This paper belongs to the Political Analysis Master research project, found in the first chapter of the full work on development: “The hacker: The consolidation of a counter-hegemony in the cyberspace”. It is important to highlight the objectives of the full work to understand the purpose of this paper. At first instance, the development of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT’s) have modify the way individuals interact with each other. Moreover, this modification has brought within new tendencies, behaviours, traditions, etcetera, which requires also a different subject of analysis. The unconventional way of interaction, reaffirming the contingency of the corporeal presence, between individuals. Thus ICT’s, beyond functionality, brought a new kind of interaction.

The cyberspace is an emergent space of socialization that has been popularized over the last years, in specific by the open access of the Internet in 1992. It has offered diverse types of interaction between individuals such as commercialization, personal interaction, accountability on governments, bonds between citizens and governments, and research development, as a few activities to mention. The benefits are focused on the information and communication that can be reached and storaged by accessing to the sites. This supersedes the necessity of being in the physical place. On the other side, computer systems have been created by humans, therefore they can be broken by them. This last side, demands that every system has to be protected by security to maintain non-public information away from the open access domain. Despite the above, there is an actual practice on the Internet that consists on breaking the security breaches to obtain different kind of information. The diversity of information is differentiated by the use that is given to it, such as blackmailing, exposing, thievery of identity and funds, or also used as political exposure of malpractice in governments. Consequently, this practice is well known as hacking, understood, as a first approach, the act of breaking into the security on the Internet.

The previous idea settles the path of the following research. Setting aside the idea of focusing on the activity of hacking, we focus this research on the individual that carries through the action: the hacker. The theorizing of this subject has the purpose of amplifying
the perspective of the conception that encapsulates the hacker as a mere trespasser of the
security on the Internet, but as a factual power on the Internet; furthermore, as a factual power
in the society. The hacker shouldn’t be represented just by the normative dimension, where
we can only consider the fact that it’s an outsider who wants to peek on the non-public
information and give it away in a social trial to be judged. We should consider not only the
types of information that a hacker searches, but also the trespassing security breaches,
endangering his own security and freedom by the social norms, and divulging information to
the society to evaluate it. The conception of the hacker should be conceived not only by the
evidence or the act of breaking the law, but the reason why the subject keeps performing as
an outlaw even knowing the consequences. According to the discourses of some hackers, the
liberalization of the information sets the strife in the cyberspace to let society know what
governments hide.

There are some hacker’s names that have been exposed in the spotlight concerned to
the country’s security (attaching to the discourse of the governments, that englobes not only
the preoccupation of state, but also of the society). Some of them have been criminalized as
homeland’s betrayers, in particular, Edward Snowden, Julian Assange, and Anonymous
(even though, there are other names that deserve to be mentioned related to the hacker
concept). They have been conceived as enemies of the country’s security because of the leak
of information which the hackers deemed to be public. At this point, we should settle that
there is cyber-warfare between two positions, both defendable. Furthermore, the debate takes
into the form of a clash between hegemony and counter-hegemony. The main goal is to
dimension them.

The objective of this document is to define the frontiers which determine a hacker.
This, in order to understand identities where in the Internet acquires different social roles,
even becoming political roles. The interest in this work is to set three Internet´s identities
which, in the full work, allows us to delimit the hacker as a political identity in a new political
field. The pretension is not to defend any political position, but, in the complete overview, to
set a dimension, where two discourses configures as a hegemony vs counter-hegemony
confrontation in the cyberspace. The conception of this confrontation needs to be raised, first
of all in the reasons that trigger the dispute, so we can understand the construction of a
counter-hegemony that aims to consolidate facing the current hegemony. Although there are countless reasons that could be listed, we must understand that these reasons do not configure the main argument of the discussion on the thesis, but the tensions that these generates between two elements. In addition, the reasons become, in a figurative sense, the articulation that relates two different discourses.

Therefore, we can warn that the use of the concept of hegemony will bring us into the poststructuralist field. In these terms, we find relevant the theories of Marxism, Gramscian and Poststructuralism to approach this exposition. We should settle that the three mentioned theories demarcate history in different phases that arise over the necessity of new explanations to understand the reality and context. However, we must consider that, it is not the contexts, but the concepts that can enrich the present theorization of an overcoming reality that demands a new explanation. Given the emergence of the information technologies, the political tools have expanded into a distinct space and context, no different in the content of interaction but in its form.

