

Reyhaneh Mirjahani

A discussion on civic participation

Lesson plan

Lesson plan

Subjects: Social science, history, social geography, civil (citizenship) education

Age group: Secondary school

Number of participants: 12–30

Duration: One day workshop (2–2.5 hours) **or** 3 lessons (40 minutes each)

What you will need: A projector, a printer, colourful pens or markers, a computer

Keywords: Social and political behaviour, trust, responsibility, agency, activism, participation, political agency

Learning outcomes:

- To facilitate a discussion about social and political behaviours within a critical framework.
- To investigate why the *liberal idea of the individual* is problematic and instead explore the intricate relationship between the individual, community, and the state.
- To understand and explore the complexity of contemporary socio-political contexts, while discussing the ideas behind ethics and human rights.

A Discussion on Civic Participation is a learning toolkit designed to generate questions and self-reflection around the ideas of socio-political participation, the role of the civilian, and responsibility in society.

A Discussion on Civic Participation originates from an ongoing, inquiry-based artistic project by Reyhaneh Mirjahani, called *An Experiment on Agency* which explores the notion of political agency in our contemporary context. *An Experiment on Agency* inquires into how artistic practice can lead viewers to question, discuss and understand the existence of agency within dilemmatic choices through creating a series of participatory installations. Furthermore, the inquiry aims to raise the following open question: If in some situations we lose agency, which systems are depriving us of it?

Reyhaneh Mirjahani is an artist and artistic researcher based in Gothenburg, Sweden. She holds an MFA in Fine Art from HDK-Valand at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, and a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Sculpture from the University of Tehran, Iran. In addition, she completed the Commissioning and Curating Contemporary Public Art course at the University of Gothenburg and is currently participating in a Curatorlab programme at Konstfack University.

Reyhaneh's artistic practice and research focuses on the notion of individual and collective agency in dilemmatic socio-political situations and the disposition of ethics in this discourse. Moreover, she is interested in understanding and challenging the role of art and artists in communicating the issues we face in contemporary life, as well as finding intersectional methods within sociology, politics and art to facilitate or mediate a space in which the complexity of contemporary politics can be discussed. She has collaborated with various institutions in Iran, Italy, Poland, the UK, and Sweden, and has been published in a number of critical journals in Iran, Sweden, and the UK. www.reyhanehmirjahani.com

The learning kit consists of:

A lesson plan

Activity instructions (presentation)

Activity sheets (handouts)

Support Material 1: Civic Participation Network

Support Material 2: Civic Participation Toolbox

Suggestions for a lesson plan

Lesson 1: Civic Participation

1. Introduction: The workshop starts with an **activity introduction**. No preparation is needed since the students should first experience the activity themselves (individually) and then become familiar with the subject through a group discussion. The introduction should mention the map and questions sheet together with examples on how to use the map. (10 minutes)
2. The activity: After the introduction slides, **the maps and questions sheets** are given to each student along with different colour markers. Students should answer the questions they face as they move along the map. The activity is finished when the path becomes a loop or naturally comes to an end. (15–20 minutes)
3. The first conversation: After the activity, the maps should be placed next to each other in a way that each student can see all of the maps. Here, the students are invited to talk about why they think each map has a different path. The conversation can be initiated by questions such as: “Why do you think they look different? What can cause these different decisions? Is it possible to discern which path is better?” In this discussion, the students can share their opinion on why they chose their different paths, and what they think the activity is about. (10 minutes)

Lesson 2: Culture and Politics

4. Support material: After the initial discussions, the students are invited to look at the **Support Material 1: Civic Participation Network** which gives an overview of the subjects mentioned in the questions. What is the most difficult question for them and why? (5–10 minutes)
5. In-group conversation: In smaller groups, the students should discuss and reflect on the **Support Material 1: Civic Participation Network** and the activity they did earlier (either by adding or answering more questions). The **Support Material 1: Civic Participation Network** should be provided to students or shared on the screen during the group conversations. (10–15 minutes)
6. Reflection: During a class discussion, the students can share a summary of their conversation and highlight the key points and questions. At the end, the students should gather different cultural productions (movies, books, exhibitions, documentaries, novels, etc.) that unfold these interlinked subjects. (15–20 minutes)

Lesson 3: Being in Action

7. Introduction: The session should start with the teacher giving a brief overview of the differences between an organisation, social centre, youth centre, NGO, grassroots movement, etc. (5 minutes)
8. Reading: The teacher then asks the question: “What should be considered when looking for an organization to join, support, or follow?” Later, the **Support Material 2: Civic Participation Toolbox** can be distributed between the students to read. (10 minutes)
9. Research and discussion: In smaller groups, the students should conduct research on the local NGOs and organisations in their neighbourhood, city, or country. The students should then discuss their research findings and share their personal experience if they have participated within any of the organisations. Later, they can add other points into the **Support Material 2: Civic Participation Toolbox**. (25 minutes)

Additional references:

<https://politicalsociology.info/documentary-films/>

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