
Methods #1: Introduction

There are a thousands of ways to explain and transmit how creative activism operates, lives and breathes. It border the domains of art and activism, is highly contextual and have innovative and sharable properties. Here you find some examples of how you can introduce and explain the concept for different audiences.



1. Introducing creative activism

Depending on the target group and setting of the workshop, we experimented with different ways to introduce people to creative activism: for a group of curious people we used a basic communication model and invited speakers which are active in the field, for people who were already familiar with the concept, we provided best practice examples of creative activism and information about creative methods used in the history of activism. The choice of approach depends on the knowledge base of the group, and the time and resources available.

From our experience, the most important when introducing the concept, was to find common ground. To share the properties of creative activism and its impact in society within the group or audience. To make this happen, we used collaborative and participative processes, some examples you find in the methods listed in this section.

Visuals by:

gerbengrotenhuis.com

Collective definition of creative activism

Time:

30 mins

Target group:

Any

Group size:

Any

Material:

Paper, large papers and color pens

This method gives space for sharing individual preconceptions about the concept of creative activism and create a shared framework.

Divide the people in two groups. If you have many participants, it is good to make 4 or 6 groups, with maximum 5 people per group. One group will find keywords around Creativity, defining the term. The other group will find keywords which for them define Activism. After 15 min the groups merge and present to each other briefly their definition. Using big paper and color pens, link both concepts together, discuss if the keywords from the separate concepts still works together or new keywords appears.

Tip:

If you use this activity as a starter in a session, you can hang the resulting poster in the working space and come back to it just before the end of the session. Give the opportunity to the participants to redefine their definition and add, change or delete keywords or links if appropriate.

Explaining creative activism using communication theory

Time:

>30 min

Target group:

Any

Group size:

Any

Material:

A board or a large paper and markers.

This method provides a framework of factors involved in the process of implementing creative actions.

Shannon-Weavers basic model of human communication identifies different factors involved in a communication process. These factors are a *sender* who wants to send a message to a *receiver* or *receptor*. The message is transmitted using a specific *code* and through a concrete *channel*.

If we are looking at our actions as a communication process, we can use some of these concepts to present creative activism and reflect on the process behind creating an action.

As an individual or a group we want to send a message to a *receptor*. The receptor will be our target group (women, old people, young people, unemployed, pedestrians, etc...). The message will be transmitted using a *code*, in our case the code will be the technique used (urban intervention, guerrilla, craftivism, culture jamming) and through a concrete *channel*, in our case this will be the location where we will place the action (the supermarket, school, forest, inside a train, mailboxes, etc...).

After presenting this basic model it is possible to analyze each factor in detail, if it is needed. It is also interesting to analyze the relations between the different factors involved and how they influence each other.

An example: *If we want to spread the message "less consumption" it will have different effect if we spread this message in a shopping mall or in a small shop*

in a rural village. The message about consumption will be different if we want to target children, elderly people or activists. The technique used to get this message across will influence the location of the action and to who will be the receiver etc...

Tip:

Really experienced participants may find this exercise a bit basic. This model can be used as scheme to help participants in the process of creating a concrete action. It can also be used when a group have experienced a concrete action, to analyze the different factors involved and to evaluate results and future improvements.

Hidden quotes of creative activism

Time:

30 mins

Target group:

Beginner

Group size:

Any

Material:

Papers with quotes, tape.

This method aims to reflect about creative activism in the society, and break the prejudices and presumptions about the concept using quotes. In the description you find some examples of quotes you can use, but the best is, if you can adapt the quotes to your group and their context.

Before the group arrives, hide the quotes in different places of the room. When they come are in the room ask them to look for the quotes. Ask them to keep in mind, that some of the quotes are related with creative activism and some of them are not. Tell them that there is only three quotes related with creative activism, and ask them to select which ones. Give the group some time and space to discuss if the quotes they find are related or not, and when they agree that they have three notes, ask them to share which quotes they selected.

Analyze the three quotes with the group and create a common definition of creative activism. For example, *if you have "Be the change you wish to see in the world" by Gandhi ask "What does it means to BE the change?" "How can you be the change and encourage others to be this change?" "What kind of changes do we need in ourselves and in the society?"*

Some quotes will more likely be in the selection than others, not only because of their content, but also because of their author. Probably the group will agree that there are more than three quotes related to creative activism, but some are more related than others, and some have not relation at all.

For example, they might agree that "You teach a child to read, and he or she will

be able to pass a literacy test" by George W. Bush is not related at all, and that who wrote it has a big impact on this decision. In this moment you can facilitate the discussion, explaining that the quote, which all of them agree as non related, actually could be related. In the example, Bush, is speaking about critical thinking and the educational system. This could be an example to explain, how we need to teach children not only to read, but also to understand what they are reading. If this way of interpreting the quote would be correct, the quite will be related. Discussing how you could relate everything with creative activism will break the thinking patterns around the topic.

From this point you can explore the ideas they had before about creative activism with questions like: *"Did your understanding about creative activism change? How?"* *"Which one of the quotes reflects creative activism best?"*

Quotes

"Be the change you wish to see in the world" - Mahatma Gandhi

"If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude" - Maya Angelou

"Creativity takes courage" - Henri Matisse

"You can never solve a problem on the level on which it was created." - Albert Einstein

"There is no time for cut-and-dried monotony. There is time for work. And time for love. That leaves no other time." - Coco Chanel

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." - Anne Frank

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." - Margaret Mead

"If everyone demanded peace instead of another television set, then there'd be peace." - John Lennon

"You teach a child to read, and he or her will be able to pass a literacy

test." - George W. Bush

Tip:

Hide the quotes well but not "too" well to avoid losing too much time.

