

The Hacking Monopolism Trilogy

The three artworks of the Hacking Monopolism Trilogy are Face to Facebook, Amazon Noir and Google Will Eat Itself.

These works share a lot in terms of both methodologies and strategies. They all use custom programmed software in order to exploit (not without fun) three of the biggest online corporations (Google, Amazon and Facebook), exploiting conceptual hacks that generate unexpected holes in their well oiled marketing and economic system.

The process is always illustrated in a diagram that shows the main directions and processes under which the software has been developed. We found a significant conceptual hole in all of these corporate systems and we used it to expose the fragility of their omnipotent commercial and marketing strategies. In fact all these corporations established a monopoly in their respective sectors (Google, search engine; Amazon, book selling; Facebook, social media), but despite that their self-protective strategies are not infallible. And we have been successful in demonstrating this.

There are other common themes in the projects. In all of them we stole data that is very sensitive for the respective corporations. With Google it was the "clicks" on their AdSense Program; with Amazon we started to steal the content of entire books, and with Facebook we stole a huge amount of public data profiles. In all the three projects, the theft is not used to generate money at all, or for personal economic advantage, but only to twist the stolen data or knowledge against the respective corporations. In GWEI it was the shares obtained through the money created by the AdSense program; in Amazon Noir it was the pdf books distributed for free; and in Face To Facebook it is the collection of profiles moved with no prior notice to a dating website.

All the projects, indeed, independently claim that some of the corporation's "crown jewels", including their brand image and marketing approaches, can be hacked, focusing only on their established strategies and thinking in a "what if?" fashion. Furthermore, the projects were all based on a "hacking" idea that, although pursued on a sophisticated level and with custom software, still could have been applied by anybody with similar results. This is one of the fundamental values of these projects. Finally, all the installations we exhibited did not use computers or networks, trying to be as coherent as possible with the projects, but focusing more on the display of the processes than on the technologies.

By Paolo Cirio and Alessandro Ludovico.