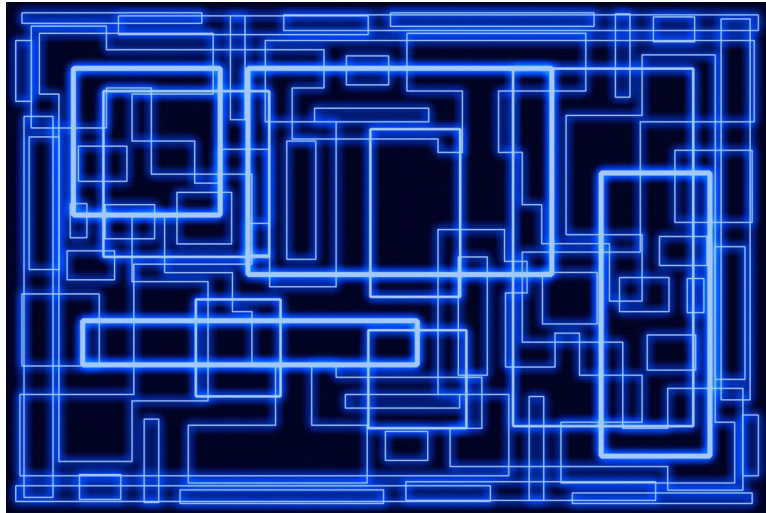


# Communicating science through museums events for the public (My Ideal City - MIC Project)



*Since the birth of the concept of science centres, visitors have been engaged more and more in a space where observation and learning have been matched with doing and teaching. In such a way, science museums and science centres have become a space for interaction and involvement. In recent years, the emergence of Internet-based technologies has increased the possibility for users to be part of immersive environments, for example Second Life, and to be active producers of experiences and meanings. “My Ideal City” project takes place in this context, investigating how to merge those two different paths of participation and involvement in science museums and science centres, in particular reflecting on the citizens' will of establishing a relationship with the museums in their cities.*

## Background

Thinking about Internet as a place for communication, it is mandatory to consider one of the affordances of technological development, let's say the possibility to enlarge the participation and the networking. Considering knowledge as one of the most precious resources for contemporary aware citizens, technologies not only allow people to access a wide range of information, but also strengthen the hypothesis that citizens could be protagonists of the same information production, due to the reduced costs of the knowledge production activity. Phenomena like Wikipedia and more generally the so-called Web 2.0, with their stress on “user generated contents”, together with Open Source Software, distributing and sharing technology production, are probably the most important examples of this trend.

Talking about science communication, could citizens be involved in science production? In the process of science communication, does technologies change the relationship between the curators and the public? Is it possible to use Internet technologies as a way to re-think science events?

## Objectives

The main aim of the project is to strengthen existing networks of cooperation among science museums in order to improve the ability of using “virtual worlds” technologies in the communication of science and technologies. Concepts of sustainable urban planning are going to be used in the construction of a virtual exhibition which will make the same concept transparent, both for the exhibition visitors and the people involved in the exhibition construction process.



In particular, the virtual exhibition will be developed and constructed through the enactment of participatory democratic tools. Its results will be disseminated by the partners museums both through the virtual exhibition, displayed first at the museums and then on-line, and through the construction of paper documents to be disseminated either at local level or in international conferences. In particular, the participatory processes will draw upon existing tools for participation in IT development and will investigate more the citizens' desire in relation to their museum.

## Results

At the moment, the project is still ongoing. Nevertheless, the phase of focus groups and participatory events has been concluded, with the involvement of more than two hundreds and fifty people in the four cities. The project has developed adopting different strategies of involvement of citizens: focusing on a single road (Jerusalem), through the help of "Community Centres"; on few blocks (Copenhagen), relying upon the personal connections of the museum staff; on a general overview, through the involvement of museums visitors (Lisbon); and focusing on controversial, under-represented groups (Trento), through the connection with more or less organized groups of people active in the city. The opening of the exhibition is expected for late July 2010, making possible to have a wider understanding of the project impacts.

## Impact

Now, the main impact has been the solicitation of participation in museums and in the exhibition organization. From this point of view, it has to be underlined how promoting the project has been enough to have some people or group contacting us in order to establish collaboration. In such a way, it is clear how the relationship between the cities and the museums have the possibility for an increased mutual shaping. This is particularly important in Trento, where the construction of a new museum, MUSE, is deeply rooted in rethinking such relationship, with a particular attention to the way through which citizens can find in the museum a place for learning and self-expression at the same time.

**For more information, please visit the website:** <http://www.myidealcity.eu>

**Or contact the project coordinator:**

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