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### **Give space for diversity: how organisations foster inclusive cultural education?**

Rotterdam is one of the most culturally diverse cities in the Netherlands. By 2009, almost 50% of the residents were from an immigrant background (International Cities Program, n.d.). This raises the question, how are these cultures integrated in the city development, what challenges do they face, and are there equal opportunities? Involvement in education is undoubtedly one of the main indicators of inclusive participation. How can we ensure that people from all backgrounds participate in education? We can safely say that there are institutions, who make steps in this direction, like Cultuur&Campus Putselaan. This project is intended to provide inclusive cultural education, making positive change for the Feijenoord neighbourhood. Here the key concept of inclusive cultural education arises, What exactly is inclusive cultural education? How does it change the urban environment? How does Cultuur&Campus Putselaan provide inclusive cultural education? Of course, there are challenges facing this broad concept and its implementation needs to be critically evaluated.

To understand the term *inclusive cultural education*, breaking down the core concepts is important, inclusivity and cultural education. *Inclusivity* in regards to education is the practice of establishing equal educational opportunities and the best possible environment for students of all backgrounds. This means that institutions need to understand the cultural context, as well as the needs and opportunities of each student (Berlach & Chambers, 2009). However, inclusivity does not stand on its own, diversity takes many shapes and forms, and without understanding the principle of intersectionality, inclusivity is useless. *Intersectionality* refers to the multiple levels of inequality, it's not only gender or skin colour, it might also be socio-economic class, disability, and so on. This is a critical concept in understanding the complexity of inequality (Romero, 2023). In education, this suggests understanding the identity of each student as a multitude of factors, which might hinder their experience and educational opportunities. We can see art education as not just practical skills, but as a wider concept, art education as a means of self-expression and inclusion. Thus, here the term cultural education is used as it represents the broader aspect of this practice. Studies have shown that

cultural education is indeed inclusive. Students see it as an enjoyable activity, elevating their feeling of belonging and promoting their self-expression. Educational staff also see great opportunities in cultural education for promoting an inclusive environment. Of course, challenges exist, like the lack of financial support for inclusive cultural education or institutional barriers, which prevent those activities from happening (Gigerl et al., 2022). Thus, we can conclude that cultural education is an important tool for a more inclusive environment, which brings people with varying opportunities and backgrounds together.

How is inclusive cultural education implemented? What are some good examples of this practice? Of course, there are many all over the planet and Cultuur&Campus Putselaan is one of them, but other cases are also exemplary, such as the Free Dance School of Maré. There are many things that can be learned from this case and further compared with the practices of Cultuur&Campus Putselaan. The Brazilian project Free Dance School of Maré is an organisation, which provides dance education and community participation for the people of Rio de Janeiro. It targets specifically the marginalised community of favelas, which are the poorest neighbourhoods in the city. There people of predominantly African and indigenous origin live, people systematically oppressed by the state. The school mainly focuses on dance education, seen as a form of self-expression, but also a practice that challenges the dominant discourses of society. Additionally, the organization focuses more widely in educating people on how to express their voice and help build a strong community in this marginalised area of the city. The school provides both classes for participants without professional aspirations to dance and classes for professional training. A study regarding this organisation found that people view dance as a form of celebrating their identity. In addition to this, people reported that they realized what their rights were, how they can express their opinion, how they can challenge the dominant discourses, how they can foster a better future and defend their identity (Moayerian et al., 2023). This example illustrates how arts and cultural education can change the urban environment and create new opportunities for marginalised communities. Art does not stand on its own; it can be a powerful tool in social sustainability and inclusivity. The Free Dance School of Maré is a perfect example of a culturally diverse organisation, which helps the local community and tries to reimagine the institutional framework of a dominant society. The context of Cultuur&Campus Putselaan is completely different, the opportunities for people in Rotterdam and Rio de Janeiro are not the same, however some parallels still exist, from which we can learn and explore new ideas. The program “Making and presenting art” which brings together students, local artists and collectives is a good example of artistic education, which tries to target a large and diverse audience, while

simultaneously catering to the local needs. Or the imitative “Construction site visit” which tries to integrate local residents in the renovation plans of the organisation(Cultuur&Campus Putselaan, n.d.). Those are just a few of the Cultuur&Campus Putselaan program opportunities, which try to foster a more cohesive and inclusive cultural environment in the Feijenoord. Both organisations show us that inclusive cultural education is possible. Even in completely different contexts, the organisations manage to create a more inclusive and socially equitable environment, which enhances the experience of local residents and helps them in their struggles.



*From the construction site of the Cultuur&Campus Putselaan, where different events will take place*

Creating a truly diverse and inclusive environment for cultural education is difficult. Those organisations who try might face unfavourable conditions, like lack of financial support or absence of institutional aid, especially if the political situation is adverse. Preserving the agency of the people is a challenge as well. Sometimes with a greater expansion, institutions become clumsy and community participation dwindles. That is why it is important for Cultuur&Campus Putselaan to know what people from the community want, what changes they demand and how they can be included in the process. This could be done in many ways, like surveying people and making interviews with locals. The above mentioned programs, like the “Construction site visit”, are a good example of community participation.

Cultuur&Campus Putselaan is on the right track and its community participation emphasis should not be forgotten. Furthermore, Cultuur&Campus Putselaan should consider expanding their marketing efforts so they can bring more participants and popularise their cause. This can be done through social media or even with more traditional methods like leaflets or word of mouth advertising. Those marketing efforts will bring a more diverse audience of participants and enlarge the community, providing Cultuur&Campus Putselaan with new ideas and opportunities. Finally, Cultuur&Campus Putselaan might search for more diverse streams of income, especially when government support is not substantial. Searching for private donors or crowdfunding are some good practices, which will ensure diversified

revenue and the possibility of the organisation to continue with its operation. Thus, Cultuur&Campus Putselaan will guarantee that it = pursue its inclusive and sustainable practice for a better future of the neighbourhood.

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