
Digital-Cultural Ecology and the Medium-Sized City

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Abstract Submission Form

1. Paper / Proposal Title: Mediated cities: the impact of locative media on space, place and social connections

2. Format: Written paper

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6. Abstract (300 words):

The digitalization of urban space is reframing the city, providing new connective possibilities as well as new approaches to space and place. A significant part of this development is the mobile web, which allows people to access location-based information on their smartphones, real-time, as they traverse their environment. For de Souza e Silva (2006) the overlaying of space with such information produces what she refers to as 'hybrid space'. This hybrid space means the city is increasingly a fusion of both the digital and the physical. The various potentials of this fusion are presently being realized through smartphones and locative applications. More recently locative media, such as location-based social networks (LBSNs), have replaced text-message-based social networks, such as Dodgeball. A prime example of this is Foursquare, an LBSN that combines elements of social networking alongside components of pervasive play. Users can share their physical location with friends by 'checking-in', just as check-ins and combinations of check-ins are awarded points, badges and mayorships. The visualization of social connections through this LBSN, as well as the gamification of space and place, has the potential then to impact how people coordinate social interactions and approach the city. Based on an original qualitative study involving interviews with a number of Foursquare users, and while drawing on early

understandings of play (Caillois, 2001; Huizinga, 1992) alongside Simmel's (1950) work on the metropolis, this paper explores Foursquare and its impact on space, place and social connections in two ways. Firstly it examines the various ways in which this LBSN is used to arrange social interactions, paying close attention to the new social opportunities this is enabling. Secondly it investigates the effect Foursquare and the reframing of play is having on spatial relationships and the mobility choices of users.

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

I am a senior lecturer at Southampton Solent University. My research revolves around the examination of mobile communication and digital media along two interconnected lines of enquiry. Firstly, I am interested in the physical, spatial and social effects of new media technologies, such as smartphones, location-based social networks (LBSNs) and pervasive forms of play. I investigate how location-based applications make people feel about themselves, their environments, coordinate social arrangements and engage with or share locational information. I examine what new spaces smartphones and locative media might presently be producing, and how people construct, understand and inhabit these spaces. Secondly, I am fascinated by the impact mobile communication and digital media are having on broadcasting and the creative industries. I am interested in how new media technologies are not only changing what people watch and how they watch it, but are also allowing audiences to be more active in the creation of media content that can be consumed in ways that move beyond the television screen. In all of my research, I explore these issues from the point of view of those using such technologies, examining how their everyday lives are reframed in the process.



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