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# Digital-Cultural Ecology and the Medium-Sized City

01-03 April 2016

## Abstract Submission Form

**1. Paper / Proposal Title:** Edges of Location: Infrastructures and Practices of Locative Technology in the City

**2. Format:** Written Paper & Presentation

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**5. University or Company Affiliation:** Queen Mary, University of London

### **6. Abstract (300 words):**

Locative technologies are becoming increasingly pervasive in the ways we negotiate cities. Semi-formal economies are emerging alongside navigation technologies (Uber, Lyft); apps like CityMapper mean that even unfamiliar cities become negotiable on foot or public transport; location tagging in social media allow spaces to be augmented and hybridised. What all these aspects have in common is the deployment of GNSS infrastructure, where satellite triangulation is used to pinpoint location. This infrastructure suggests a topologically flat understanding of place, when a terrain is viewed from space, every part of it seems equally accessible and representable. This follows an idea that location is a kind of bare information (Gordon & de Souza e Silva 2011) upon which media can hang meanings and narratives, thereby creating hybrid spaces. However, the technology's ability to situate a device in a terrain is not uniform. Specific features of the built environment, the orientation of satellites and the extent of network coverage may throw a location's accuracy off considerably.

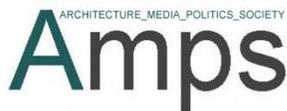
The limits of the infrastructure can open up ways of understanding how the specificity of a given site can work with and against a totalising idea of location. Design (and especially interface design) is often understood to be successful if it is seamless and invisible, but by exposing the gaps in what locative technologies can and cannot do,

we draw attention to the (infra)structures on which they rests and open up a space to examine them critically.

This paper comprises of an overview of the technologies and infrastructures which lie beneath the concept of location used in locative services and locative social media. It also offers some initial work-in-progress findings from a critical walking workshop where participants are encouraged to explore the limits of the locative abilities of their smartphones.

### **7. Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

My research and practice centres around the production of space and texture, with particular attention to sound. I am interested in the ways in which technologies construct lived experience both on an individual, phenomenological level and across networks. I explore these themes through workshops and installations focussing on the collective production of narrative around technologies, their ontologies and uses. A parallel career as a radio producer informs my work, with speech, story and reportage acting as key pillars in my practice. I'm currently working towards a PhD in Media and Arts Technology at Queen Mary, University of London. My work has been shown at Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid; Sonar Festival, Barcelona; Matt's Gallery, London; The New School, New York City and The Banff Centre, Canada.



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