



WIJK UNIVERSITEIT

ENGAGED LEARNING IN THE COMMUNITY UNIVERSITY



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Engaged Learning in the Community University

THE POWER OF RADICAL PEDAGOGIES

This workshop brings together educators, students, and community actors to collaboratively explore radical pedagogies for the future university. The core theme focuses on how higher education can transform itself to become more engaged with local communities, particularly through the emerging concept of the wijkuniversiteit in Delft West. This 1.5-day workshop challenges participants to rethink the roles of educators and learners, create community-centered pop-up learning hubs, and explore how the university can respond to real-world challenges in a collaborative and experimental manner.

Radical education thrives in communal acts of engagement

Universities are increasingly called upon to respond to complex societal challenges, including social inequality, ecological crises, and the widening gap between academia and local communities. The concept of the *wijkuniversiteit* (neighborhood university), aims to bring the university into the heart of the city. But how can we ensure that this model genuinely serves the needs of the community **while fostering transformative learning for both educators and learners**? This workshop will build on the outcomes of the previous SARPe workshops in Istanbul and Delft. In Istanbul the *Stories of Situated Pedagogies in Architecture and ...* workshop invited educators and learners to critically reflect on their experiences

with situated pedagogies, emphasising their transformative potential in architecture and related fields. Rooted in Donna Haraway's concept of situated knowledges, it challenged static educator-learner roles, advocating for relational, context-specific approaches to knowledge production.

In Delft, the focus was on exploring how knowledge is co-produced through interaction with specific socio-spatial contexts. We discussed how academic hierarchies and rigid institutional structures can be dismantled. The outcomes discussed inclusivity, empathy, discomfort, failure acceptance, and the long-term commitment needed for meaningful community engagement.

Programme



PROGRAMME

After the introductions on thursday the participants will go on a walking dialogue, exploring Delft West using walking as a tool for learning. Led by community actors, the walke invites educators to step into the role of learners, engaging with local perspectives, challenges, and insights. Through these situated encounters, the neighborhood itself becomes a classroom, fostering critical reflection on how knowledge is co-produced in everyday spaces.

Building on these insights, the next day, participants will design and implement pop-up learning stations—temporary, mobile education spaces that bring learning directly into the community. To facilitate this, materials will be provided to construct models of the learning stations, allowing participants to experiment with different spatial setups that encourage interaction and exchange. Additionally, a soft map of the neighbourhood will be available, serving as both a navigation tool and a canvas for visual representations of the discussions. A third part of the workshop is recording

conversations throughout the design and making process. These recordings will be transformed into collective manifestos using generative AI, capturing the diverse ideas, debates, and visions that emerge during the sessions. This manifesto will serve as a reflection of the discussions and be used by the Wijkuniversiteit organisers to further develop local initiatives and rethink approaches to community engagement.

In the final session, the fishbowl discussion will offer an opportunity to collectively reflect on the outcomes of the workshop. By revisiting the manifestos and learning experiences, participants will consider how these radical pedagogies can be expanded, refined, and embedded in future educational and community-led initiatives.

This programme is an invitation to rethink the role of education, co-produce knowledge with communities, and experiment with alternative learning models that challenge and expand the conventional university framework.

PROGRAMME

Day 1 (Half Day)		
13:00– 13:30	Arrival & Registration	Arrival and check-in. Coffee and tea
13:30– 13:45	Welcome & Workshop Introduction	Brief introduction to the workshop goals and overview of TU Delft's wijkuniversiteit initiative. Explanation of how this workshop aims to build upon challenges identified by both educators and community actors.
13:45– 14:15	Listening and Learning from the wijkuniversiteit	Presentation by Saskia Postema and Pieke Hoekstra
14:15– 16:15	Walking Dialogue: The City as a Classroom	Walking to and through Delft West led by community actors, who take the lead, sharing their experiences, challenges, and ideas for education. Educators take the role of learners, listening and engaging with community-led lessons. Participants engage in open dialogue during the walk, learning directly from the community actors.
16:15– 17:00	In STUNT	Getting to know stichting STUNT
17.45–	Shared Dinner	Café Labs https://cafelabs.nl

PROGRAMME

Day 2 (Full Day)		
09:00-09:15	Arrival & coffee	
09:15-09:30	Introduction to the workshop and expected products	
09:30-11:00	Pop-Up Learning Stations: Designing Mobile Education Spaces PART I	Designing temporary “pop-up” learning stations as non-traditional learning spaces around Delft West.
11:00-11:30	Coffee Break	
11:30-13:15	Pop-Up Learning Stations: Designing Mobile Education Spaces PART II	Designing temporary “pop-up” learning stations as non-traditional learning spaces around Delft West.
13:15-14:00	Lunch Break	
14:00-15:30	Sharing outcomes	Visiting and discussing ourcomes of the design exercise
15:30-16:45	Fishbowl: Narratives of Learning and Resistance	This closing session emphasizes reflection and sharing of stories about learning, moments of resistance, and evolving perspectives on education.
16:45-17:15	Closing Remarks, send a postcard & Drinks	

People teach each other, mediated by the world, ... (Freire, 1970)

The contemporary university is often critiqued for being an ivory tower—removed from the lived experiences and urgent challenges faced by local communities. Traditional models of higher education often criticised for perpetuating elitism and disengagement from real-world issues, are insufficient for addressing the complexities of contemporary society. The emergence of radical pedagogies offers a transformative approach to reimagining the university's role, emphasising community engagement, inclusivity, and social justice.

