

LOCAL FORUM TELLUS:

a platform for community enterprise, planning & regeneration

Content for web page

JR v0.2 for discussion **12-10-12**

(Referring to development site currently on:

<http://sed-gis1.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/tus/>

INTRODUCTION / HOME PAGE

Home page

Local Forum: a platform for community enterprise, planning & regeneration

Introduction What is the Local Forum How to use it Examples Comments About / Feed back / Contact

Which mode of use? Search by theme Search by location Search by other LOGIN / REGISTER

Select themes
Select activities
Select options
Data layers

The Local Forum helps communities to explore, debate and organize on issues of common interest. Based on the *Tellus* social/spatial technology, it also enables policy-makers or service providers to analyse local needs and consult with clients and the public, in any local area in the UK. The Local Forum is now a prototype in testing, and will be an essential tool for many kinds of community based enterprise, planning and regeneration.

Enter the Local Forum

The **Local Forum** helps communities to debate their issues and organize their plans or projects.

The system brings together community discussion forums with google maps and area data, all based on the *Tellus* social/spatial technology. With this, local communities can better organize neighbourhood initiatives, plans, projects or networks. Policy-makers and service providers can consult on local needs and wishes, with spatial analysis anywhere in the UK.

The Local Forum is now a working prototype, available for demo and testing. It will be an essential tool for almost any kind of community based enterprise, planning and regeneration.

WHAT IS THE LOCAL FORUM

The Local Forum starts with the idea that the best experts on local planning, regeneration, housing or other services, are local people. Community and neighbourhood-based initiatives have a long history. But in practice they are often held back by communication barriers, social fragmentation, indifference by policy-makers, and disconnection from real powers and resources. Social technology is meanwhile racing ahead – Facebook now has 1 billion users – but generally virtual and global, with few connections to the local. In contrast, this innovative Local Forum technology is firmly rooted in real places where people live or work. It provides the means for anyone – from schoolkids to residents, businesses or elderly persons – to discuss problems or ideas about their place with any others interested.

The Local Forum creates a community meeting in virtual space, and puts the ‘local’ right in the centre. This doesn’t replace the human factor, but it does have advantages: it tracks agreements and synergies: it’s more inclusive: media of all kinds can be attached: and people can join the discussion at different times and places to suit them. This in turn raises the game in local planning and regeneration, and contributes to local democracy, social cohesion and community development.

Based on an online map where any user can see their own house, street, neighbourhood or district, the system enables urban or rural communities to discuss issues, organize plans and enterprises, and consult on proposals which affect them. Users can upload images or media clips, and using the *Tellus* system of spatially-linked and threaded discussion forums, a map-based report can be produced, which shows the range of views and responses on any public issue.

The Local Forum has 3 ‘modes’ of operation, which can be used together or separately:

- a) **Discussion mode:** working with the map, making locational comments, assembling these into discussions, calling up information for each type of theme & activity. (interface shown above)
- b) **Response mode:** provides space for responses to policy or community consultation: event invitations: other voting & priority choice: other opportunities.
- c) **Report mode:** provides map and list form of report & analysis, according to the selected theme / activity / options / person & group.

The Spatial Forum works from the street level to the neighbourhood, village, town, or landscape scales. In each of these, there are a range of participants (‘stakeholders’) with conflicting views and values, where we need to explore synergies and possible collaborations. With the combined ideas of the community visible on the table, then proposals can be made by social / business entrepreneurs or policy-makers, and further feedback can follow.

Background

The Local Forum has been designed from long experience of public participation, local sustainable development, and community planning. The prospects and applications are explored in the forthcoming book by Joe Ravetz *'Urban 3.0 – shared intelligence for a One Planet world'* (Routledge). This looks at human systems as combinations of economic, social, cultural, political and other forces, which combine to form 'synergistic' patterns. Then it looks at the "3.0" models – in contrast to 'command & control' politics, or 'winner takes all' economics, the 3.0 models are inclusive, participative, creative, resilient, self-organizing such qualities can then respond to emerging challenges, from local to global.

With this background, the Local Forum provides a very practical tool, which can be used by almost any group or community, to develop their own "3.0" models.

Parallel platform: Synergy Forum

The Local Forum runs in parallel to another innovation, the Synergy Forum, with a prototype on <http://synergy.hedtek.com>

The Synergy Forum is a social technology which helps with discussions on complex issues, future studies, knowledge management, and building 'synergistic' collaboration. To do this it creates a virtual round table meeting - not replace the human factor but to enhance it, similar to the Local Forum. The system then maps who agrees / disagrees, and who is in 'synergy', on what kind of issues, for which questions or proposals. Work is in progress to link the Spatial Forum with the Synergy Forum, to enable a local issue to be debated around the place or space: the issues and opportunities can be explored in the Synergy Forum, and then the results taken back to the Local Forum for local actions.

