

# Platform Potentials

100000

what



## ANOTHER ZINE

ABOUT

OUR

ACTIVISM why



## BRAVO

HACKTIVISM ZINE



## THE DIGITAL WARRIOR

DIGITAL DISTURBANCE

how

EDT was inspired by the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and used their real names. Similarly, we decided to use our names in the reflections. This zine has also 5 titles to reflect the collaborative nature of this project.

[Link to Octomode Live Document](#)

[Link to Video Documentation of printed Zine](#)

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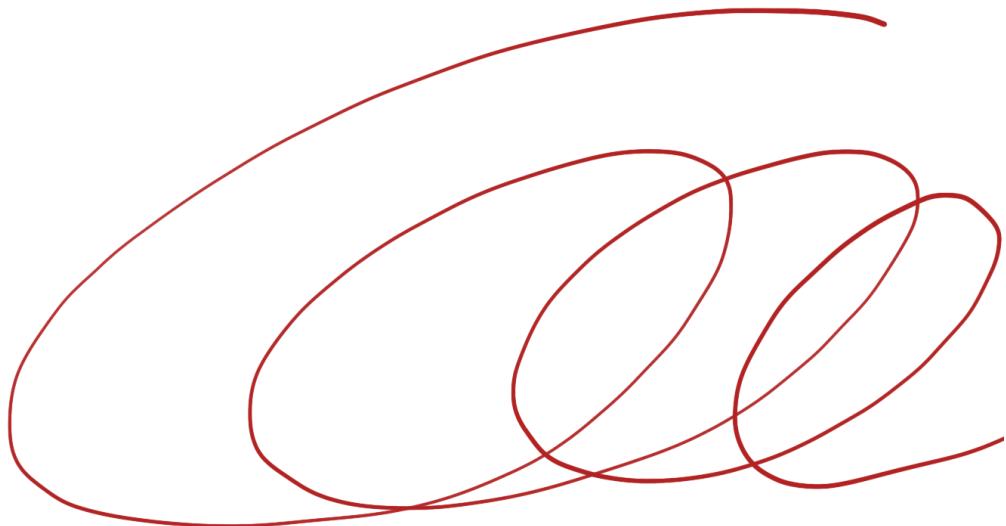
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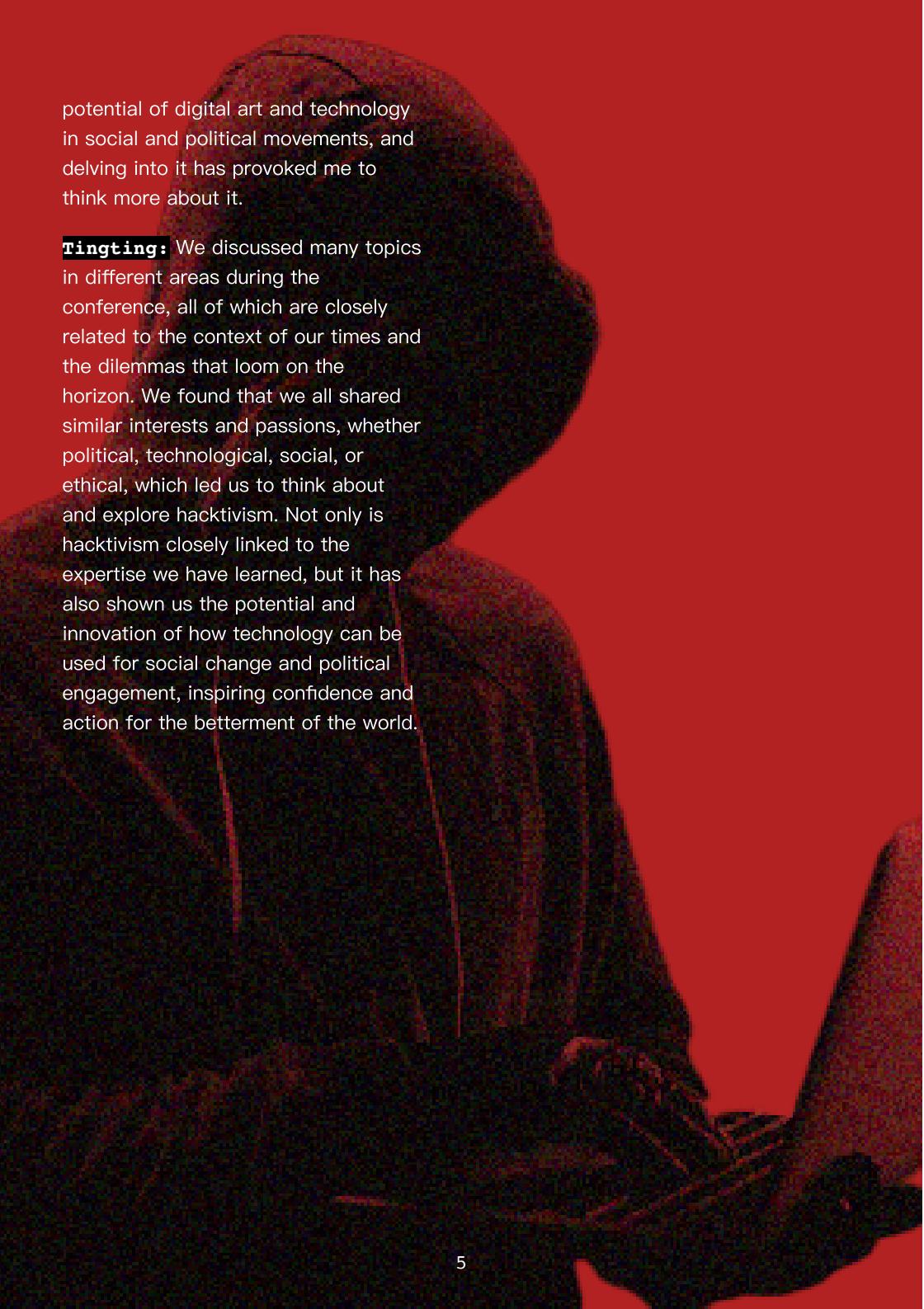
# Initial reflections

**Sammy:** We chose the topic of hacktivism after meeting several times. During and after the presentation, we noticed that we might have to change the way we worked together. Collaboration is a knowledge exchange, and therefore, constant communication led us to change our topic to focus on the Electronic Disturbance Theatre. For the zine, we decided to focus on the specific example of the Zapatista Floodnet Action.