DEFINING RADICAL PEDAGOGIES

Radical pedagogy is an educational approach that challenges traditional hierarchies and power structures within

the learning environment. Rooted in critical theory, it seeks to empower learners by promoting critical thinking, collaboration, and active participation in societal transformation.

Paulo Freire's seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), is foundational to radical pedagogy. Freire criticises the "banking model" of education, where students are passive recipients of knowledge deposited by teachers. Instead, he advocates for a dialogical model where education is a practice of freedom, enabling learners to question and transform their reality through critical reflection and action (Freire, 1970).

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SITUATED KNOWLEDGE AND CRITICAL SPATIAL PRACTICES

Donna Haraway's concept of "situated knowledges" posits that all knowledge is contextual, reflecting the specific conditions and perspectives of its producers (Haraway, 1988). This challenges the notion of objective, universal knowledge, emphasising the importance of diverse perspectives and local experiences in the learning process. In the realm of architecture and urban planning, Jane Rendell introduces "critical spatial practices," which intersect spatial theory, art, and activism (Rendell, 2006). These practices encourage questioning and transforming social conditions through engagement with specific socio-spatial contexts. By integrating critical spatial practices into education, learners

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can actively participate in reshaping their environments and addressing issues like social injustice and spatial inequality.

FEMINIST PEDAGOGY AND THE CLASSROOM AS A SPACE OF POSSIBILITY

Feminist pedagogies contribute significantly to radical educational approaches by emphasising inclusivity, diversity, and the dismantling of oppressive structures within the classroom. bell hooks, in *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), describes education as ‘the practice of freedom’, advocating for an engaged pedagogy that recognises students as whole beings—intellectual, emotional, and social (hooks, 1994). She emphasises the need for educators to create learning environments that encourage critical thinking, self-actualisation, and the exploration of diverse perspectives.

Chandra Mohanty, in *Feminism Without Borders* (2003), introduces the idea of a ‘public culture of dissent’, where education becomes a space for challenging dominant ideologies and fostering solidarity across differences

(Mohanty, 2003, p. 216). This involves recognising the interconnectedness of global struggles against oppression and the role of education in promoting social justice.

REIMAGINING THE UNIVERSITY’S ROLE

The concept of the **Wijkuniversiteit** (neighbourhood university) embodies the principles of radical pedagogy by embedding the university within the heart of the community. This model challenges the traditional ‘ivory tower’ perception of academia, promoting a reciprocal relationship where knowledge flows between the university and the local community.

Engaging with local communities requires adopting pedagogical approaches that are participatory and collaborative. Freire’s notion of praxis—the synthesis of reflection and action—is crucial here (Freire, 1970, p. 51). By involving community actors (and members) as co-educators and co-researchers, universities can create educational experiences that are relevant,

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transformative, and grounded in real-world challenges.

CHALLENGES TO TRADITIONAL EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURES

Implementing radical pedagogies necessitates confronting and overcoming several entrenched structures within higher education:

1. Hierarchical power dynamics: Traditional education often reinforces power imbalances between educators and learners. Radical pedagogy seeks to flatten these hierarchies, promoting mutual learning and respect.
2. Standardised curricula: Rigid curricula can stifle creativity and critical inquiry. Embracing flexible, interdisciplinary approaches allows for incorporating diverse perspectives and real-world issues.
3. Assessment methods: Conventional assessment emphasises memorisation and conformity. Alternative evaluation methods that value critical thinking, collaboration, and practical application are more aligned with radical pedagogical goals.
4. Institutional resistance: Universities may resist changes that challenge the status quo. Advocating for institutional support

and demonstrating the value of radical pedagogies through successful initiatives is essential.

Educators are important in facilitating radical pedagogies and are encouraged to:

- Embrace vulnerability: Recognize your own positionality and biases, creating an environment of mutual learning (see e.g. hooks, 1994).
- Foster critical dialogue: Encourage open discussions that challenge dominant narratives and explore multiple perspectives (see e.g. Mohanty, 2003).
- Promote active engagement: Design learning experiences that involve collaboration, community engagement, and practical application of knowledge
- Encourage Reflective Practice: Guide students in connecting theory with personal experience and societal issues, enhancing critical consciousness (see e.g. hooks, 1994).

Radical pedagogies offer a transformative vision for higher education—one that is responsive to societal challenges and committed to social justice.

Further Reading

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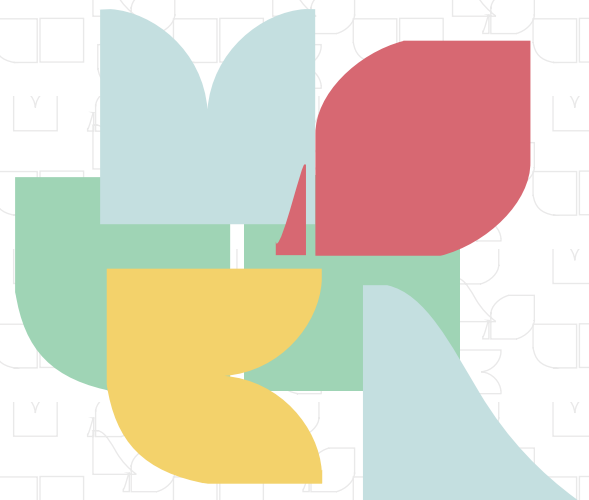
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