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Call for Papers, Architectural Concepts and Media Art Projects



MEDIACITY - Situations, Practices and Encounters
Conference of the MEDIACITY project

Bauhaus-Universität Weimar
18-19th January 2008

MEDIACITY - Situations, Practices and Encounters

The conference will investigate how the social settings and spaces of the city are created, experienced and practiced through the use and presence of new media. We will take the position that new media enables different settings, practices and behaviours to occur in urban space. These media create opportunities for diverse forms of connections between people and spaces and enable and create flows; of information, of communication and of knowledge.

The conference will consist of three parallel sessions and a workshop, which will explore these themes in a focussed way. We invite papers for the conference and less formal presentations on practices for the workshop session from academics, practitioners, activists close to disciplines such as media studies, architecture, urban studies, cultural and urban geography and sociology - using in innovative ways and reflecting critically on processes, methods and impacts of public participation and technologies in urban realm, within their theoretical and practical research, teaching, or activism roles.

Session 1: Situations

Our interactions with others can be considered as situated in that they are shaped by both the physical setting, as well as being guided by an implicit background of our own social experiences and circumstances. Situations are the settings in which people interact, and in order for this to be meaningful they must work on two levels; they must be present an imageable concept of physical space which is complimented by an awareness of how social interactions can take place in it. But communications media have affected the definition of situations so that they are no longer defined only by physical spaces with their corresponding meanings. The use of these technologies is becoming a part of everyday life, and the spaces of the city are becoming increasingly densely interwoven with mobile and wireless devices and networks. In the process, the often dominant cliché of the digital world; that networks enable people to communicate with 'anyone, anywhere, at any time and in any place', is starting to be replaced with a more subtle understanding of the types of places and spaces that provide the settings for our interactions. This session will seek to explore the characteristics of situations and how they create possibilities for interaction in urban space. We will investigate this on three levels; through the spaces themselves, the interactions in urban space, and also the technologies that mediate these interactions.

Session 2: Practices

Locative media, collaborative mapping and cartographies, digital multimedia narrative, participatory video making have become more widespread thanks to more affordable/omnipresent technology and to the success of open source tools. In the process they've opened up new possibilities for participatory practices affecting many disciplines surrounding urban studies through theoretical research, action research and activism. In particular, new media tools offer new perspectives for representing contemporary complex and heterogeneous urban dynamics, cultural and social phenomena, collective form of re-appropriation of public space. And for improving, fostering and assisting participatory practices in urban planning, including collective and individual narratives of the inhabited space.

This use of technology gives rise to open and non-conventional descriptions of contemporary cities, becoming instruments for voicing socio-political issues of marginalized or underrepresented groups, establishing active tools for community organizing. These tech options not only open possibilities for participatory practice, but also invite theoretical questions about the power of representation. On one hand urban planning as well as geography are today radically challenged in their history of serving elite political-economic power; on the other hand the role of those who market new technological innovations may do the same - using the rhetoric of participative urban lives to fuel the everyday business of the symbolic economy.

Session 3: Encounters

The connectivity of communities can be reinforced through new situated computing technologies, which lend themselves to shared experiences, such as content sharing and collaborative interaction. For example, interplay between large-scale shared displays and small-scale personal mobile terminals, or physical spaces connected to online worlds. We aim to explore how locative media systems contribute towards enhancing shared experiences in everyday places, such as the streets, parks, cafes, malls, etc.

The main research question is whether and how content sharing and collaborative use of locative media could facilitate social communication in physical space. In terms of scientific theory and methods, this session explores the relationship between architecture of physical space and media communication science. Additionally the session investigates how the use of locative media translates into business opportunity. If situated technologies are to achieve business advantage, they must capture the attention of the passer-by and motivate individual and collaborative interaction.

Workshop: Situations, Practices and Encounters

The workshop program will provide an opportunity to explore the conference themes in a more practical and experiential way. It will aim to create an open and informal dialogue about the topics and methods, and in so doing provide a forum for participants to share ideas, knowledge and technical experience. The workshops could cover themes such as 'capturing mobile experience, location-based interaction methodologies and technologies for community mapping'. Students of all levels are particularly welcome to submit work to the workshops, especially if they have demo's or explanations of projects with which they would like to present to a wider audience. The workshops will be an opportunity to gain feedback and advice on such work.

Submission

Please submit a paper of between 2 and 4 pages as an extended abstract. The conference language will be English. Papers will be submitted to external review.

Outcomes

Selected papers from the conference will be published in a post-conference volume.

Important Dates

1st October 2007: Extended Abstracts dues

1st November 2007: Acceptance notification

18-19th January 2008: Conference

Contact and submissions: info@mediacityproject.com

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Organizers

Prof. Frank Eckardt, Chair of Sociology of Globalization, Faculty of Architecture

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