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'Minority Report' style pre-social network finds you friends in your hangouts

👤 KIRAN PAHWA 🕒 25 NOVEMBER 2011



London, Nov 25 : In Steven Spielberg's 'Minority Report' a specialized police department, "PreCrime" apprehends criminals based on foreknowledge provided by three psychics called 'precogs.'

Now, a team of scientists has revealed the possibility of a "pre-social" network - a bit like the "Precrime" unit - that would predict where users will go, how long they will stay and who they are likely to meet there.

The team has developed a technology that they believe could spawn a novel form of social network - which tells its users where and when people with similar interests or habits are likely to congregate.

The system, named Jyotish after the Sanskrit term for Hindu astrology, was developed at Boeing's research centre at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign.

The system was developed to help Boeing predict the movements of work crews in its huge aircraft factories, but Long Vu and Klara Nahrstedt, the system's developers, believe it can do a lot more.

Vu explained Jyotish draws up maps of people's movements by monitoring the connections their smartphones make to Wi-Fi and Bluetooth networks, which have ranges of 100 and 10 metres respectively - small enough to pin down users' locations and thus who they meet.

Vu tested this by giving 79 volunteers Android smartphones whose Wi-Fi and Bluetooth modems were made trackable.

This detailed log of users' movements and habits can be used to create a mobile version of Facebook that allows people in the same area to create a "hang-out event", Vu said.

"Indeed, this version of Facebook could even recommend that people create a hang-out event because they are likely to be in the same location in the future," New Scientist quoted him as saying. (ANI)

United Kingdom: London **People:** Steven Spielberg

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