

CFP: Computing the City

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Please note that for this issue, initial submissions should be abstracts only

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CFP- Special Issue for the Fibreculture Journal: Computing the City

Edited By Armin Beverungen and Florian Sprenger

Ubiquitous computing is often referred to as a prime example not only of a new mode of computing, but of a new paradigm of mediation itself. The 'smart city' is promoted as its primary site of materialisation: the integration of computational systems with architectural design turns inefficient urban settings into smart cities that manifest as the penultimate value-extraction machines. This themed issue focuses specifically on the pre-history of ubiquitous computing, its status as media infrastructure, its complicity with logistics, as well as its contingent histories and virtual futures. The approach to smart urban environments taken here questions the accustomed self-descriptions of a mediated society as completely new infrastructure of living and dwelling. Town planning has, since the early 20th century, relied on ecological concepts of environmental transformations. By drawing a line from these early urban development plans to today's digital infrastructures, it becomes evident that the current condition of smart cities has to be understood as part of a transition of environments from natural habitats to objects of planning, management and control.

What are the operational logics of the infrastructure thereby instated? Pervaded by visible and invisible networks, the city becomes a playground for global corporations to play and experiment with technologies of surveillance, big data and endless feedback loops, continuously improving the passageways of commerce. The smartness here is that of technical systems that render urbanites into subjects of cybernetic management, supposedly empowered by their involvement in perfectly organised urban environments, whether it be in terms of efficiency or sustainability. Logistics is what defines not only the internal flows of the city but what links them up. Where the smart city expands, is duplicated and traded in a protocological fashion, logistical infrastructure - transport and software - connects the smart cities in an intelligent web that only knows its own protocological rules and limits. Logistics reveals the logic of smart cities as that of trade and circulation: of data, things and people.

The coincidence between the smart city and logistics implies a certain foreclosure of its possibilities and virtual futures. Many accounts of smart cities recognise the historical coincidence of cybernetic control and neoliberal capital. Even where it is machines which process the vast amounts of data produced by the city so much so that the ruling and managerial classes disappear from view, it is usually the logic of capital that steers the flows of data, people and things. Yet what other futures of the city may be possible within the smart city, what collective intelligence may it bring forth? Can one fathom the possible others of the logistical city e.g. in the visions of the cybernetic revolutionaries of Project Cybersyn or the cyberpunks of the 1990s? What other historical or contemporary examples of resistances to or alternative visions of ubiquitous computing in city could one draw on?

This issue seeks papers that investigate these questions and develop them further. We welcome papers that draw upon topics such as ubiquitous surveillance, sensorial interfaces, the digitalisation of urban infrastructures and the subsequent relation of private and public spaces, the exploration of urban corridors with technologies such as GPS, the repurposing of abandoned networks of traffic for new means, or the social upheavals we witness with the digital divide. We particularly welcome submissions from the Asia-Pacific region.

Initial submissions should comprise 500 word abstracts and 60 word biographies, emailed to armin.beverungen@leuphana.de and florian.sprenger@leuphana.de

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