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Real-Time Collaborative Mapmaking

🧪   Posted by timothy on Monday December 02, 2002 @04:30PM from the every-city-could-use-this dept.

savetz writes "*Throughout October and November, citizens of Amsterdam were invited to wear a GPS tracker as they went about their lives. Their whereabouts were forwarded to a server which created a map of the city*

in real-time, based on "the sheer movements of real people." The [site](#) includes aggregate maps, and those created by individuals, including a subway driver, cyclist, and marathon trainer."

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  ›

  [thumbs up to big brother](#) ([Score:1](#), Offtopic)

  by [inteller](#) [(599544)](#)

you've come a long way baby. next stop....AMERICA!

○

○

Re:thumbs up to big brother (**Score:1**)

by KingJoshi (615691)

thumbs up to paranoia, you've come a long way.

next stop....every...

Oh no. it's already everywhere. Everyone's already infected. what do I do?

■

○

Re:thumbs up to big brother (**Score:1**)

by MrEd (60684)

Fly, Big Brother, Fly! War is Peace! [cafepress.com]

(Courtesy of Bob the Angry Flower [angryflower.com])

■

○

Town Planning. (**Score:2**, Insightful)

by Craevenwulfe (611318)

It quite obviously points out the hot spots and cold spots. It identifies the towns ring road quite easily. All in all I would think it made for an excellent utility when it came to town planning (Your own town and for reviewing mistakes of other towns).

■

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Look at the interesting bit (**Score:1**, Funny)

by Anonymous Coward

That bright spot, to the right of the center, that is the red light district. Hmm...

■

■

Re:Look at the interesting bit (**Score:1**)

by Chrisje (471362)

Hey man,

The red light district is one of the cooles areas in town. De Waag Society is located in De Waag, an old (15/16th century) building that's situated between the UVA (universiteit van amsterdam), the red light district and chinatown (if you can call it that). It's a wonderful area with great pubs (amongst which Café de Jaren, de Sluyswacht, De Waag, Drama-café) and the Waterloo market with the Stopera within a couple of hundreds of yards from each other.

I know where I'd be spending my time.... ;-)

-

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Subway driver? ([Score:4](#), Funny)

by Scrameustache (459504) on Monday December 02, 2002 @04:34PM ([#4796085](#)) Homepage Journal

They gave a GPS to a subway driver? What next? GPS maps of deep mineshafts? :)

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Re:Subway driver? ([Score:2](#), Informative)

by inteller (599544)

actually GPS in it's purest form could never map the subway, just places where it went above ground. TO map underground they'd need some sort of OnStar type system that relied on more than just a GPS signal.

-

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Re:Subway driver? ([Score:2](#), Informative)

by CrazyJoel (146417)

The a lot of the "subway" in Amsterdam is above ground.

- 1 hidden comment

-

Re:Subway driver? ([Score:1](#))

by kraksmoka (561333)

i thought all of the city transport was above ground, big trolleys with bus drivers that weren't picky if u reused your ticket. heck, even most of the trains were above ground there.

it really adds all of the charm to almost being run over by something every second on the street :) ring ring! ring ring!

-

-

Re:Subway driver? ([Score:1](#))

by GavK (58709)

I live in Ams. and can tell you that in addition to the trams there is also the sneltram/metro system (Like, er, a metro), and the bits of that in central Ams go underground. Although once you get to the outskirts it runs overground too.

Oh, yeah, and if it's within an hour you're *meant* to re-use your ticket.

-

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Re:Subway driver? ([Score:1](#))

by SEWilco (27983)

"...a lot of the subway in Amsterdam is above ground"

...and all below sea level...

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Re:Subway driver? (Score:2, Funny)

by bootprom (585277)

How about strapping mini-GPSes to ally cats, or maybe even cockroaches? Better yet, politicians. Could get interesting.....

Anyhow, as far as I recall, and my memory of Amsterdam is a little hazy (forget why, though), there *are* no subways. The public transport is electric streetcars [hotels-of-amsterdam.org] that kind of look like subways trains, but are much shorter and do not go under the ground. Warning: these things are actually very dangerous as they basically run on the sidewalks, have a tendency to sneak up on you, and need considerable room to stop. Be careful.

Dan

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Re:Subway driver? (Score:1)

by dnahelix (598670)

That's exactly what would have prevented the near tragedy when those miners were trapped not too long ago [mcall.com].

- ▪
- ●

reminds me of the half a car joke (Score:5, Funny)

by Brigadier (12956) on Monday December 02, 2002 @04:36PM (#4796105)

this reminds me of a story of two guys who at intersections would carry the back wheels of the car over wheel sensors. thus the traffic department would have to account for 64.5 cars passing through the intersections.

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Re:reminds me of the half a car joke (**Score:3**, Funny)
by greechneb (574646)
Were these the guys with the 2.3 kids?

■

○

Re:reminds me of the half a car joke (**Score:1**, Informative)
by Anonymous Coward
Great, except traffic counters dont count in .5 cars. If one axle somehow did not trip the air tube, it would show up as one full car short (depending on tube and machine setup).

■

○

Re:reminds me of the half a car joke (**Score:3**, Funny)
by PunchMonkey (261983)
this reminds me of a story of two guys who at intersections would carry the back wheels of the car over wheel sensors. thus the traffic department would have to account for 64.5 cars passing through the intersections.

I think I'd just drive with two wheels on the sidewalk... but then again I read /. and have no muscles.

■ 1 hidden comment

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Reminds me of Cryptonomicon (**Score:5**, Interesting)
by devphil (51341) on Monday December 02, 2002 @04:52PM (#4796258) Homepage

There's a great scene in Cryptonomicon where he writes about attaching lights to people's heads, then tracking the lights from a side view as they walk on and off street curbs. Graphing over time would produce a square wave, with sidewalks showing up as high lines, and streets as low lines.
The point is that Waterhouse is one of the kinds of people who could stare at boatloads of those graphs, and then emerge with an extremely detailed street map of London.

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Re:reminds me of the half a car joke (**Score:3**, Funny)
by isomeme (177414)

Or 64 cars and one Segway.

