

Speaking up

Communicating with authorities through positive disruptions

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University of Washington

Abstract

Speaking up

Communicating with authorities through positive disruptions

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When the City of Seattle engaged the plan to build a \$160 million new North Precinct Police Station, the community was quick to vocalise disagreement. Activists opposing the new Police Station successfully blocked the plans for “the bunker.” Interviews with the activists about their ideal form of policing gave an unexpected outcome. An exploration of storytelling, by conducting a series of interventions, reframed this thesis towards creative activism. By using non-confrontational interventions as a guiding principle I searched for ways to engage with an established institution. Based on the framework used in *Beautiful Trouble - A Toolbox for Revolution*, each intervention is mapped to six modules in which they are analysed and reflected upon.

SPEAKING UP

Communicating with authorities
through positive disruptions

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SIGNIFICANCE

Current tensions between communities and police, and protests in the US by Black Lives Matter, a movement that challenges bias against race in contemporary policing, have received increasing attention in recent years. BLM gained national attention during protests in Ferguson, Missouri after police used deadly force and fatally shot unarmed teenager Michael Brown in 2014.

Barry Friedman, professor at the School of Law at New York University, explains in his book *“Unwarranted - Policing Without Permission”* that when people think about the government they feel helpless on where to engage. Making a case for police reform Friedman explains that it is exactly in the moments when civilians do engage the system that policy changes.¹

For the research phase of the thesis, I attended Seattle City Council meetings about Seattle’s planned North Precinct police station and interviewed the activists opposing it. During the public comments at these council meetings, I saw how marginalized stakeholders of institutionalized systems are trying to engage with policy makers for the purpose of encouraging more democratically-guided policy decisions.

Through the interviews I conducted, I was able to document grassroots visions of ideal policing. By focussing on creative activism and non-violent civil disobedience as guiding principles, I searched for ways to communicate these radical ideas and perspectives with the Seattle Police Department.

Though this thesis is not strictly focussed on race it is an undeniable part of interacting with the police, and it therefore became a part of this thesis.



University District, Seattle
2 April 2016

THE SOCIOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

In 2011, the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division initiated a civil lawsuit against the Seattle Police Department and after 9 months of investigation found a “pattern or practice of constitutional violations regarding the use of force that result from structural problems, as well as serious concerns about biased policing.”²

Although the City of Seattle and the SPD disputed the findings, the city agreed to a settlement with the DOJ. The negotiations and agreements made in July 2012 were represented in a Consent Decree, enforceable by federal court, and a Memorandum of Understanding, enforceable by DOJ as a private contract. In November of that year the Seattle City Council adopted a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) which anticipated spending \$89 million on a new North Precinct station. About a year later, in September 2013, the site for the new North Precinct was decided, and in December 2013 the lot on the corner of Aurora and 130th Ave N was acquired.

After several community open houses were held, and the Seattle Design Commission approved the design, the budget of the North Precinct station had increased to \$160 million. The station would be the most expensive police station in the US. This did not only raise questions within the City Council in June of 2016, but also caused a concerned community protest, Block the Bunker.

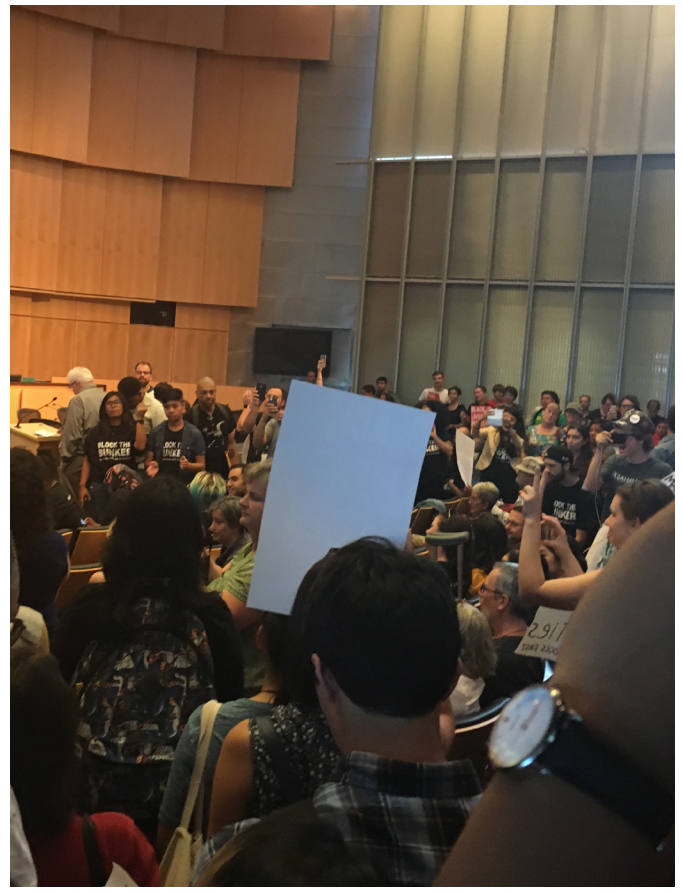
² US Department of Justice of Justice Civil Right Division. United States Attorney’s Office. Western District of Washington. December 16, 2011. *Investigation of the Seattle Police Department. Seattle Police Department Civil Rights Pattern or Practice Investigation*. Accessed January 24, 2017



Budget: Current Cost Estimate

Land Acquisition	\$ 14,300,000
Design / Other	\$ 17,300,000
Construction	\$ 105,100,000
Contingency	\$ 22,700,000
Public Art	\$ 800,000
Grand Total	\$ 160,200,000

Rounded to nearest \$100,000



Top: The conceptual layout of the proposed North Precinct Police Station
 Bottom: A concerned citizen takes the microphone during community input
 Seattle City Hall, 8 June 2016

Top: Estimated budget for the proposed North Precinct Police Station
 Bottom: Seattle City Council meeting, and Block the Bunker protesters
 Seattle City Hall, 8 June 2016

The activists urged the city to not spend the amount of money on a police department that is currently still under purview of the DOJ to carry out the court ordered reforms, but to prioritize other needs, like affordable housing to solve the city's record breaking homeless population.³

Seattle's Mayor Ed Murray reduced the budget of the new North Precinct station to \$149 million in early August of 2016 and for a moment it seemed like the majority of the City Council would agree with the project at this cost.⁴ After multiple rowdy Seattle City Council meetings that August, the City Council passed a resolution to conduct a racial-equity analysis. This means that by using Seattle Racial Equity designed to "eliminate racial inequity in the community" an assessment is made if the initiative fosters racial equity and minimizes harm to vulnerable communities.⁵

In September 2016 Mayor Murray put the plans for the new North Precinct police station on hold, stating that the length of time for the analysis made the city decide to not move ahead with the project at this time. In his statement the mayor said "There are real tensions in this community around race and policing, so I think we need to back up."⁶



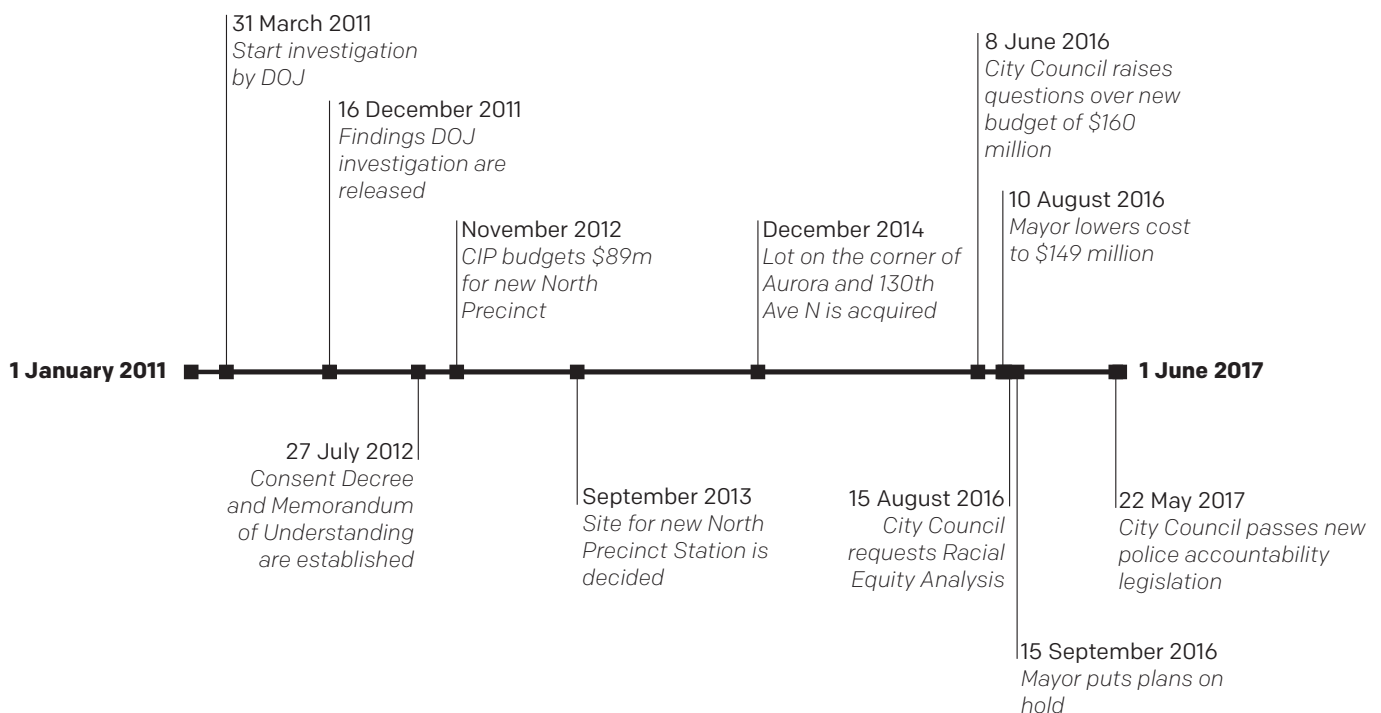
The Seattle Times, 16 August 2016

- 3 Seattle City Council meeting. June 8, 2016
- 4 Beekman, Daniel. 2016. "Mayor shaves cost, council seems OK with building new Seattle police precinct." Originally published August 10, 2016 at 6:04 pm Updated August 12, 2016 at 11:48 am. <http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/mayor-does-about-face-shelves-north-precinct-police-station-plan/> Accessed January 24, 2016
- 5 City of Seattle. 2012. *Racial Equity Toolkit*. http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/RSJI/RacialEquityToolkit_FINAL_August2012.pdf Accessed March 20, 2017.
- 6 Beekman, Daniel, and Jessica Lee. "Mayor does about-face, holds up North Precinct police-station plan." Originally published September 15, 2016 at 6:04 pm Updated September 16, 2016 at 7:28 am. <http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/mayor-does-about-face-shelves-north-precinct-police-station-plan/> Accessed on January 24, 2017.

