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**The future is bright for tech firm’s leading lights**

*The connexion – February 2017*

FRENCH researcher Suat Topsu, from The Smart Lighting Alliance (SLA), has come up with new communications technology which promises to revolution­ise our digital life all over again. First there was wifi, now there's lifi: light bulbs which also provide internet access. SLA association is a French collective working in the sector that aims to promote the bene­fits of smartlighting, as well as to ensure that lifi technology remains a French world leader and is not overtaken by similar inventions in other countries.

Paris transport authority RATP is already planning to equip all the tunnels of the Paris metro with lifi by the end of 2020, making it the first such connected under­ground system in the world. As well as providing a secure internet connection, lifi can also use audio messaging to help tourists and visually impaired people navigate the concourses and tunnels. "It's a good place to install it:' said The University of Versailles' Professor Topsu, "because it is a confined space, the temperature is constant, and there's no rain:'

It is also already being tested in Palaiseau (Essonne) where 77 street lights have been equipped with lifi components so residents can use their own dongles to go online wherever they happen to be in that area, including at home.

"Lifi won't replace wifi, it will just complete the offer:' said Professor Topsu, 'At the moment, consumers need a dongle to be lifi-ready, but in the future the technolo­gy will be incorporated into our smartphones, tablets and laptops so they will automati­cally connect to the best network available, whether that is lifi will or satellite. It can work up to 100 times faster than standard wifi"

Lifi is cheaper than wifi because it uses existing infra­structure (such as lampposts), requires no extra energy, and does not even need special bulbs. The component that makes them able to transmit data is small and can be installed behind an ordinary LED bulb.

The range of potential appli­cations is enormous: lifi super­market trolleys, which know where everything is on the shelves, or a lifi-equipped museum which could use it to deliver a guided visit or a com­mentary about the exhibits. Hospitals could use it to transmit internal medical data and once towns are equipped with lifi networks, driverless cars will be able to communicate with their surroundings.

The current challenge is to develop lifi and explore all possibilities.

VOCABULARY

Impaired people

LED lightbulbs

Dongle : clé d’activation

Lampposts

Smartlighting

1. Could you explain what is lifi technology ?
2. What are the advantages to use lifi ?
3. What are the potential applications in the future ?