-
  ○
  Re:reminds me of the half a car joke (**Score:1**)
  by ianjk (604032)
  What about vehicles with 3, 5, or 7 axles???

-
  ○
  Re:reminds me of the half a car joke (**Score:3**, **Interesting**)
  by nairnr (314138)
  This would be the case if only cars went passed an particular intersection. In real life, you would have both the sensor, and then a study where people actually do a car count to determine a reasonable ratio for car / truck traffic. Think about it. The sensor is only measuring axle passages. Cars may have two, but trucks can have anywhere from 3 axles up.

  If you ever wonder why there are a number of cars sitting on the grass around intersections or interchanges that is what they are doing.

  It would be a lot more fun to sit at the sensor and go back and forward...

-
-
  Re:reminds me of the half a car joke (**Score:1**)
  by phreakmonkey (548714)
  It would be a lot more fun to sit at the sensor and go back and forward...

  Oh c'mon, that's what pogo sticks are for! When I was 14 I bounced on one of those pneumatic car-sensor tubes at a dry-cleaner in my neighborhood with a pogo stick... I think the entire staff came out looking for me, and they were carrying big sticks. :-)
  Ah, the good 'ol days....

-
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  Re:reminds me of the half a car joke (**Score:1**)
  by CyberKnet (184349)
  Aaaaah, so the "$4,300 O.B.O" sign in their window is only there to confuse the "Big Brother" naysayers!!!

  I'd been wondering.

  Cause $4,300 (or best offer) for some of those cars is outrageously high!

-
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  Re:reminds me of the half a car joke (**Score:2**)

by [Alsee](515537)
It would be a lot more fun to sit at the sensor and go back and forward...

Nah, just keep looping around and backing over it. That way some bean counter can get stuck trying to figure how the hell negative 14 cars went through the intersection this month :)

-
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Re:reminds me of the half a car joke (**Score:1**)
by [The Bean](23214)
Surely it would be easier to hop on the nearest sport bike and do a wheelie over the sensor?

Of course, any dual axle truck would screw it up as well. Or a heavy unicycle.

I may also just be over analyzing the joke in which case I apologize.

    ▪

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Re:reminds me of the half a car joke (**Score:5**, **Funny**)
by [JaredOfEuropa](526365) on Monday December 02, 2002 @07:18PM ([#4797314]) Journal
Heh, they did something similar over here, when a new system for measuring speed over a stretch of road was introduced. The system would read the license plate at two points a few miles apart, and calculate the speed using the time difference.

During the test phase, a few guys got two identical Volkwagens and put the license plate of one on the back of the other. They then drove one past one checkpoint and immediately drove the other past the next, clocking a respectable speed of Mach 15 or so. The people looking at the stored photographs thought they were looking at the same car in both pictures and were as puzzled as the system. Probably didn't stop them for sending these guys a speeding ticket anyway *shudders*

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Re:reminds me of the half a car joke (**Score:2**)
by [Alsee](515537)
*Probably didn't stop them for sending these guys a speeding ticket anyway *shudders**

I sure hope the fine wasn't $10 per mile over the speed limit :)

clocking a respectable speed of Mach 15

A real fun project would be to try to break light speed....
... in reverse!

-

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Re:reminds me of the half a car joke (**Score:2**)
by blibbleblobble (526872)
Step 1: Print 2 identical numberplates onto paper.
Step 2: Hold first numberplate to speed camera on the A1
Step 3: A friend holds the second number plate to the next speed camera.

Adjust timing to a "believable" level, somewhere around 150mph. Wander around your competitors' carpark to gather numberplates to use...

■

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If they gave it to me. (**Score:1**)
by Skynet (37427)
I'd spell out "PWND" by walking in the correct pattern!

○ 1 hidden comment

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sweet! (**Score:1**)
by mschoolbus (627182)
This is a great idea! If only my country could embed a chip inside of me and everyone in the U.S., then we can bring spam to a whole new level!!!

○

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Are you sure you don't already have it? (**Score:2**, **Funny**)
by Subcarrier (262294)
This is a great idea! If only my country could embed a chip inside of me and everyone in the U.S., then we can bring spam to a whole new level!!!

Let me get this straight. You want a subcutaneous chip that will turn yours and everybody else's brains into spiced pork and ham?

■ 1 hidden comment

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   ### **Minority Report** (**Score:2**)
   by peter303 (12292)
   Every public wall and floor is a continuous video advertisement in Spielberg's 2002 movie "Minority Report". It is keyed into the biometrics of the passerby. No special chip needed.

- ●

   ### **Could this finally do spam in?** (**Score:3**, Insightful)
   by steveadept (545416) on Monday December 02, 2002 @04:37PM (#4796122)
   Okay, it may seem a funny jumping-off point, but stick with me for a second. Digital society hates spam, but not nearly enough for anything to actually be done about it. I think that's because it's basically limited to doing damage to your Inbox.

   Yet when everybody's walking around with wristwatches connected to GPS and the 'net, and Joe's Pizza and Meg's Jewelry and Walmart and Target all want to spam your watch with their current specials as you walk within a hundred feet of their stores, people would (I hope) find that far too invasive and seek iron-clad control over the data they receive.

   Unfortunately, I don't think this is the likely scenario. Probably most device manufacturers will provide a preference which permits you to turn off "unsolicited advertising" delivered via a certain protocol, but other delivery methods (http, pop3, etc.) will remain just as viable. Too bad.

   Steve

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   ### **Total information archive** (**Score:3**, Redundant)
   by BWJones (18351) on Monday December 02, 2002 @04:37PM (#4796126) Homepage Journal
   Boy, what do you think the odds are of a U.S. sponsored project like this that will dump all of the data into our new government database?

   It gives new meaning to "Where Do You Want To Go Today", and sounds like a marketing/GOP wet dream.

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Re:Total information archive ([Score:1](#))

by SolarInfinity (630291)

It'd be more of "Where You Went Today", since the government would have it all recorded.

■

■

Re:Total information archive ([Score:1](#))

by 1DarkZen (25693)

No, it would be "We know where you went today."