Some of the primary questions that come up are: why does Marxist, Gramscian and Poststructuralist theories are chosen over liberalism to explain the hacker? Aren’t hackers the ones that break into the personal accounts, information or any personal passwords? What are the hackers seeking? Is it just information? How can we identify which of the information is relevant per se? So, the development in the research has offered some answers that can satisfy those questions that not necessarily overwhelm this work, but refine and clarifies the direction of this construction.

We must remember that the central contribution of this research is to present the reader with an exposition which sets a path of the hacker as a consolidation of a counter-hegemony discourse in the cyberspace. The fact that we consider the existence of a counter-hegemony must, likewise, conceive the existence of a hegemonic discourse. Even so, the cyberspace has no territory, nor a specific hegemony, but yet a hegemonic discourse. It means, the governments are considered as units of hegemony and sovereignty in their own territory, but, in the cyberspace, the lacking of geographical divisions diffuses the authority and sovereignty, just as the international relations in the seas conflict. The mentioned fading of the authority and sovereignty of the countries should not be confused with the lacking of
it, but as a non-hegemonic unit that governs in the cyberspace. Nevertheless, those governmental units must be conceived as elements of a governmental hegemonic discourse, which is built in the pretension of controlling information and information media *per se*, on the eagerness to preserve the national security.

In these terms, and returning to the conception of the hacker, the construction of a counter-hegemony arises in a meta-environment where the identity can be diffused among the anonymous entities. We must consider that not all of the individuals that interact on the Internet are anonymous, also not all of them should be conceived as hackers. In the next pages, one of the tasks necessary to develop this theory is the categorization of the individuals that interact on the internet. Hence, the conception of the hacker that we are trying to conceive should rest on an impartial dimension which allows us to portrait the hacker in its fair appreciation.

The hacker that we are trying to conceive in this work can be differentiated in relation to other individuals that interact on the Internet. The willingness to expose the hacker as a counter-hegemony also demands us to compose a nature of the hacker in the spectrum between other characters on the cyberspace. This, through the construction of a criteria that allow us to demarcate the frontier that diffuses in the fog of a generalization of the hacker as a criminal. In fact, to understand the hacker requires to clear up the subject of the impression that hegemonic discourses exhibit, so we can reaffirm itself in the society. Thus, we can understand that the hacker can be misplaced, situating it on the aspects that define the cracker or the geek. The hacker should be dimensioned beyond other concepts so we can recognize it as a political actor that interacts in favour of convictions and rationality in accordance to democratic values, and as a relevant actor in the construction of democratic societies.

We summarized some of the necessary information about the hacker. Consequently, this document will not only amplify the definition of the hacker and its differentiation to the geek and cracker. We should warn the reader to approach into this delicate proposition. The exposure of this concept is not arbitrary, nor frivolous judgment. Moreover, in the development of the project we could use the concept of the organic intellectual, which allows us to subtract some of the characteristics that define it and the understanding of the hacker as a political progressive actor that finds its own definition in the performance. We are aware
that bringing a concept from a specific context in the history, with determined characteristics that allow this figure to rise, can prejudice the main argument that we are defending. Nevertheless, Gramsci, in the construction of the organic intellectual, not only is referring to its own context, but conceiving a model with determined characteristics and willingness to organize/empower society into the progressive development. Most, or all, of the aspects of the context where Gramsci situates his concept, is not present on the development of the hacker, but the characteristics that define it.

Moreover, Foucault, in “The order of discourse” criticise the rigidity of the discourses that confer true by itself. Also to conciliate the understanding of the truth by questioning its significance:

The opposing theme, that of originating experience, play an analogous role. It supposes that at the very basis of experience, even before it could be grasped in the form of a cogito, there were prior significations. In a sense, already said- wandering around in the world, arranging it all around us and opening it up from the outset to a sort of primitive recognition. Thus a primordial complicity with the world is supposed to be the foundation of our possibility of speaking of it, in it, of indicating it and naming it, of judging it and ultimately of knowing it in the form of truth. If there is discourse, then, what can it legitimately be other than a discreet reading? Thing are already murmuring meanings which our language has only to pick up; and this language, right from its most rudimentary project, was already speaking to us of a being of which it is like the skeleton.

