
Digital-Cultural Ecology and the Medium-Sized City

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Abstract Submission Form

1. Paper / Proposal Title: Monumental Capsules and Mobile Movements: Infrastructures and Exploits in Cleveland's Urban Landscape

2. Format: Written Paper

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6. Abstract (300 words):

Cleveland's Tower City complex, completed in 1930 during the city's industrial and economic boom, is a recognizable anchor in the skyline of this mid-sized city and a nexus of urban traffic (informational, commercial, material). Housing a mall, a data warehouse, a movie theater, two hotels, and a public transit hub, it serves as a material signifier of economic and social relationships at work through the city, both historically and presently. Using Cleveland's urban landscape and Tower City as heuristic sites, our work explores the complex ecologies composed of those relationships in the urban environment and points to potential exploits available to city-users for alternative urban formations and epistemologies. Locating sites that are paradoxically monumental and

transitional, spaces of flows as well as of capsularity, our hack of the Tower City complex is invested in understanding the potentialities of contemporary urban intervention, particularly in the mid-sized city. Through the multiple complex relationships and partnerships necessary to keep Tower City as a private, though publicly accessible space, our proposal seeks to make present the gaps between the already present digital infrastructure space on site and the intentionally loose agreements between owners and users in material space to provide new grounds for social cohesions.

Lieven De Cauter describes a tendency to encapsulate and enclose as the expansion of informational and material networks hastens the movement of bodies through multiple spaces. He argues that capsular spaces and discourses, under the banner of security, claim to protect us from perceived threats of otherness. The capsule as both spatial phenomenon and biopolitical strategy is visible in the architecture and development history of Tower City. A close reading of this and other city sites' functions and failures also exposes, though, ways in which excesses and alternatives are embedded in urban structures.

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

Samuel L. Friesema is an urbanist and architectural designer. With degrees in architecture and urban design, Friesema seeks to engage with the design and configuration of the built environment to enhance human flourishing in our cities and neighborhoods. His primary focus is on research into the interaction of architecture, policy, and infrastructure space, to construct development models that appropriately contribute to globalizing and mechanized urban form.

Jeffrey Kruth is an urbanist and educator based at the Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative (CUDC), part of Kent State University's College of Architecture and Environmental Design. He contributes to the design, research, and teaching aspects of the CUDC practice. Previously, he built affordable housing in New Haven, CT and worked at the Yale Urban Design Workshop. His research explores the intersection of economics, technology, politics and culture. Recently, his works have been published in the journal *Cities and the Environment* and *CLOG*.

Allison Schifani is the Postdoctoral Scholar in the Digital Humanities at Case Western

Reserve University's Baker-Nord Center for the Humanities. She received her PhD from the University of California, Santa Barbara's Graduate Program in Comparative Literature. Her work on media technologies, art and the urban can be found in *The Journal of Urban Cultural Studies* and *Media Fields*.

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