



# networks in crisis: a preliminary conclusion

1. Much has been written about the evolution of urban design in Europe and how the history of political systems is reflected in it. From the decentralised medieval forms of aggregation to the rise of the State in the Renaissance, until the birth (or more accurately, the revival) of the urban grid in the Industrial Age, urban space is the physical manifestation of the system that generated it. As an extension of social space, the Internet and its brief history give us an opportunity to investigate current politics through spatial means. From its beginning as a "pure" network of communication between equally ranked nodes, the Internet has taken an increasingly hierarchised form, in which the access to the network is regulated by ISPs, which can practically control who accesses what content. The centralisation of this function into the hands of an ever smaller number of major corporations exposes the end user to the growing risk of censorship and manipulation of information.

2. We like to think of democracy as a rampart against oppression, nurturing freedom of speech and of information. While German politician Ursula von der Leyen strives to prove us wrong with her attempt at institutionally blacklisting rogue websites, Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi is a physical lecture on how, even if this was true, today's democracy is all but a solid achievement.

3. Different and loosely connected practices of resistance have emerged within and despite the spatial regulations of modern cities - street art, reclaim the streets, squatting, rave culture, just to name a few. Similarly, this strand of the project was going to explore the possibilities of counteracting the mechanisms of online surveillance using the Internet's existing infrastructure.

4. This other strand, which also happened to be the first to be developed, was based on the idea that the Internet would become a safer and more efficient network if its structure was reduced back to a flat network of equal nodes. The identity between server and client in each and every node would allow the end user greater control over contents and privacy.

5. Crossing this idea with the possibility of enclosing such a node in a mobile device opened up the perspective of an Internet in which physical space would become more relevant to online interactions. This "web 2.1" would still be a part of and interact with the existing World Wide Web.