The idea of universal mediation is yet another way, I believe, of eliding the reality of discourse, and despite appearances to the contrary. For it would seem at first glance that by rediscovering everywhere the movement of a logos which elevates particularities to the status of concepts and allows immediate consciousness to unfurl in the end the whole rationality of the world, one puts discourse itself at the centre of one’s speculation. But this logos, in fact, is only a discourse that has already been held, or rather it is things themselves, and events, which imperceptibly turn themselves into discourse as they unfold the secret of their own essence. Thus discourse is little more than the gleaming of a truth in the process of being born to its own gaze; and when everything finally can take the form of discourse, when everything can be said and when discourse can be spoken about everything, it is because all things, having manifested and exchanged their meaning, can go back into the silent interiority of their consciousness of self.

Thus in a philosophy of the founding subject, in a philosophy of originary experience, and in philosophy of universal mediation alike, discourse is no more than a play, of writing in the first case, of reading in the second, and of exchange in the third, and this exchange, this reading, this writing
never put anything at stake except signs. In this way, discourse is annulled in its reality and put at the disposal of the signifier. (Foucault, 1981 p. 65-66)

In the last textual exposure about the truth, we should recover the concept of signifier from a linguistic perspective. Indeed, the construction of the concepts are attached, not only to a context, but to the perception of reality. In these terms, we should be aware that Foucault turns the focal point of the discourse, not based in reality, but to the perception of it. The construction of the concept does not respond to phenomena itself, but to the capacity to name it. It is the structuring of reality which embrace itself to a developed concept. The significance of reality adequate in function to the capacity to name it. The understanding of a concept, should not only respond to a single context. Its validity and rigidity as concept should also respond to the recognition of distinct phenomena that holds the essence of itself, constructing and nourishing through time.

In addition, to strengthen this perception, Judith Butler exposes the universality as a constant political claim that reconfigures itself through time. The significance of every concept, paradoxically constrains to a dialectic perpetual resignification.

Moreover, the former discourse is reiterated precisely through a speech act that shows something it may not say: that the discourse ‘works’ through its effective moment in the present, and is fundamentally dependent for its maintenance on that contemporary instance. The reiterative speech act thus offers the possibility – though not the necessity – of depriving the past of the established discourse of its exclusive control over defining the parameters of the universal within politics. This form of political performativity does not retroactively absolutize its own claim, but recites and restages a set of cultural norms that displace legitimacy from a presumed authority to the mechanism of its renewal. (Butler, 2000, p. 41)

Therefore, we can observe that the construction of the concepts is not exclusive of the past, but recognizes the present as a possible scene of re-significance. This is the logic that the liberal theory has also played through the history. The conceptualization and reconceptualization of citizen represents an example of the evolution of the concept in different phases of the humanity. Today’s citizens are not the same citizens which Greeks recognize as equals. The present demands that conception of citizen does not exclude an individual for its race, religion, sexual orientation, etcetera. Of course, the concept of organic intellectual can be restored from the past, as a political figure that responds to the main
characteristic of being a progressive visionary of society within knowledge and ability on the field claiming democratic values, to the present. Even so, we must be aware that the development of the subject in the cyberspace does not respond to a logic of creating an institutionalized party, nor the eradication of classes. Clearly, the cyberspace does not constitute a State to govern, but a public sphere that should remain uncontrolled and free for the individuals.

Been said the ideas above, we should proceed to expose the hacker as the concept differentiated over the geek and the cracker, which allow us to conceive it in a pure political dimension. Then we will continue with the conclusions of this document exposition.

The geek, the hacker and the cracker

The hacker, as we have explained above, is differentiated over the concepts of cracker and geek. This difference must be assumed by the reader as a construction of the concept that considers certain characteristics of our categorization of the subject. Moreover, it must be said because in case of investigating a specific subject based on this concept, should be aware that, for example, the subject has some characteristics of a hacker that combines with others of a geek. In these terms, we theorize in order to understand a reality that transcends and nourishes on time, more than determine an explanation that easily could expire by the lack of significance.

Geek

First, it is relevant to approach the development of the geek. As we follow this subject, we could realize the relation with the hacker. The geek is represented as a new concept that appears in the emergence of Information Technologies. On society, we can identify a geek by examining some of its social abilities. Although the lack of social abilities does not determine it, is common to describe a geek with a reticent personality. Thus, the socialization is often obstructed by its own intellectual capacity. At first, geek was used as an insult to define a person abnormality. Furthermore, the term geek has transformed its connotation to describe an oddity, but now in a superior way. Moreover, even when the eccentricity of a
person could obstruct socialization in his environment, nowadays he has also the recognition of a remarkable intellect over the average (McArthur, 2009, p. 61).

