Culture Hack Method:
Intervene

How to make a message relevant to your community and the landscape of the struggle.

This process is directed towards generating the meaningful messages to convey the intention of the struggle for the chosen audiences.

Who

Creators, artists, writers, communicators, the people in an organization tasked with generating the communication products; be them graphic, audiovisual, in written format etc. Also community organizers, the people in an organization tasked with coordinating with involved communities.

/ CHM - Ask Index

How to engage with this step

This process requires a group of people capable of creating communication products of various kinds, as well as people connected with communities that are committed to disseminating and remixing said communication products. This process has a variable timeline because it depends on the scope of the intervention, but it usually necessitates at least a couple of days, but it can go to be a process of weeks.

/ INTERVENE

The Intervene step interprets the messages that we've recoded - our intended counter-narratives - to language and imagery that resonate with our intended audience(s), and then disseminates them in spaces our mapping analysis has identified as crossroads for the narratives. We're looking for influential nodes, engaged communities, and conversations that align or have the potential to align with our counter-narrative.
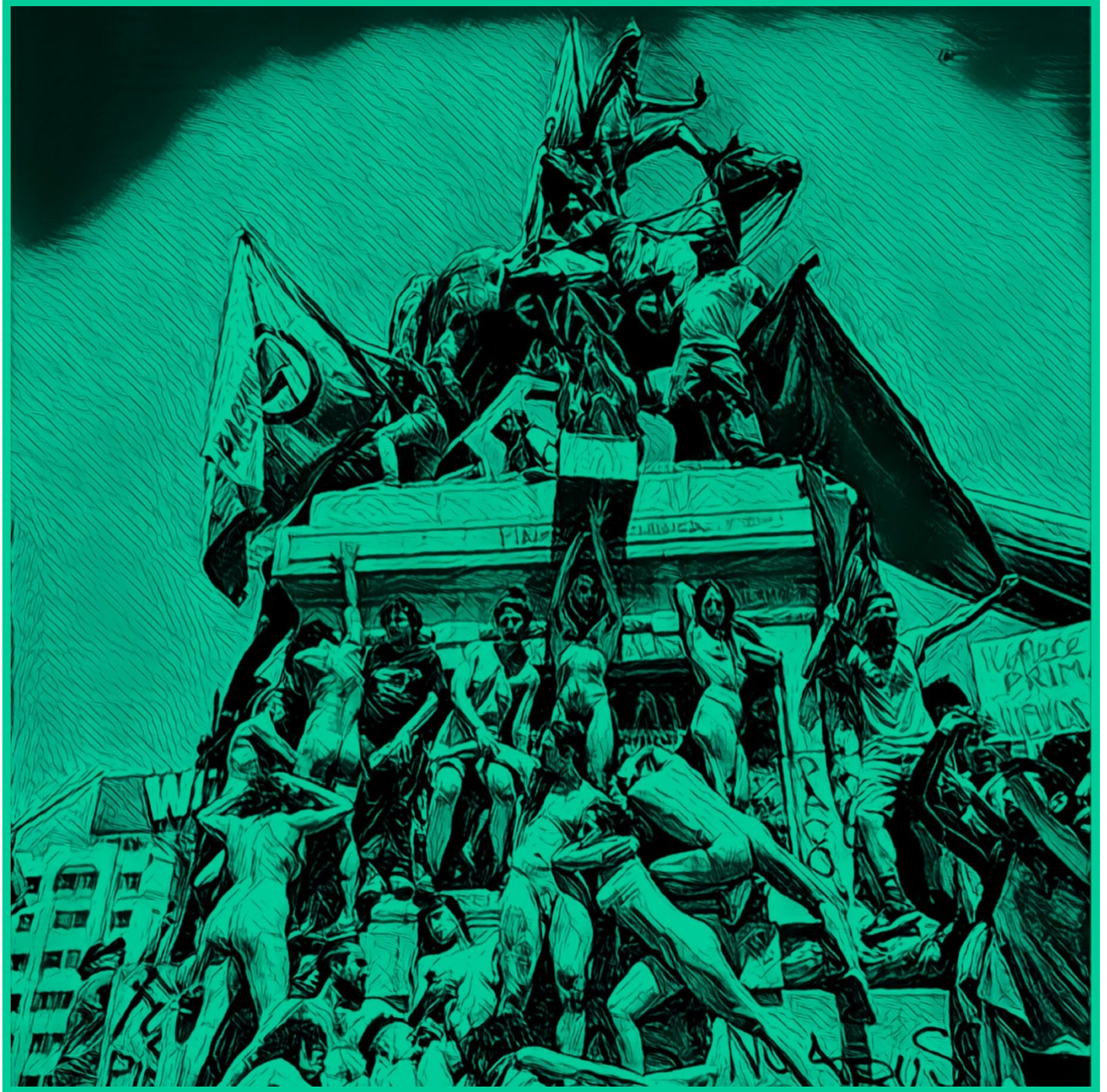
/ Theory