In an effort to combat biased policing, and as part of the Consent Decree between the SPD and the DOJ, the City Council ordinances to form the Community Police Commission (CPC). This civilian oversight committee recommends policy changes to the SPD based on community outreach and feedback. According to the CPC website all of their recommendations “[e]nsure police services comply with the Constitution and the laws of the United States and Washington, Increase the effectiveness of the police accountability system” and “Promote public confidence in SPD”.⁷

Citywide council member Lorena Gonzáles, chair of the gender equity, safe communities and Americans Committee aiming “to provide policy direction and oversight and to deliberate and make recommendations on legislative matters”,⁸ has been working, in close collaboration with the CPC, on a new proposed police accountability legislation. On 22 May 2017 the Seattle City Council voted unanimously in favor of the new police accountability legislation. The City Council insisted that the proposed legislation will build the necessary independent institutions to ensure accountability within the SPD.⁹

This thesis started with the City Council raising concerns about the budget for the proposed North Precinct station and ended with the approval for a new police accountability legislation in Seattle.



7 Community Police Commission. *About us*. <https://www.seattle.gov/community-police-commission/about-us> Accessed on January 24, 2017

8 Seattle City Council. *Committees - Gender Equity, Safe Communities & New Americans*. <https://www.seattle.gov/council/committees> Accessed on June 29, 2017

9 Miletich, Steve. “Seattle City Council passes historic police-accountability legislation.” Originally published May 22, 2017 at 6:55 pm Updated May 23, 2017 at 3:45 pm <http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/seattle-city-council-passes-historic-police-accountability-legislation/> Accessed on June 29, 2017

THEORETICAL OR THE RADICAL, CONTEXT

My internship with the notorious activist duo The Yes Men in New York City shaped my design thinking to help build creative, social, and environmental justice and awareness. But it also complicated my relationship with design as I like to stretch the definition of interaction design to include social interventions rather than purely digital ones.

My work has shifted towards service and transition design over the course of my graduate studies. In this thesis I searched for ways to better understand conceptual and activist theory in design by pairing a service design approach with activist engagement.

In the essay, “*The Art of Activism*,” in the book *The Truth is Concrete*¹⁰ Steve Duncombe and Steve Lambert ask their reader about the moment they decided to participate in activism, arguing that it is unlikely to have stemmed from a flyer or a petition. They authors emphasize that “we make sense of our world through things like images, sounds, and narrative as much, if not more, than we do through facts and figures.”

Duncombe and Lambert argue that in order to convince others, activists need to create the desire for others to get involved. They emphasize that this is where art and activism meet: taking the targeted approach of activism and combining it with the emotional nature of art. Engaging in artistic activism, Duncombe and Lambert propose, is not to use politics as a subject for art, nor to capitalize aesthetics in the name of “better looking poster[s] or banner[s]”. Rather, artistic activism creates a toolbox with which the activist and/or the artist can move the viewer, and engage in their narrative in a way that art or activism can’t on its own.

In the essay, “*Design as Activism: To resist or to generate?*”¹¹ Ann Thorpe, Deputy Director Transport Institute at University College London (UCL) argues that due to the exploratory and experimental nature of design, few designers see their design solutions as the only right answer. Therefore, she claims, design activism is “generative”. Rather than disrupting a narrative without offering solutions (an argument often made against activism) Thorpe reminds us that design activism focuses on generating alternative futures.

When it comes to the topic of generating alternative futures, Terry Irwin, Head of the School of Design at Carnegie Mellon University, proposes a new area of design practice called, “Transition Design”. In her paper “*Transition design: A proposal for a new area of design practice, study, and research*”¹² Irwin places transition design at the far reaches of design approaches, beyond service design and design for social innovation. Whereas service design is an immediate design response, she argues, transition design creates a plan for the future and lays out a preferred reality. Irwin claims that these “long-term visions of sustainable lifestyles fundamentally challenge existing paradigms and serve to inspire and inform the design of short- and mid-term solutions”.

In other words, what both Thorpe and Irwin are saying is that designers play a powerful role in shaping visions and perspectives towards an improved society. By envisioning and generating alternative futures, we can work in a constructive way towards change.

Andrew Boyd is an activist from New York who, over the years, collected forms of creative activism and combined them in his book *Beautiful Trouble - A Toolbox for Revolution*. As Boyd points out, the blending of art and politics is not new: “Tactical pranks go back at least as far as the Trojan Horse...”¹³ What I believe is new is the framework that Boyd uses in order to provide tools for activists and teach them about creative activism.

Boyd maps out interventions in what he calls a “pattern language”. This concept, adapted from architect Christopher Alexander who described pattern language as a problem that occurs over and over again, and which then describes a core solution in a way that one can use the solution endlessly “without ever doing it the same way twice”.¹⁴

Boyd uses the “democratic nature” and the “modular interlocking format” of these frameworks for activist interventions (be it artistic activism, creative activism, or design activism) to encourage activists to “provide[s] tools for people to adapt to their own unique circumstances”.

I am explaining this concept, in this very distilled form, as thoroughly as possible –though I highly recommended reading *Beautiful Trouble* as a reference for any shenanigans- for the reason that this thesis in return used Boyd’s framework as a base for mapping the four interventions. To understand the interventions better, and provide context for them, I will first explain who I interviewed at the start of this thesis, and which meetings I attended throughout.

11 Thorpe, Ann. “*Design as Activism: To resist or to generate?*” <http://current.ecuad.ca/design-as-activism-to-resist-or-to-generate> Accessed on May 15, 2017

12 Irwin, Terry. “*Transition design: A proposal for a new area of design practice, study, and research.*” *Design and Culture* 7, no. 2 (2015): 229-246.

13 Mitchell, David Oswald, and Andrew Boyd, eds. *Beautiful Trouble: a Toolbox for Revolution*. OR Books, 2013.

14 Alexander, Christopher. *A Pattern Language: Towns, buildings, construction*. Oxford University Press, 1977. Quoted in Mitchell, David Oswald, and Andrew Boyd, eds. *Beautiful Trouble: a Toolbox for Revolution*. OR Books, 2013.

PHASE 1

INTERVIEWS

I initially reached out to the organizations I saw at the city council meetings about the proposed new North Precinct police station. Through interviews and meetings I got introduced to other stakeholders and activists that have been pushing for reform within the SPD. Current suggestions on how to make the police more democratized and increase police accountability are based in existing police force behavior and policy. This excludes the possibilities that could emerge from a utopian view of what a police force should look like. For this reason the interviews conducted focused on envisioning an ideal police force to uncover hidden radical visions and aspirations.

WHO

NO NEW JIM CROW COALITION (NNJC)

The No New Jim Crow Coalition focuses on dismantling racism in King County by actively opposing mass incarceration, as it is believed to be a modern way of applying the Jim Crow Laws, aimed at segregating races. Recently NNJC has been focussing on restorative justice projects.

J. of NNJC

J. was willing to talk to me as an individual who is affiliated with NNJC, not to represent NNJC itself. We set up a meeting over e-mail and I invited him to my home. (Over e-mail we both agreed that a cafe was difficult as he has bad hearing, and I am not a native English speaker) Upon arrival J. did not only bring a bottle of wine, but his son, B., as well. Since the inauguration of Trump, B. has been talking to people about race and politics as a personal project. He told me that he would not participate in the interview, but would like to sit in.

J. is an elderly man who was looking to be politically involved after retirement opened up free time. He came across an event that NNJC sponsored and started going to their meetings. When I asked J. how he got interested in the causes NNJC fights for he answered that growing up black in the US is how he got involved. By being part of

a group that is oppressed, and not liking it, he wanted to respond to injustice and racism.

J. explained that helping to raise his granddaughter involves feminism, the environment, gay rights, “and everything else. It just involves freedom”. He explained that all these things fall under the same umbrella, and the African-American experience is the most oppressed. This is why, he continued, these are the most imperative issues because it affects everything else. If one group is allowed to be oppressed, it is easier to oppress other groups as well, he explained.

“I think the first order of business should be to prevent the circumstances that cause a person to become a criminal in the first place. And those conditions that cause criminality start when a child is born, even before they’re born and they’re in the womb. A young kid is going to steal, not only because they are poor, they’re going to steal because they don’t have respect for the society that they live in because they weren’t taught that because they grew up in society where they didn’t learn it.

They didn’t have the structure to learn that there is a reciprocal respect that is part of their experience, and created by their experience, so they know that the society doesn’t have their interest in mind. They know that the society is stacked against them so they have less feeling of obligation towards the society. So it’s not just being hungry that causes a person to steal.

If society makes it difficult to grow up healthy then society is going to have to suffer the consequences of that. But then when the society turns around and does the behavior that it has produced itself, like capital punishment—we produce in this country a lot of violent people—but then instead of taking responsibility as a country for producing those people we essentially destroy the evidence with capital punishment. Instead of preventing kids from growing up violently, we reproduce violent people and want to punish and destroy them instead of putting responsibility on ourselves as a society.

