



Guerilla Goodness

hit & trust to change the world

Guerilla Goodness uses the power of guerilla hit-and-run actions to break through ingrained patterns, unleashing new opportunities. Surprisingly changing the rules of the game, destabilising the status quo by creative, unanticipated actions and reactions. A positive anarchy, a gentle disorder, a sweet disturbance... to create new "un"balances, providing fuel for hidden or forgotten energy through which an unexpected and entirely more hopeful future can blossom.

Why Guerilla Goodness?

Headlines remind us daily of the political, economic and environmental woes facing the planet.

We are baffled by the overwhelming focus on disasters, threats, decline, impossibilities, blameworthy, ... we find in newspapers, television programmes, conferences, etc. However, a problematic view of the present leads to a problematic view of the future. The more we focus on our problems, the better we understand them and the more we get convinced that these problems have every right to exist.

Guerilla Goodness empowers an alternative reality. It enables people, communities and organizations to reconnect with your inborn resources and talents to translate words of frustration and anger into bold, surprising, positive, pattern-breaking actions, ... to rediscover the natural ease to invent rebellious acts. It invites people to shine and to infiltrate the world with hope and goodness.

Guerilla Goodness is spreading

Ever since we are developing our Guerilla Goodness concept, we are amazed by the vast number of exemplary initiatives all over the world: the Yes Men publishing the "New York Times stating that the Iraq War ends (July 4th, 2008)", Totness (a Transition Town) printing their own Totness Pound and using it for local trade purposes, President Obama sending a Nowruz message to Iran, the Free Hugs initiative spreading from Australia, the TedGlobal 2010 conference on "And now the good news", ...

Also closer to home in our own daily work, we notice individuals, teams, organizations and communities finding their inner guerillero and using their creative powers to stop complaining and start acting consistently towards the reality they want to live in.

We find inspiring connections with the Guerilla Goodness ideas in other fields: Guerilla art, Guerilla gardening, Random acts of kindness, ...

Guerilla Goodness ingredients

Guerilla Goodness initiatives are designed with the distinct purpose of creating new, not yet imagined balances and interaction patterns. It is a way of taking power back. The power over your own inner resources and aspirations, the power over the relations you're part of, the power over the work you want to do and the life you want to live.

A swarm relights the fire

A revolution can't be achieved by individuals but requires a community of people. At the heart of every guerilla goodness campaign, there is a swarm, convinced that it's time for action, breaking the pattern: stop complaining, start the change! Often this group of people finds each other starting from a common frustration. The first challenge for the swarm is to switch from "campaigning against" to "campaigning for". It's not about defeating a common enemy or harming others. The true common enemies are the demons that lurk inside of every one of us, like fear and ignorance.

The uniting element for the swarm is not anger but their shared belief in a better future and the risks they are willing to take to make this happen: *Yes we can!* It is this belief that keeps the swarm moving

and that enables them to respond resiliently to setbacks or disappointments. Their goal is to re-energize and inspire others: those who are onlooking or non-believing, but also those “formerly known as the common enemy”.

Goodness

The starting question for the swarm is “What is the goodness we want to create in this world”? The very answer to this question is the most vulnerable element of any guerilla goodness action: how do you define goodness? “Goodness is euphemism for God” states www.dictionary.com. How do you avoid ‘killing in the name of God’?

There are no external criteria to define whether actions comply with “goodness” or “guerilla ethics”. There is the “good” intention. The swarm’s mission is to reduce cynicism and to increase joy and co-creation. And there are the consequences. The swarm is not only responsible for the goodness of the ultimate change they want to bring to the world. They should also guarantee that the short term effects of their hit and run actions are consistent with the positive choice they want to provoke. In some of the examples above, such as the Free Hugs campaign, the goodness is part of the act itself. In other examples, this goodness is less evident: the opinions on whether the Yes Men’s actions bring goodness to our world, are divided. Therefore it is crucial to create a “wise” swarm that encourages diversity in opinions and is capable of “pre-sensing” the goodness of their deeds accurately.

Hit & trust

Hit and run actions are a way of reclaiming our reality, challenging the commonly accepted practices and rules. They are designed to affect the world in such a provoking way that they can’t be ignored or minimized to a fait-diver. Taking the system by surprise, these actions create an unbalance in such a way that people have no immediate reaction pattern available and must find a new creative response. These are powerful but temporary actions that allow to truly live a new possible future, be it only for a short while, like the idea that the war in Iraq has really ended overnight while we were sleeping (cfr Yes Men). Or inviting all parents for a school party to dream of a new school building, knowing that the local government is currently unwilling to look for positive and sustainable solutions.

