Günther Friesinger, Johannes Grenzfurthner, Thomas Ballhausen (eds.)

Urban Hacking
Cultural Jamming Strategies in the Risky Spaces of Modernity

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Urban spaces became battlefields, signifiers have been invaded, new structures have been established: Netculture replaced counterculture in most parts and also focused on the everchanging environments of the modern city. Important questions have been brought up to date and reasked, taking current positions and discourses into account. The major question still remains, namely how to create culturally based resistance under the influence of capitalistic pressure and conservative politics. This collection of essays and contributions attempts to address this question and its implications for different scientific and artistic fields.

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Welcome to the Battlefield.

Please Make Yourself Comfortable

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Urban space is a battlefield, symbols are appropriated, new structures created. Net culture replaces traditional counter culture and re-focuses its attention to a space of living that is changing at a fast pace: the city. By new means and venturing down new paths, enduring questions are recast, the central question being how cultural resistance is possible and can be lived in times of rising market pressure and conservative cultural policies; a question of enduring importance indeed. Here, at this precarious point in time, this anthology intervenes. We ask questions, we give answers, we take our responsibility seriously.

This reader tries to adopt the motto ‘Urban Hacking’, i.e., and attempts to constructively-critically examine the cultural practices of desire, resignification, and subversive appropriation. The urban space and the cultural technique of ‘hacking’ function as pillars for the investigation of historical as well as contemporary strategies of such culturally founded resistance. The topic of Urban Hacking, while appearing vague at first, shall be elucidated by breaking it down into three panels. The examples analyzed in connection therewith will not only reflect the status quo of what exists, but also contribute to a discussion about the options that remain open, i.e., about the possibilities and limitations of that discourse. Experts of respective fields submitted essays, interviews and prose on their areas of specialization in the according thematic groups, thereby
rendering the positive as well as negative sides of the connection between different approaches and concepts evident.

This three-part reader corresponds to the thematic priorities Urban, Hacking, and Risk. The part Urban will discuss, from the perspectives of space theory and media geography, the conditions placed upon and the requirements demanded from the city as venue; e.g., the contributors will deliberate not only about the shift from place to space and its grounds in semiotics but also on space-bound questions of adapting phenomena and artefacts crossing media boundaries.

The historical development of Guerrilla Art or the possibilities of art in the public space will be central to this discussion. The next part is dedicated to the multi-faceted notion of Hacking. Hence the second array of texts investigates the origin, structures, and evolutionary elements of that theme. Commencing from questions regarding technique and technology, advanced concepts and theories that are based on hacking and have been seminal for debates on the options of cultural resistance are being examined; e.g., Programme Code Poetry or the use of re-coding strategies in the fine arts.

The third and final part will circle around the aspects of Risk and 'putting-on-the-line'. Urban space and the discourse of the modern are conditioned by and condition each other, giving rise to approaches inspired by art and informed by philosophy to refuse, to transgress boundaries, and to ignite discussions about that of which we are told that we ought to accept. The conditions of historical and contemporary tactics of the transgressive are being investigated with reference to those aspects.