**Nuvpreet:** We met having each been assigned texts from the essential readings list. From our discussion, it became clear that an area of significant interest for everyone was hacktivism. Through producing our presentation and discussing the area in meetings, we found the Electronic Disturbance Theatre of particular interest that warranted further study. As a result, we decided to focus on EDT. This decision was made from collaborative reading, discussion, individual interest and analysis, and an overall desire to evaluate an area of general unknown. The Zapatista Floodnet Action provided an ample case to expose how platforms offer potentials for resistance and

**Sine:** We discussed a lot of different topics and approaches to this final project, some focused on the political content while some were methods- and platform-oriented. The choice of hacktivism emerged through continuous conversations and collaborative brainstorming, where everyone contributed ideas on various subjects that could fit the scope of the project. I think the case of Electronic Disturbance Theatre's Zapatista Floodnet Action presents an opportunity to explore how digital tools can be utilised for political purposes while recognising the historical importance and role of these systems and tools.

**Zewen:** We assigned suggested readings for the course in our first meeting and shared our thoughts afterwards. When we first started discussing, the topics were scattered, such as feminism, multispecies clusters, etc. But after communicating and sharing, we eventually all became interested in hacktivism. From its origins, development and movement, we unanimously decided to delve into the Electronic Disturbance Theatre and the Zapatista Floodnet Action. I think this action highlights the



potential of digital art and technology in social and political movements, and delving into it has provoked me to think more about it.

**Tingting:** We discussed many topics in different areas during the conference, all of which are closely related to the context of our times and the dilemmas that loom on the horizon. We found that we all shared similar interests and passions, whether political, technological, social, or ethical, which led us to think about and explore hacktivism. Not only is hacktivism closely linked to the expertise we have learned, but it has also shown us the potential and innovation of how technology can be used for social change and political engagement, inspiring confidence and action for the betterment of the world.

# Theoretical framework

## What is activism?

Activism is a phenomenon that does not have a defined consensus in academia. A major contribution to this lack of consensus is the apparent disjuncture between academia and activism.

Permanent Culture Now identifies three intersecting strands of activism: \* demanding solutions to problems by opposing mainstream policies; \* creating alternatives to the dominant system; and \* fundamentally changing society and its institutions

For bell hooks (2000), activism is understood as any engagement to dismantle oppressive structures, norms, and systems. While the dominant image of activism is mass political action, hooks argues that activism must be extended to acts of resistance in the everyday. Fanon's (1961) understanding of activism comes from understanding the necessity to take action against colonialism and oppression. In this sense, activism is a struggle. Andrew X troubles the term 'activism' by considering how this fails to recognise those who enact social change but are not seen as 'activists'.

### 1.1. Digital Activism

In the era of the Internet, the nature of activism has changed. In the past two decades, debates have emerged over defining online/digital and offline activism.

George & Leidner (2019) identify 10 activities of 'digital activism': \* clicktivism \* meta voicing \* assertion \* e-funding \* political consumerism \* digital petition \* botivism \* data activism \* exposure \* hacktivism

Their framework builds on Milbrath's (1965) hierarchy of political participation which divides activism into spectator, transitional, and gladiatorial activities. Manuel Castells (2013) sees cyberactivism as a starting point for resistance, where counter-narratives begin on social media and manifest on the streets. Tynes, Schuskche & Noble (2016) see social media as the amplifier for events and to engage potential activists to take action. Jensen et al (2020) question how activism is changed on digital platforms, given imaginaries, boundaries, and potentials become subsumed by the technology they are organising on.

## **1.2. Hacktivism**

As the portmanteau of hack and activism, hacktivism generally refers to the use of technology to achieve a political goal or social change. There are a number of methods employed by individuals and groups, including website defacement, denial of service attacks, data leaks, website re-directs, virtual sit-ins, and website mirroring.

The term was first coined to explain electronic direct action. This refers to targeted actions taken on digital platforms against institutions, groups, individuals, or ideas. The #MeToo and #BlackLiveMatter movements have often been seen to deploy direct electronic action with attempts to publicise political statements or interrupt the status quo.

## **1.3. Reference**

Castells, M. (2013) Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age. Cambridge: Polity.

Fanon, F. (1961). The Wretched of the Earth. Grove Press.

hooks, b. (2000). Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center. Pluto.

Jensen et al (2020). The symbol of social media in contemporary protest: Twitter and the Gezi Park movement.

Milbrath, L. W. (1965). Political participation: How and why do people get involved in politics. Rand McNally.

Permanent Culture Now (2023). Accessed at:

<https://www.permanentculturenow.com/what-is-activism/>

Tynes, B. M., Schuschke, J. and Noble, S. U. (2016) ‘Digital Intersectionality Theory and the #Blacklivesmatter Movement’, in Noble, S. U. and Tynes, B. M. (eds) The Intersectional Internet: Race, Sex, Class, and Culture Online. New York: Peter Lang, pp. 21–40.

