

# Building a Hacker Space

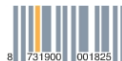
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Chaos Computer Club Cologne e. V.

August 17, 2007



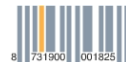
# Outline

- 1 Introduction
- 2 The Hacker Space Design Patterns Catalogue
- 3 Conclusion



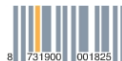
# Who we are

- Chaos Computer Club Cologne
- Founded in 1997
- around 42 members
- currently in Version 3.5 of our hacker space, operational in this location since 1999



# What we want to tell you

- We want to share our knowledge of building our own hacker space
- We won't give you a detailed manual
- We steal from computer science: Pick Design Patterns that work
- Your mileage may vary



# Outline

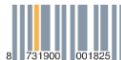
## 2 The Hacker Space Design Patterns Catalogue

## Sustainability Patterns

## Independence Patterns

## Regularity Patterns

## Conflict Resolution Patterns



# The Infrastructure Pattern

You have a chicken-and-egg-problem: What should come first?  
Infrastructure or projects?





# The Community Pattern

## How should your group communicate?



# The Community Pattern

## How should your group communicate?

## Implementation

You are hackers, you know what to do. Stop slacking and set up a mailing list, a wiki, and an IRC channel. You will need all three.



## y



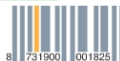
# The Critical Mass Pattern

## Problem

You want to set up a hacker space in your city alone. You fail.

## Implementation

The rule of thumb is  $2 + 2$ . You need a partner to get the initial idea kicked off, making two of you. You need two more people in order to get real work done. Don't start before you are at least four people. From this point it's easy to recruit more people. **Aim for ten people** for a start.



# The Strong Personalities Pattern

## Problem

Nothing gets done. You all want the hacker space, but it's so hard to get off your asses.



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## Implementation

Look for **strong personalities** as members of your original group. You will need people with **experience in building structures**. Look for people who **HAVE** authority (and get respect), not for people who **USE** authority (and get laughed at).



# Outline

## 1 Introduction

## 2 The Hacker Space Design Patterns Catalogue

Sustainability Patterns

**Independence Patterns**

Regularity Patterns

Conflict Resolution Patterns

## 3 Conclusion



# The Landlord and Neighbourhood Pattern

## Problem

You have found the perfect hacker space, but the landlord seems to be weird. Also, the neighbours are picky.



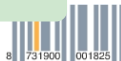
# The Landlord and Neighbourhood Pattern

## Problem

You have found the perfect hacker space, but the landlord seems to be weird. Also, the neighbours are picky.

## Implementation

Choose wisely. A benevolent, but **uninterested landlord** and **cool neighbours** can be the decisive reasons why the hacker space takes off or not. Not so cool neighbours may call the cops at 2 AM. Depending on your projects, this may be a serious problem.



# The “It’s not a flat” Pattern

## Problem

You need a space for meetings and as a lab, to store and work on materials for projects. In order to minimize rent or out of sympathy, you think it’s great when someone lives in your space. But somehow it doesn’t work, as you cannot use the lab anymore.



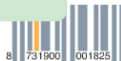
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## Implementation

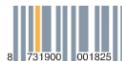
Guest are fine, but **don’t let anyone live there**. Kick them out if necessary.



# The Séparée Pattern

## Problem

You want to chill, discuss, or work in small groups. But the main room is occupied: There are simply too many people at your space. Or you want to smoke a cigarette at the space without disturbing non-smokers.



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## Problem

You want to chill, discuss, or work in small groups. But the main room is occupied: There are simply too many people at your space. Or you want to smoke a cigarette at the space without disturbing non-smokers.

## Implementation

Look for a hacker space with **smaller, separate rooms**. Use **curtains** or **doors** to separate them from the main room. Separate rooms can also be used for smokers in a non-smoking hacker space.



# The Kitchen Pattern

## Problem

As a human being, you need food. As a hacker, you need caffeine and food at odd times.



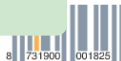
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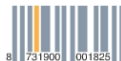
Have a **kitchen** at your space. Nothing brings people together like **cooking** together. Have **fridges** for Club-Mate. Selling soft-drinks will help you raise money for the rent. Invest in the single most important piece of hardware: a **dishwasher**. Have a **freezer** for pizzas and buy decent **kitchen equipment**. Show nerds how to cook **real food**.



# The Coziness Pattern

## Problem

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. There must be something else than only workstations and electronics.



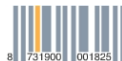
# The Coziness Pattern

## Problem

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. There must be something else than only workstations and electronics.

## Implementation

Bring in **couches, sofas, comfortable chairs, tables, ashtrays, ambient light, stereo equipment, a projector, and video game consoles**. Bringing in plants didn't work for us.



# The Shower Pattern

## Problem

After long hacking sessions, you will start to smell funny. Also, guests to your space seem to neglect personal hygiene.



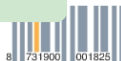
# The Shower Pattern

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## Implementation

The discriminate hacker space has a **bathroom with a shower**. After a long hacking night you'll have the best ideas while taking a shower. Guests from other hacker spaces may stay for several days. Ideally you will buy a **washing machine** to get rid of all the smelly towels.



