International Conference of the Participatory and Deliberative Democracy Specialist Group (PDD)
Democratic Transformation: Spaces, Connections and Systemic Change
Dublin City University, 4-5 June 2020

CfP: Digital Democracy and its Future: Radical Democracy in Online Participatory Spaces?

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Digitalization processes deeply effect current societal and political transformations. Which impact digitalization has for democracy and how it can aid to radicalize democracy, however, remains unclear. On the one hand, online spaces have been characterized as an unhierarchical, free spaces for a more radical, egalitarian democracy and for practices that may challenge the established institutional order. On the other hand, digital fora are often understood as threat to democracy as they provide fertile ground for trolling, populism, hate speech, and fake news.

Against the background of such ambivalent findings, this panel will assess the potential of online communication for radical democracy. Radical democrats call for the democratization of every sphere of life and aim at freer, more egalitarian, and inclusive ways of democratic decision-making. While digital communication harnesses such potentials, new media are also embedded in a capitalist logic of competition and hierarchy. The political economy of cyberspace with its multi-media giants such as Google and Facebook hardly permits such egalitarian aspirations. Moreover, governmental surveillance and commercial tracking limit democratic potentials. Digital spaces, however, also harness communicative infrastructures that can be used by organized social movements and spontaneous swarms for resistance.

Do digital spaces provide the basis for realizing a radical democratic vision of politics? Do digital spaces foster democratic and inclusive debates or do they facilitate populism, fake news and radicalization? How can practitioners, citizens, and activists counteract such threats? May supposedly anti-democratic forms of participation such as trolling or the spread of fake news even have positive effects on democratic decision-making?

The panel welcomes theoretical and empirical contributions that, for example, engage with the following topics:
- Radical democratic theories including participatory, deliberative, agonistic, feminist, queer, postcolonial, and other perspectives and their relation to digital democracy
- Online deliberation and its effects
- The use of social media and digital spaces for activism and resistance
- Populism in digital spaces
- The role of post-truth, fake news, and alternative facts in radical democracy
- The political economy of the internet as a context for radical democracy

Please submit your paper proposals to Dannica Fleuss (dannica.fleuss@hsu-hh.de) and Hans Asenbaum (Hans.Asenbaum@iass-potsdam.de) by 21 January 2020!