



Hash blogs

Description

Hash is a prominent term in computing and cryptography, according to the OED, “so called because it consists of small pieces of code arranged in an apparently jumbled and fragmented way.” See posts tagged [hash](#).

To hash is to chop up, to hack, a term applied readily to food (recooked and chopped meat), narcotic dried herbs (hashish “in Arabic). Through further linguistic coincidence the word resonates with software *hacking* as applied drudgery and routine work, low-paid piecework, and labour delivered on-demand in the gig economy.

Technically, some of these associations are “false cognates.” According to the Online Etymological Dictionary, “hack” applied to labour derives from the pastureland in Hackney, England, where horses were kept for hire (<https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=hack>). So it’s not actually about chopped up work tasks, or *hashing*.

If I were to *make a hash* of this blog post I would turn it into a jumbled mess. To hash is to arrange, re-arrange or jumble elements in such a way that they are unrecognisable from the original arrangement.

Hash house

A hash house was a type of cheap eatery in Malaysia, so named as they served chopped up meaty leftovers (*hash*). Ex-patriot brits would meet there and play fake hunting games. The Hash House Harriers (HHH) were ex-pats who developed the practice of running in simulated hare and hounds orienteering events. The “hare” would lay down markers in flour along a route and others would follow. You can see the HHH’s standard waymarking symbols online, and the association is explained at www.hashhouseharriers.com.

Hashitecture

Hash is not a term used in architecture, but *collage* is. In architecture, art and urbanism the concept of the hash most likely invokes concepts of *collage*, the deliberate or accidental arrangement of disparate elements to stimulate something new. According to architectural writer Jennifer Shields,

“A collage as a work of art consists of the assembly of various fragments of materials, combined in such a way that the composition has a new meaning, not inherent in any of the individual fragments” (2).

So, there are a few connections with urban life: digital infrastructures that rely on hash tables, hash lookup, security codes, blockchain, etc; something about urban games, colonial legacies, and waymarking, and the arrangement and incongruous juxtaposition of urban elements as collage.

Bibliography

- Rowe, Colin, and Fred Koetter. 1978. *Collage City*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- Shields, Jennifer. 2013. *Collage and Architecture*. New York, NY: Routledge

Category

1. Architecture

Tags

1. city
2. cryptography
3. hash

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