

PULSE-ART CASE STUDIES

Case Studies

The case studies are the spaces and time in which the Methodology is explored, adapted, and implemented. PULSE-ART works with seven projects that, from different disciplinary fields, develop processes aimed at promoting Cultural Awareness and Expression (CAE) with young people (ages 16-30). The seven case studies gather data for PULSE-ART research on the impacts of arts in education to foster CAE.

The Methodology is structured as a three-part process that aligns with the lifecycle of participatory artistic projects: **(1) Discover:** contextual grounding and needs assessment, **(2) Create:** participatory artistic action and curriculum integration, and **(3) Reflect:** reflection, evaluation, and learning.

This structure ensures alignment with the nine methodological criteria, including needs assessment, inclusivity, interdisciplinarity, curriculum integration, diverse artistic mediums, inspiring guest artists, reflection, assessment strategies, and professional development for educators. Each organisation implementing a case study adapts the methodology according to its artistic discipline and context.

This section provides a general description of each case study, along with updates and materials produced during implementation.

Case Studies Overview

01

VISUAL-TECH ART

Visual Tech Art and Interactive Heritage Mapping with Youth in Thessaloniki

Implemented by: Anatolia College

Secondary school and university students co-create an interactive 3D scale model of Thessaloniki, embedding NFC tags linked to digital narratives about six culturally significant landmarks. Through Visual Tech Art, participants explore the city's multilayered heritage while strengthening Cultural Awareness and Expression and integrated STEAM skills.



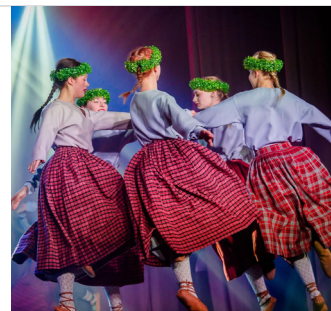
02

DANCE

Daugavpils in Motion – Our City, Our Story

Implemented by: Daugavpils University

Through dance, dance theatre and music, young people explore the complex history, memory and diversity of Daugavpils. Co-creation and youth engagement are central to the process, enabling participants to strengthen belonging, creativity, self-expression and reflection.



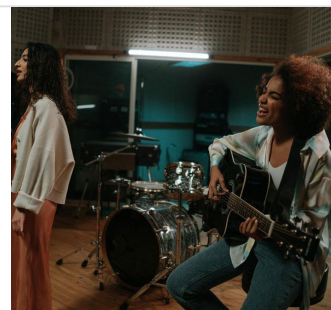
03

MUSIC

Young Voices, Living Roots: Co-Creating Music in Morocco

Implemented by: Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA)

Young people aged 18–25 in urban and rural Morocco co-create music inspired by Amazigh oral heritage, storytelling and contemporary composition. Through collective music-making, reflection and intercultural dialogue, the project strengthens Cultural Awareness and Expression and collaborative creativity.



04

ILLUSTRATION

Art and science in a shared space: young people illustrating knowledge in Madrid

Implemented by: National Museum of Natural Sciences of Madrid (MNCN-CSIC) in collaboration with Ilustraciencia

High school learners explore the relationship between art, science and heritage through drawing, scientific illustration, workbooks and participatory activities. Set between a natural history museum and a university engineering school in Madrid, the project strengthens inclusion, critical thinking and social cohesion.



05

PERFORMANCE ARTS/LIVE ARTS

All Earth is your motherland

Implemented by: Waag Futurelab

Waag and artist Rosalie Bak work with young people aged 16–27 at De Zeehoeve farm in Diemen through performance and live arts. Using embodied, somatic and ecological practices, participants explore eco-cultural identity through soil as a metaphor for belonging, memory and collective experience.



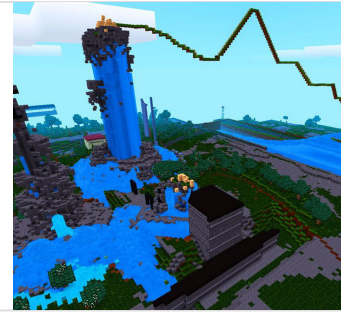
06

VIDEO GAMES - FRANCE

The Shift - video games art practices with youth in Paris region.

Implemented by: Institut de Recherche et d'Innovation

The project explores Cultural Awareness and Expression through urbanity and future archaeology transposed into video game environments. Young people examine fictional shifts in local places, building digital "shifted" twins and traces to better understand cultural, historical and social layers.



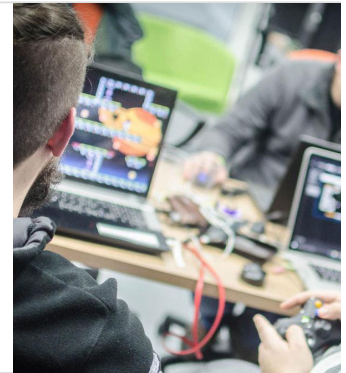
07

GAME JAMS MALTA

Collaborative game design with youth and creative communities in Malta

Implemented by: University of Malta

Game jams in Malta become spaces for Cultural Awareness and Expression, where young adults from diverse disciplinary and cultural backgrounds co-create digital games inspired by Maltese heritage collections. Through participatory and interdisciplinary processes, participants strengthen cultural reflection, intercultural dialogue and inclusive artistic expression.



