

Hactivism and techniques of neutralization: how hactivists neutralize their hacks

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In this presentation a modernized version of the techniques of neutralization developed by Sykes and Matza is used to explore hactivism. Hactivism is a phenomenon which originated from the hacker subculture in the cyberspace of the late 1980s, combining socio-political motivations typical but not limited to traditional activism, with hacker ideology and hacking techniques. Through a series of semi-structured interviews, the presentation will explore how hactivists neutralize their deviant behaviours, particularly focusing on the importance given to the socio-political element that seems to play a fundamental role in the elaboration of justifications. The techniques are not used to explain why an individual gets involved with hactivism (even though some connections will be shown). Rather, the application of the theory illustrates why hactivists keep engaging in illegal and deviant activities, and how they reinforce these behaviours. Preliminary findings suggest that hactivists consistently apply the techniques *ex ante*, in line with the original idea of the theory, mainly condemning the condemners, denying the victim and appealing to higher loyalties (in this case to higher goals).