METAVENUES
DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN PERFORMING ARTS

ECHO — EUROPEAN CONCERT HALL ORGANISATION   komodal   SPOT GRONINGEN   Funded by the European Union

Report on Prototypes and Audience Engagement (D3.2)

By SPOT Groningen

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Preface
Below you will find the report D3.2. belonging to WP3 of the Project METAVENUES. This report is closely related to the report on programming for test phase (D3.1).
D3.1 described the entire process from the think tank sessions to a living lab, concept development and prototype definitions. This report describes the prototypes in a bit more detail and relates them to the audience to be reached.

Main objective of WP3 is Ideate and Prototype.
This work package corresponds to the second project specific objective: "identify the required material supplies, programming and marketing methods and new (digital) audience outreach and engagement strategies and develop prototypes to meet those needs". The goal is to generate ideas and select the best ones and produce these.

We have two concepts in mind: a hybrid and an all-digital event.

Prototype no. 1: Sleepy Hollow, a hybrid event.

Structure
Sleepy Hollow is an immersive mixed-reality theatre experience about loss and self-deception. The makers create a total experience of about 10 scenes, each lasting about 12-14 minutes. In some of these scenes, they interweave theatre and XR (extended reality) with each other, where one medium complements the other. In this playtest phase we present three scenes within a carousel model. Every 10 minutes a new group of participants/audience takes on the role.

Objectives
- Innovation in Theatre: Integrating physical and digital worlds to create a hybrid performing art
- Audience Engagement: Active audience interaction during the production process and performances
- Accessibility: Attracting and involving a new, (young) audience in live performances

Design
- Playtest: Testing two new scenes in collaboration with METAVENUES
- Technical Innovations: Improving the integration between VR, AR and live theatre
- Research Questions: Optimizing audience interaction and scalability

Impact
- Technological Innovation: Integrating cutting-edge technology in cultural production

Audience Outreach
- Providing access to a broad and diverse audience.

Expanding the show with digital techniques to attract a broader and more diverse audience by including elements before and after the theatre performance. We want to see if it is possible to do a digital introduction, meet and greet, engage innovative marketing methods, where audiences can learn more about the show. This will be further developed and refined in the coming months.

The following questions need to be worked out for our next meeting

Before the show	Live performance with XR/AR	After the show
SPOT discusses with Danny possible content	Studio Immersief	SPOT discusses with Danny possible meet C Greet
Komodal comes up with questions/content		As above
Komodal suggests possible platforms for online meeting		
What marketing actions can be deployed in order to gain a wider audience?		Is there an incentive to trigger participation? What about a prize?

Audience Outreach
To reach a wider and new audience is an important objective. ECHO will make a marketing plan specifically for this purpose.
In addition, we will make use of the marketing knowledge of SPOT Groningen. This is its promotional knowledge, website, social media channels, etc.
Studio Immersief has its own marketing department that will promote this performance. We can make use of the student network of CrossWise, the working and learning environment within SPOT Groningen. Next semester around 300 students will be working within SPOT Groningen on projects and vocational training. These may be interested in this event. ECHO will inform its network and the network of Komodal.

Prototype no. 2: Metaverse Event, a digital event

The goal is to organise a multi-day event aiming at sharing knowledge C inspiration about immersive tech with artists and venue professionals (conference of hardware manufacturers, of artists who have already implemented these techs in their show, feedback from professionals of other industries who also have implemented these techs, etc...).

Concept:
The metaverse event should be a test to test the operation of a digital development platform.
The event has the following pillars (still need to be worked out further):

- Facilitate meetings of artists and professionals.
- Facilitate artists and potential audience
- Facilitate seminars
- Facilitate information access for professionals.
  Showcase possible activities.
  Research on possibilities for educational content (modules for cultural management classes, info for networks etc).

Schedule:
The test (WP 4) is scheduled for late May-early June in 2025.

Production and planning

- All partners will give input on the content (specific themes) of the event at the next production meeting.
- With the delegations of venue professionals, artists the themes will be developed and filled in.
- Komodal will develop the technical platform.
- We will have an online production meeting every two/three days. First upcoming online meeting is December 15, 2024 and this prototype phase must be finished the end of March.

