Hacktivism as a Model of Agency for Architects: Modulating Forces and Flows of Power

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“Its positive contributions - the adaptation
to practical functions, technical innovation,
comfort, the banishment of superimposed
ornament - are today banalities. Yet although
its field of application is, when all is said and
done, narrow, this has not led functionalism to
adopt a relative theoretical modesty. In order
to justify philosophically the extension of its
principles of renovation to the entire organi-
sation of social life functionalism has fused,
seemingly without thought, with the most static
conservative doctrines (and, simultaneously,
have itself congealed into an inert doctrine)... 
The architect, like other workers in our
endeavor, is facing the inevitability of a change
of profession: he will no longer be a builder of
forms alone, but a builder
of complete ambiances.”

- Simon Sadler

This thesis first identifies the current condi-
tions of Vietnam, specifically “Hackanoi,” in
Vietnam on a macro and micro scale as it
pertains to the internet’s physical and virtual
infrastructure, and its effect on the political,
economic and social spheres. My primary
text includes research by Bjorn Surborg
in his works, “Is it the ‘Development of
Underdevelopment’ All Over Again? Internet
Development in Vietnam” and “On-line with
the people in line: Internet development and
flexible control of the net in Vietnam.”

It then identifies and describes the current
state of hacker culture, mainly abstract
hacktivism, as it is described and translated in
Vietnam. My primary text includes Abstract
Hacktivism: The Making of a Hacker Culture by
Otto Von Busch and Karl Palmas and Hacker
Culture by Douglas Thomas.

From the book, The Situationist City by Simon
Sadler, architecture was believed by the influ-
ential Situationist International from the 1950s
and 70s as “appropriations and alternation of
the environment and its space” from which
political, economic and social change can be
generated.

This thesis claims that architecture is not just
merely materialized forms, but also a complex
network of virtual flows and forces. It attempts
to embrace a computer network-like concept-
tual model and argues that such a model
more closely represents how the world oper-
ates in today’s increasingly digitized world
(Internet of Things).

This thesis will attempt to materialize and
bring attention to the invisible and virtual
forces of the internet on the political,
economic and social spaces that activate and
direct the way for architecture in the contem-
porary world. The thesis will explore hacking,
more specifically “abstract hacktivism “as a
model for architects to find ways of being
more proactive in the political, economic and
social spheres.

This materialization of the invisible and
virtual forces will be manifested and explored
through drawing as a construction of narra-
tive and spatial interpretation based on Otto
Von Busch and Palmas’s concepts of “abstract
hacktivism”. The thesis will attempt to bring
itself to the real world by using “Hackanoi” as
the testing site for the exploration and mani-
festation of these invisible and virtual forces
through drawing.

2. Sadler, Simon. P. 12

Advisor: Brian Lonsway
[The Hypothesis]

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This thesis will attempt to materialize and bring attention to the invisible and virtual forces of the internet on the political, economic and social spaces that activate and direct the way for architecture in the contemporary world. The thesis will specifically explore hacking, more specifically “abstract hacktivism “as a model for architects to find ways to be more proactive in the political, economic and social spheres.

This materialization of the invisible and virtual forces will be manifested and explored through drawing as a construction of narrative and spatial interpretations based in the hackerspace,”Hackanoi”, in Vietnam and on Otto Von Busch and Palmas ‘s book, Abstract Hacktivism: the Making of Hacker Culture.
What is “Abstract Hacktivism?”

Hacktivism has been associated with the online strategies and tactics of activists that more or less follow the autonomous anarchist tradition - squatters, phreaks, scammers, crackers and cultural jammers who engaged in anti-globalisation, direct action and resistance. Otto Von Busch and Karl Palmas make a radical break in this book by not discussing about jamming and resistance nor about online activity. This text is not about the politics of actual computers, or the use of actual computers in politics. Rather, it is about how the abstract mechanisms enacted in actual computers are adopted elsewhere, in non computer contexts. This implies that new forms of viewing politics, activism, and critique are emerging – even in social settings far removed from actual computer networks.