Detailed Case Studies

01

CASE
STUDY

VISUAL-TECH ART

Visual Tech Art and Interactive Heritage Mapping with Youth in Thessaloniki

Implemented by: Anatolia College

Visual-Tech Art

NFC storytelling

Urban heritage

Youth 16–30

Thessaloniki

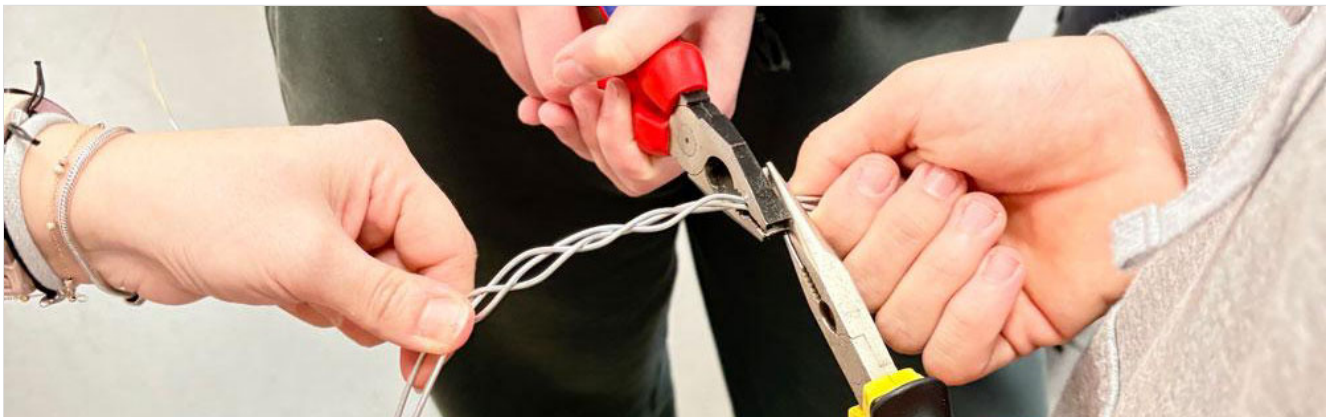


Image from the preliminary case study, where secondary school students explored creative ways to represent their neighbourhood. © PULSE-ART Project Consortium | CC BY 4.0 | Attribution required.

ABSTRACT

Secondary school and university students co-create an interactive 3D scale model of Thessaloniki, embedding NFC tags linked to digital narratives about six culturally significant landmarks. Through Visual Tech Art, participants explore the city's multilayered heritage while strengthening Cultural Awareness and Expression and integrated STEAM skills.

CONTEXT

Thessaloniki is Greece's second city and a major cultural and educational hub in the Balkans, situated at the intersection of European, Mediterranean, and Eastern traditions. Its urban landscape bears traces of successive civilisations – Byzantine, Ottoman, Sephardic Jewish, Romani, and modern Greek – making it one of the most historically layered cities in Southern Europe. This plurality is both an asset and a pedagogical challenge: dominant narratives tend to privilege a single cultural identity, marginalising the city's richer, more contested heritage.

The project takes place at the Anna Papageorgiou STEM Center of Anatolia. Anatolia brings together students/youth from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, reflecting the multicultural character of the city itself. The institution occupies a position between international educational frameworks (IB, liberal arts tertiary education) and the local Greek secondary system, creating productive tensions around curriculum, language, and cultural identity.

Key participants include secondary school students aged 16–18, a cross-disciplinary teacher team (Visual Arts, IB Arts, STEM, IT, Music, Humanities), and external partners including the University of Western Macedonia, the Museum of Macedonian Struggle, and the Technical Lyceum of Langkada. Further sessions with youth 18–30 years old will run. Students and youth bring interests in technology, and digital media; some face barriers related to language, digital access, or confidence in artistic expression. Students exercise agency and creativity in landmark selection, narrative choices, and presentation format.

Structurally, the project operates within a formal timetable, which imposes time constraints and requires careful curriculum integration across Visual Arts, IT, STEM, and Social Studies. STEAM approaches remain underrepresented in formal Greek education, and experiential, participatory learning methods are not yet mainstream. The case study is positioned as a pilot within this context, testing an interdisciplinary model that foregrounds student/youth voice and intercultural representation.

Key tensions include the risk of reproducing dominant narratives when selecting heritage landmarks, the challenge of making minority histories (Sephardic, Ottoman or Romani) visible and respectful, and the uneven distribution of digital skills and cultural confidence among students/youth. What is at stake is both the quality of the educational experience and the ethical responsibility of representing a city's complex past honestly and inclusively.

STRATEGY FOR CAE

The project is designed around Visual Tech Art – an interdisciplinary practice integrating 3D modelling, digital storytelling, and NFC technology – as the primary vehicle for Cultural Awareness and Expression. Rather than transmitting heritage content, the project positions students/youth as active authors of cultural knowledge, making meaningful choices about which histories to represent, in what form, and from whose perspective.

