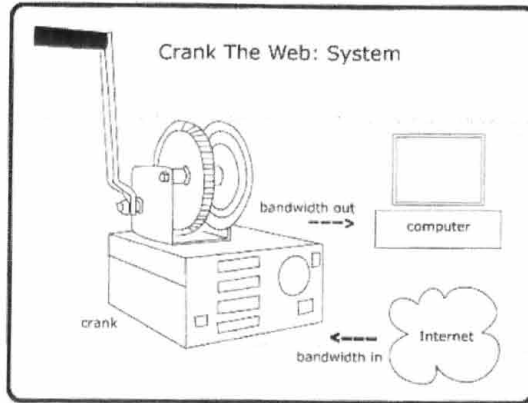


A DESIGN METHODOLOGY FOR DECONSTRUCTING NETWORKS

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This methodology is presented as a roadmap that others could follow in pursuing their own projects along the theme of *Deconstructing Networks* which includes projects that critically challenge and subvert accepted perceptions of network interaction and experience.



1. Emphasize Multiple Methods of Connectivity

By emphasizing multiple methods of connectivity through multiple networked devices and interfaces the opportunity to subvert and challenge existing

forms of networked interaction and experience increases. An example of this approach is a project by the author entitled *Crank The Web* (2001) [1]. *Crank The Web* allowed for a tangible connection between the user and the data itself by adjusting bandwidth speed to the physicality of using a hand crank. This emphasized a novel way of connecting physical movement to bandwidth acceleration and thus a new way of thinking about connectivity.

2. Challenge Factors of Networked Interaction

Networked interaction can be subverted by creating projects that emphasize the surrounding factors of networked interaction such as the location, physical proximity, connected data streams, and mindset of users in order to challenge the overall user experience of these experiments. This detail of adding the surrounding aspects and contexts of networked interaction weighs far more than merely changing their interface design or implementation. This can be seen specifically in the author's *WiFi-Hog* [1] project that allows a third party to gain complete control over a publicly accessible wireless network. Since wireless networks are deployed in public spaces and effect people inhabiting those spaces with their mobile devices, the project focused on the social and political factors of network access among the general population and the conflicts that existed in these spaces among community groups and corporate entities. By emphasizing these surrounding frictions through the deployment of the project, there



was an opportunity to engage with people involved in these scenarios and propose alternatives of use that might help to resolve these clashes.

3. Amplify Metaphors to Deconstruct Conventions

When examining the connections between physical and online worlds, there is evidence that the naming conventions and metaphors associated with online systems are often misleading as they relate back to what they were named. Examples of these misconceptions range from Gore's interpretation of the Internet as an "Information Superhighway" to software names such as "Search Engine" that consists of a piece of software designed to allow users to search the Internet for specific queries, these naming conventions have often less to do with the action or function of the object or software in question, and are more consistent with branding and "hype" associated with the introduction of new technologies. Metaphors change the way we relate objects and locations to imposed and implied meanings and can often lead to new understandings and relationships with these objects. The author's suite of software applications, *Desktop Subversibles* [1], integrated connectivity into daily computer activities such as copy/paste, mouse movements, and clicking. By augmenting these daily activities with connectivity, the metaphors used to characterize their use changed since the desktop metaphor of applications solely existing and running on a users local machine, especially those tied to the operating system itself such as copy/paste were no longer private and now globally accessible.



4. Alter The Rules of Networked Interaction

Since its beginnings, the Internet has relied on protocols and rules that control its use and users. [1] This possibility of a fundamental change in the structures of "legacy" Internet systems in order to shift the emphasis away from interface and focus on social patterns of network design directly relates with the author's *BumpList* [1] project. *BumpList* examined the consequences of disrupting and changing (or altering) specified rule-sets associated with online communication, in particular, email lists and other

forms of turn-based systems. Where traditional email lists adhere to open or invited subscription rules, *BumpList* was created to specifically challenge this "status quo" subscription policy by placing a limitation on subscriber amounts and automatically unsubscribing existing members when new users joined the list. It was meant to challenge and disrupt existing rule sets associated with email lists in order to provide another viewpoint of how simple changes to the structures of these forms of online communication could alter not only the behavior of the users subscribed but also the perception of how these lists could or should function. By changing characteristics of networked systems the potential for causing social rifts reaches even further in shaping the fundamental rules of engagement and involvement amongst groups and individuals in these social systems and organizations.

Bibliography

1. Crank The Web, BumpList, WiFi-Hog, Desktop Subversibles, all on <http://www.coin-operated.com>
2. Rochlin, Gene, I. 1997. Trapped In The Net: The Unanticipated Consequences of Computerization, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, p.44.

Links: <http://www.coin-operated.com>,
<http://www.scrapyardchallenge.com>

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