

## Preface

This book represents a long journey. It mirrors travels that make up much of my academic biography. Ostensibly, with a chair in information systems in a computer science department at an engineering-dominated university, I have developed perspectives in this book that engagements along this journey have shaped in important ways. I dwell on a select few to create a backdrop for what follows.

Trained as an engineer, I was drawn to logic for my graduate studies at the intersection of the humanities and informatics at the University of Oslo. Crucially, however, this interest was tied to logic as a language, not a purely technical discipline. Particularly influential were Husserl's formulations of *constructive* mathematics and logic, based on his phenomenological perspectives. At the Norwegian Computing Centre, Oslo, I found myself in the middle of critical, socially informed discourses on the conditions, manifestations, and consequences of Scandinavian-based participatory modes of technology development. Disciplinary boundaries were porous. The field of science and technology studies (STS) had a formative influence on me, first through the Centre for Technology, Innovation and Culture, Oslo, and then at the Centre for Technology and Society, Trondheim. Alongside a theoretical curiosity about STS, I developed a growing empirical interest in large-scale (*infrastructure*) technology efforts with implicated standardization as, seemingly, this went beyond the existing participatory methods for technology development. Relocating to the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, I became attracted to the perspectives of—and,

not least, experiences with—the politics of participatory and interventionist forms of organizational change being pursued at the Department of Industrial Economics and Technology Management. Cultural perspectives on standardization, objectification, and quantification out of the Department of Anthropology were important in broadening my notion of standardization.

My academic coming of age, then, is the result of stitching together a network of colleagues and collaborators from a variety of disciplines and camps. It has been driven by the instinct to challenge my own intellectual comfort zone, wary of growing too comfortable in any one place.

In a final comment on the theme of data science and artificial intelligence (AI) emerging in this book, I must admit that I had no intention whatsoever of revisiting AI; I had my fill a couple of decades ago. But recent demand from external partners from the private and public sectors in research projects—within oil, as I report from here, but also from my research stream in health care—nudged me toward the theme of datafication and data-driven approaches. Having spent much of my professional career explaining why various technology efforts had failed, I was intrigued by how data-driven data science, for particular purposes, apparently “works” in ways beyond what we have presently accounted for theoretically. In short, my curiosity was stirred by a “works in practice, not in theory” situation.

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# Digital Oil

## Machineries of Knowing

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