


INTERNET vs DEMOCRACY

A hybrid event and virtual training program



"After all, how do we know that two and two make four? Or that the force of gravity works? Or that the past is unchangeable? If both the past and the external world exist only in the mind, and if the mind itself is controllable what then?"

George Orwell, 1984

In the early days of the internet, technologies empowered new voices, provided citizens around the world with greater freedom of expression, opportunities for civil society, education, and political participation. This is still true, especially in places where the Internet is a critical tool in the struggle for freedom. However, we've seen, in recent years, that these same technologies are now being used to undermine democracy. There is bias, manipulation, polarization, abusive surveillance, and authoritarian control through digital networks. Targeted advertising, analytics and fake news become instruments of choice for malign forces, foreign and domestic, even in established democracies. In echo chambers of social media, only the loudest or most extreme voices gain traction, leading to emotion overpowering reason and extremes diminishing the footprint of common ground. Deepfakes can completely muddy the difference between facts and falsehood. Biometrics, facial recognition, big data, artificial intelligence allow groups of interests to recognize and to profile people. In certain countries, digital authoritarianism leads to intimidation, disinformation, reducing individual liberty, suppressing minority opinion, and enforcing centralized control. A digital interconnected society and world, based on trust and respect of individual and human rights is the goal and the paradigm explored by Digital Communication Network's new hybrid event and training, in the context of the upcoming Summit for Democracy. A digital interconnected and mass-surveillance-oriented society, based on manipulating human vulnerabilities and on polarization and mistrust is the Orwellian threat our coalition of digital influencers is trying to address.

The hybrid event, followed by an interactive virtual training will focus on essential tools such as critical thinking skills, true journalism versus opinion journalism, proper policy and governance principles, and community and network formation, supporting digital democracy.

The project will have two components, one macro (policy and civic engagement) and one micro (skill building).

On the 5th and 6th of December in Gyumri, Armenia, invited experts and participants will discuss, in hybrid sessions:

- Internet and Privacy: What can Governments and Businesses do?
- Internet and Truth: What can the Media, Social Networks and Politicians do?
- Internet and Civics: What can Citizens, Educators and Civil Society do?

The event will be followed by practical / tool focused virtual training segments on January 8/9, 15/16, and 22/23. Digital Communication Network will conduct practical workshops, leading to project design on:

- Digital Citizenship
- Digital Activism on Social Platforms
- Network/Community Formation and Sustainability

Please register at the following link:

<https://fs23.formsite.com/GlobalNetworks/oazpffqpgg/index.html>