Culture Hacking holds a cyclical theory of systems change. Patterns of communication, social codes, thoughts, norms and even concepts of culture itself influence each other in a never-ending, emergent process. Intervention in one area cascades through the others, hacking the deep logic of hegemonic narratives and allowing alternatives to emerge.

In the Intervene stage of the work, we are taking the recoded frames/memes/messages and creating content vehicles for these ideas. Guiding questions for Intervening are: "What content vehicle will be most effective and memorable for putting narrative intention into practice: tweet, a fanzine, an infographic, a video, an encounter, an open letter, a press briefing, a hashtag... or all of the above?"

We then marry these content vehicles with an understanding of which media or nodes would be the most effective content channels for dispersion and amplification. We use an exercise called The Hacking Matrix, which helps us locate the public conversation in a matrix of (a) affinity to the hegemonic system and (b) type of knowledge or communication style that the conversation uses or represents. Using this matrix, we also define where we wish to move the conversation towards.

The process of Intervening is one of trial-and-error, incorporating learnings from the Culture Hacking process and echoes of other interventions. The goal is to craft interventions that make sense in the context of each struggle and provide feedback loops so we can continuously learn and re-apply new lessons to refine our Culture Hacking practice.

CREATIVE TRANSLATION: BUILDING ARTERNATIVES

Creative translation seeks to evoke the alternative worlds we imagine while still attacking the oppressive structures that sustain the hegemonic systems of today.

It starts by questioning ourselves, diving into questions like: "What does a world that is not patriarchal, not capitalistic, and not colonial, look like? What does its art look like? And how does the process of creating this art make way to this kind of world?

By focusing on the concepts of intersectionality, transdisciplinary and transgenerational knowledge, we start laying an alternative path, one that breeds arternatives.

DISSEMINATION

Whenever we refer to disseminate a message we refer to the ecosystem that we are part of and through an idea spreads. Its either social media, digital technologies or a combination of both. We evoke the metaphor of disseminating seeds because it's a process that breeds life and across millions of years has shared and recombined genetic material, stories and relationships to the land.

A good idea is not enough to create change. This is where collective knowledge of social movements and native peoples surface the most in Culture Hacking. Communication is an organizing process; the creation of emergent

narratives must be linked to those who will actively create and embody sustainable change. **(Anex II Communitarian strategies in time of resistance)**

/ Further reading

Rexiste collective project of political and artistic interventions in the public space that was born in the political context of the disappearances of 43 students in Mexico.

Artistas Aliados Organization of art school students and independent artists born in May 2012 during the # YoSoy132 movement. Currently formed as a group that includes people from various political and artistic positions.

Beautiful Rising a repository of tools, techniques and stories around activist interventions and campaigns in the global south.

Escola de Ativismo is an independent, non-partisan collective based in São Paulo and active in various regions of Brazil. The school provides training in grassroots and campaign strategies to organizations, collectives, movements and individuals working for greater democracy.

Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics connects scholars, artists, and activists working at the intersection of artistic practice and social transformation. Focusing on urgent issues of our time—from human rights and migration to racial, economic, and gender inequalities—we research politically engaged performance through gatherings, publications, and digital platforms in order to create new avenues for thought and action.

Not An Alternative NY-based collective and non-profit organization that works at the intersection of art, activism and pedagogy. It has a mission to affect popular understandings of events, symbols, institutions, and history.