In these terms, the conceptualization of the geek must be understood over a sociological perspective. Thus, the development of the geek is related in a better way to the socialization before involving in politics. This last idea is not contradictory with the paragraph above, but must be clarified. The geek in society, whether or not socialize in a conventional way, (means face to face interaction). Its oddness or eccentricity could impede the development in a social way. Despite that, the geek, as other geeks, found itself on the Internet as space of interaction and socialization. I must recognize my ignorance over the process of how did socialization of geeks were before the Internet turned public. But we should agree that Internet opened a window of interaction and intellectual development between people, especially over those who knew how to expand/improve benefits that this tool potentially brought. Indeed, the utilization of the Internet in a more complex way can be attributed to those who are interested/challenged by the system: geeks.

Therefore, we can conceive geeks as intelligent individuals who interact better on the Internet than “in reality”. But, is it the intelligence something that could entirely define a geek? The answer goes beyond a simple negation. As we explained above, the concept of geek has found on Internet a crucial space of development whether in expression or socialization. Even when the existence of geeks before the Internet going public could be an interesting subject, we must put aside this review. Consequently, the approach to the subject is better positioned after the Internet as a public space. Therefore, the geek that we are trying to conceive is build up in the environment of the cyberspace, where we can perceive the geek in, paradoxically, its natural environment.

Clearly, the concept of geek can be controversial and confusing by dimensioning it in a public space on the Internet, but passive in relation with society. The direction should be pointed to the construction of a new society on the Internet. Thus, we should put together some pieces that understand the geek as an intellectual individual immerse in a technological society built with other geeks. In these terms, as a consequence of being a society, they also share tendencies, behaviours, identities that configure a “digital subculture” (McArthur, 2009, pp. 59-61). Digital subculture is named after configuring a subculture on the Internet.
The digital sense can be easily explained after contextualizing the development of the interaction. But, why do we make reference to a subculture and not a culture *per se*? In this matter we can observe how a culture constructs a hermetical unit, so as a subculture is built over a diversity of cultures. This means, geeks are born on a specific society which forms personality initially on a culture ad hoc to their environment. Belonging to a subculture goes after they have formed abilities to manipulate a computer. Geekiness is not an inner gift or a sacred knowledge, it materializes after a process of learning which allows individuals to have access to technical knowledge, whether by school education or self-learning. Moreover, abilities are differentiated from behaviour. The first corresponds to a technical knowledge, the second to interaction with other identities. Despite been differentiated, in this context, both are related on the Internet. The abilities to access into the Internet configures an instrument to the interaction. It means Internet, even been “free access”, demands certain knowledge to use it.

On these terms, needing knowledge about information technologies, restraint or sets a gradual usage of the Internet. Furthermore, those who dominate the information technologies language configure a selected group, whether or not they communicate with each other. Despite communities are strengthen with communication, we cannot necessarily name them subcultures. Therefore, building up a subculture, goes beyond forming a community, it means sharing practices, language, affinities. Although Internet is public domain, accessing to it demands certain requirements, for example: having a computer, knowledge to use it, electricity, internet provider. The Internet settles exclusion over society, which separates those who can access to the Internet and those which cannot, so as technology knowledge also separates those who involve on Internet from those who pretend to do it.

Thus, in constructing a digital subculture, McArthur (2009) review some theories about its emergence of it. We can observe four theories which attempt to illustrate a perspective of subcultures development through music culture, which we can synthetize in: resistance, identity differentiation, neo-tribes and genre.

Hebdige (cited in McArthur, 2009, p. 60) highlight two important angles: resistance and bricolage. This author explains that subcultures are born from conjunctures which bring
resistance as a response to a problematic. In these terms, we should perceive resistance as a cluster of individuals which share affinities for a purpose. The construction of a subculture starts from adapting tendencies from other subcultures to assemble a bricolage. This last concept allows us to decode differences which grants a particular identity, even belonging its culture. Thus, a selection of characteristics associated with other cultures, are chosen to integrate an original subculture. For example, the emergence of the hippie subculture began from a pacific resistance which comes on the 60’s in response to an international political problematic. One of the emblematic characteristic of this movement was the symbol of peace exposed on their clothing, belongings, flags, etcetera. Despite that, the hippie movement was influenced by previous movements in Europe to integrate its own identity. “For the existence of subculture, it must represent a solution of a particular problem or a contradiction of a dominant culture. This solution is a style which imposes before the invisibility of the subgroup. The new subculture then creates a culture of conspicuous consumerism as a bricolage or a semiotic guerrilla”. (McArthur, 2009, p. 59)