The process unfolds across five to six sessions. In Session 1, students explore what cultural heritage means to them personally, brainstorming landmarks in Thessaloniki that carry historical, artistic, or intercultural significance. This initial inquiry is not purely academic: students are invited to connect the city's layered past to their own identities, languages, and family histories. In Session 2, groups collaboratively select six

final landmarks – with the teacher facilitating to ensure that minority community histories (Byzantine, Ottoman, Jewish Sephardic, Romani, modern Greek) are represented alongside majority narratives. This negotiation is itself an exercise in cultural awareness and democratic participation.

Sessions 3 and 4 integrate making with critical inquiry. Students simultaneously construct a physical 3D scale model of the city and conduct deep historical and cultural research into their chosen landmark. They then produce digital narratives – audio recordings, video clips, or multimedia presentations – linked via NFC tags to physical points on the model. The storytelling process pushes beyond factual description: teams are asked to explore questions such as “Who built this? For whom? What has this place meant to different communities across time?” This reflective framing embeds critical cultural literacy at every stage of production.

Sessions 5 and 6 introduce peer testing and structured feedback on the map’s usability, storytelling clarity, and cultural representation, giving students an external audience perspective and prompting further refinement. The case study concludes with a public showcase where students/youth present the interactive map to parents, community members, and heritage organisations – making the cultural learning visible and socially meaningful beyond the classroom. Throughout, the teacher team acts as facilitator rather than director, with youth agency and self-assessment built into every stage of the competence framework.

IMAGE GALLERY



02

CASE STUDY

DANCE

Daugavpils in Motion – Our City, Our Story

Implemented by: Daugavpils University

Dance

Belonging

Intercultural memory

Border city

Daugavpils



Source: The Daugavpils University student dance ensemble "Laima" (Photo by Vasilis Šilovs)

ABSTRACT

Through dance, dance theatre and music, young people explore the complex history, memory and diversity of Daugavpils. Co-creation and youth engagement are central to the process, enabling participants to strengthen belonging, creativity, self-expression and reflection.

DISCIPLINE / FOCUS

Dance

IMPLEMENTED BY

Daugavpils University

CONTEXT

The case study is implemented in Daugavpils, the second-largest city in Latvia, located in the south-eastern part of the country. Positioned on the periphery of the capital and along the eastern border of the European Union, the city is a culturally diverse urban centre where ethnic Latvians (22%) constitute a minority, reflecting a complex demographic structure shaped by historical and socio-economic processes. The city was shortlisted as a candidate for the 2027 European Capital of Culture with the concept "Lingua Franca:

Find, Make, Speak," aimed at fostering intercultural dialogue. Despite diverse cultural opportunities, social fragmentation persists, with interactions often confined to homogeneous "bubbles," limiting dialogue, civic engagement, and intercultural exchange.

The city is situated in one of the economically disadvantaged regions of the EU and has been affected by depopulation, migration, unemployment, ageing, and widening socio-economic inequalities. These conditions, alongside ethnic tensions and competing narratives of belonging – including the persistence of an "unburied past" –, shape identity formation. In this context, strengthening belonging, reducing isolation, and promoting youth participation are key priorities.

Dance-based co-creation workshops, where dance is perceived as a shared language, can contribute to bridging divides, enhancing social cohesion, and addressing barriers such as limited dialogue. The project engages young people from two educational cohorts (aged 16–18 and 19–30) and uses experiential learning, cultural engagement, and research-informed practice to deepen the understanding of the city's historical development and awareness of its contemporary socio-cultural significance.

STRATEGY FOR CAE

The case study is designed through a story-based approach that integrates dance, dance theatre, and music to develop participants' collaboration, creativity, confidence, and cultural self-expression. The format is based on co-creation and includes a structured rehearsal phase (Sessions 1–4), in which tasks are progressively scaffolded. This phase focuses on the development of personal and social skills, including teamwork, adaptability, and iterative choreographic development, culminating in a public performance (Session 5).

The choreographic process is iterative, with each version building on the previous one and enabling participants to experiment, reflect, refine, and collaboratively enhance their work. Participants are encouraged to develop their individual creative expression while engaging with the ideas and movements of others, supporting collaborative learning and mutual inspiration. A range of dance styles, including contemporary dance and Latvian stage dance, is introduced to support the intended learning outcomes.

The session cycle is structured within a symbolic framework: Session 1. Dawn (beginning); Session 2. Light (presence); Session 3. Darkness (loss); Session 4. Rebirth (renewal). Through dance, music, and silences participants explore thematic fields such as beginnings, movement, connection, and continuity (Session 1); nature-urban interactions, unity, diversity, inclusion, and dialogue (Session 2); tension, struggle, transformation, resilience, and resistance (Session 3); and hope, freedom, renewal, and collective life (Session 4).

Each session produces performance material co-created through engagement with historical content and dance-based practice. These outcomes reflect key dimensions of the city's development, including its origins, expressions of identity, ethnic diversity, intercultural dialogue, historical transformation, and changing political contexts, as well as notions of freedom and collective awakening.

In Session 5, a cyclical narrative centred on the concept of life is presented, emphasising time (continuity, historical epochs, transformation), space (the city, river, landmarks, and streets), and the human.