Is this creative activism?

Time:

30 mins

Target group:

Beginner

Group size:

Any

Material:

Several photos of different actions, symbols, people e.t.c.

This is a method to create discussion about the concept of creative activism and to share ideas and opinions between participants about the topic. It is a good starter before creating a collective definition.

Prepare a lot of photos from different actions, symbols, people, etc. Before the session starts, make a two spaces on the floor or the wall, saying "This is creative activism" and "This is not creative activism". Spread all the photos around a part of the room.

Ask the participants to together decide where to place the photos and to share why they would place it there. The group will discuss about the reasons for doing so After the photos are placed in the categories, the group together think about what keywords came out of the images they choose and decide if this keywords could be used as a starting point to create a definition of creative activism.

Picturing creative activism

Time:

30 mins

Target group:

Beginner

Group size:

Any

Material:

Several photos of different actions, symbols, people, etc.

How does creative activism looks like?



Before the session, prepare at least three pictures that can be labeled as "Creative activism" "Vandalism/Indifference" and "Traditional activism/Campaigning", all reflecting the same topic. In this example we use the topic of the supermarkets expansion. You can print the pictures or project them.

Show the pictures to the participants and ask them to choose which one they would identify as "creative activism" and why. Ask them, how they will classify the other pictures and try to initiate a deeper discussion by asking questions like "How does one choose what type of action they make?" "Which one do you think is more effective?" "In which picture are you most likely to be involved?" "Have you been involved in any of this situations?" It is really interesting to provide some time for the participants to share their experiences and discuss how they felt and why they decided to take action or be passive, and how.





Tip:

Try to connect the exercise to an issue that is relevant to your participants. It could be local, but if for instance your group has been campaigning on a certain topic, listening to their experiences will make the whole exercise much more interesting.

Presenting creative activism

Time:

1 hour

Target group:

Beginner

Group size:

Any

Material:

Tape, pen, paper, actions printed on papers, a place to stick papers or present a presentation with a beamer.



Before you make a presentation, think about your audience. What do you think they know already? Estimating the knowledge of your group, can be very difficult, especially if you work with mixed groups or in an open setting like for example a festival. If you notice the group seem to need more basic knowledge, or more high level content while you present, it can be good to have thought

about how you can tweak your presentation so that it becomes more understandable, or include more of the experiences of the group.

One way to make your presentation more interesting and participatory, is to ask the people who will attend to bring an example of creative activism they found inspiring, and then integrate the input in your presentation.

You can structure best practice examples and presentation either around properties such as "surprise effect" and "humor" or according to techniques such as "invisible theatre", "flash mobs", "interventions in public space", "media tweaks", "adbusting" and "hardware hacks". If your audience has brought examples, you can sort them in this structure on a wall, or ask them to what kind of category their example would belong. Be prepared to add new categories.

Tip:

While presenting, make sure it is in a tempo which everyone can follow. If you don't have much time to spend, it is always better to choose to show less examples than to run through a presentation quickly. Make sure there is space for discussing and the group feel comfortable to ask questions during the presentation or at the end.

Sharing showcases

Time:

2 hours

Target group:

Any

Group size:

Any

Material:

Photos and videos, of different types of actions, from different collectives. A wall to use for projecting, and a beamer.

An introduction activity to get an overview of different types of existing tactics. This is useful to bring inspiration before starting to plan concrete actions.

Prepare the session by creating a personal playlist with videos you find interesting. The type of actions and videos you choose will depend on the type of group you are working with. Show the group different videos and during the process ask them questions. You can use each video to present a type of creative actions or to show a concrete collective that works in your local area. Some examples of questions could be: What type of creative action is it? Did you know about this collective? What would you think about this action if you would have seen it in real life? Do you think this type of action is suitable for your local area? What is the topic behind this action? and so on.

Tip:

If you are working with an experienced group, you can ask them to bring their own videos and photos from favorite actions, actions they might have been involved in or actions happening in their community. This will make the session more personal and will encourage people to share their experiences within the group.

Using a statement to introduce creative activism

Time:

30 mins

Target group:

Beginner

Group size:

10-20

Material:

Handouts with the statement you will use. A large paper with the statement and pens.

This method aims to reflect about creative activism using a statement as a starting point for further discussion.

Depending on the size of the group, give a copy of the statement to each participant or small group. Give them some minutes to read it. Ask the people to decide if this statement fits with their idea of creative activism. Analyze the different parts of the statement together, asking participants to express their opinion about it. For example: The first affirmation in this statement is, *"If we want to change the society we need to unleash our imaginations."* Some examples of questions you can ask to intimate reflection could be: *What do you mean with unleash our imaginations? Do you think this is necessary to create social change? Why? Does someone want to share an example of an action that unleashed their imagination? etc...*

"If we want to change the society we need to unleash our imaginations, take creative risks, and explore new forms of communicating besides the lecture and the press release. Our events or actions should feed the soul as well as the brain, and we should laugh and celebrate even as we speak the truth."

After the discussion, put the poster with the statement in a visible place in the room. Ask participants to think of the statement, using it to define creative activism. Add or delete aspects they think are missing or which are not needed in this definition. Discuss in the full group each proposal before adding it to the poster. Make sure the changes to the statement are easy to read.

Jim Hightower"

The activity finishes when the group does not want to add or change anything.

Tip:

For groups bigger than ten people we recommend to divide them in small groups and give each group one copy of the statement. In this case the first part of analysis will be done in small groups, leaving the reconstruction of the initial definition for the big group. It is also possible to use multiple statements.
