Land-use Planning in Second Life

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[S Y N O P S Y S]

Three-dimensional virtual spaces on the Internet (3Di) have become popular in the last few years.   In the 3Di, the "land" is the media for interaction and information. In the near future, urban planning controversies that we currently manifest in the real world may appear in the 3Di as well.   Efforts in the field of urban studies and planning have traditionally focused on the application of such technologies to addressing issues in the real world.   On the other hand, 3Di users are enjoying the experience of living in the 3Di that exists separately from the real world.

In this research, I observed several processes of land-use planning in the 3Di by focusing on interactions between avatars.   I used "Second Life," one of the 3Di systems widely available to the Internet users, and organized a urban planning competition and a free land lease program.

The research reveals the significance of roles in 3Di urban planning efforts.   In particular, role-sharing and the leader's role are important.   For those who do not know each other in the real world to collaborate in the 3Di, their roles must be specified, and a leader who takes the role of a facilitator is necessary especially when the participants have different interests in the project.   In addition, these participants have to be motivated by "impressions" because of the differences between the real world and the 3Di environment.   Finally, I contend that Second Life can be a very useful tool for urban planning efforts in the real world.   However, there are a few technological issues that have to be overcome in the real application.

Future research agenda includes an actual use of 3Di in the urban planning effort in the real life (yet to happen in Japan) and the advancement of social-science research on 3Di.