The same thing is true for any runaway crime problem. Poverty produces problems, and society produces poverty. But society doesn’t hold itself responsible for poverty, it holds the children that go into jails responsible for poverty, for the behavior that poverty produces. And as far as for the minimum mandatory sentencing where you have three strikes and you’re out, you have big sentences for small crimes. You put marijuana in the same class as opium and heroin. All those policies are shown to be directed toward controlling the people that are most oppressed in society. It is all manipulation; it is all targeting the same groups that have been targeted for 4/500 years in this country you know. It is all connected.

(...)

To have mass incarceration and militarized police is not necessary. Unless we intend to continue to produce troubled people. If we don’t keep on producing, mass producing, trouble people we’re not gonna need mass incarceration and a militarized police. So to me you can’t begin with an ideal police system because it’s kind of an oxymoron to think that you can have an ideal situation and also a police force to control an un-ideal situation.

(...)

The other part of improving the force would be to have some laws that would allow cops to be fired, or prosecuted, for inhumane treatment or breaking the law, instead of the laws that we have right now that protect cops 99% of the time.

It is extremely hard here in Washington to prosecute a police officer who shot somebody. You have to basically prove what was in the mind of the cop. You have to prove malicious intent and you basically have to be clairvoyant to know what was going on in the mind of the cop in the past, during the incident, to prosecute him. That's just insanity. So, we have to fix our own insanity as a society, before we can fix the cops.

We have to stop being stupid with laws like these. And believing in racial categories that science says don't exist, and voting for people like Trump. People that are bad for everybody. Conservative politicians don't even serve the people that support them. Passing laws against the environment, against education, against healthcare. That is all racism based. This society doesn't want anything good that people of color can, by chance, participate in. Otherwise white folks here would do to same thing that white folks in Europe did. They would have free education, free healthcare, and everything else that makes sense."

We finished the almost 2 hour long talk J. and while still discussing he puts on his coat. J. falls silent and turned to me. "You know" he said "I got intrigued by your question for an ideal police force. Because for wealthy white people, we already have an ideal police force."

M. of NNJC

M. is a big advocate for restorative justice. She explains that restorative justice and the circle practices that are part of it, are a way of humanizing each other, to create empathy for the other party. She explains that when a tragedy happens in a community it is important for that community to heal. M. gives herself as an example, her house got broken into; twice. The first time she didn't call the police. The second time a neighbor saw the burglars leave and called the police. M tells me that she was reluctant to talk with the police.

"As a member of the (NNJC) organization I have had conversations with police and as a white person in America the police have been called, you know, not on me but by people I'm with, because white people have obviously been groomed to believe that the police are here to help us.

(...)

So I actually gave the police officer, who was there to take fingerprints, I gave her an article about restorative justice as an alternative. And I explained to her that I would rather be able to be in a circle and sit down with the people whose fingerprints match the ones on the objects in my house, the burglars. Especially if they were ready to say 'Yeah we did that'. I'd rather sit down with them in the circle and find out from each other who we are. And find out what their story is and share mine. And find out how we can try to make things as right as possible.

I would've loved some help repairing the door. I don't need to get my stuff back because they didn't take all that much. Is there a way

that I could employ them? Which would not have been enough to, you know... could I have contributed to employment? And that is the kind of thing that actually happens in real restorative circles. The community sits down together and the person who has done the harm gets to become personally accountable for... they get to say, if they want to, 'I'm sorry I did this' and the community gets to say, like, 'I'm sorry you were in that situation'. Let's try and lift each other up and be responsible for one another in positive ways.

(...)

The future police would be acting very differently. They would be acting like community members that cared about everybody. The mindset, and Michelle Alexander whose book we are named after, she talks about the importance of changing mindset. She said it would be great if we dismantled the prison industrial complex, and that would be a huge achievement. But she said it won't be enough if we don't transform mindsets, change mindsets. Because racism... if we don't end that... if we don't undo it, it will just re-emerge some other way.

Applying that to the police, the history of the institution of policing is racist in our country. And there are overt racists in police departments. And we know that from the language that they use and the profiling they do. You know, caught on dash cams, you know about dash cams? I mean that was a revelation to me just a few years ago. I never watched any dash cams or anything. But when you start watching that, you cannot be ignorant anymore.

So how does the mindset of the Police Department and all the individual officers, and the culture within, change? That is hugely important. We could just end policing altogether but if that is not going to happen overnight, like a revolution where the system completely crumbles and rebuild something else. If we are going to get from A to B in another way that isn't the revolution overnight, it might be more of a transformation as opposed to a revolution in the traditional sense, it would be working with the police. The circle practice would be a very important tool to changing the mindset. And moving away from a racist mindset, which means a lot of things that's not just skin color, it's a lot of things you know it's the whole control-dominate-rule-based-law-base as opposed to human-centered, but how do you change mindset in anybody? How does my mindset change? A lot of it can come from rediscovering culture and community. And for police to do that with the people they are policing. They need to rediscover community, with the people."

SEATTLE RAGING GRANNIES

The Raging Grannies are an international activist organization consisting of a group of elderly women. Originated in Victoria B.C, Canada, the Raging Grannies now have 'gaggles' in Canada, the U.S, Greece, United Kingdom, Israel, Australia, and New Zealand. Mimicking stereotypes of grandmas, the Raging Grannies dress up in flower patterned dresses and extravagant hats. Embracing their age in activism the Grannies benefit protection from being elderly citizens.

Raging Granny S.

I got invited to S.'s house and upon arrival she served me crackers and cheese. She complains that the Costco always has such big pieces, but her eyes light up when she realizes I am Dutch so that I must be used to eating lots of cheese. S tells me she used to be married with a Dutch man but doesn't speak any Dutch herself, but she visited the Netherlands a long time ago.

S. got involved with the Raging Grannies after her retirement. A friend of her invited her to a "gig" and S laughs when she remembers that she was sceptical of getting dressed up in a flower patterned dress and an apron. But the Grannies embraced her out of tune singing and now she is an active member. S. is also a member of No New Jim Crow and she shows me pictures of protests:

"Did you look at the No New Jim Crow Facebook page? Did you notice the blimp there? We did an action where we raised a blimp in front of Dow Constantine's office. 'Stop jailing children.'

(...)

My first arrest was in Bangor, it is about 20 miles west from Seattle. We were protesting the nuclear warheads stored up there. There is lots of weaponry there, enough to blow up Seattle. The Grannies have been going there for years and years. The military knows that we are going to protest that day. I did that for a number of years. But, you know, how can you really make a damn... people think those weapons there are going to protect us.

We protest there on Mother's Day, Martin Luther King Day, the Nagasaki Hiroshima anniversary. Our action on Mother's Day supposedly got a lot of press, the grannies with their mobility aids, haha! We all went with our walkers and our canes.

So let's see, we have not really battled with the police. But the grannies did step up in the WTO protests. And there is a movie where... from what I heard the grannies kind of calmed the police down when they were getting out of hand. And that is something that seniors could sort of do. Nowadays, I don't know, they might just run right over us..."

Raging Granny R.

When R. walked into the coffee shop where we agreed to meet, I was surprised by her young age. She told me that she used to go to a local folklife festival where the Victoria Grannies would come down to sing at. R. explains that when she was mid 30's she said to herself "When I grow up then I want to be a Raging Granny." By the time R. was 45 the Seattle Raging Grannies gaggle started and R. has been a member since.

"Military and police they want to be helpful, they want to make the community safer. So they've been in the military thinking that they are making the world safer, because that is what the hype is. And then they become security or police. They have high ideals, but many have had trauma that they are not working through.

There is a stigma on getting mental help and that stigma has to be reduced. People have to be able to reach out, especially when they are prone to violence. The police has to have ways of coping with those things rather and than slam or shoot. They have to have ways of dealing with that. Maybe you have different jobs for those people. They can be in the police force but not on the front lines.

(...)

In life there will always be people that are violent or harmful, and I am imagining this future without guns, right? It does not make sense for people to have things that can kill each other in an instant of lack of judgement.

In ideal future there would still be police but they would be more like the community. People who live there, people that get to know everybody, they would be an integral part of the community. Almost like an uncle or an aunt. And they would see policing as a service to the community. They would be trained in de-escalation, they would be trained in a little bit of social work. Or have a social worker accompany them. And you don't have to intervene necessarily to de-escalate a situation, you can deflect, or distract somebody and that can de-escalate a situation. Intervention would be stepping in between.

I do believe that most people who go into the police force have this kind of ethical desire. So bringing that out, and helping them learn what that would be like in action and not having the training that is all about adversarial. There is a lot of good training available about de-escalation and intervention, and I know they are supposed to get some of that, but it is not enough. It needs to be a a lot more."

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST ORGANIZATION (ISO)

The ISO supports an socialist alternative in the United States, opposing the current capitalist society. The Seattle chapter of ISO has weekly meetings in which a range of social justice issues from environmental to mass incarceration are discussed and plans for action are made.

L. from ISO

I first learned of the ISO after one of the City Council meetings about the proposed new North Precinct Police Station. I attended one of their weekly meetings close to the University of Washington campus, called "Our Enemies in Blue".

This meeting L. had prepared a debate with a talk at the start. After the meeting I emailed L. to ask for the transcript of her talk and later asked her to be interviewed for my thesis.

L. told me that she got involved and getting active in high school. As a 16-year old she travelled up from Portland to Seattle to participate in the WTO protests. But getting into activism also made her aware of the media narrative not aligning with her own experience.

“But it was probably when I got into activism that I was first cognizant of the role of the police in terms of their combative attitude towards protesters. And I remember in Seattle this sort of media narrative that there are these anarchists, and they are smashing windows, and things descended into “chaos and violence.” That was just not my experience being at the WTO [protests]. It was predominantly nonviolent mass marches, nonviolent civil disobedience. It was really the police who were giving orders to basically clear the streets to make way for the delegates. They just unleashed a lot of brutality against nonviolent protesters.”

