

Asia Programme, final report for projects 2015-2017

SUMMARY REPORT FOR PUBLICATION

Name of the project

PLATINUM - Playful Approaches to Technology, Interaction and User-centered Media: Study Module for Nature-based Therapeutic Game Design in China and Finland

Coordinating Institution

The University of Tampere

Objectives of the project (as indicated in the project proposal)

The project PLATINUM (2016-17) set out to produce a sustained educational platform for Finnish and Chinese HEIs and the games industry to increase the Finnish influence on the large potential inherent in the Chinese society and culture for teaching about and promoting nature-based well-being solutions with technological emphasis as products and services. It sought to respond to the questions of 1) how do two culturally diverse groups of students (Finnish and Chinese) understand the story-based and playful underpinnings of psycho-physical, health-enhancing design of nature-based virtual spaces in China and Finland and 2) how they communicate with the needs and the anticipations of the games and media design industry that seeks to hire work force with extensive experience in embodied, emotional and environmental design processes.

Achieved results and outcomes

The student projects – Magic Garden, Flying Game, Transformation, and Restorative Climb, each with 5-6 participants from different disciplines and nationalities – were able to design and present four unprecedented and user-tested games/interactive virtual environments that inform the following hypotheses of the study scheme: 1) If we understand the kinds of experience and activity that have greatest impact on the environmental psychological benefits, then these can be created virtually in the same way that games create particular environments; 2) Finland and China are ideally placed to spearhead this kind of educational development, with their unique natural and garden environments, vibrant games industries, and highly capable students from human sciences, design, and technical backgrounds, who can study and build virtual therapeutic environments and games (VTEs and VTGs).

The students participating in the project gained extensive experience in the field of intercultural, nature-based, and therapeutic game design, which may significantly increase their chances of being employed in the above field of game and media production in the future.

The teachers of the projects (including PhD candidates from Finland and China) now have experience and knowledge about collaboration and teaching methods between Chinese and Finnish HEIs related to game culture and VR studies, and the game industries of Finland and China.

Activities carried out during the project

The Platinum study processes included 1) an interdisciplinary online study period (online lectures via the WeChat app); 2) two field study workshops in nature, one in Finland and one in Hong Kong; 3) an online design period between the Chinese and the Finnish students via Adobe Connect collaboration system; 4) an intensive design workshop in Finland and 5) a workshop in Beijing that mapped out the Chinese user market of the designed virtual environments and games.

Future developments, resulting from the project

The project Platinum achieved sustainable results in the form of extensive data on the basic principles and theoretical/practical framework for carrying out related teaching and projects in the future. In the coming years, these activities will take place under an ongoing summer academy agreement between the partner HEIs of Platinum in Finland and China.

More emphasis will also be laid on the real time online teaching in this field (and between the existing and future partners) as it has proven to be cost-effective. New technologies, such as 360-degree video, low-latency connections, and appropriate media servers, will enable relevant, immersive experiences of different cultures, natural environments, and design interaction in real time to support this. The Finnish game industry concentrating on simulation will be involved in the collaboration.