DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AS PLACE MAKING ELEMENTS IN BUILT ENVIRONMENT DESIGN

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary living is inseparable from digital technologies. Design researchers and practitioners have shown an increasing interest in predicting and examining the effect of these technologies in transforming our everyday life and surroundings, notably in William J. Mitchell’s epic trilogy: \textit{City of Bits} \cite{1}, \textit{e-topia} \cite{2} and \textit{Me++} \cite{3}. Built environments as an essential part of our holistic living environment have played an important role in this revolutionary process. Although digital technologies have shown great potentials in innovating many areas of the AEC (architecture-engineering-construction) industry, their roles in built environment design are yet to be fully understood. Rather than seeing the future of built environments as a more confusing array of computers and cables, this paper presents three different uses of the emerging digital technologies in designing “media place”, “augmented reality place” and “curious responsive place” for built environments, where the boundaries and our interactions with the physical and the digital worlds are blurred. The emerging digital technologies as new place making elements illuminate interesting opportunities for innovative designs and ideas in built environments. For designers, they suggest exciting new languages and resources for exploring alternative place designs. The positive changes of these new places will further influence the way people communicate, interact and collaborate. The paper concludes with a summary on the characteristics of these three types of new place designs.

Keywords: Innovative Design; Digital Technologies; Built Environment.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of digital technologies is arguably the force of the century for innovation in all domains. Design researchers and practitioners have shown an increasing interest in exploring and examining the potentials of these technologies in innovative designs. In his epic trilogy: \textit{City of Bits} \cite{1}, \textit{e-topia} \cite{2} and \textit{Me++} \cite{3}, William J. Mitchell examines the roles and impacts of digital technologies on everyday living and provides us with his fresh insights on how human life and our surroundings are transforming under such influences. Built environments as an essential part of our holistic living environment have played an important role in this revolutionary process. While many have laid out the vision, we are now looking for