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CRITICAL PRACTICE IN AN AGE OF COMPLEXITY - AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CRITIQUE OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Reassembling the apparatuses of political space in Montréal, 1992 to 2017

- **Format:**

Written paper / verbal presentation

- **Author(s) Name:**

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- **University or Company Affiliation:**

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- **Abstract (300 words):**

Giorgio Agamben defines an apparatus as “all that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions or discourses of living beings.” This paper looks at political space through the lens of the apparatus in order to redefine the way we conceive of individual-collective interfaces in urban environments. With increased deterritorialization, political space cannot be tied uniquely to traditional representative spaces. As Doreen Massey suggests, the political emerges at various times and in various places from a negotiation between humans and non-humans that share a common territory. However, this paper recognizes that, in parallel to alternative modes of organization, actions and tactics, cities slowly continue to build their networks of interfaces, which can be interpreted as a centripetal tendency towards the civic in opposition to centrifugal dispersion.

The paper reports on the initial stages of a research by design project that looks at Montréal, Canada, over the last 25 years. During those years, the development of the city's physical public realm was paralleled by a reorganization of its administrative structure and a public commission on corruption and collusion in public projects. In a context of increased wariness toward the political realm, the research looks at the apparatuses designed to organize public life at various scales including municipal offices, police stations, municipal courts, libraries, recycling centers, transport equipment and urban artefacts. These apparatuses are understood as potentially charged sites of intervention that reflect directly on the organization of the city and the status of individuals. Following fieldwork observation and recording, cataloguing and component analysis, the project reassembles the apparatuses into new narratives for the city. This underlines the significance of investigation as critical spatial practice and reasserts that the political realm of the city must derive, in part, from the continued and necessary reframing of individual-collective interfaces.

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

Thomas-Bernard Kenniff is Professor in the Environmental Design program at the École de design, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) where he teaches design studios and theory and criticism. He joined UQAM in 2015 after having taught in the architecture schools at Carleton University, Ottawa, Université de Montréal and Université Laval, Québec City. He holds a PhD in Architectural History and Theory from the UCL Bartlett School of Architecture and a Master of Architecture from the University of Waterloo. His research addresses preoccupations tied to the public realm, working out the ways in which subjectivities and relationships are transformed by the collective practice of making social space. Thomas-Bernard's PhD dissertation explored the transposition of dialogic theory to design, with a specific interest in public space and critical practice. He is currently working on a three-year research by design project on the recent development of Montréal's public realm that looks at how public space emerges from the multiple interfaces assembled between associations and individuals. Thomas-Bernard's publications have included work on participant-research methods, oral history methods in architecture, urban identity, interstitial space, dialogic methods for design and uncertainty in studio pedagogy.

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