CENTER FOR OPEN POLICING (COP)

During a game of urban Golf in 2008, Eric Rachner got arrested for refusing to identify himself which amounted to obstruction of justice. A refusal in itself is not grounds for arrest, as the law states, and Eric filed a complaint asking for the dashcam footage of his arrest. After the SPD initially claimed that the footage was erased, Eric found this to be untrue after a public disclosure request of the logs showed the footage was still available. Together with Phil Mocek, and Ben Livingston, Eric Rachner started the Center for Open Policing which promotes police accountability by pushing for public access to police records.

Eric Rachner of COP

I spoke with Eric Rachner before I synthesized the direction of my thesis and did therefore not interview him like I did the rest of the activists.

Due to his research for COP, Rachner has an extensive knowledge of the politics within the Seattle Police Department. He has been following their actions closely and he shared a lot of background information with me.

The work of the COP can go slow, Rachner explains. “Seattle’s Office for Police Accountability only posts summary reports online. The complete OPA files, including evidence, interviews transcripts, internal deliberations, etc., are not released automatically, but can still be obtained via public records request.” Rachner emails me after our meeting. This is thanks to Washington Supreme Court’s 2011 ruling for Bainbridge Island Police Guild v. City of Puyallup. But it can take months before the SPD fulfills a public disclosure request, something he believes the SPD does on purpose, as delaying your request is the only power they have after this ruling, says Rachner.

Rachner also tells me about Federal Judge James Robart (yes, the Judge Robart that blocked Trump’s travel ban in February of 2017), who oversees the Consent Decree between the DOJ, the City of Seattle, and the SPD.

As is often the case with designers focussed on service design: while trying to fix what seems to be a small problem, you discover that there is a much larger problem on the organizational whole. This was what I learned in talking to Rachner.

MOTHERS FOR POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY ('MOTHERS' OR MFPA)

After Reverend Harriet Walden's sons got stopped and assaulted by the Seattle Police Department on August 5th, 1990, she initiated Mothers for Police Accountability. MFPA supports victims and families affected by police harassment through education programs, trainings, and community outreach, concurrently advocating for policy reforms. Rev. Walden holds a seat in the Community Police Commission.

Rev. Walden of MFPA

Rev. Walden is also a Co-Chair of the Community Police Commission. I got introduced to her during one of the CPC meetings, where I heard about the benefit breakfast for Mothers. I attended this benefit breakfast in November 2016. A few weeks afterwards I met with Rev. Walden to talk about policing. Our initial talk was quite stark, as Rev. Walden seemed sceptical of my intentions and was wary of talking about the police. Unsure of what to do, I decided to not use any prepared questions and instead just have a personal conversation with each other.

We talked about race, I Am Not Your Negro, and Hidden Figures. Rev. Walden explained to me how she sees Seattle as a "liberal racist city". A city in which we like to believe we are tolerant and progressive but our actions, individually and governmental, prove otherwise.

When I asked her at the end of the conversation if she ever feels like giving up hope Rev. Walden looked at me and said "Only white people ask me that question". She explained to me that she never feels hopeless because she knows, as a black woman growing up in the south during a time when the racial segregation was still in effect-she points out that it is questionable as to "if" segregation ever really ended-she knows that she has the strength to overcome these battles.

NOT INTERVIEWED BUT ATTENDED MEETINGS:

NOT THIS TIME

In the aftermath of the killing of Che Taylor by Seattle Police on February 21st, 2016, Che's brother Andre Taylor established Not This Time. Not This Time holds weekly meetings, inviting community leaders and speakers to organize panel discussions about police brutality, mass incarceration, and disenfranchisement. Andre Taylor succeeded in involving policymakers in Not This Time's goals by meeting with Seattle Police Chief Kathleen O'Toole and Mayor Murray. He became a strong voice in the proposed Police Accountability reform legislation during the gender equity, safe communities and Americans Committee and City Council meetings.

On 22 February 2017, a year and a day after Che Taylor got shot and killed by the SPD, I attended Not This Time Community Forum in Remembrance of Che Taylor. Due to the anniversary of the shooting of Che Taylor, Andre organized a panel discussion with members of Seattle King County NAACP, Africatown-Central District, the New Black Panther Party, Planet Afrika, and Community Passageways. The evening was set up as a space for healing and discussion, and it felt like it. Not This Time provided food and drinks to all who attended and the room at the Seattle Vocational Institute was packed. The success of restorative justice and an initiative by of Community Passageways called 180 Program was shown by letting youth speak who, thanks to the help of 'Coach Dom', got their charges dropped.



Participants of the 180 program take the stage at the remembrance of Che Taylor. Seattle, 22 February 2017

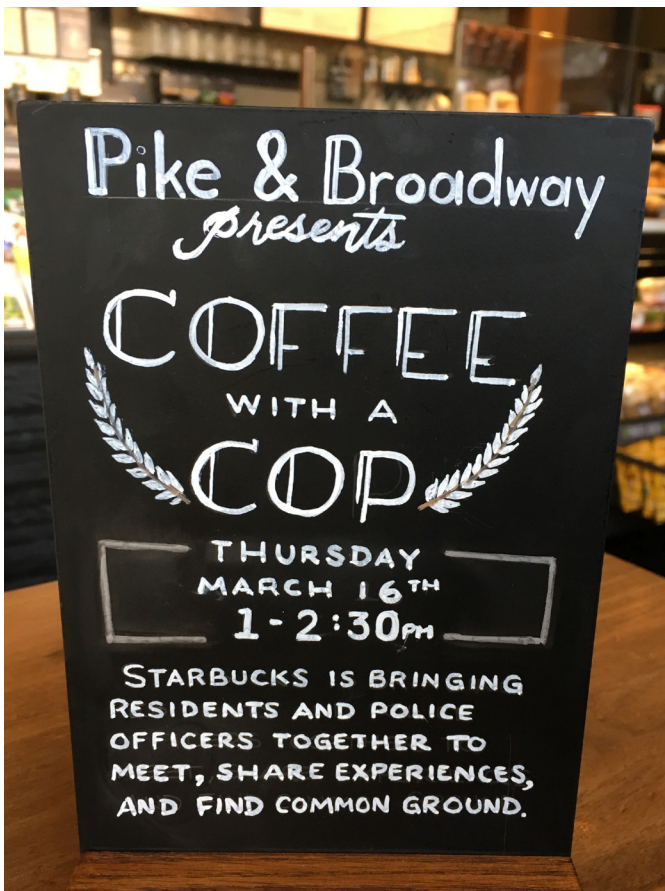
COFFEE WITH A COP

Organized by Starbucks in collaboration with the Seattle Police Department, I went to “Coffee with a cop” on 16 March 2017. The event, promoted as a way to bring residents and police together to “meet, share experiences and find common ground”, was held at the Starbucks on Pike & Broadway on Capitol Hill. Depending on which time of the day you attended, about 6-8 members of the SPD were present, ranging in rank from officers to sergeants, and captains.

Although the well-attended event went smoothly, it was an awkward situation as it was very clear that the people attending this event already felt comfortable talking to police. Others, who may not have shared that comfort, made a U-turn as soon as they saw the herd of officers inside the Starbucks doors.

Some attendees praised the SPD for their “handling” of the Black Lives Matter March on March 5th 2017. Others asked more instructive questions like, “What is a citizen supposed to do when witnessing domestic violence?” One attendee even wanted to know how his friend, who got arrested a few days before, was doing and if he was still being held.

After asking one of the younger officers what it would take to achieve an unarmed police force in the future, a question received with utter shock I might add, I ended up talking with one of the captains present. The immediate difference between the younger officers, not only in age but clearly also in experience, was remarkable. The captain I spoke claimed that a ‘give and take’ approach between the community and the police worked the best. “You can’t just slam your fist on the table and say this is how we are going to do it” he explained to me. It is important for the police to hear the community they are serving.



Starbucks and the SPD collaborate on “Coffee with a cop”
Seattle, 16 March 2017



Officers speak to attendees at “Coffee with a Cop”
Seattle, 16 March 2017

COMMUNITY POLICE COMMISSION (CPC)

The CPC started their work in March 2013 as part of the Federal Consent Decree. They are a civilian led commission providing community input on proposed Seattle Police Department reforms. In order to increase the effectiveness of the police accountability system and to promote public confidence in the SPD, they ensure police services comply with the Constitution and the laws of the United States and Washington.

The monthly meetings that the CPC holds are open to the public, and on 14 December 2016 I attended one of these meetings. This meeting covered, amongst other topics:

The analysis of the community satisfaction survey

The Seattle Police Monitor, part of the 2012 Consent Decree, conducts public confidence surveys twice a year. For the most recent survey the CPC hired a consultant to analyze the results of the survey. A preliminary report was given during this meeting.

Update on the community engagement workgroup

The CPC proposed to hire a consultant in order to assess the digital presence of the CPC in order to enhance community engagement.

Body Cameras for the SPD

The CPC decided to form a focus group to receive community input and inform the public about bodycam policies



The Community Police Commission
Seattle, 14 December 2016

SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL

The Seattle City Council has nine elected members who have the authority to discuss, and accept or decline ordinances. The meetings of the City Council are open to the public and each Monday afternoon a full council is present during the scheduled weekly meeting.

The Council Committees are committees separate from the city council, but are lead by members of the city council. Examples are the Affordable Housing, Neighborhoods & Finance committee, the Gender Equity, Safe Communities & New Americans committee, and the Planning, Land Use & Zoning committee.

I attended many meetings of the Seattle City Council over the course of this thesis. The early meetings held around the proposed new North Precinct Police Station started out with a few members of the community expressing their concerns at the beginning of the meetings. But as the plans for the North Precinct Police Station solidified the concerns of the community grew, and so did their presence. After a few weeks the City Council meetings were packed and an extra conference room was set up at city hall to accommodate all the interested.

In my belief the City Council handled the growing crowd of protesters quite well. When there was normally one hour reserved for community input, as the crowd grew the City Council extended this hour multiple times so that everyone who had an opinion to share, had a stage to do so.

