80 Questions to Ask About Any Technology

Useful questions to begin to make sense of any proposed
'solution' – green or otherwise – to current challenges

Ecological

1. What are its effects on the health of the planet and 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. What kind of resources does it require to build/operate?
7. How much and what kind of waste does it generate?
8. Does it incorporate the principles of ecological design?
9. Does it break the bond of renewal between humans and nature?
10. Does it preserve or reduce cultural biodiversity?
11. What is the totality of its effects – its "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 seeing 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?

Practical

25. What does it make?
26. Whom does it benefit?
27. What is its purpose?
28. Where is produced?
29. Where is it used?
30. Is it scalable/sustainable at scale?
31. Where must it go when it's broken or obsolete?
32. How expensive is it?
33. Can it be repaired? By an ordinary person?
34. What is the entirety of its cost – the full cost accounting?

Moral

35. What values does its use foster?
36. What is gained by its use?
37. What are its effects beyond its utility to the individual?
38. What is lost in using it?
39. What are its effects on the least person in the society?

Ethical

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

Vocational

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

Political

56. What is its mystique?
57. Does it concentrate or equalise power?
58. Who is writing/controlling its narrative?
59. Does it require, or institute, a knowledge elite?
60. Is it totalitarian?
61. Does it require a bureaucracy for its perpetuation?
62. What legal empowerments does it require?
63. Does it undermine traditional moral authority?
64. Does it require military defence?
65. Does it enhance, or serve, military purposes?
66. How does it affect warfare?
67. Does it foster a mass thinking or behaviour?
68. Is it consistent with the creation of global economy?
69. Does it empower transnational corporations?
70. What kind of capital does it require?

Metaphysical

71. What aspect of the inner self does it reflect?
72. Does it express love?
73. Does it express rage?
74. What aspect of our past does it reflect?
75. Does it reflect cynical or linear thinking?

Aesthetic

76. Is it ugly?
77. Does cause ugliness?
78. What noise does it make?
79. What pace does it set?
80. How does it affect quality of life (as distinct from the standard of living)?