

Cryptome

10 June 2016

Gabriella Coleman, Rise and Fall of Celebrities

Response to <https://cryptome.org/2016/06/appelbaum-rise-fall-celebrities.pdf>

To: nettime-l[at]kein.org

From: biella <biella[at]riseup.net>

Date: Fri, 10 Jun 2016 11:04:36 -0400

Subject: Re: <nettime> The 'Jake' Appelbaum case, or the rise and fall of celebrities

*** It has a lot to do with numbers. These, surprisingly, looked to be in our favor. Gatherings were ever bigger, the amount of people and resources mobilized were ever larger. It was probably a delusion. Just as the numbers increased, so decreased actual, personal participation. Larger groups foster 'strong personalities' - and Jake is surely one, for better or worse - and transform the rest, by sheer inertia, into mostly passive followers.

I dunno Patrice: while the rise of the celebrity hacker has been problematic, I see a pretty different set of trends in the last few years that are nothing but encouraging.

We see hackers taking real risk to expose wrongdoing (which is why a number are in jail). We see them being more inclusive than in years past (gender issues are openly talked about and addressed *finally *) and then there are all sorts of rather interesting projects that are well and alive and kicking and trying to reach beyond a narrow technical elite from the massive free culture urban experiments in Madrid Spain to the Pirate Parties that to be sure are only have some (and progressive) success in limited places like Iceland.

Then you have the hackers like Phineas Phisher engaging in direct action hacking to leak--a modality we will see more of in coming years.

I think the landscape has changed and for the better.

To be sure in some areas, like Amsterdam some political activity has waned. In some areas like Silicon Valley, progressive hacker politics are almost impossible to nurture but to declare its death and demise is to overlook the present which seems to be teeming with political energy.

I just finished a long article on the topic which will be published in the fall. I am happy to share with anyone who wants to take a look.

Final point: I agree with many of your points about the corrosive nature of celebrity, which are spot on. Hell, it is the main reason I like and studied Anonymous. We should be vigilant with the problem of celebrity leaders (for the reasons you state quite eloquently below) but to then use that problem to diagnose the death of the hacker political movement is premature. Hopefully the community can learn from this and forge forward but I am not sure things are dead at all even if there are problems, which there invariably will be.

Biella

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