■

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Re:Total information archive ([Score:2](#))

by BWJones (18351)

As a follow up to my previous post, I suppose there could be some good reasons for wanting this sort of data such as disaster planning, urban planning, resource management, service availability etc... However, this sort of data would be just what companies would want to target ads and its availability should be severely limited for obvious reasons of privacy. What worries me though is that cities and other organizations with this sort of data would realize they are sitting on a goldmine that could be sold off to the highest corporate bidder.

■

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Re:Total information archive ([Score:2](#))

by Alien Being (18488)

It gives new meaning to "Where Do You Want To Go Today"

Apple switch story: And my PDA was all like 'Beep, Where the hell do you think *you're* going?'

■

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Re:Total information archive ([Score:2](#))

by tswinzig (210999)

I know! Just think of what PURE EVIL the goverment could do with a database filled with coordinates of where people travel the most. The horror! ::shudder::

ummm oh nevermind.

■

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Re:Total information archive ([Score:2](#))

by jandrese (485)

This reminds me a bit of Platonic Chain [cdn-japan.com] where one of the girls tracks a guy she bumped into through the nationwide survalance network and figures out his favorite walkways; then hangs around the walkway to try to bump into him again and start up a relationship. It's creepy in a cute sort of

way.

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I don't understand.... ([Score:1](#))

by KristsInferno (630282)

What is it about this that excites people? I am in no way one of those freaky-conspiracy-paranoid people, but this freaks me out.
"This map does not register streets or blocks of houses"
Sure, it doesn't *register* streets, but the data is there. Which smoke house did YOU spend the afternoon in?

- ○
- ○

Re:I don't understand.... ([Score:1](#))

by KristsInferno (630282)

Sorry about the dual post, but I just found this:

Chris takes this project seriously [waag.org]

- ▪
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GPSr fun ([Score:5](#), Interesting)

by faeryman (191366) on Monday December 02, 2002 @04:38PM (#4796135) Homepage

I was sitting around yesterday thinking about what else can be done with GPS besides geocaching, etc. This is pretty cool.

If you like this, you might like GPS drawing [gpsdrawing.com] too.

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Drunk ([Score:2](#), Funny)

by Anonymous Coward

Give it to me after a night of drinking. I'll make you one hell of a map!

○

○

Re:Drunk (**Score:1**)

by mark_lybarger (199098)

it would probably make a more interesting map if given out *before* the night of drinking. i'm not sure i would want to see my own map though, nor hear the stories that go with each twist/turn.

■

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Excellent! (**Score:5**, Interesting)

by Marxist Commentary (461279) on Monday December 02, 2002 @04:39PM (#4796150) Homepage

I've been using a Garmin GPS II+ that I originally bought for mapping backcountry nonmotorized trails, using a mountain bike. It was great for that, including its ability to upload its waypoints and track log to my PC, where I could integrate the data into mapmaking (GIS) software.

On the water, I found its articulated antenna and lack of waterproofing a liability. I used it in a housing (heavy-duty ziploc type), but found it awkward. I just got a new Garmin eTrex, a 12-channel waterproof (1m for 30 min) unit that has the features I want. No internal maps, but I've never seen a handheld GPS that can compete with the big-screen units in that department-- they're as good as an actual NOS chart.

If it were possible to do so, I would love to donate my map data to such a project - perhaps an open source map project? It could make for some exciting orienteering!

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Re:Excellent! (**Score:3**, Interesting)

by flippet (582344)

That would certainly be useful for those times when you're hopelessly lost, find yourself and spend ages wondering exactly where you went.

I spent two hours last month hacking round in a forest after going off the track while cycling; I'd _love_ to know where I went, and how close to various paths I must have gone...

Phil, just me

■ 1 hidden comment

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Re:Excellent! (**Score:2**)

by WPIDalamar (122110)

but if you had the GPS... would you have been lost for that long?

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Beyond Open Source, what about Open Data? ([Score:2](), **Interesting**)

by [Travelr9]() (514162)

I think it's an excellent idea to create some sort of structured repository for geophysical data. To draw an analogy, I love Google, but it worries me that Google owns their (increasingly universal) dataset as a private for-profit corporation. Map data about the globe is just about the most 'open' sort of information that a human could need... getting from here to there, and information about here or there, being pretty fundamental to life. There are all sorts of applications -- travel, leisure, commerce, play, whatever.

The OSS community does a great job thinking about the pros and cons of open source *software* but doesn't do nearly so much work on the subject of open *data* with which to use the software. This issue is implicit in Slashdot favorites such as FOIA requests to reign in government, public domain vs. copyright issues, fair use, etc., but no one seems to formally frame the 'Open Data' issue in a way that motivates the same sort of response as does Open Source. We should start a new movement, parallel and complementary to OSS! Any takers? We need bandwidth and storage, just like everyone else... I see from Internic that mapdata.org is available. Someone want to hack out a good MySQL table structure to hold it all? Lemme know when we open the project on SourceForge... etc.

Be active!

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Re:Excellent! ([Score:2]())

by [SEWilco]() (27983)

Do any of you have any idea how much of the planet is covered with us ?

Yes. Do the math. The entire human population of the Earth can fit in Texas, with several hundred square feet of empty space around each person. A lot more if you group families together.

- [1 hidden comment]()
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Re:Excellent! ([Score:1]())

by [norweigiantroll]() (582720)

What mapmaking (GIS) software do you use? And can you put the resulting maps back into your GPS? I have an etrex legend and would like to make my own maps... Thanks...

-
-

Re:Excellent! ([Score:2](), **Informative**)

by RackinFrackin (152232)
What mapmaking (GIS) software do you use?

I'm not the original poster, but I've been doing a similar thing for a while. Whenever I go on a trip, I map it out with my etrex, then upload the data into my computer using gpstrans (google should turn it up.) and a homemade cable.

Gpstrans can download tracks and waypoints. They are downloaded and stored as a tab-delimited ascii file. A really simple perl script turns then data into two columns of (x,y) coordinates that GnuPlot can display. You can even get GnuPlot to plot the tracks as pixel-sized points, and the waypoints as larger points on the graph.

Gpstrans and Gnuplot are both really simple, open source, and work great. I've had a lot of fun using this setup, and I've mapped a lot of highways in the southeast US.