# The Membership Fees Pattern

## Problem

You need to pay your rent and utilities. Larger projects need to be funded.



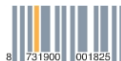
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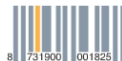
**Collect fees regularly.** Make no exceptions, ever. Choose an appropriate amount. Have discounts for students. Have at least three months of rent on your account, all the time, no exceptions. Elect a totalitarian treasurer.



# The No Sponsoring Pattern

## Problem

You think it's a good idea to meet at a company that likes you or at a university where most of you study anyway.



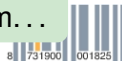
# The No Sponsoring Pattern

## Problem

You think it's a good idea to meet at a company that likes you or at a university where most of you study anyway.

## Implementation

**Never ever depend** your space **on external sponsors**. Donations are great, but remember that companies can go bankrupt and you won't be a student forever. Also, you will exclude high-school kids or people who don't like the university culture. And no company, no matter how nice, will give away presents forever without asking for favours in return. That's capitalism. . .



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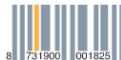
Sustainability Patterns

Independence Patterns

**Regularity Patterns**

Conflict Resolution Patterns

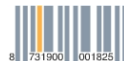
## 3 Conclusion



# The Plenum Pattern

## Problem

You want to resolve internal conflicts, exercise democratic decision-making, and discuss recent issues and future plans.



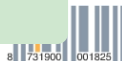
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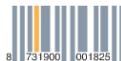
Have a **regular meeting** with possibly all members. Have an **agenda** and **set goals**. Make people commit themselves to tasks. Write down **minutes of the meeting** and post them on a mailing list and/or Wiki. Go for the only date that works: **once a week**. Weird dates like “first full-moon after the third Friday” will never work. Likewise doesn’t bi-weekly or anything else.



# The OpenChaos Pattern

## Problem

You want to draw in new people and provide an interface to the outside world.



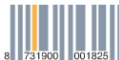
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## Implementation

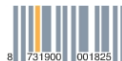
Implementation: Have a **monthly, public, and open lecture, talk or workshop**. Invite interesting visitors to your regular meetings and don't tell the weirdos about them.



# The U23 Pattern

## Problem

Your older members graduate from college or get married. Your space needs fresh blood.



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## Implementation

Recruit young people through a **challenge** you set up for them, in form of a **course that spans several weeks**. Overwhelm them with problems from hardware and software hacking and let them solve it in teams. Prepare for the challenge and **tutor them**, but give them room to experiment. After the team-building, retire and let the smartest of the young ones run the space.



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Regularity Patterns

**Conflict Resolution Patterns**

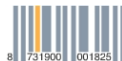
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# The Consensus Pattern

## Problem

You need a group decision and want to make sure no one gets left behind.



# The Consensus Pattern

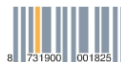
## Problem

You need a group decision and want to make sure no one gets left behind.

## Implementation

Use the weekly plenum for discussion. Don't take votes—**discuss until everyone agrees.**

For some problems this pattern is the best.



# The Democracy Pattern

## Problem

You need to make a group decision. Discussion does not seem to lead you anywhere.



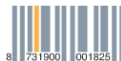
# The Democracy Pattern

## Problem

You need to make a group decision. Discussion does not seem to lead you anywhere.

## Implementation

Use the weekly plenum for discussion. Do take votes—the **strongest minority wins over the weaker minorities**.  
For some problems this pattern is the best.



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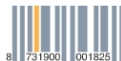
# The Command Pattern

## Problem

Nobody does the dishes. Your hacker space looks crappy. No one seems to care.

## Implementation

**Order people** to do the dishes, take out the trash, keep the infrastructure up and running. **Yell, if necessary! Participate.** For some problems this pattern is the best.



# The Responsibility Pattern

## Problem

You volunteered for the task of running a critical piece of infrastructure, e.g. the mail server, but you feel the sudden urge to slack.



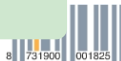
# The Responsibility Pattern

## Problem

You volunteered for the task of running a critical piece of infrastructure, e.g. the mail server, but you feel the sudden urge to slack.

## Implementation

Just because volunteer work doesn't get paid doesn't mean it's less important. Remember that you will directly hurt your friends and the hacker space. **Take pride in your volunteer work.** It will make you grow stronger as a person and is satisfying.



You are in the middle of your weekly plenum. Everybody's yelling, nothing gets done.



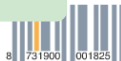
# The Debate Culture Pattern

## Problem

You are in the middle of your weekly plenum. Everybody's yelling, nothing gets done.

## Implementation

Many geeks have very poor debate skills, the result of years of flame wars on the Net. Make **people with actual social skills lead the discussion**. Those with a background in real-life political work were best for our group. **Learn from them. Learn not to interrupt others.**



# The Private Talk Pattern

## Problem

Someone causes a problem that cannot be resolved in the group.



# The Private Talk Pattern

## Problem

Someone causes a problem that cannot be resolved in the group.

## Implementation

Let some experienced member of your group **talk** to the trouble-maker **in private**. **Listen to the person**. Let them know how the group feels about the problem without exposing them in front of the group.



# Conclusion

- There is no “golden way” building up a hacker space
- Based on experience there are a couple of patterns which might match
- Be creative! Try out your own way!

