
ACTIVIST ACADEMY

PUBLIC SPACE & ACTIVISM

April 2015, Beirut, Lebanon



The Activist Academy benefits country specific strategies of PAX.

Activist hive | PAX

The Activist Academy is part of the Activist Hive, a place where activists from different contexts fly in and out; a dynamic place to exchange, share inspiration, learn, blow off steam with fellow activists, build momentum and, above all, build a movement for peaceful change. The Activist Academy is the educational pillar of the Activist Hive. During the 4-day meetings, activists join forces to interact, network and exchange best practices. It is also the moment to jointly define, improve and roll out concrete plans for direct creative action.

Co-creation | Butterfly Works

Social innovation studio Butterfly Works is involved in the Activist Academies to support the innovative, action oriented and visual work method during the Academies. Butterfly Works work method is based on the co-creation approach.

Activist Academy Public Space | NAHNOO

A free and peaceful society needs free public spaces where all people can meet, exchange, disagree, debate, and make claims. Without a free public space and without a common understanding and agreement about how to 'fill' and to use the public space there is neither freedom nor peace.

Dictators do not like free spaces, and they are right, as we have seen in Cairo and Tunis. Also in Lebanon, though technically speaking not a dictatorship, there is no free public space. Although the civil war formally ended, the root causes of the war and the sectarian tensions still live on. There is no common narrative and understanding about the war, about being Lebanese and about how to peacefully interact with each other.

NAHNOO focuses on reclaiming free public space in order to promote social cohesion and contribute to peaceful communities. The Activist Academy about Public Space and Activism is a way to strengthen the work of NAHNOO by co-creating creative actions and new plans to build a critical mass to pressure the government and mobilize people so to build an inclusive and peaceful society.



Day 1

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

- Introductions participants & organisations
- Social issue understanding: talks & brainstorm
- Social issue understanding: exploration of the social issue by means of a photo walk



OUTCOMES OF THE PHOTO WALK ON PINTEREST

Activist Academy | Public Space & Activism | Beirut

The image displays a grid of 48 Pinterest pins, each representing an outcome from a photo walk. Each pin consists of a photograph and a short text description. The photos show various urban scenes, including public spaces, buildings, and people engaged in activities. The text descriptions provide context for each image, often mentioning specific locations or events in Beirut. The pins are arranged in a grid with 4 columns and 12 rows. Each pin has a red heart icon at the bottom left, indicating it has been liked or saved.

Pin 1: **CAFÉ (in Beirut)** - A photograph of a street scene with a person walking. **1** Liked by Activist Academy.

Pin 2: **Blue Skyline** - A photograph of a blue sky with a white cloud. **1** Liked by Activist Academy.

Pin 3: **Public Space** - A photograph of a public square with a fountain. **1** Liked by Activist Academy.

Pin 4: **Public Space** - A photograph of a public square with a fountain. **1** Liked by Activist Academy.

Pin 5: **Public Space** - A photograph of a public square with a fountain. **1** Liked by Activist Academy.

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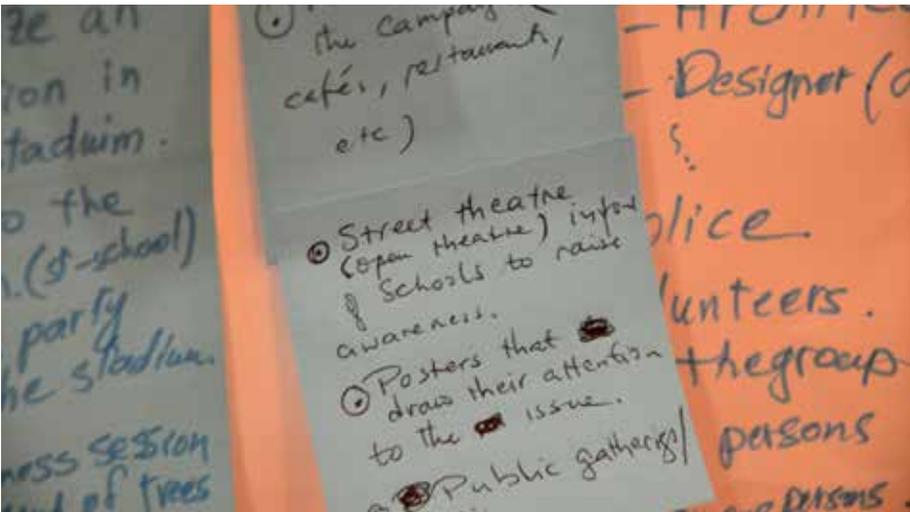
Day 2

