This presentation explores some of the ways in which hacked Changeable Message Signs (CMS) destabilize the physical space of the road and the institutionalized function of travel. CMS enhance the function of static road signs, display up-to-the-moment traffic information and, in contrast to static road signs, allow for variable messages to be displayed. However, as contemporary CMS are programmable, they are also vulnerable to hackers, which may lead to dissemination of unauthorized messages. This in turn redefines the motor transport spaces in which they operate. Hence, while computational technologies improve the function of traditional road signs, they invite alternative usages, something that radically alters the activities of drivers, commuters, pedestrians, road workers and traffic management systems.

The dissemination of unsanctioned information on CMS contributes to conveying the socio-political meaning of the particular sites in which they are located. Hence, the seemingly straightforward relationship between motor transport spaces and the activities of motorists, pedestrians and passers-by is in fact fashioned by the particular kind of message that is displayed at any given moment. Focusing on the spatial effects of hacked CMSs and how the dissemination of unsanctioned information points to the social stratifications of motor transport spaces, I argue that hacking road signs is a form of social activism which combats the disciplinary regimes of roadways. While the forces of institutional and governmental strategies are clear, CMS are widely used for oppositional and creative practices among hackers in their dissemination of unauthorized messages.

Keywords: spatiality, Changeable Message Sign (CMS), hacking.