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GET INVOLVED

Upcoming

CoLab Student Lunch series,
Dates: Feb 28, Mar [TBD],
April 25, May [TBD]

[Participatory Action Research Workshop](#), April 24, 5-7pm

[More events...](#)

Summer Opportunities

[Bronx Innovation Factory Student Interns](#) - Due March 1st

Summer Online Book Club:
[Pedagogy of the Oppressed](#)

[Self-Determination Narratives Fellowship](#) - Due March 30th

Share a Story

[Share research or a story on CoLab Radio](#)

Want to brainstorm or pitch a story or series? Drop by CoLab Radio office hours: 3-5p Thursdays @ CoLab, Starting March 8

A new Collaboration forms for Equity and Sustainable Development in Post-conflict Colombia



Image credit: CoLab

Over the past eight months, CoLab has been building a partnership with the Colombian Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Leibniz University in Hanover, Germany. The objective of this collaboration is to identify strategies to build equity around climate change and sustainable development in post-conflict Colombia. Over IAP, a group of students and faculty visited Colombia to exchange ideas with local experts through a DUSP graduate course led by Professor J. Phillip Thompson and PhD student Juan Camilo Osorio. The trip included fieldwork in Mocoa, workshops in Bogotá, and strategic meetings with relevant government institutions such as the Humboldt Institute for Biological Resources Research, the Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies, and the National Planning Department, as well as other organizations interested in strengthening local planning capacity.

Contact: Juan Camilo Osorio (jcosorio@mit.edu)

The Bronx Innovation Factory roars ahead



Image credit: Commonwise Education

Now that our prototype space is up and running, the Bronx Innovation Factory is roarin' ahead! A couple of youth are using it regularly as well as one entrepreneur that we're now incubating. We're hiring a Shop Manager, who, once onboard, will run regular workshops, trainings, and public conversations. We are also looking to grow the prototype considerably by adding new equipment over the summer. Lastly—an opportunity!—we are going to be doing a full feasibility study and are looking for student researchers to work with us! The application deadline is March 1. The full job description and application instructions are [here](#).

Contact: Maggie Tishman (mtishman@mit.edu)

2018 Mel King Community Fellows learn about economic democracy in Mondragon, Spain



Image credit: CoLab

In early fall, we brought a delegation of elected officials of color from the Bronx and Central Brooklyn from the State and City level to Mondragon, Spain to see the Mondragon Corporation in action. The delegation is the 2018 class of Mel King Community Fellows.

In January 2018 we held our second convening with the cohort in NYC. Their goals over the remaining 6 months of the fellowship are to develop and release a policy platform for the next 4 years. The purpose of the policy platform is to support economic democracy and shared wealth creation for low-income people of color in NYC.

Contact: Yorman Nuñez (yorman@mit.edu)

CoLab staff reflect on the Community Agency and Health Symposium



Image credit: Bridging Health & Communityt

In Spring 2017, CoLab served a facilitation and planning partner for the Community Agency and Health Symposium held by Bridging Health & Community (BH&C). As a follow up to the Symposium, the BH&C team has asked participants to share their reflections on their experience. Two CoLab staff members, Katherine and Lawrence, wrote a commentary that touched on 3 themes: 1) How discussing 'community' can be harmful and diminish agency; 2) How the intersection of systemic and oppression needs to be discussed, and 3) how inclusion matters for systems change. Read the full commentary and proposals to the BH&C team [here](#).

Contact: Katherine Mella (kmella@mit.edu)

Creating Spaces For Youth-led Initiatives in the Colombian Pacific



Image credit: Juan Constain

Our Inclusive Regional Development program is currently finalizing the design for the next phase of the capacity building work we have led in the Colombian Pacific since 2014. In collaboration with Escuela Taller de Buenaventura, the program will host Territorial Innovation Labs with youth groups and civic leaders in Buenaventura and Quibdó. The purpose of the work is to prototype alternatives to the extractive development model in the region and strengthen peacebuilding capacities. This is a critical moment of change for the region as local leaders aim to reshape development patterns to generate more equitable outcomes in the post-conflict context. This program is expected to launch in May 2018.