As a response to this theory, Muggleton (cited in McArthur, 2009, p. 60) criticize Hebdige. He realizes that Hebdige´s contextualization, about the origin of subcultures, take place on oppressive systems, conflict and exploitation. On the other hand, Muggleton stands over a neutral origin. He explains that subcultures emerge as the individualization of identity, but finds affinity with other individuals on trends. On this counterpart, we can observe that, setting aside conflict and tension contexts, Hebdige still provides with meaningful sense the affinities as fundamental considerations to generate a cohesion between individuals in the construction of an identity on a group.

Moreover, we can mention two authors which enhance the continuity of the subcultures over the origin. Bennet (cited in McArthur, 2009, p. 60), uses the term “neo-tribe”, where it refers to the consistency of a tribe as a unity of a society. Consequently, from this perspective, we must understand subcultures as a stable construction that transcends over time, which at the same time carries the strength of the symbolisms associated to a tribe. Even so, Hesmondalg propose that the study of music could set a parameter to understand subcultures, different to the conception that music genres are built on age stages, but to unity over the members. Thus, the subculture comprehends a common space which allows
members to interact with each other. Other studies that focus on the musical genres, propose to emphasize on tendencies and clothing. Even so, the term of genre “is used to denote a cultural space that transcends locality. [Moreover], the study of Hesmondalg goes further on its investigation, projecting the essence of the subculture on distinctive ideas, commitment, autonomy and similar mentalities of a particular group” (McArthur, 2009, p. 60). Thus, genre is understood as the transcending of a subculture, its identities and particularities, on a society. For example, on the Internet, two individuals that belong to different countries, traditions, education, could share affinities, interests, clothing, behaviours, despite the distance between both. Furthermore, keeping in mind this sharing occur between a larger dimension of individuals, we can comprehend this become a palpable relation that configures a subculture on the cyberspace.

According to this perspectives, we can present the subject of the geeks as the configuration of a subculture. Nevertheless, it is important to enhance some characteristics that geeks have which identify them with a community of geeks. Brian Alleyne, for example, conceives, through an ethnographic study, the geek as a culture itself discretionally. Despite this, we must reserve the complexity of the concept of culture, as he recognizes the difficulty of defining culture in its neatest assumption. He refers to culture as “encompass practices, identities, objects, symbols and social relations that makes geeks distinctive, even though some of these are shared with others not identified or labelled as geeks” (Alleyne, p. 6). Even so, this definition, as he points out, could be referred also to a community or a subculture, as he tries to emphasize the substantive propose of what he understands as culture. Furthermore, on the conception of the geek must present identities, objects, symbols and social relations.

Navigating on the Internet, searching for geeks communities can lead us to identify some characteristics that assimilate geeks generally. We could perceive geekiness is strongly related to computer systems knowledge, videogames, puzzles, sci-fi themes, intellectual activities, math, and comic books. Moreover, McArthur (2009) observes on geek communities that interaction on blogs, that usually were registered with unreal identities. Users did not display images of themselves, but images of a famous people or anime characters. Also, their names did not identify their actual names, but diverse use of pseudonyms. Even when they participate frequently on the same blog, their anonymity was
a constant on their posts. We must say, their chosen anonymity also configures their own identity on the cyberspace. In addition, we must point out that cyberspace configures as a public sphere where individuals interact with each other. On these terms, cyberspace represents a space of communication and bonding between individuals, and this relation supersedes the geographic frontiers. Thus, communication is now limited only by language, without considering that coding and programming is a language too. Moreover, cyberspace unites individuals despite distances and culture’s differences, which build a particular subculture around geekiness. Despite diverse interests that bifurcate around geekiness, we can synthetize them as digital intellectual enthusiasts.

According to the above, the reader can anticipate that we have not established a position on the theories of subculture, exposed by McArthur. Consequently, in this work, the analysis of the origin of geeks as a subculture could be presumptuous. Even so, the ambition to discuss those theories reside in outlining the subculture of geeks. Assuming a position could be irresponsible with the reader by determining aspects that should be analysed casuistically. Certainly the diversity of geek groups cannot set a unique posture on its origin, but opens up the reader’s point of view to decide whether the emergence of the geeks as a resistance or identity around a certain issue or context. However, referring to the concepts of neo-tribe and genre, is easier to adopt, considering that a geek subculture exists as a semi-stable community which transcends a locality as a cybercommunity.