What is “Hacking?”

“...A dialogic is about creating an interface, a platform for performing the act, a somewhat neutral ground (a space that by-passes the dominate existing politic and economic structures). This interface is a thin space or membrane of “inter” an in-between. It is not a line or border dividing as much as uniting. The space is the room ...where different disciplines converge, complement and form an alloy in symbiosis. It itself is an integrating force, as in “intermediality...We as persons have also become in-betweens...whose lives are contractions of at least two perspectives...We are hybrids of many forces. Of global and local, virtual and actual, private and public. They are no longer opposites but merge in conjunctional forms. Being and objects come to exist at the convergence point of flows and forces.”

“The dialogue happens in the in-between, it is the inter-esse between wills and intentions. In the turbulence of forces clashing. Hacking becomes a practice in the middle of it and a low-level tactic, middling between, where modding becomes the materialization of this practice. Mediators as negotiators and explorers of multiplicity of subjectivities. Inserting one into existing movements instead of a point of origin.”

Hacking as “operating at a low level, using existing infrastructure and power of a system to tinker, twist and modulate it after theism own will. Building on the existing system with local patches and modifications...adding small programs to the toolbox and presenting them with a journey on the same stream...bending the flow of power, but keeping the current on.”

[The Argument Structure]

1. This thesis first identifies the current conditions of Vietnam, specifically “Hackanoi” in Hanoi, on a macro and micro scale as it pertains to the internet’s physical and virtual infrastructure, and its effect on the political, economic and social spheres. My primary text includes research by Bjorn Surborg in his works, “Is it the ‘Development of Underdevelopment’ All Over Again? Internet Development in Vietnam” and “On-line with the people in line: Internet development and flexible control of the net in Vietnam.”

2. It then identifies and describes the current state of hacker culture, mainly abstract hacktivism, as it is described in and how that it has translated in Vietnam. My primary text includes Abstract Hacktivism: The Making of a Hacker by Otto Von Busch and Hacker Culture by Douglas Thomas.

3. Through concepts and methods of hacking explored in Abstract Hacktivism: Making of Hacking Culture by Otto Von Busch and Karl Palmas, this thesis will attempt to explore these concepts through drawing as a construction of narrative and spatial interpretations based on “Hackanoi” and on Otto and Von Busch and Palmas ‘s book, Abstract Hacktivism: the Making of Hacker Culture.
[Conditions in Vietnam]

1. It is impossible to understand the internet in Vietnam without talking about the economics and politics within the global setting and within its national boundaries. Economics and politics on the global scale shapes the hierarchical physical infrastructure of the internet. On the national scale, with pressure from the global market, Vietnam’s internet is a mechanism for its blooming foreign investments and trade, but a deterrent when its comes to flows on political content that might jeopardize the monopolized power of VCP. This control is done through the configuration of the internet’s infrastructure, software, and physical configuration of internet access and monitoring, specifically in internet cafes.

The internet did not officially start in Vietnam until 1997 when Decree 21/CP on new regulations relating the the management, installation and use of the internet was put into effect to allow fully access to foreign investors and commercial use while controlling information flows that would deals with the political party. All international connections glow through two gateways in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, which were operated by Vietnam Data Communication Company. Control over international data traffic was thus given to the government agency responsible for communication infrastructure and interested in its economic proceeds, but restrict any activities that might jeopardize its power.


“Hackanoi”, Hanoi

(Questions for Tom).

Detail Narrative of the implementation of the hackerspace. What process/procedures did you go through? What is the current condition now?

What are your short and long term goals for the hackerspace? What are the challenges that you have to overcome to achieve it?

