CITIES IN A CHANGING WORLD:  
QUESTIONS OF CULTURE, CLIMATE AND DESIGN

• Paper / Proposal Title:
The Digitization Gap in Urban Planning

• Author(s) Name:
Kai Reaver

• University or Company Affiliation:
AHO The Oslo School of Architecture and Design

• Abstract (300 words):
We live in a context of unprecedented digitization. While many technologists and researchers have developed interesting use cases for new technologies in urban environments, much recent research has highlighted how new technologies tend to disrupt governments and institutions in the process (Hill, 2020), often through a practice of so-called Surveillance Capitalism (Zuboff, 2019). The paper presents this context as a “Digitization Gap” in which data has detached itself from planning and urban governance. The paper documents through case studies within the Planning Department of Oslo, Norway how the lack of insight and ability to shape technologies critical to the digitization of public administration challenges institutional and organizational interests within city planning and governance. One of the primary findings is how institutions are under-resourced in developing such technology, thus accepting platforms and tools developed outside of their understanding and control. The paper problematizes this especially in relation to Covid-19 quarantine measures, which are primarily handled by security experts rather than planners. Here we ask how systems which visualize population density in real time present an unprecedented level surveillance, but could also have interesting implications for planning if the digitization gap was able to be “bridged” and utilized for the public good.
• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Kai Reaver is an American/Norwegian dual citizen with a background from architectural design and technology research. His work concerns digital technologies' influence upon physical space and cities. He is particularly focused on developing conceptual frameworks for the digitization of human environments within the Nordic welfare state model, which is typified by a high degree of trust between citizens and its government. He teaches experimental research courses in Oslo and in Geneva, while running a small research-oriented practice. He is an advisor to the Norwegian Architects Association and a board member for several companies and institutions.