

SOCIAL CHANGE:  
DESIRE, DESIGN, AND COMPOSITION

HANDOUT FROM JASON

Ideas to consider when designing an action  
or ongoing project

Recent direct actions and ongoing projects

Questions to ask a problem

Questions to ask an action

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# SOME IDEAS TO CONSIDER WHEN DESIGNING AN ACTION OR ONGOING PROJECT

## PERTURBATION AND DESTRUCTION

PERTURBATION is when an interaction triggers a system to change state in such a way that it remains the kind of system that it is.

DESTRUCTION is when an interaction causes or triggers a system to stop being the system that it is. Its elements may or may not survive, but the relations that define the system are ended.

Interactions with autonomous systems are either perturbations or destructions. When perturbing a system, you might be able to predict an outcome – but you can't *control* the outcome and you can't know for sure what it will be.

## NEED, NECESSITY, AND ALTERNATIVE NECESSITIES

A NEED is a condition that has to be met for a living thing to continue living. Needs are set conditions that are inherent to how a living thing is organized. They do not change.

A NECESSITY is anything that is used to meet a need. Most needs – maybe all of them – can be met with a variety of necessities. Where maintaining a paying job serves in one instance – say, for buying food – gardening is another way you can get fed. Since no one eats money or the act of gardening, they are necessities.

It is possible to *design* ways of meeting needs – ALTERNATIVE NECESSITIES. Many ongoing projects are alternative necessities projects, in that they provide access to ways of meeting needs that are not prevalent in the current society. Free gardens, alternative mental health projects...

## INPUT AND OUTPUT

An input is when an interaction with a system triggers a change of state that the system could not have generated itself.

An output is any proper outcome or pattern of behavior in a system's normal operation.

*Street harassment of women in this society does not trigger the society to new changes of state. Thus it is not an input to society, but an output. Street harassment is a proper outcome of this society's operation. It reflects the way our society is organized.\**

## AUDIENCE AND ADDRESSEE

When you do something intending for people to see you doing it:

The AUDIENCE is whoever witnesses what you do.

The ADDRESSEE is whomever you are trying to send a message to by way of your action.

It might be that you intentionally do something in front of a large audience, attempting to address only one person. It might be that you are trying to address someone who hasn't been born yet – maybe a historian. It might be that you intend to simultaneously send different messages to different people – POLYADDRESSEE.

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\* Note: A society is not only comprised of its institutions.

P.S.

Here are some questions I ask myself

in the face of the currently common tendency to only approve or disapprove of actions taken,

and in the face of the currently common tendency to dehumanize people who do things we don't approve of -

What do I think of a direct action that someone has done?

and regardless of whether I think the action was a good idea at the time -

Do I agree with the state's reaction to that direct action?  
The newspapers' reactions? Activists' reactions?

When the news gets out, whom do I support, and how –  
and what's my next step?

## RECENT DIRECT ACTIONS A NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST

Keep in mind that these accounts are mainly from memory, and reflect only what *I've* seen, heard, and read. It's very likely that there are some inaccuracies here.

Consider this a series of prompts to do your own research.

### Camp Quixote

A tent city, founded on the day that the Pedestrian Interference Ordinance took effect. City Manager Steve Hall called Camp Quixote “a poke in the eye.” Statements from city council called for immediate removal of the camp, and referred to a 10-year plan to end “homelessness”. Meanwhile houseless people had set up a camp to address less abstract problems by making a space (a) outside of the woods; (b) without drugs or alcohol; (c) without violence; (d) where people could be close to each other. Eventually the camp was taken in by a series of churches, and city council members changed their minds and said that Camp Quixote was a good solution. Camp Quixote is still around – you might have seen it at its current location on Division Street, if you took the bus to class today.

### 2007 Port Protest/Blockade

In November 2007, people blocked the port entrance in order to disrupt a shipment of equipment and people returning from the Iraq War. Some people did some property destruction. A reporter for *The Olympian* was attacked by police, but I never found any mention of it *The Olympian*.

This was the beginning of the Port Militarization Resistance movement (PMR). Afterward, PMR groups started in other parts of the country.

### Women's Blockade

A group of women who organized an arms-locked sit-down blockade during the 2007 port protests. Two of those women have accused the police of strip searching them in front of other inmates.

### May Day 2008

One or more people threw one or more rocks through a bank window during the May Day march. Mainstream and activist press both ran stories opposing this action, considering it a highjacking that endangered others in the march. WIP did also run a rebuttal from someone who was at the march and/or was friends with the accused window smashers.

