DARK SOCIAL SPACES

An event on digital cultures and acts of refusal, secrecy and power across privacy enhancing technologies.

The Provocation

Scholarship on the Darknet and dark social spaces tends to focus on the uses of encryption and other privacy enhancing technologies to engender resistance acts. The actors using these technological affordances are commonly identified as subcultural groups, activists, marginalised cultures and communities, trolls and socially divisive actors who seek to evade, refuse or disrupt institutional power. We would suggest, however, that this approach creates an artificial binary positioning a fringe of radical actors against institutions of governance, regulation and control. Similarly, approaches that distinguish between social agency and technological affordances protecting privacy, on the one hand, and institutional regulation and centralised surveillance on the other, do not acknowledge the manner in which powerful institutional actors use these decentralised technologies to reinforce their authority and control.

Keynote: Robert W. Gehl, Monday, 7 October 2019 2-4pm

Robert W. Gehl, Fulbright Canada Research Chair and an associate professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Utah. Gehl is the author of Reverse Engineering Social Media, winner of the 2015 Association of Internet Researchers Nancy Baym Award. In his most recent book, Weaving the Dark Web Legitimacy on Freenet, Tor, and I2P (2018) Gehl uses the concept of legitimacy as a window into the Dark Web, presenting three distinct meanings of legitimate: legitimate force, or the state's claim to a monopoly on violence; organizational propriety; and authenticity.

Workshop: Tuesday, 8 October 2019 2-4pm

In this workshop, we will provoke engagement and consideration of the implications of more entangled and complex views of dark actors and privacy technologies. The questions we raise address the tensions where technologies act as a support for privacy, connection, and activism whilst also facilitating practices of decentralised surveillance and social engineering that re-enforce existing power structures. Questions may include but are not limited to the following:
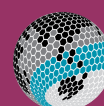
• If we continue to view civic action and social inclusion through frames of resistance, diversity and social cohesion, then how do we respond to more ambivalent developments in these socio-technical environments?
• How can digital darkness both shield and reveal social currents or identify emergent forms of social disruption?

150 word workshop abstracts Due 17 July, to Toija.Cinque@deakin.edu.au
Selected best papers will be submitted towards a Special Issue in 2021.

REGISTER FOR KEYNOTE AT darksocial.eventbrite.com

Deakin Downtown, tower 2 level 12/727 Collins St, Melbourne, Australia, 7-8 October 2019

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