IMAGE GALLERY



03

CASE STUDY

MUSIC

Young Voices, Living Roots: Co-Creating Music in Morocco

Implemented by: Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA)

Music

Amazigh oral heritage

Co-creation

Rural-urban youth

Morocco



Photo by cottonbro studio from Pexels

ABSTRACT

Young people aged 18–25 in urban and rural Morocco co-create music inspired by Amazigh oral heritage, storytelling and contemporary composition. Through collective music-making, reflection and intercultural dialogue, the project strengthens Cultural Awareness and Expression and collaborative creativity.

DISCIPLINE / FOCUS

Music

IMPLEMENTED BY

Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA)

CONTEXT

The case study takes place across urban and rural locations in Morocco, including Marrakech, Rabat, Tinghir, and Khénifra. These territories reflect significant cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic differences, while also sharing structural inequalities related to access to arts education and cultural participation.

Cultural infrastructure and opportunities remain heavily concentrated in large urban centres, whereas rural areas often receive limited institutional support despite their central role in preserving oral heritage, community memory, and traditional artistic practices.

The project is implemented through partnerships between cultural organisations, higher education institutions, and local artistic actors. Participants are young people aged 18–25 from diverse educational, social, and cultural backgrounds, including youth connected to Amazigh communities and others with limited previous engagement with heritage-based artistic practices. Some participants are involved in higher education or creative networks, while others face socioeconomic barriers, limited access to cultural opportunities, or reduced confidence in artistic self-expression.

The Moroccan context is marked by linguistic plurality and unequal recognition of cultural identities and artistic forms. Amazigh heritage has historically been marginalised within institutional and educational narratives despite its central role in Morocco's cultural landscape. At the same time, culture is often perceived as secondary or inaccessible, particularly in contexts where economic precarity shapes youth priorities and opportunities.

Within this context, the project seeks to create participatory and intercultural learning spaces where oral heritage, multilingual expression, and collective creativity are treated as living cultural practices rather than static traditions. Power asymmetries remain present between institutions, artists, and participants, as well as between urban and rural contexts with unequal access to resources and visibility. What is at stake is not only access to artistic participation, but also whose cultural knowledge is recognised, transmitted, and valued within contemporary Moroccan society.

STRATEGY FOR CAE

The project is designed around participatory and co-created music-making as a methodology for strengthening Cultural Awareness and Expression through collective creativity, oral heritage, and intercultural dialogue. Combining Amazigh musical traditions, storytelling, rhythm, and contemporary composition, the workshops position music not only as artistic production, but as a shared social and cultural language capable of connecting participants across linguistic, territorial, and experiential differences.

The methodology is grounded in Participatory Action Research (PAR), structured through iterative cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Rather than following a fixed curriculum, participants actively shape workshop content through their own stories, cultural references, languages, and creative responses. Youth are positioned as active cultural producers and co-authors of the process rather than passive recipients of knowledge.

Each workshop cycle begins with listening circles, storytelling prompts, and reflective activities connected to identity, memory, belonging, and cultural experience. Participants engage with oral narratives, musical references, poetry, and community memory through multilingual facilitation in Tamazight, Darija, and French. Storytelling functions as the starting point for collective music creation, allowing participants to transform personal and community experiences into rhythmic, lyrical, and melodic material.

Creative activities include rhythm exploration, voice and body percussion, collaborative lyric writing, improvisation, listening exercises, and collective composition. The workshops intentionally use low-threshold and embodied approaches so that participation does not depend on formal musical training, literacy level, or access to professional tools. Traditional Amazigh musical forms are approached as living and evolving practices that participants reinterpret collectively through contemporary artistic experimentation.

The process unfolds differently across urban and rural contexts, allowing participants to engage with distinct social and cultural realities. In rural contexts such as Tinghir and Khénifra, intergenerational exchange and oral heritage transmission play a central role, while urban workshops emphasise intercultural collaboration and contemporary reinterpretation of heritage. Across all sites, the methodology encourages participants to reflect critically on cultural representation, language, identity, exclusion, and belonging.

Local musicians act as facilitators, artistic mentors, and co-designers of the workshops, supporting participants while ensuring that creative decisions emerge collectively. Reflection is integrated throughout the process through group dialogue, feedback sessions, and collaborative evaluation moments that directly shape subsequent workshops. In this way, Cultural Awareness and Expression emerge through shared artistic creation, intercultural listening, and the collective negotiation of memory, identity, and cultural meaning within contemporary Moroccan society.

IMAGE GALLERY



04

ILLUSTRATION

Art and science in a shared space: young people illustrating knowledge in Madrid

Implemented by: National Museum of Natural Sciences of Madrid (MNCN-CSIC) in collaboration with Ilustraciencia

CASE STUDY

Illustration

Art & science

Shared space

Youth participation

Visual narratives



Source: Eva Carretero Ariño

ABSTRACT

High school learners explore the relationship between art, science and heritage through drawing, scientific illustration, workbooks and participatory activities. Set between a natural history museum and a university engineering school in Madrid, the project strengthens inclusion, critical thinking and social cohesion.