### Cop Car Turnover

On Valentine's Day in 2008, someone was accused of smoking pot at a show at Evergreen. A campus police officer came, and people rallied around to protest the apprehension of the accused person, who was black. The officer had trouble with her car, and left it behind at the scene. People then smashed the car and turned it over.

### Nihilist Assault Group

Vandalized the Capitol Playhouse, which is owned by Jeff Kingsbury. Kingsbury was a city council member who proposed the Pedestrian Interference Ordinance, opposed the foundation of Camp Quixote, and proposed the Noise Ordinance.

### Roving Dance Parties

Last year, there were several organized dance parties that roamed the streets of downtown Olympia at night. This was facilitated by the use of boomboxes tuned in to Free Radio Olympia.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK AN ACTION (OR ONGOING PROJECT)

1. What problem does the action address?
2. What is your detailed description of the action? What possibilities are implied by the choices made, and what effects are made unlikely?
3. How do others describe the action?
4. Did the people who did the action communicate about it in public beforehand? Afterward?
5. Who is the intended addressee? Who was/will be the audience?
6. What is this action design good for? What are desirable outcomes for such a design?
7. Under what circumstances is this the perfect thing to do?
8. Are there differences between those perfect circumstances and the circumstances in which the action was done?
9. How have conditions changed as a consequence of the action?
10. Who has reacted publicly? How have the reactions changed conditions?
11. Has your description of society changed in any way? Is there a new problem?

## QUESTIONS TO ASK A PROBLEM

1. What are the components of the problem?  
(Ask this once you've formulated the problem)
2. For whom is it a problem?
3. In whose interest is it that the problem be solved?
4. In whose interest is it that the problem remain unsolved?
5. Why has the problem not been solved yet?
6. Would a reformulation of the problem make it easier to solve?  
(Ask this after you've spent time with a formulation)
7. Jeff Glassman adds: Who recognizes this as a problem?

### HCC Occupation

A few weeks ago, a group of people occupied the Evergreen Housing Community Center (HCC), for several days. The occupiers held workshops and sent out a communiqué on the internet, to give context to their actions. There was a slogan: "Demand nothing. Occupy everything." One street rumor tells that part of the motivation of this action was to get initial practice in the experience of occupying a building.

### Anti-Police March 2010

On April 8th, 35-40 people marched from the West side to Downtown. Some carried a banner that read, "Jail the cops. Burn the prisons." Many participants were masked; an *Olympian* reporter's camera and phone were damaged; rocks were thrown through bank windows and a property of a prominent landlord; 29 people were arrested.

An article printed in *The Olympian* two days later all but openly ridiculed one of those arrested. One of the demonstrators posted an article on anarchistnews.org, labeling the action "a complete disaster."

There is a street rumor that at least one of the people arrested were subjected to illegal punishment while in custody.

<http://www.theolympian.com/2010/04/10/1201486/31-demonstrators-arrested.html>

<http://anarchistnews.org/?q=node/11031>

# ONGOING PROJECTS

INCLUDING ALTERNATIVE NECESSITIES

MANY OF THESE PROJECTS ARE NOT ASSOCIATED WITH ANARCHISTS OR LEFTISTS, BUT ALL OF THEM ADDRESS AT LEAST SOME CONCERNS OF ANARCHIST OR LEFTIST CRITIQUES OF SOCIETY

Anarchist People of Color

Camp Quixote

PANZA

Olympia Free Herbal Clinic

GOFER – Greater Olympia Foreclosure and Eviction Resistance

EGYHOP – Emma Goldman Youth and Homeless Outreach Program

Bike & Bike

Freespace Project

Radical Accountability Groups

Anarchist News Box

FRO - Free Radio Olympia

Olympia Men's Project

Olympia Zine Library

CIELO Project

GRuB – Garden Raised Bounty

Stonewall Youth

The Gleaners' Coalition

Books to Prisoners

Bridges Not Walls

Coffee Strong

BRICK – Building Revolution by Increasing Community Knowledge

POWER – Parents Organizing for Welfare and Economic Rights

The Icarus Project

TULiP – Thurston Union of Low Income People

Media Island

Copwatch

Common Action

Students for a Democratic Society

The Birth Attendants

The Crisis Clinic

Olympia Food Co-op

PMR – Port Militarization Resistance

OMJP – Olympia Movement for Justice and Peace