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

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Augmented Urbanism and Landscape. Case study on the use of Participatory AR for Youth Engagement in Tree Planting Proposals for the “100,000 Trees” program in Oslo, Norway.

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• Abstract (300 words):
While many researchers have developed interesting use cases for Augmented Reality (AR) in urban environments, the paper argues that determining the long-term viability of such applications as planning tools will likely require evaluating whether such applications are compatible with the democratically mandated participatory procedures within urban planning. The paper elaborates these arguments through an ambitious case study done in Oslo, Norway in the context of developing the “Nordic Digital City”. The case study involves the use of AR with youth participants between 14-16 years old whom were commissioned by Oslo municipality to perform the study. The participants used AR to plant trees digitally within five designated areas within the city which are subject to planning proposals in order to fulfill the Oslo council’s proposed plan for 100,000 new trees within the car-free center. The study thus presents some of the benefits and challenges of using these technologies in such a politically immersed manner, particularly regarding procurement and bureaucracy, user feedback from
youth groups, and the robustness of AR as a common interface for planning. The paper concludes that AR offers several benefits to urban planning, but will likely require a highly digitally competent public sector in order to function, in addition to requiring negotiation between the required user data and user privacy rights. This suggests that AR development within the Nordic region may migrate from a primarily technical domain, to a matter of public policy concerning democracy, user rights, and “the right to the city,” in the near future.

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

Kai Reaver is an American/Norwegian architect and researcher. His work concerns the effects of the digitization upon human environments. He is currently developing a multidisciplinary critique of the so-called “Smart City” and its potential application to the Nordic welfare state model, in light of recent publications highlighting technology practices of "Surveillance Capitalism". Through his research of architecture, cities, and the neurological evidence for spatial experience, his work is focused on applying the use of his findings to architectural heritage, urban planning, architectural practice and the arts. His is currently conducting field work throughout Europe, specifically in Italy and Switzerland, while developing a new program in Architectural Heritage and Digital Media at H.E.A.D. in Geneva while working on the Nordic Pavilion exhibition for the Venice Biennale.