GENDER EQUITY, SAFE COMMUNITIES & NEW AMERICANS COMMITTEE

Chaired by City Council member Lorena González this committee oversees the implementation of the Consent Decree between the DOJ and the City of Seattle. Not limited to this task, this committee also makes recommendations for law enforcement legislation, and covers public safety issues; immigrant and refugee rights; gender equity issues; and emergency preparedness, management, and response. This committee also oversaw the proposed new police accountability legislation. And brought the legislation before the City Council.

NOT INTERVIEWED:

BLOCK THE BUNKER

The Seattle Black Book Club, in collaboration with other local organizers, initiated the Block the Bunker movement when the City of Seattle synthesized the plans for building a new North Precinct police station at the cost of \$160 million. Block the Bunker became the joint voice speaking out against the militarization of the Seattle Police Department, focussing on opposing the new North Precinct building, hiring new police officers, and the new juvenile legal and detention center.

Sadly, Block the Bunker did not want to speak with me for this thesis. I do however want to mention them, as their voice and efforts had such an impact on the outcome of the City Council votes around the North Precinct station. Their continuing struggle for social justice shapes the City of Seattle in important ways.



Downtown, Seattle
15 December 2016

FINDINGS

Seattle's activist community is enormous, but also dispersed. Often grassroots organisations fighting for the same (social) justice issues don't team up unless there is an incentive to do so, like a rally or demonstration. At the same time it was surprising to see that members are fluid between organisations. Contacting one organisation sometimes led to an email saying that they were already in touch with me through another organisation. This was surprising to me as I noticed that activists sort of "customize" their experience in this way. What they miss in one organization they often find in another. That being said, the different organizations will team up when it is time to do so. The packed City Council meetings are a great example of this.

The activist community in Seattle calls each other out on their prejudices and biases. As someone who is not only new to Seattle, but also to the US, this was both startling and refreshing. It did make finding my way within the community a bit harder as sometimes I felt like an opinion of one group about another rendered my thesis work invalid. That being said, "good" and "bad" is not as black and white as we may believe. You may do good on one point, but harm someone else on another.

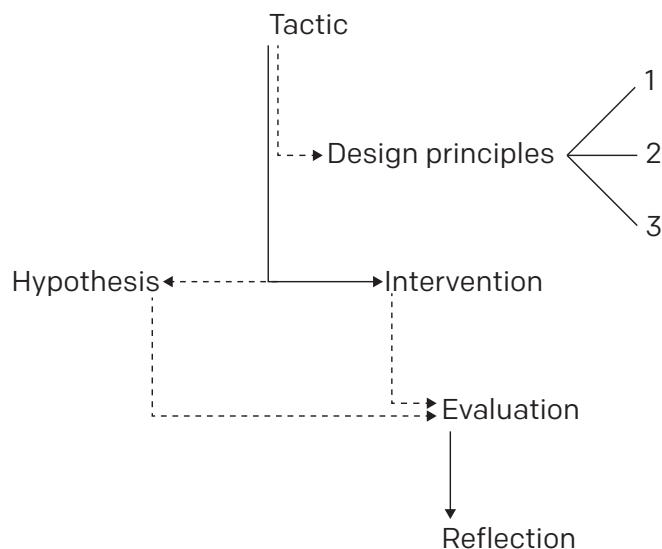
The interviews with the activists opposing the new North Precinct police station did not have the outcome I hypothesized ahead of the research. Almost all activists I spoke with were not simply for reform within the police force, but believed in a possible future without police: an aspiration for a future in which the community would police itself.

PHASE 2

POSITIVE DISRUPTIONS

Where I initially believed I could design a service system for a new form of policing, the unforeseen outcome of the interviews showed me that these beliefs were ill-founded. As a result, the conceptual lens of an ideal police force had to be adjusted. Alternatively, finding ways to bring the unexpected narratives discovered during the interview phase to light, by using non-confrontational interventions as a guiding principle I searched for ways to engage with an established institution. As an exploration of storytelling, I conducted a series of interventions.

As Irwin and Thorpe highlight, there is great value in envisioning an alternate future we might not be able to see yet. Systemic change takes time, and I see these interventions as tools for planting a seed in order to start imagining that alternate future. These interventions are all artefacts that are given in a non-confrontational, anonymous moment, at the will of the giver, to someone who has caused them some discomfort, in order to motivate a moment of pause and reflection, and to instigate a change in behavior. They can be seen as alternative forms of protest and ways to convey messages to the Seattle Police Department. Rather than proposing a single solution or end product, these interventions use design as a method of inquiry. They explore means for communicating radical ideas, perspectives, and feedback to an established institution that is, by some, perceived to be an oppressive entity.



FRAMEWORK

Based on the framework used in *Beautiful Trouble - A Toolbox for Revolution*, each intervention is mapped to six modules in which they are analyzed and reflected upon. The inventive nature of each disruption can be seen as a continuation of the inquiry, and this framework is meant to inspire further interventions.

Tactic

An umbrella approach to a type of intervention which can be applicable to other forms of activism. Examples include a flash mob or an occupation of public space.

Principle:

A design principle, a rule to abide while going from tactic to intervention. Examples include “allow anonymity” or “use existing vernacular”.

Intervention

The project, what I do to test my hypothesis. A positive disruption that is making an effort to refocus the mindset of the viewer, by interfering with the status quo.

Hypothesis

what I assume the intervention will do and what the outcome of the intervention will be.

Evaluation

basically, was the intervention successful? Assessing location and time, analyses of what went wrong what went well, what did I learn.

Reflection

How to make it again? What would I do different? How does this inform tactics and principles?

The tactics and design principles used are partly culled from *Beautiful Trouble*, while others were newly generated.

TACTICS

Subliminal messaging

The idea of subliminal messaging is that the receiver is unaware that they are being presented with information. This information is often hidden from the obvious visual or audible perception but rather tries to reach the receiver on a more subconscious level, delivering information where the target might not expect it to be.

Direct action mixed with culture jamming

Direct action is described by Joshua Kahn Russell as taking “collective action to change our circumstances, without handing our power to a middle person”.¹⁵ Known forms of direct actions are demonstrations, strikes, and protests. In this thesis the direct action was not organized by me, although I made use of the moment, May Day is an existing event.

Culture jamming is a communication technique that subverts media. It is often the act of using existing media and adding imagery or messages, in order to reveal an alternative to the viewer.

Advanced leafleting

Boyd and Lambert describe leafleting as “annoying and ineffective for the most part”.¹⁶ However, it is a fairly easy way to get a message across. But getting your target to actually read the messages is the trick. By using advanced leafleting as a tactic, the activist searches for ways to make receiving, and hopefully reading a leaflet, enticing.

Community input

This is a well-known tactic throughout both grassroots organisations as well as governmental bodies. The people who are existing in the “problem space” know what is best for them. Community input allows for those who are closest to the topic to take on an active role by voicing concerns and advising on future directions.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Use everyday objects

In order for the subliminal messaging to work it is important that this message is inconspicuous. Find a moment and an object that is being used by your target audience, and allows to be subverted to a billboard without the receiver knowing.

Don't kill the messenger

This phrase, also known as “Don't shoot the messenger”, is often used as a reminder to not blame the bearer of bad news, as they merely deliver the message. Using the often-radical ideas and input from interviewees, find a way to disperse this messaging to your target audience.

15 Russel, Joshua Kahn. “*Tactic: Direct Action.*” Beautiful Trouble: a Toolbox for Revolution. OR Books, 2013: 32-34

16 Lambert, Steve, and Andrew Boyd. “*Tactic: Advanced leafleting.*” Beautiful Trouble: a Toolbox for Revolution. OR Books, 2013: 8-9

Kill them with Kindness

This principle is the core of non-violent protest, as it recognizes the humanity in our opponents. “When you lead with kindness, you’re more likely to be seen as the sympathetic character in the story,” states Boyd about this principle. This principle aims to bring the message in a kind way, and with a smile.

Laughter is the best medicine

As all of our grandma’s said... The reason why satire works is that people can take a lot more criticism if it is bought with a joke. Bystanders are a lot more open to receiving a message if the message is fun to look at, or enjoyable to participate in.

Quick and dirty

Not all interventions allow for weeks of planning and reiterating them into perfection. When there are only a few days, or even hours, to come up with an intervention, it is ok to use duct tape and spray paint.

Use existing vernacular

Using existing vernacular is speaking the (visual) language of your target and using it to reach your goal. What rituals and imagery do they recognize, and which of those can you alter to get their attention?

Choose your location carefully

What works in one place might not work in another. When actions are location sensitive, it is worth reviewing why you want to use a certain area.

Everyone has a voice

This principle is maybe the most democratic one. All opinions are welcome, and the tactics that use this principle need to allow room for opposing ideas.

Allow anonymity

Not all who have an opinion care to share these with others. Some feel confident on the frontline of a protest, others write under a pseudonym to the local newspaper. Especially when it comes to talking to their oppressor, people might feel safer knowing that they can vent in anonymity. By finding a way to accommodate anonymous input you can make a safe space for those who wish to remain unnamed.

COFFEE COP

TACTIC

Subliminal messaging

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Using everyday objects, Don't kill the messenger

INTERVENTION

Quotes from interviews are laser cut on coffee sleeves and distributed at coffee shops in guerrilla-style, without prior authorization of the coffee shops, in order to distribute messages to the police.

HYPOTHESIS

Roy Street coffee and on Capitol Hill is a coffee shop that is known to have police officers visiting. The coffee shop is relatively close to the Capitol Hill police station and officers often stop by during their break to refuel. By replacing the existing coffee sleeves at Roy Street coffee with coffee sleeves that contain quotes from interview customers, and therefore also police officers visiting the coffee shop, will receive the visions of the activists.