One of the major challenges for the swarm is to allow time for the system to respond to the hit & run action. After the action, they withdraw and wait for any reaction. And when this reaction occurs, they explicitly reframe it as a “desired response”. By embracing every reaction, every dynamic that has been provoked by the hit and run action, they reinforce that things are changing indeed! Often the first reaction of the environment will be to try and reinstall the practices and balances as they were before. Some people will be energized and hopeful. Others will stumble and try to move on in the same direction as they were heading, rather than to really fall and stop to think. It takes a lot of courage and persistence from the swarm to truly “act as if” even the stumbling reaction is a big leap forward. This is the “hit & trust” part of guerilla goodness. By trusting that even the slightest evolution is a breakthrough, the change is emerging. From this perspective, Iran’s reaction to president Obama’s Nowruz message, stating that they need not only words but also deeds, was a huge success that deserves celebration.

Unite

The sole purpose of the hit & run actions is to initiate movement. It is aiming at a moving target, since moving is the target. There is no way of predicting which new patterns will emerge. Moreover, the swarm cannot create that new reality on its own. For this it needs to reach out to the “other parties”, shaping together the creative responses to the questions that emerge from the unbalance that was created. Possibly even getting to the point of expressing jointly an explicit commitment for the future. Take Totness, the transition town that served as a precedent for many others. It is only by consistently inviting new parties to reflect together on the questions they put forward, that a sustainable, better

future is being designed and implemented.

In many guerilla goodness initiatives, this final act of uniting is neglected. Not surprisingly since it is not easy for the swarm to let go some of their specific dreams and to include new partners when inventing the new, desired practices. This willingness to “kill your darlings” requires again wisdom and courage. This is the moment of truth. Only when the guerilleros are capable of re-addressing the question on “What is the goodness we want to bring in this world?” and of including multiple voices in reinventing their answer, the guerilla will indeed lead to goodness.

Guerilla Goodness in practice

The Guerilla Goodness concept was inductively developed through our organisational development projects. We have applied these principles to create better communication and understanding between middle and top management, to facilitate multiparty collaboration, in individual coaching programmes, in conflict mediation, ... Next to these professional settings, we experiment continuously with Guerilla Goodness in our participation in local communities and free time initiatives.

Ideas feeding Guerilla Goodness

Solutions Focus (De Shazer, S.) focuses on what we want to achieve rather than on the problem(s). The approach does not focus on the past, but instead, focuses on the present and future.

Wisdom of Crowds (Surowiecki, J.) inspires us to identify levers for creating a wise swarm.

Swarm intelligence (amongst others - Bonabeau, E.) gives insight on how a small number of rules can determine in a very high degree the way we (inter)act. Changing these rules will change our interaction.

Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, D. & Srivastva, S.) Appreciative Inquiry is an organizational development process or philosophy that engages individuals within an organizational system in its renewal, change and focused performance. AI is based on the assumption that organizations change in the way they inquire. They claim that an organization which inquires into problems or difficult situations will keep finding more of the same but an organization which tries to appreciate what is best in itself will find/discover more and more of what is good.

Theory U (Scharmer, O.) The presencing process is a journey that connects us more deeply both to what wants to emerge in the world and to our emerging, originating self.

Defensive Routines (Argyris, C.) Defensive Routines is an institutionalized, ongoing, long-term, mixed message about which discussion is taboo. It is an elaborate double-bind. Its purpose is to prevent embarrassment, threat, awkward situations, maintain the status quo and avoid unwanted change.

Guerilla art kit (Smith, K.) A way of reclaiming the environment, questioning what is acceptable behaviour and challenging what we are “allowed” to do in a specific context

Positive Deviances (see eg www.plexusinstitute.org) The Positive Deviance concept is based on the premise that some solutions to community problems already exist within the community and just need to be discovered.

CIA Guerilla Handbook. Psychological operations in Guerilla Warfare. A practical guide intended to be used by the Contras in Central America. See also “On Guerilla Warfare” by Mao Tse-Tung, how to transform disadvantages into benefits: using retreat as an offensive manoeuvre; indoctrinating locals for employment as spies; and compensating for lack of firepower with speed, surprise, and initiative.

And many more...