X, Andrew. (1999). ‘Give Up Activism’, Do or Die (9).

## What is a platform?

A platform refers to a digital infrastructure or system that enables users to interact and engage with one another or access various services and applications. Platforms often serve as intermediaries connecting different groups, such as users, developers, and providers, facilitating the exchange of goods, services, or information (Anable, 2018). They can take various forms, including social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter), e-commerce platforms (e.g., Amazon, Alibaba), sharing economy platforms (e.g., Uber, Airbnb), and many others.



### 1.1. Brief definition of platforms

Platforms are digital systems that act as intermediaries, enabling users to connect, interact, and engage with each other or access services and applications.

### 1.2. Literature on platform studies

Platform studies is an emerging interdisciplinary field that examines platforms' social, economic, political, and technological aspects. Scholars and researchers in this field investigate platforms' underlying structures, governance mechanisms, and dynamics and their impact on various aspects of society, including labour, power, and culture. Some influential works in platform studies include:

Anable, A. (2018). Platform Studies. *Feminist media Histories*, 4(2): 135–140.

Aufderheide, P. (2010). Copyright, fair use, and social networks. In Papacharissi (Ed.), *A networked self: identity, community, and culture on social network sites*. Routledge.

Bivens, Rena & Haimson, Oliver 2016, 'Baking Gender into Social Media Design: How Platforms Shape Categories for Users and Advertisers', *Social Media + Society* 2.4: 1 – 12

Cottom, T.S. (2020). Where Platform Capitalism and Racial Capitalism Meet: The Sociology of Race and Racism in the Digital Society. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 6(4): 441–449.

Helmond, A. (2010). Identity 2.0: Constructing identity with cultural software.

Parker, G. G., Van Alstyne, M. W., & Choudary, S. P. (2016). *The Platform Revolution: How Networked Markets Are Transforming the Economy and How to Make Them Work for You*. W. W. Norton & Company.

Srnicek, N. (2016). *Platform Capitalism*. Polity Press.

van Dijck, J., Poell, T., & de Waal, M. (2018). *Platform Society*. Oxford University Press.

Zuboff, S. (2019). *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*. PublicAffairs

### **1.3. Historical overview of activists using platforms**

Activists have long recognised the potential of platforms as powerful tools for mobilisation, organising, and amplifying their messages. Throughout history, activists have utilised different platforms to advocate for social, political, and environmental change. Some examples include:

The use of pamphlets and newspapers as platforms for disseminating revolutionary ideas during the French and American revolutions.

The role of radio and television as platforms for civil rights activists in the 20th century, e.g. the speeches of Martin Luther King Jr. and coverage of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa.

The emergence of online platforms and social media in the 21st century enables activists to connect globally, coordinate actions, and raise awareness about various issues, as seen in movements like the Arab Spring, #BlackLivesMatter, and #MeToo (Cottom, 2020).

### **1.4. Existing theoretical debate over activism using platforms**

The use of platforms for activism has sparked theoretical debates and discussions. Some key points of contention include:

- a. Democratisation vs cooptation: Scholars debate whether platforms provide opportunities for grassroots movements to challenge existing power structures and facilitate democratic participation or whether they merely coopt and commodify activism, diluting its radical potential.

- b.** Technological determinism vs social construction: The extent to which platforms shape activism and social movements, and vice versa, is a subject of ongoing debate. Some argue that platforms have inherent affordances and structures that influence activism, while others emphasise the agency of activists in shaping and repurposing platforms for their goals.
- c.** Governance and control: The question of platform control and governance is another area of debate. Activists and scholars discuss issues of content moderation, algorithmic bias, and the concentration of power in the hands of platform owners, raising concerns about the potential for censorship and manipulation.
- d.** Visibility and impact: There are discussions about the real-world impact of digital platform activism. Some argue that online activism is mainly performative and lacks tangible outcomes, while others highlight the role of platforms in raising awareness, mobilising support, and facilitating offline actions.

These debates contribute to a nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between activism and platforms.

# CASE STUDY: ZAPATISTA FLOODNET ACTION

## 2.1 The Electronic Disturbance Theatre

The Electronic Disturbance Theatre are often recognised as the most influential activist group at the time. Drawing inspiration from the civil rights movement's acts of civic disobedience and the Zapatistas' adept use of technology for communication, they propelled hacktivism into the mainstream public consciousness.

The group was founded in 1998 by Ricardo Dominguez, Carmin Karasic, Brett Stalbaum, and Stefan Wray. They were artists, theorists and tech nerds who applied their practice within a political framework. A practice that is informed by the digital opportunities but that moreso continues a legacy of civic disobedience in a digital space. Their practice was both a reaction to the right-wing shift in the political environment in the 1980s, as well as to the demand- and consumer-oriented artistic practise that they felt took up a lot of various platforms. (Buck, 2017)

They would make art that disturbed both these notions by being highly politically driven and collectively made and executed. The one project that got them into the conscience of the mainstream media was the Zapatista Floodnet Action of 1998.

## 2.2 Historical background and the Zapatistas

The Zapatista Army of National Liberation is a militant, far left-wing group that organised and rose up in 1993 after years of indifference towards their indigenous communities from the Mexican government. They take their roots in Mexican anarchism, Marxist ideologies and indigenous practice. They believe that globalisation exacerbates the disparities between the rich and the poor and rejects the good in global trade and neoliberalist approaches. (Bodenheimer, 2021)

They control large areas in Chiapas, Mexico and have since their 'occupation' been in an official war with the Mexican government. Organised in a decentralised structure and guided by their principles of autonomy, democracy, and self-determination, they have implemented various strategies to maintain their frontiers and communicate their message. Their methods include community assemblies, consensus-based democracy and collectivity.

