

THE SCHOOL OF Civic Creativity

Collaboration is hard. It is time-consuming, often frustrating, and it requires skills we are rarely taught in school or encouraged to develop at work. So if collaboration is increasingly part of our problem-solving process, how can we formalize opportunities to learn the skills that make us better participants?

Imagine a space that allowed you to take stock of the resources already available to you, that encouraged you to take action by developing new competencies, and that positioned itself as a hub for your ideas to take root and lead to long-lasting change.

A cross between a folk school and a design lab, The School of Civic Creativity is a proposal to extend creative thinking skills to a broader base – regardless of age, background, or training. The term 'school' is not used to convey images of rigid schedules or authoritative teaching, but rather to capture the very enthusiasm and joy that characterize processes of life-long discovery and learning.

The School of Civic Creativity can be a permanent 'open learning' space funded by municipalities, an entirely self-directed community effort, or a joint collaboration between the two. The guidelines below are only the beginning – feel free to adapt or adopt them according to your needs.

Take Stock



LEARN The ability to cooperate effectively requires a high degree of emotional intelligence and empathy. Learn about non-violent communication, conflict resolution, and facilitation – these skills will enable you to be a better listener, a more patient collaborator, and a resource to those around you.

LEAD Join or create a reading group to better understand the issues that are important to you (some examples: urban theory, municipal governance, ethical finance.) Invite guests to share their expertise through Trade School-like events, or support the learning experience with the guidance of resources like Open Culture and Academic Earth.

LAUNCH Join forces with local universities and think-tanks to design participatory research frameworks to document challenges and opportunities in your area, map existing grant and partnership possibilities, and develop a place-based action plan in support of your goals.

Take Action



TRANSLATE The ability to create a shared language is essential to foster mutual understanding and bridge inter-sectoral gaps. Organize events like a National Day of Civic Hacking or 'unconferences' to translate complex information into new services, or develop interactive resources to make research and policy findings accessible to all, non-experts included.

TRAIN Share your skills with others – teach or join low-cost community courses that transfer creative skills to others in the community. Particularly relevant are digital literacy skills like social media networking and web development, design thinking and intercultural dialogue, as well as project management, campaigning, and community organizing.

TRANSFORM Unleash the power of local culture by transforming everyday spaces into hubs of creative re-invention – turn libraries into maker labs, organize idea festivals, launch innovator in residence programs, or design interactive public art projects to encourage (in)formal learning and community exchange.

Take Root



CHAMPION Promoting civic creativity requires champions who understand its potential and work to create the conditions for it to thrive. Explore a co-production agenda and educate about city systems to design 'enabling' frameworks that support community pioneers and embed creative capacity-building into the decision-making process.

CO-PRODUCE Work with municipal representatives to curate a repository of best practices for shared learning, and investigate new funding mechanisms that better reflect community values and impact. Consider a 'project twinning' program to link different groups working to advance the same goals, or open up the problem-solving process by launching (inter)national design competitions.

CONNECT For collaborative initiatives to take root, resources like the School of Civic Creativity require accessible, permanent space and dedicated programming. Make it fun! Think of these spaces as diverse, multi-purpose centres that double as 'social cafés', 'creativity labs', and as anchor points for inter-generational and inter-sectoral mentoring.

To get you started:

Enabling City Volume 1 – Participation chapter
www.enablingcity.com/read

Social and Emotional Learning Across the Globe
casei.org/policyadvocacy/selacrosstheglobe

Policies for Shareable Cities: A Sharing Economy Policy Primer for Urban Leaders
bit.ly/1ctn1DG

IDEO Human Centered Design toolkit
bit.ly/19g5s0C

Art of Hosting
www.artofhosting.org/resources/reading-list

Story-based Strategy Charts
bit.ly/18NP6kV

Effective Groups video series
bit.ly/19yxM0b

...and reading list:
bit.ly/GM25KY

Service Design Repository
desis.parsons.edu/repository

Service Design Toolkit
www.servicedesigntoolkit.org/templates

Collective Action Toolkit
www.frogdesign.com/collective-action-toolkit

Common Cause Report
bit.ly/1goKs0C

Conflict Resolution Network
www.crnhq.org/pages.php?plD=7

Community Economies Collective
www.communityeconomies.org/Home

Social Business Model Canvas
bit.ly/17IIV5w