Create Dangerously
Museums in the Age of Action

A webinar for NEMO – the Network of European Museum Organizations

Michael Peter Edson
14 February 2023

https://usingdata.com
Twitter: @mpedson
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A video of this talk along with slides and links is (or will soon be) available at
https://www.usingdata.com/usingdata/links-for-nemo-webinar
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Note: the layout of these slides is configured for a side-by-side camera/video setup. The right side of most slides is intentionally blank, and will be hidden during presentation.

Also, some slides will have an empty spot or appear to be off center to make room for a video overlay of the speaker.
Create Dangerously
Museums in the Age of Action

Museums are used to operating within well-established boundaries of authority and trust. But the realities of 2022 — including the climate emergency, armed conflict, and rapid technological and social change reveal gaps and flaws in the traditional notions of our work.

How will we get across The Big Frikin’ Wall that separates conventional museum practice from deep engagement with societal challenges? And what can museum workers do to get action started regardless of their position, authority, or pay?
“To create today is to create dangerously. Any publication is an act. And that act exposes one to the passions of an age that forgives nothing.”

Albert Camus
Nobel acceptance lecture
Stockholm, 1957

I’m borrowing the title of this talk today, Create Dangerously, from the title of a speech given by Albert Camus in Stockholm, Sweden, a few days after he accepted the Nobel Prize for literature in 1957.

In awarding Camus the Nobel prize, the Nobel committee noted his “important literary production, which with clear-sighted earnestness illuminates the problems of the human conscience in our times.”

And what times those were.

In the months leading up to the award ceremony in 1957, Camus and the rest of the world had seen:

- Soviet tanks crushing popular uprisings in Poland and Hungary.
- The beginning of America’s war in Vietnam.
- Algeria fighting a war of independence against France.
- The US civil rights movement.
- Russia testing its first intercontinental ballistic missile in 1957, and Sputnik was launched a few days before the Nobel Prize ceremony, beginning the Space Age.
- 150,000 people died in the “Asian flu” pandemic
- And the European Economic Community (the precursor of the European Union) was formed

...And this is just a narrow glimpse of world news from a Western European and American perspective.

“To create today is to create dangerously,” Camus said, in his speech. “Any publication is an act. And that act exposes one to the passions of an age that forgives nothing.”

In other words, there is no sanctuary for artists, doers, makers, and creators in a dangerous age.

And though it’s hard to make comparisons between 1957 and today I think it’s safe to imagine that the news of our last few years, including a global pandemic leaving more than 6.6 million people dead, the rise of oligarchy and fascism, information warfare, another war in Europe, the election of Donald Trump, an insurrection and attempted coup in the US, systemic inequality and racism, social justice, the excesses of capitalism and neoliberalism, and global inaction regarding the climate emergency... All of these realities would leave Camus badly shaken. I mean, we can only guess, but do we think a writer with Camus’ conscience would look at society’s sclerotic response to climate change and say, “Eh, whatever.” Do we think the other great thinkers and doers whose exploits we celebrate in our collections and classrooms and performances and public programs would be counseling us to sit idly by, or to do the least we could do?
Family beehive

My own family inadvertently donated an enormous, beach-ball sized beehive to the Smithsonian when I was a kid. My mother had looked up the Smithsonian’s phone number in the yellow pages and called the main switchboard for advice on what to do about the bees. A day or two later a friendly Smithsonian entomologist took the bus out to our home to have a look. He was so impressed with the beehive that he put the whole thing in a huge garbage bag, tied it shut, and took it back to the office with him, on the bus, bees and all.

It gave us a thrill to know that our beehive had become part of the permanent collections of the Smithsonian Institution, even if the purpose and, well, logic of the exercise seemed a little confusing. Why did the Smithsonian have an entomologist in the first place? Didn’t he have anything better to do than take the bus around Washington collecting random beehives? Why did the Smithsonian have a zoo — with tigers, elephants, and panda bears — and a permanent exhibition of First Ladies’ gowns? Why have an Asian art museum — and a tropical research institute in the jungles of Panama? Why have George Washington’s battle sword, Abraham Lincoln’s personal handball (really), crates of fossilized dinosaur poop (coprolites, as they are called), and a $298 million contract to fly an x-ray space telescope for NASA? For that matter, why have a Smithsonian at all?