The Center for Artistic Activism is a place to explore, analyze, and strengthen connections between social activism and artistic practice.

This projects have emerged from the collaborations of the group of activist and performers **Yesmen** who have systematized various ways of intervention

> **Beautiful Trouble** Is a book, web toolbox and international network of artist-activist trainers whose mission is to make grassroots movements more creative and more effective.

> **Yes Lab** A series of brainstorms and trainings to help activist groups carry out media-getting creative actions, focused on their own campaign goals.

> **Actipedia** An open-access, community-generated wiki to document, share, and inspire Creative Activism.

Radical Imagination Project was founded in 2010 as a platform to study, analyze, foment, broadcast and promote the radical ideas that emerge from social movements.

Destructables A DIY site for projects of protest and creative dissent.

/ Stories

#YoPrefieroElLago

The #YoPrefieroElLago campaign ("I prefer the lake") helped reframe the debate around the new airport of Mexico City and secure a win in a public consultation, resulting in the cancellation of the project. Change the frame, change the outcome.

#ElijoDignidad

The electoral season in Guatemala ran from June to August 2019, and a nationwide survey showed that one third of the country thought there would be fraud. But in the middle of a hopeless electoral process, a Mayan woman made us look to an alternative way. Thelma Cabrera, an indigenous peasant leader, who inspired a group of young people to start a culture hacking process to name the defense of life at the center of the electoral narrative.
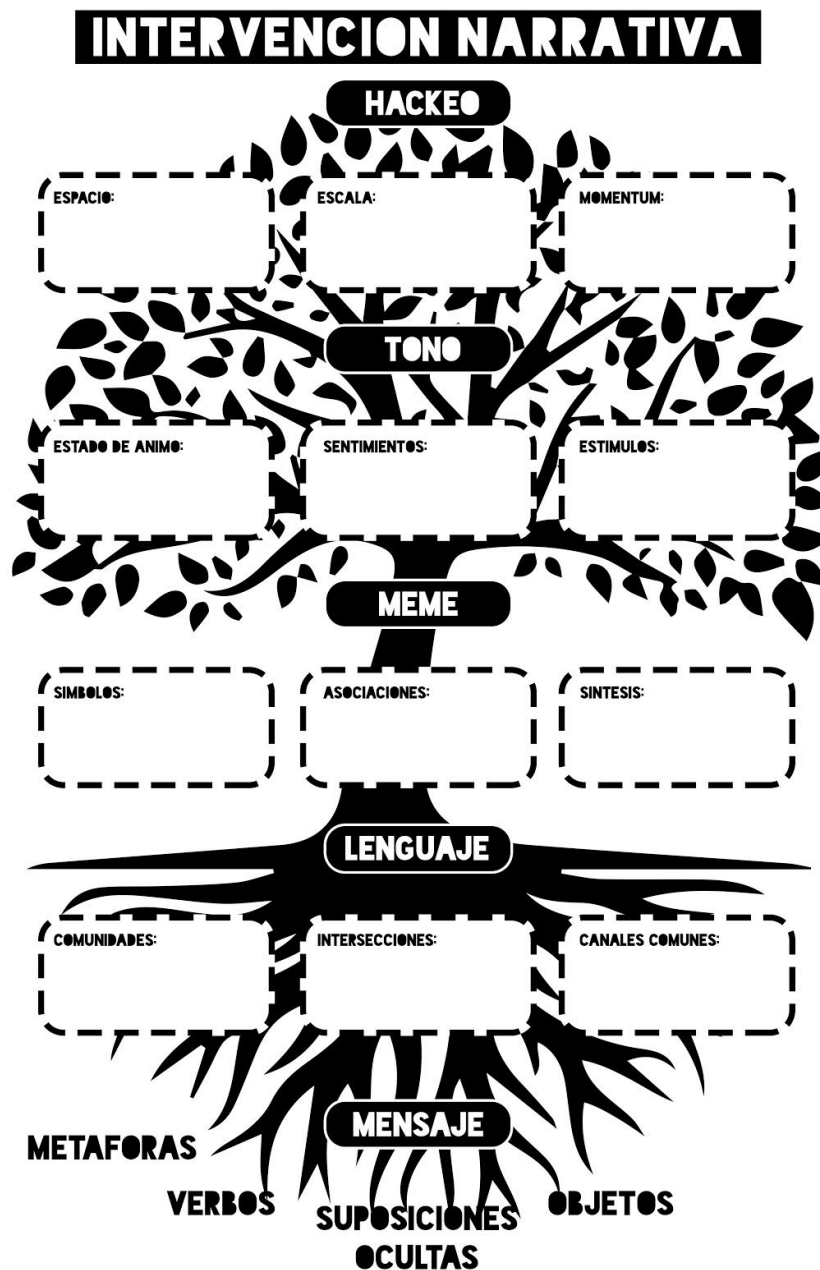
Style Wars

