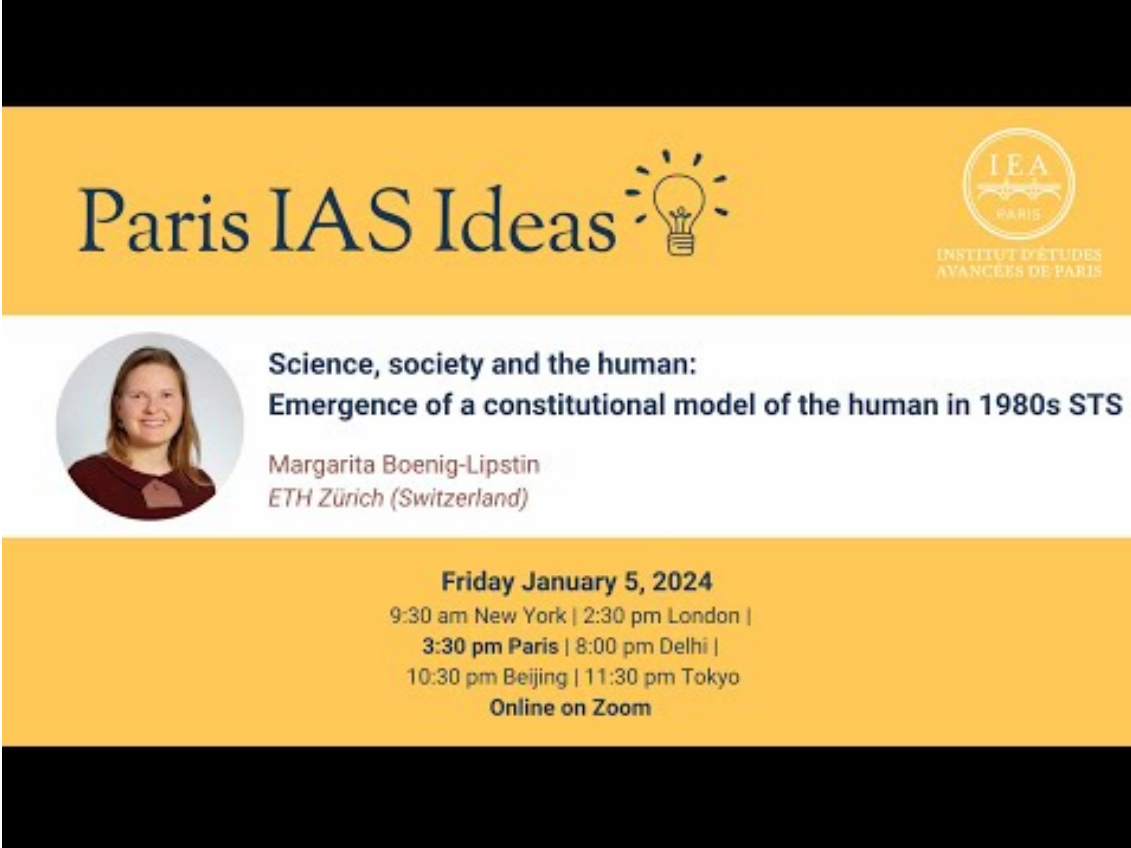
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ABSTRACT

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From the mid-1970s to the 1990s, scholars from different disciplines converged on the idea that human subjectivity and modes of thinking, knowing, and acting take place in dynamic interaction with other people, artifacts, and environments. This way of conceptualizing the human as a being that is constituted by and constituting—in both the ontological and normative-legal senses of the term—knowledge and technological practices, became particularly important in the new field of Science, Technology and Society (STS). The project will first define the concept of "constitutions of the human" today with examples of how technologies make-up people in their ways of being (bodily practice, habitual actions, forms of reasoning) and inform the norms according to which people live. Second, the project aims to trace the history of the constitutional model of the human to the formative texts (of Sheila Jasanoff, Bruno Latour, Michel Callon, Donna Haraway, and Ian Hacking) and contexts (research on the problems of the human condition in advanced scientific and technological societies) of the emerging field of STS in the 1980s. Pioneering STS scholars offered their re-thinking of the human to help restructure social institutions to support democratic life in light of growing awareness of the environmental and political risks of nuclear weapons, industrial chemicals, bioengineering, and information technologies. We can benefit from renewed

attention to the constitutions of the human in light of digital and environmental transformations today.

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