Contact: Juan Constain (constain@mit.edu)

The Economic Democracy Learning Center has its first Director



Image credit: CoLab

Just a few weeks ago, our partner, CommonWise Education, hired Evan Casper-Futterman as the first Director of the Bronx-based Economic Democracy Learning Center (EDLC). The EDLC educates people about economic democracy through trainings and workshops. Evan will lead the update and redesign of our Economic Democracy Training series and create opportunities for stakeholder education about economic democracy. Those stakeholders include community members, community-based organization (CBO) staff, elected officials, anchors, business owners, and more. The vision of the EDLC is that it will help Bronx-based stakeholders understand economic democracy and help them apply it in their day-to-day work.

Contact: Yorman Nuñez (yorman@mit.edu)

D.C. Artists, Activists and Policymakers Converge to Raise Awareness about Lead Poisoning



Image credit: Fundred/SOURCE Studios INC

With support from the Kresge Foundation, CoLab's Empathetic Aesthetics program, in partnership with renowned artist and 2014 Mel King Community Fellow, Mel Chin, continues to deepen awareness and democratic engagement around lead poisoning by leveraging the creative currency of Fundred Dollar Bills. For nearly a decade, the Fundred Project has worked with cross-sector partners to fight lead. Over the past year, the project has deepened its engagement in Washington D.C. through the establishment of the Fundred Reserve Open Lab, a temporary storefront gallery space hosting events with artists, activists and policymakers. This Spring, the team will focus on policymaker education and engagement, collaboration with public schools, and will continue to build connections with local activists, teachers, and impacted families to plant the seeds for future advocacy efforts. In addition, the Fundred project will engage MIT and D.C. area student researchers to assess the project's overall impact, and explore whether creative approaches to advocacy and education can activate democratic discourse and influence policymaker decision-making.

Contact: Allegra Williams (allegraw@mit.edu)

The BronXchange is humming along!



Image credit: The BronXchange

The BronXchange, an online marketplace that connects Bronx institutions and nonprofit organizations with high-road, local businesses, is humming along with lots of updates. Our local partner, CommonWise Education, is leading this project. CommonWise has: built out the local team (all people of color from the Bronx); launched a training program for 12 local business owners who are members of the platform; and will soon be hiring a CEO to lead the platform's growth and development. Stay tuned to CoLab for more details on that hiring process soon! By April 2018, Commonwise will begin developing a proprietary platform with hopes to expand to other cities in 2019.

Contact: Maggie Tishman (mtishman@mit.edu)

Online Book Club explores using a digital tool for an old-school purpose



Image credit: CoLab

From October to November 2017, CoLab's Community Media program experimented with an online book club/reading group. CoLab sees part of its work in support of self-determination as the creation of spaces to support people in and across places to reflect and learn together. The Community Media program is constantly trying to explore the role of online and offline media tools to support and amplify innovation from the margins as well as inspire new ways of working and collaborating.

Inspired by [Sharon De La Cruz](#), a co-host of the [p5js Interactive Book Club](#), Lawrence Barriner II and Nene Igietseme, a DUSP-alum (MCP 2014), co-hosted the five week Collective Courage Online Book Club. The club was designed to create an easy opportunity for people to read and discuss Jessica Gordon Nembhard's book: [Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice](#). A small group of Black organizers from Boston and Atlanta convened digitally to discuss the book, as well. The digital space created an opportunity to wrestle with Nembhard's ideas as well as allowing people across contexts to connect and learn about place-based work related to cooperative economics.

The next online book club starts this summer and will study Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. [Stay tuned](#) if you're interested.

Contact: Lawrence Barriner II (lqb@mit.edu)

