

Robots in the City

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Robots are increasingly being deployed in public spaces—for example, to deliver food, to clean or vacuum, or to help maintain safety. Often in these deployments, the robots are also tasked with observing the social context. This is necessary for pragmatic reasons, to steer clear of hazards, for example, or to understand issues that might affect wider deployment. In this talk, I will talk about urban human-robot interaction projects in light of the robot's role as social observer. I will talk about key areas in urban HRI research, with a discussion of the ethics of this robot role, some cross-cultural differences that emerge from this activity, and how the urban science community might rise to the challenge.



Wendy Ju is an Associate Professor of Information Science at Cornell University, and is visiting faculty at New York University this academic year. She is also an inaugural faculty member of Cornell's new campus-wide multidisciplinary Design Tech department, and an Associate Professor at the Jacobs Technion-Cornell Institute at Cornell Tech, and has a secondary affiliation in the faculty of Architecture and Town Planning at Technion-Israel. Her work in the areas of human-robot interaction and automated vehicle interfaces highlights the ways that interactive devices can communicate and engage people without interrupting or intruding. Her current research focus is on everyday urban interaction. Professor Ju has innovated numerous methods for early-stage prototyping of automated systems to understand how people will respond to systems before the systems are built. She has a PhD in Mechanical Engineering from Stanford, and a Master's in Media Arts and Sciences from MIT. Her monograph on The Design of Implicit Interactions was published in 2015.

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