
Methods #6: Spreading the message



Deciding on the attitude towards spreading the word is one of the basic elements of an action - with this chapter we want to question, how you would like others to see you/ your action group, what is the message of your action and who shall receive it. Here you can find methods related to the topics of media literacy, alternative journalism, media hacking and online security.

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6.1 Spreading the word

Not mentioning the action is also an action. However you would like to position the activity, it will become a statement - either an anonymous group painting a huge mural, or animal activists giving interviews in the mainstream media about their action, the action still will be a statement itself. We share the experience on what we find important in sharing the word, and give concrete methods and link to ideas on how to create alternative media channels yourself.

Its your action, your message and your show and an opportunity to formulate and voice your opinions in the way you would like to.

Lab experiment: Subversive strategies for distributing a Fanzine

Target group:

Any

Group size:

3-10

We open this "Wall of Knowledge" with the following "Subversive Strategies for actions/projects diffusion" that were conceived and developed during the Madrid MASTA HANDBOOK experimental workshop that took place at Medialab-Prado on January 2014 (<http://medialab-prado.es/article/tallerdeexperimentacionconelmanualdeactivismocreativomasta> English version available by changing the website's language). On the last part of the second session of this 2-day workshop, the 30 participants gathered their minds together with the aim of finding innovative strategies for distributing a fanzine -in this case the collaborative mini fanzine that was created previously during the first part of the workshop. The ideas and reflections aroused are quite universal anyway and can be applicable or adapted to diverse diffusion plans of other kind of actions.

Defining a strategy

There are several ways you can launch onto the outer space your message: may it be intervening in the everyday life or organizing deliberately a big event, by interacting on kindred-places or by occupying 'other' territories...

Since our actions normally take place in public spaces or at least involving other people, we never know what would be exactly the outcome of the action. Nevertheless, it is important you take into account your expectations and desired goals in advance, because from this 'diffusion strategy' might depend the impact of your message.

On a first stage some basic questions, in the same way like when you plan how you will carry out you action, might be helpful in order to find a diffusion strategy appropriate to you action/project:

What is the core of my message? What I pretend to say? /// Who do I want to receive it: wide & diverse part of the society or a concrete target group? /// Which tools/materials are going to be necessary? /// Will I violate any law by placing by message where I am planning to (it could also be the purpose)? /// Do I want to get feedbacks? /// Do I want to track the results? /// Do I want to sell it (in the case of a self-edited material or DIY product)?

During the Fanzine workshop in Madrid, the groups came up with the following strategies:

- - **Everyday's disruption**

The message gets to a wider and heterogeneous audience. It gets introduced on people's routines, quite unconsciously taken and raising people's attention more easily by not expecting to see what they are seeing.

This monotony-break many times acts like a mind-shaking, which potentially will be better remembered and with higher possibilities of being shared within the direct circle of the people who witness the message ("Do you know what happened to me today when walking the dog?")

- - **Kindred-places**

A neighborhood particularly active on participation or social mobilization, one that faces the problematic that we are actually trying to denounce with our action (in this case a fanzine), coffee places/bars, cultural /community centers

and institutions/associations that normally support causes alike, etc.

By using these spaces, we may seek to strengthen not only our message but our 'action network' among active and mobilized agents like us; as well as, being very positive for letting others know our methods, techniques and topics of action, creating a nice exchange of knowledge and allowing other actors to get inspired by our actions.

- - **The 'others' territory**

There is no better vindication than forcing the 'others' facing the reality. The others can be the ones that are actually directly responsible of the problematic we are talking about (politics, companies, particular groups of the society,...), can be the ones that unconsciously are not aware of the problematic, can be groups of the citizenship less active on social participation,...

Hopefully the impact results more shocking than in other situations. With this strategy maybe the chances of people's engagement are lower but higher chances of stirring up controversy and therefore generate a fruitful debate. Even though, there is a risk of reaching people just superficially (people not trespassing the 'stunning' level and not getting the message in depth) depending on our expectation, could be good enough just to bring the topic to the attention of a new social group.

- - **Random spots**

Leaving it up to the fate who and where find it. Maybe filming how the people react when finding, and even making some tracking.

- - **No physical places - The Internet**

Which means we can focus our strategy and distribution on the net. Here is also our choice to choose the tactic of placing our message on 'hostile cyber-territories' or friendly online communities.

In this case the chances to get to wider audiences are obviously big, it allows tracking the results, to create an online network that can make stronger the live participants network, to be shared on social media, etc.

Finding a catchy motto

The use of mottos provides some first-sight information or at least a frame that will contextualize your message. You can, again, decide to be quite clear with your words or, on the other hand, contribute even more with the unexpected situation.

“I am an error” or “I should not be here” were two of the ones suggested for placing the fanzines in locations that none could expect or where it don't belong at all.

Placing it

According to the different strategies mentioned before, the group came up with several possible allocations where they could place this collaborative fanzine that addresses (among other issues related) the problems of housing, consumerism and youth.

Everyday's disruption

- Distributed as a free newspaper at the entrance of the underground.
- The Supplement: so when someone buys her/his daily newspaper or weekly magazine will get a free (and unexpected) supplement.

Of course it also works with free press, store catalogues, supermarket magazines, real state leaflets...

- In mailboxes
- At cash machines (on a Saturday, to make sure it will not be removed till Monday)
- Kindred-places
- Get in touch with supporting local associations or groups of social mobilization
- The 'others' territories
- Advertising: for example placing the motto and link as an ad at the classifieds section of newspapers
- Kiosk intervention: placing as one of the numerous newspapers and magazines sold in the kiosk. How will the owner react when asked: “how much is this fanzine?”.

* This kind of intervention can be applied to bookstores, libraries, etc.

- The Involuntary Subscriber: Create a nice database with the addresses of politicians and relevant decision-makers that need to know about your claim and make sure they receive a copy of your fanzine. Be it one copy or one per day! Let's make sure s/he by interest or curiosity or boredom reads our message! We have to confess this is one of our favorites. Also because, on top of that, you can pick the "Reader of the Month", and dedicate her/him a nice profile on the website with information on why is such a devoted reader of the fanzine and why s/he became an involuntary subscriber.
- The Internet
- Create a website/microsite. There you can include a Forum for debates generated with the fanzine, update the new followers with new fanzines or new distribution points...
- Download (by direct link, QR code, in a USB flash drive embedded into a wall, a building or computers on public places like a library)
- Mapping (where the fanzines were found, where are they travelling...)

Making a Fanzine

Collaboratively creating a Fanzine as an Action.

Prepare different working spaces, according to the techniques you plan to use. This can be for example a collage area, typewriter area, scanner area e.t.c.

Each person write some of their ideas for topics for the Fanzine on small papers. We mix together all the proposals.

Depending on the size of your group, divide it in subgroups with 4 or 5 people in each.

Each group take 2,3 or 4 topics to work with, when creating the Fanzine.

Start to create! The groups go through the different areas to create the fanzine, exploring the techniques, and the materials.

At some point of the session, exchange the fanzines between the groups, so they continue working on the other Fanzines. Each group can intervene in the other Fanzine. In this way all the Fanzines will be created by the whole group.
