Prototyping Innovation Policies with(in) cities

Innovation Area:
New Funding Models for
Creativity and Innovation

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 & New Funding Models

Rotterdam is considered as a forward thinking city. It is a city known for its architecture, and also for experiments and innovation.

During the Immersive Tech Week Rotterdam was a workshop about new funding models. Together we wanted to explore and discuss new funding models for creativity and innovation. The main objective of the event was to develop clear, actionable EU policy recommendations to support this emerging space and build stronger, more future-ready innovation pathways for Europe.



KEY TAKEAWAY

The workshop showed that future funding models for CCIs should not only focus on financial support, but also on accessibility, knowledge exchange, networks and ecosystem development. A more flexible and inclusive approach is needed to support innovation and creativity in the long term.

IMMERSIVE TECH WEEK ROTTERDAM

The Immersive Tech Week Rotterdam brings dreamers and doers together, navigates the true potential of immersive experiences and pushes the boundaries of what's possible. Their programme is designed to ensure these voices are heard, highlighting the latest developments and innovative applications of XR across sectors like Education, Healthcare, Entertainment, Media, Games, and the Creative Industries.

website

Portfolio sensemaking

Portfolio

HOW TO MAKE THE CURRENT MODELS WORK FOR SUPPORTING INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY IN THE CCIS

Main idea/ Scope

The current funding landscape for the CCIs is fragmented and can be difficult to navigate. While various funding opportunities exist, innovators and creative entrepreneurs often face challenges in identifying the right funding source, accessing support organisations, and combining different forms of funding.

Against this backdrop, our discussion focused not on the amount of funding available, but on the effectiveness and accessibility of existing funding models. The key question was: How can we make the current funding models work more effectively to support innovation and creativity in the CCIs?

The ecosystem

During the Immersive Tech Week in Rotterdam, at the Katoenhuis, during the hottest day of the year, the local ecosystem came together. We didn't map an ecosystem, but the participants all came with an example of funding and the way it supports them in their development, or the way funding supports their organisations.

Through these examples, it became clear that this ecosystem is multilayered and seems limitless. Funding exists on all scales, including European funding, national funding and local funding. It also takes different forms, such as private, public or public-private funding, cultural grants and economic vouchers.



At the same time, this diversity makes the ecosystem complex to navigate. With so many funding mechanisms, organisations and levels involved, it can be difficult to identify which funding option best supports a specific project, organisation or stage of development.

Understanding how these different funding streams relate to one another and how they can be combined is therefore essential to making the current models work for supporting innovation and creativity in the CCIs.

Innovation Character

The innovation character of this innovation area is definitely 'mission-oriented innovation'. It will mainly be affected by policies and missions. The goal is clear, and there are several scenarios of how to get there.

Analysis

THE LOCAL INNOVATION SUPPORT SYSTEM: WHAT IS THE CURRENT SITUATION? WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

1. Financing CCIs is complex and fragmented

Participants noted that financing varies significantly by sector and type of organization. Within the creative industries, there are various ecosystems. Mapping these ecosystems enables better knowledge integration and the development of more targeted policy recommendations. At the same time, each ecosystem comes with its own unique challenges. It was agreed that, rather than relying on a single, generalized financing model, it is important to examine the following for each domain:

- the sector's specific needs;
- existing funding streams;
- relevant partners;
- and regional differences

A key guiding principle here is to think not just one step ahead, but several steps ahead, adopting a moonshot approach in order to address future challenges at an earlier stage.

2. Need for sector-specific guidance and expertise

A recurring point was that creative professionals often struggle to find the right funding, partners, or support.

Participants emphasized the importance of:

- mentorship;
- experts with experience in specific sectors;
- guidance from people who understand the language and context of a sector.

According to several participants, a one-size-fits-all approach is less effective. Support needs o align with actual practice—for example, fashion for fashion, technology for technology, culture for culture, and so on. It was noted within the group that ideas are often better received when discussed within the right network.

3. The role of intermediaries and ecosystems

A significant part of the discussion focused on who should act as the bridge between creators, companies, institutions, and funders. Universities and larger organizations often play a supporting role because they:

- have experience with grant processes;
- possess administrative capacity;
- maintain contacts with companies.

Researchers should not always have to be responsible for establishing commercial contacts or navigating complex regulations themselves. An intermediary can help build relationships and bridge the gap between the different parties.

It was also noted that creators and artists often prefer to focus on their creative work rather than on grant applications or legal processes.

4. Reducing administrative costs

A major frustration shared by participants is the volume of regulations and administrative burden associated with grants. Possible solutions mentioned include:

- specialized grant writers;
- support with grant applications;
- a network or overview of available support providers;
- encouraging institutions to involve smaller and independent parties as well.

According to the participants, support structures can enable creative professionals to devote more time to their core activities.

5. Impact: economic and societal

It was discussed that funding should not be assessed solely on the basis of economic value. Alongside financial growth, factors such as social impact, reach and accessibility, cultural value, and knowledge sharing are also important. Art does not always have to be immediately profitable to be valuable. The question was raised as to how impact can be made visible and how this can inform future funding decisions.

6. New approaches for financing

The group discussed the fact that existing systems sometimes do not sufficiently align with current realities. Possible directions:

- greater collaboration between public and private parties;
- encouraging larger companies to invest more in innovation;
- international knowledge exchange;
- more collective support rather than individual pathways.

A key insight was that it is not just about money, but also about the distribution of knowledge, networks, access, and influence.

Conclusions

& RECOMMENDATIONS

The topic of this city prototyping workshop is quite broad. So there is not one answer to this question. The participants came with different approaches for what is needed:



1. Budget & manpower

- Redistribute wealth and power

2. Frameworks

- Whatever the framework is: Make it visible and accessible
- Consider the CCIs as an ecosystem and develop 'food chains'
- Develop challenge-focused funding

Conclusions

The workshop showed that future funding models for CCIs should not only focus on financial support, but also on accessibility, knowledge exchange, networks and ecosystem development. A more flexible and inclusive approach is needed to support innovation and creativity in the long term.

Next steps

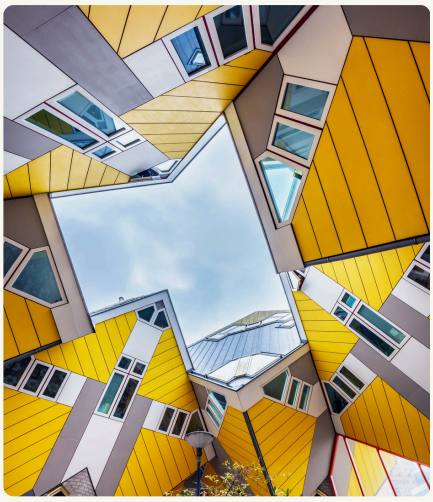
The outcomes of this workshop will contribute to the development of *ekip* policy recommendations and provide insights into how cities and regions can better support creative and innovative ecosystems.

Who was there?

A BROAD MIX OF STAKEHOLDERS CO-CREATED THIS CASE

CCI ORGANISATIONS

Dutch Culture: Dicle Gülşahin
Nieuwe Instituut: Cathy Brinkwood
Elia Foundation: Paul Herz



INDEPENDENT ARTISTS

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City of Rotterdam, Culture: Martijn van der Mark



ACADEMIA

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Geert van den Boogaard

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 Funding Models? Visit 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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