DISCIPLINE / FOCUS

Illustration

IMPLEMENTED BY

National Museum of Natural Sciences of Madrid (MNCN-CSIC) in collaboration with Ilustraciencia

CONTEXT

The case study takes place in Madrid's recently named "Science District", a unique urban environment where historic research, educational, and cultural institutions coexist within a radius of approximately one square kilometer. This area includes the National Museum of Natural Sciences (MNCN-CSIC), the Higher

Technical School of Industrial Engineering of the Polytechnic University of Madrid (ETSII-UPM), the Ramiro de Maeztu Secondary School (IES Ramiro de Maeztu), and other cultural spaces such as the Residencia de Estudiantes (Student Residence Hall) and scientists affiliated with the CSIC (Spanish National Research Council). Although physically close, these institutions have traditionally operated in a fragmented manner, perpetuating separations between formal and non-formal education, research, culture and community.

The initiative arose precisely to reduce these barriers and generate new forms of collaboration among young people, educators, researchers, artists and cultural mediators. High school students specializing in science, technology, and the arts participate, along with artists and teachers from the *Ilustraciencia* project, scientific and educational staff, universities and community groups. The main decisions are coordinated by the participating institutions, although the project incorporates youth co-creation dynamics so that learners can influence content and methodologies.

The context is marked by social and cultural contrasts. Although the "Science District" is located in a central area with high cultural, scientific, and educational resources, a large proportion of the participating learners. They come from different neighborhoods and diverse socioeconomic backgrounds within the city and metropolitan area. This creates disparities in prior access to artistic, scientific, and heritage practices, as well as different ways of relating to cultural institutions. Added to this is the historical undervaluation of the arts in formal education and certain institutional and symbolic barriers that hinder the participation of some youth groups. In response to these inequalities, the project uses scientific illustration as an inclusive tool that reduces linguistic and cultural barriers, fosters active participation, and connects heritage, science, and cultural expression through shared experiences situated within the local context.

STRATEGY FOR CAE

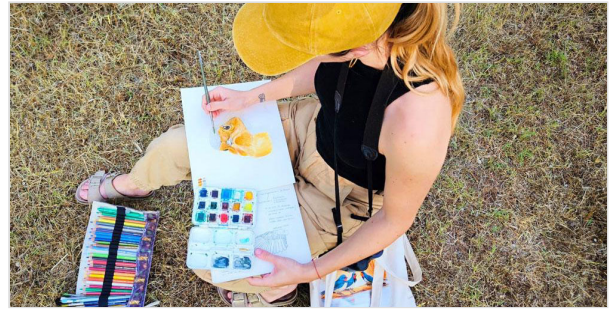
The case study is designed around five sessions as a learning and co-creation process where scientific illustration serves as a bridge between art, science, territory, and personal experience. The proposal unfolds through Participatory sessions that combine observation, exploration of the environment, drawing, dialogue, and collective reflection. From the outset, students do not merely occupy the role of recipients, but actively participate in the construction of content, routes, and forms of representation of the territory and the scientific institutions that comprise it.

The process begins with a discovery phase in which participants explore the "Science District" through visual activities and an interactive tour between the MNCN-CSIC and the ETSII-UPM. Through videos, objects, collections, machinery, illustrations, and historical examples, learners are introduced to different ways of producing and communicating knowledge. The workbooks—inspired by field notebooks and diaries journals—become a central tool for recording observations, emotions, memories, and personal interpretations of the environment.

In the following phases— experimentation and reflection—groups of science, technology, and arts students work together to develop collaborative proposals for illustration and visual storytelling. Artistic practice is integrated with critical reflection through discussions about how knowledge is represented, which cultural narratives are legitimized and which are rendered invisible, and how historical and social context influences our interpretation of science and heritage. Drawing ceases to be understood as a closed technical skill and is instead used as an accessible language to express identity, experiences, and diverse ways of perceiving the landscape.

The constant presence of artists, researchers, teachers, and cultural mediators fosters horizontal relationships and spaces for exchange where diverse knowledge is valued. The project thus promotes a situated cultural awareness, connected to the urban environment and the personal trajectories of the participants, strengthening their ability to interpret, question, and communicate culture from multiple and inclusive perspectives.

IMAGE GALLERY



05

CASE
STUDY

PERFORMANCE ARTS/LIVE ARTS

All Earth is your motherland

Implemented by: Waag Futurelab

Performance

Embodied expression

Live arts

Cultural identity

Amsterdam

Credit is just Waag Creative Commons <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

ABSTRACT

Waag and artist Rosalie Bak work with young people aged 16–27 at De Zeehoeve farm in Diemen through performance and live arts. Using embodied, somatic and ecological practices, participants explore eco-cultural identity through soil as a metaphor for belonging, memory and collective experience.

DISCIPLINE / FOCUS

Performance Arts/Live Arts

IMPLEMENTED BY

Waag Futurelab

CONTEXT

The case study takes place at De Zeehoeve, a monumental farm from 1881 located at the boundary between Diemen, IJburg, and the Diemer Vijfhoek nature reserve, on the eastern edge of the Amsterdam metropolitan area. It is a peri-urban site situated between ecological land and one of Amsterdam's newest and most socially diverse residential districts. Originally built to supply food to soldiers stationed at nearby Fort Diemerdam, the farm now functions as a space for community activities, personal development, and alternative forms of learning outside formal institutional settings.