Beehives, Climate, and the Big Frikin’ Wall
But for one thing, we are usually only given access to “the designer’s share”

We are in dialogue with our practice, but our practice is out of date.
  - Smithsonian, 10 crates of gold
  - Bran Ferren, “museums full of shit on the wall”
  - Peter Schwartz “the model of enduring wisdom”

The truth is, we forged our concept of what a museum is and does in a simpler time.
And our “practice” is mostly mute on the questions that matter the most

British Museum
American public libraries in the 1950s, 1960s,...

The UN
It all must change — it all CAN change. For all of these systems were more or less designed. And if they were designed one way, they can be designed another way.
Standard Practice
And our “practice” is mostly mute on the questions that matter the most

British Museum
American public libraries in the 1950s, 1960s,...
The UN
It all must change — it all CAN change. For all of these systems were more or less designed. And if they were designed one way, they can be designed another way.

9-11 [next slide]
And our “practice” is mostly mute on the questions that matter the most

British Museum
American public libraries in the 1950s, 1960s,...
The UN
It all must change — it all CAN change. For all of these systems were more or less designed. And if they were designed one way, they can be designed another way.

9-11 [next slide]

[Basic idea is that I was at work at the Smithsonian on “9-11”. Terrorists crashed a jet into the Pentagon across the river from the Smithsonian. Many of us wanted the Smithsonian and other cultural institutions to help the public make sense of what had happened, but it never did. This was a failure. This “radicalized” many of us, so to speak. We had discovered tech and the Internet and the Web and already had the idea that museums could be something more than they were.
The Big Frikin’ Wall
The Big Frikin’ Wall

Where you are

Where you need to be

Standard Practice

Where you are
The Big Frikin’ Wall

Where you are

Adapted from Kathy Sierra.

Where you need to be
Where you are
Where you get with safe/incremental work
Where you need to be

Adapted from Kathy Sierra.

The Big Frikin’ Wall
The Big Frikin’ Wall

Where you are

Where you get with safe/incremental work

What does this look like in today’s world?

Where you need to be

Adapted from Kathy Sierra. https://www.usingdata.com/usingdata/a-selection-of-awesome-graphics-about-user
Stakes are high. A confusing time to be alive.

Weasel in Large Hadron Collider in April, 2016.

A Weasel Just Shut Down The Large Hadron Collider, According to Reports

The largest and most powerful atom smasher on the planet has been taken offline. And it's all thanks to a little weasel.

According to internal documents, the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) at CERN, a 27-kilometre underground ring used to collide particles at nearly the speed of light, is experiencing some issues.

https://www.sciencealert.com/a-weasel-has-reportedly-just-shut-down-the-large-hadron-collider-according-to-reports
2020–

Pandemic with 6m dead worldwide so far (>976k in USA); Trump advises injecting the body with bleach; conspiracy theories; fake news; Almost went to war with N. Korea, Iran, ourselves; Wildfires in California and Australia; Brexit; George Floyd was murdered by a police officer and the Black Lives Matter protests went global; presidential election in USA; grinding disinformation, fascism fueled by 3rd party social media; Trump impeached twice; Armed takeovers of Michigan state house and US capitol (technically 2021).

*And now a war in Europe.*

Stakes are pretty high

A confusing time to be alive
Only 11 Years Left to Prevent Irreversible Damage from Climate Change, Speakers Warn during General Assembly High-Level Meeting

Ambition, Urgency Needed to Address Global Emergency, Secretary-General Says

Just over a decade is all that remains to stop irreversible damage from climate change, world leaders heard today as the General Assembly opened a high-level meeting on the relationship between the phenomenon and sustainable development.

The meeting — held pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/219 (2017) — will run through 29 March with a focus on protection of the global climate for present and future generations, in the context of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

“We are the last generation that can prevent irreparable damage to our planet,” General Assembly President María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés (Ecuador) warned the gathering in her
Greta Thunberg:

*Our house is on fire...*

*Adults keep saying: “We owe it to the young people to give them hope.”*

*But I don’t want your hope. I don’t want you to be hopeful.*

*I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel inside me every day.*

*And then I want you to act.*

Wouldn’t it be better, we asked, to pursue some intermediate aims?

