

ICLife: Tools for inclusion

How to make life on a campus for higher education more inclusive.

Toolkit Art & Participation



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What's in a name?

Participatory art practices are an accessible method for combating exclusion and improving well-being through art, in the broad sense of the word. This toolkit describes how you can make theatre with people in vulnerable positions. The first step is to recruit a group of people in vulnerable positions who are interested in making theatre. An artist will be recruited to guide the project in the right direction. Together with the artist, the participants will investigate how they can represent their 'lived stories' in an artistic form. Social work students will also be involved in the project. Once a week a rehearsal is planned on campus, during 12 consecutive weeks. The rehearsals will lead to a sort of theatre show which is also considered the final product. In this way, the artistic product can be shared with a wide audience. With the creation of this joint artistic product, the participants, the artist and the social work students together can touch others and stimulate public opinion to reflect on prejudice and exclusion. Through the spectators who come to the show, society is challenged to give new meanings to people in vulnerable situations.



Rehearsal and practice sessions are inclusive, which means that it is open to all participants who are interested in a particular art form, be it refugees, people living in poverty, those affected by mental illness and so on. The sessions take place on campus; in this way participants can participate in campus life; at the heart of the university college, eating together in the cafeteria, getting acquainted with staff, ... This tool minimally aims at making the campus inclusive, but could possibly be extended to other activities, such as participating in philosophical sessions in the regular circuit. This project is an optional course in the curriculum of the students.

Participants

The target group of this tool are people in socially vulnerable situations.

- people with a mental or physical disability
- refugees
- people with psychological vulnerability
- people in poverty
- non-native speakers
- elderly people with dementia problems

What's needed?

A steering group

Welfare workers

Welfare workers can join from different welfare organisations. In order to achieve this, a list is drawn up of various local welfare organisations from which workers and participants (typically their clients) can join.

Tasks: The welfare worker is the leader of the participants and the point of contact for students.

A sociocultural 'mediator'

Task: The sociocultural mediator provides a room in the cultural centre of the city (where the final product will be staged, giving it a prominent place in the community)

Chairman.

The steering committee is chaired by a lecturer from the university of applied sciences.

Tasks of the steering group:

- making a concrete planning
- devise a concept
- define artistic work formats
- assess the students' contributions
- brief and debrief all concerned
- the preparation of the contact details with the artists

10 to 15 participants

The participants are expected to be present at every rehearsal.

3 students

Students of the Social Work programme who have registered for a typical course in "social-artistic and agogical practices" have 3 roles: they act as participant, co-counsellor and production manager. Students are expected to support the artist and social worker in the social and artistic process. They ensure that the participants feel welcome and support the project logistics.

Specific tasks for the students:

* The social work students are divided into promotion and production groups.

The promotion team is responsible for the following:

- making and printing posters and flyers
- producing and distributing press texts
- advertising via various media channels (social media, radio, television, etc.)

The production group is responsible for:

- contacts with the cultural centre (as provided by the sociocultural mediator) or with whichever place the final product is staged
- providing food (catering) before and/or after the show for the participants, artists and social workers
- making the planning for the dress rehearsal.

- making the program booklet.
- being involved on the spot in the presentation of the final product.

The production team receives a budget within which they have to organise everything.

- They are in charge of exploring the stories of the participants so that the artist can compose an artistic production out of these stories.
- Social work students organise meals on rehearsal days
- Reflection as a method to make the welfare effects visible.

Each session has a built-in reflection moment with the participants in which they become aware of their own qualities and the effects of the artistic work on themselves, others and society through self-reflection and feedback. Social Work students are instructed to reflect on their expertise and the available diversity of reflection methods (commenting on their qualities, active reviewing, musical methods, storytelling, etc.).

After the show, the students will also provide a meeting with the audience.

This is to complete the reflection and to look for the effects of social artistic work on the spectators who 'represent society'.



The artist

The artist is responsible for creating something that is presentable in the artistic space. She or he is the artistic leader and is responsible for the artistic process and final product. The artist starts from his own stories of vulnerability and initiates contact with the participants. Together with the participants, they search for the strength and humour that keeps people in vulnerable situations afloat, that makes them survive

This process takes place in 3 steps:

Step 1: Introduction to the art form (theatre, painting, graffiti, singing,).

Step 2: The participatory production starts from participants' stories and uses them to create images.

Step 3: The artist takes care of the implementation of each rehearsal. He is responsible for the presentation phase in order to work towards a final product.

Budget

COSTS

- the artist's salary for a certain amount of hours
- artist arrangements
- catering on rehearsal days
- catering on the day of the event
- purchase of materials
- PR costs
- program booklet
- promotional gifts
- possible costs of renting space at the cultural centre

REVENUE

- sponsors
- the school itself
- umbrella municipality or city council
- possible project financing
- supporting partners and sponsors

Who gets what out of it?

The participants:

The participants are artistically challenged to give new meaning to their situation of vulnerability and stigmatisation in a powerful way. Through imagination, the participants redefine their own situation and are challenged to look at themselves in a new way so that they get a grip on their own lives again and no longer have to be an 'object of concern'. Through this participatory art method, people in vulnerable situations regain control of their stories and experience and realize again that they are someone with a story that deserves to be heard. They experience the power of imagination and acquire a public stage to make their voices heard. Because the artistic trajectory is conceived as inclusive across the board (students of Social Work participate and create), people in vulnerable positions experience that they are

unique like everyone else and are able and entitled to participate fully in society.

Because the participants discover new artistic qualities and can taste the joy of artistic freedom, people who are often approached in their vulnerability become stronger. They enjoy being able to see themselves in a different way and to have surpassed themselves in the artistic process. People become stronger and grow in self-confidence. Not only do they strengthen themselves in the artistic process, but also each other, the artist and the social work students. We work towards ensuring that every participant who shows himself to be artistic can be proud of her- or himself and receive recognition in their artistic growth. In a participative process, they create an artistic product in which they can shine and discover and develop the artist within themselves.

The students Social Work:

- learn to make authentic and functional contacts, taking into account the specific context and cultural differences.
- stimulate and support stakeholders in addressing needs and developing talents.
- systematically and purposefully support and guide people, groups and organisations in processes of change.
- actively engage with vulnerable groups in society and apply principles of empowerment, emancipation and appreciative research.
- critically examine social development in society and can use this as a basis for taking steps to bring about change together with interested parties.
- reflect critically on their own experiences/actions and arrive at clear learning objectives, tested against new insights and developments in the profession.

The artist:

Artists in vulnerable situations also experience that they can exercise their own strength, that they are given opportunities to do what is right and necessary for society: to touch an audience with images and artistic forms that hold up a mirror to that same society and make it move again.