Documentary is considered as the indispensable document of the New York street culture of the early 80s, the filmic record of a golden age of youth creativity that broke out in the world from a city in crisis.

/ The narrative intervention tree

A narrative intervention is like planting a tree.Through using The Hacking Matrix, we chose the most fertile narrative terrain to sow our interventions. Now is the time to choose and germinate the right tree. This exercise is the guide to design each of the practices that make up our strategy.

INTERVENCION NARRATIVA

HACKEO

ESPACIO:

ESCALA:

MOMENTUM:

TONO

ESTADO DE ANIMO:

SENTIMIENTOS:

ESTIMULOS:

MEME

SIMBOLOS:

ASOCIACIONES:

SINTESIS:

LENGUAJE

COMUNIDADES:

INTERSECCIONES:

CANALES COMUNES:

MENSAJE

METAFORAS

VERBOS

SUPOSICIONES
OCULTAS

OBJETOS

A narrative intervention is like planting a tree.Through using The Hacking Matrix, we chose the most fertile narrative terrain to sow our interventions. Now is the time to choose and germinate the right tree. This exercise is the guide to design each of the practices that make up our strategy.

At the roots of the tree is the **Recoded Message** which contains the logic we want to share. Inside the trunk we have the **Language** or the means by which the message travels: the **Meme** or the synthesis of the message that will be shared from person to person and the tone or the emotional and aesthetic profile of the intervention. Filling out the crown of the tree is the **Hack:** the place, the scale and time for the intervention.

1. Choose the Language

The right channel for the message to travel. As part of the mapping process, we have identified what type of communication mechanisms are being used in the conversation, as well as which are the most replicated, the most effective, the most connective. Now we have to choose the most appropriate channel to carry our message.

> **Communities** are a group of people who share narratives. What communities coexist on the narrative field we chose? What profile does each of them have? Describe them: who compose them, what age, gender, tastes, political positions and socio-economic situations.

> **Intersections (Crossroads)** are the points in common between the communities. What are the points in common, do people talk about the same topic? What discourses exist in common? What kind of posts do you share? Who are the influential people in these communities?

> **Common channels** are the specific means to express and represent ideas and feelings. At the intersections, what contents are the most shared, those that have more interaction, that generate more controversy? What language is appropriate? What creative language do we choose to be able to speak to the target audience: written, visual, audiovisual, sound, kinetic, gastronomic …?

2. Find the meme

"Meme" refers to something broader than funny Internet images: a meme is a cultural unit that has the capacity of self-replicate. Memes are everywhere around us: sayings, hashtags, images, clothes, metaphors, traditions, economic models are all memes. The "virality of ideas" long predates online memes as we're used to thinking about them.

Through Re-Coding, we identified a series of discourse elements that are important in the narrative we want to hack. These are the symbols, associations and essential building blocks of memes.

> **Symbols** the perceptible representation of an idea. Symbols are visual, aural, linguistic and physical representations of some concept or identity (for example, symbols of nation states

include flags and national anthems). Other symbolic relationships include habitual associations between two concepts, ideas or memories (the color blue is symbolic of the sky, although the color of the sky changes). We're looking to create a meme that intervenes, reconfigures, and remixes or vandalizes the symbols identified in the Re-Coding process, using actions that can transmit the message. Guiding questions: What symbols are important for the narrative communities we aim to reach? What symbols are important in the narrative we'd like to hack? What symbols we can intervene-reconfigure-remix-vandalize to generate a reaction in our audience?