A young woman called Lizia Woolf stepped forward. She hadn’t spoken before, but the passion, grief and fury of her response was utterly compelling. “What is it that you are asking me as a 20-year-old to face and to accept about my future and my life? … This is an emergency. We are facing extinction. When you ask questions like that, what is it you want me to feel?”

We had no answer.

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/nov/14/earth-death-spiral-radical-action-climate-breakdown
Bill McKibben: Winning Slowly Is the Same as Losing

The technology exists to combat climate change – what will it take to get our leaders to act?

By BILL MCKIBBEN

“If we don’t win very quickly on climate change then we will never win. That’s the core truth about global warming. It’s what makes it different from every other problem our political systems have faced.”

https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/bill-mckibben-winning-slowly-is-the-same-as-losing-198205/
"The excruciating power of Zweig’s memoir lies in the pain of looking back and seeing that there was a small window in which it was possible to act, and then discovering how suddenly and irrevocably that window can be slammed shut."

https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/when-its-too-late-to-stop-fascism-according-to-stefan-zweig
If you've wondered what you would've done during slavery, the Holocaust, or Civil Rights movement... you're doing it now. #Charlottesville
Let me give you an example of how this plays out...

To do: add clickable/larger link
Symposium: 3 weeks after Trump pulled out of the Paris Accord.

Frances Morris, Director, Tate Modern:

“The reality for Tate, which is at national museum...we’re actually duty-bound not to be an activist institution. But I think we do have an incredibly important role.”

“And what I think we are trying to do at Tate modern, that I think speaks louder than any manifesto, or any action, is that our galleries are full of artists from many places across the world, and that there is a level of diversity in relation to gender and race and ethnic city and age.”

[Does this seem to you that the Tate director’ response is on par with the magnitude of the crisis?]
Informal Survey of 30 top global museums about a week after Trump pulled out of the Paris accord.

None of the elite natural history museums or similar orgs had anything about it on their web sites. Business as usual.

Greta Thunberg, UN Climate Change Conference, Katowice, 12 December 2018:

“We can not solve a crisis without treating it as a crisis.”
Who was taking on the job of informing the public about the significance of Trump & Paris?

Teen Vogue.

The Weather Channel.

Steak-umm sliced steak. (“100% beef. 100% delicious”)
Museums and libraries fight ‘alternative facts’ with a #DayofFacts

First the National Parks went rogue, sharing climate change data on Twitter. Now museums and libraries have taken up arms — or at least typing fingers — to fight on behalf of facts.

Using the hashtag #DayofFacts, more than 280 scientific and cultural institutions are devoting Friday to dropping 140-character truths on Twitter. Many of the facts seem pointedly political — like the National Museum of American Jewish History’s tweet about a George Washington letter affirming religious freedom in the country, or a placard held up in a video by Chicago’s Field Museum that stated “Climate change is accelerating the extinction of plants and animals.”

The political undertone is the goal, according to Ali Hartley, a museum educator from Virginia who helped organize the campaign with her colleague Mara Kurlandsky.

2 cultural workers on their own time.

(280 scientific and cultural institutions signed up to participate.)

Climate acts like an X-ray on our practice.

Especially because climate requires action. Doing something.

“If you want to know what someone’s values are watch when they have to make a decision that costs them something.” - a biz school professor at the Getty leadership institute.
Climate acts like an X-ray on our practice

The information deficit model of behavior change

Access to information → Knowledge → Wisdom

This model from museology and library science is incomplete. It only builds part of a bridge...
Climate acts like an X-ray on our practice

“Providing people with accurate information doesn’t seem to help”

Climate acts like an X-ray on our practice

“One thing is clear: just giving people information doesn’t work to change [entrenched] behaviors.”

- Ann-Christine Duhaime, M.D.
  Minding the Climate, p181
Climate acts like an X-ray on our practice

“There remains a gap between pro-environmental intent and the actual impact of specific behavioral actions, even among people who have pro-environmental attitudes....