The Zapatistas always saw the internet as a platform for resistance. In the 90's, they

used the world wide web to distribute the communique that was signed by Marcos as well as to call for international solidarity and revolt through the distribution of new reports and announcements of happenings, essentially mimicking the historical activist use of distribution of information through alternative channels. (Bodenheimer, 2021)



Whereas some of their affiliated and allied groups, such as the Las Abejas, are committed to non-violence, the Zapatistas use violent tactics that reach beyond the notion of 'disobedience'.

In 1994, when the US put the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) into effect, the Zapatistas occupied large areas of the province, Chiapas in Mexico. In the process, they freed political prisoners and removed landlords from their stolen land using direct action and militant techniques, which outcomes are far more concrete.

This was the formal formation of the group whose full name is Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN). (Lecher, 2017)

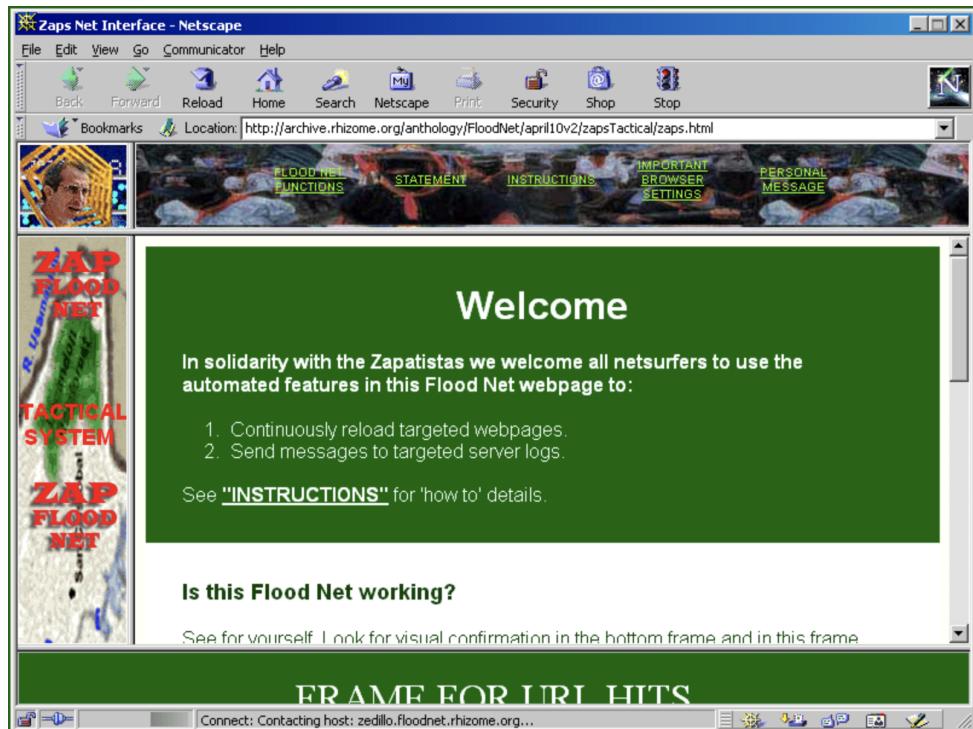
It was both a solidarity project, but Electronic Disturbance Theatre's attention was drawn towards the Zapatistas from the get-go, as they were heavenly inspired by the methods of the group, and when launching their Floodnet campaign, they directed their efforts towards the Mexican Government, shedding light on their assaults on various indigenous groups associated with the Zapatistas colliding in the Acteal Massacre, where 45 people – adults as children from the group Las Abejas consisting of Tzotzil Maya indigenous where shot dead during a prayer. (Lecher, 2017)

## 2.3 The software

The Floodnet was a piece of software that was URL based. The main platform used to distribute the project was a website from where the software could be downloaded and information and guides to using it could be found, but arguably also the social

and political status each member of the group held due to their individual involvement in academic institutions and on various art and tech scenes.

Using it was a DDoS attack; the software offered the opportunity to make several requests per minute to any target website, causing its server to be flooded and shut down, meaning that legit users who would try to use the website would not be able to. The program was written in Java and, as an applet, would be downloaded to a local computer. Therefore, the requests were only sent as long as the software was active, resulting in the numbers and coordination that would be vital, justifying the attached label of the act being a virtual sit-in and hacktivists.



The Electronic Disturbance Theatre writes on its website:

*"Always remember that all of this electronic activism is not about creating new aesthetics or reinventing the internet, but supporting a real community in search of a real peace. A community that has been*

*calling for a world the makes all worlds possible”* (Zhisome Anthology, n.d)

The intention seems always to have been to make direct action, causing a positive difference for the targeted community. However, at the time and nowadays, the campaign was highly praised among scholars and Western activists circles for being at the forefront of using tech as a tool for civic engagement even though it was ‘only’ a solidarity project. It is very sparse with information on how the Zapatista Floodnet Action influenced not only the Zapatistas community but also the Tzotzil Maya community and other affiliated groups at the time. Most information redirected our gaze towards the EDT and their actions’ influence on the history of hacktivism and utilising tech as a political tool, indicating that what the EDT tried to avoid actually happened.

