

Visual City – establishing a language of progression for Digital Earth in an urban context

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Digital Earth provides a vision for a massive multi-scalable, distributed framework for managing and visualizing geo-referenced information over the Internet. By empowering evidence-driven feedback into decision making processes, this vision will redefine the boundary between control of places and their destiny and opens innovative opportunities for a common 'language of progression' for collective experience to inform direction. A visual 'grammar' for this language will demand robust scientific assessment methodologies and new tools giving far greater confidence in mining and purposeful use of a rich mix of underlying multi-dimensional data.

Our every day urban experiences are awash with unstructured information, the physical representation of place has many overlapping forms of social, environmental, cultural, economic memory into which fit both private and public recollections. As a consequence of innovations in Digital Earth, the world in which we live is becoming increasingly more sentient and aware. Retrospective, prospective, sonic, lyrical descriptions are part of the defining experiences of places all making up this rich tapestry of cultural, social and physical geography. This emerging boundary will drive new innovations to expand upon 'social' networking mapping wider personal experience with collective expression of place. It is in this personalising frontier where the hearts and minds of the earth's greater population must be won to gain a meaningful purpose of a Digital Earth in the daily lives of people. These collective experiences and decisions by individuals, communities and organizations are the ones that will eventually shape the effectiveness of Digital Earth as a language for progressing civilization in the face of the most severe global challenges we face today.

This paper discusses these concepts with reference to *Visual City*, an innovative initiative by Nextspace to build a multi-dimensional spatial clearing house tools for decision support, collaborative sharing of knowledge, public consultation, automation of operational services, and network management.

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