Ann-Christine Duhaime, M.D.
Minding the Climate p 215-16
Climate acts like an X-ray on our practice

“...People can know about climate change intellectually, but they have many justifications that can be utilized when it's just easier to keep doing what they've been doing without making bothersome changes [...] The brain is equipped to adapt based on what's happening right now, and can find ways to attend [to climate action] selectively.”

Ann-Christine Duhaime, M.D.
Minding the Climate p 215-16
Climate acts like an X-ray on our practice

Action is very hard for us. A foreign language.
Thin engagement
Temporary, shallow attention

Symbolic outcomes

Impactful outcomes

Thick engagement
Focused, long term effort, often collaborating in small groups

Model derived from Ethan Zuckerman, MIT
Thin engagement
Temporary, shallow attention

1. Pledging/liking
Liking something on Facebook

Symbolic outcomes

Impactful outcomes

Thick engagement
Focused, long term effort,
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Model derived from Ethan Zuckerman, MIT
Thin engagement
Temporary, shallow attention

1. Pledging/liking
   Like something on Facebook

2. Voting
   Designed to be like,
   But is impactful (like,
   because it has infrastructure
   behind it)

Symbolic outcomes

Impactful outcomes

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Thin engagement
Temporary, shallow attention

Symbolic outcomes
1. Pledging/liking
   Liking something on Facebook

Impactful outcomes
2. Voting
   Designed to be like
   But is impactful (like
   "because it has infrastructure
   behind it")

Thick engagement
Focused, long term effort,
after collaborating in small groups

3. The Occupy Movement
   Very intense, 1:1 collaboration,
   but not focused on specific
   change/policy goals

Model derived from Ethan Zuckerman, MIT
Thin engagement
Temporary, shallow attention

1. Pledging/liking
   Like something on Facebook

2. Voting
   Designed to be lite
   But it is impactful (like:
   "because it has infrastructure
   behind it")

Symbolic outcomes

Impactful outcomes

3. The Occupy Movement
   Very intense, 1:1 collaboration,
   but it is not focused on specific
campaign/policy goals

4. "Occupy Sandy"
   Occupy Wall St. became the local
   offensive on-the-ground response
team after Hurricane Sandy
   (distributing aid, taking people to
debates, etc.)

Thick engagement
Focused, long term effort,
often collaborating in small groups

Model derived from Ethan Zuckerman, MIT
Thin engagement
Temporary, shallow attention

Symbolic outcomes

Impactful outcomes

Thick engagement
Focused, long term effort, often collaborating in small groups

Model derived from Ethan Zuckerman, MIT
I see many examples where impactful work begins with small, symbolic acts....

Over time, interaction, structure, infrastructure, & creativity are added to make interactions thicker, more focused, more impactful.

Some examples:
- Ministry for the future (shoes->political pledges->citizens Assemblies->political responsibility rights of future generations)
- Prof. Giuseppe Delmestri #sabbadicycle
- Occupy Sandy
- Times Square (tactical urbanism!)
- Congressional Modernization Committee (link, design for civic meeting in US congress)
- Solutions Journalism Network
- “Germany Talks”
- Folger Shakespeare Library (counter example)
- Gold Kimonos (Krznaric)

Notes (work in progress /Mike, Feb 14)

Prof. Giuseppe Delmestri
Head Institute for Change Management, WU Vienna, & Vice-Chair EGOS

#sabbadicycle, 2400km, Italy to Tallinn. For EGOS European Group on Social Studies 2022.

Arrested in a protest in Austria.

