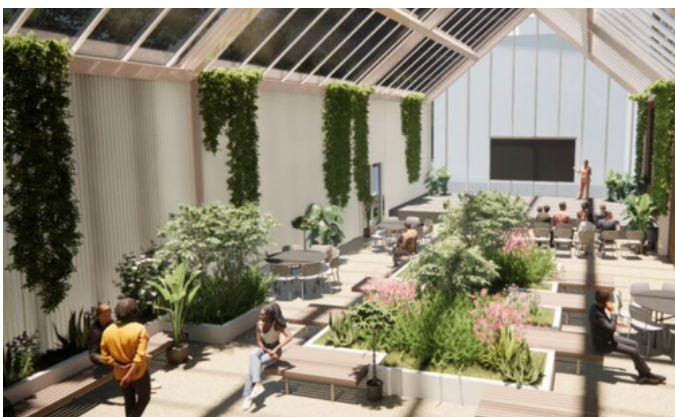
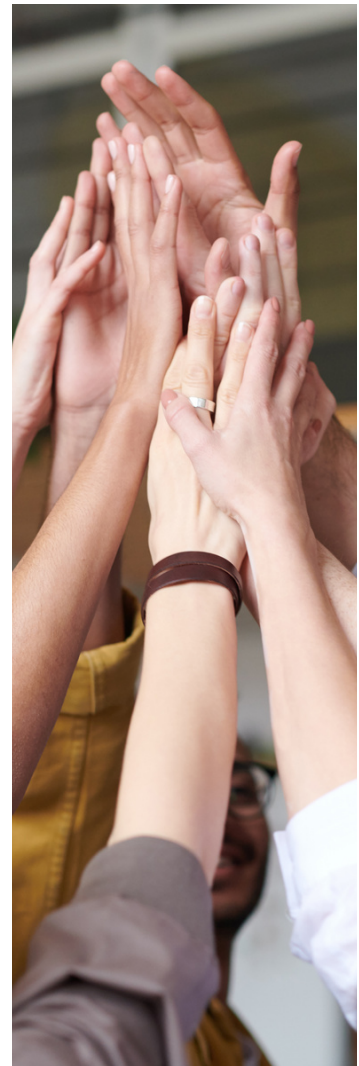


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BUILT TO LAST: How Cultuur & Campus Putselaan Can Sustain Its Inclusive Mission

At a time when fostering community and connection is more critical than ever, initiatives like Cultuur & Campus Putselaan (C&CP) play an essential role in creating spaces that help and empower others. C&CP is already fostering creativity, education, and connection in Rotterdam-Zuid, showing how culture can build stronger, more inclusive communities. However, to continue doing this important work long into the future, we must think carefully about how to make the hub truly sustainable. Cultural hubs like C&CP often face two major challenges: ensuring that all community members feel represented and engaged, and building financial independence beyond short-term subsidies. C&CP has the opportunity to embed strong foundations by focusing on three key lenses: inclusion, participatory governance, and financial sustainability. By doing so, it can ensure that local residents are genuinely part of decision-making, that funding models support long-term growth, and that the hub remains accessible and meaningful for everyone for generations to come. This topic is theoretically grounded in creative placemaking, intersectionality, and participatory governance, showing that sustainability goes beyond funding: it requires inclusion and shared power. Socially, Cultuur & Campus Putselaan has the potential to grow into a lasting, community-led space that truly reflects and supports the diverse voices of Rotterdam-Zuid, making it all the more important to consider its long-term future. Therefore we can ask: **How can Cultuur & Campus Putselaan build long-term sustainability while remaining inclusive, community-led, and financially durable?**



To create long-term sustainability, this blog draws on four key theories: creative placemaking, intersectionality, participatory governance, and financial sustainability through social entrepreneurship.

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INCLUSION



Inclusion is essential to fostering lasting durability, as a cultural hub cannot thrive without genuine community engagement and representation. Cultuur & Campus Putselaan (C&CP) embraces creative placemaking by creating a space that fosters belonging and place-based identity (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010). However, true inclusivity requires more than surface-level representation. Drawing on intersectionality (Romero, 2022), this blog highlights how race, gender, class, and migration status shape unequal access to power, space, and resources. For C&CP to be inclusive in practice, it must not only welcome diverse groups, but also redistribute decision-making power and design programming that reflects the lived realities of Rotterdam-Zuid's communities.

OWNERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

However, without structures that guarantee shared ownership, even the best intentions risk remaining symbolic. This is where participatory governance becomes crucial (Wichowsky et al., 2023). Embedding inclusive and democratic decision-making into the hub's foundation empowers local residents to actively shape its direction. Participatory governance not only fosters equity, but also builds trust, strengthens community engagement, and secures the cultural hub's long-term roots.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY



Finally, a fundamental tension lies at the core of C&CP's mission: how can a space committed to accessibility and inclusion sustain itself financially without compromising its values? Designed to serve diverse and often under-resourced communities, C&CP aims to offer cultural and educational programming at little or no cost, but without stable funding structures, such ambitions risk becoming unsustainable. As Boschee (2006) argues, financial resilience increasingly depends on adopting entrepreneurial strategies aligned with an organisation's mission. For C&CP, this could involve income-generating activities that reinforce, rather than undermine, its core purpose. Building such a funding model would protect the hub's independence and ensure it remains a long-term resource for the community.

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COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY

A relevant comparative case is Bridgend Farmhouse in Edinburgh, a community-owned centre dedicated to promoting health, wellbeing, and environmental awareness among local residents. Bridgend Farmhouse operates from a renovated farmhouse, offering inclusive spaces for learning, working, and strengthening community ties. Their approach highlights how sustained community ownership and mission-aligned activities can ensure both resilience and deep social impact. To secure financial sustainability, Bridgend Farmhouse diversified its revenue streams while staying true to its mission. It introduced a sliding-scale model for workshops (where people pay what they can), introduced revenue-generating services such as a community café, and hosted external events that generated modest but reliable income. By keeping commercial activities mission-aligned, it avoided the common trap of "selling out" while still reducing dependency on unstable grant funding. Moreover, activities like the Bike Hub, providing free or low-cost bikes to locals, demonstrate how practical services can foster a circular economy while reinforcing community trust and involvement. Importantly, all projects were developed based on community interests and needs, ensuring that participation remained authentic and wide-reaching (Bridgend Farmhouse, 2023).

In contrast, Cultuur & Campus Putselaan, while still in its early stages, aims to serve as a creative, educational, and inclusive space for Rotterdam-Zuid. Rooted in the values of accessibility, collaboration, and community engagement, C&CP seeks to bring together cultural institutions, local organisations, and residents in a shared space that prioritises public value over commercial gain. The hub's initial emphasis on co-creation, participatory design processes, and partnerships with local schools and universities reflects the ideals of creative placemaking, aiming to foster a sense of belonging within the neighbourhood. While both cases share a strong commitment to community and social impact, Cultuur & Campus Putselaan can draw valuable inspiration from Bridgend Farmhouse, which has successfully established itself as a self-sustaining organisation over the past eight years. Bridgend's financial model enables it to remain authentic to its mission, fostering inclusivity and community empowerment, while maintaining financial independence. Similarly, C&CP has the opportunity to build on these principles by strengthening its commitment to participatory governance and developing mission-aligned, income-generating activities. In doing so, it can work toward long-term sustainability without compromising accessibility, ensuring it remains a meaningful and empowering space for all residents of Rotterdam-Zuid.

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Cultuur & Campus Putselaan stands at a unique crossroads: it is not only a physical space, but also a symbolic one, representing new possibilities for inclusive, community-led, and sustainable cultural development in Rotterdam-Zuid. As this blog has explored, Cultuur&Campus has a lot of potential, but achieving long-term success requires more than offering accessible programming. It involves embedding inclusive values into the hub's governance structures, aligning financial models with its social mission, and continuously responding to the lived realities of the community it serves.

Inclusive and open cultural organisations can create deep social value, empowering underrepresented voices, fostering belonging, and building local pride. However, they also face critical challenges, with the threat of financial instability or in contrast the risk of superficial engagement and the difficulty of balancing openness with a structured organisation and governance. Without intentional strategies, well-meaning initiatives may unintentionally reproduce the very exclusions they aim to challenge.

To avoid this, C&CP must continue to move beyond symbolic gestures of inclusion and instead institutionalise equity and sustainability across all levels of its development. Here are three concrete recommendations to support this goal:



1. Create a Community Advisory Board

Involve local residents, youth, and grassroots organisations in programming, funding decisions, and hiring. This ensures that governance reflects the community's needs. Such a board should meet regularly, hold decision-making power, and reflect local diversity.

2. Develop Mission-Aligned Income Streams

Host paid creative workshops, rent event spaces to aligned groups, or launch a small-scale café or bike hub. Keep access affordable while reducing reliance on unstable subsidies.

Revenue models should prioritise social value while helping secure long-term financial independence.

3. Implement a Pay-What-You-Can Model

For cultural events or training, allowing flexibility while still generating income. This maintains inclusivity and allows participants to contribute within their means.

This approach supports accessibility while encouraging a culture of collective responsibility.



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