Therefore, attaching to the interests of the geek exposed above, we can conceive it as a subject which performs intellectual activities through his knowledge over technology. This duality allows to achieve a technical expertise on a field, complemented on its capacity to deliberate on a community around an issue, understanding that technical abilities and participation makes them part of a shared subculture. On the other hand, Kelty describe geeks not as a subculture, but as a participant on a recursive public. Thus, this author focus not necessarily on the characterization of the subject, but on the activities it performs.
Geeks spend a lot of time making, coding, building, compiling, patching, redistributing software code and networking technologies [...] The conceptual tool of a ‘social imaginary’ is important for my analysis because it permits a description of how geeks imagine their social existence through these technical practices as much as through discursive argument. (Kelty, 2005, p. 186).

This perspective assumes the geek as an active subject which interacts on the Internet. Nevertheless, it conceptualizes it as an element that plays a roll on a system, setting aside the cohesion between individuals. Thus, we can either understand geeks as a subculture, encompassing likes, avocations and behaviours shared with other individuals; or as participants in a common social imaginary inside a structure, were they can deliberate over public issues, as accountability and freedom expression (Kelty, 2005, pp. 186-189). Nevertheless, the second focuses on the space were they expresses themselves, and the first on individuals as belonging to a group. Not exclusionary perspectives, but the focal point could lead us to different conclusions.

It is important to highlight, even when Kelty sets aside the idea of culture, considers the existence of an operating ideology.

Geeks [...] provide a particularly rich route to understanding the new technical and legal forms of affiliation and practice that humans and their devices engage in. [...] It is a thick description of the process through which one set of geeks comes to imagine in common the technical and legal configuration of the very medium that makes it possible for them to associate with each other. The concept of ‘recursive publics’ is therefore meant to comprehend something more tangible than ideology and less absolute than a technocracy (Kelty, 2005, pp. 187).

Consequently, even when both authors explain from different perspectives the conception of geek, they agree on the subject being associated with other geeks. On Alleyne and McArthur, we have centre the explanation on sketching geeks as subcultures which share affinities, tendencies, behaviours and practices; with Kelty, we picture the geek on a social imaginary which comprehends a public space. Yet, we have not clarify how this information contributes to develop the hacker. The immersion of the geek on the cyberspace goes beyond only avocations and programming. The picture that we have been describing above has the purpose to outline a concept of geeks over the cyberspace. Outlining this concept allow us to conceive an actor on the Internet different to hackers. These are categories to understand a differentiation between concepts, and still both could define the same individual.
Back to the conceptualization of the geek, Alleyne (p. 7) sets it as a “highly knowledgeable about technology, especially computer technology”. Moreover, he conceptualizes the hacker as:

Highly skilled computer technologist, usually but not always a programmer, who explores problems in computing and in domains where computing is used and seeks to develop original and often unconventional solutions to these problems. The hacker is kind of a geek. The hack has represented as engineering accomplishment in hardware, and only later came to take on the meaning of an unorthodox and efficient programming solution to a software problem. […] hacks may be at times necessary, but only in the sense of a necessary evil.

According to this definition, hacker and geek are highly related with each other. Even so, hacker as individual which applies knowledge on unconventional way. Limits over conventional and unconventional practices could be subjective. Nevertheless, we should highlight the fact that hackers are a variety of geeks. On the one hand, this last idea can take us back to the beginning of the debate. On the other hand, we must recall that in this work we consider not only technical activity, but the personification of hackers on society as political individuals. Then, what could be a significant component to differentiate a hacker from a geek? According to the analysis of literature, the law factor draws the line between both concepts, one first approach could be led by Gabriella Coleman (2013, p. 163): “It is critical to recognize that geeks are in fact nimble legal thinkers”. Even when she does not underestimate the hacker’s ability to dominate law, nor express a differentiation, this recognition to the geeks including law on their activities gives us an answer to the question: why do governments criminalize hackers?