EVALUATION

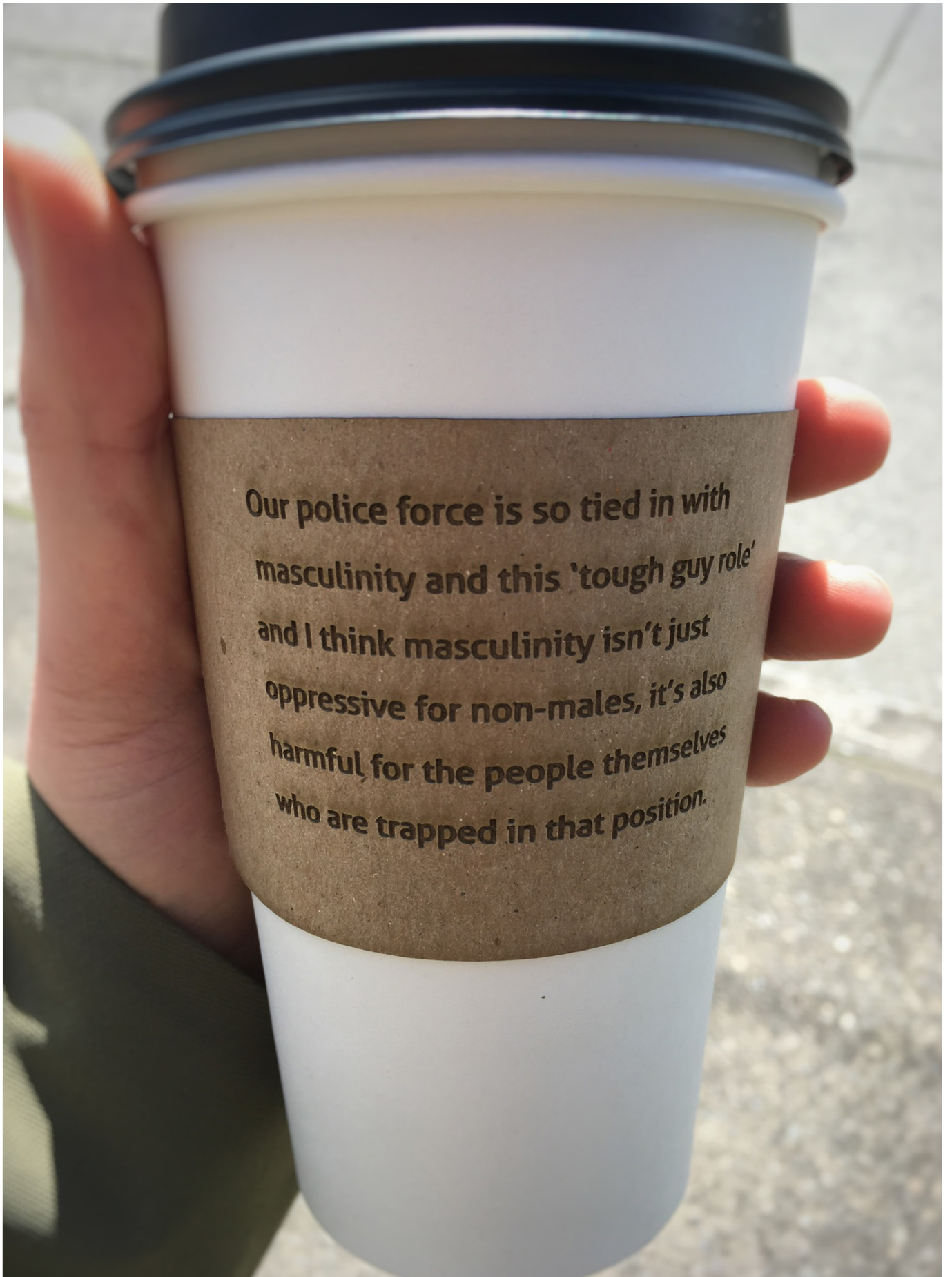
I actually did this intervention twice. Once at Roy Street Coffee, and once at the Starbucks on the other side of the police station. Both coffee shops are on Capitol Hill.

The first attempt of this intervention at Roy Street coffee was a small success. Customers took the coffee sleeves without noticing the difference between the planted coffee sleeves and the original ones. There was one police officer who came in. Sadly this officer got an apple fritter and no coffee. After about an hour, eight of my coffee sleeves were taken. This is also about the moment when the staff of the Roy

Street coffee saw a customer sitting at the bar with one of my coffee sleeves. Although the conversation between staff and customer was too far away for me to overhear, after they were done talking the staff walked over to the table where the coffee sleeves were laying and found the remaining two. The second attempt stayed undiscovered by staff and although no police officers came by, all coffee sleeves were distributed.

REFLECTION

This intervention would work best when there is the opportunity to spend a significant amount of time lingering in the coffee shops to refill taken coffee sleeves and to make sure that police officers have the opportunity to take one. Customers noticed the writing on the sleeves so I believe that with patience the sleeves will be grabbed by officers too.



Coffee sleeve with a quote from one of the interviews



A Starbucks customer grabs one of the planted sleeves

PILLOW TALK

TACTIC:

Direct action mixed with culture jamming

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Kill them with kindness, Laughter is the best medicine, Quick and dirty

HYPOTHESIS

The Stranger reported Saturday 29 April, two days before May Day 2017, that one of the protesters from the previous year got arrested and charged with terrorism for throwing an (unlit) Molotov cocktail to the riot police during May Day 2016. Seattle Police Chief Kathleen O'Toole called the timing of the arrest "entirely coincidental," but said "it is an opportunity for us to send a message to those who would bring something of this nature to an event. It's incredibly dangerous."¹⁷ We don't want protesters potentially being prosecuted for throwing a Molotov cocktail. And we don't want officers to be hurt by a thrown Molotov cocktail. So I thought it would be wise to bring something softer to the May Day March. Something that is not dangerous. And something that would bring a bit of laughter to those trying to overthrow the powers that be and to those who are here today as a "symbol of the establishment".

Attending the May Day march last year had me quite disappointing. The best the protestors could come up with was to cheer when someone climbed on top of a bus stop. There was a dude who was calling out a female cop. And I understand that you might be against the police, but be against them because they're cops. Not because it is a female cop. It is absurd to apply same messed up power dynamics that we have in our society while protesting against just that.

17 Groover, Heidi. "Three Days Before May Day, FBI Arrests Protester from Last Year's Anti-Capitalist March." The Stranger. Apr 28, 2017 at 2:05 pm. <http://www.thestranger.com/slog/2017/04/28/25114583/three-days-before-may-day-fbi-arrests-protester-from-last-years-anti-capitalist-march> Accessed April 29, 2017.

When the majority of the people and media, see you as an annual annoyance¹⁸, there is a problem. I believe we can infuse our protests with a bit of creativity. Throw a little bit of laughter in the mix. Let's not lose our sense of humor.

EVALUATION

Since 2012 Seattle's Mayday has been mostly known for the anti-capitalist march happening in downtown Seattle. Union and immigrant workers' rights marches that happen throughout that day have been underrepresented in the media due to the raucous nature of the anti-capitalist march. But there has been quite the stir in Seattle's activist community. No New Youth Jail organized a pop-up block party at the King County juvenile corrections center. The party was quite a success with shows from local rappers and DJ's. Most people attending that May Day protests could be found around this block party.

Westlake Park in downtown Seattle, where the anti-capitalists march usually starts, was this year the scene of a pro-Trump gathering. Antifa protesters were there, but it mostly felt like both parties showed up because the other one was supposed to be there. As I was expecting, like in recent years, and anti-capitalist march, I set up my table at Westlake Park. Within one hour all 20 pillows were decorated and part of the protest. Because things were not as rowdy as they were in previous years no altercation between protesters and police the place. Although lots of pillows were used as protests signs, only one pillow got thrown.

REFLECTION

I really enjoyed handing out the pillows and seeing what creative statements protesters came up with. The inspiration for this intervention was completely depended on the news. Design is usually not as fast as the news so it was an intervention in which prioritization was very important. I wasn't sure what to expect for reactions as there was little time to think the action through and taking all stakeholders into account, like you would normally do when designing. Luckily, the intervention was positively received during the May Day event.

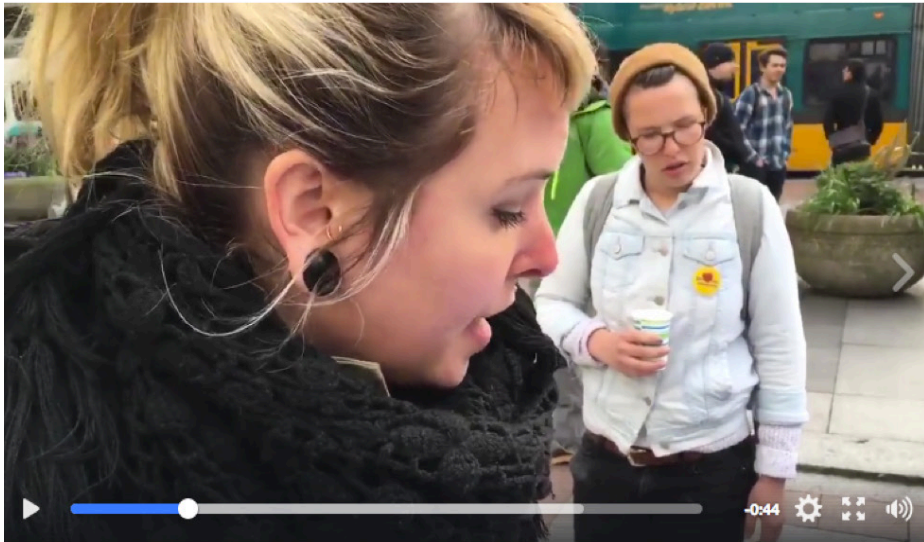
18 Herz, Ansel. "Fuck Everything About May Day in Seattle." The Stranger. May 2, 2016 at 4:05 pm. <http://www.thestranger.com/slog/2016/05/02/24034395/fuck-everything-about-may-day-in-seattle> Accessed April 29, 2017.