This location is significant because it places participants at the intersection of urban expansion, ecological transition, and questions of belonging. The farm environment contrasts with the highly structured and digitised environments many participants are accustomed to, making soil, food, ecology, and collective care materially and physically tangible. For many young people whose relationships to land have been shaped by migration, urban life, or social exclusion, the site becomes both a learning environment and a space for reconnecting personal memory, cultural identity, and ecological experience.

The project is developed by Waag, artist Rosalie Bak, and Saga Interproject, which works with young people aged 16–27 who are distant from the labour market, have dropped out of formal education, or are navigating complex social transitions without stable institutional support. Participants come from diverse cultural and migration backgrounds, including communities connected to Suriname, Morocco, Turkey, and the Dutch Antilles. Many have experienced educational environments where their knowledge, forms of expression, or life trajectories were not recognised or legitimised.

Within this context, trust-building becomes a central methodological condition. Power asymmetries exist between institutions and participants, between formal accountability structures and the slow relational work required for meaningful participation, and between dominant cultural norms and embodied or non-verbal forms of expression that are often marginalised in educational settings. What is at stake is whether artistic practice can genuinely create space for self-understanding, collective reflection, and cultural expression, rather than reproducing extractive forms of participation that ask young people to engage without transforming the conditions that shape their lives.

STRATEGY FOR CAE

Building from Rosalie Bak's artistic and haptic practice, the project approaches eco-cultural identity as something that cannot simply be taught or explained, but must be experienced through the body, relationships, memory, and collective presence. Rather than delivering content about soil, ecology, or cultural diversity, the methodology creates conditions in which participants encounter these themes through sensation, storytelling, movement, and shared reflection. Soil functions both as an ecological reality and as a metaphor for belonging, rootedness, migration, and interdependence.

The sessions unfold as a cumulative and participatory process in which trust-building, collective feeling, and lived experience are prioritised before interpretation or performance. The methodology is intentionally designed with multiple entry points so that participation does not depend on previous artistic experience, confidence with academic language, or formal educational success. Somatic, visual, and object-based practices allow participants to contribute through different forms of expression, while the facilitation remains responsive to the group's dynamics and feedback.

The first session, Sensing the Ground, begins with embodied and sensory exercises on the farm environment. Through walking, observing, touching, and listening, participants explore what they feel underfoot and how the landscape relates to their own bodily presence. The question "What is soil?" is not answered through scientific explanation alone, but opened collectively through perception, association, and discussion. Participants are positioned not as learners receiving information, but as investigators bringing their own histories, memories, and relationships to land into the process.

From this grounding, the programme moves into narrative and eco-cultural reflection. In My Story, Our Soil, participants use mapping, storysharing, drawing, and conversation to explore memories connected to migration, food, landscape, family histories, and belonging. Soil functions as a relational metaphor that makes difference speakable without flattening it into fixed cultural categories. Through this process, participants develop cultural self-reflection, openness to other perspectives, and empathy across lived experiences.

The programme then moves into collective artistic creation. In *Making It Experiential*, participants co-create with Rosalie a score, performative action, or experiential piece that invites others to encounter their eco-cultural stories not primarily as information, but as felt experience. This is the methodological core of the project: moving beyond the performer/audience divide and creating conditions in which participants and audiences can experience connection, vulnerability, and difference through embodied presence rather than explanation alone.

Critical reflection is woven throughout the process. Structured feedback and collective dialogue shape the development of each following session, allowing the methodology to evolve responsively rather than follow a fixed script. The facilitation principles that hold the process together come from both Saga's experience working with young people facing educational and social exclusion, and Rosalie Bak's haptonomic approach centred on contact, attentiveness, safety, and collective care. In this way, Cultural Awareness and Expression emerge through a shared space where participants critically and creatively explore identity, ecology, memory, and coexistence through embodied experience.

IMAGE GALLERY



06

VIDEO GAMES - FRANCE

The Shift - video games art practices with youth in Paris region.

Implemented by: Institut de Recherche et d'Innovation

CASE STUDY

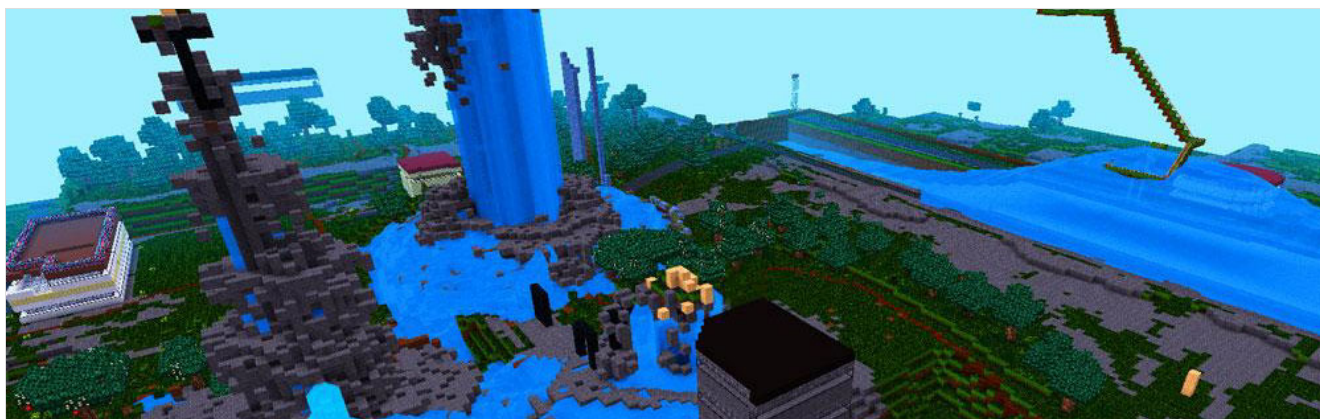
Video games

Game design

Peripheral youth

Digital culture

Paris region



Waterfall - collective creation in Luantu made during the UrbanCraft workshops at La Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie (Paris)" Credit : IRI-Centre Pompidou