Associations they're the reactions between ideas. How can we relate those pre-existing symbols with metaphors and hidden logics of our recode message? What elements does our message have that can be used in different contexts and with the language chosen to evoke them?

Synthesis means to use small and precise elements to transmit an idea. Less is more, a meme is more sherable while simpler and comprehensible to a broader audience: is easier to share a gif than a thesis. How can I better transmit my message in a few words-ideas? How can I better suit the symbols, associations and the synthesis to create a meme that viralizes my message?

3. Choose the emotional tone of the meme.

We already have the meme, but the same idea can generate different reactions in the same group of people. The same anecdote generates different emotional reactions depending on the genre in which it is told. The same photo generates different reactions depending on the saturation of the color; the same rhythm of a song evokes different emotions depending on the progression of the melody.

On one hand, we must understand how emotionally charged the conversation is - if our message evokes grief, we must be sensitive to the fact that has different stages: denial, anger, depression, acceptance. Our goal may be to accentuate a mood or modify it, this is part of the strategy we want to develop. Part of the decoding and linguistic processing helped us understand the moment in which the conversation is. Moods are lasting emotional situations that stand out from the rest of the emotional ups and downs, feelings are the most specific emotional reactions, stimuli activate feelings and emotions.

Mood the underlying feeling that persists over time. What is the fluctuation of the conversation (expansive, neutral or depressive)? What are the basic emotions that we can identify in this mood (optimism, love, submission, fright, disappointment, remorse ...)? Identify where it is on the emotional map.

Feelings the emotional reaction of people. Do we want to generate a positive or negative feeling? What feelings do we want to generate, where do we want to take the mood? Choose one or a combination of the emotional map and choose the intensity.

Stimuli external or internal signal capable of causing a reaction. This is a good time to invite to the process the people who have been trained and have experience in creative translation processes, but we must identify the people for the project. Are we going to invite a rapper or a cumbia group? If it were a movie or a song, what genre would we choose? What elements of the

form can also convey the structure? With what elements of communication can we generate the feelings we want to evoke?
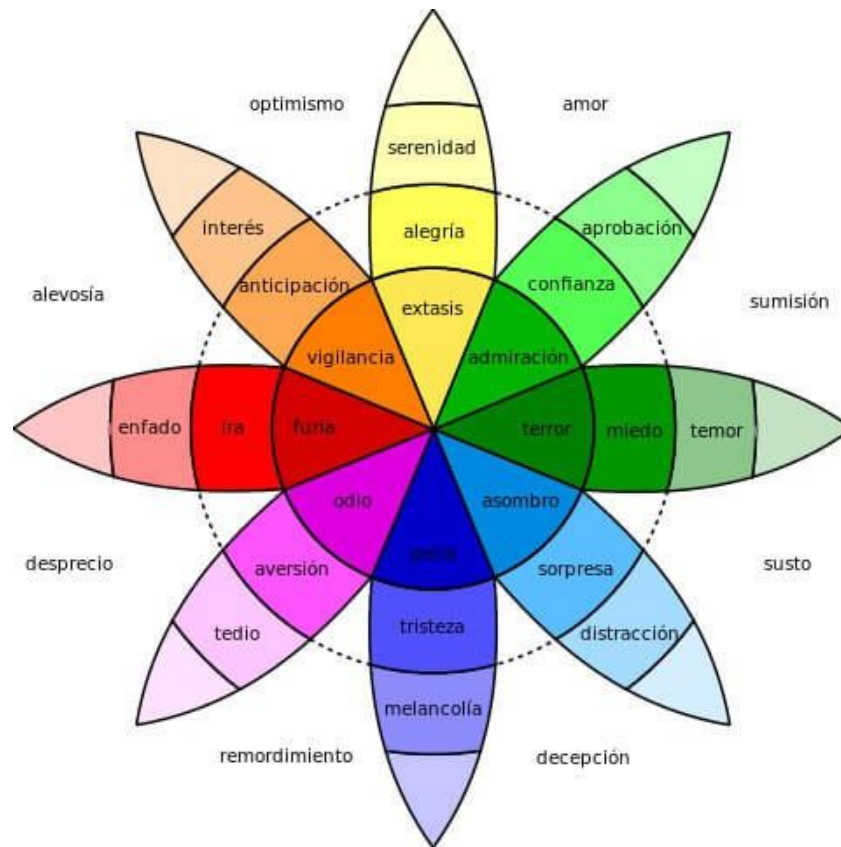
4. Plan the Hack (intervene the right place at the right time).

