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# Digital-Cultural Ecology and the Medium-Sized City

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## Abstract Submission Form

**1. Paper / Proposal Title:** "Metabolizing the Urban: The Post-Industrial City as Hybrid and Cyborg "

**2. Format:** Written paper / verbal presentation

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**5. University or Company Affiliation:** Associate Professor, University of Colorado Denver, College of Architecture and Planning

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

The emergence and development of digital media and "information and communication technologies" (ITC) has led to fundamental reconceptualizations of the nature(s) of urbanity, of the multivariant processes and agents involved in the progressive urbanization of the world, and of the way socio-cultural identities fundamentally relates to environment (e.g. Mitchell 1996, 1999, 2003).

Ecology has become a widely (and often uncritically) used concept to (re-)theorize the interactions between multiple, interdependent and networked human and non-human systems, between flows and materialities of information, energy, labor, capital and resources (e.g. Lister & Reed 2014, Ellis 2014). The resultant "new" ecologies are variously construed as "hybrid" and "cyborg", blurring traditional and emergent boundaries between human and non-human, nature and technology, material and immaterial, space and flow, determinate and open-ended, fundamental to our understanding of ourselves and the environments we occupy. They propose multiple, simultaneous realities that are materialized, mediated, enacted and reproduced across different spatial/(im)material conditions and operate across and in-between physical space and cyberspace, concrete and imaginary.

The paper focuses on mid-sized post-industrial cities which produce and render particularly legible this blurring of boundaries.

Using assemblage theory (Latour 2005, Deleuze & Parnet 2007), it investigates, conceptualizes and proposes relationships between dimensions of “city” and “urbanity” as “hybrid” and “cyborg” ecologies, concepts that have influenced contemporary discourses on the nature of urbanity as socio-ecological assemblage and as medium/mediated (Mitchell 2003, Haraway 1991). It introduces “metabolism” (Swyngedouw 2004, Swyngedouw & Kaika 2012) as a critical third dimension, facilitating a deeper understanding of the complex situated processes, actors and agents that shape and mediate cities as lived-in realities, including their accompanying socio-ecological constructs.

It reframes these new realities that are governed less and less by boundaries and more and more by connections and flows, and assembles an alternative framework to reimagine and reconstruct urban environments, new processes and fields of action empowering traditional and new actors, further blurring the boundaries between human and non-human processes.

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

Joern Langhorst is an Associate Professor in the College of Architecture and Planning at the University of Colorado Denver. Previously he has held faculty positions at the University of Oregon and Iowa State University. His research and teaching focus on theories of space, place and landscape, on media theory and issues of visualization and representation, emphasizing film, and on post-industrial and post-disaster sites with a focus on the cultural production of space. A particular emphasis is on post-industrial and post-colonial cities and their mechanisms of de-development and re-development. He has been consulting on the recovery and redevelopment of post-disaster and post-industrial sites nationally and internationally, with a particular emphasis on the role of emergent technologies, alternative processes and the relationships between traditional and new actors and agents.



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