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hey... (**Score:4**, **Funny**)
by Niles_Stonne (105949) on Monday December 02, 2002 @04:42PM (#4796174) Homepage
Hey, what's that one that keeps wandering around that street corner...

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real time vice-tracking (**Score:5**, **Funny**)
by sssmashy (612587) on Monday December 02, 2002 @04:42PM (#4796178)
Finally, a way to track the "real people" movements of residents of Amsterdam. Now I can find the marijuana cafes and red-light clubs frequented by Dutchmen who know what they're doing, as opposed to settling for the crappy spots they push on tourists.

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Re:real time vice-tracking (**Score:2**)
by Cy Guy (56083)
Unfortunately it seems the red zones that appear on the map [waag.org] aren't color coded to represent that. Also aparently absent from the color scheme are green spots to identify the hash bars.

If they could get a representative sample of the population, this would be a great technology for city planners. What I would like to see are maps that instead of giving a week at a time - give cumulative maps for each half hour during weekday mornings and afternoons to identify which traffic routes to take or avoid.

Given enough devices with a real-time hookup and it would be invaluable in directing traffic around problem spots. The same could be done in the NorthEastern US by putting ez-Pass readers into all highway onramps and offramps that didn't charge a toll but tracked traffic flow. Of course this could also have serious privacy implications as well.

■

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Re:real time vice-tracking (**Score:2**)
by Sri Lumpa (147664)
HEADLINE: Amsterdam's sex industry soon to be no more.

In a new survey studying the routes and streets used by Amsterdam inhabitants conducted over two months by the "waag society" a startling result is to be found: Less than five people are using the streets of the infamous "red light district". Following that discovery to its conclusion it is logical to predict the demise of the Amsterdam sex industry. Following the spread of this news, all the small entrepreneurs and owners of SME in the disctrict have formed an union to promote their wares and plan to combine forces to present the buyers with new incentives and and discounts like "buy one, get one free".

On the other hand, religious leaders around the world have rejoiced at the high moral Amsterdam inhabitants have chosen to follow despite the temptation, with the exception of his Holiness the Pope John Paul II who was heard muttering under his breath "damn, where will I go for my cardiovascular exercise now?" while the founder of the Church of Satan, Mr Anton Szandor LaVey, was found on the site of the tragedy where he issued a communique in which he deplored the current situation in Amsterdam and encouraged Amsterdams denizens of all sex to provide for the needy that may be left after the demise of this glorious industry by "taking a whore in your home and in your bed", and, "for the more evil of us blessed by your Dark Lord with pots of cash, to provide for the young, it is never too early to start a good education". He also encouraged those that do not have enough money to do so to "provide to the needs of the poor sod^H^H^Hconsumers who will suffer from the destruction of such a wonderful industry".

Ok, it didn't come ot as funny as I hoped but its 22:00 and my funny bone is already asleep, so bugger.

■

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You're right. LOOK AT THE MAP CAREFULLY! (**Score:1**)
by MadCow-ard (330423)
That's the best part. LOOK AT THE MAP!. If you know Amsderdam, you'll see very light traffic at the redlight district that most tourists would go to. I have a hard time finding traffic at the the Bulldog, but I see most Dutch avoiding the redlight when moving downtown by using the main street opposite the district! I also, from a cursory look, see possibly the Milkweg, and Rembrandt Platz lit up. Cant's say for sure, though. Very interesting!

■

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"How big is your world" (**Score:5, Insightful**)

by Tony.Tang (164961) <slashdot@@@sleek...hn...org> on Monday December 02, 2002 @04:43PM (#4796193) Homepage Journal

The images are absolutely fantastic, and go to demonstrate just how small our lives are. Cumulatively, all their users contribute to a very revealing map of Amsterdam; however, individually, most stay in a very small subset of the area. It's easy to see how those east-side/west-side stereotypes can develop given that most people really only live on one side and never really go to "the other side."

The visualization technique that they use is really cool too -- it lets you see more vividly the areas that get traversed (cumulatively) more heavily.

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Re:"How big is your world"-Wallet? (**Score:1**, Insightful)

by Anonymous Coward

" Every inhabitant of Amsterdam has an invisble map of the city in his head. The way he moves about the city and the choices made in this process are determined by this mental map. Amsterdam RealTime attampts to visualize these mental maps through examining the mobile behaviour of the city's users."

This will of course be of benifit to sociologists.

I wonder if they have a breakdown of the results by gender, or age, or even economic. Do males wander farther afield? Are the younger generation more mobile? Is there a difference in mobility, as well as were, based on the amount of money you have? City planning could be more "humane", by looking at density of lines,combined with time measurements and correlating that with architecture. Which places are more conducive to social interaction? Which is "user" hostile, represented by places on the map that fewer people go to. How about looking at data for the span of a year? Enough time for the seasons, as well as other events to manifest themselves in the results.

   ■

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"Automatic" visualization (**Score:1**)

by geschild (43455)

I don't know for sure but looking at the maps it seems as if the 'cool vizualization' is automagically created by the resolution of the system. If roads are wider than the resolution of th system you will obviously see that the center of the road is most intensely travelled while the sides of the roads are less travelled. That way you get a line that varies in intensity in relation to it's width with the center being more intensely marked. The colorcoding enhances on that to show single resolutionpoints that get travelled on multiple times in a more intense color.

I suspect that there are in fact no exact resolution points but accumulation of overlapping points is used. This would fit nicely since a side of the road will be lapped less because there will be no traffic out of the boundries of the road. Example: take two lines and put three dots in between that each are 1/2 the width between the lines in diameter and that overlap. The center of the 'road' will more overlapped than the sides.

reading back it seems I can't clearly explain this in words. Oh well.

- ■

- ●

That's great... (Score:1)

by norweigiantroll (582720)

This is what I want todo myself with my etrex, mapping motorcycle trails (as tracks), and having a website to share them ... Never thought of putting them on random people and telling them just to go wherever ;)

○

- ●

uh, hello? (Score:2, Funny)

by tps12 (105590)

Government tracking with satellites == bad, remember?

