Digital-Cultural Ecology and the Medium-Sized City

01-03 April 2016

Abstract Submission Form

1. Paper / Proposal Title: The Global Local

2. Format: Written paper

Written paper / verbal presentation / screening / short film / other – please specify

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5. University or Company Affiliation: Leicester School of Architecture, De Montfort University

6. Abstract (300 words):

In the same way that nineteenth century banks employed a weighty marble and stone classicism to re-assure customers of their permanence and fiscal security, twenty-first century television news providers use visual representations of architectural scale and journalistic activity as evidence of the dependability and veracity of their reporting. Satellite feeds, shots from helicopters and studios overlooking bustling newsrooms - such as that of BBC New Broadcasting House (MJP Architects; Sheppard Robson; and HOK, 2012) – seek to reassure the viewer of the broadcaster's technological and human capacity for veracity and authority.

But in Montréal, Québec (pop. 1,650,000) English-language broadcasters have struggled to remain economically viable in the face of a small Anglophone audience and limited advertising revenue. Global Television is an English-language Canadian television channel broadcasting from a dozen regional stations. It retains a foothold in the predominantly French-speaking Montréal in order to retain its status as a national network, but in so doing is obliged to produce a minimum number of hours of local programming per week.

In a 2008 restructuring of the Global Television network, more than two hundred production staff were made redundant, their roles redeployed to remote control rooms. Taking advantage of high speed data networks, automated camera tracks and Canada's multiple time zones, these remote production suites allow local newscasts to be broadcast from automated chromakey studios with only the news reader in the studio. In Montréal, the production suite visible over the newsreader's shoulder was replaced with an animation.

As part of a wider project exploring of how architecture, spatial design and technology conspire in the service of global capitalism, this paper examines how technology and architectural design collude in a hybrid of Lefebvrian *abstract* and *absolute* space, one that maintains an illusion of human activity even after it has been rendered superfluous.

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

Dr. James Benedict Brown is Lecturer in Architecture at the Leicester School of Architecture at De Montfort University. James' research and writing is primarily concerned with the social aspects of architectural education and production. His PhD (Queen's University Belfast, 2012; http://bit.ly/JBB_PHD) developed a pedagogical critique of the live project in architectural education, and was shortlisted for the 2013 RIBA President's Award for Outstanding PhD Thesis. James is a founder member of the association of architectural educators (aae) and the Series Editor of the aae's open access peer reviewed journal *Charrette* (ISSN 2054-6718). He is the producer and host of *The Arch. Ed. Podcast* (http://www.archedpodcast.com/)

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