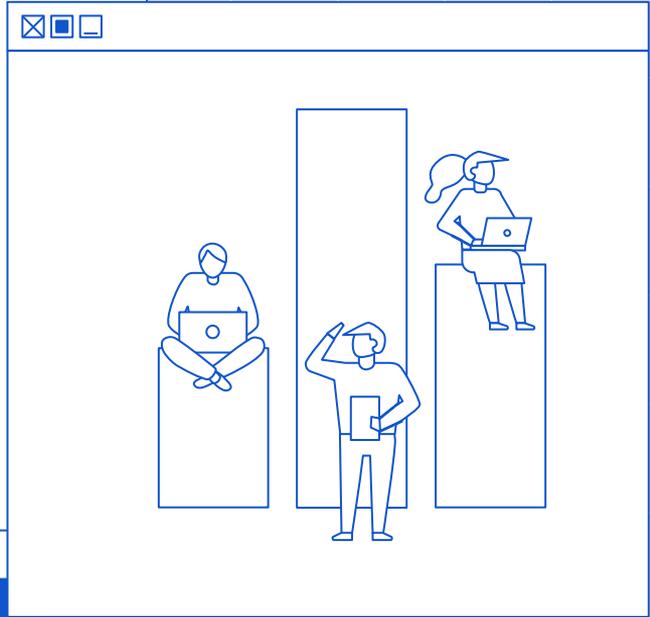# unboxing the hackathon – ethnographic perspectives

Anne Lee Steele
07.11.2023
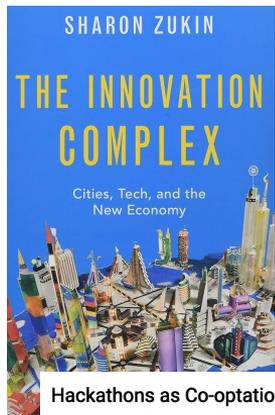
what's an anthropologist doing at hth3.0?

- anthropologists and sociologists study the gaps between what people say and what people do to develop wider theories of social life
- Hackathons are social worlds just like any other: they involve rituals, social capital, and other forms of social relations
- I organise hackathon-like events too – and want to integrate theory and practice!

critical hackathon studies: a crash course

SHARON ZUKIN

THE INNOVATION COMPLEX

Cities, Tech, and the New Economy

Chasing Innovation

Lilly Irani

Making Entrepreneurial Citizens in Modern India

Hackathons as Co-optation Ritual: Socializing Workers and Institutionalizing Innovation in the "New" Economy

Sharon Zukin
CUNY Graduate Center

Max Papadantonakis
CUNY Graduate Center

2 Hackathons and the Spirit of the New Capitalism

Sharon Zukin
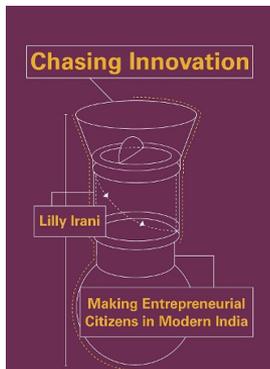
Characterizing Hacking: Mundane Engagement in US Hacker and Makerspaces*

Sarah R. Davies ✉ View all authors and affiliations

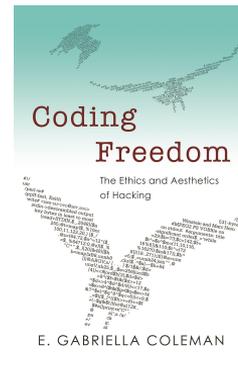Hackathons: A field of dreams for 'collaborative innovation'?
A review of recent studies
Nada Endrissat
DANS ENTREPRENDRE & INNOVER 2018/3 (n° 38), PAGES 69 À 75

FCJ–186 Hack for good:
Speculative labour, app development and the burden of austerity.

doi: 10.15307/fcj.25.186.2015

Melissa Gregg
Intel Corporation, USA

Postdigital Science and Education

Designing Postdigital Futures—The Case of Hackathons

Original Articles | Open access | Published: 14 September 2023 | (2023)

Coding Freedom

The Ethics and Aesthetics of Hacking

E. GABRIELLA COLEMAN

"While in principle, 'everyone' is invited to participate in the design process at hackathons, the announcements already show that **only certain participants are desired, and only certain kinds of futures are imaginable through hackathons**."

are critical hackathon studies just that—critical?

no!
(at least, i don't think so)

alternatives are already forming in response to these wider shifts – can hackathons evolve to encompass these?
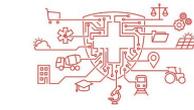
the focus of many hackathons is shifting (back?) towards applied education, public good & speculative futures

UN Big Data Hackathon

Solarpunk and Web3
ENVISIONING A SUSTAINABLE AND COLLABORATIVE FUTURE.

Critical Manufacturing: A Hackathon for Speculative Design

Hack For Public Good '23

*but are these replicating 'techno-solutionism'?

14 - 15 Mar 2024
GovTech Hackathon 2024

rethink journalism hackathon
25. & 26.11.22

HACKATH
Feminist Futures Hackathon
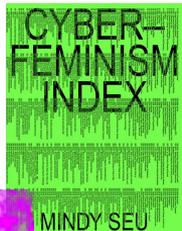31 May - 08 Jun 20

Speculative futures – design approaches that visualize new and potential worlds – move us beyond what currently exists into the realms of what could be. Long used in art, film, fiction, architecture, and industrial design, the tools employ speculation to provoke, imagine, and dream into what lies ahead.

(drawing from speculative futures)

changing the focus of hackathons: creating counter-data sets for/in open projects

ART + FEMINISM
WIKIPEDIA EDIT-⤵-THON

CYBER–FEMINISM INDEX

MINDY SEU

*but are these really 'counter'? what would a counter-hackathon really look like?

