

PEACE AND THE INTERNET

notes for the workshop 8 June at Peace Event Sarajevo 2014 by Mikael Bök, book@kaapeli.fi

"Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation."

—Karl Marx, Preface to A Contribution to Critique of the Political Economy 1859

...we're in a strange middle ground. There are two basic principles of governance in play coexisting side by side.

We have governance in which states claim to represent entire nations, everybody in their territory, with one position. And then we have governance based on open participation, which includes both state and non-state actors.

...just as monarchy was fundamentally incompatible with democracy in the long run and was eventually replaced by it, so the open access network forms of governance are not necessarily compatible with national and intergovernmental systems.

— Milton L. Mueller, speaking at Net Mundial 2014¹

The PeaceNet. Back in the 1980ies, there was a network called the PeaceNet. It was the American part of a widespread international system of non-governmental computer networks. GreenNet was the European part, GlasNet was the Russian part, and there were other such networks in Africa, Asia and Latin America² At that time, the word *peace* was on many people's lips. Peace and nuclear disarmament. Peace *through* nuclear disarmament.

Then, in the 1990ies, came the internet. Cyberspace. A system that was said to have been planned to survive nuclear war. And now, what is the situation? What has become of our PeaceNet?

In the catalog of the Peace Event Sarajevo 2014, the word *internet* occurs in the description of precisely 1 out of the 190 or so workshops that are listed — the one about "Peace and the internet." The same goes for *networking*: only the participants in the workshop on "Real military spending in Europe" do mention that they intend to engage in such activity. Isn't that a bit depressing?

However, while I was preparing my notes on the problematic of the peace and the internet, an incoming email told me that a new app for smartphones was available in Google's and Apple's stores: the "Sarajevo Peace Event" app. So the peacemovement is keeping up with technological developments, I thought. And, immediately, I felt a little better. Because, the internet cannot and will not go away. Therefore, we have to keep on *networking for peace*.

Cyberwar. It is not possible to speak about peace and the internet without saying something about cyber war. Milton L. Mueller in *Networks and States* notes that

1 NetMundial, that is, "The Global Multistakeholder Meeting on the Future of Internet Governance" in Sao Paulo, Brazil, 23-24 April 2014. Milton Mueller is professor at the Syracuse University School of Information Studies, New York, USA. His speech is available via Youtube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2DAvj5M60k&feature=share>) and <http://netmundial.br/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/NETMundial-23April2014-Beyond-NETmundial-Panel-1-en.pdf>

2 These networks merged into the Association for Progressive Communications, which is alive and kicking. See e.g. Murphy, Brian Martin: *The founding of APC: Coincidences and logical steps in global civil society networking* (www.apc.org) and Bök, Mikael: *END. LUND : a pamphlet about computer networking in the peace movement based on contributions from end.lund, a meeting in GreenNet March - June 1988* (<http://is.gd/IQfhHF>)

”cyberspace is indeed a place of its own, with its own native version of riots, crime, street barricades, defacement, and even war.”³

Is cyberwar an important phenomenon? It certainly is, and the peacemovement, too, needs to inform itself on it. However, the purpose of this workshop is, primarily, to discuss the peace and to develop an idea of what it is then tempting to call ”cyber peace.” So I shall leave the subject of cyber war with a quotation from John Bumgarner, chief technology officer at the U.S. Cyber Consequences Unit. Commenting on the situation Ukraine, Mr Bumgarner mentions that ”groups of hackers on both sides have launched scattered denial-of-service attacks aimed at overloading website servers”, and that ”suspected pro-Ukrainian hacktivists managed to briefly knock out” websites of the Kremlin and the Russian central bank, but

”We should be more concerned about bullets than bytes at this time,”

Bumgarner says.⁴

Cyberpeace? Jacob Appelbaum, famous for his contributions to computer security, explains why we see so much hype about cyber war:

”it's because some people that seem to be in the authority about war start talking about technology as if they understand it. Such people are often talking about cyber war and not one of them, not a single one, is talking about cyber-peace-building, or anything related to peace-building.”⁵

Although Jacob Appelbaum here raises precisely the subject that we have decided to discuss in this workshop, he also indirectly warns against doing so if we, in our turn, do not have a sufficient understanding of ”the technology”. The technology in question here is computer software in general, and software that uses cryptography, in particular. So when Jacob Applebaum calls for cyber-peace-building (or even for willingness to talk about it), he does so as a cypherpunk. A cypherpunk is defined as somebody who

”advocates for the use of cryptography and similar methods as ways to achieve societal and political change.”⁶

Let's assume that peace is one of the desired goals of Jacob Appelbaum, Julian Assange and other cypherpunks. Furthermore, let's consider the possibility that we are dependent on their software and cryptographic methods in our peace-building, because only they (but not we ourselves) ”understand the technology.” I think that we have to accept that, henceforward, peace cannot be built and maintained without the help of peace-minded hackers and cypherpunks.

3 Mueller, Milton L.: *Networks and States: The Global Politics of Internet Governance* (2010), Location 258 in the Kindle edition.

4 See Hsu, Jeremy: [”Why There's No Real Cyberwar in the Ukraine Conflict”](#), IEEE Spectrum 14 March 2014.

5 See Assange, Julian with Jacob Applebaum, Andy Müller-Maguhn and Jeremie Zimmermann: *Cypherpunks* (2012) Loc. 384 (Kindle edition)

6 Op.cit. Loc 10.