URBAN ASSEMBLAGE: THE CITY AS ARCHITECTURE, MEDIA, AI AND BIG DATA.

• Paper / Proposal Title:
The smart city in the smaller context: Urbanity, data-driven planning, and AI in the context of small data and local conditions

• Author(s) Name:
Daniel Koch

• University or Company Affiliation:
KTH School of Architecture, Stockholm, Sweden

• Abstract (300 words):
The discourse on the “Smart City” and digitalization has by now grown more or less pervasive, at times posited as a given development, at times as a sought ideal, and at times as a solution. Much of this discourse tend to concern a certain kind of urbanity and subjectivity, as well as particular roles and aspects of the ICT-technology; laborers behind both the material necessities of the technology itself and of the places and products in and with which the leisurely, pleasant future is to be lived are largely absent. Similarly, code and data labor generally goes undiscussed. How digitalization best supports various lives that are structured around productive labor is also generally absent in this discourse, even though many traditionally manual labor jobs have been remarkably digitalized or at least partially automated in their own ways. Part of this is rooted in a particular understanding of the ‘urban’, as a city of (digital or physical) cosmopolitans who populate particular kinds of urban spaces in particular urban ways. This leads to narrow understanding of who a city is and should be for, what kind of city would be inclusive for others, and what kind of situations digitalization can handle. This becomes
clear when approaching smaller cities or more rural conditions. Few of the most prominently suggested digital services in the “Smart City” are relevant in contexts where, for instance, there are two or three restaurants in total, which every local citizen knows well, or where who would provide—intentionally or not—the data to be used for big-data analysis or to finetune AI without severe challenges to integrity, considering the available population. This contribution aims to critically engage with some of these challenges through a project in Duved, Sweden, with about 700 inhabitants, where a digitalization project is ongoing.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Daniel Koch is Docent in Architecture and researcher in Urban Design at KTH. He has worked with challenges of spatial analysis and modelling in relation to a range of different social and cultural challenges as well as in regards to processes of subjectivity and cultural negotiation. This includes engaging with the built environment as intricate and layered information systems under constant adaption, raising questions as to whether the boundary between ICT-systems and built form are that easily drawn, and which of these, how, and when, are the more interactive and intelligent. Recent research includes close scrutiny of available data for automated or otherwise digitally supported planning, demonstrating that while there is indeed a lot of data, for urban design challenges this should not be confused that this is the ‘right’ data, or that it is particularly broadly covering the complex and contradictory questions that planning is to deal with in order to function in, support, and participate in a wider democratic society.