ABSTRACT

The project explores Cultural Awareness and Expression through urbanity and future archaeology transposed into video game environments. Young people examine fictional shifts in local places, building digital "shifted" twins and traces to better understand cultural, historical and social layers.

DISCIPLINE / FOCUS

Video Games - France

IMPLEMENTED BY

Institut de Recherche et d'Innovation

CONTEXT

The project takes place across peripheral urban territories surrounding Paris, particularly in Seine-Saint-Denis, areas marked by strong cultural diversity but also by structural inequalities in access to cultural resources, infrastructures, mobility, and institutional representation. These territories are frequently framed through deficit narratives linked to poverty, exclusion, or insecurity, despite being spaces of intense cultural

production and social transformation. The case study unfolds within both formal and non-formal educational environments, including universities, cultural institutions, and youth spaces, positioning itself between the centre and the margins of the Parisian cultural landscape.

One of IRI's main concerns is to critically question young people's relationship with digital tools. Although participants are highly familiar with digital media and video games, these technologies are also associated with risks such as addictive use, social isolation, and passive consumption. The project seeks to repurpose video games as tools for collective creation, critical reflection, and cultural expression rather than entertainment alone. By engaging participants in collaborative worldbuilding and artistic production, the case study encourages new forms of agency and a more conscious relationship with digital practices.

The project intentionally brings together participants from unequal social and cultural positions. It primarily works with young people from REP+ and peripheral areas, whose cultural expressions and forms of knowledge are often marginalised within dominant cultural institutions. At the same time, the project involves university students from central Paris in order to challenge privileged perspectives on culture, territory, and social representation. This coexistence creates productive tensions around legitimacy, visibility, and whose imaginaries shape collective narratives.

The partnership structure reflects this diversity of contexts and institutional roles. La Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie provides space and technological infrastructure for experimentation. A professor and students from Sorbonne University integrate the case study into the course "Art History and Modernism in the Global South," connecting the project to critical academic debates on culture and representation. Meanwhile, the Maison de la Jeunesse in Vitry-sur-Seine anchors the project within a local youth and community context, working directly with young residents from the neighbourhood. Through these collaborations, the project creates a space where artistic practice, urban experience, and critical cultural reflection intersect.

STRATEGY FOR CAE

The project strengthens Cultural Awareness and Expression through a collective worldbuilding process that combines urban exploration, artistic creation, and collaborative video game design. Participants do not simply consume cultural content; they actively reinterpret territories, identities, memories, and possible futures through creative practice.

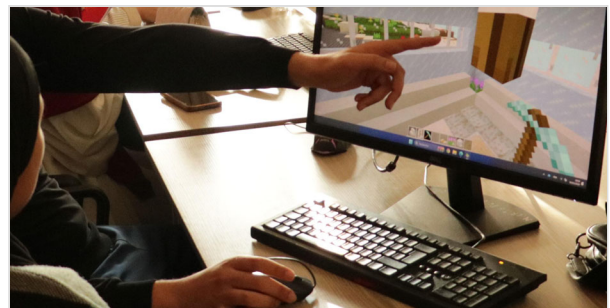
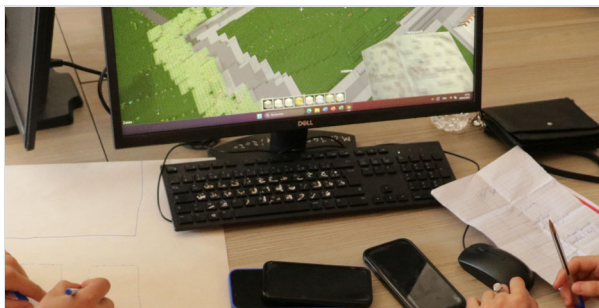
The process begins with the exploration of real territories through urban walks, archive research, emotional mapping, and discussions about local histories and experiences. Participants analyse how urban environments are shaped by social, cultural, climatic, and political conditions, while reflecting on their own relationship to these spaces. This first phase creates a shared situated understanding of territory and encourages participants to recognise their own knowledge and lived experience as culturally valuable.

The project then introduces fictional "shifts" — temporal, cultural, climatic, or social transformations that alter the original territory and open speculative possibilities. Participants collectively imagine alternative urban futures and translate them into digital environments using Lianti, an open-source version of Minecraft. Through this process, participants negotiate meanings, references, symbols, and representations, integrating personal and collective identities into shared fictional worlds.

Material artistic practices such as clay modelling, photography, drawing, and object creation are integrated throughout the process before being transposed into the digital environment. This articulation between physical and virtual creation broadens participation beyond technical gaming skills and creates multiple entry points for cultural expression.