**Hacker and Cracker**

On this section we will approach the conceptualization of the hacker, outlining the hacker, differentiated from a cracker. The distinction between both subjects allow us to release the stigmas that burden the hacker as a criminal. We will review two main positions of the literature that question the ethics of hackers. Thus, the approach to the subject has been judge through merely performance of hacking. This work stands on the position to conceive it impartially, beyond performance. Therefore, the significance of hackers, as an element of
society, goes further than hacking, but the impact this activity displays on politics, developed on a progressive discourse of society.

Above, we conceptualize the geek as an individual who belongs to a subculture where its relation with other individuals set a public sphere of communication and deliberation between participants on the Internet. Hackers also belong to this public sphere, the differentiation between geek and hacker reside on legal framework. So, we can define hackers as a variety of geeks. Nevertheless, the geek maintains its activity on legal framework, while the hacker acts as an outlaw. But, is it necessary to constrain hackers as criminals? On the one hand, we could determine, breaking the law lead to chaos on societies and undermine peace and stability sought by codes and rules. On the other hand, we must appeal to the construction of democratic societies by eliminating contradictions of law and promoting democratic rights/deliberation and free speech, in this area.

On this section we propose two concepts as a variety of geeks which dimension two focal points through the verstehen (comprehension) (Weber, 1968, p. 57): hacker and cracker. We can perceive that, the model proposed on this work assumes the geek as the root of other subject’s characterization. Despite that, we must avoid opinions, such as good or bad acting, but, according to the construction of democratic values, determine that differentiating the comprehension of hacking contributes to develop democratic societies. Moreover, the frontier between geek and hacker-cracker sets on the law framework. Thus the frontier between hacker-cracker, sets on the motives of acting. Specifying those limits, allow us to accurately conceptualize hackers, and its role on politics further.

Stoll sustains that “the hacker term has acquired various meanings, including creative programmer, someone who irrupts illegally on computers. […] Also, some alternative descriptions to someone who irrupts on computers are: “cracker” and “computerredebrenk” (computer peace disturbers)” (Stoll, 1988, p. 485). In these terms, we observe that there is not a differentiation between both concepts. Even so, this reference offers one main characteristic which we already display for both concepts: Irrupts illegally. Nevertheless, Gabriela Coleman defines the hacker as:

Skilled programmers, security researchers, hardware builders, and system administrators, and they often self-identify as such. They are generally motivated by some version of information freedom […]
and free software projects. [...] The language hackers and geeks frequently invoke to describe themselves or formulate political claims includes words and expressions like freedom, free speech, privacy, the individual, and meritocracy. (Coleman, G., 2010, p. 512-513).

Consequently, in the first definition of hacker, we take, as a condition, illegal irruption to identify a hacker. On the same line, hackers, not just as skilled programmers, also have a language which promotes freedom. Both conditions are fundamental for the concept proposed. We should warn that these conditions are not unique to identify a hacker. Even so, assuming a cyberspace context, and as a consequence of previous geek definition, hacker stands as a skilled programmer, who irrupts illegally on systems, defending free speech. We cannot dispense of the fact that his skills grant to the subject, but above we established hackers as a variation of a geek. There is no difference that could be imposed to determine which skills are better developed on both concepts, nor to generalize their political formulation on free speech expressions, even when Coleman stablishes that way. Thus, we leave for geeks a rupture to develop as a hacker, or cracker.

Before introducing the cracker, there are some sharp affirmations made above. So we may interlude to redeem the path of this conceptualization. Dropping the political identity of the geek could be seen as negligence in this work. Nevertheless, we focus on the assumption of geek configuring a subculture, core of political advent and resilience, or its antagony. The political manifestation of geeks goes on a conventional way. If we recall the main concern of this thesis, the hacker as consolidation of a counter-hegemony, we must centre the explanation on a discourse defying a hegemony. In these terms, geeks settle an environment for this leap. There is a concept we should not avoid, even when this work will not extend much: hacktivist.

Alejandro Natal and Rodrigo Perera wrote a full explicative article and data collection which illustrate hacktivism as political participation. They bifurcate participation in conventional and unconventional. The first refer to an institutional form of participation, while the second as a non-institutional form. For example, voting figures as conventional participation of citizens, while collective manifestations as protests are unconventional forms of participation. Natal and Perera define hacktivism as “a kind of unconventional political participation, and in occasions a form of civil disobedience which their tactics and repertoires are non-violent, non-profitable, pursuing public purposes and based on internet or creation.
of digital tools that could have legal ambiguities” (2014, p. 207). On this point, we could consider a short reach definition about hacktivists, as well as some contradictions on it. They extend their definition by differentiating hackers from hacktivists:

Hacktivism is either a collective or individual action, which is non-profitable but a political or social change, in benefit of the collective and not of who is participating. Some expectations could be legislative change or in public policy, or also denunciate public, or private, power actions considered unjust.

