

Is landscape visualisation a useless illusion or a useful analytical and management tool?

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The construction of visual models in engineering, architecture, chemistry and mathematics has long been accepted as a norm. However, in areas of environmental research and management visual landscape modelling is relatively new, still developing and not yet fully accepted.

With the emergence of geographic information systems and rapidly improving remote sensing and computer graphics, landscape visualisation has moved far beyond drawings and photography and into fast-maturing technological field. The ability to portray space, time, colour, light and translucence makes visualisation an attractive addition to environmental models as an investigative and communication media. A visual synthesis of vast amounts of environmental data is an especially attractive feature of landscape visualisation, but is susceptible to distortions. Appropriate ethical conduct on behalf of developers and users is an essential part of landscape visualisation application.

This paper presents a discussion of the benefits and pitfalls of landscape visualisation in relation to Victorian examples, and suggests an infrastructure to make landscape modelling more effective and common place in land management and land policy development.