“...the contention that the university teacher should be entirely devoid of ‘passion’ and that s/he should avoid all subjects which threaten to arouse over-heated controversies constitutes a narrow-minded, bureaucratic opinion which every independent teacher must reject.” - Max Weber, The meaning of “ethical neutrality” Os4future.
Climate acts like an X-ray on our practice

Incrementalism
Trust (and risk)
“Culture”
Digitality
Politics
Agency
An incomplete change model
All that being said, don’t obsess about what’s holding you back; focus on what’s over here on the other side.
Next slides, projects/people who have seen through, around, over the Big Frikin' Wall.
Standing up to book bans, The Brooklyn Public Library is letting all teens access their online catalogue, free.

https://www.bklynlibrary.org/books-unbanned
Internet Archive National Emergency Library and Controlled Digital Lending
The YNot Lot ("why not?")
A free community performance/meeting venue in a shipping container in Baltimore, Maryland, USA
https://www.stationnorth.org/ynot
National Portrait Gallery (USA) deputy director Nik Apostolides received complaints of local youth hanging out on the museum’s steps. He invited them in and, with DC Public Library, helped the young people use the museum in their own way.

“The brainchild of the D.C. Public Library’s Rebecca Renard and professional designer (and former Project Runway contestant) Carmen Webber, the event brought together girls and boys ranging from 13 to 17 years of age. It all took place at Martin Luther King, Jr. Library and the National Portrait Gallery’s Kogod Courtyard”

Via https://dcist.com/story/11/08/08/rip-this-runway-at-mlk-library/
Museum of Solutions, Mumbai (MuSo)

*Boldly Child Led, Opening 2023*

[https://www.museumofsolutions.in/know-muso/](https://www.museumofsolutions.in/know-muso/)
Other examples:

National Geographic Society shift from *neutrality* to social & environmental issues arising from *last/next 100 years* discussion in the 1980s
MIT Open Courseware arising from faculty strategic planning on the future of education in the 1990s.
Climate acts like an X-ray on our practice

Where you need to be

Talk to people who are already over here...

...and build know-how and confidence here, and the wall starts to dissolve.

“Confidence is a feeling which reflects the coherence of the information and the cognitive ease of processing it.”

Daniel Kahneman
Thinking Fast and Slow
Two big clarifying questions:

What are our obligations?

What is consequential?
What are our obligations?

*Why do we need to do anything at all?*
What are our obligations?

**Why do we need to do anything at all?**

1. **Every sector must be transformed**
   ...By 2050, and sooner. // Me: If I were a shoemaker I would be angry that the shoemaker’s sector was so passive and detached. Our societies must be *transformed*. Climate requires effort/risk from every sector of society.

2. **“Culture” is needed (and M.I.A*)**
   We know we can’t just deliver technocratic solutions to every community in the world. There is a “cultural” component to change.

3. **Core values + needs are aligned with this moment!**
   This is the “for the future” part of the “study the past” equation! Relevance. Impact. Unfinished transformation (participatory, community, co-creation). Business model (€1.8 trillion on the table now; €100m N. Euro. Bauhaus; $23 trillion in emerging markets by 2030 per ifc.org)

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*Missing In Action*
What are our obligations?

Why do we need to do anything at all?

4. **Human rights**

   People have a fundamental human right to determine the kind of world they want to live in.
What are our obligations?

*Why do we need to do anything at all?*

5. The “handoff” between different sectors of society is broken
   ...Broken by the speed and scale of change.
What are our obligations?

*Why do we need to do anything at all?*

5. **The “handoff” between different sectors of society is broken**
   ...Broken by the speed and scale of change.

   So everybody has to do 1 more thing (more risk, more boldness, more creativity) than in *normal* times. “A bridge to action.”

   *It’s not fair, but nobody said it has to be fair.*
What are our obligations?

Why do we need to do anything at all?

5. The “handoff” between different sectors of society is broken

Outdated notions of “trust” and “neutrality” often hold us back in the sector. Trust is thought of as something that is earned, but not spent.

This crisis is mirrored and accentuated in journalism, which has been reluctant to deviate from the illusion of neutrality re: social justice, climate, and the rise of fascism.

See also Museums are not Neutral.
https://www.museumsarenotneutral.com/learn-more/we-are-stronger-together

To do: add slide after this one that unpacks the “trust”/handoff examples, for example, from Wash Post

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/01/30/newsrooms-news-reporting-objectivity-diversity/
“The American mainstream press must make a choice: Will it double down on its commitment to detached, nonpartisan neutrality? Or will it [elect to] defend truth and democracy?”


“The consensus among younger journalists is that we got it all wrong. Objectivity has got to go.”

