

hack[PUBLIC SPACE] Diego Fagundes da Silva, Erica Azevedo da Costa and Mattos and Romullo Baratto Fontenelle

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Abstract

The way we interact as citizens in new global and local scenarios is changing how we build our cities, how we relate as individuals and how we assign value to our work. We use the digital tools available to create new physical and virtual territories which are the supports for our activities and needs. Concepts like open source and crowdsourcing are manifestations of our unceasing search for adaptation. Within this context architects, designers and other cultural producers are seen as fosterers of projects with which, besides contributing with their specific skills, they can also investigate, invent and take alternative courses of action.

Our proposal is a reaction against this context created by countless forces. We develop our discourse around three elements - **money**, **time** and **space** – to suggest an empowering engine, a way to take control, or simply a survival strategy. We propose to create a currency associated with time, a mediating digital platform and physical infrastructures supporting the productive activities. Someone's time is counted by the digital system linked to the physical platforms which compose a complex system spread throughout the city.



Context

In the recent years we have seen the rise of new forms of economic and commercial interchange like crowdsourcing (Howe 2009), social currencies (Schumacher 1989; Freire 2011) and time banks (Cahn 2011), all based in and supported by networks acting in local or wider, global domains. Likewise, a new structure of knowledge construction based in open source (History of the OSI 2012) and do it yourself ideals echoes in numerous fields, from exact to social applied sciences, arts and communication, thus generating new dynamics and creative changes. Could these experiences be understood as symptoms of deeper social changes? Can they be taken by us – architects, designers and urban planners – as part of practices that will define in the future both new forms of sociability and spatial design and production? Within the theme of the current issue of V!RUS magazine – "Do It Yourself!" – how can we conceive these new social and economic realities in a collaborative and horizontal way?

The way we interact as citizens in new global and local scenarios is also changing how we face public issues, how we use the digital tools available and how we create new physical and virtual territories for our own activities and needs. Within this context we are constantly pushed to question our actions and look for alternatives. Hannah Arendt's treaty, entitled "The Human Condition", describe action as a necessary catalyst to the pluralistic human condition, expression of both the public and individual domain. This interpretation of action requires freedom for us to move towards a collective project that is at the same time bottom-up and top-down (Pereira et al 1993). Simultaneously, these new forms of interaction can lead us to explore forms of collectiveness which will enable different ways of compensation for the work of designers and architects. New paths are now open so we can find other funding sources more appropriate to foster both specific architectural projects and more radical urban interventions.

Our proposal *hack* [*PUBLIC SPACE*] is a reaction against this complex context created by countless forces. We develop our discourse around three main elements - **money**, **time** and **space** – to suggest an empowering engine, a way to take control, or simply a survival strategy, in short, a way of acting in the city.

As a synthesis of these concerns we propose the creation of: a new model of currency directly associated with time to stimulate social exchanges between people and the city; a digital platform to mediate these new forms of relationship; and a physical platform supporting all these activities and assigning them new meanings. Time donated or received by someone is counted by the digital system and can be "exchanged" in each of the physical platforms, which compose a complex system spread throughout the city.

Money

Money is a man-made instrument created to facilitate exchanges, mostly the exchange of goods and services. Overall, those exchanges exist since before the creation of money. Therefore, money is a culturally created information system, not the natural way of things, although sometimes we see it like that.

The financial system features some specificities which are often understood as sideeffects. Crisis, hyperinflation, housing bubbles, violence and competition, to mention only few. Those are, however, inherent effects which stand in the very core of the monetary system. It is worth thinking how – through the new instruments and flows brought to us by so called "information age" – we can revisit certain principles and rethink the way our resources can be exchanged in more ethical and fruitful forms.



Time

In a world ruled by money we are accustomed to evaluate all things quantitatively. All people's time is one of those things usually associated with a monetary value. It is more valuable as higher the worker's specialization degree and the market value of what s/he produces. We use to say "time is money" to justify our incapacity in leaving this system behind and look for other possibilities. But time is something equally shared by everyone. As long as we live, we all have the same amount of time: twenty-four hours a day, divided in productive and non-productive parts. Could this shared time be the basis of a new kind of exchange?

Space

Money makes cities. Our urban zones are spatial reflections of the capital, that is to say, money flows according to economic trends shaping private and public spaces. We might then easily think of our cities as an anti-ethical ensemble of public and private spaces.

In this scenario, public spaces are often neglected and become a direct consequence of brutal engines of real estate speculation and other disputes of interest. Is it possible to subvert this logic and somehow invade and reclaim our public spaces?

Proposal

We don't need to destroy the old system, but rather think how we can redirect and boost some flows towards a more desirable and fair goal. We propose a hacker approach as intervention in this complex system that is the city, building upon it with the available resources, that is, people, their time and the public space.

Currently some social groups already perform exchange of favors in form of time, production or even services. Nevertheless, this is made independently of any commercial organization system. The absence of systematic organization makes it impossible that this informal network grows. A bigger network could create a viable alternative for many trades that we make through the money system - now through the freedom of our self-organized time. Time is not money, time is our lives.

To enable any form of activity we need to occupy space. The city has that space. How could our free/productive time be related in that way with the city? The public urban space should be the basis for a new platform capable of catalyze the cultural exchanges between people.

We propose the creation of: a new form of currency, directly associated with time as a way of stimulate social exchanges between people and the city; a digital platform to mediate these new relations, and; a physical platform to support all activities. One's donated or credited time is counted by the system and can be exchanged in all physical platforms scattered on the city.

We can make a collective hack, a system within the city system, a new layer of abstraction that make what's available to and from us in new and interesting possibilities.

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