

78 Reasonable Questions to Ask of Any Human Activity

Ecological

1. What are its effects on the health of the planet and of the person?
2. Does it preserve or destroy biodiversity?
3. Does it preserve or reduce ecosystem integrity?
4. What are its effects on the land?
5. What are its effects on wildlife?
6. How much and what kind of waste does it generate?
7. Does it incorporate the principles of ecological design?
8. Does it break the bond of renewal between humans and nature?
9. Does it preserve or reduce cultural biodiversity?
10. What is the totality of its effects—it's "ecology"?

Social

11. Does it serve community?
12. Does it empower community members?
13. How does it affect our perception of our needs?
14. Is it consistent with the creation of a communal, human economy?
15. What are its effects on relationships?
16. Does it undermine conviviality?
17. Does it undermine traditional forms of community?
18. How does it affect our way of scene and experiencing the world?
19. Does it foster a diversity of forms of knowledge?
20. Does it build on, or contribute to, the renewal of traditional forms of knowledge?
21. Does it serve to commodify knowledge or relationships?
22. To what extent does it redefine reality?
23. Does it raise a sense of time and history?
24. What is its potential to become addictive?

Moral

25. What values does its use foster?
26. What is gained by its use?
27. What are its effects beyond its ability to the individual?
28. What is lost in using it?
29. What are its effects on the least person in the society?

Aesthetic

30. Is it ugly?
31. Does it cause ugliness?
32. What noise does it make?
33. What pace does it set?
34. How does it affect quality of life (as distinct from standard of living)?

Practical

35. What does it make?
36. Who does it benefit?
37. What is its purpose?
38. Where was it produced?
39. Where is it used?

40. Where must go when it's broken or obsolete?
41. How expensive is it?
42. Can it be repaired? By an ordinary person?
43. What is the entirety of its cost—the full cost accounting?

Ethical

44. How complicated is it?
45. What does it allow us to ignore?
46. To what extent does it distance agents from effect?
47. Can we assume personal, or communal, responsibility for its effects?
48. Can its effects be directly apprehended?
49. What ancillary technologies does it require?
50. What behavior might it make possible in the future?
51. What other technologies might it make possible?
52. Does it alter our sense of time and relationships in ways conducive to nihilism?

Vocational

53. What is its impact on craft?
54. Does it reduce, deaden, or enhance human creativity?
55. Is it the least imposing technology available for the task?
56. Does it replace, or does it aid, human hands and human beings?
57. Can it be responsive to organic circumstance?
58. Does it depress or enhance the quality of goods?
59. Does it depress or enhance the meaning of work?

Political

60. What is its mystique?
61. Does it concentrate or equalize power?
62. Does it require, or institute, a knowledge elite?
63. Is it totalitarian?
64. Does it require a bureaucracy for its perpetuation?
65. What legal empowerments does it require?
66. Does it undermine traditional moral authority?
67. Does it require military defense?
68. Does it enhance, or serve, military purposes?
69. How does it affect warfare?
70. Does it foster a mass thinking or behavior?
71. Is it consistent with the creation of global economy?
72. Does it empower transnational corporations?
73. What kind of capital does it require?

Metaphysical

74. What aspect of the inner self does it reflect?
75. Does it express love?
76. Does it express rage?
77. What aspect of our past does it reflect?
78. Does it reflect cynical or linear thinking?

From Stephanie Mills