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**Title:** Bits in the 'Hood: Location-based Storytelling Systems, New Forms of Tourism and their Impact on Spatial Ownership Patterns

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**Abstract:** The widespread adoption of GIS-enabled portable media has opened the mass market to location-based storytelling systems (LBSS) based on spatial annotation. These systems stream meaningful layers of information to clients in accordance to their geographical position, telling effectively one or more "stories" about place (including, but not limited to, what that space is). These layers can have varying degree of institutionalization, ranging from officially sanctioned information to freely user-generated content: this paper will focus on the latter end of the spectrum, that is on systems that allow users to annotate space.

This paper analyzes one of such systems - MIT Mobile Labs' OpenLOCAST platform - to discuss implications of ubiquitous GIS data flows for (a) the redefinition of tourist experience and, because of this, of (b) processes of social production of urban space:

(a) The overall goal LBSS is to provide narrative information (i.e. meanings) in accordance with spatial movement - that is, we argue, to enable forms of tourism. Touristic experience entails decoding meanings assigned (at the individual, collective, cultural etc. levels) to particular spaces (and possibly their insertion into personal or shared narratives). We argue that the less institutionalized are the data layers involved in a LBSS is, the broader the range of spaces potentially entailed in this encoding-decoding process become, as users are enabled to more freely attach meanings and narrations to spaces for other users to experience. Combined with flexible data retrieval capabilities of the databases on which LBSS operate, this fosters potential new forms of tourism centered upon (and not only enhanced by) the experience of these layers.

(b) Furthermore, the paper explores how LBSS may impact socio-spatial concrete production processes (Lefebvre 1991). In particular it might pose a challenge to established patterns of spatial ownership. While a somewhat fluid concept, "owning" a space implies mastering its material and symbolic geography with a certain degree of exclusivity. When we "own" a space we can afford the privilege of turning it into a "place" (Tuan 2001). Yet as LBSS broaden the potential audiences of these meanings and
narrations and loosens their access requirements, the centrality and exclusivity of such knowledge for spatial ownership (and potentially for spatial belonging) might become contested. This would in turn fostering highly interesting practices of resistance and/or subtraction similar to those observable in the dialectic between elite and mass tourism, or in graffiti.