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Computer says no: understanding digital authority

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COMPUTER SAYS NO

Understanding Digital Authority

Daan Weggemans

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Computer Says No **Understanding Digital Authority**

PROEFSCHRIFT

Ter verkrijging van
de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van Rector Magnificus prof. dr. ir. H. Bijl,
volgens besluit van het college voor promoties
te verdedigen op 13 februari 2025
klokke 16:00 uur

door

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in 1986

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An old man enters a hospital and walks up to the reception desk to register.

“I have an appointment to see the cardiologist. My name is Peter Bale.”

The receptionist types on a computer, looks up and replies:

“Computer says no. Apparently you are already dead.”

“That must be a mistake” the man says.

The receptionist looks at the computer again.

“Dead” she nods affirmatively.

Hopeless and bewildered the man left.¹

1 Little Britain Sketch ‘Computer says no: 14’.

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We are shaped by the interactions with others and the settings we find ourselves in. This also holds true for the things we make. In any artifact - whether tables, phones, or dissertations – lie hidden the ideas, criticisms, passive aggressive sighs and tons of time, patience, and support of others. Nothing happens in isolation. This book developed out of the countless encounters with people that have inspired and supported me over the years.

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