

## **VRIJPLAATS Designing & creating educational tools as a means for learning.**

Topic: co-creative and transformative learning environments. Format: Action atelier (90 minutes)

### **What is the aim of your workshop or installation?**

VRIJPLAATS is a learning hub, a working space where students design and create educational tools together with researchers and stakeholders. These tools are not always specific products but are more possible answers to complex questions or challenges, with a link to sustainability. Therefore, there is always a collaboration with NGO's, city authorities, educational institutions, non-profit organizations, etcetera. Often challenges that are tackled, are dealing with people who are in a vulnerable situation. VRIJPLAATS is not only a place of social services (in trying to find educational answers to complex questions), but it is also a spot where researchers together with students doing practice-oriented research. Practice-oriented means working in the field/practice together with stakeholders from the field/practice. VRIJPLAATS is inspired by methods like design thinking, integrative learning, design based research, practitioner inquiry and service learning.

Students and lecturers/researchers discover and develop their skills and learn how these skills support a co-creative process. Interdisciplinary teams are formed to tackle these authentic questions that are present in practice. These skills are critical thinking, creative confidence, collaboration, and communication. Skills that enable us to deal with complex topics and challenges in this world and even more, that helps us creating and shaping the world of tomorrow.

During this session the presenter will elaborate on the collaboration between students, lecturers, researchers, and external stakeholders. Also the link with the students' curricula and learning gains for all stakeholders will be discussed. This will be made more specific by examples or challenges from both formal and informal school context, working with several ages (kids, youngsters, ...). Most examples can be organized in 4 main topics: Education for Sustainable Development, cultural education, STEM and outdoor learning.

### **What is the main didactic approach of your workshop? How will your workshop proceed?**

During this session participants will experience how VRIJPLAATS acts by walking through the process that is mostly happening while students and researchers are working together tackling a specific challenge. A Future Forward Talk will be presented that illustrates the concept of VRIJPLAATS. This record can be used in curricula of other University Colleges to reflect and find opportunities in their own institution working in the same way as VRIJPLAATS.

### **Why do you think that your workshop has potential for transformation?**

VRIJPLAATS creates a space in between in higher education and it gives opportunities outside the existing structure and curricula of these institutions. Innovation works on different levels, in the approach of student learning, in the collaboration with diverse stakeholders, and also in the organization of the learning hub. This innovation can lead step by step to the transition towards a more sustainable higher education.

**References:** <https://sites.arteveldhogeschool.be/vrijplaats/themas> (Topics and examples of research project with lots of references)