This distinction is important because, unlike hackers hired by parties, enterprises or power groups to serve particular causes, which are paid and does not act on own convictions; hacktivists seek political or social change for the collective. (Natal & Perera, 2014, p. 208)

From this definition, we must deny the description given to hacker’s nature. The authors in first term grant a deficient approach of civil disobedience, which they also admitted not extending on the theory. Synthetizing civil disobedience of Henry David Thoreau lead to forget one fundamental characteristic of this concept. They conceive it as transgression of a law to make evident the lack of justice on it, “protesta con propuesta”. Nevertheless, civil disobedience considers, after transgressing, acceptance of consequences of their infringement. Furthermore, acceptance of consequences happens to be unlikely when we consider anonymity as one defining characteristic of geeks, hence hackers. Defining hacktivists out of nowhere lead to abandon the origins, or construction process, to become a political subject. They left behind the environment and origin of the concept, which involves a culture, and a subculture, that allows the materialization of the subject.

Furthermore, we must consider counter-hegemony presumes to settle a factual power which defy a hegemony. In this case, civil disobedience on Internet do not settle a defying power over a hegemony, nor free speech discourse. Civil disobedience constitutes an articulation between government legislation and society to prove wrong or unfair a law. This concept, as its definition settles, refines a democratic society, citizens, governments, to exemplify some elements that belongs to liberal models. Nevertheless, we must analyse that liberal models contemplate normative/idyllic precepts to theorize before reality. From a post-structural perspective, we must consider that a hegemony establishes an order to subdue society. From this last perspective, on civil disobedience, hacktivists legitimate the control imposed by this discourse, accepting the consequences of their own actions. Civil
disobedience legitimates a system before questioning it. On these terms, hacktivists constitute another element articulated in the established discourse. On the other hand, hackers built a discourse, not only questioning the existing hegemony, but confronting it. Thus, tensions occur between two discourses instead of enhancing the one.

In addition, Natal and Perera consider hackers as those who are hired by power groups to profit. Nevertheless, we cannot refer hackers as hired individuals of power groups, considering the second ones those who belongs as constitutive part of a hegemonic discourse. Even when we could name an individual, which tends to profit in this activity as a freelancer, the term corresponds to a cracker.

On these terms, the main differentiation between hacker and cracker, settles on the will of acting. The hacker, even by breaking the law, his action stands for principles rooted to free speech and information access. On the other hand, the cracker, on the same outlaw condition of hackers, search and individual benefit, not a direct connection to social principles. Even so, to affirm which act, whether or not, be based on social principles could be a subjective assumption. Nevertheless, the utility societies consent or gain of the activity could elucidate the impact of hackers in the political field.

![Figure 1](image_url)

**Figure 1.**
Conclusions

We can conclude this document by conceiving the hacker as a geek who breaches cybersecurity in search of prevalence free speech and information access on cyberspace. In this pages we tried to separate some of the main characteristics which defines three identities on cyberspace whose can be confused. We consider relevant differentiating concepts because, breaching security gates on cyberspace is mistakenly criminalized on the same terms hackers and crackers. Nevertheless, the differentiation becomes primary the base before form. In order to stand this last idea, social mobilisations are based on demands of society groups, those who consider their rights are not respected or violated. Social mobilisations intend to bring fairness into society, even when social order must be given up to demand it. Moreover, hackers by intend to leak information or breach security, these actions democratize information, strength free speech and liberate cyberspace from the control of public information. Regardless, governments establish as legitimate power we consent as society, when rights are restricted, individuals must demand them. On cyberspace, conventional and unconventional practices change on the political, but still politics carry on.

This, does not mean crackers or geeks do not impact on political matters, but not on the same terms as hackers do. Along the complete research project, those concepts are fundamental on the development of the hacker as a counterhegemony. Other concepts, which belong to the political science, should be revised in order to analyse the subject on politics. The differentiation of concepts allows us to understand the structure of the political and the politics in it. Identifying elements and articulations lead on the construction of the political dynamics on the cyberspace and the territoriality where the public space settles.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