## 2.4 References

Bodenheimer, Rebecca (2021, September 1). What Are the Zapatistas? ThoughtCo. Retrieved June 2, 2023, from <https://www.thoughtco.com/zapatistas-4707696>

Buck, Stephanie. (2017), One of the first cyberattacks was an ‘art project’ that targeted the Pentagon. Retrieved June 1 from <https://timeline.com/electronic-disturbance-theater-bace73446dda>

Lecher, Colin. (2017, April 14). Electronic Disturbance Theater and the Zapatista Tactical FloodNet Sit-In. Retrieved June 1, 2023, from <https://www.theverge.com/2017/4/14/15293538/electronic-disturbance-theater-zapatista-tactical-floodnet-sit-in>

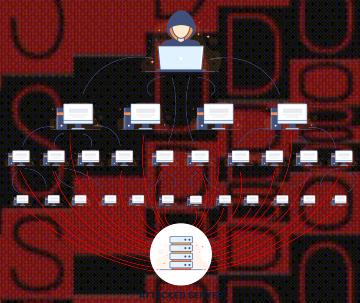
“FloodNet.” (n.d.). In Rhizome Anthology. Retrieved June 1, 2023, from <https://anthology.rhizome.org/floodnet> <https://anthology.rhizome.org/floodnet>

## Discussion on EDT’s platform/methods/software

Billed as a “virtual sit-in,” users navigated to the FloodNet website at a predetermined time and, through a simple Java tool, were directed to a targeted website that would constantly reload every few seconds. With enough people — perhaps thousands — the sit-in caused targeted websites to slow or maybe even crash, rendering them intermittently inaccessible.

The ability to neutralise practically any website on demand — now commonly referred to as a distributed denial of service, or DDoS, attack — was a powerful new tool for global civic disobedience, especially for EDT. But for agencies like the US Department of Defense, then facing the earliest prospects of war in the digital age, the capability posed a legitimate threat and a dark omen of what was to come.

Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) attacks involve overwhelming a targeted website, server, or network infrastructure with a flood of traffic or requests, rendering it inaccessible to legitimate users (Douligeris and Mitrokotsa, 2004, p. 644).



### 1.1. The connection of platforms and DDoS attacks

The theory of platforms and DDoS attacks are not directly connected, as they represent different concepts and perspectives. However, some indirect connections and implications can be explored.

As discussed earlier in the context of digital platforms or platform capitalism, the theory of platforms examines the economic and social dynamics of digital platforms that facilitate interactions between users, producers, and consumers. Platforms, such as social media networks, e-commerce websites, or content-sharing platforms, provide the infrastructure and tools for various activities and exchanges.

On the other hand, DDoS attacks are deliberate attempts to disrupt the normal functioning of online platforms or services by overwhelming them with a flood of traffic (Douligeris and Mitrokotsa, 2004, p. 648). These attacks render the targeted platform inaccessible, interrupt its operations, and potentially draw attention to a particular cause or issue.

While DDoS attacks can target any online platform or service, they often focus on high-profile websites, financial institutions, or government entities. These attacks can disrupt the operations of these platforms, impact their users, and potentially generate media coverage or attention. (Douligeris and Mitrokotsa, 2004, p. 644).

In the context of the theory of platforms, DDoS attacks can be seen as a form of resistance or disruption against the power dynamics embedded within digital platforms. They challenge the dominance or control of specific platforms or institutions over online spaces and aim to reclaim some agency or attention by disrupting the status quo (Douligeris and Mitrokotsa, 2004, p. 656).

However, it's important to note that most governments consider DDoS attacks illegal and unethical. One such legislation is the British Computer Misuse Act 1990. While the theory of platforms explores power relations and the impact of digital platforms on society, it promotes more constructive and legitimate forms of activism, engagement, and critique within the framework of democratic principles and ethical considerations.

In summary, the theory of platforms and DDoS attacks represent different concepts and perspectives. While there are indirect connections in terms of challenging power dynamics and disrupting online platforms, DDoS attacks are not a recommended or endorsed method of addressing the issues associated with digital platforms.

## 1.2. Activism & the Floodnet

Providing an opportunity for engaged citizens of the Internet to express solidarity with the Zapatistas, the Floodnet Action exemplifies the potential of Internet platforms for global activism. The use of the Floodnet for civil disobedience is widely recognised as the first major use of an Internet platform for protest. This represents a watershed moment in platforms' and activism's history.

Drawing on Castells (2013), the Floodnet can be identified as an activation and expression of solidarity with on-the-ground organising. As opposed to engaging people to get on the streets, this was a facilitation of the guerilla activism being undertaken by the Zapatistas. This opportunity for platforms to be used as an expression of solidarity with activists is widely recognised in how platforms are used now. The criticisms weighed against 'clicktivism', as a thoughtless and effortless act that hardly amounts to activism, might be challenged given the opportunity to amplify the events of on-the-ground organisers. Milbrath's (1965) recognition of 'spectator' activism as an element of political engagement also warrants consideration in the case of the Floodnet. Debate is necessary over the role of spectating in activism: does it facilitate activism? Are spectators really activists? And what is activism without spectating? Bringing Milbrath's theory into Web 2.0 provides new avenues for the exploration of how we define activism.

Activism is typed into Twitter bios; it is the act of sharing an infographic to an Instagram Story; and it is worn as a label.

For others, the term ‘activism’ has become unfashionable. The explosion of Black Lives Matter in 2020 following the murder of George Floyd by police, heightened by lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic, brought digital activism to the forefront of debate. Questions were raised as to whether this term has become redundant, given its widespread use by those whose adoption of the term was seen as problematic. Yet, it was these very debates that enunciated the unavoidability of social media in modern-day activism. Even if temporary, insincere, and/or fruitless, social media amplifies events and activates people (Tynes, Schuskche & Noble, 2016). For the Floodnet, those otherwise unable to take on-the-ground or otherwise physical action were given the ability to express solidarity for a cause. And through doing so, amplified the cause to others unaware of it. The snowball effect of social media for engaging users in activism cannot be underemphasised. Yet, when analysing the FloodNet action, it cannot be separated from the platform used. The action itself is defined and understood through the lens of the platform and the Internet (Jensen et al, 2020). This provides a valuable understanding of the operation of platforms but also makes the Floodnet action a case for the use of platforms for activism to recognise how platform activism is a distinct exercise in direct action defined by the affordances and potentials of the platform.