Audience Outreach
Echo, possibly with the help of marketers from SPOT and Komodal, will develop a marketing and dissemination plan to meet as many participants as possible on this digital platform.
What we have in mind:
We will use our social media channel LinkedIn and account links with SPOT Groningen, Komodal and ECHO.
We may need to start using other channels like Instagram and TikTok for these events as well.
SPOT Groningen has a large audience reach that we can also use through their site and newsletters.
Echo, as a networking organization, has a large constituency that we can inform through a special newsletter and possible conferences, and Komodal has also made its network available for marketing communications.

Learnings

- We organized the retrieval of information, opinions and needs of the target groups in a structured manner. We used a process facilitator for this who set the brainstorming groups to work with clear questions. The information was collected through standardized customized forms and finally processed into an overall understanding. This was a fine way of working.

- Translating these outputs into eventual prototypes was not easy. We did that as a consortium. Among ourselves it was searching for where we put the emphasis without losing sight of the objectives of the project. That is a considerable risk during discussions and decision-making. As project leader you must monitor this well.

- When designing a concept for a prototype, as a consortium you miss representation from the artists' side. It deserves attention not to lose sight of their importance during discussions.

- We would like to continue the participation of students in the next phases. This generation already have different views about digitalization in relation to live performances than the members of the consortium. Through CrossWise they are also doing parallel assignments that they can contribute to the project team.

- What is an important point of attention as a project leader is that the project is also regularly on the strategic agenda of member organizations. At Komodal, this happens naturally because this relatively small organization embraces this project top-down. It lives within this organization. Whereas it is different for ECHO because it is a membership organization. Each hall has its own dynamics and concerns. The intermediate impact can vary from member to member and the intrinsic focus on METAVENUES is also different. The advantage of ECHO is that in addition to the active participation of a number of professionals from halls, interim and final reports can be shared and discussed at meetings of directors, marketers, business leaders, etc via a keynote. An important output that will have impact especially at the end of the project.

- For SPOT Groningen, it is natural for it to participate in this project because it also has an independent Innovation C Development department, but with that the responsibility for this project can also be linked to ICO. Addressing questions to managers about their needs regarding this project in relation to the development of their own department remains an important point of attention. If this attention is insufficient, the project will mostly be seen as an activity of the ICO department and the integral importance for the future-proofing of the own organization will be underexposed.

Next steps

- In the coming months, we will refine the prototypes and develop them in more concrete terms.
- In doing so, we will prepare well for the testing phase (WP4).
- This production preparation will be mainly through online meetings and meetings with 'hired' partners.
- In late February/early March we plan to test the hybrid event and a few months later the METAVERSE week.
- Before summer 2025 we want to conclude the testing phase. We are considering some hosting a final conference in which all yields, learnings and impact will be shared with as many interested parties as possible.

Annex

Report on outcomes from Metavenues Living labs Day 1 & 2

Day 1 Morning: Presentation and Discussion

Session: Presentation of the Smart Venue Project by JOS (Effnaar)
Topics discussed during this presentation:

- Challenges of VR in Venues:
  - Complexity and the steep learning curve for venue staff (e.g., sound and light engineers).
  - Lack of time and expertise to adopt new technologies.
  - Financial concerns, as venues aren't yet monetizing smart venue programs effectively.
- Fear and Resistance:
  - Both artists and venues are hesitant to adopt new technologies due to fear of failure, lack of experience, and insufficient support.
  - Major industry players and older staff often resist changing established business models.
- Impact of COVID-19:
  - Shifted focus to virtual and hybrid live events.
  - Small scale virtual concerts with tickets priced at 100€ each, combining video and chat, and many were only targeted at gamers
- Hybrid Live Music Models:
  - Live performances are evolving to include both in-person and virtual components, increasing accessibility and audience reach.
- Reimagining Staff and Structure:
  - During Covid, JOS had to lay off 2/3rds of this staff. Now post Covid, this restructuring led to hiring new staff with innovative mindsets ready to embrace technology.

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- o Some venues now operate as two separate entities - traditional and smart venues - to maximize resources and subsidies.
- Artist Empowerment:
    - o Artists can now have greater control over their careers through tech-driven solutions.
    - o Venues and programs must focus on educating and supporting artists to explore tools that align with their vision and audience.
- Collaboration with Technology Partners:
    - o Technology partners play a crucial role in turning artists' ideas into reality.
    - o Building a network of shared knowledge and experiences across venues can facilitate innovation.

