

WINNER DISSERTATION AWARD 2018**(Organization Sciences) Thijs Willems: 'Monsters' and 'Mess' on the Railways: Coping with Complexity in Infrastructure Breakdowns.**

Infrastructures are the structures and built constructions defining how we move, communicate, store, dispose of stuff, buy, distribute, arrange, organise, etc. They are so basic in our daily lives that they generally operate invisibly on the background of society. Only when infrastructures break down they come to us as something meaningful to scrutinise and investigate. This ethnography on the Dutch railway system argues that distinctions between functioning or broken down infrastructures cannot be drawn unproblematically. Rather, it urges us to rethink infrastructure as a process in which breakdowns and repair work are constitutive of how infrastructure functions. Analysing diverse railway breakdowns, ranging from the very mundane to dramatic ones, the dissertation illustrates what is at the core of breakdowns: their complexity. Two different perspectives on complexity are discerned: one in which complexity shows up as an enemy that must be tamed and managed, and one in which railway employees deal with it in practice. What turns out as truly disruptive is not the breakdown itself, but the ways in which the two perspectives on coping with complexity interrelate and are played out

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