## Final reflections

These are part of the feedback pictures after our presentation:

Share your Feedback with us here :)

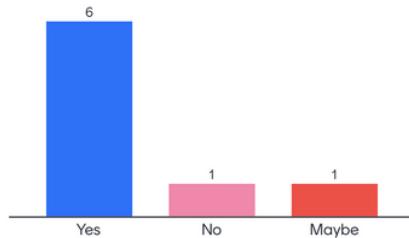
I love this presentation. I learned a lot from your presentation! Well done! Looking forward to seeing your guys work!

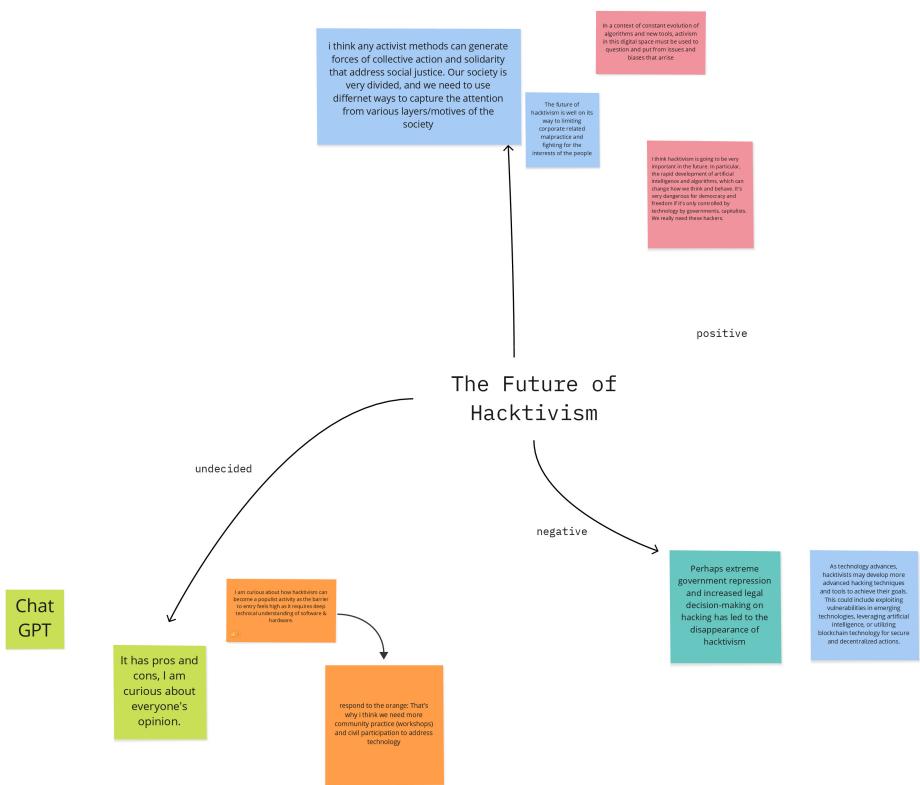
all very clear 😊

love the interactivity xoxo



**Do you think hacktivism in its current form is a force for good?**





**Sine:** Marginalised groups have powerful tools for resistance at hand, such as building infrastructures and resources as well as civil disobedience. But marginalised groups are vulnerable. Due to their position, they might be heavily targeted by the authorities. They might not have papers to protect the legal framework that the resistance's existence is situated within. It takes either privilege or desperation to act, and I believe we should be highly aware of the fact that the Floodnet Action has been praised more for its impact on the theoretical conversation on electronic disobedience and hacktivism as a tool than for its impact on the victims and communities targeted. Similarly, actions stemming from the targeted communities, which might have had more direct influence at the time, don't seem to be highlighted. This is not equal to EDT not being important; I believe that the more our personal lives, as well as our infrastructure, is digitalised, the more we need know-how and tools for digital resistance. From the Miro Board and the class discussion, I see a general concern over the gatekeeping that comes with technical tools – who has the technical skills to create and operate this software?

I share this concern, but I believe it comes down to the dynamic between knowledge-sharing, education and apathy. Activists have always held training – you don't just go on the street and protest – you learn to position yourself within the framework of the streets, and therefore this skill acquisition is also doable within hacktivism.

**Sammy:** My interest in the Zapatista FloodNet Action stems from the fact that it is a form of (electronic) non-violent civil disobedience. This reminds me of other Global majority protest forms, such as India's dharna. It is a fast undertaken at the door of an offender, especially a debtor, to obtain compliance with a demand for justice and state response to criminal cases. It was utilised during the independence movement. The knowledge of this protest in the West is limited and violent protests, such as the recent strikes against the French pension reform, are idealised by Eurocentric left-wing politics. This is why I felt passionate about exploring this under-represented form of resistance. This was also highlighted in the feedback from the Miro Board set up for our presentation about Hacktivism. People highlighted that hacktivism would play an integral part in future civil disobedience.

