• Paper / Proposal Title:
Ambient Media: the Atmospheric Production of Civic Center in Shenzhen, China

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• Abstract (300 words):
Characterized as sensorially or affectively immersive (Eno, 1978; McCullough, 2013; Papastergiadis, 2016; Roquet, 2016), ambient media now prevails in China’s urban space. This paper addresses urban light show put on at Civic Center in Central Futian district of Shenzhen to investigate how ambient media, with the spatial and aesthetic experience it affords, serves to showcase the power and ideology of the Chinese megacity and thereby leads to an urban atmospheric interpellation that impinges on the formation of citizenship and nationalism. Adopting a non-media-centric and non-representational perspective, this paper considers ambient media not as foregrounded or isolated representation, but manages to situate it in the fabric of thrown-together spatial-social relations which exerts influence over realms of senses, perception and affects in urban spatial experience. Drawing from spatial analysis and interview data, this paper examines the design and emergent experience of atmospheres afforded by ambient media in constellation with other spatial parameters, and suggests that: first, state-engineering through spatial design wields a cohering power over the production of atmosphere, hence the atmospheric totality that effectively interpellates the spectators; second, according to the first suggestion, ambient media by no means operates on its own, but
only in constellation with human practices, environmental materiality, and historicity of the place and subjects present; third, that said, it is because of the deep embeddedness of atmospheric production in subjective experience and everyday life practices that the atmosphere mediated by ambient media in constellation with other environmental parameters remains a processual, emergent and unfixed phenomenon, whose meaning is thus open to negotiation, contestation and even disruption.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Maoli Xing is currently a PhD student at the School of Creative Media, City University of Hong Kong. He obtained a Master degree in Global Media Communication at the University of Melbourne. His current research interest is the deployment of ambient media in China and its influence over China’s public space.