INNOVATE: IDEA GENERATION

- Mapping of the actors & influencers
- Target group selection
- First campaign ideas

Inspiration presentations:

- By **Nathalie Fallaha**, founder of Branding and Digital Agency VIT-E. on setting up a successful campaign brand. (<http://www.vit-e.com/>)
- By **Heath Morrison**, Tech activist and founder of govright.org. on ICT & social media solutions. (<http://govright.org/>)





Day 3

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

- Campaign vision statements
- Activity selections
- Defining success factors & risks investigation
- Designing a recourse plan
- Making sessions

Inspiration presentations:

- by **Aisha Habli**, community manager at ZOOMAAL, the leading crowdfunding platform of the Arab World, on crowd funding. (www.zoomaal.org)
- by **Kassem Istanbouli**, director of Istanbouli Theatre in Tyre on creating a broad audience by means of arts: street theatre. (<https://www.facebook.com/istanbouli.teatro>)





Day 4

ACTIVIST HIVE & EXPO

- Writing down the ideal follow up scenario
- Sharing the Activist Academy's experiences & defining each other's future roles
- Expo Activist Academy Beirut



a street theatre play to involve & inform the neighbourhood



a design for public street signs directing the public to the Park

a marketing add about the issue around Horsh Beirut



neighbourhood improvement competition

OUTCOMES & FOLLOW UP

Mohammad Ayoub, activist & director NAHNOO, Lebanon

“It is an inspiring experience that took us a step forward toward the change.”



Imad, activist at Pax, Sudan

“It is a dynamic motivated working group that can visualize and realize required change. The experience is appealing to reproduce.”

Armen Papyan, activist at Peace Dialogue, Armenia

“It was very useful due to the good team work and exchange with other activists. I’ve learned a lot, especially about making campaigns and make it work properly.”

Various activists from Lebanon

“Our minds were opened for new projects”

“I like that the Activist Academy was action orientated”

“The creativity of the group was pushed under time pressure. That gave great results!”



Outcomes for the Lebanon programme

- capacity development of partner organisation & participants
- network strengthening
- network broadening
- action orientated peace activism plans



Day 30

ACTION!

- Demonstration organized by NAHNOO
- Theater play was performed and further developed
- Studies are being done in the neighbourhood of the stadium. The goal is to involve the consulted people in a neighbourhood improvement competition that was designed during the academy .



SUCCESS FACTORS

Based on the experiences of the Activist Academy in Beirut we can say that there are 8 success factors in an Activist Academy format:

- 1) The topic
- 2) The partner(s) in peace
- 3) The social issue statement
- 4) The participants; makers/artists and problem & solution owners
- 5) The workshop program
- 6) Specialisms – speakers
- 7) Expo
- 8) Visual reporting of the process

Follow up activities

PAX is supporting NAHNOO in developing the outcomes of the Activist Academy into a comprehensive plan for peace activism. NAHNOO organises regular meetings for the follow up and actively involves the Academy's participants in their peace work.

PAX continues the talks with the participants to see how their specific expertise or their organisation can support to the work of NAHNOO and if an Activist Academy could serve their peace work.

The Activist Academy turned out to be a great success with a lot of room for broader use, within the framework of different country programs. The Activist Academy can serve as a means to:

- *expand and strengthen your network with 'unusual suspects'*
- *come up with new and creative project plans*
- *build capacity of your partners*

Do you feel an Activist Academy is something for you? Do you want to spark your partner's activities?

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BUTTERFLY WORKS