

THE LIBERAL CONTRADICTION

With the questioning of the nation state from an anarchic perspective and the bypassing also in financial terms of states, such as through the questioning of taxation on the web, libertarian stance among cryptoanarchists and hackers must have been apparent. Barlow's (2001) „Declaration of Independence in Cyberspace“ has amongst others been widely criticized on that matter. Barbrook criticizes the privatization of cyberspace stating that „[u]nable to explain this phenomenon within the confines of the Californian Ideology, Barlow has decided to escape into neoliberal hyperreality rather than face the contradictions of really existing capitalism“ (Barbrook 2001: 50).

Having coined the term „Californian Ideology“ himself clearly referring to Silicon Valley, he reveals inherent contradictions to a libertarian cyberculture that withdraws from authority in concerns for its individual autonomy on the one hand, while being trapped in a global liberal marketplace on the other (Barbrook & Cameron 2001: 372–373). Barbrook and Cameron (ibid.) conclude that: „the Californian ideologues preach an antistatist gospel of hi-tech libertarianism: a bizarre mish-mash of hippie anarchism and economic liberalism beefed up with lots of technological determinism“ (Barbrook & Cameron 2001: 372–373).

Gabriella Coleman and her analysis bring a new perspective and more clarity into where the liberal contradiction in cyberculture stems from, arguing that hackers only make visible what is inherently contradictory in liberal thought itself. Rooting hackers in a liberal tradition in terms of F/OSS's visions of liberty and freedom on a broader scale, she indicates some of the core ethics underlying hackers' practice: „protecting property and civil liberties, promoting individual autonomy and tolerance, securing a free press, ruling through limited government and universal law, and preserving a commitment to equal opportunity and meritocracy“ (Coleman 2013: 2). Two of these principles that touch hacking practice at its core stand opposing each other: the protection of intellectual property and the right to free speech.