_Opinion: Newsrooms that move beyond ‘objectivity’ can build trust. By Leonard Downie Jr. Jan 30, 2023 (link)_
What is consequential?
What kind of action matters?

What is consequential?
What is consequential?

What kind of action matters?

- Educate ourselves

“The first step [is...] to know your s**t.”

https://anildash.com/2012/12/13/the_web_we_lost/
What kind of action matters?

- Educate ourselves

What is consequential?
This list of books, essays, and articles are posted on my website:

https://www.usingdata.com/usingdata/links-for-nemo-webinar
THE CARBON ALMANAC
IT'S NOT TOO LATE


This is The Carbon Almanac: A book of facts about climate change. Containing tables, infographics, images, definitions, history, quotations, and resources. We are a collective of artists, entrepreneurs, scientists, teachers, and humans who believe it is not too late to stop climate change. JOIN US.

Foreword by SETH GODIN

Minding the Climate
How Neuroscience Can Help Solve Our Environmental Crisis

Ann-Christine Duhaime, M.D.
Indigenous Youth Represent Their Culture to Demand Action

In the months leading up to the 2017 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) held in Paris, a group of young activists from the Guna Yala indigenous community came together to organize a unique sail. They planned to sail their sailboat, a “Mola,” to Glasgow to bring attention to the effects of rising oceans on the Guna homelands. The traditional colorful handmade mola cloth, a unique technique used for the sail, is unique to the region.

The Guna people (about 1,000 live in Guna Yala, a province primarily located on the San Blas Islands in the Caribbean Sea). The islands are in danger of being submerged by sea level rise in the next several decades. The Guna youth, active participants in the 2020, a 10-year leadership development campaign for global climate action, planned to sail their sailboat to Paris in 2020 and launch globally in 2021. The sailboat is a unique sailboat, a “Mola,” the sail is handmade by 37 Guna artisans, and at 40 square meters is the largest Mola ever created. To ensure that the entire sail is unique to the region, the sail was made by 37 Guna artisans, and at 40 square meters is the largest Mola ever created.

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The majority of the Guna people (about 1,000 live in Guna Yala, a province primarily located on the San Blas Islands in the Caribbean Sea). The islands are in danger of being submerged by sea level rise in the next several decades. The Guna youth, active participants in the 2020, a 10-year leadership development campaign for global climate action, planned to sail their sailboat to Paris in 2020 and launch globally in 2021. The sailboat is a unique sailboat, a “Mola,” the sail is handmade by 37 Guna artisans, and at 40 square meters is the largest Mola ever created.

To ensure that the entire sail is unique to the region, the sail was made by 37 Guna artisans, and at 40 square meters is the largest Mola ever created.
Whose Job Is It?

The roles of government, business, and individuals in creating change
Business Disruption from the Inside Out

By Forrest Briscoe & Abhinav Gupta
Illustration by Klaus Kremmerz

Employees increasingly want their employers to become more responsible corporate citizens. Here is a playbook for how employees can be effective change agents and how leaders can respond to employee activism.

https://ssir.org/articles/entry/business_disruption_from_the_inside_out

Good for internal changemaking…

Leverage Points
Places to Intervene in a System

Sustainability Institute

by Donella Meadows

Losing Earth: The Decade We Almost Stopped Climate Change

By Nathaniel Rich
Photographs and Videos by George Steinmetz
AUG. 1, 2018

The Insect Apocalypse Is Here

What does it mean for the rest of life on Earth?

...Unpacks the idea of what a “discipline” is.
Chapter 3: The Thicket of Life

(Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants by Robin Wall Kimmerer and Ways of Being: Animals, Plants, Machines: The Search for a Planetary Intelligence by James Bridle)
Think big, start small, move fast
Digital Strategy in a Changing World

https://slideshare.net/edsonm
…And when you're sick of it all and just need a break.
What is consequential?

What kind of action matters?

- Educate ourselves
- Build from symbolic to impactful

Use the “Zuckerman Quadrant” to understand where your projects currently stand, and to think about how you can nudge them towards increasingly impactful outcomes.

