

Direct Democracy within the Internet

Panel at Left Forum 2014, NYC; organized by Paolo Cirio.

The panel will highlight structural crises of our contemporary moment to illuminate potential avenues to enhance democracy through universal participation within the Internet. The panel will showcase the limits and potentials of participation and transparency on the Internet through examining how direct democracy envisions a social architecture that can autonomously manage local needs and collaborate on global issues.

Carne Ross, writer and independent ex-UN diplomat, will discuss a form of participatory radical democracy through decentralized leadership, pointing at the reductive view of representative democracy and the potential of deliberative leaderless democracy.

Joanne McNeil, writer and journalist, will discuss what Wikileaks cables meant for democracy in relation to over-classification and radical transparency, reporting on the Manning trial that she covered for Jacobin and The Atlantic.

Paolo Cirio, hacker and subversive artist, will present a comparison of his attacks on the Cayman Islands and Facebook. These works illustrate the formation of cultural norms relating to privacy and anonymity versus transparency and accountability.

Chad Kautzer, Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Social Justice Minor at the University of Colorado Denver will moderate the panel discuss the interrelations of law, direct democracy, and political subject formation.

Leocadia Díaz Romero is devoted to the research of contemporary forms of democracy and the revitalization of social actors in digital societies. She will present how new social actors claim for "real democracy" through alternative forms.

The Internet activates decentralization of power for participatory governance, enabling transparent social accountability and democratic free speech. These potentials have been repressed by a war to control the Internet as a means of mass surveillance, cheap entertainment, media monopoly and marketing tools. Yet, Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden's leaks once again marked the power of decentralized communication technology to enhance transparency and a democratic society. Following the recent leaks, there has been development in participatory politics through Internet platforms like Iceland's crowd-sourced constitution, which was rewritten through anonymous online submissions; platforms like Loomio, an app for decision-making developed by Occupy activists; the Pirate Party; OpenCongress.org, which tracks bills and lobbyists; and a growing number of participatory budgeting projects in U.S.

The question of how to keep up with social change when technology, global markets and environmental crises are faster than ever is a central concern of this talk. The forces of cross-border markets and global environment crises have led to the decline of the nation-state, propelled by multinational firms and the misuse of media technology. These conditions lead municipalities, individuals, and small businesses to lose power over their democratic rights. Yet, society now possesses more expansive tools and knowledge to apply to radical democracy than ever before.

Bios:

Carne Ross is a writer and political activist. A former British diplomat who resigned over the Iraq war, Carne founded and now leads Independent Diplomat, an expert team of former diplomats which advises democratic but marginalized governments and political groups so that their views are heard internationally. Carne has also been heavily involved in an Occupy Wall Street initiative to offer a new kind of banking – The Occupy Money Cooperative. He was recently interviewed about his philosophy in the Los Angeles Review of Books. His recent book, *The Leaderless Revolution*, analyzes the current failure of governments and alternative forms of political organization, including anarchism.

Paolo Cirio is an award-winning Italian artist and activist based in New York. Cirio's art projects have tampered with institutions such as Facebook, Amazon, Google, NATO, and the financial industry of the Cayman Islands, among others. Through his artistic performances he regularly receives a number of legal and death threats, and has been the subject of investigations by authorities, starting from the Department of Defense in 2002.

Joanne McNeil is a writer interested in the ways technology is shaping society, politics, and art. Her work has appeared in *Dissent*, *The Atlantic*, *Jacobin*, *Wired*, *Frieze*, among other publications. She is currently writing a book on internet privacy. She is the former editor of *Rhizome* at the New Museum.

Chad Kautzer is Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Social Justice Minor at the University of Colorado Denver. He is co-editor (with Eduardo Mendieta) of *Pragmatism, Nation, and Race: Community in the Age of Empire* (Indiana, 2009) and author of *Radical Philosophy: An Introduction*, forthcoming from Paradigm Publishers. He has been an activist and political organizer for over twenty years.

Leocadia started her academic career in 2000. Since then, she has written and defended her European PhD and been professor of various courses within the Law, Political Science, and Media Schools. Throughout this time, she has joined networks and participated in conferences and projects. In 2011, she obtained her Accreditation. Currently, Prof. Díaz is devoted to the research of contemporary forms of democracy and the revitalization of social actors in digital societies.