

Tema T Higher Seminar

Speculative Propositions: Climates and Politics from Mekong to Hong Kong

Casper Bruun Jensen

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In recent years, broad swathes of the social sciences bear witness to a rapidly growing and many-sided interest in *speculation*. Oriented, on the one hand, to science fiction, climate fiction, and various indigenous fictions and, on the other, to speculative philosophy and empiricism these speculative turns signal increasing dissatisfaction with dominant theoretical frameworks, and indeed with dominant understandings of what theory *is and does*. Confronted with accelerating climate disruptions and political upheavals across the planet, existing conceptual tool-boxes appear to provide diminishing returns.

Against this backdrop, I describe experiments with speculative propositions in two quite different contexts. The first takes us to the Mekong, the actual transformations of which are blended with Paolo Bacigalupi's quasi-dystopic near science-fiction *The Wind-Up Girl*. The second conceives of ongoing events in Hong Kong, the silkpunk imaginary of Ken Liu's *The Grace of Kings*, and the alternative world-history of Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Years of Rice and Salt* as *leaky sets*, put into communication to give shape to *speculative Hong Kong* as a cosmopolitical proposition. Together, the "cases" offer an illustration of what it might mean to use speculative resources to take care of the possible.

Casper Bruun Jensen is an anthropologist of science and technology currently residing in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. He is the author of *Ontologies for Developing Things* (Sense, 2010) and *Monitoring Movements in Development Aid* (with Brit Ross Winthereik) (2013, MIT) and the editor of *Deleuzian Intersections: Science, Technology, Anthropology* with Kjetil Rødje (Berghahn, 2009) and *Infrastructures and Social Complexity* with Penny Harvey and Atsuro Morita (Routledge, 2016). His work focuses on climate, environments, infrastructures, and speculative and practical ontologies.

For more information: Jonas Anshelm, jonas.anshelm@liu.se, 013-282265

Department of Thematic studies - Technology and Social Change