



Prototyping Innovation Policies with(in) cities

Innovation Area:
Immersive Media

Rotterdam, Netherlands



How does “prototyping...” work?

This City Case Description is the outcome of a policy prototyping exercise within a city ecosystem. Once the ekip research team has explored a policy area and its connection to cultural and creative industries (CCIs) and innovation, we ask: what would this mean in a local city context?

Together with local stakeholders, we test how a draft policy recommendation might stimulate innovation. Using Portfolio Sensemaking, stakeholders simulate an innovation portfolio, analyse the strengths and gaps of the local support system, and identify what resources are needed to realise the portfolio.

Rotterdam Context & Area of Focus

Rotterdam is considered as a forward thinking city. It is a city known for its architecture, and also for experiments and innovation. During all different types of festivals connections between the Rotterdam and international scene are made, and also between inhabitants and visitors of the city.

Together with experts we explored the use of (immersive) media in (architecture) exhibitions and use of archives. And what kind of policy is needed to support this.



THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP PUBLIC SPACE AND PUBLIC VALUE IN IMMERSIVE MEDIA

The challenges and opportunities in immersive media are clear. For example the development of makers, the need for chain-approach, limited attention and resources, silo-thinking, the need of accessible software, the need for certain skills in immersive media, the issue of archiving and the need for representation.

In this case the main thing for the experts was the public space and public value in immersive media. Several actions are needed to create more public space and to strengthen the public value. The experts see also the need for bridging from professionals to a general audience, bridging from youngsters to all generations. And see also the potential of festivals, because they make developments visible, bridging to different target groups, have a momentum and are flexible. In Rotterdam for example the Architecture Film Festival Rotterdam (AFFR) and International Film Festival (IFFR) have their immersive programmes, also because they feel the responsibility to show these works.



Portfolio sensemaking

► Portfolio

PUBLIC SPACE AND PUBLIC VALUE IN IMMERSIVE MEDIA

Main idea/ Scope:

When we co-dream a few steps ahead we see immersive as the spider in the web, intertwined with all disciplines.

This development is already taking place. What started more as an undercurrent is now becoming increasingly mainstream. However, in policy (for example) immersive media is still sometimes regarded as an undercurrent. As a result, there are no specific programmes to support these developments, or they are approached mainly as experiments, or limited to production or presentation only (while the connection between producing and presenting is also important to support).

This development is already taking place, and without action it will continue regardless. The impact of any intervention should therefore focus on the public value of immersive media: how can we ensure accessibility, how can a critical discourse contribute to the development, how can we remain aware of 'digital gentrification', and to what extent is immersive media simply becoming a business model? Immersive media are part of the digital/virtual realm, a parallel universe alongside physical reality. Public immersive media is therefore an important issue for all of us. It will be a world in which we live, work, learn, develop, and interact.

The potential is enormous and will affect everyone. If we want public value to be embedded in this immersive world, the cultural and creative sector must be positioned as a driving force in its development

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Cultural experiences are becoming increasingly digital, and cultural policy must keep pace with this. Digital culture plays a key role in this. Dutch digital culture is an independent cultural discipline with unique and contemporary narratives, offering ample room for experimentation, research, and innovation.

- Collaboratively exploring the connection between digital culture and, for example, education can provide a solid foundation for generating greater impact with digital culture.*

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Youssef Louakili, Director Media and Creative Industry, Ministry of Culture at the Moonshot Digital Culture session during Netherlands Film Festival 2024



Who was there?

A BROAD MIX OF STAKEHOLDERS CO-CREATED THIS CASE

CCI ORGANISATIONS

International Film Festival Rotterdam:

Aida Pachedji, Eva Langerak

Nieuwe Instituut: Cathy Brinkwood,

Flora van Galen

Architecture Film Festival Rotterdam:

Cristina Ampatzidou

Artist: Pedro Gil Farias



LOCAL AUTHORITIES

City of Rotterdam, Culture:

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ACADEMIA

TU Delft: Eytan Mann

Kanowitz, Hans Hoogenboom

Grafisch Lyceum: Oskar Maan



Analysis

THE LOCAL INNOVATION SUPPORT SYSTEM

The portfolio case is somewhat uncertain and not yet fully directed, but it focuses on public values in the development and implementation of innovation in Rotterdam. The public partners (cultural organisations, schools, etc.) are responsible for the coordination, as they are familiar with these public values and with innovation and cultural programmes.