Wiki Education x 500 Women Scientists

500 WIKI WOMEN SCIENTISTS

> calm
> coding
> socials

The **TURING** way

THE ROAD to REPRODUCIBILITY

Scriberia

WikiProject Organized Labour

% **Digital Solidarity Networks**
% a shared listing of tools, practices and readings for digital solidarity, conviviality and togetherness

Countermapping – How visualising landscapes of power can unravel dominant development narratives
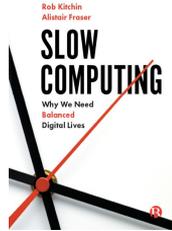
LSE

(drawing from term 'counter-mapping)
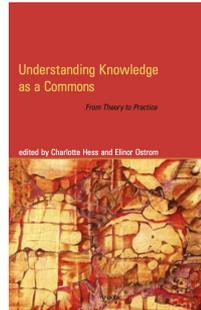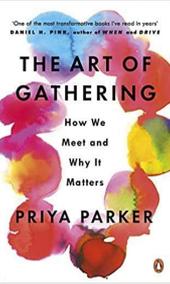
Making the implicit, explicit in academic data science

other movements are appearing: for maintenance, slow computing, slow science, knowledge commons, knowledge equity, data justice

Isabelle Stengers

Another Science is Possible
A Manifesto for Slow Science

Rob Kitchin
Alistair Fraser

SLOW COMPUTING

Why We Need Balanced Digital Lives

'One of the most transformative books I've read in years'
DANIEL H. PINK, author of WHEN and DRIVE

THE ART OF GATHERING

How We Meet and Why It Matters

PRIYA PARKER

Understanding Knowledge as a Commons

From Theory to Practice

edited by Charlotte Hess and Elinor Ostrom

Information Maintenance as a Practice of Care

SOCIAL DATA JUSTICE

Closember

Knowledge Equity Lab

can hackathons be slow and sustainable?

can we center other forms of co-creation, like maintenance?

can we center other forms of knowledge, aside from development of technology?

growing social movements for worker protections in universities and tech companies

*are walkouts and strikes a form of hacking, too?

University and College Union

UTAW

TWC

MARK GRAHAM   MARTIN DITTUS   IDEAS   11.09.2018 07:00 AM

To reduce inequality, Wikipedia should consider paying editors

The online encyclopedia is a lopsided representation of the world. Should it break its non-profit taboo?
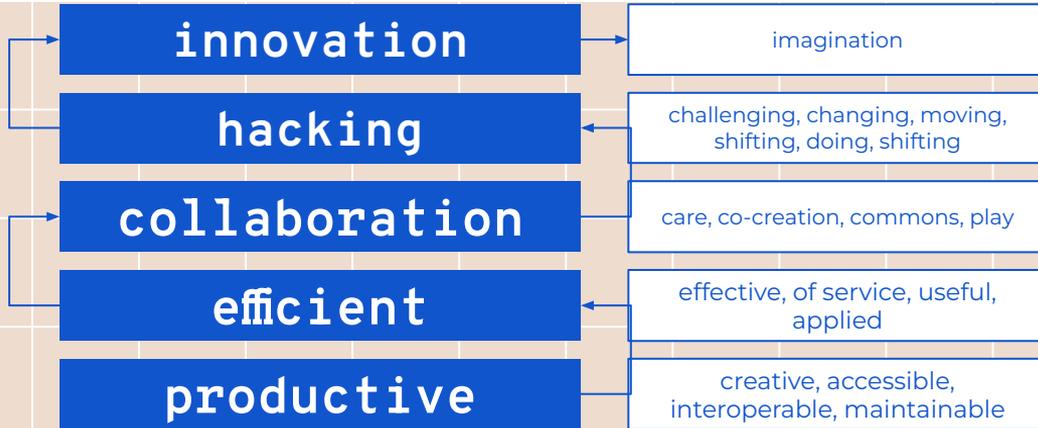
The **hacker culture** is a subculture of individuals who enjoy—often in collective effort—the intellectual challenge of creatively overcoming the limitations of software systems or electronic hardware (mostly digital electronics), to achieve novel and clever outcomes.[1] The act of engaging in activities (such as programming or other media[2]) in a spirit of playfulness and exploration is termed *hacking*.

hacking culture

do we need to narrative hackathons differently?

innovation → imagination

hacking ← challenging, changing, moving, shifting, doing, shifting

collaboration — care, co-creation, commons, play

efficient ← effective, of service, useful, applied

productive ← creative, accessible, interoperable, maintainable

how can the work of facilitating hackathons be applied in other areas of collective life?

thank you!

all questions welcome!

aleesteele@gmail.com
@aleesteele
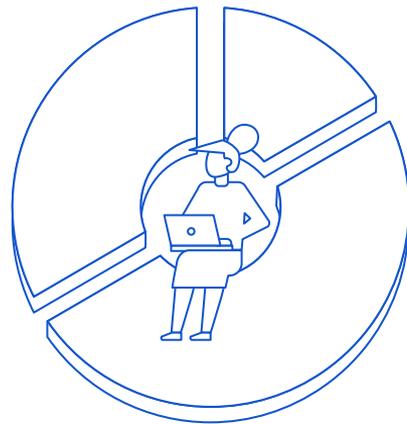
citations

Did you like the resources on this template? Get them for free at our other websites:

Books

- "The Innovation Complex" Sharon Zukin
- "Chasing Innovation" by Lilly Irani
- "Coding Freedom" by Gabrielle Coleman
- "Cyberfeminism Index" by Mindy Seu

Articles

- "Hackathons: a field of Dreams for Collaborative Innovation" by Nada Endrissat

Projects

- Vvvvvvaria
- Knowledge Equity Network