HOW TO USE IT

The Local Forum has 3 'modes' of operation, which can be used together or separately:

- **Discussion mode: working with the map, making locational comments, assembling these into discussions, calling up information for each type of theme & activity.**
- **Response mode:** provides space for responses to policy or community consultation: event invitations: other voting & priority choice: other opportunities.
- **Report mode:** provides map and list form of report & analysis, according to the selected theme / activity / options / person & group.

Of these, the Discussion mode is working as a prototype: the other two modes are in development, details to follow.

Notes in italics below – these show some starter web pages & functions which are to be uploaded shortly - the Home page, Area Page & Local Forum pages. Please bear with us at this unfinished stage.

GETTING STARTED: LOGIN & REGISTER

You can use the system without registration or login: but you won't have access to any discussion which requires it. Depending on the security level in any Local Forum, this might include the majority of active discussions. Although we would prefer everything to be open, we need to be careful as the system could possibly attract the wrong kind of attention. So to set up a Local Forum will require an active Moderator, who takes responsibility for safety and respect for other users.

- To login / register - Click the button on the top right hand side of the screen, insert a user name and password, you would shortly be logged in and see the screen here:

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Login". The main content area has a dark header with the text: "Hello! **CURE** WELCOME TO TELLUS PAGE! You have passed all security checks! You have been logged in since 16:08:24 PM [Click here to Logout](#)".

Below the header, there are two columns of information:

- Left Column (User Profile):**
 - Surname:** CURE
 - Givename:** CURE
 - Gender:** F
 - Usertype:** Stakeholder
 - Postcode:** M139PL
 - Isbanned:** 0
 - Register Day :** 2012-06-26 16:43:17
 - Birthday:** 1958-01-09
 - Profession:** Academic/Educational
 - Email:** cure@manchester.ac.uk
 - Groups You've Created:** -choose from list-
 - Groups You've Involved:** -choose from list-
 - [Change Password](#)
- Right Column (Group Management):**
 - Group Name:** (3-10 characters, only a-z, A-Z, 0-9, NO spaces)
 - Group Description:** (Maximum characters:100)
 - Radio buttons for **public group** (selected) and **private group**.
 - Create New Group** button
 - Radio buttons for **Public Groups** (selected) and **Private Group**.
 - choose from list- dropdown menu
 - Put Group Name Here- input field
 - Join a Group** button

- You can then see Groups which you have created, or already a member, on the left
- You can then Create New Group, or Join a Group, on the right hand side.
- (more detail to follow)

AREA PAGE

From the Home Page, press Enter the Local Forum, to get to the Area page. This shows the default of Greater Manchester:

- to find your Area, type in the box a city / town name, or a post code.
- The main screen shows the Area map (you can toggle between map and satellite view).
- The screen below shows spatial data: to find the spatial map of your choice, explore the menu 'tree' in the bottom left hand panel.
- You can alter the size between the main map and the data map, or shrink either one.
- Click on the panel on the far right, to show the most 'recent discussions' and 'most popular' discussions. Click on one to see that discussion 'thread' or list.
- Each circle shows a Local Forum. To enter one of your choice, click on it.

Area page

Revised text to be inserted.

Existing 'Forums' are shown with shaded 3km circles around the post code

Map window is set by 'area' selection, at 25km radius around the selected postcode or town name

Default map view is better for location finding within the area.

Discussion list is shown by default for the selected area

Data layer default position is reduced

"Most popular discussions"

Creator	Comment	DateTime	Reply
Joe Ravet	this building was or	2012-07-28	9
anonymou	is the most imp	2012-09-19	9
CURE	must be the ms	2012-06-26	5
anonymou	Road is one	2012-06-26	5
IRF	he three hours	2012-06-26	4
Joe Ravet	is a rubble	2012-06-26	4
anonymou	dae	2012-07-20	3
Joe Ravet	who	2012-06-26	2
richardK	This	2012-07-17	2
anonymou	this is	2012-07-23	2

LOCAL FORUM PAGE

- The main screen shows the Local Forum map (you can toggle between map and satellite view). (Default map view is generally better for location finding).
- Click on the panel on the far right, to show the most 'recent discussions' and 'most popular' discussions. Click on one to see that discussion 'thread' or list.
- The screen below shows spatial data: to find the spatial map of your choice, explore the menu 'tree' in the bottom left hand panel.
- You can alter the size between the main map and the data map, or shrink either one.