Their driving force is guiding the development. They also invite their partners to become stakeholders, such as the city government, industry, and technology actors. For example, the CIIC programme can bring these organisations together. Even if their application is not supported, they may still continue by maintaining an infrastructure for knowledge development and exchange.

This workshop took place at the Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam. It is also where the first immersive media programme by the Architecture Film Festival Rotterdam is hosted.

The workshop focused on developing emerging conversations among practitioners in architecture and in the visual arts (including film and media).

The participants agreed on the value of the intersection of immersive media with architecture, visual arts and archiving. Although the invitation for this workshop was addressing the relation with architecture and archives, during the workshop the public value of immersive media became more the central topic of this workshop.

The participants see in their organisations the role of immersive media developing. This development is international and this development is not dependent on local keyfigures. But, a challenge is: how do you relate to this development? A good example of Grafisch Lyceum: they changed the curriculum for their students and made 'immersive media' key, and other disciplines and programmes related to that.

Conclusions

& RECOMMENDATIONS

This development of more immersive tech and media will continue regardless. But for the implementation and maintenance of public value there are things needed:

1. Budget & manpower

Especially money for immersive media and tech is needed. Currently there is money, but it is not specially reserved for immersive media and tech. Therefore it is a bit insecure and a non reliable system.

Also manpower is needed. Some educational organisations already made the step with offering immersive programmes. But also programmes are needed for professionals to make this shift.



2. Infrastructure & place

Currently the (film) festivals are showcasing the development to a general audience and professionals. And the professional discourse is happening there as well. This accelerates the innovation because there is infrastructure, place and momentum. But this needs to be more and perhaps also a bit more institutionalised.

3. Frameworks

Some frameworks are plans are already developed (for example Moonshot Digital Culture). This helps with giving directions. But also action programmes and budgets are needed to follow that direction.

Overall Conclusions

By running this portfolio case, it shows the important power and necessity of:

- Public values have to be the key elements of building and developing immersive media.
- Develop policy to support the whole chain, instead of specific elements in immersive media. The development in this sector is open, so use open instruments as well.
- Driving forces are CCI's from their intrinsic motivation. They are part of infrastructure, make connections between different stakeholders, making the developments visible. And they are used to work with public values.
- See what is needed: from training cultural institutions to be well equipped to offer programmes to advance in digital technology. Sometimes what's needed are pilots; other times, it's the growth of start-ups and scale-ups. Sometimes festivals can drive the development, or institutions can foster the developed knowledge.

COOPS&CO

Coops&Co creates immersive, music-driven experiences that use technology to expand perception and question embodiment. Each project brings together tailored collaborations that serve the story, offering audiences multi-perspective encounters that explore themes such as the fear and desire to lose control.

The work often investigates the tension between tactility and virtuality, as in the music film One Charming Night, shot in the metaverse and reflecting on intimacy, sexuality, and consent in virtual worlds. Similarly, the augmented-reality concert Ghost Towns examines personal and collective legacy, inspired by the abandoned Arctic settlement of Pyramiden.



Photo by Pien Düthmann from the multiplayer VR experience *The Saga of Sage – Mission 2: Heroes, Nieuwe Luxor*

What is happening now?

► IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME

The Grafisch Lyceum Rotterdam (GLR) is offering an Immersive Experience programme starting in September 2026. Within this curriculum GLR trains professionals capable of designing and building multi-sensory installations. GLR expects significant demand for multidisciplinary specialists who operate at the intersection of creativity and technology, who are able to quickly master new technologies on the basis of broad professional expertise.

GLR does not do this alone; under the banner of OASIS, they collaborate with five other creative vocational schools across the Netherlands. Together, they conduct research, develop and deliver programmes, and are working on establishing a lifelong learning pathway for industry professionals. In addition to the five schools, the professional community is also well represented within OASIS.