Day 1 Afternoon: Brainstorming Sessions

Groups of 3 people were asked to choose at least 2 ideas to develop, one physical/one virtual. The goal was to come up with a complete scenario (explanation and guidelines).

Group 1

- Physical Spaces:
    - o Create labs for artists, teachers, and students to experiment with tech away from daily distractions.
    - o Set up innovation spaces outside concert venues, which could also be a networking space for tech professionals etc.
- Virtual Spaces:
    - o Build customizable platforms where people can meet, share knowledge and experiment together.
    - o Use membership fees to support shared ownership models (between venues).

Group 2

- Physical Spaces:
    - o Help artists and tech partners work together to create innovative ideas.
    - o Support artists as risk-takers to inspire others and drive innovation.
- Virtual Spaces:
    - o Provide safe virtual environments for artists to test and interact with fans.

Group 3

- Physical Spaces:
    - o Improve already existing spaces
    - o Capitalise and make use of attendees have a mobile phones, adding to the experience.

- Virtual Spaces:
    - A virtual space for each artist to promote their work to venues
    - 3D rendering of the venues to give artists a better idea of the space. This could be useful for stage production as well as overall experience of the performance.

Group 4

- Physical Spaces:
    - Use mobile containers to train people on different technologies.
    - Encourage co-creation between artists and audiences.
- Virtual Spaces:
    - Build virtual platforms for on-demand (not real time), from home participation in the performance. Eg. Use 360 video to film choreographies, sharing with fans so they can learn it, perhaps even before the show.

Group 5

- Physical Spaces:
    - Create a 'Smart Metavenues' label/standards to ensure quality and consistency in tech adoption.
- Virtual Spaces:
    - Build unified platforms for consistent and high-quality virtual experiences.

Day 2: Before and after the show

Morning: Ideation Session with Maud Clavier
Fablabs and Hybrid Experiences:

- Physical Spaces:
    - Fablabs inside venues to let artists create avatars and train in virtual worlds with professionals.
    - Hybrid setups that connect live and virtual audiences (e.g., VR buttons launching real-life fireworks).
    - Venues acting as production hubs for virtual content, including virtual merchandise and interactive Q&A sessions.
- Virtual Spaces:
    - Virtual venues for curated shows, like the example of Blankaly's theatre using Vroom.
    - Devices evolving, with AR glasses becoming common in the next year or two for both home and venue use, and in 2-3 years we will see more VR headsets at home.

Artists' Opinions and Challenges:

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- Artists' Perspectives:
    - Some artists, prefer avatars due to shyness, while others find virtual interaction less engaging than live performances.
    - Virtual shows need to match or exceed live quality to gain acceptance.
- Tech Implementation:
    - Venues should experiment with mixed-reality devices for innovative experiences.
    - VR and AR shouldn't replicate reality but offer unique, enhanced visuals and freedom for audiences.

Public-Oriented Services:

- Inclusivity:
    - Expand access to music for people in hospitals, with anxiety, disabilities, or limited financial means.
    - Use VR to create expressive, movement-focused experiences, particularly for dance and other visual art forms.
- Collaboration:
    - Students and tech designers can partner with artists to explore new ways of engaging audiences.

Afternoon: Brainstorming session

3-4 x groups of 4-5 people, where each group chooses at least 2 ideas to develop. The questions asked were:

- What additional services around a traditional show based on immersive technologies might interest the audience?
- How can we add value to these services so that they represent a true value proposition?
- What types of exclusive or bonus content could attract an audience willing to pay for complementary services?

Group 1

- Use AR glasses to help staff provide personalized services, like recognizing drink or seating preferences.
- Replace brochures with immersive 3D experiences to connect audiences with artists before and after the show.

Group 2

- Make use of new spatial audio - Train venues in advanced sound systems like Dolby Atmos to create new sound experiences.
- Adapt spatial audio techniques for both live and electronic music.

- Use audio systems that recreate real-world acoustics in VR environments.

Group 3

- Use AR glasses to create pre-show atmospheres and engage audiences.
- Introduce AR features to attract younger audiences and enhance their concert experience.

Group 4

- Let audiences contribute art, poetry, or feedback during shows to foster creativity.
- Provide tools for audiences to collaborate with artists in real time.