

Virtual Production: Ideation Grid

Teaching Method



EMERGING MEDIA EXPLORATION



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Project Consortium: University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF (Germany); Tampere University (Finland); Tampere University of Applied Sciences (Finland); University of Lincoln (United Kingdom); University of Central Lancashire (United Kingdom)

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Graham Cooper, University of Lincoln, UK

Björn Stockleben, Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF, Germany

Sophie Tummescheit, Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF, Germany;

The Virtual Production Ideation Grid was developed during the EMEX autumn course in 2020. The time for ideation was limited to two weeks- as, due to the corona pandemic, the production phase had to be planned very precisely and well in advance. To make this feasible, the classic ideation process was adopted. We found that most design ideation tools lack a storytelling perspective, so we created a tool that would appeal to both filmmakers and interactive designers.

When to use

You can either use the tool very early in your process for an initial open ideation session, as it allows you to explore the interests of each team member from different angles, or you use it after you have narrowed down your problem, e.g. with a set of "how might we?" questions. A further use may be to brainstorm ways to realise an idea in detail.

Description

The intention behind the Ideation Grid is to gather ideas - or rather individual goals and needs - from multiple perspectives. The completed grid does not yet provide finished ideas, but the combination of single elements in every row can lead to several ideas, which can later be evaluated with respect to desirability, feasibility and viability.

The perspectives range from themes to spaces to concrete narratives, then shift to the user experience perspective and the look and feel to be created, up to desires to test workflows and technologies. People from different disciplines may have different perspectives and individual goals from which they approach the project; this is totally acceptable and the Grid can be used to visualise this. Ideally, the output of this method helps to create project ideas that reconcile individual goals with course and team goals.

Template

Grand Theme Which grand narrative or societal problem would you like to address?					
Space What kind of room/space do you want to create?					
Narration What would you like to tell?					
Experience - What do you want to make the user feel?					
Aesthetics What would you like to visualize?					
Workflow - What would you want to try?					

Usage

- Create an online whiteboard canvas and create the above structure for each participant (students may also work on this in pairs or perhaps in groups when you have a high number of students, although individual usage is preferable at the first stage).
- Students (or groups of students) are asked to fill in the structure, and are given a time limit of 10 - 15 minutes. At least one or two rows should be filled with 5 distinct ideas each and all in all, at least 12 - 20 squares should be filled in total. Giving a target is important so students go for quantity and do not dwell too long considering whether an idea is appropriate.
- Optional step: cluster and consolidate ideas per perspective. Useful in larger groups.
- All students may cast 2 votes per perspective to choose their favourites.
- Combinations of the favourite ideas across the perspectives are used as a basis for concrete ideation of project ideas.

Evaluation

The results can also be analysed on a meta-perspective. Looking at which perspectives have been completed and which not gives an overview on both individual and team preferences when it comes to the approach to the project. It can also be used for teambuilding to put together people with complementing primary perspectives (people with a technology focus join with those with a story focus).

Workflow - What would you want to try?	Working collaboratively in real time	working asynchronously (dark souls)	volumetric capture at home	VP (at home)	Mandalorian level Virtual Production
Experience - What do you want to make the user feel?	Comfort through memory	Connection to others	Positive change	enlightened	Hope
Aesthetics What would you like to visualize?	Low poly	an inaccessible space	The past	The future	Childs imagination
Space What kind of room/space do you want to create?	Under the sea lab	Inside an ancient monument	A dream world where anything is possible	A coffee shop	Duggee's playgroup
Narration What would you like to tell?	Personal / relatable tales	Childrens stories	How we can work together	self belief	learning from the past
Grand Theme Which grand narrative or societal problem would you like to address?	Equality	Beyond the virus	Online safety	Respecting Cultural Heritage	Accessibility

Workflow - What would you want to try?	volucap studio	using context Capture apps to build something in a 3D mesh	unreal engine, building game worlds	Hybrid Green Screen	How do real Time Graphics work?
Experience - What do you want to make the user feel?	empathy for different narratives	I want them to have the chance to experience something they wouldn't otherwise	when we see, what we haven't seen before it educates us (hopefully)	travel through places and emotions	learn and get to solutions of problems by them selves
Aesthetics What would you like to visualize?	either uncommon spaces or common spaces from a different perspective, for example how does it feel as a kid with a shorter height to be in a crowded situation	how could past and future look	how could the future look if we change something o don't change anything - leads to the question what we are manageable of.		
Space What kind of room/space do you want to create?	building a safe space for people to tell their stories and for other people to have a part in it				
Narration What would you like to tell?	work documentarily, meaning using real stories				
Grand Theme Which grand narrative or societal problem would you like to address?	how do other cultures life?	showing Knowledge that enables many to leave behind the white privileged Eurocentric view	what would the future hold for us? how can we change what we don't want		

Tips and problems

Students who are not used to developing lots of ideas in a short time without reflection (“go for quantity”) have to be encouraged and guided. For more experienced students, this tool may also be used asynchronously as preparation activity for a synchronous ideation session. Also, it may be necessary to repeat the “one post-it one idea” rule.

Variations

We created a canvas based on the perspectives and added the category “Images that inspire us” in the centre. This can be used to compile a pool of inspiration in the kick-off session of a course:

- Randomly mix students in Breakout groups of 2-3 and let them work on the canvas for 5 - 10 minutes.
- Students should gather together as many ideas as they can, starting from an arbitrary perspective. If they run out of ideas, they should pick a new perspective.
- All students should work on the same online whiteboard canvas. (For a template see separate PDF file: <https://www.emerging-media-exploration.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/EMEX-2020-InspirationCanvas.pdf>).

- Breakout Groups are randomly re-shuffled each 5-10 minutes. Repeat a couple of times as you see fit.
- Students can mark their names on the idea Post-its so when students build their teams, they can contact people with similar/particular interests that match the project.

Themes you would like to tell	Experiences and Emotions you would like the user to have	
Spaces or settings we would like to create	Images that inspire us	Looks and aesthetics we long to create
Characters we would like to bring to life	Workflows and technologies we would like to try	

Prerequisites

It is helpful if the groups formed have got to know each other with the help of an ice-breaker. It is also helpful if an introduction to the collaboration board used has been given, but there are no mandatory prerequisites for using this methodology. However, a "cold start" requires more time in implementation and more facilitation.

How to continue

Participants will afterwards be asked to combine the elements of the sections to create challenges worth solving. Not every section needs to be represented in the combination, because some sections (images, looks and aesthetics or spaces) may overlap or contradict. The goal is to make every challenge as precise as possible.

The challenges should be formulated in. "How Might We..."-Questions. How Might We questions are great to find opportunities for design.

Every question should allow for a variety of solutions. If it doesn't, the questions need to be broadened. "How Might We..." should generate a number of possible answers and will become a launchpad for further brainstorming.

To get to the core of the problem it is also advisable to apply the method of the: 5 Whys. Ask your team why the problem is occurring. The answers should be grounded in facts and not in speculation. For each of the answers that are generated, 4 further "Whys" in succession are asked. Each time, the responses are framed into more Why-Questions.