The stand for 'Pillow Talk With a Cop'



Top left: The instructions on the stand
Top right: A protester is decorating a pillow
Bottom: The SPD keeps an eye on the protest at Westlake Park



KOMO News at Westlake Center. about a month ago

Pillows for Police
A woman at Westlake Park in Seattle had a May Day protest sign that read, "Pillows for Police."

She explains her reason why to **Matt Markovich KOMO**:

58,789 Views

Like Comment Share

66 Top Comments

11 shares

Write a comment...



David Beckenbaugh What an interesting idea. Not sure what her message is (maybe KOMO could have reported on that) but it is a lot more peaceful than most others, no matter which side she is on. Kudos for being imaginative.... NO matter which side she is on.
Like · Reply · 8 · May 1 at 6:53pm

Vickie Schaefer SO your promoting throwing anything now at police? Don't care if it is a pillow or a grenade...disrespectful and what is really wrong in this country that we accept this
Like · Reply · 7 · May 1 at 9:11pm

Johnny Schill Well with the lack of accountability for police that do commit crimes being as bad as it is I think there is a bigger issue than people not being respectful. Do you know how many people have died at the hands of police? Do you know how many of those deaths have resulted in a police officer being charged? If you look into it you might have a better understanding of why so many people are angry.
Like · Reply · 1 · May 2 at 1:55am

Jeff Welch Welk no, what is really wrong with this country is Donald Trump and his idiot supporters.
Like · Reply · May 2 at 6:56am

Eric Jacobson People who complain the left takes offense at everything then take offense at everything the left does. It's a pillow for christs sake. Get over yourself.
Like · Reply · May 2 at 12:10pm

Top: Screenshot from the live stream of KOMO News

Bottom left: A protester holds up a pillow

Bottom right: Facebook reactions to the livestream of KOMO News

FINE JOB

TACTIC

Advanced leafleting,

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Kill them with kindness, Use existing vernacular

INTERVENTION

Using existing vernacular that is familiar to see around parked cars, i.e parking tickets, I can provide positive reinforcement and thank the SPD for their effort in honoring the 2012 Federal Consent Decree.

HYPOTHESIS

On March 31st Attorney General Jeff Sessions ordered a review of the federal agreements with local law enforcement agencies. Advocates for police reform saw this as a threat to past agreed upon Consent Decrees but also risk for cities that are currently in the process of reforming their police departments. Seattle's police Chief Kathleen O'Toole and Mayor Murray released a statement shortly after the ordered review, stating that they will continue with the process of the reforms.

During this time the City Council was reviewing the new proposed Police Accountability Legislation initiated by the Gender Equity, Safe Communities & New Americans and the Community Police Commission, and voted in favor of the legislation at the end of May.

The relations between police and the community they serve are described as fragile at best. Positive reinforcement is a desired consequence of a certain type of behavior. By thanking the SPD as opposed to pointing out what else could be improved I aim at rewarding good behavior.

EVALUATION

The first attempt at placing the tickets was a failure. I assumed that approaching a parked police car to place the ticket would be easy to do, but this proved to be more nerve wrecking in practice than in theory. I lingered around the police station and the parked cars for about an hour and a half, before deciding that my behavior was now definitely noticeable suspicious, and cancelling the intervention for that day.

I planned a new attempt for the following week, this time with an accomplice whose parents were both police officers and therefore felt that she had the advantage of feeling more comfortable around police officers. Because the lingering was the biggest factor of failure in the first attempt, we strategized the scenario of the intervention by walking past the parked cars once, and then splitting up. Allowing for her to place the parking tickets and for me to follow with a camera, and have a hit-and-run intervention.

After deciding which police cars to target we walked passed and quickly placed the tickets under the wipers. After placing several tickets we watched from a distance to see if any of the officers inside the police station would get to their cars. Most officers drove off without noticing the ticket at first. However, one unmarked police car with several officers in it drove by, and we could see that the officer in the passenger seat was opening the envelope. Message received!

REFLECTION

The first attempt at placing the tickets was a failure. I assumed that approaching a parked police car to place the ticket would be easy to do, but this proved to be more nerve wrecking in practice than in theory. I lingered around the police station and the parked cars for about an hour and a half, before deciding that my behavior was now definitely noticeable suspicious, and cancelling the intervention for that day.

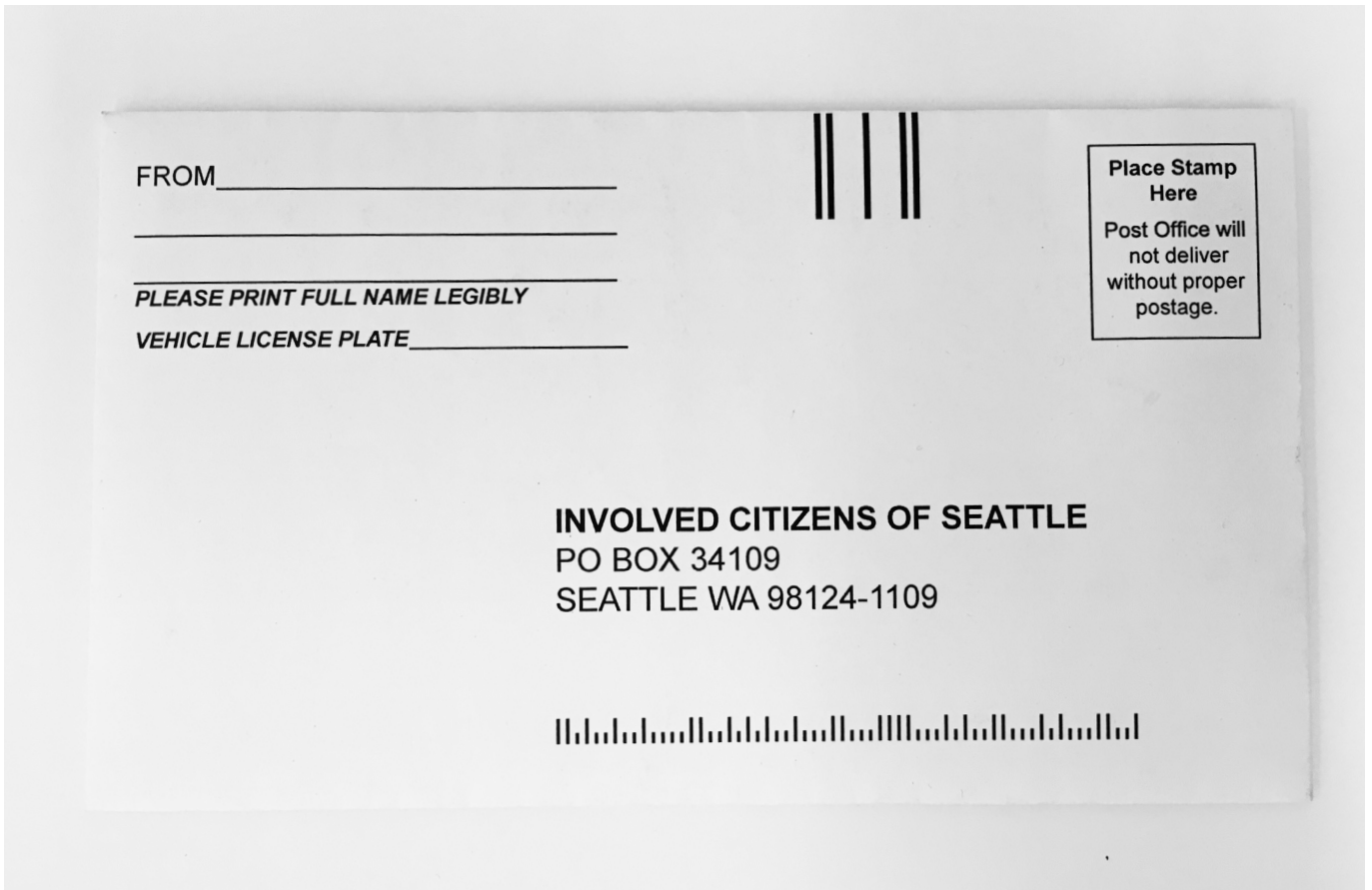
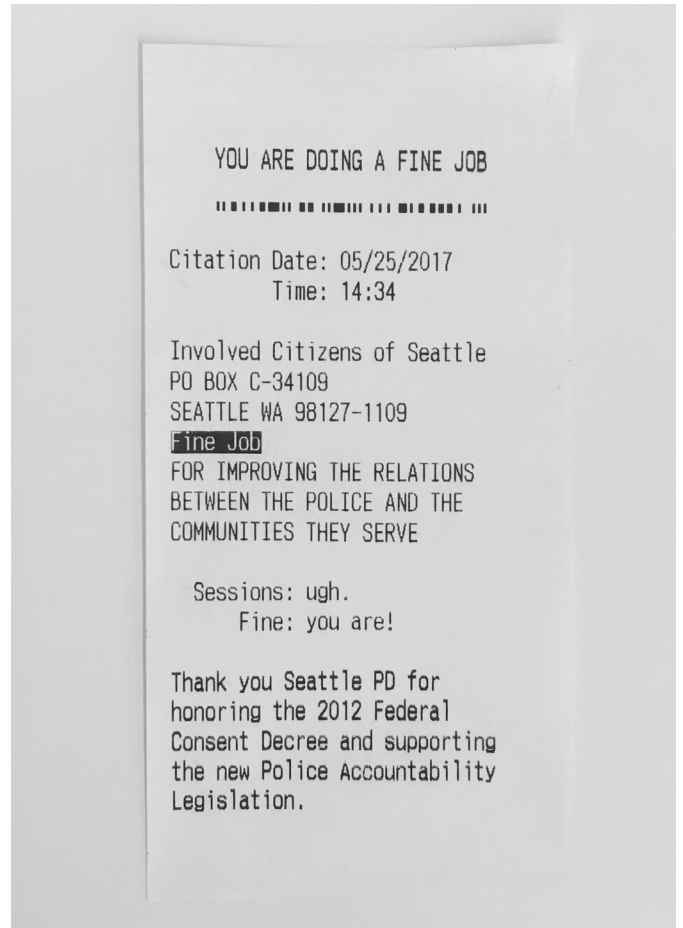
I planned a new attempt for the following week, this time with an accomplice whose parents were both police officers and therefore felt that she had the advantage of feeling more comfortable around police officers.