Time, space and scale are components equally important as the message for the culture hacking, they're the treetop. The considerations for planning a hack include:

Space: point of intervention Where does the intervention happen? Is it a public or private space? Is it a physical or virtual space? What political statement are we making at a specific point of intervention?

Here are some possible points of intervention:

- Points of production (a monoculture plantation, a maquiladora factory)
- Points of destruction (a mine, a place of deforestation)
- Points of consumerism (a store, a bank)
- Points of decision making (government offices, a corporate office)
- Points of assumption (a place where a narrative is based: a square where a flag is raised, a place heavy with symbolism: a statue or monument)
- Points of communication (social networks, TV stations)
- Points of counterculture (spaces that have been taken by the social organization and reappropriate power: anti-monuments, memorials, alternative culture spaces)
- Points of active imagination (spaces where networks and streets converse. In online movements like Indignados, Occupy Wall Street and #Yosoy132, public spaces have

become spots to activate and imagine other worlds possible. Unlike traditional vertical structures, they are decentralized and self-affiliated places.)

Scale: how big or small it must be to be relevant Think like a graffiti artist! A tag on the interior of a subway car will be seen by people traveling in that car, over and over again; a graffiti bomb on a street corner will be seen by passers-by. A large, colorful piece on the exterior of the car will as well, but those who go inside that car cannot see it.

The same thing happens in the virtual space. Do we want to communicate by impact or repetition? Do we want a message that fits everywhere or that'll be monumental?

Momentum: what is the right political moment As part of the active listening of the narratives we want to hack, we uncover if we are in a valley where the conversation is static or if we are in a peak where there's a lot of movement and exchange. It is useful to know the political agenda or the events that can untie the peaks in the conversation, people can be more open to talk about climate change if a natural disaster just happened, or they will talk about economy if a budget bill is being debated.

Sometimes we need to generate that momentum with our interventions. Is the conversation limp or active? How relevant is our message in this moment of the conversation? Do we foresee that the conversation will be more effervescent in the near future or should we create the momentum ourselves? (This could have an effect on the decision in the scale of the intervention)

Taking action

Back to the metaphor of the tree, an intervention grows from the bottom up, like life. We've chosen the language, found the meme, decided the tone and planned the hack. **It's now time to take action.**

It's important to mention that this is part of a process of trial and error, where we generate prototypes. We create opportunities to test these prototypes without using all of our energy on one intervention that we aren't sure will work. By using this method, we are able to take fewer uninformed chances and be more confident in the soundness of the work, but success will depend on knowing the narrative space we're hacking. When implementing a hack, it's important to have the tools to measure the impact of our actions in the narrative.