**Nuvpreet:** Electronic direct action is not a novel form of activism, nor should it be understood separately from the history of direct action. It is the necessary progression of activism given the Internet Age. In the past decades of the Internet's grip on daily lives, seldom is oppression recognised as one of its central tenets. Electronic direct action, especially groups like EDT, has exposed how this oppressive force can be subverted and used as a tool for resistance. The instant, global, and person-to-person reach of the Internet offers new affordances for organising, resisting, and forging new futures. The EDT are a critical example of the ability of groups to utilise such technologies. This, of course, does not come without critique. The Zapatista's Floodnet Action has been widely recognised as a case that over-emphasises the grassroots quality of hacktivism, given the image of guerilla groups hacking that was imagined was not true to the event. Rather, it was groups in the Global North with ready access to the Internet that composed a majority of the group. This example reflects the dangers of highlighting electronic activism as superior or different to the issues faced in other organising.

**Zewen:** In the same way, I feel a vision for the future of hacktivism because it is exciting. It is the tool, it is the platform, and it is the future. As the age of digital, artificial intelligence advances at a rapid pace, the tools and platforms for citizen protest voices will no longer have to be limited to the traditional forms of the past. Building on the theme of digital activism, I have seen in both our case studies and classes about the platform potential of hacktivism's digital tools to be invisible, powerful, and equal. From Anonymous to Operation Flood.com, they all demonstrate the potential for influence that individuals and collectives can achieve through technological means in the digital realm. It is, therefore, foreseeable that more innovative and sophisticated hacktivist methods and tools will emerge in the future. In our case study, the examples of EDT and Zapatista Floodnet Action showed me that the combination of digital art and activism could play an important role in driving social change. However, the challenges facing hacktivism in the future also include technological dependencies, surveillance and repression by the powers that be, and ethical issues such as moral privacy. How do I see these challenges being faced? In what ways and with what tools? How to avoid being controlled by violent, left-leaning, terrorist ideas,

etc., are all directions for studying the future development of the potential of hacktivist platforms, and this is the direction that our case provokes me to think about.

**Tingting:** Electronic disturbance theatre is an organisation that uses web technologies and media to creatively combine art, politics, and technology to support and show solidarity with social movements and marginalised groups, to resist and challenge the inequalities and injustices of cyberspace, to deliver political messages and social demands, and to promote political change and social progress. They demonstrate the mutability, interactivity, and value of technology and the virtual sit-in as a tool for electronic civil disobedience. I argue that the virtual sit-in is a way to conform to the politics of resistance in the digital age. It makes use of the characteristics and resources of cyberspace for non-violent political expression and social intervention, in line with people's pursuit and aspirations for values such as democracy, freedom, collaboration, pluralism, and innovation, mobilising more participants and supporters and creating greater momentum and influence.

## **Reflections on the classes (5 x 250 words)**

### **Sammy – Technofeminism:**

Technofeminism is a dynamic field that explores the intersections of technology, gender, and feminism. It acknowledges how technology shapes our lives and recognises the potential for liberation and oppression within technological spaces (Wajcman, 2013, p. 10). Reflecting on technofeminism, I am struck by its ability to challenge and deconstruct traditional gender norms while highlighting the need for inclusivity and equity in technological development.

One aspect of technofeminism that stands out to me is its emphasis on inclusivity and diversity. It recognises that technology is not neutral and biases can be embedded within algorithms, design choices, and data sets. Technofeminism pushes for the inclusion of diverse voices and perspectives in the creation and development of technology. It calls for more women, people of colour, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other marginalised groups to be involved in shaping the digital world. This emphasis on inclusivity resonates deeply with me as I believe that technology should reflect and serve the needs of all individuals, regardless of their gender or identity.

Another aspect of technofeminism that I find thought-provoking is its exploration of the potential for technology to empower marginalised groups. It acknowledges that technology can be a powerful tool for activism, organising, and amplifying marginalised voices. From online feminist movements to digital storytelling platforms, technology has enabled new forms of expression and mobilisation. Technofeminism encourages technology to challenge patriarchal structures, dismantle oppressive systems, and create spaces for resistance and solidarity. This recognition of technology's potential for liberation inspires me to explore how I can harness the power of technology to create positive output for my community.

### **Nuvpreet – Decentralised platforms :**

I found this class highly engaging and powerful for the potential to pave alternative futures on the Internet as it currently stands. Abbing, Diehm & Warreth's (2023) article defines decentralised platforms in three forms: federated, peer-to-peer and blockchain-based. In comparison to centralised platforms, which hierarchically

concentrate data, governance, revenues, and content distribution, decentralised platforms aim to remove this topology.

The example of Framasoft is inspiring. That a platform exists putting in practice decentralised and educational tools with recognition of surveillance, data-harvesting and profiteering makes clear what is possible.

In reflection on this topic, through exploring decentralised platforms we can recognise how centralised the platforms are that we use day to day. Even if users do not make the change to these platforms, the understanding of centralisation and the alternative possibilities for decentralised platforms is important.

### **Zewen – Weaving multispecies collectivities :**

I chose the week 4 theme for my reflection: reading ‘Staying with trouble’ triggered me to think critically about the relationship between tentacles, thinking – the human world, the age of capital and ecology... In the first demon of the book, the spider (later mentioned as an octopus alias sea spider), I think that the intention of the spider, the tentacle or the octopus points to the fact that “everything is connected to something”, that is, that things are connected (the original text “The tentacle is not an invisible image”), so the connection between the biological world and human society is inseparable and does exist.

The text mentions “growing evidence that human activity is having a transformative impact on the planet,” from the air to the waters to the rock formations, etc... This is certainly heartbreaking to me, and the author also offers a critique of human society, in which he quotes Werner’s statement “He says his research shows that our entire economic paradigm is a threat to ecological stability”, where “economic paradigm” refers to the age of capital. The author critiques the Anthropocene’s “tendency to be top-heavy and bureaucratic” through various examples of destructive behaviour, which diminishes our capacity for empathy, including those of the world now in jeopardy, and which will eventually shake the planet’s ecology.