I swear, when they finally start installing video cameras in everyone's houses, all they'll have to do is say they're BlueTooth enabled or XML-RPC enhanced and the geeks will eat it up.

○ 1 hidden comment

○

Re:uh, hello? (Score:3, Insightful)

by LostCluster (625375)

Government tracking == bad, private group tracking data for limited purposes == good.

Tracking me to give me a speeding ticket every time my car's speed > 66 mph == bad... tracking me so that the world can know trafic's moving at 75 mph on route 3 good.

- ■

○

Re:uh, hello? (Score:2, Informative)

by faeryman (191366)

I know this is halfjoking, but ...GPS units like the ones used in this example do not transmit your position, only triangulate it and store it locally. Someone has to download all the routes off of it to track you.

Some systems (like the vehicle locator systems) use a satellite uplink though to transmit the position given off by the GPS though. This is totally different than Big Brother stalking you just because you bought an eTrex :) But it is possible for it to happen given the proper combos of technology.

- ■

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I tried this... (Score:1)

by Thud457 (234763)

when I first got my GPS, I tried this for a week. I got bored when all it showed was route from the coffee pot to my cube to the bathroom and back.

- ■

○

Re:uh, hello? (**Score:4**, **Funny**)
by nebenfun (530284) on Monday December 02, 2002 @05:06PM (#4796353)
Government Agent: How would you like a free child safety camera?

Average Geek: Screw you! You agent of MS...

Government Agent: What if I said that it ran linux?

Average Geek: Screw you...hmmm, did you say linux?

Government Agent: Yes, I did.

Average Geek: Does it support...

Government Agent: Ogg Vorbis? Yes, of course.

Average Geek: I'll take five.

Government Agent: Going to run a Beowulf, eh? Hehe...you crazy geeks.

Parent   Share

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Re:uh, hello? (**Score:2**)
by Alsee (515537)
Free? Cool!

I'll hack it so it does nothing except scan the digits of Pi to find the longest consecutive string of 4's.

■ 1 hidden comment

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How can I do this? (**Score:2**)

by viper21 (16860)
Seriously. I've got a GPS, and a link cable for my PC. I want to make a map of my life travels :-)

-S

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Re:How can I do this? (Score:3, Informative)
by faeryman (191366)
It's not too hard! I'm interested in this sort of thing too.

You'll need some software to gather your paths from the GPS, and some digital maps to overlay them on.

Some of the popular software is EasyGPS for the PC, and GPSy [gpsy.com] and MacGPS [macgpspro.com] Pro for the Mac. You can download a free version of each.

The maps are a little harder to come by though. Here is a list to get you started. [gpsy.com] Some are free, some cost up to about $100 depending on size, scale, and detail. You can scan in your paper maps and calibrate them in some software too.

I think this is really cool - I'd like to have a map of North America and see where all I've been :)

■

○

Re:How can I do this? (Score:1)
by Woogiemonger (628172)
I want to make a map of my life travels :-)
Possible uses for tracking your life adventures:
- CIA knows where to point the orbiting laser if you need to be assassinated.
- You have a built in alibi if you ever get accused of being somewhere you're not. (would require secure storage, including from you)
- Stalker is able to view where you are and decides to drop in.
- You might be well off, so muggers can see your routine, and wait till you're in the bad part of town.
- You have built-in lo-jack in case you're kidnapped.
- You can look at your "location log" to see where you made that wrong turn.
- You can see pretty curves and loops from the night you attempted to walk home drunk.
- Letting your children or future historians have a better idea of what your life was like.
- 2 hidden comments
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    Re:How can I do this? (Score:2)

    by JaredOfEuropa (526365)

    I did this! Got my GPS and some software to make a perfect map of me sitting on my duff at the keyboard, with a few lines indicating the occasional bathroom break and trips to the supermarket.

- ■

- ●

  Red Light (Score:2, Insightful)

  by kiley (95428)

  It is great to see that every one of those people spent some time in the Red Light District. :)

  - ○

- ●

  Distributed mapping is cool (Score:2)

  by drinkypoo (153816)

  Now they need a distributed cluster of web servers to fight the /. effect. Can anyone mirror some of the better images from the site (if you can get them) so others of us can see them?

  - ○

- ●

  In a certain zone of Amsterdam... (Score:1)

  by Wolfier (94144)

  The GPS server will only record a whole bunch of coordinates oscillating up and down, up and down...

  - ○

- ●

  Who do you trust? (Score:4, Insightful)

  by LostCluster (625375) on Monday December 02, 2002 @04:53PM (#4796265)

  One use I can think of this would be a data source for traffic reports. If the sensor is moving quickly, it's safe to assume that whereever that sensor is, there's a highway operating perfectly fine. If a sensor comes to a stop or goes slower than normal speed on a highway (excluding tollbooths and rest stations, zones that I'm sure will be quickly identified) that indicates that something has gone wrong such as an accident or blockage. Whatever it is doesn't matter, so much as the fact cars aren't going at the proper speed. What would result from this data is a hot-cold map of the highways that indicates pixel by pixel where the road is at full speed, and where it's not. The only thing is, I'd much rather that sensor in my car be reporting to a private traffic-reporting company than the government....

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    Re:Who do you trust? (Score:1)

by boster (124383)

I forget the name, but there's at least one startup in the Bay Area proposing to do exactly this, but with cell phones. I think they are proposing to use the new GPS functionality required for emergency (911) calls.

- ■
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Re:Who do you trust? (Score:3, Informative)

by nairnr (314138)

If you want to see something of interest that does this check out Houston Live Traffic [tamu.edu] They use toll-booth transponders with sensors every 1-5 miles. This then gives them a live map of average traffic flow. They also have web cams at various spots.
Overall this is an excellent demonstration of this kind of technology.

- ■
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Re:Who do you trust? (Score:2)

by po8 (187055)

TrafficDodger [trafficdodger.com] uses existing highway sensors and fancy AI search techniques to suggest fast routes in traffic for the LA area. Free, at least for now.

