

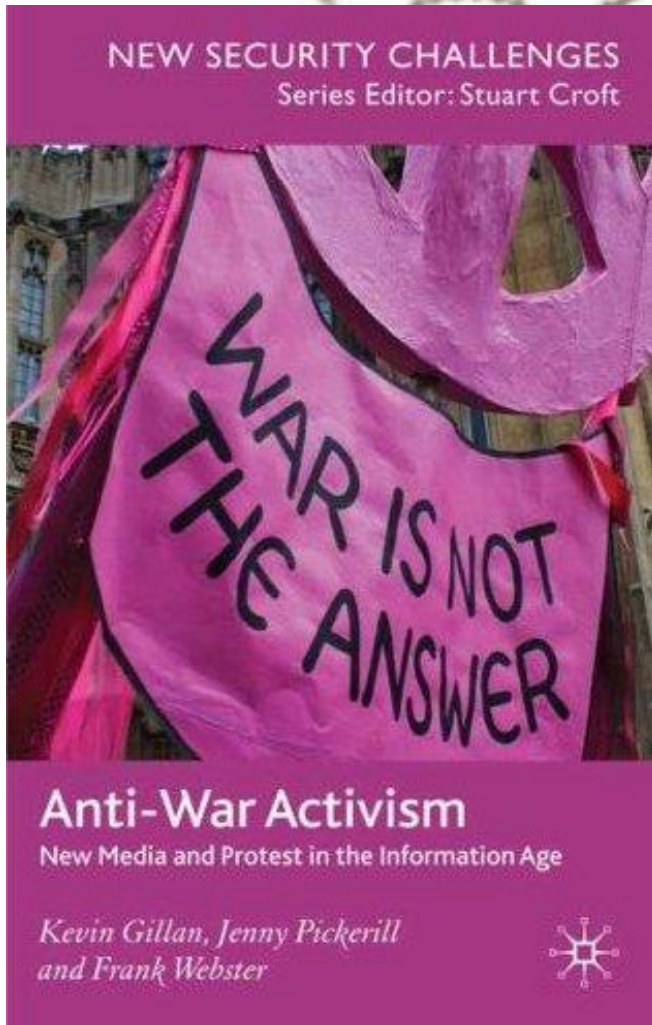
'Hackers' and 'Users' in the Anti-War Movement

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the context...



- Aims:
 - full exploration of contemporary anti-war activism
 - particular focus on questions of information and communication
- Key areas:
 - Mainstream and alternative media
 - Beliefs and identities
 - Coalitions, alliances, fractures
 - Transnational activism
 - Embedding technologies in activism

‘Hackers’ defined

“people who have acquired the expertise required to take control of a personal computer and make it do things that are not part of the publicised functionality... someone who is disrespectful of the rules that are codified into the machine” (Kirkpatrick 2004: 118)

At minimum, hacking involves:

- **Mastery of a system**
- **Willingness to experiment with and break rules**
- **Discovery of unintended new uses of technology**

Configuring 'users'

“a user is involved with the machine in a hands-on way, but is not interested in the technology except as it enables an application” (Turkle 1997)

The user attitude is prevalent because:

- Shifting demographics of computer/Internet use; not just passionate 'early adopters' any more
- Manufacturers' promotion of 'user friendly' technologies (which are equally 'hacker unfriendly')
- Variety of new devices (e.g. laptops, mobiles, cameras) less easy to hack at either hardware or software level
- Urgency of activism



“Get off the internet, I’ll see you on the streets!”

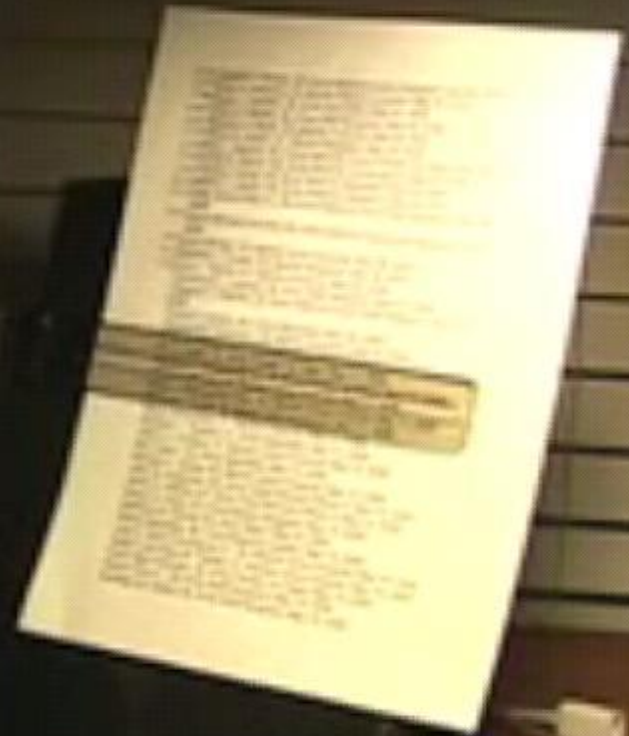
Three examples of the hacker attitude

- 1) Joshua Kindberg's 'dot-matrix graffiti bike'; RNC demonstrations 2004
- 2) Joseph Delappe's memorial project inside 'America's Army' during 2006
 - Stop the War Coalition's *War! (What is it good for?)* hitting 6th in the charts in 2007

Bikes Against Bush



Anti-war Protests in America's Army



'War!' Covered by Ugly Rumours

A large billboard for the movie 'War!' is shown. The billboard features a caricature of a man with a wide, shouting mouth and a distressed expression. The background of the billboard is a dark, blue-tinted image of a city street. Below the image, there is a black banner with white text that reads: "Text 'peace1' to 78789 TO PRE-ORDER/BUY THE SINGLE NOW". At the bottom of the billboard, there is a small line of text that reads: "Only Cost £1.50 Plus Standard Operator Charges".

Text "peace1" to 78789 TO PRE-ORDER/BUY THE SINGLE NOW

Only Cost £1.50 Plus Standard Operator Charges

Key features of anti-war hacking

- Shifting status of technology from means of organising protest, to a form of protest in itself
- Changed communication structures
- tendency to seek more horizontal structures (many-to-many)
- risk of take-over if single nodal point mediating
- Some potential to link political and social networks
- Security and trust enhanced by new structure: few-to-few-to-few...

To sum up...

- Most activists display 'user attitude' to technology:
- Benefits include speed and cheapness – no bad thing!
- Particularly useful in more formal and vertically organised groups
- 'Hacker' attitude leads activists to:
- More horizontal communication structures
- The message becomes the protest itself
- Linking political and social networks

None of these benefits are automatic – all is dependent on context