Håkon Fyhn, Jens Røyrvik & Petter Almklov: Reconsidering the Concept of Power in the Age of Technology. Power Transformations in Technological Control Systems

There is a pattern in the way power shifts today that makes it necessary to reconsider how we understand the concept of power itself. A common example of power shift is associated with new technologies that concentrate power in international corporations such as Google and Facebook; while disempowerment is at the other end of user interfaces. Other examples point to digital technologies as drivers of democratization and dissolution of old hegemonies. This paper investigates the displacement of power, and also transformations of power with the production of disempowerment as the result of the technological conquer of reality. The paper discusses three case studies of technologization of working environments. Through these we investigate different processes of migration and transformation of power. 1) Standardization of investigation processes in the Norwegian child welfare services, which, among other things, legitimizes case workers assessments while simultaneously undermining the legitimacy of professional judgement. 2) An energy calculator which documents energy efficiency measures, and which ends up overruling the professional competence of carpenters/craftsmen. 3) A performance management system in a large Norwegian company which, by measuring employees’ performance and behavior, undermines collective bargaining, unions and the three party collaborative model. All examples show how disempowerment is produced. The standardizing and quantifying system of representation in these technologies suppresses practical knowledge and human relations. This occurs without equivalent power being produced somewhere else. It is obvious where the power moves from (the case workers, craftsman, the union), but it is not obvious who gains power on their behalf. Does the power disappear, or does it take forms that render it unrecognizable in established discourses of power? Based on these analyses, our investigation points towards a concept of power that takes into account how technological systems themselves “eat power”, and how the logic of technology itself is strengthened.

Keywords: transformation of power, technology, control system, digitalization, work life, empiric philosophy
Rasmus Tyge Haarløv: The Role of Traffic Modelling for Green Mobility. A Discussion of the Data Being Used in Copenhagen’s Traffic Model

This article investigates how traffic models represent and mediate various traffic phenomena for city officials and traffic planners working in Copenhagen. A traffic model is a software program that models the transport behaviour of a certain group of citizens based on various input. Traffic modelling is used in connection with infrastructure investments for the purpose of determining the state of transport phenomena such as car traffic, public transit or cycling. Starting in the summer of 2020, Copenhagen plans to use a new, upgraded traffic model which is more detailed than the current traffic model. In the current traffic model a range of transport phenomena are either neglected or imprecise, but the new model will take into account pedestrians, cycle parking facilities, car-sharing as well as combined mobility trips of e.g. trains and bikes and will make these transport phenomena visible to officials and decisionmakers. In order to understand how traffic models shape the “vision” and transport-overview among city officials and transport planners, I draw upon anthropologist James Scott’s ideas about how states “see”, as well as post-phenomenologist Peter-Paul Verbeek’s ideas about how technologies open the world. In light of a comparison of the two models, I argue that the current traffic model has been detrimental to the goals of Copenhagen, as the city aims to become a CO2 neutral capital in 2025. In addition, the article casts light on how traffic modelling is used in connection with producing cost-benefit-analyses which often form the basis for decision making regarding how the streets of Copenhagen are designed and prioritised.

Keywords: traffic modelling, green mobility, post-phenomenology, cost-benefit-analysis, philosophy of technology, anthropology of the state

Diana Schack Thoft & Anders Kalsgaard Møller: Involving People with Dementia and Their Relatives in Developing Dementia-Safe Technologies

This paper presents a public-private innovation project with a participatory design approach. In the project, people with dementia and their relatives were involved in the idea-generation phase of the development of a new GPS-solution to orientation challenges facing people with dementia. Often people with dementia are not involved in research collaboration, which means knowledge goes missing about this groups’ need and preferences. In our project, three workshops were held for people with dementia and their relatives, using different creative generative tools. Participant observation was used to collect data about their preferences and needs for a new GPS-solution, their opinions about existing solutions and views about the monitoring aspect. The study shows that the participants are
aware of the challenges and considerations related to orientation for people with dementia. Likewise, they express a need for safety and describe different strategies that they already use. The participants are critical of existing solutions and how these suit their needs. In relation to monitoring, they are aware of the need for autonomy as well as a need for safety and security. It can be concluded that people with dementia and their relatives may have different opinions about the need for safety solutions, but they can to some extent understand other’s perspectives. Thus, monitoring is accepted only if it is used when relevant and only monitored by nearest relatives. In conclusion, the project suggests that future ideas for development must be introduced to all participants in the early stages of the project, so that these may be used as a supportive tool for people with dementia and later be extended to relatives so it is possible to locate a person with dementia when needed.

Keywords: dementia, GPS-solution, monitoring, autonomy, participatory research, participatory design

Thomas Friis Søgaard: Cannabis and Cocaine Delivery Services. The Mobile Phone as Co-Creator of Illegal Drug Markets

In recent years the growing use of novel communication technologies have changed the way illegal drugs are traded and distributed. This happens increasingly in online crypto-markets, social media or by use of mobile phones. Berry (2018) has therefore concluded that drug markets are best understood as socio-technical networks, because they are both socially and technologically constructed. Against this background, this article explores how the use of mobile phones today shape illegal drug trading organized as delivery services. The article argues that a focus on the different ways that dealers’ sales phones are “enacted” (Law 1999) can function as a prism through which we can gain insights into the multiple and fractal socio-technical networks (Mol 2002) that make up the phone-based drug delivery market today. The article is based on interviews with active drug dealers and buyers. It shows how the sales phone is articulated in five different ways; as a tool for internal coordination of the delivery business, as a commercial passage point for drug customers, a weak link that police seek to use to disrupt drug lines, and as a commodity and a means for hostile market takeover, as when criminals either trade phone-based customer portfolios or try to capture marked shares by stealing their competitors’ sales phones.

Keywords: drug markets, mobile phones, drug dealing, drug dealers, actor-network, Denmark
Spatial Anthropologies: The Realm of Welfare, Home and Haunting is the title of my professorial inaugural lecture held at The Royal Academy of Fine Arts, the Schools of Architecture, Design and Conservation (KADK) 6.2.2020. It deals with anthropological perspectives on spaces, such as welfare spaces, haunted houses and homes. This lecture is also about the significance of lacking, absence, displacement, blind spots, dead ends, and sloaps (spaces left over after planning). The non-sites of welfare, one might say. In the research project “Spaces of Danish Welfare”, welfare and space are understood as the premise of each other; the research is conducted by architects, art historians and anthropologists. In the subproject “From Province to Periphery”, the focus is on daily life in both the present welfare spaces and the welfare spaces that have become absent, with the small town Tønder as the case study. Something serious is going on in Tønder in these years. Silent and in the unpredictable manner of small, insignificant, seemingly undirected steps, the city is being transformed. The changes in Tønder are related to changes in Danish welfare systems. In Tønder, many of the welfare institutions have been moved to other cities, turning Tønder into a rich welfare city of yesterday, a reduced welfare city of today and a possible wellness city of tomorrow, since the city is planned to become part of a touristic experience of the Tønder marshes. This focus on welfare spaces will be supplemented by other anthropological space investigations, such as explorations of homes, and haunted houses. Furthermore, the insights and blind spots of an anthropological gaze at lacks, absence and displacement in a spatial context will be analysed.

Keywords: spatial anthropology, welfare, haunted houses, home, “hygge”, deconstruction