Let's plan as much as possible but be ready to improvise along the way.
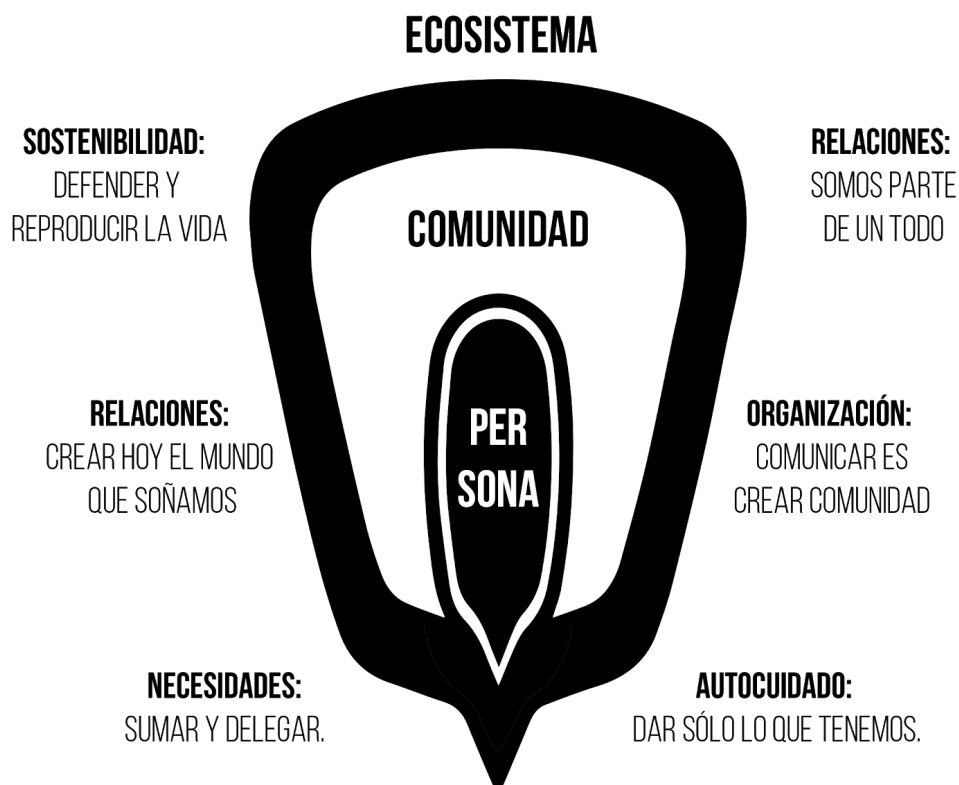
Spread the seeds, worksheet

Culture Hacking is a modular method that can be used by a small group of activists and by mass social movement alike. It's a series of steps and exercises that can be used as a complete process or as separate modules. In that sense, there is no recipe when it comes to dissemination and we trust that the accumulated knowledge of each social action space knows its means of communication-organization-sustainability best.

Here we propose an exercise that can be conducted collectively, however in the first question there should be room for self-criticism and honesty in terms of individual abilities and needs. We can go back to the intervention tree to identify **how are we going to operate the intervention.**

Above all, pay attention to:

1 Language > Common Channels: Do we have access to these languages and channels or should we partner with someone who is part of them?

3 Tone > Stimulus: For the tone we have chosen, do we have the capabilities within our community or do we need to invite other people who have these developed skills?

4 Hacking > Space: Does the intervention point we have chosen have security implications or the potential to jeopardize our integrity?

4 Hacking > Scale: Depending on the scope of the hack, do we have the capacity within our collective to act or should we ask for support?

4 Hacking > Momentum: What impact can our narrative intervention have if it works well? Are we prepared for what may come next? Should we fail, do we have a resilient community?

ECOSISTEMA

SOSTENIBILIDAD:
DEFENDER Y
REPRODUCIR LA VIDA

RELACIONES:
SOMOS PARTE
DE UN TODO

COMUNIDAD

RELACIONES:
CREAR HOY EL MUNDO
QUE SOÑAMOS

ORGANIZACIÓN:
COMUNICAR ES
CREAR COMUNIDAD

**PER
SONA**

NECESIDADES:
SUMAR Y DELEGAR.

AUTOCUIDADO:
DAR SÓLO LO QUE TENEMOS.

Persona - what are the implications for me as an individual?

Self care: to give what we have. Rarely do we stop to wonder if we have the spiritual, emotional and bodily capacity to do the work. It is essential to ask ourselves how we are healing the pain that comes from being close to life's defense processes. As a Mayan healer says: "We cannot give what we do not have." We must assume the body and spirit as the first territory to defend. What measures of healing and security am I taking personally to take care of myself?

Needs: add on and delegate. We don't have to carry the weight of the world on our backs. We have to be self-critical and know how to accept when we don't have the skills for a certain task or that we need support to achieve it. By bringing others in, we are forming a community. What are my skills and what are my limits? Where do I need to seek support to continue working?

Community - what implications does it have for my community?

Relationships: create the world we dream today. On the one hand, it is necessary to be consistent and apply our political demands to the way we relate to our communities. The Zapatistas say, "I do what I say and say what I do." On the other hand, Culture Hacking should make it possible to generate networks of life and solidarity. Sometimes the simple exercise of inviting other people to be part of an intervention is the change we are looking for: to meet and create community. How are we generating and strengthening a consistent and resilient community?