Model from Ethan Zuckerman, MIT
What kind of action matters?

- Educate ourselves
- Work from thin/symbolic to thick/impactful

What is consequential?

At a strategy session in a barn in Leiden, with the Ministry for the Future and other Dutch collaborators. They literally walked through their options.
What kind of action matters?

- Educate ourselves
- Build from symbolic to impactful
- A bigger N (Greta Thunberg)

We must get dramatically more people aware/involved (though beware “awareness raising” as its own end: must design for doing, too.)
What kind of action matters?

- Educate ourselves
- Build from symbolic to impactful
- A bigger N (Greta Thunberg)

"The bigger your carbon footprint — the bigger your moral duty. The bigger your platform — the bigger your responsibility"
The global scouting organization pledged 1 billion hours of effort towards the SDGs...and got 2 billion hours! Now they’re going for 4!

Here’s to completing 2,000,000,000 HOURS OF SERVICE for @GlobalGoalsUN by #Scouts around the world! 🌍

Our next goal is to DOUBLE this! 👏 Let’s reach 4 billion hours of community service by 2030!

sdgs.scout.org
What is consequential?

What kind of action matters?

- Educate ourselves
- Build from symbolic to impactful
- A bigger N (Greta Thunberg)
- Change the information flow
- Change the rules of the system
PLACES TO INTERVENE IN A SYSTEM
(in increasing order of effectiveness)

9. Constants, parameters, numbers (subsidies, taxes, standards).
8. Regulating negative feedback loops.
7. Driving positive feedback loops.
6. Material flows and nodes of material intersection.
5. Information flows.
4. The rules of the system (incentives, punishments, constraints).
3. The distribution of power over the rules of the system.
2. The goals of the system.
1. The mindset or paradigm out of which the system — its goals, power structure, rules, its culture — arises.
Leverage Points
Places to Intervene in a System

PLACES TO INTERVENE IN A SYSTEM
(in increasing order of effectiveness)

9. Constants, parameters, numbers (subsidies, taxes, standards).
8. Regulating negative feedback loops.
7. Driving positive feedback loops.
6. Material flows and nodes of material intersection.
5. Information flows.
4. The rules of the system (incentives, punishments, constraints).
3. The distribution of power over the rules of the system.
2. The goals of the system.
1. The mindset or paradigm out of which the system — its goals, power structure, rules, its culture — arises.
Start Debating! "Germany Talks"

ZEIT ONLINE matched up 1,200 people across Germany to meet up for face-to-face political debates. How did we do it? Here’s a look behind the scenes.

9. März 2018,

In summer 2017, some 12,000 Germans registered to participate in the ZEIT ONLINE project "Deutschland spricht". They agreed to meet up personally with someone from their neighborhood or region who held opposing political views and to have an hourlong discussion with that person. Here is how it happened.
Director Meta Knol: “The community bonus” (by redefining the flows, rules, power, and goals of the system). 365 days of events.
365 DAYS CURIOUS

KNOWLEDGE THROUGHOUT THE NEIGHBOURHOODS

Knowledge throughout the Neighbourhoods builds bridges between science and local society. It is a co-creation project in which we extract and share science, knowledge, art and expertise in the capillaries of Leiden and the region.

https://leiden2022.nl/en
People from all over the world are sending emails to Melbourne’s trees

Melbourne gave 70,000 trees email addresses so people could report on their condition. But instead people are writing love letters, existential queries and sometimes just bad puns.

By Margaret Burin
Story Lab

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-12-12/people-are-emailing-trees/10468964
Dear Rose Gum,

Over the past year I have cycled by you each day and want you to know how much joy you give me.

No matter the weather or what is happening around you, you are strong, elegant and beautiful. I wanted you to know.

Love.

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-12-12/people-are-emailing-trees/10468964
What kind of action matters?

- Educate ourselves
- Build from symbolic to impactful
- A bigger $N$ (Greta Thunberg)
- Change the information flow
- Change the rules of the system
- Build solidarity
There isn’t mystery about how climate change has come about: Big emitting countries have created the problem. Tension is already there about this, and it will get far worse as impacts are felt.