Yet the same critique also produces “a condemnation that is extremely ineffective. Otherwise, capitalism would have disappeared from the face of the earth” and “nothing is possible if we indulge in despair, cynicism or optimism, and in the discourse of progressive faith or unbelief.”. The author concludes his essay by suggesting that human actions and choices are extremely important for the world, and most importantly – “Ideas are ideas, and we must think!” we should really think

for the past, present and future. And I also believe that in addition to thinking, we must act, incorporating activism, to really spread ideas from now, from our surroundings, from every class, from small and large assignments or personal art projects, whether it is to influence one person or two. We need to bring questions and thoughts to people in the real world! And this thinking has led me to my element2 project.

### **Sine – Trackography :**

Trackography from session 2: Technical Rewritings is a web-based project that maps your online existence and the companies that take your data. By tracing and mapping which companies buy data from which websites, which countries the data travels to and how the data is handled, it highlights the actors in an unethical global data industry that is exploitative. The conversation on data security and privacy tends to go in circles, as it mostly focuses on the overall problem and individual self-protection. This project offers a super interesting and refreshing approach to tracing the digital footprint, as it concretely exposes and calls out the evil by its name instead of mystifying it as ‘big tech corporations’. I believe this approach aligns with the framework of transparency, autonomy and literacy, and it reminds me of the Danish book, ‘Magteliten’ (The Power Elite) by Anton Grau Larsen, Christoph Ellersgaard and Markus Bernsen that maps all the richest Danish people and their economic crimes, their influence and their power. highlightsts how often the people in power get away with their crimes, and it highlights the need to turn our gaze towards those who are responsible instead of only focusing on our individual and collective ways of responding to it.

### **Tingting – Decentralised technology :**

The danger of centralising social functions has always been a concern, especially in the digital age, where our political life has undergone profound changes. Digital technologies not only affect the privacy, expression and rights of individuals, but also threaten the role of human reason, leaving us increasingly at the mercy of algorithms and artificial intelligence. To address this challenge, decentralised platforms offer a new alternative that is user-centric, enabling a higher degree of decentralisation and giving individuals more control over their data and information.

Decentralisation, although discussed in technical terms, is used to refer to social order. PeerTube, for example, is a decentralised video platform that uses peer-to-

peer technology and a federated network to allow users to create, manage, share and watch videos autonomously. It gives users more freedom and choice, with no uniform standards or rules, and no central body or agency to control or intervene. Such a platform facilitates the dissemination and sharing of knowledge, promotes diversity and innovation, and enhances the participatory and democratic nature of society.

Decentralisation is a new alternative to the dangers of centralisation, which uses decentralised platforms to give users control over data and information and to promote social diversity, innovation, participation and democracy. However, decentralisation also has ethical implications, requiring a balance between user freedom and choice, responsibility and accountability, social order and stability. Decentralisation is not a perfect solution, but a process of exploration and improvement.

## Annotated Bibliography

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*Anable argues that we need feminist platform studies to expose the larger global context on which all platforms are dependent. They see visual platforms as ‘black boxes’ that are sealed units reinforcing subjectivity, agency, ‘race’, and sexuality.*

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*Apperly & Parikka expose how platform studies produces the cohesive ‘platform’, and thus there ought to be a recognition of such a phenomenon when approaching platform studies.*

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*This book offers a compelling analysis of the internet’s impact on democracy. It serves as a wake-up call, highlighting the crucial role individuals and society play in shaping a future where technology and democracy can coexist harmoniously.*

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*Cottom argues for the recognition of racial capitalism in the approach of platform studies, given the Internet embeds structures of racism and amplifying such relations.*

Douligeris, C. and Mitrokotsa, A. (2004) ‘DDoS attacks and defense mechanisms: classification and state-of-the-art’, *Computer Networks*, 44(5), pp. 643–666.  
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*This piece explores the history of DDoS attacks and examines the relation of power and resistance. The paper aims to place some order into the existing attack and defence mechanisms so that a better understanding of DDoS attacks can be achieved and, subsequently, more efficient and effective algorithms, techniques and procedures to combat these attacks may be developed.*

Helmond, A. (2010). Identity 2.0: Constructing identity with cultural software.

*Helmond recognises how platforms exist in a state of insatiable demand for data in order for the unending construction of identity online.*

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[https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/4374763/mod\\_resource/content/0/Haraway-Staying%20with%20the%20Trouble\\_%20Making%20Kin%20in%20the%20Chthulucene.pdf](https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/4374763/mod_resource/content/0/Haraway-Staying%20with%20the%20Trouble_%20Making%20Kin%20in%20the%20Chthulucene.pdf)

*It is a transformative book that challenges conventional notions of nature, science, and culture, urging readers to embrace a more inclusive and collaborative approach to the future. the author explores the possibilities of making kin with diverse species and reimagines our relationship with the world.*

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*This is a thought-provoking book that explores the interconnectedness of the Anthropocene, Capitalocene, and Chthulucene, offering new perspectives on the complex relationship between humans, capitalism, and the environment.*

Wajcman, J. (2013) ‘TechnoCapitalism Meets TechnoFeminism: Women and Technology in a Wireless World’, *Labour & Industry: a journal of the social and economic relations of work*[Preprint]. Available at:  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10301763.2006.10669327> (Accessed: 6 June 2023).

*Wajcman explores the intersection and differences of Capitalism and Technofeminism. The paper might have lost relevance as it was published in 2013.*