- ■
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Re:Who do you trust? (Score:1)

by Wireless Joe (604314)

While not pixel by pixel, the WSDOT Puget Sound Area Traffic [wa.gov] page does give a very good representation of what's happening at any given moment on Seattle's interstates and highways (I5, I405, I90, hwy167, 522 and 520). The combination of speed sensors and a lot of traffic cameras really helps me plan my Bothell-Seattle commute (which sometimes constitutes a 1-hour 12 mile drive).

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Why not me? (Score:4, Funny)

by r_j_prahad (309298) <r_j_prahad@hotm[_].com ['ail' in gap]> on Monday December 02, 2002 @04:54PM (#4796266)

They should have asked me to participate, they could be having a most excellent map of the red light district by now!

Oh, it wasn't funded? Never mind.

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- **Ok I'm gonna strap a GPS on my...** (**Score:3**, **Funny**)

  by nlinecomputers (602059) on Monday December 02, 2002 @04:54PM (#4796272)

  ...cat. Just where the hell DOES he go when he vanishes for 3 days? Now If I can just tap into those orbiting "Star Wars" laser guns I could teach him to stay at home.

  Bad KITTY!!! ***death ray come down from the sky***ZAP! Fried cat found 2 miles away.

  Well maybe not...

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  It's playing "Cat Chess"... (**Score:3**, **Funny**)

  by FyRE666 (263011)

  It's a little known fact that the average moggy enjoys the intellectual pursuit of Cat Chess almost as much as sporadic violent confrontations with other random cats.

  The rules (based upon observation) are pretty straight forward, and are as follow:

  A point is scored by a cat that can simultaneously observe at least 2 other cats.

  Any cat observed by 2 other cats simultaneously is out of the game.

  That's it - so strategy plays a big part - on the one hand, a high vantage point lends itself to high scoring rounds, but has the increased danger of being spotted by other cats. These games can go on for days though, often ending only in a mass fight or when the competitors fancy some milk and maybe the chance to bat a small bird around for fun.

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  Where were you? (**Score:1**)

  by Free Heel Skier (466717)

  So, this way everyone would know that I skipped work on Friday, and spent it at the stip bar!

  ○

  ○

  Re:Where were you? (**Score:1**)

  by SEWilco (27983)

  So, this way everyone would know that I skipped work on Friday, and spent it at the stip bar!

I'll stipulate to that.

- ■

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This is freeking cool (**Score:1**)
by Gabrill (556503)
I wish I my city would use info like this for street planning. It would beat the heck out of those rubber lines counting axles by intersections.

○

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If you followed people around long enough... (**Score:5**, **Funny**)
by unfortunateson (527551) on Monday December 02, 2002 @05:03PM (#4796328) Journal
... you'd get a most excellent map of where the public restrooms are. Always useful when traveling to a foreign city.

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APRS (**Score:1**)
by cryptec (630849)
This sort of thing has been achieved by ham radio operators for 10+ years now. In the ham radio community it is called APRS (Automatic Position Relay system). For more info check out http://web.usna.navy.mil/~bruninga/aprs.html

○ 1 hidden comment

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Better Maps? (**Score:1**)
by ThingOne (578618)
Over time this would develop better maps of surface streets and access. Some of the current maps of this scale would get you lost with non existent and mislocated streets. This could be used as a quality control for city maps. I would participate if given an opportunity

○

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Interesting Concept, However..... (**Score:1**)
by LittleDustPuppy (588678)
I have to admit, as interesting as a concept as this is, just how much detail does the tracker obtain? Is it only the geographic position? (yes I realize that that is what it is named after...) How will this play in regards to the "Big Brother" theory? Though it would be a great idea for use in the parole system, how long will it take for it to go beyond acceptable boundaries? Numerous people wish they could be the stars the see on TV, at the rate this technology could go, we could very well find our lives being that much closer to those some admire. Exposed, and never again to be completely and privately our own.

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red light (**Score:2**)
by jglow (525234)
http://www.waag.org/realtime/images/kaarten/2-11-4 0d.jpg [waag.org]

those bright red blotches must be the smoke shops and red light district. high traffic!

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Curiously... (**Score:2**)
by Shamanin (561998)
the amount of traffic in one section of town was mapped to a highway calculated to be 50 lanes wide, but upon further investigation turned out to be where the greatest number of brothels reside.

○

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having been to amsterdam (**Score:1**)
by kraksmoka (561333)
i definately suggest a visit.
but seriously folks. that city is old, circular and downright confusing to find your way around. and that's when you're sober, after a couple of good coffee shop visits, forget it. everything looks the same (the locals should attest to this), and the city is a big horse shoe. so if you take one wrong turn you wind up who knows where!
hell. one night i spent 2 hours freezin my butt off, during the summer, at 3 am until i could find a decent sign.
i for one am glad to see gps put to a fun use.

○ 1 hidden comment

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Re:having been to amsterdam (**Score:1**)
by kraksmoka (561333)
direction+difficult/unfamiliar names+intoxication (often)=lost
the worst part was getting directions from someone.

■

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Even better (**Score:1**)
by gr8_phk (621180)
I considered doing that a few years ago. Actually, I wanted to use inertial sensors to track relative position with good acuracy and then use GPS to nail down some absolute positions. Someone sitting with a laptop could click on icons indicating road type in real time too. I just wanted to make a videogame with I-696 in Detroit, so I could go over the standard 80-90 MPH.
Paul

○

- **I've been thinking about something similar** (**Score:3**, Interesting)

  by Randy Rathbun (18851) <slashdot.20.randyrathbun@spamgourmet.com> on Monday December 02, 2002 @05:31PM (#4796524) Homepage

  One thing I have noticed about a lot of open source stuff is that they all use those horrific Tiger maps. Tiger maps suck. Big time. They are good for just looking at street names, but when you want to use them for anything more than that they are not good at all. For example, the street I live on shows up on the tiger maps as being about 50 feet south of where it really is, and the intersection closest to my house is more than 150 feet off.

  But, because tiger maps are free, that is what is used. However, if you want to build your own talking GPS navigation system, using those maps is a bad thing - the routes would be all goofed up.

  So, I have been considering doing something like these guys so there could be some way to get decent maps out there for free that will give better results.