This is the one intervention I had the most questions about. Is affirming the police in their practice really the way to go? Less than 3 weeks after this intervention the SPD fatally shot a pregnant mother of three, Charleena Lyles, who called the police herself after she suspected a burglary¹⁹ and I felt conflicted about my compliments on doing a fine job. Although the shifting of power structure by fining the police makes an interesting intervention, I am not sure I would do this again.

19 Thompson, Lynn. "Seattle police fatally shoot black Seattle mother; family demands answers" Seattle Times. Originally published June 18, 2017 at 11:03 am Updated June 20, 2017 at 3:29 pm <http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/officer-involved-shooting-in-magnuson-park-leaves-3-children-in-protective-custody/> Accessed June 29, 2017.



A 'Fine Job' parking ticket under the wipers of an SPD vehicle



Top left: A 'Fine Job' parking ticket is placed under the wipers of an SPD vehicle
Top right: The ticket acknowledging the SPD's efforts
Bottom: The 'Fine Job' envelope front

ON MARCH 31ST ATTORNEY GENERAL JEFF SESSIONS ORDERED A REVIEW OF THE FEDERAL AGREEMENTS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES.

This could mean the following:

- (a) A threat to consent decrees aimed at reforming police departments not only in Seattle, but nationwide.
- (b) That Jeff Sessions is under the impression that less use of force by the police **is the equivalent of inadequate policing.**
- (c) The fragile relationship that police departments have with the communities they serve might suffer another blow.

But Seattle is doing the following:

- (a) Both Mayor Murray and Chief O'Toole have stated that the Seattle Police Department is **continuing with the process of reform.**
- (b) Mayor Murray also declared "Our progress under the Consent Decree cannot be undone by empty bureaucratic threats."

- (c) Chief O'Toole praised SPD officers by saying "Our success is a credit to our officers, and reflects real and measurable progress. We remain committed to constitutional and effective policing in our city."

In their most recent "Use of Force Assessment," The Seattle Police Monitor found that the use of force has gone down significantly since the start of the Consent Decree, without an increase in injuries to police officers.

THE CITY COUNCIL AIMS TO VOTE ON THE ACCOUNTABILITY LEGISLATION BY THE END OF MAY

- The Community Police Commission will become permanent;
- Enhancement of civilian oversight;
- An increase of public trust in the SPD; and
- Seattle will continue to be an exemplar of police reform nationwide.

24-hour information line: 206.684.5600

TTY (Hearing/speech impaired): 206.684.5210

Do not ignore this ticket. This is a recognition that the SPD is doing a fine job at upholding their part of the Consent Decree.

Rev 2/12

The 'Fine Job' envelope back

THE SPD IS THERE FOR ME

TACTIC

Community input

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Choose your location carefully, Everyone has a voice, Allow anonymity

INTERVENTION

A true or false vote can be cast on the statement “The SPD is there for me”. Participants have the opportunity to comment on the back of the ballot, providing feedback on their choice. These ballots are made into postcards and send to the Seattle Police Department as a way of bringing the voice of the community to them in an anonymous way.

HYPOTHESIS

By placing a voting box in each of Seattle’s precincts the input will be diverse. I am hoping for a good amount of votes but am tentative to believe that passerby will interact with the voting station.

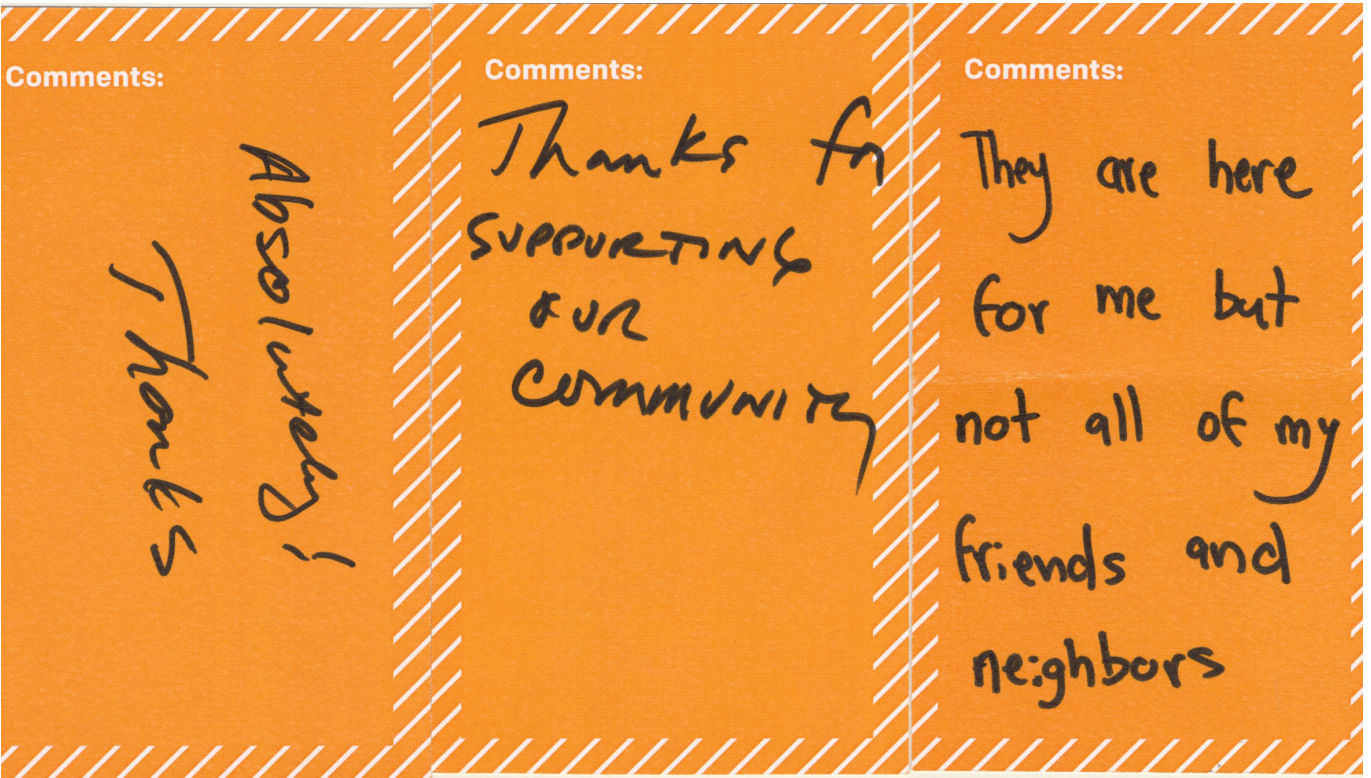
EVALUATION

A lot of votes were cast, and most of them had comments written on the back. Opinions were strong, on the ballots as well as in spoken word. The interaction worked best when I was not standing next to the voting box, but let passerby interact with the voting box on their own. Some participants came to talk to me before or after their vote. We discussed race and policing, and how the question was a tough one as they felt that they as a white person felt that the SPD is there for them, but that it doesn’t count for all in their community and if it therefore meant that the SPD was there for none.

REFLECTION

It turned out to be quite difficult to find a way to be unbiased in the design of the the voting station. Both “true” and “false” cards needed to have the same level of hierarchy, and the statement took some external copywriting experts to make sure it was as impartial as possible.

It was interesting to see how different the votes were depending on which precinct was voting. I believe the possibility for comments on the back of the ballot was a good choice as it helped people to nuance their vote. For instance, some votes explained that although they voted “true” they knew this was not the case for everybody.



Top left and right: Passerby cast a vote
Bottom: 'True' votes cast with comments

Comments:

ACAB
Fucks the
Police

Comments:

FUG
12

Comments:

Not if
you live
SE Area
of Seattle
Rainier
Beach

Comments:

Police are here to
Protect property
not people

Comments:

THE SPD
IS NOT
HERE FOR
MY COMMUNITY
OR CITY.
MAYBE FOR ME,
AS A WHITE
PERSON - ITS NOT FOR
ALL

Comments:

They're
not there
for all

'False' votes cast with comments

CONCLUSION

DESIGN IS SLOW

Design is slow, and surprisingly, politics can go fast. Artefacts made for these interventions were not always ready on the time that is required. The parking tickets for instance had to be adjusted 3 times because decisions were made in the city council that rendered previous versions redundant.

THERE IS NO ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL SOLUTION

Each of these interventions could have been done completely different by using different tactics and principles to inform the intervention. And also when they would have been done by different people. This is the principle Boyd talks about when explaining the pattern language of Christopher Alexander.

Although I hope these interventions may be an inspiration for activists to think creatively about their protests, and for designers to find justification in their socially engaged works, they are not meant to be reproduced in their exact form.

REFLECTION

RICHELLE “DON QUIXOTE” DUMOND

There have been times in this thesis that I felt like Don Quixote fighting windmills.* I have felt like I was on a crusade without anybody knowing I was. I wondered if the SPD was aware of my existence and my efforts of trying to communicate with them. But I hold on to the thought that spreading these ideas is important.

The planting of the seed, as I mentioned earlier, can ripple into society. Systemic changes take time and experiences are a way of reaching those who have the power to bring about change.

ALL FORMS OF ACTIVISM HAVE MERIT

And therefore also all forms of design. As Ann Thorpe states, it is important that the work that you do aligns with your ethical values, and I have personally been frustrated the resistant form most activism turns into without providing alternatives for the future.

But a dive into these grassroots organisations taught me that a lot happens on a generative level, as they are often focussing on changing mindsets and providing opportunities for the public to do the same in the form of workshops and discussions. We are not all designers and artists and direct action has just as much merit as a designed interaction with an institution.

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