The making of Southeast Asian silicon valleys

Although many parts of Southeast Asia lag behind in terms of Internet penetration, recent years have witnessed an explosion of Internet use across the region, largely supported by the increasing accessibility of mobile technologies, growing digital literacy and the popularity of social media. As the information and communication technologies (ICTs) become more pervasive across the region, there are more and more young people who see their lives inextricably tied to technologies not only as users, but also as creators. Software developers and hardware engineers, hackers, new media specialists or technology enthusiasts in general, who refer to themselves and each other as geeks, are not only to be found in Silicon Valley. Young men (and to a lesser extent, young women) in Singapore, Bandung, Kuala Lumpur and elsewhere, also try to take part in and benefit from the so-called digital revolution, by exchanging knowledge, collaborating and celebrating the geek culture or ‘geekdom’.

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 HackerSpaces are created and nearly ad-hoc gatherings, taking place within a limited time frame, then HackerSpaces are permanent establishments with a physical location where geeks can take part in their software or hardware projects and learn from each other. HackerSpaces are community-run and self-sustained, they eschew financial support from non-techies and focus on the techies. The origins of HackerSpaces can be found in the aftermath of the hippy-counterculture movement in the USA; they provide an alternative creative space, separated from state and market. To date there are approximately 500 active HackerSpaces around the world, and it is important to note that, in comparison to other forms of geek gatherings, sustaining a HackerSpace demands significant time and effort, and thus can be considered to indicate the existence of a more developed and substantial geek community.

HackerSpaces appear to be gaining momentum in Southeast Asia, especially in Indonesia, where within one year four new establishments have arisen: Bandung, Surabaya, Yogjakarta, Medan. One is also in the planning for Jakarta. Interestingly, the HackerSpace in Bandung was created after a group of Medan. One is also in the planning for Jakarta. Interestingly, the HackerSpace in Bandung was created after a group of 14 Medan. One is also in the planning for Jakarta. Interestingly, the HackerSpace in Bandung was created after a group of Medan. One is also in the planning for Jakarta. Interestingly, the HackerSpace in Bandung was created after a group of Medan.

### Resources


### Notes

1. In this article ‘technology’ refers to hardware, software and the combinations of both.

2. This label is used in literature and practice, interchangeably with words such as nerd, hackers, developers, coders, etc. Each has a slightly different connotation. In this article I chose to use the word ‘geek’ as an umbrella term, it is also the term most often used when referring to the raising popularity of geek culture – it tends to describe a person with entrepreneur characteristics, rather than just a technical tinkerer.

3. In September 2010, the research project “The Future is Elsewhere: Towards a Comparative History of the Futurities of the Digital (Re)Visionation”, commenced at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University. This research is funded by NWO.


6. As in ‘bar’ and ‘camp’, for more information see www.barcamps.org.

7. Kenduri is a Malay term meaning a religious ceremony, celebration and feast.


9. For more information see www.HackerSpaces.org

10. An interesting critical essay about the ideological underpinnings of Hacker Spaces, “Hacking the Spaces”, written by Johannes Grenzfurthner & Frank Apunkt Schneider, can be found here: http://www.monochrom.at/hacking-the-spaces/

11. See the list of active HackerSpaces around the world: www.hackerspaces.org

12. Forum Web Anak Bandung – FOWAB is a group of web technology specialists who organise regular meetings, in many aspects resembling Barcamps in Bandung.

### BarCamp Yangon 2011 Second day – the slots for giving presentations are filled up.

### Hackerspace Singapore.

### Various stickers on laptops are often part of the geek image.

### WordCamp meeting in Bandung Indonesia.

All photography courtesy of Zane Kripe.