

ABSTRACT

Asobi City - Mixed and Blurred Boundaries between Real and Virtual Worlds in Japanese Cities

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Japanese cities are characterized by high pedestrian traffic and public transportation use, and a dynamic street culture. During their everyday life, many people in Japan carry their portable gaming consoles or mobile phone devices while on the streets and public transportation. Some of these devices have powerful technology features which together allow the introduction of applications and games that use image processing, location-based features, proximity and movement sensors. Could video gaming industry and mobile phone service providers in Japan leverage this techno-cultural trend and introduce a new type of augmented reality in pervasive games? In these games, the playground is an imaginary graphic layer that is overlaid on and merges with the real urban space and players need to be on the move in order to play. This playing experience extends beyond traditional video gaming out into the real world, mixing and blurring real and virtual worlds, changing game space, gaming trends, gaming culture and gameplay. This paradigm will be explored in this presentation through a review of industry-consumer techno-culture trajectory examples of portable consoles and mobile phone usage in Japan, and also, through a review of a few existing examples to augmented reality games played in Japan (mainly in Tokyo).