More about the hacker space:

What events are held in the space? How often? Who uses the hackerspace? How often

What are you rules you have to follow? How is the space supported?
2. “cyberpunk” - more complicate and multicultural world. Computers are being used to destroy freedom and autonomy and control over computers is an act of self defense not just power. Hackers of today justify their actions through e claiming that 60s hackers were the keepers of secret who sold out for the corporate word. These hackers consist of white suburban boys who have their own PCs and are challenging authority. Unlike 60s hackers, exploring is considered harmful for hackers today because exploring seemed harmless due to the fact that the culture of secrecy did not take full effect for the 60s hackers.

Information must be distanced through the technology of language, which can range from silence to commodification to patents and copyright to encryption. The notion of the host implies the existence of a guest, a stranger who is met with either a sense of hospitality or; if they come as an enemy, the other is met with hostility. How one determines how the other is met is often a propriety of information - a letter of introduction, a handshake, or a password. The metaphor of the host can also imply a discourse of infection within the the language of computer networks themselves. It gives rise to the notion of the virus. We can see this change happen in culture, economy, politics, theology, military thinking. Often shifting from a top down discipline and discipline and control rigidity to a bottom up perspective of self-organization and collaborative work, an opening of systems. This is a dark contrast to the opposite tendency in society of surveillance, immaterial property and exploitative aspects of global capitalism. In closed world hacking is an expanding a field of action.

2.

1. About 25 million people out of 89 million people in Vietnam partake in circumventing the web by utilising an alternative domain name server to access Facebook. Hacking has become part of Vietnam's internet culture. This has allowed for a growing community of political criticism and activist. Fleeting content on the web criticizing a government official one day would disappear a few days later just to make it point.

[Methodology of Exploration]

3. Through concepts and methods of hacking explored in Abstract Hacktivism: Making of Hacking Culture by Otto Von Busch and Karl Palmas, this thesis will attempt to explore these concepts through drawing as a construction of narrative and spatial interpretations based on “Hackanoi” and on Busch and Palmas’ book, Abstract Hacktivism: the Making of a Hacker Culture.
Hacktivism as a Model of Agency for Architects
1842: Gutta-percha, a insulating gum with could be applied to the wire, made its appearance.

1861: A submarine cable between the United States and Great Britain allowed for the first successful exchange between President Buchanan and Queen Victoria.

1876: William Thomas invents the first electrical pulses to automatically be translated into letters.

1893: Physical and Virtual Infrastructure of the Internet

1840: 1849: Gutta-percha, a insulating gum with could be applied to the wire, made its appearance.

15,000ft

70,000 seeds of the rubber tree (gutta-percha) are brought from the Amazon rain forest and planted in a greenhouse in London. 2,800 out of the 70,000 seeds that germinated were brought to the botanical gardens in Penang.

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1893: Physical and Virtual Infrastructure of the Internet
1786: Penang, a Malaysian peninsula, is acquired by the British East India Company. Penang is the first British possession in the Malay States and Southern Asia.

1842: A two mile wire coated with gutta-percha off the coast from Folkestone tested successful.

1856: Atlantic Telegraphy Company laid the a transcontinental cable from Ireland to Britain.

1876: William Thomas invents the first electrical pulses to automatically be translated into letters.


Since World War II, AT&T owned a monopoly over the construction of most of the international telecommunications systems as it was backed by the government. AT&T owned all of the customers within their borders and can charge at any price rate.

Modulating Forces and Flows of Power

Physical and Virtual Infrastructure of the Internet

1994:
A study was completed and the favorable results created an interest from many investors such as Asian Infrastructure of Hong Kong and Telecom Holding Co. Ltd. of Thailand. The project also extend to form the Middle East to Tokyo. Telecom deregulation

Late 1920s:
Contracts were written in Southern Thailand where it became the center of FLAG operation and construction. Manhole-making villages emerge consisting of local workers from men to women and young and old.

After World War II, Japan is in rubble under the Douglas MacAthur and by foreign run telecom

1980s and Early 1990s:
"We need to unbar any progress and prescind for reasons which make it difficult for international cooperation.

A satellite dish at the Submarine Cable Landing Station is connected to the internet exchange provider.