Foundation for Public Code

Collaborative Code is the Future of Governance

Ben Cerveny - @neb
ben@publiccode.net

The city is perhaps the longest running continuous process that humans have created.

The last several decades have seen a rapid acceleration of technological innovation involving software services at the scale of society.

After weathering the disruptions caused by this transformation, we now ask: **is software becoming infrastructure?**

Cities have always been a site to turn technology into infrastructure for the benefit of society.

Cities work to transform **technology into infrastructure** through iterative generation of **policy, or 'civic code'.**

Policy is the set of rules, determined through a public governance model, that defines the **possibility space of society**.

Made civic through policy

▷ rights

▷ property

▷ industry

▷ trade

▷ transport

▷ software?

policy

digital society?

software

policy

digital society?

software

uninformed and vague
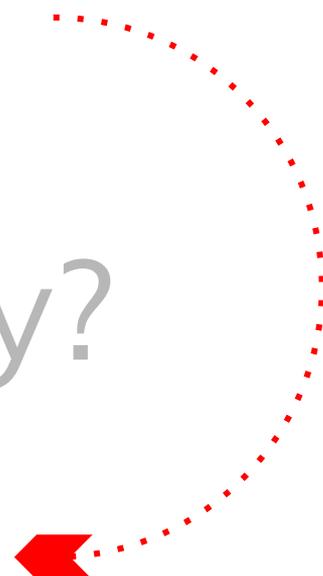
policy

digital society?

software

proprietary and closed

uninformed and vague

We believe software that runs our society can no longer be:

▷ hidden in **proprietary code bases**
▷ producing data not owned by the public
▷ licensed at ever-increasing cost from outside companies

Instead, governments need **technological sovereignty** so they can shape the functioning of public software - just like they can shape policy legally formulated in laws.

Public software should be subject to the principles and processes of democratic governance.

Public software must reflect the values of the society it serves.

Italian food. French cinema.
Just "software"? Nope.

Software has 'terroir'. One of the most culturally situated things humans can produce.

Forward thinking cities are already building open **public digital infrastructure** for themselves, but often it's not reusable (yet!).

Public digital infrastructure

▷ transit

▷ schools

▷ healthcare

▷ sharing tools

▷ libraries

▷ community

▷ mapping

▷ countless others

software + policy

produced by
and for the public

= public code

By sharing these codebases, cities can:

▷ diffuse the risk of development

▷ accelerate production through collaboration

▷ **push back against the dizzying costs** of licensing private alternatives

Cities need to develop open, adaptive and reusable **public codebases** together as part of their core civic functions.
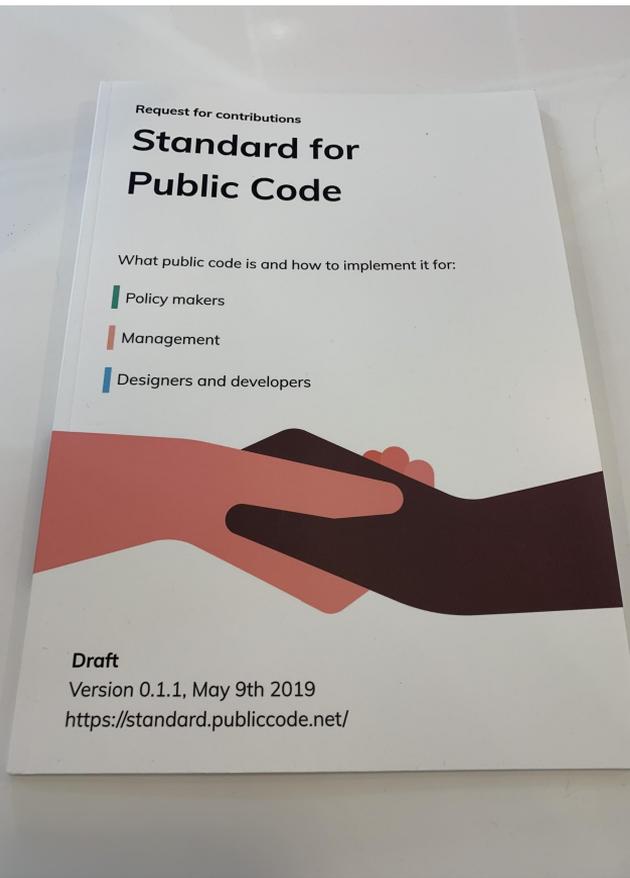
The Foundation for Public Code provides cities with the tools and processes to do so, through a set of services we call **codebase stewardship.**

The Standard for Public Code

Request for contributions

Standard for Public Code

What public code is and how to implement it for:

▌ Policy makers

▌ Management

▌ Designers and developers

Draft
Version 0.1.1, May 9th 2019
https://standard.publiccode.net/

▷ Set of certification criteria
▷ Used to audit contributions
▷ Collaboratively defined and continuously versioned
▷ standard.publiccode.net

Codebase stewardship

▷ community development
▷ product management
▷ quality assurance
▷ support for success

Community development

We will help the communities around codebases organize, grow and thrive by:

▷ processing feedback and contributions
▷ building effective models of governance
▷ organizing events

Product management

We will help shape the codebases into mature products by:

▷ growing awareness and adoption
▷ creating branding and communications
▷ providing guidance and support for development and design

Quality assurance

We will enable agile development in an ecosystem of trust for public institutions and their collaborators by:

▷ checking every merge request on code, policy and documentation for compliance with the Standard for Public Code

Support for success

We make using open source less risky by:

▷ helping with technical questions, software packaging, and distribution

▷ developing training materials

▷ helping vendors (like companies and NGOs) sell, implement and support the product

We've entered talks with

- 20 municipalities,
- 4 national frameworks for municipal collaboration,
- 4 national governments,
- 2 European directorates

We're moving codebases towards stewardship
- have looked at more than 5 packages developed by cities
- moving forward with 2 active development projects

Organizationally, each city is **remarkably different** in how it evolved a software adoption, development, and **deployment practice** or culture.

However, cities have uncovered some recurring **design patterns** in emergent needs among civil servants and citizens for types of **digital tools and processes**.

The Foundation for Public Code

provides **tools and processes** that bring **people** together in **institutions** to collaboratively build and maintain **software as public infrastructure.**

Also, we're hiring!

Check out our open roles at:
about.publiccode.net/roles/

Thanks! 🙇‍♀️

Ben Cerveny - ben@pubbliccode.net