FROM THE WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT:

- What, and where, are the possibilities for a collaborative interplay among these three?
- How can each take advantage of the other two in order to co-invent and sustain an expanded practice of civic engagement, a deeper definition of community, and overall a newly-enriched civic life?
- How can – or should – such collaboration account for the particulars of the places and the publics within which and for whom such initiatives might be designed and implemented?
- And what are some possible outcomes?

These questions, and others, were the focus of this workshop – itself a collaboration involving not only BostonAPP/Lab but the Engagement Lab at Emerson College and the Boston Mayor’s Office of New Urban Mechanics. Participants were given the opportunity to brainstorm approaches to this co-invention – as artist, as programmer, as community leader, as citizen – and to begin outlining an action agenda by which to bring these emerging ideas to fruition.

A recent quote from an unknown source: “Collaboration is not about gluing together existing egos. It’s about the ideas that never existed until after everyone entered the room.” Which pretty much describes what happened...

The following notes provide a sketch of the workshop’s intense discussion, and several links to several fascinating projects that, in many ways, encompass the workshop’s title.

[Many thanks to Christina Wilson from E-Lab, and participants Candy Yang and Jackie Gonzalez]

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**Legacy Lives On - community org**

- Mothers of children who were killed by gun violence (Roxbury / Dorchester)
- Violence up in the summer, loss of access to safe outdoor public spaces
- Can we use music/dance/performance to activate safe spaces in these neighborhoods
- Create opportunity of members of the community to express themselves and perform, as well as bring artists / dancers / musicians

**Insights**

- Creating a space for recognition of diverse expertise across divides is critical (youth/seniors, racial, economic, drivers/cyclists, etc.)
Essential to have that mutual acknowledgement of what different stakeholder groups bring to the table

- Short-term effect → trust, civic relations
- Long term effects → traces of the project in the community (material or social capital)

**Case Studies**

1. **National Alliance for Media, Arts and Culture** (http://www.namac.org)
   - 50 States at a party (dinner party hosted by community artists / activists → bring their own vision, food, perspectives): http://www.namac.org/youth-media-collective-action-dinner-future/
   - Provides a took it for how to host the dinner party and build on outcomes from the party

2. **Project in China**
   - Children kidnapped and forced to perform as beggars
   - Community activated on social media creating a Twitter campaign
   - Low barrier to participation - snap a photo, note time and location, tweet with hashtag
   - Police using the incoming data to follow-up officially and locate children

3. **Bamboo Bicycle Project (also in China)**: http://bit.ly/2dVT0od
   - Building new mobility culture through people crafting their own bamboo bicycles
4. Experimental Project
- “Traveling in Your Own Room” project: http://www.yanqingyang.com/voyage-around-my-room
- Exploring private spaces as a way of de-isolating people, creating community, becoming more intimate
- Digitally curated online exhibition
- Building on that, perhaps we could use Twitter to make community reps more approachable: a question that could prompt city councilors to share details about their personal space, be more open with the public
- Based on Key/Story Museum
  - Artist asked people to send key intended to be thrown away, and a story to accompany it
  - Artist/history/community to build collective memory
  - Ritual provides an important way to make sense of (hi)story in community

5. Museum of Broken Relationships (Croatia)
- Responding to the break-up of Yugoslavia
- People prompted to send in items that were meaningful to them and sharing a story about the object
- What would it mean to have a conversation or share a story (or history) across a (cultural) divide in the City of Boston?

**What is meant by “activating civic engagement”?**
- Metaphor, at all scales (and as exemplified in the case studies), as a power tool for civic engagement
- Building social networks / trust
- Wanting to be part of positive change
- Moving from tool to facilitation/process
- What is the skill, the resume that is built? → Civic capacities (trust / empathy)
- Moving from attentiveness to caring
- Nurture caring
- Sometimes caring means taking action, but it can also mean NOT doing something (not breaking/destroying a thing in public space)
- Triangulation between expression / witness / civic caring
- Need a prompt that focuses the attention on something beyond a person’s job, but rather a way to get at identity mediated through the aura of an object or a story

**Further post-workshop thoughts on engagement (from artist/workshop participant Candy Yang)**

1. Why engagement?:
- to raise the awareness (eyes open)
- to be empathetic and caring (hearts open)
- to activate action (body participation)

2. Who to engage?:
- focus on collaboration rather than individuals – governments, different community groups, academics, professional individuals – to create a group effect

3. What to engage (or what value can we provide to participants through their engagement with our projects)?:
- a new/fun experience
- building a collective memory through sharing and making sense of personal stories
- allowing my words/world to be seen (such as this public art project on which participants can place their promises on a big billboard: http://www.nowandthere.org/publictrust/)
- building connection through deeper understanding
- healing current tensions

4. How to scale up the engagement?
- media consumption and meaning making: everyday we spend so much time on consumption of digital media: how to let participants feel that they are creating something meaningful through engagement.
- consider participation scenario: allow participation at anytime/anywhere through digital media; or design the engagement based on different life contexts and scenarios