Organizing: to communicate is to create community. Narratives shape how we understand and act in the world, but organizing is what sustains cultures. There are technological tools that allow us to organize in real time despite the distance, generate consensus and decentralized decision-making, but there are also similar technologies that have sustained resistance in communities for hundreds of years. What forms of organizing am I promoting? Who has access and who doesn't? What tools do I use that allow me to organize during short-term moments but also in latency?

Ecosystem - what implications does it have for the ecosystem?

Sustainability: defend and reproduce life. Connect local action with global interconnection. Our actions and narratives can weave new relationships between our communities and our common home, the planet. We must defend those cultures that have defended life for thousands of years. 80% of the world's biodiversity is in the territories of indigenous cultures. How do we learn and join these struggles that have existed for hundreds or thousands of years? What communication channels do we use and strengthen and what are their implications for my community and the environment? What possibilities do narrative interventions open to show how oppressions are connected but also that resistances are too?

Interdependence: we are part of a whole. The relationship between person, community and territory is more complex than the sum of its parts and can only be understood in interdependence. It is worth

asking at what time we are strengthening narratives, organization and individualistic, anthropocentric and patriarchal action, what limits it has and how we can open ourselves to other ways of being-thinking-doing. How do we promote new ethical references such as water and land? How can we take only what is necessary and be reciprocal with the planet? What implications does an interdependent conception of the world have for our reflection - organization - communication?

Tech Tools

Gimp

One of the most popular and open-source graphics design and photo editing tools. It is a featured-packed graphic design suite and image editor. It's the same as Adobe photoshop layout. A great tool for any beginner or advanced designer who primarily works with photos.

Inkscape

Is much like adobe illustrator and Corel Draw. It is also one of the most powerful tools, available free to everyone. It is also known as the counterpart of vector graphics creator adobe illustrator. Inkscape basic and default file format is in Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG). It's available for Linux, Mac and Windows operating systems.

Blender

Is a 3D drawing creation software. Topmost famous animators use Blender to make short films, feature films, and Tv shows, etc. Its interface is quite complex at first. It has a lot of customizable features; you can also create your extensions and features that the way you want to design.

FontForge

Is a font editor that support many font formats for designers. It is lightweight and enables to create smooth designs of your own-type, true-type, and postscript. It is free software.

Shortcut

Is a robust non-linear video editor with enough tools to satisfy most levels of video editing skill. The free cross-platform program—available on Windows, Mac, and Linux—opens up to a clean, minimal interface, ideal for new or casual editors who want to keep things simple.

Audacity

Is an easy-to-use, multi-track audio editor and recorder for Windows, Mac OS X, GNU/Linux and other operating systems. Developed by a group of volunteers as open source

> ### Mixxx
>
> If you are into DJing then Mixxx is one of the best free and open source software, it is designed to be friendly for both beginners and professionals alike. Gettings started with Mixxx is nothing hard, simply drag a song into Mixxx and you can start manipulating it using beats, cue points, and scrollable and scratchable waveforms among other things.

/ Glossary

Arternatives a method to do/learn together, deschool and experiment while we struggle.

Creative Translation its like translating a text but instead of taking words from one language and substitute with words from another; creative translation uses a source text to create an equally compelling copy using expressions, wording and memes unique to the audience we want to reach.

Content Channels These are the media or nodes where the content vehicle is places. Think of it as the location you place the vase in the room itself.

Content Vehicle A form that holds the ability to communicate an idea. Think of it as a vase that holds the memetic flower. For example, an open-letter is a content vehicle which allows a certain type of more formal, op-ed style, group voice to communicate an idea in a public domain like a newspaper or online magazine or open letter.

Language a systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings by the use of conventionalized signs, sounds, gestures, or marks having understood meanings.

Meme Memes are to cultures what genes are to biology. Memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making posts or building arches.

Narrative Communities groups of people who self-consciously regard themselves as members of a community defined by believing a particular narrative.

Narrative Intervention Creation of special content to make an intervention on a specific space (physical or digital) with a narrative objective and a political strategy.

Points of intervention A point of intervention is a physical or conceptual place within a system where pressure can be put to disrupt its smooth functioning and push for change.