Local Forum page

The screenshot shows the TELLUS interface with several callouts:

- Theme of each discussion is shown in colour code (see the list)**: Points to colored pins on the map.
- Locations of 'open consultations' in the Local Forum area are shown with shaded circles**: Points to blue shaded circles on the map.
- Default map view is better for location finding within the selected Local Forum.**: Points to the map view toggle.
- Discussion list is shown by default for the selected Local Forum**: Points to the 'Comments & Discussions' panel.
- Boundary of selected Local Forum can be drawn on map at the set-up, or uploaded from boundary data, or just a circle**: Points to a red dashed boundary line on the map.
- "Most popular" discussions" are shown just for the selected Local Forum area**: Points to the 'TOP 10 Hot Discussions' table.

Creator	Comment	DateTime	Reply
Joe Ravet	This building was or	2012-07-28	9
anonym	this is the most imp	2012-09-19	9
CURE	es must be the mc	2012-06-26	5
anonymou	ch Road is one	2012-07-16	5
CURE	is a tree houo	2012-06-26	4
Joe Ravet	is a rubble	2012-06-26	4
anonymou d		2012-07-20	3
Joe Ravet w	Chloe, he	2012-06-26	2
richardk	The	2012-07-17	2
anonymou th	ourite	2012-07-23	2

- Locations of 'open consultations' in the Local Forum area are shown with shaded circles
- Theme of each discussion is shown in colour code (see the list at the end)
- "Most Popular" & "Most Recent" discussions are shown just for the selected Local Forum area
- Click on the icons to get to the relevant Discussion page.

DISCUSSION PAGE

The general functions

are arranged at the top of the page.

- Search functions with drop down menus for: themes / activities / options / persons / free text
- Login facility, as notes above
- The main screen shows the Discussion map (you can toggle between map and satellite view – for discussions the satellite view can be better for the details of streets, open spaces etc).
- Click on the panel on the far right, to show the most ‘recent discussions’ and ‘most popular’ discussions. Click on one to see that discussion ‘thread’ or list.
- The screen below the main screen shows the spatial data map: to find the spatial map of your choice, explore the menu ‘tree’ in the bottom left hand panel.
- You can alter the size between the main map and the data map, or shrink either one.

To make a new comment / start a discussion:

- Zoom in to the appropriate scale, and click once on the map on the place of interest
- *(There are also facilities to define a corridor or area of interest)*
- A comment box comes up, in which you have up to 300 characters
- An image *(or media clip URL)* can be attached to this comment.
- Scroll down to the ‘Make Comment’

To view discussion / respond to a comment:

- Click on the icon, or on the discussion list on the right hand panel
- At the bottom of the comment box, it shows the number of replies: click on the box icon to see the replies listed, on the panel on the far left hand side.
- To reply to this comment, type in box, with up to 100 characters, and click on the big ‘reply’ button.
- You will then see your reply appear on the discussion list on the far left hand panel.

What type of comment?

When you make a comment, you can specify what type: these menus are at the top left hand panel. There are drop down menus with short explanations. (Details of the categories are in the Annex)

- **Themes:** i.e. policy areas, e.g. housing, transport, open space, climate change etc.
- **Activities:** i.e. types of user activity or policy process: e.g. comment / proposal / plan, etc.
- **Options:** these refer to current policy options / consultations / other opportunities, which are current for the selected theme / activity / location

If you don't specify, then the default settings for each, are **'general'**. The detailed settings would be useful more for particular problems, projects or consultations.

- If you do specify a theme for your comment, the icons which locate the comment will be colour coded.
- If you want to change the theme, start another discussion in the same place, with a different theme.
- We find that many local planning issues involve a number of themes, e.g. transport / shopping / open space / children etc: in that case select the most relevant to the project or consultation in hand.

Discussion page

The screenshot displays the TELLUS web application interface. The main map area shows a residential street with several colored pins (red, green, blue, yellow) indicating discussion locations. A callout box over the map contains a comment and a reply text input field. The right sidebar shows a list of 'Most Recent Discussions' with columns for Creator, Comment, DateTime, and Reply. The bottom left shows a list of replies to a selected discussion.

Annotations (callouts) provide additional information:

- Comments & media are read-only at the report stage
- Secure resident login with postcode / number
- If a discussion is selected then we see all replies to that
- Reduce size of text in comment box so that scrolling is not needed.
- "Most recent" or "most popular discussions" are shown just for the area on the map.