Critical reflection is embedded in all stages of the methodology. Participants discuss what traces societies leave behind, who gets represented in urban narratives, and which futures become imaginable or excluded. The final machinima and collective storytelling activities allow participants to narrate and reinterpret their transformed territories, making visible both personal experiences and broader social tensions. In this way, CAE emerges through collaborative imagination, situated reflection, and the collective negotiation of cultural meaning.

IMAGE GALLERY



07

CASE STUDY

GAME JAMS MALTA

Collaborative game design with youth and creative communities in Malta

Implemented by: University of Malta

Game jam

Collaborative design

Creative communities

Digital skills

Malta



Source: Jame Jam. Credit: University of Malta

ABSTRACT

Game jams in Malta become spaces for Cultural Awareness and Expression, where young adults from diverse disciplinary and cultural backgrounds co-create digital games inspired by Maltese heritage collections. Through participatory and interdisciplinary processes, participants strengthen cultural reflection, intercultural dialogue and inclusive artistic expression.

DISCIPLINE / FOCUS

Game jams Malta

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CONTEXT

The project takes place in Malta, a small Mediterranean island positioned historically as a crossroads of cultural exchange, migration, and colonial influence. The case study is situated within the Institute of Digital Games at the University of Malta, in collaboration with Heritage Malta, the national agency responsible for museums and cultural heritage.

The initiative emerges in a context where digital games are increasingly being valued as a legitimate artistic and cultural practice, but their impact is still limited outside specialised communities. Cultural education is gradually becoming more prominent especially in non-formal education contexts, while artistic participation is frequently associated with talent, expertise, or institutional access. At the same time, Malta's strong gaming culture and multicultural social fabric create fertile ground for experimenting with collaborative and participatory forms of cultural expression.

Participants include university students, young professionals, artists, designers, programmers, and members of Malta's gaming and creative communities aged over 18. Although the project promotes horizontal collaboration, important asymmetries remain present: technical expertise and digital fluency may shape participation and visibility within teams, requiring deliberate facilitation strategies to avoid privileging coding skills over narrative, artistic, or cultural contributions.

The project also navigates tensions between institutional understandings of heritage and more participatory, lived, and community-based notions of culture. Through game creation, the case study opens a space where cultural representation, identity, and belonging become collectively negotiated rather than passively consumed.

STRATEGY FOR CAE

The project reinforces Cultural Awareness and Expression through a participatory game jam methodology in which participants collaboratively create digital games inspired by Maltese cultural heritage. Rather than approaching culture as static content to be transmitted, the process positions participants as active cultural producers who interpret, negotiate, and transform heritage through creative practice.

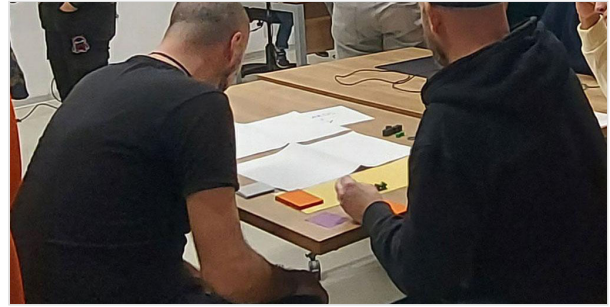
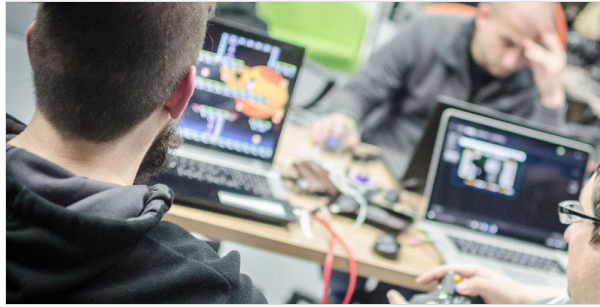
The process begins with an opening session where Heritage Malta presents digitised cultural artefacts and historical references. Participants engage in identity-mapping exercises that connect personal experiences, memories, and cultural backgrounds with the heritage materials presented. This initial stage establishes culture as lived experience and encourages reflection on representation, belonging, and collective memory before the game creation process starts.

Participants then form interdisciplinary teams combining different levels of technical, artistic, and cultural expertise. During the 48-hour game jam, teams collaboratively design narratives, characters, visual environments, mechanics, and soundscapes. The methodology intentionally creates multiple entry points for participation so that cultural contribution is not dependent on programming skills alone. Accessible tools such as Twine, Bitsy, and GDevelop support inclusive participation and lower technical barriers.

Critical reflection is embedded throughout the process rather than added afterwards. Facilitators and mentors periodically encourage teams to reflect on how cultural meanings, identities, and power relations are represented in their games. Participants must negotiate creative decisions collectively, confronting differences in interpretation, aesthetics, and cultural references. In this sense, CAE emerges not only through artistic production but through dialogue, collaboration, and situated decision-making.

The final showcase functions as a collective reflection space where participants present both their games and the cultural choices embedded within them. By articulating how they interpreted heritage, identity, and expression, participants develop greater awareness of their own positionalities and of the social dimensions of cultural production.

IMAGE GALLERY



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