Two big launches for The Just Money program

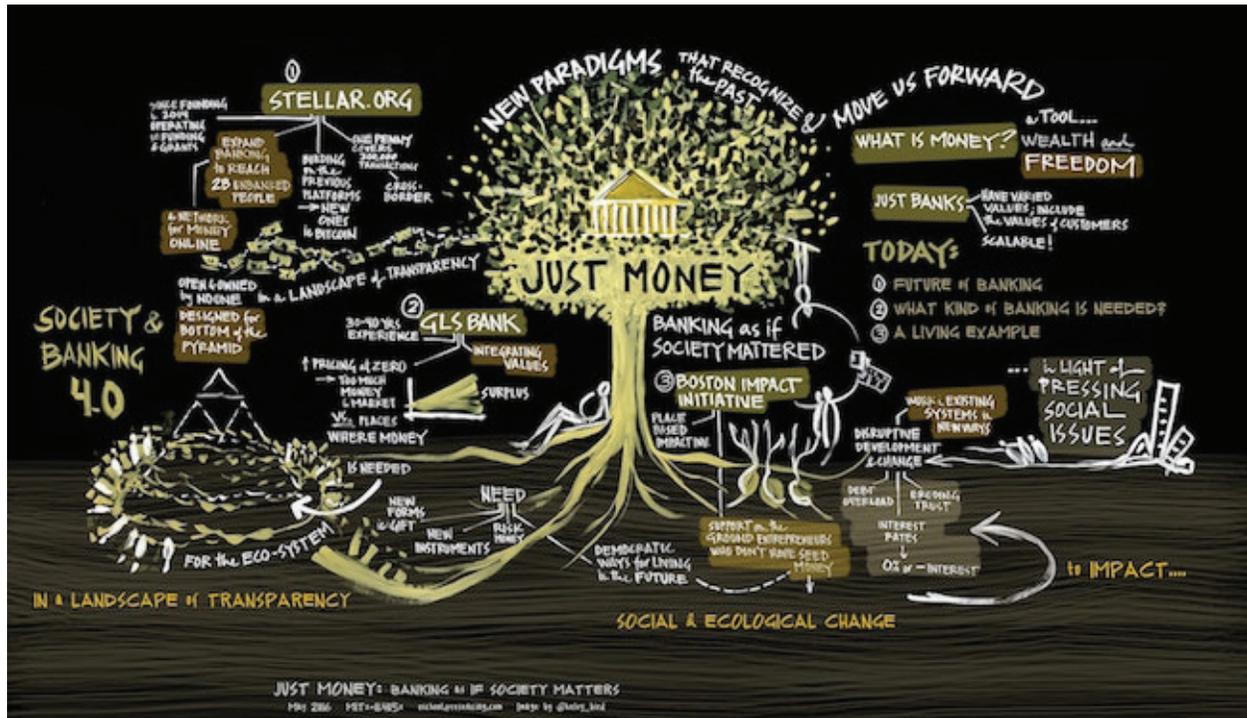


Image credit: Kelvy Bird

The Just Money program at CoLab has two launches coming up this Spring. First, the third cohort of the [Values-Based Banking Leadership Development program](#) will launch on March 5, 2018 in Peru, hosted by Caja Arequipa.. The leadership development program that is facilitated by CoLab, the Global Alliance for Banking on Values (GABV), and the Presencing Institute. The second launch is a new development in the program's Massive Open Online Course, [Just Money: Banking as if Society Mattered](#). The course, which has previously been offered only with Just Money program staff as "drivers," will now be available forever and "at your own pace." Beginning in March, participants can start the course whenever they want, take it as quickly or slowly as they want, and still choose to receive a certificate at the end by taking a test. CoLab hopes that this offering will become a foundational resource for people around the world looking to learn about Values-based Banking for free. The course will remain on [MIT edX](#).

Contact: Katrin Kaufer (kaeufer@mit.edu)

New Experiments in Collaborative Imagination take root



Image credit: Grant Williams

Alongside resistance (including our own Resistance Mapping efforts) has always been the need build the futures we want. In order to know what to build, in order to be deeply self-determining, we need radical imagination and radical hope. As Junot Díaz [said](#), “Radical hope is our best weapon against despair, even when despair seems justifiable; it makes the survival of the end of your world possible.”

As such, continuing from the [Spring 2017 Alternative Futures Writing Collective](#), the Community Media program ran two new workshops in the Fall and over IAP. [The Collaborative Sci-Fi Generator](#), in November 2017, and the [Unleashing Alternative Futures workshop](#), over January 2018. These workshops, drawing on thinking and work from [adrienne maree brown](#) and Díaz, were created to experiment with the practice of individual and, especially, collaborative imagination. Collaborative ideation can be an antidote to individual ideation, giving people opportunities to dream worlds that they create together. The capacity to imagine different ways of acting and being together is a necessary element of self-determination; these workshops are exploring how to build that capacity and will hopefully make it beyond MIT’s walls soon...

