General Press Statement

Living in a Smart World - People as Sensors

The 2013 IEEE International Symposium on Technology and Society (ISTAS13) will take place in Toronto, Canada on 27th-29th June. The theme of this conference is "SmartWorlds".

This conference will address smart- smart grids, smart infrastructure, smart homes, smart cars, and smart appliances but also "smart people". Smart people" interacting with smart infrastructure means that intelligence is driving decisions.

People wearing sensors (e.g. monitoring temperature, physiological characteristics), location data loggers, microphones, cameras, tokens, and other wearable and embeddable systems can see direct benefits for a host of applications including health and well-being, emergencies, convenience, and care-oriented solutions. However, these "Wearable Computing" technologies and applications have the potential to become controlling applications because they are used to make decisions, generate alerts, log employee movements etc. There are great socio-ethical implications that will stem from these technologies and fresh regulatory and legislative approaches are required to deal with this new environment.

Professor Steve Mann, formerly a member of the MIT Media Lab under the guidance of Nicholas Negroponte in the 1990s is long considered the Father of Wearable Computing and AR in this young field. Professor Mann is the General Chair of ISTAS13 and will be speaking in the opening keynote panel with acclaimed Professor of MIT Media Arts and Sciences, Marvin Minsky who wrote the groundbreaking book *The Society of Mind* and has helped define the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) among his major contributions.

Associate Professor Katina Michael, Program Chair of ISTAS13 believes the time for discussing wearable computing and augmented reality in every day life is now.

“Widespread diffusion of wearables has not yet occurred and the time for discussing the potential implications of these technologies is now. Law enforcement officers in Australia for instance, are already wearing these always-on recording devices. In-car video recorders have been used officially and unofficially in a number of police forces over the last ten years. What does it mean when the every day citizen puts on the same equipment and presses the record button taking video images of those around them?”

Michael continues:

“Earlier this year Google launched their Glass Project in concept. They believe they will be going to market by 2014. Apple and a number of other smaller suppliers are also developing this new technology at rapid speed. Are we ready for this explosion in personal recording devices that log the world around us? This is a particularly pertinent question for those people who will not be adopters of the technology. There is an asymmetric power relationship

Wearable technology and AR are not something from science fiction or the distant future. They need to be discussed today, Mann said. He noted that Google has already beta-tested internet-connected glasses similar to the EyeTap.

"Soon your built-in, 3-D camera in your eyeglasses will be able to display onto your retina the names of people it recognizes, and then let you see through walls and buildings to show you your friends sitting in a nearby restaurant. Then it reads your brainwaves, and if it senses you want to join them, it guides you to them."

"In a world of smart things like smart lights, smart toilets, smart grids, smart meters, smart roads, and the like, what happens when you have 'smart people' – when you put sensors on people? What do we make of the growing numbers of businesses like department stores and restaurants that prohibit cameras, yet display QR codes that require cameras to read and understand? These are some of the things we'll discuss at ISTAS. We're very excited and proud to host this conference."

For more information about the conference, go to http://veillance.me .

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