

Immobile Nation

CitySpeak and Citywide are sibling projects that explore how mobile networked technologies can be used in relatively immobile contexts to augment conversations among people located in the same space. CitySpeak does this by using large-scale public displays to host text messages sent by participants' mobile phones and wireless personal digital assistants, using prompts and subtle provocations to encourage participants to talk to one another about the particular context in which they find themselves. Citywide moves the locus of interaction to the personal space of the laptop screen, where participants can enter a chat environment which is focused on a particular hotspot or group of hotspots. We have created over a dozen CitySpeak installations in contexts ranging from workshops to festivals to nightclubs, and Citywide has been active across Montreal's free wireless network since the summer of 2006. In this talk we will review our experience with these two projects, discuss how the systems are effective at promoting conversations about a particular co-located context, and speculate how they may evolve in the future.