

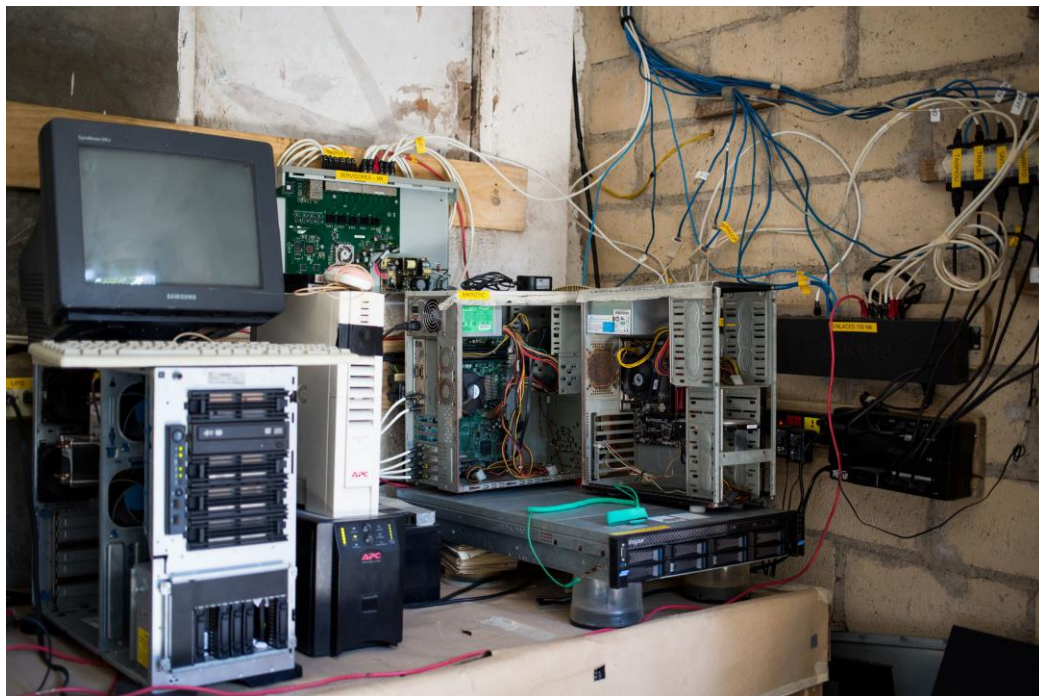
## **SNet (Street net)**

SNet is a clandestine, community-based IP intranet, which emerged at the beginning of the last decade, was consolidated, and recognized under the name *SNet* around 2011. In 2019, when it had more than nine pillars (central nodes) and more than 30,000 connected IPs (only in Havana), it was forcibly absorbed by a state institution known as the Computer Youth Club.

The first traces of the network, the first segments, and nodes, appeared in the early years of 2000 (my first personal contact with this practice occurred in 2003, a young family member was part of one of the first networks in the Havana neighborhood of Monaco. The initiators were young people who had computers, either because their adult relatives were traveling outside the country, or because the government had assigned them to them as a means of work or because they assembled them in pieces. The desire to play *StarCraft* (Blizzard) among them but exceeding the number of players allowed by the multiplayer option of the consoles (Nintendo, Sega, Sony), and the distances between the houses, pushed them to connect their computers using telephone cables (Ethernet Links) of up to 100 meters. Small networks that repeated everywhere was the result. Although some had wifi cards, incorporated in some laptops of the time, and AP (Access-Point devices), the common thing was the use of cables. According to some participants, the first option was to carry their computers, from one house to another (mainly desktops). Still, the action brought them problems with the police, who often confused the scene with a robbery. If you paid attention, you could see hidden-phone lines between plants in gardens and courtyards to cross from one house to the other in those years. Soon the cables began to cross streets and avenues. Sometimes they used electricity and telephone poles to be guided by other wires (I note that the first enemies of *SNet* were other individuals illegally connected to the electricity and telephone circuits. They said that children with their LANs cables would bring more attention from inspectors and police). The desire to gaming on equal terms led these young people to help each other. When the groups were small to no more than 20 people in the early years, money was collected, or duplicated parts were shared to level and make the playing conditions fair. In other words, the aim was for the visualization, the memory, the speed of response to be similar. Although the primary use was in games, these first micro-networks also served as distribution channels for other content such as software (antivirus), music, templates. It was also common to allow access between friends to installed files, such as encyclopedias. *StarCraft*, as I mentioned, was the first game used in these networks. I have reviewed many graphics that explain the growth of the network. And although I believe that the precise models are using nodes and segments, I have noticed a tendency to represent radial growth, circles, or rounded shapes that grow until

they meet each other. In my opinion, these graphics are an echo of the invasive narrative of the *StarCraft* game. Perhaps a parallel with the *Zergs* (one of the three primary competing organisms in the game), specifically their forms of expansion, can be explored concerning *SNet*. *Creep*, the purple goo, whose previous expansion allows the invasion of the *Zergs*, would be, in this case, the ideal medium formed by the minimum technological resources over which *SNet* could expand. As the groups of players grew, imagine this on a city scale, the networks crossed whole neighborhoods. *SNet* was, first, many *SNets*. At some points, networks began to connect to networks. One creep's coastline dissolved in the encounter with another's. Due to the disparity of resources, not all the networks assimilated equally the intense use and activity of many players, so the growth was slow, laborious, viscous, we can say.

As the youth became adults, their use of the network varied, and other family members joined. This diversity of users allowed diversification of contents and use. Many teenagers who started *SNet* in the early 2000s went to university and studied computer science. This new knowledge had a positive impact on *SNet*, to the point of becoming the most extensive community intranet in the world, without an internet connection. *SNet* became a learning environment. The massive participation of individuals from different backgrounds and interests gave *SNet* features beyond its communitarian character. For example, at the beginning of the second decade of the network, a monthly CUC per user was charged as a common fund for purchasing new equipment and assuming repairs and replacements due to breakage or theft. The administration of these funds was public, and you could access the tables and explanations about the use of the funds that made the administrative process an educational tool. The user understood the network structure, its needs, and learned about the repair process's resources and tools. Being active users and participating in the network's economic support allowed them to know about the *SNet* technical and human principles. The volume of services offered and partly recorded by research (TAL) is a sample of the implications of many users/viewers becoming producers of content and digital tools for community interaction.



SNet sever