RESPONSE PAGE & REPORT PAGE:

Functions & details to follow

EXAMPLES

The applications are many – almost any local problem or challenge or opportunity, where there are different views around the table, can benefit. Some examples:

- **Schoolkids** often have to cross dangerous roads every day. The Local Forum would help them identify the problems, using spatialized comments and smartphone images, and present their proposals to traffic planners and other organizations.
- **Landowners** often sit on empty or derelict land, which could be used and maintained by local residents. With the Local Forum they are better able to form ideas, organize projects, and communicate with landowners or planners.
- **Open spaces** are often zones of conflict between social types or groups – e.g. youth, elderly, sports or ecology – with a lack of contact between them. The Local Forum enables communications, down to the level of individual trees or benches, and (with suitable moderation) helps to resolve conflicts.
- **Neighbourhood planning** (as encouraged by the UK government) is fine in principle, but often difficult in practice – with communication barriers, social fragmentation, indifference by policy-makers, and disconnection from real powers and resources. The Local Forum is designed exactly to bridge such gaps, and where managed properly, should be a real catalyst for change.

Local Forum full application

(this includes for the ‘Response’ and ‘Report’ stages, in development as of October 2012.

Storyline: many residents & small businesses are not happy with the heavy traffic and parking problems on their streets caused by users of the nearby shopping centre. They want to talk among themselves about the problem, and if most people agree, present a case for change to the local authority. They also want to communicate with the shopping centre developers about the rumours of expansion plans.

1) Generate discussions & reports

- Residents hold a meeting, with an interactive presentation on wireless laptop & projector, from a Local Forum facilitator.
- S/he introduces the system, and takes them on a tour around the neighbourhood, with the googlemaps platform.
- they go around the room and invite comments from residents on their concerns, each linked to a particular location in the neighbourhood.
- These are arranged into themes (some comments are in more than one theme, some apply to ‘all themes’). Some comments are ‘general’: some are put as ‘options’ i.e. proposals or opportunities.

- The comments are all put up in 'discussion mode'. During the meeting, some people go back to their comments and revise them, and look at other comments which relate to their street or their theme.
- At the end of this people can see the initial 'reports' on their discussions, all displayed on the maps and in text form.
- Report 1) is the 'traffic / parking' report for the whole neighbourhood, which shows where the problems are perceived as worst or least.
- Report 2) is an 'open space & leisure' report, which shows where children can or can't play, and where there is conflict with other users.
- Report 3) is the 'safety / security' report, which shows where people feel vulnerable or safe from crime anti-social behaviour and/or traffic.

2) Form group & communicate the reports.

- The residents agree to form a 'group' where all the online comments and discussions are shared among them. They agree to invite their neighbours to also join the group, either by word of mouth, email or facebook.
- The group nominates one person with the role of moderation & management of the group.
- UP to now, the discussions were 'group closed', i.e. only those invited can see or make further comments.
- When they feel ready, the residents agree to 'export' these reports to the City Council planners / local area office. This is done by inviting the planners to join the group for those discussions).
- The neighbours are encouraged to add to the discussion or to start new open free-form comments and discussions, linked to locations of particular problems on the ground.
- The benefit is that some residents who would otherwise not be heard, (or who might not meet in public or join a group), can put up their views on an equal basis.

3) Extend to other stakeholders

- Further on, local school kids do a local project: they study the traffic patterns, and the safety risks in crossing the road. This is started by the Local Forum outreach person in a classroom, in a similar way to the above: kids find the places they know on the map, provide comments:
- The kids come back a week later and upload digital photos or media clips, to follow through their comments.
- Later, a group of small businesses and shopkeepers are concerned they are losing trade. They follow a similar process and provide detailed feedback from each of their locations.
- Later, the local Councillors look at the updated reports, with the help of the Local Forum facilitator, and organize a meeting with residents / businesses / school kids, to see what might be done.
- Following that, the planners / traffic engineers / police also look at the reports and meet with residents. They also then provide some feedback on the comments as part of the same discussions, both in the meeting and afterwards.

ABOUT / FEEDBACK / CONTACT

Feedback

We would welcome feedback, comments, queries, and particularly experiences from demonstration and testing of the Local Forum.

Please send an email to joe.ravetz@manchester.ac.uk, or supply comments in the box below:

COMMENT

YOUR EMAIL

Development team

- Joe Ravetz, concept development
- Kai Zhou, software & system developer
- Richard Kingston, *Tellus* social-spatial technology
- Jenni Viitanen, prototype testing.

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