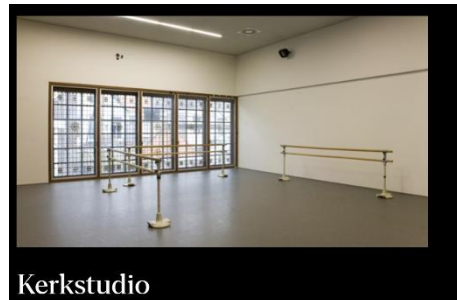


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Blogpost

Sustaining the past, Inviting the future

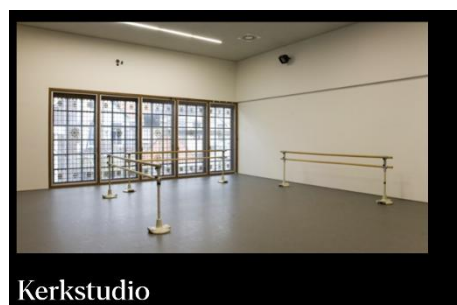
How can the Cultuur&Campus Putselaan hub be inclusive and sustainable?

The Cultuur&Campus Putselaan initiative which aims to be an educational and cultural hub, is situated in a building at Putselaan 178, in Rotterdam-Zuid, which is registered as a monument. It is a former school building, and also a former home to the anti- squatting community (and some animals) who lived in it after the institution closed its doors. Due to its monument status multiple features can not be changed during the renovation which goes hand in hand with the sentimental heritage that these walls carry. How can a building's core essence with such different functions be sustained while still giving space for new beginnings, new purposes?



Kerkstudio

The Korzo Theater in Den Haag is also situated in a building with an interesting history as it is a combination of a cinema building, a church and a residential building. In transition, it was also squatted. They have exhibitions from time to time where they show how it used to be a cinema and there is one studio space, where they kept the original windows from the church – it is called the Kerk Studio. How both buildings were first used to attract audiences, and how squatting had a role in keeping these places alive, leads us to analyse their practices of preserving their history while giving the buildings new purpose?



Kerkstudio

Korzo, n.d.,
Kerkstudio, Korzo. <https://korzo.nl/nl/verhuur/zaalhuur-korzo/>

The importance of highlighting the practices of the two cultural places in general lies in the increasing societal relevance of how to ensure inclusion and sustainability. By presenting actions that not only enriching theory, it can also spark some new ideas, such as how the comparisons emphasise how these organisations can learn from each other. By repurposing old buildings, the environmental impact is less, however I would like to delve into the social sustainability perspective. According to Vallance et al. (2011) it has three components: development: aiming for social equity, bridging: for meeting other, sustainability: goals, and

maintenance, which refer to what should be preserved in social terms. The issues stemming from the balance between development and maintenance will be discussed. Kagan (2023) emphasises that sustainable urban development goes beyond environmental attributes by highlighting that urban development has social and cultural dimensions as well since attention to cultural memory and social equity that leads to historical continuity and community participation is essential (Kagan, 2023), since buildings are much more than structures, they have symbolic meanings too, which are shaped by collective use (Feinberg et al., 2021).

During all the functions the buildings of C&CP and Korzo maintained, the buildings were not in private hands, carrying the attributes of public-owned spaces, meaning they are spaces and resources designated for the usage and benefit of residents of the local area. Thus stimulating co-usage and co-creation of the space (Feinberg et al., 2021). It is interesting to think that these spaces have the urban common attributes, but how can the projects give room for it as well. The Cultuur and Campus Putselaan building is owned by the municipality of Rotterdam, which represents the citizens, but it is also an authority, and the project is founded by the European Union that has constraints, requirements. To ensure that the initiative can be co-governed, co-created it needs to implement bottom-up practices.

Arts and culture, not only because both of the projects are build around them, but also because of the general ability to convey values, can be used to reimagine places through creative placemaking (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010), or through placekeeping, which instead of reimagining a place, prioritises preserving its original essence (Redaelli, 2018). Arts and culture as a tool always bring the question, whose culture are we talking about? In the case of Korzo, the squatting community invited local artists and that is how it grew into a theatre (Korzo, n.d.). Now still supporting emerging, local artists, but they are also involved in the international cultural field, which is far from the grass-root initiative as it started (Korzo, n.d.). With the C&CP being planned by the universities of Rotterdam and the municipality, even though involving the Afrikaanderwijk Cooperatie, which is a local, bottom-up organisation, it is still imposed in some senses on the locals. As Korzo grew bigger, and as the C&CP aims to reach a broader audience, we can suppose that if an organisation aims to ensure inclusivity, and cater to a diverse audience, some institutional “power” is needed, mostly in the organisational, strategical senses, but it is interesting to think about how else it could be achieved. One way Korzo still tries to stimulate co-creation is that the programming team is not the only one who plans events, but they have evenings, when artists that they work with can organize to invite who they prefer to showcase. As the C&CP tries to ensure accessibility and inclusivity by, for instance, having masterclasses on the rooftop of the Recycling Station, it could also stimulate a learning exchange involving local residents, so as not only offering them the opportunity to be taught. For example, with the repair cafe, ensuring that a local crafts people can help to lead the collective reparation of bikes. By aiming to give space for informal knowledge exchange, this might already bring the project closer to unearthing the value of local knowledge but also teaching prospective learners something new.

What the C&CP might learn from Korzo is not to forget the building's history because it is part of the neighbourhood. For instance one idea would be to curate an exhibition about



what it means to the community, thus showing that the new project doesn't simply aim to keep the walls because it's an order from the municipality, but because their historical value is recognised. To bridge the gap between the project and the locals, collective programming could also be used as a tool, ensuring that people would feel that the space is co-used and co-created, for instance having

Thursday afternoons for events planned by the locals. Collaboration on an organisational level in the city the project is embedded in, is present from the beginning at the C&CP, but it could be extended, for example as happens with the Cultuurhuis Feyenord, which is also a local cultural hub.



By paying attention to preserving the stories of the building, it can open new doors to connect to the locals, however the project should also ensure some room for flexibility, innovation, but not in an imposing, placetaking way. Especially in the South of Rotterdam gentrification is present, finding the ideal practices on the scale of placekeeping – placemaking – placetaking is challenging. The same can be said about finding an ideal way to preserve history, that not only retells to those who have experienced it, but also it in an inclusive way, preserves the art which can be used as a tool when language might be a barrier.



building holds.

Also it's important let the local voices to be heard, and to not only rely on how the project perceives stories received from indirectly from third parties. In achieving its sustainability goals, by not building a new building but acknowledging new possibilities for an existing one, this is a good start. However, it is important to carefully consider the ways in which the renovation takes place, considering and protecting the cultural significance the



The photo credits are for Laura Vogel.

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