  However, I see a number of potential problems. First, you can't just turn on a GPS and start recording data. My Magellan 315 starts averaging when you sit still. Get under an obstruction and the data it records is all over the place. After only an hour of sitting you would have somewhere around 100 data points that don't exist. That would be a lot of work for someone to clean up.

  The other problem I see is really related to participation. It's one thing if you are in a small town with 50 or so streets in it - you would probably be more apt to get your town fully mapped. However, living in the Big City, I only really travel a few streets during a typical month - mainly highways and interstates, with the occassional side street. Since the ways I travel always have a ton of traffic on them, that means most everyone else goes that way too - probably including a good number of people who might be participating in such a project as well.

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    Re:I've been thinking about something similar (**Score:2**, Interesting)

    by SEWilco (27983)

    So ignore the data points which are close together during a long period. You're not particularly interested in data from an hour when you're not moving. Throw away data from periods when you're not moving or when it has been "too long" since a GPS reading.

    If the data is coming from a bunch of people who are wandering around for weeks, they'll probably run through the same area several times and generate several valid data points. Even more if they keep doing it for months.

    Matching the raw data to actual locations is a different problem. Let's say we start with TIGER maps. Use speeds to locate and confirm the highway locations. People who enter/exit a freeway will show where the limited number of access points are, so now the location of those intersecting streets is known (if TIGER doesn't show the ramps, you might have to record them -- easy to do that if you care). Cars which use those known streets allow correlation of TIGER locations of those streets. Turns and cross traffic show intersecting streets -- counting number of blocks from highways allows confirmation of location of all individual streets (alleys would add some confusion). Streets with curves in them allow further confirmation of locations along the street. Patterns of traffic pauses show STOP signs or traffic lights. Areas with only interpolated data hint at tree cover or tall buildings.

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[Accuracy, precision and QA of spatial data](#) ([Score:3](#), Interesting)

by [xixax]( ) [(44677)](#)

One thing I have noticed about a lot of open source stuff is that they all use those horrific Tiger maps. Tiger maps suck. ... and the intersection closest to my house is more than 150 feet off.

That's one of the cans of worms I have been pondering deeply ever since I demo-ed a PostGIS based system that lets random users lodge spatial data.How on earth do you do meaningful QA on that quantity of data? Especially when many people are happy to use layers such as TIGER.

FWIW, I think that collecting raw GPS tracks is a low value activity. I think the most value will come from validated overlays put together in a Wiki fashion. Leave it to the Cave Clanners to maintain a Wiki style layer of drains and urban tunnels, leave it to the geeks to maintain a WiFi layer. Pull you favorite overlay sites together in your PDA and enjoy an augmented reality...

Xix.

- ▪
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[Re:I've been thinking about something similar](#) ([Score:1](#))

by [Cid Highwind]( ) [(9258)](#)

The TIGER maps may not be the best, but they are a good starting place. (and free!!) What you could do is use this sort of GPS data to refine the TIGER maps. Roads would look like long narrow clouds of GPS fixes, with the real course of the road somewhere very close to a line of best fit through that cloud. You could use something like a least-squares algorithm to move roads in the TIGER maps to match the patterns of GPS positions.

Another alternative would be to hire me :D to gather the data, and make revised maps for your area. My rates are very reasonable!

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[Collaboritive Mapmaking? in AMSTERDAM?](#) ([Score:1](#))

by [mary_will_grow]( ) [(466638)](#)

A surprising result: 90% of the people seem to either stay in one place, make a trip to the convenience store, or take a bi-weekly trip to this one hippie looking guy's front porch. The map basically looks like this:

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[Remote controlled eyes](#) ([Score:4](#), Interesting)

by [jki]( ) [(624756)](#) on Monday December 02, 2002 @05:35PM ([#4796570](#)) [Homepage](#)

...this story reminds me of one the dark-hour ideas. Would not be sometimes handy if you could "rent the eyes" of people around the world, for say 5

minutes. Just like in the GPS'ing Amsterdarm scenario, there would be people in multiple cities with world - carrying GPS and a digital (video) camera. Then, when you spot someone in a interesting place, you could get control of his camera for some time. Maybe there could be the option donate the guy $5 and ask him to move 100 feet left.... now that's a real big brother scenario :) Anyway, it could be fun too, to be "in the place" when something interesting happens...talking about Amsterdam...(red) lights, camera, action :)

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Re:Remote controlled eyes (**Score:1**)

by chadjg (615827)

So with this idea we have the beginnings of Simstim (Neuromancer)?

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Re:Remote controlled eyes (**Score:1**)

by sexecutioner (597887)

And also Sensevirons [spelling?] - (Dark Reign Trilogy, Peter F. Hamilton) The concept is awesome, and brilliantly portrayed in both titles.

■

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I saw you... (**Score:1**)

by StevenHallman76 (455545)

Whenever I'm gettting to know a girl I'm intrested in this sort of image always comes to mind. I always wonder "could we have crossed paths before?"

Over time the lines might come close to crossing, but they never touch. Then one day it happens.

○ 1 hidden comment

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Re:I saw you... (**Score:1**)

by FatAlb3rt (533682)

Wow. You almost made me shed a tear. Well, I'd better get back to my chocolate ice cream and Hugh Grant movie.

Sorry...had to do it.

■

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- **Two-timers need (should) not apply** (**Score:3**, **Interesting**)
  by Black Copter Control (464012) <samuel-local.bcgreen@com> on Monday December 02, 2002 @05:39PM (#4796605) Homepage Journal
  I can just see it now, Your spouse looks up your GPS data and finds that just about every night you said you were 'working late', you have thes long traces at their best friend's house
  (Sorry: *Former* best friend).

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  - **But... How does it handle the canals?** (**Score:1**)
    by quakeslut (107512)
    The city of Amsterdam has extensive canals and waterways. If people wearing these transmitters use any canal boats for transportation it seems as though the maps generated would incorrectly identify roads that "don't exist" and would lead people into the water!

    -
    - **Re:But... How does it handle the canals?** (**Score:2**)
      by cei (107343)
      I was thinking you should just rent a helicopter and skywrite obscenities with your GPS tracings....

