

Sustainable Innovation 2023

Accelerating Sustainability in the Creative Economy and Creative Industries

24th International Conference

Online Conference: 20th – 26th March 2023

Business School for the Creative Industries

University for the Creative Arts

Epsom, Surrey, UK

The Games Realising Effective & Affective Transformation (GREAT) Project – A Pathway to Sustainable Impact on Climate Change Policy.

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Climate Change is the most significant single challenge currently facing the global population and governments are accused of not being in tune with and not listening to the concerns of their citizens in this respect.

In this paper the authors provide detail of a major European Union funded research and innovation initiative that posits the application of digital games, game making and games technologies, as a realisable solution to actively engage citizens in meaningful dialogue with governments. The aim of the research and project interventions is to facilitate citizens, through the use of emergent technologies, in providing input into developing national and international policy priorities to address the challenges presented by global climate change. Bridging the chasm that exists between communities and government and by using technologies that are both available and accessible.

The Games Realising Effect & Affective Transformation (GREAT) project is framed by three major social issues (as defined by the European Commission). First, although the digital games industry is now a larger economic sector than either music or film there is no consensus on the nature of the impact of games on society, nor even if this is good or bad. Second, in a parallel process since the mid-1990s, the proportion of citizens who are “dissatisfied” with democracy in their countries has risen by almost 10 percentage points globally. “The deterioration has been especially deep in high-income, “consolidated” democracies, where the proportion has risen from a third to half of all citizens.” (Foa et al., 2020). Similarly, the United Nations (2021) considers that distrust of news sources and scientists is at an all-time low. Dissatisfaction and mistrust correlate with scepticism, for example concerning vaccines and covid19 (Freeman et al., 2020; Caplanova et al. 2021). Third, analysis of data generated by citizens' interactions with media and commerce has increased to the point that it has become a dominant economic force. Indeed, a review by Vrontis et al. (2022) concludes that social media “polarizes our society”.

How does society address this dilemma? A dilemma presented in the detailed scenarios; in identifying and applying games technologies to achieve positive transformation, in restoring community engagement and satisfaction with democracy and democratic processes and finally in utilising the opportunities presented by the collection and storage of citizen big and small data to bring together communities, in an ethical and moral, arguably polarised through their negative experiences of technology and negative social media interactions more widely.

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Commencing in February 2022 the ambitious project 'GREAT' project brings together leading scientists in academia and the games industry with the intent to address these three areas in a single programme of research and innovation. The Project will aim to harness the potential of digital games and technologies to create a new form of social engagement and encourage meaningful dialogue between citizens and senior policy stakeholders (policy makers, policy implementers, political parties, and affected citizens). To mobilise citizens in affirmative constructive engagement with their governments in addressing this potentially catastrophic global challenge.