



## LESSON TRANSCRIPT

### *Inhabit Public Space*

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Réseau Culture 21 has been supporting local authorities and networks of professional for around ten years in providing training in cultural rights through research-action and training-action initiatives. Based on these fundamental political, philosophical and legal approaches, the challenge for us is to help stakeholders to understand and apply them in practice.

Since 2011, we have been conducting this research-action in collaboration with the Fribourg Observatory for Diversity and Cultural Rights, which we have named Paideia.

Paideia is ancient Greek for education, both formal and informal, which feed off each other. We're really trying to adopt an approach where practice and the analysis of practice will enable us to conceptualise what's going on and then return to action to observe the effectiveness of these cultural rights.

We have therefore developed multi-disciplinary research-action work involving the social and educational sectors, early childhood, youth, municipal policies, the environment, regional planning, urban development and other fields.

Through cross-disciplinary work with other fields, and particularly social action, we have identified strong links with the notions of empowerment.

These methods, these empowerment approaches, or "community-organising" as it has been called since the 1970s, tell the story of contexts that enable cultural rights to be fully expressed.

We conducted a research-action project on empowerment for several years, and the stakeholders we involved in the project frequently brought us back to the issues of public space.

In the analyses of practices we've been able to support, we've observed that the specifications and the intentions that the players set out in principle, are often extremely virtuous. But this is not always the case for the conditions under which they are implemented.

The stakeholders themselves admit that the conditions for participation, cooperation and local conditions do not allow them to make these cultural rights as effective as they would like. The question is whether they want to be aware of it or not, whether

they recognise it or not. However, in any case, what we're trying to support is the implementation, and above all, continuous improvement.

Cultural rights are fundamental rights in general. They're an end, but also a means to an end. Obviously, the future goal is hard to achieve, very ambitious and utopian, we are sometimes told. But in any case, observing their effectiveness means getting down to work in an extremely concrete way on a whole host of issues, details, and potential actions to improve the conditions under which these rights are exercised for the people concerned, at every moment, in every action.

In public space, where many of these interaction issues

between stakeholders and pitfalls are played out, the problems related to exercising these rights can be observed in a way that is particularly instructive. Our analysis of the various fields we've worked in has shown us that regardless of the type of stakeholder involved (local authorities, artists, promoters, prevention players in general), the issues are in fact the same. These are problems that prevent everyone from having their rightful place to enjoy public spaces.

Through this research-action work, we have identified seven specific issues, which we will cover in this MOOC by unfolding what they tell us. We talk as much about borders, governance, cohabitation, power relations, conflicts of use and the many issues we encounter when working in public space.

We need to be aware that these issues are shared by many different stakeholders. And whatever our status, we all face restrictions and limitations on participation in public space. All this means that, whatever our profession, we all have a responsibility to try to ensure that rights can be truly exercised.

It's the responsibility of artists, the responsibility of promoters, the responsibility of public authorities, but also the responsibility of each and every one of us.



The aim of this MOOC is to share the challenges of public space in order to better act in a democratic space. Inhabiting public space requires a form of democratic maturity, which we might say is the goal of our action in public space.

That's what I want to contribute to. That's what we'd like to believe, and it's absolutely essential to become aware of all the obstacles to democratic expression at work, so that we can live together as a society.

As we will see from all the testimonies, regulations are often about neutralising these spaces by restricting access to them, which would perhaps guarantee a form of peace.

However, in the process, this peace becomes so restrictive that it is no longer in a public space, and public space can no longer even be defined as such, but rather as a confiscated space. In this training-action approach, inhabiting the public space means thinking about your place in an ecosystem. Your place and the place of others, with shared responsibility for what happens there.

Finally, it's also about highlighting all the work that each and every one of us has to do, in cooperation with the other stakeholders.