If we let the problems of climate change force us apart and create divisions, that in itself will become even more significant than the climate crisis. They will dwarf the climate problem itself.

We are going to need to work on a deeper and more cultural level in order to counter the tensions and divisions climate will generate. We must work on things that promote that solidarity and unity of purpose. We need to be working in ways to build human solidarity — a sense that we are in this together and only by cooperating are we going to be able to tackle this problem.

As part of that we should use the opportunity of the internet and digital tech for its original purpose, which is to build that shared sense of purpose and that shared sense of belonging. And rediscovering that capacity of the Internet and of digital tools is I think a great hope and possibility.

— Tom Pravda
What is consequential?

What kind of action matters?

- Educate ourselves
- Build from symbolic to impactful
- A bigger N (Greta Thunberg)
- Change the information flow
- Change the rules of the system
- Build solidarity
Our sector has an allergic reaction to the term: toxic

...But we have been badly miseducated about activism, And the art of activism has a lot to tell us about agency, impact, community, and change.
The “repertoire of contention” contains options for everyone.
Aids Memorial Quilt

National Institutes of Health via NPS, AIDS quilt in front of the Washington Monument, DC (Public Domain) https://flic.kr/p/HRP3Qk
A great explainer video about a simple but effective campaign.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FtUQNnmYE1E
1. The power to transcend paradigms

There is yet one leverage point that is even higher than changing a paradigm. That is to keep oneself unattached in the arena of paradigms, to stay flexible, to realize that no paradigm is “true,” that every one, including the one that sweetly shapes your own worldview, is a tremendously limited understanding of an immense and amazing universe that is far beyond human comprehension. It is to “get” at a gut level the paradigm that there are paradigms, and to see that that itself is a paradigm, and to regard that whole realization as devastatingly funny. It is to let go into Not Knowing, into what the Buddhists call enlightenment.

Donella Meadows, Leverage Points. The most powerful way to transform a system is to change the paradigm out of which the system arises.
Projects

23 Climate Things

23 Climate Things is a new global initiative designed to help the library, museum and cultural sectors become dramatically more engaged with the climate emergency.

https://climatethings.org
Projects

The Culture for Climate Innovation Prize

The Culture for Climate Innovation Prize is to be a €10-million incentive competition that will award its purse to the first cultural organizations to generate 10-million hours of bottom-up community effort towards the climate emergency.
Climate Things

Join us! Climate Things is an emerging global collective of library, museum, and cultural professionals* who develop transformational initiatives for culture and climate action.

* And many other types of people. Not sure if you belong here? You do. Join us.

https://climatethings.org
used to walk at night on the mountains overlooking the gulf of Genoa and light great bonfires of leaves and branches which he would watch as they burned. I have often dreamed of those fires and have occasionally imagined certain men and certain works in front of those fires, as a way of testing men and works. Well, our era is one of those fires whose unendurable heat will doubtless reduce many a work to ashes! But as for those which remain, their metal will be intact, and, looking at them, we shall be able to indulge without restraint in the supreme joy of the intelligence which we call 'admiration.'

One may long, as I do, for a gentler flame, a respite, a pause for musing. But perhaps there is no other peace for the artist than what he finds in the heat of combat. 'Every wall is a door,' Emerson correctly said. Let us not look for the door, and the way out, anywhere but in the wall against which we are living. Instead, let us seek the respite where it is — in the very thick of the battle. For in my opinion, and this is where I shall close, it is there. Great ideas, it has been said, come into the world as gently as doves. Perhaps then, if we listen attentively, we shall hear, amid the uproar of empires and nations, a faint
Coda

Throw your hat over the wall
“Frank O'Connor, the Irish writer, tells in one of his books how, as a boy, he and his friends would make their way across the countryside, and when they came to an orchard wall that seemed too high and too doubtful to try and too difficult to permit their voyage to continue, they took off their hats and tossed them over the wall--and then they had no choice but to follow them.”

President John F. Kennedy
San Antonio Texas
Nov 21, 1963

https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-speeches/san-antonio-tx-19631121
Think big.
Start small.
Move fast.

Thank you!
Michael Peter Edson
https://usingdata.com