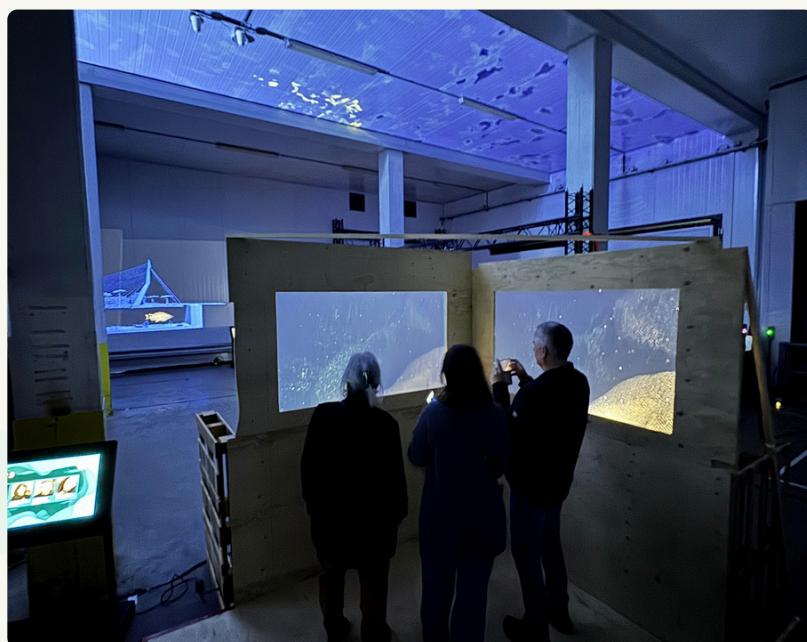
► X-CITE

x-CITE is a European project that uses immersive technologies to make cities smarter, greener, and more inclusive. By adding a digital inter[1]action layer to urban life, x-CITE helps people engage with their environment in new and meaningful ways.

[website](#)

► ECDA

Erasmus Centre for Data Analytics is the Flagship Centre and Community of Erasmus University Rotterdam for cross-disciplinary insight on the societal impact of Data, Artificial Intelligence, Digitalization and Immersive Technologies.



What is happening now?

► DIGITAL PLAYGROUND

Digital Playground encourages young people to explore the possibilities of immersive technology in an investigative and creative way. In collaboration with education and the cultural sector, the organization develops workshops and lesson series where students can experiment with digital media and new forms of experience, interaction, and imagination. Next-Century Creativity forms the foundation for this; a set of skills that focuses on digital, social, and creative competencies. Equal opportunities are central: every young person should have access to future-oriented media experiences that connect with their world. In this way, Digital Playground contributes to an inclusive, progressive approach to immersive technology within arts and cultural education.



Photo by Bas Czerwinski

► SHINE

SHINE focuses on establishing and further expanding the network between governments, businesses, and knowledge institutions to make immersive technology inclusive and applicable. By organizing joint events and creating physical meeting places, knowledge exchange across regions is stimulated.

In this picture Rotterdam elderman Robert Simons and Member of the Provincial Executive Meindert Stolk of the Province of South Holland announce that the SenseGlove company will establish in Rotterdam. The arrival of SenseGlove and the development of the SHINE network (South Holland Immersive Network & Ecosystem) are direct results of the joint efforts of, among others, the municipality of Rotterdam and the province of South Holland.



Our methods

THE INNOVATION PORTFOLIO POLICY CANVAS

The Prototyping Workshop Methodology and the Innovation Portfolio Policy Canvas guide local stakeholders to analyse their local ecosystem, make an inventory of actors and resources, identify and create a potential innovation portfolio and analyse their local innovation support system.

THE OPSI MODEL

The OPSI-model (Open Public Sector Innovation OECD) is adapted to analyze the innovation character of the policy area. Participants explore whether the policy involves new legislative measures or is more exploratory in nature, allowing for a deeper understanding of how the policy might influence the local ecosystem

THE LIEPT MODEL

The Lund Innovation Ecosystem Portfolio Tracking (LIEPT) model is a tool that provides a framework for tracking changes in innovation portfolios in ecosystems where impact and growth happen not in one organisation but in many. This relies on collaborative efforts by many stakeholders.

What is ekip

The ekip partnership funded by the European Commission consists of 5 universities, 4 consultancies, 4 creative and cultural organisations and 4 cities. Together we develop innovation policies for the cultural and creative industries in Europe. We do that in various ways: through research, consultations and interaction with people in the sector at policy labs and focus groups and assessments in city ecosystems.

Want to know more? Want to do it in your city?

Would you like to explore the topic of Immersive Media? Visit [Immersive Media](#) on the ekip website, where you'll find relevant policy posters, presentations, videos, and articles.

You can even host your own session in your city! It's an empowering and insightful way to bring together local stakeholders across sectors and disciplines for a focused discussion on a topic of shared importance. The ekip method and approach are open for anyone to use including a Facilitator's Guide and templates available in the ekip Knowledge Bank under [Tools and Methods](#).

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Disclaimer:

Each City Case Description reflects the views of workshop participants. It is a perspective from one city context, intended to inspire and ignite action



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