SMART CITIZEN KIT

MONITORING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT BY CITY.

By Fab Lab Bcn

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Imagine a city that could almost regulate itself, like a natural organism, adjusting to changes in its environment that its own inhabitants created. Until recently that scenario could only be played out in computer games in which players simulated the growth of cities. Now a much talked about Barcelona-based start-up wants to make that a reality.

The Smart Citizen Kit has three interlocking components. The first is a multi-purpose, low-cost monitor, about the size of a TV remote control, which records noise, temperature, pollution, humidity and light, as well as ambient networks such as Wi-Fi. Smart Citizen wants to equip people in cities with these monitors, so together they can start collecting basic data.

The data from the monitors is brought together online to create a detailed virtual map of a city, so its environmental life can be easily visualised. These maps and the data underlying them can then be relayed back to citizens in real-time on their smartphones, so they can see their own part played in the life of their cities and take action in response.

For the first time, citizens should be able to see in real-time their collective environmental impact. It should also sharpen the political debate over cities and climate change, because for the first time it would bring out into the open where the most energy was being consumed, and which parts of a city produce the most carbon and pollution.

Maps change how cities see themselves and how they govern themselves. In

the 19th century maps of poverty and deprivation in London paved the way for new policies on housing, sanitation and welfare. The collaborative real-time maps created by projects such as Smart Citizen could do the same.

Image 'Smart Citizen Kit' courtesy of Al Billings

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