      -
      - **Re:But... How does it handle the canals?** (**Score:1**)
        by SEWilco (27983)
        Don't need to use boats to mark canals. If the canal freezes over you'll have ice skating routes [letsgo.com] traced.

        -
        - **God, mine would suck.** (**Score:2**)
          by EvilStein (414640)
          Home -> BART station -> (trip on BART..) -> Embarcadero (SF) BART Station -> Java City -> Caltrain -> Work.

          Reverse to get home.

          Toss in Home -> Fry's -> Home on the weekend.

          Some people just shouldn't map out their lives. heh.

          -
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What's "citizens of Amsterdam"? (**Score:1**)

by AnonymousComrade (465177)

Funny, nobody told me that Amsterdam is a sovereign country! Or maybe they meant **residents** of Amsterdam?

○

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including a subway??? (**Score:2**)

by frovingslosh (582462)

The site includes aggregate maps, and those created by individuals, including a subway driver,

I'll admit I can't view the site because of the /. effect, but Amsterdam has a subway? I sure missed seeing that while I was there. Doesn't seem like a likely thing for a city reclaimed from the ocean to have, and less likely for a GPS receiver to be able to track a subway driver.

○ 1 hidden comment

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Re:including a subway??? (**Score:1**)

by it0 (567968)

Well you aren't going to find any in the coffeeshops
But here are pictures of it
http://mercurio.iet.unipi.it/pix/nl/metro/Amst erda m/pix.html
And here is the subway map
http://www.metropla.net/eu/ams/amsterdm.htm

If you haven't seen it, it doesn't mean it isn't there. Although I believe there is a philisofical discussion about it...

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subterrestrial GPS? (**Score:2**, **Interesting**)

by flowerp (512865)

So how exactly does a subway driver get a GPS
signal on the job?

And how do Australians get GPS? They're 6000 miles
below our feet!

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Solves part of the problem (**Score:2**)

by Alethes (533985)

I can see that this is a great way to get the actual paths and roads into a database to be used for mapping and so forth, but how do we complete this mapping

solution with a way to label those paths and roads?

○

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Re:Solves part of the problem (Score:1)

by SEWilco (27983)

As I mentioned in another reply, from speeds you can confirm highway locations. Exits from highways show cross streets. Bends in roads also show some locations. Street names have to be entered by at least some people, or extracted from maps which might not be very accurate.

■

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I did this last year (Score:2, Interesting)

by jjeffers (127519)

I did something like this last year using amateur radio's Automatic Packet Reporting system. Basically there are thousands of amateur radio operators that broadcast their GPS position. Using software I wrote along with MySQL [mysql.com] and Mapserver [umn.edu] I was able to create maps that showed real-life traffic flow.
You can see a sample of this type of map and learn a little bit about it at http://aprsworld.net/info/paper2002/giant-map-of-l a.php [aprsworld.net]
-James Jefferson
KB0THN
Find me [aprsworld.net]

○

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GPS over GPRS (Score:3, Insightful)

by ukryule (186826) <slashdot&yule,org> on Tuesday December 03, 2002 @12:03AM (#4798930) Homepage

One of the neat things I haven't seen comments on was the fact they were using GPRS to transmit the GPS data in real-time [waag.org] - so the GPS data really was uploaded as it was generated. This is the sort of thing that GPRS is really good for - it's low bandwidth (so doesn't cost an arm and a leg) and constantly updated.

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Re:what about... (Score:2, Funny)

by Anonymous Coward

This fellow [goatse.cx]? I'm sure it would be very interesting to see where life leads him.

oh, come on. you didn't even take the time to make a referrer link so that people wouldn't immediately realize it's a goatse link. how do you expect to troll properly if people KNOW you are trolling?!

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    Re:Well (**Score:1**, **Offtopic**)
    by Tattva (53901)
    Thank you, offtopic Aqua Teen Hunger Force-quoting anonymous guy.
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That is so cool (**Score:1**)

by [Frobozz0 (247160)](#)
This is one of the coolest, least depressing, stories I've read on Slashdot in a while.

If I'm not mistaken, would this not only create a thorough map, but a map with density? You'd be killing 2 birds with one stone by mapping location, and travel density.

- ○

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Cool Map ([Score:1](#))
by [IMarvinTPA (104941)](#)
This is awesome. Reminds me of Everquest and Mapfiend. Great maps to navigate by.

IMarv

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More info that can be used. ([Score:1](#))
by [xyote (598794)](#)
There's speed. Slow speed is pedestrian traffic. Faster speed would be vehicle traffic. Being still would be inside a building most likely.

Then there's temporal distribution. At mealtimes, the non movement would be resturants. Right after mealtimes would be restrooms (when you're a tourist knowing where the restrooms are is valuable information). Evening, theatres and bars.

- ○

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Wise-a$$ draws a pigeon ([Score:1](#))
by [muck1969 (237358)](#)
Someone took the time to walk around and let his/her (Chris?) data be recorded in a manner that the resulting image was a pigeon. I think that if I were to wear a tracking device, I'd be too tempted to spell out profanities.

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- ●

Terrorist Maps ([Score:1](#), Insightful)
by Anonymous Coward
Hrmm..
Now they know where to place the bombs to inflict maximum collateral damage.

- ○

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  fps levels anyone? (Score:1, Interesting)
  by haa...jesus christ (576980)
  am i the only person that thinks we could generate fps levels using this technique? yes? well okay then.
  -
-
  yeah but... (Score:1)
  by drc500free (472728)
  ...how many people would actually go to the red light district wearing a GPS? I wonder how accurate these paths really are at showing 'real' day to day life ;-)
  -
-
  I'm building a website for doing essentially this (Score:1)
  by bogamo (96489)
  Except for hiking trails.

  It has a long way to go, but the first pass is up.

  Check it out:

  http://www.trailregistry.com

  -Geoff
  -
-
  -
-
  Last Post! (Score:1)
  by alpg (613466)
  "We don't do a new version to fix bugs." - Bill Gates
  "The new version - it's not there to fix bugs." - Bill Gates
  -- Retranslated from Focus 43/1995, pp. 206-212

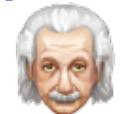 - this post brought to you by the Automated Last Post Generator...
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