EFFECTS OF MOBILE GAME PLAY ON NEIGHBOURHOOD REALITIES

Statement for
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As people move through their daily city environments, they increasingly make use of mobile technology to detach themselves from their immediate surroundings. They connect to remote people, immerse themselves in musical soundscapes, leave the space they physically traverse, and embark in their minds on fantastic adventures where they can find hidden treasures, rise from the dead and turn into heroes.

While these portable technologies make our mobility more pleasurable, they do not necessarily give us a greater awareness of our immediate surroundings. For keeping in touch with our environment, we are required to tune ourselves into the multitude of mediated information channels available to us.

Thus, as we are often not aware of the air we breathe, the energy that is wasted, the high levels of noise that affect us — what if mobile technology could allow us to reconnect to our surroundings, to sense and read environmental data straight from the source, data that had been obscured to us before? And what if this was all a game-like exploration? Could the same technology that brought pleasure to our mobility make us enjoy to discover environmental data about our neighbourhood? Could it even create a sense of community through collective actions of environmental survey?

A playful experience could engage a diverse group of people, not only those who are already sensitive to environmental issues, but also those who enjoy using mobile gadgets as they walk and are curious to check their neighbourhood conditions.

Through my Master's thesis at Interaction-Ivrea, I hope to create a mobile gaming system, in which people can explore their city environments over a continuous period of time, and experience the cumulative effect of their actions. By opening the system to the public domain, citizens can win information sovereignty of their neighbourhoods by sharing their findings.

Participating in the PerGames 2005 workshop, I would hope to hear ideas which resonate with my own, leading me to a broader understanding of the possibilities and restrictions of pervasive game play. In particular I am interested in the society v. technology debate, and to explore the motivations for playing games that combine the physical world with the virtual videogame world.
From my approach, I hope to contribute the perspective of using mobile and pervasive gameplay potentially as a creative platform and social tool.