Health: The Design, Planning and Politics of How and Where We Live

• **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Video game environments and depression: healing aspects of contemporary digital spaces

• **Format(s):**

Pre-recorded Film / Written paper

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• **Abstract (300 words):**

The study explores the way in which contemporary video game environments deal with the depressive condition and the design aspects that are employed in order to develop digital and interactive spaces capable of affecting their users on an emotional level.

Widespread digital culture, and especially the prevailing phenomenon of video games, is developing today at such a speed that it can be regarded as a modern type of epidemic. Especially, the new generation is fully familiar with modern technologies as

well as with the "habitation" of the digital-analog reality. In particular, the number of players worldwide has exceeded 1.8 billion since 2016.

At the same moment, this observation is juxtaposed with the phenomenon of depression, one of the most widespread psychological conditions of the contemporary world. Depression can both be regarded as a clinical state as well as a deeply intimate and melancholic mood or state of being. According to the latest data from the World Health Organization, depression appears to be a silent scourge of the modern age, surpassing 350 million people, according to recent measurements. Interestingly, many studies show the extent of this disorder, referring to it as one of the most common mental disorders in the western world, and estimating that by 2020, depression will be the second disability factor worldwide, after heart disease.

Early research observations described videogames as capable of provoking a depressive condition. However, recent multidisciplinary studies claim that according to recordings of brain activity in both players and depressed people, video games do not appear as the cause, but as the neurological counterpart of depression. In this context, the study will discuss cases of videogame design and the spaces they represent in order to provoke healing, or encourage a deeper understanding of an intimate human condition through alternative approaches of the ways people experience and inhabit digital environments.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Professor Fani Vavili-Tsinika, Dr. Architect

Professor Fani Vavili-Tsinika, MA, PhD, is teaching Architectural Design at the School of Architecture AUTh, Greece and practicing architecture. A significant part of her work is about health care facilities, residential & cultural buildings. She has participated in conferences, seminars workshops around the world and has published many (150) articles, research results etc. Among them are the following books: Hospital Design at the beginning of the 21st Century (ed), Designing for the Elderly, Designing for Mental Health, Aspects of Healing Environments (ed), Arts in Health Care Buildings (ed), Teaching Architecture in Extreme Conditions, Regulations for planning & Designing Public Libraries, National Research Institute, Greek Ministry of Education, et al. She has been Director of the department of Architectural Design & Technology AUTh, member of Greek & International organizations (eg. executive member of UIA-PHG, alternate member of Uia council, chairwoman of uia Greek section, co-founder of GUPHA, vice president of International Exhibition of Thessaloniki, member of Greek & International Juries for architectural competitions.

Angeliki Malakasioti, Dr. Architect

Angeliki Malakasioti studied architecture in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and completed the Postgraduate Course of MArch Architectural Design in Bartlett School of Architecture UCL with distinction. Her doctoral thesis "Anatomy of the Digital Body - Spatial Aspects of the Self and the Immaterial on the Web" researches the spatiality of the digital experience and the transformations of the notion of the self in the contemporary cyber-context. She is currently running a post-doctorate research under the title: "From the Architecture of Melancholy to Video Game Design: the Question of Space". Her academic activity includes teaching and research on digital experience, new technologies, immaterial architecture, audiovisual representations, architectural design and video games. She has also participated in multiple international conferences, art and film festivals and exhibitions and she has received prizes of experimental film making, photography and "art as research" contributions.