Contact: Lawrence Barriner II (lqb@mit.edu)

CoLab Bronx staff co-develop interactive strategic mapping tool with Bronx-wide Development without Displacement Roundtable

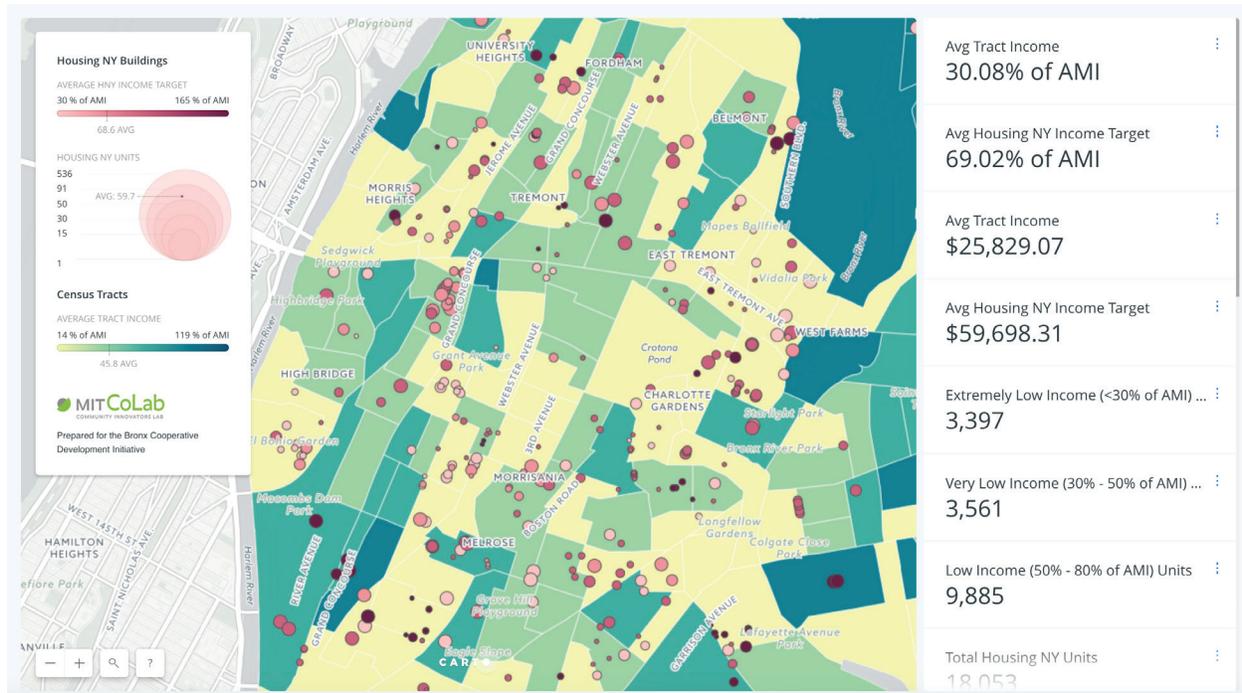


Image credit: Nick Shatan

Over the past five years, base-building community organizations across the US have created several interactive mapping platforms to address gentrification and displacement. The Bronx-wide Development without Displacement Roundtable (DDR), made of eight community organizations around the borough, is developing its own tool to fight back and fight forward in the Bronx. CoLab staff has supported DDR with coordination and strategy development, and are now working with the Roundtable to prototype and workshop the tool. Various iterations of the tool are already functional and being used by partners to help inform strategy. One such iteration has been created to show the wide gap between the affordability targets of city-financed housing and the incomes of people in Bronx neighborhoods. One community partner is fighting forward by using the tool to find sites as part of the planning and visioning process of its Community Land Trust.

Contact: Nick Shatan (nshatan@mit.edu)

Mel King Fellows learn first-hand how race structures the economy and what leaders in the US South are doing about it



Image credit: CoLab

In October, the Transnational Mel King Community Fellows cohort traveled to Tennessee and Mississippi. The purpose of the trip was to explore the role of race in structuring the economy and learn from local leaders building economic democracy in the U.S. South.

The Fellows also began an exciting process to co-create a conceptual framework for economic democracy. The framework is intended to be a dynamic resource for advancing the thinking and practice of leaders seeking to transform their economies and build self-determination. The framework accomplishes three tasks. First, it builds an analysis of the transnational forces and systems of oppression that have structured economies in the Americas. Second, it maps the approaches and strategies Fellows are using to advance economic democracy. Finally, it defines collective aspirations for the systems, structures, and politics the Fellows (and their communities) hope to build.

This May, the cohort's fourth convening will take place in New York City. Fellows will explore economic democracy efforts in the Bronx as well as translocal efforts to build shared wealth in the context of immigration.

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