Citizen Science (37)

The role of science in the modern world will become increasingly critical in the years ahead, as health care, energy, resources and the global environment become ever more problematic. Science can appear to serve powerful institutions, such as stock markets and the weapons industry, more that it serves the people most affected by these problems. Meanwhile, the resources of society's professional scientists are overtaxed by the amount of data to be collected and the need to distribute expertise over a wide area. Science needs greater participation from people at large, and people need a greater voice in science. We need to develop new approaches to collaboration between science and communities. Citizens, policymakers and professional scientists all benefit by bringing both scientific knowledge and local knowledge to bear on the problems that they experience.

Written by Stewart Dutfield

Mobile Intelligence (38)

We can’t think or act intelligently in relation to the world if we think statically. The problem is that we think that things change, one-at-a-time when things are constantly in flux. The answer changes while you’re still trying to understand the question. John Urry articulated the need to reconceptualize sociology in such a way to better understand and explore the “mobilities” of our era. Mobilities characterize movement from one state to another as well as blurring of two or more states. For example, we don’t have to leave or disconnect from physical space to connect to digital spaces. Artists, architects, technologists, urban planners, and others are recombining the two, connecting individuals and groups together at a variety of scales and intensities. We can think of Mobile Intelligence in at least three ways: (1) intelligence about a variety of mobilities; (2) intelligence that can be used in different situations (where the intelligence itself is mobile or “portable”); and, (3) mobile intelligence that moves us forward; in other words the intelligence mobilizes people. Mobile communication is fast and increasingly commonplace, opening up whole new arenas of both thought and action. One of the main points of this pattern is encouraging positive possibilities that the new technology opens up, such as emergency communications.

Written by Douglas Schuler

Techno-Criticism (39)

Because technology and technological systems can play out in so many ways, the motivation and practice of Techno-Criticism can be complicated. An unquestioning reliance on technology can result in a technocratic culture where people come to expect technological solutions. Technology can put major decisions in the hands of the technologists, degrade public discussion, and divert attention, discussion, and funds. Technology often alters power relations between people, generally amplifying the power for some and not for others. The development of new military technology through history dramatically illustrates this phenomenon. The distribution of computers in society is yet another example. Generally, rich people have them and poor people don’t. If computers enable people to be more productive (as computer related companies assert) then economic benefits would obviously accrue to those that have them. People need to understand or at least anticipate to some degree not only the effects of specific technological artifacts (RFID in running shoes, for example) but the broader socio-technical systems that they support or destabilize.

Written by Douglas Schuler

World Citizen Parliament (40)

The United Nations is an assembly for the governments of the world's nations. Business, likewise, has an incredible assortment of institutions such as the Chamber of Commerce and events such as the World Economics Forum that cultivate and propage its prerogatives. Civil society is obligated to create institutions that are strong enough to challenge other organizations — governments, businesses, criminal groups, extremists — and not strictly on their terms. Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss proposed the possibility of a "Global Parliament" that inspired this pattern.

How do we about developing this assembly? Launch a non-centralized, heterogeneous, loosely-linked network of people, online and offline resources, institutions, deliberative and other collaborative settings. Develop articles, scholarly papers, opinion papers, manifestos, research findings, and anything else that is relevant to this effort. Develop concepts, design principles, and experiments that lay the groundwork. The new deliberative bodies that we develop over the next few years are likely to be advisory at the onset but hopefully will lay the groundwork for more integrated and influential involvement as time goes on.

Written by Douglas Schuler