

TRANSFORMCITY MODULE 2 – SUGGESTED TIMELINE ‘SPEEDY LEARNING’

Duration: 3 weeks

Time investment: 1 day per week

You are busy, but you also have a concrete urban transformation project that requires a different approach from what you are used to. Although your project already has targets and deadlines, you also need to bring in new knowledge, insights and practical tips and tools for yourself to be able to realise better results in the project. Carve out one day a week during three weeks and equip yourself while also making direct improvements to your project strategy. Learning by doing.

Week 1: Kickstarting local engagement

Morning

Content: Chapter 1 (Intro) & 2

Assignments: explore the strategic context and power of your software activities

1. Have a look at the overall transformation project you are working on. What is currently the role and the timing of software activities like community building, communication and external branding and pr? How is this organised within the complete project team: is there close collaboration or is it organised separately and/or sequentially? Can you spot aspects or moments in the overall transformation process where these software activities could be of help? How could you increase the (strategic) power of community and publicity in the project?

Content: Chapter 3

Assignments:

1. Write down your initial thoughts on interesting ingredients for a local narrative. What kind of tone and style might be involved? Are there any elephants in the room in the area that you could name (such as the notoriously dull area in Amstel III)? Are there interesting metaphors for the area or the tasks? You can use the checklist as a guide. You can use our checklist “Local Narrative” here.

2. How can you make sure each stakeholder group has an accessible entry to the larger area story based on their specific interests, concerns and experiences? How can you specify the narrative for each stakeholder group? What should you pay attention to per group in terms of tone and style but also jargon and professional maturity level? And very important: where do these stories overlap?

Afternoon

Content: Chapter 4

Assignments:

1. What ideas do you get for your own project after watching the Glamourmanifest example? Do you recognise the distinction between branding the area (to the outside world) and branding the transformation process (to the local stakeholders)? Are there some small and light-wight ideas and changes you can implement in your project(s) immediately?

Content: Chapter 5

Assignments:

1. Set up or sharpen your own community building and management approach with the help of our checklist “Community building from scratch”. Pay special attention to where you can work with existing networks and channels, both formal and informal ones.

Week 2: Growing outreach & tangible impact

Morning

Content: Chapter 6

Assignments:

1. Set up or sharpen your own local database with the help of our manual. Try to spot interesting cross-links between the interests or dependencies of different stakeholder groups as these may be interesting points to bring them together and unleash collective action and investment in your project.
2. Keep a separate list of these interesting cross-links and ideas as they can keep giving you inspiration for targeted actions and events also later in your project. This is a kind of backburner list for you that you can keep filling with ideas. It can be a simple Word document or a paper notebook that you can go back to and browse through any time.

Content: Chapter 7

Assignments:

1. Think about how you can make your transformation project visible in the area, also physically? How you create actions that hit as many birds possible with one stone, like building community, physically upgrading the area, growing support base for larger actions and positively trigger the press and external target groups while doing all this?
2. Do a quick (solo) brainstorm on interesting and low-threshold actions you can start with. How often should you be present in the area to keep the momentum among different stakeholders? This of course depends on the situation and status of the transformation in the area. Your actions should match with this and also with the project organisation you represent. You can use our checklist for creating effective guerrilla actions on site as guidance.
3. Double-check your press relations. Do they match the channels through which you can reach both your local stakeholders and your new target groups for the area? Are there important media missing and can you think of an interesting intervention that you can use to trigger and invite targeted press? How can your local narrative help with this as well?

Afternoon

Content: Chapter 8

Assignments:

1. Think about how you can start bringing stakeholders together in a light and low-threshold way. Can you think of activities where you put more serious content on the agenda while also allowing different stakeholders to get to know each other a bit better? How can you keep a balance between being relevant and light? Just to give you an example: a conference is probably too heavy to start with, a local excursion with a few short presentations and fun moments for socialising could be better.
2. How do you create and safeguard an atmosphere of openness, collectivity and enthusiasm that appeals to all these different stakeholders? Go back to your narrative and the entry points for the different stakeholders as these may help you to build your activities on.

Week 3: Keep going together sustainably

Morning

Content: Chapter 9

Assignments:

1. Complete your own Canvas Communication Channels (see a short step-by-step guide on the canvas).
2. Fill in both existing stakeholder groups and (future) target groups you want to reach.

3. How can you link your communication channels to your actions you came up with earlier and with your narrative? And how can you cleverly link the contact data you build up and the input you collect through the various channels to your own website and database?

4. Distil actions for your own project if you see gaps in your channel network. Are there stakeholder groups that are not being reached yet – especially the generally difficult to reach ‘non-usual-suspects’? Be critical here if you should fix this by creating new communication channels yourself or if you should reach out to existing networks and key figures to join forces? Please go back to your community building approach and our checklist for more ideas and insights on this.

Content: Chapter 10

Assignments:

1. List the different types of new target groups there are for your area. Look beyond the target groups for your own projects and organisation and also think of potential target groups for other stakeholders’ initiatives. These can be of course various types of new residents but also entrepreneurs – and visitors - for new amenities, office tenants, etcetera.
2. Think about what they would want or need from the area and what kinds of extra layers this requires from your local narrative.
3. How can you work together with the different public, private and civic initiatives in your area to make sure you fully utilise each other’s communication channels. Like this you create a really powerful, consistent and credible messaging and you prevent engagement fatigue when people are approached by too many different. – yet similar – messages and channels.
4. Have a critical look at your own project communication here. What concrete actions or improvements can you already set in motion, for example set up a meeting with active local initiatives to join communication forces?

Afternoon

Content: Chapter 11

Assignments:

1. How can you make sure all the energy, network and results your project is realising over time are being safeguarded sustainably? What tasks can you distribute to local stakeholders, networks and other initiatives so that they can keep moving, also when your project is formally finished? Can you already start to shift some of your tasks to them? Or do you need to make some adjustments first, for example in the name, visual identity and tone of voice of the project, linking it less strongly to your own organisation so that it can be (co-)adopted by other local stakeholders, perhaps even getting its own local governance model, like a foundation or cooperation?

Content: Review whole course

Assignment: Sharpen your strategy and action plan and get ready to start

1. Based on everything you've learned, refine your own project strategy and action plans one more time. Double-check that you have given a place to all different big and small stakeholders as well as all relevant new target groups.
2. Now refine your five very first actions. Make sure that these are actions that you should be able to start right away, tomorrow morning at nine o'clock so to speak, so that you don't need any additional budget, permit, support, or other permission. These actions can in themselves be very light with zero risk of failure, but they are aimed at giving your process an optimal kickstart and setting in motion as many other actions as possible in your strategy and action plan. Make sure that at least one of these first actions has a festive and optimistic tinge and gives you the opportunity to meet the various stakeholders without putting too much serious content on the agenda immediately.
3. Take a moment to realise you just finished this module and redesigned your complete software strategy while also being busy with your regular work and projects. This is no small achievement in these busy times, and you should definitely celebrate this. Whether you pop open the champagne or plan something nice for yourself, enjoy – and congratulations!