

SOCIAL NETWORKING AND IMMERSIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract

Social Networking Applications such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Youtube and others, coupled with the converging technologies of immersive environments such as virtual worlds and serious games, are being recognised as important and effective tools for building communities of interest and for driving collective action on important social and economic issues. Indeed, politicians and celebrities across the globe are using these tools to sway public opinion and encourage the active engagement of citizens and communities.

Elections can be won and lost and campaigns can be extremely cost effective through the use of these tools combined with an understanding of how they can tap into the public consciousness. In the UK there already several examples of projects which use social networks and serious games to engage the citizen in this way on issues as diverse as climate change, flood prevention, deforestation and sustainable development.

This paper will examine the core components of practical examples of how these technologies are being used in the Digital Earth context to engage the citizen, increase awareness, understanding and influence behaviour in a positive way. The paper will illustrate how a combination of technologies including wireless sensors, 3D data visualisation, control interfaces, social networks and serious games can bring genuine benefits to key environmental issues at local, regional, national and global levels.

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